

1. The interview



I was warned beforehand by Miss Smith that the Chairman of the Governors was hard of hearing, so I must speak up! As sole candidate, they gave me the works: a full house of Governors upstairs in the Library. I was placed on a chair in the middle of the Library floor and surrounded by ladies and gentlemen in a somewhat jovial mood. Mr. Hamilton took me through my particulars and when it came to where I was going to live, the answer being Fishlake, some 19 to 20 miles away, travelling to and fro by car, one of the gentlemen behind me jumped in with, "Tha mun not forget to put plenty or oil in thi engine!", at which the whole room fell about with laughter. Mr. Hamilton apologised for any embarrassment caused by a private joke, and the meeting quickly decided, in the absence of anybody else, I suppose, to give me the job - little realizing they were going to be stuck with me on Hemsworth Hill for the next 33 years - a third of a century! I began with General Subjects, filling in here and there on the timetable, then consolidated to History and Maths. I did enjoy teaching Logarithms (where are they now?), finally being appointed Head of History in 1966, just 2 years before the Grammar School was abolished. I continued as Head of Department at the new 'High School' until retirement in 1989, shortly before the Berlin Wall came down. I believe my best work was done in the years after reorganisation, especially while the existing Grammar School pupils worked their way through the new 'High School'.

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I kept in touch with Mr. Hamilton during his retirement in Exmouth until he became too ill to continue. He was a terrific Head. To parody Louis XIV, his leadership was a case of "L'ecole, c'est moi." He worked at it "morning, noon and night". The School was his life. He was great to work for. If you needed help professionally or personally, it was, "Come in, sit down. How can I help?" If you fell below the standard he expected of you, it was: "Mr. Hodson, you missed Assembly this morning", or, "You were two minutes late for the third lesson," or, "I didn't see you at such and such an event." Whatever was going on at School he made a point of being there, if only for a short time, if he was busy. It mattered to him that the Staff knew that he knew what they were doing, or not doing, and that he appreciated their efforts and offered them thanks and encouragement. It mattered to him that the pupils knew who he was, and that he cared. This dedication did not prevent him from friendly circulation up in the Staff Room, having a chat or a joke over a cup of coffee, or on the touchline, at a Music Concert, or whatever.

R.G. Hodson, HGS Staff 1956 onwards

Dear Mr. Hodson,

Your evaluation of Mr. Hamilton's Headship is echoed in the many tributes to him from pupils and Staff alike. I hope you will allow us to place some of your favourable comments alongside those of Terry McCroakam, Ken Sale and others. Miss. Smith and Mr. Collette also come in for much praise. It would have been impossible for any pupil not to know who the three of them were! I suppose the subsequent Comprehensive set-up would have shown the new Head to be a Senior Manager rather than a paternalistic figure in School.

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62

2. Mr. C. Reasbeck



I happened to be at a church conference about three weeks ago when I was tapped on the shoulder by an ex-member of staff from HGS, one Colin Reasbeck (RE and History). After we exchanged pleasantries I told him about the site. When I mentioned to him all the details, the first thing he said was that he remembered it as a very happy school where he loved to teach. He could not quite work out why they were (that is, the pupils) so motivated and pleasant to teach. Perhaps it was the relaxed nature of the school staff plus the excellent discipline that was engendered. He did not know the answer, but he fondly recalled one or two pupils and friends on the staff. Then the session started and I did not make contact with him again that day in spite of searching high and low for him to continue our conversation. But I did find it interesting that his initial response was so positive about the establishment.

Ken Sale, HGS Staff 1955-61

3. Match Day Travel



Dear Sheila,

Although it's a long time ago, I vaguely remember that a coach was arranged for the rugby teams for away matches. Of course, with so many rugby teams at school, there were usually at least 2 teams going to the same venue, and the time span per trip was relatively short. There were occasional added bonuses when the girls' hockey team was also playing the same school!! Cricket, however, was a different matter, and we had to make our own way to each match. Pontefract, Ackworth and even Barnsley, despite the long walk up to Barnsley Grammar School, were relatively straightforward, but imagine the treks to Wath, Thorne and Normanton. I suppose we were fortunate that a member of staff took the team bag!! Would today's youth put up with such journeys just for a game of cricket? I doubt it! Saturday jobs, late Friday nights would take priority. I wonder sometimes how I got back to Shafton to play on Saturday afternoon for the village side! Happy days!

Frank Morley, HGS 1953-60

Thank you so much for your latest batch of team travel memories. Yes, it makes you marvel at how tenacious we all were before we had cars! We knew the bus timetables, and somehow, time seemed so elastic when we were young. I take it that the teams met at School first, before making the journey to the away team's pitch? When you went on the organised coach, did you ever have to pay anything for the fare? I do remember bringing a few pennies as a contribution to the half-time oranges or orange juice when the girls' teams played netball or rounders, but I don't recall any travelling fees. Maybe the School Fund paid for the coaches?

Sheila Kelsall

We did meet at school for away matches. I don't remember paying fares, though.

Frank

These little details seem so insignificant and unimportant, but we try to imagine later generations examining the standards and value of our Grammar School education between those years, and so even the smallest recollections will give a truer picture. Do you find that the more you re-visit those times, the more of these inconsequential items pop into the mind? Remembering how we used to buy our rulers and protractors at the office, or doing duties at the Pound, handing out lost ties and scarves for coppers; those green stacking chairs used for exams in the Hall, or the smell of polish on the floors and desks after the long summer holidays. It's all still there, under the layers of experiences of the years following.

Sheila

In answer to the question about sports travel (Frank Morley), there was a fee of one shilling. It was Bingley's coaches (who ordered them I don't know) and the Sports Staff who gave Colours together with RWH.

Terry McCroakam

Frank Warren, Stan Holmes, Brian Moore and yours truly were waiting to catch a bus from Shafton to Pontefract. We were due to play cricket for the HGS colts against King's School. Stan and Frank were from Grimethorpe by the way. Brian decided he would like something from the corner shop at the Two Gates, so he duly went across there. The shop was just across the way from the bus stop at Shafton, possibly a hundred yards away. While Brian was at the shop I could see the bus coming up from Cudworth so I took the decision that I ought to go and gee him up. Yes, we both missed the bus. Frank and Stan got on it. Brian and I had to find some other means of getting to Pontefract. We took the next bus to Hemsworth - about twenty minutes later. At Hemsworth we caught a bus on the slope coming up to Crosshills. It was probably a United bus. Anyway, we eventually got to Pontefract bus station and then had to walk/run all the way back to Kings School, asking for directions as we went along.

When we arrived the match was already in progress and unfortunately Mr. Leonard was the teacher in charge and of course he was on the field carrying out his duties as an umpire. We approached the boundary edge to let it be known that we had arrived, and were beckoned onto the square by Mr. Leonard. There was no way that he would have walked towards us. After the lecture which reduced us to two feet in height - we were probably only four feet tall in those days anyway - we were bade to go and get changed into our cricket gear and get back onto this field A.S.A.P. I remember Ponty were already batting and were 51 for 1. I'd hardly got my breath when I was imposed upon to bowl; not by the skipper, but by Mr. Leonard. To save further humiliation I proceeded to take four wickets. I even top-scored with the bat but it wasn't enough to stave off defeat.

I would just like to point out that, although I was only involved for the one season, at no time did we assemble at school prior to away games. Apart from the aforementioned occasion, we managed to arrive on time, and safely, to such places as Wath, Barnsley, Silcoates, Pontefract and Castleford. However did we manage it?

Geoff Govier

4. Written Records



I want to bring to your attention the meticulous coverage by RWH of events, incidents, Staff, games, pupils, and games results that he had tabulated for each year of his 'reign' in the exercise books of the day. I know he did that as I went to him about a subsidy to take the lower sixth to Malham Tarn which of course he granted, and waiting for him to enter the Saturday results in one of his games books for the year. This is why he was able to churn out a wondrous mass of data at the annual Speech Day where school prizes were distributed by 'famous' personalities at the time. He returned the book to a cupboard behind his desk to the right of the chair where I was sitting to discuss with him. There on various shelves he had amassed a mighty archive of information. What would be interesting is to inquire if such books are still around on a dusty shelf somewhere in the school. It is only a thought but he knew, believe it or not, all his pupils individually, where they lived, their parents, addresses, when they entered the school, their individual successes and achievements - including the Staff, and external examinations. He had an enormous database, even before computers, all written by hand. For me he was an object lesson which I never forgot. No pupil was allowed to be anonymous. To permit him to perform the enormous admin role that he had, people like Les Collette and Cyril Owen constructed the mighty tasks of timetable admin after being instructed by him of the criteria that were to be followed.

Ken Sale, HGS Staff 1955-61

5. The Lectern's Footstool



The footstool with the Lectern - has that survived? Mr. Hamilton always rearranged its position as he arrived at the Lectern for Assembly.

R.G. Hodson, HGS Staff 1956 onwards

6. Entrance Examination



Dear Sheila,

You ask about an entrance examination, and no, we had no exam on entry. There may have been a few fee-paying scholars in our day but the vast majority had won County Minor Scholarships taken at the age of 10. I remember going to an elementary school at Grimethorpe to take the exam, along with several other 10 year olds. That was quite an experience in itself! Only two of us got the Scholarship that year from Brierley Church of England School - Joan Kitchen (the soprano cum pianist) and myself. I think that in 1C (1936-37) there would only be about 2 out of 30 who paid fees.

Mollie Weaver, HGS 1936-43

7. Maintenance Grants



On March 30th 1940 it was reported in a local newspaper that,

"The Divisional Education Officer (Mr. S. Wright) reported that maintenance grants had been increased to £28 a year for children under 15 years of age, £38 over 16, and £48 over 17. About a dozen pupils at the school were receiving grants, which were subject to the income of the house being no more than £3. 15s per week."

[Article from Geoff Govier. Thank you, Geoff.](#)

This small piece of information speaks volumes about the system of the time, and the numbers of the parents who were willing to state their weekly wage in order to qualify for the aid and assistance of a maintenance grant. Out of the whole school population, it is likely that many more than 12 families managed on a wage of less than £3. 15s per week. Pride would prevent many applications for the grant. Did it apply to the purchase of a full uniform? There is also the possibility that this "maintenance grant" was in payment of the school fees of that time. Free Secondary education for all children had not yet been introduced, and only appeared four years later in the 1944 Education Act. I wonder if someone will remember how this grant was used and let the site know?

[Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62](#)