



Brown Rigg Stories

My first try at smoking

Some bright spark had the idea that we could grow our own tobacco and make our own cigars. Somehow the plants materialised, that is if they really were tobacco. The leaves were dried on the radiators and then finally dampened and rolled. The moment had come to light up. I can't remember who tried the first one but all that happened was that it burned like a rolled up newspaper with flames and smoke like a bonfire. No need to light up another one, everyone was choking on the smoke. A few weeks later the dreaded call came at assembly from Mr Raine, "I want everyone who has been smoking to own up!". Amazingly most did including me.

I am sure to this day the only reason for this was to have slave labour to demolish the old air raid shelters at the back of the dorms, which was our punishment. I never tried smoking again, nothing to do with the punishment; it was those flamethrower cigars that did it.



Food

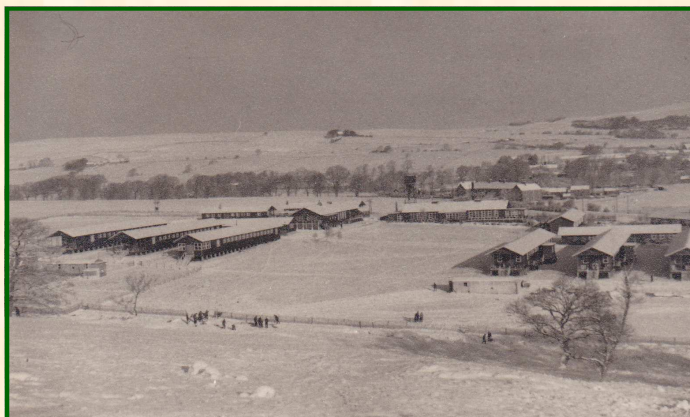
When you are that age, hunger always seems to be a large part of your life. So, various methods were employed to supplement the Brown Rigg diet. Someone had the bright idea of going to the local fish and chip shop at Hexham and placing an order. When they got there they nearly got thrown out of the shop. Why? Never thinking, they ordered 42 portions of fish and chips! That took a bit of explaining away. They only believed them when they produced the money to pay.

My own personal method was to tickle or 'guddle' with my hands (trap them under large stones) for trout. On one expedition I caught a decent-sized trout and built a fire to cook it. The only problem was I had no knife, so I soaked it whole, guts and all in some paper I had, and slow cooked it on the fire, delicious!

The Fells

I had many a lone walk across the fells or along the River North Tyne, which I loved to do, sometimes ending 7 or 8 miles from the school. On one of these expeditions a fog started to rise off the land and it was just like wading through pea soup. Slightly dangerous to cross over the fell, but I thought it was the shortest option and only about 2 miles back to school. I knew the area like the back of my hand so, with darkness closing in, I set off. I had to find a small narrow gorge then follow the stream flowing through it back to school. I was progressing through the silent eerie fog when suddenly there was a horrible noise and then pandemonium erupted all around me. The sudden noise was a cow coughing or belching right next to me, which panicked me and the rest of the herd that were lying 'chewing the cud' under the cover of the low-lying fog. They hadn't heard me coming over the soft ground until I was on top of them. After a few expletives I then got my wits back from out of my pants, and I was off! Fortunately in the right direction. When I got back to school, fairly late, no one had missed me!

Winter Sports



The fells were great in the winter for sledging and in those winters there always seemed to be plenty of snow.

On one occasion I was too late to find anything left that resembled a sledge. But I was in luck, I found a bench seat from an old desk which had a large metal bolt sticking up on one end to rest my feet on to stop me sliding off.

Away I went flat out down the slope. Great, until I hit a ridge in the ice. The seat stopped dead on the spot, but I carried on forward. Now I knew the bolt sticking up was not such a good idea, 'Oooooooooogh'. It was a little while before I managed to stagger back to the dorms, another lesson learned.