

CHAPTER 8

Playing the Game



There won't be a boy at Whitgift after 1931 who didn't experience the school cross-country runs, including the long slog up Puntabout. Those relishing it more than most were the pentathletes, including the Montreal gold medal winning team, who took full advantage of the wide open spaces.

Seasons of mist and mellow fruitfulness
Of wintry winds and rain that feels like flak,
Of drizzle driving down from sombre sky
To lubricate the copse's muddy track.

'If Groundsman Bill worked with a will
And swept throughout the year,
Do you suppose', the Walrus said,
That he could keep it clear?'
'I doubt it', said the Carpenter,
'The Signals practise here'.

FROM THE NOBLEST SPORT OF ALL, MWRS, WHITGIFTIAN, JULY 1961.

The Battle of the Dread Fifteen – Canto XVII

A trembling crowd had gathered
Within the gloomy hall;
For all were there with anxious care
To know what might befall.
The mist of eve was rising,
The sun no longer seen,
When from the field of battle
Came back the dread fifteen.

So thickly were they covered
With mud and filth and gore,
That so much mud on mortal men
Was never seen before.
Then burst from them a cry that raised
The trembling crowd's faint hope:
'The battle has been fought and won!
Bring us the towels and soap!'

Whitgiftian, June 1893.

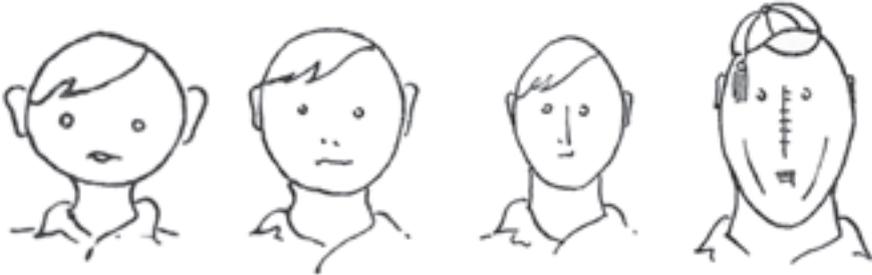
That was one view of Whitgift's national game. Here's another:

Compulsory Rugger

Yes! Rugger's just the kind of fun
That's certain in the long, long run
To render every mother's son
Considerably tougher
Than man is in his normal state;
But in my case at any rate
Results quite fail to compensate
For all it makes me suffer.

Long, long ago within my breast
A love of pastimes I possessed;
But now – for ever being pressed
To play them has destroyed it;
And so at rugger, when I play
On some cherished half-holiday
Whene'er the football comes my way
I carefully avoid it.

A Slacker, Whitgiftian, April 1935.



Bob Jones' idea of the ages that boy rugby players go through. The last is particularly accurate.

I think the greatest thing about Whitgift when I was there was the sport. I was not brilliant at any of them but enjoyed playing all up to a certain standard.

I went to Whitgift in 1945 and left in 1949, aged seventeen. Having spent my early school years in Scotland, a thorough grounding in the three R's enabled me to spend my time at Whitgift playing as much sport as I could and wasting very little of my time on the educational process.