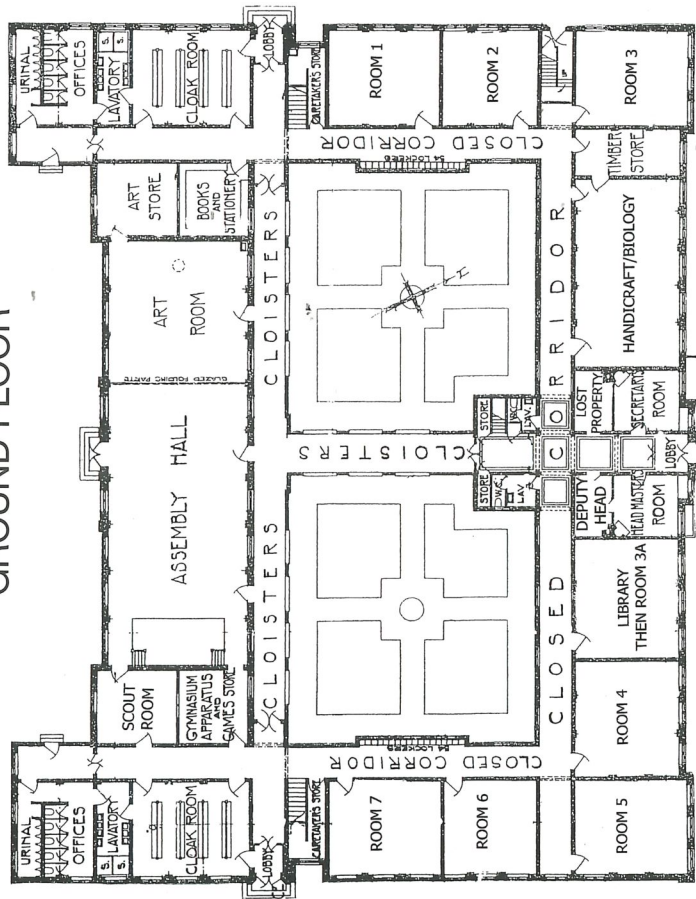


An invitation from John Macrae - to walk round the School with him!

Those of you who are far away or less mobile may be interested in the continued evolution of the School building. I know there has been some discussion in the past on the website about the numbering and use of the rooms, particularly in the old original building, so I have taken it upon myself to bring you up to date.

As I begin this task, I have no idea where it will lead or in fact how long it will be. I beg your indulgence if it ever gets printed in its original form because I have added anecdotes based on my memories of my life in Borden over five decades which inevitably will lengthen it. Our noble Editor, bless him, will do the honours and I trust him implicitly. *(Ed. - Very unwise! I know him quite well and I don't trust him at all)*

GROUND FLOOR



Room 1 looking towards the quadrangle



Room 2 looking towards the quadrangle (Below) Room 3



So let's begin at the beginning. Room 1. In the 1950s it was the home of Frank Nicholls (English) and John Weekes's form room. Before the Hardy block was built, the view was out on to the School field over the asphalt. Afterwards the room became gloomy with less natural light. The corridor outside had lockers along one wall for boys whose form rooms did not have desks, laboratories for example. The lockers were tailor-made for the space and had wooden doors with spring clips to hold them shut. This corridor was the queuing place for boys waiting to be sent to the Dining Room upstairs, with the front of the queue at the bottom of the stairs. Of course you had to be there early in order to get a good place at the table nearest the end where the Prefect distributed the food, so there was inevitably much pushing and shoving from the back to try to squeeze out those nearer the front. If you were popped out of line then you had to go right to the back by room 3. I used to hang on to the radiator outside room 1 to keep my place - the best position in the whole line. The master on duty soon brought this to an end and I remember Frank Nicholls calling us "spineless jellyfish" for slouching against the corridor walls instead of standing to attention when he appeared. Aren't all jellyfish spineless. I mused? I never dared to ask even when I was a colleague of his. Among other incumbents of this room were Cliff Beer (English & Latin) and Reg Silverside (Maths). Do you remember the small room between Room 1 and the stairs? It stored all the lighting equipment for the stage productions. It was also a stationery store, a duplicating room and the base for the School Music Station at different times.

Rooms 1 and 2 : the windows have been removed prior to part of the walls coming down to increase the size of each classroom. The alterations will increase the size of each classroom by doing away with the corridor and using it as a resource area. The complete wall could not be removed as it is load-bearing. Room 2 is smaller than 1 and hence did not have a podium. I recall this room being used by Eric Hill (English), Jennings (Economics), Huntley (History) Peter Atkinson (Maths), a succession of R.I. masters and Jon Adams (English). These rooms were also used for detention.



off the light when a visitor leaves, so the 'Engaged' light could be left on. A certain pupil, who shall remain nameless, grew tired of waiting and adjusted the wiring, so when I pressed 'Engaged', the 'Enter' light came on and vice versa. I took ages to work out where each wire belonged and never did get the full combination. If you're out there reading this, Stephen Goodhew, perhaps you could come back and sort the lights out?

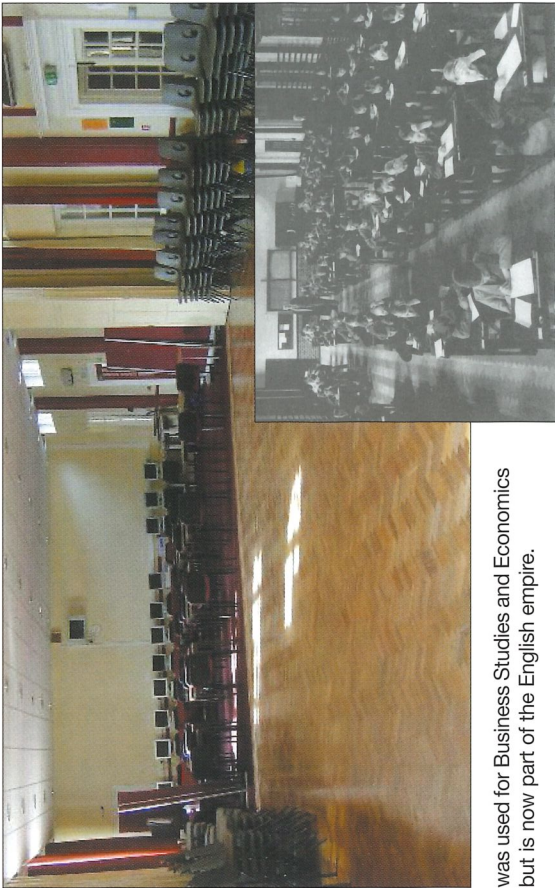
Next along is Room 4, for me a Geography room housing Roy Hill (Geoger Hill). It was a dark, north-facing room, thankfully not too cold as it was close to the boiler room housed in the basement under the Main Office and Headmaster's Study. Being larger, it had stacks of storage and display cabinets for geographical things and was also the meeting area for School House. My abiding memory of geography in this room was the regular tests we had after a learning homework. We were given pieces of paper less than A5 in size that had been partly used by previous sufferers. It was the main Geography room for many years so I think it was used by Ron Baguley, John Howell and Alan Cole. It is now part of the English Department's territory and in recent time you would have found Jon Adams, Collin Butler or Robert O'Brien there.

Down the end of the N.E. corner is Room 5.

In the 1950s this was Jimmy Howard's French room. It served as a Music Room for some time with Sebastian Smythe and John Kay in residence. It eventually became part of the English suite housing Marian Minhall for most of the time. Was this the meeting room for Swale House?

Turning right leads you to Room 6, which has had a number of occupants over the years. My first memories were of Mr Comber (English) and later 'Spider' Webster and Peter Atkinson (Maths). It served a variety of subjects, notably Religious Studies (Arthur Hack) and eventually returned to English. Next is Room 7, the History room for Norman Anderton and then Alan Davies used it for History and Economics. I recall little about my time here, except for a blackboard full of 'Chub' Anderton's miniscule handwritten notes which we had to copy before the end of the lesson - quite a challenge!

There ends the tour of the lower classrooms in the original building, but there are three more thanks to Bryan Short's planning. Next to Room 7 is the under stairs storeroom used for History books, stationery, school uniforms but more memorably as a Tuck Shop. On the other side of the east entrance corridor were the east cloakrooms, communal bath, showers and toilets. Only the toilets remain, with a small section partitioned off as a room for the Caretaker. The rest is now Room 8 and



was used for Business Studies and Economics but is now part of the English empire.

Opposite Room 8 you might expect to find the Scout Room and the Gym store. No more - it's Room 9, used for English! (Paul Reynolds). It's a bit dark and the flat roof above tends to leak. Life can get very disruptive when plays are in progress as this is the make-up room and back-stage entry.

Along the back of the old building is the Old Hall. Only half the School can fit in for assemblies now. It also doubles as the Dining Room since a kitchen was built on the back of it in 1981. The Hall was ideal as an examination room. I remember dreaming at my exam desk and watching the woodwork room being built outside in 1957. The movable partition still exists separating the Hall from the area next to it. This area was designed as an Art Room (Reg Goff, Alan Rawlinson) and it remained so until the 1960s when it became a Music Room (Leslie Olive). Subsequently it became a Sixth Form Study Room. It is likely to be the new Drama Room after the latest building programme. Barrow House met here.

The old Art Room had a store at the back, next to a chair store that held all the metal framed, wooden-slatted chairs used for Speech Days, plays and events on the field like Sports Day - exclusively for guests and parents (the plebs sat on the ground!). These two rooms were

knocked into one to provide Room 10 with a work room.

Finally the west cloakroom was changed to accommodate the Prefects with a small staff changing room alongside. The toilets at the far end remained. The two original cloakrooms served the whole School in the 1950s. All pupils had numbered pegs where they could hang their games and PE kit in bags. A sign of the times perhaps but this kit could be left there in safety, although I do remember the odd 'borrow' for someone who had to turn out at the last minute for a Match.

So that's the ground floor. I mentioned the coal-fired boilers in the basement (it was only in the 1970s that they were converted to gas). Imagine the chaos when the coalman arrived! The only space for staff cars to park was on the curved road in front of the School and it was possible to fit them all in at one time. However, when the coal lorry arrived, we had to park out in the Avenue of Remembrance - no trouble really as the road was not that busy and there were no yellow lines. The coal in 1cwt (50kg) sacks had to be emptied into small holes and down a chute. The caretaker had to shovel it into bunkers at each end of the basement for the two boilers. They had to be fit in those days!

Upper Floor

Let's start by going up the west stairs - this could be perilous as at different times in the School's life they have been designated as 'one way only'. The direction of travel changed over the years, too. It was automatic Prefects' Detention if you were caught going the wrong way. However, you may have noticed that it was possible to hang over the rail and look down to see if it was all clear, and make a dash down them, travelling backwards just in case someone appeared, so you could quickly reverse without appearing to face the wrong way. At one stage we used to perform a Physics experiment on the East stairs to measure human power. The aim was race up them as fast as possible to achieve the greatest power. The record stood at 3.5 seconds for both flights and is held by Kevin Rush.

Up to the 1950s, you could only turn left when you were at the top, but now you can go right as well - which takes you to the extra space built on the flat roof that used to be over the cloakroom (it's the same at the east end, too). Here there were originally 3 classrooms - 11, 12 and 13 (12 and 13 used for Maths with Terry Veal and Roger Lerpiniere). Then the Art Room moved in until it was relocated in the Short Building (Fred Clouter). Now there is a Careers Room, the Chemistry Prep Room and Lab 7.

Above Rooms 1 and 2 was the Dining Hall with its enormous wooden tables. I think six fitted into this space with one at the north western end being used for staff. Because a third

pupils came from Sheppey, the uptake of School dinners was high and for several years 3 extra tables were used in the corridor outside. Each table was supervised by a Prefect with an assistant from the Upper Sixth. The system was feudal and survival was precarious for first formers who sat at the far end of each table. The Prefects had first pick of the food and the dishes were passed down the table until a morsel or two was left for the smaller lads whose duty it was to collect all the dirty plates and take them to a trolley near the kitchen door. While they were doing this, the sweet was being served and they would often return to find a tiny morsel as their dessert. Neville Amos and John Faulkner were my Prefects over two years and they were pretty friendly and fair, but it was their henchmen, who shall remain nameless, who made our lives a misery. Not surprisingly, I took the first opportunity to go home for lunch and escape this Dickensian nightmare. Years later, as a staff member on permanent dinner duty, I made a point of walking round to promote a more democratic process, although some of you may tell me the problem persisted.

When a new kitchen was built downstairs (1981), the Dining Hall was divided into two classrooms. Then they were used as Upper and Lower Sixth Common Room, which didn't work very well. Today the Room is Lab 6 where all science subjects are taught. With solid floors in the old building, all the plumbing and services had to be pushed through this floor and appear on the ceilings of Rooms 1

and 2. Hence these rooms were like a ship's boiler room complete with the gurgling, whooshing and dripping that accompanies today's plastic plumbing. Their refurbishment has provided for drop ceilings and more efficient lighting that makes a more pleasant environment in which to learn.

Between the Dining Hall and the rooms at the front there was a set of stairs going down to ground level up which all the food for the kitchen had to be carried. These were removed when the corridor was pushed through to link up with the Hardy Building. The kitchen became the Advanced Chemistry Lab, which struck me as being a suitable choice considering what had been brewed up in there since 1928! The room now is designated Room 10 and serves as a classroom for Modern Languages. In this corridor there is a trap door in the roof. In the space above, all the Scout Troop camping equipment was stored. Prior to Summer Camp we had to retrieve all the six-man tents and gear from here and at the same time investigated the whole roof space above all the rooms on the upper floor. There was some interesting stuff up there which I remembered in later years and brought down to sell off in the Centenary Auction at the School in 1978 (it raised £800 in fact, which was a tidy sum in those days).

Continuing round the top corridor we come to the Chemistry Lab (photographs next page) inhabited by the likes of Hayden Preston, Jack (Smiler) Davis, Roy Sowden, Jeremy Hindle, Bob Ladds, Mike Boulton and Mike Leake. It used to be a dark, smelly place but in recent years has been restyled and is lighter and more pleasant. We actually sold a number of the wooden cupboards to a company that was happy to pay for them. The one snag was the discovery of asbestos which meant special measures to remove it. It is now known as Lab 5. If you remember, there was a door to the left of the old blackboard which led to a Chemistry prep room that doubled as a work room for Chemistry staff. This disappeared some years back and was incorporated into the Staff Room as a general working area for staff and a staff kitchen.



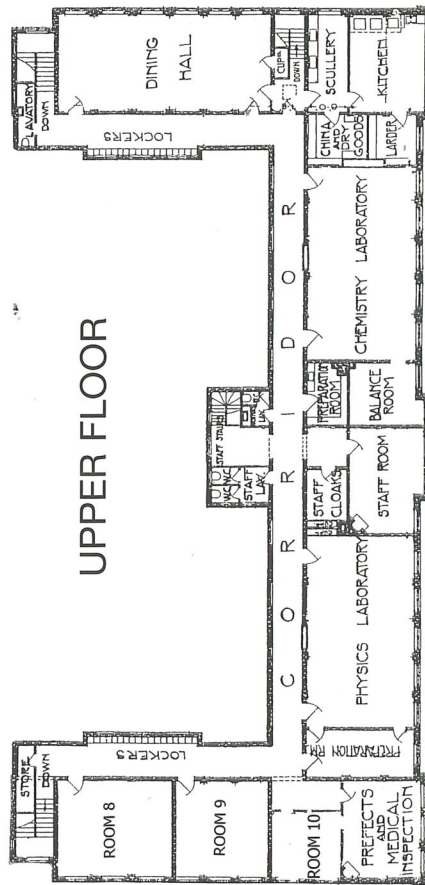
Lab 7 (was Room 13). Island benches mean some pupils have their backs to the teacher - not my favourite arrangement!



Lab 6. The beams in the roof remind you it was once the old Dining Hall



The old Kitchen, now Room 10





The old Chemistry Lab transformed. Now called Lab 5. The fume cupboard is still in the corner by the door.



The Staff Room today. In the centre is the master clock.



The Physics Lab - Lab 4. The old wooden stools have been replaced by plastic stools with backrests.



The Physics Lab looking towards the back wall. The Radio Station was located there.



Lab 2 - site of the old Room 8.



Lab 1 - unchanged over the years.

My early recollections of the Staff Room were a dark dingy alcove containing pegs for staff gowns and coats with a door at the end that was the entrance. You did not knock on this door unless you were in extreme peril for it was the inner sanctum that few entered. I am sure there are many Old Bordenians who have never seen the inside. He who had the temerity to knock and enter would have been met with a terrible onslaught of noise and a tirade of language of unaccustomed volume - and that included Headmasters! (but not in the last 10 years). The alcove has gone and the door opens directly on to the corridor to make more space for the staff.

Up to the 1960s, the caretaker lit a coal fire for us in the morning and provided a large bucket of coal to keep it going all day - a wonderful treat after a cold outside duty. The master clock that kept all the classroom clocks in step is on the wall. It used to be powered by a set of dry batteries stored in the roof. The system required about 100volt so you can appreciate how many were needed. When they failed one year I paid a visit to the roof to find that when batteries were replaced the old ones were just left there. Imagine how many had accumulated since 1928 (Ed - is this why they were called 'accumulators' in those days?). I resolved as soon as possible I would change to mains power with a battery backup.

Next along the top corridor is the Physics Lab - the haunt of Old Bordenians George (Joe) Dawkins, me (all sorts of nicknames) and David Jenkins. George taught me and I taught Dave. I calculate that Physics has been taught at Borden by an Old Boy for more than 90 years of the School's 129-year history. One other coincidence is that George, like me, had been Secretary of the OBA and just recently I discovered that John Taylor, my Headmaster at Snipeshill Primary School ('The Council School') was also OBA Secretary. The Physics Lab is now known as Lab 4 and at the time of writing I have not been able to unearth a photo of it in its original state. It was well preserved - after all no one would mess around with Joe's room! - and it served us well until 2002. I reckon that at 74 years we had

good value for money there. As the School increased in size so did the Physics staff. In 1964 when I joined, I had Stan Ashby and John Weekes doing the junior work leaving me with the 'O' and 'A' level pupils. This was a bit strange at first, since both men had taught me and here I was telling them what I wanted in the syllabus. The expansion in the 60s and 70s meant that more specialist teachers were needed, so the reader may recall John Hearn, Steve Bateman, Simon McGrahan, Mark Pyburn, David Jenkins, to name the main contributors who took their share of both 'O' and 'A' level work.

Now we come to the room in the corner, the Prefects' room with its wonderful views out on to the Avenue, the old football ground now Sainsburys and the playing fields of the Girls Grammar School (wonderful sight!). Some memorable names are engraved on the stone windowsills and some of them are not Prefects! There used to be a small room next door where Ken (Tot) Wheatley took small Scholarship Maths classes, and when it was occupied the Prefects' table tennis had to be more subdued.

Turning right at the corner brings you to a science prep room and a Biology Lab, now called Lab 2. Previously this was Rooms 9 and 8. If I remember correctly, room 9 was for Maths and 8 was for French, so they would have been used by Ken (Tot) Wheatley and Eric (Sniffer) Snelling. When Eric moved down to Room 3a both rooms were used for Maths. I also remember Eric using 8 for his Borden House meetings. In 1957 the flat roof over the cloakrooms was built on to provide a purpose-built Biology Lab (now named Lab 1), and its first occupant was Dave Hargrave.

I hope I have stirred some memories for the reader. No doubt I have sparked some controversy and I do not deny that memory is a funny thing - in that no two people recall the same thing about a place or event. So write to me or the editor and fill in some gaps or right some wrongs so that we can all share those golden memories of our Borden.

John Macrae