

Memories of MHGS 1962-1964

Hi there, I'm Drew Elliot and I joined MHGS in September 1962 and left just after the start of my third year in September 1964. Whilst only there for just a short time I have a few vivid memories.

As someone who was not and never has been sporty, my earliest memory was when my father (a great rugby union fan) returned from the initial meeting of parents and informed me that the Headmaster had informed all present that 'all' boys would learn to love rugby. My father was thrilled at this, and I was equally not! I was certain this would not, could not include me. However, how this aim was to be carried out led to much speculation and it has to be said, worry, on my behalf.

The memories for the start of the first year are many. Part I suppose were those caused by that typical 'new boy' syndrome, your uniform stands out because it is new (and probably too big) the schools buildings easily lost in, (all those rows of classrooms) the quad noisy and I thought dangerous (all those soccer games at the same time) and I remember everybody else (apart from other first-formers) as being enormously tall and rowdy.

As we lived in Bramhall my next memory was how to manage the school buses. The school informed us which bus to catch, but I quickly realised that some buses were crowded whilst others less so and therefore more pleasant, even if this meant waiting on the quad at the end of day for the last bus out. I also remember the school rule that caps had to be worn from the quad down the lane (does anyone else remember the mock orange bushes) to the main road where the buses pulled in.

With regard to uniform I also remember that during the first year, grey shorts were to be worn and you were only allowed to wear long trousers from the second year onwards.

Once settled in, the September of '62 is more of a blur. I remember (just) that our form rooms were in a (sort of) new block round the back of the mansion, near to the pottery room perhaps. I remember we had French lessons there.

During that first year I was asked, cajoled, persuaded, forced or perhaps I simply joined the school choir. I seem to recall a choir competition somewhere – Manchester(?) – probably a music festival.

But it was during the second year that my involvement with the choir was going to dominate, certainly during the first term. We were preparing for the Carol Concert / Service which was held in St Mary's Church, Cheadle, on the evening of December 17th 1963. I had been chosen to sing solo for the first verse of 'Once in Royal David's City' as well as the treble solo in 'And there were Shepherds...' from the Christmas Oratorio by Bach. The rehearsals were fine, including much loved time off from lessons to rehearse in the church, but I remember being quite terrified in the evening of the service by having to walk, in the dark, around the back of the church which meant going through the grave yard. I think I remained terrified for the rest of the concert, certainly the 78rpm recordings which we were able to order and buy the following term sound that way. Mr W. Ifor Jones was the Choir Master / Music teacher and the organist was Mr K Halstead. (Mp3 versions of these recordings are now on the website.) Generally this was all new to me, we were not a church going

family nor were we particularly into 'classical' music; my mother thought the Bach "could have had a nicer tune..."

My memories of sporting events are equally as vivid but for different reasons – actually being terrified was a common link. Rugby I detested and was always in the 'C' team which meant we had to play on the pitch the furthest from the school (near a stream I think) but this had the advantage of only getting the rarest of visits from the teacher. My like minded friends realised that if we kept running around and chucking the ball about, we could fool the staff that we were indeed playing 'rugger.'

Later, I remember cricket matches on the pitches along the main road next to the girls' school. As my ability at cricket was as bad as that in 'rugger' I often ended up as the umpire – but not knowing anything about umpiring! Confidently I would shout, "No ball," in an authoritative way, only to be drowned out by everyone else shouting "No way!" (Or perhaps words to that effect.)

My final memories for this short blog concern school plays. I remember persuading my dad to take me to see Ben Jonson's 'The Alchemist' – was this held in the '62-'63 academic year or the next. It certainly fostered an interest in theatre which I have to this day. Also there was a house drama competition (I was in Moseley – I recall a green band on the rugby shirt) and again I can no longer remember which academic year this was. I do however remember the play – it was entitled 'Captain Scuttleboom's Treasure,' and I think I played 'Slimy Pete.'

Finally I am on the banner photograph on the home page of the web-page taken during the summer months of (I think) 1964, back row – 6th in from the right with a pen in my blazer pocket and looking a tad serious.

And "that," as they say, "is that." For during the summer holiday of '64 my father was transferred back to the North East of England so, just after the start of year three, September '64, I left.

I joined Whitley Bay Grammar School before qualifying at Bretton Hall College of Education becoming – you might guess – a music teacher and finally an LEA music advisor. Thanks are probably due to Mr. W. Ifor Jones for the inspiration.

Now retired, we spend our time between our homes in Tynemouth and Puy l'Évêque in the Lot department of France.

If there is anybody out there remembering any of these events please get in touch. My email address is drew.elliott46700@gmail.com