

Memories of the Southern Grammar School for Boys

Catchphrases used by staff

Many celebrities have traditionally employed catchphrases which are widely known and often repeated with affection by their fans.. In a similar vein. I am sure that many former pupils of the SGBS will remember with some fondness and amusement utterances by certain "celebrities" among the staff of that revered seat of learning.

Who, from my era, could ever forget the stentorian bellows of "Go to the Head!" which echoed with startling frequency from Wilfred Avalon (Buller) Jeffries' Art classroom situated down the corridor from Mr Mills' study? The gentleman responsible also achieved legendary status for uttering on one occasion such gems as "British workmen; you stink!" "Shifty sods, I wouldn't employ one of you." This happened when workers were repairing part of the school building outside his classroom window, Other remarks are unprintable.

A phrase still guaranteed to bring this 67-year-old out in a cold sweat was directed to trembling recalcitrants with chilling regularity in the Gymnasium. "Come her laddie boy, I am going to beat you!" I can still feel the impact of Brian Naysmith's dreaded slipper.

In more gentle vein. A certain Maths teacher, who basked in the tile of Commander (T R Smart) would lick his thumb theatrically and offer to "indicate the method" to his youthful charges. Delivered in a similar understated fashion in lilting Welch tomes we were encourage not to waste writing paper during Jack Thomas's History lessons: "Concise and small writing, boys, save paper - write Gy for Germany...."

Even those born beyond this Sceptered Isle were not immune from the lure of catchphrases. An eminent teacher of French (Dr Traynor) would frequently cry out in genuine anguish: "Barbarous, Portsmouth-English pronunciation!" after being subjected to grotesquely mangled efforts which would have made even television's Officer Crabtree (of Allo Allo fame) cringe!

On stage, in the assembly hall a Harris tweed-jacketed pedagogue would at times strike a distinctive pose and inform the underawed pupils "I have a notice about the PTA Whist Drives." If a muted groan escaped from the captive hundreds, "Am I boring you?" would be the repose delivered in stinging tones from Charlie Cummins.

In my latter scholastic years, Mr Murray, a Welsh Geography teacher with a distinctive rather nasal intonation would frequently impart information with the rider that it was "Verrey impawtant" . The number of times that this phrase was repeated in a single lesson would often reach impressive heights and, I believe, on more than one occasion, a tally was kept by a certain pupil who shall remain nameless!

Even in the realms of written punishment, certain phrases were unique to those who doled-out painless, but stultifyingly boring chores to boys who have offended. Who can forget "I must remember to bring the necessary equipment" ? Imposed by Mr R J Webb (Holy Joe), recipients were also warned that this must be written on "Two

sides, in ink and no margins". Similarly, a languid History master's favourite imposition was "Punishment for conduct prejudicial to good order and scholastic discipline". So impressed was I by this magnificent example of the English language put together by Mr Craig Barlow that I actually imposed it myself at times upon pupils in my charge when - for my sins - I entered the noble profession.

Ah, happy days.

Mike Stewart (1957 - 1963)