

KING'S COLLEGE, LAGOS: THE EARLY YEARS, 1909 – 1959.

PLANNING AND ESTABLISHMENT.

Let us go back to the beginning. How did King's College emerge? How did King's College evolve?

Following the Treaty of Cession in 1861 imposed on Alaiyeluwa Dosumu, the Oba of Lagos, by the British Government, Lagos and its environ (including Epe, Ikeja, Palma, Lekki and Badagry) became a British Settlement. In 1866, the Settlement of Lagos was merged with the *West African Settlement* with a Governor General in Freetown (Sierra Leone). In 1874, by letters patent dated 24th July 1874. Lagos and the Gold Coast were exercised from the West African Settlement and renamed by the Colonial Office as *the Gold Coast Colony* in Accra (the Gold Coast). In 1886 however, the Colony of Lagos came under the direct rule of the British Government in London.¹

Until 1906, Lagos was a colony of Great Britain, independent of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria as well as the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. It was under the direct rule of London and had that status since the cession of Lagos in 1861.

In May that year 1906 however, political changes of gigantic proportions were taking place – the merger of the Colony of Lagos with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The flag followed the Trade as Lagos had become the center of trade and commerce in the region. It was already a sea port. The construction of the railway was soon to follow.

There were only three secondary schools in Lagos in 1906. With the rapid political and economic growth of the Colony, there were increasing demands for clerical personnel and professionals, especially in teaching and the civil service. The educated elites, trained in British Universities, resented the influx of personnel from the West Indies, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. There was therefore that demand for training of the indigenous people to take up the available posts in the civil service.

The planning and establishment of King's College in 1906 was described as “a major educational milestone, the first positive involvement of Government in the field of secondary education in Nigeria.”² It was down to two men, Walter Egerton, the Governor of the Colony of Lagos, and Henry Carr, Inspector of Schools, later Deputy Director of Education in Lagos who were associated with most radical educational reforms in the Colony at the time.

As far as back as 1891 and 1896, there had been demands for the establishment of “an embryo University of Lagos,” first by Edward Wilmot Blyden and later by Otunba Payne and J.S Leigh.³ In 1906, Governor **Egerton** “instructed the Department of Education to draw up a new scheme for a Government institution of higher learning in Lagos”⁴

1. Contemporary State Land Matters in Nigeria: The Case of Lagos State by Femi Okunnu at pp 19 - 26. See also The Administrator – General v. John Holt & Co Ltd. (1910) Vol. 11 NLR p. 1 at p 6.

2. Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria : *The Case of King's College, Lagos (1906 – 1911)* by F.O. Ogunlade, Published in the Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. VII, No 2, June 1994. Pp. 325 – 344, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

3. F. O. Ogunlade, Ibid at p. 329.

4. F. O Ogunlade, ibid at p. 331.

The Department of Education produced a paper on the project, apparently by Henry Carr and with an input by the Governor before forwarding it on December 20th 1906 to the Lagos Board of Education constituted under the Education Code, 1905. The new institution was to be called “Lagos Government College”, and its mission was “to provide a course leading up to the Matriculation and intermediate examinations of London University.”⁵

The Board consisted of Henry Carr and some other officials. The African members included Sapara Williams, Kitoyi Ajasa, Dr. Obasa, Dr. Obadiah Johnson and Bishop Isaac Oluwole. Fifteen members were present at the meeting, Obadiah Johnson was the only person who voted against the proposal. It was Kitoyi Ajasa (later Sir. Kitoyi) who suggested a change in the name from Lagos Government College to **King’s College**.⁶

The Colonial Office in London did not approve an institution with a **university** status. The Egerton scheme or proposal was subjected to fierce criticism. The London Board of Education objected to such terms as “College” and “Professor” for staff, as Nigerian products of Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone had produced “agitators to British Colonial rule”. The Colonial Office wanted education with “technical” bias instead.

Walter Egerton’s reaction to London’s hostility was simple. He dropped the concept of a “University College”. A concession was made to the name of the institution. It was changed to **King’s School**, instead of King’s College. In his dispatch to Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 10th February 1908, Egerton said that all he wanted was “a good secondary school”. With the assistance of Henry Carr, Egerton presented a suitable rebuttal to the unsavory aspects of London’s counter proposals and stressed the need for *literal education* rather than **technical** or **industrial** training. Henry Carr emphasized in the new proposals that the course to be offered would lead to London Matriculation examination *leading* to open up careers as clerks or in the professions for the students in the future.

The London Board of Education again insisted that the school should offer only a course in technical education, and in a dispatch from Elgin to Egerton on 9th May 1908 “objected to the teaching of civics and sought to put the school further down the scale”⁷ London then suggested that admission to the school should be open to standard V boys instead of standard VI, implying that the school should provide for pre secondary section.

With rare perseverance, Henry Carr, now Acting Director of Education, went back to the drawing board. The needs for technical education, he stressed, were met with statistics to prove the point. The needs now were for clerks in the emergent commercial world and in the civil service. He pleaded with Walter Egerton to put the new proposals to Crew who had become the new Colonial Secretary. Crew gave initial approval to the proposal in November 1908.

5. F. O Ogunlade, *ibid* at p. 332.

6. F. O. Ogunlade (*ibid*) at p. 330.

7. F. O. Ogunladi (*ibid*). at p. 331, 335 and 340.

Detailed proposals were fleshed out in Lagos in the first half of 1909. The annual school fee was £6, and hostels were provided for boys who came from outside Lagos. The necessary staff was recruited. The Department of Works (later Public Works Department, and since 1960 the Federal Ministry of Works) completed the red brick building. Formal opening was postponed from Tuesday 13th July 1909 to 20th September 1909.

On Monday, the 20th September 1909, King's School (as it then was) "opened its doors to the public, and in the presence of its first 10 scholars, the Director of Education gave an opening address. Next day, His Excellency Sir, Walter Egerton formally visited the School. " 8

The school building which was erected and furnished at a cost of £10,001 consisted of "a hall to accommodate 300 students, 8 lecture rooms and a chemical laboratory, and an office."

OPENING THE DOORS TO FIRST SET OF STUDENTS : THE EARLY YEARS

History has it that amongst the first students were J.C. Vaughan, I. L. Oluwole, Frank Macaulay, Herbert Mills (From the Gold Coast), O. A. Omololu (Oluwole, as he then was, alias "Lojiji") and Moses King. I. L. Oluwole, the son of Bishop Oluwole, was the first Senior Prefect of the School.

Among the 1910 set were Solomon A. Williams and his elder brother, Moses Williams, Ben Oluwole, Felix O. Lucas, Daniel Ade Onojobi, Ernest Ikoli, Gabriel Oni, J.A. Ojo, E. J. Newland, Daniel Esin, Jameson Pearse, S. Ayo Williams, Alvan Williams, Percy Holms, Eyo Nkune, Jonny Marsh, J. Adebayo (later known as Adebayo Omololu) and D. Jackson Davies. Other pre 1915 students included C. Oshodi, N.O.A. Fanimokun, Amuso Subair and Kafaru Oki.

Admission to the College was definitely not by entrance examination; this came in several years later. There was no school uniform or school badge; it was enough for students in those early days simply to be well dressed.

The sporting life centered on cricket and football. Except for C.M.S. Grammar School in cricket, the opposing teams were British, most from the Secretariat or the intelligence Services. 9

The object, the philosophy, of Kings School was "to provide for the youth of the Colony a higher general education than that supplied by the existing schools, to prepare them for the Matriculation Examination of the University of London, and to give a useful course of study to those who intend to qualify for professional life or to enter Government or mercantile services. According to the original scheme, the college comprises three (3)

8. Founders' Day Report. 'The Mermaid' No 2 of Dec., 1923.

9. Interview by the author on 3rd Jan., 1985 with Mr. Solomon Williams, (1910 – 1914), born 3rd October 1894, Mr. Williams was the Sole surviving student of the 1910 set. Mr. Williams played cricket and football for the College.

departments, namely, a sub-secondary, a secondary, and a post secondary. Student whose attainments on admission are below the standard of the Cambridge Preliminary Local Examination are placed in the sub-secondary department; those in the secondary department work up to the standard of either the Cambridge Senior Local or the London University Matriculation Examination. The fees range from £6 to £12 per annum from the lowest to the highest forms of these departments. It has not yet been possible to inaugurate the post-secondary department which was originally intended to consist of students taking special courses of study in the theory and practice of teaching, engineering, science, commercial subjects etc.

“Evening classes are held in the College for teachers preparing for the Certificate Examination under the new Education Code, and young men and women who desire to improve their general education for clerks requiring instruction in book-keeping and shorthand, and for apprentices in the engineering workshops of the Marine and Public Works Department of the Government.

“The Staff of the College consists of 3 Europeans, namely a principal who gives instruction in the English language and Literature and in Latin, a Mathematical and Science Master,¹⁰ and a General Master,¹¹ together with two (African) assistant teachers.¹² Some of the other members of the Education Department are also engaged as lecturers of the evening classes.

“Three Scholarships and three exhibitions, in each case tenable for four years are annually awarded by the Government on the result of an examination held for the purpose. The Scholarships entitles each holder to free tuition and a government grant of £6 per annum; holders of Exhibitions receive free tuition only. Hussey Charity Exhibitions tenable at the College have been founded for poor boys out of the investment of the proceeds of the premises of the defunct Hussey Charity”.¹³

At the end of 1910, the average attendance of students was 16. This increased gradually over the years and at the end of 1914 the number on the roll was 67.

In 1926, an official report. “*The Development of Education Department, 1882 – 1925*” was issued. Chapter 1 of that publication entitled *Annual Report on the Education Department, Southern Provinces, Nigeria, for the year 1926*” unearthed certain interesting facts about King’s College. It reads in part:

10. Mr. de Gaye

11. Mr. D. L. Kerr

12. Mr. PoHs – Johnson and Mr. C. J. Smart, both from the Sierra - Leone.

13. Imperial Education Conference Papers II Educational System of the Chief Colonies not possessing responsible Government, published in 1914.

“..... 1909 is chiefly noticeable for the opening of King’s College (in the early days, it was known as King’s School) as a Government Secondary School under the headmastership of a Mr. Lomax who was seconded from the Survey Department, and who was assisted by two European Masters. The number of boys on the roll was 11. In 1910, Mr. Hyde-Johnson was appointed Headmaster of King’s College, but nine months later, he succeeded Mr. Rowden as Director of Education....”¹⁴

That the first headmaster of the College was Mr. Lomax is an outstanding revelation, outstanding because the general conception, the general belief had always been that Mr. Hyde Johnson held that enviable position.¹⁵ Until 1954 when the first edition of this brief history of the College was published,¹⁶ the popular myth was that Mr. Hyde-Johnson was the first principal of King’s College. And except for the few surviving foundation students then, there was hardly any old boy who had ever heard of Mr. Lomax! This pioneer’s name was curiously sunk in obscurity.

An insight into life at King’s College in its early years was provided by Mr. F. S.. Scruby’s article in *The Mermaid* dated 24th February, 1924 entitled “Further Glimpses of the Past” :¹⁷

“It revived many memories which are never very dormant to read Ikoli’s very flattering recollections of my all too short “regime” at King’s College. Having taught the young Australian out in the “Bush” in sunny new South Wales, and spent holidays in Fiji and the Pacific Islands, it was the pleasurable anticipation that I came to Lagos, and it was a great disappointment to me to have to resign the post so soon.

“It was a curious thing that Ikoli should have noticed that some boys run the risk of being spoiled. To this day Old Boys from schools in which I taught in England before going to Lagos remind me of the lasting impression that was made on them when they showed any symptoms of such deterioration. The feasts so generously described in the December number were really only meetings of the Matriculation class – Oluwole, Vaughan and Macaulay – who used to come up to my quarters once or twice a week to read Shakespeare.

“In looking back on the Physical Training, I am afraid Ikoli has taken off his rose-coloured spectacles. The sergeant of the W.A.R.F.F. who used to come and give lessons were really not very old on peppery. He was a very good instructor and very fond of boys but the fact remains that P. T. was not popular, and one small boy in particular used to come and report to me regularly

14. The Development of Education Department, 1882 – 1925” was issued.

15. See also *The Mermaid*, No. xxv October, 1949.

16. *King’s College : The Early Years: 1909 – 1939* by L. Olufemi Okunnu. 1954.

17. *The Mermaid*, No. 3 published in August 1924.

that he was "sore-footed", and take big dose from the bottle and an hour's work as well. It was my great ambition that a cadet company should be formed at King's College as the first company of a Lagos Cadet Battalion. Schools were circularized by the Education Department, but the scheme fell through.

"It is a great joy though it is not a matter of surprise to know that King's College has prospered during the last 13 years with the development of the house System and inter-house sports.

When I arrived in Lagos, I had the firm intention of making no changes whatever in the curriculum for at least 12 months. However some changes seemed to make themselves, chief among which was the dropping of French from the curriculum except for the Matriculation class. In 1911 the juniors were studying from a text book entitled "French without Tears"

"Unfortunately the author's pious hopes were not in our case justified, and so many tears were shed in trying to master the unaccustomed pronunciation of this language that in view of the urgent need of passing the Preliminary Local Examination we concentrated on the other subjects and dropped French, much to the consternation of Mr. de Gaye; while we continued the study of Latin which seemed to present no difficulties whatever.

"It gives me great pleasure to note the successes of 4 of my old pupils, Oluwole, Vaughan, Holm and Williams. I am very sorry that I did not see them whilst they were studying in England. Had they visited my little home just outside London they might have noticed a West African flavour in the name of the house, "Kekere", short for "ile kekere na" and had I continued to reside in Lagos I would have endeavored to write this article in as good as Yoruba as Ikoli has written his in English if only to show that the average Briton is not such a bad linguist as he is generally considered.

"Do any of the boys collect postage stamp? My wife and I have indulged in that pastime from our earliest youth, and endeavour to help any of the boys in the Schools I inspect in the same hobby. I shall be very glad to receive any used West African stamps, and also to send out those of other countries to budding philatelists at King's College.

"Reading the December number of 'The Mermaid' has given me so much pleasure that I should like, if I may, to become the member of the Old Boys Club and to subscribed to the Magazine.

“One more question. Ikoli in his Glimpses of the Past” makes no mention of the old school’s messenger, Baba George. I trust he is still hale and hearty, but should he have gone the way of all flesh, I feel that he deserves a memorial in the College of which he was such a trusty and devoted servant.

“In conclusion, though the college has jointly increased in numbers and prospered, I can safely say that no one had a more loyal and devoted staff or a cheerier band of pupils than those with whom it was my happy lot to work in the all too brief latter half of 1911.”

Twenty five students from King’s College were presented at the Cambridge University Local Examination (Preliminary Junior and Senior) held in December, 1912 out of whom fifteen succeeded in satisfying the examiners. Of those who obtained a Senior Certificate, three qualified for exemption from the whole of Part 11 of the Cambridge Preliminary Examination, and one for exemption from the London University Matriculation Examination.¹⁸

Another Government Report also published in 1914, “Education in the Colony and Southern Provinces of Nigeria” by Sir Fredrick Lugard, had this to say:

“King’s College requires lower classes as feeders to its upper forms. It also requires a normal class for the training of teachers. The existence of the lower classes will afford material for teaching to the teachers in training. King’s College, the leading school in the colony, has but little chance of setting an example in the training of character, so long as it only receives “secondary pupils”. Students will be attracted to the normal class by liberal “Teachers’ Scholarships” and will profit by their association with the premier school. The new Code will make important changes in the school course.”¹⁹

In the same year, the Principal of the College, Mr. McKee Wright, made this comment in the ‘Annual Report of the Education Department, Colony and Southern Provinces for the year 1914’ :

“Our old boys are all doing well in their several professional and duties, and Oluwole, who gained honour in his first professional examination at Glasgow University has done credit to the teaching of the school...”²⁰

In November 1917, the school sustained a most tragic loss by the death of the Principal, Mr. McKee Wright, who was drowned on ‘S.S. UMGENT’. He had contributed immensely in moulding the college into its premier position in its early years. The College however continued not only to receive students from other schools like C.M.S. Grammar School and Methodist Boys High School to be moulded into gentlemen, but also to supply these schools with teachers who helped to prepare their raw materials for life at King’s College and the world at large.

18. The Imperial Education Conference Paper III ibid.

19. Fredrick Lugard was the first Governor-General of Nigeria following the amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Colony and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1914.

20. The Annual Report of the Education Department of the Colony and Southern Provinces was published by G.H. Hyde Johnson.

Mr. J. A. de Gaye, who took over as Acting Principal stated as follows in Capital Education Annual Report 1917:

“It is gratifying to report that those who have taken up teaching work have given satisfaction, with the result that Principals of the secondary schools in Lagos have frequently asked if the College could supply them with more teachers.

The post of the Principal of the College was vacant throughout the year 1918, and the duties again fell on Mr. de Gaye, who was later appointed the Inspector of Schools. The Report went further to record that for the first time, “athletic sports were held at the school..... The demand for boys who have been through King’s College continues to be keen, and of the 25 who left the College in December, all obtained appointment at once.”²¹

The year 1919 witnessed the beginning of the long service of a distinguished Old Boy of King’s College as a member of Staff. Mr. D. Ade Onojobi, popularly called “D. Ade O” or “The Master” by the boys, entered King’s College in 1909 and left in 1912. He first taught at Warri Government School between 1914 and 1916, and later at Ibadan Government School from 1916 – 1919. He thereafter joined the staff of his Alma-Mater in 1919 until his retirement as English and history master in 1947. He returned as English Master in 1949/50. He was a legend. “D. Ade O” is part of the King’s College fabric.

On 20th September 1919, King’s College celebrated its 10th Foundation Day Anniversary. The main event was an address by A.G. Boyle, Esq., the Lieutenant – Governor. In a speech reported in the Lagos Weekly Record,²² “Mr. Boyle said that the College started “with 18 boys and today there are no less than 76 pupils”.

He went on:

“King’s College, alone of all schools in Nigeria, has succeeded in passing candidates for the Senior Cambridge Examination. In 1910 it presented 6 candidates for the Cambridge Local, of which number 3 passed. No other school at that time was able to present any candidate. In 1918, out of 37 candidates from King’s College, 17 passed, while other schools in Nigeria were able to present 106 candidates, out of which number 22 passed.

“In 1919, game had been made compulsory twice a week at King’s College. And there were regular Football matches played between King’s College X1 and the European teams. There were also occasional Cricket matches with other European Teams.

“King’s College Old Boys Club was also established about 1919 in order to enable the old boys to keep in touch with their Alma Mater and to ensure the maintenance of the traditions and principles of King’s College.”

21. Capital Education Annual Report, 1917.

22. The Lagos Weekly Record, September, 1919.

THE CHANGE OF GEAR: THE HARMAN REVOLUTION

From the beginning of 1919 to September, Mr. D. L. Kerr acted as the Principal and thereafter Mr. de Gaye, once again took over until the arrival in December 1919 of the new Principal, **Major H. A. A. F. Harman, B.Sc.**, who was transferred from the Gold Coast (Ghana) where he was for eight years Principal of the Government Training College, Accra. The number of boys on roll was now 75, and this steadily increased to 135 in 1925 when Major Harman returned to the Gold Coast as Assistant Director of Education.

Major Harman was a man of great vision and energy. He possessed the rare gift of bold originality and perhaps did more than any other Principal in execution of the physical development of King's College and certainly for its outstanding progress as the premier educational institution in Nigeria and, unarguably, in West Africa.

When he assumed office as Principal in 1919, he had two European and five African masters to teach 80 boys. In 1922, the Governor of Nigeria "sanctioned an additional European master" which led to an "increase by 50% of the number in students. Two years later, the master had not arrived. Meanwhile, Mr. De Gaye had been transferred from the College to another duty post. His long meritorious services to King's College had come to an end. The services of Mr. Smart, another master, were no longer available from October 1921.

In desperation, Major Harman pleaded with the Director of Education that "His Excellency be requested to urge upon the Secretary of State the necessity of every endeavour being made to fill at once the vacant post of assistant master"²³

Although the Director assured the Principal that every effort was being made to fill the vacancy for an additional European master, the view had gained ground that any such assistance was unnecessary as the available staff already had "too many periods off". In his reaction to that view of the Deputy Director, Major Harman argued that "the upper form would consist of five boys" preparing for the London Matriculation Examination. The Director himself had urged the Governor to ensure the appointment of "an additional European master in 1920 and the Governor agreed".

Since 1920", the Principal complained, "the school has increased from 76 to 120. The increase represents two additional masters. It is not possible that we can be overstaffed now, if that increase is taken into account".²⁴

In the letter which was accompanied by the time table, they made no mention "of the assistance rendered by Messrs. Ojo and Onojobi in drawing and science classes, where Mr. Crutchel and I are endeavoring to train them to take these subjects themselves" he went on to suggest that a cable should be sent to the Secretary of State about the need for the two new masters. Meanwhile, Major Harman requested for the appointment of "an additional African master"

23. Letter from Major Harman to the Director of Education dated 8th July 1921

24. Letter from Major Harman to the Director of Education dated 21st June 1920.

Some relief came however in April 1922 when the Acting Director of Education, Southern Provinces, wrote to the Principal that “Mr. E.E. Nkune who has just passed the Cambridge Senior and is an Old boy” might be willing to transfer from his post as “Headmaster of Omoku School to Lagos at a serious loss of money to him as at present he gets a house rent free”.

And again in July 1921, Major Harman wrote to the Director of Education that the Governor should request the Secretary of State to proceed to the appointment of two masters as soon as possible. He submitted two names at the request of the Colonial Office. One of them, Mr. W.H. Crutcheley, was approved. “Nothing has been heard” of the other, Mr. Harry Barrett.

“The qualifications I look for” he said “is ability to teach Latin and general English subject up to Cambridge Senior Local or London Matriculation Standard, and I desire a man who will be willing to take an interest in the games in the school and general welfare of the school”.

Major Harman agitated for better salaries for assistant masters on £420 per annum from £300, and for increase in the salaries of members staff of Kings College. The boys had the desire and the ability to learn but that desire to learn was thwarted by the inability of the government to provide enough masters to help them.

That inability was accentuated by “the absurdly anomalous position in which the assistant master at King’s College was placed by the findings of the Salaries Revision Committee” Major Herman protested in his letter ²⁵ to the Director of Education, the most senior Education Officer in the Colonial Government in the Colony and Southern Protectorate of Nigeria.

Major Harman was relentless in his search for adequate staff to assist “fee-paying scholars,” and that there was “an obligation for them to be under instruction.”

On January 15th 1925, he wrote a letter to the Colonial Office in London pleading for the appointment of a master, preferably “a youngster keen on games, especially cricket. Other qualifications, classics and English ----- At King’s College he can make between £50 and £100 a year extra for exams and night work.....” ²⁶

There were three Europeans on the staff: Messr. Kerr, Crutchley and Panes. The fourth “he asked for in this letter.” He compared his situation with that of the Prince of Wales College, Achimota in the Gold Coast, a school of 240 students “rather less than twice the size of King’s College” for which “the committee of Education Experts recommended a staff of 21 Europeans”

25. Letter from Major Harman to the Director of Education dated January 5th 1922.

26. Letter from Major Harman to Major Furse dated 15th January 1925.

Another letter in similar vein but directed to Mr. Hyde Johnson, Director of Education, followed on February 12th 1925. And in April 1925 Major Harman by letter ²⁷ sought the assistance of the Appointment Board of the University of Cambridge for “an assistant master The salary is £480 - £920, free quarters and medical attendance, with pension in due course” Similar letters were sent to the University of London ²⁸ and also to Oxford University ²⁹ . It was on record that Major Harman assigned himself the duty of teaching two subjects, Science and Mathematics, besides his functions of “administration and supervision”.

Major Harman’s persistence paid off later. Early in 1926 after he left Nigeria, Messrs Bayne and A.H. Cliff joined the staff.

For the record, besides the appointments of the two legendary old boys – D. Ade .O and J. A. Ojo – some old boys at different times were appointed to the staff of King’s College. H. O. Davies was appointed as Assistant teacher on 1st January 1923 on a salary scale of £48 -6- 78 per annum with 3 years probation.³⁰ And S. P. Thomas was also appointed as Assistant Teacher on January 1925 on a salary of £48 per annum with annual increment of £6 + £78 per annum. ³¹

One of the first set of boys admitted to King’s College, Eyo E. Nkume (1910 set) also joined the staff soon after he left the College. By April 1925, Mr. Nkume had risen to “2nd Grade school master on a salary scale of £180 per annum from 21st April 1925. Mr. Onajobi’s promotion to the same Grade with effect from 1st April 1925 was also contained in a memorandum from the Director of Education to the Principal dated 24th April 1925.³²

Earlier in 1920, Major Harman inaugurated the House system. Three Houses were created: School House, Hyde-Johnson’s House and McKee Wright’s House. Hyde Johnson’s House won the first ever inter house sports championship in 1920, but both School House and McKee Wright’s House tied for first place at the second annual interhouse sports meeting in 1921.

In June 1923, Major Harman founded the school magazine, ‘**The Mermaid**,³³ named after the weather vein, “that mythical denizen of the deep” still adorning the roof of the old (red brick) building (as described by Mr. Cliff). The second issue came out in December, 1923.

27. Letter dated April 4th 1925 from Major Harman to the Secretary, Appointed Board, University of Cambridge.

28. Letter dated 25th April 1925 to University of London Commerce Degree Bureau and Appointment Board.

29. Letter to Oxford University Appointments Committee dated 28th April 1925.

30. Memorandum from Director of Education to PKC dated 22nd October, 1923.

31. Memorandum from Director of Education to PKC dated 2nd February, 1923.

32. Memorandum from Director of Education to PKC dated 3rd April, 1925. In this memorandum, Mr. Onajobi’s annual salary was £220 pounds.

33. The Mermaid, Volume xxii, 1945 when Mr. Cliff was the Principal.

The Editorial of that No. 2 issue of **“The Mermaid”** states: “If we had felt any hesitation as to the need or value of bringing into being **“The Mermaid”** we should have had ample justification of our venture in the warm welcome accorded to our first number. Earlier members of the school find particular interest in the congratulations and good wishes of Sir Fredrick Lugard who writes to us in reference to the future of education in West Africa, “I hope that King College will continue to lead the way, and not to be outdone by any other colony.’ ...”³⁴

Besides the school song which Major Harman gave to the school, the College was to undergo its first major physical development in 1924 and there is no better description of this change than as recorded in No. 3 issue of **“The Mermaid”**, published in August 1924.

“The scheme for providing King’s College with a Boarding House and new laboratories has been approved and work has already begun. If all goes well, both buildings should be ready for use by the end of next year..... The Boarding house is being placed at the West end of our grounds. The ground floor provides a spacious dining room for the boarders, with pantry and students’ store room : a library and reading room where silence will be the rule and quiet study will be carried on; senior and junior common rooms where the ordinary out-of-school life of the boarders will be lived; and a master’s office where affairs of the house will be conducted.

“On the floor above, there will be 4 dormitories with accommodation for 64, with a special room in each for the prefect in charge. The general appearance of the boarding house will be in keeping with the present school.

“A bungalow for the master in immediate charge of the boarders is being built nearby.

“The laboratories will be built in the space between the present main building and the telegraph quarters. It will be one floor only, but so designed that a second floor can be added whenever further school accommodation is required”.

34. The Mermaid, No. 2 – Dec 1923.

“The main features will be large chemical and physical laboratories, each 27’ by 45’. In addition, there will be a lecture theatre with seats raised from front to back where the main demonstration will be given. The building will be complete with a dark room, a preparation and store room for apparatus and chemicals, and a cloak room.”³⁵

The same issue of ‘**The Mermaid**’ also recorded that “a great improvement has taken place in the appearance of the boys of the school since the insistence on all wearing a blue coat and white trousers.’ Blue coat”, please read “blue blazer”.

Major Harman opened the door of King’s College to serve the interests of the community at large. He created Forms IV, V and VI to enable not only King’s College boys but also boys from C.M.C. Grammar School, Methodist Boys High School, St. Gregory’s Grammar School and others to undergo a course of studies leading to the senior Cambridge School Certificate examination. The level of education offered at the time by all other schools in Nigeria, Northern or Southern provinces, was Junior Cambridge School Certificate.

In a letter to the Director of Medical Sanitary Services on September 10th 1925, he regretted his inability to take in Dispensers-in-Training for science courses “during our school hours” as earlier promised. This was because the Principal’s “request for additional European master has not been approved by His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, Southern provinces”. He therefore advised the Director to send his dispensers for training in elementary science at the Evening Classes which were organized in the premises of King’s College.

With the inauguration of the House system, with the introduction of the school song and the school blazer, with the advent of the ‘**The Mermaid**’, with the construction of the new block of laboratories as well as the establishment and construction of the Boarding House, with a steady increase in the number of students on roll and his concern for adequate and well remunerated staff to draw the best out of the boys, with the establishment of the first of the annual inter house athletic competitions, and with many more behind him. Major Harman left the College in December, 1925 only to return to the Gold Coast as Assistant Director of Education. He was presented with an oil portrait of himself by the great and the first Nigerian Paris – trained artist, Mr. Aina Onabolu, himself a member of staff who was nicknamed by the students as “Artist Kere” in later years. Major Harman was not only a great Principal of King’s College; he was perhaps the greatest for all time !

The Boarding House opened its doors to the first 21 boarders on 4th January 1926, and Mr. C. H. Baynes assumed duties as the House Master in February. In April 1926, Mr. A. H. Clift, later to be Principal of King’s College, joined the staff as English master for the upper forms. In the Easter term of 1926, a new House called Harman’s House was created alongside School House, Hyde-Johnson’s House and Mckee Wright’s House. Three old boys, H. St. Anna, A. Omololu and T. Adu were selected to play cricket for Nigeria against the Gold coast in 1926.³⁶

35. The Mermaid. No. 3, 1924.

The Boarding House has 5 dormitories, one more than originally designed. The Biology Laboratory is one top of the Physics Laboratory.

On top of the Chemistry Laboratory was the General Office.

And the Office of the Principal King’s College was on top of Messrs Ajumogobia, Ibi Mooto’s and Femi Okunnu’s office.

36. The Mermaid. No. 7, June, 1926.

FROM PEACORE TO PANE. TO CLIFT

On September 26th 1926, the Revd. W.M. Peacock arrived in Lagos to assume duties as the Principal. His first public appearance was the following Wednesday when he read prayers for the first time at the close of which he received a healthy welcome from the School.³⁷ In the same year, a foundation member of staff, Mr. J.A. de Gaye, died.

The Mermaid of January 1927³⁷ contained the news of the completion of the new laboratories and that they would be put into use the following Term. Mr. Crutchley had arranged the range of apparatus for the laboratories which included cinematography equipment.

Beside athletics, football, cricket and boxing which were already well established games at the college, a tennis court was built in 1927. And as recorded in to No. 9 issue of **'The Mermaid'** published in July 1927,³⁸ "there is a rumor of the impending arrival of hockey sticks. So before long, members of the College would be winning fame in yet further branches of sport". A fives court (later converted into squash court) was constructed a year later. Mr. W.T. Mackell who joined the staff about this time coached the 1st XI football team and also looked after the boxing club.

In sports, The Mermaid No. 9 also recorded that the Football 1st XI played 16 matches in 1927, lost 1 to the Old Boys and drew 4. The team defeated Wesleyan (Methodist) Boys High School 6-nil and again 5-nil in the return match. King's College defeated St. Gregory Grammar School 1-nil and drew the return match.

One of the highlights of the year was the temporary conversion of a dormitory to a chapel for use mainly by boarders. In that year also, on 27th May, the Emirs of Kano and of Kazaure visited the College. The Emir of Kano wrote in the Visitor's Book in Arabic:

"From the Emir of Kano Abdulahi Bayero to the Head of the great school, i.e Kings College Greeting and Friendship. I wish to thank you for your kindness in showing me over the school and explaining how it is run."

New members of the staff included Messrs W. Simpson, H. H. Jeffers (who took over the boxing club from Mr. W.T. Mackell, several years later to become Director of Education, Western Provinces), K. W. Marchant, F. K. Butler (also later to be Director of Education, West) and G. Percy Savage. In 1984 Mr. Savage became the first Nigerian to act as Principal of King College. Mr. V. B. V. Powell, a great sportsman and renown Principal of Hussey College, Warri, also had a short stint on the staff. Mr. D. L. Kerr, a foundation member of the staff in 1909 retired from the public service. He acted on several occasions as the principal. He was remembered for "many reasons, most of all for the great interest in football". That the College "reached such a high standard" was due to his efforts. Hockey was introduced as a sport in the College.³⁹

37. The Mermaid. No. 8, January 1927.

38. The Mermaid No. 9 – July, 1927

39. The Mermaid, No. 10, June 1928

The College Chapel, completed during the 1928 long vacation, was dedicated on 18th November, 1928 by the Bishop of Lagos, assisted by the Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission.⁴⁰ It was some years later that Muslim and Catholic students were encouraged to have their morning services separately on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, Mondays and Fridays being for general assembly in the College Hall, and Thursday for House meetings.

The foundation of medical education in Nigeria was laid at King's College on 1st January 1928.

Earlier in the year 1927, the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services and the Acting Director of Education had presented a scheme for the training of "African subordinate Medical and Sanitary staff and Medical Assistants at Kings College, Lagos" In a letter under the hand of the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government, Mr. H.F.M. White, in July 1927, approval of the scheme was conveyed to the Secretary, Southern Provinces, "subject to the covering sanction of the Secretary of State.

Under the scheme, the period of instruction at King's was 3 years. The College indicated that it could not take more than 50 pupils, 25 students in the first year and 25 in the second year. Admission was by entrance examination "with a competitive qualification if the number of candidates exceed the number of vacancies"

The scheme commenced on 1st January 1928 with the admission of 25 students open to approved schools throughout Nigeria and who had "covered at least the ground normally required for Std V". The training at that stage was "for the various branches of subordinate staff in the Medical Department.

Provision was made for 80% success in the first year, with admission of 25 students in the second year, 1929. The number on the roll in 1929 for the scheme was 45.

There was no admission of students in 1930. Rather, the 20 most promising among the "1928 class " were selected for training as "Medical Assistants" and they remained under training at King's College for a fourth year.

The scheme ran its initial period of 8 years with new admission of 25 new students in 1931, 1932 and 1934.

It was a great improvement on the earlier scheme handed over to Major Harman in 1925. It laid the foundation for the Higher College, Yaba which provided training for African medical doctors, the first of its kind in Nigeria in the late 1930s, and eventually this led to the establishment of the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

40. The Mermaid, No. 11, July 1929

The Mermaid No. 10 – June 1928 contained the story of the visit of Katsina students from the Katsina Training College. “Between spells of sight-seeing (what a sensation to see the ocean and the great ships for the first time) they were able to play us at Cricket in which their fielding was particularly admirable, and at football. They gave us a good game, and showed both their friendliness and their sporting instinct.....They showed a courtesy of manner which some boys ...would do well to imitate.

Again from ‘**The Mermaid**’, No 11, July 1929 : “It has become necessary to start a second Boarding House. Accordingly, Hyde-Johnson’s House is now a boarding house with Mr. Simpson as House Master. At present the members of the House are accommodated in the rooms recently vacated by the Education Department and two rooms which were in use as staff offices. It is hoped that next School Year will see them more comfortably housed in the Secretariat, Southern Provinces Building which is now vacated, as the Southern Secretariat has been transferred to Enugu”.

In the same year, the school year underwent a radical change. The school year now commenced in October and ended the following July. “It consists of three terms of 12 weeks each with a week holidays at the end of the first and second terms. At the end of the 3rd term, there is a long vacation of about 14 weeks.”

“The reason for this change” as reported in the July 1929 issue of The Mermaid “is not, as has been stated by a local politician, in order that the European staff may have 3 months’ leave at the end of 9 months’ work, but in order that the whole staff may be available during the whole school year. Under the old arrangement, European staff were necessarily coming and going according to the particular time each officer’s tour began and ended. The result was that the syllabus and time-table were continually being changed to fit in with the staff available at the moment.

“There is a distinct educational advantage in boys being taught by the same masters throughout the year. So far the change seems to be working most satisfactorily, but we shall be able to speak more decidedly after a more extended trial. In order that boys may not forget too much during the long vacation, they are advised what to study this vacation and for boys living in Lagos a four weeks’ voluntary course is conducted in September by the African members of the Staff.”

The Principal’s report for that year (1929) contained the following extracts, as reported in The Mermaid, No 11:

“Our numbers this year have continued in the neighborhood of 160. The Boarders owing to the arrival of the second batch of medical scholars have largely increased and now number 86. We have begun a second Boarding House. The first one – the School House – still continues to function under Mr. King. The new one under Mr. Simson has made an excellent start.....

‘We have introduced two new subjects into our time table, class singing and physical training....

“In the cricket team which recently visited the Gold Coast, King’s College was represented by Mr. St. Anna, Mr. Omololu, Mr. J. Akerele, and Randle, while the success of the Billiard Match was largely due to Mr. Kayode.”

This tradition of having Kings College old boys and present students in Nigeria’s 1st XI or national teams in athletics, cricket, hockey, and other sports has continued ever since. This band of Old Boys included B. J. Ikpeme (1932) and Albert Osakwe (1933) who captained Oxford University Cricket XI, Olujimi Coker, Rex Akpofure, A. K. Amu (1952 – 1954) and L. O. Okunnu (1952 - 1954).

It is interesting to note that during the year 1931, a new post of the handicraft instructor was created. The first holder was Mr. O. T. Jones, formerly of Public Works Department. A temporarily “handicraft shop” was fitted at one of the school House dormitories. In the same year, Mr. J. A. Ojo, himself as old of the College, was promoted to the post of a First Grade Teacher.

J. A. Ojo, or “Ojo Ibadan” as he was fondly called by both succeeding generations of students at King’s and his mates at the game of “Ayo” was a legend during his over 30 years as a master at the College. He entered King’s College as a student in its early years and left in 1914 only to join the staff soon thereafter. In later years, without any university education, he became the chemistry Master, but it was a mark of his scholarship that a distinction or credit by students in the Oxford or Cambridge School Certificate examination was the rule rather than the exception. An ordinary pass in the examination was regarded as a failure.

The Mermaid No. 12⁴¹ contained the following notes:

“ A College Library started by Mr. Hanerton in the room which used to be the Director’s Office, and also a Chapel Choir which has greatly brightened the chapel services.”

The Mermaid also contained the following on the school orchestra :

“On Friday the 14th of February, the school gave a concert in connection with the celebration of Founder’s Day. At this concert, the school orchestra, under Mr. G.P. Savage as conductor, made an appearance for the first time in the history of the school. The performance of the orchestra was good, due mainly to the keen interest taken by the boys and their willingness at all times to practice when called upon to do so.....”

For the record, the new Boarding House was formally opened by Major W. Birrell Gray, the Administrator of the Colony, on Wednesday, December 1929.

41. The Mermaid, No. 12 – June 1930.

The Editorial in The Mermaid No. 13⁴² read :

“We look back upon our history, conscious that King’s College has stood for something worthwhile in the lives of those who have been educated within her walls, and proud to feel that these 21 years have had a beneficial influence, however slight, upon our country.

And now in this first year of our majority, we have shown that we can still adapt ourselves to the ever changing needs of the time. The engineering class, the division of the College into 2 sides, Literary and Modern, the fact that one boy⁴³ who last year passed the school certificate examination with credit, and is staying for another 2 years to read for the Higher School certificate, the preparations that have been made for the starting of 2 new forms below our present bottom form all this is proof that we are alive and ready to meet the new demands made upon us by the steady growth of education in this country.

“But the end of this school year will see two changes which we deeply regret. In the first place we are losing Canon Peacock

“Our second loss will also be a heavy one. We are losing the last of the Medical Scholars and no new ones are coming to take their place. This, we fear, will lead to the closing of one of the Boarding Houses. Such a step we view with the greatest misgiving.....”

The year 1930/31 witnessed some radical internal re-organization with the renumbering of Forms 1 - 4 Secondary as 3-6 Middle. Each Form was again subdivided into Literary and Modern, depending on the choice of subjects. The syllabus of the Literary section was designed for literary education leading to admission to British Universities, while that of the Modern section was for admission to the new Higher College at Yaba. Biology and handwork replaced Latin in the Modern section of the school. In addition to these changes, two junior forms – 1 and 2 Middle – were added on, so as “to give a sound general education before the stage at which the division into the Literary and Modern sides is made” as recorded in The Mermaid.

The changes did not affect the Engineering Class intended for students who wished to obtain admission to the Higher College, Yaba and which ranked parallel to Class VI Middle.

In 1931, the two day-boy Houses for day boys were merged and the new House retained the name “Mckee – Wright’s”, with Mr. Jeffers as House Master and Mr. J.A. Ojo as Assistant House Master. On 2nd November 1931, Mr. J.N. Panes (who was on the staff from May 1922) assumed duties as the Principal.

42. The Mermaid, No. 13, July 1931.

43. Sir. Liouis Mbanefo who later became a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, and the Chief Justice of the Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Mr. Panes in 1932 however, reversed the internal changes recently made with an increase in admission entries. Classes I, II and III were merged and re-arranged in set for Latin and Science, while Biology was taught in all classes except class VI Literary. The distinction between Literary and Modern sections disappeared in Classes 1 to VI with all boys following common curriculum including handicraft, science and Latin until classes V and VI where the distinction was retained.

The structural changes however continued in 1934 Class VI Modern and Classical (Literary) were merged into one, and a new Form called the “Remove” was created.”⁴⁴

In the area of extracurricular activities, 1933 witnessed the establishment of The Science Society, later to be known as The King’s College Society. Until the Students’ Council (or the students’ Parliament) came into being in 1953, King’s College Society was the most important students’ organization in the College. It was an elite club, with membership limited to 36 upper forms students only, and strictly by invitation.

King’s College scored two other “firsts” during this period. In the area of scholarship apart from Louis Mbanefo being the first Nigerian to sit for Cambridge higher school certificate examination, King’s College also admitted two girls as students in 1924. They were Irene Thomas (who later qualified as Medical Doctors) and Foluke Allen in 1934.

In the sporting arena, King’s College continued to excel in cricket, athletics and football, and had no compare amongst the schools in hockey.

A.B. Philips, the cricket captain and a prolific batsman scored 52, 73 and 111 not out in matches against such clubs as the Public Works Department (P. W. D.) 1st XI, and Lagos & Colony Cricket Club (L. & C.C.C.) in 1934 – the first recorded century by a school boy in the history of cricket in Nigeria. And G.A. Garrick’s 6ft 3^{1/2} inches in high jump in 1938 remained Nigerian record until the early 1950s.⁴⁵ A year earlier in 1937, Ishau Sanni Adewale had set a Nigeria record in high jump.

Such was the dominance of Kings College in athletics that she won the Grier Cup in 1934 and retained it in successive years in 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939.

There were still in 1936 only two Houses: Hyde-Johnson’s with 70 boys, for boarders and over 80 days boys in Mckee Wright’s.

Mr. Panes left the College in 1936, and Mr. A. H. Cliff who joined the staff in April 1926 succeeded him as the principal. Mr. Pane’s contemporaries said of him :

“It must be pointed out that the success he (Mr. Panes) achieved during his period of office was achieved during a time of peculiar difficulty, which makes that success all the more striking and valuable. He has left behind him a tradition of broad mindedness and courtesy which will long be remembered.”⁴⁶

44. The Mermaid No. 18 November 1936.

45. Six Nigerians went over 6’4”, and 4 later the same afternoon went over 6’ 6” (Majekodunmi, Osagie, Guobadia and Chigbolu).

46. “The Mermaid No. 16 November 1934.

Oxford University ceased to conduct its school certificate examination in Nigeria in 1937, and its great rival, Cambridge University, took over. For the first time, boys in Form V were entered for the school certificate examination. It has remained a Vth Form examination at King's College ever since.

Mr. M. F. Bestman (later F.I. Ajumogbobia) assumed duties as a master in 1939. In the same year the marriage of an old boy, T. Ogbe, was solemnized at the College Chapel. It was the first occasion that such a ceremony was conducted at the Chapel and a special license was procured to enable it to be performed.

The gathering storm had begun to envelope Europe. Soon, it appeared on the horizon in Africa, the divided continent under different European Colonial rule, and which had no choice in the matter. Then came September 3, 1939, and the Second (European) World War had begun. There would be no 30th Anniversary Celebration for King's College. Indeed, King's College Students were victims of the second (1939 – 1945) world war, one of them fatally. More anon.

TEACHER'S REWARD IN HEAVEN

It is often said that the reward of teachers is in heaven. Besides the pleasure and joy of seeing their pupils succeed in school and in life after school, what was the remuneration of the staff like between the period 1920 and 1940?

Major Harman perhaps was in a separate league of Principals of his own in the degree of interest he took in recruiting staff in the welfare and remuneration of his staff.

In his first self imposed assignment, he challenged in a letter to Mr. Hyde Johnson⁴⁷ the rationale of a salary scale of £430 + 30 + 720 for a master at King's and the same scale but "with £72 charge allowance extra" for inspectors of education. After a few years, he moved up to another level.

"There is an implied inferiority", Major Harman protested and the absurdity becomes more pronounced when one realized that some of those conferred with the advantage were "masters of primary schools" whose knowledge was not required to be above that of secondary school masters.

Mr. F.H. Bowen was a West Indian from Jamaica, a graduate of Colombia University in the United States. He taught mathematics at King's College. For income tax purpose, he was grouped with members of staff of Nigerian origin, not an expatriate.

He featured with an annual salary of £550 in 1940 alongside all Nigerians on the staff like J. A. Ojo (£300), D.A. Onojobi (£280) – both 1st Grade Teachers, G. P. Savage (2nd Grade Teacher on £220), J. A Cronje (£112), M. F. Bestman (£104), both Masters Grade 111), Jombo Akoma. (Laboratory Boy on £20), George Itabor (cook steward on £29). The tax was regulated under Colony Taxation Ordinance. There was no record of income tax returns of expatriate staff. Tax Form 6 stated: "Return of Employees, other than Europeans, resident in the Municipal Area of Lagos."

47. Letter to the Director of Education dated 21st June 1920.

The corresponding annual salaries in 1937 were (Mr. F. H. Bowen (Lecturer on an annual salary of £490) Mr. J. A. Ojo (£300), Mr. D. A. Onojobi (£252), Mr. E.N.E. Nkune (1st grade Teacher on £240), Mr. G. P. Savage (£190), Mr. E. A. Onimole (Master, Grade 111 on £10, Jombo Akoma (£18) and George Itabor (£13.4/- for 10 months).⁴⁸

From the two tax returns, it would appear that almost all the non African staff did not pay income tax as the yearly salaries and the total amount actually received as salaries were the same on Tax Form 6.

It is worthy of note that there seemed to be some disparity in seniority in service and annual salaries between Mr. Onojobi and Mr. Ojo. Whereas Mr. Ojo in 1923 will appear to be senior to Mr. Ojo as reflected in a Memorandum from the Director of Education, Southern Provinces, Lagos to the Principal of the College dated 20th October 1923 which showed the salary of Mr. Onojobi as 200 pounds per annum on 1st April 1923, and Mr. Ojo's salary as 190 pounds from 19th February 1923, the corresponding salaries in 1937 were Mr. Ojo on 300 pounds per annum and Mr. Onojobi on 252 pounds per annum.

The corresponding annual salaries in 1940, as indicated early, were 300 pounds for Mr. Ojo and 280 pounds for Mr. Onojobi.

This will explain the cool relationship between the two masters clearly noticeable in the late 1940s.

THE 1944 STRIKE

In November 1940, the Boarding House was moved to the Bonanza Hotel, Customs Street, Lagos (almost opposite both Rex Cinema, next to the Glover Memorial Hall), and the College was moved to Onikan to enable the army to be billeted at King's College premises at the Race Course.

This created a great inconvenience for the boarders who had to trek on foot from Customs Street in the morning and back to the boarding house in the afternoon.

Mr. F. H. Bowen, Acting Principal in his Annual Report 1942/43⁴⁹ put it thus:

Living conditions in a noisy and mostly unsavory atmosphere have been very difficult. The boys, however, have been cheerful and one hears few complaints. The students themselves have often taken the initiative in alleviation hardships that have arisen to take their manner of life different from that of the usual Boarding House. They have organized a keep fit club.

48. Income Tax Returns Tax Form 6 of 17th May 1937 and of 3rd May 1940.

49. King's College Annual Report 1942-3 by Mr. F. H. Bowen, Ag. Principal on 29th June 1943.

Perhaps the College authorities misjudged the mood of the boys as later events in 1944 would show.

The Annual Report 1942- 43, stated further: “There were 100 boarders in March 1942 and 79 day –boys on the roll’, including 39 boys who were brought from Government College, Umuahia to be groomed or educated in the proper manner at King’s College in August 1942, of whom only 25 were admitted.

“In spite of the dislocation of the College life, the students continued to perform very well at the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations.

“In December 1942, out of 35 students who sat for the examination, 30 candidates were successful in Grade I, another 2 in Grade II and 3 in Grade III. The results of the December 1941 examination “were exceptionally good.” 9 out of 18 King’s College students and 6 out of 18 Umuahia students gained exemption from the London Matriculation Examination. Three students were admitted to the Higher College in January 1943”.

Games at the College were however completely disorganized. The College grounds at the Race Course (Tafawa Balewa Square) were no longer available for the use of the students. The 1942-43 Annual Report stated that “games have been carried on with the greatest difficulty. Cricket has had to be abandoned for lack of a playing field and proper materials Athletics has become increasingly difficult to carry on. No school sports were held this year...”

With a daily routine of walking from Bonanza Hotel to school at Onikan and back over a period of 4 years, and with an unsettled life in academics and in sports, it was no surprise that the boys – all boarders – decided on a strike action in 1944. They decided one day on a “sit in” strike action, not to leave Bonanza Hotel until their demands were met by the authorities. The main demand was that the boys must be returned to the College at the Race Course. When all efforts to eject the boys from Bonanza Hotel failed on the appointed day, a criminal complaint was filed at the Magistrates Court, St. Ana, Tinubu against some of the boys. The defence team was led by one of the leading lawyers of the era, Mr. Eusebius J. Alex Taylor,⁵⁰ popularly called “the cork of the Bar”. Such was the brilliance of the defence that the boys were discharged and acquitted of the charge. The answer of the colonial government to that judicial decision was to conscript some of the boys into the British Army and they were sent to the war front in Burma. They included Ayoola Gladstone Young Dakolo, Adedapo Aderemi (eldest son of the Oni of Ife), Victor Ologundudu, Valentine Osula, Akanni Pratt, Yinka Akpata and Okparaocha who died in service in Burma.

50. Alex Taylor was the father of J.I.C. Taylor, also a brilliant lawyer and legendary Chief Justice of Lagos State.

Some of the other boys were sent to various secondary schools in Lagos like C.M.S. Grammar School, Methodist Boys High School, Baptist Academy and St. Gregory's College. "These included Charles O. Idowu, E.E. Idehen, R.S. Kokori, C. K. Ikemefuna, Adenekan Ademola,⁵¹ Tira Bello-Osagie,⁵² Victor Ovie-Whiskey,⁵³ C.H. Oyewo, S.A. Fakoya, O. Awani, S.S. Young-Harry, Thaddeus Eziashi and M. Agidee."⁵⁴

Having removed the ring leaders of the 1944 strike action from the College, the authorities resumed business as usual, or tried to do so. The boarders still at school remained at Bonanza Hotel, going on foot on weekdays to the wooden bungalows at Onikan which served as temporary school building, and back to the boarding house in the afternoon.

The army remained in occupation of the historic college building with its fields at the Race Course.

THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NIGERIA AND THE CAMEROONS (NCNC).

During the turbulent days of the strike action by the students, some leaders of opinion of various shades gathered together and decided to persuade the colonial government to reverse its decision to rusticate the students and conscript some of them into the army – leaders like E. J Alex Taylor, Dr. Akinola Maja and Nnamdi Azikiwe. It was to no avail.

Following a series of meetings by nationalists like Mr. Herbert Macaulay, Mr. Nnamdi Azikwe and a group of students, (a forerunner of the student movement), and others of like mind, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons⁵⁵ was born. It was to play a major role in Nigerian politics leading to independence in 1960 until the army coup d'etat in January 1966.

SWEET HOME, SWEET CHARIOT

In 1947, King's College returned to its homestead at the Race Course, the home, the sweet home of its birth. The borders were happy to leave the crammed rooms of the Bonanza Hotel for the hallowed halls of residence built by Major Harman 20 years earlier.

The students were happy to leave the wooden classrooms at Onikan for the 40 years old red brick classrooms, the laboratories, the fields and fresh air at the Race Course where thousands of Nigerians and other Africans in government and professional life were to render (and are still rendering) unparalleled service to Nigeria. Africa and the world.

51. Eldest son of the first Chief Justice of Nigeria, Sir Adetokunboh Ademola, and himself later Justice of the Court of Appeal.

52. Later Prof. Tira Bello – Osaghe

53. Justice Ovie – Whiskey of the High Court of Bendel State later became Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

54. Memory Lane". By Adedapo Adeniran published in The Mermaid 1989/99.

55. The N. C. N. C., in alliance with National Democratic Party won elections to the Legislative Council in 1947 (Dr. Ibiyinka Olorunnimbe (K. C. O. B.), Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prince Adeleke Adedoyin.) The party was dominant in Lagos, Eastern Region until the 1966 military coup. It also retained strong following in the West.

It was that red brick building that the young Isaac Oluwole, the first Nigerian Medical Officer of Health, John Churchill Vaughan, the founder of the Nigerian Youth Movement, and Gladstone Macaulay, (son of Herbert Macaulay) and other confident boys entered on 20th September 1909 as foundation students.

It was this red brick which nurtured in its classrooms from their early youth Samuel Manuwa (1920), the first Nigerian Director of Medical Services, as well as his immediate successors, Simeon Awoliyi (1924) and Charles Modupe Norman-Williams (1927).

It was at that red brick where Adetokunbo Ademola (1920), Chief Justice of Nigeria (1960-72), Louis Mbanefo (1928), Chief Justice of the Eastern Region (1962-1966), N.O. A. Morgan (1920), Chief Justice of the Western Region (-), M. A. Begho (1936), Chief Justice of the Mid-West Region (State), (-) and his immediate successor, E.A. Ekeruche (1937), (-) Ignatus Pinto (1918), Chief Justice of the Republic of Togo, and later a Judge at the International Court at the Hague, all learnt to cherish chivalry and truth.

A time there was when all the Chief Justices in Nigeria (except that of the Northern Region) Sir Adetokunbo Ademola C.J.N., Sir Louis Mbanefo, N.O. A. Morgan and M. A. Begho – were all Old Boys of King’s College. !

And lest we forget, the first black African to attain a high post at the United Nations, the post of Assistant Secretary General, was Simeon O. Adebo (1929).

It was to that hallowed red brick building that the students returned from wilderness in September 1947. And on October 29th 1947, Mr. C. H. Clift left the College after 11^{1/2} years as (the longest serving) Principal. He left behind a dynamite, soon to explode. The junior boys, (boarders) in Forms II and III were in September 1947 left in the wooden bungalows at Onikan. So were the new Form I boarders who entered the College on 5th January 1948. Mr. A. D. Porter became the Acting Principal after the departure of Mr. Clift.

The Mermaid of November 1947 ⁵⁶ in part described Mr. Clift thus:

“His interest in King’s College boys did not end with their disappearance from the School Register, but followed them into the Old Boys’ Society, and through their diverse careers. In turn, the Old Boys reciprocated this interest, and through Mr. Clift gave support to their old School and to the boys of succeeding generations.

56. The Mermaid, No. XXIV, July 1948 .

There were times when Mr. Clift was called away from Lagos to serve in other capacities, but his affection for King's College, in which he had taught during his earliest Nigerian days remained undiminished. To his more intimate friends he was known as the "Dean of King's" a title which, although conferred by no known ecclesiastical authority, was earned by his constant solicitude for the welfare of the College. By his going, the "**Dean**" has left a gap among his colleagues, and Lagos has lost a kind and unassuming friend."

The new Governor of Nigeria, Sir John McPherson, was the first visitor to the College at its old premises, followed by Britain's war-time hero, Field Marshall Lord Montgomery on 18th November 1947.

The Cambridge School Certificate examination in 1947 was the best for some years. Eleven boys were placed in Grade 1, six in Grade II and six in Grade III. Only four boys were unsuccessful. By 1947, the four-House system had been restored: Hyde-Johnson's House, Mckee Wright's House, Harman's House and Panes' House, each one with a Captain and a Perfect.

"Aladdin and the Lamp" was successfully staged by the students in December for three consecutive nights – a sign that things were getting back to normal.

Compulsory wearing of College caps and badges by the students was abandoned because of slow production and quality.

The Wood Craft Society was established, and the King's College "Gwando" Photographic Society, founded in 1937 by Albert Osakwe but moribund during the war years, was revived by Ademola Banjo in 1945. And in 1948, the King's College Photographic Society (established by F. S. Onyekawena in 1946) was reorganized by Tunji Gomes.

On December 1947, Mr. Jerry A. Enyeazu took a party of 24 students (19 from Form V and 5 from Form IV) to Ibadan on a biological excursion", and returned on 3rd January 1948. The visitors stayed at Grier House, Government College, while the Government College boys were on holidays. They visited the Moor Plantation, the Forestry School, the Water Works and the Power Station near the newly established University College. They did not forget to collect specimens while exploring "the bush" around Government College.

On their release from Bonanza Hotel, the students regained their sporting process over their opponents in hockey and cricket, mostly Europeans, on their return to their familiar field at the Race Course. The Lagos and Colony Cricket Club with European (British) membership established the Elmore Cup competition, a limited 24 – over competition like

the modern one-dayer (O. Ds) on a league basis. King's College lost the first match to L & CCC, but won the others, including the final match against "Old Sweats". E. I. Akpata was the College XI captain (as well as School, Captain). He later became a Justice of the Supreme Court and like Justice Ovie-Whiskey before him, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission. The stars of the cricket season were Jimmy Coker and Rex Akpofure, with both the bat and the ball.

In hockey, K. C. XI played five matches and won all five – 4 against European teams and one against the Railway team. The star of the athletics season was E.A. Ikomi. He won the Victor Ludorum cup at the Inter House athletics competition, with a new school record in long jump. He obtained maximum 12 points at the Grier Cup Competition, "more than three-fourth of the teams' score"⁵⁷

THE 1948 STRIKE

The newly admitted students entered King's College on January 5th 1948.

Early in the year, the teaching of political science and current affairs was introduced for the benefit of Form VI students who were to stay on till June awaiting the results of their Cambridge School Certificate examination held the previous November/December. This was particularly apt at a time when the new Governor, Sir, John McPherson, had declared that the Richards Constitution would be reviewed. Mr. R.M. Elphick, the English master, was in charge of the teaching of this new subject matter. He was later to take active part in a radio programme on the (proposed) McPherson Constitution for Nigeria.

The College however continued to run two Boarding Houses, one for the Senior boys in the school premises at the Race Court, and the other at Onikan for the junior boys. After the long vacation (June to September) Forms IV, V and VI boarders were in residence at the Race Course, and Forms II and III boarders at Onikan. In our calendar, Form 1 boys were admitted in January every year; the students spent only six months in Form 1. In September, they would go to Form II.

The reason why all the boarders were not returned to the main Boarding House in the College premises in 1947 is buried in history. It was to be part of the **causus belli** for the students strike action in 1948. Mr. C. Odunukwe took over as junior Boarding House Master from Mr. U. B. Ugot who had proceeded to the United Kingdom for further studies. Mr. G. Percy Savage remained the Senior Boarding House Master, occupying the second floor apartment (now the Principal's and the administrative offices) in the red brick building as his official quarters. He was assisted by Mr. Jerry Eyeanzu as the junior House Master occupying the bungalow on Igbosere Street, Two Form VI students took charge of the junior boys at Onikan Boarding House for a period of two weeks in turn.

57. The Mermaid No. xxiii of November, 1947.

Shortly after their Cambridge School Certificate examination in November, 1948 Form VI students, along with a few in Form V (like Gogo Chu Nzeribe) embarked on a strike action. The complaints of the students in rebellion against the college authorities were:

1. Unsanitary environment in the junior boarding house at Onikan, infested with mosquitoes. On grounds of ill health, the boarding house should be closed down. It should be remembered that like Bonanza Hotel, the students had to walk from Onikan to the College every day, and return to Onikan on foot.
2. The food served in the dining hall was not good enough, it was poor, it was not up to the standard the students were used to in earlier times.
3. Whereas the boarders were used to iron beds and mattresses, what was supplied since the exodus from Bonanza Hotel were wooden beds with three planks as support.
4. By tradition, a boarder was usually appointed the school captain. The authorities appointed Olujimi Okikiolu Coker,⁵⁸ a day boy, as the School Captain. B. A. Anumoye was appointed the School Prefect. Anumoye though a boarder was not popular among his peers. Both later became professors at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

I.C. Garrick was the preferred choice of the students. His peers expected Garrick to be appointed as the School Captain.

And so on a Thursday morning when the four Houses were assembled in front of the red brick building built in 1909 as was the custom, the Acting Principal, Mr. G.P. Savage, walked down the corridor, instructing each House captain to call the register of the boys in the House on parade. Garrick, the House Captain of Hyde John's House ignored him. So did the House Captain of Mckee Wright's House.

When he came down to Tunji Gomes of Harman's House, Gomes turned his back on Mr. Savage, and said to his boys :

Harman's House,

No talking; no giggling”!

The Acting Principal then walked to Eben Ikomi of Pane's House. Ikomi also gave Mr. Savage a cold shoulder.

It was all planned by the VI Formers and their allies in Form V – all boarders.

The next step was an orderly procession of the strike leaders, all in their best white trousers, white jackets or school blazers on white shirts, and white canvas shoes, wending its way to the Government Secretariat at the Marina. They tried to present their complaints, their grievances to the Director of Education - to no success.

58. Prof. Jimmy Coker represented Ireland in international cricket while at Trinity College, Dublin, and later played inter- colonial match for Nigeria.

The College premises were immediately closed down for the coming Christmas holidays.

When it resumed in January, and following the intervention of some parents and well wishers, all the Form VI and Form V boys who took part in the strike action were invited to receive twelve of the best cane to be administered on their back side by the Principal. That was the main condition imposed by the authorities if any of the boys desired to obtain the usual school leaving certificate. Some of the students accepted the terms, received the cane, and collected their certificates thereafter. Some of the students rejected the terms offered them, and refused to have the cane.

Mr. Savage, the first Nigerian to act as Principal of King's College, was never offered the substantive post of Principal of the College.

The boarding house at Onikan was subsequently closed down, and the boarders were repatriated to the Boarding House in the College premises. There was little problem in accommodating them. The College population – boarders and day boys – was not more than 150 in 1949.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE STRIKE: THE BUNTING REVOLUTION

The Colonial Office made a wide search for a new Principal. Eventually, a suitable candidate was found. He was John Reginald Bunting, Headmaster of a school in Jamaica. "J.R.B" (as he was fondly called by the boys) resumed duties in September 1949.

The new Principal soon stamped his authority on the College. He first banned the "Fag System". As perhaps in some English public schools, a senior boy at school usually in Form V would adopt a new Form 1 student as his "fag". The system allowed "the fag" to undertake all manner of errand for "the senior" in exchange for special "protection" and "care" for the fag. The junior boys dubbed the new order as "Butting's Law of Equality". It was a victory for respect for human right and equality. More was to come.

J. R. Bunting founded the Parents, Teachers Association (PTA), the first in the, educational development in Nigeria. A parent of one of the students was elected the Chairman and a member of the College staff became the Secretary. In his time as the Principal, Reg Bunting issued regular circular letters to the parents and guardians of the students. Similar Parents/Teachers Associations were later inaugurated in several schools. These associations in the fullness of time established a National Parents/Teachers Association of Nigeria.

In a circular to Parents/Guardians in 1950, J.R.B. advised them to pay to the College Bursar (not to the Treasury) games fees, payment for text books and four shillings for house vests, laundry fees and pocket money. The boys were never short of sports wears or shoes – the first athletes to wear “spiked” shoes in Nigeria, and “special diet” for those representing the college in athletics!

The letter ⁵⁹ also advised those who wished to join the Parents Teachers Association to pay a membership fee of five shillings to the Secretary, Mr. J.A. Enyeanzu

The letter concluded:

“The problem of guardianship of non-Lagos boys who are not boarders is very worrying to us. We find many boys who are underfed and overworked with domestic duties. Consequently their work suffers. If this problem concerns you I do hope you will try to ensure that your boy is given proper care and guardianship next term – and that he is given two hours every evening to do his home work which he can do on the School premises if desired. He should also have at least 8 hours sleep each night”.

Mr. Bunting also founded *the League of Bribe Scorners*, with membership open to members of the public. It was the first organized struggle against corruption in public life in Nigeria. The League was publicly launched. It received tremendous response from the public.

NEW BUILDING

One of the first steps taken by J.R. Bunting on arrival in Lagos in 1949 was to embark on search for additional accommodation for the College and the staff. He prepared sketched plans and submitted them to the Public Works Department, later to be known as the Ministry of Works and Housing when Nigeria became independent of British colonial rule. The result of his effort is the new wing, east of the red brick and adjacent to the Court of Appeal. It consists of four classrooms, the gym, the Assembly Hall and the Workshops occupying the ground floor. Dormitories occupy the second floor, atop the classrooms, the clinic, gym, Assembly Hall and the workshops. On the third floor atop the Hall and the workshops are four staff flats. The four flats replaced the old duplex staff quarters behind the chapel and the old workshop on the east wing of the red brick. The old College Hall behind the red brick became the College Library which replaced the reading room in the old Boarding House building, now exclusively occupied by Hyde Johnson’s House borders.

The additional accommodation enabled Mr. Bunting to double the annual intake of students to two classes of 25 students in each class, instead of an annual intake of 25 boys. The College population rose to about 260 boys, of whom over 200 were boarders. ⁶⁰ The few girls were for HSC course only.

59. Letter to Parents/Guardians dated 8th July 1950.

60. “The teaching of Civics at King’s College, R.E. Manley, published in OVERSEA EDUCATION Vol. XXVII No. 2 July 1956.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE COURSE

Mr. Bunting also introduced the two year Cambridge Higher School Certificate course, another first in Nigeria, on successful completion of the school certificate course. That enabled VI th Form students to pursue a two year H.S.C course to gain direct admission to British universities.

The H.S.C. course took off in 1950, and the first set of students included A. A. Ayida, Dike Nwanodi, P. C. Asiodu, C.A. Tugbobo, S.T. Kofi Duncan, Rufus Victor Williams and Olusole Ade Onojobi. JRB ensured the admission of perhaps his best two students among the 1946-50 -52 set, Asiodu and Ayida to Queen's College, his old College at Oxford University, to pursue PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics) studies. Higher School Certificate Course enhanced direct admission prospects of Nigerians into University College, Ibadan and other British universities.

There were some girls from Queens College who were admitted as students in 1950 for the H.S.C. course. They were Floreata Eyo, (a superb athlete who set the Nigerian women high jump record), Oyinade Adenubi (Prof. Mrs. Elebute), Stella Udoffia (Mrs. Bassey), Gwendolline Martins (a Cameroonian) and Grace Shoyinka (Mrs. Efunkayo). They following year, other girls were admitted into the College for the HSC course. Then included Eno Etuk (Mrs. Irukwu) and Grace Ugbo (Mrs. Nsofor). No girls were admitted into the 1952-54 HSC class; only eight boys out of twenty five 1948 -52 set opted for the course. But in 1954, Olugbo Lucas (Rev. Mrs. Hollist) and in 1956 Gbolahan Abisogun (Mrs. Abisogun – Alo), Kehinde Lawal and Matilda Esan came on board. Other girls followed in later years.

As stated earlier, two girls were admitted into the College as students in 1934 in the upper forms to pursue a course in science, preparatory to a course in medicine one of them was Dr. Irene Thomas who was very active in the King's College Old Boys Association in the 1950s.

All the girls in the HSC classes from 1950 took active part in the life of the College, including sports and extra curricula activities. Those still alive continue to be active and proud to be Old Girls of King's College.

CIVICS

J.R. Bunting widened the college curriculum by the introduction of civics “so that King's College students would be *able* to learn and understand (and eventually practise) the essentials of democracy”⁵⁸ again the first in Nigeria (and in Africa).

61. “The Teaching of Civics at Kings College Lagos at page 51-53 of Oversea Education Vol. XXVIII, No , July 1956 by R. E. Manley op. cit.

Unlike in 1922 and 1946/47 when the Clifford and the Richards Constitutions were handed over to Nigerians by the Colonial power, there was a public debate on and participation in the type of constitution best suited for Nigeria soon after Sir John McPherson arrived in Nigeria in 1948 as the Governor. Representatives of the people, chosen by an electoral college system, met at Ibadan to discuss the shape of the new McPherson Constitution in 1950. There was also the constitutional crisis in 1953 which led to a new constitution, the Lyttleton Constitution, for Nigeria. Amidst these momentous events in the political history of Nigeria. JRB seized the moment to teach the students of King's College the essential of that part of the School Song:

**“Though of many nations we will not forget. That we all are
brothers with a common bebt.”**

Kings College students came from different villages and towns in Nigeria. The only communities of people they knew were their individual immediate families. The study of Civics taught the students the lesson of concentric circles of communities: the family, the village/town, the Region, Nigeria, Africa, the British Commonwealth and the World at large. Civics taught the students the essentials of loyalty to each of those communities. It taught them the need for honesty in everyday life, of tolerance of and respect for other people's opinion. It taught them the spirit of sportsmanship, of “give and take”, and that politics was not a “do or die” affair, but a life of service to the Society.

“It taught them the importance of their contribution to the welfare of their communities rather than what they would take out of their Society. Above all, it taught them this lesson: to leave the world a better place than they found it.

A study of the United Nations Organization, its philosophy and operation, was part of civics lesson. The students also worked on study projects like the Lagos Town Council or its Health Department in groups, and prepared reports for discussion in class.⁵⁹

J.R. Bunting taught civics as a subject at King's. So did Mr. R. E. Marley in the early years. And so did L. O. Okunnu, an old boy between 1953 and 1956, teaching Forms 1 to IV in civics, History and English (Forms 1 – 111).

KINGS COLLEGE STUDENTS COUNCIL.

If the teaching of civics was one arm of exposing students to democratic process in theory, the King's College Students' Council was the other arm in the teaching of democracy in practice.

62. “Forward to The Mermaid No. XXVII, October 1951.

The experiment began when Reg. Bunting spent his annual leave in 1951 in the United States of America on a short course study in that country. ⁶⁰ The next stage was to provide a platform for the students to put into practice what they had learnt in civics class about the democratic process.

The first challenge to the students was to prepare a Constitution for the King's College Students Council. That was in April 1952.

Each class (from Form 1 to Form VI) elected two members in the class to the Constituent Assembly which set to work immediately. In December 1952, the Constituent Assembly presented a draft Constitution which received the approval of the Principal the same month.

The Preamble to the Constitution ⁶¹ read:

In search of a true Democracy which we believe to be the ideal form of Government, we the students of King's College, inspired by our principal, J . R. Bunting Esq, herein wish to set down the Pedestal on which we hope to found and develop a true **sense** of respect for the opinion and civil rights of others, a keen sense of Justice and equity, a profound realization of civic responsibilities in order to fit ourselves into the **GREATER DEMOCRACY** of a future Nigeria.

The functions of the Council as defined in its Constitution were:

1. To enact and enforce bye laws to govern the conduct of the students.
2. To cater for the welfare of all the students in or outside the College compound.
3. To maintain discipline among the students.
4. To advise the Principal and the College staff on all matters pertaining to the administration of the College.
5. To perform duties delegated to it by the College authorities.

Membership of the Students' Council consisted of two representatives from each class or Form (I to VI) and a member from each club or society "which has been functioning satisfactorily for at least a school year." The Prefects Body elected a member among themselves to the Council.

The general election to the office of the Secretary to the Council was held on 10th January 1953. Nomination for election was limited to two or three candidates from each Form or class, from II to IV. Form I students were disenfranchised as they were less than a week old in the College.

63 Forward to The Mermaid No. XXVII, October 1951.

64. The Constitution of the King's College Students' Council, 1952.

Seven candidates were nominated: Abaelu and Tandoh (Form V), Adeniji and Okunnu (Lower VI th Form), Akinrele, Igbinovia, and Seriki (Upper VI th Form).

Campaign meetings (hustings) were held; canvassing was intense but orderly. There were banners and posters bearing all sort of cartons and slogans on displaying. It was a great fun.

These were the results of the election:

L.O. Okunnu	53 Votes
I. A. Akinrele	46 Votes
J. A Adeniji	44 Votes
L.O.A. Seriki	9 Votes
I. A. Igbinovia	7 Votes
O. K. Tandoh	3 Votes
J. M Abaelu	2 Votes

L. O. Okunnu was declared duly elected as the Secretary of the Council.

Election of the members representing Form II to Form 6 Upper as well as representatives of the clubs and societies also went on smoothly. The inaugural Meeting of the Students Council took place on 13th January 1953 with the President of the Council, Mr. J. B. Bunting, on the “woolsack”.

After the President’s address, Mr. P H. Davies, our History Master, was elected The Speaker.

The Business of the Council commenced on January 15th 1953 at the Council Chambers, the Lecture Theatre, with students on the gallery as spectators. Two motions came up for “First Reading”. The prayer in use in the British House of Commons was modified by the Secretary for the purpose and adopted by the Council.

There were other motions approved by the Council during its first school year ending June 1953. But one of the two motions tabled for discussion on 15th January 1953 prayed the Council to constitute/institute a “Commission of inquiry to investigate the working and activities of the Photographic and Craft Societies” apparently to disenfranchise them.

The other was the “white and khaki uniform” Bill.

During the Christmas Term 1952, the Principal had decreed that all students must wear white or khaki uniform in the school premises after school hours

The regulation was not popular among the boys.

A motion “that this Council takes it upon itself to appeal to the Principal to reconsider his Rule restricting boys to wearing only khaki or white uniforms.” A lively debate ensued. When the vote was put to the House, the cries of “**aye**” rang throughout the chamber. There was no “**nay**”. The Councilors warmly applauded when the President (Mr. Bunting) announced:

“I think the “ayes” have it”

The “Bill” was presented by the Secretary to Council to the Principal for the “Royal” assent. JRB, now as the Principal requested a joint committee of the Sanitation, Disciplinary and Social Services Committee to consider certain issues like the dress proposed for wearing in the evening or when watching school matches against other visiting teams. The joint Committee under the chairmanship of the Secretary to the Council presented an appropriate response. On January 22nd, the Principal gave the “Royal” assented. He wrote:

“Agreed.

**Secretary to draft for my approval a new
School Regulation coveringthe change”.⁶²**

Under the Constitution, there were seven Committees of the Council: Sanitation, Food, Games, Social Services, Disciple, Finance and Publications. They served as the executive organs of the Council. It was in the execution of the functions of the Disciplinary Committee under the Chairmanship of I. A. Akinrele that the Council was plunged into its first crisis.

On April 1st 1953, Kayode Jibowu, Chairman of the Social Services Committee, rang the big Assembly bell on the main stair case between the red brick and the science laboratories. All the boarders trooped out of their dormitories and assembled on the playing field, fearing an outbreak of fire accident. Jibowu beamed with mischievous laugh, and said it was “April fool.”

The incident was referred to the Disciplinary Committee for appropriate action. Jibowu was invited by the committee to appear before it, but he ignored the invitation. The Committee ‘decided to recommend to the Principal that Jibowu be removed from the office of the Head of the Social Services Committee”.

Three days later, the Speaker (Mr. P. H. Davies) reported to the Council that the Principal “had confirmed the recommendation of the Disciplinary Committee and asked the Council to recommend two members of the Committee for his approval of one of them as the new Head of the Committee. The Principal would appoint one of them.”

Then the Crisis:

Those Counsellors who had an axe to grind against the Disciplinary Committee attached the committee vehemently in their speeches on the floor of the Council. In a vote by the Council to elect a new chairman of the Social Services Committee, Jibowu scored 12 votes and the other contestant S. K. Nwangoro, scored 5 votes. The members of the Disciplinary Committee in protest resigned their membership of the Committee on the premise that the re-election of Jibowu as the Head of Social Services Committee was a vote of no confidence in the Disciplinary Committee. Akinrele resigned his seat on the Council also in protest.

65. For fuller details about the Student Council, see “The Student’s Council of King’s College, Lagos” by L. O. Okunnu published at pages 54 – 59 of Oversea Education Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, July 1956.

The Principal asked the Council Secretary to persuade the Prefect Body to send another prefect to the Council, and when that failed the Principal accepted one of the recommendations of the Secretary in a Memorandum to the President which was to summon another Constituent Assembly to review the constitution.

The major changes in the new Constitution were the omission of the Disciplinary Committee from the constitution and appointment of “**a Cabinet**” consisting of all Heads or Chairmen of the Committees one of whom would take the chair of the Cabinet in rotation. Relations with the Prefects Body were normalized by monthly meetings between the prefect body and the Cabinet.

The Sports Committee helped to organize the annual College Athletics inter House competitions. The new Information Committee assisted in the annual production of *The Mermaid*. The Social Services Committee organized film shows. The Health (Sanitation) Committee organised clean-up campaigns in the College premises.

The Finance Committee was in charge of a new design for the College blazer.

The Principal acted on the advice (by motion) of the Council to provide mosquito nets in the boarding house and refrigerator for experiments in the laboratories.

In 1955, following fresh elections to the Council, the Cabinet invited senior boys and girls from all the secondary schools in Lagos to attend a special session of the Council.

In the late 1950's in the wake of the strike action by students in 1944 and 1948, there was speculation that another strike action by students of Kings College would take place in 1952 in a four yearly sequence. That was not to be. The students were fully integrated in the administration of the College, and were engrossed in their studies and in sports to think of another strike action.

In academics, the College had a good result in the Cambridge School Certificate examination in 1949 – the class of Rex Akpofure, Alex Ekweme (later Vice President of Nigeria, 1979 - 1983), J. A. Adebayo, Frank Akinrele, K. A. Hart and others. The class of Richard Apkata, P. C. Asiodu, C. A. Tugbobo, A. A. Ayida, K. A. Sansi, (now an Oba), J. T. K. Duncan, Benjie Oni – Okpoku, G. Brown Peterside, N. O. Onuoha, J. A. Idowu did better. Out of 20 boys who presented themselves for the examination, 10 were in Grade I, four in Grade II and six in Grade III. That was not the only occasion King's attained a 100% record. In all its years of existence, King's had never fallen short of good academic performance.

SPORTS AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In its range of extracurricular activities, King's has always excelled. Indeed, it has been heads and shoulders above all other secondary institutions in Nigeria. Which other College or secondary school could boast of this range: Cadet Unit, Junior Red Cross Society, Boys Scout, King's College Society. The Literary Society, King's College Students Council., The Thinkers Group (founded by L. O. Okunnu), Photographic Society, Crafts Society, The Fishing Club, The Gardening Society and the Table Tennis Club. That was King's College before and after 1953. Wednesday afternoons were set aside for meetings of clubs and societies. The other weekdays, after the afternoon siesta were dedicated to games; it is sports which depicted clearly the versatility of JRB and his wife.

Mr. Bunting and his wife were the managers of the Jamaican men's and woman's teams at the 14th Olympic Games in London in 1948 at which the lanky Arthur Wint of Jamaica won a gold medal in 440 yards. Not surprisingly, JRB within days of his arrival in Nigeria was appointed a member of the Amateur Athletics Association of Nigeria. ⁶³ By 1950, he had been elected the Chairman of the AAA of Nigeria. His wife and Mrs. Irene Fatayi Williams in 1951 launched the Women's AAA of Nigeria, and were elected the chairman and the secretary respectively. Soon after, JRB organized a visit to Nigeria of Arthur Wint and McDonald Bailey of England (bronze in 100 yards at the London Olympics) to compete against selected Nigerian athletes and to hold clinic for Nigerians, again the first ever in the annals of sports in Nigeria.

Under his leadership, every member of the academic staff of King's College was either in charge of or assisted in organizing one sport or the other. It was compulsory for every student to attend and support the College team in any sporting competition, especially athletics, football, cricket and hockey against a visiting team.

King's College was dominant in hockey and cricket. In the 1953 season. For example, K. C. Hockey XI played 16 matches, won 13 and drew 3. ⁶⁴ And a year earlier in 1952, two of our boys (A. K. Amu and L. O. Okunnu) were selected to represent Nigeria in the first ever Inter Colonial (International) Hockey competition in the Gold Coast (Ghana) between Nigeria and the Gold Coast.

Cricket featured K. C. boys representing Nigeria against the Gold Coast or in later years the Triangular competition with Ghana and the Sierra Leone. The King's men internationals of the era were O. O. Coker, Rasheed Oyekan, and Rex Akpofure.

The star athletes of the period (1950's) who represented Nigeria in Inter colonial meetings against Ghana or at the British Empire Games in Cardiff, Wales included T.A. Falana, A.K. Amu, S.O. Akpata, S.A. Oladapo and A. O. Oyenuga.

A.K. Amu was the best of them all. He held the national record in 440 yards race and was Nigeria's best sprinter from the mid 1950s. He was the captain of the Nigerian Olympic team in Rome in 1960.

There were other achievements of J.R. Bunting before he left King's College in 1954.

During the Easter term of 1951, he organized an Inter House Arts competition among the four Houses in the College. The students competed as representatives of their respective houses in Elocution, Literature, Woodwork, Drawing and Singing.

The competition in elocution brought out the best student in the art of expressive speech. It taught the students how to express themselves with clarity of thought. Except for elocution, Panes' House emerged the overall winners in Literature which included not only essay writing but also original poetry (Sola Onojobi, the son of our English master, D. Ade O, and a Trinity College Dublin doctor), in Woodwork (Timi Morgan, a graduate in engineering who later set up a factory at Ibadan in woodwork), in Drawing (Kofi Duncan, emeritus Professor of Physiotherapy), and in singing (Dayo Akinrele, Food Scientist). It was a Festival of Arts which brought the best out of the students. It was education at its best.

66. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of AAA of Nigeria on October 2nd 1949.

67. Except for the Government College Ibadan xi who lost 1 – 0, all other hockey teams were men – marine xi Army.

In June 1952, a group of King's College students left Lagos by air, all for the first time, for Accra, the Gold Coast (Ghana) for international competition in athletics and football against the Prince of Wales College, Achimota. The group included Ben Enahoro, Ayida, Luke Ogbolu, Amu. Okunnu, Seriki Tandoh, Jibowu. It was another first in Nigeria and in the history of sports in Africa.

Achimota College occupies a very large area of land (like Government College, Ibadan). It is a mixed school, with boy and girls; the premier Government Secondary schools in the Gold Coast. It had over 600 students on the roll, all of them boarders grouped in six houses, each at some distance from the others,. One of the physical features was a swimming pool.

The games were held in a most friendly atmosphere, and friendship forged among the competitors. One of the Achimota boys was Quarterly whose father, Peter D. Quartey entered King's College in 1922. There were several students at King's College from West Africa in the early 1920's. These included Sylvanus Olympio who later became the President of Togo. Others from Ghana included Quashie, Cuthbert Bruce Asante, Togo and Nuro.⁶⁸

The Prince of Wales College boys visited King's College in 1954 for the second international sports competition against King's College. There were three sports for the competition: football, athletics and cricket.

Like the inaugural competition, the spirit of sportsmanship was very high. The two competitions set a standard in friendship and sportsmanship which still endures. Although these meetings in later years were not as regular as originally envisage, it is noteworthy that King's College visited Achimota in 2008. The Prince of Wales College were guests of King's College in July 2009 as part of the centenary anniversary celebration of King's College.

THE CADET UNIT

J R. Bunting, with the co-operation of the Army, founded the Cadet Unit under Mr. P. H. Davies, a captain in the British Army during the Second World War He was assisted by Mr. J. N Kellen (Pa. K). Wole Rotimi, Brigadier General and Governor of the Western State (1970 – 75) was a foundation member of the Unit. Other members of the Cadet unit who later enrolled in the Nigeria Army included S. O. Uwakwe (captain) and D.O. Ajayi (Brigadier General).

King's College, Lagos was the first secondary school in Nigeria to have a Cadet Unit. There has been no one like it ever since in any other school.

THE COLLEGE CREST

An attempt to make wearing of the College badge on the blazer or jacket compulsory was abandoned in 1947 because of the poor production. One of the first acts of Mr. Bunting as Principal was to commission the College of Heralds in London, the official makers of armorial bearings and insignias under a royal charter, to design and produce the College Crest on the pattern of the old crest. The product of the College of Heralds has remained the official crest for the College badges ever since.

68. King's College, 1920-24 by Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, at pp 11-15 in **75 Years of King's College**.

THE FEDERAL SCHOOL OF SCIENCE.

The history of King's College under the principalship of Mr. Bunting will not be complete without reference to the part he played in the establishment of the Federal School of Science. It all began with the visit to Mr. Bunting by Mr. Francis Nwokedi, the Nigerianisation Officer charged with the duty to speed up the training and promotion of suitable Nigerians to take over the functions of the expatriate staff in the Federal Public Service. The request of the Nigerianisation Officer was that Mr. Bunting should "device urgently some means whereby an annual intake of science students could be given a two year course to enable them to qualify for admission to higher institutions of learning"⁶⁹

Mr. Bunting assisted the Federal Government in the recruitment of staff, purchase of equipment and material for the teaching of science, and securing the premises vacated by King's College at Onikan. The end result was the establishment of the Federal School of Science. That should go down as yet another contribution of Kings College to the post secondary science education in Nigeria.

A teacher of high repute and intellect, a superb administrator, an innovator, a visionary, a democrat, a man of many parts, a decent human being who gave so much and received so little. That was John Reginald Bunting who died in September 2001.

HARMAN V. BUNTING

Major H. A. A. F. Harman was a pioneer who gave the College its school song, its badge and The Mermaid. So was Mr. J. R. Bunting who set up a secondary school Students' Council, the first in Nigeria (and Africa), and introduced into Nigeria's secondary school curriculum the teaching of "civics".

In physical development, Harman built the laboratories and the Boarding House on the west side of the 1909 red brick building. And Bunting built the new Boarding House and class rooms, the College Hall and the staff quarters on the east side of the main (red brick building).

Harman was passionate about character building through sports and other innovations, So was Bunting by the introduction of "civics" and the Students' Council.

Harman initiated the ideal of "Dispensers -in- training for a course in "elementary science" in the Evening Classes at King's College, and which later led to the establishment of Yaba Higher College for the training of our early medical doctors. Bunting was the author of the Federal School of Science.

The recruitment of staff, the care of staff, and their well being were uppermost in the minds and by the action of both Major Harman and JRB.

Harman introduced Forms IV, V and VI into the College to enable not only King's College boys to further their education but also to turn rustic boys from Methodist Boys High, C.M.S. Grammar School, St. Gregory Grammar School and the lot into "gentle men". J.R. Bunting introduced the two year Cambridge Higher School Certificate course into the educational system of Nigeria.

69. I Remember; Reminiscences by J.B. Bunting

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And on, and on with the achievements of these two great men.

Like Major Harman before him, Mr. Bunting bestrode King's College like a Colossus. He did in five years more than what was achieved in the previous twenty years. Between J. R. Bunting and Major Harman, it is too close to call.

Each in his own time and within his own space made the greatest contribution to the moral development and education of King's College students, and also to the physical and material achievement of our alma mater that have put King's College on the pinnacle of our national educational system.

They stand side by side on the pantheon of King's College.

THE OLD BOYS – JUST A FEW OUT OF SO MANY

As stated somewhere in this narrative, King's College in its first 50 years scored several firsts (and in some cases, second and third) in the public services of Nigeria: the first and second Nigerian Medical Officers of Health in Lagos City: Dr. Oluwole (1909), and Prof. A. O. Ajose; (1924); the first Nigerian Chief Justices of Nigeria and of the Eastern Region; and the first two Chief Justices of the Mid-West Region; the first, second and third Nigerians to be Chief Federal Medical Advisers; the first Nigerian Governor of the Eastern Region of Nigeria (now the South – Eastern States) Dr. Francis Akanu Ibiam (1921); the first Nigerian Judge of the International Court of Justice, Hague (Judge Charles Daddy Onyeama, (1931), the first Nigerian senior police officer – Assistant Superintendent of Police (Mr. A.S.E. Agbabiaka, (1920); the first Nigerian Lagos City Engineer, Mr. Ekundayo Ajayi (1927), the first Mayor of Lagos (Dr. A. B Olorun Nimbe, (1972) and several other firsts.

In the Government of General Yakubu Gowon between May 1967 and December 1974, four out of twelve Federal Commissioners (Ministers) and members of the Federal Executive Council were King's College Old Boys: Dr. R. A B. Dikko, (1928), Mr. Wenike Briggs (1936), Chief Tony Enahoro (1937) and L. O. Okunnu (1948).

Among the immortals besides the foundation students were :

Ernest Sesi Ikoli (father of Nigerian Journalism) 1910, Adebayo Omololu (1910), Hamzat Subair (1915), Oba Akenzua (the Oba of Benin(1915), J. O. Lucas (1916), Yekini Ojikutu (1919), A. W. Howells (Bishop)1920, Oba J.I. Owoaje, (1925) A. R. Agoro (1921), H. O. Davies (1921), A. R. Shitta (1922), Oba C. D. Akran (of Badagry)(1923), A. A. B Oyediran, (1924), Dr. J. A. Onwu (1924), Rev. Monsignor Pedro Martin) (1926), Oba Adeyinka Oyeka (of Lagos)(1927), A. k. Disu (1927), R. B Dikko (the first student from the Northern Protectorate), J. K. Randle (1926), T. O. Ejiwunmi (1928), Oba J. F. Ososami (1928), G. O. Okunzua (1929), S. O. Adebo (1929), M. E. R. Okorodudu (1928), Micheal Otolorin, (1929), Prof. Ogan (1935), Joseph Ebosie, (1930), F. A. O. Philips, (1930), O. A. Wilkie (1930), Lawrence Anionwu (1933) Roland Okagbue,(1933) I. I. Oluwa(1933), Remi Fani-kayode, (1933), Dr. Irene Thomas (first female old boy), Bassey J. Ikpeme, (1932), Ishawu S. Adewale, (1933), George Garrick,1933, E. A. Olu Akpata,(1933), Albert Osakwe, (1934), Abdul Majid Agbaje, (1935), Fred S. McEwen, (1935), Mason Begho, (1936) Adeniran Ogunsanya, (1936). Anthony Enahoro,(1937), Ephraim Akpata, (1943), Onwumechili,(1943), Gogo Nzeribi Ekuruche, (1945), Alex Ekweme, (1945), Rex. Akpofure, (1945), P. C. Asiodu, (1946), A.A. Ayida, (1947), L. O. Okunnu, (1948), A. K. Amu, (1948), V. I. Maduka,(1949), O. Rotimi, (1950), L. O. Adegbite, (1950), Oyinade Adenubi (Prof. Mrs. O. Elebute)(1951) Floreta Eyo, (1951)George Kalu Ndika Kalu (1954), O. Oshunkeye (1954), G. O Williams (Ogundugba)(1954), Ayinde Lawal Balogun (HSC) (1954), S. O. Adeniji Adele (1955), M. O. Fasanu (1955), J. O. Oyekan (1955), O. Abisogun (Miss) (HSC), (1956), G. A. Sotinwa, (1955).

and several others who passed through the portals of King's College between 1909 and from 1959. ⁷⁰

These and all other students were nurtured in the College classrooms in their early youth, where, in the words of the SCHOOL SONG, "we learnt to cherish chivalry and truth. We learnt to pull together each one with rest, playing up and striving each to do his best"

Old Boys of Kings College, though from different parts of Nigeria and beyond the Atlantic Ocean "are brothers with a common debt", bonded together, rendering "service" to the living and giving honour to the dead".

The students of old beckon to the present boys to look closely and seek the reason "why" if they fail. They exhort the boys to "conquer all before" them to attain "the light" where" the old boys "wait to cheer them".

The honor of King's College has stood unfurnished since 1909, "bright as when we took it from our Founder's hands.

Kingsmen have rendered immeasurable service to Nigeria, Africa and the World. That tradition will endure for all time.

70. For the full list of old boys and girls (HSC class) who entered King's College from 1909 to 1978, see **75 years of King's College**.

THE STAFF : LEST WE FORGET.

Several members of staff, beginning with Mr. Lomax, Mr. Hyde Johnson, Mr. de Gaye and Mr. D.L. Kerr in 1909, have over the years moulded the character, the lives of the boys and girls of this great institution. Many have remained unsung in these pages because of space. Two of them however stand out among the rest. They were embodiment of our traditions in life, and icons and legends in death. They were both old boys of Kings College. But let us remember also one teacher who was an old boy of Government College, Umuahia.

JERRY ENYEAZU

Mr. Jerry O. Enyeazu held sway in the biology laboratory for Forms I to V until a young English graduate, Mr. J. M. Macroft, arrived to teach zoology and botany to Lower and Upper Sixth forms as well as some classes immediately below the 6th Form. History has it that when Mr. Enyeazu for the first time met the School Captain, immaculately dressed soon after his appointment on the staff of King's College, the young teacher fresh from Umuahia addressed the School Captain: "Sir".

There was an occasion when he was training members of the Boxing Club, and Mr. Perkins (the Principal) came in to rebuke him for some reason or the other. When he returned to his training, Mr. Enyeanzu said of Mr. Perkins loud enough for the boys to hear :

" He can't sit on my head and balance there.

I'm senior to him in the school!

It was Benjamin Oni Okpaku, a brilliant College goal-keeper in football and the wicket keeper in cricket, who once described Mr. Enyeanzu's bicycle as "the Master's Limousine". The master retorted:

Have you not experienced poverty at home?

Mr. Enyeanzu coughed in style. He would emit "pia pia". He taught not only biology but "mathematics" before the return of Mr. F. I. Ajumogobia. (He was Mr. M. F. Bestman at the time) to King's College, and the arrival of Mr. Ibi Mbotu. They both taught Mathematics and Physics.

Whenever "Pia Pia" was lost in memory in his geometry class, he would say aloud:

"It is equal to two right angles.

It is automatically equal to two right angles.

It is undoubtedly equal to two right angles.

It is equal to two right angles

Mr. Enyeanzu would say to any student who gigged or caused some disturbance in his class, and who, he believed deserved some punishment :

**“Stand up !
“Congested”
“Annihilated,
“Frivolous,
“God forsaken.
“Get out, and turn right.
“Mount the stairs,
“Turn right, and right again.
“And then left,
“Go to the office,
“Ask the clerk
to give you
the papyrus pieces,
in which
names of delinquents
like yourself are written”.**

Pia Pia would cough out “pia pia”, and repeat his chorus.

“Congested” 71

The offending student would go to the college clerk’s office and returned with the “papyrus piece”, the Detention book, for his name to be entered for detention the following Saturday.

Mr. Enyeanzu took over from Mr. Ojo on his retirement from service as the new Sports Master. He also acquired the strategy employed by Mr. Ojo to wrench supremacy in College athletics from Hyde Johnson’s to Harman’s House of which Mr. Enyeanzu was the House Master. Like Mr. Ojo before him, Mr. Enyeanzu would carefully select the best boys in athletics, in football when the prospective students reported for interview for final selection for admission to King’s College, and put such budding sportsmen into Harman’s House. For years thereafter, Harman’s House led the other Houses in sport.

“PER LITRE !”

Before we go onto the two legendary figures, both as old boys but more as teachers, let us visit one of our respected masters who joined the staff in 1949 – 1950, Mr. Thomas was a Welshman who spoke English with heavily pronounced Welsh accent, We called him “Per Litre” as a man from the Welsh coal mines or the hills would pronounce those words: “Per Litre”.

71. The unpublished Autobiography of L. O. Okunnu

Mr. Thomas, genial by nature and middle aged, once asked the 1948 – 52 – 54 class in the chemistry laboratory to give him an example of “compound salt”, Olujide, the butt of teasing in the class, furiously put his hand up.

“Yemson salt” he yelled.

“Yes,” retorted Mr. Thomas

“Epson salt. That’s what you need, to purge you”!

D.ADE.O

Mr. D. Ade Onojobi, a disciplined and highly principled man, immaculately dressed in or out of the classroom, always with a pocket handkerchief in his jacket was admitted into King’s College late in 1909. He was on the staff of King’s College for about 28 years, from 1919 until his retirement in 1947. He was recalled briefly in 1949 to teach “English language” to the junior boys.

The story was told of the great man during his first coming admonishing a rather difficult student who provoked the anger of D. Ade O. The Master exclaimed.

**“I taught your father,
“I taught your uncle!**

The offending student looked down, muttering to himself but loud enough for the master to hear him.

“And you will teach my son!”

The Master looked up, tight lipped for a while, and simply said:

Boys will be boys !

Mr. Onojobi taught his students, class after class till year 1949/50 when he went back on retirement, the meaning of the word *resourceful* by the following illustration:

**“A highly literate man was once asked to render to
a congregation at a burial ground the meaning of
the words written on a tomb stone in Latin :**

“SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI”

The man said without batting an eye lid:

**“The man buried here was sick
transiently and buried on
Monday morning !”**

Mr. Onojobi taught his students a little of Old England and Old English.

Sample: "I needs must go to Jerusalem. I must needs go to Jerusalem," meaning "I must go, I have to go to Jerusalem."

The Master taught his students in 1949/50 **Gray's Elegy**, and more. D. Ade O. was greatly missed by all the students when he finally retired from public service.

An Old Boy wrote of D. Ade. O in *The Mermaid*⁷² on his retirement:

"After over thirty three years of faithful service to his Country, Mr. D.A. Onojobi has proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement.

There can be no doubt that his industry was great and his erudition profound. The Acting Director of Education speaks thus about him, "You have served under various principals all of whom regarded you as a loyal and devoted colleague. The many boys who have been under your care and instruction will remember you with respect and affection." The Principal refers to him as "a very successful English and History Master." Typical of the sentiments of old boys is his "leaving King's College for good, no longer to grace the prestige of that ancient seat of learning.

There is one aspect of "his long and faithful service to the cause of education" in Nigeria which I wish to underline, namely his benevolent exertions outside the classroom on behalf of the welfare of his pupils especially his well known Thursday morning fatherly talk to his boys. The number of old boys who owe their upright character and position in life to his fatherly advice and example is difficult to overestimate.

And now ends a long and successful career. Mr. Onojobi retires with the assurance of the great regard and sincere appreciation of his past students and of all who worked with him."

I MEAN TO SHAY

The other Old Boy *icon* who was admitted to King's College in 1910 and taught at King's for over 30 years was Mr. J.A. Ojo.

In 1937, Mr. Ojo's annual salary was £300 and retained that salary in 1940. Mr. Onoboji's was £252 in 1940. It compared with Mr. Percy Savages' at £190 in 1937 and £220 in 1940. Such was the range of salaries paid to African teachers at the time.

In 1948, the General Science class of Form 1 students would begin with the Master's call to **Jombo Akoma**, the Laboratory Assistant, to "supply spring balance". That done, that was the end of the general science lesson for the day.

72. *The Mermaid*. No xxiii November 1947 at p. 49.

The rest of the time would be taken up with “post mortem” of the previous day’s football match between two Form 1 students’ teams. Jumbo’s annual salary in 1937 (and one of the highest among the junior staff) was £18, rising to £22. 10/- which included an allowance of £1.6/-

Towards the end of the first term as in the second, the students had to present a drawing of spring balance or such other laboratory equipment in their science notebooks to earn marks for the term. Mr. Ojo would award, irrespective of the quality of one’s drawing, his regular marks of 8 or 9 out of 10 to his favorite students; 6 or 7 to those he was indifferent to. Those boys to whom the master showed no favor usually earned 3 to 4 out of ten for their effort. A. K. Amu belonged to the last group.

Mr. Ojo would carefully choose the best footballers or athletes for Hyde Johnson’s House after admission of boys into Form 1. But Amu was a late developer in athletics. In Form 1, he hardly featured in the sports field. In 1949, he began to show some athletic prowess. But he was in McKee Wrights House, not Hyde Johnson’s. Amu later held the Nigerian record in 440 yards race for many years.

Amu decided to add “Ohimai”, his Ora (Benin) name, to his name on the front cover of his science note book. He wrote “Ohimai” in very bold letters, and “A . K Amu” in small letters. Mr. Ojo a few years earlier had an accident in the laboratory which resulted into loss of an eye. When the master saw “Ohimai” on the cover of Amu’s science book, he awarded him 7 out of 10 marks.

When Mr. Ojo called out the names of the boys in alphabetical order to record their respective marks, and he called out “Amu”, the following conversation ensued:

Mr. Ojo : **Amu?**
Amu : **7 Sir**
Mr. Ojo : **Amu?**
Amu : **7 Sir**
Mr. Ojo : **Amu**
Amu : **7 Sir**
Mr. Ojo : **I mean to shay, you shee, bring your science book.**

Amu took his book to the Master. Mr. Ojo looked at the name on the front cover of Amu’s book. he saw “Ohimai”. He looked at the last entry in Amu’s book where he recorded 7 marks. The Master then looked at his own record book and saw “7” for Amu in his own handwriting. The Master looked again at Amu’s science book and saw “Ohimai” boldly written, with “A. K. Amu” in small letters on the cover of his book. Amu was breathing heavily down the Master’s shoulder.

Mr. Ojo:

“I mean to shay, you shee. When did you change your name to
“Ohimai”?”

For looking into the Master’s record book, minus 4.⁷³

Mr. Ojo, an Ibadan man to the core with ethnic marks on his face, always prefaced his statements thus:

“I mean to shay, you shee
I mean to, to, to, you shee”

A non-graduate teacher of Chemistry, very few of his students scored any mark less than “credit” at the Cambridge Oversea School Certificate examination. Mr. Ojo was the College coach in, and master – in – charge of athletics, football, cricket and hockey. King’s College was dominant in sports in the 1940’s and 1950’s among secondary schools in Lagos, especially in athletics, cricket and hockey. The annual King’s College encounters with Government College Ibadan boys in cricket always brought out the best in King’s College boys who won most of the matches. Mr. Ojo was also a great footballer in his College days.

Mr. D. Ade Onojobi and Mr. J.A. Ojo are part of the Fabric of King’s College.

And so are Sir Walter Egerton and Dr. Henry Carr, living legends in the fabric of King’s College all woven together. They also served, these two pioneers in the history of secondary school education in Nigeria.

Henry Carr displayed complete dedication to duty to the work at hand; so did Walter Egerton who gave him the opportunity to blossom and flourish in the turns and twists, the web of argument between Lagos and London whether King’s College would be in their long battle with the Colonial Office. They refused to take “no” for an answer. They persevered, they fought the London Board Education, Lord Elgin and the Colonial Office to a “stand still” until the latter bent to their will. But for their vision, their grit and tenacity, King’s College would not have been.

Admission as a student to King’s College was for one major purpose: *Spero Lucem*.

The past students acquired the light together and with honour carried it round, illuminating Nigeria and the world, and handed it over untarnished to the Present. And the Present shall hold it aloft, “bright as when they took it” from the Past, and hand it over to the Future. Thus; the third stanza of the College song :

***Present, Past and future form one mighty whole,
Shining forth emblazoned on the muster roll,
When the call is sounded, all must answer “Here”
Voice and bearing showing neither shame nor fear,
Pointing to our honour which untarnished stands
Bright as when we took it from our Founder’s hands.***

73. See, “In The Service of the Nation by Femi Okunnu at pages 25 – 69 especially pages 28 – 31.

