

Chapter 43
1958 – 1961
Bannockburn / Jordanhill College (ii)

The group of men who formed our 'S1' cohort on entry to the Scottish School of Physical Education, Jordanhill in October, 1958, comprised:-

Ian Baprie [70] (Fifeshire), Bruce Barclay [71] (Glasgow), Brian Blisset [72] (Edinburgh),
Alisdair Bradley [73] (Glasgow), John Gray [74] (Edinburgh), William Hand [75] (Ayrshire),
John Henderson [76] (Stirlingshire), James Keenan [77] (Lanarkshire),
Ivor Liddell [78] (West Lothian), Struan McCallum [79] (Stirlingshire),
Duncan McCallum [80] (Stirlingshire), John McConnachie [81] (Lanarkshire),
Derrick McCrimmon [82] (Dunbartonshire), James McKinnie [83] (Dunbartonshire),
James McManus [84] (Clackmannanshire), Alexander McRae [85] (Highland),
Ronald Marshall [86] (Clackmannanshire), Robert Jess [87] (Ayrshire),
Thomas Robertson [88] (Glasgow), Hudson Scott [89] (Dunbartonshire),
Leon Tait [91] (Edinburgh), William Telfer [92] (Highland), Jim Travers [93] (Ayrshire),
James Wylie [94] (Inverness), Jack Kelly [95] (Aberdeenshire),
Frank Mitchell [97] (Perthshire), Alex Assiedu [98] (Ghana),
Karty Caesar [99] (Ghana), Omotoso Omolabi [100] (Nigeria).

The staff members in 1958, initially were:-

Mr Hugh Brown (Principal)
Mr George Orr
Mr William Dickinson
Mr Crawford Leach*
Mr Roy Small
Mr Frank Punchard * (Principal emeritus)

In 1959, the * members of staff were replaced by,
Mr Kenneth Morton and Mr Robert Mackay.

From the main college staff in 1958/59/60 we received tuition from:-

Miss Chalmers (Scottish Country Dancing)
Dr Gatherer (English)
Dr Wybar (Anatomy)
Miss Rennie (Speech Training)
Mr T. Johnston (Music)

Our basic training in practical Swedish gymnastics was meticulously undertaken by Mr Orr, and our introduction to Theoretical Methods in Teaching PE, as well as to practical sessions in essential fundamental 'Commanding' techniques, were undertaken with great flair and panache by Mr Dickinson. It was during interactions with these two tutors that we learned what we had to be able to do in order to at least survive, not only the first year of the college course, but also our subsequent weekly single days of first year teaching practice in primary schools.

It was soon evident that within our cohort there was a wide range of Swedish gymnastic skill, and thus a fair shortage of it too! Significantly our 'body types' ranged from 'ectomorphic', through 'mesomorphic' to 'endomorphie' and although most of us had special aptitudes for several physical education activities, only a very few displayed those of an 'acrobatic' variety.

None of us realised it at that point, but the selection and admission of our group appeared not to have had the former emphasis on gymnastic ability as a major criterion. Rather priority seemed to have been placed on the kind of 'all-rounder' ability, academically, physically and aesthetically, that would reflect the 'winds of change' that were encouraging all PE teachers to greatly widen the variety, and deepen the understanding, of participative sports and recreational activities that should in the near future be offered within the school curriculum. Despite these relaxations, the in-college discipline of daily gymnastics sessions - free-standing exercises in our positions in 'open-order' on the floor as well as vaulting etc. in groups for apparatus and agilities - was imposed on us with due severity. Indeed our stamina there was tested daily in

ways that we soon found out had merely been briefly sampled during our practical tests for entry to the course.

As the first few weeks ran into months, previously never experienced levels of fatigue, startling increases in need for food and drink intake, and even an element of fear, all came to the fore. An example of one day's time-table gives a strong indication of why:-

9 - 10 a.m., Swimming Life-saving at Cranstonhill Public Baths in Glasgow City Centre
(*Grab a roll/tea at a café and then catch a Corporation Bus for a 20 min. ride to college*)

Change into gymnastics' kit

10.40 – 11.25 a.m. – Gymnastics

Shower

Change into white shirts, teaching blues and dancing pumps

11.35 – 12.20 p.m. – Scottish Country Dancing

Lunch Hour

1.25 – 2.10 p.m. – Academic Tutorial

Change into field games' kit

2.20 – 4 p.m. – Practical Outdoor Games (Soccer or Rugby or Hockey)

Shower etc. – wrap up well against the cold weather – stagger to catch bus home for the day.



One 'fear' element traditionally came about from rumours spread by senior colleagues in S2 or S3. One such 'threat', that in my ingenuousness I took seriously, was that, unless by Christmas you could walk the length of the gymnasium on your hands and complete a satisfactory head-spring on the mat, your course would be abruptly terminated. Luckily my arm strength and application was such that, after about six weeks of practice, I managed the hand-walk challenge. But my tight games' player hamstrings, despite hours of endeavour, prevented me then, and for the duration of the course, from ever doing a satisfactory head-spring to land back on my feet. As it turned out, the seniors had been exaggerating the threats and no obvious action was ever taken on such failings.

However, in my case, the damage had been done, as, in my futile efforts to do a head-spring, I suffered permanent damage to my lower spine. This intermittently sent me into spasm thereafter, became the root cause of the early onset of bouts of crippling sciatica from age forty, and indeed brought about my early retirement from teaching at age fifty-five. However, I have always felt that this was a small price to pay for the privilege of becoming a successful SSPE student and enjoying what was undoubtedly one of the happiest, and best friendship-making, periods of my life. Blessings indeed!

Another ‘fear’ test that I have never forgotten was a light-hearted one given by Mr Dickinson when warning us novice teachers about the necessary immediate effects of our issuing of a command. Without the hint of smile, but with his eyes glinting through his heavy specs, he said to us, “*Slip into the rear upstairs seat of a crowded, smoke-filled, newspaper reading tram-car in Sauchiehall Street. Choose the moment, and then give the order, ‘stand-UP’ and if every single passenger does not obey immediately you are a failure!*”

Another tradition that our seniors had had passed down to them from previous SSPE graduates was ‘the duck-pond’ punishment for certain ‘transgressions’ of student codes of behaviour (as variously defined, but unwritten, by current third year students!). The most heinous ‘crime’ was ‘over-conceit’ by any man, usually, a ‘fresher’ appearing to get above himself. However, the least of possible ‘mistakes’, but nonetheless, actionable, was for any student to become engaged to be married while at the SSPE. After pre-operative shaving of pubic hair and extensive application of black boot polish, the usually popular victim was ‘honoured’ by being carried high by his comrades, flanked by the rest of us, to the college ‘duck-pond’. This muddy pool was seldom clean as seen in the springtime photographs below of wee Alex Adam’s entry and exit.

