



In those now distant days, when the Grammar School had a teaching staff of 22 and a pupil population of about 420, the salary scales ranged from the Head's £640 to the Assistant Secretary's £20 per annum. The School Office had a staff of two. The Secretary's salary was £50 p.a. The two secretaries were responsible for the typing of all correspondence, the greater part of which was from the shorthand notes they made from the Headmaster's dictation. The Assistant Secretary was responsible for the maintenance of all class registers. "Presence" was not recorded at all. Absence was entered in red ink using the list of absentees written by a class monitor and verified by the teacher taking the first class each morning and afternoon. The Secretaries maintained the milk registers - "free" and "paid for", the latter at the rate of one half-penny per bottle. Orders for milk were likewise the responsibility of the office staff. Notwithstanding the fact that the Secretary was only 17, 18 or 19 years of age he (or she) was required to produce the school time-table (16 or 17 classes, 35 periods per week) once the Headmaster had determined (normally in each May) which teachers would take which classes and the number of periods per week per subject per class. Ignoring split classes (e.g. boys P.E. whilst the girls took R.E.) between 500 and 600 rectangles had to be 'filled in', checked to ensure that members of staff were not expected to be in two places at once and finally rooms allocated. Fortunately it was rare for more than two staff changes to take place in a school year so it was possible for the Secretary to extract individual teachers' timetables and post them to homes or holiday locations in mid-August and to have class timetables ready for form teachers on the first day of the school year. As office appointments were restricted to a one year tour of duty as Assistant Secretary followed by another year as Secretary, the producer of the timetable had only one year's experience to go on before he undertook the task himself. It was easy inadvertently to allocate Class 1b 4 periods of French in the afternoon and only one in the morning when a ratio a.m./p.m. of at least 3:2 was desired and at the worst 2:3 would be most reluctantly acceptable! Schools of 2,000 pupils, 80 classes, 120 staff and 3,000 rectangle computer-designed timetables were not even distant clouds on the horizon!

In the second half of each term the two secretaries typed, proof-read, duplicated, collated, bound and helped with the selling of the School Magazine priced at sixpence a copy. The duplication alone required twenty-two thousand revolutions of the hand-operated Gestetner (500 copies of 44 pages) with every page 'interwoven' to prevent printer's ink from marking the back of every sheet. From the total receipts of £10 to £20, depending on the number of advertisements and complimentary copies, the Secretary was awarded five shillings and his Assistant half-a-crown plus several excellent evening teas produced by the wonderful school cook, Mrs Cliff, the caretaker's wife, whenever overtime on the magazine was necessary. Collation, for example, could be done only when the Technical Drawing Office (in the old coach-house) was vacant. 500 copies meant 500 journeys round that room picking up one copy of every sheet.

During the second half of the weeks allocated to magazine work, the Office Staff were busy typing and duplicating examination papers and keeping an eye on the steady circulation of the pupils' report books to make sure that every book was ready for the Headmaster's perusal, written final comments and signature. In the third term other duties were the checking, packing and despatch, to all parts of Britain, of the external examination scripts in accordance with the lists of markers' names and addresses supplied by the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board. Every knot on every envelope had to be wax-sealed otherwise the local postmaster would refuse to accept it for registration. Another hefty task given to the Secretary early each October was the completion and despatch to London of the very detailed forms required by the Board of Education. The Board Forms set out the weekly work-load of every class below the Sixth Form expressed in periods per week per subject and for the Sixth Form by individual pupil depending on his or her selection of subjects at Lower and/or Higher School Certificate level. As my successor has no recollection of these documents I can but assume that they were abolished very soon after the declaration of war.

The ability of 16 or 17 year olds to undertake the fairly onerous responsibilities in the school office was the outcome of a very good general education augmented in the Fourth and Fifth Forms by three periods a week in each of Shorthand and Book-keeping, both taught by Mr Collette and one half-hour per week after school teaching oneself touch-typing on one of the two 1924 Remingtons in the small room on the right of the half-landing of the main staircase. The office itself was the small room facing the massive oak doors in the centre of the front of Hemsworth Hall, ie separating the boy and girl prefects' rooms.

W.G. Branford (former Head's Secretary)