

Beryl Haughton

Starting my teaching career at K.H.S.

In my final year at Birmingham University I applied for a post as English Teacher at K.H.S. & was appointed for September 1957. They had not reckoned with fewer VK, whose ingenuity in ragging the staff caused their English teacher to walk out at Whitson. The University released me early and in June I presented myself to fill the gap, full of optimism & enthusiasm. Half a term of lower VK nearly convinced me that teaching was not for me, but as all my other classes were intelligent and responsive I gritted my teeth and over the subsequent 12 months became quite fond of them!

I found myself in a teachers staff room dominated by teachers of the old school, with high standards and strict values. The learning of younger staff had to be trained in THE RIGHT WAYS. I came to respect, and in many cases, to care for them but it did produce some conflicts of loyalty! Making my form kneel on the floor whilst I measured the length of the gym slips was one duty that I hated, and when the velour hats were replaced by air hostess style models that blow off easily I was horrified when a decision was taken to give detentions if more than two kirby grips each side were used to secure them!

We did not have our own Kitchen for some years & the meals that were delivered were far from Michelin standard. Dinner Duty entailed ensuring clean plates and I felt I had to turn a blind eye to some of the debris - I would not have eaten them myself. On one occasion I could not understand the epidemic of cutlery dropping that had half the room crawling round the floor. I asked one of the sixth form what went on. "They can see Miss X's knickers, Miss". Then there was the green faced young lady who approached me with her plate and begged me, "Don't make me eat it!" I surveyed the grub sticking out of her pastry & gave her a dispensation.

Fundamentally, though, I found myself one of team of hardworking teachers, who cared about their subject and their pupils in equal measure, Sport, Art, Music, Drama, Domestic Science were as important as purely academic subjects, and I had great fun running the Guide companies. (The only Guide Captain to ask her Patrol headers to carry a brick to camp for the fire place and to receive a severe reprimand from the District Commissioner for her scruffy appearance on parade!).

I must also comment on the qualities of our excellent Headmistress, Miss Renwick, not always recognised because of her dignified demeanour. There were many occasions when her good sense, her kindness and her sense of humour were invaluable to me.

I have no regrets about the 7 years I spent at K.H.S. and am still in touch with some of my pupils over 60 years later.

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