



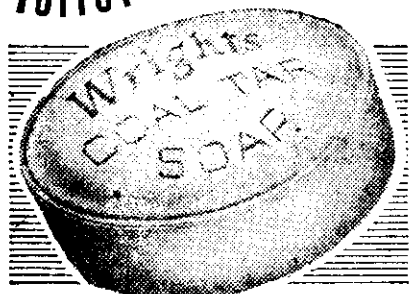
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Back to Tom Brown's School Days

Facts and Fun in an Educational Broadcast

THE Broadcasts to Schools Department of the NZBS took children on a journey backwards in time the other day—to 1857 when Thomas Hughes published over the signature "An Old Boy" his chief work, *Tom Brown's School Days*. This famous tale, which depicted (with didactic purpose) schoolboy cruelties and loyalties, considerably influenced English ideas on public schools. The object of the broadcast which was included in the *Tales That Are Told* series, was to show, in a recorded discussion, the changes which have come about in education and sport since those days.

What the children heard was first an argument on education, between a schoolboy, his father, and a schoolmaster, and secondly a running commentary by a modern sports commentator on the celebrated Rugby match in which Tom Brown took part—as it would have sounded if radio had been in existence in those days. The commentator was Winston McCarthy, the schoolboy Terry Brown, the father Britton Chadwick, and the schoolmaster William Austin, all of Wellington.

Whenever they have the opportunity—which is not infrequently—the staff of the Broadcasts to Schools Department visit some school to join the classes in their listening, watch the children's reactions and note what interests them most. On this occasion they called at Kelburn Normal School, and took McCarthy with them on the safe assumption that after hearing the imaginary football game, the children would have questions to ask him.

His sporting commentary, compiled in collaboration with Joan Taylor, of the Broadcasts to Schools Department, found him mostly offside, for the Rugby game of Tom Brown's time had no touchlines, about 300 players, a drop kick-off no referee, no points for a try, and a score (after a three-hours' struggle) of one goal to nil. Kelburn's pupils were all ears, particularly when Winston McCarthy followed up with a short history of the Rugby game.

Not What They Were

In the preliminary discussion on "the old days" and the present, father dogmatically ranged himself on the side of the diehards. Education and football

had been steadily getting worse for the last hundred years; the old-time schoolboy learned far more than he did now. Then the schoolmaster wanted to know if the father would like his son to learn *nothing* but Latin and Greek, which was, supposedly, all that Tom Brown learned. To-day, he claimed, all the many subjects a child was taught were part of the life he was going to live.

While the father agreed that modern boys and girls certainly knew more about what went on in the world than he did when he was young, he complained that they were not taught discipline—that they had no respect for their elders. Which prompted the master's comment that he hoped they weren't afraid of their elders, for the kind of discipline Tom Brown had was, by to-day's standards, neither right nor useful.

At least the boys of Rugby, considered to be one of the best schools in England, had plenty to eat and were well clothed. But there were schools where they had actually been starved and beaten. Dr. Thomas Arnold, who was headmaster of Rugby for 14 years (from 1827 to 1841) and who is regarded as the greatest of English schoolmasters, widened the conventional public school curriculum and developed a form of self-government through the prefect system. During his time at Rugby he raised the level of the school to a place, many believe, second to none in England. He stopped all forms of boyish cruelty and put the boys on their honour. And he encouraged healthy games like football. Well, said the father, one thing had become worse. Boys of to-day didn't know how to play a decent game of football at all.

On the Ball

So the master asked McCarthy what he thought.

"Has football improved? I should say so," declared McCarthy, who then asked the class to imagine that they had tuned in to the game at Rugby between School House and the rest of the school, and launched into a running commentary on the game from which Tom Brown emerged as the hero:

"Hullo, hullo, everyone. Well here we are at Rugby College to relay the match between School House and the rest of the School. We're not quite ready for the match yet. There are still about 300 people wandering over the field. I'll see if I can place the teams for you. The House are playing

on my right and School on my left. I can't quite see the touchline from here—Hey! you in front, get down there, I can't see. That's funny, there don't seem to be any touchlines. There's a gravel path where the touch ought to be, and there's a line of trees on the other side. I'll be able to see better when they get all these people off the field. But they don't seem to be making any move to get off at all. Good Heavens! I believe they're *all* going to play. The House team have white trousers and the School team just ordinary clothes.



Old Brooke rescues Tom—an incident from the famous Rugby match in "Tom Brown's School Days"

"But there are about—let's see—60 boys on the House side and at least 250 on the School side. They've got about 15 boys *behind* the goal; then in front there are about 20 more; and then in the middle of the field are about 25 of the big fellows. . . ."

and so on to an all-attentive class, and to the end of the game.

The class in this instance was a composite one, arranged in such a way that student teachers in training could gain experience in teaching children of varied ages and attainments. In effect it represented the type of class a teacher would meet in a country school.

Social Studies

Also at Kelburn, members of the Broadcasts to Schools staff watched a social study class at work, taking a broadcast episode in Roger Duff's series, *Man Comes to New Zealand*. Previous preparation had included a map of Polynesia drawn on the blackboard on which

(continued on next page)