

THIRTY YEARS ON! A PRIVATE VIEW OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mark Draisey

The British public school system has, for centuries, been the envy of the civilized world. Not only for its high standards of education, but also for its unyielding propensity for producing Empire builders and leaders in the fields of politics, science, economics, sport and the arts. Over the course of centuries, public schools have accumulated a bewildering array of quirky traditions. With the possible exception of the Church, no institutions so fervently hold onto their rituals, customs and costumes as the public schools, be it the Tudor uniforms of Christ's Hospital and the straw hats of Harrow, or the Eton Wall Game and Wincoll football. This, combined with often magnificent buildings set in the most beautiful of British countryside, means that they are remarkably visually interesting.

In the late 1980s, photographer Mark Draisey was given privileged access to these usually closed and private worlds, to produce a stunning record of life inside institutions that were, as a rule, out of bounds to the majority of the population. This collection was taken at a time just prior to major changes in the boarding house conditions and the general modernisation of facilities at many of the schools, brought about by a more competitive market, plus the introduction of girls into these once male dominated institutions.

This supremely evocative collection is a unique insight into the life within twenty-five of Britain's leading boy's public schools just before they changed forever. Images of austere dormitories and bleak bathrooms, beagling on the moors and Sunday Chapel, cadet training and early morning rowing, will remind thousands of Spartan but more certain times when tradition and eccentricity mingled with educational excellence to produce generations of boys destined to succeed.

Schools featured include:

Ampleforth College • Charterhouse • Christ's Hospital School • Clifton College • Eton College • Fettes College • Haileybury • Harrow School • Hurtpierpoint College • The King's School, Canterbury • Lancing College • Loretto School • Marlborough College • Monmouth School • Pangbourne College • Radley College • Repton School • Rugby School • Sedbergh School • Sherborne School • Shrewsbury School • Stowe School • Wellington College • Westminster School • Winchester College

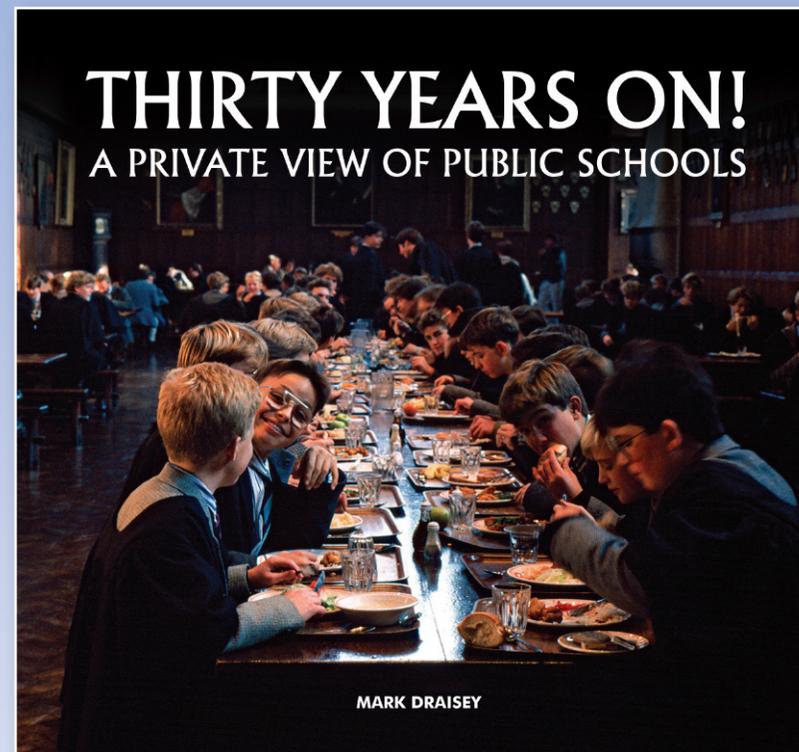
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Draisey was born in 1962 and grew up in South West London attending schools in both the private and state system. His fascination for British public schools began whilst he was studying illustration and photography at Brighton Polytechnic, and began this project in his final year as part of his degree. He now works as a successful illustrator and caricaturist for all aspects of the media from his home in Bath.

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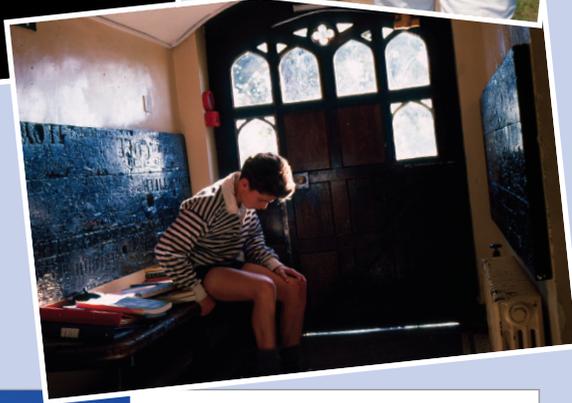
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Above: Wellington College. A Wellingtonian in his College scarf.



Below: Eton College. Rowers, or wet bobs, in their traditional naval uniforms worn for the procession of boats on the Fourth of June.



Right: Rugby School. A boy from School House putting his boots on ready for a house rugby match.

Example of a double-page spread.



The King's School, Canterbury

Chronicle: Arguably Britain's oldest school, The King's School is believed to have been created by St Augustine soon after he was sent by the Pope to evangelize England in 597 AD. It only became known as 'The King's School' after Henry VIII granted it a royal charter to educate 50 King's Scholars in 1541 following his Dissolution of the Monasteries. Former pupils are still called Old King's Scholars or O.K.S.'s. The school lies in the shadow of Canterbury Cathedral where it holds regular school services.

Top right: King's pupils in their traditional 'Canterbury dress' consisting a black jacket, tie and jumper, striped trousers and a winged-collared shirt.

Bottom right: Some can carry the uniform off better than others.

Below: A choir rehearsal.



Lancing College. Boys crossing Upper Quad between lessons and passing under Great School's Octagon Porch.

Harrow School. Calling the register is known as 'Bill', and takes place in each house daily. However, on Speech Day, it is a more ceremonial occasion where the whole school files past the Headmaster and Head Boy, raising their hats as their name is read out.

