



Brown Rigg Stories

The Ghost on the Fell

One evening great excitement could be heard outside the dorms. Joining up with the rest of the crowd I was directed towards the fell and I could see a ghostly apparition walking or, from a distance, appearing to float along the crest of the fell. You can imagine what some people were thinking, and of course what they were being told, and it was coming up to the full moon. Rebecca was on the prowl, it was too much to take for some people and one lad (I remember his name) decided he was going home and took off in the direction of Newcastle. One of the teachers had to go and collect him with a car and haul him back. That night it was cries of, "Mother, I want me Mother". Now you can imagine the sympathy he got. Poor lad ended up jumping into bed with someone for company, but he, like the rest of us, survived.

The ghost was two lads who had covered themselves with a white sleeping bag/sheet, very effective. I seem to remember the bottom half of the ghost was a lanky lad called 'Gibb' and on his shoulders was a great little lad known as 'Conky'.



Second Initiation Test

Another trick was to wait till some poor soul was asleep, then to keep pouring water into a jug close to their head in the hope it would induce them into peeing their bed. Then of course in the morning they would be taunted for being a wimp.

When we had bunk beds some time the support springs would mysteriously disappear out of the middle section of usually the top bunk. The effect was that person would end up sinking through the bed and onto the bottom bunk. Archie our local handyman became an expert at repairing the intricate spring patterns, with just a little smile on his face.

That winter was fairly hard with snow drifts. I remember one wild night lying in bed, a howling wind kept banging the outer porch door to the dormitory. No one, including me (not after all those ghost stories) would get out of bed to close it. No one spoke or made a sound, and I knew most of the lads were awake. Suddenly the inner door creaked open and then slowly on its return spring, closed. Footsteps could be heard coming down the dormitory and towards me! They got closer and closer and Jesus, or more likely Rebecca, stopped right at my bedside. The only saving grace was that I was on the top bunk. How that was going to save me? I didn't have a clue but it seemed a good idea at the time. Not a sound could be heard other than the howling wind. Where were all the heroes in my time of need? I thought this is it and slid further down the bed hoping to be invisible, probably like everybody else. Then God Almighty, I heard and felt something jump and the bunk bed shook as something landed on the bed underneath me. Some more muffled sounds, I thought I was next!!! Then 'SILENCE'.

I woke in the morning to realize I was alive and hadn't been taken, 'yippee'! Isn't it amazing to be alive, then I thought about my mate, bit late, but at least I did have the thought. Oh my God, what had happened to him? I slowly peered over the edge of the upper bunk expecting to see a bloodbath. Guess what it was? Around the edge of the dormitory were large 4-inch heating pipes which ran parallel to the beds. Safely lying in his bed was my mate, with a big smile on his face, and a huge foxhound lying on top of him next to the pipes. The foxhound had got lost from the previous day's hunt and, on a freezing snowy night, found its way to a warm friendly place. The next day the huntsman called to collect the hound which by now just preferred to stay but off he went back to the kennels.

Not having a mother at home to attend to me, I was already house trained and I fitted well into the school life, which was fairly well disciplined and orderly. Every morning you were up at 7.30am, to the ablution block for washing and grooming. Then make your bed, army style with all the bedding made into a neat pack. Then off to breakfast, to the dining hall which was full of all the other boys and girls and teachers. After breakfast the dormitories were all swept, dusted and polished by ourselves and then inspected to see which dormitory was the best. Needless to say, in all the time I was at the school the neatest dormitory award was never won by a boy's dormitory, quite rightly.