

1. The Mischief of Ronnie Gorton, HGS 1943-50.



Do we all remember the Boy Prefects' Room on the ground floor of the School, almost opposite the Head's study? Even if we were not Boys, or not Prefects, we may have peeped inside, or had a lesson there at some time or another. The windows of this room faced into the Quad, and hinged shutters formed the window frame together with a wooden window seat which lifted up to reveal a storage area beneath. As our concentration drifted away from the Latin verbs or Mathematical formulae, our eyes may have gazed vacantly at the ceiling, and noticed the hooks which had been there since the room was the kitchen of the old Hemsworth High Hall when it was a private residence. Perhaps it was in such a reverie that Ronnie Gorton's (photo above) ideas for a prank were formulated. Maurice Bird takes up the story.

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62

1a. Chair-lift!

I remember Gorton as being a great one for playing tricks and getting up to all kinds of mischief. He would always accept a dare, and one never quite knew what he would come up with next. He had noticed the hooks in the ceiling where the hams and pots and pans used to hang, and at the end of one School day, he went over to the window seat, lifted the hinged lid, and looked at what was stored inside - the thick tug-of-war rope which was used on Sports Days for that event. He took it out and formed a loop at one end, which he attached to one of the hooks in the ceiling. He then threaded the other end of the rope through every chair-back in the room. Another of the hooks was used as a pulley, and the end result of his efforts was that all the chairs in the room were now up in the air, touching the high ceiling! Gorton then went home! I just happened to be nearby the next morning when Mr. Hamilton needed to go into the Boy Prefects Room for something. He opened the door, looked up, his jaw dropped, and his face was a picture!



1b. Five bob, and I'll do it!

1b. During one of our free periods in the Library, the irrepressible Gorton decided things were a bit too quiet, and so he proposed to his group of friends that for five shillings, he would climb out of one of the windows, tiptoe along the small stone ledge which ran along the front elevation of the building, and climb back into the room via another window. Everyone enthusiastically agreed, and he was on his way. The minute he was outside on the ledge, clinging to the ivy, his classmates promptly closed

the window, and then ran to the other window, and closed that one too! He had been stranded out there by his friends, half-way between two Library windows, and with no means of ingress! He edged his way along until one particular stem of ivy failed to support him, and came away from the stonework. Down he fell, landing on his feet in the soft earth beneath the window and rolling down the sloping lawn strip which edged the gravel. No-one in authority witnessed this, and so there were no repercussions, but the footprints he left in the spot where he landed were the deepest ever seen, and he was given his five bob!

Maurice Bird, HGS 1944-51

2. Reunion March 23rd 2005



At my time of life, there are few occasions when I can look around a crowded room and know that I am the "youngster"! Last Wednesday it was so, when I attended a Hilmians reunion at the Burntwood Court Hotel in Brierley. Mick Cleaver, the evening's organiser, had welcomed me, and was kind enough to let me see his file which contained School photos from the 1940's, and information on previous meetings. What a pleasant group of people I met! Some had travelled far to be there, and were staying overnight at the hotel, and others lived locally. Some had known about the reunion having attended in previous years, and there was one person who learned about it through our website only a few days before. As with every reunion I have attended, the faces around me lit up with the smiles of animated conversations and greetings.

Within a few minutes of my arrival, I had received several photos and memorabilia for our website, and was thanking Leo White and Jeff Woodcock for bringing them. Everyone met in a small bar just off the reception area of the hotel, and then proceeded into a larger room nearby for a meal. During this time I listened to some of Maurice Bird's fascinating memories of his time at HGS. I recognised some members of Staff who had been at School when I was a pupil nearly 50 years ago - Mr. Whittaker, Miss Tate, Mr. Twigg, and Mrs. Whittaker, whom I startled by saying "Bonjour, Mademoiselle Elliot", as we used to say when she was taking her French lessons with us in 3A. That really must have been a "blast from the past" for her! The names of many of my classmates were then mentioned, proving that it is not only the pupils who remember their teachers, but it also applies the other way round!

On another table, photos and Magazines were being passed around with reminiscences, and having spent much of the week before this in the task of compiling class lists from the 1940's, I was delighted to be able to fit faces to many of the names I had been writing down. More thanks went to Janet Thorley when she kindly piled up her photos and Magazines and handed them to me for copying and putting on display on the website. Such generosity and trust!

As with any pleasant experience, it was over far too soon. I could have done with another three hours to speak to everyone, to ask about the identifications of those little black and white faces on the choir and class photos of their era, and to hear fresh angles on life at School in the 1940's, with its air raid shelters, and before the New Block. Full marks must go to Mick Cleaver for the time and effort he puts into this one evening each year.

As everyone was about to leave, Bruce Ward asked me why Dave and I were minded to create and maintain our website about HGS. There wasn't really time to formulate a full and serious answer to this, but on reflection I don't think one is needed. We'll just allow the site to speak for itself. Similarly, such evenings as last Wednesday are another facet of the enrichment of friendship from those days, which benefits everyone.

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62

3. 15 minutes of fame.



Dear Dave,

A recent news item sparked a long lost memory which might be of interest to our members and may be recalled by my contemporaries. The occasion was the 5th/6th Form Xmas Dance either 1947 or 1948 to which all Staff members were invited. Mr. Leonard's party arrived with a French girl who was spending the holiday with them and we were asked to make sure she had a good time. As I recall I danced with her twice during the evening. It later emerged that her name was Anouk Aimee who later became a famous film actress in France. My 15 minutes of fame!

Regards,

Eric Jones, HGS 1942-49

4. Bird Watching Society 1948-49



The Bird Watching Society consists of two troops each having ten members. There are meetings each dinner hour when one of the troops goes down to the small wood near the school where we have found and seen many interesting things. One of the most interesting was a hole in a tree containing a good assortment of seeds which we expected to be the store place of some small animal. When the snow was on the ground we found the tracks of a fox and the smaller tracks of some animal which we presume it was hunting. We also saw the tracks of a badger, rabbits and many other small animals and birds. We also saw a hare run along a hedge side in March. We hope to find other interesting things as the Summer progresses.

All the members wish to thank Mr. Hewson for his help, and the Headmaster for allowing us to leave the grounds at lunchtime.

Peter Robinson 1B

Dear Dave,

I was a member of the Birdwatching Society with Peter Robinson and it was considered a great privilege to be allowed 'out of bounds' at dinner times. As I recall Mr. Hewson was a relief teacher who came from near Selby and he invited Peter and myself to visit him at his home address whilst we were at a nearby school engaged running the line for the 2nd XV rugby team.

Happy times,

John Atkinson, HGS 1948-53

5. Gulag



Do you remember a Friday night meeting in the Science Lecture Room (Friday Club?) in which a Russian visitor spoke to a gathering of Sixth-Formers about his experiences in a Soviet Gulag located in the north-east corner of the icy Siberian wilderness? He spoke in Esperanto and Mr. Murray acted as translator. Both did very well. Mr. Ridchkov (his name was something like that) had sinned against the Stalinist regime by being an Esperantist. After Stalin's death, a thaw, and some Russian Esperantists were able to escape westwards. Mr. Ridchkov had had an adventurous journey through S.E. Europe and Italy before eventually reaching England, and being sheltered by Mr. Hamilton and his friends. I wonder if any of your correspondents remember this fascinating encounter with a Russian from a Stalinist Gulag?

R.G. Hodson

6. Jackson Stevenson



When I first came up to Ashington in 1969 I joined the local Rugby Club and had a drink with an old guy who told me that he had taught at HGS when he first qualified as a teacher. His name was Jackson Stevenson and he did a quick sketch for me of Mr. Collette which was very lifelike. When I next went down to Hemsworth I mentioned this to my brother-in-law Bert Lawton who was a pupil at HGS at the same time as Mr. Stevenson was there, and he remembered him very well. He told me that when he was injured playing rugby, Mr. Stevenson took him to his home in Fitzwilliam. So the next time that Bert came up to my home we went along to see Jackson Stevenson and the two of them had a good session talking over old times.

Tony Firth, HGS 1950-54

7. Geoff remembers Cricket 1951



On the theme of travelling to matches I believe we caught a bus from Shafton to Hemsworth Cross-Hills and from there I seem to recall there was a bus to Sheffield (might have been designated No. 70). I think we then alighted at Wombwell and caught a bus from there to Wath. There would then be a fair walk up the hill to the school. Mr. Lock would probably have travelled by motorcycle complete with sidecar.

Incidentally, I have a copy of the Hemsworth H.G.S. Averages for that season and I see that I had a total of 5 innings and my total number of runs was 14. The 14 came in that match at Ponty. I said it was unusual. Bowling wise, I took 16 wickets at an average of 7.5, leaving me second in the bowling averages. The guy who topped me was Don Weaver with an average of 5.83 but he only took 6 wickets. In fact I was the leading wicket taker; the next after me was Brian Ridgeway with 10 wickets to his name with an average of 11.7. You see I could have probably made a good contribution to cricket at HGS if only I'd have stayed longer.

I came to be selected for the Colts in an unusual way. We were on the cricket field preparing for games, which was cricket. The teacher in charge was Mr. K. Allan. Whilst he and a couple of classmates were in the throes of splitting the class into two teams I picked up a ball and proceeded to bowl at the stumps. First time of asking, Bingo!, middle stump. All of a sudden a voice boomed

out "Govier, come here lad!!" I don't know if you remember Mr. Allan but he had rather a strong voice. I expected a dressing down for messing about. When I got near to him he said "Are you going to the Colt's practice match tonight?" I said "No." He said "But you are." I didn't even know of such a practice match nor did I know how one came to be involved in such things. Looking back there was probably a notice pinned up somewhere inviting interested pupils to attend such events.

Geoff Govier, HGS 1950-52

8. School Milk



Does anyone remember the sound of those third-of-a-pint bottles as they were returned to the crate? Did anyone ever see the milk being delivered? Was it always stacked at the side of the old PE changing room cum shed near the Dining Hall? Those cold winters' mornings meant that the top inch of the milk was icy when we used to have our mid-morning break. The 'Playtime' of our Primary Schools became 'Break' now we were grown up!

Drinking straws were taken from a grey cardboard box container and used to pierce the cardboard top on the milk bottle, where a pre-cut circle would give way when we pressed in. The older boys would remove this top and gulp down the milk, eager to be off playing their games on the playground. As First-formers we had our milk delivered to our classrooms in the New Block didn't we? Perhaps it was assumed we needed sheltering from the jostling created when the crowds moved in towards the crates as the classes were dismissed.

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62

On March 30th 1940 it was reported in a local newspaper that, "Pupils of Hemsworth Grammar School are drinking 430 bottles of milk a day, but the demand falls as the weather gets colder, Mr. R. W. Hamilton, the headmaster, told the school governors on Friday. Governors were surprised at the statement, and on the suggestion of the Rev. A. E. Duckett, they decided to ask the local Medical Officer of Health to give a "pep" talk to the scholars on the value of milk."

Article sent in by Geoff Govier, HGS 1950-52

When I read this for the first time, I was interested to see that the concern of the Head about falling consumption of milk in his School was such that it merited his calling it to the attention of his Board of Governors. Their response to this knowledge also showed a caring attitude which was translated into action by the "pep" talk. In light of the circumstances of that particular time, the fear of shortages and rationing due to the outbreak of the War would focus the minds of everyone on the health of the younger generation.

Sheila Kelsall, HGS 1955-62