

E. H. JENKINS

Mr. Jenkins died peacefully, in his sleep, on 20th February, 1985 in his 88th year.

Born on 11th August, 1897, Ernest Harold Jenkins was educated at University College School, from where he won an Open Scholarship in History to The Queen's College, Oxford. The Great War prevented his taking up this award until 1919, after his service as an officer in the Royal Navy. He was appointed Senior History and Sixth Form Master at Brockley School in 1922. Subsequently he spent a year at the Grocers' Company School at Hackney Downs, before his appointment, in January, 1930, as Headmaster of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School.

Selected from 170 candidates, Mr. Jenkins took over what was then a small, country grammar school, housed in rather old, dilapidated and inadequate buildings. The Local Authority at that time, and for the whole of Mr. Jenkins' headmastership, was the Hertfordshire County Council. It had already planned new buildings for the school on a site in Queen's Road, Barnet, adjacent to the school's playing field, and Mr. Jenkins' first concern was to supervise the transfer of his school of some 280 boys to its new home. In addition to this, he felt that the whole curriculum of the school needed to be reformed. The creation of a proper Sixth Form and a re-arrangement of the lower forms to provide a series of accelerated promotions for brighter boys were initial steps on the academic side. Athletics were soon added to the existing rugby and cricket. Other sports were introduced and numerous clubs and societies were created. In short, there was a really thorough "shake-up" in every area of school life. Right from the start, it was made clear to the public, to School Governors, to staff, to boys and their parents that the new broom was determined to sweep very clean. An inescapable result was that Mr. Jenkins had many and strong differences of opinion with all of these groups — as well as with local shopkeepers. Throughout this, as throughout all his time as Headmaster, Mr. Jenkins was much helped by the unstinting service of County Alderman H.E. Fern, O.B.E., J.P., as his Chairman of Governors. But in the end he achieved his goals and succeeded in his aim to close the gap between public schools and grammar schools. None of this, of course, could have been possible without the backing of a team of enterprising, innovative and enthusiastic teachers. In several areas of activity, Queen Elizabeth's achieved fame outside the local district. In its approach to Physical Education and to athletics, it was very much in the vanguard of national developments. In its entire programme for the well-being of its pupils, it led current thinking. Part of this success was reflected in the school's winning the Public Schools Athletics Cup four times — three times before the War and again in 1947. In this busy period, Mr. Jenkins also found time to publish "Prelude to Poetry" in association with Mr. A. Spencer Vaughan-Thomas.

By the outbreak of the 1939-45 War, Mr. Jenkins was almost at the point when he might have considered moving to a new job, to advance his career. However, he decided it was his duty to stay at Q.E., which he did until his retirement in 1961.

It was this period, perhaps, that consolidated his reputation among his pupils. Numerous were the Old Boys who visited the school when on leave, particularly to see their Headmaster. He was deeply conscious of this affection and consequently felt deeply the death of many of his former pupils. There is no doubt that for many O.Es of that vintage the school under E.H.J. was a very treasured memory.

In the period after the War, the school was enlarged both in buildings and in numbers to almost twice its former size. A Classics side was added to the curriculum. Academically and on the games field, the school forged a formidable reputation, both locally and nationally.

In addition to this work, Mr. Jenkins served on the committee of the Headmasters' Association, becoming subsequently Chairman of the Essex, Herts and Middlesex area and then was elected to the Council of that body. He served also on the Herts. Schools RFU Committee and on the committee of the London-Paris Schools Association.

After his retirement, Mr. Jenkins held a part-time post in the Education Faculty of Reading University. He was at last able to devote time to a long-standing interest in the French Navy. He published in 1973 "A History of the French Navy", which was so highly regarded that it was translated into French. In 1972, at the request of Governors and Old Boys he produced an account of his headmastership in "Elizabethan Headmaster, 1930-1961".

In his later years, he found himself wholly out of sympathy with the new trends, above all with the increasing intrusion of politics, at both local and national level, into education. As a Headmaster he had fought strongly for what he believed in and comprehensive education was no part of that belief.

A man of scholarship, integrity and single mindedness, Mr. Jenkins made a deep impression on all who knew him. Beneath a seemingly bluff, or even tough, exterior, he had a real and ready sympathy for those in need or distress, a shrewd understanding of human nature and a keen perception of all that is best both in people and in things. A Government report on the school commented, "A man of great energy and devotion to his responsibilities, he has by his bold policy and skilful administration built up the school to a stature which commands the respect of all who are familiar with it".

He is survived by his wife, Winifred, and by his son, Aymeric, and by his grand-children, Annabel, Catherine and Timothy.

The private funeral service was held in Barnet Parish Church on 27th February, and a memorial service was held on Saturday, 27th April, in the Parish Church, attended by a large number of O.Es from Mr. Jenkins' time, past and present members of staff and older pupils currently at the school.

Donations to his memory may be sent to Save the Children Fund.

K. W. Carter.