

The Opie Shield

The Opie Memorial Shield was presented to the school in memory of the long serving and popular matron, Mrs Emma Opie.

Retirement of 'Mother Opie'

Mrs Opie retired from the school on 17 August 1921, after 27 years.

At the Old Boys meeting on 16 August a farewell tribute was held for Mrs Opie, as well as for Mr H.W. Vinter, the retiring headmaster and his sister.

'The great reception accorded Mrs Opie was ample demonstration of the high esteem in which she was held'.

She was presented with an easy chair with a tapestry cover 'and a substantial purse' as a tangible expression of their affection. It was hoped 'she would spend many happy hours in the chair and think of them all ... the school was a home for the boys while they were away from home while she was there'.

After her retirement from the school Mrs Opie, a widow for 47 years, lived with her sister, Mrs Mitchell of Mongoose, St Agnes. However she did not have long to enjoy the peace and quiet; seven weeks later, on 2 October

retiring on Sunday evening in her usual health, she complained on Monday morning of feeling unwell. She expired before medical attention could be summoned.

That same day news reached Mr Vinter of Mrs Opie's death at Mongoose. He had seen 'her apparently in her usual health only the previous Thursday' and was shocked by the news.





It was my privilege as Headmaster to be associated with her as Matron of the College for this long period, and I gratefully express thanks for her long and valuable help in the management of the School. Mrs Opie was indeed a most efficient Matron, but I venture to think that her name will long be remembered as 'Mother Opie'. She was a mother to all the boys, and they never hesitated to go to her for advice and help. The thoughts of many boys will turn with gratitude to the well-known room over the front entrance. As we talked together on that Thursday she was bright and happy, and talked of her plans for the future, specially that of carrying on correspondence with the Old Boys.

She had no sympathy or help for boys who were feigning illness, but if a boy was really ill she would nurse him with all the tenderness and devotion of a mother. On one occasion she gave up her own bedroom for six months, so that the boy might have the advantage of a good out-look and fresh air. 'A mother writes to say: "I feel that she gave her life utterly to the welfare of the boys, and I felt that we owed her much for her kindness to my son during his stay with you". Such cases are only typical of her self-sacrifice for the good of others. Mrs Opie always kept up an extensive correspondence with the Old Boys, and no one will ever know how many letters she wrote and what help she afforded to boys on their starting in life. It was during the war that her correspondence greatly increased. One of the khaki lads says: "We were such great friends and in many respects she appeared to care for me like a mother. Her affection followed me everywhere – Spain, South America and France. I have letters from her which she had written to me in nearly every part of the world I have been". She had a wonderful collection of photos of Old Boys serving in the war, and she was very pleased on leaving to know that these would be carefully preserved in the school..

Mrs Opie did her work well, and much of it was unknown to the outside world, but those who lived with her knew her sterling worth and Christian character.

The end was indeed sudden and quite unexpected, but she died according to her oft-repeated wish. Mrs Opie has entered on a higher service, but her works and kindly interest will be inseparately associated with Truro College.

H.V.W, *Truro College Magazine*, December 1921

Her funeral took place at Mount Hawke on 6 October. The procession from Mongoose to the church was preceded by prefects from the school bearing floral wreaths. A number of Old Boys and about 40 pupils and members of staff were present for the service.

Memorial Shield

The Opie Shield was first presented at the Past and Present cricket match in 1923, by Mr Vinter on behalf of the donors Mr and Mrs Charles Bawden, son-in-law and daughter of Mrs Opie, to the headmaster Mr Magson. The shield was to be presented annually to the winning house of the inter-house competition.

Mr Magson accepted the shield with pleasure and pride. He said that he had remodelled the house system and in each house they were trying to develop sport by making every boy who was physically capable, proficient at games. In each house there were three teams in football and two in cricket. Other games which counted for the shield were chess and draughts and he hoped to add shooting to the list if a suitable place was available.

Truro College Magazine, July 1923

The shield was presented to J.D. Couch, captain of Smith House, the first winners of the shield. The house competition was actually first competed for in 1921-1922, and won by Smith; a back-dated plaque was later added to the shield.



The first three winners of the Opie Shield