

1. Choirs

Isn't it astonishing that a small Grammar School could at one time or another over a school generation (and possibly at the same time, though I cannot be sure of that) have a Girls' Choir, a Boys' Choir, a Male Voice Choir, a Madrigal Choir, a Bach Choir, a Mixed Choir and a School Orchestra, AND organise trips to hear the Halle and The Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra? What a remarkable place HGS was.

Peter Wall

2. Spelling and Mr. Collette

Dear Dave,

I have a Mr. Collette story. My mother had attended HGS in the 30's ... it was really interesting to be able to find her on the school photos of those years. She recalled two teachers who were still there when I arrived ... Mr. "Titch" Manning (Physics) and Mr. Collette (Senior Master). On the first Parent's Night ... hmmm ... what did we call those times when parents came in to meet with our teachers? I'm stuck in the American title "Back to School Night" here. Whatever, when my Mam was coming in for the first time, she was nervous about meeting Mr. Collette again. After the evening was over she reported on how things had gone. She had spoken with Mr Collette, she had used the verb "indicted" in the conversation, at which point he immediately asked her to spell it!!!! She seemed, for me at that time, inordinately proud that she spelled it for him correctly. And another small issue. It seems a little odd for me now to recall that I knew the boys by their last names only! I often wondered how that felt to the boys and what that was all about.

Cheers,

Jean Snookes

Dear Jean,

What a lovely story! The "surname only" for boys came as quite a shock to me in the First Form. One soon got used to it - we had to! RWH never called me anything but McKenzie. Mr. Collette was far more friendly. I got on really well with him, especially in my last year. I can see him now - walking through the trees to the Green Gate at the end of his day in HGS. It was Summer and St Helen's Church was calling out the hour - 6 o'clock. I did not hear any other sound.

Best wishes,

Dave

Dear Dave,

I have been nudged to think about how many Hilmians went into education in one form or another. I would love to be able to send a message to Bill Russ, Mr. Collette and Miss. Smith about how extraordinary their work was ... they created a new "world" culture behind the Green Gate for all of us Yorkshire kids, a culture of expectations, self esteem, exposure, a culture of possibility, standards, and respect. It was the antithesis of what we see in the USA, where budget cuts and public concern have reduced schooling to the "the basics" for so many, especially those who need more. Having found so many peers, now I want to find Mr. Stewart, Jock Johnston, Mr. Ken Sale, Uncle Dudley Taylor, Miss. Kilner, Mr. Swinbank, and etc. etc. If only!

Cheers,

Jeannie

3. To Hilmians who lived in Upton (1959)



I like the idea of putting school memories into poetry and I've already got quite a few verses spinning around in my head. I'm also enclosing a poem that I wrote during a brief moment of nostalgia about a month ago. I don't know if it's suitable for the web-site, but it is about leisure activities at the time we were at school. I think Dave might like it because he was a participant in those activities at the time.

Upton Youth Club 1959

Eyes that glare up at the ceiling;
Grunts and groans and bodies reeling;
Glossy muscles rippling tightly -
Nothing here is taken lightly.

Clanging weights from iron cast;
Repetitions - hope I last!
Straining backs on inclined benches.
What's it for? - to please the wenches.

Walls that stream with condensation,
Crumbling from dilapidation,
Pale-green painted, cracked and peeling.
Subsidence there's no concealing.

Training's done, I hear the sound
Of Rock and Roll - the ceilings pound.
Tread the stairs to hear the band,
With a 7-Up bottle in my hand.

Swirling petticoats. Who's that chick?
I guess I'd better move in quick!
"Subs" are due, old Skipper's here.
It's time for me to disappear!

Bob Taylor [Tues 02/09/03]

Thanks, Bob. That takes me back. I never went up to the Rock 'n' Roll, of course. The weights helped me with my rugby and athletics. That's all. After training I would "run a lamp, walk a lamp" back to Harewood Lane. Drink my milk, do my homework (4 per night!!) and go to bed. I would awake refreshed for another day of study and sport at HGS.

Dave McKenzie

4. Forms



I think I remember that somewhere on the site you ask about how pupils were organised into forms when they first came to Hemsworth. I am pretty sure you are right in saying it was one according to 11+ performance, but in our year, 1947, there was an extra twist. The year was divided into two halves of comparable ability; the half I was in started French straight away, but the other half did Esperanto in their first year and did not begin French until the Second Form. Presumably the idea was to see if studying Esperanto would give pupils an understanding of the structure of language which would help them learn other languages more

easily and quickly. Our performance in French at O level were compared and I believe there was no discernible difference in the results of the two groups, so it seems as though the experiment worked to an extent.

Peter Wall

5. A poem for boys of the 1955 intake plus 2



Holgate V Guest

"It's heads," says Pasher, "Choose your goal!"
So Parkin heels another hole,
Places oval ball just right,
Then kicks it into studied flight.
Hordes of yellow jerseys charge,
And some of them are rather large
Baker says, "Why pick on me and not the others?"
He drops the ball and can't recover.

He's on the ground and he's attacked
By friend and foe - a scrum's been stacked!
He mumbles, "Rugby I detest -
I've only come here as a Guest!"

He scrambles out from underneath
The heaving, grunting pile of beef.
"Get in that scrum," shouts Valentine,
"Or Holgate colours will be thine!"

The ball pops out, and guess who's there
To pick it up. "It isn't fair,
To put me on the spot like this!"
Says Baker, with a cunning hiss.

With deep dismay the Guest players wince.
"He's gone and given it to Hince,"
Shouts Daley with a face that matches
His big, red shirt with muddy patches.

From Hince to Field, then in a line,
The oval ball is moving fine -
To Clay, Lees, Poskett, Pickin, Pawson -
This Holgate team is really awesome!

Kidd sells Harrison a 'dummy'
Then passes it to Holland's tummy.
He gives the glory all to Morley -
Twigg says to Stonier, "They're looking poorly!"

Baker, now, has been demoted,
He says, "I'm safe at full-back." [quoted].
Then his mind goes into frenzy
As Taylor slips the ball to McKenzie!

McKenzie charges down the wing
With all his fine-tuned muscles pumping.
Baker's shivering with fear -
"It looks like I'm in trouble, here!"

Baker runs with all his might,
But it's in the wrong direction - right?

McKenzie streaks between the poles
To add to his long list of goals.

Abell, Whalley, Wildman, May,
Gainey, Pickles, Taylor say
To Baker when they're, later, showering,
"You've let us all down with your cowering!"

Baker says "Well, I don't care,
For none of you would ever dare
To tackle him - that great, big lorry.
I'd rather stay in one piece - sorry!"

Bob Taylor [19/10/03]

6. Our Games



Can you recall the different games we used to play in our breaks and dinnertimes at School? I remember 'Hide and Seek' being popular with the girls. There were so many good places to hide (wherever we may have chosen to play in the School grounds), that we had to establish firm boundaries before we started. The boys always seemed to play the physical games of Touch Rugby, or Finger Thumb or Rusty Dum (was it?). Dave Worgan has mentioned this a while ago. Conkers in season, slides on icy winter days, and 'Tig' or 'Tick' also come to mind, with its variation whereby when a person was caught by the catcher, they would join hands and chase the rest. The next person when caught would join hands with the catchers again, until there was a huge chain of people sweeping round the playground chasing one person and colliding with everyone they passed.

Does anyone recall a game which involved a group of boys who stood a playing card as a 'hypotenuse' to any handy brick wall, and then standing at a pre-arranged distance from it, aimed, with an expert flicking action, the other cards in the pack with the purpose (I think) of covering it without knocking it over. Am I correct? Now I come to think of it, was there a similar game using lolly sticks instead of cards?

The younger girls often took a partner and held crossed hands while they 'twizzed' one another round at speed, or a few would stand in a circle to play a clapping game involving a repetitive chant and connecting with the hands of the next girl along.

I don't remember anyone chalking a hopscotch on the playground, but as First-Formers we used the paving stones for that game which were in and around the New Block. Occasionally the girls brought skipping ropes to School, and wherever there was a set of steps there would be girls giving each step a number, letter or colour, and then one girl would say a letter/number and the players would have to jump to the correct step. If one slipped, touched another step or jumped to the wrong step, they were 'out' and had to become the 'caller'. This sounds a bit mundane, but when the caller speeded things up it became more interesting! There were steps up to the girls' cloakroom at the top of the girls' walk which were good for this game.

That's all I can bring to mind. Any help here would be appreciated! There must be loads more, and it may even vary over the different generations. Perhaps those who are still teaching could tell us what today's teenagers get up to in their breaks!

Sheila Kelsall

Dick Bateman adds....

Some games. Usty-busty-finger and thumb we called it in Grimethorpe. One side formed a sort of linear "scrum" and the other side jumped as far onto them as we could. I loved it. When our side had all jumped on, our first jumper cried "Usty-busty-finger and thumb" at the scrum team, Usty was an open fist, busty a closed fist, finger was one finger up, and thumb-one thumb up. The first jumper showed it to the kid he was lying on. The back kid in the "scrum" guessed which gesture was being shown. If he guessed right, the scrum became the next jumpers and the jumpers had to scrum down. If he guessed wrong, the jumpers had another go. Needless to say, you had kids hanging on all over the place and often the whole lot would collapse in giggles or, even better, a scrap. Great fun.

Also, what about "throw can", Queenie-o, and, of course, British bulldogs.

Throw can

One kid is "on" and stands by a flattened can. Everyone else runs and hides. The "onner" goes to find them. When caught you stand in the "dead" area behind the can. If some brave soul runs out from hiding, without being touched by the "onner", and throws away the can, everyone is freed. The "onner" runs to fetch the can and starts to find the hidees. Great game.

"Queenio"

You all stand in single file down the middle of the road. If Queenie shouts a TV star you all run to the left. If she shouts a film star you run to the right. Anyone running the wrong way is "Out". Same sort of game as Port (left), Starboard (right) and shipwreck (fall down) in the gym.

British Bulldogs

One lad is on, on the 22 metre line. Everyone else runs past him from half way to get to the try line. If he tackles someone they join him in tackling the others. The last runner to not be tackled is the winner. He is then the Onner.

Christine Whittaker (1955-62)

About the games at school - I remember playing the game which the boys played against a wall when half the team crouched down in a line and the rest jumped on to their backs until the whole thing collapsed. In the first couple of years I remember having a mania with acrobatics and walking in the "Crab ". I can't remember if we played 2 ball and 3 ball up against the wall at school but I certainly did at home. I think the Prefects were on duty at the doors but we used to try and sneak in if they happened to move. We were quite scared of being seen by a member of staff so we didn't try it too often. I remember that we used to play Jacks [the metal ones] and Five Stones [usually bits of flat sandstone picked up in the shrubbery].

Judith Gunhouse (1956-63)

My favourite game was 'Hot Rice'. Boys and girls got together in a circle, hands round shoulders, heels together and toes touching the next person's. One person dropped a ball in the middle, and whoever's foot it hit, they were "it" and had to throw the ball at someone who, when hit, also was "it". The others scattered on the playground (usually the new one near the Gym). Each time you hit someone, they joined the catchers who were not allowed to run with the ball, only to throw it to the other catchers, to aim at the ones left. This was done until everyone became catchers and only one person was left who had not been touched by the ball. This person got to drop the ball in the circle of feet, and then the game started again.

Doris Richardson (1944-49)

Benches near the Little Bridge. Remember the little bridge that straddled a ditch? ...well, along from that were some benches, overlooking the Cricket Pitch. At some point someone had devised a game involving them. A bench and the immediate surrounding area were marked off (by scraping the earth) into smaller areas and numberedmuch like a hop-scotch game. One girl gave instructions to another eg. 1, 3, 5, 4, whereupon the second girl had to leap from 1 to 3 to 5 to 4. It became more complicated with practice. There were rules and I think sequences but I don't remember them. I didn't play much but watched the others. It was far too energetic for me.

Friends and Games. From time to time we would come into contact with other girls, and as we grew bolder, boys as well --- (were we actually segregated or did we simply prefer it that way --- for a short time at least?) Helen Sims had other friends from Upton Moira Longden, Ella Godwin and Dorothy Nutter. On one occasion we were attacked by them and pushed into the holly bushes on the North Walk. Or we would be leaped upon and chased by them in a sudden game of 'Tig' or 'Truth or Dare'. At times as well we would sit on the high wall which separated the old walled kitchen garden from a farmyard which must have been closer to the main road. We also made friends with some young boys from a lower form.

David Worgan (1954-62)

Having read Sheila Kelsall's account of the pig sties, I was vividly reminded of the amazingly anarchic game 'Finger, Thumb or Dum' which took place in the vicinity of the pig sties. Basically the game consisted of two teams of 8 or more slightly deranged boys. The team who were the 'backs' placed one boy in contact with and facing the wall with the remainder placing their heads between the previous boys legs making a row of backs. The team who were 'on' then had to get every member of their team on to this row of backs using a leap frogging action. Once every member of the team were on the backs (numbers were critical at this point believe you me) the captain of the 'on' team the held up either a finger, a thumb, or a dum (fist). The captain of the backs unbelievably then had to guess which of these three options the other captain was displaying. If the guess was correct then the teams changed positions (backs becoming ons), if incorrect then the teams stayed in position and the process was repeated. Remember this was the West Riding in the 1950's long before Equal Opportunities (singing treble was a definite advantage) and the HSE! Can anyone enlighten me on the finer points of the game (technicalities, language, unofficial records etc.) and am I right in thinking that a version of this game appears in Breugel's "Childrens Games"?

Cheers,

Worg

Wray Vamplew (1955-62)

The game was played with either a compass or small penknife. You faced your opponent with feet together about five feet away from each other. You took turns to throw the compass. If it stuck in the ground within a handspan of your opponent's feet he had to move his foot to that position. If it was more than a span then he had stuffed up his throw and you kept your feet where they were. You kept going like this until one of you fell over because your legs were too stretched. You might care to run this past a few others to see how faulty my memory has become!

Cheers,

Wray

Sheila Comments:

What was that game called? "Stab-your-leg? Slice-your-toe? Impale-your-instep?" Such danger! I can see why it was a 'boys only' game, and also why it would have to be played on the fields! Can you think of any more? We were reckoning up that with a 15 minute break morning and afternoon, and an hour and a half dinnertime, that would be 10 hours free time per week in which to play/go for walks/do Sports practices etc. However did we fill the time?

Sincerely,

Sheila

7. Filming



Dear Dave,

Reading about the Film Club on the site today jogged my memory about the time I was involved in the early 40s. I was a member in my early years 1942-1945 at HGS. A film was made annually under the guidance of the Art Master - I think his name was Hartley - and the earlier ones seem to have been of the slapstick variety. However, the third year it was decided to do a drama for a change. I cannot remember much of the plot except that at one point Derek Wilkinson (Head Boy 1947-48), who was playing the part of an elderly gentleman, was walking across the moors and had an accident in that he fell off a cliff! This led to an hilarious filming sequence which took place in the old quarries at the top of Elmsall Hill. As film was in short supply it was always a one-take scenario and so to make it look genuine Derek had to fall naturally from the cliff face. This involved the rest of us being positioned below ready to catch him! Now Derek for any one who cannot remember him was a BIG lad for his age so at the word Action he just fell backwards on top of us where we promptly collapsed and the whole lot of us rolled down the slope to the bottom laughing or moaning as the case was. However our joint efforts must have been successful as it looked very realistic when the final film had its premier in the School Hall later in the year. An extras lot was not a happy one with the Amateurs! I have often wondered in the past what happened to those early efforts of the HGS film club. Those were the days!

Regards,

Eric Jones

8. The Fun Society, Walks and Tennis



I've had to wait to contact my old mate, Helen Sims to find out whether she could remember any more than I can about our activities during lunch breaks etc. You know I don't recall much. Though we were very unsophisticated compared with today's youth we were still past all the skipping games. As I write this though, I think I very vaguely recall other younger girls being a little more traditional. What I do remember is that right at the start of the first year we formed a 'club', which we called The Fun Society (T.F.S.). We had rules ... though I don't remember any and a password which we had to give before we could enter the den. This den was situated in the bushes between the hockey pitch and the rugby pitch and was very secret. We also had to take care when leaving the den so that no-one saw us. I was captain at the beginning, but what on earth our motives or objectives were - heaven alone knows! There were others in this gang, maybe five or so, but I can only remember the two of us with any clarity. I imagine it was all inspired by Enid Blyton, after all, we were still very young and fresh from the Primary school of the mid-forties. I think it all came to an end when the den was discovered and 'ragged' ... (I think that was the term used when someone destroyed a nest) probably by boys in the next field. Helen seems to think that it all continued until the second year but I thought it finished before that.

The Walks

We must have spent many hours walking round the field collecting beech nuts (which I think made me sick on one occasion), walking up the North Walk across the end of the hockey pitch back past the tennis courts then across past the big tree to the beginning of the North Walk again. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER across the Cricket pitch or you would get lines from a Prefect. I remember a girl who got about a hundred lines and wrote each one out on a separate bit of paper and handed them in to the Prefect in an envelope.

Tennis

I remember that when I was in the fifth year a boy I quite liked was playing tennis on the courts at lunch time. I'm almost certain that at that time, one could beg permission from the relevant member of staff and gain the use of a court. Here, a flash from the past reminds me that Helen Sims and I, as Fifth Formers, used to nip up the North Walk, go up to Hemsworth Park, and use our Dinner money to hire the courts there. If we got up early enough we could pack some sandwiches to stave off the hunger.

Doris Richardson (1944-49)

9. Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme 1967



This year about 25 boys and 15 girls are tackling the first (Bronze), while half a dozen more are attempting the second (Silver) stage. All are dreaming of their "golden handshake" at Buckingham Palace. Leadership is happily no longer the responsibility of one whose acquaintance with the scheme only outpaces that of the candidates by a few months. Mr. Waters, whose speed on Kinder Scout dismayed us all and Mr. Owens who has considerable experience in Award work are both now lending invaluable assistance. The Award itself takes a minimum of six months for each standard and four activities. They are Service (including First Aid, Life-saving etc.), Hobbies (varying from potholing to pig-keeping), Expedition, and Fitness and Design for Living (physical fitness for the boys and aspects of womanhood and homemaking for the girls). If we, through this scheme, can become more dependable and widen our interests and experience, then the Duke of Edinburgh's vision will have been fulfilled.

D.W.B.

10. Two Questions



Q1. Remembering that tarmac path running between the classrooms and the grass of the Dell, am I imagining that there were small flower beds containing rockery stones at the edge of the grass there in our time? (1950s)

Q2. A name which jumped out at me during a swift browse of the site was Mr. Wycherley. I remember him! He used to garden, while Mr Rhodes did the Sports pitches. Am I right? I wonder does anyone else know more about him - after all, he was at the School for 40 years!

Sheila Kelsall