

A GUIDE TO GREYFRIARS SCHOOL



GREYFRIARS AND CHAPEL FROM THE NORTH-WEST

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Introduction

During conversation a friend once said to me 'most of you people who study old boys papers like the Magnet are those who seem to have missed something in life'. He will probably never know just how wrong he was for, on the contrary, we gained something that was usually permanent; something which contributed in no small way towards one of life's greatest of all gifts, that of happy memories; of memories of a world of adventures and happenings which always seemed to end up with that most universally sought-after of all conclusions, the happy ending. And why not?, for it was this which helped to create the evergreen charm of the Greyfriars legend, a legend as alive today as it was since those far-off days of over three-quarters of a century ago.

It seems incredible that the story of Greyfriars has survived two World Wars and lasted for nearly 78 years, from 1908 to 1985; even more incredible that its appeal is as great, or greater now than it was before, with millions of words having been written about it since its creator died in 1961, with still more remaining yet to be written. An explanation for this state of affairs remains as difficult to find and analyse today as it always has been, with that appeal apparently passing from generation to generation as the years pass by.

The brain-child of Charles Hamilton under the more familiar pen-name of Frank Richards was created and sustained for more than 30 years by a man whose assured position among writers is unique; there will never be another like him, or one with such a prodigious output of work. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the part played by the artists, mostly C.H. Chapman and Leonard Shields who between them illustrated a very large number of the stories, undoubtedly must have contributed greatly to their popularity, over so many years and to so many readers of all ages; their illustrations can only have added to the general interest, not least through their meticulous adherence to the picture of Greyfriars that was in most readers' minds.

This present booklet and maps describe the School itself and is intended as a supplement to the previous booklet on the district only. I hope that the two combined may constitute a useful reference companion to the ever-popular saga and that it will in its own small way add to the enjoyment of present and future readers.

Tunworth, Hant's.

1985



Greyfriars School plans

As with the early maps of the Greyfriars district, so the early maps and plans of the school itself (see map list in 'Guide to the Greyfriars District') failed in many ways to agree with the descriptions given by Frank Richards in the Greyfriars stories. There were many such descriptions to be found throughout the stories and in most instances they were remarkable for their clarity and amount of detail; also, for the most part, successive descriptions seemed to agree.

A study of those descriptions indicates the fact that Frank Richards must have given a great deal of thought to what can only be described as the building up of a clear and logical picture of a well-planned layout for such an establishment as Greyfriars School; such a study giving a clear pointer to the best method of ensuring authenticity by making use of the descriptions in order to build up the overall picture. In the light of the above, it would be an obvious mistake merely to make the various rooms fit the school buildings, regardless of any orderliness, as in some of the early plans; a much better method would be to make their positioning fit the author's own descriptions. Therefore, with the exceptions of bathrooms, box-rooms and store-rooms, I have omitted to include many of the features of earlier plans such as clubrooms, dancing and rehearsal rooms, laboratories and workshops, art and natural history museums, dark-room, etc., many of which seem to fit rather uneasily into the layout of an old-established classical school like Greyfriars, during the period covered by Frank Richards' stories. Rather, I have attempted to feature only such rooms and offices as fit his descriptions and whose whereabouts would agree with the author's own mind-picture of the old school.

To quote from some examples of his descriptions, I have chosen six Magnet series which I think contain some of the best selections.

They are the following:-

- (1) Loder's Captaincy series, Magnets 923 to 931 of 1925
- (2) Prefects at War series, Magnets 1111 to 1115 of 1929
- (3) Courtfield Cracksman series, Magnets 1138 to 1151 of 1929
- (4) Tatters series, Magnets 1195 to 1203 of 1931
- (5) Lancaster series, Magnets 1209 to 1219 of 1931
- (6) Valentine series, Magnets 1297 to 1307 of 1932

I fully realise that there are many more series, also single stories, which also contain references to various parts of school or grounds, and have included many of these in the Appendix.

Descriptions and Illustrations

As we have all so often seen, Frank Richards had the magic ability to create and re-create the atmosphere of Greyfriars as no other writer could. That such an atmosphere owed so much to his ability to punctuate his narrative so liberally with descriptive material also cannot be denied. That his themes were often repeated did not in the least lessen the attraction of the stories, as witness the anticipation we all experienced from week to week in those days of the Magnet and the Schoolboy's Own Library, and the addictive mixture we never tired of. Even without the illustrations, the charm and attraction would still have had great appeal for our imaginative young minds in those far-off days, as indeed they still do today; how much more then did we (and do we) owe to the creative art of those artists who did so much to bring our stories to life. Throughout the history of Greyfriars, the illustrations of Leonard Shields did most, for me, to bring life to its characters and surroundings in such a wholly convincing way; for me, Leonard Shields was Greyfriars. However, before readers take pen to paper in defence of the well-loved C.H.Chapman, let me hasten to add that this is only my personal preference.

To return to descriptions in general and to the selection of series chosen previously for study in particular, it seemed to me that in each series the author used great skill in his use of those descriptions so relevant to the local action of each individual story, and thus keeping the reader's interest alive in each successive part of the area. It never ceases to amaze me how Frank Richards, in his writing, could so completely immerse himself in the atmosphere of his current subject. His ability to do this had its influence on this particular reader (no doubt on countless others also), for from my early days it became habit to note down all references to descriptions whether of the local district or of details in or around the school itself. In that way I gradually built up a rather rough but adequate index, to which I found myself referring more and more as time passed, especially when working on any specific study of Greyfriars and/or its history. It has helped in countless ways since its commencement in about the year 1925.

Nowadays, since the welcome activities of our old friend W.Howard Baker have made it increasingly possible to obtain so many facsimiles of Magnets, etc., previously well-nigh unobtainable, a door has opened to enable much more research to be undertaken by many more students.

From the series list on page 2, from references contained in the relevant magnets for the Loders Captaincy series, we find in Magnet 923, on page 6, that the Remove boxroom can be reached by a stair leading up from the end of the Remove passage; we also find that we have to leave the Remove passage and descend the Remove staircase to the ground-floor in order to reach the 6th. Form passage (page 8).

In Magnet 924, on page 5, we find that the main (Head's) corridor leads directly to the Head's study on the ground-floor and (page 8/9) that the Prefects Room is near the 6th. form passage, both also on the ground-floor, in what we can only assume is the West wing. If we also study the Prefects at War series, we find confirmation that the Head's house is situated in the Close, a little distance away from his study in the School itself.

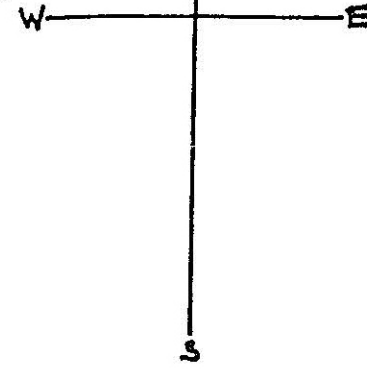
Taking into consideration all the available evidence from existing descriptions, I think it is logical to assume that the ground-floor of the West wing contains the Library, Head's study and main corridor, 6th. Form-room, 6th. Form study/bedrooms, not forgetting the lobby where 6th. Formers find the means of exit and re-entry when breaking bounds, the Prefects Room near the 6th. Form passage, probably also the guest rooms and, of course, Big Hall.

From the same source we also find that the Fifth Form passage, studies and the Games Room are on the first-floor above.

In the Courtfield Cracksman series, there is a reference to Masters passage, confirming its position on the ground-floor, central area; there is also a reference to a side door used by Masters only. I have not shown this on the map as I can find no other mention of it, but it is worth bearing in mind as a possibility.

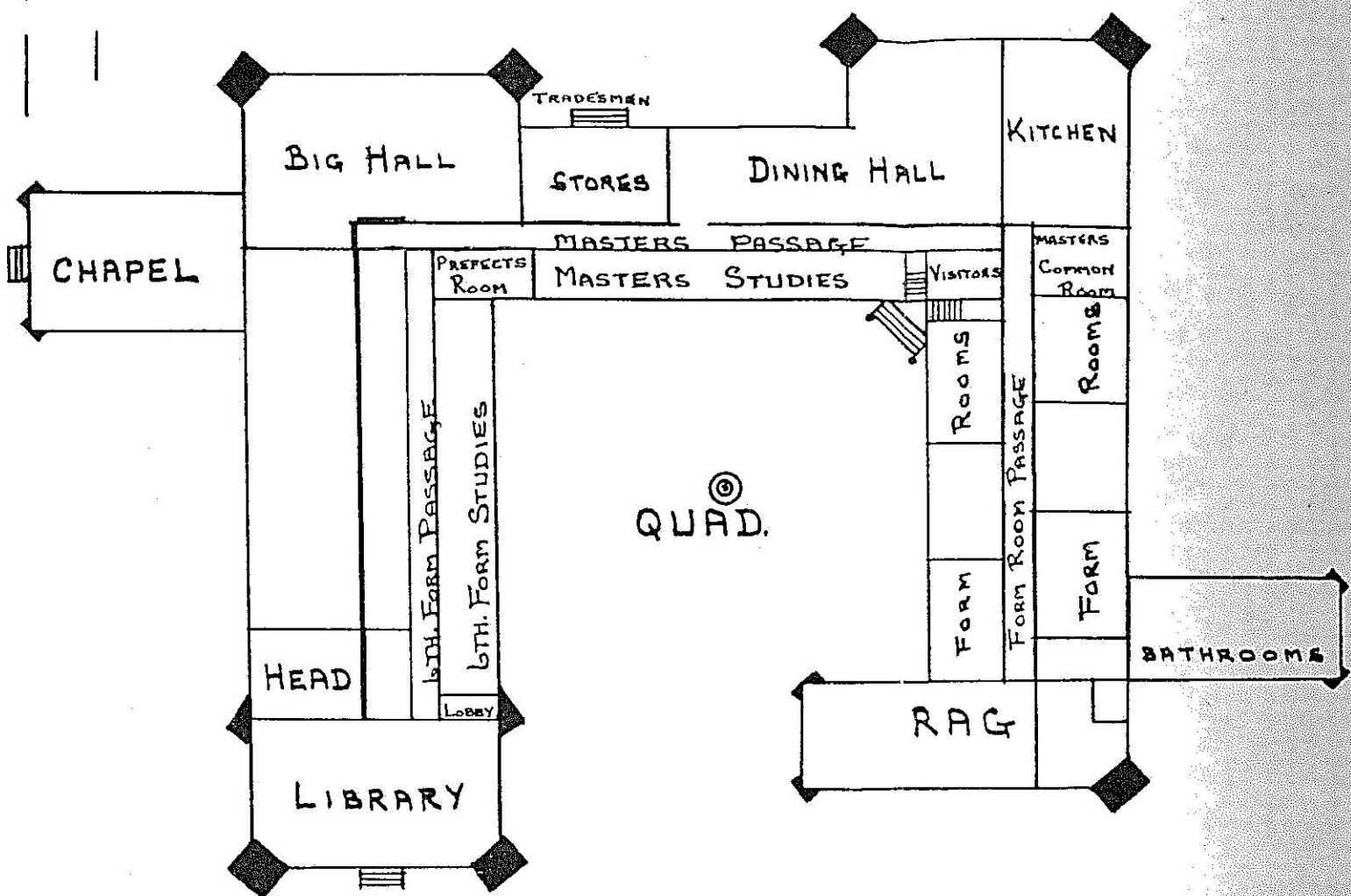
In the Tatters series there is a very good description of the Remove passage, with Study I at the staircase end, boxroom at the far end. The Lancaster series contains descriptions of the 6th. passage and the study/bedrooms with the famous lobby at the West end. There is also a very good description of the relative positions of the 6th. Form studies and (across the Quad.) the Rag or junior common-room.

In the Valentine series can be found other references to Masters gate near the old Cloisters, Masters passage, Remove and Shell passages, many details of the topography of ground, first and second floors, and of buildings in the Greyfriars grounds. See also Appendix.



GROUND FLOOR

FIR LANE
CLOISTERS



QUAD.

LITTLE SIDE
PLAYING FIELDS

BIG SIDE

CLOSE

COURTFIELD

FRIARDALE

TUCK SHOP

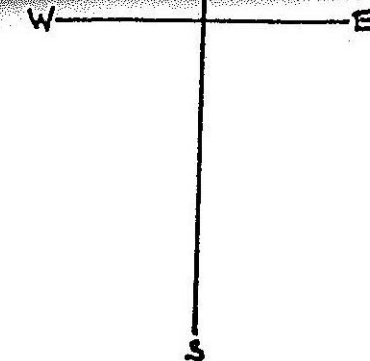
PORTER

GATES

HEAD'S HOUSE

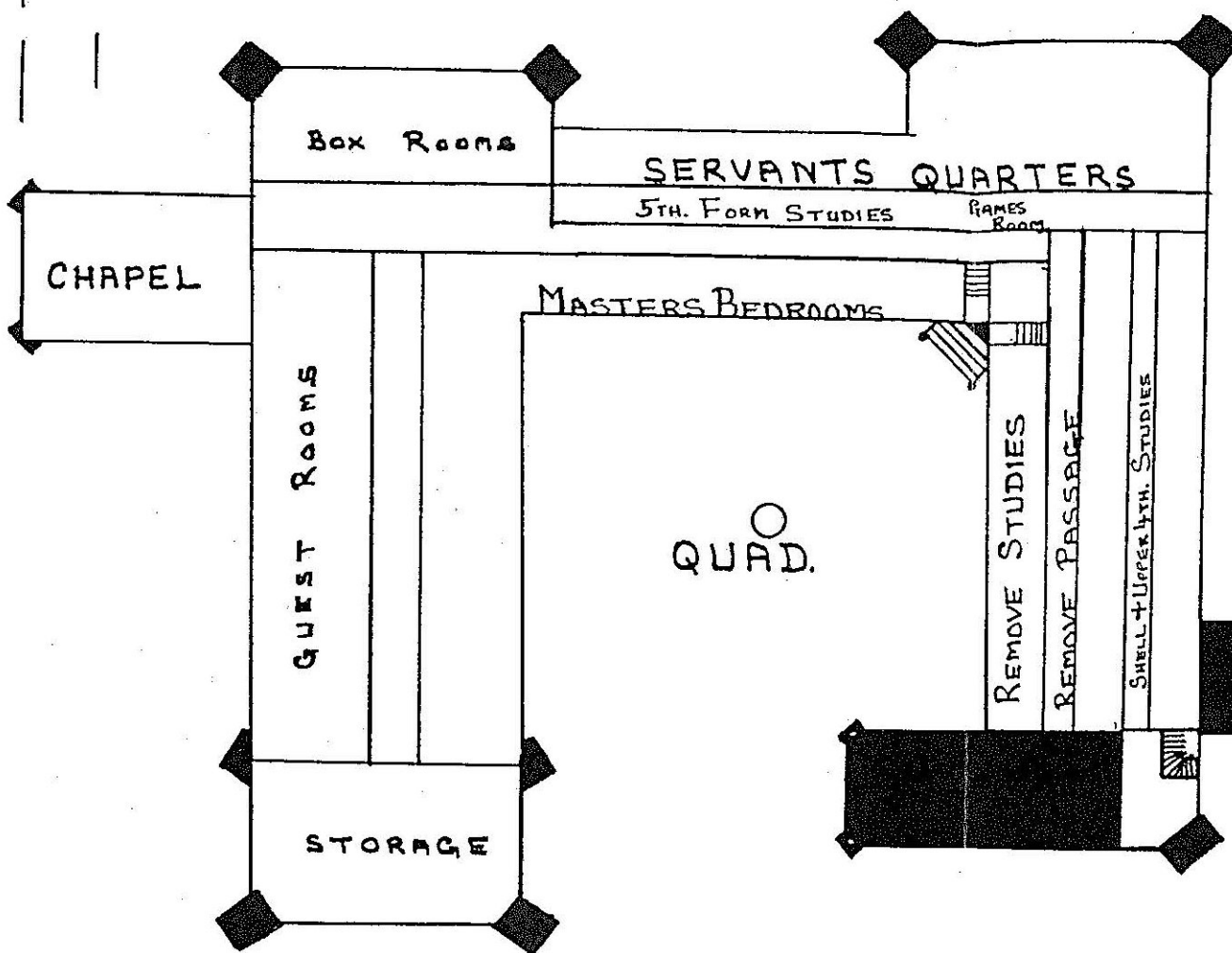
LANE

FRIARDALE



FIRST FLOOR

FIR LANE
CLOISTERS



LITTLE SIDE

PLAYING FIELDS

BIG SIDE

C L O S E

COURTFIELD

FRIARDALE

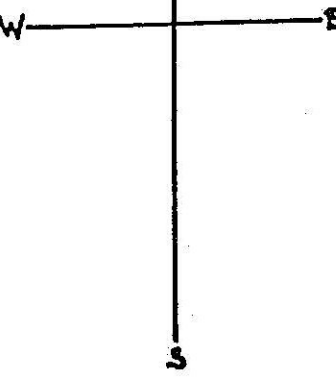
TUCK SHOP

GATES

HEAD'S HOUSE

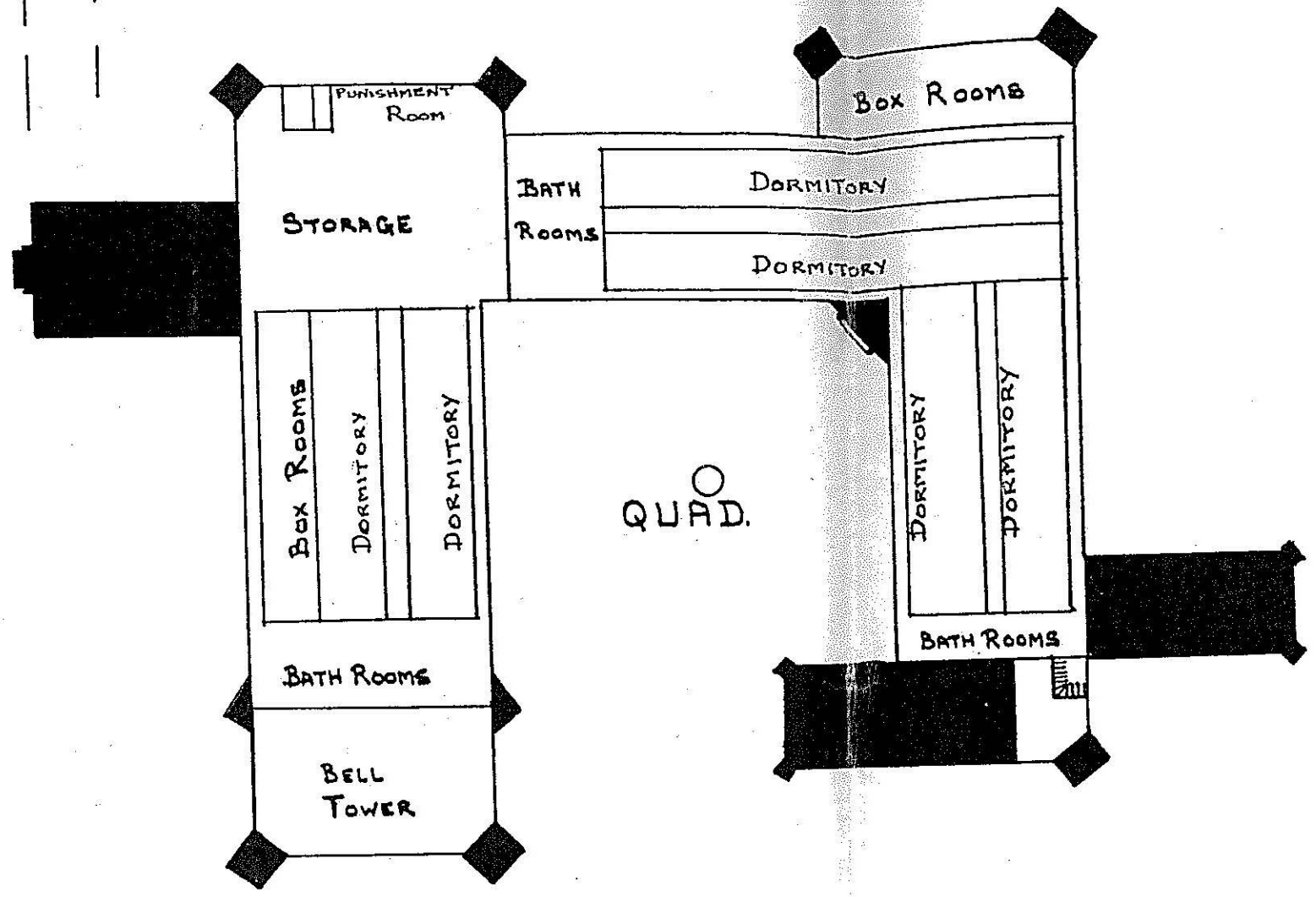
LANE

FRIARDALE



SECOND FLOOR

FIR LANE
CLOISTERS



QUAD.

LITTLE SIDE

PLAYING FIELDS

BIG SIDE

CLOISTERS

← COURT FIELD

FRIARDALE

GATES

HEAD'S HOUSE

LANE

FRIARDALE →

Appendix

A selection of notes and references to Greyfriars School and grounds

In this companion to my recent Guide to the Greyfriars district, I have attempted to complete the introduction, and at the same time to increase the incentive towards continued study, of one of the most fascinating stories of our earlier days, happily more readily available now to dedicated Greyfriars students through the good offices of a publisher with vision, who was far-sighted enough to materialise it.

Through all the years of Greyfriars stories in the Magnet, and of the well-loved reprints in the Schoolboys Own Library, there was never any shortage of descriptive material and, though some of it was occasionally rather confusing or misleading, most of it was surprisingly authentic, and was readily available to those who noted and stored such material against a future occasion, when the whole story may perhaps be re-told.

In the following appendix I have included a selection of references to most parts of the School buildings and grounds, drawn from a lifetime of reading, noting and recording such information.

It will be seen that certain areas within the School buildings have been deliberately left blank; for such areas I have been unable to find any reliable information and, rather than fill them with an indiscriminate collection of 'usual offices', I prefer to leave them for any possible results of future research, or merely to the reader's imagination.

Big Hall	See Ground-floor map
Big Side	S.O.L.310, M.I212/14
Chapel	See Ground-floor map
Cloisters	S.O.L.239, M.III10, II61/62
Close	See Ground-floor map
Dining Hall	See Ground-floor map
Dormitories	S.O.L.367, M.I312/14
Elm Walk	S.O.L.400, M.I303/05
Fifth passage	S.O.L.225, M.III13/15
Fir Lane	S.O.L.400, M.I303/05
Form-room passage	See Ground-floor map
Fountain	M.928
Games Room (or Study)	S.O.L.239, M.III10, II61/62, I219
Guest Rooms	See First-floor map
Head's House	S.O.L.99, M.I66/168

Head's Study	S.O.L.233, M.1087/89
Library	See Ground-floor map
Little Side	S.O.L.231, M.1126/28
Lobby	S.O.L.310, M.1212/14
Masters bedrooms	S.O.L.211, M.1039/41
Masters Common Room	See Ground-floor map
Masters Gate	S.O.L.397, M.1300/02
Masters passage	S.O.L.211, M.1039/41
Masters studies	Various references, S.O.L. and Magnet
Monks Cell	S.O.L.211, M.1039/41
Prefects Room	M.924
Punishment Room	S.O.L.243, M.1166/68
Quadrangle	S.O.L.286, M.874/77
Rag	S.O.L.310, M.1214/15
Remove passage	S.O.L.265, M.1198/1200
Remove studies	S.O.L.400, M.1303/05
Secret passages	M.1224/25, Friars Oak series
Sixth Form green	S.O.L.245, M.1169/71
Sixth Form passage	S.O.L.310, M.1111, 1214
Sixth Form study/bedrooms	S.O.L.310, M.1111, 1214
Tuck Shop	S.O.L.211, M.1039/41 (and Rebellion series)
Visitors Room	S.O.L.181, M.819/23
