



An interview with Mr. Hamilton 1962

Sheila 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.



Margaret Birkin



Michael Harrison



Sheila Kelsall

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.



Mr Hamilton helps at half time on the 15th October 1966 in a Hockey match against Nunthorpe G.S.

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.