

Chapter 46
1958 – 1961
Bannockburn / Jordanhill College (v)

As mentioned earlier, our curriculum in Year One comprised Gymnastics, Swimming, 3 Major Games (in season), ‘Commanding’ (basic teaching simulation in the gymnasium), Scottish Country Dancing, Theory of Teaching PE, Theory of Major Games, Health Education, Anatomy and Physiology, Speech Training, English Literature and Singing. In fact, throughout our three-year course, the Major Games that we experienced and simultaneously learned how to coach and organise, were, from October until March, soccer, rugby and field hockey, and, from April until June, athletics, cricket and tennis. But additionally, during the Spring and Summer terms of our final year, opportunities were provided to experience what were then called, ‘Outward-Bound Activities’, namely, not only orienteering, hill-walking, ski-ing and rock-climbing when based for a week in the Cairngorms at Glenmore Lodge in early April, but also dinghy sailing and canoeing for a week in late May when hostelling/camping near the mouth of the River Fruin at the south-west corner of Loch Lomond.

Some of my SSPE Year Group Ski-ing in a ‘white-out’ on Cairngorm, 1961



L. to R.

Derrick McCrimmon, Jim Wylie, Jack Kelly, Jimmy Keenan, Ali Bradley, Karty Caesar, John Gray, Jim McKinney

In all years, the most enjoyable participation for me in the six competitive sports offered came from the hours and hours that I spent developing my playing and teaching skills in rugby and cricket. However, in parallel with these, I not only learned much about the other major games, but also worked extremely hard to gain, the Royal Life-Saving Society swimming awards - Bronze Medallion, Award of Merit, and Instructor’s Certificate, the Scottish Country Dance Society’s Teachers’ Elementary Certificate, and the MCC’s Cricket Coaching Certificate. I soon discovered that I was a useful ‘all-rounder’ who could perform very reasonably at any recreational activity that involved hand and eye co-ordination in ball games, could display the precise and relaxed movement skills needed for dance and swimming, and could show a fair degree of competence and resilience in coping with the Outward-Bound challenges presented by hills, mountains, snow, lochs and seas. Indeed these last were exceptionally valuable because of the different senses of team-work, caring and sharing that they inspired amongst our tightly-knit group of ‘men with a mission’ in sporting and recreational endeavour.

Back in college during the first year, we were fortunate to have able tutors, not only for our sports’ subjects, but also for our ancillary academic/expressive learning in English, Speech Training and Music. As befits those who should exemplify perhaps the most essential attributes of good teaching - command, personality, subject skill and knowledge, and a sense of humour – Dr Gatherer illustrated these as he, for example, guided us through the historical and literary nuances of ‘The Doctor’s Dilemma’; Miss Ethel Rennie absorbingly demonstrated just what could be achieved with precise diction, as well as impressionism ... and her Churchill speech, ‘Never in the field of human conflict’ was a lasting cameo among many for us all to treasure, in recognising what ‘voice’ is capable of in establishing atmospheres that may be wished for, or even demanded, in teaching; Mr Johnson not only recognised our group’s love of singing and the wide range of specialised musical talents in our midst, but he also, in due course

provided us with as fine a choral repertoire as one could ever imagine arising from a mere one hour of practice per week. His arrangement of the song, 'The Farmer's Boy' in three-parts, is his legacy to us, as, for the last forty-four years, when meeting periodically at week-end reunions in April, it has always been the essential 'top of the bill' item to be sung after dinner with great accuracy and feeling, and thus typify the loyalty that has always exemplified our togetherness.

Cricket as a major summer term sport was not, to put it mildly, everyone's choice as an enthralling way to pass a warm afternoon. However, it did provide those of us with talents in this direction, great opportunities to cope with the problems caused in net-coaching a mixed-bag of aimless 'chuckers' and hard-ball frightened 'swingers' in order to teach them the wonderfully 'unnatural' skills of a historic game played by 'white-flannelled fools'.

That apart, the college ran an XI who played matches against local Glasgow opposition on mid-week evenings and Saturdays. But in addition there was also the annual away fixture against the might of St Andrews University. Traditionally, this provided a great day out on the East coast and an evening to remember socially. However, the match itself, until my time, had seldom been anything other than one-sided Too many Englishmen at St Andrews usually saw to that! But in May, 1959, we were better prepared than ever before to hold our own!

With Peter Giles, Colin McLeod, Tom Robertson and myself all seasoned players at Scottish County or Western Union level, we felt we might surprise the 'varsity for once. The first three were all able medium-paced seam/swing bowlers, and I was a useful wicket-keeper. In addition, all of us, except Colin, were accustomed to batting in the upper order for our own home-based clubs.



St A's won the toss and batted first. But they made such slow headway against our 'mean' attack that after about two and a half hours they had only managed a modest score of around 140. The time factor in the match thus left us with about two hours to either win, or to survive for a draw. As it happened, we lost three wickets cheaply early on in our reply and the opposition were clearly feeling that the usual collapse of Jordanhill was on the cards. But they had not reckoned with the appearance out in the middle of Tom and I as two college 'freshers' determined not only to win, or save, the game, but also anxious to impress our tutor Mr Morton with our confidence and capability to deal with a situation that we had both met often before at much higher levels of the game. The upshot was that by 'stumps', we were both undefeated, and the moral victory of a creditable draw obtained by our assured defence, not to mention the opposition's puzzled frustration affecting their ability to somehow remove us from the fray. Our performance there, and in piling on the runs in the May/June local matches, were rewarded at the annual college award-giving when Tom and I gained 'College Half-Colours' and thus the coveted red/yellow/blue trim of ribbon on our blazer pockets.

As often happens, our team success that year created more interest amongst those who had cricket ability but had formerly opted to concentrate on tennis or athletics instead. Thus, we became more of a force to be reckoned with in the years ahead.