



A Short History  
of  
WALTON LODGE  
and the  
OLD WALTON LODGE  
SOCIETY



# FOREWORD

by HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF SOMERSET

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The name "Walton Lodge" recalls to many of us the happy days we spent as young boys, in the pleasant surroundings of our first school, and it is a great honour to have been associated with almost the oldest Preparatory School in England.

Many of England's noblest families were educated here, among whom one calls to mind such names as The Marquess of Bath, Earl Cavan, Earl of Devon, Viscount Beauchamp, Rajah Brook of Sarawak, Mr. J. H. Grayburn, V.C., and many others.

It has been a great pleasure to me to have re-visited Walton Lodge on many occasions since Mr. R. F. Gwinn succeeded as Headmaster.

After many vicissitudes in the history of the School, Mr. Gwinn has brought the School back to its former status and reputation, and this good work has been most ably carried on by the present Headmaster, Mr. L. G. Holmes.

Thanks to the energetic efforts of the Earl of Devon, ably supported by Mr. G. F. A. Sandford, our late honorary secretary, the Old Walton Lodge Society was founded in 1933, and the Society has held many meetings since its foundation. Members of the Old Walton Lodge Society have attended the Annual Sports at Walton Lodge each summer.

I ask all Old Boys, especially those of the younger generation, to join the Society and help to uphold the wonderful tradition of their Old School.

In conclusion, I should like to pay tribute to our late honorary secretary, Mr. G. F. A. Sandford, for all the hard work he has done for the Society in the early days of its foundation, and for his unstinted efforts to keep the Society alive during these latter years immediately prior to and since the Great War.

Maiden Bradley  
April 1952

SOMERSET  
President O.W.L.S.



# Walton Lodge

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## 1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Walton Lodge has the distinction of being one of the oldest Preparatory Schools in the country. It was founded by the Rev. C. L. Cornish who, some time between 1860 and 1869, took a few pupils into his home at Baltonsborough, near Glastonbury. Before coming to Walton Lodge, Mr. Cornish went for a time to Compton Dando in the Mendips. When Mr. Cornish died, he was succeeded by his son, the Rev. Charles Cornish, but the latter did not survive very long, and he died on a voyage in the Mediterranean. There is a memorial window to him over the small altar in the Lady Chapel at St. Mary's, Walton.

The exact date on which the School moved to Walton Lodge has not been established beyond all doubt, but the year 1869 is generally accepted.

Charles Cornish was succeeded as headmaster by his younger brother, the Rev. Stephen Cornish in 1874. It is interesting that the oldest extant School roll, showing the names of forty-two boys in that of the year 1873. Quite a number of the boys whose names are on this list were originally with the School at Baltonsborough.

Under Stephen Cornish, Walton Lodge became well known, especially in the West Country, as Cornish's. There were only three Preparatory Schools which seem to have reached pre-eminence in those days; Walton Lodge, Willis's of Clifton, and St. Peter's, Weston-super-Mare.

As the School increased in numbers and repute, other nearby houses were taken over, until there were four in all; the Lodge, Brasted, New House, which was joined to Walton Lodge by a long "glass" corridor, and the next house on the sea side. The maximum number of boys reached at any time appears to have been 88. From 1873 until 1894 there still exists a continuous series of printed School rolls, Form Orders, and a good number of Sports Day programmes. The names of a very large number of prominent and famous men appear on these lists.

After 1888 a gradual decline in the fortunes of the School seems to have taken place and when the Rev. Stephen Cornish retired in 1894 there were barely thirty names on the School roll.

When Stephen Cornish retired, the School was taken over by two of his cousins, John and Robert Thornton. The practice of keeping printed School rolls unfortunately ceased, and from 1894 to 1922 there are no complete records of the names of those who passed through the School.

At some time during this period, Brasted and the other un-named house ceased to be part of the School, which continued with just the Lodge and New House and another house, Castle House, which appears to have been used almost entirely as a sanatorium.

In 1904 Robert Thornton broke away from the partnership with his brother and started a School of his own at Eastbourne, called Hill Brow. This School still exists—during the 1939–46 war it was evacuated from Eastbourne and returned to Somerset, at Brent Knoll, but under John Thornton things went badly for Walton Lodge. Up till 1907 it maintained itself without apparently any very great distinction, but after 1907 the numbers dwindled considerably and in 1910 the School was closed down. It remained closed until 1913, when it was re-opened by Mr. C. M. Vaughan-Parks.

Mr. Vaughan-Parks was headmaster from 1913 to 1921. The war years were difficult for all Schools—very little is known of the history of the School during this period but it certainly did not achieve the distinction and character that made it so outstanding before 1900. The maximum number of boys does not appear ever to have exceeded thirty during this period and the premises now consisted solely of Walton Lodge.

In 1921 Mr. Vaughan-Parks was succeeded as headmaster by Mr. R. F. Gwinn under whose régime the School grew steadily until it reached a maximum of forty-eight boys. Its status and reputation also improved, approaching closer to that which it had held under the Cornishes.

The Second World War affected Walton Lodge heavily as it did most Schools. The number of boys on the roll fell slightly and the School itself was considerably damaged by a land mine which fell nearby on the golf course. However, repairs were quickly carried out and the School carried on and weathered the storm.



After twenty-seven years as a headmaster, Mr. Gwinn retired in December, 1948, and the School was taken over by Mr. L. G. Holmes. At the present date the number of boys on the School roll has risen to sixty which is the maximum number that the School can cater for with its present accommodation.

## 2. THE OLD WALTON LODGE SOCIETY

In 1933, a group of Old Boys meeting in the School Pavilion on Sports Day, with the active co-operation of the headmaster, decided to found an Old Walton Lodge Society. The driving force behind this movement was the Earl of Devon, who became the Society's first President. He was untiring in his efforts to foster the Society and went to infinite trouble and considerable expense to reproduce a register of all the boys who could be traced who were at the School under the Cornishes. This register contains many famous and distinguished names and is one of which any School would be justly proud. Dormitories at present used in the School are named after some of them: Devon, Somerset, Cavan, Bath, and Grayburn (named after a more recent Old Boy who won the V.C. at Arnhem). On the death of the Earl of Devon in 1935, the Duke of Somerset became, and still is, President of the Society.

Every year, on the occasion of the School Sports Day, the Old Walton Lodge Society holds a meeting, followed by a luncheon at the Walton Park Hotel, and the members present attend the School Sports and Prize-giving in the afternoon.

The Society has been instrumental in keeping many Old Boys of the School in touch with one another, and has provided at least one occasion in the year when they could meet together and discuss old times.

Since this booklet was printed, the School has regained possession of Bushbury, the large house adjoining Walton Lodge which originally and up till 1900 formed part of the School. This has provided much extra accommodation, including five new class-rooms and has made possible an increase in the school roll to 80 boys.

## **Addenda (August 2023)**

1. In the first paragraph under the heading "1. A Brief History of the School" the statement that Rev Charles Cornish, the son of Rev C L Cornish, died on a voyage in the Mediterranean has subsequently proved to be incorrect. It was Rev C L Cornish's second son, Walter, who briefly succeeded his father as Head before dying at sea, after which the headship was taken over by Walter's younger brother, Rev Stephen Cornish.

For a more detailed explanation, please see the Appendix on page 4 of the document "School History – Walton Lodge Preparatory School, Clevedon", available via the 'Walton Lodge and OWLS' page on <https://laurencevlatham.wordpress.com>.

2. The date of the school's move to Walton Lodge referred to in the second paragraph of the booklet is supported by the fact that when Rev C L Cornish's widow died in 1900, her obituary in Clifton Society stated that 'she went to Clevedon in 1869'.