

Chapter 61

1958 – 1961

Bannockburn - Summer 'Holidays' – 1961

After graduation day in late June, and the farewells to the comrades of three years who were not returning to undertake post-graduate certificate studies in Primary Education during Session 1961-62, I went home to Bannockburn to seek a summer job that would bolster my bank savings for probable marriage in 1963. In this employment hunt I was initially unsuccessful, but knew that more opportunities would arise later if I was not too unwilling to get my hands dirty.

Meantime, my diary for the first week of the school holidays had been inked in to fulfil my acceptance of an invitation from the Scottish Association of Physical Education (SAPE) per Mr Dickinson, to become a volunteer teacher of rugby and cricket at the National Athletics' Camp week that the SAPE always organised in Helensburgh for senior pupils selected by their schools as worthy of elite coaching. This indeed proved to be an exciting, energetic, and very worthwhile experience for me as a novice teacher, and a great opportunity to rub shoulders with other dedicated coaches prepared to give up their time for love of sport (not money) in order to encourage the nation's budding talent.

We were based in the old Clyde Street School on the esplanade – handy for the open-air swimming pool that all campers had to 'enjoy' before lunch daily after their (and our) strenuous two-hour morning coaching sessions involving either soccer or rugby at the Ardencaple playing fields on the rural outskirts of the town.

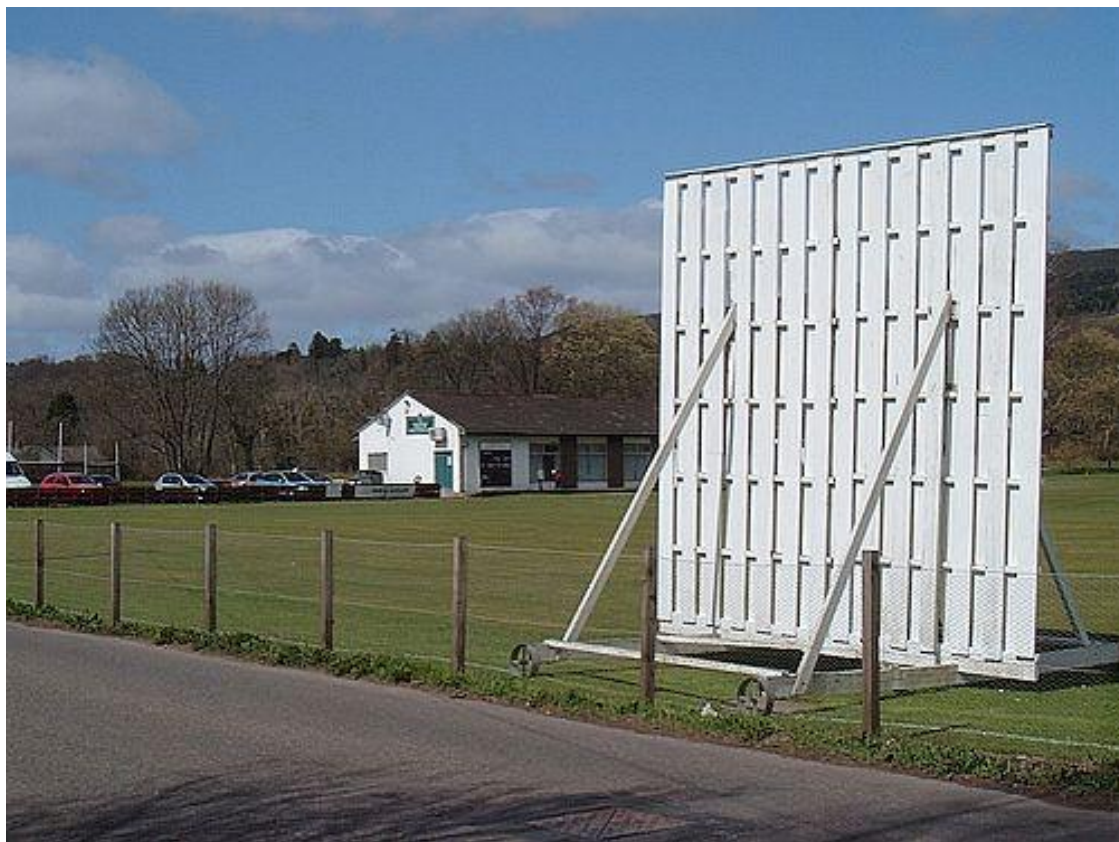


Clyde Street School beyond the steeple on the edge of the River Clyde

(Here closed and condemned in 2006)



The playing fields in 2006 that we used in 1961



After lunch each day we split into groups for two hours of field athletics or cricket activities up at the playing fields, before ‘crawling’ back to base for ‘high-tea’ and relaxation ... followed strictly by early

mattress-bedtime on the classroom floors for the teenagers but not for us staff! The old stagers among my colleagues knew all the best haunts and party places in town ... and we had a whale of a time for each of the six nights of the course the test of our professionalism, despite alcohol consumed, being silent re-entry to the school in the 'smoozers' and being able to tuck into a hearty breakfast at eight o'clock next morning to allay the suspicions of jealous students about our nocturnal escapades and thereafter face the demanding teaching day ahead as if our heads were as clear as bells! [which they seldom were!] Indeed, although we all had a fantastic week in pretty warm weather, I was glad to get home to Bannockburn on the following Saturday to 'recuperate', ease into a comfy bed, snooze undisturbed by old men's snores and other noises, and of course, most importantly, try to recall the numerous amusing anecdotes recounted by my peers at all hours of the day and night during our week together.

While I had been away, the postman had brought a letter offering me an eight-week job as a labourer in the John Player Cigarette Factory in Stirling. It demanded willingness to accept shift-work – 6am to 2pm and 2pm to 10pm on alternate weeks. The early start bothered me and the loss of some evening cricket and tennis was also a nuisance. But the pay was good and my need for cash was pressing So I accepted Little knowing the filthy demands of the work at least in the early stages of being on probation. However, I was warned by others who had previously survived the first few days, to put up with at least five days of back-breaking, finger-nail breaking man-handling of raw tobacco into huge steel containers, and then hope that good attitude and performance would be rewarded with a 'cushier' occupation. I never really enjoyed my 5.15am rise to catch the factory bus into Stirling from Bannockburn, but the compensation I earned after a week was a super job driving a fork-lift mini-tractor to keep the machinists supplied with empty pallets and remove the 250 thousand fags piled up in 'sleeves' on the ones they had already filled.

All in all this proved to be an enlightening time mixing with all kinds of people, especially women who tended to call a spade a spade ... or more likely 'a bloody shovel'. However, after seven weeks I received an offer from Stirlingshire Education Authority to take-up a six week temporary post as a teacher of Science at Slamannan Junior Secondary School before my return to Jordanhill in October. They said that transport would be available from fellow teachers – one relaying me from Bannockburn to Falkirk and another from there up the 'braes' to Slamannan. And, most importantly, I would be on a professional salary scale based on about 3 pounds 10 shillings per day for 30 days ... almost 3 times my daily earnings at the factory. I thus jumped at the chance of such experience ... and such financial rewards!