

## Long Eaton Grammar School

Lawyers have always enjoyed greater esteem and considerably greater financial reward than teachers. Is this because they are more intelligent, I ask myself? In 1969, Keith Matthewman the successful barrister was earning £80 per week as opposed to £12 per week for a starting teacher. When I discovered that Keith had never failed an exam in his life I was very impressed and described him as a brilliant student. He disagreed -

*"Not me! I'm not an academic and never was. My interest in studying was only to achieve certain ambitions. I worked hard and did what I did just to get where I wanted to go. English and history were the subjects I enjoyed most. "*

In an attempt to uncover the 'Real Keith Matthewman' from those distant days of the Long Eaton Grammar School, in January 2000 I put out a general appeal in all the local newspapers. The following response was intriguingly signed - Carol Harper (legs)

*"I remember Keith and his brother Ray, then there was Bob Hales, David and Pete Spence. We all went to the Chilwell village hall dances together - what a laugh! Keith was tall, quiet and serious; a very kind caring person. It's no surprise that he's turned out to be a good, fair and honest judge. "*

Later it dawned on me that 'legs' was a reference to the school; nothing at all to do with Carol's anatomy.

In 1951 the old School Certificate was abolished and replaced with the General Certificate of Education which, with great public confidence, high value, prestige and respect, would reign supreme until its replacement in 1984 with the new exam, the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

At the Long Eaton Grammar School, it was just one year into the life of the young GCE when Keith Matthewman passed his Ordinary Level in Maths and English Language. In the September of that year, 1952, he entered the Lower Sixth Form and, as a necessity for any student planning the future study of law, he followed a course in Latin and passed the Ordinary Level in 1953. The following year in the Upper

Sixth he passed his Advanced Level in English Literature, History and French; results which were necessary for entry into a university. Some of his less ambitious fellow pupils were leaving simply to get a job. In their case it was necessary that they acquired as many 'O' levels as they could possibly get.

For 33 years the GCE had an unrivalled international reputation for being rigorous and sound: a gold standard which was well acclaimed before the arrival of the progressive innovations of 'interpretation' and 'empathy': a gold standard well before Melanie Phillips was moved to write 'All Must have Prizes'. In short, the reader can be assured that to pass such exams in the early 1950's - Keith Matthewman had to know his stuff!

Nick Seaton (the chairman of the Campaign for Real Education) said in the 14.8.01 edition of the Daily Express -

*"The introduction of the universal GCSE exam, in the vain hope that one exam would cater for all abilities, was bound to lead to a lowering of standards in secondary schools.*

*So what has gone wrong and why? The reasons are partly political, partly cultural and, most of all, the product of confused egalitarian ideology that has infected our education system from top to bottom. "*

Armed with an impressive array of excellent results in subjects of such high prestige, a present day thinker would suppose that all doors would be open to the bright young student - alas, not everybody took that view.

During the high summer of 1953 when the air was thick with floating fine pollen grains, a miserable seventeen year old, suffering from a bad bout of hay fever, went to seek relief from his family doctor in Beeston, a Dr Thompson. After the consultation, the rather frumpish physician said -

*"What are you going to read at university?" "Law. I want to be a barrister. "*

*"A barrister! People like you don't become barristers! Why don't you become a teacher?"*

This unwelcome advice made Keith determined to succeed all the more, and looking back over his 38 years in the legal profession, he

tackles a commonly held misconception, a myth soundly slain by the sword of his own personal example -

*"Nobody has ever asked me where I went to school. The public and the press think that where you've been to school and college matters greatly for you to get to, and get on at, the Bar - it does not. It's a load of rubbish! At the Bar, all that really matters is if you can do the job and do it well. "*



*Keith Matthewman aged about 16*

At Long Eaton Grammar School Keith showed very little interest in sport or athletics and had very little talent in any of the usual competitive school games - with the one possible exception of hockey. A girl in his year called Jane Maxwell, one of the First Eleven Hockey Team, shared with me a particularly amusing memory at the end of games afternoon when she and a few of her team-mates were leaving the playing fields on West Park.

*"After a good game we were on our way back to school, no doubt in a cheery and giggly mood. At the library grounds we found ourselves just a little behind two good looking lads who always stirred up (in us girls) a small ripple of excitement. Geoff Kingscott and Keith Matthewman were walking slowly, languidly trailing their hockey sticks, deep in serious political conversation. They presented a hilarious sight! Frumpish baggy shorts worn well below the knees caused us to fall about in hysterics! None of the other boys with their snappy closer fitting gear would ever be seen dead like that!"*

Please note that today, Jane Maxwell is Mrs Jane Matthewman.

On the same theme of the unwilling sportsman, an interesting observation is made by the French Master, Mr Geoffrey Prime -

*"It was unusual for a boy without sporting talent or sporting aspirations to be so well liked. The male contemporaries of Keith Matthewman regarded prowess on the soccer or cricket field as the chief reason for approbation, yet he was very popular indeed with both boys and girls. "*

Mr Prime took up his appointment at Long Eaton Grammar School in the September of 1949. It was his first teaching job and Keith was in the third year -

*"I realise now, though I did not appreciate at the time because of my lack of experience, that Keith was in an exceptional group of pupils, one of the best I have had in a full career of teaching. As well as being bright in the academic sense, the form was full of 'characters', young people of charm, wit and quiet determination. Even in the presence of so much talent, Keith stood out. The first thing I remember about him was his cool, frank, appraising gaze. I can imagine many people being apprehensive or uneasy when facing this unwavering look in subsequent years. Even at the age of 13 he had a unique way of being able to express approval or disapproval in a*

*glance. I don't think I have before or since come across a person with this quality so marked as it is in Keith Matthewman. "*

Perhaps we should not be too surprised that this young student was able to use his natural charm and be well thought of even in the teeth of a cultural tendency to esteem a flair for football, athletics and other games. In the early 1900's, Lowell Thomas wrote a perceptive article about one of the most successful authors of the twentieth century -

*"He was very poor. He milked the cows, cut the wood and fed the hogs, but he still went to college. He soon saw that there were certain groups in college that enjoyed influence and prestige - the football and baseball players and the chaps who won the debating and public-speaking contests. He learned that leadership went to the man who can talk. "*

Mr Thomas was writing about a man who wrote and self-published a book in 1937 which has now sold fifteen million copies all over the world - 'How to Win Friends and Influence People' by Dale Carnegie.

Keith Matthewman was a leading force in the Long Eaton Grammar School Literary and Debating Society. It is here that he honed and developed his considerable skills of articulate persuasion which, a decade later, would coax juries to weigh up the arguments in his favour. As a fledgling sixth-former he was beginning to follow and understand the process of the Criminal Justice System and noted with some interest the main event of December 11th 1952, when Lord Goddard sentenced the 19 year old Derek Bentley to death by hanging.

The extracts from the school magazine 'THE GOSSAMER': 1953 to 1955 gives a flavour of the issues covered in the debates.

On page 624 the magazine reports that -

*"Matthewman showed himself aware of the paradox of Marlow's shyness and sophistication, and he had some good moments in his scenes with Kate Hardcastle who was played by Glenys Radford"*

In Oliver Goldsmith's play 'She Stoops to Conquer', Keith was Young Marlow, the proud, impetuous snob who was shy with his equals but amorous with women whom he regarded as social inferiors. In a play

control Geary as the Queen's drunken son. Pat Dennis and Dawson were messenger and gentleman respectively, and Pat Malcolm took the part of a " Dresden " shepherdess.

After the interval " The Dark Lady of the Sonnets " was presented This was of a more serious nature. It consisted mainly of Quotations from Shakespeare ; the plot tells of a chance meeting between Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth when he should have met his own love, the Dark Lady. The latter arrives as Shakespeare is making love to the Queen who eventually forgives the Dark Lady her liason with Shakespeare.

Mattewman seemed to be ideal as Shakespeare, easily swayed but keeping himself safe by his eloquence. Pauline Greensmith as the Queen was a real tyrant (I was particularly impressed by this part).

Jillian Colclough was a charming Dark Lady and Pettefar a most intimidating sentry, guarding the palace walls where the action takes place.

M.J.M., UPPER VI.

#### LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY

Page 641

The Society's 1953-54 programme, tabulated below, gives some indication of what an extremely successful season this has been :

##### Debates :

- 1.10.53 That commercial television would be a menace to the community.
- 28. 1.54 That the emancipation of woman has led to the enslave-ment of man.
- 4. 3.53 That the British monarchy serves no useful purpose.
- 1. 4.54 Inter-schools debate with Ilkeston G.S.: That modern entertainment has an adverse effect on the youth of today.
- 9. 4.54 Old Scholars' debate : This house believes in fairies.
- Feb. 4. (page 679) Visit of Mr. Ernest Ashley, the author, who writes ' de-tective fiction ' under the name of Francis Vivian. Mr. Ashley addressed the Society on the subject of the short story explaining its structure and his own method of presentation.
- Mar. 3. (1955) Visit of Air-Commodore W. Cooper of the Telephone Works, Beeston. Air-Commodore Cooper spoke on the subject of ' Communications,' showing the changes they have effected in contemporary life.
- April 5. Old Scholars' Renunion Debate : " That the decline and eventual fall of the Derbyshire Nationalist Party ' is viewed with PLEASURE." Proposed by Mr. K. Matthewman, of University College, London, and Mr. B. R. Hunt, Treasurer of the Society. Opposed by Mr. A. G. Kingscott, President of the Derbyshire Nationalist Party, Undergraduate of University College, London, and Mr. T. J. Syson, Chairman of the Society.

about the rigid eighteenth century class system this is an interesting role for a budding socialist.

On the evening of March 19th, 1953, the Long Eaton Grammar School Drama Group staged a play by Bernard Shaw called 'The Dark Lady of the Sonnets'. A photograph in 'The Gossamer' shows a young man in Elizabethan garb on one knee entreating an indifferent and haughty young woman. The man is Keith Matthewman playing the part of William Shakespeare pleading with Pauline Greensmith who takes the part of Queen Elizabeth.

Mr Prime gave me his unofficial review and commendation of that performance -

*"I love the somewhat equivocal use of the word 'seemed' in describing his performance of Shakespeare. My memory of the play is that he was very impressive in the part, quite an eye-opener to me in fact. I hadn't realised his hidden depths. "*



*Jillian Colclough as the Dark Lady standing over a kneeling Keith Matthewman as Shakespeare in 'Dark Lady of the Sonnets', 1953*

Keith Matthewman -

*"I worked hard at school, but not too hard since I had a brain and was always in the top form. I enjoyed my life at school tremendously, particularly debating ... and best of all... acting on the stage. "*

These last few words were said with a profound deep and genuine wistfulness. His tone, melancholic and meditative, struck a chord with my own personal misgivings looking back over early career choices. Like me, Keith was a working class boy who had to obtain a 'no-nonsense' position which would give secure regular wages. Like me, he did not have the luxury of a private income or wealthy parents for a financial safety net. Like me, Keith Matthewman was in no position to take risks, to explore and develop the artistic side of his abilities which means that some talents have gone untried and untested.

But acting is not always done on the stage. Bill Shaw remembers a certain cold wet autumn night in 'down town' Long Eaton when he and his friend Keith, both aged sixteen, found it desirable to turn themselves into black and white, movie type gangsters.

*"We left the cinema, (no doubt having just seen a James Cagney film) and, for reasons which I can't remember, decided to track down a mutual friend who lived across the road from Keith. Ray Sewell was in the habit of frequenting snooker halls. In those days of the early 50's, particularly in Long Eaton, they were invariably tatty places and regarded by some as where low-life and criminals hung around. By unspoken agreement we adopted what we imagined to be a 'tough guy' image - with rain coat collars turned up, shoulders haunched, fists thrust deep into our pockets and facial expressions to suit. We swaggered into a couple of 'joints' and in a tough voice asked the (somewhat alarmed) receptionist if Ray Sewell was in the place. We didn't find him on that bleak night and had to catch the bus home. "*

Keith Matthewman was not acting when he had first expressed his admiration and affection for the 'Dark Lady of the Sonnets'. The eponymous lady was played by Jillian Colclough who lived in Spondon. Just after that performance Keith recalls an evening which involved four time-consuming bus trips, just to take Jillian out to the pictures.

*"I caught the bus from Depot Corner in Chilwell for the journey out to pick up Jillian at her house in Spondon. We then waited at the stop for the Nottingham bus and eventually arrived at the old*



*Gaumont Cinema. After the film, another wait for the bus back to Spondon to see Jillian safely back to her front door. Now alone, yet another wait at the bus stop to catch the ride back to Chilwell and home. Out of the total cost of six sets of bus fares and two cinema tickets, I still had change out of 10/-.. " [50p]*

The academic and athletic distinctions of Jane Maxwell are well documented in 'The Gossamer'. In the June of 1952 she took and passed 'O' Level Domestic Science. Those early skills, now improved by the years of experience, are still enjoyed and greatly appreciated today by guests to the Matthewman home and also by the 'Friends of the Galleries of Justice'. In June of the following year she added English Language, English Literature, Biology and Art. In December 1953 she also passed Geography and French making a total of seven subjects.

Long Eaton Grammar School was divided up into three houses named after local rivers - Trent, Derwent and Soar. Living in Belper I was gratified to discover that Jane Maxwell was honourably associated with Derwent House. In 1954 Jane and Geoff Kingscott co-wrote the house notes in which she characteristically concerns herself with the well-being of a long serving member of staff -

*"We are pleased to hear that Miss Silk is out of hospital and well on the road to recovery. "*

In the Derwent house notes of 1955 -

*"We would like to mention the fine performance of our two athletic captains - Jane Maxwell and John Panton. Jane won the 100 and 150 yards races. "*

From 1956 to 1960, Jane Maxwell also played for the Attenborough Tennis Club.

I asked Keith if Long Eaton Grammar School had it's equivalent of William Howitt Secondary Modern School's formidable Mrs Buxcey described in my second book 'Heanor Schooldays' -

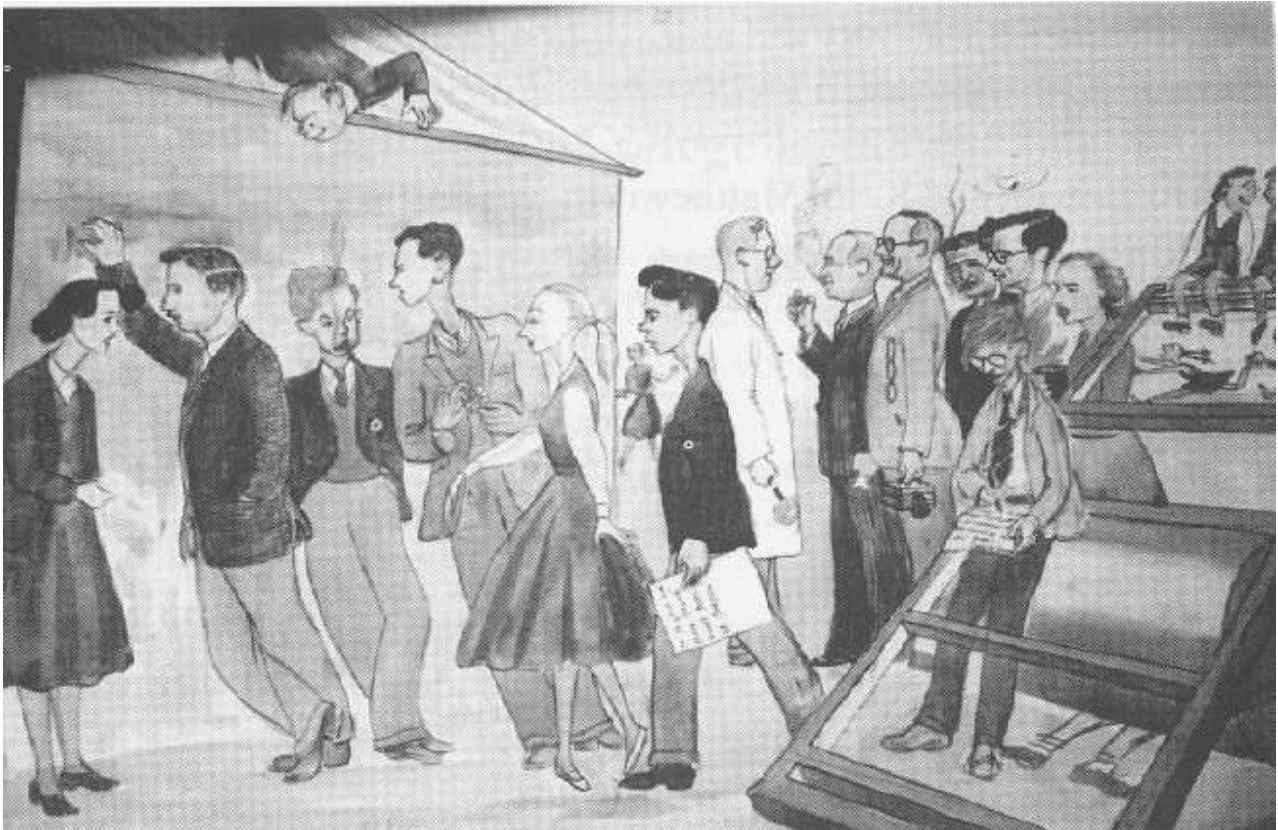
*"All the staff were good. I don't remember any teachers who were actually disliked ... but we did have a first year maths master called 'Cheesy' Allen! If homework was done incorrectly, he'd throw your exercise book right out of the hopper window: he never missed! Rain, hail, shine or snow, you had to go out into the playground to bring your work back into the classroom. "*

Many thanks to former pupil Michael Trotman for sending me the following photographs of charming caricatures of the staff and pupils of Long Eaton Grammar School. This is the work of Mr Sanders the



art master who is first on the left. Mr Greenhalgh the geography master is next to the sitting physics master, Mr Robinson, nicknamed, 'Nosnibor'. The very tall Mr Saville, nicknamed 'Tom', taught English and Latin. In front of Mr Saville, Mr Atkinson ('Fras'), taught maths as did the sitting Mr Dillingham ('Dilly'). The two women between Mr Atkinson and Mr Dillingham are Miss Balantyne [sports] and Mrs Wright nee Deacon, wearing glasses, who taught biology. The striding Mr Crompton, ('Crumps') taught Latin and Mr Morton taught sport. With spectacles and smoking is Mr Allton the music master. Also with specs, is maths master Mr Calton ('Felix'), speaking to the pipe smoking French master, Mr Wright, 'Pip', at the extreme right.

The second photograph is overleaf. Michael Trotman was not able to identify the boy on the roof or the boy speaking to Jane Maxwell who in on the extreme left. The boy apparently smoking is David Pettefar in conversation with Peter Harrison. The dancing girl with a pony-tail is Cynthia Clements, just in front of an unknown boy holding a paper. Behind this boy is the white-coated chemistry master, Mr Pritchard speaking to a fellow chemist, the smoking, dark suited Mr Cocking, nickname unsuitable for publication. The English and divinity master



Mr Hunter, apparently sporting sausages and holding a box, is next. The last two men are English masters, the smoking Mr Townshend and the bespectacled Mr Johnson. The history mistress, Miss Cockerell, is on the extreme right. James Williamson is the boy sitting on the roller.

Nita Higham told me that -

*"The history mistress, Miss Brooks, was a driving force. It was an excellent school with thriving musical and theatrical opportunities. "*

It would seem Nita took full advantage of such opportunities. In May 1953, ambitiously the school staged the 17th century opera by Henry Purcell called 'Dido and Aeneas'. A reviewer signed LN wrote -

*"Nita Matthewman, I think, deserves a special mention, for she sang with a beauty, strength and clarity which it was a joy to hear. "* The Gossamer page 625.

Miss Brooks, a very popular teacher, also ran the Literary and Debating Society. Keith was full of praise recalling the tremendous amount of extra work she did for the school -

*"She was a great help and we got on very well together. Hundreds of former pupils will remember Miss Brooks with gratitude and affection. "*

Keith told me he was very sad to leave Long Eaton Grammar School -  
*"It was a good school, a great school. Everybody had a lot of fun. "*

But life goes on and Keith Matthewman was destined for higher office.