

## CHAPTER FIVE

### School antics

HAVING successfully crossed the canal, after Longmoor Lane, Curzon or Breedon Street, Derby Road, The Green and Market Place, we found ourselves in Tamworth Road, at the secondary school. I suppose it must have been a bit of an eye-opener for us, never having had sisters, suddenly to be plunged into a co-ed school, but I must confess that I don't recall much about the first two or three forms.

For this reason I have availed myself of the kindness of Miss Eileen Adams, of Beeston, who has very trustfully lent me her copy of the Jubilee 1960 book of Long Eaton Grammar School. The information dispensed therefrom will be of far more interest to readers than my sparse and feeble recollections.

The school had been under the headship, from the very earliest days, of Mr Samuel Clegg. He must have been quite a remarkable man, for I read that "... he had an enthusiasm for literature, art and knowledge in general which could not have been bettered by any formal academic qualification; he had an eye for promising young men, a quality well illustrated by his appointment of C B Fawcett and F L Attenborough and he had 'the gift of leading and controlling amicably a team of much higher academic qualifications'. He was also a tried administrator who had an unequalled knowledge of the school."

I also learn that "... in this year (1913) two old scholars joined the staff: Mr F L Attenborough, who was to stay for two years before going to Cambridge and who, after marrying Mary Clegg, Mr Clegg's daughter, was to become Principal of Leicester University College and be, perhaps, more widely known as the father of Richard and David Attenborough. . ."

Had he any inkling, I wonder, that the former would be ennobled for his vast contribution to the film and theatre world (doubtless sparked by Mr Clegg's early encouragement of literature, art and associated subjects), also that the latter would become a household name in bringing us the wonders of the natural world?

Not only did he encourage art, but he wrote about it - "*Drawing and Design, a four-year course in art teaching for secondary schools*". The Jubilee book tells us that "...everything in the book has been proved in school", so I am somewhat reluctant to report that even he was not infallible, for I am told that after my initial interview with him, my parents were informed that I would be a judge - apparently because I thought of both sides before answering questions. Or had he really guessed that my apparent care in answering was due to my not having a clue how to answer?

This interests me particularly because there was obviously a like-mindedness with my late aunt, NANCY SMITH 1881 -1962, one of the forerunners of the modern pre WW1 art styles; who also wrote a book, *THE MAKING OF SCHOOL ILLUSTRATIONS*, which was published by Charles & Dible in 1909. Extensive attempts have been made to find a copy, and we are told by the BRITISH LIBRARY that they are unable to find their obligatory copy, probably being one of the casualties of war. How interesting it would be if one could compare these two books - one by a dedicated educationalist and the other by a dedicated artist!

With increasing age I find it rather frustrating that if one is interested in personalities one meets through life, there is so much unknown about them until their obituary or biography is published. To me, as a teenager, "Sammy" Clegg was almost completely unknown, except for that gentleness so little expected of a headmaster. Long before facing him in the flesh I had been accustomed to his photograph on our sitting room mantle-piece. The very, very few personal confrontations at school gave me no clue to the man himself. It was therefore with great interest that I was able to glean -so tardily - something of this very gifted and genuine man, from the pages of the 1960 Jubilee Book of the Long Eaton Grammar School, for which we are indebted to Mr R. Hough.

As I write this, it is one hundred and two years since Mr Clegg arrived in Long Eaton, from Manchester, to meet with Professor Michael Sadler, and “discuss the best way of re-organising the local education system to fit in with the reform flowing from the Education Act 1902.” It is impossible for us to throw our minds back to those comparatively halcyon days before WW1, but we can comprehend something of the novel problems that these men were up against. It transpires that Mr Clegg, through a mixture of dogged persistence and flair for character judgement, and, of course, through advice from Professor Sadler, made possible the institution that evolved from a Pupil Teachers Centre to a Secondary in 1913 and to a Grammar School in May 1945.