Foreword

WHEN the Collegiate School for Girls closed in July 1971, Dr Wilkinson wrote a short history of the school in the last issue of the magazine. Now, when the school buildings have been demolished, it is fitting that this longer history should be published, recording the school's life in the context of educational developments in the world around it and reminding those who were educated in the Collegiate School of its significance and achievements.

Many old girls were anxious that such a history should be written and Dr Wilkinson was the obvious person to undertake the task. As I wrote in 1971, Dr Wilkinson has a unique place in the school's life. She was Miss Dunn's last Head Girl and Miss Allan's first Head Girl. Later, in 1947, she returned as a junior member of staff for three and a half years and rejoined the staff in 1960. From 1961 until the school closed she was its Deputy Headmistress and Senior English Mistress. The school owes much to her and it has meant a great deal to her, so it is with affection that she has compiled this history.

Although the Collegiate School for Girls existed as an independent institution for only forty-six years it achieved much in that time and all who have been members of it as pupils or staff can be proud to have been associated with it. As this book shows, the school was always a lively institution, constantly adapting to changing conditions in the world outside, but never losing its individual character or sacrificing its aim of providing the best possible education for its pupils.

The vital factor of any life is not length, but quality, and the quality of the Collegiate School shines through the pages of its history, showing clearly that its members have indeed aspired to achieve the highest for the highest's sake.

The school made a valuable contribution to education in Blackpool, and the pupils appreciated (even if not always during their school years) the conscientious work of the staff. Many, if not all, realised their good fortune in being able to attend such a school. Although the buildings are no more, I am sure the school's influence will continue to be felt by its old girls and the spirit it engendered will not die.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Wilkinson for producing such an excellent book, and I hope all those old girls who read it will enjoy it and will realise that they all played some small part in shaping the history of the Blackpool Collegiate School for Girls.

Mary Roberts.

Introduction

THE building which housed the Blackpool Collegiate School for Girls for the forty-six years of its existence, from 1925 to 1971, was demolished in 1987. Old Collegiate girls felt the demolition deeply. Although the school had closed in 1971, the building had housed another school for several years, remaining on the outside as former pupils remembered it, a landmark and a symbol. Now, nothing remains as an outward and visible sign of that educational experience which prepared so many girls for their adult roles. It seemed a pity if, in time, the school were to sink into oblivion, with nothing left to suggest it had ever existed. All record of this girls' grammar school, a phenomenon already almost extinct, would be gone. It therefore seemed a good idea to try to preserve the memory of the school and to fit it into the wider educational perspective of which it was a part.*

When the school closed in 1971, the history of the school was published in the last issue of the school magazine. This has largely been reproduced here. It was compiled from school records, school magazines and the personal recollections of several former members of staff, of whom, sadly, few are now left. To this has been added an historical dimension, and, more importantly, material provided by some seventy-five old girls, who, between them, span the entire life of the school. In addition, material from the general articles in the last magazine has been used in Chapter V.

Although most of the material provided by old girls was fragmentary, several longer pieces were submitted. Four of these have been printed as they stood and, if overlapping a little, they

* Anyone interested in the background could refer to *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* by Joan N. Burton and *Reluctant Revolutionaries: A Century of Headmistresses, 1874-1974* by Nonita Glenday and Mary Price.

cumulatively contribute to fixing the old building and some aspects of the life within it with a vividness borne of committed personal recollection. Apart from these four, no names have been appended to direct quotations in the text, but each writer's years of attendance have been given to the extracts in the 'Kaleidoscope' sections.

It is not possible to list all who have contributed to make this book possible. To all who provided material, the most grateful thanks are due. It is hard to capture the flavour of experience. It is hoped that so many personal ingredients have made possible more than a history. It is hoped they have helped to re-create something of the atmosphere of the school itself and to suggest in some measure what it was like to be a pupil of the Blackpool Collegiate School for Girls.

Meliora Sequamur

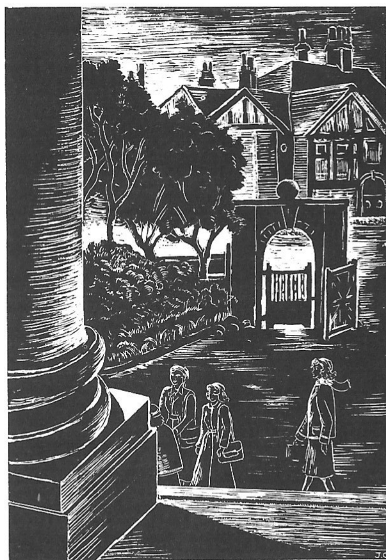
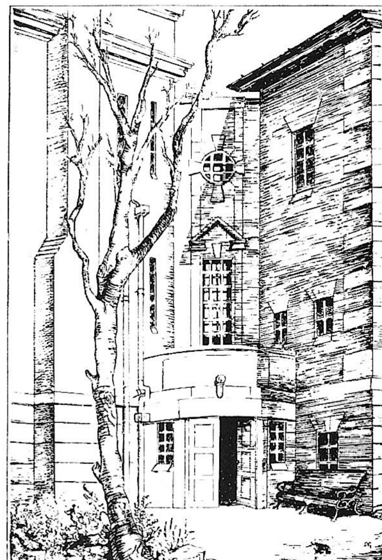
THE Blackpool Collegiate School for Girls. An impressive name and an equally impressive position. Approaching from Forest Gate, one had to lift one's eyes to see its noble façade. I walked up the hill each day, gazing always in awe at the edifice for the seven junior years I spent at the Baptist Church, housing the small school I attended.

Nor was it just the building that fascinated me. The Collegiate girls stood out with their braided blazers and unique fringed hats with the enamel badge and single blue ribbon trim. My ambition to become one of them was finally realised when I passed the now much-maligned 11+.

Only Staff and Sixth Formers had the privilege of entering by the front steps. New girls used the front entrance on their first day only and were afterwards relegated to side and back doors but that first day was particularly memorable as a consequence.

"Meliora Sequamur". It was significant that one started the day in the basement, changing from outdoor to indoor shoes. The first (ground?) floor facing the tennis courts along Beech Avenue was always home for first-year pupils, mine being separated from the next by a wooden partition. As the years advanced one progressed to the next storey until in the Sixth Form my home was one of the rooms above the front entrance, in the shadow of the columns, where I could look down the drive to my early road and think of my humble beginnings.

The layout of the school soon became familiar to us. Facing the front entrance was the Hall with its coloured windows and its stage. Musical talent was encouraged at the Collegiate School and each day began with pupils playing the pianoforte for assembly,

A view from the front steps and the entrance to Cloakroom 2.

providing the accompaniment to hymns and the more robust march out to lessons. In the Hall the news of the death of King George VI was broken to us and in the same hall the present Queen's Coronation year was celebrated by a never-to-be-forgotten production of *Merrie England.*

To the left of the Hall was the Headmistress's study, a room visited infrequently and always with a healthy respect. Along to the right the Staff Room was situated, entry forbidden, but glimpsed through the open door and symbolising authority and learning. Other rooms became known to us: science laboratories, the needlework and cookery rooms and the art room, with its panoramic views of the grounds behind.

Those grounds were a source of delight to me, coming from a school with none. In the first year we were allowed a small plot to cultivate in the area by Ridgwood Avenue and to the side by St. Joseph's College, dear old "Holy Jo's", God rest *his* soul too, was a patch of woodland where we could hide away or stretch our imaginations in games. Over the rest we played our hockey, ran our rounders and became athletes for the annual Sports Day. On lined tracks bordering Forest Gate we did not forget to have fun and entered for egg and spoon, slow bicycle and three-legged races with the same enthusiasm as the final house relays.

Those early years introduced us to new skills and aspirations. For me the Collegiate School cultivated a particular love of my native language and its literature. Starting somewhere in the third year and fired by my readings of Dickens and Shakespeare, I decided to make English the subject to study further. I always wanted to teach and my ambition was ultimately achieved thanks to the encouragement and training I received within those walls.

The Collegiate School was special. It attracted its ex-pupils back to the fold. It lured no less than ten of its old girls, including myself, back at one time to join the staff and, by teaching another generation of Blackpool children, to repay a debt.

Many memories flash past. The prefabricated canteen with its bright murals painted by budding artists, the ice-buns from the Beech Bakery on sale at break, walking along corridors in single file, the school tie, the school photograph!

And now? Returning to Blackpool and my parental home, driving up from Stanley Park, even after the amalgamation, I could still feel a nostalgic surge of affection when I caught sight of the building which used to be the Collegiate School. Now, suddenly, that landmark has gone. I can no longer locate the corridor where I leant on the radiator, the 'hovel' where I proudly hung my prefect's hat with its two blue bands, those rooms where I dreamed of the future and I am saddened and reminded of Matthew Arnold's line,

"How changed is here each spot man makes or fills".

Maureen Fozard. 1948-1955
Formerly Senior English Mistress and
Director of Studies, Macclesfield.

Chapter One

1. The Beginnings

IT is sometimes difficult to realise that secondary education for everyone is less than a hundred years old. For girls, formal education beyond the most elementary level was a very chancy business before the Education Act of 1902. It is true that boarding establishments for the daughters of the reasonably affluent middle class existed from the eighteenth century, where, at their best, accomplishments and manners were cultivated, and, at their worst, something like Jane Eyre's experience at Lowood was not uncommon. By 1864 it was the case that "there were many schools for girls, and there were good schools, but the many were not good and the good were not many." All schools, good and bad alike, at secondary level, were fee-paying, and much depended upon where one lived or where one was sent.

The middle years of the nineteenth century saw a great stirring in the ranks of middle-class women who demanded educational opportunities equal to their abilities and aspirations. They were in revolt against the barren and frustrating lives social convention dictated they should lead. In most homes and schools the ideal presented to a young girl was to be amiable, inoffensive, always ready to please and to be pleased. Serious conversation was for the men and any intellectual interests a woman might have were best kept secret. The Taunton Commission, set up in 1864 to consider the secondary education of women, summed up the situation in this revealing sentence:

> Although the world has now existed for several thousand years the notion that women have minds as cultivable and as worthy of cultivation as men's minds is still regarded by the ordinary British parent as an offensive, not to say revolutionary, paradox.

By 1874 there were sufficient schools of recognisable merit for a Headmistresses' Association of nine members to be formed, and by 1887 fifty-seven attended the annual conference. Of the original nine, seven came from London, one from Cheltenham Ladies, and one from Manchester High School. Of the fifty-seven, eighteen came from London, fourteen from the south, ten from the Midlands, four from Birmingham and four from Yorkshire and the North East. Six were from Lancashire: Manchester, Liverpool, Wallasey, Birkenhead, Bolton and Preston.

The pioneers in women's education faced enormous opposition, mainly from men, to whom educated women were, on many grounds, suspect, but also from some women who felt the ideal of womanhood threatened. Objections fell into three categories. First came the long-established and inveterate prejudice that girls were less capable of mental cultivation, and were less in need of it, than boys. Some even argued, on spurious 'scientific' evidence that women's brains were smaller than men's and therefore not intended for equal intellectual effort.

Second came the argument that women were physiologically unsuited to sustained intellectual effort. In 1874, the year of the foundation of the Headmistresses' Association, a professor of medicine at London University argued that,

> It is not that girls have not ambition, not that they fail generally to run the intellectual race which is set before them, but it is asserted that they do it at a cost to their strength and health which entails lifelong suffering, and even incapacitates them for the adequate performance of the natural function of their sex.

But underlying all else was the essentially male fear that the educated woman would fail in the purpose assigned her from the time Eve was created from Adam's rib, namely, to attract a husband and devote her life to pleasing him. In the year of the Taunton Commission, referred to above, an influential periodical claimed that:

> there is a strong, an unirradicable, male instinct that a learned, or even an over-accomplished, young woman is one of the most intolerable monsters of creation.

Ridicule, vituperation and open hostility accompanied all the efforts of the pioneers. Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, mocked them in a verse drama, and, when the Cambridge Examining Board

opened the Cambridge Local Examinations to some girls as an experiment in 1865, the *Saturday Review* commented:

> The most curious development is a proposal for submitting young ladies to local examinations. The idea almost takes one's breath away.

Two years later the examination was, nevertheless, opened to all girls on condition the results were not published. In 1900 the school leaving age from the elementary schools was twelve. For those whose parents could not afford secondary education at an existing fee-paying school (for virtually all secondary schools, whatever their foundation were fee-paying) formal education was at an end. By 1900 the number of pioneer high schools for girls had grown steadily. Still largely, though not exclusively, in the South and South East, these schools had set a standard in secondary education for girls which was to be a guiding light for the schools set up after the 1902 Act ordained that local authorities should provide secondary education. As was said in Parliament, "the time had come when equality of opportunity should be given to all men".

It is interesting that 'men' were the natural recipients of equality of opportunity. Women had to wait a long time before even lip-service was to be paid to the idea that they, too, should qualify. Although Bedford College had been founded as long ago as 1849 "to provide for young ladies at a moderate expense a curriculum of general education on the same plan as the public universities", London University admitted women to degrees only in 1880, and therefore to university membership of Convocation and a voice in university governance. Not until 1925 did Oxford do the same. Cambridge waited until 1947 before following suit.

Nevertheless, for many women, there is no doubt that the Act opened doors, which, without it, would have remained closed. Secondary education was to be provided for those, male or female, of sufficient ability but insufficient means, and for those, particularly girls, who lived in areas where no secondary school previously existed, secondary education became a possibility. This was true for those living in Blackpool and the surrounding area when the Blackpool Dual Secondary School opened in 1906.

The opening of the school saw Blackpool fulfilling its civic responsibilities. From the scattered fishermen's cottages of the early-eighteenth century, through the gradual growth as a place for sea-bathing for health, through the subsequent explosion of

population and accommodation which followed the coming of the railway in 1840, Blackpool had arrived at maturity when it was made into a Corporation in 1876. Living within its boundaries was an admixture of the professional and business families required to service medicine, the law and finance, the architects and builders needed for the continued expansion of the town, the hoteliers and boarding-house keepers and the purveyors of entertainment expected of a holiday town. Their children took immediate advantage of the new school and children from outlying villages, particularly girls, now had an educational opportunity previously denied them. Their brothers had usually attended Baines or Kirkham Grammar Schools, both exclusively male, the one a nineteenth-century foundation; the other, with a much longer history, had stopped taking girls in the eighteenth century. Some girls had to cycle as much as twenty miles a day to take advantage of their new privilege, as there was no public transport, though some were lucky enough to have access to a railway station.

Boys and girls were not taught together, hence the name 'dual', but they followed the same curriculum. Mr. Turrell, the first headmaster, was a legend in his lifetime. He built the school firmly according to his own principles of order and hard work. His confidential booklet, issued 'For Masters and Mistresses only', reveals his priorities. His preamble is worth quoting in full:

> The Headmaster once more takes the opportunity of acknowledging the devotion of his colleagues especially the older members, to all the many sides of School life. Indeed, the reputation of the school has been made in so short a time by this singleness of aim: "The institution before self". Now that the school has grown, however, both in numbers of pupils and staff, and that the headmaster's own work has by no means diminished, it is obvious that only a strict adherence to these few simple rules will maintain the discipline, tone, and work of the school.
>
> Rigid punctuality is the first desideratum; next, a keen and cheerful alertness to keep the machine working smoothly. While it is the duty of the members on the Rota to preserve order, etc., for the day, the Headmaster will be glad if they are supported by all the staff, especially out of lesson time.

The attitude and expectations of the parents are reflected in the injunction:

> It should be remembered that the reports go to some of the

keenest businessmen in the town, and they must not receive from the School slovenly documents which they would not accept from their own clerks.

Much of what Mr. Turrell wrote was eminently sensible and could be applied to the present day, but, significantly, he made no mention of girls. All *boys* should be out of school by 4.10; *boys* must have it impressed upon them that their first business on arriving home was to present their report, etc. It was obviously time due recognition was accorded to girls.

Mr. Turrell's booklet was written in 1922 and, three years later, recognition of the girls came when they were given an identity of their own. The Blackpool Girls' Secondary School came into being, with Miss Dunn as Headmistress.

Miss Dunn was born in Scotland in 1881, and her maternal grandfather was an official on the Glamis estate. When she was eleven, she moved with her family to London, where her father became editor of the *The Morning Post*. She attended Mary Datchelor School from 1892 to 1900 and qualified as a teacher from the Mary Datchelor Training College in 1902. She taught in Tiverton until 1906 and entered Bedford College, London University, in 1908, already twenty-seven. She took a degree in History, and after a brief spell in Harrow County School for Boys, joined the Blackpool Dual School as Senior Mistress in January 1915.

There is no known explanation of her late entry to university. There is a gap of two years between 1906 and 1908, when she was presumably at home, perhaps preparing for university entrance. Mrs. Cusworth, who was the school cook in the 1930s, also worked for the Dunns in their Leicester Road house and claimed that Miss Dunn had rejected marriage because her suitor refused to work. Whether this is true or mere gossip will never be known. The fact remains that Miss Dunn was thirty-one before she graduated.

Miss Dunn was born only a year after women were first admitted to degrees. Only seven years earlier some anthropologists were asserting that the more advanced a civilisation, the greater the difference between men's and women's intellectual capabilities. Ten years before she was born it was believed in some quarters that mental fatigue reflected adversely on the physical well-being of women and that there was a danger that too much education might make women incapable of bearing children. The Married Women's Property Act was not passed until a year after her birth and when

she was two it could be exclaimed from the pulpit:

> Behold then, at the very outset, the reason of woman's creation distinctly assigned. She is intended to be Man's helper. Yet not a rival self: for, as the *spirit* pointed out some 4,000 years later "the Man was not created for the Woman, but the Woman for the Man" and from this very consideration the *spirit* deduces Woman's inferiority.

She was therefore born at a time when controversy raged about the rights and wrongs of educating women. On the one hand was the striving for education with the accompanying enlargement of horizons, till now so narrow for most middle-class women. On the other was the fear that educated women were denying their femininity and becoming 'unnatural monsters'. Yet there was more even than that. In Victorian England many women had to earn their living. Made for man or not, some were unmarried, and some were widows. Some had to support dependent relatives or bring up children. The work available for women was very limited. Education, however suspect, at least made possible some extension of choice.

It is perhaps, then, no coincidence that during the period of settling in, while the new school was completed around them, the dominant impression etched upon the memory of the pioneer pupils of 1925 was the desirability of behaving in a lady-like manner. Miss Dunn, with her adage that "ladies don't fuss" and her demands for lady-like adherence to particulars in dress, manners and behaviour stood for the genteel ideal in which she herself had been nurtured. She chose her staff in the light of this ideal and she expected to mould her girls accordingly. Miss Parkin, born in 1892, and held up by Miss Dunn as a model of the spoken word, is remembered as a kind of lesser luminary, issuing lady-like precepts of her own. To her a lady was one who impressed as she passed by but of whose attire nothing was memorable once she had passed. There was to be no ostentation, only restrained good taste.

Miss Dunn would consider it her duty to pass on to the girls in her charge the principles of behaviour which she herself had been taught. Her own behaviour would have been scrutinised by her mother and certain standards and assumptions would have been expected of her by the circle in which she moved. The norms of behaviour would not be questioned. There was something of 'it is not done' in her expectations. As the perimeter of educational opportunity for women widened to include more and more girls

from different backgrounds it was deemed necessary to prepare them for their rightful place in society, among other educated people, and to give them enough social training to enable them to fit in, for social training had formed an integral part of the education of those who taught them.

The girls were, therefore, to behave in public with due decorum. They were not to talk to boys in the street even when they had only just left the Dual School. They were always to wear gloves, even with blazers (Mr Turrell had also insisted on gloves). The street was no place for eating ice cream. But dancing classes prepared the girls for appropriate meeting with the opposite sex, and chocolates were a suitable treat for homesick dinner girls. Girls were certainly not to be above useful toil (Mrs Dunn always cleaned out the fires because she enjoyed doing so). The pioneers laid pipes and clinkers to drain the hockey pitch and the memory of bleeding fingers is with them still. All was not confined to formal behaviour. Girls were brought to school at four o'clock in the morning to watch the eclipse and a homely note was struck in the early days by the presence of Mona, the caretaker's dog, allowed freedom to roam at will. Nor was Miss Dunn immune from feminine vanity: when Alistair Cooke asked her to dine with him at Cambridge, she took care not to look like his maiden aunt.

No doubt influenced by the discussions of her youth, Miss Dunn had reservations about too much academic pressure on girls. Physics she thought too demanding, and in 1935 told the newly-appointed Miss Edwards, herself an old girl of the transition period, that she hoped to phase it out. To the newly-appointed Physics teacher, this was not reassuring, and she had to show considerable persistence to be allowed to remove the glass which was on the Physics benches to protect the wood. Latin was also arduous, indeed equal to two sciences, for one took either Latin or two sciences for School Certificate, having a period of private study (or recuperation?) while one of the sciences was in progress.

Yet it was no accident that led Miss Dunn to call the school the Collegiate School when the name was changed in 1933. She called the school after the North London Collegiate School, founded in 1850 by Miss Buss, the forerunner of all girls' schools of any standard. A day school conscious of "a call to educate the daughters of the neglected middle classes", it prided itself on producing within the school a classless society with no barrier of religion or rank. It was the perfect balance to the insistence on the lady-like to call the school after a great foundation for girls which

had as its first head one of the two acknowledged leaders of the movement for women's education. Miss Buss's school was a model in her lifetime for girls' schools and was much visited by educationalists. Miss Buss was still prominent in educational affairs until her death in the 1890s and Miss Dunn in her youth would have known of her as a force to be reckoned with.

'Collegiate' has several meanings and Miss Dunn could have chosen it because the girls' school was a collegiate institution, being an off-shoot of the former school. But that is not why the name was chosen. She hoped that her school would have some of the attributes of its illustrious namesake.

Miss Dunn, then, demonstrated something more than her social code and pre-suppositions. She showed a distinctive courtesy in her dealings with other people, child or adult, representing a respect for individuals in their own right, no matter their background. She did what she could to help girls of promise whose circumstances were straitened with compassionate and unobtrusive generosity, and, although fearful of asking too much of the girls in her charge, she did what she could to give them a sound start in life. She had a literally old-fashioned approach. There was a high boundary which was violated at the peril of the violator and few, if any, ever dreamed of violating it. But, within the limits, there was mutual respect, taken for granted, and courtesy and considerateness given as well as expected. It was for her graciousness and charm, truly lady-like qualities, as much as for her insistence on requirements of dress and behaviour, that Miss Dunn's memory remains with her old girls as herself being a 'lady'.