

AS OTHERS SAW US

It was our privilege during the war to give some measure of hospitality to people who had not, as we had ourselves, a home of their own. They have been kind enough to contribute these accounts of their experiences ; but we cannot print them without adding that what was done, perhaps, in the first instance as an act of duty, part of our war-effort, we soon found to be a pleasure. Those who came as strangers remained as friends. May they long remain so !

VICTORIA COLLEGE, JERSEY (at Bedford School)

To Bedford belongs the distinction of being the only Public School in England to give hospitality to another, which had been captured by the Germans. It so happened that when Jersey fell on July 1st, 1940, its Head Master, Mr. Grummitt, was at Shrewsbury with fourteen boys from Victoria College, who were taking their Certificate examinations.

In August, he decided to try and establish the College in England for those who had managed to escape. As there had been no official evacuation, as in Guernsey, he had no idea how many had arrived and originally hoped for a hundred or more. The Government backed the scheme, which included the provision of billets for those unable to pay fees. A temporary boarding house was leased at 19 Lansdowne Road, Bedford, and the Head Master and Governors of Bedford School agreed to provide all the facilities for education and sport enjoyed by the boys of their own School.

This was a great opportunity and those Victorians who profited owe a debt which can never be repaid. By October 31st, however, there were only 34 boys in attendance, with ages ranging from 7 to 17½. This meant that the school could not be run separately for games or work. Two assistants, Mr. Hopewell and Miss Aubrey, had temporarily joined the Bedford Staff but it was no easy task to preserve the entity of the Jersey College and at the same time to give them the full advantages of a well-organised school life. In November, the small band received another shock, as Mr. Grummitt was appointed Principal of the Royal Academical Institution at Belfast. On January 1st, 1941, Mr. S. M. Toyne, late Head Master of S. Peter's School, York, and then History VIth Form Master at Bedford, was asked to undertake the Headmastership. This he did and with Mrs. Toyne ran the Boarding House, until such time as the Boarders passed out of the School or could be absorbed into the various School Boarding Houses. After the remnants had been put on a more secure basis by the foundation of an Advisory Committee in London under the Chairmanship of Lord du Parc, more Victorians joined the others and in all some fifty passed through the School. The Committee not only gave some standing to Victoria College at Bedford, but also afforded much needed financial aid.

Educationally the boys took some time to get acclimatised to their new surroundings—the mere size of the School was difficult for them to grasp. In sport it was even harder at first as Association Football and hockey are not easy bedfellows with Rugby and rowing.

Their first successes came in the Easter Term in the Inter-House Athletics, when Paulo-Pontine, the House to which they had been assigned, won the Cup by 35 points. The Victorian contingent contributed no fewer than 48 points to the winning total. From that time, the Victorians began to feel at home and soon appeared in the Bedford teams.

In work, Durell won a Scholarship at Oxford and D'Authreau won an Open Exhibition at Cambridge, afterwards rowing in his College VIII. Outstanding educational

achievements were gained by Derek Benest—an open Scholarship at New College Oxford, in History and Modern Languages, a State Scholarship, and a Government Scholarship for Oriental Studies. This is a truly fine record, but it should be added that he did not confine himself to “School” work only. He was President of the Bedford School Debating Society and of the Music Club and Secretary to the Literary Society. That a Victorian could hold these coveted positions is evidence of the generous spirit in which the Bedford boys welcomed their guests and allowed them complete equality of opportunity.

In spite of this absorption, means were found to remind Victorians of their old school and to retain its identity. Separate school caps were worn and when the stock was exhausted, the Victorian badge was superimposed on the Bedford blue. Although Victorians became options and monitors in the main school, a head boy was always appointed for the Victorians. There were six in the period from September, 1940 to July, 1945: G. E. Catto, D. L. Benest, D. Le Seilleur, P. R. Owtram, P. C. Skinner and C. M. Thorn.

There was a regular Sunday Service in the Memorial Hall, followed by a meeting, at which problems peculiar to the Victorians—either as individuals or as members of the corporate body—were discussed with the Acting Head Master. Three small clubs remained to the end—the Chess Club, the Naturalists Club and National Savings Society. Periodically a *News Letter* was published containing news of Old Victorians, the school at Bedford and, when available, of Jersey itself. This *News Letter* appeared ten times and gradually increased from a mere eight pages with a circulation of 250 to twenty pages and a circulation of 800.

Though the numbers dwindled, billeting became more and more difficult and Miss Aubrey supervised a small house for the younger boys; and she became the last remaining link with the past, because Mr. Hopewell had gone to a preparatory school at Malvern and thence to Hereford.

A graceful act by the Head Master of Bedford was much appreciated, when Lord du Parcq was invited as the prize giver and guest of honour at Speech Day in July, 1941. In the afternoon he met the Victorians by themselves and a school photograph was taken with Lord du Parcq, and this duly appeared in the *News Letter*. In spite of initial difficulties, the scheme was highly successful, and the harmony which prevailed was a matter of considerable pride and satisfaction to those concerned.

The Victorians wished in some way to show their appreciation to the Head Master, Staff and boys of Bedford School and to leave some visible record of their gratitude. A fund has been raised to erect an oak panel suitably inscribed at the entrance of the Great Hall. If the sum presented by the last Head Boy, C. M. Thorn, at the end of the Summer Term, 1945, proves more than what is required, an oak seat will be placed on the cricket field. An illuminated book bound in leather containing all the names of the boys who were so hospitably received at Bedford has been placed in the Library and this short account can be suitably concluded by quoting the opening inscription, which will also appear on the panel:—

A BARBARIS DOMO EXPULSI,
AB HUMANIS IN ALTERAM
RECEPTI DOMUM,
NUNC, UT VICTORIAM
REDDIDIT DEUS,
HOSPITES HOSPITIBUS
GRATIAS AGIMUS

VICTORIAE COLLEGII ALUMNI.

S.M.T.