

## **A Cracking Experience**

My first Saturday night as an undergraduate was traumatic. At a dance I had met a girl from Homerton Teacher Training College. As a true gentleman, I offered to walk her back there without realising that it was not in Cambridge city centre close to my own college. It was two miles away. The upshot was that after a chaste kiss goodnight I completed the four mile round trip arriving back at college after the gates had been locked. In those days it was an offence for an undergraduate to be out after midnight. I panicked and spent a good hour walking round and round the perimeter of Sidney Sussex College trying to spot where I could climb in. The college had high walls topped either with metal spikes or shards of broken glass. Behind the college was a row of terraced houses backing onto the wall of the Master's Garden. I decided that this presented the most likely entry point. I crept through a narrow gap in the row of houses and crossing a small garden I reached the back wall of the college.

I managed to scale the twelve foot high barrier and sat astride the top, thankfully spike and glass free. All my senses were on high alert. By now it was 2am on an inky mid-October night. I decided to jump onto what looked like a flat surface at the edge of the garden. It was flat but was in fact one of those low level horizontal glass contraptions to protect delicate plants. My feet hit the glass sheet with a resounding crash. I later imagined that, like one of those Tom and Jerry cartoons there would have been a perfect imprint of my feet through the otherwise pristine panel. I was totally unscathed and legged it to my room which, luckily, was about fifty yards away. Forensic science was in its infancy so I escaped subsequent detection.

In my two years living in college I climbed in frequently. A number of us night owls shared our knowledge of possible entry points. I remember one in particular. It was by the rear gate to the college where there was a handy telegraph pole and at the top of the high wall next to it was a two foot gap where the cemented in broken glass had been removed. You could shin up the pole, drop over the wall onto the top of a garage and then lower yourself to the ground. The last time I took this route I got the shock of my life. As I dropped softly to the floor inside the college a flashlight suddenly blinded me and the well-known voice of the college porter said, "Good evening Mr Brown."

The fine levied was always one third of a pound - six shillings and eight pence. It was the same when you were caught out of college by the University Proctor not wearing your gown. And they call those, 'the good old days!'

500 Words