

# Matlock College in Retrospect (ii)

Edited by George Wigglesworth



Chatsworth

## Foreword

Information about the work of the college is not easily available. This edition (I & ii) is intended to fill in some of the background of the life at the college detailed in the first booklet (Life at Matlock College) with emphasis on the academic and professional aspects by recording some personal thoughts of those involved at the time. It is therefore partial and incomplete, for instance no account of the various Slow Learner courses nor of Youth and Community is here. The general body of the booklet is put together by me and not expert. Attributed text has been written by those involved in their particular area but remains their personal view. Whether this will ever be superseded by anything at all is doubtful!

In retrospect one sees that a number of features marked Matlock out from other colleges, including those of the present day. Firstly students were for the majority of the time in small groups. This allowed them to be known well by a few staff concerned to help them to become as good teachers as possible. This contrasts with a present tendency to organize large groups where economies of scale might be achieved. However it is also true that the former pattern can be seen as paternalistic. Secondly the environment the college was in gave it a particular opportunity. The traditional subjects of, for instance, history, geography, biology and outdoor education were able to make full use of the environment and special groupings were formulated such as 'Science in the Social Environment' and 'Geography and Ecology'.

There were various innovations, some by their nature short lived, for example, the shortened courses referred to by Miss Allen, one of which, for those who had resigned from the Ministry, is briefly described by Andrew Bebb. The 'less able' featured as a full time, one year, in-service diploma course for practising teachers and later as a Main Course. There were also particular ways of slanting work in other areas. The Youth and Community course although it often seemed quite separate was an important part of the diversification. It is well worth reproducing Miss Allen's reminiscences of the college's early history, originally recorded for "Mosaic" and already reprinted in "Matlock Musings".

The photographs are from the prospectuses and in later years often taken by the Art department, the art work is often David Ainley's. As was the case in the earlier booklet I was dependent on all who helped and to my wife to whom, as always, I am indebted.

George Wigglesworth

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### Short courses

Andrew Bebb (1969 - 1975)

“I, along with Cyril Jones, negotiated with the University the possibility for men resigning from the ministry, (mainly R.C. but also Anglican and Methodist) to complete a one year course leading to the award of a B.Ed. We managed to argue that most of the subject content had been completed in their earlier training. Cyril looked after their teacher training element.

“He was very impressed by the quality of the applicants. They likewise had very fond memories of him. Over the five years I was there 28 men completed the course successfully! They went on to obtain very important positions in Schools and Colleges subsequently, often surprisingly, in RC Institutions. I recall that when I left in 1975, we had a quite a moving religious ceremony with all those who were able to come, in the RE unit I had put together in the old former Methodist Chapel on the hill.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### B Comb. Studs.

In the late 1970s a group of English tutors met the deputy registrar of the CNAA in London to propose an English degree at Matlock college. The ideas put forward were said to be out of the usual run of things, and the tutors returned to Matlock much encouraged by the view that the college might be teaching such a programme in 1981. The proposal was not however put to the college Academic Board until other teacher training agencies had outstripped Matlock in the fashionable process of diversification. At that point the college became interested again and the head of English devised a degree programme with an English core which involved other subjects.

With the advent of the new principal, the CNAA deputy registrar paid a visit to the college. She was encouraging but the principal took the view that a college of Matlock's size would do best to work through its existing validating body, the university of Nottingham. So planning went ahead on this basis.

In due course a combined subject degree was launched, which met the criterion of non-fragmentation (of not being merely a pick-and-mix of subjects) by emphasising the connections between the various Arts and Sociology. The availability of an 'English major' option proved popular with students and valuable for the college, as it enabled those who wished to teach in secondary school to proceed to Matlock's own English specialist post-graduate certificate in Education. From the B Comb Studies there emerged the BA and then BA honours degree which was taught after the amalgamation with Derby, initially on the Matlock site. Its structure owed a good deal to an enlightened first version of the Nottingham B Ed Hons degree, in which:

1. an academic subject was studied along with,
2. psychology, sociology or philosophy of education,
- via 3. a unit called Link.

In the B Comb Studies/BA, this 'Link' was replaced by Applied Studies, a course which worked through the connections between the subjects in the degree (Art, English, Drama, French, Geography, History, Music, Religious Studies, Sociology) and the world of work. This included a work placement. Two of the subjects listed above were studied, linked by this practical course. When the degree was launched, such an approach to higher education was comparatively novel and some students were not always happy that the course had this unusual dimension. However, from the first it proved highly successful in preparing students for gaining fulfilling employment in places in which their subject knowledge and practical aptitudes were relevant. One student who studied English and Music is now (2007) Senior Registrar at a British University; and she still plays the violin. Her work placement was at the Buxton Festival in its early days, where she was told that she had 'a flair' for management, words which she never forgot.



Inservice Education in the Science Centre

## Inservice Education.

The college contribution in this area grew throughout its life. The Senior Adviser, Frank Knight, through his team of advisers was very influential over the nature and recruitment of the shorter courses operating. It had a significant beginning in the area of Primary Science, which was introduced into a profession where teachers of that age range may never have studied Science beyond Nature Study in their junior school.

Running such courses in many subjects was followed by creation of some specific 'centres', Reading, Religious Studies, Science etc, run by a teacher-dominated committee with a part time warden, often a teacher. Both primary and secondary topics were offered and in science ones for laboratory assistants were run. College staff were also involved in the local and national teacher associations such as the Derbyshire Schools Rural Studies Association, the Association of Science Teachers and the National Association for the Teaching of English. They were involved also in curriculum development, again both local and national, such as with RE, the Schools' Council, e.g. Geography for the Young School Leaver and Nuffield Science. The out of school societies within the county were well funded mainly because an initiative by Frank Knight meant a specified fraction of the takings from School Travel Insurance was devoted by the county to such activity.

The College was the county's only Higher Education institution under its authority and as such was aware of any needs for award-bearing courses which it could fulfil, either full or part time. The one year, full time diploma course ran for many years. The B Ed was offered as both a part time and full time option, preceded by a preparatory course to take account of the teacher's previous length of training.

## To be a Principal

Robert Clayton (1967 - 1976)

"It comes as a surprise in retrospect to realise just which abilities were used as a Principal and which decisions needed to be made.

"The College was subject to both county and national supervision. I well remember thinking that I knew best about the constant flooding at one end of the main soccer pitch: the drains below mustn't be sloping the right way. The appropriate county officer wouldn't believe me and wasn't pleased! Nevertheless I asked the groundsman to open one of the drains for just over half the length of the pitch and I asked the county officer to visit the scene with me the following day - each of us to do a 'levelling'. (I did do an element of surveying in my geography degree at university.) As luck would have it, rain fell heavily that night, and hence, in the morning, the water alongside the pipes left no doubt about the slope issue and the direction of flow of the water: originally the drains had not been laid correctly!

"Decisions, decisions. One very snowy morning, while having breakfast, the phone rang. An anxious colleague spoke: teaching practice was in danger! Many issues were put before me. The coach firms were ringing up. The state of the roads was very unsure at this early hour. Schools might not all be opening that day. Students were ready and

waiting with lessons prepared and cases packed. Colleagues would be trying to plan supervision visits for that day. The day's weather was uncertain. "Principal, we think you should decide if T.P. is 'on' today or not. And what about tomorrow?" I certainly knew then why Principals were necessary!

"I was to hear that a relatively new, young and female member of staff had been marooned in the snow in a Derbyshire village at lunch time one day. The crunch had come during her snack lunch at the village pub: the roads out were all blocked! The solution came when the barmaid, on hearing my colleague's plight, generously provided hospitality that night. I'd come to know that Derbyshire folk have very kind hearts."

\* \* \* \* \*



Dance

## Performance

Don Measham (1968 - 1989)

"By the sixties there was a significant record of work in Performance at Matlock College: Music under John Clements (ex Dartington Hall), Dance from Connie Dove, Drama through George Chapman - who had a knack of re-discovering forgotten plays and of forming student theatre companies to present his productions at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Distinguished work by Matlock students in Edinburgh was also part of Geoff Malbon's contribution to the college in the 70s and 80s.

“Before that Drama had become for the first time a separate teaching discipline under Cedric Vendyback; and then given a 'Dorothy Heathcote', child-centred approach by Keith Frisby. Yet soon Drama was gaining a firmer base in academic terms through the concept of 'English with Drama'; while, out of hours, Geoff Malbon was transforming the idea of institutional theatre. He re-established college shows in Rockside Assembly Hall, musicals and classic plays. They became major social events not only in the college but also in the town. This success led to the conversion of the huts in the grounds of Rockside for drama teaching and as small-scale performance studios; from which developed the mid-Derbyshire Derwent Festival of the Arts, in which Alan Wood of the art department was a prime mover. The final drama production on the Matlock site was of Sheridan's 'The Rivals'. The company consisting of staff, students and former students was directed by the writer. This production was 'exported' to the Mickleover campus of DCHE and presented there as evidence of the performance tradition which Matlock was bringing to the greater college. The promise of this held good, because former Matlock student and later Matlock member of staff, Yvonne Mycock, who worked on all the late Matlock shows and played Lydia Languish in *The Rivals*\*, went on to establish Drama as a BA special Honours field in its own right in what is now Derby University, after having directed a series of outstanding student productions culminating in a major award at the NUS National Drama Festival. [\*Thanks also to Diana Hurst (Spoken English), as Mrs Malaprop, and Stuart Watson (Education), Sir Anthony Absolute.]”

\* \* \* \* \*



Chicago

“I remember the dramatic productions put on by Geoff Malbon - the first all staff one was *Blithe Spirit* - and I shall always be grateful for the opportunity to swan about being a glamorous Noel Coward character, and for the tremendously high standards Geoff instilled in us all. It was also great fun helping with costumes for the student musicals, being handed ten pairs of black satin shorts to make, or a dozen long dresses, to be done 'by tomorrow if possible'.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### Drama

Cedric Vendyback (1963 - 1970).

“The drama, of its very nature, was a constant procession of intense interaction of personalities rather than an academic subject. Conflict being the essence - virtually every session provoked emotional responses. We cared a lot, argued a lot, loved a lot and, most of all, laughed a lot. The chapel annex we used was a sanctuary where we explored ourselves in other peoples, places and periods. We mounted plays and swiped all the trophies at the Buxton festival each year we entered. We were essentially complex, heart-on-the-sleeve characters - which is what we were about, and what drama is.”

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### Changes

Margaret McAdams (1949 - 1980)

“For the first ten years it was largely a community separated from the town. There was a service on Saturday mornings taken by local clergy and when staff were invited to give a short address. Alongside there were entertainments when staff entertained the students and vica versa. The Christmas dinners were themed, in 1956 it was ‘Tudor’ and the staff contrived varied hats and clothes from anything to hand; it was a time of clothes rationing.

“The main contact with the town was the domestic staff many of whom had worked in the pre-war hydros and maintained the very high standards of service. The catering staff engineered excellent meals despite continued rationing. In the Senior Common Room crusts were still cut off the dainty sandwiches for afternoon tea.

“When changes came, they came quickly subsequent to Government reports or, as in 1958, with the coming of men. Provision was needed for more active leisure facilities, table tennis, football, rugby. Many had completed National Service and might be embarking on a second career. They sought suitable provision and freedom after the timetable time, out of college. Although some local people had little contact with the students nevertheless pubs, dances, local churches were popular meeting places between town and gown. Beer mats became collectors’ items. The annual rag week, including the innovative raft race on the Derwent, were the most spectacular of occasions for contact. Outdoor activities were extended to include caving, rock climbing and sub aqua.



High Tor

“The growth in numbers had its effects. From 200, all resident in the first years, there were more than 800 by the seventies. The halls of residence provision, even though enhanced, had to be supplemented by rented lodgings, houses and flats for more than a quarter of our numbers. As well as being a welcome source of income for many landladies and landlords, in many cases strong friendships developed lasting well after students left. Shops and trades people benefited, some developing unorthodox methods to meet the needs of customers. One ‘Chippie’ parked his van under the windows of Chatsworth Hall in the late evening. Orders were placed, collected and paid for by lowering notes and money in a bag from upstairs windows!”

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### Legendary meals

Helen (née Hill) Burpee (1975 - 79)

“College Hall meals were legendary. You could start the day with a full cooked breakfast, at eleven there was coffee and ‘Two biscuits each!’. Lunch consisted of a selection of salads which I remember some of the P.E. students piling up into a kind of hill on their plate, which they then covered in salad cream (no mayonnaise then) like a volcano. In the afternoon there would be tea and sandwiches and finally, as if you hadn’t already eaten enough for a week , a two course dinner.”

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### The Matlock climate

Doug Briggs (1976 – 2005)

“Learning and teaching in a College located a couple of hundred metres above sea level is not a unique experience but the altitude does make a difference. For example it is obvious to those who travel daily to Matlock that the arrival of blossoms and the falling of leaves may be 4 to 5 weeks out of step with similar changes in less exposed places. Again, in winter it can be very bleak.

“I particularly recall one wintry occasion during the 1970’s when large snowflakes began to cover the ground at lunchtime. Lectures were cancelled, and I departed for home soon thereafter. Alas my decision to leave early was already too late. After a nightmare of a journey down Chesterfield Road I arrived at Matlock Green only to find ‘Road closed’ signs barring the way. I headed for the A6 but when I reached gridlocked Ripley around 5 hours later all ‘through’ roads were closed excepting the one to Derby. I finally made it to Nottingham via Long Eaton at around eight p.m.

“At least I had wheels. A busload of students returning from TP that afternoon must still have painful memories of struggling up Slack Hill through deep snow having been forced to alight from a bus that was stuck somewhere near Kelstedge.

“The weather sometimes had beautiful consequences too. For example on frosty days temperature inversions occasionally filled the Derwent Valley with mists whilst allowing the tops of the surrounding hills to reach above them and stand proudly like islands in an ocean whilst bathed in glorious sunlight.

“Another memorable effect would be the arrival of the colourful blossoms around the campus. The appearance of the gardens was a reflection of the pride of the College’s cheerful, welcoming gardeners and it was a credit to them. The views from the dining hall on a hot and clear day were always breathtaking.

“If your career has taken you to more attractive locations you have been lucky indeed.”

\* \* \* \* \*

### Paying Guests

Jean Henshaw

“The college advertised for people to take students but as I lived over the bridge on Snitterton Road it was too far away in the first years. Then they expanded the area they looked to and I had room for four students. The first ones were girls but I quickly found I couldn’t do with them! Always washing things, dripping everywhere. After a year John Pryor [Dean of Residence, Ed] arranged for me to have men. He was an easy contact with the college, concerned to know how we found the young men. It was often their first time away from their mothers and these ladies often said how their sons had changed and grown up.

These men became part of our family, playing monopoly with our children on the dining room table, joining us sometimes for a meal at weekends. There were only two problems over the years as I remember, for example one was a student repeatedly came in drunk so he left me. They did not always initially like being in “digs”, wanting a room of their own in hall. They wanted baths whenever and our hot water system needed me to plan if it was to cope. I remember one student who so wanted to be in hall yet in the end he stayed with me for all three years. Friendships I made with my guests could last for years. One, David, brought his wife and family to pick my brains on having paying guests.”

\* \* \* \* \*

**One aspect of change**

Pam Gibbs (1966-88)

“On my first day at Rockside in 1966 as a secretary I remember being surprised to be presented with a tray of coffee and biscuits - just for me in my office! Afternoon tea arrived similarly with finely cut brown bread and butter - sometimes these were cucumber sandwiches!) When after 22 years my career ended with the college’s demise in 1988 beverages came from a vending machine in Chatsworth Hall. A reflection of the decline in the College’s fortunes? The years between were very happy for me with many valued friendships made.”

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**The last days**

Don Measham. (1968 - 1989)

“I expect the University of Derby now wishes it possessed the Matlock college site. Shortly after its forerunner Derbyshire College of HE abandoned it, parliament altered the legal situation in a way very favourable to colleges. Had it stayed put, it would have been the owner of all the buildings, which instead reverted to the local authority.

“The decision to depart, taken by the DCHE academic board, was a reversal of the decision made on merger to develop teacher education, social sciences and the Humanities on the Matlock site. There were some cloak and dagger elements in the volte-face which brought about the site's closure. At least one major scheme to realise the potential of Matlock was kept secret. That was the proposal to bring new Art faculty work there. (The Art faculty was the CNAA star.) It was proposed by one of Britain's top photographers, and had the prospect of funding from a major camera company.

“As it was, with the excellent student accommodation at Matlock left empty, students at Derby were housed in caravans and sleeping on floors at the beginning of the subsequent academic year. But the previous year, the year of the departure from Matlock, was another matter.

“Nothing became the Matlock students better than the way they left it. The cleaners and the student union met together to discuss what should and could happen on the final night. Nothing was put on paper, no formal agreement was reached. However, there was no rowdyism, no taking of souvenirs, no damage, no falling out. The students went their way quietly and pleasantly – and everything was left in good order – left for the vandals. Amongst the first were 'dealers' who stripped the art nouveau hinges from the Parker and Unwin fittings and placed the unwanted woodwork neatly on the floor. (Worse followed, until the final excellent conversion into apartments – the exterior of the building enhanced, the inside of the building, efficiently but blandly changed for its new purpose.)

“During that final year, with the bulk of the greater college's work centred on Derby, the Faculty on the Matlock site became once again a small college, in effect. There was unusually close contact between staff and student. Literally so, for the former staff common room and committee room – too large now for the reduced population – became a joint staff-student coffee and sit-and-talk place. That worked well. So much so that the quitting of the place, marked by a garden party, took place in surprisingly good spirits. Matlock town's brass band played, the sun shone, and there were fireworks at the end of the day, many rockets. What goes up must come down. Something valuable survived.”

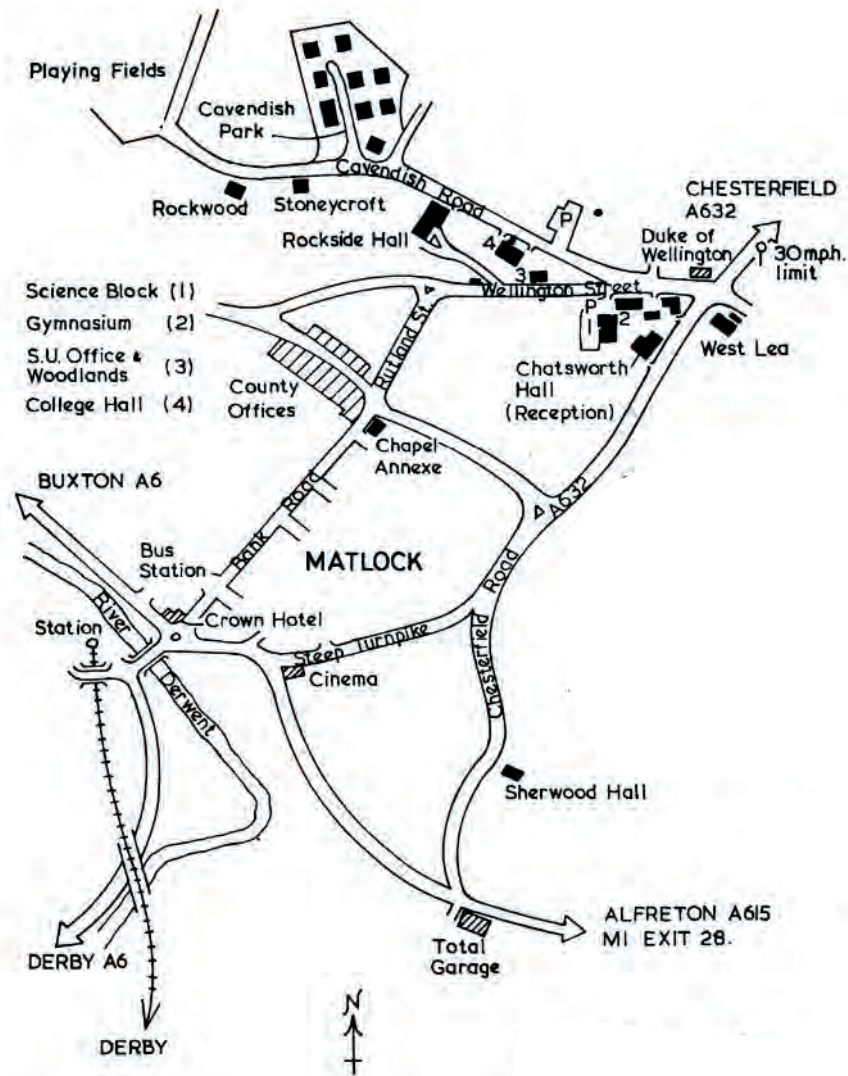
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John Clements and the college orchestra

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