

1. Dinners, the RAF and Farm Work 1941

July 5th 1941

A meeting of the Governors of Hemsworth Grammar School was held on Friday, County Coun. A. Flavell, J.P., presiding.

Mrs. E. L. Dooley J.P. reported that 215 students were staying to dinner at the school, and in addition there was an average of 56 who brought their own meals and were provided with tea or other drinks. She thought that Mrs. Cliffe; the caretaker's wife, with her three maids had plenty of work in attending to the students, and she suggested that the wages and the strength of the staff should be reviewed. It was decided to recommend to the County Education Authority that the wages of the maids and members of the kitchen staff should be increased by 2s. 6d. each per week. A sub-committee consisting of the chairman, the Rev. A. E. Duckett and the three lady Governors was appointed to go into the question of the staffing of the kitchen.

Mr. H. G. Augur, a member of the school staff, had his period of service in the Royal Air Force extended from three years for the duration of the war. A letter of congratulation was sent to Sergeant Bernard Clifton, of the R.A.F., a former student at the school, on being awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal.

In reply to Mrs. Dooley, who asked if anything had been done regarding students giving assistance on farms during the summer vacation, the Headmaster (Mr. R. W. Hamilton) said he had taken up the question of forming a camp for the students but on finding that in the event of any accidents he would be the person responsible, he had declined to undertake the organisation of such a camp. He had suggested that the War Agricultural Committee should have the lads if they would accept responsibility. Mr. Hamilton added that if any boy desired to go farming during the vacation he could go. The Governors approved the action of the Headmaster.

Article from Matt Poole (U.S.A.). Thank you, Matt.

2. 1940-41 Report



November 25th. 1941

The twentieth annual speech day of Hemsworth Grammar School was held at Hemsworth Hippodrome on Wednesday afternoon. County Coun. A. Flavell J.P. (Chairman of the Governors), presided, supported by Air Commodore J.A. Chamier, Commandant of the Air Training Corps, who presented prizes and certificates numbering about 190, Mr. R. W. Hamilton (Headmaster), and Governors.

The Chairman said the school was opened in 1921, and had made good progress. They had a staff second to none in the West Riding, and whilst several members were in the forces, others, including the Headmaster were devoting much of their time to the local squadron of the Air Training Corps. Since the opening of the school, 458 students had passed the School Certificate examination, 187 had matriculated, 140 had gone forward to training colleges, and 75 had entered Universities - a large proportion having obtained honours degrees.

Headmaster's Report

The School's contribution to the war effort figured largely in the Headmaster's annual report. He made special reference to the Hemsworth & District Squadron of the Air Training Corps, in the formation of which, he said, the school took the initiative. Mr. Hamilton said that in many Secondary Schools A.T.C. units were for members only. There were arguments for the course, but he believed that in a struggle such as we were engaged in, unity between all sections of the people, and more especially our youth, was essential if we were to win the war. In this area, at any rate, membership was open to all boys, no matter what schools they had attended, and he had no regrets for the step. From the beginning every male member of the staff volunteered to lend a hand. Though not all were called upon, most of the officers were members of the staff, and all of them willingly devoted their time to the welfare of the Squadron.

Mr. Hamilton said the school had been doing its bit for the national cause. During the last year it raised £350 from weekly collections by the children, and in war weapons week saved £2,325/19s/6d. During the summer campaign it raised £96. The number of members last year was 162. The present number was 180.

In addition the school contributed to a comforts fund. Last year it raised £69/7s/3d., which included a gift of £5 from the Old Hilmians. Useful articles of all kinds had been made and sent to hospitals. Over 200 gifts in the form of gloves and scarves had been sent to old students in the Forces. Parcels of knitted comforts have also been sent to the Merchant Navy. When Liverpool and Glasgow suffered from air raids over a hundred babies' garments were knitted and despatched to those places. Articles of clothing of all kinds, over 2,000 in all, had been collected and sent to blitzed areas. Throughout the year the school had also sent sums of money to various charities, both national and local, the total contribution being £45. Some old pupils were prisoners of

war. The present pupils subscribed to a "Prisoners of War Fund", and sent approximately 10 shillings every week to the Red Cross to provide a parcel for one or other of them. The school had done a little in the "Grow More Food" campaign, having ploughed up an acre of the playing field and set potatoes, cabbages and cauliflowers. More than 234 Old Hilmians were serving with the Forces. Their war effort had still one more phase. The school offered its engineering facilities to the Government in June 1940, and three weeks later began training men and women to work in munition factories. Day and night shifts were worked, and two qualified instructors, directed by Mr. Waters, the Engineering Master, were responsible for the training. Their product was so good that an aeroplane factory had offered to take all their trainees as fast as they could turn them out. "This working at double pressure", he remarked, "has been accomplished only by much sacrifice on the part of the staff, nearly every member of which has at least one extra job of national importance. I would not say that we like it, but we realise that Hitler must be beaten, and so far, our share has been to double up our hours of work."

The Headmaster said that on October 1st. there were 453 pupils at the school, compared with 429 a year before.

The examination results of last July were well above the average for the whole country. Successes included a County Major Scholarship, two Junior Technological Scholarships, a Junior Art Scholarship, and a County Women's Scholarship for Physical Training. Three State Bursaries in Science had been awarded.

After presenting the prizes, Air Commodore Chamier related some exciting experiences of the last war, when he was a member of the Air Force, and stressed the importance of the training they received at school. "Anything you learn in school, and anything that may happen to you after school, may have a tremendous effect on your lives, if you only seize the opportunities as they occur", he said.

A book was presented to Air Commodore Chamier.

The students of Holgate House presented a special cup to Annie Brammer for having accomplished the unique feat of winning the Junior Victrix Ludorum three years in succession.

A musical programme was given by the scholars.

3. Housecraft and Domestic Science



In the Index there was a question about what we did in Housecraft and Domestic Science. In laundry lessons most of our mothers were mystified that we insisted on taking only clean things to wash - partly out of prestige and partly because if there were any stains etc. we couldn't face the trauma of trying to get them out!

In cookery lessons my abiding memory is of the teacher demonstrating whisking the white of an egg until it was stiff and telling us that it should be so stiff that you could turn the bowl upside down and it wouldn't fall out - but she only tilted the bowl herself and daren't risk proving her own case! She went on to be a lecturer so I hope she did a bit more practice before she got there.

Jean Burton, HGS 1936-43

4. Form plays in April 1940



Clever acting and sound production were to the fore when the staff and scholars of Hemsworth Grammar School gave their annual plays on Wednesday and yesterday. The plays were augmented by musical items by the girls' choir.

Eighteen boys and girls took part in the Third Form's play, "Robin Hood". The title role was taken by Birley, who gave a good performance, although he could have put a little more vitality into his lines. The Knight, who twice came to the rescue of Robin Hood and his men when they were outnumbered by the sheriff's and Prince John's men, was well played by Fox. Hollingworth was good as Prince John, a haughty aristocrat trying to win the hand of Maid Marian (I. Stokes) in marriage. Jenny, Marian's maid, was played by J. Barker. The prologue was given by B. Longfield, and rustics, outlaws and Prince John's men were taken by D. Hardy, R. Thompson, Needham, Jones, Conway, Oakland, Eyre, Courtney, Noble, Bannister and Horbury.

The most interesting, and perhaps the best acted of the plays was "Michael", given by the Fourth Form. Michael (an angel who had disobeyed God and was sent to earth as a man to learn the three truths of man) was skilfully played by J. Mozley. Lighting effects played a great part and the scene at the end when Michael eventually learned the truths was striking. He was well supported by Chapman, K. Fenton and M. Duckworth, who took the parts of Simon, a Russian cobbler, Matryona, his wife, and Anuiska, their daughter, respectively, Mugglestone, a Russian noble, Lawton, his servant, P. Morris, a woman, and I. Ventom and P. Rowley, twins.

5. A Perfect Head of Hair



My dark brown hair was plentiful at that time, but it was fine and soft, and so it needed quite a lot of attention in order to achieve the right effect. There was a washroom at the corner which was created by two of the corridors in the main part of the school. Most of my time in front of the mirrors in the washroom was spent trying to tease my 'floater' into the appropriate shape, so that it dangled serenely over my forehead, but it was extremely difficult to achieve the desired effect because of the soft nature of my hair. I had found a 'morning solution' to my problem, which was to wash my hair with shampoo, brush my mother's green setting-lotion into my hair, and then brush it out once my hair had set - before I set off for school. My peaked cap, which had alternating red and navy blue segmented triangles with their apexes fastened with a blue button at the top, would then be placed precariously on the crown of my head, so that it didn't affect the main theme of my creation. The cap had been deliberately kicked about and shrunk so that the disturbance to my hair was minimised, and when I arrived at the school, my first port of call was the washroom - in order to restore my hair to its former grandeur.

It was fortunate that the wearing of the caps wasn't mandatory in the external school recreation areas, but I also had to contend with wind and rain - the slightest breeze would reduce my hair into a tangled mess because of its softness. And even if there was no breeze at all, I would find that my hair in general, and my 'floater' in particular, would gradually sag throughout the day.

One of the other minor irritations which I had to endure was that there was a Georgian-framed glass window that overlooked one of the main corridors, from the perspective of the wash-room itself. My attention to my grooming was sometimes distracted because of my gradual awareness that there has been an interruption to the general flow of students passing along the corridor behind me. I would often find that the reflection of my own image would include that of a female teacher, or a pair of immature female students, staring with bemusement at my attempts to create a perfect head of hair. I merely scowled inwardly, in such a manner that my contempt was revealed only through my eyes, and then I would return to the main focus of my attentions. Giggling, immature female students, and bemused female teachers did not bother me at all!

Quite honestly, I don't think any of the other students ever noticed the difference to my hair when I eventually reached the classroom; but the important thing to me was that - I did!

The article was sent in by Bob Taylor, HGS 1955-60. Thank you, Bob.

6. Through the "oblong" window.



Here is the very famous window of RWH's study. I wonder if anyone has stories which could be published concerning what happened inside?

Dave McKenzie, HGS 1955-62.

An interview with Mr. Hamilton 1962

Sheila Kelsall writes:

I can't remember why I was invited to sit in on this interview, perhaps it was to take notes or to operate the tape recorder. It was the only time I ever went into the Head's Study. Mr. Hamilton sat at his desk and Mick Harrison, Margaret Birkin and I were on the other side with our backs to the door. There may even have been others there too. Mick and Margaret took turns in asking the questions. Perhaps Margaret will give her memories of this occasion.

To mark his twenty-fifth year at Hemsworth Grammar School, the Headmaster was interviewed towards the end of the Spring Term. The tape-recorded interview contained much more material than space permits to be reproduced; it has therefore been edited and the more important extracts are printed below.

Our grateful thanks are due to Mr. Hamilton for allowing us time for the interview and for giving us permission to print his opinions. They should be of particular interest to junior members of the School who have not yet had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Hamilton outside the academic sphere.

Q. Why did you choose to come to this area?

A. I didn't choose to come to Hemsworth Grammar School - Fate directed me here. I had been head of my own department for five or six years, and the only prospect of promotion was to apply for a headmastership. I applied for every vacancy that looked at all reasonable, and Hemsworth was just one of them. When I was told by my headmaster that enquiries were being made about me at a place called Hemsworth, I had to admit that I just did not know where it was. My being here is the work of Fate rather than my own choice.

Q. What are the main changes that you have seen in pupils over the last twenty-five years?

A. Whatever changes have taken place have happened to all young people over that period. We are taking twice as many pupils now as we did in 1937. That means that from an academic point of view we are admitting some who are not as quick as even the poorest we used to take in earlier years. We accept people who require six years to reach 'O' level, whereas twenty-five years ago those people did not come to a Grammar School at all. Another consequence of taking in such a large number of pupils is that it is not so easy these days to know every child in the School, whereas when I first came I knew practically every pupil.

Q. What do you think the School sets out to do for its pupils?

A. Two things. Firstly we try to educate in the sense that when the pupils leave School they will take with them the ability to get the most out of life. Some boy's great interest in life may be sport. We hope that when he leaves we will have given him a slight insight into music, for instance. Another boy's sole interest may be music. We hope that when he leaves he knows something about sport and understands why people can be enthusiastic about games. We hope that the individual will have an interest in far more things than the particular side he is good at naturally. Therefore, his potential for having a really full life is as great as it is possible for it to be. Secondly, the School gives him an opportunity to acquire those qualifications which permit him to take up careers which would otherwise be closed to him. We have an eye to the career of a pupil, but we never forget that the real job of the School is to educate him in the widest sense. To fit him for a career is secondary to this.

Q. What would you say are the main advantages of co-education?

A. My own feeling is that a co-educational grammar school gives a better education than a single-sex school. A boys' school is too masculine in its approach - it is rougher and tougher; whereas a girls' school, I would imagine, tends to be gentler and softer in its approach. In a co-educational school you get the mean, the best of both worlds. The boys become a little more gentlemanly; the girls rather tougher. In a boys' school, the teacher has to drive a lot harder than in a mixed school. The combination of the sexes in the classroom makes the boys settle down and eventually overtake the girls. I'm always for a mixed school, having had experience of both. And when it comes to social life - plays, dances and that sort of thing - the mixed school has it every time.

Q. What importance do you attach to sport in the curriculum?

A. Not as much now as in my earlier days. Then I was very active in games and attached greater importance to sport than perhaps it ought to have. Even now, I say that sport is very important in a school, but I think that the other things are important too. I would devote more time now to the fostering of music and drama and other cultural pursuits than I would have been prepared to give when I was young. All my time was taken up with sport: I knew nothing of acting, nothing about music, and even less about art. I think that my life has been the poorer because of this, I missed an awful lot, but I didn't worry about it at the time. Now I realise how much I missed and I have been trying in various ways to make up for it. Of course, I would not like to see these other things fostered at the expense of sport. Games teach you to give every ounce of physical effort, to take knocks and to give them.

They teach you to control your temper and to respect the other person. These things are valuable because the boy who becomes a good sportsman, even when his playing days are over, knows what is meant by good sportsmanship, and he carries over these ideals into his other walks of life. There are those who think that we have overplayed this idea in this country. I wouldn't have thought we had. However, I wouldn't like to think that in any school I was connected with, games were the thing and other activities didn't matter.

Q. If you had a sum of £10,000 to spend on the School, what would you do with it?

A. One of the things would be to provide the School with its own swimming bath. Another thing which will have to come in time is a really good sports pavilion which will accommodate both winter and summer sports. I think if we had both these, the £10,000 would be more than accounted for.

7. John Clements the actor



Dear Dave,

I recently watched a version of The Four Feathers on TV starring John Clements as the hero. At the weekend I was reading the new information on HGS Dramatic competitions and I was reminded of the time when John Clements came to judge the House Drama Competition. He must have been appearing at the Grand in Leeds at the time. I cannot remember who won or the exact year but I think it was Year 3 1943-44 as I am sure I was in the Third Form at the time. So much for memories - I hope someone else may remember it.

Regards,

Eric Jones, HGS 1942-49

I saw the note about John Clements. It must have been the Spring or Summer term of 1943 that he came, because Marjorie Duckworth and Herbert Brammah (Head boy and girl) were deputed to go down to Hemsworth station to meet him and escort him to School - i.e. walk up Station Road and in the back entrance to the grounds - no celebrity limousine in those days! Marjorie and Herbert left in the summer of 1943 - M. to go to teacher training college, and H. eventually to the RAF. I don't remember anything else about the competitions I'm afraid.

Regards,

Jean Burton, HGS 1936-43

John Clements, the stage and screen actor who is this week appearing in a play at Leeds, visited Hemsworth on Monday and judged the House dramatic competition at the Grammar School. Extracts from "Midsummer Night's Dream" were given, and Mr. Clements' awards were: Talbot House, 81 points out of a possible 100; Guest House, 72; Holgate House, 67; Price House, 51. The students receive no tuition from members of the school staff for the competition. They appoint their own producers. Mr. Clements stated that he thought the standard of acting was very good.

April 16th. 1943 newspaper article.

8. In about/At About



Dear Dave,

In Australian novelist Patrick White's 'The Solid Mandala' he wrote....'I dunno,' Arthur said. 'I forget what I was taught. I only remember what I've learnt.' This humorous little quote always comes to mind whenever I think of our 4th-5th year English Master at HGS, a Scotsman named Mr. Johnstone (photo). A wonderful little man, he was not much taller than Ronnie Corbett and had the same ready 'toothy' grin and vocal resonance, with the 'texture' perhaps holding a bit more gravel. Like Arthur I will never forget his almost passionate persistence in explanation and his insistence that we should write in capitals in our books and 'retain forever in your minds'

"AT ABOUT" - "IN ABOUT" - AN IMPOSSIBLE STATE OF AFFAIRS!

The 'impossibility' lies in the fact that 'at' and 'in' are specific and 'about' is an approximation/generalisation. In terms of time nothing can possibly be both and therefore cannot be described as such.

'We landed 'at' 3 o'clock' - this is exact. 'We landed 'about' 3 o'clock.' is the correct way to describe an approximate period of time, i.e. a few or maybe several minutes either side of 3 o'clock, but we can't be sure as to the exact time. "We landed AT ABOUT 3 o'clock' is impossible.

Likewise, it is correct to say 'The Company commenced trading about 1860 and closed down about 1890. The word 'in' cannot precede the word 'about', because the Company for all we know may well have actually started trading in 1862 and closed down in 1878.

Half a century later and it's as fresh in my mind as ever. Hearing supposedly well educated TV Presenters, Politicians and the like saying in about/at about just makes me cringe and the same can be said of a great many present day authors.

I sometimes wish my little Scottish mentor had never mentioned it, but then again, he was absolutely right.

Kind regards,

Frank Hudson, HGS 1949-54

9. School Dances

13th. April 1946

The rugby and hockey teams of Hemsworth Grammar School held a dance in the school hall on Friday, 120 being present. The M.C.s were J.D. Birkin and D.H. Fox. Competitions were won by Mr. & Mrs. R. W. Hamilton, Gwen Haywood, R. Mozley, Jean Rowley and C. Kaye.

During supper, Derek Birkin, Rugby captain, handed a gift to Mrs. Cliffe for her service in providing refreshments for the teams during the season. Birkin congratulated the hockey team on its unbeaten record, and Frances Hemingway (hockey captain), responding, congratulated the rugby team on its unbeaten record.

The best wishes of the gathering were extended to Miss E. Shortridge, senior mistress, who left the school on Wednesday to take up a new appointment. Mr. Collins (Brierley) was responsible for the lighting effects in the hall.

If anyone can supply information or thoughts on other dances, please send them in.

10. Reading Competition – which year?

Talbot House gained 111 points in the Annual Reading Competition at Hemsworth Grammar School last week, Price being second with 98, Guest third with 89, and Holgate fourth with 71. Individual placings were:

Junior: 1. T. Robinson 2. Whittaker 3. Williamson 4. M. Harwood.

Senior: 1. M. Medforth 2. Kirkham 3. B. Robinson 4. Batty.

The adjudicator was Mr. E. Arnold, senior English master at Castleford Grammar School, who made particular reference to Medforth's pleasing voice.

If anyone has details of this competition and/or other results, please send them in to the site. Thank you.