



## Brown Rigg Stories

The following stories and experiences are recalled by former Brown Rigg pupils.

### Welcome to Brown Rigg

Coming from a one parent family, my brother Terry and I got the opportunity to go to a local education boarding school called Brown Rigg. The cost was 10/6 per week each. After the invitations to one parent families, other pupils in the area were asked if they wanted to take up the vacancies, which they did.

Brown Rigg Camp School was situated in the Northumbrian countryside at the foot of the fells near Bellingham. It was used to house children evacuated during World War Two.

My brother and I were late arriving at the school for the start of the term by about two weeks, as an outbreak of flu was rampant in the school. I was 11 to 12 years old when I arrived there.

At first sight the school looked just like a 'Prisoner of War camp' with all the wooden huts and some sort of tower in the background. On inquiring about the tower I was told by other pupils that this was a watch tower, where the school's handyman Archie was stationed at night with a machine gun to look out for escapees. It was actually a wooden structured water tower.



### Rebecca

Another welcoming feature, just to help you settle in on your first night, was to tell each 'newbie' the story of Rebecca. Each dormitory housed about 30 lads who slept in metal bunk beds. Later changed to single beds, very posh! Large central heating pipes were all around the walls and these were used for good ghostly sound effects.



The story was about an old mansion which used to stand on the land where the school was now built. One night while the owners were out a fire burnt down the house with two children inside. Their mother Rebecca arrived back at the house at the height of the fire and tried to save them from the flames. She could hear them crying out from inside the house but was unable to save them. She was so distraught that very soon after she died of a broken heart.

If you found in the morning that she had marked your forehead with a cross of blood you were one of the chosen ones. This was to let you know she regarded you as one of her sons and that she was coming back for you on the next full moon. Sounds great doesn't it, live in fear until the next full moon, shot by the handyman Archie if you try to escape or kidnapped by a ghost and taken away into the never life.

Now you can be as sceptical as you like, but newly arrived, away from home and family, sleeping in a strange environment and no friends, I defy anyone just to go to sleep as normal. I decided of course to stay awake listening to every sound that seemed to be magnified, never daring to shut my eyes or so I thought.

Next thing I knew I was being woken up; it was morning, I had survived! But, I was surrounded by a group of lads. A mirror was thrust in front of me and sure enough there it was in my reflection, the dreaded blood cross on my forehead, I had been chosen by Rebecca. Actually, not too perturbed after surviving the night, I quickly wiped off the blood with my hand and gave it a sniff, oxblood boot polish! Much to my relief and with howls of laughter all round, I had survived the first initiation test.