

1. The Origin of the Awards



As a recipient of the Dr. H. Walker plaque and the Kenward Biology medal 1955, I wondered if anyone can shed any light as to the origin of these eponymous awards?

Tony Pickering (Price House, 1952-58)

In reply to Tony's query on the origin of the Kenward Biology medal, I have found this on the site:

"A new Biology teacher named Miss Kenward joined the staff during this school year (1931). Those of you who take Biology, and others too, will know of the Kenward Biology Medal, awarded each year to the most outstanding student of Biology. This was instituted by Miss Kenward." (Ainge J.A.)

This seems to explain the Kenward medal, now all we need to know is the identity of Dr. H. Walker. A lady by the name of Mrs. R. Walker was a Governor of the School during 1948, 1949, and 1950, though this may have no connection to the person we seek. Someone, one day, will tell us.....

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62

2. Index of Deprivation



What particularly interested me on the HGS site was one of the links to www.hemsworth.org. There it states that of the 8,000 or so 'wards' in England, Hemsworth ranks round about the 300 level in the Index of Deprivation: 1 being the worst deprivation; so 8,000 is pretty affluent. I haven't lived in Hemsworth for nigh on 38 years, but have been back very regularly so I am quite aware of how folk have to exist there. Of course, when we were at school, folk were also poor and deprived, but we knew nothing else and weren't surrounded by wealth, but HGS gave us a step-up. By reading your website or 'Friends Reunited', you realise that many Old Hilmians have done very well for themselves. I wonder if there is now some way our concerted efforts could help the poor generation that has known nothing but benefits and hopelessness, and likely to have to do so ad infinitum. I don't know what the answer is. I would just like to start the ball rolling and see if anybody else feels strongly enough to pick up on it.

Regards

Dave Fearnside, HGS 1958-66

3. Mock Election 1950



Pupils of Hemsworth Grammar School are enjoying a mock election. The election is being contested by Liberal, Labour, Conservative, Communist and Independent candidates, and although no agents have been appointed, the School Prefects are rallying as workers for the nominees. Arranged by the school's Historical Society, the election is purely instructional and is not to

be regarded as an indication of the children's political beliefs. It aims to show the children that there is more than one point of view and to give them an idea of what is happening in the outside world. Each candidate is to be allowed one lunch hour in which to arrange a "political" meeting and on "polling" day - Wednesday - they are to be allowed a final 15 minutes speech before the whole school. To add a touch of realism, the Conservative and Labour candidates for the Hemsworth Division, Miss. Jean Asquith and Mr. Horace E. Holmes, have been invited to address the pupils. To assure a "clean fight", Mr. R. W. Hamilton, who is to act as the Returning Officer, has prohibited interference with "party" posters and has ruled that no literature or posters are to be displayed without the signature of the candidate they are intended to support. The vote will be taken on Wednesday afternoon and the scholars will assemble later in the day to hear the result.

This article has been submitted by Geoff Govier. Thank you.

If anyone remembers this event, or any other political election in school, please get in touch with the site and tell us of your particular memories.

Peter Wall, HGS 1947-54, sends us this comment:



Although, as Geoff Govier says the Mock Election "aims to show the children that there is more than one point of view and to give them an idea of what is happening in the outside world", they were great fun too. People were very partisan and the regular public meetings held in the grounds at break and lunch-time were particularly entertaining with plenty of good-natured, if occasionally rowdy, heckling. Eric Twigg was the Labour candidate but I am afraid I cannot remember any others. Can anyone help with this information?

4. Changing Rooms 1950

This will surely bring back memories of what Mr. Hamilton calls the Black Hole of Calcutta. Funny, that's not how I remember it. But by today's standards but then, we knew nothing different.

Geoff Govier

A memorandum by Mr. R. W. Hamilton, Headmaster of Hemsworth Grammar School, stressing the need for improved changing facilities at the school, was sent to the County's Chief Education Officer. The memorandum pointed out that the present changing room had only 32 ft. of seating, giving a maximum seating capacity for 25 boys. Owing to the increased size of the school the number of boys to change for games might be as high as 72. Because of the increasing complexity of time-table organisation, physical training sometimes occurred at the same time as games, when as many as 103 boys had to change at the same time. The floor space of 337 sq. ft. was completely inadequate, and to put over 100 boys into the hut, the ventilation, which consisted of three small windows which opened seven inches, was rather reminiscent of the "Black Hole of Calcutta". The result of this congestion, the memo went on, was that many boys had to change for games in winter in the cricket pavilion, where there were no washing facilities and no heating. The washing facilities were obviously inadequate. Three showers, a small foot-bath and four wash-basins could not meet the needs of over 70 boys coming in muddy from games. The result was that most boys had to put their ordinary clothes on over their mud until they could get home to wash properly.

Mr. Hamilton said a new changing room should be built for games with accommodation for at least 80 senior boys, full shower and washing facilities, and an adequate supply of hot water. In addition, the showers in the present changing room should be converted to a shower corridor (the expense of this work should not be excessive), and the boiler feeding the showers should be renewed and improved to give adequate hot water to them. If the cost of the proposals was prohibitive the present changing room should be extended with the following objectives: Increasing the available floor space and seating facilities, and improving the ventilation, washing facilities (entailing a better supply of hot water, as the present boiler is too small to meet constant demand), and the lighting of the room. If the extension was approved the improvement could only be regarded as a temporary measure to alleviate the changing conditions until money is available to tackle the problem properly.

Does anyone have clear memories of these changing rooms?

Dave McKenzie

If my memory from nearly 50 years ago serves me correct, it was highly unlikely that anyone (boys at least) got a shower before the new Gym was built. The changing rooms were two wooden huts (one for boys, the other for girls) on the right before reaching the New Block. (Maybe adjoining the stable block) The milk crates were on a table outside these huts. They weren't so big, even when there were only about 30 boys doing PT, but when the whole year group got in for Games, there was certainly no room for showering - worse still when it was 5th and 6th form games, which were joint in those days. There were open shower cubicles, but every bit of space, even in the cubicles, was taken with boys clothing. There were some filthy kids going home on the buses after games lessons!!

5. Petition 1946-47



If the 600 boys and girls of Hemsworth Mixed Grammar School do not get a satisfactory answer to their petition to the School Governors against the plan to set up two single-sex multilateral schools, they are to organise a petition on behalf of their parents and send it to the West Riding Education authorities. Derek Wilkinson, Head Boy, of South Kirkby, said that both he and the Head Girl, Barbara Harwood, of Ryhill, appreciated that the new schools would not be set up in their time at school. "But we are thinking about our younger brothers and sisters who will be deprived of the mixed education advantages that we have had at this school," said Derek. The petition, which the scholars queued up to sign and which was sent to the School Governors, stated that they were proud of their school and its traditions and were happy under the present conditions. The petition added: "The conditions have developed a social atmosphere and mutual understanding between boys and girls which would be irrevocably lost if we were divided into two single-sex schools." The petition requests the education authorities to withdraw their decision to split the school into separate units.

Both Barbara and Derek are in the same form and due to leave in July. They both think that a mixed school has advantages over single-sex schools. Barbara said: "Boys grow up with us and don't get silly ideas about us and we don't get silly ideas about them." Derek said: "Having girls, in one classroom makes a boy less frivolous." The Headmaster, Mr. Russell Hamilton, said that his position was one of "benevolent neutrality". He added that he had had no hand in the instigation of the petition. He said that it was a credit to the school that the boys and girls had taken up such an attitude. "They obviously like the school as it stands and, by sending the petition, that they can think for themselves," he added. "That is what we teach them, but I am not going to say which side I am on.

This article comes from Celia Asher. Thank you, Celia.

6. Specific memories 1964-71



Miss Smith

She had a fearsome reputation and insisted that she was addressed by her name. You had to say, "Yes, Miss. Smith, no, Miss. Smith", and woe betide you if you forgot and tried to end a sentence without the obligatory "Miss. Smith". We were not allowed off the school premises unless we had a "permit". In order to obtain a permit you had to queue outside Miss. Smith's room before the start of school and provide proof of your need to obtain one. "I have a dentist's appointment, Miss Smith. Yes, Miss Smith. No, Miss Smith. Thank you, Miss Smith." It was on one such occasion that she amazed me. I was only in the second year and had gone to ask for a permit. She not only knew my name but she congratulated me on how well I'd done in the end of year French exam. She had never taught me and I don't think she had ever spoken to me before, so how did she know? At that time she only taught French to the Upper school so I came out of her room walking on air. Many of

the teachers in those days used to wear their academic gowns around school. Everyone else's was black but Miss Smith's was dark green.

Measurements

Standing on the stairs which led from the Girls' Changing Room to the Gym, I think in alphabetical order, to be weighed and measured in the first P.E. lesson of each term (or it might have been each year?).

"Habits"

I was really looking forward to doing Needlework in the second year, but before we were allowed anywhere near a sewing machine we had several weeks of "Hygiene" lessons. Miss Metcalfe talked to us about washing regularly and the importance of regular bowel habits! She was a lovely lady.

Uniform

School uniform skirts had to be exactly the right length - two inches from the floor when kneeling. Blue gingham summer dresses could be any style but Christine Laycock took this to extremes. When Miss. Smith said to her, "What are those?", she answered in wide eyed innocence, "Hot pants, Miss Smith." (At least she remembered to say Miss. Smith at the end of it!)

The Blue/Grey Lady

Was she blue or grey? Mrs. Margolis, maths teacher, once told us she had seen an apparition on the main staircase as she was going home late one evening. She had stayed back to do some marking and was quite alone in that part of the building when she saw the famous HGS ghost. I have wondered since if she was having us on at the time, but in my mind I believe she was very sincere.

Linda Redmile, HGS 1964-71 Holgate House.

7. Memories and Questions



- In July 1951 Miss. Woodward (P.E. mistress) and Mr. Owen (Science Master) were to be married in Buckinghamshire. The senior class of Domestic Science pupils, myself included, instructed by Miss. Metcalfe, were taught how to make the decorations for the wedding cake, basket weave trellis work and flowers.
- Does anybody remember the form Christmas parties held in the dining room? Did we have to bring some food?
- When the stage was put up over the Hall platform for School and Staff plays, were pupils involved in building it?

Irene Wright, HGS 1944-51

Dear Irene,

Thank you so much for your latest remembrances. I'm sure they will promote others to check their memory-banks! Mr. Owen was still at HGS when Dave and I left in 1962. I've just checked on the site, and he appears on the 1952-53 Staff photo, but no Miss. Woodward is listed. Then again, Mr. Owen is absent from the 1953-54 Staff photo, but is present on all the subsequent ones up to 1967. He certainly served his 'time' as Chemistry master at the School, didn't he!

Concerning your mention of Form Christmas parties - we have had some correspondence about a memory of a Dining Hall celebration in one of the Forum sections. My own Mum says she went as a volunteer to help pour the tea at such a gathering, but it involved more numbers than just my Form. Maybe it was a party for a whole year? The Staff were there, and she remembers Mr. Hamilton coming over to her and thanking her for helping out. She was feeling a bit awkward, because she had forgotten her pinafore. Such innocent times!

Now, about your mention of that stage, and the building which took place for School and Staff plays over the Hall platform. What was the Hall platform, and why did it need changing in order to stage the dramatics? This is news to us, as we only had experience of 'the stage in the Hall' which was as it was, if you get my meaning. You were in the play "Miss. Elizabeth Bennett" in 1949. It's strange, isn't it, that in schools nowadays there are Drama Departments, often with specialised Drama Suites, which occasionally stage a musical, or a play. Yet these productions seem to involve only those subject specialist people. In our days at School, just about anyone who wanted to be involved was given an opportunity to shine, and the productions were regular, and anticipated with pleasure, possibly because they were not examination-linked.

Sincerely,

Sheila Kelsall

How well I remember the one and only school play I was in. No hockey in case we got injured. Must admit I would rather have kept up my hockey. I had a very small part. If I remember correctly, I had just one sentence to say. I had to sit on stage as a spoilt child and look miserable. Another recollection was my mother having to wrap my long hair tightly in rags every night to produce the ringlets which were the hairstyle for that period. The last thing I remember was the horrible greenish white make-up I had to wear to make me look sickly. I was told after the first night that a parent had spoken to a member of staff saying how concerned she was for my health. Good old H.G.S. staff. They certainly did every thing right down to the last detail.

The permanent fixture in the Hall was a low platform behind which stood the Honours Board and above 4 or 5 small shelves on which stood the School Cups. On this platform were chairs for Staff, a grand piano and the Memorial Lectern. A week or so before the opening night of the school or staff plays a larger and wider stage was erected over the platform, to accommodate lights, curtain, pulleys and ropes for changing scenery etc. When this stage was up, part of the Honours Board was obstructed. The stage only went up twice a year and was removed after the last night.

In the Lectern picture I can make out the dark panelling that covered the wall at the back of the stage which had the names of ex-pupils who had done well in their chosen professions. As the panelling looks very low this would point to the fact that the big stage is in situ over the platform. I can't remember if the wall nearest the girls' cloakroom was panelled or not. What I can remember is if I stood with my back against that wall I could see the lower platform without the big stage, the Honours Board and above this 5 glass cases attached to the wall containing the school cups. I think the back wall may have been covered with wall bars for gym. The two walls on the right and left certainly had wall bars on between the doors to the outside and the hall corridor. Above the wall bars on the internal Hall corridor were large memorial panels which listed the names of the fallen in the World Wars.

Irene Wright

By the time Dave and I came to the School in 1955, the Honours Boards had been moved from the stage end of the Hall to the back wall. As the boards are behind the Lectern presentation group on the stage in the 1940's photo, and were there 1951, it would seem they were moved some time between 1951 and 1955.

Sheila Kelsall



Dear Sheila,

Irene tells me that she has been in contact with you and has told you of the height of the stage in what was our Main Hall and Gym. I can confirm that a higher stage was erected over the lower one when a drama production was about to take place. My friend Helen and I used to crawl under the top fixture and squeeze between the two. Then after finding a knothole we would poke up a finger to distract any actor who was performing above us.

Doris Richardson, HGS 1944-49



I can confirm that a larger and higher stage was erected over the fixed dais at the end of the School Hall for various performances 1941 - 1948. It was put up by sixth formers for the School Play in the Autumn Term and the Staff Play in the Spring Term. It was also used for the House Drama Competition and the House Music Competition but usually without curtains and stage lights. For the two Plays sixth formers were the stagehands under the supervision of members of staff. In 1947 I was a stage electrician and in 1948 chief stage electrician. We were supervised by JAS. The first year was as apprentice, "learning the ropes". This was certainly needed as all the switching panels for the stage lights were "home made" by JAS and had to be mounted on the wall and connected to the main fuse/switch every time a performance came along. The dimmer rheostats were open (live) windings and would these days make Health and Safety go hairless - but we were very careful! Before the performance and in the intervals we played records on the upright cabinet player borrowed from the Music Room. Unfortunately there were only three records - Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik - which we played over and over. After four plays and the eight intervals I reckon I knew every note! I remember one occasion when the stage was being prepared. Derek Wilkinson was at the top of a tall stepladder near the roof of the hall, putting up curtains I think. The ladder toppled and crashed to the floor. Athletic Wilky managed to leap across to one of the climbing ropes to save himself from a nasty fall.

Arthur Hanley, HGS 1941-48

8. Novelty Staff Cricket Match 1952

An amusing match was between the men and women teachers, won by the latter by 4 runs. There was no equality of the sexes, however, for the men were allowed to field the ball with their left hand only, the penalty for using the right hand or feet being 4 runs and bowlers and batsmen had to use the opposite arm or hand to what they were accustomed. The fielding condition was particularly profitable to the women, and Miss Whitworth was credited with 24, although she only knocked 4 runs. The best bowling performance was that of Mrs. Owen, who took 5 for 24. Best for the men were Mr. Allan (2 for 0) and Mr. Walker (2 for 9). The women knocked 120 (Miss. Pole 10, D. Picken 29, Miss. Saville 16, Miss. Whitworth 24, Miss. McBride 16), and dismissed the men for 116 (Combes 14, Swinbank 21, R. W. Hamilton 23, Farrar 17, Senior 13)

The information comes from Geoff Govier. Thank you.

9. Homework Pigeonholes



These were visited very frequently. How did the system work?

Dave McKenzie, HGS 1955-62

Hi Dave,



Each staff member had their own space outside the library you may remember. Pupils put their homework in there so that they could be collected and marked ready for the next lesson.

Best wishes

Terry McCroakam