

Speech Day 1923

On December 18th the Hippodrome was once again the venue for the Wednesday afternoon ceremony of 1923. The Guest of Honour was Mrs. J. Dymond, of Burntwood, and Sir James P. Hinchcliffe, chairman of the West Riding County Council was also present, and gave an address.

The Governors and Staff

County Alderman Gabriel Price (chairman); Mrs. Alice Schorah (vice-chairman); Mrs. Guest, Mrs. Garstang; Mrs. Price; Coun. J. Potts; Coun. E. Beaumont; Coun. C.B. Little; Mr. A.G. Jenkinson (Headmaster); Miss M.A. Griffiths, (senior mistress)

The Opening Address

Ald. Price opened the proceedings by welcoming the parents and visitors, and proceeded to give an up-to-date account of the school, its staff and its pupils. When it was first opened on the morning of November 8th 1921 there were 98 pupils, with accommodation for 181. There were 73 who paid fees, 23 who held County Major Scholarships and 2 Intending Teachers. The Staff comprised the Head master, senior mistress, Science master and two assistant mistresses. Since then the school had gradually grown to an attendance of 154 pupils, of whom 94 paid fees, one received a South Elmsall Pretoria Club Scholarship, one a Holgate Scholarship and one a Cudworth Education Foundation Scholarship. The Staff had been strengthened to meet the needs of the increased numbers of scholars, and now comprised the Head master, senior mistress, three assistant masters, three assistant mistresses and a part-time manual instructor. There were seven Forms in the school, and the highest Form would be taking the School Certificate of the Northern Universities in 1925. Subjects taught were:- English, History, Geography, French, Latin, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Art, Music, Needlework, Woodwork and Scripture. Since the temporary laboratory had been equipped, good progress in Science had been made, and the magnificent grounds of about 20 acres offered good facilities for Cricket, Football, Hockey and Tennis.

The chairman expressed appreciation to the South Elmsall Pretoria Club and the Frickley Working Men's Club in each offering a free scholarship tenable at the school. He said that the Governors remained convinced that they had the makings of a Secondary School second to none in the Riding, and it was their desire and intention to keep abreast of the times and secure the best staff, accommodation and equipment necessary to fully meet the demands made upon the school. Having done this they hoped that parents who resided within the catchment area of the school would show their appreciation of the splendid facilities provided by making every effort, and if necessary, some little sacrifice, to enable their children to attend the school immediately they became eligible for admission.

In conclusion, he said the Governors and staff wanted to feel that the Hemsworth Secondary School had come to stay, and was going to send out boys and girls who would play a very important part in the life of the Empire.

Sir James Hinchcliffe

Sir James began his speech by offering praise to Ald. Price, whom he observed to have common sense and a logical mind. Hemsworth people were fortunate to receive the services of such a man. Proceeding, he compared the advantages of the children of that time to the limited educational options of his boyhood days. The County Minor Scholarships offered by the County Council meant that everyone who could attain the standard required had a chance to succeed. From his own experience, he knew of the son of a shoemaker in his own village who had received such a Scholarship, and was presently at Oxford University. He then spoke in favour of encouraging correspondence between children of English schools and children in other parts of the Empire, so that when they grew up, the English boy or girl would be more familiar with countries abroad. This, he pointed out, was necessary so that a supply of raw material to this country should be ensured. He was also in favour, he said, of teachers from the Dominions changing posts with English teachers for a period so that minds might be broadened.

The Headmaster's Report

"In looking back over the history of the past school year, my general impression is one of progress and improvement in every direction - if I except building construction, the progress of which has been more evident to the imagination than to the eye". So began the speech of Mr. Jenkinson, who continued to assert that, "in work, in games, in the various side-lines of school life, and most of all, and most important of all, in character formation there has been a distinct move forward, and there has been no slipping back." The general discipline of the school was a cause of great satisfaction to all concerned. A good tradition was being established, and the children were beginning to realise that their outward behaviour was a reflection of the character within. The good name of the school was in the hands of the children, and their orderly behaviour was being noticed and commented on by people outside the school. Compared with the previous December, there were 14 more pupils in the school, which was only a small increase and probably due to local conditions which they all hoped would soon change for the better.

In his report of the previous year, he had extolled the virtues of the teaching of Latin as a way of training the mind, awakening latent powers and showing how, by labour, to acquire knowledge. This had played no small part in the considerable improvement of the powers of self-expression within the school over the past year. The current outstanding weakness of the children was carelessness which had shown itself in the July examinations. Inaccuracy in the working of mathematical papers; carelessness in reading the questions set; insufficient attention to elementary points of grammar - these were the common faults throughout the examinations, and they sprang from one common cause, a lack of determination to concentrate the mind upon the thing of the moment. "This concentration of will is a quality to which we schoolmasters attach, and rightly, I think, a very great importance. Many a career in life is ruined by vacillation and instability. If the power of concentrated effort and minute attention to detail has been acquired at school, it will not fail its owner in after life. And that is partly why it is a true dictum that it doesn't matter so much what we teach at school as how we teach it, or what we learn as how we learn it. Any subject taught in the true spirit of culture will do something towards fulfilling the aim of education."

The aim of education should be to equip a boy or girl for the future; but he asserted that there was more to it than that. Educators should avoid allowing the teaching in school to become narrow and cramped. Learning should contribute to the fullness of life. He did not advocate dispensing with formal teaching, but would have it woven into larger schemes of culture rather than be treated separately. As an example, he felt that in English, the essential teaching of Grammar should be incorporated into the whole scheme of literature, and not ignored, as was the current trend. Unless a child had a clear idea of English Grammar, it would be very difficult to learn a foreign language. As far as the teaching of French in school was concerned, he knew that some people asked what use that would be when the child had left the school. The justification for teaching any foreign language had already been mentioned as performing a useful function, and where French was concerned, it was a modern language, and it should not be beyond the bounds of possibility for Secondary pupils to maintain an interest in, and continue their studies of this after leaving school. Perhaps reading circles could be formed among old pupils for the study of French Literature. It was well-known that as a nation, the British were more ignorant of the literature of other nations than they were of ours.

Activities:

As a result of Mr. Crossland's encouragement, the boys' Rugby skills had greatly improved, and several matches had been played. Many boys played 'Fives' with great enthusiasm, and it was hoped to arrange some matches during the next school year. In Cricket some excellent progress in batting, bowling and fielding had been made, thanks to the encouragement of Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Crossland. The cricket ground had improved beyond recognition, and was becoming one of the best grounds in the district. The end of term match against the parents was enjoyable, with the parents achieving a respectable victory. Hockey, Tennis and Netball were played regularly by the girls, and some tennis matches had already been arranged for the next term. A grass court was established on the cricket ground, and another court was being prepared for the next season. Athletics and Folk Dancing had been two successful activities involving all the school. The school also entered for various classes in the Folk Dancing competitions at Pontefract, and obtained five certificates. Miss Jackson and Miss Prince deserved thanks for their untiring efforts in connection with the dancers.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" had been performed successfully in the delightful setting of the old quarry garden. The first edition of the School Magazine had been produced, and a gramophone had been acquired to encourage the appreciation of good music. Gifts of gramophone records of good music were requested. The Boy Scouts Troop lost an excellent leader with the departure of Mr. Cliff, and hopes were expressed for the activities of the troop to be maintained and even increased by his successor. By the beginning of the September term, there would be a wireless apparatus installed at the school which, under the supervision of the male teachers, would facilitate much useful experimental work, as well as entertainment. The school had a National Savings Bank which was looked after by Miss Griffiths and had a growing membership.

The School Library was steadily accumulating a stock of about 360 books both for reference and circulation, and thanks were due to those members of staff and pupils who had made gifts of books to the library. More donations were invited. There were 124 books on loan from the County Circulating Library, and the small reference section already included two encyclopaedias and many other interesting books.

The School Choir had participated in the Pontefract Music Festival, but had gained no certificate despite being only nine marks behind the winning choir. At the next festival, certificates were to be awarded on merit to all choirs reaching a fixed standard.

The School Gardens were still being cultivated, though they were fewer in number, as part of the grounds had been rented out. Mr. Cressey had kindly given prizes for the two best allotments.

The House Competition had been keenly contested, and won for the 1922-23 school year by Holgate with a score of 847.5 against Talbot's 841.25.

The School Staff

The first changes to the staff of the school were as follows:-

Mr. Stanley Clift left the school at half-term to take up a post as Assistant Lecturer in Geology at Nottingham University College. His skills as an excellent teacher, a cartoonist and a Scoutmaster were greatly missed.

Mr. J.A. Storer B.Sc. was appointed to replace Mr. Clift.

Miss Robinson was appointed as a senior teacher of English.

In welcoming the two new members of staff, Mr. Jenkinson repeated the praise he had given during the previous year's Speech Day in commending the unswerving loyalty and willing co-operation of all his colleagues. The parents and Governors, especially the chairman and vice-chairman, were thanked for their cordial support. He appreciated the fact that they recognised his position and consulted his wishes, and was looking forward to the prospect of the new buildings. In that connection he urged the creation of new playgrounds and a covered drill hall as necessities. He ended his speech with the words,

"A useful work lies ahead for all of us who desire the prosperity of this school, and as our school motto says, may we find pleasure in doing it."

During the afternoon, carols, songs and dances were given by school children, and then the prizes were awarded by the Guest of Honour, Mrs. J. Dymond.

The Prizewinners

The following is a list of prizewinners:-

English	Fearnside E., Margaret Foster, Miriam Wass, E. Kitchen, May Bull, Clarice Allen
History	Freda Swaine, Margaret Foster, H. Garner, Adelaide Branford, Clarice Allen
Geography	Barker E. J., Hawkesworth S., Hilda Gaunt, H. Sharpe, Adelaide Branford, Wilson A. L.
French	Freda Swaine, Carter S. L., Hilda Gaunt, Adelaide Branford
Latin	Barker E. J., Carter. S. L.
Mathematics	Barker E. J., Carter S. L., Hilda Gaunt, Doris Miles, S. Brown
Physics	R. H. Slatcher, S. Hawkesworth, Hilda Gaunt
Chemistry	Barker E. J., Kirk W., Hawkesworth S.
Scripture	Florence Hodgson, E. J. Langley
Singing	N. Miles
Art	Emma Bate, M. Jebbett.
Needlework	M. Wootton
General Knowledge	Dooley W. L., Alice Scott, E. Martin, J. Taylor, Olive Tooth, H. Garner, E. J. Langley
Greatest Progress	S. Thorpe, Raymond Wilkinson, K. M. Thompson, E. Partridge
Star Prize:	Freda Swaine, Hilda Gaunt

Talbot Challenge Cup for Houses: Holgate House 847½ marks against Talbot House with 841¼ marks.

Taking Stock

The year of 1923 had been a busy one for the school and the Head master. Sport, Folk-dancing, Drama, Athletics, a School Magazine and a Speech Day had all come and gone. Mr. Clift had departed for Nottingham, and Mr. Storer and Miss Robinson had joined the staff, together, one would hope, with the new maid engaged to help Mrs. Manning with the dinners! The Governors, with their new clerk, Mr. Crossley, had continued to manage the affairs of the school under the charming and dependable guidance of Ald. Price.

As yet, the proposed new buildings had not materialised, despite the many hints and requests made by the Headmaster, but in general, the school was set fair to continue to flourish and encourage the pupils of the following year to excel in their first Public Examinations. Elsewhere, Sir Michael Sadler, who was born in Barnsley, and had sent the letter about the Holgate Scholarship which was read out at the opening of the school in November 1921, left his position as Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University during 1923 to become Master of Oxford University College.