

## ***Headmasters***

***F G Hall 1922-1930 A J Doig M.A. (Camb) 1930-52***

***GJP Courtney MA 1952-1959 C R Bingham 1960-1968 M.A. (London) D.Phil. (Oxon)***

***B F Atherton 1969 M.A (Cantab) BSc Wales Grand Inst.***

**A J Doig M.A. (Camb) 1930-52**



**Mr. A. J. DOIG.**

**Headmaster, Mitcham Boys' Grammar School,  
1930 to 1952**

Mr Doig leaves this term to become Headmaster of Surbiton Grammar School. He has been Headmaster at Mitcham for 23 years, and it came as a considerable shock to hear that he was leaving us. In buildings and in number of boys the School has increased considerably during his reign—and, we venture to think, in reputation. It is a solemn thought that Mr. Doig has some seventy times wished the School a happy holiday and some seventy times has welcomed it back from that same happy holiday. We wish h.m, if not a happy holiday at Surbiton, a happy Headmastership there.

I count it a privilege to endeavour to put into words some of my impressions of Mr. A. J. Doig. I have been asked to write from the Governors' point of view and would therefore state that my own connection with the school and with Mr. Doig commenced in 1937, when he had already been seven years in the saddle and was well settled into his very important position.

Mr. Doig lived for the school then and has always done so since. The war took him and the boys to Weston-super-Mare, a naturally unwelcome change and one necessitating close co-operation with the authorities at Weston. Despite difficult circumstances the school spent a happy time there, and tributes were paid to the behaviour and bearing of our representatives in the West when they returned once more to Mitcham.

As Chairman of the Governors I have naturally had close contact with the Head Master and with happenings at the School, and feel privileged to pay a warm tribute to the great part Mr. Doig has had in building up, year by year, a worth-while tradition of which the school is rightly proud.

Mr. Doig has always had a great faith in Mitcham boys which has been justified by results, and it must be with great satisfaction that he learns from time to time of the exploits of those whom he has been able to influence and fit for their chosen careers.

His patience and perseverance in striving for those things needed by an ever-growing school, including a good usable playing field, have never failed despite the delays and frustrations caused by shortages and cuts for the purpose of economy.

Mitcham boys and Mitcham parents owe a great debt to Mr. Doig, for he has given twenty-three years of unselfish endeavour in bringing to fine manhood the best of our youth in Mitcham and the surrounding district. We all thank him very sincerely and wish him God-speed in his new appointment at Surbiton.

G. S. ALDERMAN  
(Chairman of Governors)

On December the nineteenth, the last day of the present term, Mr. Doig will conduct his final assembly at this school. For us in the Senior School that occasion will mark the end of one period of our lives during which, I feel, we have been guided carefully along the paths of reality with a stern and unwavering hand. It has been said that the Headmaster of a school, amongst everything and everybody else, influences a schoolboy's character least. This is untrue. A Headmaster sets a standard of principle and morality which all in his keeping strive to live up to. So has it been with Mr. Doig. His energy, resourcefulness and justice have always been available for those of us who go astray and need encouragement.

No mention of Mr. Doig may be made in Mitcham without coupling his name with those of Gilbert and Sullivan (by permission of the executors of Rupert D'Oyly Carte, Esq.) Those of us who perform in the Operas and those who come and enjoy them every year would, I am sure, agree that his warm-heartedness and enthusiasm are very much in evidence at this new traditional occasion. May we hope that, in this respect, the flame of tradition will prove too strong to be extinguished.

We will not dwell on long good-byes and farewell courtesies here, for we learnt long ago that formality cuts no ice on these occasions.

We wish you happiness, Sir.

A BOY IN THE SENIOR SCHOOL.

As a parent whose son has passed through the School and is in his last year there, I feel some words of appreciation are due to Mr. Doig from such as myself.

One has to meet Mr. Doig only once to feel that he has had Mitcham Grammar School very much at heart. I have had many contacts with him, and have found both his courtesy and his knowledge of individual boys to be outstanding. At all times I have found him approachable, his advice when sought has always been given without fear or favour, and such advice, if acted upon, has proved excellent. The meetings with parents of the boys in the Upper School have been informative and useful in helping parents to decide upon their sons' future, and no doubt have opened the parents' eyes to how much he knows of their sons.

His charm, quiet humour and earnest endeavour on behalf of our sons have made him "Our respected Headmaster."

A PARENT.

The characteristics of a headmaster are probably reflected in the boys at his school, but it would be a very dull school for them if the Staff all reflected the headmaster. It is one of Mr. Doig's virtues that he has always been tolerant of the idiosyncrasies of his Staff (who all know how a School should be run) and that he has been equally calm and unruffled when something has gone wrong, perhaps as a result of these idiosyncrasies.

Evacuation during the War, together with its consequent staffing difficulties, left him not only unmoved but happy, and to him is largely due its success at a time when schools were disintegrating before their shocked Headmasters' eyes.

Perhaps one of Mr Doig's happiest characteristics is his gift for bizarre quirks of humour. It is a somewhat gayer Speech Night when a headmaster can announce, in the middle of a moral evening, that a Work Cup was presented by an Old Boy who (as an aside and probably as an after-thought) "wasn't particularly good at work himself but thought there was probably something in it."

A MEMBER OF STAFF

Few of us are conscious during our school-days of their moulding of our characters and their influence on our later lives. Yet there must be many Old Boys like myself who owe "Doggy" (as he is probably still called) much of their present success and enjoyment in life.

I can still see him rehearsing a Gilbert & Sullivan opera on cold November nights and moulding acceptable 'tenors' and 'basses' from voices scarcely broken; or on the night of the show, in his distinctive dinner-jacket, mouthing your forgotten words over the footlights.

He also introduced Rugby Football to us, and the success of the School and Old Boys' teams has well rewarded his decision. His interest in the games produced a team-spirit I have found unequalled in the Services and the commercial world.

Under his unnoticed care, a spirit of true democracy existed in the house and Prefectorial systems, and tolerance was shown to the many mistakes that were made by those exercising the authority he gave them; yet firmness was there when needed, and in my junior days I had reason to respect the strength of his right arm.

Traditions develop slowly but are quickly destroyed. I hope that whoever succeeds A. J. D. will cherish them as we have done. When Mr Doig says "That will do, thank you" after his last Assembly, I would like to be there to add "Well done — and good luck!"

AN OLD BOY

Mr. Doig has been here for some twenty-odd years. During this time several hundred boys have passed through his hands from the relative freedom of boyhood to the trials of the world of today, well-trained to become good citizens of England.

I have known Mr. Doig only for one year, but in that time I have formed a favourable opinion of him. In my experience he is very fair-minded and only gives punishment after considering the matter with an unbiased mind.

While in the First Form I remember Mr. Doig showing us his "homework", which to me looked like several sheets of solid figures. It was then that I realised that the job of Headmaster is not so easy as I had at first thought.

Soon, Mr. Doig will leave Mitcham to take up his new post. I am sure we shall all miss his humour and we welcome the new Headmaster, who we feel sure will do well in Mr. Doig's place.

A MEMBER OF THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Many of us have had the misfortune, both masters and boys, 'to be up against it' during the 23 years that Mr. Doig has been at the school and I firmly believe that on these occasions there could have been no more kindly, more considerate or more helpful man than Mr. Doig. At such times no task was too much for him, no journey too long. For these virtues, perhaps above all the others that he has manifested to us, will he be remembered here with gratitude and affection.

H. S. JUDGE.



December, 1959



*Mr. Courtney has left us this term after seven years as Headmaster. The School owes him much and we felt that we could not allow his departure to occur without recording our appreciation in some more adequate form than was possible in this year's School Magazine. The following contributors—a Governor of the School, a Parent, a member of Staff, a Senior Boy and an Old Boy respectively—have spoken not only for themselves but also for a large number of others who have not the opportunity of thanking him individually. We hope that, collectively, their remarks do not too much suggest the tone of a formal vote of thanks, for it is the sense of many personal expressions of gratitude and respect, from those who have worked with him in the running of the School and from the boys whose futures he has helped to shape, which we have most wished to convey.*

**I**T S E E M S almost impossible that seven years ago I was called upon to pay tribute on behalf of the Governors to Mr. A. J. Doig, who was about to depart to Surbiton Grammar School. Now comes a request to do a similar thing on the occasion of the departure of Mr. Courtney to take over the headship of Isleworth Grammar School.

I well remember the meeting at County Hall when we appointed Mr. Courtney to Mitcham. The selection committee had little difficulty in deciding which of the candidates was the man for the job. I felt sure that our choice was a good one. I am equally sure now that we made no mistake.

Seven years have passed, and my personal regret is that a change of leadership has come so comparatively soon.

Mr. Courtney, while bringing a fresh outlook and new ideas into the work and life of the School, has, at the same time, done much to maintain and strengthen the School's traditions. His approach to educational methods is alert and up-to-date and he has given much thought and very considerable assistance to the Governors in building up, balancing and strengthening the quality of the Staff.

As far as premises and equipment are concerned, he has pursued with vigour and fervour all efforts to bring about improvements. I shall not attempt to enumerate them, as the results are self-evident to all who work in the School, teachers and scholars alike.

Mr. Courtney's personality is a strong one and has, without doubt, stamped itself on all concerned. We thank him most sincerely for what he has done and can only regret that he is bidding us farewell. Our loss is Isleworth's gain, and we wish him well in his new sphere of service.

**I**T IS some six years now since, in the summer term, I, with my son, was summoned to the "Head's" study at Mitcham. On recollection, I feel sure that, of the two of us, I had the more "butterflies", for I could still recall the somewhat awesome and fearsome gentleman called "The Head" of my day. The uneasiness I had soon disappeared, for Mr. Courtney, to my first impression, was a gentleman with personality, understanding and zest for the School, who, I felt, could and would by his own example increase, in both mind and body, the stature of the boys who passed through his hands.

Year by year, since then, my impression has been strengthened, for never at any time during my close work with him for the Parents' Association, has there been an occasion when I have found him to lack interest or fail to show enthusiasm for any project or matter that could be said to be of value to our sons during their school lives.

This last term my son left the School to embark upon his life's career and I am sure that in years to come he will refer to Mr. Courtney, not as a man upon whom he looked with awe and fear, but as a gentleman and friend.

For the parents, upon his departure from Mitcham, I say, "Mr. Courtney, we thank you. We know your days with us were well spent. We sincerely hope you will be as successful and happy at your new school."



**M**R. COURTNEY has been at Mitcham for almost exactly seven years, which is the school lifetime of a boy who stays for a normal sixth-form course. There the comparison necessarily ends: the boy can hope to have much influence on his contemporaries only for two years at the most; the Headmaster *is* the School from the first day he walks into assembly.

Only a few boys, and relatively few of the Staff, can remember that day. Mr. Courtney was following a Headmaster who had reigned for over twenty years, and it is not an easy position to be in. He soon made various changes, as was to be expected from any new Headmaster with ideas. Typical of his energy were the realisation that the games field was in need of a pavilion, and the fruits of that realisation in the Fair which took place at School in his second term. The pavilion was built not long after, the condition of the playing pitches was vastly improved, and our rugger and cricket pitches, though not in the most beautiful surroundings in Surrey, are, from the playing point of view, high in rank among them.

With the Headmaster, anything that in his opinion has demanded action has got it. He is ill-content to wait. The school uniform, the choice of subjects in the time-table, and the choice of play for the Christmas term performance have all in their various ways undergone change. The new science block and particularly the new canteen are the result of his continuous pressure on the authorities.

It is the duty of a Headmaster to appear to be interested in all sides of a school's activities, whatever his private feelings about them. Mr. Courtney has been singularly adept in hiding his preferences. Who is to say what he has really felt of Games, Prefects, the Parents' Association, the Library, State Scholarships, the Staff Room, School Assembly, French Camp, Theatre Visits? His interest in them all has been considerable and unflinching.

One suspects that he considers that the main function of a Grammar School is to work, and that the best background for work is a civilised society. We hope, and think, that he has realised that aim at Mitcham.

WHEN Mr. Courtney became Headmaster of the School, I was in the first form. Now that he is leaving I myself am about to leave. Thus his period of Headmastership has coincided exactly with my own years of higher education. Perhaps seven years is not a long time to be Headmaster of one school, but the amount that Mr. Courtney has achieved in this time is incalculable.

As a student, one thing I have greatly appreciated is the improvement in our working conditions. Through his efforts the School is a place in which we can enjoy our work ; it is brighter and more roomy ; we have new furniture, new laboratories, and pleasant surroundings to eat in. But we owe him a good deal more than this. He has, above all, been concerned that the School should not be a mere academic machine, but a live community whose activities are not confined to books. Characteristic of this concern has been his stimulating interest in the School societies.

Finally, he has always been wise and friendly in helping us with our personal problems. We have looked to him for guidance, and we are truly sorry to see him go. He will not go alone, however: he will take with him the respect and best wishes of us all, and our hope that he will be as successful and as appreciated at his new school as he has been here.

**D**EPENDING on your position in the School, a summons to the Headmaster's room can be awe-inspiring, painful or social—and no doubt sometimes a combination of all three; but with Mr. Courtney it usually involved an element of the unexpected. I once received two such summonses in one day. The first was to advise a slightly more lenient attitude towards first-form miscreants, and the second was to suggest that the ungainly and socially retiring members of the sixth might benefit from a course of dancing lessons. And herein we may perhaps see the secret of Mr. Courtney's galvanising effect on the School: his concern for each boy, great and small, saint and sinner; his fairness and tolerant justice; the enthusiasm which he inspired by his desire to improve and expand, not only in the basic essentials of School life and education, but in the apparently more trivial details of our daily existence.

That so much can have been accomplished in so short a time seems to some of us miraculous, but to Mr. Courtney it appears only in the natural progression of things. He never seems over-awed by anyone or anything, and yet he combines this with a natural and instinctive ability to put at ease even those whom his vigour and energy might put to shame.

Even though the signs may still flicker "Engaged" or "Enter", the expectancy will hardly be the same.



The Headmaster (1959-68)

### DR. BINGHAM

Dr. Bingham will be leaving at the end of the present term to take up his new appointment as Headmaster of Glyn Grammar School. We print below two tributes to his work at Mitcham: by a former pupil and a present pupil.

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I know that Dr. Bingham will leave Mitcham this summer with fond memories of the school and that he will be well remembered by the boys in whom he instilled a strong spirit of unity and friendship. In the linguistic field, of which I can best speak, he did much to communicate his enthusiasm to his pupils and succeeded in a very short time in establishing a flourishing modern language department in the school. He introduced German, his own subject, into the curriculum upon his arrival, and it must be a rewarding thought for him that three of this year's Trinity/Keble German group in Oxford are Old Mitchamians. He encouraged his "gentlemen" to continue on into the sixth form, which for them was a pleasant experience and which has meant that a large number of Old Mitchamians have gone on to pursue their studies at University and other establishments of higher education. Through his efforts and interest the name of Mitcham Grammar School has gained recognition and come to guarantee a promising undergraduate at many of our top universities. The celebration of the 1968 Oxford dinner, in fact, saw some ten Old Mitchamians engaged in various courses of study at the university.

In the field of sport Dr. Bingham's encouragement of his school's teams has been untiring. He was always a familiar spectator on the touch lines when the first fifteen played and his vivid if somewhat rosy accounts of the team's performance were an indispensable feature of Tuesday morning assembly. But it was not only in rugby, his favourite game, that he showed interest. He carefully followed the progress of all the school's sports, and indeed of its many clubs and societies.

Dr. Bingham placed high importance upon the tidy appearance of Mitcham School and its pupils. Many and frequent were his chastisements in respect of tonsorial extravagance. In the summer, the gardens in particular, made a pleasant impression on visitors and helped give the school a friendly, restful atmosphere, which is often so lacking in the larger schools of today.

Dr. Bingham set high standards for the boys of his school and saw that they were upheld. He kept order with fairness and often with humour, but could be strict and demanding on occasions. Charles Bingham helped mould many of the young men of Mitcham and it is a sad occasion for all concerned for him to leave the school he had served so well. We wish him every success in his new school.

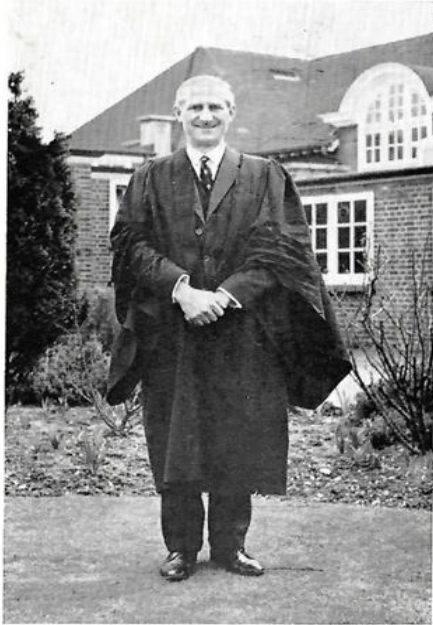
D.W.P.

During his years as Headmaster, all Dr. Bingham's efforts have been directed towards the growth and development of the School. He has sought to establish the School, not as a mere academic machine whose activities are confined to books and study, but as a living community in which a boy's character, as well as his brain, is moulded. Consistent with his belief that members of the School should lead a full life, he has inspired enthusiasm in sport and in out-of-school activities. Many is the time that mud-soaked 1st XV players have glanced towards the touchline to see the lone supporter braving the elements.

Dr. Bingham has become so much a part of the School that it is difficult to imagine it without him. We regret his leaving, but all of us who have been students under him will long remember his fairness, his tolerant justice, the consideration he showed to us as individuals and the genuine enthusiasm which he had for all aspects of school life. We hope that Dr. Bingham has enjoyed his headship here, and we also hope that his new school appreciates him as much as Mitcham does.

N.S.D.

***B F Atherton 1969 M.A (Cantab) BSc Wales Grand Inst.***



Mr. B. F. Atherton