

"My father, having heard of the Minster Grammar School at Southwell some 15 miles away from my home in Bestwood and which had places for about twenty boarders, entered me there for the Autumn Term of 1920. I was nine years old and the thought of leaving home was terrible. My father took me to Southwell and handed me over to the Head Master, one Reginald Matthews, who later impressed not only me, but also the majority of his pupils, as an extraordinary and very competent man.

"We travelled there by foot, tram, train and station trap. We walked to Daybrook to catch the tram with my small trunk perched on the saddle and handlebars of my father's bicycle. The bike was stored temporally in a shop near the tram stop. My trunk, which contained a new outfit from the School Outfitter, Dixon & Packer in Nottingham, was looked after by the conductor on his platform and in due course we arrived at the Midland Station.

"There we boarded a train for Rolleston Junction where we changed into a small shuttle train to Southwell. The station trap carried us the rest of the way to the School, which was close to the Minster. In fact, its buildings occupied a corner of the churchyard. It had started life as the school for choristers and similar Church supporters, reputedly in late Norman times, when the Nave of the Minster was built.

"Mr. Matthews, or Matt as we called him among ourselves, was a kind man who had served in the First World War as a Captain in the Royal Gloucester Regiment and at the time I joined the School was in his early twenties. Incidentally, he gave me his Sword and Sam Browne belt when I was commissioned in 1931. He was supported by a living-in master, Dudley Doy, an ex Flying Corps Officer who entertained the boarders during the evenings when prep was over, to stories of his wartime experiences. We all thought the world of him and I believe from this distance that he too thought well of us. Suffice it to say that he usually remained among us until bedtime at 8.30 pm, when he recited evening prayers, before making his way up the street to the Saracens Head where the town worthies met of an evening. He was an excellent sportsman and coached us in both Cricket and Rugby Football.

"Other members of the staff were similar but of varying personality and ability as teachers. K.G. Blair, (French and who subsequently married Miss Padgett, the proprietor of the newsagent's shop). John Lindley, (Geography and the owner of an ancient Morris Car), Bob Gregg (Chemistry and Physics), Mr. Heppenstall (a splendid pianist), Mr. Betts (a large solid chap) and sundry others, some temporary or connected with the Minster.

"The School was organised roughly on Public School lines, comprising but one house numbering some 20 boarders and 60 day boys who lived in the town or who travelled each day from villages on the line to Nottingham and who were called 'train boys'. We had a Prep School environment in the first two forms, 2 and 3, with the more senior approach in forms 4 and up. In the sixth form we all sat the Oxford School Certificate Examination in, I think, July each year. In his teaching mode Dudley Doy was in charge of Maths and it was his boast that he never had a failure in that discipline. Other masters were not so fortunate and we were particularly weak in French. So weak in fact that although I passed the Oxford with Honours and three Distinctions, I failed in French and so failed to get the Matric exemption.

"I was reasonably happy at school after overcoming a period of homesickness common to all young boys and I am not ashamed to admit that on my first night there when I got into bed I cried myself to sleep. Forms 2 and 3 provided a good grounding in the three R's though to this day I am sadly unable to spell correctly and as mentioned earlier my French was abysmal.

However, promotion to form 4 was a kind of watershed in my schooling. Not only did I encounter and become fond of Maths, Physics and other associated subjects but my brother Roy joined as a 2nd former. This not only provided a family link but some one who it was pretty safe to bully. Not real hard nosed stuff of course, but he was one who I could use as a 'doter and gofer'. Roy naturally resented this and later told me that I was the most hated boy in the school.

(It is interesting to note that after I had left, Roy was joined by our other brother John who received similar treatment and who gave Roy an exactly similar title)

The Minster played a large part in School activities and many of us became very attached to it. There were innumerable passages, landings etc, to explore and a visit to the triforium or possibly the belfry and the top of the central tower was a great treat. We attended services there twice on Sundays dressed in our black coats and grey striped trousers with an Eton collar for juniors and a starched turned down collar for others. After confirmation one attended the early communion service on the first Sunday in the month and on that day were excused Matins.

This provided a real incentive to be confirmed for there was much to do in the district when free of official duties. For example the obligatory Sunday afternoon walk could be made to include the free Sunday morning thus allowing us to arrange outings far afield; for example to the River Trent at Fiskerton or a day out with one's parents if they could be-persuaded to come over.

"Things were not so cushy however for the unfortunate Choristers who in addition to normal school lessons were obliged to attend Choir School every afternoon and all the services in the Minster whenever they were held. The chosen few who had earned their free places at School by being able to sing worked for their education and no mistake. There were a few boarding Choristers but the majority were local dayboys.

"There was a well established "Old Boys Society", The Old Southwellians, who gave the school much support, not only by visiting and talking to the present boys, but by fielding teams to take on the boys at whatever sport was in season. They possessed a large silver cup that was presented each year to 'the best all round boy of his year'. At the end of my last term in 1927, I was most surprised to be selected to receive it. This thrill was severely dampened by the sheer flight of having to appear at their Annual Dinner, normally held at the Assembly Rooms adjoining the Saracens Head, to thank them for it. This cup was subsequently awarded to my two brothers Roy and John when they too left in their respective years. To the best of my knowledge, this sort of record has never been repeated since"

**Leslie Norfolk (1920 - 27)**