

R.S.M. Blincow

J. W. Blincow was born in 1894, enlisted in the Grenadier Guards in 1911, more than two years under the proper age, and became an Instructor when he was still too young legally to be a recruit. He served through most of the 1914-18 war, was invalided out in April, 1918, spent one term at Charterhouse, and came to Bedford in September, 1918. He married in 1915, and for forty years his wife has given him that background of steady support and happiness without which he could not have achieved the half of what he has done. His two sons, Stanley and Sidney, had splendid careers at School: the elder was Captain of the 1st XV and in the 1st VIII; the younger, Captain of School Athletics, a brilliant sprinter (who later distinguished himself as such at Aberdeen University), and Captain of the 2nd XV. Both were commissioned and both were killed in action in the last war.

At the School from 1918 to 1954, Blincow's main job was in the O.T.C. as it was till 1939, and the first thing you knew about him—probably before you saw him—was his voice. There has not been such a voice before and there will be none like it

again. Before this footling modernisation took place, drill was a mystery or craft in the medieval sense; something that only a real master could comprehend. When you formed platoon at the halt on the left with the rear rank in front, and the odd numbers marked time for one pace, ceremonial parades involved the most complicated movements; and officers and cadets alike wondered how one head (even one requiring headgear of $7\frac{1}{2}$) could carry all he knew. "Hold your chin up, No. 25 in the front rank, I think it is; No. 26 rather!" The C.C.F., I have no doubt, is doing and will do good work; but the old magic and the mystery have departed for ever.

Perhaps Blincow was at his best in camp—not on parade or in administration, not even training the band, but, in times of recreation, coaching tug-of-war teams to victory over far heavier teams or playing rounders or tip-and-run. You simply could not get him out—should the bowler get past his bat or body (a substantial obstacle in any case) there was always some rule, not previously heard of by any save the Sergeant-Major, which kept his wicket intact.

During the last war, Blincow assisted Home Guard sections all over the county, and so enlarged his knowledge of the men and the places of the country he loved so well. In this period, the squads he took for punishment-drill spent the time on work on the field, and gave valuable help to groundsman Pepall, who was then working almost single-handed. For his work in the O.T.C., J.T.C., and now C.C.F., he was awarded the B.E.M. and later the Cadet Forces medal.

Injury prevented Blincow playing much rugger, but I have seen him at full-back, and, as you would expect, there was nothing ordinary or commonplace about his play. His punts sailed into touch majestically, but the touch judge had to wait some minutes before the ball dropped down again from the clouds. As a place-kicker he gave useful hints to 1st XV players for many seasons. He was an excellent referee, and, should his decisions be questioned—it rarely happened—his instant quoting of the relevant law, paragraph and sub-paragraph, had the would-be critic quickly in his place. As a spectator he was first-class, *i.e.*, he told the team (school, club or county), exactly what they should do, in clear unmistakable terms. He must have won as many matches as any spectator in the country. He was a firm—at times almost the only—supporter of the Lizards. For many difficult years, he was secretary (team and match), transport organiser, touch judge, referee and crowd. No O.B. who has not played at Long Buckby can call himself an experienced rugger player.

In School Athletics, Blincow acted as starter for many years, and he did the same in the "Inky", when his kindly way with the very young was specially valuable. The same quality was evident in the Swimming Pool, where he has taught hundreds of boys and girls to swim. It is about six years ago that he demonstrated the soundness of his methods by diving in, fully clad, to bring to safety a girl who had absent-mindedly strayed out of reach of his pole. In his early years he helped in the Gymnasium for many years; he has organised the teams behind the stage at the Assault-at-Arms. When the Quadrangular Boxing took place at Bedford he announced the fights; and he was the Toastmaster at O.B. Dinners.

Outside, his interests are wide and varied. He is a keen angler and a good shot. When game has been scarce and difficult, he has brought down hare, partridge and pheasant with no particular difficulty, while the writer, to avoid returning to his expectant family empty-handed, has had to fill his pockets furtively with brussels sprouts! He has a useful knowledge of first-aid—demonstrated on many injuries on the School field. He can sweep chimneys as well as a professional; he can make or mend boots (skill born and bred in him from his forebears in Northamptonshire), and he can dig better, on their own confession, than the expert gravediggers of the cemetery—may it be long before he digs his own!

O.V.B.