

Woolverstone Master's Eye View - Interview

It has been suggested that members of this group would like to hear from masters about their experiences at Woolverstone. I took over from Roy Hanson as the Master in Charge of Metalwork and Technical Drawing in 1974, and left Woolverstone in 1978. During this time I was Assistant Housemaster in Johnstons for three years, with Jim Hyde as Housemaster, and one year with his successor, Richard Rabjohn. Coming to Woolverstone immediately after gaining my teaching qualification from Loughborough College of Education, I was certainly the youngest member of staff at the time.

My earliest recollection is of my interview day during the summer term of 1974. I had driven from Loughborough to Woolverstone, leaving early in the morning. I must have met Roy Hanson briefly and had a tour of the metalwork room, but my clearest memory is of the curved corridor leading from the Headmaster's Secretary's office to the Headmaster's study. In the next door room there were several boys who had completed their GCE exams watching sport, probably cricket, on TV. Mr Bailey must have asked me a few questions and then I accompanied him out onto Berners field to inspect the wicket for that afternoon's cricket match. The stumps were already set up; I later discovered that this was a custom, started by Dickie Mayes, the Head Groundsman, to announce to the school that the First XI had a match that afternoon. This was Mr Bailey's last term as Headmaster and I think that his heart was not really in the interview process. He told me that Woolverstone was a nice place to work and that he much preferred it when the boys were around. I remember having lunch in the staff dining room; it was packed out and I was impressed with the conviviality of the atmosphere.

The formal interviews were held in the Library. There were two or three other candidates, all from Goldsmiths College in London. I felt this gave them some advantage having certainly done their teaching practice placements in other ILEA schools. The panel included Mr Bailey but was chaired by Mrs Chaplin, the Chair of Governors. There was also a local governor and an ILEA Handicraft Inspector called Donaldson. Each candidate had their session with the panel and in between times sat on rather uncomfortable chairs in the lobby, immediately inside the front door of Berners.

Eventually someone came out and invited me to come back in because the Governors had "some additional questions". This was my first job interview and I did not realise that the question was going to be: **"If offered this post would you accept?"** There was then another enquiry: **"Would you be interested in the position of Assistant Housemaster?"** It was explained that this provides board and lodging plus additional salary known as the **'extraneous duties allowance'** in return for house duties. I didn't realise it at the time but all staff received the extraneous duties allowance, however, not having to arrange accommodation made the offer very attractive.

Before being invited for interview the ILEA Handicraft Staff Inspector, a Mr Swayne, had come to Loughborough to give a presentation encouraging Creative Design students to apply for jobs in London. I told him that I had applied to Woolverstone Hall and he assured me that it was a plum job. I drove back to Loughborough feeling pretty pleased with myself.