

Headmaster Speaks in Defence of Modern Youth

In these days of frequent criticism of teenagers, it is refreshing and certainly reassuring, to hear a Grammar School headmaster speak in defence of modern youth.

Their cause is championed by Mr Cyril Harris, head of Guthlaxton Grammar School, Wigston Magna, which has over 1,000 boys and girls of age groups 14 – 18 plus.

In a chat I enjoyed with him in his pleasantly situated study overlooking the School's spacious grounds, Mr Harris confessed that he did not approve of the use of the word "teenager".

To quote the head... "I think that the whole body of young people today tend to be labelled by the activities of a lunatic fringe. It is this fringe which hits the headlines and the vast amount of genuine service done by large numbers of young people only rarely gets into the public eye."

Mr Harris thinks that the present day scholars are more "businesslike" than their predecessors in their approach to the need for study and qualifications... "They are much more adult than we used to be" he said.

Guthlaxton, which achieved its independence from an annex of Kibworth Grammar School in June 1955, is blossoming into one of the finest Grammar Schools in the County. An impressive extension scheme containing a completely new geography department and a language laboratory is almost complete. The building – it has cost in the region of £25,000 – will be ready for occupation this month, but it is not likely to be brought into school use before September.

This modern development is viewed with admiration and not a little envy – by hundreds of Wigston and Oadby parents, who recall their own school days often featured by lack of learning facilities.

The original Guthlaxton Grammar School was situated in Long Street, Wigston Magna and transferred to its present imposing site in Station Road in September 1957.

Mr Harris has only been headmaster since 1960, succeeding the late Mr M.J.Oliver. A "Man of Kent" Mr Harris was educated at Exeter University, gaining a London University degree in English. His first staff appointment was at Blundells School, Tiverton, Devon. He came to Leicester in 1933 as English master at the Gateway Boy's School. He remained there for over 20 years before appointment as Head of Humphrey Perkins School, Barrow on Soar in 1955.

He now has a total staff of 63. Men members are in the majority – by about three to one. Mr Harris comments "Women teachers seem hard to get these days. They marry earlier"



Guthlaxton is rising rapidly in its sports and athletics reputation. At sixth form level students are given "options" which include golf, judo and more recently fencing.

Mr Harris played football for the British Universities Athletics Union. He was centre half.

Guthlaxton is now preparing for its annual Speech Days. July 14 & 15. Mr T Milner, Headmaster of the neighbouring Abington High School is to present the prizes on the first day and Mr T Fraser Noble, Vice Chancellor of Leicester University, on the second.

Mr Harris who is a Governor of Loughborough Training College is also a member of the Council of Leicester Library and Philosophical Society and a member of the Rotary Club of Blaby, Oadby and Wigston.

His favourite relaxation? – Angling. He likes nothing better than those fishing expeditions in Scotland.

I must not close this record of my talk with the popular Guthlaxton Head without a reference to his war time service – especially as he is the son of a former Regular Army Officer, who served for 36 years.

Mr Harris was a recruit at Wigston – he signed on at Glen Parva barracks and served for six years with the Royal Leicestershire Regiment from 1940.

He is well remembered "marking time" in the Long Street Congregational Church Rooms as a rookie.

He finished his military career as substantive Captain at one time being Adjutant to 22 Infantry Training Centre at Warwick. He saw war service in Europe and end up in Berlin.

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