



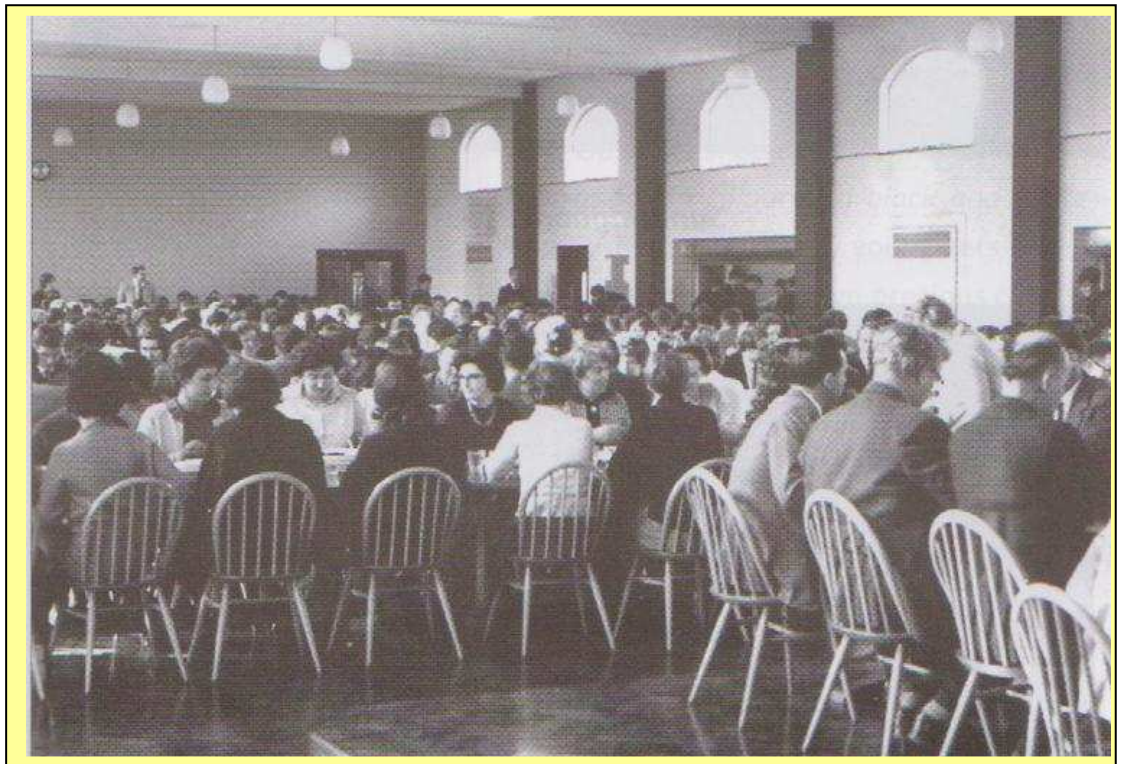
Food, glorious Keswick food

1961 style

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As I write this it is 43 years ago exactly to the minute that I sat in the assembly hall, which was then the dining hall for my first meal at Keswick. It was on the evening of Wednesday 20th September 1961 that we ate our first college meal - sausages, baked beans and mashed potatoes, as we were stared at and marvelled at by our college 'mothers'! We were the first multi-sexed intake in the history of the college and the meal sizes left much to be desired!

We were soon led into the ways of college life and settled into the routine of lectures, free periods, coffee with friends and, of course, meals. Today's students have to fend for



themselves and have the luxury of fast food, ready meals and canned drinks. However, for us hardy pioneers we had to endure prepared college food and as Gilbert would say "we never thought of thinking for ourselves at all!"

Food came thick and fast. Breakfast was served at 8 o'clock-ish so that those who wished to attend chapel at 8.40 a.m. were able to do so. No tracksuits or sloppy gear allowed! A substantial breakfast with all the cornflakes you could eat followed by cooling fried eggs and bacon congealing in a large pan and then toast and marmalade and tea. At 10.45 there were elevenses with coffee and if you were lucky bread and dripping from a large tub. Those who preferred it could indulge in marmite and margarine to spread on their bread - the margarine and marmite conveniently ready mixed in another vat!

Lunch was the main meal of the day. We were expected to be dressed properly - gentlemen with ties - and to be in the dining room in good time in order to stand when the staff entered. A student would start the grace and we would all sing this unaccompanied. Then the meal would be served to the tables. Woe betide you if you were late for lunch. Embarrassed at your own tardiness you would bow to the staff tables as you entered, acknowledging that you had sinned and that you craved forgiveness! After lunch we would invariably withdraw to someone's room for coffee and those imperative and delightful social chats.

At 4.05 p.m. our thirst and hunger were assuaged by that institution 'Little Tea'. This was the time to hurtle into the dining room for a good strong cuppa and if you were early enough a piece of cake or a biscuit! By 6.45 we were back again for supper and the evening meal. Not as formal as lunch but a substantial meal.

By late evening it was time for more coffee and it was a **chance** to see who was entertaining whom! The cry was often **heard** in the corridor "KETTLE!" after someone had put it on **and** then become engrossed in studying something! "Where **have** you been for coffee?" friends would ask each other! On **Tuesday** and Thursday evenings it certainly wasn't in the East **Wing** for any men. Males, including staff were forbidden to **enter** those hallowed walls after the evening meal on those **days** as the ladies would wish to wash their hair! Other

evenings were OK until 9.30 p.m. precisely, when ladies **would** release their guests from their rooms and the corridors **would** fill with men as they reluctantly withdrew to their own hostels. One male member of staff was even heard to call out "**Man** Coming!" as he proceeded through this alien territory. **On** Mondays and Wednesdays ladies were allowed in the men's hostels. On other evenings it was a free-for-all but only **until** 9.30 p.m!

At weekends only breakfast and lunch were served! **We** were provided with a modest selection of food and left to develop gastronomic delights for ourselves from an egg, a tin of beans which occasionally contained sausages, a tin of pineapples, perhaps an apple maybe and bread and milk. Armed with these ingredients we had such feasts! Boiled eggs, poached eggs and even fried egg sandwiches at midnight. The butter always seemed to be rancid and the milk was often smelly, as we had no fridges in the hostels. Occasionally, two chaps would practise fencing with a flying loaf of bread and a pair of kitchen knives!

These weekend rations were sometimes augmented with sophisticated delicacies from Norwich - Vesta Beef Curry was a great favourite with some of us and on special occasions, or to really impress a friend, this would be washed down with a 7/6d bottle of Mateus Rose! This was living!

Saturdays were often chances to go shopping - we had little time during the week and we never thought of going off-site during the weekday! Then we would visit Princes opposite Jarrolds for a Welsh Rarebit or Poached Egg. Others would visit Hilda's opposite the market where a memory of Chicken Wings complete with feathers still underneath is a vivid memory.

Rounding off Sunday, if no-one invited you for a drink, there was always Complime at 9 p.m. in the chapel, before coffee and bed to prepare you for the start of the next culinary week!



A decade later, around **1970**, things were much the same, except **formality** seemed to have gone; jackets and ties were comparatively rare and staff had their meals separately. There were occasions when a **bread roll** might come whizzing through the air during meals!

Queuing for meals was an art form: if one was near the front of the queue friends, who arrived late, would often come and join you with an important message – and then stay at the front. This happened a lot with the male fraternity...

At this time, **weekend rations** were sometimes misused; more than once an egg would be thrown through someone's open window!