

## 1. Reflections

### Reflections on Life at Hemsworth Grammar School

This article is taken from the December 1948 issue of the Old Hilmian Magazine and has been sent in by Geoff Booth. Thank you.

I always think that my Grammar School life actually began on the morning that our Junior School Headmaster read out the names of those of us who had passed the Scholarship. I literally wept for joy and then, having been given permission because of the occasion, sped home to announce the good news. For the next few weeks I walked on air. There might never before have been a gymslip bought, a School bag polished, a 'bus pass issued.

The great day arrived and I came down to earth with a most awful bump. I felt very small and insignificant standing there in the School Hall. The prefects looked so tall and reserved; the Staff so remote and stern in their gowns; the gilt lettering round the panelling so formidable and so completely strange. I thought that I would never get used to this School. How I longed for the little School from which I had come. The first day was one mad frightening rush – attempting to find classrooms; learning names; getting dinner tickets (this was always a nightmare to me, as I was always afraid of being left without dinner). Time went on, and of course I did get used to it eventually. School life became quite a routine, with all the odd incidents standing out in my memory.

Funny isn't it, how all the seemingly unimportant things are remembered best. The first winter was a very severe one – lots of snow and frost and fog. Near our 'bus stop was a pond where we all used to congregate for a session of sliding before the 'bus arrived to take us to our hive of industry. One morning, after a severe frost, excitement having quite gone to my head, I ventured on to some thin ice and before I knew what happened I fell in, new gymslip and all. I trailed miserably home to change and for weeks afterwards was tormented with a lot of sarcastic remarks. Talking of frost reminds me of another mild form of torture which I went through that winter. We were learning French phonetics and the effort of saying "a", "e", "i" etc. with chapped lips stretched to cracking point was something which has to be experienced before it can be believed.

The Osiris players came to School that winter – it was the first time I had seen anything so wonderful. I sat through the show open-mouthed and developed a great admiration for those women which has not abated in the least. I think that those shows, together with the School plays, were the brightest spots in my School life. My dearest ambition after seeing "She Stoops to Conquer" was to act in a School play and wear a crinoline and a curly wig (I had short, straight hair). This I never managed and so I still nurse in my bosom a burning desire to sweep majestically around in a gorgeous hooped gown.

In the 2nd Form I attended my first film show in the Art room with my first boy friend. We sat on one of the sinks at the back of the room eating toffees and holding sticky, ink-stained hands. I thought it all quite wonderful, and so it was until Mr Hamilton came along to us and started a discussion on costumes through the ages. I never forgave him for that!

My first contribution to the School Magazine was made whilst I was in the 2nd Form. It was a short, despairing protest (I had been encouraged in this by my Form master) against the commandeering of the cloakroom mirrors by the senior girls. It brought down on my head a torrent of abuse and I vowed that I would never again write anything for the magazine.

In my 3rd year I joined the Choir and was sure that because of that we won the 1st place in the Pontefract Musical Festival. I can remember nothing about that day – music, adjudication, songs or anything, except the fact that Miss Townsend bought a great bag of toffees and handed them round in the 'bus. (Stomach again.)

The work we did at School, the examinations, the homework we did or did not do, are all quite hazy now, but the little, silly things are still fresh in my mind.....forgetting my magazine money after a final warning and being reduced to a dithering idiot by the cutting remarks of the English teacher; sliding down the corridor and falling right at Miss Shortridge's feet as she came round the corner; seeing Miss Kenward faint in the Staff Play and wondering how she did it without hurting herself; hating the doctor's periodic visits; acting behind the footlights for the first time, and hundreds of others which, if I were to write them all down here would probably fill the magazine.

They were grand days and though not exactly the happiest days of my life, they rank a close second. I only wish that all the children now at the old School and those who are yet to come will have in their later years as happy memories of their School days as I have.

'Persome'

## 2. Mr. Hamilton's Presidential Address to the Old Hilmians December 1948

The outbreak of war in 1939 put an end to many things; among them was the Old Hilmians Magazine. A very fine beginning had been made, and then for nearly ten years came a complete gap. In that time two generations of Students have passed through the School. The stalwarts of the Old Hilmians of 1939 have become scattered more than ever and we have to look to the newer generations to supply the enthusiasm and energy to get things done. It has been almost like beginning from scratch. But not quite. The few Old Hilmians who were left behind in the district during the war years never lost contact with the School nor with one another. The difficulty now is that the continuity of the various activities so bravely built up during the years before the war has been broken. The spirit of interest in the School still exists in the hearts of nearly all old pupils. It would be strange if it were not so, but the idea of loyalty to the Old Hilmians' Clubs such as the Hockey and the Rugger Clubs has suffered a blow through the interruption to these activities by the war. The faithful few are continuing their efforts and I feel that in the end they will win through. Year by year pupils are leaving School and every year one or two will be found who have the same enthusiasm and the same

“esprit de corps” as those older Old Hilmians who built the Association in the very beginning. I am sure that it is only a matter of perseverance and time.

The School has changed much since the year 1939. The main building is still as it was: the grounds are still as they were. But we now teach in the Technical School, and in the Dining Room. Four new classrooms to take the place of the Technical School rooms and the Dining Room are practically finished and by the time this appears in print we expect to be using the four new classrooms (The New Block). The mainspring of the School - the Staff - has changed very much indeed. There is not a single Mistress who was here in 1939. This was perhaps to be expected. Of the Masters who were here in 1939 there still remain Mr Crossland, Mr Storer, Mr Collette and Mr Manning. Twenty-five years of service at the School were completed by Mr Crossland last year – as most of the Old Hilmians know – and this year Mr Storer completes his 25 years.

My predecessor and your old Head, Mr Jenkinson, is still going strong in his retirement at Oxford. He came up for the Memorial Service and has promised to come back again for Parents’ Day next summer. He keeps remarkably fit and gives me great hopes for the day when it comes to my turn to retire.

It is a great pleasure to welcome once again the appearance of the Old Hilmians’ Magazine. Much energy and thought were expended over the idea prior to the first issue round about 1939, and it is a very encouraging sign indeed to find that there are other Old Hilmians ready to take up the work of their predecessors as soon as circumstances permit. Ten years is a long time and so much has happened during these particular ten years that there must be pages and pages of news which we are all longing to read. I want to pay tribute to those who kept the Old Hilmians alive during the war years, and to those who have rallied round since the war finished. To both groups I would express my deepest thanks, and for the future, “Good luck and God Speed”.

RWH

### **3. Old Hilmians Dramatic Society 1947**

In January 1947 the old Hilmians Dramatic Society once again came into being. Almost immediately a play was chosen – “Love from a Stranger”. Though the response was not what it should have been, the few who showed an interest were keen and willing. After many rehearsals however, this play was deemed to be unsuitable and it wasn’t until September 1947 that the production of “Happy Days”, a farce in three acts, was begun.

A great deal of hard work was put into this play, and it was eventually presented on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 1947. Though it was by no means a masterpiece of great acting it was nevertheless a success socially and financially.

An early start was once more made for the next production, but again there was a great deal of time lost while a play was chosen. At last it was decided to produce another play by Wilfred Massey – “Such Things Happen”. However, holidays and the usual lack of co-operation resulted in the play being put off. The few remaining members are still keen to produce a play and it is hoped that more people come forward to take part in or to help with a further production.

James A Halsall