

JUBILEE BROCHURE
ON THE
50th ANNIVERSARY
OF
ST. AMBROSE COLLEGE
AT
HALE BARNS,
ALTRINCHAM

1946 ~ 1996

PREFACE - By the current Head Master, Mr.G.E.Hester

A golden jubilee is a good time for reflection: for looking backwards but also for looking forwards.

This fascinating and well-written history of St.Ambrose College gives us much material for thought. There could be no better author than Mr.Sean Fleming, the longest serving teacher at St.Ambrose, a man whose whole teaching career has been spent here with dedicated service. Happily, though he has now retired as Deputy Head Master, he continues as a part-time teacher.

The history shows the great debt of gratitude that is owed to our great predecessors by those of us currently benefitting from the present glories of St.Ambrose college.

1996 is also, by a felicitous coincidence, the year of the beatification of the founder of the Christian Brothers, Edmund Ignatius Rice. If we follow Edmund Ignatius Rice. St.Ambrose College will continue to be a worthy Christian Brothers' foundation.

Edmund Rice, when Novice Master of the first community in Mount Sion, Waterford wrote: "The Brethren of the institute should have but one heart and one soul in Christ their heavenly spouse, mindful that as our Divine Saviour has by the grace of their vocation united them together in one body, they should always remain united in that same spirit of charity which is the bond of perfection." The spiritual biographer of Edmund Rice, Brother A.L.O'Toole adds: "The preservation and this growth of brotherhood was entrusted to the all-loving and all-powerful patronage of Mary, the mother of Christ." These are great lessons for all who strive to follow Edmund Rice.

At the time I write this, the Christian Brothers, fully supported by the College Governing Body. are applying for St.Ambrose College to become grant-maintained. Sean Fleming's history shows how the college has grown, changed and developed. May it continue to do so. always being faithful to its Christian Brothers' origins.

Live Jesus in our hearts for ever.

1. THE GUERNSEY CONNECTION

The story of the origins of St. Ambrose College is inextricably linked with the German invasion and occupation of Guernsey in June 1940. which caused the evacuation to England of a party of schoolboys and their De La Salle teachers from Les Vauxbelets College. During the so-called 'phoney war' of 1939-40, which preceded the German Blitzkrieg in Western Europe. the beautiful little island of Guernsey (where Victor Hugo had written 'Les Miserables' incidentally) had doubled its income tax to contribute £180,000 towards the cost of the defence of the island. but otherwise offered itself as the ideal spot for 'war time holidays'. the 'safest place on earth', far removed from the theatre of war in the English Channel and sheltered by France. However, Hitler's attack on the Low Countries and France in May 1940 caused great concern. Dunkirk was evacuated by 4 June; Paris fell on 14 June; and soon Cherbourg was in German hands. The Channel Islanders could hear the rumble of the explosions on the French mainland. The British War Cabinet agonised over the defence of the islands before deciding in favour of withdrawal and demilitarisation on 12 June. When this news was conveyed to the officials on the Channel Islands on 19 June, evacuations immediately began, and by 22 June 17,000 of Guernsey's population of 41,000 had left.

It was particularly recommended that children and men of fighting age should evacuate. The risks of famine, forced labour, or worse, had to be considered. Families had only a few hours to decide whether to stay together or be split up; to send their children alone to England, where they might have to face bombing raids. or to keep them on an island facing starvation and occupation. Some islanders in 1940 still spoke only Norman French. Queues formed in the harbour. Each evacuee had a suitcase or a pillowslip or a brown paper parcel containing essential belongings. When some became dismayed by the confusion in the harbour; or the fact that boats (colliers and the like) had no guns or escorts, they turned back and remained in Guernsey for the Occupation.

Eric Clark. St. Ambrose College's oldest Old Boy. who now lives in Hale, remembers the time vividly. For some time, they had heard the sound of shelling in Normandy. but it still came as a surprise when the Headmaster of Les Vauxbelets College, Brother Victor, announced to the boys that the Brothers were preparing to leave for England. The pupils were instructed to inform their parents, and to decide within a matter of hours whether to evacuate with the Brothers. or to stay in Guernsey. Eric, who was 13 years of age at the time, and his parents decided to leave the island. After much confusion in the harbour of St. Peter Port. the family fortunately found themselves on the same boat. It was, therefore, on 21 June 1940 that an apprehensive party of 70 schoolboys and 10 De La Salle Brothers. led by Brother Clarence. the Deputy Headmaster, safely completed a potentially hazardous voyage from St. Peter Port to Weymouth, in England. The crossing was thankfully uneventful, and Eric remembers that it was a beautiful, sunny day. Once in Weymouth they were taken to a cinema and provided with tea and sandwiches. Then the various evacuees were moved by train (a new experience for Eric) to towns in Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire, or even as far north as Glasgow. Fortunately for us, the group from Les Vauxbelets was directed to Eccles, near Manchester. where they stayed for a fortnight, sleeping between the pews in the Congregational Hall. They found the district very dirty and polluted - far removed from the wooded valleys, cliffs and secret bays in Guernsey - but they were overwhelmed by the wonderful generosity and warm welcome of the people. Other children from Guernsey found themselves in Bradford, or Marple, or Winsford, or Greenmount, near Bury; some were accompanied by the Sisters of Mercy from Le Cordier Convent. Bishop Cotter of Portsmouth (Guernsey's Diocese) took a

special interest in the evacuees, and tried to keep in touch with the various groups. When he died in October 1940, his successor, Bishop King, continued the practice.

On Sunday, 7 July, Brother Clarence, his colleagues and the Vauxbelets boys were moved to Hale, to be accommodated mostly with local families or in a hostel, such as the one near the 'Bleeding Wolf' (Glengarry). Soon the Brothers were provided with a house named 'Burnside', in Gilbert Road, as their residence, where by mid-August they were able to give lessons: part of the school attended in the morning, and the rest in the afternoon. By 26 August they had been given the use of St. Peter's Assembly Rooms in Hale as a temporary school, taking their lunch each day at the Congregational Hall opposite. Eric Clark particularly remembers the time when the Vauxbelets boys assembled in St. Baldred's Hall, the Conservative Party Headquarters, where they were to be allocated to local families. Mr. and Mrs. Lord of Broad Lane (Edgemoor) chose Eric and his brother to live with them for the next eighteen months or so, before they moved to another house in Avon Road. He understands the families were paid 7/6d per week by the local council towards the expense of accommodating the boys. Of course, the evacuees were now parishioners of St. Vincent's, Altrincham, and the Parish Priest, Canon Donnelly, was quickly active on their behalf. With the approval of Dr. Ambrose Moriarty, the Bishop of Shrewsbury, Canon Donnelly acquired an attractive house on Dunham Road, 'Oakleigh', to serve as a school from October 1941. The school was renamed "St. Ambrose College" in September 1942 after Bishop Ambrose Moriarty, who had been so supportive. Some of the boys wore the Vauxbelets blazer, which was blue with red piping around the collar, but most wore grey jackets and trousers. The school had to be furnished and equipped, but adequate supplies of desks, chairs, paper, crockery and cutlery were gradually obtained. Increasingly, boys from the local neighbourhood enrolled at the school, replacing many of the original Vauxbelets boys, who gradually reached school-leaving age during the war years, and, like Eric Clark, found employment, before joining the forces. Eric was called up into the Army in June 1945 and by November had been posted to Egypt.

Only a week after the Vauxbelets boys had left Guernsey, the Channel Islands were heavily bombed by the Luftwaffe. The Germans had been discussing Operation Green Arrow (a combined military and naval assault on the Channel Islands) on 18 June. Now on 28 June at 6.45 p.m., unaware of the demilitarised state of the islands apparently, the Luftwaffe attacked, dropping 180 bombs on Guernsey and Jersey in less than an hour, and firing countless rounds of machine-gun bullets at the islanders. In St. Peter Port, Guernsey, a long line of trucks was waiting to off-load a quantity of tomatoes onto the ship for England. Soon the line of lorries burst into flames, incinerating drivers who were caught in their cabs or sheltering under them. The blood of the wounded and the dying mingled with the juice of the tomatoes to produce a harrowing sight. Twenty-nine Guernsey people were killed. However, on 30 June, Sunday, a German pilot landed and established that Guernsey was undefended. Later that evening Junkers transport planes brought in a Luftwaffe platoon, which occupied the island without resistance. The following day Jersey was occupied.

Major Albrecht Lanz, the first German military commandant, who was later killed on the Russian front, arrived to meet Guernsey's Attorney-General, Ambrose Sherwill, and to obtain his assurances of co-operation. The occupying forces apparently behaved with courtesy in Guernsey and Jersey originally, for this was supposed to be a 'model occupation' and a rehearsal for the projected occupation of Britain. Nevertheless, press censorship, driving on the right, German currency and German language lessons were quickly introduced. Early in 1941 the Germans ordered 500 copies of *Deutsche Leben* from a local Guernsey printer for

use in schools. Locals were allowed to sit in the left stalls in the cinema, leaving the right stalls and balcony for the Germans! Gradually, however, deportations occurred and then the Organisation Todt (to be directed by Albert Speer after Todt's death in 1942) supervised a massive fortification programme, employing thousands of foreign workers, especially Spanish, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians, on the building of the Atlantic wall. By 1945, under the command of the fervent Nazi, Vice-Admiral Friedrich Huffmeier, the basic food ration was down to subsistence level, and only Red Cross food parcels, especially those brought aboard the Red Cross ship, the Vega, on 27 December 1944, had held off mass starvation. British bombing raids were another hazard, for the islanders as well as for the Germans. It was 9 May 1945 before Guernsey was liberated, when British troops arrived in St. Peter Port to receive Huffmeier's surrender.

The long awaited liberation of the Islands brought immediate preparations for the repatriation of the evacuees, but the difficulty of providing sufficient transport, and the rush for passports occasioned unavoidable delay. By 1945 the school in Hale numbered about 170 boys, but only about twelve of these had come from Guernsey. It was therefore a relatively small community which on 10 August 1945 left for London, and then Southampton, to board the 'Hantonia' and return to Guernsey, to their homes and parents. Their joy was indescribable, but they would always keep a warm corner in their hearts for their Cheshire friends.

2. OAKLEIGH

Michael Marchant, who now lives in Stratford-on-Avon, remembers his days at Oakleigh quite vividly. His family were very grateful for the foundation of a Catholic Boys' Grammar School in Altrincham. He particularly remembers the Headmaster, Brother Clarence, and also Brothers Dennis, Osmond, Vincent and Chad. He was 7 years of age when he attended the school upon its opening in 1940, when there were just four classrooms. He was at first in Brother Dennis' class, and it was Brother Dennis who started a Cub and Scout Group, "The First St. Ambrose Cubs and Scouts", and took them on outings to the River Bollin, Dunham Park, and to an annual camp in Anglesey during the summer months. Michael remembers that they had to attend school on Saturday mornings, when the Headmaster visited each classroom to distribute weekly testimonials, based on marks achieved during the week. The testimonials were in three colours: Pink, Blue and White. The pink ones were for those obtaining the highest marks, whilst the white ones were reserved for those with the lowest. "We would sit in anticipation and with some apprehension if we could see any White testimonials at the bottom of the pile in his hand (which he made sure we could all see), wondering who would receive them. The testimonials were distributed individually in order of merit, and were then taken home to be signed by our parents so that they were made aware of our progress, and then returned to school."

Of course these were the war years, and Michael recalls some of the implications. "During the early years of the war, there were a number of occasions when daylight Air Raids by German aircraft took place over the Greater Manchester area. We all thought it was great fun, having to take cover in the cellars and not having any lessons for the duration of the Air Raid, which might last up to an hour or so." Apparently, there were other bonuses too. "Our other great joy in those days was having an army camp on the opposite side of the road, where there is now a golf course. The United States' Army took it over and the American soldiers used to give us sweets, gum and chocolate bars from their rations, which otherwise we would never

have seen in those wartime days. Later the camp became a P.O.W. camp and was taken over by the Polish Army. who were also very friendly towards us."

Michael also remembers the moment when a Free French Army convoy of trucks pulled up in Dunham Road, just outside the school, one lunchtime in 1943. The officer in command was an old boy from Guernsey, calling into to see the Brothers. Subsequently they spent the rest of the afternoon playing with the soldiers in the gardens around the house - much more enjoyable than having to attend lessons, but they did try to improve their French with the soldiers! Michael remembers the introduction of the blue-and-red striped blazer and cap, but significantly points out that they were difficult to purchase since clothing coupons were required. Michael was particularly friendly with a Guernsey boy called Donald Simmons, who returned home at the end of the war. He has never seen him since their days at Oakleigh.

Another old boy from the Oakleigh days, Gerard Attenbury, now teaches English in Portugal, but usually returns to Altrincham each summer. He again recalls the first Headmaster, "a sturdy middle-aged French Brother called Clarence" and some of his colleagues: Brothers Dennis, John and Ralph. He still remembers being interviewed for a place at the school when he was just six years of age by Brother Clarence "in a little cloakroom which was his office". Accompanied by his mother, they were both surprised to see Brother Clarence "at frequent intervals extract from a large tin on his desks sweets and chocolates which he fed neither to himself no: to us, but to his large, fat collie dog, Prince. We later discovered that these sweetmeats were gifts from parents who doubtless but erroneously thought the Brothers themselves and not the dog would enjoy them."

Gerard explains that the boys were distributed among the classes on the basis of ability, not age, so that it was not uncommon to find an eight year old in the same class as a number of twelve year olds. His early Maths lessons were conducted by a Brother in French, since he had not yet grasped English apparently. Gerard also remembers that it became a regular and accepted practice for mothers to "deposit junior in the morning" and also leave the baby in its pram by the lawn at the back of the house, while they went to do their shopping in Altrincham. Hence "a pleasant morning could be spent, free from tedious studies, if you were lucky enough to be assigned nursery supervision - and it was excellent training for future parenthood." Another duty disguised as an educational benefit was to help out in the kitchen, where Brother Ralph was in charge. He apparently specialised in creating delicious stews.

Gerard also remembers the effects of the war. "In 1944, in preparation for D-Day, enormous numbers of American G.I.s were stationed in Altrincham and Bowdon, where many large houses had been requisitioned for their use. On Groby Road, along which we passed to school each day, several houses were full of 'Yanks', kicking their heels, waiting for the 'off'. They used to congregate in the road, throwing baseballs, and our usual greeting was: "Any gum, chum?", to which they would respond with gifts of Wrigley's Spearmint Gum, oranges, Mars and Hershey Bars, luxuries unknown to us deprived wartime kids. Many of them were only teenagers, and I shall never forget their generosity. We used then to walk up to St.Margaret's Church and watch fleets of tanks and aircraft, passing by on enormous Foden lomes on their way to their staging ports on the south coast. Another source of goodies was the P.O.W. camp in Dunham Woods opposite Denzell House. Every Wednesday afternoon Brother Dennis, as leader of the scout troop would take us past there to learn 'Woodcraft'. The P.O.W.s had built a model railway, with stations, tunnels and real steam engines, landscaped to produce a most striking effect. When they saw us approaching, they would throw us

toffees over the barbed-wire fence. I can only guess that these were received in Red Cross parcels."

Of course the 1944 Butler Education Act, which enabled children to have a free Grammar School education, if they passed the eleven-plus examination, meant that parents became especially concerned to have their children well taught. Oakleigh was no longer adequate for 170 children, and the lack of grounds must have proved a serious handicap.

At the cessation of hostilities in Europe. the Superior of the College was directed by the Bishop of Shrewsbury to close the school in the summer of 1945. This came as a great shock, for the De La Salle Brothers were contemplating the purchase of a large property with the intention of building a permanent school. The parents of the local boys were much upset by the contemplated closure, and three protest meetings were held, which the Brothers attended. The school was finally closed down in July 1945 and the boys on leaving were expressly told to secure admission to other schools in the area, as the school was definitely not re-opening. However, the Bishop of Shrewsbury invited the Christian Brothers to re-open the school in September 1945. The former premises of the school were taken possession of early in September, and on 14 September 81 boys, all former pupils of the school, presented themselves. The premises were to serve as a temporary school, pending the purchase of an excellent property in Hale Barns, about 2 miles from Altrincham. Local pressure seems to have been crucial in securing a Boys' Catholic Grammar School for the Altrincham area. Mr. Jim Cosgrove, founding Chairman of the Parents' Association, and his colleagues were heavily involved in the discussions with the Bishop of Shrewsbury. Canon Donnelly of St. Vincent's, Altrincham, and his fellow priests in Timperley and Sale also played a crucial role. Bishop Moriarty therefore allowed Canon Donnelly to purchase 'Woodeaves', a grand residence, standing in 22½ acres of parkland. The Christian Brothers moved in on Christmas Eve in 1945. Furniture for the house and school was transferred during the Christmas holidays. Two of the large rooms were converted into double classrooms, while the outbuildings were converted into a dining room, cloakroom and toilet facilities for the boys.

In order to adapt the residence for the purposes of a school, application for a licence for the necessary alterations was made to the Ministry of Works, and after a delay of over two months this was granted with some restrictions on the materials to be used. The execution of the work was carried out during the Easter vacation. The remaining portions of the fine residence afforded ample accommodation for the Community. The first Holy Mass was said on 17 March in the Oratory, with many local people in attendance. A priest from St. Vincent's, Altrincham, would continue to celebrate Mass in the Brothers' House on Sundays and Holy days from 1946 until 1958. On 25 March 1946, the Feast of the Annunciation, Canon Donnelly celebrated a Missa Cantata, sung by the pupils, and four of the boys made their first Holy Communion. The Superior of Blackpool presented a beautiful oak altar; the Superior of Birkenhead a set of vestments, cope and humeral veil; the Superior of Stoke-on-Trent the many requisites for the altar; and the Superior of Great Crosby the *prie-dieu*. The school was intended to serve the Catholic boys of the three large parishes of Altrincham, Sale and Timperley, as well as the neighbouring towns of Northwich, Knutsford, Warrington and Stockport.

3. WOODEAVES IN HALE BARN

Brother J.J.Dowling was the Head Master from 1945 until 1948 and supervised the transfer from 'Oakleigh' to 'Woodeaves'. (He died in 1990). The site at Hale Barns, which Canon Donnelly had purchased, was also intended to contain a new Parish Church and Presbytery (the future Holy Angels) and a new Secondary School (the future Blessed Thomas Holford?) as well as a new building for St.Ambrose College. The Christian Brothers promised to build a new school as soon as possible after 1945, but shortages of money and material made this impossible to consider until the mid 1950s. For some reason unknown Blessed Thomas Holford was eventually built on its present site, much closer to Altrincham. Cheshire Education Authority were not willing to provide any assistance and were not obliged to do so anyway. Brother Dowling was assisted by: Brother Lennon, who taught Maths; Brother Virgin, who taught English and French; Brother Shannon, who taught the Preparatory Department (three classes in one!); and Brothers Allen, Sullivan, Ryan and Healey. There was usually one lay teacher as well, probably on a one year contract. A much more disciplined atmosphere was now introduced, with the threat of corporal punishment (the strap). Gerard Attenbury recalls: "We soon learned that there was to be no more wandering in and out of classes as the mood took you. The first winter was extremely cold and fuel was hard to obtain. The Brothers, with their newly acquired acres of woods and fields, set about tackling the fuel problem by chopping down mighty beech, ash and elm trees, to be sawn for logs to keep three almighty fires going in the school."

Michael Marchant remembers: "Brother Lennon used to form a "Saw Gang" every lunchtime, in order to cut down trees around the old derelict Manor House, which was bombed by the Germans during the war (now the site of Holy Angels' Church) and cut the trees into logs to burn in the classroom fires during the winter months. Meanwhile, Brother Sullivan organised the "Diggers Gang" to dig up the vegetable garden (now the site of the swimming pool) in order to grow food for the College kitchen, which in those days was short of supplies."

Michael Cosgrove, son of the late Jim Cosgrove, who now lives in Guildford, in Surrey, has similar memories. (His father died in February 1974 at the age of 75, having become a Papal Knight for his services to Catholic Education) "I attended St.Ambrose College at Dunham Road, then under the control of the French De La Salle Brothers, eventually taking part, with the Christian Brothers, in the move to Hale Barns, where we used rooms in the old house as classrooms and the refectory was, I believe, the previous resident's huge garage. I can well remember the many hours of pioneering work spent in cutting down trees, digging up roots and forming an area on which to play rugby and cricket, and also serving on the altar at the first students' Mass in the newly consecrated Brothers' chapel."

Steve Duffy was another student at Oakleigh and Woodeaves. He recalls the scouting activities and the pink, blue and white testimonials. He also remembers that the Guernsey boys were "quite a fit bunch, and in the yearly gang-show they gave an exhibition of tumbling and human pyramids". The move to Woodeaves under the Irish Christian Brothers meant that rugby replaced football as the main winter sport. "The Warrington lads were elated, since they had been brought up in a rugby league area." Their tackling skills and ball-handling abilities would be fully appreciated and utilised in the College's rugby teams for years to come.

Like all Old Boys of the period, he recalls Brother Lennon's tree-cutting squads. Indeed, chopping logs into small pieces appropriate for the fire for half an hour during the lunch-break,



*Sports' Day
at Hale Barns in 1958.*

*Mr. Jimmy Murphy
(Assistant Manager of
Manchester United)
presents the trophies,
assisted by Brother Ring.*



*Mr. B. Quinn with pipe,
Senior Master and English teacher
in conversation with George Wilcox
and Peter Woods.*



Brother Phelan and local councillors with sixth Formers in 1955



Jim Cosgrove, Brother Curey and Bishop Murphy at the school Garden Fête in 1959

was an alternative punishment to writing lines! There were other unusual sanctions too. Brother Dowling was noted for his strict code of discipline, and when he broke up a fight in the playground, the miscreants were immediately despatched to his office. On arrival, they saw Brother Dowling produce two pairs of full-size boxing-gloves from a cupboard, and were then informed: "If it's fighting you want, we might as well do it the right way!" Apparently a stopwatch and a bell were also provided!

The squeaky parquet floor in Woodeaves required protection, so the boys were instructed to wear soft shoes, known as 'Cambridge' shoes, indoors. When one boy was changing into his indoor shoes one day he found them full of bicycle oil. When he asked the prankster why he had done this to his shoes. he received the reply: "Because they were squeaking!"

Father Terence Hegarty, who described himself as 'one of the original 1946ers', left to go to Ushaw in 1950. He remembers that his Headmasters were Brother Dowling and Brother Casey. When his family emigrated to Australia. he joined the Brisbane Archdiocese and was ordained in 1961. Is he the first priest to have originally attended St.Ambrose College? He visited the College briefly in 1994 and met Brother Sassi and Mr.Hester, and is anxious to keep in touch and to be informed of Old Boys' events.

Bernard Stafford, who now lives in Stockport. was another student in the early days of the school. Originally his Headmaster was Brother Dowling, but in 1948 Brother Casey took over as Headmaster (Brother E.L.Casey was Headmaster from 1948 until 1954. He died in 1965.) Bernard remembers the log-fires and the log-cutting organised by Brothers Lennon and Virgin. He also tells us: "School hours were 9.30 a.m. until 3.30 p.m., and fees were eight guineas per term! New laboratories were constructed for Chemistry and Physics in the early 1950s. (They would later be the wooden buildings occupied by the Preparatory Department until 1990.) There was an annual holiday on the feast of St.Ambrose, 7 December. Rugby and cricket were played on Saturday afternoons and attendance was compulsory. House teams were formed, taking the names: Bowdon, Rostherne, Dunham and Tatton."

Brother D.C.Phelan became Headmaster from 1954 until 1958. (He died in 1972.) A very popular man with the parents; he made a significant appointment in 1958, when he persuaded Mr.B.P.(Barney) Quinn to join the teaching staff in 1958. Previously at North Cestrian Grammar School, Mr.Quinn played an important role in the development of St.Ambrose College until he moved on to St.Augustine's, Wythenshawe, in 1974.

The College had been growing each year since 1946, when there had been approximately 80 pupils. Soon every available room was in use. Further accommodation was required, and, so as licences for permanent buildings were not being granted, a pre-fabricated structure was erected. Two years passed by and another was erected, and later two science laboratories were added. It was hoped that this latest addition would enable the school, in the near future, to obtain the status of a "Recognised" Grammar School, and thus enable the Local Education Authorities to pay the fees of boys who passed the eleven-plus examinations. The demand for places increased to overwhelming proportions, with applications coming from places as far away as Buxton and Chester. Soon the science laboratory had to be used to accommodate additional classes, instead of for its proper purpose. Parents wanted the school to provide education up to GCE Ordinary and Advanced level so that their sons would not have to seek transfer to neighbouring schools such as: De La Salle College, St.Bede's College, and Xaverian College. These schools in any case had very few places available. Of course, the

longer that boys stayed. the fewer the places that would be available for those wishing to gain admission. In 1955 Brother Phelan. Headmaster. invited the parents to meet him. He explained the problem, and it became clear that the only solution would be to build a new school on the site. However. without any financial assistance from the Cheshire LEA, the cost would be enormous. In September 1995 the St.Ambrose College Parents' and Old Boys' Association was formally inaugurated. Mr.Jim Cosgrove was the first Chairman. and it was decided to organise annual Garden Fetes and Christmas Fairs to raise money towards the Building Fund. He was not only a benefactor of St.Ambrose College but a man of considerable distinction and standing in the local community. He served as a Justice of the Peace. was prominent in local politics achieving the distinction of Alderman. and became Mayor of Altrincham. Mr.Cosgrove used his considerable political ability to help steer the College through the necessary procedures at national and local level, assistance for which the Brothers must have been most grateful. He continued to work devotedly for the welfare of the College once it was established. In 1955 he was a Governor, a founder member and first Chairman of the St.Ambrose College Parents' Association and continued to serve on the Committee well into the 1970's. After his death in 1974, it was proposed in the Committee of the P.A. on 11th March that the memory of James Cosgrove should be perpetuated by establishing some form of continuing memorial so that his work and dedication should not be forgotten. Hence the COSGROVE AWARDS which are made annually on Speech Day.

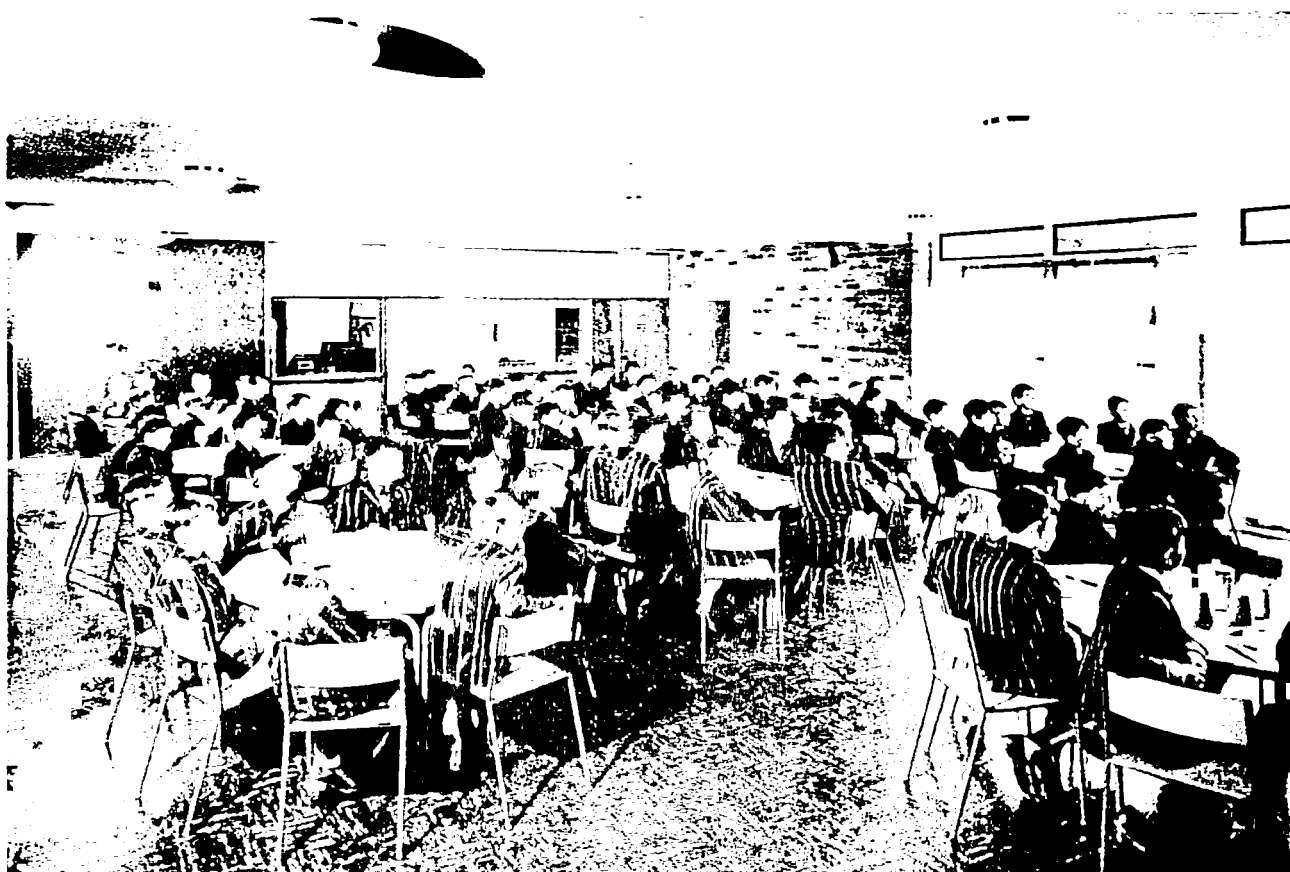
Brother P.C.Carey was Headmaster from 1958 until 1961. This intelligent. quietly-spoken man was party to some highly significant decisions and developments. On Sunday 15 March 1959, the Provincial of the Christian Brothers, Rev.Brother Curran, announced that Bishop Murphy of Shrewsbury had agreed to the need for two Grammar Schools: an aided Grammar School in Wythenshawe (the future St.Augustine's) and an independent Grammar School at Hale Barns. "It is our aim to make St.Ambrose College comparable with the other great schools run by the Christian Brothers," said Brother Curran. Indeed massive financial support would come from the other Christian Brothers' communities: St.Edward's College. Liverpool; St.Mary's College, Crosby; St.Anselm's College, Birkenhead; St.Joseph's College, Stoke; St.Brendan's College, Bristol; St.Boniface's College, Plymouth; Prior Park College, Bath; St.Aidan's College, Sunderland; St.Joseph's College, Blackpool. Meanwhile. it was in 1958 that the parish of Holy Angels was constituted. The first parish priest was Fr.Gerard McDonald, who lived with the Brothers in Woodeaves while the Church and Presbytery were being built. The parish of Holy Angels and St.Ambrose would grow together. Catholic families moved into the area over the years because of the existence of the Church and the College. Clearly, without the support of the Christian Brothers and the Parents' Association. the financing of the new buildings would have been impossible. Instead, there would just have been the Wythenshawe Grammar School. built with the assistance of the Manchester LEA, named St.Augustine's; and that school proved to have a very short existence! Brother Carey now supervised Phase 1 of the new building at Hale Barns. but before this stage was completed, Brother W.D.Foley, O.B.E. was appointed our new Headmaster. His headship. from 1961 until 1967. was a crucial period in the history of the College.

4. RECOGNITION AND EXPANSION - BROTHER W.D.FOLEY O.B.E.

St.Ambrose College was indeed fortunate to have the experienced and talented Brother Foley as Headmaster in 1961. He had been Headmaster at St.Edward's, Liverpool, and had recently received the O.B.E. for services to education in Gibraltar after the war. Confident, enthusiastic. shrewd and persuasive, he combined a sense of vision and optimism with the



Left to right Bishop Grasar, Brother Curran (Proviitcial), Canon Campbell and Mr. and Mrs. Graf at the formal opening and solemn blessing of the School in 1963.



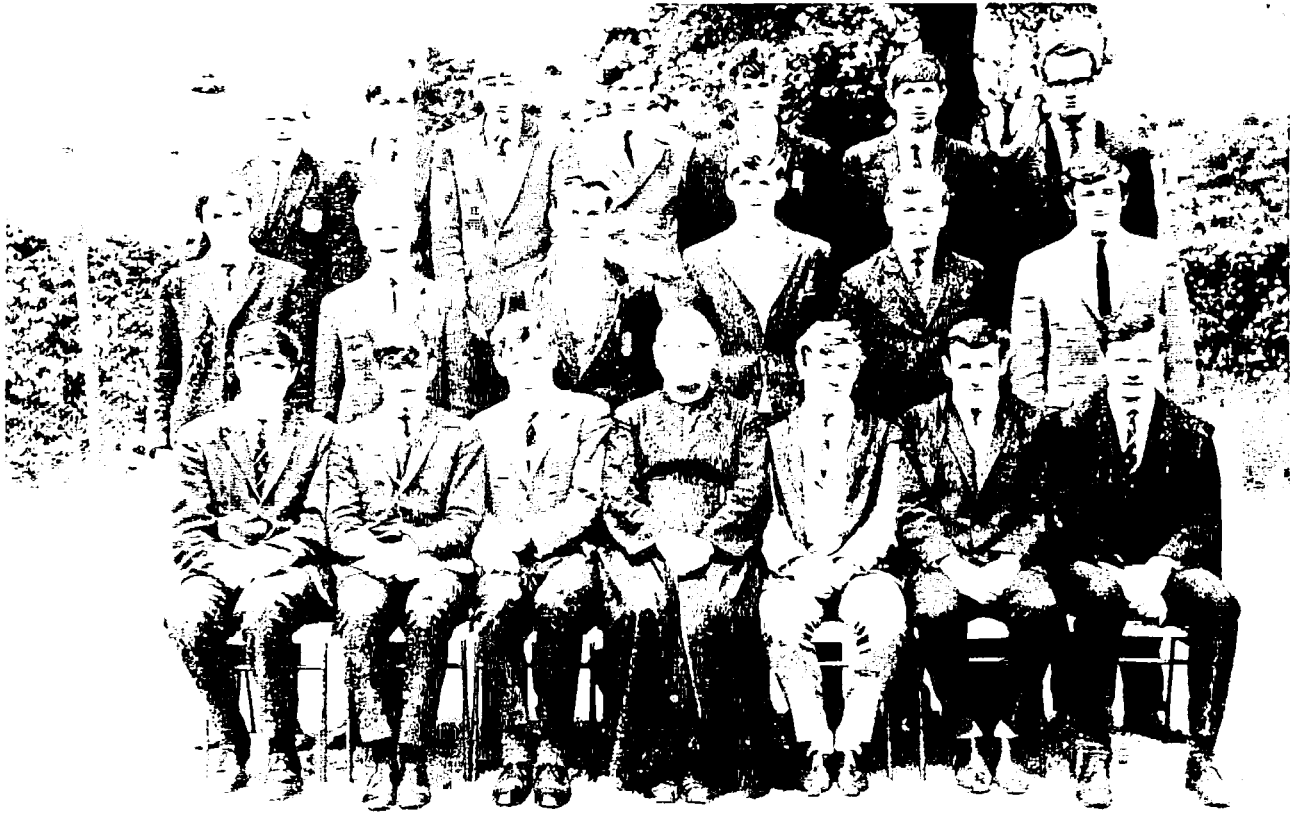
The Preparatory Department at lunch in the new Dining Hall in 1963.

pragmatism that was essential, given the college's precarious financial circumstances. Cultured and civilised. he was a superb public speaker. who could chair meetings authoritatively with energy and good humour, and who could lead the School at morning assembly particularly effectively with well chosen words, delivered with due emphasis and, not infrequently, appropriate gravitas. Confident of parental support, his staff and his school, he took the important decision to admit eleven-plus boys in 1962 without charging or receiving fees for them, even though 'recognition' by the Ministry of Education would depend on the successful outcome of a Government Inspection in December 1962.

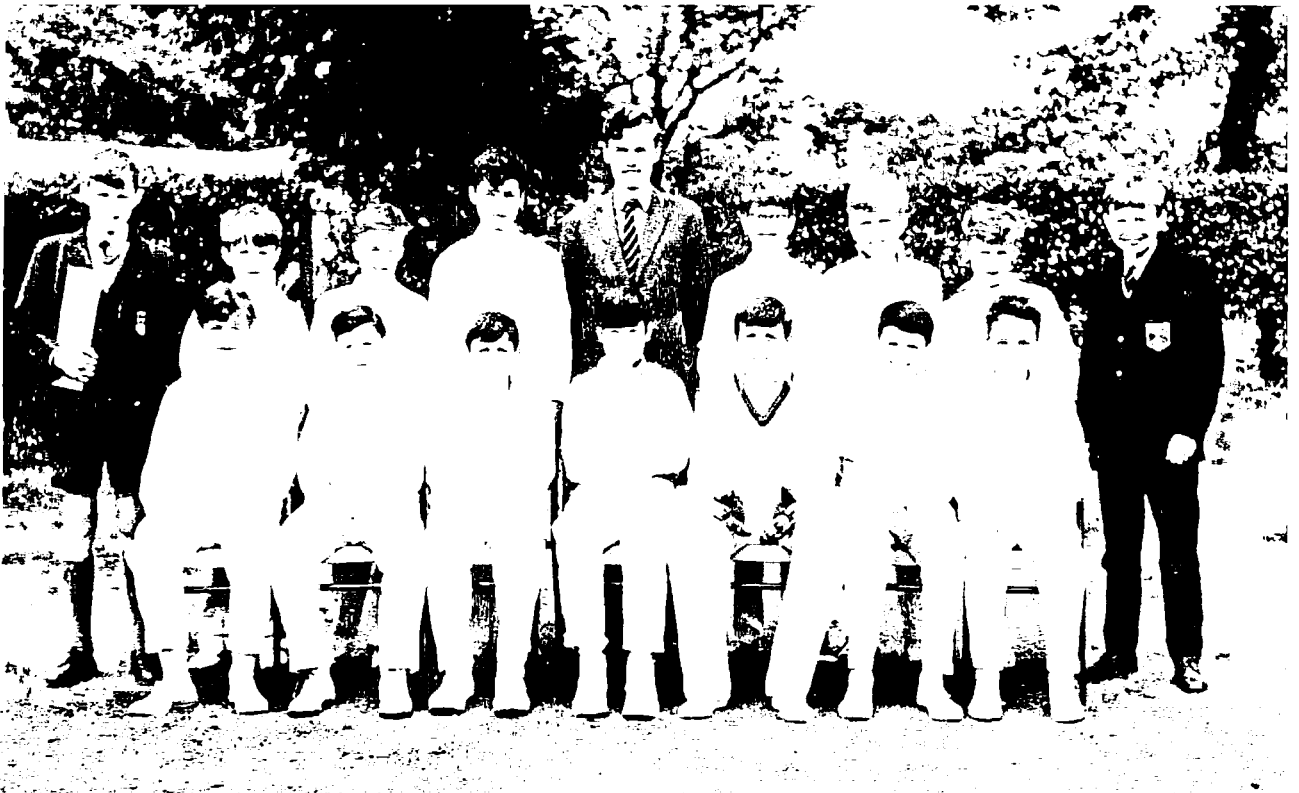
He had assembled an experienced staff to achieve this objective. Mr.B.P.Quinn was the Senior Master and Head of English. Colleagues and students alike could not fail to be impressed by his immense knowledge of literature and love of language. Combining energy, integrity and generosity to an unusually high degree, he also possessed a few delightful mannerisms and eccentricities. Brother Wilkinson was Deputy Head and Head of Science, and Brother Grice was Bursar and Head of Geography. Both had previously been Headmasters of Christian Brothers' schools - in Stoke and Plymouth respectively. Brother Rynne was teaching Maths and History and in charge of books and stationery. The inspection went well, and St.Ambrose College was "recognised as efficient" by the Ministry of Education in 1963. From September 1963, therefore, boys who passed the eleven-plus could come to the College and have their fees paid by their LEA. Cheshire agreed to pay the fees of the boys admitted by Brother Foley in 1962 before the inspection and 'recognition'.

Additional teaching staff had to be recruited, but this was easier than hitherto, since applicants now knew the school had an apparently secure future. Mr.D.Hibbert (Woodwork), Mr.D.McCarthy (English), Mr.P.Bailey (P.E. and History) and Mr.N.Guare (Maths) who had joined the staff in 1962, were now joined by Mrs.J.Kinsey (English), Mrs.C.Lilley (Biology). Mrs.B.Davies (Science), Mr.P.Whalley (Art), Mr.M.Quinn (Latin), Mr.J.O'Regan (French) and Mr.S.D.Fleming (History). Soon these were joined by Brother Moan (Physics). Brother O'Shea (Geography and French). Brother Farrell (Science), Mrs.R.Cox (Biology), Mr.J.Dennison (Music) and Mrs.J.Handford (Maths). Fr.Frank McGuinness (French and Maths) spent two years on the staff before becoming the first Headmaster of the new St.Augustine's Grammar School in Wythenshawe. Mr.Arnold Gregory, who had just retired as Deputy Head and Head of Maths at Altrincham Grammar School, was recruited on a part-time basis to teach 'A' level Maths. Brother Foley allowed the brightest students to take their G.C.E. Ordinary level examinations after only four years. and soon the College was able to develop a substantial Sixth Form.

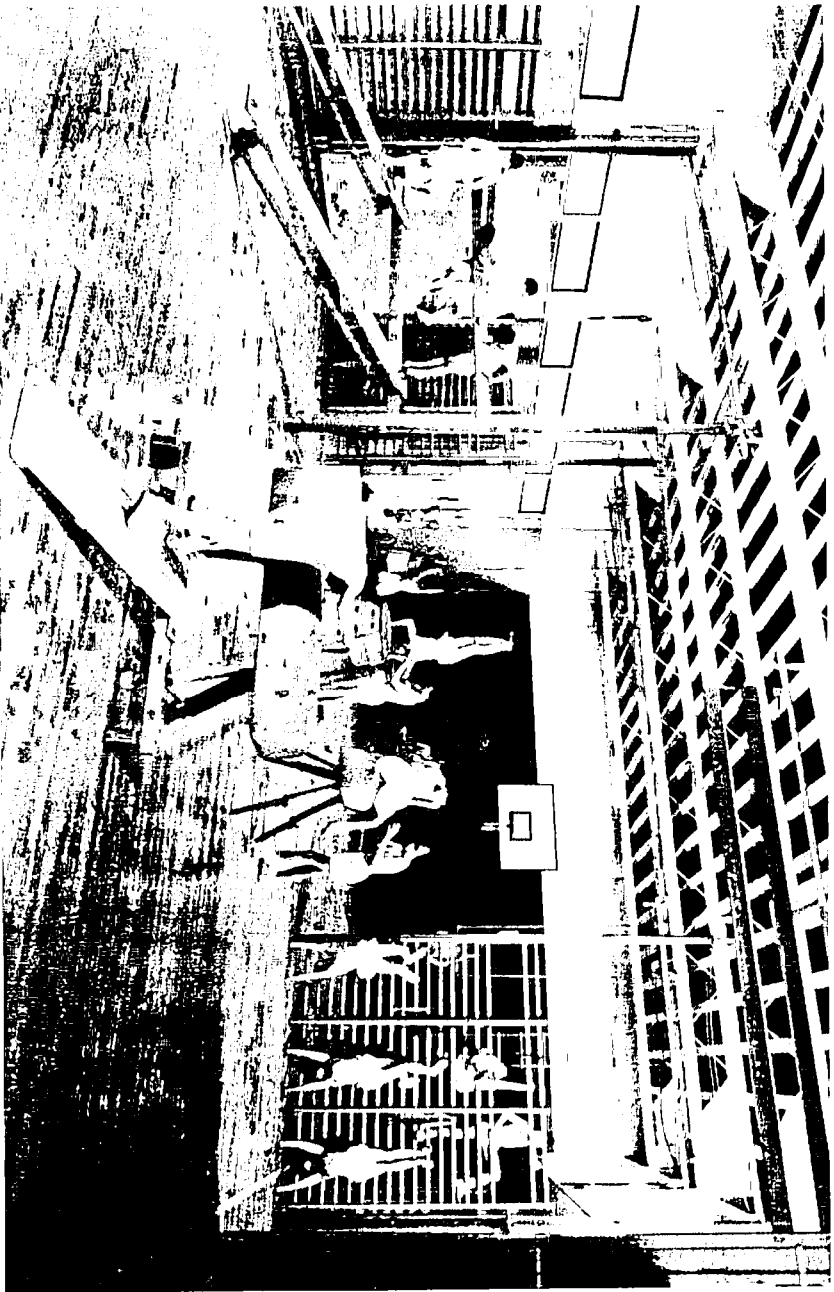
'Barney' Quinn and 'Mike' Quinn (not related) now began to lay the foundations of our reputation as an important rugby school. Practices every lunch time on the adjacent pitches, instruction on school corridors between lessons, and endless discussions in the staff room meant that everyone came to be a serious observer of the game. Gradually, Sean Fleming began to develop the school's cricket. John Dennison founded the school choir and the Christmas Carol Service, which became an annual event, and Bill Calder, fresh from HMS Ark Royal, developed the College as a key centre in the N.W. for Gymnastics, with a Saturday afternoon Gym Club, as well as introducing hockey as an alternative sport for those courageous enough to declare that they didn't like rugby! When Don Hibbert founded the College Sailing Club, members even built their own boats to sail on Tatton Mere. Peter Whalley took charge of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme in the school and Brother



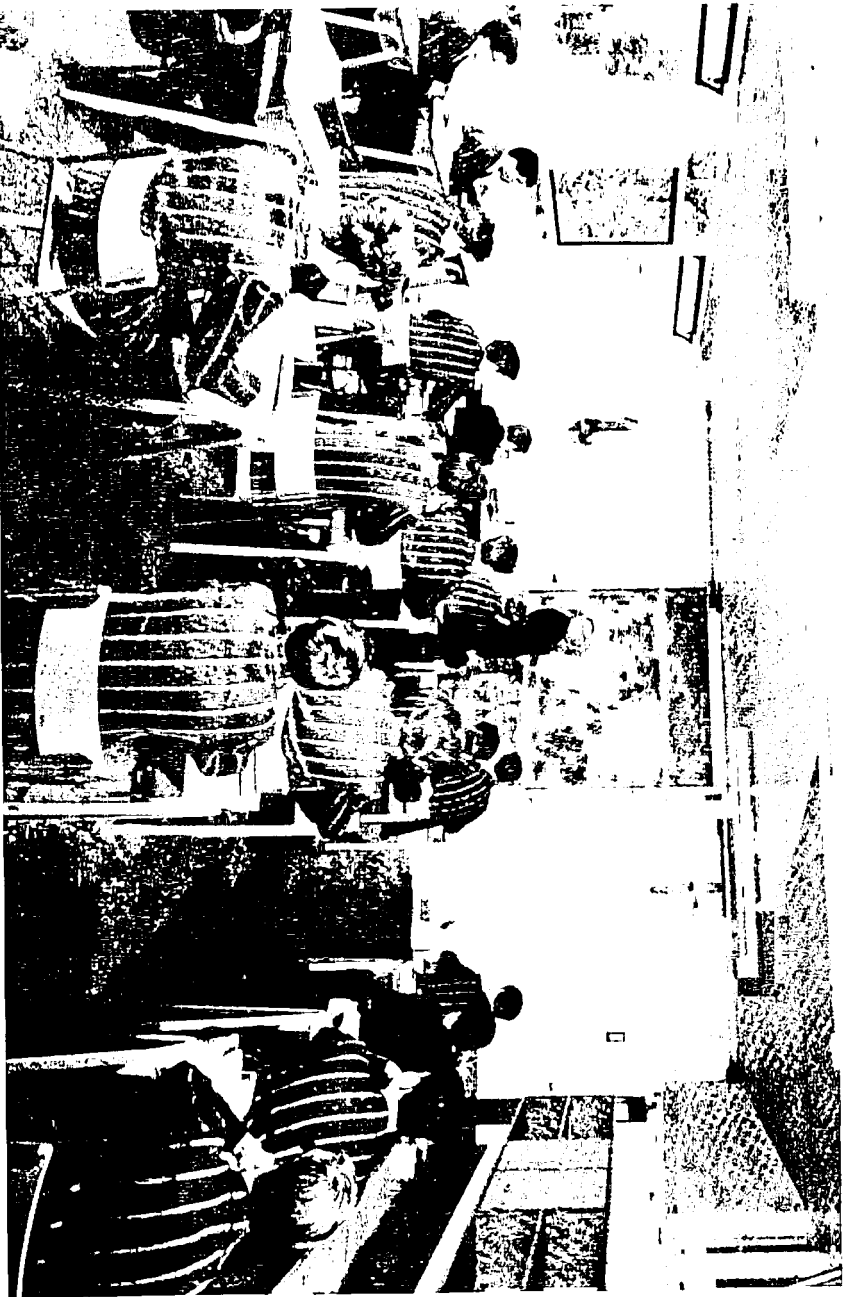
Brother W.D. Foley and Sixth Form in 1964



*Mr. Fleming with Under 12 Cricket Team in 1964. Note the two different blazers on view.
The wicker - Keeper is now the Headmaster of a local Catholic Primary School.*



P. E. in the new Gym in 1963



Brother Wilkinson, Deputy Head, teaching Physics in 1963

Moan developed the boys' interest in Cross-Country running. Soon, 'coincidentally' Alan Blinston, Olympic Athlete, became the school groundsman.

In 1963-64 Phase 2 of the school building programme was completed. It was no longer necessary to use 'Woodeaves' at all for teaching, so the house now became solely the Brothers' residence. All classes were taught in the new building, and the Sixth Form had a purpose-built Common Room with specialist rooms for small 'A' level groups. Prefects had short gowns; assemblies were preceded by classical music, with a brief analysis provided by Mr.Dennison. A certain tone had been established.

Our attractive blazer (bright blue with red stripes) was replaced gradually by a more sober black one. Boys from Warrington, Northwich and other outlying areas had found the striped blazer a little too garish when viewed far from Hale Barns by their local contemporaries in the 'swinging sixties'. The geographers went on field-trips; one to Helvellyn was led by Brothers Grice and Rynne and filmed for posterity! Brother E.Doyle, formerly an Assistant to the Superior General, joined the staff to teach Maths (in 1967) Once Brother Foley's Form master. I believe, he was a man of great dignity, unfailing courtesy and integrity. and a very dedicated and professional teacher and form master. When Brother Foley and his Deputy, Br.Wilkinson, left in 1967, Brother Doyle became Deputy Headmaster to the new Head. Brother J.C.Gleeson.

The College also participated in the Christian Brothers' pilgrimage to Lourdes, as it still does today. However, the journey by coach, boat and train must have been quite formidable in the 1960s. David Bracegirdle (now of Warrington, formerly of Sale) remembers his experience of the 1964 School Pilgrimage quite vividly. and still possesses his pilgrimage badge. certificate and instruction booklet. David recalls that the journey took two or three days. The train journey from Calais to Lourdes apparently took 18 hours, so that they were worn out when they arrived and "probably needed some divine intervention to revive them". He also claims that one evening jugs of wine were provided with the meal. Unwisely, and unknown to their teachers. some of them drank the wine quite liberally, only to regret their actions the following morning! The pilgrimage took place between the 8th and 16th of April 1964 under the leadership of Bishop Rudderham of Clifton. Five Christian Brothers and 67 boys from St.Ambrose College joined the hundreds of boys from the other Brothers' Schools. Each pilgrim had a seat number on the French train, and was allocated a particular hotel. David occupied seat number 698 on the train, and stayed at the Hotel Madonna. Brothers Farrell, Grice, Owens, Rynne and Wilkinson accompanied the group together with Fr.G.McDonald of Holy Angels. They participated in a full programme of ceremonies and visited the main places of interest. Today the College participates in the Diocesan pilgrimage each July.

One or two problems emerged nevertheless during the 1960s. When St.Augustine's Grammar School opened in 1965 under the Headship of Fr.McGuinness, who had been teaching at St.Ambrose College for the previous two years, there was some misunderstanding over respective 'catchment areas', before the two schools learned to live with each other. Then in October 1965 the Labour government introduced Circular 10165 directing local authorities to draw up plans for the replacement of grammar and secondary schools with the eleven-plus examination with a system of comprehensive education. Conservative authorities dragged their heels, and by 1970 the Labour government had been replaced by Edward Heath's Conservative administration, but the threat to independent schools remained. Moreover, as authorities like Cheshire, Tameside and Stockport introduced Comprehensive Schools, they

were reluctant to pay fees for their children in independent schools. The sixties also witnessed the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent changes. Religious Orders reappraised their roles. New approaches to Religious Education were recommended. The wearing of capes and birettas gradually ceased. Then over the next ten years or so, the Brothers increasingly wore suits rather than cassocks. Some members of teaching orders felt the need to turn to missionary work in the Third World or to work in deprived, inner city areas. Soon Deputy Headships (and much later Headships) would no longer be reserved for members of the Religious Order, but opened up to lay teachers.

Nevertheless, the College had made dramatic progress under Brother Foley. By 1967 he had completed six years as Headmaster, which was the maximum allowed by the Order at that time. He left the College with its new buildings, a talented staff and greatly increased numbers as 3 or 4 form entry became the norm each year. He went out in style, delivering a superb speech (no notes) to governors, teachers and parents' representatives at a formal dinner in the College Hall. 'Palm Court' music was performed to provide an appropriate tasteful atmosphere. I believe the violinist was Margaret Graf (later Duffy).

5. CONSOLIDATION (1967-73)

Brother J.G.Gleeson had been Deputy Headmaster at St.John Rigby College, Orrell, before moving to St.Ambrose College. An enthusiast for musical and stage productions, he possessed a fine tenor voice, and was a useful pianist. At Orrell he had been a particularly successful teacher of Classics and an enthusiastic, even fanatical, rugby coach. The College's rugby, largely in the hands of Barney and Mike Quinn, went from strength to strength, and the fixture list was significantly strengthened. In 1969 Mr.D.Hallas became Head of P.E. and took over responsibility for coaching the First XV. Full back for Broughton Park and later Sale R.U.F.C. he was a member of the North West Counties' Squad and 'on the bench' as they met the South Africans at the old White City, as the debate over apartheid reached fever pitch. There were titanic struggles between the College and the other, more well-established Christian Brothers' schools, as well as Lymm G.S., Marple G.S., Audenshaw G.S. and Sandbach School, and Sir John Deane's G.S. and the De La Salle Colleges at Pendleton and St.Helens (West Park). Sean Fleming had refereed First XV matches for three years. but now Society Referees were engaged to officiate. Outstanding players during mid-sixties included John Mahoney, Nick Murphy, Arnold O'Connor and John O'Hara. By the end of the decade one would have to add Steven Hennessy, Chris Gleave, Peter Riley and Dave Jarvis. Powerful, speedy and elusive, Jarvis originally played on the wing, but gradually moved to wing-forward, where his phenomenal work rate and tackling and ball-handling skills won him a place in the Cheshire Under 19 Schools' XV. He later played for many years at Sale R.U.F.C. and with the full Cheshire County XV. Sean Fleming's cricketers were also winning representative honours, and in 1970 Peter Morris, Greg Morris and Paul Strzelecki all played for the Cheshire Schools' Under 19 XI. Peter Morris, in fact, was a regular member of the Cheshire side for three seasons. Peter might remember top-scoring for Cheshire against a Yorkshire side which included David Bairstow in 1968. The match ended as a tie when Yorkshire lost their last 3 wickets to Cheshire's left arm spinner in the last over of the match!

Mr.P.Broadbent had become Head of Music now. With the help of a number of peripatetic staff, a fine military band was formed, with a wide repertoire for concert purposes. Hymns were sung at daily assemblies in the College Hall, and the College Choir was revived. With the assistance of Mr. 'Sam' Wilkinson, another recent acquisition to the teaching staff, and

Brother Gleeson's encouragement, several memorable musical productions took place, including 'The Mikado' and 'Yeomen of the Guard'. Sam Wilkinson was soon into action in his own right, establishing a tradition of a major dramatic production every December, which would continue until his retirement in 1995. A magnificent actor himself, Mr. Wilkinson was an inspirational figure, whose productions were meticulously rehearsed and utterly professional. The boys were involved in constructing and painting the sets, front-of-house organisation, and the stage lighting, as well as filling the dramatic roles so appropriately assigned to them. Shakespearean productions predominated, including memorable performances of 'Twelfth Night' and 'King Lear', but a superb performance of 'A Man for All Seasons' was an indication of Mr. Wilkinson's versatility. His 'Palace of Varieties' productions, which were immensely popular with students, staff and parents, revealed his talent for comedy. A number of former students will remember a trip to Paris, led by Mr. O'Regan and Mr. Fleming. Transport was by train and ferry during the Easter holiday in 1970. Students included Dave Jarvis, Paul Strzelecki, Paul Tyrrell, John Evoy, Mark Willan, Howard Wilson, John O'Reilly, and Dominic Kendrick. Staff v Boys matches at cricket, hockey and soccer became a regular feature.

Brother Gleeson also strengthened the school's departmental organisation. Mr. M. Quinn (Latin), Mr. J. O'Regan (French) and Mr. Fleming (History) were promoted as Heads of their respective departments. Mr. J. Chilcott arrived to strengthen the Geography Department. Mr. O'Kane (Chemistry), Mr. A. Morris (Chemistry), Mr. F. Coan (Physics) and Mr. D. Hancock (**Art**) also joined the teaching staff during this period. The Sixth Form steadily grew towards a hundred boys, and students were winning university places in large numbers. Our first students gained admission to Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Kieran Moriarty was the first student from St. Ambrose to go to Cambridge, reading Medical Sciences from 1969 until 1972. His brothers repeated his achievement (Brendan in 1972 and Anthony in 1977) to form a trio at Trinity. (Their sister, Frances, also went to Cambridge, before marrying Phil Edmunds, the Middlesex and England cricketer, and becoming a famous writer and broadcaster). John O'Reilly also went to Trinity to read Medical Sciences in 1970; his brother, Martin, joined the Christian Brothers and has done sterling work in recent years in West Africa. Meanwhile, Mr. B. Quinn, in addition to his duties as Senior Master and rugby coach, found time to guide and inspire a number of students to read English at Oxford and Cambridge. David Forsdike was the first, going to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1970. Michael White (Exeter College, Oxford) and Dominic Kendrick (Cambridge) were two more of Mr. Quinn's successful 'Oxbridge' students.

Kieran Moriarty is now a Consultant Physician in Bolton. He was at St. Ambrose from 1962 until 1969, becoming Head Boy before going up to Cambridge. He remembers that another of his contemporaries, Bernard Massey, went on to become a priest for the Clifton Diocese. Fr. Bernard became an army chaplain and was on duty out in Bosnia quite recently. He will soon return to parish work in the Bristol area. Kieran also recalls taking his G.C.E. 'O' levels in 1966. "Brother Foley advanced our class and we took them after four, rather than five, years. As a consequence, we were only allowed to do 6 'O' levels. We had to choose between Physics and Chemistry or History and Geography. I wanted to continue with all four, so Brother O'Shea used to teach me once a week at lunch time or after school, and Mr. Fleming did the same in History. With this special help, I got 8 Grade A 'O' levels. . . Although football was not approved, we did have a Welsh International in the person of John Mahoney of Stoke City. It was amazing that he slipped through Manchester United's grasp as he was an avid fan, and his best friend at school was Nick Murphy, son of Jimmy Murphy, assistant manager to

Matt Busby. They all played in an excellent rugby team coached by Barney Quinn. Also in that team was Arnold O'Connor, who became Cheshire Amateur Golf Champion soon after leaving school and went on to become a golf professional."

Over the years our location has meant that a number of Manchester United and City players have sent their sons to St.Ambrose, as the following names indicate: Foulkes, Stiles, Dunne. Morgan, Docherty, Corrigan, Watson and Tueart. When Stephen and Geoffrey Foulkes were in school, their father, Bill. did some soccer coaching in the Prep. Department. An area to the south of the College (now covered by housing development across the public footpath) was cleared for a suitable soccer pitch. Bill Foulkes brought Matt Busby to officially open the pitch. and the legend of Manchester United generously agreed to address the whole school in the College Hall. where he extolled the virtues of Bobby Charlton and recommended him as a role model. It was a memorable occasion.

Catherine Scott visited St.Ambrose College in May 1968 to write an illustrated article entitled "All in Twenty Years" on the school in "Cheshire Life". A brief history of the College was provided. followed by a description of the new buildings, the contribution of the Parents' Association, newly split from the Old Boys. and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. The illustrations include: Woodwork, Art, Music and Biology lessons; Brother Doyle presenting First Aid Certificates; Brother Gleeson taking coffee with Sixth Formers in their Common Room; Brother Healy supervising the Prep Department's lunches: and Richard Beckett on the parallel bars (he had just become North West Under 19 Gymnastics Champion on the rings and parallel bars); and a morning assembly of the whole school. "They make an impressive sight at morning assembly in the school's Great Hall, especially when the sun streams through the modern stained glass window at the back of the mahogany panelled room. This window, the gift of the architect, J.Basil Ellis, is the work of a monk of Buckfast Abbey, Dom.Charles Norris." (The pictures were by Cyril Lindley).

Michael Edwardson from Warrington won a place to read Natural Sciences at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1973. He is now a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College (our first 'Don'?) and Lecturer in the Department of Pharmacology, teaching mainly Cambridge's medical students. He often visits his parents in Warrington and hears news of St.Ambrose College. In February 1994, Dr.J.M.Edwardson wrote: "From what I gather, you have done extremely well in the schools' "league tables" recently, which is great news. I have very good memories of my days at St.Ambrose, and especially Mrs.Rosemary Cox. I always enjoyed her classes, and she turned out to be quite right that I would end up a Biologist, even though I came here intending to do Physics."

In 1973 Brother Gleeson's six years as Headmaster came to an end. Energetic, enthusiastic, generous, yet pragmatic, he consolidated the achievements of his predecessor. The Parents' Association became a separate organisation from the Old Boys; the teaching staff was strengthened and Departments established; academic and sporting results were improving markedly in line with the more well-established Christian Brothers' schools; a swimming pool was constructed with the generous assistance of the Kennedy family; and a wide range of extra-curricular activities was being provided; and the College's Music and especially its Drama under Mr.Wilkinson was becoming quite outstanding.

6. BROTHER I.C. RING (1973-79)

Brother Ring had taught at St. Ambrose College during the 'Woodeaves' period in the 1950s. He had later taught at Blackpool, Orrell and St. Edward's, Liverpool. A generous, sensitive, sincere man, with a dry sense of humour (a Limerick man!), he was always immaculately dressed. Cultivated and cultured, he enjoyed visiting the theatre and Halle concerts (often in the company of Mr. Alan Morris); his brother was a professional singer. He took great pride in maintaining and indeed upgrading the school's assets, furniture and grounds. He replaced nearly all the desks in the junior school at one go; unhealthy trees were removed and new ones planted; the lawns around Woodeaves were replaced. He also had some delightful eccentricities, whether polishing his glasses meticulously with an immaculately folded handkerchief, or flicking an unwanted spot of dandruff or debris, real or imaginary off his, or occasionally someone else's, clothing! His Deputy Headmaster was Brother J.V. Crease, a uniquely gentle, generous, civilised and efficient man, who had a particularly fruitful relationship with the Sixth Form. The experienced Brother Rynne was still at hand to advise. When Mr. B. Quinn left for St. Augustine's, Wythenshawe, after over 16 years of unrivalled and dedicated service to the College, and Mr. M. Quinn left to seek a career in Educational Administration, Mr. Sean D. Fleming, Head of History, was appointed Senior Master in 1975. Mr. Fleming had been producing the College Timetable annually since 1970 (and would continue to perform this onerous duty until the summer of 1996), and now had special responsibility for the Sixth Form, as well as the day-to-day running of the school, allocation of duties, and so on. Mr. Ronan, Mr. Butler and Mr. Cain joined the teaching staff in 1974.

In 1974, of course, the Labour Party under Harold Wilson won the General Election. Soon it became apparent that the Labour Government wanted to complete the transition to a comprehensive system of education throughout the country. LEAs were instructed to draw up appropriate plans. Soon a Working Party was formed to propose a comprehensive scheme for the Catholic children of Trafford. The Working Party included representatives from Loreto Convent, Blessed Thomas Holford and St. Ambrose College, and the Diocesan representative, Fr. Cahill, and a primary school Headmaster, Mr. J. Finigan of St. Hugh's, Timperley. Br. Ring, Br. Crease and Mr. S.D. Fleming represented St. Ambrose College in a series of lengthy, difficult and often frustrating meetings over the next few years, and the future of the school in its existing form became most uncertain. Should there be a Sixth Form College for Trafford's Catholic children? The Working Party visited St. John Rigby Sixth Form College in Orrell, near Wigan, to assess this type of educational institution. Another visit was paid to St. Nicholas', Hartford, to view a mixed-Comprehensive school. How could we best utilise the Loreto, BTH and St. Ambrose sites and staffs? Perhaps there should be two single-sex (or Mixed) 'feeder' schools serving one mixed Sixth Form College? Neighbouring LEAs had introduced comprehensive schools and scrapped the eleven-plus, but the Trafford LEA, with a Conservative majority, tried to resist or postpone these changes. The Shrewsbury Diocese probably would have preferred Trafford Catholic Schools to 'go comprehensive' at the time since other parts of the Diocese had already done so.

Public meetings were held in local schools and parishes, as well as in the three main secondary schools. Mr. Fleming addressed St. Ambrose College parents in a packed Assembly Hall, to explain the three main possibilities, pointing out the relative advantages and disadvantages of each scheme, and asking them to put their views to the Working Party. With teaching staff increasingly worried about the future, the debate continued beyond Brother Ring's headship, but his successor would soon find that the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79 would bring about

the defeat of the Labour Government in the 1979 election. The new Conservative Government under Mrs. Thatcher would not compel Trafford to change its system of grammar schools and high schools, and soon the Working Party was scrapped and St. Ambrose College's future as an Independent Grammar School now seemed relatively secure.

Although the uncertain future had certainly put plans for new buildings on hold, such as that for a new Music Room, improvements were made. A pre-fabricated structure was purchased as a temporary solution to the problem of overcrowding. This 'temporary' building is still standing, twenty years later, and was capable of accommodating three or four first year classes together with a Junior Library. In terms of 'value for money' it was the most important purchase ever made at Hale Barns. The Sixth Form Common Room was also totally refurbished; the glass partition being moved to form a wall along the adjacent corridor, and the room itself was provided with carpet tiles, attractive curtains, multi-purpose tables, and especially some **beautifully** upholstered seating, arranged in bays. In sport and matters academic high standards were maintained, and the numbers of students winning 'Oxbridge' places grew. Such candidates in 1977 included: Michael Box (Modern Languages), Anthony Moriarty (Medicine), Richard Holden (Modern History) and Philip Whitmore (Music). The last-named proceeded to have a brilliant academic career, and became a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. More recently, he decided to study for the priesthood, and in 1992 he was ordained a priest for the Westminster Diocese by Cardinal Hume in Westminster Cathedral. Although Mr. Broadbent, Head of Music, left, Mr. Wilkinson's Drama went from strength to strength with a series of outstanding productions. Incidentally, in recent years, Mr. Broadbent's Adult Choir won the televised Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition at Buxton, and last year he was narrowly beaten for the position of the Hallé Choir's Chorus Master by Stephen Orrell.

When Brother Crease left for Plymouth, Brother John Sullivan arrived to become Deputy Head and to teach History. Brother David Lennon, a founder member of the St. Ambrose College in 1945, returned to teach Mathematics and handle the College accounts. Brother Beattie arrived to develop a 'Pax Room' and provide pastoral guidance, counselling and opportunities for private and group prayer. Mrs. Joan Binns was also appointed School Secretary, a position she filled with distinction, loyalty and good humour until the summer of 1996.

Brother Ring also established a tradition of holding Sixth Form leavers' party to which the boys' girl-friends and parents were also invited. For the staff, the Christmas and Summer Terms ended with a generous, relaxing lunch, at which good humour, speeches and presentations to leaving teachers became the order of the day. When his six years as Headmaster had been completed, he intended to take a holiday, spend a few months at St. Joseph's College, Stoke, and then take a course in Rome. Sadly, within a few weeks of leaving, he died suddenly while on holiday in Spain. His funeral took place in Holy Angels during the school holidays.

7. BROTHER P.F.RYNNE (1979-83)

Brother Rynne had taught Maths and History at the College with great success for over twenty years when he was appointed Headmaster in succession to Brother Ring. Throughout the period he had also been in charge of the Book Room (St. Ambrose College's equivalent of Anfield's 'Boot Room?'), and the ordering of all school stationery. His 'O' level Mathematics

results had been consistently outstanding and he had a deep interest in Medieval History, especially the Church and the Monastic Orders. He was a popular appointment in view of his unrivalled knowledge of the school and obviously dedicated commitment. However, he was also appreciated for his sincerity, humility, realism and holiness. A very talented and fanatical golfer, he still plays virtually daily in Stoke. As the threat of reorganisation of Catholic Secondary schools in Trafford receded, important building projects were implemented. The boys' dining area was extended and a cafeteria system, with a wide choice of meals, was introduced. The main drive was widened and a generous car park provided for staff and visitors. The Sixth Form Library was now built on the open land between the Assembly Hall and the main teaching block, and a magnificent Music room with suite of practice rooms was added. A pitched roof, practically essential yet also pleasing to the eye, was constructed on top of the original 1962 building and spacious, modern changing-rooms were provided. Additionally, and most appropriately, splendid gates were erected at the end of the lower drive in Wicker Lane in memory of Brother Ring. Brother Rynne was also responsible for introducing the College's entrance examination.

When Dr.Lomas retired as Chairman of the Governing Body, he was succeeded by Dr.C.N.W.Litting, who still holds the position today. Both had originally joined the College's Governing Body in the early sixties. Mr.Philip Howard, an old boy of St.Edward's, Liverpool, joined the College from Cheadle Mosley School, to strengthen the French Department. but he soon began to reorganise and galvanise the school's cross-country running. with regular fixtures and thorough training programmes. Mrs.Lilly and Mr.Don Hibbert retired. to be replaced by Mr.Dwyer and Mr.Baker. Mr.Wingate (1983) also joined the staff to teach Maths, but he was soon taking charge of Under 12 cricket and establishing an efficient Careers Department. Mr.Sean Fleming was promoted to Deputy Headmaster, and when his fellow Deputy Head, Brother Sullivan was transferred to Liverpool, Brother Sheehan became Deputy Head. Brother Rynne's appreciation of the staffs needs, saw him provide the former Library for use as the Staff Common Room, and the old staff-room was divided into two offices for the Deputy Heads and the Bursar. Mr.Joe Kerr and Mrs.Sheila Ball (still with the College) joined the Administrative staff in 1982. Brother Rodgers, an old boy of the College, arrived to become involved in a whole range of activities, including a trip to Taizé, the ecumenical centre in Burgundy. Mr.Chadderton joined the teaching staff in 1981.

Students continued to win university places and achieve great success in the various sports. Philip McDonnell starred in both departments. He successfully took History papers in the Oxford Entrance Examinations and won a place at Wadham College in 1981. Outstanding academically, he took a First in Law and went on to become a distinguished solicitor. However, he was also an outstanding athlete and won a Full Blue for clearing 2m.10 (6' 10") in the Oxford-Cambridge Varsity Competition and became a member of the Achilles Club of Light and Dark Blues. Secretary of the Oxford University Athletics Club in 1982-3, he then broke the English High Jump Record in 1985 with a 2.24m jump in the England versus Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland Athletics match at the Crystal Palace Stadium in London. Michael Madden was another outstanding athlete, coming second in the All-England Championships in the hammer-throwing event. The McQuaids (Sean, Paul and Steven) began to embark on their successful swimming careers, which saw them all represent Scotland at international level.

Brother Rynne was also responsible for the decision to publish an annual Review of the main events and achievements of the school year. It has become an important record and source of

information as its scope has widened over the years. In 1983 Father Gerard McDonald relinquished the position of School Chaplain after many years of service. He had especially close relationship with the College and the Brothers; indeed, he had lived with the Community while the Holy Angels Church was being constructed. Fr. Francis Connolly now became School Chaplain.

Tragedy struck the College on the night of Tuesday 15 November 1983. A fire broke out in the Brothers' house, 'Woodeaves', and choking fumes quickly spread. Although the Fire Brigade eventually got the blaze under control, several of the Brothers were injured and, tragically, Brother Doyle died, overcome by the fumes. Born in Wexford in 1900, he had joined the Irish Christian Brothers in 1915, but mainly taught in England. He became Headmaster of St. Joseph's College, Stoke, in 1947 but was soon called to Rome to become Assistant to the Superior General. Then he came to Hale Barns in the 1960s as Maths teacher, Deputy Headmaster and later, Superior in the Brothers' House. In 1980 he celebrated his Diamond Jubilee as a Brother. The Brother Doyle Memorial Prize is awarded annually on Speech Day to the College's Head Boy. Brother David Lennon also died in 1984 in Sunderland. A founder member of St. Ambrose College in 1945, he had returned to the College as Bursar and Maths teacher in 1978. After recovering from a heart attack, he travelled up to Sunderland to attend the Jubilee of one of the Brothers there. Sadly, he collapsed and died in the presence of the Sunderland community.

Several of the Brothers needed Hospital treatment for bums and respiratory problems. One, sadly, was the Headmaster, Brother Rynne. His treatment and a period of convalescence meant that he was unable to continue as Headmaster, so Brother Sheehan was appointed Acting Headmaster, with Mr. Fleming as sole Deputy. Brother Sheehan's period as Acting Headmaster was a positive one. He had previously been Headmaster at St. Joseph's College, Stoke, and the experience acquired was now put at the service of St. Ambrose College, at a particularly challenging time. Although Woodeaves had not been destroyed, repairs and refurbishment would clearly take a long time, and so the Brothers bought a house in nearby Arthog Road, and commuted daily to the school buildings for the next year. Although he wisely made no fundamental changes over the next few months, Brother Sheehan brought some imaginative approaches to school assemblies; introduced regular assessments instead of half-year examinations for the lower school; and made some practical adjustments to the day-to-day running of the school. The acquisition of Computers and extra expenditure on Library books were other examples of his appreciation of the school's requirements. When informed that Her Majesty's Inspectors would like to make one of their occasional visits to the College, he ensured that the necessary preparations were made and documentation provided, so that the visit of Messrs. Lewis and Graham on 15 March 1984 was a pleasant, interesting and profitable experience. During the 1983-84 school year the usual events took place. A hilarious "Palace of Varieties", was produced by Mr. Wilkinson with his usual expertise and flair: the College entrance examinations and admissions were smoothly handled; and after successful rugby and cross-country seasons, the summer term brought success in athletics and cricket, where Michael Breen and Philip Genge (later to become prominent in the Cheshire County League) were prominent. This was also the time when teachers nationally were withdrawing from 'voluntary' activities, lunchtime activities and a number of duties. The College was fortunate to have someone of Brother Sheehan's experience, humanity, sensitivity and sense of humour at this delicate time. Soon after Easter 1984 it was announced that Brother T. Coleman would become Headmaster from September 1984. Messrs. Aspinwall, Handy, Mulrennan and Przybyła all joined the staff at this time.



*Mi: D.W. Hallas and the College First XI' in 1981.
The present Mr. P. Burns is seated on the front row.*



Brother Gillespie (Provincial) with Brother Rynne (Headmaster).

8. BROTHER T.COLEMAN (1984-91) - HMC STATUS AND A NEW PREPARATORY SCHOOL

A native of Plymouth (and loyal supporter of Plymouth Argyle), Brother Coleman had been a successful and distinguished Headmaster at St.Mary's, Crosby, and also St.Brendan's, Bristol. Indeed, in Bristol he had supervised the transition of the Brothers' Independent Boys' School into a mixed Sixth Form College under LEA control. His headships were marked by outstanding academic success and achievement in sport, within a disciplined but caring, Christian environment. At St.Ambrose College, despite his advancing years, Brother Coleman surpassed himself. Possessing tremendous energy and dynamism, he had clear ideas for the College and knew exactly how he was going to achieve them. Pragmatic and realistic, he had awesome organising abilities, based on a shrewd assessment of strengths and weaknesses. He called into school in the summer of 1984, notebook in hand to evaluate the situation. The Assembly Hall would need at least 200 chairs, so that the lower school could sit quietly each morning before school in total silence to read and study under his personal supervision. More storage space and offices for Deputy Heads and Administrative Staff and a medical room would be a priority. The Sixth Form block could be extended to enlarge their Common Room. Biology teaching space and provide an extra classroom. Outside, we would need sight-screens for cricket, a flag-pole for the school colours, and a more identifiable and attractive Main Entrance. He assessed the condition of the school buildings, all the time scribbling in his notebook, and required an up-to-date report on local developments, neighbouring schools, and so on. On arrival in September, he immediately booked the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, for a Speech Day the following Easter 1985, and advertised for a Director of Music to provide the choral and orchestral music of the required standard. We would also need to have an Open Morning to show prospective pupils and their parents what St.Ambrose College had to offer.

Fortunately, he already had a talented, experienced and in many cases long-serving teaching staff, and was convinced that with their help he could lead the school to the top of the first division. Mr.Ronan (Maths), Mr.Coan (Physics), Mr.Morris (Chemistry), would soon be joined by Mr.Gray (Biology), to run the Maths and Science Departments. Mr.Friend (English), Mr.O'Regan (French), Mr.Fleming (History), Mr.Chadderton (German), Mr.Hancock (Art), Mr.Hallas (P.E.), Mr.Chilcott (Geography), Mr.Cain (Latin and R.E.), and Mr.Butler (Economics) were joined by Mr.Haworth (C.D.T.) and Mr.Chadwick (Music). John Chadwick would indeed quickly build a superb choir, specialising in Church Music and rapidly reaching Cathedral Choir standards. A distinguished oboist, he supervised a team of peripatetic staff to give the school orchestra new impetus. But it was at choral music that he excelled. Christmas Carol Services became a highlight of the school year, and Speech Days were enhanced by the quality of music which preceded the distribution of prizes and speeches. Soon the choir was invited to sing at Chester, Worcester and York Cathedrals, as well as a number of local churches, and made a distinguished appearance on BBC television. When he left in 1993 he had achieved a remarkable success in such a short time. One particularly talented musician at the College during this period was Martin Baker, whose father, Denis, had taught Woodwork at the College. A brilliant organist, Martin won a place at Downing College, Cambridge, and proceeded to hold positions at Westminster Cathedral and St.Paul's before being appointed sub-organist at Westminster Abbey, where he works at the time of writing. He is particularly remembered for playing the organ in the Free Trade Hall, on Speech Day, with impressive flair and precision. The first Speech Day under Brother

Coleman's headship took place in the spring of 1985, with Brother Foley, our former Headmaster of 1961-67, as Guest of Honour. This has since become an annual event, with distinguished guests including David Alton, Chris Patten and Dr. John Morrill (Cambridge historian, old boy of Altrincham Grammar School, who has recently been ordained to the diaconate), as well as an old boy in the person of John Bason.

Although Brother Sheehan, and briefly Brother Carey, were Deputy Heads in the early years, alongside Mr. Fleming, in 1989, Mr. Morris, Head of Chemistry and then Senior Master, was promoted to Deputy Headmaster. A graduate of Queens' College, Cambridge, Mr. Morris had built a reputation within the College for outstanding Chemistry results, and played a major role in encouraging and guiding prospective candidates to Cambridge. His distinguished Cambridge friends, Dr. Eamon Duffy and Dr. John Morrill were asked to visit the College to explain admissions procedures, and day trips were arranged so that the students could visit the various Cambridge Colleges and then discuss courses with Admissions Tutors. After 1988 such visits often ended with tea at the University's Catholic Chaplaincy, as Fr. Philip Egan, an old boy of the College, was Assistant Chaplain there for several years. Indeed, at least twelve Old Ambrosians have been ordained to the Priesthood during the course of the last twenty-five years, including six for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Andrew Lloyd, Terence Carr, Michael Gilmore, Philip Egan, Bernard Massey, Anthony Wild, Philip Nathaniel, Simon O'Connor and Philip Whitmore have become priests, and a number of boys have joined the Christian Brothers, especially Martin O'Reilly, who has spent much time in West Africa. If I may quote Reverend Deacon Alan Morris: "This excellent record must rest on some foundation. Vocations are caught, not taught. For a pupil in a Christian Brothers' school, it must very quickly become clear that to have a religious vocation beyond that proper to any baptised Christian does not mean that one has to be so very different from the rest of humanity. The earthy, common sense spirituality of the Brothers says to anyone who is educated in it that an ordinary boy could take on what seems to many to be an extraordinary task. A pupil looking at the Brothers would recognise that for them religion was as much an ordinary part of life as rugby, golf or digging the garden. Religion for the Brothers is not an esoteric added extra: it is the stuff of everyday life; it is as necessary as eating and drinking. English Catholicism is the poorer for the loss of the extraordinary witness of such ordinary men and women in daily contact with the young people in our schools."

The first small group of sixth-formers to visit Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight accompanied Alan Morris there in the summer of 1972. This venture became an annual event for the next twenty years. In addition to joining in the community life of the Benedictine monks, especially the celebration of daily Mass and the Divine Office, the parties visited places of interest on the Island. Osborne House, the favourite holiday home of Queen Victoria, was a great treat. The walk up the extensive chalk downs on the south west corner of the island above Freshwater Bay. Tennyson Down, was always popular. Tours of the ancient churches of the island were conducted by Alan Morris, who well remembers his consternation as one particular group (Nicholas Pegge, Michael Davies and Mark Phimister) began to ask very searching questions about the architecture and art work in each church, only to discover at the end of the trip that the group had been revising for each visit from a guide to the island churches, which they presented to Alan as a present at the end of their stay. Several individuals from the groups made private retreats in the monastery in later years and one, who made many return visits, became a priest.



Mr. P.. Howard and Mrs. Thomas with the combined St. Ambrose / Loreto team which finished second in the 1992 National final of the Heinz Marathon Relays Competition. Adrian Moorcroft presented the awards.



Brother Coleman's retirement in 1991

Throughout this period there were annual pilgrimages to Lourdes. The old Christian Brothers' Schools' pilgrimages gave way to participation in the Official Diocesan ones, where the pilgrims need to organise fund-raising activities to cover costs; face a long, arduous journey through France; and then put in a series of hard working days, as they attend to the constant needs of the handicapped pilgrims, including washing, dressing and feeding them. Mass at the Grotto and in the underground basilica; Blessed Sacrament processions in the afternoons or torchlit in the evenings; or individual visits to the Grotto by the River Gave, offer unique moments for personal reflection. In recent years Mr.Lumb, Head of Chemistry, and recently Head of Science, has taken responsibility for organising this particularly fruitful activity. Alongside this impressive commitment, Mr.Cain and colleagues have maintained a school branch of the S.V.P., whose members have concentrated on helping the elderly and housebound. and making hospital visits, as well as working with a youth club which arranges activities for the mentally handicapped. Mr.Howard, Head of French, then Senior Master, and recently Deputy Head, has encouraged interest in the work of the pro-Life organisation. All these groups and the College Charities' Committee have organised countless fund-raising activities for a variety of charities. The school Lenten Collection always raises several thousand pounds.

Meanwhile, various school trips have taken place, often on an annual basis. First Year boys have had the opportunity to spend a few days in France, supervised by six or seven members of staff, with all arrangements made meticulously by Mrs.Rayburn. Other visits for older boys have been organised by Mr.Howard and Mr.Toal. Mr.Chadderton has organised regular visits to Germany, usually to the Rhineland with a visit to Cologne, but also to Berlin. Mr.Mulrennan has led a number of skiing trips to Europe. Mr.Friend and Mr.Stewart have similarly accompanied frequent Hill-walking ventures to the Lake District, Snowdonia or Glencoe. Theatre Club, Quiz Teams, Chess Club and all the usual sporting activities continued to flourish.

Academic standards were very high; nearly 10% of our students were going to Oxford or Cambridge. Mr.Fleming guided students to Oxford University in increasing numbers. and a large proportion of his History students were successful in the Oxford Entrance Examinations. Visits were arranged to Open Days, sometimes involving overnight stays in various Colleges. and significant contacts were made. Particularly pleasing was the number of students who then proceeded to obtain First Class Honours Degrees, such as Philip McDonnell (Law), Damian Hinds (P.P.E.), Daniel Power (History). and Martin Fanning (History). Daniel Power then preferred the academic world to the Foreign Office, and after a three year Research Fellowship at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, has taken up a position as Lecturer in Medieval History at Sheffield. Several students have been appointed or elected to prestigious positions. Damian Hinds became President of the Oxford Union; Michael Duggan became President of the Oxford Guild; Philip McDonnell became Secretary of the Oxford Athletics Club. Our 'A' level students obtained high grades in a wide variety of subjects and went on to obtain good degrees at our best-known provincial universities, many proceeding to work in the legal and medical professions. At 'O' level, most of our students took 11 subjects successfully, and when G.C.S.E. courses were introduced in 1986, prior to the first G.C.S.E. examinations in 1988, it was decided to continue with this wide range.

Brother Coleman now felt the College was strong enough to seek admission to the Headmasters' Conference (H.M.C.) where we would join the other Christian Brothers' schools. such as St.Edward's, St.Anselm's and St.Mary's, as well as Eton and Harrow! Once

preliminary documentation had been provided and accepted, there was an official H.M.C. inspection in October 1988. Sir Roger Young, a former teacher at M.G.S. and a former headmaster of the George Watson School in Edinburgh which had produced the Hastings brothers for the Scottish national R.U.XV, led the team. He was accompanied by Mr. Roger Griffiths (H.M.C. Secretary), Dr. Giles Mercer (Headmaster of Stonyhurst) and Mr. John Winnera (H.M.C. Staff Inspector). Arriving on Monday 17 October, they met the Governors and Senior Staff for dinner at the Ashley Hotel, Hale, where they were staying. Over the next two days they observed lessons, met the whole staff, toured and inspected the buildings and looked at the accounts. Everything seemed to go very well, and just over five weeks later at 9.30 a.m. on Friday 25 November, Brother Coleman received a phone call from Mr. Roger Griffiths to inform him that he would shortly be receiving written acceptance of his application for H.M.C. membership. Several months later at the H.M.C. Annual Conference. Brother Coleman found himself seated next to the Headmaster of Harrow at dinner. Before he retired, Brother Coleman offered to host the North West H.M.C. Annual Meeting at St. Ambrose College, to which Dr. John Rae, former Headmaster of Westminster School, was invited as Guest Speaker. He was most impressed by the school and amazed that so much had been achieved in such a short time.

Brother Coleman continued to organise annual Speech Days and Open Days with great skill and enthusiasm. Having completed the extension to the Sixth Form block, the new Administrative building and the new Front Entrance, Brother Coleman now decided, after much consultation, to build a new Preparatory School. This had been housed basically in 'temporary' buildings since the arrival at Woodeaves, and legendary figures such as Brother Allen, Brother Healy, Brother Mullins and Brother Owens had spent years in those 'historic' surroundings. Brother Healy, of course, was sadly killed in a road accident outside Loreto College, after he had attended Mass/Benediction there. That the Prep Department had been so popular with parents for so long is a tribute to these men, and also to long-serving teachers such as Mrs. E. Franks, Mrs. H. Carter, Mr. J. Fallon, Brother F. Ryan and Mrs. S. Scotson. Brother Coleman saw the project as an investment for the future and left plans for an extension so that the school could become a two form-entry school. He left the College with a most attractive, tasteful, yet functional building, with laboratory and computer facilities. It proved to be the last part of the legacy that Brother Coleman left to St. Ambrose College by his retirement in 1991.

He had generous support from the Parents' Association for his projects, as had his predecessors during the previous 40 years or so, when people of the stature of Jim Cosgrove and Gilbert Graf had led the way. In 1986, the 40th anniversary of the College, the Parents' Association raised approximately £20,000 through a whole range of activities. In 1987, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Joe Holleran, they were able to finance the magnificent all-weather tennis courts (five in all), which have proved such a valuable asset. In recent years a multi-gym, cricket pitches and equipment, and minibuses have been provided. The College has indeed been fortunate to have so many committed parents, willing to give their free time so generously. As the 50th anniversary of the College is upon us, they are once again looking to make extra efforts to mark the occasion with suitable projects.

Perhaps 'outsiders' were unaware of Brother Coleman's less obvious abilities and virtues. Most evenings after school, he inspected classrooms, desks and corridors and took appropriate action to ensure that everything remained in pristine condition. He was happy to refurbish desks with an electric polisher, to remove graffiti, and to repaint areas which were

showing their age. He employed a joiner, Kevin Clarke, to turn spaces into storage areas or offices, and to provide panelling to protect or enhance corridors and the main foyer. He also was a most generous and caring man. Each year he accompanied the handicapped to Lourdes. Today in his 'retirement' he likes to work at Nazareth House in Plymouth to help in whatever way he can.

Well before he retired, the Christian Brothers had decided that they would appoint a lay Headteacher to succeed. This practice was also followed at the Brothers' other schools in Crosby, Liverpool, Birkenhead, Stoke, Plymouth and, more recently, Sunderland. The Governors appointed Mr.G.E.Hester, who had been Headmaster of a successful and popular Comprehensive school, St.Joseph's, Horwich, for the previous sixteen years. This clearly was another important landmark in the history of the College.

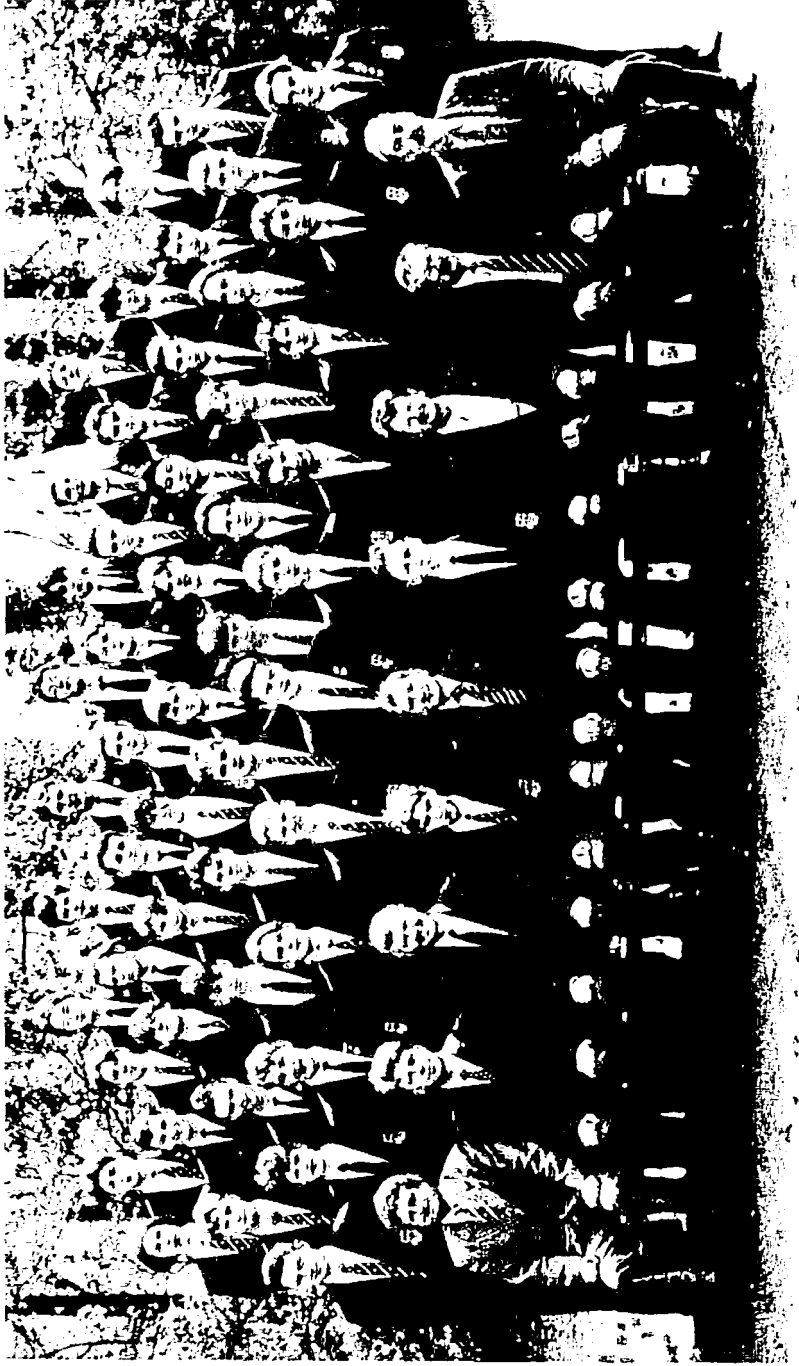
9. MR.G.E.HESTER (1991-)

Although Mr.Hester's recent experience had been in the state sector, he had taught in a variety of schools in various parts of the country. At the end of his first year, eight 'A' level students won places at Oxford or Cambridge. In 1993 the College topped the new League Tables for G.C.S.E. results in the Greater Manchester area. Mr.Fleming took over the organisation of Speech Days and Open Days, which were retained and enhanced. Soon additional Open Evenings were organised for those wishing to join the College Sixth Form. Mr.Hester was particularly pleased to become a member of the Headmasters' Conference, and when H.M.C. introduced their own system of inspections in response to the Government's formation of OFSTED, Mr.Hester became an inspector and has since led teams of inspectors to evaluate H.M.C. schools such as Mount St.Mary's and Prior Park, Bath. Additional Heads of Year were appointed in the Fourth Year (Mr.Arthur), Fifth Year (Mr.Azzopardi) and Mr.Murphy became Head of Sixth Form. Numbers admitted to the First Year and also the Sixth Form grew to new heights. The Prep School extension was completed and a lay Headmaster, Mr.M.Lochery was appointed and additional staff recruited. A full-time College Bursar, Mr.D.N.Dale, was also appointed. The existing curriculum was retained, though banding was ended, and recently Latin has been reintroduced in the First and Second years.

His keen interest in cricket and the commitment of Mr.Handy in that sport has paid rich dividends. A stronger fixture list, including a tour to the Isle of Man and an annual fixture with the M.C.C., (whose 1996 side included John Crawley), followed the provision of a new cricket pitch, laid by Mr.Peter Marron of Old Trafford, and financed by the Parents' Association. A new artificial pitch and, more recently, a bowling machine have also helped to improve standards. Recently, Michael Bishop and Andrew Blacoe have captained the Cheshire Schools' Under 19 Cricket XI, whose Team Manager is Mr.Fleming. Michael Bishop also played for the English Schools' XI against New Zealand. Rugby has continued to be a strength. Recently, Michael Worsley was selected to play for the English Schools' Under 19 XV, and actually scored a try for England against Scotland at Twickenham. Old Boys like Paul Sheridan, Rod Ellis, Liam O'Callaghan, Dylan O'Grady and Simon Verbickas have made their mark on local club rugby and Daniel Wright was a substitute on the bench as Cambridge played Oxford at Twickenham, thus narrowly missing his 'blue'. The College has remained very strong in Athletics and Cross-Country with athletes of the stature of Paul Martin and David Savage following in the footsteps of Ciaran Murphy.

Changes are, however, at hand as our 50th anniversary approaches. Mr. O'Regan, who joined the staff in 1963, took early retirement in 1991. Mr. Chadwick left in 1993, to be replaced by Mr. S. Mercer. Mr. Alan Morris was ordained to the Diaconate by Bishop Malone in Holy Angels in the summer of 1992, and recently took early retirement. Other recent retirements of long-serving staff include those of Mr. Wilkinson, Mr. Hallas, Mr. Cain, Mrs. Binns, Mr. Chilcott and the Deputy Headmaster, Mr. Fleming, though the last two will continue to teach part time at the College. The College should now become a Grant-Maintained Grammar School in January 1997 along with other Christian Brothers' Schools like those in Birkenhead, Liverpool and Stoke.

Mr. Hester has sought to retain the Christian Brothers' ethos, even though the Brothers are no longer physically present. College, Year and Form Assemblies are carefully prepared. There is a weekly lunchtime Mass, opportunities for Lenten Confessions, the Rosary in May and October, and the Stations of the Cross during Lent. Brothers from Liberia and Sierra Leone are regular visitors. In recent years, the Provincial of the Christian Brothers, Brother Dominic Sassi, has used Woodeaves as his Headquarters, but he has recently been appointed Assistant to the Superior General in Rome. The Order's Founder, Edmund Ignatius Rice (1762-1844) died on 28 August 1844. In 1993 the Pope declared him 'Venerable', and his 'Beatification' will follow in October 1996. In 1994 the 150th Anniversary Celebrations opened with a Mass of Thanksgiving at Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King in January. It was concelebrated by two Archbishops, several Bishops and many past-pupil priests. The St. Ambrose College choristers joined the massed choir, and the College flag was borne in procession by Sixth Formers Christopher Beech and Richard Graham. The Head Boy, David Prior, read the Second Reading; Reverend Deacon Morris read the Gospel; and Deputy Head Boy, Kevin Freeman, read one of the Bidding Prayers. The Provincial, Brother Sassi, presented the Deputy Head Boy, Anthony Gerrard, with a Missionary Scroll. A photograph of that moment and the scroll are now on permanent display in the entrance hall of the College. Then a Festival of Music and Thanksgiving took place in the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, on Sunday 24 April 1994. Our musicians and choristers took part, and the audience, which included Archbishop Worlock and the Papal Nuncio. At the beginning of the year, Brother Sassi missioned us to "live in the spirit of Edmund and Jesus, and to find ways of showing this spirit in action, especially among those who are suffering or on the edge of society." That is still our challenge today. The Brothers have shown their willingness to adapt and face new challenges, especially in Africa. Our former Deputy Headmaster, Brother Vincent Crease, was the first Christian Brother to die and be buried in Africa in 1994. Last year, Brother Kerrigan, who used to be a member of our Governing Body, was shot dead in Sierra Leone. Their example surely gives us the strength to face new challenges with faith and confidence.



William James
DESIGN



ST AMBROSE COLLEGE
Upper Sixth 1983



Written by SEAN D. FLEMING
History Teacher and Deputy Headmaster
(1963-1996)