

Harry Minns - Born May 1923 – Died January 2023.



The longest serving member of staff in Caistor Grammar School's 393 year history has sadly passed away at the age of 99. Harry Minns was School Secretary from 1945 - 1988 when he retired. What he did for the school was far beyond his role as School Secretary. Mr Ken Michel, CGS Headmaster in 1988, was told by his predecessor that Harry was not only the School Secretary, but the person "who did all the jobs no-one else wanted to do". One of these may have been taking the boarders potato picking!

During his long association with Caistor Grammar School he introduced many pupils and adults to the Youth Hostel Association, bell ringing in Caistor Parish Church and he taught many youngsters to swim. He accompanied many school trips, taking students to Woody's Top Youth Hostel and also walking and climbing with students in mountain environments such as Snowdonia and the Lake District. Irene Kendall described him as "the best mountain goat in the world." He also went on ski trips. Paul Fytche's abiding memory of Harry is of a school skiing trip to Foppollo, Italy in 1986. Having spent 3 days on the nursery slope with Harry learning to ski (or rather fall gracefully), Paul's group then went onto the bigger slopes where Harry had the uncanny knack of continually careering into the nicely formed line of attentive skiers (a.k.a. 'human dominoes'). The belly aching laughter helped distract Paul's group from the inevitable bumps and bruises.

Ian Jones, on Harry's retirement in 1988 wrote " I'm sure Harry regrets his retirement almost as much as we do. He seeded many important things in my life, fell walking, orienteering etc" Many pupils would say the same.

Ella (Saca) Mutimer remembers that when she arrived as a new member of staff "it was Harry who helped me the most . . he seemed a 'fount of all knowledge', both for the school and for the town, its people and activities. He was certainly an extraordinary human being."

Sharon Woodhouse succeeded Harry as School Secretary and said at the time "obviously no-one can take his place, but I will certainly do my best to ensure that the good work he has done for the school for all those years is maintained" (and it was).

After his retirement he maintained a keen interest in the Grammar School and, until recently, was a member of the Caistor Grammar School's Archive group. He had a good memory for old students and will be sadly missed.

Harry was well educated but lived a very modest life in his terraced cottage in North Street, Caistor. Previous to his 43 years at CGS he served in the Royal Navy. When he came to Caistor he joined the Royal Observer corps and was based in North Kelsey and Swallow. Harry was a well known figure in Caistor, walking into the market square on most days well into his 90's, often stopping the traffic while he crossed the road. It was typical of Harry that he spent his 90th birthday doing voluntary work tidying up Caistor. He was, for instance, the driving force behind the instigation of the BIGTIDYUP events which helped Caistor in Bloom achieve their coveted Gold Awards.

He was a great supporter of the charity Christian Aid for nearly 60 years and made an enormous contribution to Caistor's Church of St Peter and St Paul as a parishioner and a keen bell ringer. He was also a member of the choir and was not afraid to break into song when in a public place. Harry made an enormous contribution to the School and also to the town, over many years.