

Played Rugby at Lansdowne Road in Dublin

Alan Jenner was born in 1912 and interviewed in 1995

I went to a very good secondary school, Chatham House School in Ramsgate, when I was Head Boys there Teddy Heath was in the fourth form. I got a scholarship to Jesus College Oxford. When I was in my fourth year Harold Wilson was a freshman. My tutor said I could take maths, physics or chemistry. When I came to Kendal Grammar School in 1935 I taught mathematics and physics. It was a boarding school then but it only had five boarders. In fact at the end of that year they disappeared.

The first term I was there I was greeted one morning before assembly with "We want to do Aladdin at Christmas would I play the dame." So I did. I was called 'Twanky' for quite a long time after that. Then later the replacement of an English master had written a version of Dick Whittington which we did as well

I was told Kendal was a wet place and I arrived one evening in September and it was pouring rain and it poured with rain until the end of November. I didn't take any notice of it but the locals were beginning to grumble. I arrived on a Tuesday evening and I was playing rugby for a Kendal team on Wednesday night at Windermere and played for Kendal in Manchester on the Saturday.

The class size then was, I would think, between twenty-five and thirty but discipline was easy to keep. We used to have to play rugby with them on a Tuesday afternoon so I got a certain amount of respect. Anybody who misbehaved got tackled. Tuesday afternoon the whole school had games. Then on Thursday afternoon was free for school matches. Saturday morning was a scholastic period from 9.00am to 12 noon and Saturday afternoon was rugby. We used to have "Merit Monday Holiday." If you behaved yourself, at the end of the month you got the first Monday of the following month off.

One of the features of the school was it had its own swimming pool and gymnasium which had been built before the First World War. The pupils would say "Can we go swimming after school?" and we would say "Depends how you behave yourselves." Sometimes there'd be thirty or forty would come back at night to go swimming in the pool.

I stayed at the school until I went into the army in 1940. I was thoroughly happy there, I was married by then and I think if the war hadn't broken out I would never have left.

When the school boarding ended we had to move out and four of us teachers went to Aynam Lodge, next to the organ works and we had a room that went the whole length of the house. The landlady was a Mrs Beer and it cost us twenty-five shillings a week.

We could go out and enjoy the societies and things in Kendal. That's when I got into this literary, and dramatic society that met in the library. In fact I was in the last thing they ever did in St. George's Theatre – "Hay Fever." It was such a good play. Subsequently the plays we produced were in the Town Hall.

Then I was talked into the Operatics. I'd never thought of myself as a singer. I'd sing a few things when we did pantomime at school but I'd never rated myself. That's when I met my wife to be. She was the May Queen in "Merrie England," the first show I was in. Then I got a big part in "The Belle of New York" in 1939. It never happened because the war broke out and they didn't do it.

My other great love was rugby and I was involved a lot with Kendal Rugby Club. We travelled around quite a bit playing all over the place. Plenty of times in Manchester and Yorkshire

areas. In fact one weekend we played at Lansdowne Road in Dublin. We went on Friday night and came back on the Saturday night by boat in January and very rough seas.

While we played at Mintsfeet there was no pavilion, there was nothing there. We used to change there and at the end of the game we'd come back to school. There would be three tubs of water and we washed in those and went home. Big wooden tubs of water about four or five feet in diameter. Three of those at the swimming baths and we just sort of stood and wallowed in them and got the mud off. There'd be fifteen of us in those three tubs plus the reserves plus the opposition. Not long after I was there they built showers. What a forward step that was.

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