

FROM GRAMMAR TO PARK

100 Years of a Barnstaple School, 1910-2010

Trevor Hill

THIS BOOK tells the story of the first secondary school to be built by Devon County Council. An exquisite blend of archive sources and personal testimonies evokes a century of turbulent change - from 1910, when Barnstaple Grammar School opened at Newport, to 2010, when The Park Community School celebrates its centenary. Amusing anecdotes and rare photos bring to life a place dear to the hearts of generations of children.

The school has been dual-sex, single-sex and co-educational. It has charged fees, taken boarders, been highly selective and is finally comprehensive and free to all. Where pupils were once caned into submission, they now get a say in the recruitment of staff. Where a single building with just ten teachers and a telephone once served 105 pupils, a campus of buildings with 180 staff and 500 computers now serves 1500 pupils.

Such differences should not obscure the underlying continuities. Today's students still wear a uniform with a crest and motto created in 1910. Inter-House rivalry is still strong, time-honoured gala events remain highlights of the calendar and parts of the modern site will still be uncannily familiar to pupils from long ago. The school retains the essential soul and spirit that has brought it through those hundred years.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Trevor Hill was born in Barnstaple and attended Barnstaple Boys Grammar School from 1961-68. He was caned twice and went on to gain more detentions than GCE's. Reading University still accepted him and a Linguistics degree there led to a lectureship in Glasgow from 1972-78. In 1979 he moved to Bristol and somehow got into TV Production. He has since had an eventful career as a Producer and Director, including 16 years with BBC Television. His screen credits include '999', 'Vets in Practice', 'Comic Relief', 'Holiday Swaps' and 'Antiques Roadshow'.

Trevor now lives in South Gloucestershire but every ancestor he can trace was a North Devonian and the sight of the Albert Clock can still bring on the brogue. A school reunion in 2007 was the stimulus for writing this book.

HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

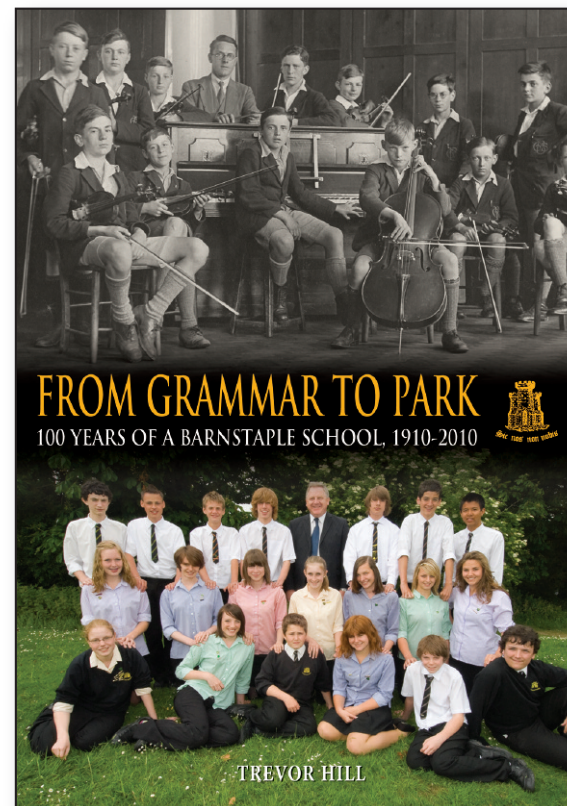
The full Halsgrove catalogue is available free or visit www.halsgrove.com for regional and category listings of available titles.

Trade sales:

Helen Deakin – DDI 01823 653772
helend@halsgrove.com

Halsgrove Publishing
Halsgrove House,
Ryelands Industrial Estate,
Bagley Road, Wellington,
Somerset TA21 9PZ
Tel: 01823 653777
Fax: 01823 216796
www.halsgrove.com
e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format: Hardback, 160 pages, A4, profusely illustrated in black and white throughout.

Price: £19.99

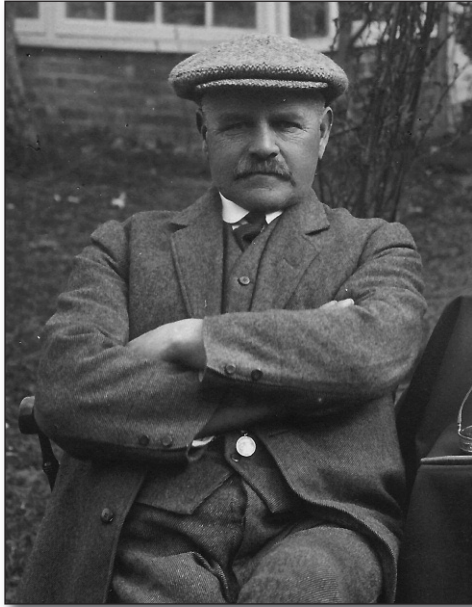
ISBN: 978 1 84114 997 4

Imprint: Halsgrove

Published: May 2010



**Great Books from
your Local Bookseller**



Above: Joseph Duhig presents his 'smart card' to canteen cashier Lesley Deegan.

Left: James Hill, the Clerk of Works for the original construction.



Girls' form class, 1910-11. Florence Tucker is seated front left and Edith Robins is standing second from left.

Example of a double-page spread.

TINKLING TWENTIES, 1919-1929

CHAPTER 3

**TINKLING TWENTIES,
1919-1929**

WHEN MR SYDNEY JONES took over as Headmaster in 1918 he inherited a school that was a twinking star in the Devon education firmament. The new Head soon gained a reputation as "a typical boy master". It was said that "50 very beautiful rose trees in 100 flowered plants and plants from the district". The combined school had 450 pupils in 1919 and by 1922 the number had increased a little more. Throughout the remainder of the Twinkling Twenties, however, pupil numbers fell again owing to the decline in birth rate during the war years. From 1921 the school leaving age was raised to 14 but RGS pupils were already staying on here that that a rule, despite the fact that tuition fees were reported to be higher than at any other secondary school in Devon. 18 boys and 18 girls were granted new free places from September 1919. Nine of the boys and five of the girls came from Ashleigh Road School in Barnstaple.

The first bus service from Ilfracombe to Barnstaple via Bampton began in 1919, bringing some new customers within reach but a new secondary school in Ilfracombe also brought new competition. George Radley was determined that his three sons and two daughters would attend Barnstaple Grammar as he heard his name first in the will of his father and owned a house in Goodleigh. For several years the children travelled to and from school by pony and trap. George Radley Junior began as an eight year-old in new Preparatory Class catering for a mixed group of boys and girls under eleven. Although some "trip" pupils subsequently were elsewhere, George progressed in the Grammar School progress and passed there until 1925.

With the war stringencies behind them, the Governors turned their attention to improving staff pay. The caretaker got a rise to £2 per week. Teachers were awarded a salary increase and a document submitted to the County gave further evidence of the inequalities of pay between men and women. Mr Crutchley (with 8 years of teaching experience) and Miss Scott (3 years) were both on a salary of £230 whereas the two most senior female teachers, Miss Smith (17 years) and Miss Coates (18 years), were both graduates yet were only earning £210. Mr Boardfield was dissatisfied that the unfairness was resolved because in 1921, when Barnstaple salary scales for secondary teachers provided national parity on pay for the first time, Devon County Council opposed it.

Boarding accommodation exercised the Governing Body a job in 1919. Fourteen girls were already boarding at Miss Nicholls' house in Park Lane and a further six were at Miss Webb's in South Street, but Governors were also keen to purchase Pill House as a hostel. Miss James' house in Newport was declared unsuitable for boarding sixteen boys and Governors even considered an on-site but on the premises as bedroom accommodation. Two wooden huts were erected but they became "temporary" classrooms - so temporary that they were still in use after World War II. It was decided to have a whole school library instead of separate form libraries. A boiler was installed for teaching handy work to girls.

There were some off-beat sporting notes in the RAG magazine for 1919. The tennis club had had a successful season but "had being to make as its badge of a few minutes". The Editor speculated about what the RAG report on Sports Day 1919 might contain and suggested there might be a 200 mile race won by "a 500 temporary Pinguin wearing an Albatross in 1919 autumn". This was quite imaginative considering North Devon still had four more cars than Devonshire whistles. On 15th November the first inter-school night match ended with Barnstaple's Beavers beating RGS 5-0. The RAG report said there was a need for tackling lower and that "Snacks on and forward pass were frequent at our first goal and at the new goal". In the autumn term, the boys' Concert was revised, the first time in 1914, and the programme included Shostakovich's 1st. RAG with boys playing the female roles. The girls' Prize-giving Ceremony was held in Barnstaple's Albert Hall in December. After two successful winter dinners and "snacking convales" the first annual dinner of the ORA was held at the Hospital Field.

In 1920, the RAG welcomed Mr Matham as DEB Instructor and Games Master, saying "700 has played the RAG, the strength of its right side, so to use it for 'up'". Two advertisements appeared in the April edition. One was for a pair of football boots - "only used for four seasons and well-served several times". The other was for "100 ready-made lines guaranteed to be accepted by any judge - large variety in model". The Debating Society noticed that "Bull" (a young man) and "Don't" (a young man) were defeated by 14-12. A motion that "Capital punishment should be abolished" was



Boys' orchestra from 1930s with Mr H.J. Martin who ran it.