

gentlemen, some as aristocratic ladies, and others as farm labourers and even school children. A tall, distinguished looking lady approached us. She greeted us and explained that she was the housekeeper of Polesden Lacey. We were to follow her up to the great house, and shortly to be introduced to the lady of the manor.

The house was like something from a history book. Everything was immaculate. The drawing room was chiefly decorated with gold furniture, and the ceiling was intricately ornate. The library was a reader's (or historian's) paradise and royalty from all centuries, both past and present, would have been happy to spend a night in the lavish master bedroom.

We were introduced to the sophisticated but friendly mistress and her excitable daughter. We also met some of the servants and labourers who were all happy to be working at the house. They were well fed and paid and agreed that they were lucky to work for such a generous employer.

We were told about the history of the house, and how it had been in the same family for many years. We watched servants and aristocracy dance together in the extensive hall and were invited to participate in the merry-making. However, despite the festive atmosphere, we were to learn from our chaperone, the housekeeper, that the situation was purely superficial. The family were simply trying to forget what was looming in the future; the necessity to sell the beautiful house. Times were hard, and the owners had no means of affording the up-keep. They were to move to a smaller town house in the vicinity of London; a prospect which excited the daughter, but which seemed rather daunting to the master and mistress.

We discussed this dilemma, and reached the general conclusion that it was sad to have to leave such a beautiful home, but agreed that the owners could at least afford a sizeable town house and enjoy an active social life. Our sympathy lay more with the servants and labourers who faced a very uncertain life; there was no guarantee that they would be employed by the next owner.

Later in the afternoon, news came from the master in London that they would be moving the very next week. The servants would have to be dismissed and contents of the house sold. The mistress retired, very upset, and our visit back in time was over, as we once again found ourselves sitting in a coach on the M25, and very firmly lodged back into our slot of history: 1991.

Sarah Harvey, 5T

Theatre Outings

To date, the first, second, fifth and sixth forms have been taken to various theatrical performances. Outings for the third and fourth years - not to mention further opportunities for those girls who have already been favoured - will arise in the course of the remainder of the spring and the summer terms.

The Upper and Lower Sixth enjoyed a performance by the Cambridge Theatre Group of Wycherley's *The Country Wife* at the Connaught Theatre in Worthing. Restoration comedy is well known to be somewhat risqué, but as the play appears on our 'A' level syllabus it seemed appropriate to go and see it, whether it should offend our sensibilities or not.

In fact, it was a splendid performance, colourful and lively, and the theme of the jealous husband and the straying wife was presented with just the right amount of suggestive humour and no more. So enthusiastic were the girls who saw it, that they begged to be taken to the companion play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, later in the season.

The Cambridge Theatre Group, we felt, were less inspired in their production of Wilde. The sets and costumes were equally impressive, but the brittle wit of Wilde failed to strike as sharply as it should.

In December, the entire first year went to the Mermaid Theatre in London to see *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Almost all of us were disappointed in the presentation of this well-known children's classic. Unfortunately, we had, owing to our early end of term, booked for the first performance, which was raggy and in need of much tidying up.

A January outing by the second year to Sadler's Wells to see *A Christmas Carol* was more successful. Although an earlier review referred to the show as 'hackneyed', we found the acting very competent and the music and the sets delightful.

Children of the present generation, accustomed as they are to all the slickness of film and television, are severely critical of theatrical inefficiency. They pick out instantly the door which does not close, the obtrusive hiss of the smoke machine, the clumsy moving of a particular item of scenery. No stars in their eyes: perfection is what they have paid for and perfection is what they demand. Let us hope that we can educate them into being equally critical of their other viewing.

C.R.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

'Don't do DoE unless you like walking,' someone once told me. This advice is not completely true in that there is much more than that involved.

Before the 'real thing', there were two training expeditions to be completed by us. The training session (in which we walked fewer miles than in the final expedition) did some good as we could actually decide for ourselves the amount of clothing we needed to bring or wear and the right amount of nutritious food (which should not only take up as little space as possible in our heavy rucksack, strapped tightly to the body, but should also be light). As usual, lunch for me is a chocolate bar (or two!), a pre-made egg sandwich with cucumber and minced beef and a few tomatoes to quench my thirst.

The expedition, however, is not all 'walk, walk, walk'. We had to learn and practise to read the compass bearings correctly to make sure that we were on the right tracks (which were pre-planned). Determination is also of great importance as there were times when your legs just wouldn't take you any further, and you still had about eight more miles to drag yourself along.

On reaching the desperately longed-for camping site, and after pitching our own tents, the only luxury after a long day of torturing your body system, is a hot shower and a hot, delicious meal. Sleeping in sleeping-bags is really not very comfortable, and worse in a double tent, but it has been such an experience that I would have been unhappy with myself if I hadn't taken part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Marisa Lim, UVI

Left: Marisa Lim, UVI on the Silver Expedition in the New Forest



St. Mary's - Yala (Or, 'Carry on, Madam')

Twenty years ago I was an education officer to the Government of Kenya. As such, I had signed the Official Secrets Act of that country in duplicate; so, I hope what I am about to reveal will not lead to a Spycatcher trial.

As a civil servant, a teacher can be transferred to another school either by the request of the Head Teacher or his own request. I had been at State House Road School for two years and a new headmistress had arrived and aspired to having an all-Kenyan staff. I had refused the dubious honour of Kenyan citizenship saying I was proud of being English. This resulted in a request for deportation on the grounds of 'Asian racialism' by the Kikuyu African Mrs. W. My African friends in the Ministry advised me to disappear for two weeks: this I did, covering myself with a sickness certificate for 'a bad back'!

Thus, three weeks later, I arrived at 9 a.m. at the office of the Provincial Education Officer in Kisumu - a town 300 miles away on the largest lake of Africa. The earlier arrival of ten Peace Corps Americans meant no Science teachers were needed. I was offered a job at St Mary's Yala - 'do you mind teaching Geography, boys, Catholics?' and sent to the Kisumu Hotel (alias 'the Dysentery Arms') for breakfast to await the arrival of the Headmaster. He arrived an hour later, decided I'd be all right and said, 'Drive to the end of the tarmac, keep going until you see a school on the right - that's St Mary's'.

My crate of worldly possessions, which had travelled on the overnight train would be directed on to Yala.

At 10.30 a.m. I drove out of Kisumu in my worthy Beetle, taking the road signposted to Uganda. I drove past the prison and then wound up a steep escarpment to Maseno, lying on the Equator. On and on the pot-holed tarmac wound, through Luanda, a few homesteads, round herds of goats until I came to a single-track level crossing. The tarmac stopped. I changed to a lower gear and ascended a steep hill of rutted, red mud. At the top an impressive sign told me I had arrived. I turned in and screeched to a halt at the flagpole. Immediately, two Europeans rushed out of a bungalow to greet me.

'What are you going to teach?' cried out Gill Davies.

'Geography and General Studies - but I'm a biologist.'

'Thank God. Now Gareth can get his transfer. Come in.'

Another couple were sitting in the house - Geoff did the timetable and my arrival meant a total re-organisation. There should have been 17 teachers for 500 boys - I was number 14 - and now, as well as Geography, some classes could do

extra Biology! All had arrived at Yala by transfer from elsewhere. Barry (now a lecturer at Makerere, Kampala) was in his third transfer. After a term, Gareth and Gill got their transfer to Nairobi (and are now in Bogota, Colombia).

St Mary's, Yala, was a bush, boys' boarding school founded by the Mill Hill Fathers in the 1920s. Three Fathers still worked there - Fr. van der Werf (who was headmaster until Africanised) taught 'A' level Physics, Fr. Meraner (ex stores officer to the SS) taught Chemistry, and Fr. Dekker (an avuncular Dutchman) taught Biology although he had an M.A. Cantab in Classics. The Fathers were rather reserved and it took about six months to get to know them - as Charlie (Fr. Meraner) said over a game of Scrabble by altar candlelight just before I left three years later, 'We were never trained to mix with single women.' It was his interest in gardening that made Yala an oasis - with beautiful bright flowers and shrubs.

Willem (Fr. Dekker) I got to know quickest. He was a keen amateur botanist with a magnificent collection of pressed flowers. His little bungalow was full of plants and fish tanks. We had many adventures together hunting for specimens needed for the eighty 'O' level and fifty 'A' level Biology candidates. After Gareth's departure, we shared the 'A' level teaching of Biology.

The boys, aged between 12 and 30, were mostly of the Luo tribe. This is a Nilotic group - very tall and dark - and different from the Bantu Kikuyu, Luyha and Kamba or the Hamitic Masai, Samburu and Rendille. All classes up to the Year 4 were of 40 students. It was with some trepidation I approached my first class: I was the only single female on the compound and most students towered over me. Women, in Luo society, are second-class citizens. However, at the end of the first fortnight, I thoughtlessly said to one of the students, 'If you do that again, I'll throw you out.' Unfortunately, he did. With the aid of a rush of adrenalin, I picked up the six-foot lad and threw him out of the door. I heard a student in the third row mutter to his friend, 'She's as strong as a man.' I never had any further discipline problems! My reputation was established.

This was just as well, as a year later, there was a strike. One Monday morning, at assembly round the flagpole, the Headmaster was not there. Mr. Muhanyi - a History teacher - read out all the notices and we returned to Barry's house for a coffee before lesson one. As we drank our coffee we saw a stream of boys marching on the Headmaster's Office. We noticed that the 4th and 6th form were missing.

'Are you going to teach your lesson?' asked Barry.

'Yes. 4 East aren't marching.'

'I've got 4 West for English.'

The bell-boy rang the handbell. Barry and I walked across the compound; behind us we could hear the boys chanting. Arthur Onyango, one of my students, approached:

'Are we having Biology, Madam?'

'I am carrying on as normal' I replied and walked on to the laboratory building. By the time I unlocked the door, the 40 students of 4 East were all there. It was, I think, the longest lesson I have ever given. After an hour and a half, Mr. Oynga, the Deputy Head, arrived at the lab. He told me the school was on strike and the compound was surrounded by police and teargas (and rifles!)

'I am teaching Biology,' I replied. 'The students aren't striking.'

'It's up to you,' he replied and disappeared.

'Carry on, Madam,' said Arthur Onyango.

'Keep going,' said Jacob Odinga. ('O' levels were not far away.) A further hour passed. We could hear shouting, but could see nothing as the Biology Lab. was at the back of the building. From experience, as infirmarian, I knew that after three hours many bladders would be bursting.

'I think,' I said, 'we should try to get back to your formroom, where I hope Mr. Sesnan will be teaching 4 West. Please go via that hedge and keep together.'

Five minutes later, we made it to the 4th Year block. Barry rushed in from next door.

'What shall we do?' We told the 80 boys to keep together in their form rooms, and set off side-by-side across the compound where Geoff and Father Charlie had the sixth form herded together under a tree.

'Where's the headmaster?' we enquired.

'In bed,' replied Charlie with the inevitable cigarette in his mouth. 'He phoned the Provincial Education Officer when his home was surrounded. That's how the police got here.'

Barry and I decided to get the Headmaster up. His wife let us in and Mr. Agoya came in wearing his pyjamas. 'I'm sending all the boys home.' No persuasion could make him change his mind. After ten minutes, we returned to the group under the tree.

'I'll go,' said Charlie, who got the Headmaster up again. He managed to persuade him to exclude the VIth form from suspension.

There followed a frenzied hour of producing cardboard boxes for packing belongings and doling out pocket-money for the boys' departure. For three weeks, the VIth form had normal lessons, whilst we played Scrabble until our lessons resumed.

Some years later, at a British Council interview to work in Tunisia, I was asked how I would cope in a crisis. I recounted the strike.

'Do you mean Barry Sesnan?' the chief interviewer asked. 'He's working for us in Khartoum.'

Yes, life at St Mary's Yala was eventful and enjoyable despite lack of water, electricity and a host of parasitic organisms who found us ideal hosts.

V.M.

Sabbatical Term

July-December 1990

As I sat at Heathrow I felt great excitement and not a little trepidation. I had checked in my luggage, said my farewells to my family and friends and had the prospect of six months travelling, meeting new people, places, experiences with a sprinkling of familiar faces to help me along the way. I had been very fortunate to be given a sabbatical term to study P.E. Curriculum and Testing in Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, and during the six months would visit 28 schools and colleges.

My first stop was Thailand where each school day started with ten minutes of exercises in the school yard. In one school these were taken by the pupils who composed a routine to music, in other larger schools, some with as many as 6,000 pupils, the arrangements were obviously, of necessity, more regimented. I was impressed by the efficiency of the Boy and Girl Scouts who acted as lollipop men/ladies on the busy roads in front of schools and the obedience of drivers to their pennants firmly placed in the way of oncoming buses, cars, lorries and bicycles.

Hong Kong P.E. facilities amazed me - football pitches and tennis courts on high-rise roofs - what an incentive to keep the ball under control! It would be a long way to go and fetch it! The use of limited space showed a great deal of thought and ingenuity.

When in Bali I thought how fortunate we are to have such superb facilities. Football in the village school was played in a dirt square with a mediocre ball, paw paw tree trunks as goal posts. In the classrooms books were in short supply but the easy, friendly relationship between staff and pupils proved that facilities are not everything. I was most impressed with the eagerness with which pupils and families greeted education. Pupils in Thailand, Hong Kong and Bali were impeccably dressed in simple, smart uniforms and were keen to improve their knowledge and understanding of their school work. I was interested to be told that university students in Thailand also wear a uniform and since the number of those applying to university far outnumbers the places, it is worn with pride by those fortunate to gain places.

Australian education and curriculum varies from State to State and I was fortunate to visit five States, so seeing a variety of approaches. By good fortune I was in Alice Springs for the School of the Air Sports week and enjoyed seeing children who normally only had contact with peers via a radio set, playing together while mothers and fathers sat talking nineteen to the dozen. The older pupils had been taken to Darwin to experience Big City! It was amusing to find that some things are the same the world over. At one school in Brisbane a P.E. Department were sitting in their room with a huge box of lost property, mainly socks, bemoaning the

fact that they had lost the gym to be an examination room for public exams!

New Zealand provided me with surf canoeing on Brighton beach - a beautiful sandy cove just outside Dunedin - a VIlth form activity from Kaikorai School and a Speech Day where after the prizes had been given out we were entertained by Maori and Polynesian dances performed by pupils and families in the school. I was fortunate to take part in an Outdoor Pursuits Camp from John McGlashen School where the 13-year-old boys were quite surprised that I was not au fait with handling a rifle. Most of them, largely farmers' sons, had become proficient with a rifle at age seven. The standards of instruction and performance in the camp were high and there was a strong sense of awareness amongst the boys of the potential dangers and hazards in the activities they were

undertaking. This resulted in a well-developed sense of responsibility towards themselves and others.

My return through America with a visit to a San Fransisco school was something of a culture shock. City life in America and the other countries I had visited were very different! I was very grateful for the chance to take the time away to visit other countries' schools and communities and to now have correspondents from many of the places I visited. I would like to thank those who gave me many of the contacts in the countries, making the visits easier. I was touched to discover that in the majority of countries British education is seen as the model and our standards are considered high - encouraging when the press seems to belie this!

H.M.F.

The Mosque

When I first saw the Mosque in Jerusalem, I held my breath. It was from a distance but it stood out from all of the buildings beneath us. We were on a balcony, and the beautiful dome reflected the hot sun like a mirror.

When we moved up closer, it was even more beautiful. The sun's reflection didn't shine out any more, but the whole elegance of the building revealed its beauty. It was a busy place, popular with the tourists and very mysterious. People had come to see this spectacular wonder and were not disappointed.

The religious followers were going into prayer, and they took their shoes off - as they habitually did - and walked into the Mosque with their prayer mats.

When the service had started, I peeped in. The men, women and children were all bowing before Allah. There was a feeling of magic in the air, a feeling of belief, a feeling of culture and a feeling of experience. They carried out their moves automatically and made not one mistake.

From the outside of the Mosque, chants of prayer and the faint smell of incense lingered in the hot mid-day air. The echoes of the prayers floated around and created a sense of the emotion generated by prayer.

After a considerable amount of time, everyone emerged feeling that they had done their daily duties, and had showed their love for God. However, the Mosque created its own air of religion. It didn't need the people or the prayers to make it special. It had its own character and its own strength.

That, of course, was before the fighting became more intense. Who would have thought that only two years would have made a difference?

When we went back two years later, the feeling of magic, the beauty of the Mosque and

the busy people, had all disappeared. Instead, there were just demonstrators, gun fire, angry voices, tempers raised and nothing but bad feeling. There was no sweet smell of incense and no chants of prayer. The Mosque didn't even look strong. In fact, the Mosque looked weak and ugly. It was as if some aliens had taken it over. Everything about the place spelt evil and bad feelings. No-one had gone to pray, but to demonstrate instead.

I was scared and feared for the future of the whole religious area. I had often heard about it in the news: 'Israelis kill two Arabs in demonstration', or 'Three Israelis injured in tear gas attack.'

It scared me even more to see it right in front of my eyes. There was no violence but demonstrators and the Israelis were shouting at each other. Other tourists were standing at the side. We wanted to get out, but were glued to the spot.

Then suddenly, the army rushed in with their gigantic guns and fierce faces. There were about fifty demonstrators and about seventy army men. One army man took a demonstrator and dragged him across the ground with one arm, and, with the other arm, held a gun to the demonstrator's head. The violence had started.

This was too much for me and my family, so we tried to get out quietly without being noticed. As we were going, an Israeli army man came to escort us out of that real-life hell. He apologised, and even took us out to the Jaffa Gate, a famous entrance to the Old Jerusalem Town, but I couldn't help wondering how long it would remain a town, rather than a dead, no-go area of rubble.

I prayed that this violence would not last for ever.

Zoë Kent, 4P



P.E. Report 1990-1991

The year was, as ever, a busy one with participation in the A.E.W.L.A. Tournament this year at Luton, S.I.S.N.A. at Roedean and the usual commitment to weekly matches with local schools. The tennis challenge has been increased by the well-structured Midland Bank Competitions for Senior, Under 15 and Under 13 ages. We were fortunate to be able to field an Under 12 tennis team due to the help of parents in transport and supervision.

In the autumn term Miss Ford was taking a sabbatical term to study P.E. Curriculum and Testing and Miss J. Harvey was welcomed to the Department. We were very fortunate and most grateful to her for the energy and enthusiasm she brought to S.M.H. Her special interest in water sports enabled several girls to experience canoeing in the pool!

Sadly, after a lengthy period of ill-health Mrs. Oswick resigned and we wish her well in her convalescence. We are most grateful for her patience, calmness and humour in the time that she has been at S.M.H. Miss Harvey kindly returned to S.M.H. to help during Mrs. Oswick's absence and we wish her well in her new post.

Congratulations are due to those who were selected for the County Lacrosse Squads: Sarah Cole the 2nd XII; Lucy Major, Katie Moorman and

Helen Bastide for the U15 XII. Congratulations also to Louisa Canavan and Nicola Hudson in their selection for the U12 County Tennis Training Squad.

H.M.F.

Colours

Lacrosse

Reawarded: S. Cole, J. Clarke

Awarded: L. Major, K. Moorman, J. Green, G. Trott, H. Bastide, C. Wilkinson, Y. Kassim

Netball

Reawarded: J. Clarke

Tennis

Awarded: N. Monen, K. Moorman

Trampoline

Reawarded: J. Garland, H. Crittall

Stripes

Lacrosse

H. Duveen, L. Richardson, C. Ellison

Netball

K. Moorman

Tennis

R. Pratt, M. Corfield

Rounders

C. Green, A. Tatham, D. Lang

U15

J. Crouch

U15

Sarah Harvey, Z. Kennell, J. Kassir, J. Crouch

Under 15 Lacrosse team





Under 14 Netball team

Cups

Junior Lacrosse Cup

C. Wilkinson

Senior Lacrosse Cup

S. Cole

Gym Cup

J. Garland

Junior P.E. Cup for effort and improvement

C. Newman

Senior P.E. Cup for effort and improvement

L. Askey, S. Terrot

Swimming Cup for effort and improvement

V. Cuddeford

Posture badges

J Graves
A Ho
E Tennant
S Nee
S Latham
Z Kennell

L Owen
M Lim
J Gander
E Briant
B Cole
H Hashim

P Powell
J Mathews
A Leung
A Delow
J Freeman

Inter-house Matches

Lacrosse
1st Babington
2nd Bristol
3rd Chichester
4th Adelaide

Badminton
1st Bristol
2nd Chichester
3rd Babington
4th Adelaide

Netball
Babington
Adelaide
Bristol
Chichester

Rounders
Bristol
Chichester
Adelaide
Babington

Swimming
Adelaide
Babington
Chichester
Bristol

Tennis
Babington
Bristol
Chichester
Adelaide

School Tennis Tournament

Under 13 Doubles: Sian Harvey, J. Lutkin

Under 13 Singles: J. Lutkin

Under 14 Doubles: C. Green, A. Tatham

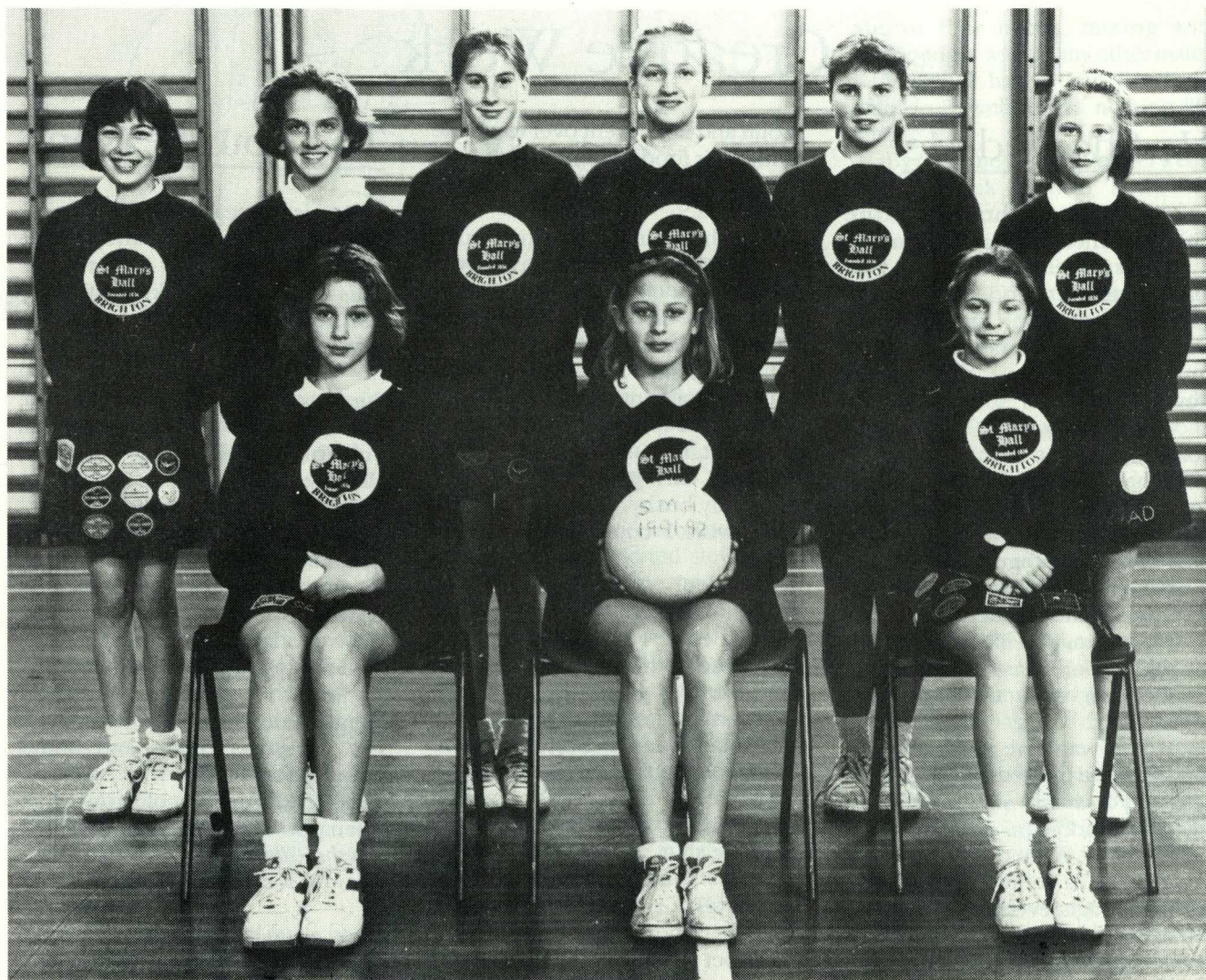
Under 14 Singles: C. Green

Under 15 Doubles: Z. Kennell, Sarah Harvey

Under 15 Singles: R. Pratt

Open Doubles: K. Moorman, N. Monen

Open Singles: K. Moorman



Under 13 Netball team

At the beginning of 1991 the girls of S.M.H. were asked to be ball-girls for the Midland Bank Tennis Championships - a Women's World Tour event - which was to be held at the Brighton Centre from 20-27th October, during half-term week.

After an intensive series of training sessions during the 6 week period leading up to the event 44 girls arrived at the Centre at 8.30 a.m. on the opening Sunday to be kitted out. By 10 o'clock the first team were in action, and it was the beginning of many long hours spent at the centre, both on court and relaxing in the very comfortable lounge provided for the exclusive use of the girls. It must be said that the girls were extremely well provided for, during the week, but no group could have been more deserving.

They overcame nerves, temperamental players, a sickness bug and T.V. cameras, to perform their duties with skill and style. Their commitment and hard work was tireless and praise was forthcoming from those concerned with the tournament at all levels - organisers, players and officials. The girls were a credit to themselves and

to school and they should feel proud of their performance.

Thanks must go to Sue Baker who trained the girls, Kelly Sharman who looked after them and George Hendon, the Championship Director, for providing such excellent facilities. I should like to thank the girls personally for their dedication, good humour and companionship.

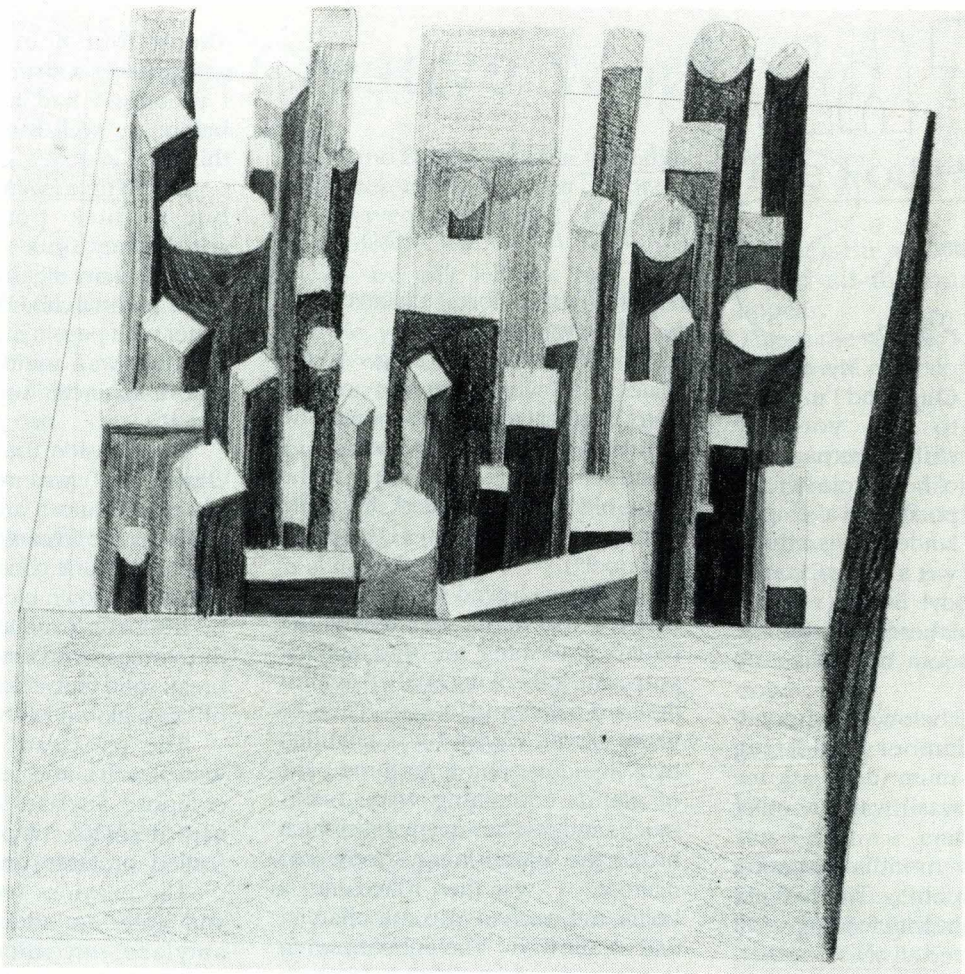
A.C.

(P.E. photographs by J.B.L..)

Nightmare

*Ghosts and ghouls
Bats flying
darkness falls
People dying
It's lightning
So frightening
Everywhere.*

Julia Howard, 1i



L. Wright, 3E

The City at Night

Night falls and the city slowly wakes from its mundane existence of toil and strife until it becomes transformed into an exciting, buzzing world of fun, freedom and fantasy; of lights, fast cars and action; of beautiful people and of drunks who, despised by day, become an integral part of the city by night, as they weave their merry way towards who knows where.

Yes, the dazzling lights, the head-pounding throb of music, rock and rap, the heady aromas of perfume and aftershave, mingled with beer, tobacco, hot dogs, chestnuts, all serve as a giant magnet to the senses, promising thrills and spills, glamour and gloss and the unexpected.

Around each dark corner is a new experience, a different sight to delight or shock the eye. Eager young men and women, hungry for romance and adventure, are

devoured by night club doors like giant toothless mouths, flanked by black-suited, muscle-bound bouncers. Another corner and another of these giant mouths is spewing out its unwanted prey into a drunken heap at the feet of startled passers-by. But their surprise is soon forgotten and the infectious sound of laughter fills the night air once more as angry cries and protestations fade into the distance and oblivion.

These unsuspecting revellers think they're safe from harm - but are they? Pimps and pushers mingle slyly with the throng under their cloak of night. They sense victims -- the lonely and the vulnerable - and their evil knows no bounds as poor lost souls are caught in their web.

This is the dark side of the city at night, where innocence is stolen and will never be returned.

Yet the music plays on.

Perhaps the raggedy old tramp, huddled in the doorway is wiser than you think, as he sits and watches the world go by, unburdened by material

things - 'Can you spare 10p for a cup of tea, Guv?' Tonight he may be lucky.

The night wears on and slowly weary revellers wend their bleary-eyed way homewards, some eager for a place to rest their leaden heads, to dream of recent conquests and success, some to hang their heads in shame and hide away from the cold light of day, and some too far gone to care.

Daylight comes and the city is quiet once more, save for the birds' dawn chorus and the echoing footsteps of some stragglers, the rattling milk float and the clang of a dustbin lid as a hungry moggy searches for morsels.

The befuddled drunk assumes his ungainly stance beneath the lamp post, his empty bottle hanging limply at his side and blinks benignly at nothing in particular. Soon life in the city will go on as usual. but will it ever be the same? For some, maybe.

Lisa Hanner, 4P

A Frightening Experience

1 At five years of age my knowledge of violence was not very extensive, so when my father was held at knife-point I was very unsure of what was going on.

I could hear from my bedroom that something was wrong and so I went out, accompanied by my older sister, onto the upstairs landing, curious about all the noise. A few minutes later I saw my mother walk through the kitchen very slowly and then my father walk into the study with a tall man standing close behind him.

'It's all right,' I said to my sister, 'Dad's just got a visitor.' So we started to come down the stairs. My mother came running out of the kitchen.

'Go back upstairs, the pair of you, quickly,' she said, but I didn't understand why I should go back upstairs when I wanted to come down.

My sister grabbed my hand and began to pull me back upstairs. I could hear a man shouting at my father, but I didn't hear him shout back. I couldn't hear him shout back. My mother was beginning to look more frightened than I had ever seen her look before. I wanted to stay down there with her, but then I saw the man come out. He said he would hurt the vicar's family and then Dad walked out. He started talking to this man quietly, reassuring him, and persuaded him to take himself back into the study. My sister and I rushed upstairs and hid in our bedroom, listening to hear the voices and waiting for it all to stop.

After what seemed hours my mother came upstairs and we all went down with her. Mum started to explain what had happened and it turned out that my father had managed to help this man, retrieve the knife and talk to the man properly, helping him to express himself, but not in such a violent way. Soon I began to feel less frightened and instead I felt much more respect for my father.

Joanna Terry, 4Y

2 I was only thirteen when the most frightening experience of my life occurred. I had been staying with my Godmother and her family, during the summer. I had been there for about a week. Her husband had promised to take me canoeing, which is my favourite pastime. The canoe which I was to use was not mine and had been built for a much larger and, I think, stronger person. The spray-deck which I was wearing was fitted very tightly to the canoe. I wasn't strong enough to attach it, so Peter had to help me.

We set out full of anticipation. The sea was fairly rough, but I had been canoeing in more severe conditions, so I was fairly confident of my abilities. Having been canoeing far out to sea for about an hour, I grew weary, so Peter decided that we should start to make our way into shore. Peter was a very experienced canoeist and he had explained that the waves were just the right height that day to surf on, in our canoes. He did explain, however, that I had to be careful not to turn so that my canoe was parallel to the wave, but to keep at right-angles to the shore.

I waited, patiently, for the right wave. I was extremely nervous because I'd only ever surfed before in calm waters. A huge wave swelled up behind us and Peter shouted out that the wave was perfect, so I took it. The wave propelled me through the sea towards the shore. I was high in the air, right on the crest, the wind and spray flying past. It felt amazing, a totally new experience. Suddenly I felt myself swing round. I was now sideways to the wave and falling down, down, down. It all happened so suddenly that I had no time to breathe. I was upside down with my head on the sea bed and my legs still inside the canoe. I pulled at the spraydeck, but I didn't have the strength to release it. I was stuck.

The water was freezing and all around me, tossing the canoe with every wave. I pushed myself up a bit with my hand and grabbed a quick breath, then I was submerged once again. I thought that was the end. I

started silently saying goodbye to my family and friends. Just as I was giving up hope I felt a hand pulling me up and uprighting the canoe. I climbed out with tears of fright, shock and relief running down my face. Peter had got there, but only just in time. I don't think he really understood what I was going through, but all I could think of was that I nearly died.

Alice Tatbam, 4P

The Foxhunt

The day they had waited for had finally come. Everyone was happy and panicking at the same time. The noise from the dogs, horses and people was tremendous.

Riders wore freshly-pressed coats of scarlet, black hats, white scarves and shining black boots. The horses were so eager to set off into the bright sun, across the fields of yellow buttercups. Hounds' noses twitched to follow the scent of the fox which they were determined to get.

The bugle called and with a prance and a jolt everyone was off. The horses ran fast with the dogs in front tracing the tracks of the poor little fox. Meanwhile the fox was battling on, trying to keep out of danger; with all his strength he leaped and jumped over every tiny branch he met. They would not have his head and every limb in his body.

By now the horses and hounds were tired and were desperate for water. Both the horses and hounds' coats perspired and twinkled in the sunlight. Although the hounds were tired they still went on. Then all of a sudden they were behind the fox. The fox knew that this was it, yes, he was going to be torn limb from limb. Hounds were upon him; their prey had been found. Unhappy I was to see such a beautiful creation lying in a pool of blood in the field of yellow buttercups.

Joanna Heal, 4P

Coming Home

1 'All Aboard.' I heard the ship call. I carried all my heavy suitcases full of my old army clothes onto the ship.

It would take one night to reach Boston where my family would be waiting.

I was to be sharing a cabin with my friend Bob, who had kept me company the whole way through the war, and with whom I had shared a bunk in the bunk houses.

The ship was leaving the harbour now, and I looked out of the windows until the land was out of sight. In my mind I thought I would miss the place where I had fought for my country for the past seven years of my life. I walked into the big dining room where there was much dancing, singing and merry-making. I think my friend Bob was enjoying it the most because he was as drunk as could be.

After I had had enough of the jovial evening, I retired to my cabin, opened my diary and wrote:

'After seven years of fighting, gun shooting and blood, this was the first evening we have ever had a lot of fun, and why? Because we're coming home.'

After I had finished writing I lay on my bed and fell asleep.

In the morning I was woken up by the groans of Bob saying, 'I've got a headache.'

The sun's beam through the window hurt my eyes but I soon recovered, and Bob and I went to have some breakfast.

During the afternoon I heard one of my friends cry 'Land ahoy,' and everyone gave a loud shout. As the ship docked I saw my family waiting at the quay side for me. We walked to the car and drive through town. Soon, all my old memories came back and it brought tears to my eyes.

At home, after giving everybody their gifts and the hugging and kissing had ceased, I went into my old bedroom and lay on the bed, thinking how glad I was to be home.

Nicola Hudson, 1i 1990-91

2 I suppose I always knew we would be found eventually. Somehow, even all those months gone by, when I was just nine, I was prepared for that event, and took it into consideration.

Anyway, what with all these reporters, and beastly reporters pestering me and Aurora, I've simply decided to write all about coming home.

When I was just nine, and Aurora six, our parents died. Just like that, out of the blue, when we were barely

old enough to realise quite what had happened. They had gone to a business party, leaving us with a neighbour. It was terrible that night. They were suppose to have come home at eight, but when three or fours hours had passed and it was impossible to lay the blame on traffic, Rosie-next-door panicked.

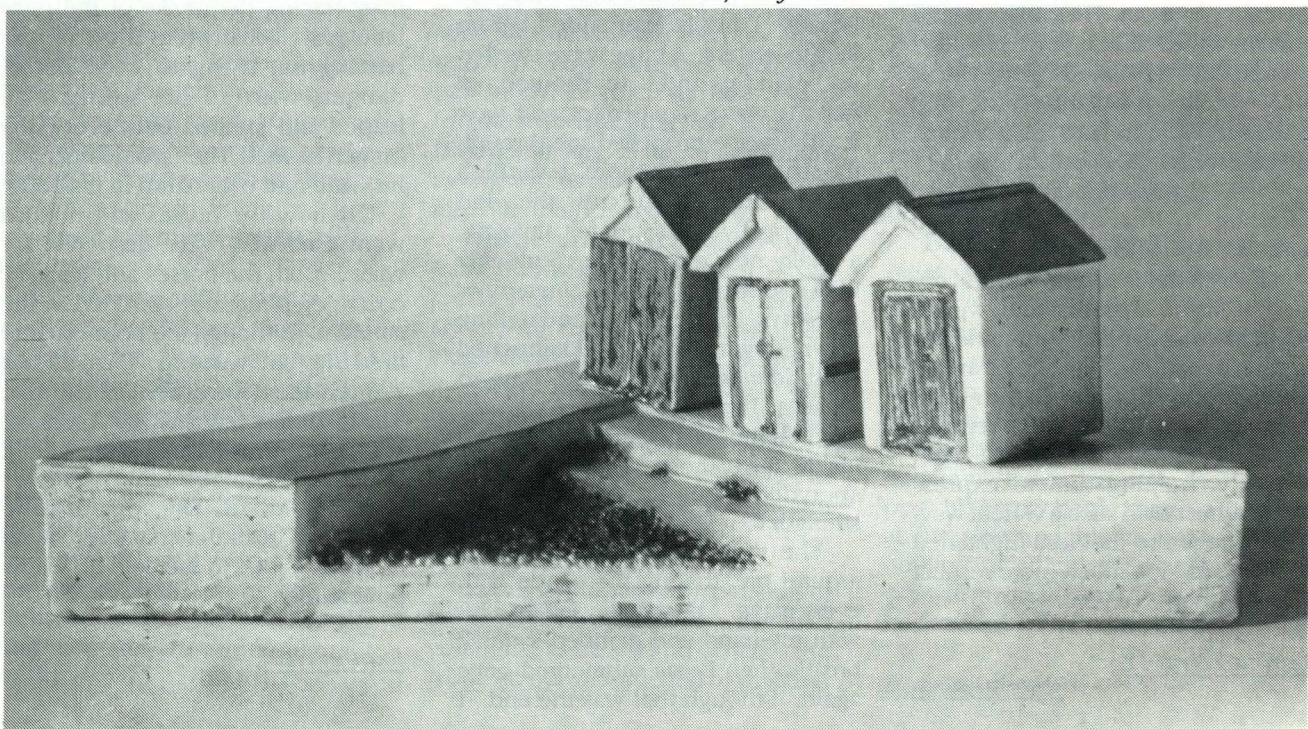
I'm not quite sure how or what she did, but it ended with Aury and I huddled together, listening in disbelief as she stated that on the way home, in the car, they skidded on the snowy road and had crashed into a tree. Both were instantaneously killed.

Neither Aury or I behaved anything like the kids on television. We did not cry or moan. We asked questions! What would happen, where would we go, who would look after us?

I'm not going to attempt to explain the long and complicated business over whom we would go to. I didn't really notice anything about it, apart from the fact that everyone was wailing their heads off over us, and expecting me to do the same. I'm not cold-hearted or anything: it's just that, when someone dies, it's far too big a thing for you to believe.

It was decided at last that we would go to Auntie Nora and Uncle Richard. Unfortunately for both sides of the family, Aury and I hated them like cold mushy peas. So we

Catherine Wilkinson, 4th year



decided to run away! Nowhere like the woods, or a mountain. Just back home.

You see, we had once owned a house in Somerset, until a huge storm blew the roof off! But we had loved the house, and, in between the bursts of crying from relations and chocolates from sympathetic nurses, we made our plan.

On Christmas Eve, we escaped through the bedroom window. It was snowing hard, but we didn't care, it would serve to cover our footmarks. Wrapped in coats and scarves, we hurled the cases to the ground and climbed down the trellis after them.

To cut a long story short, by the time we had collapsed into a train we were exhausted.

'How do we get there? I don't remember anything past Ash Wood,' asked Aury.

'I do. We take a bus from Kendowe to Ash Wood, and then we can spend the night in the barn.' I didn't really care how we got there; we were coming home!

Ash Wood is beautiful in winter. Frost turns the trees into delicate patterns, glinting in the sun. The snow muffles voices and holds the forest in its spell; even the river is halted by its power.

We had no time for beauty though, we had to reach shelter before nightfall. When we reached our barn I was thankful to see that the roof was still there, and the straw, though alive with mice, would provide a mattress.

There was no present that could have rewarded us better in the morning than the sight of our house. However disused and snow-covered it might be, it was still ours and nothing could take it away from us.

It took us quite a time to get used to reverting to medieval customs. We had brought Dad's army pistol with us, and with the help of elastic, a penknife, and lost of wood, we finally made two bows and arrows and a spear. At first we were hopeless at it, and sometimes had to buy things from the shops in Kendowe (heavily disguised of course).

By the time two months had passed, however, we had caught our first rabbit, though we never had a chance to eat it.

It was really rather a fluke, I suppose. Aury had climbed a tree to

be lookout for an hour, and, armed with a packet of peanuts and the spear, sat swinging her legs over a branch. All of a sudden, a rabbit popped out of its burrow at the self-same instant when Aury dropped her spear and it plummeted down into the poor rabbit.

Her shriek of triumph unfortunately, brought a gamekeeper running and, well, basically, that was that!

I don't expect we shall stay long at Auntie's, so I'm writing this in between plan-making and reporters. Next month we'll be coming home again, so I just thought I'd finish this off before going. Yes, Rosemary and Aurora Smith are off on their travels again!

Katy Morrison, 1K 1990-91

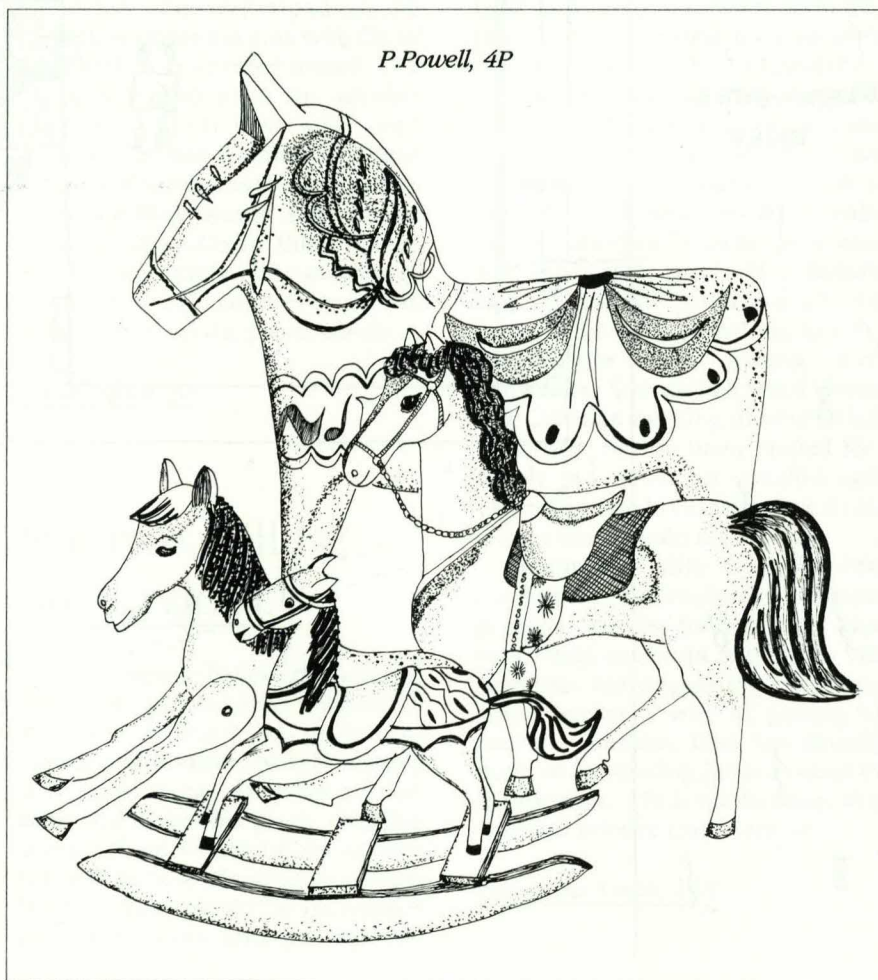
The Creaky Floorboards

My dad collects number plates and stores them in our loft. We use the loft as a storeroom and study. Where the number plates were kept there was a creaky floorboard. When anyone stepped on it the floorboards rubbed together, making an ear-splitting noise.

It was one hot night in June when I woke up in the middle of the night. Looking at my clock, I saw it had stopped at one thirty five, the time I was born. Then, from in the loft, I heard the boards creak. I stifled a scream and buried myself under a sheet. I felt a presence, cold and clammy, smothering me. I grabbed a book and threw it at the thing. Then I hid again under the covers.

When I woke again, my room smelled of must and rot. But the thing that amazed me most, was that when I looked at my clock it said seven o'clock. Then I heard the one downstairs strike seven too.

Helen Barley, 1i



My idea for a sugar-producing-by-photosynthesis factory

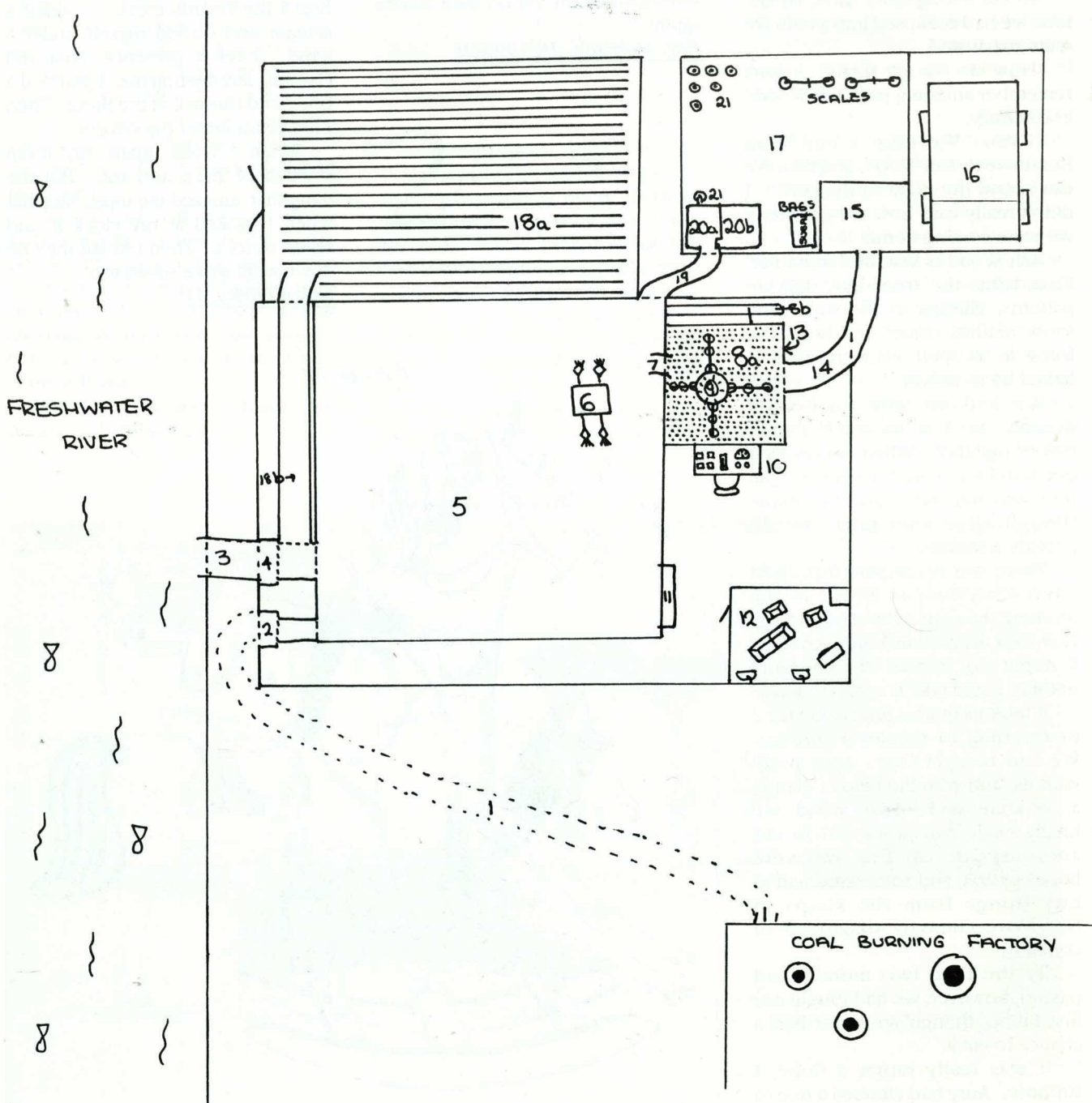
Key

1. Pipe that takes waste CO₂ from coal burning factory underground to the sugar factory.
2. Purifier. This makes sure that the CO₂ is pure and has no other chemicals in it that could damage the plants.
3. Pipe taking the river water underground to the sugar factory.
4. Purifier. This takes out all the grit and chemicals that might be there.
5. This is a large room or hall with rows and rows of green plants all

photosynthesising quickly. They are doing this because they are regularly sprayed with water and during the day a steady flow of CO₂ is going into the caged area. On the roof of this area are some solar panels that reflect the sun's rays down, giving the plants light.

6. This is a very clever device. It is suspended in mid-air until it is switched on by the switchboard outside. Then it lowers itself to the level of the plants and by using special chemicals it tests a leaf of

each plant to see if it has the required amount of sugar in it. If it hasn't the machine moves on. If the leaf has, then the machine carefully picks the leaves and places them on a tray. It does this for all the plants in that area. 7. This is the tray where the machine puts the leaves that are full of sugar. It leads into a chute. The leaves then fall down the chute into number 8a. 8a. This is like a water bath. It is a large tank that has hundreds of very small holes in the bottom. The holes are closed off when a sheet of metal



is slid underneath it tightly (operated by the switchboard). Warm water from the storage tank is pumped into the water bath. The leaves then fall into the bath from the chute.

8b. This is the storage tank where the warm water is pumped out from and it also sucks in steam and cools it from the heat tank.

9. After the leaves and water are both in the bath, this machine is switched on. It is called the mashing machine, better known as MM. The MM moves slowly up and down, round and round, mashing up the leaves so that the sugar contained in them is dissolved into the water. MM is then switched off (when the sugar concentration in the water reaches its highest level). Using the switchboard the metal sheet is then removed, allowing the water containing the dissolved sugar to run through the holes into the heat tank below, leaving behind the mashed up pulp of the leaves, which are then collected by hand and put on the soil in the greenhouse as fertiliser.

10. This is the switchboard which operates all the electrical things in the factory.

11. This is a door with an entrance and another door. Both doors are vacuum tight allowing no oxygen or impurities to get in and no CO₂ to get out of the area.

12. This is the common room where the staff rest when they are not working!

13. This is the heat tank. After the pulp has been collected and the metal sheet has been slid back, it is switched on. There is a very powerful heat source heating the bottom of the tank. When the sugar solution has reached a certain temperature it boils and the water separates from the sugar as steam, only to be collected by the storage tank. After all the water has been evaporated the dried sugar crystals fall down another chute.

14. This chute leads to an open topped box in the shed.

15. The staff then collect, weight and bag the sugar from the box by hand.

16. The bags are put into a lorry to be taken to shops or factories, businesses or even homes.

17. This is the shed where bagging and weighing and the oxygen is dealt with.

18. This is the greenhouse. This is where the green plants are grown to begin with. It has solar panels and a

water supply (18b), but unlike the area it has natural air rather than CO₂. The baby plants are grown here until they are big enough to be able to produce a certain amount of sugar. When the leaves have been picked off a plant in the area, someone goes in (wearing oxygen tanks, as there is no oxygen to breathe in, only CO₂, meaning they would suffocate), replaces that plant with a new one and takes the old one out. The old one is planted in the greenhouse and stays there until it has grown new leaves and is ready to go back into the area.

19. This is a pipe between the area and the O₂/CO₂ tank. It takes the O₂ out of the area in the morning and replaces with CO₂ and vice versa in the evening.

20. This is the O₂/CO₂ tank. a) is the O₂ half and b) is the CO₂ half. As previously explained, when the plants use CO₂ to photosynthesise during the day, the pipe removes all O₂ from the area and replaces it with CO₂ (it only replaces the CO₂ first thing in the morning as the coal factory supplies the area with CO₂ for the rest of the day). During the night when the plants use O₂ to respire it works the other way round but the O₂ tank supplies the area with O₂ all night as there is no other source. The O₂ tank is also used for another purpose: when the staff and gardeners go into the area they have to have oxygen tanks to supply them otherwise they would suffocate as there is only CO₂ in there. (They don't go in at night. The machinery is switched off but the O₂ is still coming, to keep the plants alive).

Katie Taylor, 3F

Science will be our saviour

Many people believe that science and technology have the potential to save our world from pollution, famine and disaster, often forgetting that science caused most of the problems in the first place. Without science there would be no nuclear waste to dispose of and no air crashes because there would be no nuclear power stations and no aircraft.

Electricity and air travel are useful to us, but not as important as the advances in medical technology which enable people to live longer and healthier lives.

Given time, scientists may well come up with a solution to the environmental problems we are facing across the world. They may find a way of improving third world agriculture and bring an end to mass starvation. They could even discover a cure for cancer or AIDS. But, while they are working on these problems, nuclear war could destroy the planet, or global warming could melt the polar ice caps, causing catastrophic flooding.

Therefore, in purely material terms, science could equally be our salvation or our ruin.

The real danger, as I see it, lies in the belief that 'Science has disproved religion'. Many people put all of their faith in science, mistakenly thinking that God has no place in our modern hi-tech world. As a committed Christian studying science subjects, I believe that it is possible for science and religion to coexist without any conflict between them. Many leading scientists today believe in God, and many have done so in the past. Sir Isaac Newton, the man who discovered gravity, was a Christian.

One somewhat controversial point I would like to make is this: God can often accomplish things where science has failed. I know a boy who had been unable to walk without crutches for over a year and was in constant pain. The doctors had tried everything they could, but were unable to do anything to help him other than giving him painkillers. Science had failed. I was at a Christian meeting in which that same boy, having been prayed for, simply put down his crutches and walked unaided. God was able to do what science could not.

Science is able to make life comfortable, and I believe it has great potential for the future, but it can never help us except in this life. No scientists are suggesting that they could invent a way of getting to heaven. Besides, God has already done so by sending Jesus to earth to die for man. He is our Saviour, in a way that science can never be.

Emmeline Smith, UVI

What would the world be like without any green plants?

It is funny: I never really thought about how important plants were until I found out that all green plants were dying. Some mysterious disease was killing them off and there was no way to stop it.

I can remember the exact day I heard about it. The sun was shining brightly on all the trees and flowers, making the green leaves glow transparently and the red, blue and white petals sparkle with dewdrops. Of course, I can only vaguely remember the trees and flowers because I did not ever really notice them much. I suppose I just took them for granted, assumed they would always be there. That was when I saw the newspaper article about the Cooper Syndrome (named after the scientist who had discovered it). I was shocked as I read that this man had been experimenting on several different flowers and realised that they were all dying. Now, he was predicting that before the month was over, all green plants would be gone. My first reaction was to laugh it all off. Scientists were always predicting things like this, but they never happened. Surely it could not be true. Then, I began to think what we would do without plants: for a start there would be nowhere for animals to live - birds would have to leave trees, there would be no shelter for the larger animals - also, we could no longer wake up in the morning and look out of the window and see green fields or gardens, trees brimming with green leaves, brightly coloured flowers waving in the breeze. I realised that, although I had never really taken these things in, when they were gone I would miss them terribly. But still it seemed an impossible thought that in less than a month's time, it would all become true.

Suddenly it occurred to me that fruit grew on trees and vegetables

always had green leaves. Would this mean they would go too? By this time, I was really worried. The enormity of the problem struck me. Before, it had just been 'nothing pretty to look at any more' but now it was 'nothing to eat'. Just in time, I remembered meat. At least we could eat sheep and cattle and chicken. But could we? No! Sheep and cattle eat grass which Cooper had proclaimed dying - and chickens eat grain which comes from corn. So there would be no more meat either, but another type of food could be found. What about bread? No good, bread is made from wheat which has green leaves. Rice, perhaps? Unfortunately rice has green leaves too, so that was no good either. I desperately tried to find a food that did not originate from a green plant. But each food I came up with always had green leaves. Coffee, flour, pasta, vegetables (even if they were grown underground because they have green leaves above the ground) beans, cereal and even sugar. I was frantic, there had to be something. I thought hard. How about jelly? A tiny piece of hope flickered through me. Jelly is made from gelatine, which comes from animal bones. I deflated, there did not seem to be a single food resource that did not first come from plants. I had never realised they were so important. But what could we do? The scientist, Cooper, said in his interview that he was working on a food pellet, which could be made out of chemicals containing fat, sugar, protein and everything we needed to keep healthy. I did not like the idea of having one tiny pill three times a day instead of meat and vegetables. And what about chocolate?!

I walked home flat and depressed. I took good care to look at all the pretty plants that bobbed up and down in the wind. It might have been the last time I ever saw them. As I walked, I read the paper and saw a word I recognised. 'Photosynthesis'. Hang on, hadn't we done something about that in Biology? Of course. I could remember learning that all food is made by photosynthesis and that by this process the earth's resources are

recycled and made available for re-use by living organisms. This is done by green plants dying and giving food to decomposers (bacteria, fungi) which then decay into the soil (producing humus) that goes into the green plants, that feed animals who die and feed the decomposers that decay and produce humus which goes into the green plants. This is called an ecosystem. I realised that this all meant no food is made without the help of green plants apart from Dr. Cooper's food pellets which did not sound too appetising!

Reading further on in the newspaper, I discovered that cotton is grown by green plants, and so is tobacco. So now, not only do green plants provide food and drink, they also make our clothes and give some people a relaxing cigar. How could we survive without them?

Green plants give out oxygen and take in carbon dioxide which is opposite to what we do. Surely, if the plants die, more and more carbon dioxide will build up in the atmosphere and make the greenhouse effect ten times worse. I was getting more desperate every minute. I could see that we would have to give up all of our cars because they pump out carbon dioxide, and without plants to take some in, there would be far too much in the atmosphere and we would all end up being fried, getting skin cancer and turning into another Venus.

I had almost reached home by then but I wanted to be able to turn back the clock. I wanted to have always taken notice of the flowers and trees instead of taking them for granted. A hymn that I had sung at school flashed back into my mind: 'Think of a world without any flowers, think of a world without any trees.' Until now, it had just been a song, but the words began to mean something to me.

It started to rain, and I watched as the plants lifted their heads thirstily. Looking at the flowers, dripping with sparkling drops of water, I realised I could never imagine a world without any plants. Could you?

Marie York, 3F