

2. A School Prepared for War?

In December 1912 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, conducted his annual Visitation of the School. In his address to the boys he mentioned a German Minister who had wanted to know “the secret of England’s great public schools”. The Archbishop had replied: “he was of opinion that the secret of the public schools lay in their want of secret, that it was the openness, the frankness, and the straightforwardness that constituted their main character.” He continued with further general comments on the “straightness and simplicity, and trust” that characterised the Christian gentleman and helped those who had been public schoolboys “to keep to the path of simple honour throughout their lives”.¹

Two years later, on his Visitation of December 1914, the Archbishop returned to the German’s question. “It is to me a strange and a pathetic thought that it is by means of a war, which brings out what is best of the life developed in our public schools, that Germany is learning that which apparently leading German statesmen have been anxious to ascertain.” He went on:

The evidence! We know it well. And you just see the evidence of what comes from the public spirit of a great school in the sense of self-surrender for the common good which is in every game we play and in every incident, almost, of common life – the standard that we, in the great schools, uphold of absolute unsullied honour, faithfulness to the plighted word... Dauntless courage in the face of difficulty, danger, and even discomfort – all these things are learnt in our public schools... It is in no small measure through the influence of our public schools that the leaders of English manhood, either in military or civil fields, develop these characteristics so strongly that they are able to make them operate in their lives afterwards.²

A comparison between the two speeches highlights the problem in any attempt to describe the ‘public school ethos’ at the King’s School (or elsewhere) and its potential influence in the First World War.³ Although the possibility of war was taken seriously in the early twentieth century – and discussed in debates by the boys or mentioned on Speech Day – it would be wrong to suggest that it was ever a central concern. Boys were prepared for a world that was, at least in Europe, relatively peaceful. When that world turned into something

¹ The Cantuarian, March 1913, pp. 365-6. A much fuller version of the speech appeared in the local newspapers: e.g. K.G. 21.12.1912 and W.T. 21.12.1912. The section about “the path of simple honour” only appears in The Cantuarian. The German Minister must be Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, who died shortly after becoming Ambassador to London in 1912.

² The Cantuarian, March 1915, pp. 8-10.

³ The best known attempt to discuss the ‘public school ethos’ and its relationship to the Great War was by Peter Parker: *The Old Lie*. Many of its sometimes sweeping generalisations are inapplicable to the King’s School. For a more balanced approach and a discussion of Winchester College, see: J.A. Mangan, ‘Happy Warriors in Waiting? Wykehamists and the Great War – Stereotypes, Complexities and Contradictions’ in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, March 2011, pp. 458-91 and in Thierry Terret and J.A. Mangan, *Sport, Militarism and the Great War*.

else, they had to adapt, and make what use they could of their education. The Archbishop's hindsight (and everyone else's) must be treated with caution.

The most obvious way in which King's School boys might have been 'prepared for war' was in the Officers Training Corps. This was established nationally by the Haldane Army Reforms in 1908. Some schools had had a Volunteer Corps since 1859, and many more later joined the volunteer movement. Henry Stringer, a Captain in the Volunteers, told the OKS Dinner in 1881 that the East Kent Regiment of Volunteers "was composed in a large measure of those who were educated at King's School" and he "hoped that ere long King's School might be able to boast of a cadet corps".⁴ Nothing came of this, however, and even when several local schools joined at the time of the Boer War, King's did not take up the scheme.⁵ In 1904 the Headmasters Conference had debated a proposal for compulsory military service but rejected this and turned to the possibility of 'training in the use of arms'.⁶



Shooting in the gym, 1907

At Canterbury, rifle shooting was introduced in 1906: "Eighty-four boys have been put through an instructional course of shooting this term on a fifteen-yard range in the Gymnasium."⁷ On Speech Day, the Dean referred to this. "Without, he said, entering into any political question whatever, he did hope that Lord Roberts' influence would be successful in getting hold of their youth to receive a manly, military, setting up. He fully believed that no

⁴ Whitstable Times, 5 November 1881.

⁵ Alan R. Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and the Great War*, pp. 5-6. In *East Kent, St Lawrence (1898), Sir Roger Manwood's and Dover (during the Boer War) and St Edmund's (1903)* all joined.

⁶ Seldon and Walsh, pp. 24-27.

⁷ *The Cantuarian*, July 1906, p. 572.

training had a more important moral effect upon a nation than a military one.”⁸ An outdoor range at St Stephen’s was officially opened in October, “and is now continually in use every afternoon.” On that occasion Colonel Thompson said “he could hardly over estimate the necessity of every Englishman being able to use a rifle if necessity required it.”⁹ Woodruff and Cape in their 1908 history of the School waxed eloquent on the same theme:

All encouragement should be given to any sport which enables boys to take upon themselves the duties of citizenship and to answer the demand which the State may lay upon them. Whatever the truth contained in the Duke of Wellington’s epigram concerning the playing fields of Eton, there is little doubt that the movement towards systematic rifle training in Public Schools, which owes its inception to the enthusiastic energy of the greatest General of our day, is the first great step towards the ideal of a “nation under arms”.¹⁰

The Officers Training Corps was launched at King’s in May 1909.¹¹ Charles Bell was the commander, with Algernon Latter and Herbert Poole as fellow officers. (Both Bell and Poole later served in the war.) The fact that masters were running the Corps made it easier to accept it as a normal school activity. It had a significant effect on school routine, with a weekly parade, a termly field day, and an annual inspection and camp.¹² The camp even led to changes in the date of the end of term in 1909, though in the event the School was unable to attend “owing to infectious illness”.¹³ It was also necessary to have an armoury, which was approved by the governors and built at a cost of £141 0s 8d.¹⁴ In principle the Corps was voluntary, but in practice it bordered on the compulsory and most boys joined. “Up to date [May 1909] one hundred and seventy one Cadets say “Hear” to the muster roll, practically the whole of the Senior School, with a stiffening of about half-a-dozen Parrots.”¹⁵

The fundamental object of the OTC was made clear by OKS Major Hubert Isacke in his address-cum-rallying call delivered in the Lent Term 1909 and published in full in *The Cantuarian*. After reminding his audience that “we are all members of the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen...” he proceeded to show how, by joining the School Corps, the present generation of King’s School boys could help their country:

Every Army naturally requires not only a sufficient number of officers but also officers who are well trained. The British Army at the present time is sadly

⁸ The Cantuarian, November 1906, p. 590. Shooting in the gym continued. See: The Cantuarian, June 1912, p. 243.

⁹ The Cantuarian, November 1906, pp. 585 and 603-4; Holme House Gazette, vol. 4, p. 336. Among the memorabilia of James Yates (KS 1903-08) is a target, inscribed ‘At 50 yards 21:6:07. J.S.Y.’ KSC Archives box A 111.

¹⁰ Woodruff and Cape, *Schola Regia Cantuariensis*, p. 310.

¹¹ The Governors had approved its rules and conditions at their meeting of 26 March 1909. Governors Minutes p. 232. For details of the organisation, see Haig-Brown, pp. 20-36.

¹² The Holme House Gazette, vol. 7 pp. 43-4 provided a summary of the early activities by ‘Militaris’. “Another pastime has been instituted for the members of this ancient School. We have enrolled, or at least most of us, as Cadets of the Officers’ Training Corps, through the strenuous efforts of our Captain Commanding, Mr Bell.”

¹³ OTC Contingent Record, pp. 2-10.

¹⁴ Governors Minutes 7 June 1909 and 30 April 1910. The building is now the Music School’s percussion studio.

¹⁵ The Cantuarian, May 1909, pp. 346-7. The original contingent record in the School Archives has 170 boys as enlisted in May 1909. There were 192 boys in the senior school at Easter 1909. Cadets had to be thirteen years old, so a few Junior School boys could qualify.

deficient in this respect. If mobilization were ordered to-morrow, a large shortage of officers would exist, and there is a wholly inadequate source from which to make good the casualties, which are inevitable in war... The true service of the Corps to the nation will ultimately be shown by the number of officers it has provided.¹⁶

Over the next four years, Inspection Days and Field Days in particular provided regular army officers with the opportunity to put across the aims of the War Office and their comments were duly recorded in the school magazine. A good example is General Cecil Bingham, Commander of the 4th Cavalry Brigade, who attended a remarkable Field Day for the East Kent Schools on Scotland Hills in March 1912.

He emphasized the one great object of the O.T.C., which was to provide a Reserve of Officers to meet the emergency of war. He urged that it was the duty of every cadet to make a real effort to join either the Territorial Force or, preferably, the Special Reserve of Officers.¹⁷

Field Marshal Lord Methuen, inspecting the OTC in November 1913, took a similar view:

He pointed out the increasing difficulty which the British nation is experiencing in keeping to the front, and not dropping behind other nations in fitness for war; and urged upon us all our duty as citizens to help in that task. Our two chief duties, he said, were to our God and to our country; and one of the ways of carrying out the latter obligation was through the S.R. [Special Reserve] and T.F. [Territorial Force]¹⁸

Even the Dean, on Speech Day 1912, “spoke a word of approval on the work done by the Officers’ Training Corps, and said that if all carried out their part in the great movement for the defence of England, they would make her so safe that the possibility of a foreign enemy ever invading her shores would be out of the question.”¹⁹ The Headmaster too noted that the OTC “was strong in numbers, and they encouraged all whom they could to join it... They believed further in the training and discipline which a corps like that afforded to all who joined it (applause).”²⁰

It is far from obvious, however, that all the boys paid attention to these urgings. Some were definitely enthusiastic, and there were grand occasions that might appeal even to the sceptical. Nine boys represented the contingent in the Officers Training Corps Coronation Battalion on 22 June 1911. They were stationed “just to the right of the Palace, facing Green Park, at the bottom of Constitution Hill”.²¹ The OTC Review at Windsor on 3 July 1911 when the King inspected the entire national Corps, Senior and Junior, was even more

¹⁶ The Cantuarian, May 1909, p. 347-50.

¹⁷ The Cantuarian, April 1912, p. 220. It is not entirely clear from the report whether it was General Bingham or Major Ashmore of the Imperial General Staff who made this speech. Schools present, in addition to King’s Canterbury, were: St Edmund’s, Tonbridge, Dover College, St. Lawrence Ramsgate, Sir Roger Manwood’s, King’s School, Rochester, and Maidstone Grammar School. It is striking how high-powered the visiting officers were.

¹⁸ The Cantuarian December 1913, p. 540.

¹⁹ The Cantuarian, October 1912, p. 301.

²⁰ K.G. 3.8.1912. These remarks are not recorded in The Cantuarian.

²¹ The Cantuarian, July 1911, pp. 70-2 and p. 90. There is a very full report in the Holme House Gazette, vol. 8, pp. 91-7.

spectacular. The boys writing the report for the school magazine described it as “the happiest and most inspiring day ever spent with the O.T.C.”²²

Such responses are not common. Reading between the lines of the repeated exhortations it seems clear that King’s schoolboys – and many of their fellows in other schools – were not living up to the expectations of their seniors. Even the relentlessly enthusiastic Alan Haig-Brown in his 1915 book *The O.T.C. and the Great War* had to admit that the reality did not always correspond to the ideal. In addition to the predictable references to ‘shirkers’ he observed: “Civilian influence and ideas have been strong in our education centres up to the present time. Not without opposition did military training assure its place in school life...”²³

One possible example of ‘civilian influence’ is alluded to in the report of the King’s Birthday parade in June 1912. *The Cantuarian* gave a full and cheerful account of “rather a nice little show” but also mentioned “a few whose souls are above khaki and puttees and whose attentions were still directed to Caesar and Latin Exercises... It is believed that these few find military exercises ‘too hot’ and prefer Latin ones.”²⁴ *The Holme House Gazette* added comments from Brigadier-General Fanshawe, who took the salute: “He went on to talk about the object of the Officers’ Training Corps, and exhorted us willingly to make the sacrifice of games time and leisure hours, in preparing to take part, should need arise, in the great game of war; and he told us to realise what important duties were ours, the coming generations, and what great responsibilities rested on our shoulders.”²⁵ Even if they did not go so far as to prefer Latin exercises, most schoolboys were more likely to have taken the short-term view and to have made this particular sacrifice reluctantly. Some may have actively disliked the OTC.²⁶

One of the obvious tests of commitment to the Corps was attendance at camp. Yet numbers remained at a moderate level – typically less than half the contingent – in the pre-war years: 69 in 1910, 75 in 1911, 55 in 1912, 61 in 1913 and 1914. Numbers in 1911 were boosted by “an earnest and wise appeal from the Head Master”, and Charles Bell sought to encourage attendance by advertising the non-military aspects of the camp. “The charge for the whole 10 days – really 12 days, as we go to Camp on Saturday, July 29th till August 9th – is only 35/-, a charge which will not cover the whole of the expenses. A cheap, enjoyable, and useful holiday!”²⁷ Even then, “a few dropped off for various reasons at the last, one or two having no reason at all”.²⁸ The 1912 *Cantuarian* report again commented on the disappointing turnout. “The Commanding Officer cannot help regretting that the numbers attending camp are so small, smaller than ever instead of being larger, and wishes to add that

²² *The Cantuarian*, July 1911 (no. 3), p. 90 and July 1911 (no. 4), pp. 120-2; *Holme House Gazette*, vol. 8, pp. 88-90. Cf. Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and the Great War*, pp. 67-8 on “certainly the greatest event in the history of the O.T.C.” He also quotes the report in *The Times*.

²³ Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and the Great War*, p. 62. Haig-Brown commanded the OTC at Lancing College.

²⁴ *The Cantuarian*, July 1912, p. 262.

²⁵ *Holme House Gazette*, vol. 9, pp. 51-2.

²⁶ The attitude of Patrick Shaw-Stewart – “I am the most unmilitary of men: I hated field-days at Eton” – may have been common. Letter to Lady Diana Manners, quoted in Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles* (2010), p. 264. Cf. the views of Arthur Innes Adam at Winchester, described in J.A. Mangan, *Happy Warriors in Waiting?*, *IJHS*, March 2011, pp. 479-82.

²⁷ *The Cantuarian*, July 1911, p. 90.

²⁸ *The Cantuarian*, November 1911, p. 146.

this fact shows rather uncomfortably that both parents and boys have not got hold of the correct spirit or correctly caught the true meaning of the Officers Training Corps.”²⁹ The report on the camp itself noted: “it is high time that K.S.C. woke up to the fact that it is its duty to have a company to itself at camp.”³⁰ Other schools were at camps, and inter-school rivalry (including ‘footer matches’) came to the fore, so pride was at stake as much as national preparedness.



Boys at the OTC Camp 1913, including LW Goldsmith, CW and PS Barber, JAR Ferguson and CLP Heming
Goldsmith, Ferguson and Heming were to be killed in the War

Things do not seem to have been any better in 1913. A full report on the Camp, presumably from Bell, included some very strong criticisms of the attitude of the boys to the OTC.

We are rather apt to jog along at our own pace under the general impression that we are ‘*playing* at soldiers.’ Perhaps that is the reason why there is too often so little interest shown in O.T.C. *work*. But a camp like this should help us to realise that it is work and not play that we are out for. The fact, not only that the War Office pays a trained staff for ten days to look after us, but also that that trained staff doesn’t treat us like a lot of schoolboys, but as men, should make everyone

²⁹ The Cantuarian, July 1912, p. 263.

³⁰ The Cantuarian, October 1912, pp. 315.

who was there resolve to make himself efficient – not merely in the technical sense of the 30 drills and the musketry – but in the sense of ‘soldierly’ qualities, and fitness for command. That this is the aim of the War Office is abundantly proved by the trouble they take over the O.T.C., and the money they spend on it.³¹

In so far as the boys could vote with their feet, many were not showing great enthusiasm for things military. Even attendance at camp was no guarantee that it was taken very seriously. It is quite clear – and surely not surprising – that it was precisely the ‘playing at soldiers’ that appealed to the boys. As the full report in the *Holme House Gazette* makes clear, it was the various activities, including football matches and the nightly ‘sing-song’, that attracted them rather than the work and the discipline.³² It is hard to imagine them enjoying the ‘strong line’ taken by the Brigadier, who “came to the camp determined that orders given were to be obeyed; and in breaches of discipline treated officers and men alike with military severity.”³³ Only a small minority of boys envisaged a career in the armed forces. The report listed six boys “formerly cadets of the K.S.C. Contingent, [who] have taken commissions during the year” (mainly in the Territorial Force).³⁴ For the rest, the OTC camp was probably not much more than an adventure holiday.

There are other indications that the OTC was not succeeding in its aims at King’s. The 1912 Inspection took place on Thursday, 27 June. On this occasion, the inspecting officer, Lieutenant A.P. Wavell, the future Field Marshal and Viceroy of India, did not follow the usual pattern of exhortation and encouragement. His comments perhaps reveal a more accurate picture of the condition of the School Corps: “At the conclusion of the parade he addressed the Contingent. It is hoped that everyone present registered a vow that never again would they hear such an address on our Parade Ground.”³⁵ No details of the speech were given by *The Cantuarian*, but the *Holme House Gazette* filled in some of the gaps:

Lieutenant Wavel [sic] first of all commented upon the unsmartness in dress; buttons were not well polished and in many cases boots had not been cleaned it showed insufficient pride in the king’s uniform. The second point was that the orders and commands were said in too much of a sing-song voice which betrayed anything but smartness. In conclusion Lieutenant Wavel said he was distinctly disappointed by our turn out that afternoon. From what he had previously heard he gathered that we were quite one of the best corps at Camp. However he presumed that part of our failure was due to it being an off day.³⁶

As often, the correspondence pages of *The Cantuarian* provide a more convincingly accurate (and even sardonic) view of the true state of the school. With a suitably patriotic pseudonym, one boy exposed the reality of the OTC in 1914.

The other day I was watching the King’s School O.T.C. fall in and, really, if it had not been a serious matter, it would have been absolutely laughable. When a

³¹ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, p. 495.

³² *Holme House Gazette*, vol. 9, pp. 153-7. A ‘house tent’ no doubt added to the appeal.

³³ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, p. 495.

³⁴ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, p. 497. Figures sent to Haig-Brown noted that 29 OKS had been gazetted officers between May 1909 and August 1914. See Haig-Brown, p. 103.

³⁵ *The Cantuarian*, July 1912, p. 263.

³⁶ *Holme House Gazette*, vol. 9, pp. 59-60.

regular regiment falls in, the men double out at the first sound of the bugle; but with the King's School it is rather different. About 15 seconds after the last note of the bugle people start to stroll up, most of them as if they are going to a funeral. I don't wish to impute slackness to any individuals; I think it is merely symptomatic of a slack spirit which has become general of late. The School has braced up in many things this term; isn't it about the Corps' turn? The School can turn out as smart a Corps as any, if they really mean to. Why not try now? it can't be done only on Inspection Days.

Yours truly,

PRO PATRIA³⁷

Other letters in the same year picked up on the shortcomings of the OTC noticeboards and – more pertinently – on the inadequacies of the shooting:

In the first place, we only shoot with miniature rifles. That is very useful as far as it goes and well done; but shooting with a miniature rifle is a very different thing from shooting with a service rifle, and, after all, the latter is the one we ought to know how to use, apart from the fact that every respectable school has practice with it. We cannot say we have no chance of doing so, for there is the 30 yards range at the barracks, which we did use in time past.

'Fire Control' went on to say that "there is very little inducement for people to become keen" – another indication that enthusiasm for the OTC was limited.³⁸

The OTC at the King's School, as elsewhere, undoubtedly fell short of the ideals and hopes of the Army and of the schoolmaster officers. Its influence on the boys in the longer term is not easy to gauge. When Brigadier-General Fanshawe addressed the Corps in 1912 and expressed the hope that some boys would eventually join the Special Reserve and Territorial Force, Charles Bell in an aside "thought of the (only) six names on the O.T.C. boards, yet hopefully thought of the morrow".³⁹ As the OTC was only founded in 1909, many (probably most) OKS who served in the War had not been members.⁴⁰ Of the 163 who were to be killed, some 61 (37%) had been in the OTC. On the other hand, when the War came, many of the younger men who volunteered had the experience of being in uniform, of drilling, field days and camps to draw on. The world of the military, even if not admired or aspired to, was not as unfamiliar as it might have been, though there was still a huge gulf between schoolboy games – playing at soldiers, even with rifles firing blanks – and the reality of war. The limitations of their training were soon apparent – recruits were "high on enthusiasm but low on skill"⁴¹ – but they were not totally unprepared for what they would find in the services.

³⁷ The Cantuarian, April 1914, p. 547.

³⁸ The Cantuarian, June 1914, pp. 651-2. For the letters on the noticeboards, see: The Cantuarian, March 1914, p. 586 and June 1914, p. 652. Of course the letters show that some, like 'Fire Control' (and probably 'Pro Patria'), took the OTC seriously.

³⁹ The Cantuarian, July 1912, p. 263.

⁴⁰ Haig-Brown, The O.T.C. and the Great War, p. 103. The figures he gives are: officers gazetted from formation to August 1914 = 29; Aug 14 to May 1915 = 82; in ranks = 50. The numbers from 1914 onwards are clearly underestimated.

⁴¹ Seldon and Walsh, p. 51.

The impact of the OTC on the attitude of boys to all things military and on the ‘public school ethos’ is much harder to assess. Emphasis on the principle of service to the country in an era accustomed to the possibility of war seems to suggest a school (and a society) gearing up for war. But there is no evidence to suggest that the OTC made boys militaristic. The opposite may have been the case. Drill was unpopular and it would seem that at King’s, as at Winchester College, there was a “general absence of militaristic fervour” but “quiet acceptance of the inevitability of involvement”.⁴² References to slackness are double-edged, showing the hopes and ideals of the military establishment encountering adolescent reality. For many, maybe most boys other aspects of the ‘ethos’ were more important.

There cannot be much doubt that as far as the authorities were concerned, the central element in the ‘ethos’ of the King’s School was Christianity. The Governing Body were all clergymen, as was the Headmaster (and all his predecessors for 200 years), and the Archbishop of Canterbury was a regular visitor both officially and informally. There were two services on Sundays as well as one on Saturday afternoon; major occasions such as the Admission of Scholars, Confirmation and Commemoration of Benefactors took place in the Cathedral; and there were prayers in the Schoolroom every morning.

At the same time, it is far from obvious that all this effort produced much more than outward conformity – ‘unthinking Christianity’.⁴³ Clergyman’s son Hugh Pitts noted: “Even I can remember at school in Canterbury how the fashion was to denigrate the Cathedral and her services among the boys.”⁴⁴ According to Reginald Hancock, “We went to cathedral services far too often, and the services themselves were dull and far beyond the patience and endurance of small boys.”⁴⁵ As a musician he added: “Only the singing, always beautiful, made the long hours of forced worship bearable.”⁴⁶ Not everyone would agree even on that: a correspondent to *The Cantuarian* lamented that the Sunday evening psalm and hymn were sung like a funeral dirge.⁴⁷ Mangan’s comment – “There was precious little Christianity in the [public] schools at any time. It was a cultural custom: a social habit not a spiritual state.” – may be too sweeping, but it is not far off the truth.⁴⁸

In a wider sense, however, the values of the Christian gentleman were central to the ethos of the School. Charles Pullan makes this clear in his *Schola Mea*, written in 1914 and 1915 and reflecting on the final Speech Day:

And now, as we turn to our bed, it is meet that the last memory which floats before our eyes is that of the School Chapel – our Chapel, which seems to sum up for us all the lessons that our School and our Cathedral, of which this portion is our own, would have us learn. We have found there in the past both strength and peace, and in the future throughout our lives we must bear in mind the lessons we

⁴² J.A. Mangan, *Happy Warriors in Waiting?*, IJHS, March 2011, p. 476.

⁴³ Martin Stephen, *The Price of Pity*, p. 14-15.

⁴⁴ H.C.M. Pitts, copy of diary, p. 86. KSC Archives box A 38.

⁴⁵ R. Hancock, *Memoirs of a Veterinary Surgeon*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ R. Hancock, *Memoirs of a Veterinary Surgeon*, p. 53.

⁴⁷ *The Cantuarian*, December 1913, p. 547.

⁴⁸ J.A. Mangan, ‘Tragic Symbiosis: Distinctive ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Visions and Voices’ in Thierry Terret and J.A. Mangan, *Sport, Militarism and the Great War*, p. 120.

learnt of honour and loyalty; of courage and determination; of contempt for all that is merely selfish, material and ephemeral.⁴⁹

The feeling that ‘service’ was somehow a duty was repeated in sermons.⁵⁰ It is a useful corrective to the view that public schoolboys were fed an exclusive diet of militarism, nationalism and imperialism. The most obvious illustration of this at Canterbury was the involvement with the Bermondsey Club. Although this was not a regular part of the school week like the OTC, it was, in its way, as significant.

A meeting was held on 28 May 1911 in the Parry Library “to consider the proposal that the School should support a Boys’ Club in Bermondsey, to be known as the Canterbury Club”. The key figure in establishing the link was Rupert Winser, who had been a boy at King’s from 1900 to 1905 and gone on to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He had been ordained in 1910 and was Warden of the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission. *The Cantuarian* provided a very full account of the meeting, and reported the decision passed on to Winser:

We do not, on our part, guarantee to provide any fixed sum of money for its support; also if either side wishes to terminate the connection, we consider that you, or we, may do so without any breach of contract.

Subject to these observations we agree to support the Club to the best of our power by our interest, by mutual exchange of visits, so far as they can be arranged; and we hope to provide a gradually increasing sum of money from the School and Old Boys towards the upkeep of the Club.⁵¹

Over the next few years, there were regular links between the Canterbury Club and the School. Ten boys from Bermondsey came to Canterbury for a weekend in July 1911. They played a cricket match on Blore’s, camped in an orchard, spent Sunday morning on the river and then visited the School and attended a Cathedral service.⁵² There was a similar programme for them in 1912.⁵³ In 1913 and 1914, the Whitsun weekend was chosen, so there was an extra night in Canterbury.⁵⁴ In addition, a few King’s boys went to Bermondsey in, at least, 1913 and 1914. The report of the latter occasion ended with a remarkable peroration:

But there is one thing that all agreed on the way back: It is God’s own work; the good that is being done by these missions is something stupendous, and we appeal to all O.K.S. who live near town to assist by spending one night a week or so down at the Canterbury Club, and to go to camp with the boys in the first week

⁴⁹ Pullan, *Schola Mea*, p. 41. Pullan was at the School from 1908 to 1913. In a letter to Edward Gent, Mary Pullan, mother of Charles, wrote: “Charlie so much enjoyed writing about the School. The first four chapters he wrote while he was in the army, & sent them to me as he wrote them. The other chapters, which he also gave me, he wrote soon after he left school... Mr McDowall edited it, but he altered practically nothing. He liked it very much, and left it just as Charlie wrote it.” KSC Archives: Box W1.

⁵⁰ *Sermons... of the King’s School, Canterbury* (1897) published those preached on Speech Day from 1887 to 1896. There are several references to ‘service’: e.g. from Robert Ottley pp. 48-52 and Charles Mackeson pp. 120-7.

⁵¹ *The Cantuarian*, July 1911, pp. 73-77. There is a copy of the letter from McDowall in the School Archives. Many public schools had missions, often dating back to the 1880s. Seldon and Walsh, pp. 14-15.

⁵² *The Cantuarian*, July 1911 [no. 4], p. 122.

⁵³ *The Cantuarian*, August 1912, pp. 288-9.

⁵⁴ *The Cantuarian*, June 1913, p. 427 and June 1914, pp. 644-5.

in August. If they have never done anything of the sort before, its charm and its desperate difficulty will impress them more than anything else possibly could.⁵⁵ Speech Day collections for the Club continued throughout the war (and indeed for many years afterwards), but the weekend visits stopped.

When the recently formed Cavendish Association contacted the School in the autumn of 1913, *The Cantuarian* responded positively by printing the letter from the Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Selborne and by including an article on ‘Social Service’.⁵⁶ The article noted that the movement was “based on two assumptions, each of which we are all probably prepared to grant, but to neither of which we are apt to respond without some special appeal”:

The first assumption is that there is a *need* for Personal Service, whether Social, Civic, or National, on the part of our Public School and University class... The second assumption is that many of us are quite ready to take up these duties, if we are only “stirred up” and shown the way.⁵⁷

The ‘stirring up’ was provided by a talk from Colonel Ulick De Burgh, Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Boy Scouts Association, on 5 November. In introducing him the Headmaster noted that “in the case of the School the Canterbury Club in Bermondsey was a step in the direction of the objects of the Cavendish Club”. The Colonel replied that much was expected of public school boys “because of the advantages that have been given them”, and spoke on the need for leadership and “that the Public School men of today were successors of King Arthur’s Knights”.⁵⁸ For some commentators this analogy epitomises the illusion of 1914, but in this case the call was not to arms, but to social service. Selflessness and public service were aspects of an ethos that might encompass the Bermondsey Club as well as the OTC.

If the King’s School was not preparing boys for war, it was preparing them to serve in the Empire – with the military as just a part of that. Many of the boys were sons of Empire; many would go on to serve there. As Robert Ottley (who spent his working life in Oxford) explained in his 1891 Speech Day sermon, ‘Faith and Consecration’:

An English boy can never be sure in what distant scene he may end his days.
There is no corner of the world which is not sown with the seed of English lives.⁵⁹

Charles Pullan’s *Schola Mea* had a whole chapter – ‘In Authority’ – on being a monitor, and explicitly linked leadership and Empire:

Some of us don’t always rise to the possibilities of the position; all of us are not leaders among men. But here we learn and never forget what discipline, obedience and responsibility mean, and everyone gains some insight into the management of men. And often when you see a young gentleman of eighteen

⁵⁵ *The Cantuarian*, April 1914, pp. 602-3 and 613-4.

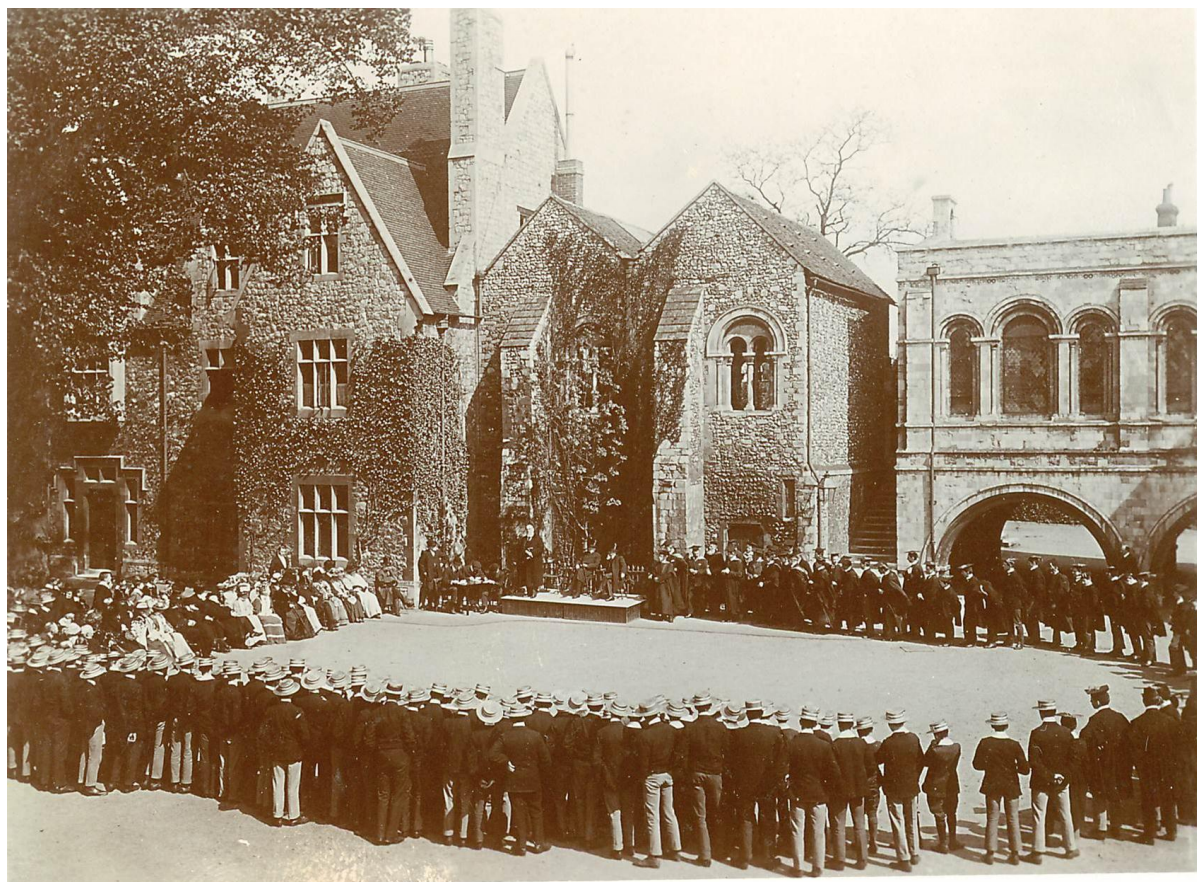
⁵⁶ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, pp. 497-8 and 517-9. The letter was sent to many schools.

⁵⁷ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, p. 497. *The Spectator* of 25 October 1913 provided a full account of the scheme and the efforts to involve schools.

⁵⁸ *The Cantuarian*, December 1913, pp. 537-8. Cf. Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* for public schools and chivalry.

⁵⁹ *Sermons... of the King’s School, Canterbury*, p. 48. The sermon was in fact delivered in 1891, not 1889. The book has misdated the sermons by Herbert Swithinbank and Ottley.

carrying out the office of the order of Monitorship, you realise just how the British Empire is run, and why it stands so sure.⁶⁰



Empire Day 1908: Mr Henniker Heaton, MP for Canterbury, presents a flag from the King's School, Parramatta

Boys were certainly well aware of the Empire. Empire Day was usually celebrated with appropriate ceremony.⁶¹ *The Cantuarian* included regular references to OKS abroad in its OKS News and more directly in its letters from overseas. From 1911 to 1914 there were five letters each from India and Canada, but also one from Sierra Leone.⁶² There was even 'A British Empire Song', composed by the Dean and set to music by Geoffrey Ryley, which was performed at the School Christmas Concert on 19 December 1910. (Ryley had been at King's from 1880 to 1886 and was a Minor Canon of the Cathedral. He became Sacrist in 1911.) What was presumably a revised version was included in a concert on 7 November 1914 in a new setting by Percy Godfrey.⁶³ And popular literature such as the novels of G.A. Henty,

⁶⁰ Pullan, *Schola Mea*, p. 33.

⁶¹ See, for example, *The Cantuarian*, June 1908 pp. 182-7 and May 1909 p. 365.

⁶² The *Cantuarian* letters are as follows. From India: March 1911, pp. 37-8; July 1911, pp. 95-6; November 1911, pp. 165-6; June 1912, pp. 243-4; and April 1914, pp. 611-2. From Canada: March 1911, pp. 35-6; October 1912, pp. 328-9; December 1912, pp. 354-5; November 1913, pp. 514-5; and March 1914, pp. 581-4. From Sierra Leone: February 1912, pp. 187-8.

⁶³ The *Cantuarian*, March 1911, pp. 4-6 and December 1914, pp. 768-9. A British Empire Song, by Geoffrey Charles Edward Ryley, words by H. Wace, was published by Boosey & Co. in 1910. An Imperial Anthem, by Percy Godfrey, words by H. Wace, was published by Boosey & Co. in 1914. In addition, An Empire Song, by Percy Godfrey, words by H. Wace, was published by Boosey & Co. in 1912.

regularly added to the Library in the 1880s and 1890s, may well have had more effect than anything said by masters – or than the map of the British Empire that may or may not have been on a classroom wall.⁶⁴

It was part of the rhetoric of the cult of athleticism in Victorian and Edwardian public schools that games inspired virtue, developed manliness and formed character, and that leaders were made on the sports field. *The Cantuarian* editorial in March 1914 seems at first sight to acknowledge the dominance of sport within the school:

A school magazine is, presumably, a record of school news rather than an organ of budding litterateurs (at all times a shy species in these parts); and school news must obviously mean mostly sporting intelligence; but perhaps we ought to have thrilling accounts of the classical examinations and character studies of the prize-winners? ,

We may congratulate ourselves so far, at least, on a quite successful term and Gent on a good finish to a good football season. The Tutor Set matches produced one or two excellent games, in spite of the great superiority of the Martlets; and the weather, usually a constant occasion of complaint this term has been most propitious.⁶⁵

At the King's School, however, the 'bloods' did not entirely hold sway. There were thirteen Captains of School between 1900 and 1914. All were King's Scholars. Most had some success on the games field, but only one was Captain of Football (and that a term *after* becoming Captain of School), one Captain of Boats, and none Captain of Cricket, though two were Captains of the less prestigious sport of Fives. All were editors of *The Cantuarian*, and although this was an ex officio role, most were already on the editorial board when they achieved the top office. And all went on to Oxford or Cambridge except for Curteis Ryan, who went to the Central Technical College, Kensington. Academic prowess seems to have been the primary consideration; sporting distinction was secondary. A similar pattern is apparent in the Monitors. Of the ten listed in *The Cantuarian* for 1913-14, all but one (Godfrey Haward) were King's Scholars, one (Edward Gent) was Captain of both Football and Cricket, three others were in the XI and two in the XV (of whom one was also in the IV).⁶⁶

There were very few 2nd XV or 2nd XI matches, and no junior teams at all, so the main focus of most boys as participants was on tutor set matches ('tuggers'), instituted in 1895. Such boys might take pride in the fact that the 1st XV was unbeaten against other schools in 1910 or, even more so, in the success of recent old boys, and especially the internationals Roland Gordon, who played for Scotland in 1913, and Digby Watson, who played in England's grand slam winning side of 1914. (Both were to be killed in the war.) They might

⁶⁴ On Henty see *The Cantuarian*, October 1884, p. 284 (4 titles); April 1891, pp. 103-4 (3 titles); December 1899, p. 155 (3 titles).

⁶⁵ *The Cantuarian*, March 1914, p. 551-2.

⁶⁶ *The Cantuarian*, November 1913, p. 501. All the Captains of School were also Presidents of the Debating Society. On monitors, see Pullan, ch. IV: 'In Authority' pp. 28-33. For Pullan, "The Captain of the School is, of course, the Prime Monitor of this august, privileged and responsible body." Cf. Andrew Parry, *Making Men*, pp. 142-4, 199-201, 236-7 and 293-4 for comparisons of academic and athletic qualifications for School Captains at King's Canterbury and King's Parramatta from 1915 to 1965 and J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, pp. 253-4 for comparisons with other schools.

admire, as spectators, the ‘heroes’ of the XV or the XI and maybe aspire to emulate them. ‘The Song of the Sluggard’, which appeared in the *Holme House Gazette*, reflected the esteem for sporting heroes – several are mentioned by name, including Bruno Garibaldi – as well as the recognition by the unathletic and short-sighted ‘ordinary’ boy that he was a ‘slacker’ and maybe preferred to read a book.⁶⁷ The anonymous poet had much in common with Hugh Pitts, who commented: “We played ‘Rugger’ at school. The game was never explained to me, and I usually found myself at the bottom of the scrum, covered with mud, without any idea of what to do there!”⁶⁸ One should be wary of assuming that the ‘games ethic’ had much influence on boys like Pitts.



Cricket shield 1914, hung in the gymnasium
Burton, Potts and Hodgson were to be killed in the War

⁶⁷ *Holme House Gazette*, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 11. Garibaldi, grandson of the great Giuseppe Garibaldi, was Captain of Boats. He was to be killed in the War.

⁶⁸ H.C.M. Pitts, copy of diary, p. 9.

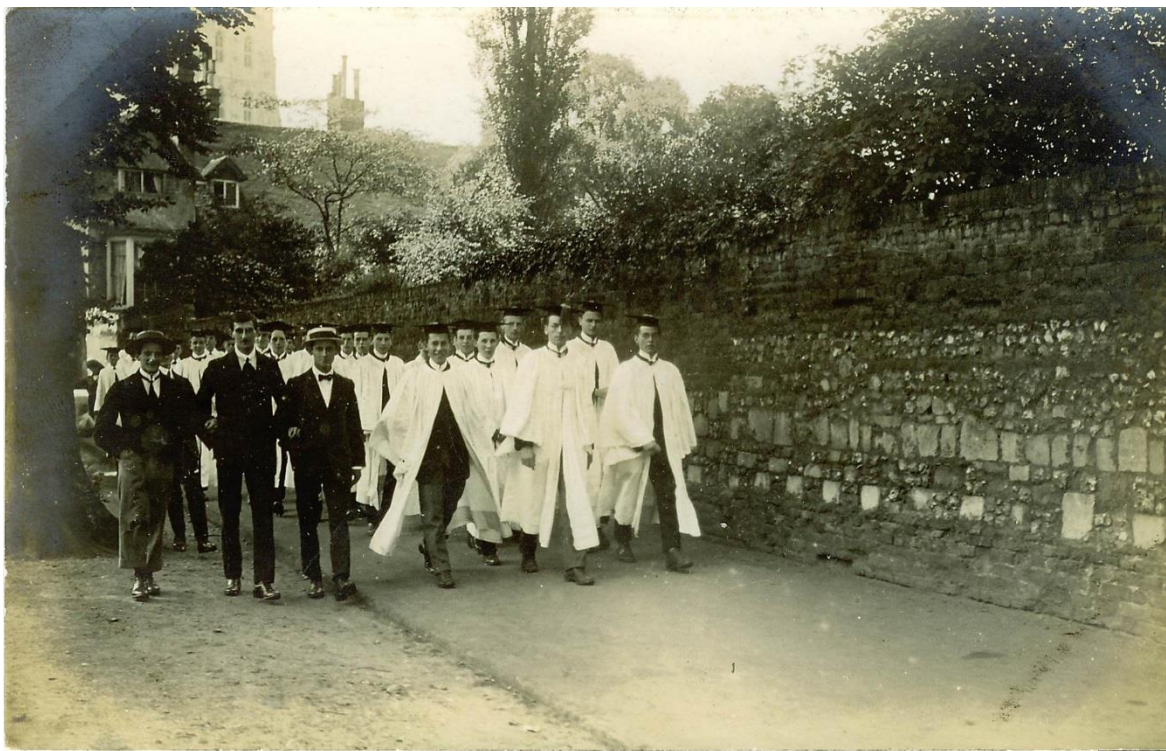
THE SONG OF THE SLUGGARD

ANON

I oft dream of fame and athletic proficiency,
Muscular strength and ophthalmic efficiency,
But in everything such I seem sadly deficient
And, for exercise, walking to school's quite sufficient.
I often imagine myself playing at cricket,
Superbly off-driving, or taking a wicket,
With the wiles of a Denne or the skill of a Fluke,
But it ends up with cherries, the Bev, and a book.
And how in the winter when footer's predominant
Do I envy the half-back or forward who's prominent,
Taylors and Gents, the professors of "Rugger" —
But all that I do is to cheer on my "Yugger".
Ah! when upon Fordwich all eyes concentrated are,
My one sole desire to be some heavy-weighted star,
Some Garibaldi with oars on his coat,
But it ends with my running — some way — by the boat.
Other colours I've gained in my ambitious thoughts
Such as Fives and Gymnasium, Sixth Form and Sports,
But I fear there's not one that will e'er come to me,
As I'm frightfully slack — and still in III C.

The Song of the Sluggard, Holme House Gazette, 1908

Games do not figure particularly prominently in the 1914 prospectus.⁶⁹ More revealingly, the school history, published in 1908, included a final chapter on ‘Forty Years of King’s School Games’, but the authors felt they had to justify this in anticipation of “provoking a certain amount of hostile criticism”. They recognised the prominence of sport, but sought to downplay it. “Although, perhaps, we may deplore the excessive devotion to athletic pursuits, which is the prevailing feature in the life of present-day youth, yet we hope and think that in the King’s School these matters are regarded more sanely and that games take their proper place only as a means to an end.”⁷⁰ The book of photographs published at about the same time conveyed a similar message. It included eleven views, but these were mainly of the buildings. Only two included games (cricket nets on the Green Court and tennis behind the Grange), but in both cases the captions referred to the buildings. There was one picture of Blore’s Piece, but it showed an OTC Inspection, not a school match.



The King’s Scholars, in their white surplices and mortar boards, return from a Cathedral service, c1910

The importance of games – at least in hindsight – in preparing boys for their military role has often been commented on.⁷¹ The rituals and symbols associated with sporting success – the ceremonial award of colours, the right to walk across the Green Court and the cap and hat band, the applause for victorious teams, the team shields in the gymnasium and photographs in the dining hall, and the ‘bloods’ seat’ – all gave sporting heroes a special

⁶⁹ King’s School Prospectus (1914), pp. 20-1.

⁷⁰ Woodruff and Cape, *Schola Regia Cantuariensis* (1908), p. 283.

⁷¹ See e.g. Andrew Parry, *Making Men*, especially pp. 118-120: ‘Boyhood to warrior: ‘dulce et decorum est’.

status within the school community.⁷² However, it is important to note that all this applied equally – and with greater weight of tradition – to the King’s Scholars. They wore their black gowns in school and processed to the Cathedral in surplices and mortar boards.⁷³ 165 boys entered the School in 1906, 1907 and 1908. If we exclude the 26 who left before they were sixteen, then 43 out of the remaining 139 were in the 1st XV, 1st XI or 1st IV. In the same years, 35 boys went on to Oxford or Cambridge. Of these only 14 were in the main teams; the majority were in this respect not notably ‘athletic’.⁷⁴ It is open to debate therefore whether the ‘elite’ in the School were the Scholars or the sportsmen. And on Speech Day it was a Cathedral service and the ‘speeches’ and prize giving in the Chapter House, rather than – as happened in many schools – a cricket match, that took centre stage.

In this respect, as in some others, the King’s School Canterbury may have been unusual. J.A. Mangan opens his chapter on ‘Conspicuous resources, anti-intellectualism and sporting pedagogues’ with the bold statement: “The English public school is invariably an island of mellowed buildings in a sea of well-kept playing fields.”⁷⁵ Canterbury could excel in its mellowed buildings, but by 1914 the only games visible within the Precincts were cricket practices on the Green Court and tennis in Palace Court. Similarly, Mangan’s chapter ‘Play up and play the game: the rhetoric of cohesion, identity, patriotism and morality’ is liberally illustrated with sporting verse.⁷⁶ But King’s, unlike many of its fellows, did not have a school song, though Harrow’s ‘Forty Years On’ was sometimes used. In 1914, two old boys – Henry Morice and Bertram Latter – composed their own offering entitled ‘The School of Theodore’. Morice had been in the cricket XI and football XV, and Latter had captained both teams as well as being Captain of School, but their song was about history and tradition. Unlike so many such compositions of the era, sport was absent. This is the final verse:

Now a thousand years have passed away!
 Untouched by impious hands,
 Firm as a rock, unchanged to-day,
 Our brave old school yet stands,
 And bears on its unsullied roll
 The name of many a noble soul.
 No rule will we own but of Church and Throne!
 As in the days of yore,
 Our school shall stand in the fair Kent land
 For a thousand year and more!⁷⁷

⁷² Pullan, *Schola Mea*, pp. 16-17. The award of colours “from the bottom of the School steps after tea” had been formalized in 1896, replacing “the irregular manner customary before”. See *The Cantuarian*, July 1896, p. 245.

⁷³ Pullan, *Schola Mea*, p.14.

⁷⁴ Analysis from King’s School, Canterbury Register 1859 to 1931, pp. 192-211. The names of those who won scholarships and exhibitions to Oxford and Cambridge were on boards in the Schoolroom.

⁷⁵ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, p. 99. Mangan’s focus on six schools – Harrow, Stonyhurst, Marlborough, Uppingham, Lancing and Loretto – illustrates much that is familiar in Canterbury, but also some things that are unrecognisable.

⁷⁶ J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, pp. 179-206.

⁷⁷ *The Cantuarian*, March 1914, pp. 572-3. Morice was at King’s in 1865 and from 1866 to 1872; Latter from 1867 to 1877. The song was presented at the OKS dinner in January. It retained its appeal for some years. Cf.



Miss Gadd, School House matron, c1900

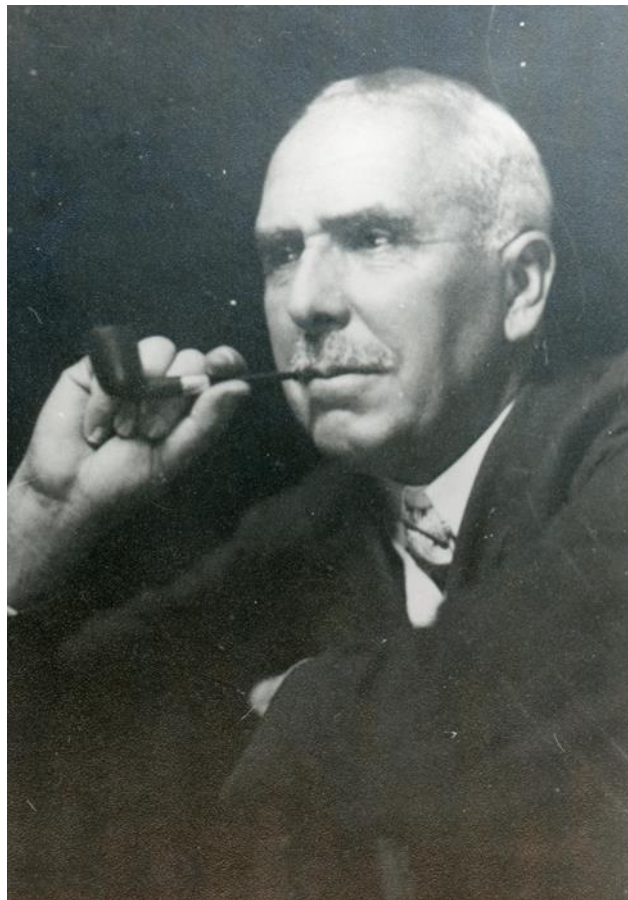
For all the emphasis on manliness in accounts of Victorian and Edwardian education, it is clearly wrong to suggest that public schools were male bastions where women were absent. The census of 1911, taken during the school holiday, shows a strong female presence in School House. In addition to the Headmaster's wife and two young daughters, the residents were a cook (aged 66) and five servants (a nurse, maid, housemaid, kitchen maid and scullery maid) all single women aged 15 to 27. The 1901 census perhaps gives a better picture of the school as it was taken during term time. Headmaster Arthur Galpin's household included sixteen servants: nine 'domestic' and seven 'school'. The school servants, all female and all single, included two matrons (Frances Gadd and Harriet Spilsbury), both aged 46, and five maids – four 'dormitory maids' and one housemaid – aged 15 to 19. The domestic servants included a cook (aged 38), a nurse (aged 24) and seven servants, aged 15 to 27. In all eight of the servants were teenagers. These figures of course do not take into account any daily servants, such as those who might have worked in the dining hall – or the tuck shop.⁷⁸ No male domestic servants were recorded in either year, though there were six resident masters (aged 26 to 51) in 1901 and all were single. The first female member of the Junior School teaching staff, Miss D. Bellars, appeared in the Trinity (Summer) Term 1914.⁷⁹

Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, ch 8, pp. 179-206 on school songs and other related verse.

⁷⁸ David Stainer recalled the 'elderly lady and her daughter... known as Mrs. and Miss H.' in the tuck shop. John Cropton, *The Road to Nowhere*, p. 110. Mrs Fannie Holdstock, who lived in 84 Broad Street at the back of School House, was manageress of the tuck shop. Her daughter Frances lived with her, as did two School servants (young men aged 18 and 19), listed as 'potts' in the 1911 census.

⁷⁹ Not much is known about her. She remained on the staff until the Michaelmas Term 1918, when she was replaced by Miss Southern.

It is also important not to underestimate the standing of women within the school community. Elizabeth Sumner, the School Nurse at this time, was a major figure. “She wielded tremendous influence”, recalled David Stainer in a glowing tribute.⁸⁰ Miss Tyler, the School House matron from 1907 to 1923, was, according to *The Cantuarian*, “a friend to mother us or scold us as occasion demanded”.⁸¹ In similar fashion, Geoffrey Soden, who was at King’s from September 1918 to March 1921, observed that “the Headmaster’s housekeeper [Miss Skipwith] – one felt that “hostess” would have been a more appropriate word – belonged to the credit side of the war” and added “But of all the more or less uncomprehending grown-ups, male or female, with whom I came into contact at Canterbury, the one of whose kindness and understanding I have the happiest memories is Jane, the School House maid.”⁸²



Percy Godfrey, Music Master

Whatever the importance of the OTC, the Cathedral and sport in the average schoolboy’s priorities, other things may have been more significant in the lives of some. There were plenty of opportunities for ‘hobbies’ and what would later be called ‘extra-

⁸⁰ John Cropton, *The Road to Nowhere*, pp. 125-6. For her obituary and a tribute from former Headmaster Charles McDowall, see *The Cantuarian*, July 1929, pp. 46 and 97.

⁸¹ *The Cantuarian*, March 1923, p. 123.

⁸² D.L. Edwards, *A History of the King’s School Canterbury*, p. 166. For an obituary of Yvonne Ella Skipwith, with a tribute from Algernon Latter, see *The Cantuarian*, July 1948, p. 389. See also: *The Cantuarian*, March 1913, pp. 364-5 and 399; and July 1914, p. 679 for an appreciation for the Misses Evens.

curricular activities' with sympathetic masters – or, as had always been the case, for individual boys on their own initiative. Drawing was taken by all boys in the Junior School and by 3rd formers in the senior school. Thereafter it was voluntary (one of the extras noted in fees schedules). Looking at the school magazine, you would not be aware of art at all, but there was a Drawing Prize in the Lower School, so some recognition. Photography was a popular activity with its own dark room in the Mint Yard. A Photographic Society had been proposed in 1898 and eventually came into existence in 1915.⁸³

Drama was not a subject, nor an extra and there were no school plays at this time, though there had been some in the 1880s. Instead, there were Speeches on Speech Day, which were in fact mostly short extracts from plays: usually in Greek, Latin, French and English. In 1914, that meant scenes from *The Knights* (Aristophanes), *The Rivals* (Sheridan), *L'Avare* (Molière), and *Richard II* (Shakespeare) as well as pieces by Tacitus and Juvenal – a typical example. This was a tradition going back, in various forms, to the sixteenth century. The display of learning was no doubt intended to impress parents and other visitors, but the *Cantuarian* reporter in 1911 was sceptical. "Let us drop the Latin Speech. Let us reintroduce the comic English Speech... while by no means denying the presence of a few scholars who can and do understand the Latin Speech, I can confidently state that the vast majority of the audience are hopelessly befogged."⁸⁴

Reminiscences of the period (not a representative sample of opinion, of course) often pick out the Music Master, Percy Godfrey. Music, oddly, was not mentioned as a subject in the 1913 Inspection Report, though it was advertised as an 'extra', and it received some recognition through a Lower School Music Prize. Godfrey, usually dressed in his Norfolk jacket, was a man of character and even minor distinction: he had won a prize for the composition of a Coronation March for 1902. He was assisted by a teacher of violin S.J. Zacharewitsch.⁸⁵ There were concerts from time to time (one in 1913 even included *Trial by Jury* – which was, so far as we know, the only 'musical' at the school until the 1950s). There were also fairly regular 'Penny Readings' – shows put on by the boys and including mainly songs, recitations and the occasional instrumental item.

Godfrey may well have felt that he was competing against entrenched philistinism in the School – not to mention the wider culture – and did his best to counter this by his advocacy of music. In March 1914, his wind sextette provided an 'Entertainment', largely consisting of his own compositions. Godfrey "made a few remarks about the instruments, and also about the modern tendencies in music" and the programme, "printed in a futurist or phonetic method of spelling", even included references to Schoenberg and Debussy.⁸⁶ A letter from 'Orpheus' in the same issue of *The Cantuarian* complained about "the violent

⁸³ The *Cantuarian*, July 1898, p. 547 and July 1915, p. 53.

⁸⁴ The *Cantuarian*, May 1911, pp. 67-8. Cf. The *Cantuarian*, August 1916, pp. 268-71 for an entertaining English version of the extract from Aristophanes, *The Knights* performed that year. "The rendering is most essentially for English readers; and does not claim to be a scholarly rendering. It is intended primarily as a means of enlightening the uninitiated in the meaning and spirit of the Greek Speech on Speech Day."

⁸⁵ Schelich Jacobwlew Sisserman Zacharewitsch (known as Zelig) was from a distinguished family of Russian musicians and had come to England in 1904.

⁸⁶ The *Cantuarian*, April 1914, pp. 600-1.

discords, the jarring skids, the agonized screams” of the piano in the Parry Hall, and referred to “budding Paderewskis”.⁸⁷

Woodruff and Cape’s penultimate chapter in their 1908 school history – ‘The King’s School under the present Headmaster’ – included a separate section on music from Percy Godfrey, with details of two ‘typical programmes’.⁸⁸ After the review of a 1914 concert, Godfrey added a note for *The Cantuarian* on ‘King’s School Concerts 1900-1906’. This described some impressive performances for which he brought in members of the LSO to boost the school orchestra.⁸⁹ He added the interesting comment (and clearly a bit of a plea...): “Much is being done to assist the music, and the consideration for music is far more liberal than in former days; but the O.T.C. is an embarrassing factor here as elsewhere, the time available for music as for other things is much more restricted. Concerted work of any musical value is impossible...”⁹⁰

It is easy to forget that during the day the boys spent more time in the classroom than anywhere else. Academic success was a major priority, especially for King’s Scholars and the Sixth Form, with a place at university at stake. The list of ‘honours’ achieved by school leavers and OKS that was read out by the Dean on Speech Day and published in the *School List* and *The Cantuarian*, was, significantly, titled ‘Academic and other distinctions gained during the year’ and the exam orders were also published in the School Lists. There was some success in winning awards at Oxford and Cambridge, especially under Galpin, with five Open Scholarships in 1908 and four in 1909 and 1910, though there was some falling off with just another five in the next four years.

The influence of individual masters could be very great. John Maxwell Edmonds, at King’s from 1899 to 1903, was remembered as much for the fact that he had coached the 1st IV and had an eccentric approach to form orders as for the scholarliness that later gained him a fellowship at Jesus College, Cambridge. His edition of *The Characters of Theophrastus* was co-authored with his colleague at King’s George Austen and his *Twelve War Epitaphs* would include some of the best-known verses commemorating the Great War dead.⁹¹ George Rosenberg was a mathematics teacher of some distinction from 1900 to 1924. Graham Buston, who won an Open Mathematical Scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, noted that a dozen mathematical scholarships had been gained at Cambridge between 1904 and 1915. “In mathematics this was the School’s golden age, which was never quite restored after

⁸⁷ *The Cantuarian*, April 1914, p. 616. One wonders if Orpheus was in fact Percy Godfrey.

⁸⁸ Woodruff and Cape, *Schola Regia Cantuariensis*, pp. 269-73.

⁸⁹ Reginald Hancock recalled such concerts, and added: “Godfrey made a great to-do about the orchestra. He engaged professional wind-players to fill out the local strings, and through his friendship with the great horn-player Aubrey Brain, who usually came to play for him, we had an orchestra better than most one-night-only organizations.” However, as Aubrey Brain was born in 1893, Hancock must be confusing him with his father Alfred Brain of the LSO. R. Hancock, *Memoirs of a Veterinary Surgeon*, p. 57.

⁹⁰ *The Cantuarian*, March 1914, pp. 564-5.

⁹¹ J.M. Edmonds, *Twelve War Epitaphs* (1920). This Ashendene Press version prints his most famous epitaph incorrectly. It should read: ‘When you go home, tell them of us and say, For your tomorrows these gave their today’. For comments on the relationship between Edmonds’ epitaphs and Simonides, see Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles*, pp. 350-2.

the war". Rosenberg also had an interest in scratch dials and gave talks to Canterbury Archaeological Society.⁹²

Outside the classroom, there were school societies, especially the Harvey and Debating Societies. The Harvey Society had been founded as a scientific society in 1892, but it organised talks – often by the boys – on a wide range of topics. In the Autumn Term of 1911, for example, Robert Crosse spoke on 'Lantern Slides', Vyvian Heywood on 'Paper', Dyneley Hussey on 'Greek Pottery', Sydney Maiden on 'Indian Mutiny', the Headmaster on 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica', the Revd R.S. Moxon on 'The Recent Excavations and Discoveries in Crete', and Mr H. Poole on 'The Map of the World'.⁹³ All four boys, and Herbert Poole, served in the war; Crosse was killed at Trônes Wood in the Battle of the Somme, Heywood won the Military Cross, Hussey wrote a volume of war poetry and became a music critic, and Maiden became an artist. Heywood and Maiden served in both World Wars.

Articles written by boys were common in the *Holme House Gazette* and the range of topics covered is again remarkable. Subjects in 1911 included 'Ozone' (by Vyvian Heywood), 'The Forth Bridge' (by future Victoria Cross winner Terence Fleming-Sandes), 'Lawn Tennis' (by Duncan Macaulay, future Secretary of the All England Club) and 'A Cycle Tour' (of Southern England, by Charles Field, killed in 1916).⁹⁴ J.A. Mangan observed that "Winchester is a corrective to simplistic generalisations about the uniform chauvinistic philistinism of the period public school system".⁹⁵ The same can be said of the King's School.

The most direct insight into the attitudes of the boys – as opposed to the exhortations of their seniors inside and outside the School – comes from the school debates. These were often well attended and the full reports in *The Cantuarian* provide much detail on what was said. The results on some issues were, perhaps predictably, one-sided. In February 1910 Curteis Ryan, proposing a vote of confidence in the Liberal Party, opened by "begging for an impartial hearing. The Public School boy is only too prone to be prejudiced in favour of the Conservative party." The result – defeat by 52 to 12 – appeared to confirm his view (and a similar motion in 1906 had been lost by 79 to 10).⁹⁶ In 1912 a letter in the *Holme House Gazette* from 'Fair Play' commented on "the custom of subscribing only to one-party papers. Could not a liberal paper be also taken in? It has always appeared to me to be rather hard on a new boy to have his politics laid before him cut and dried, without giving him the chance to choose for himself which party he will adhere to." The writer went on to comment on the value of being able "to read both sides of any given question" – even though he was, as he admitted, a Unionist himself.⁹⁷

One should, however, be wary of stereotyping the public school boy and his opinions. On many occasions the speeches at debates reveal a willingness to be controversial and to

⁹² The Cantuarian, August 1976, pp. 123-4. 'Rosie' was the posthumous son of George Frederic Rosenberg, the artist: see ODNB.

⁹³ The Cantuarian, February 1912, pp. 176-9.

⁹⁴ Holme House Gazette, vol. 8, pp. 72-5, 120-1 and 127-32.

⁹⁵ J.A. Mangan, Happy Warriors in Waiting?, IJHS, March 2011, p. 458.

⁹⁶ The Cantuarian, March 1910, pp. 525-7. To set these results in context, Canterbury in the two general election of 1910 returned the Conservatives by 2721-815 and 2798-623.

⁹⁷ Holme House Gazette, vol. 9, pp. 27-8.

express unpopular or unexpected attitudes. In November 1910, for example, a motion supporting votes for women was defeated by a mere 29 to 21.⁹⁸ Although Sydney Maiden complained in November 1911 “that it was an almost unprecedented thing for that House to discuss movements still occupying the attention of Europe”, current affairs had in fact provided several opportunities for the boys to air their views and continued to do so.⁹⁹

In 1906 there had been a debate on the effects of war, a subject on which opinion was clearly divided.

A debate was held on Saturday, September 29th, when in an able speech *G.D. Maclear* moved that “warfare is an essential to the welfare of nations.” The mover cited numerous historical instances in which a successful war has been followed by a period famous for art and literature. In reply *G.H.S. Pinsent* mentioned the advantages of arbitration and criticised the wording of the motion. *C.N. Smith* pointed out that decision by arms is the natural method. *J.S. Yates* and *R.M. Gent* also supported the motion. In speaking for the opposition *G.M. Webster* mentioned some of the evils attendant on militarism. *C.J.N. Adams* noticed the expenses of armaments and *A.B. Emden* the advantages which peace brings to science and commerce.

The motion was carried by 51 votes to 48.¹⁰⁰

Of the speakers, Maclear, Yates and Adams were all to be killed in the Great War.

On 28 October 1913 the debate on the relative merits of airships and aeroplanes revealed common assumptions about any impending conflict. Edward Gent “pointed out to the House that the next war in which Great Britain would be engaged would probably be with Germany...” and William Janson Potts, who would join the Royal Flying Corps in 1916 – and be killed in action in 1917 – added that “if war did break out between Germany and England, English aeroplanes could easily remain in the air long enough to fly to the North Sea, smash up airships and come back again in safety”.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the most remarkable debate took place on Tuesday 10 March 1914. The motion was that “National Service would be a good thing for this country” and there is considerable poignancy in the fact that all of the thirteen recorded speakers were to be in uniform within a very short time.¹⁰² Four – Potts, Gough, McCarthy and Goldsmith – were to be killed, and at least three – Cooper, Gent and Best – wounded. One should not necessarily take schoolboy opinions too seriously, but on this occasion there was a very large attendance (nearly half the senior school were present) and the debate was notable for the variety of views expressed as well as for awareness of the possibility of war.

⁹⁸ The Cantuarian, November 1910, pp. 652-4. The motion was that “the suffrage be extended to women on the same terms as it is now granted to men”.

⁹⁹ The Cantuarian, November 1911, p. 153. The motion on this occasion was that “Italy was quite unjustified in attacking Tripoli”.

¹⁰⁰ The Cantuarian, November 1906, p. 603. Cf. Holme House Gazette, vol 4, p. 334-5. According to the Holme House Gazette it passed 44-39. There was a similar debate at Shrewsbury School in 1910: Parker, The Old Lie, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰¹ The Cantuarian, December 1913, pp. 543-4.

¹⁰² The Cantuarian, April 1914, pp. 606-10. The speakers were RSF Cooper, GEJ Gent, WJ Potts, A Lindsey, JNL Gough, MW Goldie, WRW McCarthy, H Wace, LIH Thomas, HE La Trobe, LW Goldsmith, LWHD Best and LG Robertson.

Roy Cooper, the Captain of School, opened proceedings. “National Service was not, he said, a tyrannical scheme which was destined to strike at the heart of British freedom... He was very agitated over the paucity of the British military resources compared with those of France, Germany and other continental countries...” In response, Edward Gent argued that if money were to be spent, it should not be on the Army, but on the Navy: “so long as the Navy was allright, the Territorials could easily deal with an invading force; after all, if – as most likely in the next war – Germany was fighting France as well as England, would she waste thousands of men in abortive attempts to elude our Navy? Of course not. The proposers must be excited by German war scares and over anxious for their safety; national minded men ought, with him, to oppose the motion.”

William Janson Potts was scathing on the Territorials – “they weren’t trained, they weren’t organized, they couldn’t shoot... [and] they aren’t up to the job.” Thus “the country’s safety demanded National Service”. Archer Lindsey responded: “What, he said, is the good of spending millions of pounds on the chance of getting a better army than the Territorials, to repel a purely imaginary invasion, at a time when the First Lord of the Admiralty says that every penny is wanted for the Navy?” Lewis Goldsmith “did not seem to think there could be any delusions now about the fact that the Territorial Force was not fit for its work; in particular the idea that it was going to get six month’s training after the outbreak of war, provoked him to great scorn”. Lennox Robertson “admitted that everyone ought to serve his country...; but it was not necessary that they should all do so by military service; they could do it just as well in other branches of life”.¹⁰³

Perhaps the most revealing light on schoolboy attitudes comes in the comments on the contribution of Noel Gough. Having noted his view that “a short period of service would lead to a great increase of patriotism”, *The Cantuarian* report continued: “Surely, he said, beaming on the audience, they felt a glow of patriotic fervour springing up within them when they put on their uniforms of field-days with the Corps. He certainly did himself, but the House, however, did not reciprocate these sentiments with great enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁴ The result of the debate was very close. Amid some controversy over the count, the motion was lost by 35 votes to 34.

It is hardly surprising that King’s School boys should not have predicted a war of attrition. Although senior professional soldiers were to warn of an extended conflict in August 1914, this was not the popular view. At the same time, there is not much evidence to suggest that nationalistic feeling, occasionally aroused by such events as Mafeking night – and by the outbreak of war in 1914 – was the norm in the Mint Yard.¹⁰⁵ The verdict of Haig-Brown, from the perspective of war and of the need (perceived by him) to strengthen the OTC, was in this matter realistic: “Our peace-time patriotism at school is a little thin.”¹⁰⁶ David Reynolds may be right that “patriotic fervour was a consequence of the war rather than a cause”.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *The Cantuarian*, April 1914, p. 608.

¹⁰⁴ *The Cantuarian*, April 1914, p. 608.

¹⁰⁵ On Mafeking, see *The Cantuarian*, July 1900, pp. 218-9 and Woodruff and Cape, *Schola Regia Cantuariensis*, p. 263.

¹⁰⁶ Haig-Brown, p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*, p. 23.

The idea that “the acceptance of an ethos within a closed society was relatively simple to achieve” is clearly nonsense – even supposing that there was any intent to impose one.¹⁰⁸ Charles Pullan presents the orthodox view of the Edwardian schoolboy in his memoir *Schola Mea* – a self-contained world with its own traditions and rituals. At the same time it is important to point out that individuals like Hugh Pitts or David Stainer or Reginald Hancock saw things differently. Pitts was, by his own admission, a very ‘churchy’ boy: the Cathedral and its services were important to him (and he was even aware of the canons). He did not like the OTC, though he was a member and noted parades in his diary. Stainer was, very unusually, not a member of the OTC and for him Percy Godfrey and music were among the most important influences. Hancock, who barely mentions sport at all, is another for whom Percy Godfrey was a key influence. He also appreciated the classical emphasis in his education, even though he went on to become a vet.¹⁰⁹ It may be true that those who wrote memoirs were, by definition, untypical, but it is clear from *The Cantuarian* and from other sources that a significant minority, at least, of boys did not conform to any public school stereotype.

The Cantuarian editorial for July 1914 – written just before the end of term – gives a good sense of the attitudes of the school leaver.

And so – it is the end! As we said, or almost said, in the last *Cantuarian*, “To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new!” To-morrow! – ah, let us think what to-morrow will have in store for us! Perhaps to-morrow we shall betake ourselves to Oxford, some to work, others to follow more attractive pursuits. Perhaps to-morrow at Sandhurst we shall learn the arts of war, or in the City strive to earn the paltry sums, for which we may be “crammed with distressful bread.” Perhaps to-morrow we shall forsake the comforts and discomforts of England for India with its Eastern glories, or for Afric’s sunny clime. Perhaps to-morrow we shall return once more to perform the time-honoured duties in the time-honoured way “under the shadow of this mighty edifice”! ...

But away with such sad, uncomfortable thoughts! Let to-morrow take care of itself, and let us live, like Epicurus’ herd, in the present. Have we not beaten Highgate? Then why should we not rejoice? “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!” The motto of a sensualist, you say, you that sneer at us all from your corner? Better far be a sensualist than a cynic such as you! If we have praises to offer, let us offer them with a cheerful face, and not as if we grudge all we give; and all praise is due to the 1st XI. for they excelled themselves that day. May they do the like v. the O.K.S., say we, and avenge past defeats by future victories!¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Parker, *The Old Lie*, p. 116. As elsewhere, Parker oversimplifies. Cf. David Cannadine, *The Undivided Past*, p. 259 for criticism of “totalizing claims to uniformity and all-inclusiveness that are never actually true”. J.A. Mangan makes the same point in his study of Winchester: *Happy Warriors in Waiting?*, *IJHS*, March 2011, pp. 458-91.

¹⁰⁹ Reginald Hancock, *Memoirs of a Veterinary Surgeon*, pp. 38-60.

¹¹⁰ *The Cantuarian*, July 1914, pp. 655-56.

Familiar themes are here – Empire, games, even the arts of war – but they take on a different meaning in the light of later events. They are light-hearted in intent and ironic only in hindsight.

Once the war had broken out, the senior boys were able to reflect on the significance of the conflict and on the role that they might well be called upon to play. *The Cantuarian* editorial in the first wartime issue picked up on the virtues of ‘grit’ and courage, and the dangers of apathy, as well as on the assumption that public school boys would provide leadership in the conflict – as indeed they did:

And what are the Public Schools doing? Theirs, perhaps, is the hardest task of all, the task of providing leaders for their country. It is inspiring to think that the majority of the British Officers at the front are old Public School men; and that they are keeping up the old reputation of Great Britain for “grit” and courage. These two virtues, which are needed in war more than in anything else, are ones which the Public Schools have always prided themselves on possessing: the “grit” which will sustain a man for weeks in the trenches without complaint; and not only the wild ardour which will carry a man through a charge, but also the deliberate bravery which will send him on a forlorn hope and which is the finest of all. This “two o’clock in the morning courage,” as Napoleon called it, is – an officer of the present day has said – the result of moral stamina, which will keep your faculties going

When there is nothing in you,
except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on’!

That, we hope, is the spirit which is bred in the Public Schools; if it is not, then we are worthy neither of our past nor of our present.

Our country has her faults as much as her virtues; and we think most people will admit that England’s greatest failing has been her apathy or, to put it more bluntly, waste of time. It is a failing, too, which is as patent in the Public Schools as in the wider world. Go out some afternoon and you will see men lounging round the “Jolly Sailor,” just as Public School boys – in a less deliberate way, perhaps – are lounging under the Arches. And in a quarter of an hour’s time, if you return, you will very probably find the same people in the same places.

Yet these latter are leaders of men!

Maybe; the Englishmen has always been somewhat of an anomaly. But one would be inclined to say that the greatest leaders in our history have been those who combined with the natural qualities of their race a capacity for hard work. Nothing in this world worth the getting was ever got without hard work; and the sooner we all realise that, the better for us – and our country.

Outside the range of the mind the most precious thing in the world is time. Matter cannot be destroyed; but time, once let slip, is gone for ever. To reduce waste of time to a minimum is one of the hardest tasks of this world; but it is one which has to be faced by everyone; and if the Public Schools are not turning out men who know how to use their time, they are surely not doing the duty expected of them. Kipling never more clearly saw the truth than when he said:

“If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,
Yours is the earth and everything that’s in it,
And – which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son!”¹¹¹

Just as the Archbishop had re-thought his views on “the secret of England’s great public schools”, so the Dean appeared to recognise that the new circumstances had led to a reassessment of the aims and purpose of the King’s School. At Speech Day 1915, he commented: “It had been forced by this war upon every young man, that after all he was being educated not for personal success and advancement in life, but that he should be able and ready, should the time come, to sacrifice his life and his all in the service of his country and his God.”¹¹² A year later, he expressed an opinion that was becoming an orthodoxy:

The greatness of the public school education of England had never been so conclusively proved as in the manner in which the schools and Universities had risen to the call of their country. It was conclusive proof that whatever else might be taught in the schools of England, at all events we taught the highest principles of character and of duty, upon which the very life of the country depended.¹¹³

It had certainly not been the intention of the King’s School to prepare boys for war. On the other hand, many features of school life and many of the ideals that were impressed upon the boys – and maybe at the time ignored or even rejected by some – turned out, in the abnormal circumstances of the Great War, to seem relevant and even valuable. When the War came, this generation – including Pitts and Stainer – did not hesitate to do what it saw as its duty. Most old boys of military age volunteered but they probably did so out of a sense of honour and loyalty, rather than out of any enthusiasm for war or chauvinistic patriotism. It was not just the militaristic and the imperialistic who joined up, but the peace-loving and the scholarly. Whether they were adequately prepared to fulfil their role as officers is another matter.

¹¹¹ The *Cantuarian*, November 1914, pp. 691-2. The editors of *The Cantuarian* were the Captain of School William Janson Potts, Geoffrey Burton and Archer Lindsey. Potts and Burton were to be killed in the war; Lindsey was wounded.

¹¹² The *Cantuarian*, November 1915, p. 95.

¹¹³ The *Cantuarian*, November 1916, pp. 292-3. Quoted in Seldon and Walsh, p. 101.

