

DOUGLAS CAMERON

In June 1953 our Queen was crowned and some talked of a second Elizabethan age that would revive the supposed glories of the first. Here at school one of the maths. masters had a motor-cycle accident, the young Douglas Cameron was summoned prematurely to take up his duties at L.R.G.S. (preventing him, incidentally, from being at Lord's to see the Gentlemen beat the Players for the last time.)

A betting man might have been wiser to put his money on the outcome of this second venture, but he would have been unlikely to get long odds, for those shrewd judges of form, R.R.Timberlake and Leslie Twyford, were taking few chances in fielding one bred by impeccable scholarship out of Northern determination - and anyway they had the advantage of having seen him run his maiden stakes over the same course only a few weeks previously.

Horses for courses then. It seemed likely that he would suit L.R.G.S., but would L.R.G.S. suit him? We need not depend merely on the evidence of nearly forty years' service, for within a week or two of retirement, speaking to colleagues gathered to honour him, Douglas provided his own answer: to work at L.R.G.S., he said is a privilege.

And there, perhaps, is the key to both the man and his life's work, outstandingly successful by any reckoning. Successful first and always in the class-room: a teacher of Physics and Maths. to a very high level every day, and a teacher of boys on an astonishing number. "Head of the Physics Dept., 1972 - 84" doesn't begin to do justice to that story. And does "Master i/c Cricket 1958 - 82" reveal to any other than those who have run teams over many years the devoted coaching, the organisation of pitches and equipment, the tours arranged, the hours of travelling that went into the making, not only of some of the best senior sides in the country, but also of such enthusiasm and success lower down the school? Clearly the labels had better be abandoned. Indeed, it is hard to think of a label to fit Douglas's service to boarding in the school. He joined School House in 1956 when it was still very much the Headmaster's house, and left it thirty years later, about twice the stint of a public school housemaster and a length of service that might well qualify for that famous book of records. And not mere length of service. How many boys who enjoyed boarding were encouraged to seize every opportunity? And how many who found the life less congenial were encouraged by a friendly word to stick at it? And, for that matter, how many callow young house-masters emerged the wiser from a visit to the study on the top corridor!

And so the years passed. The grey hairs came, gradually more seldom. And the reputation among the boys and in the Common Room grew. For many things, perhaps, but, if special qualities are to be identified, two that have been remarked come to mind. Last year's Head of School singled out Douglas's fairness. And that shrewd judge David Widdess once epitomised Douglas as "the quintessence of good sense": few of his colleagues would disagree.

Who, then, could more fittingly succeed as Second Master when Michael Hansen retired? For the past seven years Douglas has brought distinction to the post, moulding its demands, as every occupant should, to his own special talents. A fitting climax to the career of one who, early on, decided that L.R.G.S. was the course for him.

A privilege to serve at L.R.G.S? An enormous amount of work certainly. Some recreation, of course. In the early days watching Preston North End or one of the other successful Lancashire sides. (Yes, there were some!) But not much of that lately. The odd round of golf. But not much of that lately. Bridge in the winter. Dipping his toes, but never more than the toes, in the Mediterranean fairly frequently. And cricket, of course, apparently most of the time. Running the 1st XI at school was not enough for this man. Since 1963 he has been joint manager of the U19 Lancashire Federation, and in 1985 his services were aptly rewarded when he was made a Vice President of Lancashire County Cricket Club. And, a little later than some, marriage. In his pursuit of Mary do we see the good sense and Northern determination combined? A lady of character and distinction was not enough. She has had also to prepare countless cricket teas, to act as a leading member of the Cameron Intelligence Corps, for being well informed in most of what concerned the school has undoubtedly been one of Douglas's chief resources.

Poor Mary! Might she occasionally have wondered if she was in fact married to the school, for much has still gone unrecorded. What of the U14 Rugby teams? What of the regular attendance at practically every event of school life, sporting and otherwise? What of his links with the O.L. Club? I should think it certain that Douglas will have the staff record of attendance at O.L. dinners by a large margin, and it is largely because of him that there is much more interest in the Club among the masters these days. And what of the challenge of being one of the first two members of staff to serve as a Governor? Much of the Governors' deliberation is unknown to most in the school, but it must be because of our early staff governors that what was regarded by some only a few years ago as at best an eccentric experiment has now become not merely accepted but valued.

Can such a paragon of all the school-masterly virtues really exist? And if the pudding has not been over-egged, was the man liveable-with? Was he never short-tempered, never wrong? And hasn't his Service been well rewarded in terms of honour, power and profit? Yes, probably to all of these. He can be cross, particularly on those occasions, rarer, fortunately, at L.R.G.S. than in some schools, when he feels that a colleague is adopting an attitude that got Players a bad name rather than Gentlemen a good one. There must be those who have left him still nursing a grievance. But liveable with? He is much more than that. Fostering a greater than usual sense of loyalty and devotion to duty, he has taken his work more seriously than many. But born with a quick brain and a great sense of fun, he takes himself less seriously than most. He has been for lots of us the best of colleagues for many years. May he remain the best of friends for many more.

B.A.S.