

The 1920's



The Pirates of Penzance 1928

In *The Durlstonian* (Vol. IV N9 38, 1920) the story of the founding of the Durlston Court Cadet Corps is described. The Corps began in 1903 at the suggestion of L.R. Kent, one of the original 23 boys. Mr Atkinson purchased 40 Boer War vintage rifles. Kent, G.R. Atkinson and L. Jenkins drilled the sections.

The School purchased a 60- foot long wooden hut from Swanage Army Camp and set it up next to the pavilion. A dry playground was provided for the Junior House. A high wire fence surrounded it. The old pavilion was enlarged for tea purposes enabling School XIs to be entertained on the field without the need to return to the main school. Colonel Lyle promised to provide the Corps with a drum.

At Sports Day July 1920 Mrs Longman presented a silver challenge cup for the 100 yards in memory of Valentine who was killed in the Great War. Durlston won the first Inter Schools Sports for boys, beating all local rivals. The team received a Silver Challenge Cup provided by the Headmasters.

The War Memorial Window at St Aldhelm's was dedicated on January 22, 1921. The School crest and motto was found at the top of the central window.

A poem written before Easter 1921 recalls the measles epidemic.

"The measles came to Durlston Court

In nineteen twenty-one,'

And scarcely twenty boys remained Beneath the golden sun.

For all but these had soon succumbed, And gone to view the San.

The nurses said, "Cheer up, old boy, And bear it like a man."

G.T. Atkinson noted that there were 252 leavers' names on the Dining Room walls by Easter 1921. The Old Field rented since 1903 was purchased by the school during the summer of 1921. G.T.

Atkinson mentioned that January 22nd each year was to be remembered as Dedication Day, another way of recalling the sacrifice of Old Durlstonians in the Great War. Unfortunately this did not take place in 1922 due to widespread illness.

A lawn tennis court was made in the Old Field. Some trees were felled to make room for junior games pitches. Table tennis proved to be a popular indoor game. Matches were played in the Dining Hall.

The 1st XI soccer team won all of their nine matches. "The School won because it was quicker on the ball and played as a team and not individually," wrote G. T. Atkinson. Whooping cough affected the boys during the summer term of 1923, Cricket matches were cancelled as a result. The cricket pitch was improved by the removal of a clump of trees. Durlston recorded their second win in the Inter-School sports in 1923. During the autumn of 1923 the Cadet Corps received the promised drum.

N.C.O.s were given new chevrons; white on a grey background to replace the old khaki ones. The old rifles were also replaced with dummy service rifles. At the end of the summer 1924, 299 names could be found on the Dining Room walls. The annual Studland Picnic took place on June 20th, Molly Atkinson's birthday.

A new Music Room was built and put into use during the autumn of 1924. It measured 21 ft by 18ft. It doubled as a library.

The 1st XI cricket had a record season winning all nine matches. H.J. Wright scored 135 not out v Hillcrest, 161 v Oldfield and 119v Forres. An outstanding performance.

Increased traffic passing the school caused the building of a flight of steps to prevent the boys rushing out of the door to the gate. The "James" challenge cup was given for Junior Sports. In November, Lt Commander A.M. Carrie died in a submarine accident. He attended Durlston from 1903 to 1907.

K.B. Anderson, (Assistant Master from 1905-15) died, aged 44, that same month. *'I don't think a kinder or more unselfish man ever existed'* wrote G. T. Atkinson.

The most significant decision of 1926 was the appointment of Patrick Hume Cox as a Partner in the school. He was educated at Bradfield and Jesus College Cambridge. During the Great War he served as a captain in the Grenadier Guards and won the Military Cross.

School activities during the spring term were badly affected by chickenpox and whooping cough. Atkinson wrote that 'the class-rooms often sounded like homes for lost dogs, not many of the barkers had to be transferred to the San.'

352 boys had passed through Durlston between 1903-26. P.H. Cox informed The Durlstonian that he would do his utmost to help maintain the great traditions of the school. In June 1926 the Cadet Corps wore a full uniform for the first time. The mother of Mrs Cox provided the uniforms. The Cadets *'were very proud of themselves.'*

The Cadets were affiliated to the Dorsetshire Regiment following their inspection that month. The cricket XI won all their fixtures. Boys were faced with difficulties at the beginning of term trying to

get to Swanage owing to the General Strike. Two charabancs and a 4½ ton lorry collected the boys and their luggage in London for the long drive to Dorset.

Mr Sulman, mathematics and games master, left the school in 1926. Atkinson valued his support at the same level as that of Ker, Anderson and Jenkins. High praise indeed! Miss Idle, music mistress for twenty-one years at Durlston, also retired in 1926.

Mr and Mrs Atkinson presented a Challenge Cup for the annual Cadet Corps competition. It was one belonging to G .H. Atkinson, who died in 1917. A cricket bat and ball were given to the best batsman and bowler in the 1st XI. Mr Ellis joined the staff in September 1926.

In December 1926 a meeting was held to form an Old Durlstonian Club. The Club had three objectives:

- a) To keep Old Durlstonians in touch with the school and each other.
- b) To arrange Old Durlstonian Days and an annual dinner in London.
- c) To form a cricket team.

The colours were to be grey and white with the addition of a darker grey.

The life subscription was set at 5/- (25p).

1927 saw the first ever Staff v School Soccer match. 'The ladies played a hard game and Molly Atkinson shot two goals.' The players were given lemons at halftime. A part of the Old Field was turned over to vegetable growing - especially potatoes. Swedish drill, a series of keep-fit exercises was introduced in P.E. A rifle range was provided for the Cadet Corps. Glasier fired the first shot. The range was made in the Old Field.

Mr Atkinson published a book of Latin Stories in January 1928. It retailed at 1/6d and was titled "Arva Latina." At the end of the summer term, G. T. Atkinson officially retired as Headmaster of Durlston Court. He was then aged 73 years. The "Swanage Times" recalled that 'as a school Durlston Court enjoys a very wide and high reputation, and its beautifully kept playing fields, command a panoramic view of sea and country.'

In the Staff v School Cricket XI match, Molly Atkinson took 4 wickets, held 2 catches and scored 76 runs. Mrs Atkinson laid the foundation stone of the new wing on July 6th. A silver shilling minted in 1928 was placed under the stone.

The kitchen garden in the old field produced a good crop of potatoes, peas, broad beans and cabbages. By July 31st the Atkinson wing was roof-high.