

WELBECK COLLEGE

THE EARLY YEARS



IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SHOULD
READ THIS
(*ACI 541 of 1952*)

Elizabeth R

ROYAL WARRANT

43/MISCELLANEOUS/8608

Welbeck College

WHEREAS it hath been represented to Us that it would be for the advantage of Our service and for the public benefit that there should be established a College whereat boys should be received and educated so as to fit and prepare them for entry thereafter into Our Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, or other military establishment with a view to becoming commissioned officers in Our Regular Army.

NOW THEREFORE OUR WILL AND PLEASURE IS as follows :—

1. There shall be a College known as the Welbeck College (hereinafter called "the College") whereat boys shall be received and educated so as to prepare and fit them for entry thereafter into Our Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, or other military establishment with a view to becoming commissioned officers in Our Regular Army.

2. Subject to the provisions of this Our Royal Warrant and such further orders, rules or directions as it may Please Us hereafter to signify in like manner under Our Sign Manual the government and control of the College shall be vested in Our Army Council and Our Army Council, subject as aforesaid, shall from time to time issue such regulations and instructions for the conduct of the affairs of the College as it may deem necessary.

3. Our Army Council shall appoint a Board of Governors constituted in such manner as Our Army Council may from time to time direct to advise it upon all matters of policy concerning the College and to perform such other functions in connection therewith as may from time to time be specified by Our Army Council.

4. Any question as to the construction of this Our Royal Warrant or to the regularity or validity of any acts done or about to be done under this Our Royal Warrant shall be determined conclusively by Our Army Council.

Given at Our Court at St. James's, this ^{25th} day of
April 1953 in the 2nd Year of Our Reign.

By Her Majesty's Command,

Antony Head

CAPT. ROBERTS *for wife*

NOTICE BOARD INFORMATION

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SHOULD READ THIS

541. Welbeck College.

1. A pre-Sandhurst school, known as Welbeck College, is due to open in September 1953.

2. THE COLLEGE WILL PROVIDE A FREE EDUCATION TO SUITABLE CANDIDATES FOR REGULAR COMMISSIONS IN THE TECHNICAL CORPS FOR TWO YEARS BEFORE ENTERING R.M.A. SANDHURST.

3. Qualifications for entry are:—

- (a) Age limits are 15½ to 16½ years of age at time of entry.
- (b) Headmaster's testimonial with regard to character and suitability.
- (c) Educational standard of the General Certificate of Education with passes at ordinary level in mathematics, science and one other subject.
- (d) Acceptance by an interviewing Selection Board.
- (e) Medical fitness.

4. Parents' contributions will vary from nil up to £90 a year towards the cost of maintenance, depending on their net income.

5. Further details of the College and the method of obtaining forms of application, which must be submitted to reach the War Office by 10th January 1953, for entry in September 1953, are contained in Army Order 135 dated 10th November 1952.

By Command of the Army Council,

G. W. Finney

For David Rickards and General Kim Gausson
and all their Staff
We owe them an immense debt

WELBECK COLLEGE
-
THE EARLY YEARS

A personal memoir
by
Jim Dennis
A past archivist

Foreword

“A man who has lost his memory is a pathetic creature, not knowing who or what he is. The collective memory, or tradition, must fulfill the same role for an Institution, giving it a character, a wealth of transmitted experience.

Welbeck was founded in 1953 by men who have seen both war and academic life in various parts of the world, who were determined it was not to be a military or technical closed shop, but a preparation for a full life in rapidly changing and unforeseeable circumstances.

We hope that this magazine is a tribute to their vision and to all those who have contributed to the life of the College. There is a great deal left unsaid and for this we apologise.”

from The Silver Jubilee issue of the Welbexian

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days.

Winston Spencer Churchill

I will not report on the two years at the College with the pretty lawless society that was the first Intake. Perhaps someday somebody will write the story of the first two years at Welbeck College. It should be a best seller!

Sam Roberts
The Welbexian Silver Jubilee Edition p50

Introduction

'I would recommend everyone involved in such projects to squirrel away every letter and document, even if they never get around to writing the story'.

From "The restoration of a Woollen Mill (Farfield) in Sedbergh".

An Old Welbexian Association (OWA) meeting considering a proposal that someone should start preserving our history looked around the room and asked "Who is now pretty old (40?) and isn't here?". I became the OWA Archivist!

I had always thought that we should make an attempt to preserve our heritage so that in the future a history of the College could be written. To try to achieve this, in about 1975 Jim Elliott (3 Entry), and I produced a set of 51 "Intake Scrapbooks". In the event, human nature being what it is, the system didn't work; more of this later, but to suffice to say I amassed a pile of papers in my loft.

I don't think that anyone would disagree that Welbeck was a huge, and possibly risky, social experiment in its time. Whilst there have been some rough passages it has gone from strength to strength to its current successful position. This success is underlined by two OW's reaching the rank of Lieutenant General; one after being the Senior British Officer in Baghdad and a member of the Army Board. There are more than a handful of Major Generals and the retention rate of OW's is very favourable compared with other groupings within the officer corps.

Compiling a history of the College requires a disciplined approach with authoritative sources; there must be treasure hoard of official papers and photographs in MOD and College archives. A complete set of College magazines tell a good story and happily Leicester Moss, an original master, retained all but a few and Alma, his wife has kindly donated them to the OWA. Jim Steel, another founder master, retained a complete set of the minutes of David Rickards' (The first Headmaster) meetings held during September 1953, he gave them to me as the archivist. I also have the OWA Minute Book courtesy of Bob Matthews a one time Bursar and all three of the Welbeck Registers listing all OWs.

During 2011 the OWA set up a sub committee to move the "archive forward", so I organised my pile of papers into some sort of structure and scanned the whole lot into my IMac. This memoir aims to tell some sort of story about the early days at Welbeck and as such I have included my own comments and memories in linking the various sections together and comprise chiefly schoolboy anecdotes: "Do you remember when....." and maybe will appeal only those there at the time.

I have had my doubts as to whether to put pen to paper but have been spurred on by the Farfield Mill story - it is now the centre of tourism in the area. In the 6th Duke of Portland's memoir's: "Men, Women and Things" he says: "I have tried to set down the truth, but always with a twinkle in my eye". I hope to do the same, especially as regards the latter.

I hope the College history will be written some day and this story may help. In any case it is much better made available rather than gathering dust in my attic!

Read on!

Prologue

A grand day out

(With apologies to Alan Bennet)

Nig Allan and I were LCpl's in the Chesterfield Grammar School CCF. On a fateful day early in 1952 we spied a notice in Part 1 Orders about a new Army College. What took our eyes particularly was that interviews would be held away from home and involved an overnight stay. We thought this a spiffing idea as two days off school were included. We took the details to our parents who were prepared to give it a go.

Thus we travelled, along with another boy, by train to York. We were billeted in the Temperance (???) Hotel! It didn't take long for the three of us, all 1st XV seasoned "rugger buggers", to slip out to the nearest hostelry for a beer.

The next day, I was interviewed first despite the alphabetical order. Nig and I were inseparable at Chesterfield and did everything together; one example being members of the lunch time chess club where, in addition to playing the fool most of the time, some swotty sub prefect taught us the Ruy Lopez opening. This came up as a question at my interview under the hobbies section and I proudly answered "Queen's Pawn to E4, Queen's Knight to F3, Queen's Bishop to B5". Questions continued in this vein.

After his interview Nig told me he had also trotted out this chess opening where upon one of the Interview Board asked : "Have you and Dennis rehearsed this interview?"

The rest is history!

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Annexes and Folders on the DVD

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- B. Welbeck and the Portlands
- C. London Illustrated News September 1953.
- D. HM Staff Meetings September 1953
- E. Queens Visit
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Separate Folders:

- Magazines (First seven complete scan)
- Registers
- OWA Minutes (First 22 Meetings)
- Charles Brodley Papers

Separate DVD:

Welbeck Archive Material (Over 1000 images) - Separate DVD

REFERENCE MATERIAL AND THE "DVD"

It is normal to put a bibliography at the end. However the bulk of the material in this memoir consists mainly of scans of newspaper cuttings and extracts from other sources such as the College Magazine. Everything is copied onto a DVD in PDF format so as ensure that it is available for the future. It is a sort of "E Book" and enables material to be easily accessed and "zoomed in" making it easier to read the scanned in copy (this makes up for a cheap scanner in the first case and over comes the poor legibility of the source material which in many cases is very faded). A great advantage of this is that if anyone cares to enhance this material it can be amended or updated.

Whilst I have used complete scans, or extracts from them in the memoir, I have put a number of these into "Annexes" so as to avoid lengthy tomes of press cuttings. On the other hand they tell their own story and don't need much amplification from me. In addition it has not been too easy to decide what to put in the main body and what to relegate to an Annex (who reads Annexes anyway!). I trust they are readable and make for a coherent story.

Authoritative sources:

I have, mainly due to the efforts of Sam Roberts (1), four comprehensive sets of documents shown below. Details from each are on the DVD as shown. They will be referred to as shown.

Welbeck College Magazine

Nos 1-7 - these Issues scanned in completely.
Referred to by: WCM 2-23 ie page 23 of Vol 2.

An almost full set of magazines up to 2005 have been donated to the OWA by Alma Moss wife of Leicester, a founder Master, who master minded the mag and clearly kept almost every issue. The set will be placed in the OWA Archive.

The following Issues are missing and assumes publication ceased in 2005:
Vol 2 No May 1960
Vol 3 No 8 Nov 1964
Vol 4 Issues 3,5 and 7
Vol 5 1 and 4 onwards (1970 maybe the no of issues were reduced at that time)
1971, 1999, 2002 and 2004.

Headmaster's Minutes (Courtesy of Jim Steel).

Scanned in completely and cover the run up period to the opening of the College - 1 Sep 53-10 Sep 53.
Referred to by: HMM 9 ie that of the 9th of September 1953.

OWA Minute Book (Courtesy of Bob Matthews Bursar)

Covering 22 meetings from the start in 1961 through to 1981. Referred to by:OWA 6 - ie 6th meeting.

Register/Directory of OWs.

Referred to in the College , affectionately, as the “Derektories” are all scanned in to the DVD. The first was produced by Derek Hawker and covered the years 1953-73 including Entries 1- 40 . Derek included statistics up to that date and for each OW gave some good biographical detail. The statistics and full lists of Entries 1-40 have been scanned in.

The second covered the years 1953-1980, again produced by Derek, included Entries 1- 56 and updated the first Register.

The third was issued in 2000 and covered Entries 1-86 with contact addresses where available, and a list of Honorary, Benefactors, Friends and Staff.

Note: I understand that the data base used for 2000 was lost and currently attempts are being made to resurrect the details. Maybe these three registers will help.

An interesting reference in my possession is “Men, Women and Things” the memoir of the 6th Duke of Portland published in 1937. Some relevant anecdotes from the book are included in this piece.