

# THE RAGLAN SCHOOL 1928-1949

## 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

From J. H. Adams

The Boys' School Headmaster 1941 - 1949

First I must say that I write as a junior member of the family, having spent but eight years under the Raglan colours. Those years have been a testing period for most schools, with the upheaval of War, frequent staff changes (over 40 in the Boys' School alone between 1941 and 1949) grievous shortages in equipment and supplies, and perhaps most important of all, the ferment in the world of education accompanying the restlessness and social changes in the greater world outside.

Yet I would say that the school has held fast to its ideals throughout this time of stress and, in a changing world, has kept first things first, integrity of purpose and a steadfast belief that in education the child comes first and always first. Bill and Dick and Harry may be in the same class and Dick may be the "average" boy of the group, but that does not turn the boys into three Dicks. Simple and obvious as this statement may appear to be, it is easily forgotten by those in high authority, remote from the schools, and I wish that the words "There is no average child" could always be in the forefront of the minds of all those in control of English school, from Ministry official to the teacher in the classroom. And it cannot be too strongly stressed that the most important of these is the teacher, the man or woman in contact with the child during his most formative years. As long ago as 1834 a Select Committee Report on Education stated "In all cases the success of a school depends on the character of the teachers."

This was the dispassionate utterance of a University Professor (Professor Pillans) yet in 1946, we find a man of the people (James Hilton) writing these words – "If I had a child who wanted to be a teacher, I would bid him Godspeed as if he were going to war. For indeed the war against prejudice, greed and ignorance is eternal and those who dedicate themselves to it give their lives no less because they may live to see some fraction of the battle won."

Raglan has been singularly fortunate in the men and who have worked within its walls. The pioneers who helped to shape the ideals and policy of the school set a standard which those who followed have striven at all times to maintain. They would not wish me or anyone else to name them. The school motto "Sic vos, non vobis" has been and is to them more than a Latin tag. "Not for yourselves" is a philosophy they have accepted in the full spirit of the words and they have loyally tried, no matter what the difficulties and disappointments, to communicate that spirit to the boys and girls under their care.

In the schoolroom or in the playing field, in the countless activities outside the curriculum that help to make up the full life of a school, they have given their best, and many a Raglan boy has returned to the school to voice his appreciation of the help the school had given him in preparation for the world of men. The Norwood Report wisely stated that education is concerned with ultimate values independent of time and environment. A child can only understand this as a growing realisation that the school stands for something greater than himself; in Kipling's words –

"The game is greater than the player of the game  
The ship is more than the crew."

In the last few years the part played by the school in society has changed considerably; the scope has been widened and the responsibilities increased. No longer is the school a place where the child receives instruction in the three R.s; the last War and the 1944 Act have combined to change the whole face of education. The Butler Act was not merely an extension of the 1921 Act and earlier Education Acts. It set a new course and attempted, to a hitherto unheard of degree, to link the parents' responsibilities to a democratic educational system. To many it may seem that the provision of school meals, medical services, welfare clinics, County Colleges, etc., has lessened the responsibility of the parent, but the 1944 Act will be a complete failure if parents do not realise that, in the words of the Act, they must cause their children to

receive full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude. It is their duty to see that Local Authorities carry this ideal into practice. What was previously optional for local authorities is now by law a duty.

Undoubtedly the widening of the social service rendered by the school has created great difficulties and imposed a server strain on all those who serve within its walls. Buildings are insufficient for the many calls made upon them, makeshift arrangements for school meals and the raising of the leaving age have in particular created conditions inside the school which only those who have to stand the daily strain can fully appreciate. The enlargement of the school's responsibilities has caused an increase in staff of all kinds, and much work is now carried out in premises never designed for so many purposes. It is true to say that overcrowding in the schools of to-day is as great as that in the homes. Raglan has now two full canteen staffs, a matron and two clerical assistants and I should like to record my appreciation of their loyal service to the school and their willingness to co-operate in school activities not falling directly within the scope of their allotted duties. It is gratifying to note this true expression of the spirit of service, and to all those who carry out the many and varied tasks that are included in the complex machinery of a big school I would ask parents join me in giving their thanks.

All the efforts of school staffs, however, would be largely negated if parents did not contribute their part to the successful running of the school. Education is, or should be, a partnership between home and school. I am happy to say that Raglan is *not* one of those schools where parents enter the doors only to register a complaint or "have it out" with the headmaster. The Parent-Teacher Association is a flourishing body and does much to foster the good relations between teaching staff and home. There must be some occasional differences of opinion (and it is good that there should be, for no one wants a deadening attitude of indifference) but the best way to resolve differences is to discuss them in an atmosphere of goodwill. The Parent-Teacher Association has maintained such an atmosphere in spite of the many difficulties and frustrations of the post-war years. Addison's words –

"Tis not in mortals to command success,  
But we'll do more . . . deserve it."

Might well be the motto of the Association and I trust that this will be as true in the future as it is at the time of writing. May I add a request to parents to let me know of any old Raglan pupils who would be interested in the formation of a Raglan Old Students' Association? We hope to develop such an Association in the near future, but it is not easy for the school, especially after the dislocations of the War years, to discover the whereabouts of many of its old students.

Finally, I would say that the future success of the school, as in the past, depends on a concept of education as something immeasurably greater than schooling. Children are responsive to every part of their environment; every experience is a part of their education. Oscar Wilde's dictum that "education is admirable, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught" conveys a subtle truth which every parent and servant in the field of education should ponder upon. A school that thinks only in terms of the curriculum is failing in its first duty: a society that thinks of a school as a place to fit its children for vocational needs alone is not worthy of its teachers, not worthy of all those who seek to lead the new generation to "the full life and the good."