

*(Extract from booklet called)*

## **HIGH STORRS FIFTY GLORIOUS YEARS AND BEYOND**

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High Storrs School is the direct descendant of the Central Secondary School, which began its existence in Orchard Lane, off Leopold Street, as part of the large complex of buildings which still houses the Education Office. The CSS was for many years the only Education Committee School to provide education beyond the primary school level. At first there were no playing fields or organised games and the only physical exercise took place in the asphalted school yard when classes were taken for "drill" by a visiting drill-sergeant.

The School had been in existence for almost a quarter of a century before it acquired three fields of irregular shape and uneven surface at High Storrs "opposite Marsh Farm". The pupils provided a good deal of the labour which made them fit for the first annual Sports Day, held in 1906. It was a long walk from the tram to High Storrs, whether one went up Greystones Road and "round the cliffes", up Ringinglow Road (then called High Lane) or over the field paths (now Knowle Lane) and over the Marsh; but succeeding generations of boys and girls made the journey from town for their weekly games afternoon. When it was proposed that the Central School should move into entirely new buildings the High Storrs site was the obvious choice, and at the Speech Day held in April 19 in the Albert Hall (the predecessor of the City Hall in Barker's Pool) the Chairman gave the welcome news that approval for the new school had been obtained and that estimates for its construction would shortly be discussed.

This period in the school's life was not without its difficulties. The Great Depression was having its effect and the usual trip abroad at Easter had to be cancelled "because of the unfavourable rate of exchange". Even a trip to London had to be cancelled for lack of support. The Boys' Headmaster, Luther Smith, "was recovering, though somewhat slowly, from a long and troublesome illness". The building work at High Storrs seriously disrupted games; there were no House games and School teams had a disastrous season, but nothing was allowed to mar the exciting celebrations on June 28 1933, when the new School buildings were officially opened by Sir Percy Greenaway, Lord Mayor of London. There was a great deal of civic excitement. The Lord Mayor's coach and horses were defeated by the gradient of Ringinglow Road and there were frantic phone calls before taxis could be summoned to complete the journey. The official ceremony must have been quite lengthy, for it included a hymn, a dedicatory prayer from the Bishop of Sheffield, a considerable number of speeches, votes of thanks by various local worthies, the presentation of two volumes of Hunter's "Hallamshire" to the two school libraries and the planting of oak-trees in the School grounds. At some stage the Lord Mayor inspected a guard of honour

formed by senior boys and girls, where Brooksbank, the Head Boy, presented him with a pen-knife "of local manufacture".

Impressions of the new school were very favourable. Spaciousness, grace and austere strength were all qualities detected in the facade. On one side a flood of light was let in by great windows, commanding "an extensive view to the purple line of the distant moors", while on the other "a pleasing effect is given by glimpses of a narrow belt of trees separating the school from the high road." Inside, "open balconies overlook a dignified quadrangle" "which with its grassy lawns, flagged paths and surrounding cloisters" gives an old-world atmosphere of serene peace". The Libraries (now both music rooms) were among the most peaceful of all the rooms, with "their dark regular book-cases of walnut and green shade from the trees softened by deep blue curtains".

The open balconies and "cloisters" may have looked charming in June, but the architect had not reckoned with wind, snow and rain. Early in 1939 the Education Committee paid nine hundred pounds to have the existing corridors enclosed. The boys and girls of the Central School had once shared the same classrooms, but over the years a gradual separation of the sexes took place. Although the new Boys' and Girls' schools shared a communal Hall (now the Library) the move to High Storrs fossilised the segregation so completely that a master returning from war service could write that "cheek by jowl with us was a girls' grammar school, but there might as well have been a moat and drawbridge between us for all the mixing that took place."

He was perhaps unfair to the Sixth Forms at any rate, for they made valiant attempts to bridge the gap by an Inter-Sixth Form Society, which arranged joint rambles, tennis matches, ball-room dancing sessions and inter-school debates, only to be defeated by "an almost universal apathy."

There were further problems in 1933. The clock tower leaked; there was no cooking equipment to provide school dinners and as winter approached the heating system broke down (not for the last time!). Spacious as it was, the School proved too small for its increasing number of pupils. Nevertheless, the years before the war were years of very solid progress. Both the Boys' and Girls' schools had a very high academic reputation and every year there were examination results far above the national average and a pleasing tally of State Scholarships and successes in the entrance examinations to Oxford and Cambridge. All sorts of societies attracted a large membership and the school had an impressive record on the playing fields. Year after year the girls provided many members of the Yorkshire Junior Hockey and Cricket teams; the boys were less consistent, but included among their heroes one celebrated Watt-Smith who rarely failed to score twice in a school football match, had three hat-tricks on the 1936 season and scored no less than six goals against an entirely overwhelmed Nether Edge!