

## Rendcomb College – The Day the School Ceiling Fell In 1999



Headteacher, John Tolputt, surveys the damage to the dining room at Rendcomb College

### **PUPILS' LUCKY ESCAPE**

STAFF were trapped when a ceiling came crashing down on top of them in a West school yesterday – just minutes before more than 50 pupils were due to eat their lunch beneath it. Three kitchen staff were hurt when an entire section of a suspended aluminium-framed ceiling collapsed in the dining room of Rendcomb College, near Cirencester in Gloucestershire, at 12.15pm. The catering workers, two men and a woman, had to be pulled from the mangled wreckage of metal and fibreglass tiles by other members of staff. Firefighters rushed to the scene but the victims had already been rescued when they arrived. The kitchen staff had been enjoying their own meals before catering for the school pupils when the ceiling collapsed. A 30-year-old man suffered back injuries, a 54 year-old man had head and shoulder injuries and a 51 year-old woman suffered numbness to her arms, neck and face.

All three were taken to Cheltenham General hospital for treatment and later allowed home. Last night the school's headteacher, John Tolputt, said: "The false ceiling in the dining hall just came down, fortunately there were no pupils around. "We don't know what caused it. A structural engineer is coming to look at it and the other ceilings." Mr Tolputt added: "I am relieved that it wasn't worse and it's fortunate we have got another dining room so we can seal it off until it can be made safe. "It was a bit of a shock. If it had happened later about 50 children would have been in there."

*It was later established that the most likely cause was undetected water leakage from a washroom on the floor above, and having revealed the hidden but ornate original ceiling, the entire false ceiling was subsequently removed.*

*From the Western Daily Press, Tuesday 18 May 1999*