

WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE




**the alternative prospectus
of WELLINGTON college**



What it generally feels like



There is a good atmosphere at Wellington: quite serious—you know that you have to pass your GCSEs and A Levels—but at the same time, pretty open with fewer than expected rules. There is plenty of free time so you don't really feel constrained to a rigid timetable 13 hours a day. Of course, you do feel under pressure when there are exams, but this is really the only time when you feel, "I've really got to concentrate on this; I don't have time for anything else." You do get treated quite fairly at school; there isn't much, "You have to do this for me because I'm bigger than you." And, if there is, you can go

and talk to your Housemaster about it. 

Walking to the first lesson



I walked along the rain-darkened, grey slabs of concrete. They seemed to look up at me with a cold, depressing stare, making my trudge to the Classics Department seem even slower. The odour of rain-drenched vegetation filled my nostrils and sheets of water beat down on me as I made my splashing, wet, water-filled way to the Latin classroom.

The dreary building, loomed up through the sheets of rain. I peered out from under the protection of my hood, and I could imagine what a person in a rowing boat felt like, when faced with a 200,000 ton oil tanker. I pulled myself up the steps. They looked like a mini waterfall. I

had reached the building. All around me the sights, sounds and smells of subdued boys wandering to their first lesson of the day filled my eyes, ears, and nostrils. However, I was isolated in my own babble of Latin verbs, declensions and nouns.

I softly opened the door: a wave of warmth hit me like a wall. This was accompanied by the musty smell of the nylon carpet. The door shut with a click behind me. I took off my coat, and shook it vigorously. A shower of water droplets made explosions on the brown carpet below. I crumpled my coat, tucked it under one arm, and made the final steps towards room number three. I approached the door and pushed it open. The smell of my teacher's coffee and digestive biscuits wafted towards me. I greeted the teacher who smiled and took a drink of his coffee. He seemed quite relaxed. Perhaps my first lesson was not going to be that bad after all!



Life in the day of a Wellingtonian



The first thing you get to know at Wellington is your House and the people in it. At first, you think you're never going to know anyone's name except the boys in your year and your Block prefect. A Block is a Wellington word for a year; the first year is Block III; the second year is Block II; the third year is Block I and then there are the Lower Sixth and Sixth.

I am in a great house (but I would say that!). In Block III, you share an open area with the rest of your year, but after that you have your own room. In most houses, you are left in the morning to get up when you want. However, in our House, the Housemaster comes round with a

bugle at 7.30 am. Well, if nothing else, it gets you up!! Our Housemaster is really kind, and if you want any help, you can just ask him. Like every teacher, he has got a few choice sayings like, "You stupid bonehead!" if you do something wrong; "Flaming Heck!" if he's surprised and, "You are a little star!"; if you do something good. A real character.

The best thing at Wellington (apart from the holidays) are probably Saturday nights. Saturday starts differently from other days. Breakfast is the same (7.30 - 8.00), but lessons start at 8.30 am instead of the usual 8.45 am. There are 5 lessons on a Saturday, which is a bit annoying, but as soon as these finish, you're free. Usually, you have set times when you can go to have a meal. However, on Saturday you can wander in whenever you want. After lunch, it's matches.

In the Michaelmas Term, your first term,

you play rugby. This is the sport that Wellington is renowned for, and some College 1st XV contests can get quite fiery.

In the Lent Term, you play hockey. This is compulsory in your first year (unless you are completely amazing at something like basketball). However, from your second year on you can play football, or a host of other sports.

In the Summer Term, you can do cricket or athletics. As well as these 'major' sports, there are also a lot of minor sports played every term. These include squash, fives, badminton, basketball and rock climbing, to name just some of them.

On Saturday nights, a lot of things are organised. There are good comedians performing in the Theatre; there are dances with girls schools (if only they were more often). Also, there are sports events like indoor 6-a-side football competitions.

All in all, a great day!



Periods 4 and 5



As I sat down on the hard wooden chair in our French classroom, my heart sank: I realised that I hadn't learnt the verbs for the test today. The room around me suddenly looked very cold and unwelcoming and I wished I wasn't there. But I was. The teacher walked into the room, but he didn't look like a person about to give a test; he looked very hot and bothered. Then Nick walked in.

"Smith, are you late?" he shouted.

"Er.. I don't know sir, sorry!"

"That is not good enough. I want a signed essay on the importance of punctuality by tomorrow's lesson. Now then, what were we doing? Yes! The Passé Composé."

"Phew!" I thought, "He's forgotten the test." I looked down at the desk, etched with names. I thought of the people who had used it. I also thought of the coming weekend, and the chance to go home and see my family. I thought of snuggling down in a warm, comfy chair in front of the TV and just relaxing. That's the life....

"John, can you tell me the answer?" I was jolted suddenly from my dreamworld. The TV seemed further than ever now, as I was faced with the reality of the French lesson.

"Well, do you or don't you know?"

"Not really sir."

"Nick, can you redeem yourself?"

"Yes. It means, I have learnt."

"Good, it's the end of the lesson now. Prep. is page 41, Exercise A. Oh, and John, don't forget the essay."

At last, the lesson was over. It was Art next,

Pottery, in fact. I couldn't wait to get started on the wheel. "Hi, guys," said our pottery teacher. She was very easy going, up to a point. She had prepared the clay for us and everything was ready to go. I pulled on the most comfortable looking apron I could find and hurried over to a wheel with my piece of clay. It felt very soft and willing to be moulded, if only I had the skill. If only!

I sat down and slopped some water; as the water started to saturate into the limp clay, I felt it came alive, rounding into the contours of my hand as a pillar slowly rose from the blob. When I felt I had the right shape and size, I started to hollow it out into the pot shape. The wet clay slipped easily through my fingers. It now looked like a real pot and my hands were left sticky and wet.

"I wonder what's for lunch?"

I thought to myself.



The lunch queue

and...



Leaning against the cold, hard, uncomfortable brick wall I stare with anger at the Block 1 boys who have just pushed in. I contemplate the unfairness of the older boys pushing in, who have no more right than me to get to lunch first.

I see the books and cases hanging lazily over the wooden inscribed shelves. I see the sun blazing with magnificent radiance over the school buildings. I see the iron railing protecting us. The glossy black finish to the railing reflects the sunlight into my eyes, while the surface is rough and some of the heads are bent or broken. I wait, impatiently listening to the soft murmur in the background and smelling the

gentle aroma of fish and chips. I gaze longingly into the steamy windows of the busy kitchen, hunger gripping me. I watch the duty prefect remaining calm amongst the pushing and shoving. I wait patiently to be given the signal to enter the creaking door.

I am now in the warmth, and the stronger smell of fish and chips envelopes me. I hear the clatter of the wooden trays, the noise of voices, plates scraping against one another, glasses being taken and the cutlery being snatched. Soon, I'll have my fish and chips!

...lunch

Thud, tinkle, crunch! The sound of breaking glass on the floor, splattering out in fine particles like droplets of water on the polished surface. A few people start clapping. It is lunch in Wellington: children, boys and girls of all ages sit, talk, think, dream and eat. Amongst

the words and laughs, mouthfuls of food are chewed and then swallowed, with every so often, a sip of cold water to help down the dry chicken kiev.



The pupils are eating a variety of exotic dishes: spaghetti, sweet and sour pork, curry, cheese, ham, potatoes, salad, ice-cream, fruit, apple pie, rhubarb pie and many others.

The sounds of speaking echo throughout the great Dining Hall, with only sporadic bursts of laughter interrupting the rumbling murmur. There is constant movement throughout the Dining Hall—in one entrance and out the other. It is like the heart of the College, pumping life into the students, who head out to all the corners of the school, only returning again for their next meal. Once their stomachs are fully laden, the pupils leave, with trays in hand, via the dish-washing room out into the bitter, cold, biting winter air. They quickly shuffle on ...

Monday in Lent



The whining tone of my digital alarm clock awoke me and I bundled out of bed. After breaking my fast with a rushed bowl of Shreddies and half a cup of tea, I leapt back upstairs and searched hurriedly for my school attire. In 2 minutes I was dressed and on my way to assembly; I just squeezed through the Theatre doors in time.

The Theatre was packed. The routine business was made less tedious by the announcement that one of the science teachers was to be "Master in charge of Skating"—this information was well received by the boys but not in the manner intended, for we all laughed. Next came an art talk and then the hockey results.



My first lesson was Geography. After a few of the customary jokes, we got down to the serious task of reviewing some old work on volcanoes. Geography was followed by double Maths—80 minutes of solid work during which the amount of material covered amazed me, as it always does.

Break—25 minutes of blissful freetime! I left House early so that I could take my time getting to the Biology lab. Upon entering, the distinct smell of floor polish was easily recognisable. All through the lesson, we remained transfixed as fascinating facts about the human body were presented to us by the enthusiastic teacher.

Straight after Biology, I walked swiftly to the lunch queue and met some friends. It was now my turn to be served and, after some hesitation, I decided to go vegetarian. The main

course was simple but nourishing and the pudding was delicious!

Games are always an enjoyable affair; even when playing hockey for the 5ths, we are ensured a fun afternoon. Our coaches are our Physics teacher and an Australian student with a penchant for green bobble hats. After games, shattered and exhausted, I refresh myself at Grubbies, a small paradise. Crowds of boys filter out of this 'sweet warehouse' carrying bags and cramming sweets into their greedy mouths in between muffled conversation.

The last lessons of the day are often a bit of a struggle but at least we have tea to look forward to; this also keeps us going through what can often be an arduous prep. The time after prep is one of the best parts of the day at Wellington: 45 minutes of precious relaxation time with all your work hopefully finished.



A day boy's day



At 8.20 am, I arrived at the House and ticked my name off in the book outside the Housemaster's study. I went upstairs, got things ready for lessons and had a chat with some friends. At 8.30 am, there was the Junior Assembly, where we were told about last Saturday's sports results and important issues. Lessons started at 8.45 am and went on for 2 hours, but there were 5 minute breaks between them. Break came next; I picked up some toast, and checked for any mail. I went to the 'Boot Hole' to see if there were any interesting notices. Then I talked to some of the LV1th about what

was on TV last night; it was a good film, but they didn't like it. After 2 more lessons, there was lunch which was delicious—pizza and fries: weird! They always seem to have what you want (most of the time). I then got into games kit and played rugby on Turf; we won 35-22 even though they had five 1st XV players. After a shower, I remembered I had to practise the piano, something from the Blues Brothers. I got back just in time for my 'Ferret' option, indoor cricket. I scored 9 wickets inside 20 minutes which must be a record! Prep started at 7.05 pm and lasted for 2 hours. I sometimes lost concentration, but somehow I finished it. I went home at 9.15 after a full day.



My housekeeper



My housekeeper has shoulder-length, wavy brown hair and brown eyes. She has her own office that leads off the 'Brew Room', which is the house's equivalent to a kitchen, and this is where she organises all the laundry. If you need some clothes washed urgently, for example, if all your cricket whites are dirty and you have a match the next day, then she takes them home with her and brings them back the next morning, clean!

She likes to help around the house and is always very busy keeping the house looking neat and tidy. She is really nice, because she tries to help you in moments of difficulty, and is not at all strict. She helps you if you don't get time to do your house duty; she mends things, should you accidentally break them!

The chapel



The crowd gushed in as the Chapel doors opened. I walked in, trying to avoid the Prefects and Sixth Formers who were behind me. As I passed through the doors, the Head of College gave me a leaflet, saying "Hello!" in a cheerful voice. I hardly had time to reply before I was swept away by the river of people bursting in.

Once inside the Chapel, there was the familiar noise of the organ and the loud hum of people talking. My friend beckoned me and patted the seat next to him. I lowered myself down and felt the cold wood of the pew.

"Just made it!" he said, looking at me.

"How long have you been here?" I inquired. He was not able to reply for the great hum had died down as the Master came in. The Master

slowly and carefully sat down in his seat, while the Chaplain marched in. His robe billowed as he passed the magnificent golden lectern with its great eagle head sparkling in the sunlight. I always think that one day perhaps the garment might catch on one of the lectern sides, but so far it seems to have glided past easily.

The Chaplain paused, and gave a little bow towards the altar at the other end. For some reason, I turned towards the windows and the sun was directly behind them. There were reds and oranges, greens and yellows all decorating the walls. A large triangle of light shone on the polished floor and a number of the boys. Suddenly I heard, "Hymn number 207" and started fumbling for a hymn book. I pulled it out and started to flick through the pages. The organ played and the singing started. I could hear the roar of the Sixth Form behind me. As the hymn played on, I looked at the service sheet to see what was next.

A small boy rose from the congregation, made his way to the lectern, and his face disappeared behind the large bible; only his legs could be seen. There was a small voice as he started the reading and, slowly, he built up confidence. I thought how nervous he must be, having all the teachers and the Master in the Chapel. In the end, the boy did the reading well and then the Chaplain said, "We will now sing Psalm 100." The organ started to play. Unfortunately, the Chaplain had forgotten to switch off the microphone and his voice came through on the speakers. We all did our best not to laugh, and the Chaplain didn't sing for the rest of the psalm.



Hockey



I had put together all my efforts to make my way swiftly to the astroturf, only to find there was no-one there. No one else had driven themselves to get changed quickly and then sat waiting for 10 minutes for someone to turn up! Nevertheless, I scamper around the side of the fenced-off scene of many a goal and victory, and eventually come across a hockey ball.

When I step rapidly on the astroturf, I feel a strange textured surface under my feet. It is no more than half a minute before I hear the heels of other clomping feet which are on the concrete of the carpark and quickly approaching the astro-pitch.

All my potential energy was soon to be converted into kinetic energy, but my lunch did not agree with this, promptly informing me in the form of a stitch.

All the same, when the practice match began, I was raring to go, and my stitch was forgotten. A few good early kits gave me a nice start but too many times the small ball, on the end of an opposition stick, squirmed past me, jeopardising my position in the 1st XI. Fortunately, I just managed to hold my place!



The theatre at Wellington



When I first came to Wellington, I knew that I wanted to become involved in the backstage of the Theatre. So, after about two weeks, I told the Head of Drama that I was very keen to be involved. To my surprise, I was actually made props manager, with another boy, for the junior play which was, "A Midsummer Night's Dream". This was a remarkable experience and I was so enthralled that I have tried to become involved in more plays ever since. I like the Theatre because it 'gets you away' for a while and being backstage gives you a feeling of responsibility. However, I did find that my

prep was sometimes affected because of late performance times and dress rehearsals. The only disadvantage of being involved is the catching up afterwards.

Another part of the experience was being a member of the audience. Viewing a play only once is very different from watching it develop over four weeks of rehearsals along with stage preparation and the 'strike'. (The 'strike', by far the worst part of the job, is the removal of all apparel to do with a play, which means returning props, taking the stage down and other hard jobs.) The feeling of the Theatre is extremely hard to describe and you would only find out exactly what I meant if you gave it a try yourself!



Tennis



The thought of fluff on graphite might not seem as glamorous as leather on willow, but for many people it's slightly more interesting than standing for 4 hours only to touch the ball a couple of times. Being one of these people, I didn't turn down the chance of playing tennis instead of cricket (although I could also have done athletics, sailing or swimming).

Having played since I was 5 increased my chances of getting into the under 15 team, but I still had to play hard for a place. As the astroturf was not my choice of surface to fall down on, I proceeded with caution given my injury the year before. Nevertheless, I played my

heart out. The result was a place in the team and hopefully for the whole season of 8 matches, playing against such proclaimed names as Eton, Radley and Charterhouse.

The first match was a tough one; we all knew that the team wouldn't be at full strength so early on. We came, we lost, we went. It was nevertheless still enjoyable and a good test of stamina.

I'm sure we'll do better next match.

And as I wandered back to school, my racket held high, I passed Turf, the hallowed cricket pitch to my left. White figures were poised and motionless—nothing seemed to be happening. I had made the right choice!



Saturday in Lent



"Beep! beep!" buzzed the alarm clock at 7.30. Saturday, and time to get up. I heard muffled foot steps going through to the washroom. I dressed, washed and at 7.45 made my way down to breakfast in the Dining Hall. As I was in the Talbot House, I didn't have to worry about queuing or waiting out in the cold. The only wait I had was standing at the serving counter. I could smell the food from the kitchen and it smelt gorgeous: bacon and eggs.

My friends and I had to leave the Talbot at 8.20 am to get to Saturday morning school at 8.30, and as it was the beginning of the Lent Term, I was freezing. We have 5 lessons on a

Saturday, each 40 minutes long, with a break after the first three lessons for 25 minutes. After lessons, at 12.30, I go back to the Talbot for lunch where I always seem to be the last back.

Lunch is different every week and, today, we had sautéed potatoes, broccoli and fish fingers. There were also a few other things there for those who don't like fish. This Saturday, there weren't many people at lunch because of away matches. As soon as lunch was over, we went down to the Sports Hall to play some football so we could get some practice in for that evening when there was an inter-House football competition. After about an hour, we decided to call it a day and we came back to House.

I came back and watched TV until supper, at 5.30. Supper in the Talbot on Saturday, is all laid out and you can choose anything you like.

After supper, at 6.45, we had prep. Nor-

mally, there is something organised in the Sports Hall on a Saturday night, and tonight was no exception. We were having an inter-House football competition (as mentioned earlier) in the Sports Hall. We did quite well and then got knocked out. We had to come back across the main pitch to get back to our House and that was quite fun in the dark.

Back at the House, after we arrived, the entire House it seemed, were watching a film on the TV. We couldn't even squeeze in, so we decided to go upstairs and listen to music in our rooms.

Lights out, on Saturday night, are at 10.30 so we get half an hour more than normal. I went to sleep straight away; I was so tired and weary after the day's exertions.



Tips on how to be a successful Wellingtonian

Join in things.

Try anything new—you might like it.

Enjoy yourself.

Be organised.

Remember lesson timings.

Remember the teachers' names.

Don't be cheeky to the Sixth Formers.

Don't spend too much in the College Shop.

Buy lots of food.

Don't lend anything to the Sixth Formers.

Don't panic.

Don't panic.

(this is an important point so it's repeated).

Keep calm

(this is similar to the two previous points but has
a subtle difference).

Everybody is helpful; so don't be afraid to ask.

Be prepared for long days.

Have a sense of humour.

If you are not willing to try anything or show your skill,
you will not enjoy yourself.



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