

So the new
could be born...

The Passing of a
Country Grammar
School

Peter Housden

So the new could be born...
The Passing of a Country Grammar School
© Peter Housden

Peter Housden is hereby identified as the author of this work in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Cover image © Market Drayton County Library

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored on a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner and publisher.

The authors and publisher have made every effort in the preparation of this book to ensure the accuracy of the information. This book is sold without warranty either express or implied. Neither the author, APS Group (Scotland) Limited, nor its dealers or distributors will be held liable for any damages caused or alleged to be caused either directly or indirectly by this book.

Published by APS Group (Scotland) Limited
21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA

A CIP Catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

First published in paperback June 2015
ISBN 978-0-85759-034-3

eBook first published June 2015
ISBN 978-0-85759-035-0 (EPUB)

Kindle eBook first published June, 2015
ISBN 978-0-85759-036-7 (MOBI)

Designed, typeset, printed and bound in Great Britain by
APS Group (Scotland) Limited

To Michael

FOREWORD

The origins of this book lie in a debt of gratitude to The Grove Comprehensive School in Market Drayton, a small town in Shropshire. The Grove gave me an outstanding education and sent me into the world with confidence and a sense of the future.

The comprehensive school opened in September 1965 after a long battle over the shape of secondary education in the town, a struggle which evoked a wide range of emotions and left strong memories. The last days of Market Drayton Grammar School under the ailing Mr Tongue was a period of uncertainty. The campaign in the school's defence, led with spirit by Old Grammarian Ron Farrell, stretched over 18 months. But the decision was made and we came to know the Head of the new comprehensive, the stern aesthete Mr Mackay, as a man who did not want to see potential go to waste. He assembled a talented group of teachers determined to make the new school fly.

My subsequent work in education and in local and central government gave resonance to these experiences, and made me puzzle. How did such a change come to such a sleepy town, and so early, well before the main thrust of comprehensive reform in the 1970s and '80s? I wanted to understand better the characters and the political currents flowing around this moment of change. The research opened my eyes – to the prolonged struggle of the Grammar School to realise its mission, and to the role of Martin Wilson, Secretary for Education in Shropshire from 1934 to 1965. The vision of a comprehensive school for Market Drayton was essentially his, and I have tried to bring to the tale some of his craft as an educational administrator.

I also wanted to add my voice to those willing to speak up for comprehensive education. The move away from selection triggered the most extraordinary leap in attainment, in Market Drayton and across the country. It was without doubt the most significant reform in our schooling system in the post-war period, and a huge success by

any standards. Yet many remain reluctant to speak its name. These few words can perhaps help us remember the ways things were.

Its compilation and production have been made possible by a large number of people. I am hugely grateful for the help of Shropshire County Archives in Shrewsbury, particularly to Sara Downs, Heather Dulson, Karen Young and Andrew Davidson; to Briony Paxman and her colleagues at The National Archive at Kew; to Martin Wright, Toby Neal and Tania Taylor at The Shropshire Star, and to Phil Gillam at Shropshire Weekly Newspapers; to Mirka Duxberry, Catherine Westwood and their colleagues at Market Drayton Library, and to the volunteers at the Town Museum in Market Drayton. My friend of 50 years and co-promoter of bands on The Grove stage, Mick Jones has been a great source of insight and anecdote. I am grateful in addition to classmates Jane Roberts and Chris Whilde, and to Geoff Dickinson and Rob Gregory, former members of staff at The Grove; to Peter Wingham, Sheila Halsall, Sonia Taylor and Ceri Bedford at The Grove today for their help and encouragement; to Steve Murphy for information on The Birks; to Fiona McParland, Michael Fraser and Jim Meiklejohn at APS here in Edinburgh for their skill and assistance in the book's production and publication and finally to Maureen for all her insights, editing skills and love.

This book is not an academic treatise. I have therefore included a list of sources consulted but have avoided an excess of footnotes. The text has also benefited from the insights of three outstanding educationalists: Sir David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2002-2006; Baroness Estelle Morris, Minister of State and then Secretary of State for Education 1997-2002, and Lord David Puttnam, the film maker and life-long champion of educational progress. Responsibility for all that I have forgotten, misinterpreted or failed to find rests however with me. I was stimulated as much as frustrated by the fact that the Ministry's file on the reorganisation has been 'weeded out' and is lost (see sources consulted). As The Grove School celebrates its 50th anniversary, I hope the text stimulates new memories and sources which can add to this testimony.

Peter Housden
Edinburgh, 2015

INTRODUCTION

On 3 November 1955, Market Drayton Grammar School celebrated its 400th anniversary. On that special day, the Annual Prize-giving addressed by Lord Powis was combined with a service of commemoration taken by the Bishop of Lichfield. The souvenir programme struck a note of measured celebration.

For four hundred years with little serious interruption the wishes of the original founder and benefactor had been respected and 'some part of the youthe of this realm' had been given not only the knowledge but that training in mind and character which has always been the chief aim of grammar schools.'

Not 10 years later, on 31 August 1965, Market Drayton Grammar School closed. A comprehensive school was to be opened on the site of the County Secondary Modern School at the other end of town. The Grammar School buildings were used as a Lower School for a number of years before being demolished.

How did this happen? The school traced a line of descent from an ancient foundation that counted Clive of India amongst its alumni. The proposal to close the Grammar School became a serious proposition in 1962. At that time barely 8% of English children were educated in comprehensive schools. Shropshire was a quiet part of England with an independent County Council and absence of party spirit. How then did the school come to be closed and Shropshire and Market Drayton be in the vanguard of schools reform? Why were the objections of hundreds of supporters overridden in favour of what many regarded as an experimental form of schooling ill-suited to the needs of the town?

This story is an important part of the history of Market Drayton. It also sheds light on a broader movement. In the early 1960s, the centre of gravity of national debate was shifting toward the idea of England as a more open, egalitarian and democratic society. Voices were being heard to suggest that a move away from the class-bound and restrictive environment that bedevilled the country for so long

would enable the talents of all its citizens to flourish and sustain a more dynamic and prosperous economy in a world where the position and influence of Great Britain could no longer be guaranteed.

Education was seen as a key component of this advance. The Conservative Government had commissioned Lord Robbins in 1961 to examine the principles on which the long-term development of higher education should be based. This was not a neutral question. Access to university was at that time restricted to 4-5% of the population and admissions were heavily skewed toward students from private schools. In the compulsory phase of education, a succession of official reports had cast doubt on the effectiveness of a selective system which maintained 1,300 grammar schools and resulted in 70% of children attending secondary modern schools. These modern schools – however energetic and well-led – were markedly less-well resourced. The vast majority of their pupils left school with no qualifications. There were unsurprisingly marked disparities of esteem between the grammar and secondary modern sectors. As aspirations and living standards rose in the 1950s, these inequities began to chafe. The 11+ examination which determined whether a child would go to a grammar or secondary modern school became deeply unpopular. In the last years of the Conservative Government, ministers feared that they were swimming against a tide and that comprehensive schools were increasingly seen as ‘the democratic solution’.

In these times Market Drayton became a pioneer. Long known as a town ‘behind the day’¹, it embarked on a course of comprehensive reorganisation that set a pattern of schooling for the town that has endured and flourished in these 50 succeeding years. This short account is dedicated to the men and women who made it happen and to those today who carry on its fine traditions at The Grove School.

1 Norman Rowley’s work – see sources consulted – is speckled with quotations from 19th-century figures bemoaning Drayton’s status as ‘a town almost shut out from the civilised world’ and highlighting ‘the degree of unfair neglect and isolation which it suffered’.

Those interested in the history of secondary schooling in Market Drayton owe much to the pioneering work of two local school masters.

Norman Rowley was a distinguished teacher of History at Market Drayton Grammar School, and published with his wife Sheila important work on the social and economic history of the town up to the early 20th century.²

Martin Ridgeway taught at Market Drayton Secondary Modern School from 1932-65 and served as a Deputy Head Teacher at The Grove Comprehensive until the early 1970s. His history of elementary education in Market Drayton gives a rich picture of developments in the period 1863-1965.³

This account focuses on three untold stories.

- * The rescue and reincarnation of a grammar school for Market Drayton after the collapse of the ancient foundation in the early years of the 20th century.
- * The Grammar School's struggle in the modern period to establish itself as a viable and successful school.
- * The proposals to create a comprehensive and the struggle to save the Grammar School.

Hundreds of men and women gave skilled and loyal service to the Grammar School in its modern incarnation. Thousands of children spent their school days in its fine buildings and on those wonderful playing fields. Each will have their own story of achievement, of happy times, and of good friendships.

Nothing here seeks to detract from those precious memories.

The purpose of this account is rather to understand how the idea of a grammar school for Market Drayton foundered and died, in favour of a scheme of comprehensive reorganisation. This was not particular to the town. There were deep currents at work in society

2 See Sources Consulted

3 See Sources Consulted

at large which undermined the legitimacy of selective education. But there is no doubt that the performance and reputation of Market Drayton Grammar School left it particularly vulnerable to reforming spirits. In the autumn of 1962, a long-established plan was triggered to provide a new form of secondary education in the town. The pattern of the ensuing struggle sheds light on the society we were, and on the one we have become.

EARLY DAYS

Market Drayton Grammar School was founded as an act of charity in 1555 by Sir Rowland Hill, a merchant adventurer and future Lord Mayor of London. Hill was knighted by Henry VIII, and his extensive estates in Wales and in the West Midlands included large tracts of former monastic property. He had been born in Hodnet close to Market Drayton and had a reputation as a stern religious moralist. In this spirit, he endowed a grammar school for his home town with a clear purpose:

‘... somewhat to help in the virtuous education and bryngyn up of some part of the youthe of this Realm.’

The school opened on 12 November in St Mary’s Hall on the south side of the churchyard. Little is known of its early history beyond the well-trodden tales of young Clive of India. Robert Clive, born in the nearby village of Styche in 1725, was the eldest son of a wealthy family with a long history of public service in England and in Ireland. Every guide book tells us how Robert was an unruly spirit reputed to have scaled the church tower and perched on a gargoyle to scare passers-by, and to have visited something of a protection racket on the town’s shopkeepers. His father removed the boy from the school and enrolled him at Merchant Taylors School in High Wycombe from where he was later expelled. From these turbulent beginnings, Clive went on to have an extraordinary career as a merchant, military adventurer and founder of British India.

Robert Clive had at least the opportunity to go to school. There was no general entitlement to education at this time. Such schools as existed were provided by the church and voluntary bodies and relied on charitable subscriptions and fees, thus excluding the broad mass of the labouring poor. It wasn’t until 1833 that the state began to provide some support. Grants became available for school sites and buildings in the 1840s, underpinned by national standards and an inspection regime. In 1870, School Boards funded through the rates were enabled to fill in gaps in voluntary local provision.

Attendance to age 10 years was made compulsory in 1880 and fees for elementary schools were abolished in 1891.

Grammar schools remained entirely voluntary and through the 19th century began to expand. In the great cities and large towns, a growing middle class wanted their children to be educated in Science and Modern Languages alongside the Classics and to acquire the habits of speech and manner that would mark them out as gentlemen, thus shaping the curriculum and ethos of the contemporary grammar school. Many of these schools thrived as the wealth of the nation increased.

This was not the experience in Market Drayton. It was a small market town mid-way between Stoke and Shrewsbury dependent on agriculture with a market and associated trades and industries. Its population and facilities grew slowly. Business failures were common and the numbers of the town's poor would swell alarmingly at times of agricultural recession. Much of the 19th century was a struggle, for Market Drayton and for the Grammar School. A schools Inspector in the 1860s found the town 'a lifeless place... the trades people too few and too poor to make a flourishing day school possible'.

The school's masters were typically poorly-paid graduate clergymen, some doubling up as curates with money in chronically short supply. Rowland Hill's original bequest had not been augmented for 300 years and whilst there were occasional public subscriptions for repairs, the school's position was often precarious. In a small town and in the face of competition from other institutions, pupil numbers were never large. Twenty-four pupils were recorded in 1867 as paying fees of a guinea a quarter, with five boarders paying 20-25 guineas for the year. But numbers fluctuated and the school experienced cycles of decline as attempts were made to balance the books through narrowing the curriculum and lowering entry requirements.

Over time the deteriorating fabric of the school became a major issue, leading to 'the periodic loss of nearly all the pupils due to the state of its buildings, in a half-ruinous state'. Matters came to a head in the early years of the new century:

‘The last master, Mr Woodforde, suffered the indignity of having a rival school in the same building, the boys of which passed through the schoolroom as he taught his last three pupils.’

Market Drayton Grammar School closed in 1909. In February of the following year, the Foundation established by Rowland Hill was reconstituted. Its endowment would thenceforth be used to allow Mr Woodforde to occupy the school buildings rent-free and to receive a pension of £20 per annum.

TOWARD MODERN TIMES

The Education Act 1902 created local education authorities⁴ to provide free elementary education and with powers to create and maintain secondary schools. Shropshire County Council used these powers to build two new schools in Market Drayton. A new elementary school opened at Alexandra Road to complement provision at Mount Lane and Little Drayton. And with Roland Hill's foundation school defunct, new Boys and Girls Grammar Schools were established to the west of the town centre. The grammar schools were set in fine conjoined buildings in extensive playing fields and were each to provide for up to 70 pupils under a joint Governing Body.

This was a new beginning, but from the outset there were issues about the status and reputation of the Grammar Schools. The County Council had to persist in its desire to have the schools even named as Grammar Schools. The Council regarded this nomenclature as 'an important asset'. But Board of Education⁵ officials in London sniffily declared that as the Foundation had been reconstituted and its school closed, use of this term would not be appropriate. In extended correspondence, the Council argued that the intended later transfer of Rowland Hill's endowment to the new school created a line of continuity. Civil servants in London were unconvinced but admitted to themselves there was nothing they could do in law to prevent the Council from their intended course of action.

There was also dispute about the proportion of free places. The Board of Education wanted to see 25% of the schools' capacity used in this way, but the local authority feared that too high a proportion

4 Under the Act, Shropshire County Council was established as the Local Education Authority. It exercised its powers through its Education Committee. In this account, the terms County Council, Education Committee and the Authority are used interchangeably.

5 The Board of Education was the forerunner of today's Department for Education with national responsibility for the education service under the Minister and later Secretary of State for Education.

of free places would colour the reputation of the new schools. The figure was set at a lower number and in the end, there were just nine free places in all across the two schools as they opened.

The new grammar schools thus faced a genuine task to establish a reputation and secure pupils. With a more successful grammar school in nearby Newport and private schools in the locality, they operated in a competitive environment. A sizeable sum each year – equivalent to half of the annual salary of a qualified teacher – was set aside for advertising, and early steps were taken to attract fee-paying pupils of junior age to a preparatory school.

In November 1912, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited the schools for the first time. They found much to admire at the Girls' School. The Cambridge-educated Head Mistress, Miss Hardy, led a team six full-time teachers and four occasional staff. Ninety-two pupils were enrolled, five of whom were in receipt of scholarships. A further 15 enjoyed free places. Under the 'quiet and refined influence' of the Head Teacher, 'an excellent start' had been made. 'A body of conscientious and capable teachers' had been assembled. 'General standards were very creditable' and 'discipline was maintained throughout the school without the least difficulty'. The Inspectors noted the emphasis on 'physical culture' at the school – the Head had requested the Governors to provide a vaulting horse – but urged against 'exercise so fatiguing as to place girls at risk of muscular strain'. The Inspectors noted that although only 12 girls had competed for the eight free places on offer, the Girls' School had shown enterprise in capitalising on the closure of a private school to open a junior department. 'Overall, this was an encouraging start.'

Things were less rosy at the Boys' School. The Head Master, Mr Elliot, also a Cambridge graduate, was assisted by two full-time teachers, Mr Long and Mr Brown, and a further three occasional staff. With a complement of 63 boys, enrolment was some 30% lower than the Girls School. Competition for places was weak and there were problems with 'early leaving'. Pupils were on average leaving the school for employment after just four terms, aged 14 years and 9 months. The school had thus, in its first two years, faced 'a steady decline in numbers'.

Educational standards and discipline were also a concern. The quality of teaching was clearly a contributory factor. Mr Long was singled out for particular criticism. HMI did not mince their words:

‘The Senior Assistant Master devotes his time ungrudgingly to the interests of the boys and takes a large share in the organisation of games. In the classroom he proves himself a less capable teacher than he should be, partly because he is too conscious of his intellectual superiority over the boys, and partly because his method of dealing with them so often borders on sarcasm.’

Mr Long was later described by the Inspectors to the Governing Body as ‘too conceited’. His colleague, Mr Brown, who took responsibility for Science was ‘too lazy. His handling of a class occasionally leaves much to be desired’.

The Inspectors’ criticisms however went beyond personality. ‘All the teaching in the school errs on the side of giving the boys too much writing to do in class.’ Written work was not being properly marked. They felt this ‘should be ruthlessly checked by the Head Master’. But Mr Elliott ‘had private many troubles which claimed a large share of his time and attention’. He was a man who tended to ‘imagine difficulties that do not exist’ and his own teaching of Mathematics was ‘eccentric’. The Inspector went to great pains to show the Governors the laborious and abstruse method of long multiplication on which Mr Elliott insisted, and admitted that he had failed to convince the Head of ‘the absurdity of his methods’.

The Inspectors nevertheless concluded that ‘A fairly satisfactory start’ had been made at the Boys’ School. Their treatment of Mr Long looks in retrospect less generous. Remembered elsewhere as a genial host offering sardines on toast to tea-time guests, Mr Long left the school soon after the inspection to take a post in Kendall Grammar School. Mr Brown also left Market Drayton. Both men were later killed in the First World War.

HMI returned to Market Drayton in 1921. Things had improved at the Boys Grammar School. Numbers had risen to 104. Standards of work showed marked progress and there were ‘satisfactory beginnings of a real sixth form’. This team of Inspectors acknowledged that Mr

Elliott could still be 'a difficult man to handle', but praised him for his 'original mind' and the 'promising conditions' he had created.

Early leaving continued to be an issue, boys' secondary school careers were on average three years and two months before they were set to work. To counter these trends here and elsewhere, the Board of Education required grammar schools to conclude an Agreement with Parents on the duration of their children's attendance. Agreements of this kind were in place at Market Drayton, but only for pupils with free places. For the remainder, the regulations were not being enforced. HMI also commented on the standard required in entrance examination, set so low that some pupils on admission could not read.

All this suggests a continuing struggle to attract and retain pupils. And things had slipped back at the Girls' School. The talented Miss Hardy had taken a headship in Canada and been replaced by Miss Fanner, also a Cambridge graduate. HMI felt the new Head Mistress did 'too little teaching' and that 'the school was rather listless'. As was the custom, the Head Mistress herself had responsibility for the boarders and was reported to have found this 'somewhat of a strain'.

A further Inspectors visit to the Boys' School in 1927 illustrates the challenges in maintaining standards of teaching in these very small schools. Physics and Chemistry were offered by a capable and qualified teacher and were held to be reasonably sound. In Year 3 however, pupils were allocated according to ability either to Latin or to Biology. Each had its troubles.

Latin had special status in the psyche of the grammar school. It served as a gateway to a classical education and was a requirement for university entrance. More, it was indicative of the blood line that connected grammar schools to the great public schools and the challenge of its acquisition epitomised the desired ethos of unquestioning scholarship.

In a town such as Market Drayton it no doubt required special efforts to bring this subject alive. But the school was not well-served. The Senior Latin Master in 1927 was capable and pleasant but a poor teacher. The text book was inappropriate, some work was extremely

poor and no-one had passed a School Certificate in the subject for two years.

Biology teaching in its turn was 'very haphazard'. It was taught by an unqualified teacher of Rural Studies. There was no progressive scheme of work and 'no sign of correction was found in books going back for two years, perfectly egregious blunders being left to sink into the boys minds when the books were used for revision purposes'. The unnamed teacher was 'content to dole out the facts without use of the blackboard or experimental work'. The Inspectors recommended that Biology should be dropped and that the teaching complement be reduced by one.

The final view of the Girls' School in the pre-war period comes from a full Inspection conducted in 1931. The girls were offered a four-year course with English, French, Maths and Science as core subjects. Domestic Science was taught in the 2nd and 3rd Years, and Latin in the 3rd and 4th. Art, Music and Needlework were offered throughout and 'generous time' continued to be allocated to Physical Education.

In assessing standards, the Inspectors found work in Geography was 'distinctly creditable'. 'On the physical side' work was good, with 'the staff providing considerable help'. The general arrangements at the school were however the subject of considerable criticism:

'The pupils do not acquire confident knowledge, and lack any feeling of success – this has some bearing on the fact that many of them leave early. Throughout the school, girls speak and read inaudibly and their pronunciation is slovenly.'

Generally there was 'an absence of corporate life'. The premises were 'shabby' and behaviour 'no more than satisfactory'. The school was 'much below the average and the organisation needs attention'. The Inspectors drew attention to a particular instance:

'On the day of the inspection, the Head Teacher, the 7 full-time staff and the 2 visiting teachers were all deployed. Yet Form IVB, the weakest in the school, were doing prep with a senior girl in charge.'

Pupil numbers were reasonably healthy, but on closer examination real concerns remained. One hundred and thirty-one pupils were enrolled, including 30 Juniors and 10 in the Sixth Form. 40 received free tuition. On leaving, 9 pupils had gone on to training colleges and 2 to university. A few had obtained clerical posts. But a fair number had remained at home, 'especially those who came from farms'. The Inspectors remained concerned however at 'the very unsatisfactory duration of school life':

'In spite of what was said at the last inspection, no steps have been taken to improve matters. There is still no Agreement of any kind with fee-payers.'

Over a five-year period, 40 pupils had left at aged 14 or earlier. This was in the Inspectors view 'a serious waste of money and effort', and a position 'even worse than at the last inspection 10 years ago'. Governors were again urged to require all parents to sign an Agreement on the duration of their child's school career. Governors however remained sceptical. Even if such Agreements were in place, they doubted whether they would be enforced by the County Court judge then presiding and the County Council itself was unwilling to press the school unduly on this matter.

Following the inspection, the Board of Education in London wrote a warning letter to the local authority and the school, citing 'the unsatisfactory duration of the school life of the pupils'. The school-life undertaking, required of pupils occupying free places, should be extended to all.

The Inspectors took heart however from the 'active interest in the school' shown by the Governing Body, 'to which considerable changes had recently been made'. They recognised 'the ineffectiveness' of the Head who lacked inspiration and powers of organisation. Miss Fanner had suffered bouts of ill-health in preceding years and had indicated her intention to retire at the end of the school year.

After Miss Fanner's retirement, Mr Elliott became *de facto* Head Master of both schools before his own retirement in 1936. At that time, the two schools were formally amalgamated under the newly-appointed Mr Hesketh, a further Cambridge graduate, and went forward as Market Drayton County Grammar School.

SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ALL

The Grammar School at this time catered for around of 10% of the local population. Education for the broad mass of children in the Market Drayton area had historically been provided at village schools and at two Church of England ‘National Schools’ established in the town in the mid-19th century – in Little Drayton and in Mount Lane – close to the Parish Church.

In Market Drayton and elsewhere, the facilities at elementary schools were of the most basic kind. In 1895 across the country, 90% of children aged 5-14 had to rely on these all-age elementary schools. Barely 20% received an education after the age of 10. Martin Ridgeway quotes an historian on conditions at the turn of the century:

As a schoolmaster of 1902 gazed at a typical form sitting in front of him, he knew that nine out of every ten of those children could be classified as ‘dirty’, that is filthy and verminous. Eight out of ten suffered from dental decay; six out of ten were infested with nits; two out of ten had eye, nose and throat trouble, and one out of ten was terribly underfed.’

This was the sobering backdrop to the Education Act 1902 under which local authorities took responsibility for education. Some set about this task with vigour, with Shropshire providing both the new grammar schools in Market Drayton and a new purpose-built elementary facility at Alexandra Road in 1915. Further progress proved more difficult in Shropshire and elsewhere. The leaving age was raised in 1918 to 14 years, but across the country the Great War and the ensuing slump combined to slow advance in ambition and in expenditure.

Reforming spirits remained alive. The socialist RH Tawney was the guiding hand behind the Labour Party’s 1922 publication *Secondary Education for All*. Tawney was later a member of the Hadow Committee whose report in 1926 advocated the break at age 11 or 12 and the creation of a distinct secondary phase of education. This was enacted for the elementary schools in Market Drayton in 1926

as Alexandra Road became a secondary school with the Mount Lane and Little Drayton Schools providing Junior facilities.

But it took the Second World War to provide real impetus for advance. There was a recognition in Churchill's War Cabinet of the pressing need to improve social conditions. The war had exposed the full extent of deprivation, particularly through the large-scale evacuation of children and mothers, a process which brought 20,000 children from the cities and industrial towns of the North West to Shropshire, swelling its school population by two-thirds. As the war began to draw to a close, the general desire in the political class to 'bring the nation together' led to the Butler Education Act of 1944, and in parallel to the implementation of the Beveridge Report, and the establishment of the National Health Service and wider welfare state.

The Butler Act required local education authorities to provide free school places for all children up to the school leaving age which was to be raised to 15. This finally would deliver the 'Secondary Education for All' advocated by Tawney and others in the inter-war period. Local authorities had to provide a sufficiency of places and

'afford all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their differing age, abilities and aptitudes and for the different periods they may be expected to remain at school.'

Each authority was to produce an Educational Development Plan setting out their intentions. Authorities were not of course writing on a blank slate. Each had an existing pattern of schools with established local reputations and various levels of accommodation and equipment. Capital funds for building improvements and new facilities were scarce and under the control of the Ministry. The creation of any new schools and school reorganisations required Ministerial approval. In the official mind, over and above any local considerations, there was a clear blueprint for the new world. This vision had been strained through the fine muslin of grand committees and then distilled by civil servants in 1946 into a draft document of guidance to assist local authorities in the discharge of their new duty.

The core assumption of ‘The New Secondary Education’, was that education should be provided, according to ability and aptitude, in distinct grammar, technical and modern schools, with children allocated to their place through the administration of intelligence tests.

This series of propositions – framed in guidance rather than in statute – was to define the battleground for the future of secondary education in the post-war period. It was based on a particular view of the capabilities and potential of children. A civil servant looking back in the 1970s sought to explain:

‘There was a general belief that children were divided into three kinds. It was sort of Platonic. There were golden children, and silver children and iron children. The golden children were capable of going to a grammar school, they had minds, they could have abstract thinking. The technical children, the silver children so to speak, were technically oriented, and all the rest, they couldn’t handle ideas, they had to have concrete notions.’

To the modern mind, this seems an extraordinary, class-bound, proposition. So too to socialist reformers at the time. Ellen Wilkinson appointed as Secretary of State for Education in the 1945 Atlee government, railed at the initial draft:

‘I wondered why I felt deep down so angry...then I realised that Mr Squeers had given me a quizzical look across the years...this pamphlet is fundamentally phoney because it subconsciously disguises the real question that has to be answered, namely, ‘What shall we do to get miners and agricultural workers if a hundred per cent of the children able to profit from it are offered real secondary education?’ Answer... give the real stuff to a selected 25%, steer the rest away from the humanities, pure science, even history.’

Ellen Wilkinson had, however, to fight on many fronts. Her lasting achievement was the raising of the school leaving age and the enormous effort of logistics required to train teachers and provide accommodation for the first cohorts of 15 year-olds. *The New Secondary Education* was revised and issued with an Introduction crafted by the Minister herself but its core ideas and assumptions were essentially unchanged. The new system was to be tripartite in concept.

Progress was made. Fees were abolished in April 1945. The school leaving age was raised in 1947. But technical schools failed to establish more than a marginal place in the new system. Making these schools a reality – and thus offering a genuinely tripartite system – would have required a major national programme of re-equipment of premises and facilities, and of teacher training. The appetite for such an advance was not apparent. Increasingly and overwhelmingly the system became binary. Selection process at age 11+ were used to determine whether a child should be offered a grammar or secondary modern school place. This placed intelligence testing at the heart of secondary education in England with consequences that few would then have foreseen.

DRAYTON REMEMBERED

On a Saturday morning in 1942, Gwyn Lewis sat his 'scholarship examination' at the Grammar School in Market Drayton, taking tests in English and Arithmetic. He failed and was admitted initially as a fee-paying pupil, remaining at the school until he started an apprenticeship in 1947.

His memoir gives a vivid picture of life in 'sleepy, secure' Market Drayton as the town and its Grammar School sought to weather the depredations of war. He describes how two teachers at Mount Lane had been killed on active service. A German pilot had crash-landed and been escorted to the police station after knocking at a farmhouse door. The town had accommodated dozens of children and adults – both mothers and teachers – from Manchester as part of the huge wave of people from the north-west evacuated to Shropshire. Lewis's schooling moved onto a part-time basis to accommodate these children, with the Parish Room pressed into service as emergency accommodation. The Manchester children were regarded as rude and uncouth, and blamed for everything including the spread of infectious diseases. But some – both pupils and teachers – stayed on and settled in the town. The post-war period saw the development of RAF Tern Hill, two miles outside the town which brought the children of service personnel to the school which retained both a rifle range and an Army Cadet Corps.

This was of course a tough time for Britain as a whole. Many towns and cities had suffered extensive bomb damage. The war-time economy had distorted industrial production and led to the loss of established overseas markets. Millions of returning service personnel had to be absorbed into the labour market and find their place in post-war society. Rationing persisted and 1947 was the harshest winter in living memory. But Gwyn Lewis has little say on such privations, beyond fond recall of sledging on Salisbury Hill. He takes us instead to the beautiful setting of the Grammar School. The grounds were substantial. Lessons would sometimes be taken outside under a magnificent lime tree. Or be disturbed indoors by

the sound of Mr Evans the caretaker as he tended the cricket pitch on his motor-mower.

The school had the trappings of the traditional grammar school. There was a good library. A Founders Day service was held each year at St Mary's Church at which staff wore their caps and gowns and the proceedings were brought to a close with the school song. Competitive sport was plentiful. There was an Open Day for parents, and a Parent Teacher Association was established in 1947. Lewis recalls teachers who gave much to the wider life of the school. Mr Plim in English was a highly-regarded footballer. Miss Jones in Latin ran a lively school club. Miss Eccles in Science introduced the pupils to bird song and energetic country dancing.

The new Education Act came into force on 1 April 1945. Fees were abolished and the Preparatory Department wound down toward its eventual closure in 1948. But the school still had much to do to recover from the war. The Head Master, Mr Hesketh, had been called up in 1939. Mr Helm, known to Lewis and his ilk as 'Creeper', was appointed as Acting Head. It seems however that Major Hesketh had difficulties in letting go. Governors had to instruct him to hand in his keys and desist from entering the premises without permission whilst on leave from active service. Mr Helm himself faced ongoing difficulties. Teachers were in short supply and compromises had to be made on the requisite levels of energy and capability. People and relationships became frayed. The Senior Mistress, Miss Mercer, was in a state of such evident distress that a visiting Inspector advised she should have a year's leave of absence. The Major returned in 1946, once more striding solemnly to school from his house in the grounds, and in the make-do spirit of the times and with a clutch of new staff, the school worked to get back on its feet.

An HMI inspection took place in 1947. The verdict was not heartening. The group of teachers were undistinguished – their expectations of pupils were low and their lessons lacked tempo. The older teachers were not giving the example expected and many of the younger staff were unskilled in the pedagogic arts. Standards in the school overall were not high, and below average in some subjects. Resources were not used wisely, and particularly so in the sixth form where a wide choice of subjects consumed a disproportionate

amount of teaching time. Despite this investment, the number of pupils proceeding to university was ‘rather small’. The visual environment was poor. The school had neither a choir, nor a record player nor a tape recorder.

As the years went on, personnel difficulties became the abiding preoccupation for Major Hesketh. A number of new staff showed little aptitude for teaching, either in terms of pedagogy or keeping good order. A Geography master appointed in 1950 accepted an offer to resign at once in 1952. Major Hesketh recorded in the school’s Log Book that this Mr Milliken ‘...was not happy. He has real difficulty in keeping order, especially with little girls. Strange for a man 6 foot 8 inches high’. Older hands posed problems too. Miss Baker failed to attend adequately to her wider duties in the school, preferring to teach French to upper sets. She did not in any event ‘have the sympathetic understanding so necessary in a Senior Mistress’.

The school retained however a sense of occasion. The funeral of King George VI in 1952 was marked with the school gathering in the hall to view the proceedings on two television sets lent for the purpose by an Old Grammarian, Ron Farrell. And in 1955, the school celebrated its quattro-centenary with the Service of Thanksgiving, Prize Day, a proud school photograph and a rendition of the school song.

But at this moment of high celebration, things were coming apart. The Authority provided access to comparative data on the performance of all its 17 grammar schools and Major Hesketh was concerned at the large numbers of pupils leaving his school without attaining the benchmark four passes at Ordinary-Level – a number in Market Drayton ‘greatly in excess of the average for the County’. The Secretary for Education, Martin Wilson, shared his concern and came to discuss the problem. Shortly thereafter HMI Wakeford spent two days in the school.

A full HMI inspection took place in May 1956. The dislocations of war were now more than 10 years behind. The school’s attainments could be seen in a clear light. The Inspectors’ verdict was blunt.

‘This is not a good school.’

There were aspects meritorious of praise. History was singled out. Inspectors recognised the wider life of the school, reflected in productions of Shakespeare and trips to Paris and the Rhône Valley. A school magazine was produced.

But the young and not well-qualified staff – less than a third were graduates – were held generally to lack effective classroom techniques. Some were frankly poor. They lacked effective role models – a lesson given by the Senior English Master was described as ‘having few redeeming features’. Overall the pace of work remained slow, especially in the B stream into which the lower attaining pupils were grouped. Work was dominated by examination requirements with termly tests, but did not yield ‘much examination success’. Pupils were ‘generally unresponsive’, their speech indistinct and their vocabulary weak. The timetable in the Sixth Form remained elaborate with inadequate teaching time allocated to the subjects offered.

This was not the end of the matter. There were issues with manners and discipline. The arrangements for school meals were ‘shambolic’, and in considering the arrangements for showers after games, the Inspectors painted a graphic picture:

‘Since the last report shower baths for boys were introduced. The custom however that senior boys do not use them regularly is only very slowly yielding to the efforts of the master in charge.’

The findings were initially reported to Major Hesketh. He nobly recorded the burden of the meeting in the School Log Book:

‘The comments made suggested that the main fault lay in my own administration.’

‘In my attempts to provide a wide curriculum, it was thought that I had set myself and my staff an impossible task, and that I was also at fault in failing to “drive” my staff sufficiently.’

Major Hesketh did not seek to blame ‘the raw material’. In the discussion with the Inspectors he expressed his own belief that ‘the children themselves are well up to the normal standard in grammar school entrance’.

The Inspectors reported their findings to the Governors, and thanked the Head Master for the way he had received their 'hard comments'. But their verdict was clear. In today's terminology, Market Drayton County Grammar School was a failing school.

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

The Inspectors report of 1956 has strong echoes of those prepared over the preceding 25 years. Why were the difficulties and challenges of sustaining an effective grammar school in Market Drayton so persistent?

In many ways they were endemic. The catchment area was sparsely populated. The structure of the economy locally did not generate a middle class of any size. Parents with resources could turn to more prestigious schools within travelling distance, both in the state and private sectors. Traditions of education and advancement were not well-established in this predominantly rural area. Expectations of girls and those connected to the land were particularly low.

The small grammar school found it difficult to recruit and retain teachers. The availability of promoted posts was determined according to numbers and the age of pupils. Teachers were poorly remunerated and large schools in urban areas with significant sixth forms offered far greater career opportunities.

Strong and imaginative leadership would therefore be required to enthuse and develop the teaching staff, to create a lively learning environment with high expectations of all pupils, and to organise the resources of the school to best effect. With honourable exceptions, these qualities were often lacking at Market Drayton. Inspectors point to aspects of individual character; to foibles and eccentricities. But there is a sense also of Head Teachers – and indeed of a school – caught in aspic, imprisoned in a particular view of how a grammar school should be.

This was seen nowhere more clearly than in the streaming of pupils. The two forms of entry of pupils admitted each year were placed into A and B forms according to their pass-mark in the 11+. This practice, ended only after the 1956 inspection, created an ethos of underachievement and sometimes disaffection in the B stream. This phenomenon was well understood in grammar school circles. Frances Stevens captured the broader point in 1960:

'In many grammar schools the pupils of 'C' forms constituted something of a problem. They formed at least a third of the school population and could not be ignored. But the grammar school had chosen from the first to play for academic success, to emulate the older schools, to keep up the pretence that it existed in order to prepare pupils for university. In fact no more than a minority ever proceeded to universities, but this minority was regarded as the raison d'être of the school, the curriculum of which therefore ultimately took its colour from university requirements.'

It was the case that

'for all but the most able pupils, the syllabuses of public examinations represented a rather formidable body of knowledge.'

Teachers of these

'B and C forms sometimes yielded to the temptation to substitute memory for understanding and provided their pupils with notes, summaries and ready-made opinions.'

This driving force – for academic scholarship and university entrance – was the school's North Star, steering decisions and attitudes in Market Drayton County Grammar School toward provision for the most able pupils, and contributing to a deadening climate for many others. It was certainly in evidence in the elaborate and uneconomic subject choice in the sixth form. These arrangements came at disproportionate cost. And when the teaching resource became so stretched that an inadequate number of periods was available to teach Advanced-Level subjects effectively, and pupils having to rely on excessive private study did poorly in the ensuing examinations, it defeated its own objects.

There were weaknesses in leadership, in organisation and in pedagogy. Their combined effect in 1956 was of a school running to stand still. Teachers were over-pressed, with excessive class-contact ratios and the burden of termly tests. Yet few were achieving much in the way of pupil engagement or examination success.

Major Hesketh retired shortly after the inspection at the end of the school year in 1956, having given 20 years service to the school. The senior staff around him were not strong and the Governors agreed to the appointment of an Acting Head, a Mr Gibbings from Owestry, for a term before Mr A.F. Tongue, a graduate of Birmingham University, took up the position of Head Master in January 1957.

ANOTHER OLD BOY

I joined the school as a 12 year old in May 1963, six years into Alf Tongue's tenure. I arrived fresh from four terms at Bristol Grammar School and a spell of private tuition as a family plan to emigrate to Australia came to naught. My father had rejoined Tube Investments at Blythe Bridge, 15 miles or so from Market Drayton and we came to live in the middle of the town.

My memory of the Grammar School is of a small and friendly school with a settled routine and good discipline. The staff were caring and able, one or two outstandingly so. There were several who lacked much spark or empathy with children and one at least who could not control a class, but the overall standard was perfectly reasonable for the day.

All the accoutrements of the Grammar School remained – uniform, school houses and the Founders Day service in the parish church. But Market Drayton County Grammar School was not at all pretentious. It showed none of the 'petty snobbery and priggishness' that Frances Stevens suggested could characterise more self-consciously aspiring grammar schools. Staff gave readily of their time for games and outside activities and rapport with the pupils was good.

My later experience taught me that Mr Tongue's academy lacked however the spark and buzz that characterise the best schools, those with a clear educational vision and a thorough-going determination to see every child excel. This was a more relaxed environment. A child with an academic bent would be welcomed and nurtured, but without urgency. Teachers made discretionary efforts in games, clubs and societies. There was a school exchange to Copenhagen, but there was little effective challenge to lazy tykes like myself beyond the sarcasm of Mr Stannard in Latin, who, in exacting punishments insisted that clemency was his middle name, and the excellence of Mr Rowley in History in his crisp, assured lessons and exacting standards.

The outside world intruded but little. A boy transferred from the secondary modern at 13 and did well. A lad from a working class background was held down for a year and provided a lot of important social education for we fresh-faced 3rd Years. Another spent some time away at a corrective institution and was welcomed back as a pirate might be after a long voyage.

Otherwise the ship sailed on. Our only engagement with other schools was in sport and then only with other grammar schools. Mr Shufflebotham, the Caretaker, maintained two wickets in the summer with matches held on Saturday afternoons. The main field was reserved for the First XI while we Juniors enjoyed the shade of the lime trees at the rear. In my second summer we hosted Whitchurch Grammar and shrunk in awe as a fully-grown Whitchurch boy, Jack Lemon – reputed to have struck a century in his last match – lorded it over us with bat and ball. Mr Wilson the Biology teacher umpired. The school canteen was opened for our match teas, served by girl volunteers. We lost gracefully and Mr Wilson, looking ruefully at my name in the scorebook said we needed to find some new bowlers.

WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON?

One of Mr Tongue's early tasks as the new Head Master in 1957 had been to report to Governors on the measures taken to address the Inspectors' criticisms. Adaptations were made to the curriculum and the practice of streaming on entry was discontinued. Governors were advised that 15 candidates had offered papers at Advanced-Level that year and secured passes in 36 subjects, representing a 50% pass rate. Only two pupils passed in three subjects. The pass rate at Ordinary-Level was 62%.

Governors had also paid close attention over the years to the two or three pupils a year whose parents sought permission for them to leave school before completing their five-year course. A compassionate approach was taken. Approval would be granted where the family circumstances left no alternative or where it was felt that a pupil had little more to gain from the school. But in a good number of cases the school used all its efforts to encourage the child to stay, often seeking a discretionary maintenance grant from the local authority to assist with household expenses. A Governors' meeting in 1958 considered the case of a particular girl. The Vice-Chairman of the Governors – Mrs Daphne Gask, an ex-debutante and well-to-do wife of a local GP – undertook to visit the girl's mother and was able to report to the next Governors' meeting the success of her mission.

Further academic progress was reported in 1958 with a 68% pass rate at Advanced-Level secured by a group of 14 candidates with three proceeding to university.⁶ The Ordinary-Level pass-rate had drifted marginally to 61% but with 38 students overall, the sixth form was at its highest-ever level of enrolment. But things slipped back in 1959. Twenty-four candidates offered papers at Advanced-Level, but the pass-rate fell to 42% with two students proceeding to university. At Ordinary-Level, the pass-rate at 53% was 'disappointing'.

6 This refers to the percentage of entries where a pass grade was awarded.

These less-than-stellar results led to Mr Tongue speaking with senior staff in Science and Mathematics. Things improved in 1960 with 17 candidates offering 42 subjects at a pass-rate of 61.7% and three university scholarships were secured, whilst the Ordinary-Level pass-rate rose to 60%.

Things fell back again in 1961 with only 12 candidates offering subjects at Advanced-Level at a 50% pass-rate, and 43 students at Ordinary-Level securing a 46% pass-rate. This fluctuation around a low base was a puzzle to Mr Tongue. In his time in the school he had put considerable efforts into the recruitment of some competent teachers. There was a plaintive tone to his entry in the School Log as he sought to explain these low levels of attainment:

‘So many of our best boys and girls seem to ‘fade out’ during the last few months. I am convinced that many of our pupils, particularly in the B-stream, are not grammar school material and find an academic course hard going.’

The data for 1962 were recorded in the Governors’ Minutes in the autumn of that year in a less-detailed format inconsistent with previous years and with a note that no pupils had gone on to university. These data provided information about pupils who were entered for examinations. The Governors’ Minutes did not record any consideration of the numbers not so entered or those who otherwise left with very little to show for their time in the school.

Attempts were made to recognise potential. New arrangements had been introduced to facilitate the transfer of pupils from the secondary modern at age 13 and two girls had moved up to the Grammar School that year. But with no GCE courses offered at the secondary modern, the girls were put down a year to facilitate their further progress.

The school’s overall performance and the range of educational opportunity in the town, might have been something of a concern to any local authority. But it was not one likely in 1962 to demand attention. Authorities across the land found their secondary modern schools struggling to accommodate larger pupil numbers and unable to provide examination courses. Many small grammar schools went

through cycles of mediocrity and found it difficult to generate rigour and momentum. Only a few local authorities at this time however were seeking to challenge the efficacy of a selective system and the inequality it could so visibly engender in a town such as Market Drayton.

Shropshire was one of the honourable few. The Authority was led by Sir Offley Wakeman. Its Secretary for Education was Martin Wilson. These were talented and energetic men who over 20 years were to change the face of education in the County. The position in Market Drayton had long been in their sights.

MARTIN WILSON

Martin Wilson was the Secretary for Education in Shropshire for 30 years. He was a detached, humorous man of the old school. Cambridge-educated, the son of an HMI who found his way into local government after spells as a foreign correspondent and as a teacher at Glasgow Academy. Wilson's memoir shows his passion for the power of education and feel for the nuance of places, developed first in Lancashire and then Kent, the North Riding and Suffolk before his appointment to Shropshire in 1934. He also had, by his own admission, the 'perhaps obsessional' energy and resilience required to make things happen in the complex and multi-layered world in which he operated. Often remaining silent for long periods in Committee, Martin Wilson felt no need to dominate proceedings. For beneath his charming other-worldliness lay a degree of intellectual bite and capacity for detail that concentrated minds.

In his early days, Wilson found Shropshire 'A step back into the Middle Ages' in which 'the emanations of feudalism' were still apparent. It was a time when

'a landowner could talk of putting a hand out of a job if he were so presumptuous as to send his boy to a Grammar School.'

Those in public life took

'grim satisfaction in being outside the current stream of thought or even behind everyone else; pride and local tradition being good enough; in not being pushed about; in not succumbing to any new fangled-fads.'

Educational issues were often approached from the perspective of self-interest or individual prejudice. 'Malice toward All' was the guiding principle of association and folk would also indulge in

'that choice brand of Salopian amity expressed in the form of conversation about villainous third parties.'

‘One wondered despairingly whether in all of Shropshire there was anybody who cared a damn about education, or more fairly how anyone who did would ever make an impact on the County’s policy.’

The shift in Shropshire education came with the war and the passage of the Butler Education Act. As Wilson explained in his autobiographical notes:

‘Wartime sharpened the nation’s and Shropshire’s sense that the young must be protected. The 1944 Act was a calculated reaffirmation of faith, a recognition of the duties of the young and the deeper advantages and necessities of the modern community, a comprehensive vision of evolving demands and future possibilities ‘as far as thought could reach’, a business-like approach to action which showed a grasp of planning concepts...and talked of timetables. It had teeth in it.’

‘...the Shropshire rustic was with it: and gingerly, timidly, resistingly, his Lords and Masters inched toward the precipice. They were sufficiently infected with the spirit of the times to recognise in broad outline that there was a job to do.’

Wilson was an officer of the County Council . His job was ‘to interpret professional and politician to each other and help, within an appropriate code of conduct, both achieve their ends’. The key politician in this period was a kindred spirit. Sir Offley Wakeman was a Baronet and a member of one of Shropshire’s oldest families. With war service in the Guards and time as ADC to the Viceroy of India, Offley Wakeman had gone on to gain significant local government experience in London. He then served as Chairman of Shropshire County Council from 1948-1963 and as Chairman of the Education Committee. He was a liberal and tolerant man of deep religious conviction, a professed Conservative yet known in his own circles as ‘something of a Bolshevik’, a member of several London clubs, confidant of Permanent Secretaries and one who readily formed alliances across political and administrative divides.

These two men worked together in a period with a particular character:

‘... invigorating, taut, demanding, challenging, speculative open – the epoch we would have chosen – at the grassroots of growth. Perhaps it was the last great flourish and fanfare of local government.’

They had a formidable reputation and presence. M.P. for the Wrekin, Bill Yates, had this to say in the Commons 1963:

‘Shropshire’s education programme has been quite outstanding over the last ten or twenty years, and there is not one person in the county who lays any criticism. Indeed, perhaps one of the greatest secretaries for education that Shropshire has ever had has been Mr. Martin Wilson. The mark he has left on education in the county will go down in its history. He has been honoured for his services, and I commend his work.

‘He has been aided by a valuable education committee of long standing. One of the greatest driving forces for education in Shropshire has been the chairman of the County Council, Sir Offley Wakeman. He has devoted more time to public service in Shropshire than I have been in this world.’

Wilson and Wakeman’s conjoint task in the immediate post-war period was the production of Shropshire’s Development Plan required under the Education Act 1944:

‘It was a tough and infinitely complex exercise. Every school had to be surveyed: the state of its buildings, the disposition of its children and probable population and housing trends, and a decision made about its future. A new pattern of secondary education had to be worked out, for all children, to a higher age; a new pattern; using the experiences of the old, harmonised with it, jointed to it, or reshaping it by plastic or more drastic surgery..... All this had to be turned into a costed programme, phased into priorities, year by year. And to find its way through a maze of Committees and of wider consultations....’

But it did its work. Within the Education Committee, the Plan created a sense of purpose:

‘It produced a coherent and inter-related pattern. A climate had been created; consciences softened and determination hardened; something of a consensus had been established.’

A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL FOR MARKET DRAYTON?

The Development Plan submitted to the Ministry in March 1947 reflected the Committee's general agnosticism on patterns of secondary schooling. The Committee saw

'much scope for development and experimentation in different forms of secondary education... Sometimes the main types of secondary education (Modern, Grammar, Technical) may be given in separate schools. Sometimes two or more of these types might be combined in a single school.'

It was very specific about the position of a number of small market towns, including Market Drayton:

'It is proposed to treat Market Drayton as one of the areas in the country for full comprehensive reorganisation, and establish a single secondary school in a new building replacing the existing Grammar and Modern schools.'

The same approach was to be taken in Ludlow, Whitchurch, Wem and Bishop's Castle. All but the last-named would involve the closure of an established and more-or-less ancient grammar school.

How radical an idea did this represent?

The idea of a comprehensive school had become common currency in reforming circles in the inter-war years. Its core lay in a broad approach to secondary education where all children bar those with the most significant additional educational needs would be accommodated under one roof in a common school. The idea had by no means conquered the mainstream. Conservatives were almost universally opposed. Some Labour Councils in cities and other urban areas pressed forward and established comprehensive schools. But a strong strand of Labour-minded opinion wished to preserve 'the ladder of opportunity' embodied in grammar schools. Even amongst sympathisers, there was no unified view on the best configuration of these 'all-in' schools.

In rural areas with a sparse and dispersed population, the practicalities of a comprehensive approach were however better accepted. England's first comprehensive school was thus opened in Windermere in 1945 and Anglesey became the first local authority to be wholly organised on comprehensive lines.

The immediate post-war period was one in which great changes were being seen across wide swathes of public provision, based on a consensus on the need to bring the country together. There is thus no evidence that the comprehensive proposal for Market Drayton made in 1946 in the Development Plan was seen as radical or unacceptable. Governors were consulted prior to the Plan's submission to the Ministry and Major Hesketh's entry in the school Log Book for 17th December 1946 records their simple conclusion:

A meeting was held in the Library to discuss the Development Plan for the District. A plan to merge all the secondary education in one building was agreed.'

The Clerk to the Governors later reported the matter to Governors without even the aid of a comma:

'Received letters from Mr Wilson dated 16 May 1947 with regard to the School Development Plan for the Market Drayton area and 24 June stating that subject to the sanction of the Ministry of Education, the school playground should be put in repair.'

The Education Development Plan was of course a statement of intent. Any specific proposal would require a full-blown statutory procedure with the final decision resting not with the County Council but with the Minister of Education. Things would go on as they were for a time – the first priority was to re-establish normal working after the war.

DIFFERENT VIEWS

The Ministry at this stage had other issues with Shropshire's Development Plan. The differences, unresolved at the time, throw an interesting light on the warring conceptions of secondary education and on the determinedly independent stance taken by the County.

The Department found the Authority's definition of the term 'comprehensive' to be 'a little hazy'. It departed, in their view widely, from the conventional tripartite model which saw a comprehensive fundamentally as 'a multi-lateral school' offering distinct curricula and streams of opportunity to pupils according to their ability and aptitude, rather than the more fluid form of organisation found at the heart of the modern comprehensive. The Department's preference in Market Drayton was for 'a Grammar/Modern school with a technical bias'.

This did not find favour within Shropshire and with the Authority remaining 'intransigent', the matter was left in abeyance. The broader issue was soon however put to the test. In October 1952 the Authority brought forward a proposal to establish a comprehensive school in Market Drayton. The presenting circumstance was acute pressure on accommodation at the Secondary Modern.

Numbers at the Alexandra Road premises of the Secondary Modern were scheduled to rise from 450 to a peak of 700 in 1958. Accommodation was already overstretched with additional facilities for older children sited on a large area of the playground. PE lessons were held in a nearby youth club. The staffroom was cramped and there was no library. Any further accommodation would encroach on the scarcely-adequate playing fields.

The condition of secondary modern schools across the country had been brought sharply into focus with the raising of the school-leaving age to 15. Room had to be found for an additional 400,000 pupils from 1948 onwards and the foundations were not strong. Bar a small number of recently constructed schools, the modern school estate

across the country was the result of make-do-and-mend expansion of elementary schools. The Department acknowledged that:

‘Many so-called modern schools have been established in the premises of former elementary schools – accommodation is makeshift and wholly unsuitable for anything that can properly be described as secondary education.’

The Education Committee wished to snip the knot on this wholly unsatisfactory situation in Market Drayton. A site suitable for the construction of a school of 1,000 pupils was available at The Grove, to the north-eastern fringe of the town. The Authority thus acquired the site and on 28 July 1952 published the required Statutory Notices to close the grammar and secondary modern schools and to create a comprehensive school.

The response from local interests was this time hostile. The Governors of the Grammar School met on 31 October 1952 and were advised of the position:

‘Two meetings had been held to consider the proposal of Shropshire County Council to build a comprehensive school in Market Drayton, on 6th October jointly with the others schools, with Sir Offley Wakeman and Mr Abbott of the Secretary’s Department in attendance. A separate meeting of the Governors only was held in 15 October and declared unanimously that ‘We the Governors of Market Drayton County Grammar School, Market Drayton Secondary Modern School and the Managers of Mount Lane Junior and Market Drayton County Infants Schools are definitely of the opinion that a comprehensive school is not suitable for this District, and that the District should not be committed to one type of school only, and that a comprehensive one.’

‘On the other hand, we do feel that a new secondary modern school in replacement of the existing secondary modern school, should be built at once, leaving the existing secondary modern school for use as a junior school.’

In the face of this united local opposition, the proposal for a comprehensive was withdrawn. The scheme was modified by the Authority in the terms suggested by the Governors and resubmitted. The two schools would be retained, and new premises for the secondary modern would be established on The Grove site.

A local resident wrote to the Minister in April 1953 to object. He sensed that, even in its rejection, the scheme for a comprehensive school was being subtly advanced. The reply on behalf of the Minister confirmed his fears. The sting was in the tail:

I am directed by the Minister of Education to say that she has carefully considered the objections which you forwarded to her to the proposal of the Shropshire Education Authority to establish a school for about 1,000 children mainly between the ages of 11-15 years at Market Drayton.

I am to explain that the LEA have not proposed, nor would the Minister approve, the erection of a school of this size at the present time. The Minister is satisfied, however, that in order to accommodate the increasing numbers of children in the Market Drayton area a new school is needed, and she proposes therefore to give her approval under Section 13 (4) of the Education Act 1944, to the establishment of a new school for about 450 children.

'The decision of the Minister is given without prejudice to her approval of the Development Plan now before her but the LEA have been told that she will raise no objection if, in designing this new school for about 450 children, they take account of the fact that it may ultimately be expanded to accommodate almost all the children of secondary age in the area. The LEA would however have to publish Notices afresh of any future proposal to extend the buildings for this purpose, and there would therefore be further opportunities to have the matter considered in the circumstances then prevailing.'

Here, the Department recognised both the reality of rising pupil numbers and the likelihood of the LEA putting forward a scheme of comprehensive reorganisation in the future. This, the Minister would be obliged to consider on its merits. Its subsequent approval by the Minister of the day could not in any way be assumed, but on grounds of economy if no other, it would be unreasonable not to allow the LEA to construct the school with such an eventuality in mind.

This was bureaucratic acknowledgement that a comprehensive solution for Market Drayton could one day become a reality.

NEW CIRCUMSTANCES

The new secondary modern opened at The Grove in September 1957, but the accommodation issues rumbled on. The new school was without Domestic Science rooms or sufficient overall accommodation to house the growing numbers of pupils. Facilities were thereby retained at Alexandra Road and at Mount Lane Junior – requiring the school to operate across three scattered sites.

The Committee's strategic intention toward education in the town remained clear. Its Development Plan was finally approved by the Ministry in 1957 and included a comprehensive direction of travel for Market Drayton. Over the next five years, the Committee had cause to examine afresh its commitment to the comprehensive principle. A new settlement was to be built in the Dawley/Oakengates area. A series of visits and discussions had taken place as the Committee considered the optimum pattern of schooling for Telford New Town. This investigation strengthened its view on the educational merits of comprehensive education. It also deepened their understanding of the realities on a key question that would attend any reorganisation in Market Drayton – that of split-site working.

By the summer of 1962, the Education Committee's working assumption was that a comprehensive proposal should be developed for the New Town area, and that they would in the same moment act on the position in Market Drayton. They knew from their Triennial Review of examination results across the County that the Grammar School was consistently under-performing. A change of Head Master had not moved the school decisively forward. If change was required, the time was now. The Head of the Secondary Modern School, Mr Roberts, had given notice of his intention to retire after 32 years' service. Appointing a successor on a like-for-like basis would lock the Authority into a selective pattern in Market Drayton for a further period. In addition, the County wished to establish a Further Education facility in the town. It had identified the Grammar School premises as being well-suited to this purpose.

The Committee's long-term intention and these immediate circumstances pointed toward action. Martin Wilson visited Alf Tongue in the summer holidays in 1962 to discuss the emerging proposal. Mr Tongue knew of the Committee's long-term intentions. Indeed, at the time of his appointment in 1956 it had been made clear to him that were a bigger school of this kind to be created in the town, he would have to compete for the post rather than being slotted in.

The school's Governors were called to a meeting on 29 October where the Secretary for Education laid out the Committee's plan. The Grammar and the Secondary Modern schools would close in favour of a comprehensive school to be established at The Grove. The lower forms would however continue to use the Grammar School premises until such time as new accommodation had been completed on the main site.

The Governors' response was led by their Chairman, Lt-Colonel Arthur Heywood-Lonsdale. He was a member of the landed class with 12,000 acres, a serving member of Shropshire Education Committee and a future Lord Lieutenant. There was a tradition of family service to the area. His mother had been a founder Governor of the Grammar School in 1910 and he had joined the Governing Body in 1946 and become Chairman in 1949.

Heywood-Lonsdale was direct in describing the shortcomings of the County's proposal. The new school would be 'scattered across four sites'⁷. Staff and pupils would have to navigate 'the busy traffic in the centre of town'. The proposals would cost money that could be better spent elsewhere.

The Chairman went on to deploy analysis from the County's Triennial Review of examination results across Shropshire. In 1955-57, his paper explained, on average across the County, 23% of pupils in grammar schools had gained one or more passes at Advanced-Level. The range of performance on this measure was between 33% in the highest performing school and 11% in the lowest. The figure in Market Drayton was 16%. In the same period, an average

⁷ The Chairman included in his calculation satellite premises then in use by the secondary modern due to overcrowding.

of 58% of pupils across the county achieved four or more passes at Ordinary-Level. The range was 77% in the highest performing school and 40% in the lowest. This was Market Drayton.

In the 1958-60 series, the average at Advanced-Level rose to 31% and a range from 61% in the highest performing school to 17% in the lowest. The figure for Market Drayton was 26%, offering evidence of the school closing the gap. At Ordinary-Level standards across the County had also improved. On average, 72% of pupils secured four or more passes. The range across the County was between 89% in the highest performing school and 52% in the poorest. The figure for Market Drayton was 76%.

The Chairman reported that the Grammar School took 23% of the overall cohort. He acknowledged that it was a closed system: the 'interchange' of pupils between the Grammar and Secondary Modern was 'virtually non-existent'. But drawing on the improvements cited above, he concluded that 'the school is doing well with the material available'. He went on to argue that change was not desirable, particularly if the new school required a split site. The Governors in his view should hold to their resolution in 1952:

'so that changes in education and in population in Market Drayton and success or failure of comprehensive education elsewhere can be taken into consideration.'

The Chairman's paper was fair-minded, candid and respected the evidence. Martin Wilson's arguments to the Governors were set out without specific reference to academic performance. He first struck a pragmatic note:

'In framing the Development Plan, the Education Committee deliberately projected a variety of types of organisation in different parts of the County, preserving traditional achievements but opening the way to experiment; allowing the pattern to evolve according to the circumstances and institutions of each area; in some cases sustaining at a good level the customary layout of separate grammar and secondary modern schools; in others undertaking a combination of forces or a change of functions, or a new type of school.'

He was also clear on the educational and organisational benefits of a comprehensive school:

'Comprehensive organisation removes the pressures of the selection examination; it avoids the cleavage that develops between work in grammar and secondary modern schools; the greater resources and flexibility of the larger organisation with the fact that all children of secondary age are in the same school makes easier the provision for individual needs in a variety of courses and options, and both the very able pupils and the average and less able benefit from this; in the larger school, the staff can be developed as a stronger and more diversified team; staff recruitment is good and benefits from higher posts of special responsibility.'

And Martin Wilson did not duck the issue of split-site working:

'The Committee have carefully considered the question whether it would be better to wait until the school would be entirely housed in an extended buildings on a self-contained site. On sites some distance apart there can be problems of internal organisation and movement of staff between buildings, though no appreciable movement of children is expected. Some time must elapse before it will be possible to programme the major building projects. The Committee are convinced that once the principle of future organisation is established it is preferable to embark on the reorganisation at the earliest possible date; that will bring the advantages of the new organisation to the present generation of children. Deferment would produce an awkward interim period; difficult staffing problems would arise and the problems caused by separate premises are far from being so great as to make deferment desirable. The Committee know of several comprehensive schools that have started in this way, where the Authority and the schools have felt it well worthwhile.'

It was time for a decision. Two Governors, also from the upper reaches of society, were clearly persuaded of the Authority's case. Colonel T.E. Upton proposed a motion, seconded by Mrs Daphne Gask that the comprehensive school should be established in Market Drayton without delay.

An amendment, to support reorganisation only when the accommodation necessary to enable the school to operate on a single site was available, was proposed and defeated.

The main motion was then carried by 8 votes to 4. The Governors of the Grammar School had voted decisively in favour of a comprehensive school for Market Drayton.

Mr Tongue recorded the meeting in his Log Book as 'unsatisfactory'. To his mind the decision had been made without fully exploring the consequences. But there it was. The proposal had the support of the school's Governors.

THE PUBLIC DEBATE

The Education Committee's Development Sub-Committee met in January 1963 and authorised a series of consultation meetings with parents. After the worst of that dreadful winter receded, 10 meetings were held in the town and surrounding villages. These gatherings were for parents and by invitation only – the Press were excluded. But some shared their impressions and the reports of the impending reorganisation began to appear in *The Newport & Market Drayton Advertiser*.

The first meeting was held in the village of Cheswardine on 8 March 1963 with 40 present. The *Advertiser's* reporter harrumphed that the press had been 'peremptorily ordered to depart from the meeting room'. Readers were advised that the Secretary for Education had spoken of

'relieving children, parents and schools of the burden of the 11+. At the new school, the ablest would be able to follow a grammar school-type course and reach high academic standards, at whatever age their talents began to show.'

Three propositions were put to a show of hands. The reorganisation should be deferred until accommodation was available one site. The scheme should be implemented without delay. And the scheme should be rejected. At Cheswardine 10 people were recorded as wishing to proceed immediately. Twelve were against any scheme of reorganisation and one wanted deferral pending the availability of accommodation.

At a meeting in Child's Ercall the following evening, all present voted in favour of the reorganisation. On 5 April a meeting was held at the Grammar School itself, with two-thirds of the 100 parents attending expressing opposition to the comprehensive principle. The *Advertiser's* headline for its report that week grew more indignant as it went along:

'Market Drayton continues to withhold its full support for the Shropshire Education Committee project of using the town for its guinea-pig comprehensive school plan.'

THE DEEPER ARGUMENT

Although 152 comprehensive schools were operating in England in 1962 and in a variety of different contexts, it was customary in certain circles to describe them as guinea-pigs, experiments and departures from the norm that would require evaluation over an extended period before any question of their supplanting selective education could properly be considered. This degree of high scepticism – found in quarters across the political spectrum and amongst some in the teaching profession – often masked profound misgivings of principle about the comprehensive ideal.

But it had become increasingly difficult in the early sixties to set out an unqualified apologia for the selective system. There was an intrinsic difficulty in arguing that for any general social good, the interests of the 23% should receive priority. This difficulty was accentuated by the spirit of the age. Grammar schools across the country felt themselves to be under attack. Apologia were being published as early as 1960, defending their traditions of scholarship, their moral code and essential mission in training tomorrow's leaders. In addition, the 11+ itself was coming under huge pressure. Authorities did all they could to broaden the base of the assessment but its intellectual and scientific pretensions were progressively exposed. It was found that pupils could be successfully coached for tests intended to identify allegedly innate capacities. Some authorities offered 40% of pupils a grammar school place and others as few as 12%. Parental aspirations were rising across the board as the economy grew and the technical and professional middle class expanded. The system had burst its banks. With coaching and cramming in primary schools, the composition of grammar schools was becoming increasing middle class. More damningly, it was being recognised that the grammar schools themselves were often failing a significant proportion of their working class intake.

These considerations formed the backdrop to the proposal for Market Drayton. They circumscribed the territory that could be safely occupied by those committed to defend the Grammar School

and in parallel, weakened the resolve of parents to stand against the comprehensive.

And perhaps as a result, the apparently more practical question – of whether a comprehensive school for Market Drayton should be created immediately or only after all the necessary accommodation had been made available – became the most talked-about aspect of the proposal. It had its own reality. Split-site working would impose inconvenience, expense and constraint upon the new school's pupils and its staff. The distance involved was close-on a mile, a tidy walk, or a 20-minute classroom-to-classroom journey by car or bicycle for staff. These inconveniences could of course be eased by timetabling. The programming of the younger children to the Grammar School site would minimise disruption. But staff would certainly feel an effect.

The power of the split-site argument was however in presentation. It offered a concrete, practical and immediate disadvantage. It lent itself to the idea of a scheme being rushed through on doctrinaire grounds, regardless of the consequences. Deferral until the accommodation had been provided was also a clever demand. For whilst it might seem reasonable and prudent, it was in fact a showstopper. The Ministry had enormous calls on its capital resources, strictly controlled by the Treasury in the unstable stop-go climate then prevailing for public expenditure. The waiting period would likely as not extend over years, decades even, as other, firmer needs across the County and more widely repeatedly took precedence. What were the Heads and staff of the two schools – remaining selective but moving to comprehensive – supposed to do? How would the curriculum be organised? What would the 11+ mean in these circumstances?

It was a complete non-starter. But a useful proxy for argument about the merits and consequences of selection at 11 years of age.

The teaching profession in the town consistently declined to express a public view on the proposals. Eric Booth – later a stalwart of the comprehensive school – was elected President of the town branch of the National Union of Teachers in February 1963. His acceptance speech avoided any mention of comprehensive education, focusing instead on the raising of the school leaving age and the need for a

County college of further education. Visiting officials took the same tack. This may have been to preserve unity, as many interests and opinions were at stake. It is also the case that the Authority published at an early date a table of the expected pattern of promoted posts in the new comprehensive school. The scale of opportunity in the new school would be significant with eight additional senior posts available.

After their initial meetings, the Authority arranged for the Governors of both schools to visit comprehensives in Wolverhampton, and at a subsequent joint meeting they had voted 13-7 in favour of the reorganisation. But by 16 votes to 4 they supported a proposition that it be deferred until such time as the accommodation had been made available.

The Education Committee over-rode this proposition however and duly approved the scheme of reorganisation for Market Drayton on 19 April 1963. The Committee accepted that split-site working would be necessary to avoid what would otherwise be ‘an awkward interim period’. The new school would thus operate initially on two sites pending the completion of the major building works required. The Notices required would be posted in May. Arrangements would also now be made to appoint the Head Teacher through open competition.

Thus far, from the point of view of Martin Wilson and the Education Committee, the proposal for Market Drayton had gone forward without undue alarums or excursions. Extensive consultations had been held and Governors given the opportunity to visit comprehensive schools – it was a model of a modern education authority at its work.

For parents however, there remained all to play for. The Minister of Education, had now to agree the proposal – nothing could go forward without his say-so. A predecessor, Florence Horsbrugh, had turned down just such a scheme 10 years before. And in June 1963, after the Statutory Notices had been published, the voice of organised opposition began to be heard for the first time.

It is easy to imagine how resentment would have built. A scheme of reorganisation had been presented to the Governing Body by two members of the county's great and good. Its acceptance had been proposed by two more. Governors had then pre-empted the position by taking a view on the future of the school without any consultation with parents. The speed of the thing had been alarming. It would feel like their pocket had been picked. Now they were fighting a firm proposal to be considered by the Minister.

On 28 June, a meeting was held under the baton of Old Grammarian, Ron Farrell – the man who had loaned the school two TV sets to watch the King's funeral. The *Advertiser* reported that 'a group of men and women have mounted the ramparts', urging citizens to exercise their rights to object and announced their intention to raise a petition. The Parish Room would be set aside on 3 July for signatures to be added.

This initiative finally sparked a genuine public debate. Supporters of the scheme were forthright. Opposition was based on sentiment and prejudice. The existing system condemned 73% of children as failures. The needs of advanced technology and the new managerial classes required a better-educated workforce. The attempt to preserve the Grammar School was in the mind of a Mr Mickleson an act of 'the status-seeking middle classes'. 'The fences are coming down and they don't like it.' He urged Market Drayton to 'Wake Up and Be Bold'.

Others took a different view. A Mrs Twist was quoted as expressing concern that a town without a grammar school would hamper drive to bring much-needed industry to the area. On 12 July the voice of pupils was heard. Helen Davidson was the head signatory of a letter that said how disgusted pupils were to have been 'practically ignored' in the debate. Responding to the charges levelled in previous week's paper, they stressed that their support for the Grammar School was not based on resentment or snobbery. They did not care to be the subject of an experiment and it was 'surely not so difficult to work out some scheme where the most brilliant pupils of the Secondary Modern school could study for the GCE'.

The campaign was getting up a head of steam. Criticisms abounded:

‘(The proposers have) little knowledge of local circumstances – none live within twenty miles.’

‘Commuters and people of potential are being put off from coming to the town.’

‘The standard of education is going to be lowered.’

‘A meeting of parents at the Modern School was attended by less than ten parents. At the Grammar School there were a hundred.’

‘This is a doctrinaire experiment.’

Enrolment at the Grammar School for the school year beginning in September 1963 was affected. Mr Tongue reported that only 47 of the 65 places on offer for 11 year-olds had been taken up with twice as many girls enrolled than boys. The parents of four children were considering moving them to other schools.

739 signatures were secured for the petition against the reorganisation. On 19 July The Advertiser carried a picture of Ron Farrell delivering the petition in Whitehall. Hopes were high that this impressive show of opposition would be sufficient to sway the minds of Ministers. Reporting to the Parent Teacher Association on 9 August, Farrell continuing the fight, spoke of ‘inconsistencies’ in the Authority’s position at meetings of parents:

‘The whole scheme gives the impression of being rushed through before the proper facilities are available or the need has been proved.’

We do not know the reasons why 739 people cared enough to sign the petition. Some may have held strong educational views. Others may have objected to the Education Committee’s proposition, coming as it did from the landed gentry de haut en bas. Perhaps many would rather things just stayed as they were. Fifteen thousand pupils had passed through the Grammar School’s doors in the years since 1910. It was part of the town’s physical and cultural heritage. For those concerned to sharpen Market Drayton’s competitive edge and attract industry and commuters, closing the school would look

like a sign of defeat and hopelessness. That it was being done in the name of progress would bring little comfort. The consequences of such forward-thinking seemed always to involve consolidation and loss. The town's passenger railway service was to close that very September. The Rural and Urban District Councils had been merged. The cricket and hockey clubs were locked in discussions to do the same. Promises of this kind, for a bright new future, often flattered to deceive. Silhouette, the London-based manufacturer of ladies shaping garments had recently extended its factory in the town. The roof of the new building was formed as a hyperbolic paraboloid, a quadric surface of great interest to architecturalists, mathematicians and small boys. Sadly, this glorious wave-form had begun to sag. The factory was evacuated to premises at Pell Wall Hall until repairs could be effected. Was this the much-vaunted 'future' the town was promised?

THE POLITICAL REALM

A natural port of call for those seeking to defend the Grammar School was the local Member of Parliament. Just two years before, the 30 year-old John Biffen had been one of four men invited by the Conservative Party to attend for interview to select a candidate the by-election in the Owestry constituency in 1961 occasioned by the appointment of David Ormsby-Gore, (the later Lord Harlech) as the UK's Ambassador to the United States. Biffen, an economist by training and working as a journalist in London, had travelled by train from Paddington to Market Drayton to face a 100-strong selection committee in an upstairs room of the Corbet Arms Hotel. His opponents included the Chairman of the Constituency Association, a Major Rowat, and the oddly-named Jummy Friend, a local landowner with connections to The League of Empire Loyalists. The bulk of the Association's membership was however of the less-exalted middle class and enmities between the four market towns in the constituency were well to the fore. As Biffen put it in his autobiography:

'... the constituency was by no means as one. Owestry regarded Market Drayton as outer Siberia and there was no bond between Ellesmere and Whitchurch.'

Biffen, a grammar school boy and son of a tenant farmer, prevailed in the selection by just two votes over Jummy Friend. The heavens now fell in upon him. His selection was dubbed 'Government by Greengrocers'. How could it be – it was asked – that a National Service Lance Corporal had been selected when Field Officers were available? The man was a London journalist – did he really have rural instincts?

A full constituency meeting, intended to be a formality, was required to confirm Biffen's candidacy. Jack Galloway, the Regional Agent, sensing danger for Biffen, asked his protégé 'Are your folks still around?'. Thus was Mr Biffen Senior summoned from his farm in the Quantocks, 'heavily built and with a strong Somerset accent... rubicund, gregarious and sporting a broad-brimmed felt hat'.

Biffen's selection was overwhelmingly confirmed and he was duly elected in October 1961. Given his background Farrell and the Grammarians in Market Drayton might have expected their MP to have been an active supporter of their meritocratic cause. And doubly so as Biffen had been a scholarship boy at Dr Watson's in Bridgewater, 'a not very distinguished state grammar school'. There he had been strongly influenced by Charles Kay a new Head Master who, with shades of Alf Tongue, had been 'anxious to improve the school's academic performance'.

But Biffen – as his later career was to demonstrate – was intellectually self-confident and not a man to be held captive by local interests. His political schooling in Somerset had taught him to pick his way through such thickets. In public at least, Biffen held his piece on the question of secondary education in Market Drayton.

IN THE HANDS OF THE MINISTER

The Minister of the day was Sir Edward Boyle. A 50-year-old Baronet, Boyle had been appointed in July 1962 by Harold Macmillan in a famously-brutal reshuffle designed to reinvigorate a Conservative government facing discontent over economic policy and a series of difficult by-election results. Boyle, educated at Eton and Christchurch and appointed as a Minister at the age of 29, was known as ‘the complete insider’. Intellectually confident and well-connected, he was a man not hampered by the over-riding personal ambition that can, in politics, be the enemy of consistent decision-making. His political philosophy was that of a radical conservative, seeking to preserve the essential character of British society not through stasis but through humane and rational reform.

Earlier in his career, Boyle had served in the Department as a Junior Minister and had a practised feel for the issues. He also displayed a willingness to get into schools and local areas to engage with conditions on the ground where his gracious manner and informality won him many admirers. His political mission was to bring state education to the heart of Conservative thinking. He wanted party loyalists and supporters to recognise that the quality and output of the nation’s schools were of prime importance to the creation of a civilised and successful society. For Boyle there was much to admire in the maintained system, and much requiring reform.

Boyle was also a man open to evidence. Discussing the work of educational sociologists which came increasingly into the public discourse in the early 1960s, Boyle had this to say to an interviewer:

‘The work of these people made one realise that the pool of potential ability was deeper than we’d thought and that the interplay between nature and nurture was more subtle than used to be accepted. I think, though, to some extent it was the reports of 1963 that finally clinched it. Perhaps Robbins, more than Newsom, because Robbins did put this so explicitly...pointing out the small proportions of wage-earning families whose children got to university...you had masses of evidence of the numbers of boys and girls who were being allowed to write themselves off below their true level of ability.’

This approach was reflected in Boyle's hand-crafted foreword to the Newsom Report:

'The essential point is that all children should have an equal opportunity of acquiring intelligence and developing their talents and abilities to the full.'

In service of this objective, he wanted the Department to show greater flexibility in its thinking about patterns of school organisation, sanctioning the creation of Middle Schools and – critically in this case – wanting to encourage broader thinking about the place of comprehensive schools.

Boyle's desire in this was deeply political. He recognised the bind his party faced over comprehensive education. So too did the Prime Minister. On 2 July 1963, Harold Macmillan sent Boyle a characteristic minute:

'The LCC⁸ in its dying throes has earned the gratitude of the public by proposing to abolish the 11+. What are you going to do about it?'

Boyle's response dealt first with the question of the 11+. He advised the Prime Minister that the education authority in London was not abolishing selection *per se*. They had over 60 comprehensives but more than 70 grammar schools for which there were no proposals for abolition. London now planned to undertake their selection on the basis of teachers assessments rather than a formal examination. Boyle explained that a good number of local authorities were moving in this direction and that 'this tendency has been quietly encouraged by my department'. He proposed to move to a public statement on this question at an appropriate moment in the future.

Boyle then went on to 'the far more important and delicate issue of selection itself'. He reminded Macmillan of his exchange with the-then Minister of Education, Geoffrey Lloyd, on this topic in 1957. Lloyd's view had been that their 'political prospect on this issue was not happy'. His remedy had been a five-year improvement programme to accelerate levels of investment and access to new curricula and examinations in secondary modern schools.

This, Boyle suggested, had been ‘a great help. But once more we are on the defensive’:

‘I do not think any major change of policy is required: the next occasion for considering this will come in about three years’ time when we see whether Lady Plowden’s Council has anything to say about the age of transfer from primary to secondary education. But my own public remarks on this subject since I became a Minister have deliberately implied that we do not, as a Party, regard separate grammar and modern schools as the right and usual way of organising secondary education, compared with which everything else must be stigmatised as “experimental”.

‘In particular, I have suggested on a number of occasions that a system of completely separate schools is unlikely to be the best answer either in a new housing area where one can plan from the beginning, or in a scattered country district. As for existing grammar schools, which are the crux of this controversy, I think our own line should be that we will continue to resist any proposal likely to level down academic standards, but we are fully alive to the disadvantages of “segregation” and do not believe that every school labelled “grammar school” should automatically retain its separate identity.’

The Prime Minister noted the minute as ‘most interesting’, expressed his gratitude and asked for Boyle to circulate it to two of their senior Cabinet colleagues.

This exchange took place in early July 1963. The date is significant. The symmetry of Boyle’s argument with the proposals then on his desk from Shropshire County Council is remarkable and may even exceed coincidence. Shropshire’s proposition for a series of comprehensives in Telford New Town was exactly as Boyle had cited in his minute to the Prime Minister: ‘a new housing area’ being ‘planned from the beginning’. Market Drayton Grammar School was at the centre of ‘a scattered country district’. Its academic record made it hard to sustain an argument that its closure would involve any ‘levelling down of academic standards’.

A DECISION IS MADE

No-one who knew Boyle's mind on these questions would thereby have been surprised by his decision, announced on 31 January 1964, to approve the County Council's proposals to establish a comprehensive school in Market Drayton. The new school would open on 1 September 1965, initially in the premises of the existing schools pending consolidation on The Grove site at a later, and unspecified date. The Minister's statement said this was 'a reasonable means' of effecting the reorganisation. The Grammar and Secondary Modern schools would therefore close on 31 August 1965.

Straight away there was an accusation by Ron Farrell of 'a breach of faith'. He told the Advertiser that he had an assurance from John Biffen there was to be 'some kind of enquiry' into the proposal, to take place locally, and the matter would not be determined until such time as this process had been completed.

This was a misapprehension. There was no scope for further deliberation. A statutory decision had been taken by the Minister in the light of representations received on the Authority's proposals, including the 739-signature petition from those in opposition and its supporting documentation. What John Biffen had relayed to Ron Farrell was the Minister's willingness to come to the town to explain his decision, not to re-open it.

A visit by Sir Edward was scheduled for April 1964 but had to be postponed at late notice as the Minister was required for a vote in the House on Resale Price Maintenance⁹. The Authority were in parallel making the necessary preparations for implementation, including the advertisement of the post of Head Teacher. This announcement further irked Ron Farrell who persisted in his notion of a local enquiry and felt the announcement 'leant itself to abuse', implying that it would be prayed-in-aid of those arguing the scheme had to go ahead.

⁹ The practice whereby a manufacturer and distributor agree to sell products at an agreed price.

More realistic stances were being adopted elsewhere. At the Grammar School's Speech Day on 13 March 1964, Alf Tongue – an applicant for the headship of the new school – argued that 'change and progress must come'. He spoke warmly about the 'family atmosphere' of the Grammar School and understood that some would regard a school of 900 pupils as 'impossibly large'. But he was positive about the coming new chapter in the town's educational history and encouraged others to be the same.

The Minister's meeting in the town took place on 8th May 1964 in the Hall at The Grove School. Councillor Griffiths, in the chair, assured those attending that the matter had had the fullest consideration in the County Council. It had been 'discussed this time and time again and, on one or two occasions, had some very close votes indeed'.

The Minister went on to explain to the 300-strong audience that he did not believe plans to enlarge the Grammar School were realistic. Comprehensives tended to 'do better with the large middle range' of children and he believed the school in Market Drayton would attract a larger sixth form. A £60,000 extension to the premises on The Grove site had been approved for 1964-5 to provide three classrooms, three laboratories and further specialist rooms. The Minister trusted the County Council's bona fides in implementing the scheme: Shropshire was 'by any standard, a good local education authority'.

Many in the audience remained to be convinced. Councillor Pugh felt the proposal had been 'rubber-stamped' by the County Council. Concerns abounded about the accommodation difficulties and the disadvantages of a split-site school. There was testimony about parents taking their children away. And a new call was heard – for 'the matter to be taken to a higher source'. This was a reference to Quintin Hogg who, in a further Cabinet reshuffle, had been appointed by Alec Douglas-Home as Secretary of State for Education.

This was further pie-in-the-sky. Edward Boyle, who had continued as a Minister of State in the expanded department and retained his seat in the Cabinet, assured the audience that he would let Mr Hogg know the importance they attached to the accommodation issue. But

as he and informed observers would have been perfectly aware, it was not open to the new Secretary of State or anyone else to reopen the statutory decision. The Courts could set such a decision aside if it were significantly flawed in terms of process, or was deemed to be irrational in the sense that no reasonable person, having considered the facts, could reach such a conclusion. No such application on these grounds had been made. Any reconsideration of the scheme in Market Drayton would therefore have required the County Council to reverse its decision and submit a fresh proposal, which it clearly had no mind to do.

Eight candidates were interviewed for the post of Head Teacher in April 1964, including Mr A.F. Tongue. In accordance with the usual practice, this first appointment to the Headship of the school was made by members of the Education Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Offley Wakeman. Representatives of the Governors were in attendance but without a vote. Mr D.N. Mackay, Senior Master at Monk's Park Comprehensive in Bristol was appointed unanimously to take up duties in August 1964, initially as Head of the Secondary Modern School. Mr Tongue would remain in post at the Grammar School with full responsibility until its closure in August 1965 at which point Mr Mackay would assume the Headship of the new comprehensive school.

In November 1964, Grammar School parents were invited to a meeting with the 40-year-old Mr Mackay held at The Grove. The new Head, a personally shy but commanding Scot, nailed his colours firmly to the mast, telling the parents he 'could not stand any system which breeds educational failures'. In the same period Ron Farrell was appointed as Chairman of the Joint Parents Teachers Association. Farrell came on board with a generous but carefully-conditioned statement:

I was one of the people opposed to comprehensive education coming to Market Drayton. But now I feel it would be quite disloyal to continue my attitude until we have had results from the new scheme. After all, we have got to give the new venture a chance and then perhaps we can compare the results of the old ways. In my view Mr Mackay, given the support of the parents and pupils, will undoubtedly make a success of the new school.'

It really was the end of an area. After a long illness, Mr Tongue died in late 1964. Martin Wilson retired as Secretary for Education after 30 years' service in June 1965. Donald Mackay, having taken the reins of both schools after Mr Tongue's death, became the first Head Teacher of The Grove School at its opening in September 1965.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

It remains on the surface remarkable that all this could happen in Market Drayton. In 1963, the number of grammar schools was at its peak. The proposal for closure at Market Drayton came well in advance of the national wave of reorganisation instigated by the Labour Government's Circular 10/65, under which the Ministry of Education requested all local authorities to bring forward schemes for comprehensive reorganisation. But it took some years for proposals to be developed and many were the subject of significant local opposition. Six hundred and fifty grammar schools closed between 1970-78, and by 1979 only 269 remained. By this time, Market Drayton had been served by a comprehensive school for 14 years. The town was for once well ahead of the day. Why was this? What had made the Grammar School vulnerable?

There were structural factors. The demography of the area and the nature of the local economy had – throughout the life of the school – made it hard to build numbers much beyond 280. Crucially there were never quite enough children whose attainment could seem to justify the school's existence as a selective school. This was partly a function of the small numbers of children of parents with significant prior educational attainment, and partly a result of the school's failure to nurture sufficient numbers of children from less-favoured backgrounds into high levels of attainment. The nearby and equally-small Adams Grammar School in Newport had forged a national reputation for excellence. But the school at Market Drayton found it hard to make any kind of academic argument in its defence.

It would be wrong to lay all this at the door of socio-economic factors. The school was a living community. Hesketh and Tongue, its two post-war Head Masters, honourable men both, lacked vision and drive. Neither quite managed to create the virtuous circle of success that attends a school with consistently high expectations of staff, pupils and parents. A reputation is built that attracts and retains the best staff. Parents want to see their children admitted to the school and to play their part in their success. A culture of

achievement is established at all levels. The excellence of individual teachers at Market Drayton Grammar School allowed glimpses of what might have been possible. But the generality was nowhere near good enough and, as Major Hesketh accepted, leaders in the school had to take their responsibility in this.

Market Drayton Grammar was furthermore a school with historically shallow roots. Rowland Hill's ancient Grammar School closed in 1909. The County Council had to battle in 1910 to preserve its status and name. Although landed society was well-represented on the governing body there was no Foundation behind the school nor evidence of powerful alumni coming to its aid. Adams Grammar School had the endowment and influence of the Haberdashers Company in London, sometimes a mixed blessing but adding heft whenever the school came under pressure. Elsewhere, when for example the tiny one-form entry Ludlow Grammar School was threatened in the 1960s with the admission of girls, the London Branch of the Old Boys Association sprung into action to form a Watch Committee, leading to Sir Offley Wakeman calling on the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry to seek his advice on the next possible steps. Nothing in Market Drayton engendered this reaction.

Other less-than distinguished grammar schools limped on in this period. The Grammar School in Market Drayton however faced an education authority with a vision set out in the County Council's Educational Development Plan published in 1947. The continuity in office of its two principal architects, Martin Wilson and Sir Offley Wakeman, was a significant factor in its realisation. These two able and nationally-connected men had a clear purpose and, after the failure in 1952, played their hand skilfully when the opportunity came afresh in 1962/63. The pattern of consultation meetings, the arrangements made for governors to visit comprehensive schools, and their work with the Education Committee all display a high standard of professionalism and an understanding of how to achieve change in a complex environment.

It might be argued that the supporters of the Grammar School were unlucky to face a Conservative Minister with the reforming cast of Edward Boyle. There is no doubt that the Minister believed that the selective system had probably run its course in communities like

Market Drayton. But even Boyle would have had pause for breath had there been a more substantial campaign. The heroic Ron Farrell was active through the period and mobilised a significant number of signatures for the petition. But his case lacked any kind of positive vision for education in the town. The Grammar School should be expanded. Pupils at the Secondary Modern should be enabled to take GCE courses. The County should introduce better transfer arrangements for higher-attaining pupils at the Secondary Modern. It was all built on the continuance of selection. Things were to go on essentially as they were.

There was good evidence that parents, society indeed, was beginning to expect something more. The changing needs of industry and commerce and rising prosperity were material factors. But there was also something increasingly in the air, a concern for individuals, their worth, dignity and potential and frustration with closed and restrictive traditions. The lives and prospects of ‘the working class’ had become significant cultural and political phenomena.

This played out in the educational sphere with particular force, helping to create a climate in which Geoffrey Lloyd, a Conservative Minister, had in 1957 admitted that their party’s selective policy was at odds with perceptions of ‘the democratic principle’. The intellectual foundations of selection in academic psychology and pedagogy, never strong, had also come under increasing attack. By the early 1960s, 11+ examinations were discredited and being replaced across the country by broader-based processes.

But as Boyle’s note to Macmillan made plain, it was not the means of adjudication that were arousing ire. It was selection itself. Those wedded to the status quo found their reform options structurally limited. Grammar schools could only exist by virtue of secondary moderns, and meaningful reform in that sector would require substantial investment over a prolonged period, an investment that no-one quite believed would carry the day. The Conservative government, Boyle or no, was stuck in a position from which they could neither advance nor retreat.

These were the well-springs of change in Market Drayton. It was at its heart a late flowering of the Education Act 1944. The Act gave

the reformers in Shropshire the impetus and freedom they needed. Wilson celebrated their craft:

‘The new policy makers at least had their feet on the ground. They knew where the shoe pinched. They were fairly close to the customer. They were accessible to the pressures as existed from the people – and from the teachers. They developed zest and ambition. Local pride worked powerfully in them.’

And thus, so the new could be born, the Grammar School in Market Drayton was laid gently to rest.

THE NEW SCHOOL

The Grove School opened on 1 September 1965 with 1,096 pupils including 66 in the sixth form. Donald Mackay, in post since January, had made good use of his lead-time. A range of activities were organised to involve pupils in the creation of the new school, including a joint sports day held in the summer term.

That afternoon, a pal and I latched ourselves onto a pair of modern school toughs and lapped up their tales of the pecking order and who had, or would, lump whom. The school's first day in September included an ugly two-stage affair in this regard, but the aggressor had chosen the wrong Grammar School kid and it ended inconclusively. And that essentially was that. We had our share of silliness and posturing and the very occasional nasty incident, as any school will. But order and discipline were good. Students mixed as freely in the comprehensive as they had in their primary schools. We lost one or two classmates to private or other grammar schools but we soon gained others as families came to RAF Tern Hill or moved to the area with the intention to commute to Stafford and the Potteries. The school had a genuine mix of intake and a lot of tension drained out of our lives. Tough-looking people you crossed in the street on a Saturday night were no longer total strangers. You knew their little brother or cousin. There are many languages to learn in life. If pressed, you had at least something to say in those encounters and knew how to say it.

Donald Mackay's most important acts in the run-up to September 1965 had been to give the school a new spine with a series of senior appointments that set a tone of purpose and ambition. A Senior Deputy Head, Phillip Stevens, and a Head of Lower School David Still, were capable administrators able to engage with students with friendly authority and educational purpose. Roy Nevitt came in as Head of Drama and Mick Braund as Head of Art. Braund became Head of the Sixth Form situated in the Georgian elegance of Grove House set across in the grounds from the Main School. Nevitt established drama as a major force in the curriculum and

life of the school, staging plays by Brecht and Arthur Miller, and involving us in a joint production with Newport Girls Grammar of Hugo Cole's opera, *Jonah and the Whale*, with the young Benjamin Luxom in the title role. All we 15-year-old boys went through a six week cookery course. Outdoors, we were suddenly one of the largest schools in the County. With access to talented coaches including Mr Edwards from the Modern School, we began to win football matches. There was a sense of energy and purpose in the school, and attention to individual progress that one day led to my being hauled off the football pitch to meet Mr Mackay in his office to confront his concerned disapproval at my academic progress. We were more motivated and some of the inconsistencies of the Grammar School were ironed out. A number of established teachers had departed and I now had a strong and engaging Maths teacher who didn't take no for an answer. A Physics teacher warned me that if I was not careful I would pass my Ordinary-Level. Excellent teachers from the secondary modern took examination classes, with Mr Booth and Miss King in History proving particularly effective.

We moved through to the Sixth Form in 1967 where we benefitted from some first-class tuition. We came to respect our subjects and get our first glimpse of scholarship and a world of thought beyond the narrow confines of the teacher's notes. There was advice and expectation toward university entrance. We variously represented the school at sport, did the Duke of Edinburgh's Award with the inspirational Mr Band, acted in plays, had our turn in Copenhagen, brought the first decent bands to the town on Friday nights making – in today's money – £1,300 a time for the School Fund. The school took out a 21-year lease on The Birks, a farmhouse in the Lake District to be used as a base for outdoor activity. We spoke proudly about the school to visiting sixth formers from Ellesmere College. We went for university interviews and came back inspired. A clutch of us went on to get a bunch of decent Advanced-Levels. The school was on the move.

The talents of Mr Mackay were, however, not lost on the wider world. In 1968 he left to become the Head of a comprehensive in Wanstead on the outskirts of London. The Governors chose as his successor Henry Arthur Behenna, who had educational experience

in the former colonies and in Cambridgeshire. Mr Behenna positioned himself at arm's length from the Main School, moving the Head's office to Grove House. He had the carpet lifted from the upstairs Sixth Form Common Room to furnish his office. Fuelled slightly by student protests in the wider world, we took umbrage at this and other restrictions. Frictions continued. Mr Behenna left the school in 1972 after much acrimony and a long-running dispute with Rob Gregory, the Head of Drama that required the intervention of the local authority. More settled times followed, Geoff Dickinson was appointed as Head Teacher from a comprehensive in Yarm near Middlesborough. He renewed the senior team, tightened expectations of pupils and staff and set the school moving freshly forward.

It is now 50 years since the school's founding. In that period, in Shropshire and across England, there have been huge changes in the structure of the economy, in demography and in values. All have had their effect on the context in which schools operate. There are now far higher levels of expectation, of scrutiny and of measurement of schools performance. Examinations are not all, but this perspective does allow us a broad measure of educational progress in the town.

Colonel Heywood-Lonsdale showed the Governing Body of the Grammar School that in 1958-60, 76% of the school's pupils at 16 gained four or more passes at GCE Ordinary-Level. The Grammar School admitted 23% of 11 year olds in the area and no public examinations were taken at the County Secondary Modern. This meant that just 17.5% of the overall population of the area left school with a meaningful basket of qualifications.

In 2014, on a broadly equivalent measure, the figure for The Grove was 55%¹⁰. This represents a threefold increase in attainment. That is a stark measure of progress, and one replicated across the attainment range and into the sixth form where a far higher proportion of students now stay on to complete courses of advanced study. In 2014 at The Grove, 35 pupils from an original year group of 158 secured at least one Advanced-Level on leaving the school, equivalent to 22% of the population. In 1958-60, the equivalent

10 Department for Education School and College Performance Tables 2014.

figure in the days of the Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools was 6%.

The coming of the comprehensive school has thus enabled very significant increase in opportunity for success for young people from the Market Drayton area. Martin Wilson wished this opportunity, in his day offered to less than a quarter of students, to be extended to all. This required the end of selective education and the closure of the Grammar School. There is sadness always in the passing of an institution with such a long history, and the more so when it had been one of struggle against adversity and rowing against the tide of social change. Market Drayton County Grammar School was, however, a creature of its age, and its passing was a necessary precondition for the establishment of a common school in Market Drayton. Its closure was achieved with openness and dignity, and enabled the comprehensive to get off to a flying start. The process has enabled The Grove, which proudly celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 2015, to provide not for some part of the youth of the realm, but for all.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Archives & Museums

The Shropshire County Archive holds Minutes and Reports of the Education Committee, of the Governing Bodies of Market Drayton County Grammar School and Market Drayton Secondary Modern School, together with the associated Log Books compiled by the Head Teacher.

The National Archive at Kew holds the files of the Ministry of Education, and reports of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. The Ministry's file on the reorganisation of secondary education in Market Drayton is however missing. Files on a sample of other contemporaneous schemes have been retained, but it is believed that the Market Drayton file was 'weeded out' at an unknown date.

The Local Studies Library and the Town Museum in Market Drayton contain a variety of pamphlets and other materials of background interest to the town in this period.

The Shropshire Star in Ketley, Telford, retain the archive of The Newport & Market Drayton Advertiser for this period.

Books Consulted

Benn, C & Chitty C. *Thirty Years On*. Penguin Books 1997.

Benn, M. *School Wars: The Battle for Britain's Education*. Verso 2011.

Biffen, J. *Semi-Detached*. Biteback Publishing 2013.

Butler, Lord RA. *The Art of the Possible*. Penguin 1971.

Carstairs, G.M. *This Island Now*. BBC Reith Lectures, 1962. Hogarth Press, 1963.

Fenwick, I.G.K. *The Comprehensive School 1944-70: the politics of secondary school reorganisation*. Methuen. 1976

Gamble, A. *Britain in Decline*. St Martin's Press 1994.

Goldthorpe, J.H. 'Understanding – and Misunderstanding – Social Mobility in Britain'. Barnett Papers in Social Research. University of Oxford 2012.

Hennessy, P. *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*. Verso Books 1993.

Kogan, M. *The Politics of Education: Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland*. Penguin Books 1971.

Kynaston, D. *Family Britain, 1951-57*. Bloomsbury 2009.

Kynaston, D. *Modernity Britain, 1959-62*. Bloomsbury 2014.

Jones, E. *It's All Part of the Pattern – the Memoirs of a Market Drayton Lady*. Pybus 1997.

Levin, B. *The Pendulum Years: Britain in the 1960s*. Cape 1989.

Lewis, G. *A Childhood Remembered*. Authorhouse 2006.

Pedley, R. *The Comprehensive School*. Penguin Books 1979 edition.

Ridgeway, M. *A Century of Elementary Education in Market Drayton 1863-1965*. M. Ridgeway 1986.

Rowley, N & Rowley, SV. *Market Drayton A Study in Social History*. Rowley 1966.

Rowley, N. *The Story of Market Drayton*. Rowley 1987.

Rusholme, Lord James. *Education and Democratic Leadership*. Oxford University Press 1961.

Sampson, A. *The Anatomy of Britain*. Hodder & Stoughton 1962.

Stevens, F. *The Living Tradition: the social and educational assumptions of the grammar school*. Hutchinson 1960.

Taylor, D & Taylor, R. *Mr Adams Free Grammar School*. Phillimore & Co 2002.

Wilson, M. *Epoch in Education: Administrators Challenge*. Sheffield City Polytechnic 1985.

Young, M. *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Thames & Hudson. 1958.

Yurdan, M. *School Songs & Gymslips: Grammar Schools in the 1950s and 1960s*. The History Press 2012.

A Note about the Author

Peter Housden attended Market Drayton Grammar School and The Grove Comprehensive School from 1963-69. After graduating in Sociology from Essex University, he worked a teacher in a comprehensive school in Shropshire and later as Director of Education and Chief Executive for Nottinghamshire County Council before joining the Department for Education and Skills in 2001. He was appointed as Permanent Secretary at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005 and went on to serve at the Department of Communities & Local Government before moving to Scotland in 2010 as Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, leading the civil service in an extraordinary era of constitutional debate and change, and in placing new styles of leadership and engagement at the heart of public services reform. He is a Trustee of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and his earlier publications include *Local Statesmen: The Story of Politics in Nottinghamshire County Council*.

