

MEMORIES — Mainly of Nether Edge

I remember
those scattered buildings (so cold upstairs in winter); the lonely art-room's outside iron stairs, close-packed with waiting boys; the stalactitic drip, drip, drip in those dim rooms beneath the labs.

I hear again
the cracked school bell; the clanging gates across the way; the Friday choral practice in the "Hall"; the wailing sirens sending us below; the rival shouts of 'Owls' and 'Blades'; and, from room 12, "Oo — sir, don't, sir, you're hurting, sir".

And certain masters' voices, too — the anguished Mr. Bell's "Haven't I told you?"; one French Master's stentorian commands, another's whispers ('Where did I put those books, old man?'); and 'megaphone' comments, commentaries or pseudo-yodelling, with, from the rest of us, retorts, appropriate or not.

Of boyish pranks —
strange, subterranean music in room 4; K. Hustler hypnotising a small boy; the peripatetic blackboard, tugged this way and that, trundling its reluctant load from room to room.

SHOCKS.....

The first shock was to discover that the large building facing Union Road was not the school — then known as Nether Edge Secondary — it was in fact the Hospital. The school was housed in the much smaller building on the opposite side — one might have thought it large enough for forty boys, rather than four hundred.

The second shock was to observe that the books in the small dark stockroom were stacked on cold grey slabs of slate; then to be told by Mr. Pomfret's remote predecessor that this was indeed the mortuary of the old Nether Edge Workhouse, and the reason for the existence of the slate slabs became clear.

The third was to realise, too late, that the authoritative gentlemen of military appearance had in fact no authority to countermand the Headmaster's previous instructions that Form Two would not go to the field that Tuesday afternoon. The

And Chess Club's early days —
'Chess Ellis', Tranter, Littlewood (to mention but a few) — and several of the staff, who, later on, alas, deserted us for Bridge.

Of Staffroom memories galore, here are a few:—
a semi-circle round a roaring fire, the Scripture master's feet (odd socks) upon the mantel-piece, his fingers foraging among a fistful of odd scraps, old letters and pound notes (and seldom finding what he seeks). Emerging, smiling, from 'another place', a Science master slyly asks, "What is it Adam says?" Our English expert spins a yarn and quizzically adds 'Je suis un un, je suis? From time to time, when crises loom, our pundit pontifically proclaims "I told you so".

And two of my faux pas —
bursting impatiently into a room of chattering boys with — "Have you no work to do?" to find the H.M., smiling up at me, from the front row. Arriving, one evening, at Heeley, for the Swimming Gala, there to be told: "It's held at K.E. now — has been for many years".

That's one thing no-one else has done, I'm sure. I think this is a record, too — fourteen thousand miles, and more, covered, walking to school, since 1934.

resultant recall by telephone led to a long and dismal walk from Bents Green back to Union Road, and the first of several unhappy visits to the Headmaster's Study.

Finally, the fourth episode — shocking if not quite a shock — a motorcycle had been bought on Friday evening; a driving licence obtained for five shillings: no test in those days — On Saturday morning an hour or two of self-tuition produced a happy driver confident in his skill! But pride soon fell. That afternoon a senior colleague asked for a lift on the pillion to the cricket field at Bents Green — a wobbly trip ended with fierce acceleration at the top of Bents Road; rider, passenger and machine fell in a tangled heap on the grass verge, opposite the 'Hammer and Pincers'. The passenger then insisted on driving; the owner, now less sure of his ability, arrived at the field as pillion passenger on his own machine.

But may these minor upsets of long ago be insignificant compared with what awaits us all in September of this year?