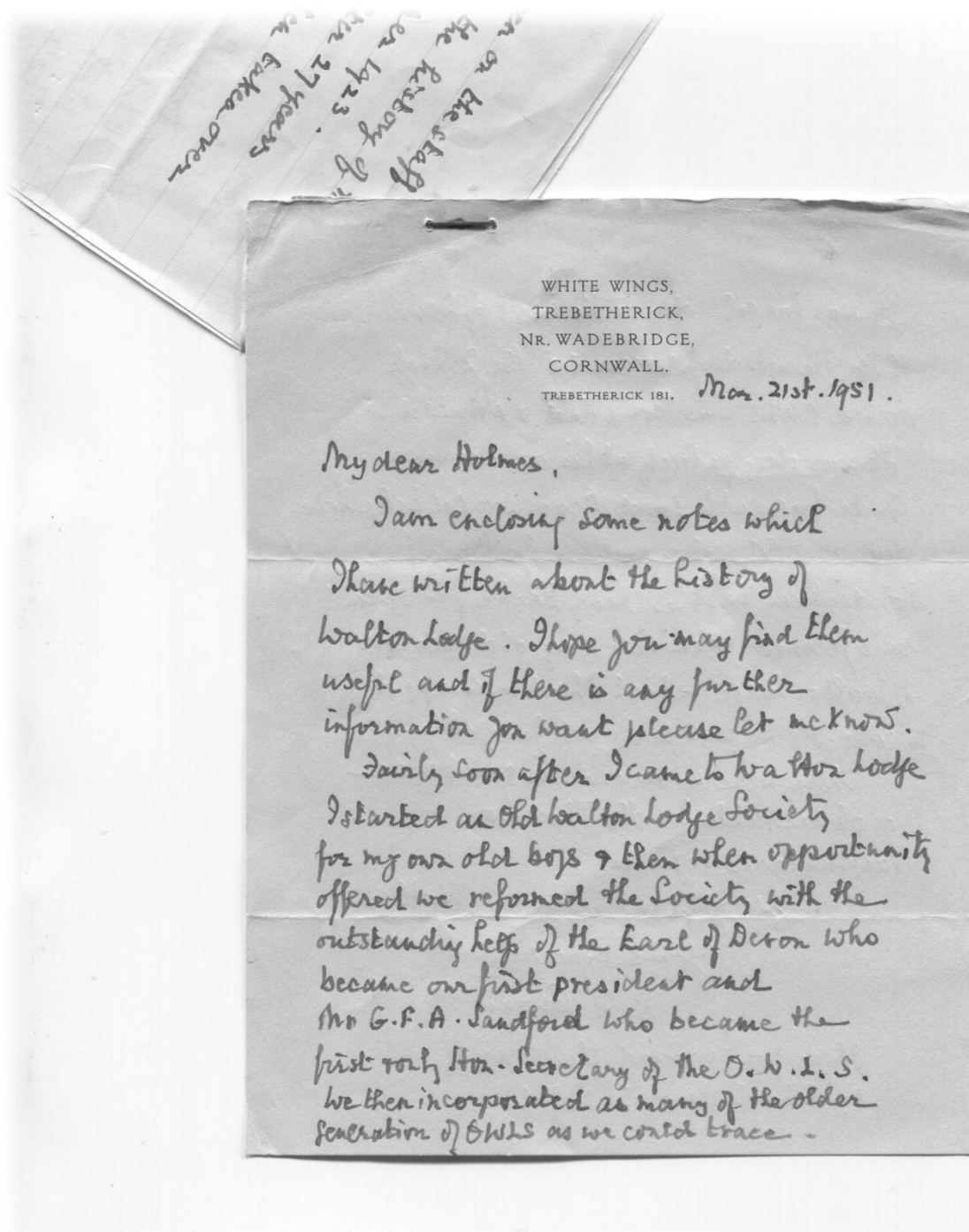


Letter and Notes by Mr R F Gwinn re Walton Lodge Preparatory School

Mr R F Gwinn was Headmaster of Walton Lodge School from 1921 to December 1948. The following letter and notes were sent to Mr L G Holmes (Headmaster from January 1949 to 1971) in 1951.



Miss Peach, our
Walton Lodge Lodge
School. She came
Mr R. F. Gwin
as Headmaster of
by Mr L. G. Holmes

It was largely due to the Earl of Devon
that the wonderful record of the Cornish
period O.N.S. was compiled & printed.

It was done entirely at his own expense -
Quite frequently Lord Devon would telephone
me & would motor up from his home,
Powderham Castle, near Exeter, to spend
an afternoon examining any old records
of Walton Lodge which I had managed
to collect. He was quite indefatigable.

There were no records in existence
or obtainable for the Thornton &
Vaughan Parks regimes.

All good wishes to you both -

Yours sincerely

R. F. Gwin.

I hope you received the copy of
my School Record safely.

(The dates are quoted from memory -
I have a feeling that I wrote
a list of the dates of the
Headmasters of Walton Lodge & left them
in the box in your study. It may be on the D. to L. S. pamphlet.)

WALTON LODGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL,
WALTON-BY-CLEVEDON,
SOMERSET.

Walton Lodge started at Balthamsborough (pronounced, I believe, Battsborough.) I think, in its beginning, rather than ~~being~~ ^{having} an actual school, the Rev. C. L. Cornish the father of the Rev. Stephen Cornish, took a few pupils. Before coming to Walton Lodge Mr Cornish went to Compton Dando (in the Mendips) for a time. Mr Cornish (sen.) died & was succeeded by his son the Rev. Charles Cornish (I think Charles is correct, but all this can be checked from one of the three Cornish daughters still living). His son also died within two or three years 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.

Charles Cornish was succeeded by the Rev. Stephen Cornish, his younger brother and it was during his Headmastership that Walton Lodge became very well known, especially in the West Country, as "Cornish's". There were only 3 Preparatory Schools that seem to have reached pre-eminence in those days:

Walton Lodge, Willis's of Clifton & St Peter's, Exmouth.

At one time Walton Lodge had 88 boys and there were 4 houses: Brasted, Walton Lodge, New House joined to it by a glass corridor & I believe the next house also, ~~to it~~ on the sea side.

After reaching its peak the numbers gradually declined and when Mr Stephen Cornish retired (I think about 1894), having been Headmaster for rather over 20 years, I believe about 22 or 23 years, the school numbered about 25 boys.

P.T.O.

Note: In the first paragraph above there is an apparent discrepancy regarding the name of the son who succeeded Charles Lewis Cornish as headmaster of the school - ie Walter Cornish, not Charles Edward Cornish. For clarification, please see the Appendix of the PDF document "School History - Walton Lodge Preparatory School, Clevedon" available via the 'Walton Lodge and OWLS' page on <https://laurencevlatham.wordpress.com>.

I have never been able to ascertain whether Walton Lodge was built as a school by Mr Stephen Cornish or whether he took it over after it had been built & altered it to his requirements. The late Marquis of Bath told me that when he came to Walton Lodge at the age of 8 the Big School had been built about a year & everyone was very proud of it!

When Mr Stephen Cornish retired Walton Lodge was taken over by two of his cousins Robert & John Thornton. During the earlier part of this partnership numbers seem to have been about 25 to 30. In 1904 Robert Thornton broke away and started a school of his own at Eastbourne, Hill Brow (now removed to Brent Knoll under Mr Matthews). This school was most successful but unfortunately under Mr John Thornton things went very badly for Walton Lodge and I believe that by 1910 there were no boys left in the school. Walton Lodge was then closed & remained empty until 1913 when it was re-opened by my predecessor Mr C. M. Vaughan-Parks.

During the following years until 1921 the school rather changed its character & tradition. I think the maximum number of boys at any time was not more than 25 and when I bought Walton Lodge in September 1921 I took over only 14 boys, seven boarders and seven day-boys, the youngest of these being only 5 years old. Present members of the school would be amused to know that on Sundays the whole school wore Eton suits and ^(including the 5 year olds) Top-Hats. I eliminated the top hats at once and altered the Eton suits to black Marlborough coats which were worn with stiff white Eton collars for many years for Sundays, entertainments etc.



WALTON LODGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL,
WALTON-BY-CLEVEDON,
SOMERSET.

From 1921 Walton Lodge grew steadily until it numbered 48 boys which was the maximum number which we had decided to take.

During the early part of the 2nd. war, when instructions were to take cover directly the Air Raid warning sounded, the whole school went down to the cellars. Sometimes all the boarders were taken down there two or three times during one night and I can remember Prayers, Lessons + Breakfast taking place down there.

This could not go on and after the first term of war the boarders slept on the ground floor and were not moved for Alerts.

The Big School was used as the Dining Room. After Dunkirk, at the beginning of the following September term the number of boys was suddenly reduced by almost twenty owing to numbers of boys being sent abroad, or to places considered by some parents to be still safer than Clevedon. This was naturally a heavy strain on the resources of the school and it took some time before numbers gradually returned to normal.

In April 1942 a parachute mine, intended for the Bristol Channel, fell on the Golf Links, not far from the school, and over one hundred window panes were broken at Walton Lodge and ten ceilings were brought down. Many slates were torn off the roof and the front door was blown through the hall into the Big School.

Thanks to the hard work of 21 men, supplied by two Clevedon firms who worked in co-operation to help us, things were largely put right within three weeks and the opening of the Summer Term was only delayed for ten days.

Miss Peach, our Matron, has now been on the staff at
Walton Lodge longer than anyone else in the history of the
School. She came to Walton Lodge in September 1923.

Mr R. F. Gwinn retired in December 1948 after 27 years
as Headmaster of Walton Lodge. The school was then taken over
by Mr L. G. Holmes who came from Malvern Link.

With grateful thanks to Jane Lilly for providing the scans of the original documents.