

Chapter 58

Jordanhill College 1958-61

Late March 1961, at college was planning time for our year-groups' up-coming six outward-bound adventure days in the Cairngorm mountains hill-walking, orienteering, skiing, rock and ice-climbing, all based at Glenmore Lodge, near Loch Morlich, about five miles east of Aviemore in Inverness-shire.

Here is the Lodge, photographed, mostly unchanged, some forty-six years on.



The final item of planning was a unanimous decision by all students to defy an order from our accompanying staff members that banned the 'beard-growing contest' that we had started on Friday 24th March. "Not very close to the razor this morning", a well-known greeting to the careless amongst us from our highly respected principal, Mr Hugh Brown, was not to be a comment taken seriously until the summer term started, especially if offered by any of his junior staff at Glenmore! Thus, after our various match commitments on the Saturday had been fulfilled – mine involving a satisfactory win over local rivals Jordanhill School FPs by 19 points to 6, and another 7 points added to my personal tally, we, an unshaven bunch of scruffs, boarded the coach for the late evening journey north.

It was a wonderful week of physical challenge and socialising. The weather was bitterly cold but dry – except when heavy snow curtailed the Tuesday's skiing. However, we were well-kitted to withstand the various 'exposures' – unforgiving weather, frustrating orienteering to find a lochan hidden in a nearby forest, falling off (suitably roped of course) dry and icy rock scrambles of various degrees of difficulty from 'easy' to 'severe', a steep climb up Cairngorm

itself, followed immediately by a wearying trek from the Shelter Stone, along Loch Avon and down Strath Nethy, and fun glissading in snow slopes in the Coire Cas and Coire na Ciste.

Coire Cas and Coire na Ciste in the Distance from the Lodge



Another ‘exposure’ to be accounted for was awareness that Ron Marshall and Struan McCallum were constantly filming activities as added footage for the ‘epic-movie’ that they had been shooting all year concerning SSPE Final Year Experiences. It also became a week devoid of alcohol but awash with exquisite and ever-appreciated mugs of Glenmore Lodge coffee; especially in the evenings after dinner when we all gathered in the lounge to entertain both ourselves and fellow residents from other colleges with great sing-songs led by our own Tom Robertson (Baritone), John Gray and Struan McCallum(Guitars), and Ron Marshall and Jimmy McKinnie (Piano).

On a personal note, I had the moving experience on the first Sunday of inspecting Ryvoan Bothy where my father had rested his weary limbs for two nights in his summer of 1932 expedition in these same mountains and valleys. (Pictured below)



Then on the Friday before departure, I was surprised and delighted to take first prize (shaving soap) in the beard-growing contest – happily, and acquiescently, judged by the same Messrs Morton and Small who had previously, perhaps precipitately, issued the ban on such hirsute facial cultivation!

My first priority when returning to college for the summer term in late April, 1961, was taking over my responsibilities as newly appointed captain of the cricket 1st XI confirming the eighteen fixtures to be squeezed into about eight weeks, sorting out necessary equipment, finding out who would be available for the evening mid-week and Saturday afternoon matches, checking playing facilities – square and nets, and also preparing for the up-coming MCC Coaching Certificate examinations – written and practical.



Simultaneously, I, like the other twenty eight due to graduate in June were also contemplating a variety of commitments, v.i.z.

- a) Intensive indoor and outdoor [*weather permitting*] practising of our final year gymnastic display due to be performed on the college front lawn immediately after the graduation ceremony during the last week of June
- b) Prior to the decisive award finalisation meeting of the college committee of examiners in late May, sitting, in the first week, the previously postponed final Health Education Multiple-Choice written examination and additionally during that exam week
- c) For those on the short list of five for the award of merit in teaching [*myself included*], a nerve-racking ‘unseen’ opportunity to show off their skills with a selected secondary class at nearby Jordanhill College School - the assessors being any of the six tutors who

respectively had not previously had the chance to visit each of the candidates on school placement during the final year.

- d) Also in late May, the undertaking of a challenging three-day canoeing expedition on Loch Lomond, based at the ‘bonnie banks’ youth hostels of Auchendennan on the western shore, and Rowardennan on the eastern side
- e) Practical planning meetings etc. for our year group’s responsibilities for the organisation and administration of our own college Sports Day as well as the athletics and cricketing aspects of Inter-College Field on the second and third Saturdays of June respectively

Quite a programme !!

Although very time-consuming out-with the normal 9.45 a.m to 4 p.m. college day, I found all the cricket activities very relaxing. I had a good mixture of seasoned and up-and-coming players to lead, and this eased the pressure on me to take as much responsibility for run-getting as in former years. In particular, my great friend and vice-captain, Tom Robertson, consistently performed magnificently with both bat and ball, and much success came our way yet again.

a) In contrast to this, I, as a fairly mediocre gymnast, found, as ever, the more acrobatic demands of our proposed display programme weighing heavily on my mind, if not even more so on my less than supple musculature. The fairly complicated arm and leg twirling manoeuvres of the likes of asymmetric free-standing loosening exercises did not trouble me as they soon became ‘roboticised’. Nor did the basic vaulting that more suited my frame



But the voluntary section, where each was expected to do something eye-catchingly acrobatic became my nightmare. I had a great fear of going backwards in any agility sequence whether attempted on floor or beam. I was neither a ‘spring-heeled’, nor a partially double-jointed

individual. and ... critically, I usually lost necessary awareness of my surroundings when performing mid-air somersaults! However, my showpiece became a compromise between these last two ... an single open somersault from a trampette onto the security of a double mattress. For months I had gradually improved at this with the help of a harness dangling from the ceiling before progressing to placing my life in the hands of a trusted catcher ... but all this took place indoors in the gymnasium. Then we started to practise our routines outdoors on the stretch of lawn beside the tennis courts behind the main college buildings. Initially, damp grass, typical of early summer mornings in Scotland, confined most of our action to regimented full class activities. Then as the weather improved by the beginning of June, vaulting, agilities and acrobatics were attempted. Oh dear! Someone should have warned me! Doing an open front summersault within four walls is totally different from performing such with lots of open space between one and distant rose gardens, bushes and tennis court netting surrounds. Result? ... injury prone John lost his bearings and did an ugly one-AND-A-HALF somersault that ended with a nose-diving crash onto (luckily) a TRIPLE mattress Little comfort that the film-magnets Marshall and McCallum had the cameras rolling throughout and thus recorded this 'OOOOPs' for posterity and intermittent re-running at our re-unions during the next forty-five years. Thus, 'hors-de-combat' and unable to turn my head for weeks thereafter, I escaped further possible indignity by being excused from taking active part in the graduation day display.

b) & c) The Health Education exam did not seem to trouble any of us. But the 'teach-off' for merits became a nail-biting affair. This was especially the case for Derrick McCrimmon and myself as we had a pretty shrewd idea that we both needed such approval to gain the elusive third merit required for the award of a Diploma with Distinction. In another context too, we also suspected that the decision of who between us would be made 'Leading Student' might be finalised from our respective teaching performances within the College School Hall. How such decisions are arrived at of course properly remain confidential to the relevant committee members. However, grateful for small mercies, come the day before graduation, I was more than happy to offer my congratulations to Derrick when it was announced that he had gained the premier award.