

Michael Davies recollections

I joined the school in the second year (1955), having moved from Cardiff. The school was still in Highland Road then and Mr Mills interviewed me. He, it turned out, was a neighbour of ours at Eastney and shared a morning sea swim with my father all year round. Although rather frightening to the younger boys Mr Mills turned out to be a very supportive headmaster to me, particularly when I was in the 6th form.

I joined the CF and move, after our year of basic (army) training into the naval section and enjoyed many camps including one two week stint on HMS Vanguard, the only remaining battleship at the time, moored in Portsmouth Harbour. I intended to join the navy at that time but decided otherwise later.

Soccer was the school winter game but being a Welshman I had grown up with rugby. I could only join the Phoenix Rugby Club (an alternative to soccer) in the 5th form, which I did and remained a player thereafter. Mr Robling joined the school when I was in the Lower 6th (I think) and coached us enthusiastically. We never beat Portsmouth Grammar School 1st team but managed their 2nd team quite well along with Bedales and others.

In the 6th form I was influenced greatly by my physics master Mr Tooze who showed me a new way of looking at science. I determined to “do” physics at University and gained a provisional place at Kings College London. I did not get the required grades the first time round so stayed at school for part of a 3rd year sixth form. During that time I was met and sponsored by an old boy of the school, Mr Evans (a local Councillor) of J Evans & Son. He paid for 3 boys from the school to visit Duisberg in W. Germany to “see engineering”. This changed my life and I decided that engineering was what I really wanted for my future. I worked for Mr Evans for the remainder of that year as a trainee draughtsman and entered Kings London to study mechanical engineering in 1961.

As an aside it is my understanding that about 15 of us gained County Scholarships for various universities but only one or two gained places at Oxbridge. This was a typical result for that period of the school. Most of us came from families who, themselves, had no previous experience of university. Thanks to grants for giving us the chance (Ed – not to mention the Southern Grammar and its staff!!).

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