

3

Colonel Brady and “The New School”, 1925–1930

*‘All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy;
for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves’*

Anatole France.

‘First he wrought, afterwards he taught’

Chaucer.

MILTON’S numbers had grown rapidly in the years after 1910, doubling to 160 by the end of 1912, and, as early as 1918, it was becoming apparent that the senior school would have to move to a new home as the Borrow Street site would not be large enough to contain the necessary buildings¹. By 1921 the Miltonian was reporting that “the school has been growing almost incredibly fast during the last three or four years and at present the number on the registers is 390, of whom over 160 are boarders compared with some 50 odd in 1916! There is not an inch of space in the boarding house or the four cottages which have been taken over by the school”. A year later numbers were up again: “during the past year the number of boys attending the school has increased by leaps and bounds, and we now number well over 400. There are 252 day boys and 192 boarders”, but there was also news of exciting developments — “Arrangements have been made for a new hostel and a new school for the senior portion of the present school. These will be built near the race-course, and, it is hoped, will be ready by February 1923”.

February 1923, however, came and went with never a sign of the new school; by this time the school was bursting at the seams and the two most junior classes had to find temporary accommodation in the new Jewish Guild Hall; although it was at some remove from the school, there were compensations — “the privilege of shepherding the boarders ‘Croc.’

through the traffic to the temporary school each day, and at times, a heartfelt relief at being a certain distance from the Head's office".

During 1923 Milton at last acquired a school hall, thanks to the generosity of the Beit Trustees, and on 28 November it was opened by the new Governor, Sir John Chancellor. In the course of the speeches, Howard Moffat, the Minister of Mines and Public Works (and subsequently Prime Minister), replied to comments made by Allen Welsh, Chairman of the School Advisory Council, reviving the suggestions for a new school:

"When I look round and see this beautiful hall and see the mass of young humanity in the balcony up there, my feelings are worked upon, and I can say this, that as a result of my being here tonight there is some hope the Government may do something — (applause) — something on the lines suggested by Mr. Welsh. I think that is very cautious and I have not committed the Government (laughter) . . . I am a Bulawayo man, my sympathies are in Bulawayo, my heart is in Bulawayo, even though I live in Salisbury. (Applause). That also applies to the Premier. (Further applause.) Bulawayo boys and girls and parents have some very staunch friends in the Ministry."

Mr. de Beer and the School Advisory Board then proceeded to "harry" the Government and, by the middle of 1925², it had agreed to allocate £45,000 for a school to comprise "a large block of thirteen classrooms with science laboratory, school of geography, workshops and school library, also two hostels, each to accommodate sixty boarders, and a central dining hall to seat 250 . . . to be built on a site overlooking the town and adjoining the race-course". The site at the top of Selborne Avenue occupied some forty-two acres and on completion, the whole senior school was to transfer, leaving the existing hostels and class-rooms as the junior school.

The Government's estimate proved to be rather optimistic and the contract was finally awarded to McDonald and MacFarlane whose successful tender was £54,853. Work began on 1 March 1926 and it was hoped that the buildings would be ready for occupation at the beginning of 1927³. The site was cleared in the ensuing months and by late May, the architect, G.E. FitzGerald, had finalised his plans and actual building had begun. The laying of the foundation stone had been deliberately delayed so that the ceremony could be performed by the Earl of Athlone⁴, the High Commissioner for South Africa, who was at that time

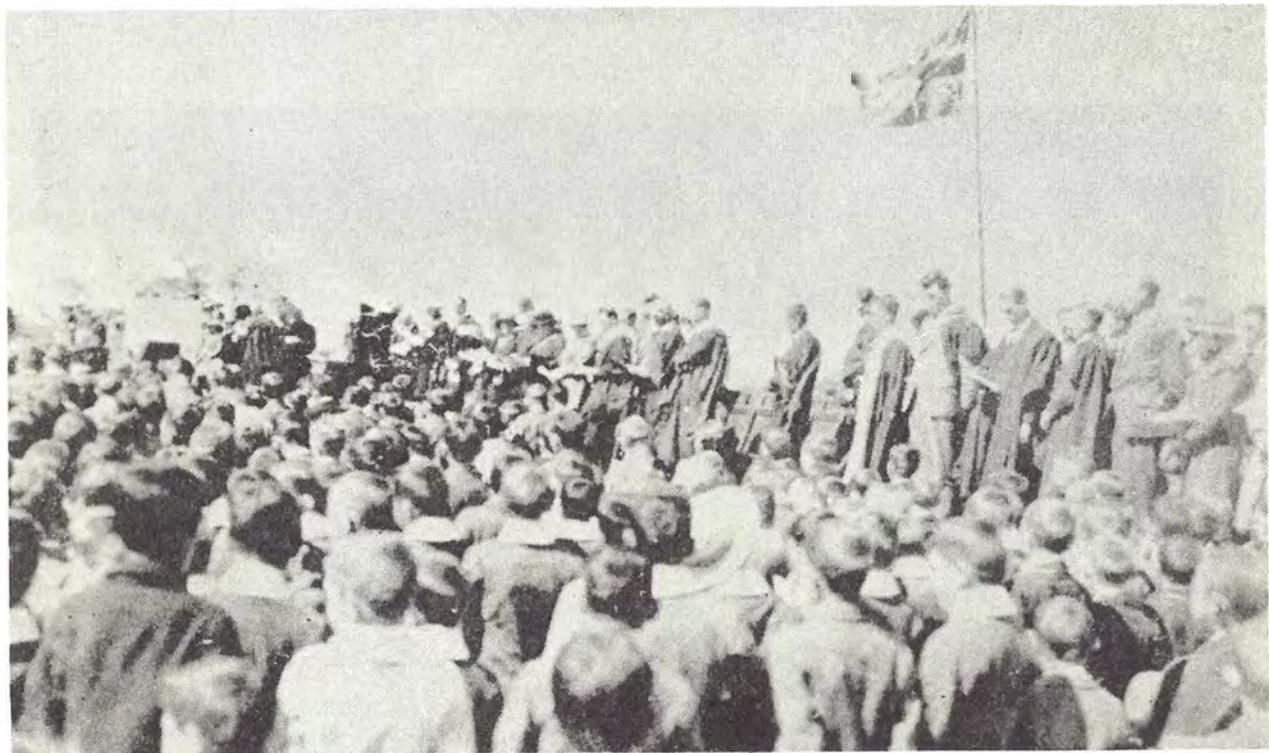
visiting Southern Rhodesia with his wife, Princess Alice, for the first time in thirty years, as Allan Welsh pointed out in his welcome:

“Some thirty years have passed since Your Excellency was last in Bulawayo, and then, Sir, you engaged in assisting the settlers to win this land for our Empire; today, Sir, we ask you to lay the foundation stone of the leading boys’ school in this Colony. At the time of Your Excellency’s last visit to Rhodesia, there was only one small private school in Bulawayo which, I understand, had on its roll some 30 pupils⁵; today there are over 2000 children attending schools in Bulawayo and its immediate vicinity. The Milton when opened had an attendance of about eighty pupils with six teachers⁶ and six classrooms; today there are over 500 pupils with twenty-one teachers and fourteen class-rooms. . .”

Using a silver trowel⁷ that was handed to him on behalf of the architect and builders, the Earl performed the ceremony of laying the foundation stone, which, under the school motto, bears this inscription:

“This stone was laid by His Excellency the Earl of Athlone, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., High Commissioner⁸ for South Africa, 5th August, 1926. Builders, McDonald and MacFarlane, Architect, G.E. FitzGerald, A.R.I.B.A.”

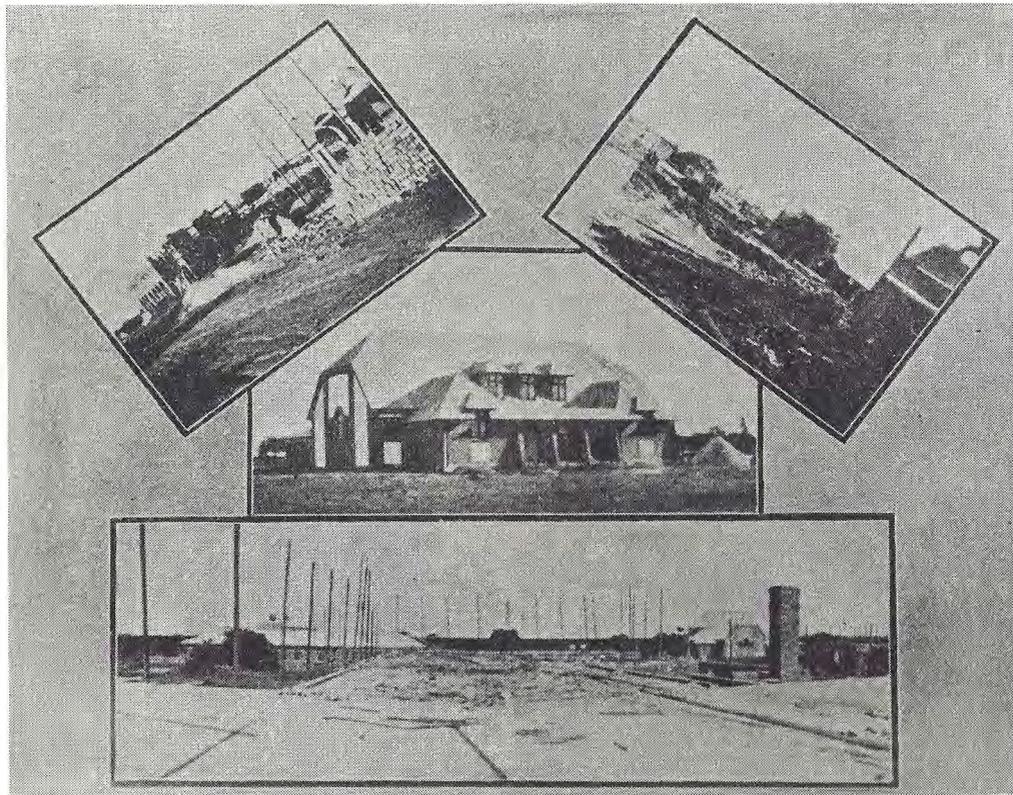
The builders’ estimate of time proved even more optimistic than the Government’s of cost; hampered by a severe rainy season and various other difficulties, work progressed very slowly; the Miltonian of October 1926 optimistically reported that “at the New School, building operations have been in full swing for some six months: there is now a possibility that the main block of classrooms and science laboratories, and the dining hall may be ready for use at the end of January next — it is anticipated that both boarding houses will be completed by June. The playing fields, thirty acres in extent, have been cleared and levelled — and should be fit for use immediately after the rains. The experiment of putting the rugby field under grass is being tried, and if successful will be extended to all the playing fields”⁹. However, it was not to be, and it was only in September 1927 that the buildings were ready for use. One additional reason for the delay was that a major change to the original scheme had been made: Colonel Brady, the new Headmaster, had felt the lack of a hall to be a serious drawback¹⁰ and during a visit to England had approached Sir Henry Birchenough and Sir Otto Beit with the result that the Beit Trustees agreed to give £6000 for a school hall. The architect accordingly adapted his plans, dividing the open rectangle of the



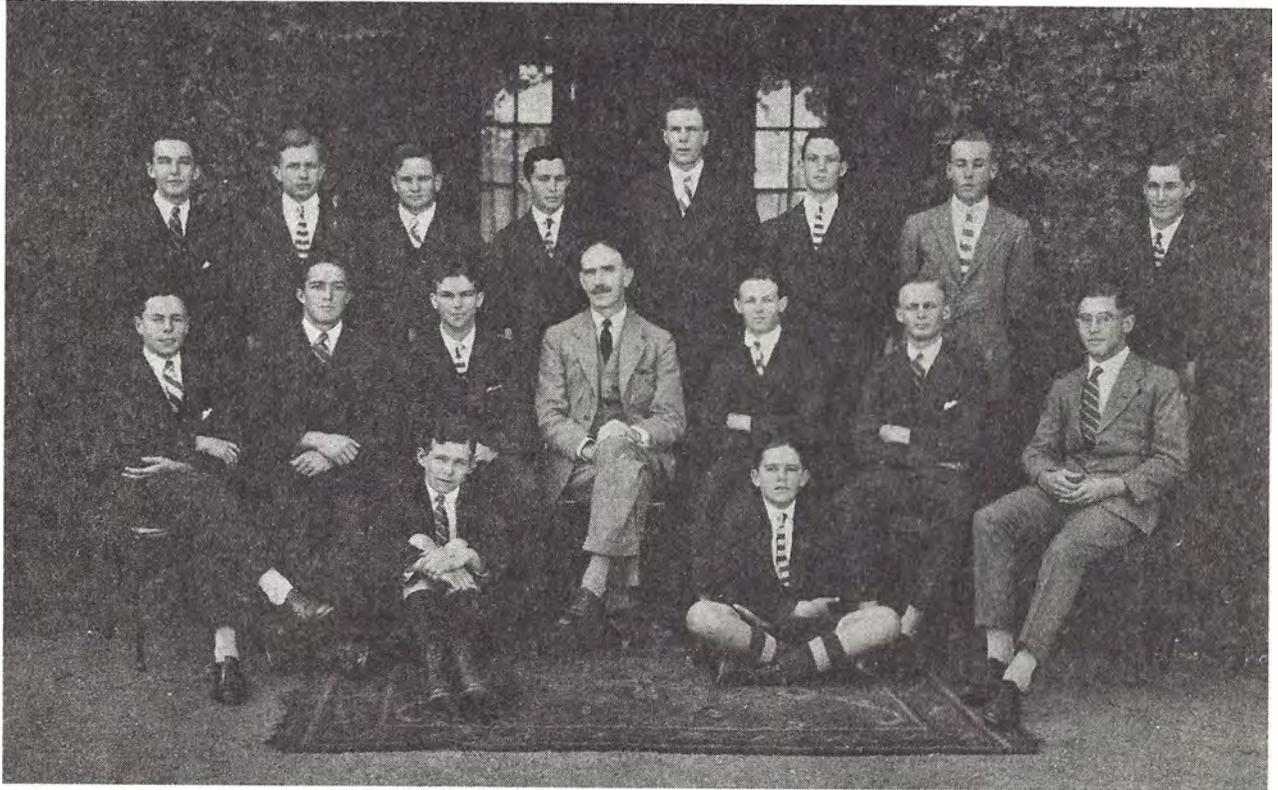
The Laying of the Foundation Stone, 5 August 1926.



The Laying of the Foundation Stone, 5 August 1926.



Building a School, 1927.



Milton School Prefects, 1926.

classroom block into an E with the Beit Memorial Hall as the central arm; the building of the hall began some six months after work had actually started. It was agreed that portraits of both Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit should hang in the hall¹¹ "as a constant reminder of Rhodesia's great benefactors" and that the War Memorial should be transferred from the Beit Hall of the old school to the south end of the Beit Hall of the new. The lower walls were to be panelled in Burma teak and were specifically intended to serve as honours boards, which they do to this day¹².

The actual move to the new school finally took place during the September holidays of 1927 even though some of the buildings were still incomplete for, as an anonymous contributor to the *Miltonian* put it, "it was realised that hope deferred maketh the heart sick". For those who had not had the opportunity of inspecting the buildings, the magazine went on to give a brief description:

"The school is now situated at the top of Selborne Avenue and occupies the space, some forty-two acres, between the Suburbs and the Racecourse. The classroom block is laid out on similar lines to that at the old school. Above the main entrance, however, is the Library, a very fine room, which is also to be utilised as a reading-room¹³. Facing the main entrance is the new Beit Hall, which is still in the hands of the contractors. Its walls are to be panelled in teak, while the roof is to be of the same type as the dining-hall, the great beams of which gave it a distinctly Jacobean appearance¹⁴. The Beit Hall, when finished, will be an exceptionally fine building.

"From the foregoing it may be gathered that the classroom block would appear E-shaped from the air. Directly behind the classroom block is the Dining-hall. Its exterior is not the subject of absolutely unanimous approval, but the interior is undoubtedly extraordinarily impressive, and has excited very favourable comments from visitors, one of whom remarked that it only needed an open log-fire to make it completely Jacobean. Its seating capacity is far in excess of the requirements of the boarders. . .

"On the town side of these buildings are the two houses, Charter House in front and Pioneer behind. These buildings accommodate 65 boys apiece and are very cool and airy.

"Immediately in front of Charter House is situated what is commonly regarded as an eyesore, the woodwork shop, with

cycle-sheds attached. It seems a pity that such a small, squat and ugly building should have been dumped down in such a position as to spoil the appearance of the whole front of the School. Still, what can't be cured must be endured¹⁵ and we are lucky that it is the only thing of which we can complain. Provision has been made in the plans for two further houses and a headmaster's house, but we do not expect to see these materialise for some time yet¹⁶."

It was only on Friday 1 June 1928 that The Milton School (as it was officially named¹⁷) was formally opened by Sir John Chancellor. As Colonel Brady reminded those present, the school had no better friend than Sir John who had never failed to visit Milton when he was in Bulawayo, and Sir John himself remarked:

"I first came here when the foundations were being dug. I have seen your school grow brick by brick and I have never missed a chance of watching (Milton's) progress."

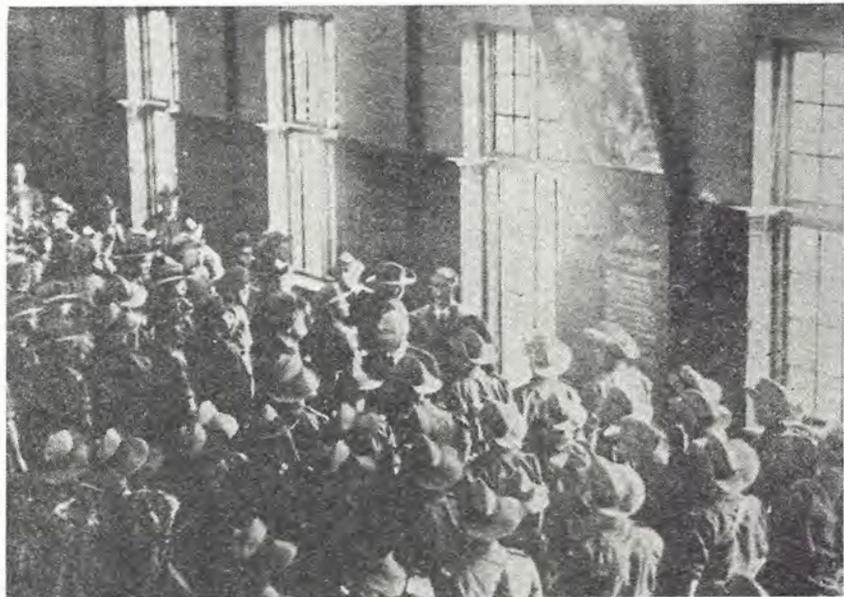
He then unveiled the portrait of Alfred Beit and declared the school officially opened. By a curious coincidence the first building Sir John had officially opened as Governor of the colony was the Beit Hall of the original Milton and now the last was the new Milton; the following afternoon he left Bulawayo Station for England, en route to becoming High Commissioner for Palestine after five years in Southern Rhodesia. Milton was present in force to see him off and Colonel Brady presented him with a "large album of school photographs which included many of the incidents in which His Excellency and Lady Chancellor had taken part at the opening ceremony".

The school of 1927 had just over 300 boys and a staff of seventeen; all of those original buildings still exist although they represent only a modest part of the present Milton; the school that Sir John opened in 1928 comprised the two boarding houses, dining hall, Beit Hall and the present labs. 1 and 2, rooms 1 to 11 and ex-music room. The Headmaster's and School Offices at the front of the building now have other occupants, but the Headmaster's Office in particular is little changed in appearance and still retains its open fireplace.

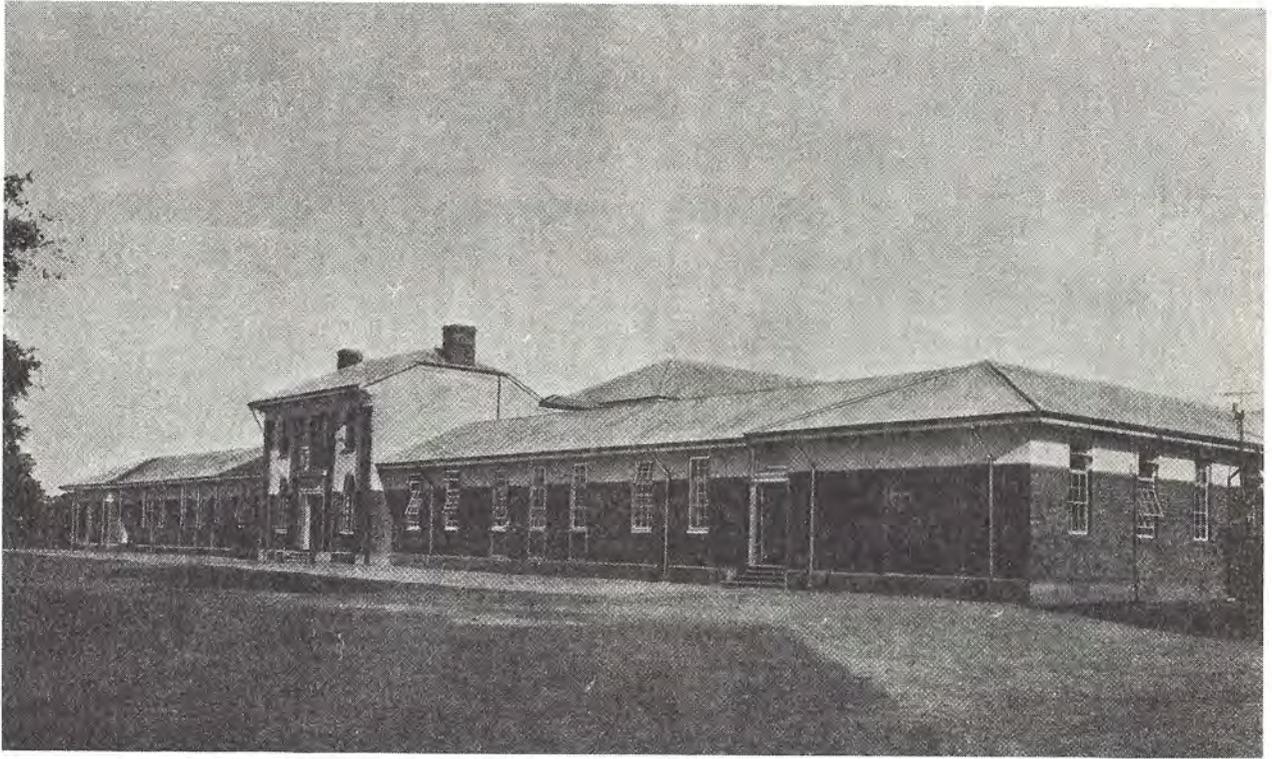
Although it is possible to imagine Milton without its subsequent additions, it requires a considerable imaginative effort to picture its surroundings: in 1927 the school was on the eastern boundary of Bulawayo and there was very little else that far out of town; someone wrote at the time that "beyond Milton is miles and miles of - -!" and the Secretary of Education was rumoured to know of the school merely by



Sir John Chancellor inspects the Cadets before the official opening of the School, 1 June 1928.



Sir John Chancellor unveils the portrait of Alfred Beit, 1 June 1928.



The Main School Block, 1929. All the photographs of the School in 1929 come from the prospectus issued in that year, a copy of which was sent to Sir William Milton.

hearsay! There were virtually no trees on the site but small game could be found (and were on occasion shot) in the bush south of Pioneer¹⁸, where the Sixth Form Centre, tennis courts and Hambly Field are today. Drainage was non-existent and in the rains there were times when the water on the undeveloped quad was knee-deep. A canoe was kept to ferry hungry boarders from the hostel to the dining hall and on at least one occasion a sturdy senior was pressed into service as a suitable mount for the legendary "Putt" Jackson.

Having seen the school firmly established on its new site, Colonel Brady retired on 3 July, 1930; it was by no means the end of a career for one of the more remarkable of the many remarkable men associated with Milton. Colonel Brady had first come to Africa as a soldier after taking his degree at Trinity College, Dublin and had served throughout the Boer War, receiving the Queen's Medal with four clasps. He remained in South Africa becoming Headmaster of Grey College, Bloemfontein at the age of twenty-seven. Two years later he was appointed Inspector of Schools in the Orange Free State and served in that capacity until June 1909 when, with other inspectors, he was dismissed by General Hertzog to make way for Afrikaners. He was at once appointed Inspector of Schools in Rhodesia and, in that capacity, was closely associated with Milton from the very beginning. Throughout these years he was a keen sportsman: he played cricket for both his University and for the Gentlemen of Ireland and in South Africa was runner-up at championship meetings in both the quarter- and half-mile events.

On the advent of war, he was one of the first Rhodesians to join the forces and took a Rhodesian platoon to France in December 1914 as part of the Third Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles. By the end of the war he was in command of the Fourth Battalion of the K.R.R., had taken part in the First Battle of Ypres and many other battles, been wounded twice, mentioned in dispatches four times and received both the D.S.O. and the Croix de Guerre¹⁹. He served with the Army of the Rhine in 1919 and returned to Rhodesia in 1920 as Senior Inspector of Schools, succeeding Mr. de Beer in January 1925.

After Milton, he entered Parliament as member for Bulawayo North in 1933 but, although he was 64, the outbreak of World War II saw him back in the army as liaison officer with the Rhodesian forces, initially in West Africa, subsequently in Egypt. In the middle of 1942 ill-health meant that he was invalided out of the army²⁰ but his services were recognised with the award of the O.B.E. In 1948 he spoke at the

unveiling of the 1939-45 plaques added to the School War Memorial — they carried 114 names and Colonel Brady spoke with great feeling:

“We are met here today to give thanks to Almighty God, and to honour brave men, valiant sons of this School, who gave their lives in the war. To honour them by the setting up of these bronze tablets of remembrance. We are not met in a spirit of mourning, but in a spirit of pride and thankfulness, to bear witness to the enduring glory of men of this School who “feared the name of Dishonour more than they feared Death”, and so, on the battlefield their feet stood firm, armed with Faith in the righteousness of a great cause; armed with clean hands and a conscience void of offence, trusting in the God of their fathers that He would deliver their country from the snares of the enemy.

“They came to Milton from scattered homes, and to these homes their first love was rightly given; but they shared that love with Milton, where first they formed the enduring friendships of boyhood, and where were laid the firm foundations of Faith and Purpose, which held them steadfast till the end, in war’s welter of blood and suffering.

“Short years ago we knew them, shared with them the fleeting hours of Peace, their dreams of youth, the hopes and promise of manhood. These dreams, these hopes, they were well content to lay as a freewill offering to Almighty God on the altar of their country. In years, many of them still boys, yet all in high courage, faith and purpose, grown to the full stature of a man, they endured the uttermost of human pain, so when their hour came they faced it, steadfast and unafraid. Mindful of the school motto, “they quit themselves like men”, they were strong; and now “in some far corner of a foreign land that is forever England”, they rest content. To them has been given the noblest of all sepulchres — not the grave in which their bodies *rest*, but where their glory *lives*, in the grateful hearts of their country.

“We know how this little company of Milton men held high their Country’s Flag in battle. They made no claim to be heroes of Romance, just plain men like most of us here; but they showed by their shining example how a man, in the great crisis of his fate, may rise in the greatness of his soul, triumphant over fear, and pain and Death. They were brave in peril, constant in tribulation and temperate in wrath and in all changes of fortune, and, down to

the gates of death, loyal and loving comrades one to another.

“These men of Milton whose memory we honour *gave all*; we cannot *add* to their glory, we cannot share in their sacrifice; but this little we can do: we can see to it that so long as this School stands, its walls shall bear their names, and their deathless story become the well spring from which the School may draw its inspiration, in faith, in high purpose, in courage and sacrifice, in years to come. They have left this great charge — that, so help us God, that faith and that freedom for which they died shall not perish among men.

“If we fail them, if we betray that sacred trust — then those men have died for us in vain.”

He died in 1952 and it is no less than he deserves that one of Milton's two original quads should enshrine his memory in its name²¹ for, together with De Beer, who is commemorated in the other old quad, he made Milton what it was — and is today.

Notes

¹The original block had consisted of six classrooms and, by 1920, the quadrangle had been virtually completed (it wanted only the promised hall) — further expansion would have encroached on the playing fields, in themselves no longer adequate.

²Prior to this, at the end of 1924, Mr. de Beer had been transferred to Salisbury as Chief Inspector of Schools. Two years later he left Rhodesia to take up the appointment of Headmaster of St. George's Cape Town. He died in Cape Town in March 1948.

³The first Milton had been built from start to finish in less than four months.

⁴Alexander, Earl of Athlone (1874–1957), youngest brother of Queen Mary, married Princess Alice of Albany, Queen Victoria's last surviving grandchild — she died in 1981 aged 97.

⁵He presumably was referring to St. George's and discounted the Convent, a girls' school.

⁶He was wrong — there were only four teachers initially.

⁷The trowel is still in the possession of the school and is now in the School Museum.

⁸Sic! — the word 'Commissioner' is incorrectly spelt on the foundation stone.

⁹In those early days, playing fields were almost invariably bare earth, but by 1926 Bulawayo's water supply had improved sufficiently to enable grass fields to be watered during the dry season. Cricket was played on matting wickets.

¹⁰It was ironic that the original school finally received a hall thirteen years after it had opened when it was inevitable that a new senior school would be built but that there was no provision for a hall in the new school. No doubt Colonel Brady would have agreed with Mr. de Beer's remarks at the opening of that hall when he said that a hall was “perhaps the most vital part of a school . . . (it) gave them a chance of seeing that they were part of one great corporate body and they could meet in it as one combined school.”

¹¹ Beit's portrait still hangs in the hall, as does one of Sir William Milton, presented by the President and Board of the B.S.A. Company in 1958. The magnificent, full-length portrait of Rhodes now hangs in the School Museum.

¹² The honours boards themselves were long ago filled up and new honours now go on to the actual panelling between the boards.

¹³ This beautifully proportioned room with its curved steel ceiling and two fireplaces is now the School Museum, a project specially endowed to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the opening of the school.

¹⁴ But acoustically they were disastrous and eventually the hall was given a plaster ceiling. The beams are still there and can be visited via a trap-door in the lighting-box.

¹⁵ And still must. The building became the music room on the completion of a new technical block in 1938 but was condemned by the P.W.D. in 1979. It still awaits demolition and, in the meantime, in a move perhaps reminiscent of the employment of St. John's first rectory, is used in part as a boarders' study.

¹⁶ The hostels never did, but the headmaster's house was finished by December 1932.

¹⁷ The original school was "The Milton High School"; on its division it was intended that the two schools should be known as "The Milton Junior School" and "The Milton School".

¹⁸ As recently as the early seventies, boarders were still going on hunting expeditions in the bush that was cleared to make way for the Holiday Inn/Ascot Centre complex.

¹⁹ The school possesses all the citations and some of the medals.

²⁰ His place as liason officer was taken by the newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Jock Thompson.

²¹ The Brady Barracks show that the army did not forget him either. His name is also honoured in St. John's Cathedral where for many years he was churchwarden.

Odds and Ends, 1925–1930

August 1925: The Governor, Sir John Chancellor, visited the school.

August 1925: A notice appeared: "In view of our forthcoming game with Plumtree, arrangements have been made by the Prunes, we understand, with the P.O. for the dispatch of telegrams to relatives at certain intervals during the game. Special cards have been printed to cope with demand as follows:

I am	}	lamed.
I am certain to be		maimed.
I expect to be		dead.

(Requiescat in Pace.)

March 1926: The Miltonian refused to give the name of "the lady member of staff who, on seeing the Mathematical work called 'The Reign of Relativity', remarked that she had never heard of

him and suggested that he was one of the ancient kings". It also reported an exchange between master and pupil:

"Master: What is a polygon?

F-g-d: A dead parrot, sir."

1 May 1926: Milton debated with Eveline the motion "That a strike in the hands of the workman does more harm than good, economically, socially and politically". The adjudicator, Dugald Niven, "concluded that the sides were even".

June/July 1926: Milton beat Plumtree 15-3 in the Haddon and Sly Cup and again 15-3 in the semi-final of the Honey Cup; the school then went on to beat Prince Edward's 22-6 in the Honey Cup Final.

June 1927: On the eve of the move to the new school, some statistics were produced for the period 1910-1926:

Rhodes Scholars 10

Beit Bursars 17

Beit Scholars 34

Rugby v. Plumtree: Played 25, won 17, lost 5, drawn 3

Cricket v. Plumtree: Played 27, won 16, lost 10, drawn 1

July 1927: The school became the "proud possessor of a Gestetner Reduplicator. Henceforth boys at examinations will be deprived of the convenient excuse that they 'couldn't read the board'". A Linguaphone, with books of records in French and Afrikaans, was also acquired.

28 August 1927: Sir Charles Coghlan died suddenly and the school furnished the guard of honour both at the railway station and the lying-in-state. The full cadet company acted as escort at the state funeral and school buglers sounded the Last Post and Reveille at the grave on World's View.¹

March 1928: Milton acted as host to fifty English Public Schoolboys who were on a tour of Rhodesia; despite the novelty of playing on matting, the visitors gained the upper hand in a drawn cricket match and then contributed to a highly successful concert; the only complaint was that the visitors had not brought their sisters.

June 1928: Milton expressed its condolences to the Earl of Athlone and Princess Alice on the death of their only son, Viscount Trematon, who had accompanied his parents to Milton two years earlier.

June 1928: Rhodesia participated in the Olympic Games for the first time and one of the two boxers chosen to represent the country was Old Miltonian Cecil Bisset.²

June 1928: Milton's 1st XV toured Natal and had the melancholy experience of losing all three matches, conceding 83 points and scoring none. In a letter to the Chronicle spiritedly defending the decision to send the side, Colonel Brady pointed out that it had been at Michaelhouse's invitation and the school could hardly have replied "No, we won't play you this year as you will probably beat us, you must wait until we think we are strong enough to beat you".

December 1928: The new Governor, Sir Cecil Rodwell, K.C.M.G., visited the school.

January-February 1929: Two enterprising juniors decided to publish a weekly chronicle of school life under the name of "The Weekly Fib". After a successful run of five weeks "the publication was banned by the Censors"³. The editors of the Miltonian were "considerably relieved at the removal from their path of this insidious and dangerous rival".

11 May 1929: Mr. Jacobs of the Bulawayo Gramophone Society gave "a very interesting and much appreciated recital" in the Beit Hall, including "Trial by Jury", Finck's "Melodious Memories", an aria from "Lucia di Lammermoor", "An Old Time Music Hall. In four parts" and "Domestic Blisters. Billy Bennett, Comedian".

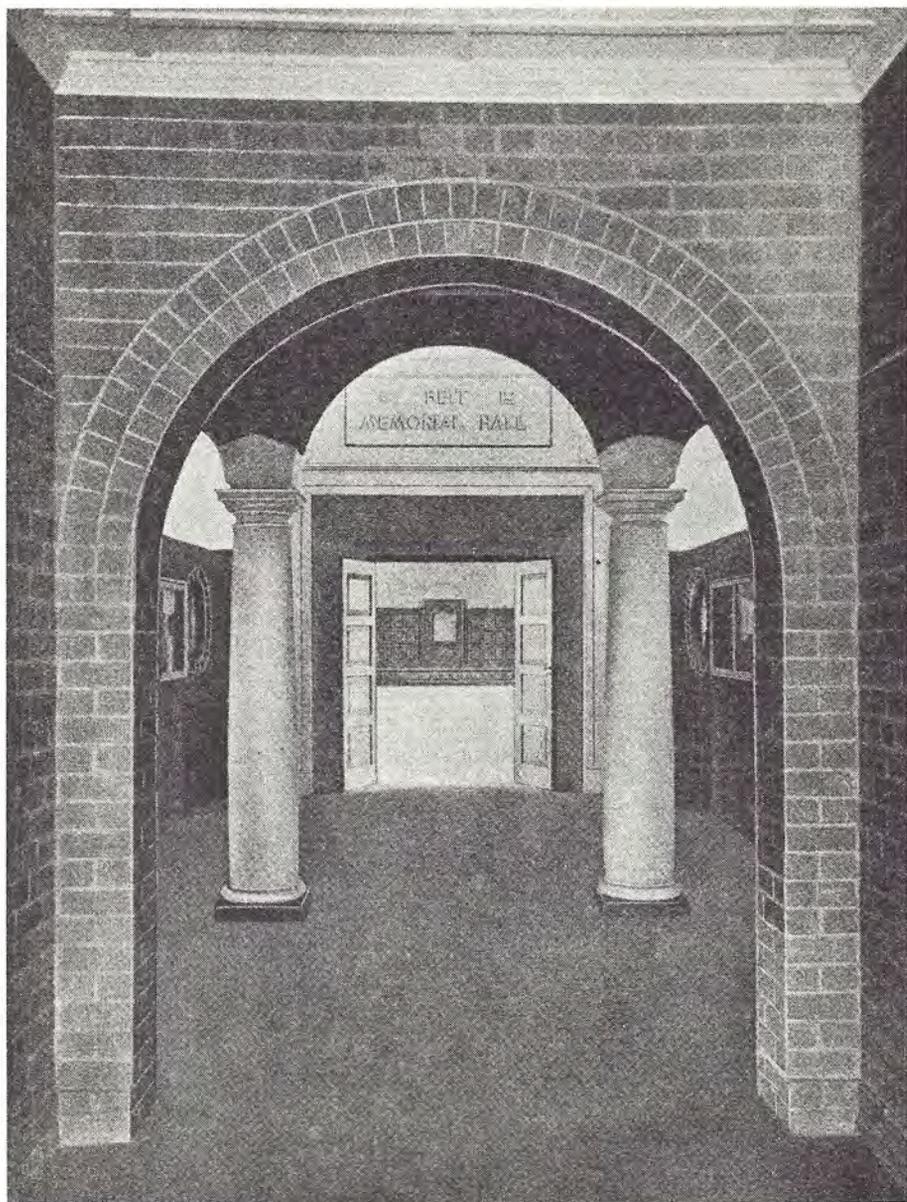
June 1929: Sir Henry Birchenough and his daughter, Mrs. Morcom, visited the school.

July 1929: Sir William Milton wrote thanking the headmaster for a book of photographs of the school expressing the wish that "I could see any prospect of inspecting them in person, but I am afraid that is not possible"⁴.

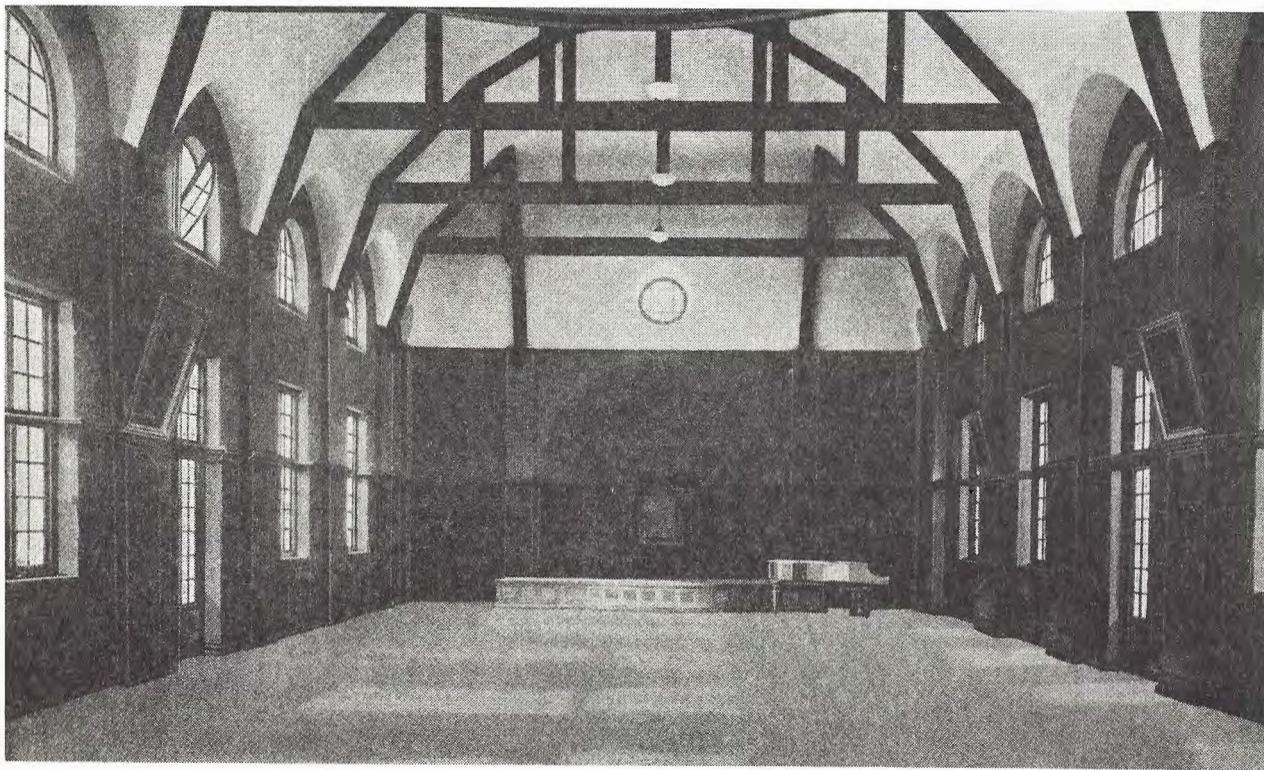
July 1929: Milton again beat Prince Edward's in the final of the Honey Cup, 21-5.

September 1929: Milton's first two tennis courts came into commission and the first tennis tournament was held the following year.

June 1930: A correspondent noted with regret that "only running races were included in the inter-school sports" and suggested the inclusion of a motor-cycle race and the inauguration of "a Milton Dirt Track Racing Association".



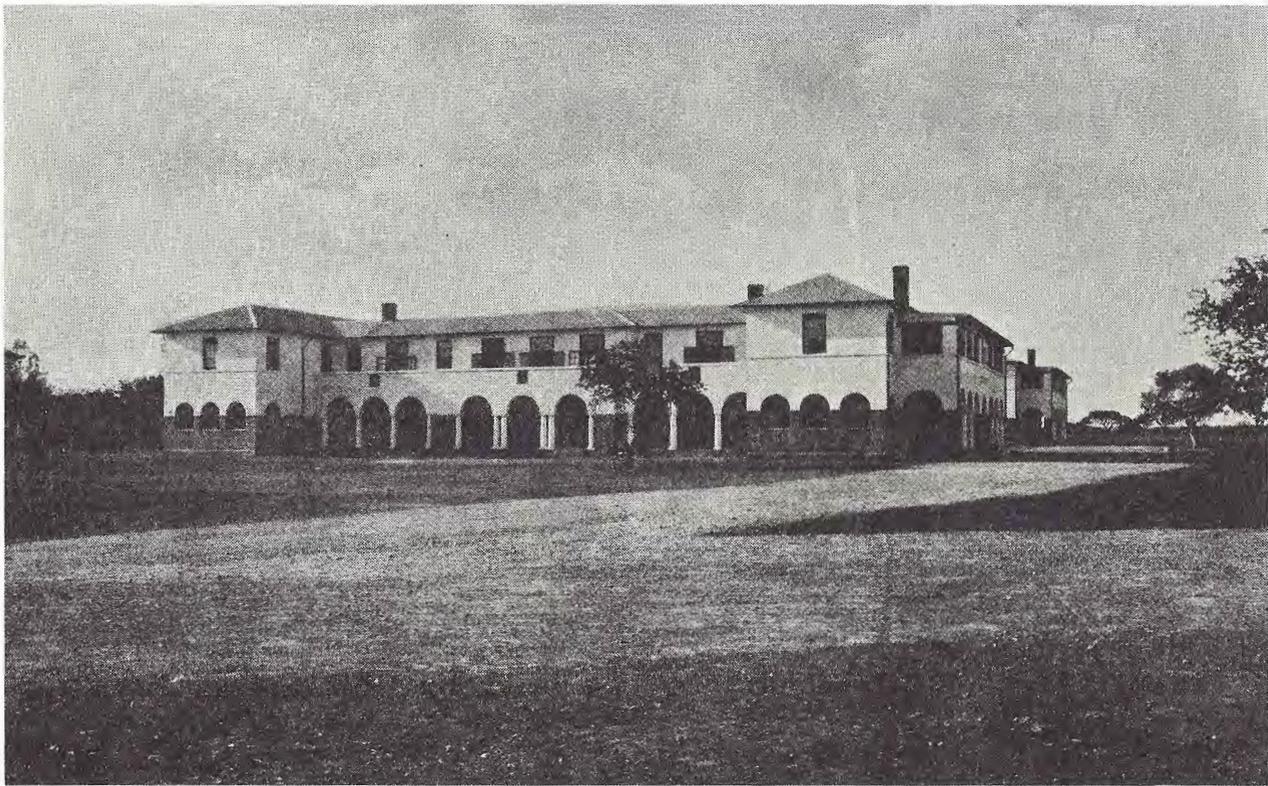
The Main School Entrance, 1929.



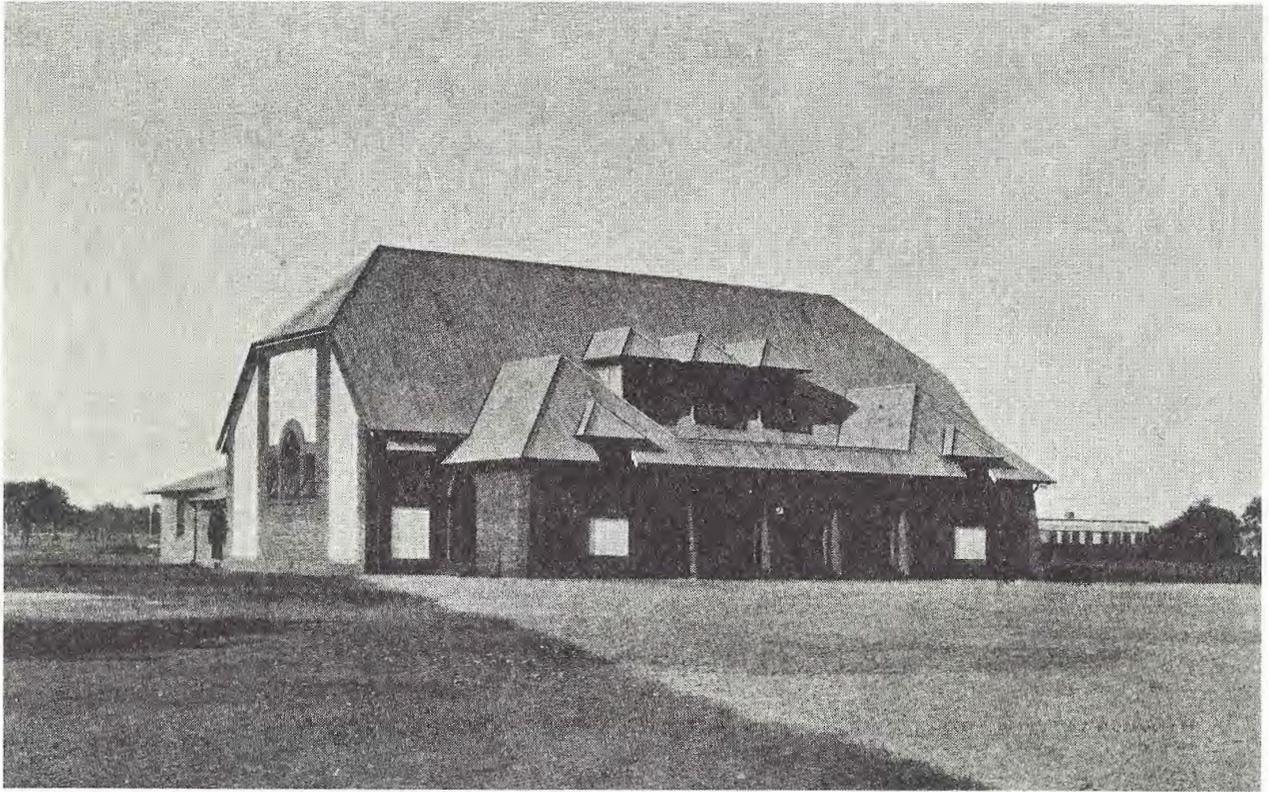
The Beit Memorial Hall, 1929.



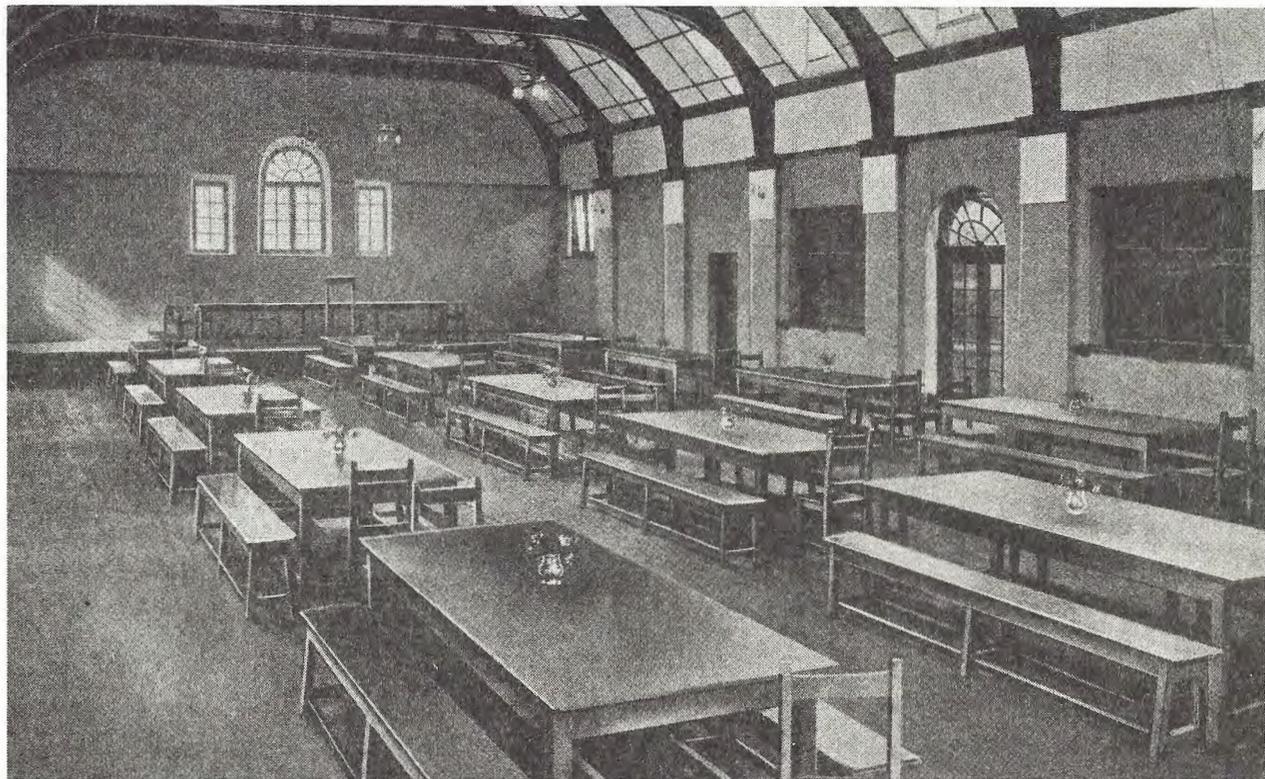
The War Memorial, 1929.



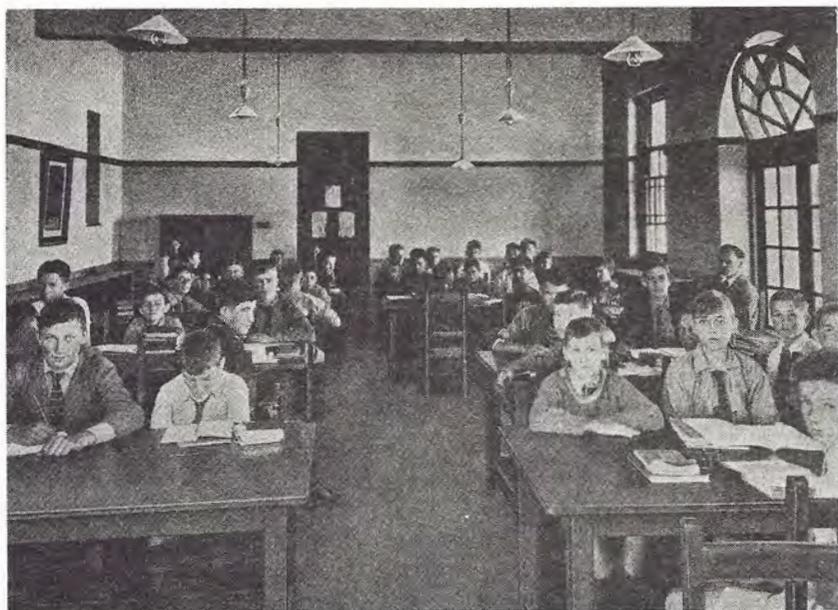
Charter House, 1929.



The Dining Hall — Exterior, 1929.



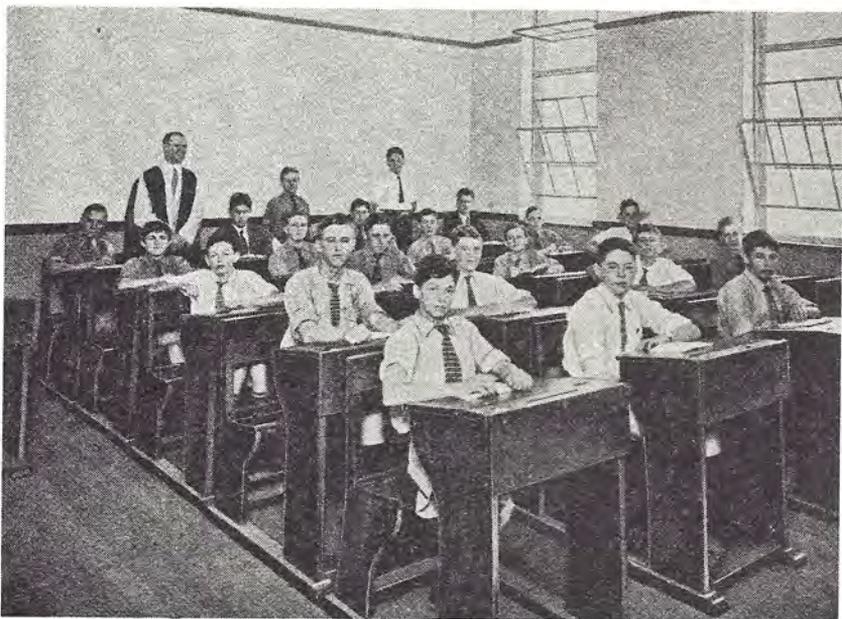
The Dining Hall — Interior, 1929.



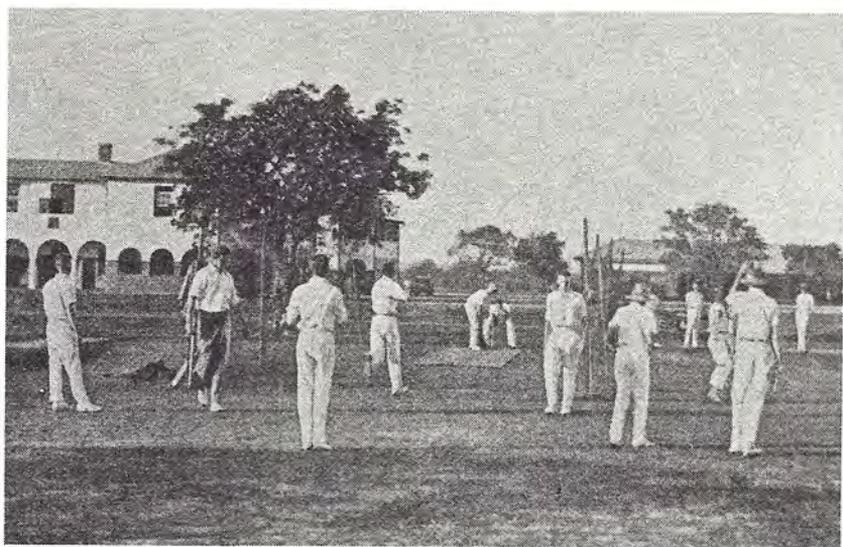
House Common Room, 1929.



School Library, 1929.



A Form Room, 1929.



Practice at the Cricket Nets, 1929.

Notes

¹In his remarks to the school about Sir Charles, Colonel Brady strikingly anticipated a famous comment of President Kennedy when he said that “the lesson of his life lay not in the answer to the question ‘What has Rhodesia to give me?’ but rather ‘What have I to give to the service of Rhodesia?’”.

²That same Cecil Bisset who had manned the Prince of Wales’ punt three years earlier.

³Sadly no copies have survived — perhaps “the censors” destroyed them all! . . .

⁴Sir William was by now 74 and in failing health; he died in Cannes on 4 March 1930.