

SCHOOL PERSONALITIES

James Westbury (1880-1942)

It was in January 1910, when **W Bonavia Hunt** was Headmaster, that James Westbury joined the staff of Kilburn Grammar School, which was then a school of about 150 boys being reorganised as a Middlesex Secondary School. He joined as Senior English Master and teacher of Latin. As the school grew in size and importance he had time only for English. Later, on the retirement of John Ware, during the Headmastership of **James McLeish**, he was appointed Second Master, and for a term after the tragic death of the Head he served as Acting Headmaster.

When **Dr Anthony**, the new Head, was lost to the school for service in the army at the beginning of the war, Mr Westbury was leader of the evacuated school and again became Acting Headmaster, a position he held until his death.

After two years at Northampton he was recalled to nurse the young school at Kilburn. He was advised, and believed, that the future of the school was there, and he very much hoped to hand over to the returning Headmaster a school as complete, as well as organised, as familiar with the best traditions, and as successful in all spheres of work and play, as that which had been entrusted to him in 1939.

However, towards the end of the summer term, 1942, he collapsed and had to be taken to the Hampstead General Hospital. He was soon home again and manifesting as lively an interest as ever in school affairs. But he was never to visit the school again. During the following term he collapsed once more and was taken back to hospital, where he died.

In 1910 he was just thirty years of age, slim, dark-haired, blue-eyed, very active in body and mind, full of enthusiasm and determination to make a success of his job. When the House system was reorganised he became the first House Master of Curtis and retained this position till the temporary suspension during the evacuation period at Northampton. He was always fond of games, for which he was naturally gifted, although he never played enough to become adept at any one. He was particularly keen on swimming and was

responsible for many years for building up a strong swimming club and life-saving facility in the school.

A prominent feature of “Jock’s” personality was his great pluck. He showed this on the playing field, but most of all in his later life when he carried on at school in spite of great pain due to the illness which finally proved fatal. Had he spared himself more he might have enjoyed those few years of pleasant retirement which he had richly deserved.

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