

## John Cook Headmaster 1982-1992

John Cook guided Epsom College through a decade of political and economic uncertainty. That the school is a stronger establishment in 1992, with a full complement of staff and pupils, with higher academic standards, with a greater range of subjects taught and activities offered, with new and refurbished buildings evident in all areas of its acreage is evidence of his skill, enthusiasm and persistent hard work as headmaster.

John and Vivien arrived from Christ College, Brecon in September 1982 in a move which seemed part of a Brecon to Epsom tradition. Soon at home both John and Vivien rapidly became an integral part of all college activities, bringing a warmth and friendliness to all occasions through their genuine interest in people and the welfare of all associated with the college, pupils, parents, and staff in all departments of the school's services.

Soon reknowned as a workaholic, to be found in the HM's study all hours of the day and night, JBC set about cultivating greater ties with the local prep schools, fostering a mutual understanding, a move which led him to a role on the governing body of many of them. Involvement with HMC committees and policy directing also took much time. He also viewed interviews with prospective parents as an essential part of his duties and the number of pupils in the college reflect the efficacy of this policy. With the promotion of weekly boarding the range of options available to parents and pupils was increased and the parallel increase in the number of 6th form girls added a strength and range of opportunity for the fairer sex. Concern over academic standards promoted a consistent improvement in these statistics – a further selling point for Epsom. Consequently he was able to broaden the curriculum, especially for the juniors, giving greater scope and choice of subject and a fuller educational opportunity. An increase in the number of teaching staff was also implemented to enable these changes to develop. Guiding the school through the government sponsored moves from GCE to GCSE and the new-look A levels, JBC encouraged greater diversity in the choice of examination boards in order to provide the best options for pupils. New and wider ranging scholarships and awards were instituted – from the 'all-rounders' to the Paice scholarship which encourages post school educational activities in the world wide spectrum.

In line with these policies encouraging the improvement of standards were the continued refurbishment and modernization of the academic departments – the almost total rebuilding of the physics and biology buildings, the creation of a geography department, the upgrading of the english, history, language and economics departments. A fully equipped art school was created with integral pottery and photographic rooms and latest of all, a new CDT department has been completed. Day and boarding houses have all been modernized (with changes including Carr becoming a day house and Robinson transferring to the rear of Newsom). Just as with the Fourth Bridge painting progress, much needs doing in this area of school to continue these improvements, but the days of the spartan congested, uncurtained and dormitory based accommodation have gone. That these works have been carried out through finance derived from income is sure evidence of the success in maintaining the school numbers.

In keeping with his concern for academic matters, JBC promoted the increase of non-curricular activities, not simply in the sporting field, which culminated in the new sports halls plus pavillion and chapel pitch developments, as well as plans for new astro turf playing surface, but also within the musical realms, attending and encouraging increasing numbers of concerts both formal and informal, and the creation of a larger and more active chapel choir. Both he and Vivien were regular supporters of school drama, even making an occasional appearance on Big School stage. Chapel services were felt to be of vital importance in the life of the college, and the change to the Saturday service to enable the whole school



to worship together and the encouragement of voluntary services during the week as well as constant support for the Sunday voluntary eucharist demonstrated their concern for the promotion of a Christian ethos within the college, further symbolised by the appointment of a second chaplain to the full time staff.

To add to these developments were the updating of the sanatorium facilities, the cafeteria, the Sixth form centre and staff accommodation – the six Brookside houses, the North Lodge building and the improvement of much of the staff accommodation in the boarding houses.

In her own right Vivien rarely found time to rest between attendance at major social functions and her coffee mornings for parents which helped foster closer ties and a more family atmosphere in the school. She organised many a costume for the succession of dramatic productions on Big School stage, scouring London and the south east for to satisfy those difficult demands of pressurized producers. Her warm and friendly back stage role, with needle and thread ready in hand, calmed many of those first-night nerves. Chapel flowers are no small matter to oversee but Vivien did that too in her 'spare time'. Most of all her constant support of members of staff and their families, as well as of JBC himself, must have taken much time and energy for which numerous individuals have been very grateful.

Perhaps now JBC and Vivien will have time to rediscover the meaning of family life as they embark on the new stage of their career; being based in Bagshot and learning the joys of commuter life will broaden horizons as well as, we hope, provide a few evenings of well earned peace and repose. We thank them for all they have done, for their friendship and support, their ease of approach and the secure legacy we enjoy.