

Past Pupils' Newsletter

Spring 2001

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Sad News

We have two pieces of sad news to report this term. First the death on 18th January of the much loved teacher **Mr Harold Picken**, who was on the Moulsham staff when the school opened in 1938, and served for well over 30 years. We were glad that so many of his former pupils who live locally were able to attend the funeral on 6th February. Hilary and I attended on behalf of those past pupils unable to be present, and the school was represented by one of the Governors. In our next issue we shall print the address given at the funeral by the Cathedral Chaplain, Revd Katy Hacker Hughes, outlining Mr Picken's life and achievements. Meanwhile, if any of you have your own memories and stories you can add, do please send them to us to include as part of our tribute.

Just a few days after Mr Picken's death, we heard of the tragic accident in which **Shirley Wood** (nee Porter) was killed on 26th January as she was walking along the pavement and struck by a car. Shirley, who was at the Junior Girls' School from 1943-47, was well known to many of you, and a keen member of Jennifer Bailey's regular class reunion. Her death came as a great shock and she too will be sorely missed. We hope to include a full obituary, in consultation with her friends and former classmates in our next Newsletter.

Other News, including Open Afternoon on 19th May

Many thanks to all those who have sent in articles and photos for this Newsletter, and those who have been in touch promising news and memories for future issues. It is so interesting to hear or read the individual recollections of life at Moulsham Juniors over so many decades. If you had asked us two years ago what we remembered of our schooldays, we would probably have said not very much, or at least not in any great detail. But it is amazing how other people's stories jog our own memories and fill the gaps, sometimes quite vividly. It is also fascinating to hear something about life at Moulsham before our time: the early years after the opening in 1938, for example, and the wartime experience. And of course about life after our own time at the Juniors, and life in the boys' school of which we were scarcely aware at the time (yes, really!). Do keep sending in your stories and latest news, please, to Kathleen Boot, 1A Vicarage Road, Chelmsford CM2 9PG or by email to kathleen.boot@virgin.net Or let us know if you would prefer to meet us for a chat and we can write up your memories for you.

Thank you to the reader who phoned the school to let us know that the missing names on Kathleen Duncombe's 1940 photo of girls who went on to the County High (page 8 of the Autumn 2000 issue, are Sybil Bonvini and Olga Parker (now Euston).

In the last issue, we mentioned that there would continue to be no charge for the Newsletter, but that if you wished, equivalent contributions of say £3 a year (cheques payable to Moulsham Junior School) could be sent to the Head Teacher, Mr L R Kemp, for the school fund. I know that some of you have already sent donations. If you have not, and want to, the address is Moulsham Junior School, Princes Road, Chelmsford CM2 9DG. Any spare Computers for Schools vouchers from Tesco's will also be gratefully received, if you're not already collecting them for another school.

Last but definitely not least: do come along to the **Past Pupils' Open Afternoon** at the Junior School on **19th May** if you can. We look forward very much to meeting friends old and new from 1pm until 5pm as before, with refreshments, displays of photos and memorabilia, and this year some short entertainments by present pupils too. We now have over 250 on our mailing list, and we know that several of you will be returning to Moulsham on the Open Afternoon for the first time since your schooldays. Welcome one and all.

Kathleen Boot

Notes from the Head Teacher, Mr L R Kemp

The focus this term throughout the school is Europe which is in preparation for our Curriculum Week at the end of this term. Each of the four Houses is studying a different country together with the language of that country. Italy, Spain, France and Germany are our four countries and through the generosity of the Anglo European School and the work of some of our bilingual parents, language lessons have been added to our curriculum. The more I see the enthusiasm of the children for this work the more I regret we do not introduce infant children to learning a modern language.

The central part of our Curriculum Week will be a market place which we shall run each day in one of the four languages we are studying. Alongside this will be study days on Italian opera and Spanish dancing. Fire House will have educational visit to France and Water House will have a German festival as the climax of their work. On Thursday 1st March we are holding an International Evening at the school when people present will share food from different countries and enjoy an in-house entertainment by parents and children drawn from across the world.

Each year we hold a mini saga competition when we ask children, parents and grandparents to enter a fifty word story, this year beginning with 'I set off...'. We would welcome contributions from former pupils. The title, which must be no longer than fifteen words, is not included within the fifty words. The first prize winner will be asked to open this year's school fete on Saturday, 16 June. All entries will be displayed at the reunion on Saturday, 19 May and the three winning entries will be included in the next newsletter.

The school has twinned with schools in Anzio in Italy, Thessaloniki in Greece and Constanta in Romania and jointly the four schools have applied for a European Union grant under the Comenius Project. We were delighted to welcome in January two teachers from the Italian school and one from the school in Greece. A three year programme of joint activities was produced under the title 'Europe - Treasure Box'. We look forward to a further meeting of the schools in Italy in October.

Our link with the Japanese School in London continues and recently three of us gave a talk on English Education using this school as a case study. In the light of the present shortage of teachers it was interesting to learn that my Japanese colleagues would all be pleased to see their children follow in their footsteps into teaching. The same question put to a group of English teachers brought the opposite response.

This term we have held our House breakfasts which take place on a Wednesday morning. The menu includes cereal, beans on toast and toast with a number of spreads, strawberry jam being the clear favourite.

Thank you to the former pupils who contributed to the purchase of a Golden Acacia tree which has been planted at the front of the school.

Mrs Poppy Donovan: twenty-five years at Moulsham Juniors

Among the Moulsham teachers who have become a legend in their own time is Mrs 'Poppy' Donovan, so-called because her birthday falls on 11th November, Poppy Day. She joined the staff of Moulsham Junior Boys in 1957 and remained with the combined mixed Junior School until 1982. Last October, we were delighted to meet Mrs Donovan, and hear about those dynamic twenty-five years.

It was almost by chance that Mrs Donovan came to Moulsham at all! Having trained and worked as a secondary school sports teacher, she moved to Chelmsford with her family in 1957, fully intending to take a break from teaching while her two children were small. However, one afternoon at a car rally she and her husband met the well-known Mr Harold Picken, Deputy Head at Moulsham Junior Boys School. Shortly afterwards Mrs Donovan received a phonecall from the Headmaster, Mr Sturgeon. He was looking urgently for a temporary teacher, and wondered if she would be willing to help out for a term. Mrs Donovan enjoyed that first term so much, teaching a third year class in the canteen, that she then agreed to stay on a permanent basis.

From teaching in the canteen, Mrs Donovan graduated to sharing the North Wing Hall with Mr Hodgson's class. After that she taught in more 'normal' classrooms, ending up in her final year with one of the larger rooms between the two original schools. In those days, both school and class numbers were high. In 1969, when the two schools combined, there were a total of 900 pupils, with over 50 pupils in most classes. All available space had to be pressed into use, including a 'prefab' between the school and Princes Road. One of Mrs Donovan's colleagues even had to use the cricket pavilion as a classroom. The room next to the Headmaster's study (now the Deputy Head's room) was a store room. After assembly on Fridays, the boys had hymn practice in the Hall, while the staff queued up for the following week's supply of paper, exercise books and other essentials.

As well as class teaching, Mrs Donovan spent a lot of her time coaching netball and rounders, and introduced and established a strong tradition of both Maypole and Scottish dancing. Through teaching games, she met most of the pupils at some time, and inspired enthusiasm and high standards of achievement. At one stage, there were four school netball teams, and Moulsham won the inter-school girls' league. In inter-school rounders, a team of 11-year-old Moulsham boys even managed to beat a team of 15-year-olds from Westlands Secondary School! Mrs Donovan enjoyed sports coaching immensely, and still has the whistle she used from college days and throughout her teaching career.

Mrs Donovan remembers Moulsham Juniors as a happy school with a good reputation. Her own two children both attended the school, and she was impressed with the confidence and sense of responsibility they attained. On the retirement of the caretaker, Mr Little, her son Andrew made a speech presenting him with a chair on behalf of the school. Her daughter Sarah went to Moulsham Infants as well as the Juniors, and was particularly happy in Mrs Thompson's Infant class. Mrs Donovan remembers many pupils in the Juniors, of course, including in the early days a brilliant mathematician called Cohen, and John Thackeray, who used to chew his pens right down to the nib. She recalls that John could work out his sums quickly and accurately in his head, and was highly indignant at getting no marks because he had not written down the working!

The teaching staff were a pleasure to work with, and a very happy team. Mr Picken was outstandingly good with the children. Miss Bartlett was brilliant at acting. When the music teacher, Sally Martin, got married, the school choir sang at her wedding. Another image stands out strongly in Mrs Donovan's memory: Mrs French was a keen and knowledgeable botanist, and queues of children could be seen outside her room before assembly, bringing wildflowers to be identified. Before the two schools combined, there were two separate staff rooms, with a shared kitchen between. Mrs Donovan was in charge of making coffee at break time, and used to knock politely on the other staff room door to

enquire if it was all right to use the kitchen. The present school secretaries, Lorna and Rosemary, joined the school while Mrs Donovan taught there, and she remembers how very helpful and pleasant they were. Before them, Mrs Hall and Ivy Kirkpatrick shared the secretarial work for the two schools.

School visits were a memorable feature of school life. In the second year, one group would be taken to explore and learn about the Old Market and Chelmsford town centre, and another to the Cathedral. In the summer, longer trips were arranged. Mrs Donovan remembers one famous excursion to the zoo, with a Thames boat trip, when her son Andrew was left up a tree during the short stopover at High Beech on the return journey! Special days were organised, too, such as the annual pageant at the end of each summer term. There was also a 'Victorian Day' in 1982, when staff dressed up in appropriate costume, and pupils experienced sitting upright and silent with their hands behind their back and marching out to PE in lines, to play with old bowling hoops and Victorian playthings. Lunch that day was potato soup with bread and cheese, reminding Mrs Donovan of a scene from 'Cider with Rosie'!

One day just before Mrs Donovan retired from Moulsham, a girl in her class arranged for her to be invited out to lunch. When she returned from lunch, she was surprised and very moved to find that the classroom had been decorated, and on her desk was a lovely cake with a poppy on it. Since retiring, Mrs Donovan has continued supply teaching from time to time, is a keen golfer, enjoys travelling, and also acts as one of the judges of the annual Age Concern essay competition. She and her husband still live in Chelmsford, and she is frequently recognised in the town by former pupils. Her daughter Sarah is married to an Australian and lives with their three children on the Gold Coast. Her son Andrew, who has three daughters, lives in Cumbria.

The first dinner ladies

Joan Tredgett, nee Ponsford, recalls that her mother, Mrs Sarah Ponsford, was one of the first ever dinner ladies at Moulsham. Just after the war, Joan was in the second year of the Juniors, in Miss Skilton's class. One day, all the pupils were invited to ask their Mums if they would be interested in becoming a "dinner lady" - serving up the new school lunches (dinners, as we called them in those days) which were being introduced. Mrs Ponsford applied for the job, and was joined by Mrs Parsons, Mrs Buck and one other lady. Every day the hot food was delivered from Witham, and served at lunchtime by the dinner ladies. Miss Norris' classroom was used for this before the canteen was built. Although not all pupils stayed for dinner, Joan thinks there were two sittings, with a teacher in charge to make sure the children ate their food. Treacle pudding and custard was one of Joan's favourite 'afters'.

The canteen was built next to the Infants' School during the time Joan was at the Senior Girls. Mrs Ponsford continued working as a dinner lady, and many of you may remember her. Joan herself went on to marry Brian Tredgett, a former pupil of Moulsham Boys', who sadly died three years ago. Her daughter Adele also attended Moulsham, and her granddaughter Kylie is now at the Seniors (Moulsham High). Joan has kept in touch with both schools, and has particularly enjoyed producing craft-work for various bazaars etc, especially at the Juniors. It was Miss Barton who first got Joan interested in knitting at school, making the knitted balls and fair-isle mittens which so many of us remember. In the senior school, she went on to enjoy needlework, cooking, country dancing and sports, and recalls that Miss Simmonds in the senior school and Miss Firmin in the juniors lived in Roman Road and were both great country dancing enthusiasts.

Wartime memories *Brian Emmett*

I lived in the unmade road Goldlay Gardens, close to the Mercury Press factory, and attended St John's Church School for my "Infant Education". After this Victorian school with its high windows, outside toilets and gravel playground, Moulsham school seemed like a palace at the time. I can still recall the lovely "newness" smell.

All the first intake in 1938 from the various schools were grouped together in the hall, and Mr Petchey, Headmaster, stood on the stage and called out our names to go to the classrooms according to age. My teacher was Mr "Danny" Clark, who lived in Baddow Road. The music and Scripture teacher was Mr "Daddy" Gardner, who played the piano during assembly. He had two sons, Ian and Nigel, who were friends of mine during those early stages of my life.



When war was declared and the young male teachers left, a number of lady teachers came back, including Mrs Petchey, the Headmaster's wife.

I remember the air raid shelters being built in Autumn 1939 and discussing with the builders the ratio of sand and cement to provide a strong mortar between the bricks. With regard to the bomb dropping episode, we were in the playground at lunch time and heard the unmistakable noise of the engines of the Dornier lone raider. We had left our gas masks in the classroom and as we heard the screech of the bombs falling we all rushed back to retrieve them and make our way to our allotted shelter. But of course by the time we reached them the bombs had dropped in Curries Farm fields, luckily for us.

I went on up the hill to the Senior school at the age of 11 and soon earned the nickname "Joe Fishcake". Joe by the PE teacher Mr Bradley, who was a hard case and didn't like the name Brian, so renamed me. The "Fishcake" part came about from my intense dislike of the fish pie etc we were regularly served up at school dinners. The "Joe" stuck for quite a while into my adulthood. In my last year at school our classroom, 3B, looked out over the town, and I remember vividly one geography lesson glancing out of the window at the same time as the double explosion occurred when the V2 rocket hit the Marconi factory. Leaving school at the age of 14 years and 3 months, I joined the Eastern Garages Ltd in Market Road as it was then, to commence my career in the motor industry, but that's another story.

Having been through the phase when my own children have passed through school, I realise that the class of 1938 age 7 which went right through the war, did remarkably well. Classes were disrupted, hundreds of hours spent in shelters, but the teachers that were left, some young women straight from college and those brought out of retirement, still managed to give us a really good standard of education, for which I am very grateful.

An Email from Norman Kerridge, 1946-50

In this age of instant electronic communication, it is always a pleasure to find emails from past pupils in my "inbox". Norman Kerridge, who describes himself as a "self-taught oldie" has even been so kind as to explain how I can add photos directly into the text on my computer. Many thanks for the help. Perhaps one day in the future we shall even be distributing the Newsletter by email, but not just yet, I fear! Norman emailed just after the last Newsletter in October, to say :

"My step grandson is at present at Moulsham Juniors and I was delighted to come home on Friday and find his Mum had left me a copy of your Past Pupils' Newsletter. It was sheer coincidence that my lifelong pal from Moulsham - Michael Cable (Geoff's brother) was coming to dinner last night and he was able to read it as well.

We were divided on the year we joined but we were in the same class as John Wiffen and Pat Durrant so we assume it must have been 1946. I remember Pat getting house points for a composition saying he was going to be a professional footballer but I see he finished up at Marconi's! Also in our class were Ray Wisbey and Dick Horsnell (whose parents were both family builders in Chelmsford. Some of the other names which come to mind are Arthur Howes and Malcolm Davies.

The contents of the newsletter brought back all the old memories. I remember Brian Greatrex well, and all the teachers mentioned. Also I well remember that super "mad" music teacher Mr Metcalf. In my last year I was house captain of Brown House (no mention of Wren then). I help record the Chelmsford talking newspaper and until a couple of years ago Mr Picken was one of the editors - what a gentleman he was.

I have often wondered if the board in the hall with the names of those of us who passed the scholarship is still there. Mr Picken told me they didn't add names to it nowadays."

Note: Some of the old "Honours Boards" are still in place, and others are in the attic. We hope to include these lists in a future Newsletter. Meanwhile, the present Head, Mr Kemp, has found for us a copy of the Junior Boys' Magazine for Summer 1950, which contains a complete school roll. Norman's class, Standard IVA has 48 pupils listed:

K Anderson, M Anderson, C Anthony, P Belham, R Bell, D Biglin, D Bingham, R Brame, M Britton, M Cable, M Canham, D Clark, M Collins, M Cresswell, M Davies, M J Davies, P Durrant, M Eldred, B Forster, T Giddings, F Griffin, M Harris, R Horsnell, D Howes, C Howlett, C Hull, J Jenkins, N Kerridge, R Ledwith, P Livesey, J Marjoram, R Moody, J Mosley, G Pittman, T Raven, E Rayner, P Rayner, R Saltmarsh, N Searles, A Smith, C Spare, N Stevenson, P Stockwell, J Thorogood, M Turner, J Wiffen, B Wilder, R Wisbey

The parallel class, Standard IV, also had 48 pupils:

G Barnard, W Berry, R Bradshaw, D Chandler, P Combes, B Dowsett, M Dutton, M Edwards, B Gowing, A Grimswade, D Hammond, J Harrington, A Harris, R Harte, D Hayward, P Head, B Hill, B Jiggins, K Kasley, G Leatherdale, W Moseley, R Newton, J Palmer, A Prior, A Radford, M Rawlinson, D Reed, S Rose, C Rush, N Scott, D Shearman, B Skilton, A Smith, J Smith, L Snelgrove, W Soppitt, K Spearman, M Spencer, N Sprake, D Tricker, N Turner, K Vass, D Westley, J Whybrow, D Wiseman, G Wood, A Woodward, A Yates

Post war Moulsham: Liberty bodices and the eleven plus *Helen Roberts*

Helen Roberts, daughter of Mrs Jean Roberts (see Autumn 2000 Newsletter), now lives and teaches in Gloucestershire. In this article, she recalls highlights of the years 1952-56 at Moulsham Junior Girls.

"I always remember the rural setting, next to the gravel pits. I remember that a boy was bitten by an adder on his way to or from the school one day. Is my memory wrong that a child was drowned in the ponds there? I remember a huge ploughed field the other side of the A12 which is now covered with houses. I remember the beagle hunt coming across the field adjacent to the school. I remember the secondary school before the extensions were built.

I didn't even realise that the school was relatively new when I was there. I do remember the huge classrooms, but also the huge classes that went in them. A while ago someone gave me Miss Skilton's address, so I wrote to her. I asked whether my memories of the A class being 56 strong and the B class 48 strong in 1956 were wrong, but she wrote back to say this was correct. She said that she used to cycle home with a basket full of 56 exercise books. Even though I am now a teacher myself, it just hadn't occurred to me that teachers took our work home to mark!

At break time I remember the skipping and ball games described in previous newsletters. The only other rhyme I can remember was

"Nebuchadnezzar King of the Jews
Sold his wife for a pair of shoes.
When the shoes began to wear,
Nebuchadnezzar began to swear.
When the swear began to stop
Nebuchadnezzar bought a shop.
When the shop began to sell,
Nebuchadnezzar bought a bell.
Doh ray me far so la tee doh"

We played ball to this rhyme, and each last ball was a drop ball against the wall. We played three ball to it as well. I remember going for a day to St Cedd's private school where my mother taught, and feeling very superior to the pupils there, since they had no idea how to play ball at all, let alone three ball. We also used the rhyme to skip to. We also played "he" and off ground "he". Now that I live in the west of England, I discover that the geographical area which called tag "he" is limited to the south-east. I have lovely memories of playing "houses" using bricks on the unfinished estate road which was on the edge of the playground, and that there were complicated rules of ownership of the pavement and the bricks. I also remember using chalk to mark out hopscotch. We sang the Oranges and Lemons rhyme to do a similar dance to the one described for Alley Alley O, but two children at the front raised their arms in an arch and the last person to pass under the arch was caught in the arch and was "out". We did lots of handstands against the wall. I tried doing one when I was about 40 and discovered to my astonishment that it was no longer easy!

My memories of lessons are distinctly limited. I do remember the school hall with its pegs lined with our liberty bodices when we did PE. I also remember singing with Miss Skilton in the hall. She used to say "look sharp!" I was never quite sure what it meant! I remember the monthly tests we had in the top class of the school, together with the positions I came in at the end of them - 2nd, 1st, 3rd, 1st, 6th, 7th, 1st, 1st. We had to sit in our position until the next test - very irksome, since I really wanted to be with my friends. I still have a couple of drawings I did in art, which I presumably kept because I was proud of them - the teacher gave me a gold star and VG. If only marking was that easy nowadays!

I remember children being punished by having to stand on the seat with hands on head, or at the front of the room. I can't remember being punished in the Junior school. I do remember the time I got caught in the Infants, together with 10 other boys and girls, for trying to see how many pupils could squeeze into one toilet cubicle, in the outside toilets! Our punishment was to stand in the corridor outside Miss Roberts' room. In the Junior school, I remember that a boy was caned by Mr Petchey for something. It caused quite a stir, so I presume that caning was not carried out very often. I think I recall Miss Barton using a ruler to hit children on the hand. She certainly had a reputation for severe discipline.

I remember several special occasions. One was doing a project about the Commonwealth, following the route Queen Elizabeth took when she toured the Commonwealth soon after she came to the throne. I learned quite a lot about Australia, and can still remember the map I drew. I also took part in a pageant, which I think may have celebrated the same thing. I can remember a dance festival, when we were taught the Scottish sword dance. We had to make our own wooden swords. I can still remember the dance steps, though I doubt whether I've got enough puff to do them today! Our dance skirts were made out of school blackout curtains, trimmed with ribbon - very pretty. Again, I don't think I realised it was blackout cloth. I remember playing in the air raid shelters, and I think I had only the haziest understanding of what they had been. I do remember the coronation, and the school being marched to the cinema to see the film about the conquest of Everest and enjoying it hugely.

I remember the day the 11 plus results came out. The postman hadn't called before I left for school so I had to wait until Miss Pettet read the results out in assembly to know which school I was going to. I do remember a girl so frightened about the results that she was sick on the playground before the assembly. Miss Pettet made a speech about how the exam sorted us out into the schools which were most suitable for us, and that it was thus not really possible to pass or fail. But then she spoilt the logic by inviting those of us who had passed to parade on the platform! I still remember the sobbing from the back of those who had not passed, among them several of my friends. Once I had gone to the High School, and moved to the other end of town, I saw very little of my former Moulsham friends, and to this day I have had little contact with them. I remember meeting one of them in the autumn that I became 12. She wasn't in any uniform except, I think, the green beret of Moulsham Secondary Modern, and she was upset to meet me in my High School uniform. It was one of those events which made me feel strongly that Grammar schools are not a good thing, and was one of the reasons that throughout my teaching career I have always taught in comprehensive schools. Despite the academic success of Chelmsford County High School I am still sad that Essex is one of those areas where the 11 plus system still exists."

Favourite songs and skipping rhymes

In our next newsletter, we plan to include an update on the songs and playground rhymes you remember, including an impressive collection which Diana Turbin (nee Brown) has sent to Mr Kemp. Meanwhile, Anne Holdsworth (nee Hammond) has given us the words of the favourite children's hymn so many of you recall singing at Moulsham and/or your infants' school:

Glad that I live am I, / That the sky is blue,
Glad for the country lanes / And the fall of dew;
After the sun the rain, / After the rain the sun,
This is the way of life / Till the work be done.
All that we need to do, / Be we low or high,
Is to see that we grow / Nearer the sky.

Memories and news from Alan Twitchett

I attended the Junior School from 1953 to 1957, and my closest friend for that time was Bob Wiffen (Biffo) as we had virtually grown up together, living only four doors away from each other.

The teachers I remember are firstly, Mr Picken who I think everybody liked because he looked like a fighter pilot with his superb moustache. I recall one day he ran over my toes with his little Austin A40 and was concerned that his car had been damaged! No damage to car or toes! Mr Hodgson was another likeable person but my recollections of him as well as Mr Hymas and Mr Lambert are now hazy. Mr Gardiner I can remember. He was called 'Daddy' Gardiner (not to his face) and I don't know why, but he took us for music and encouraged us to sing our heads off. I think he had a son Nigel who played football for Chelmsford City Football Club. I also faintly recall a Mr Hughes who took us for PE and would you believe Basket Weaving! He hated talking or any other noise in his basket weaving classes and once he caught me whistling. I had to write on the board twenty-five times "I am a little dicky bird, I go tweet tweet"! Our Headmaster was Mr Petchey who I remember very well. He was very authoritative but at the same time likeable. If you were naughty during lessons, you were sent to wait under 'the Board' where the end of lesson bell was rung and if Mr Petchey saw you there when he came out of his office, you got a smack on the back of the legs. On the lighter side, he always read us a story on a Friday morning. Everybody sat enthralled. Incidentally, Mr Petchey taught my father at Trinity School in Chelmsford before he went to Moulsham.

Some of the boys in my classes at Moulsham were Ted Speakman, John Woodward, Rhett Hazel, Francis Gillam, Stephen Marriot, David Young (a very good friend of mine), David Fairhead, Peter Parkhurst, Robin White, Roger Porter (now deceased as the result of a car accident), David Cranston, Jim Beardsworth and Kenneth Martin.

I used to enjoy games especially football but was not very good at it or anything else. Still, we all enjoyed ourselves. I did enjoy music and we had a small orchestra mainly of recorders, which played at some assemblies. During summer term, there were many trophies to be won. One was the Turner prize or trophy, named after an old boy who used to visit the school every now and again and presumably donated money for equipment, etc. What I can remember is our school song, highlighted in a previous issue, "Let us sing of this school where under its rule we prepare for our manhood to come". I will remember it for evermore.

Like Bob Wiffen I was scared of going to the Seniors and managed to get a place in Sandon Secondary Modern School (for Juvenile Delinquents as we used to say!) and when I left there in 1962 I joined the Essex County Council where I remained for the rest of my working life, becoming Works Manager of the Highways Department Direct Labour Group. This group was privatised in June 2000 and I was able to take early retirement as well as being made redundant!

I have lived in Rayleigh for the last 24 years. I am married to Heather; we have two children Patrick and Elizabeth. Patrick is also married with three boys, Craig, Neil and Luke. I look forward to reading the Newsletters and would be extremely delighted to hear from any past school friends.

Boys School Pageant, circa 1959 *Barrie Stevens*

On the next page is a photograph of a school pageant, sent in by Barrie Stevens, which we hope will reproduce clearly enough for you to see some of the faces. In any case, we plan to have a clear copy laminated for display at the Open Afternoon. Barrie writes:

"The war years at Moulsham were in part "re-enacted" in the school pageant of, I think, 1959. One teacher, Mrs French, could recount tales of classes held in the bomb shelters which stood on ground near the door leading to the cloakrooms. Mrs French lived to an advanced age, I believe, and was apparently still around in 1987 in a south coast nursing home. I recall Mrs French going from class to class lecturing on the perils of deadly nightshade which grew wild then and poisoned several children around the country every year.

Returning to the pageant, I can even now recall the ripple which ran through the assembled parents seated on the upper veranda when my performing group, clutching tin hats, gas masks and schoolbooks, emerged from the playground to the recorded sound of air raid sirens and marched off to the shelters! Looking back now, I realise that for parents with children at Moulsham in 1959, the war had been a mere 15 years before, and must have seemed like "yesterday". Some helmets and gas masks had been found in the school stores where they kept plimsolls and shorts! I seem to recall this was a dark "no-go" area across the way from Mr Hodgson's classroom (on the extreme right). Shortly before the summer break a tank of disinfectant was set up on the grassed area in the quadrangle and all shorts and plimsolls were soaked before being laid out in the sun to dry. It was a capital offence by the way to walk across the grass! The photo shows about half the school on the grassed area. I am in the penultimate row at the back.

I think that the boys in the front had taken part in something akin to a Harvest Festival (?). Others played out a ballad of Robin Hood while the narrative was broadcast over the p.a. by other boys and possibly a teacher as well: "As Robin Hood in forest stood, under the greenwood tree, he there did espy . . . coming leaping over the lea", which goes on "and every day he was heard to say 'Alack and well a day' " or words to that effect. In fact it was the story of Alan a Dale. The boy Franklin played Friar Tuck, and Barry Tabrett was one of the "merry men".

The other enactment was the "Jackdaw of Rheims". The Jackdaw, with a sort of hood and beak on his head is marked on the picture. About three rows back to the right, sitting near "Styles" is the boy who played the Lord High Cardinal Archbishop of Rheims. Do you see the boy picking his nose to the far right, and the school flag? Do you still have a flag? [Note: we certainly have the old one] The curious object hanging up in the window overlooking the playground in Mr Hodgson's classroom is in fact an abortive attempt to create a human skeleton! What you can see is a spine made of linked cotton reels to represent the vertebrae and papier mache covered wire ribs! It was still hanging there when I moved to the Secondary Modern School!

The head boy at the time of the pageant was, I think, Paul Ridgeway, who later went on to Colchester Royal Grammar School. The deputy head boy was a musically inclined Graham Ogden. Of the other boys identified on the photo, David Game I believe became a solicitor. Certainly there was a "D.Game Solicitor" in Rayleigh or that area. David Cave was I believe a teacher at Moulsham Juniors for a while. I recall he was teaching there when we were still in the sixth form at the secondary modern. He was very good at the subject then known as "crafts"! Paul Blundell is still around and lives, I think, at Boarded Barns. His family were rag and bone men or scrap dealers. Tozer was a visitor from Liverpool staying a while in Chelmsford, long enough to have to go to school. Willis became a motor mechanic in Chelmsford. David Roberts moved with his parents to a pig progeny testing station in Sussex. Trevor Lee worked at a drug company involved in animal health."



Above: Barrie Stevens' photo of the 1959 pageant

Below: The Jackdaw of Rheims



An excellent start in life *Sally Waller 1960-64*

In the Autumn 2000 newsletter, we heard from Sue Davis, who was at the Junior Girls School from 1960-64. This time we have more recollections from her classmate Sally:

"I attended Moulsham Infants from 1958-1960 and then Moulsham Junior Girls 1960-64, after which I went to Chelmsford County High. At the Juniors I was in classes 2, 4, 6 and 8 as follows:

Class 2 Miss Temperby, a young teacher who didn't stay all that long, but I adored her!

Class 4 Miss Barton. Initially I feared her, but I got to like her very much and I can still remember some of our "projects", eg collecting information on all the ingredients that make a Christmas pudding, or on all the places we passed through on a visit to Colchester Castle. The worst feature of this year, however, was being kept in at break to practice my handwriting with a "dip in" ink pen. As I am left handed, I never managed to write successfully without smudging all that had gone before! I remember being told that one day I should have to write "the most important letter of my life" this way - a job application. Clearly poor Miss Barton never foresaw the advent of cartridge pens or the word processor!

Class 6 Miss Aldridge. I remember little about this year except that I wasn't made to work as hard as I had in class 4 and consequently my mother got rather anxious about my 11+ prospects!

Class 8 Miss Alty - another brilliant teacher. I remember a big treat was being allowed to listen to the radio play in the afternoon (from a huge machine on the wall) while doing our sewing. What 10 year olds these days would get so much pleasure from that? We also had a class "holiday" in Stratford on Avon - which I didn't go on because I was acutely travel sick at that stage. But I did participate in the "exhibition" we made about it and which was featured in the local press. My group rewrote (ie paraphrased) Richard II, which was the Shakespeare play the group saw in Stratford. We also went to see the Merchant of Venice at the Civic Centre in Chelmsford. This was my first introduction to Shakespeare and I found it really inspiring. I was really devoted to Miss Alty and after I left visited her in hospital when she broke her hip. I was very sad to learn of her death shortly(Ithink) afterwards.

Throughout the period, our head teacher was Miss Pettet. We were all in awe of her and I do remember the day when she stood I front of Class 8 and hit a friend of mine on the knuckles with a ruler for writing on a new desk. Nevertheless, I think she was fair and we did respect her judgement.

There were a few changes while I was at the school. When I first entered the Juniors there was a "road" leading from the playground which contained assorted bricks which we made into "houses" (one brick high). Whole bricks were highly prized and traded for lesser pieces. Brickdust was used for "cooking" in the pretend kitchens. All this changed shortly after when some new classrooms were built. I still remember the "new" smell. I remember doing needlework and singing in one of these when in class 6.

We loved playing on the field, and particularly doing handstands against the air-raid shelters. We played ball games (Donkey), and hopping games such as "Bolt the Door" on the driveway at the side of the school. I only remember the Alley Alley O in the Infants', but I know the song well and still use it. A favourite skipping rhyme was High, Low, Dolly (turn round), Pepper (fast).

I also remember the assemblies, with soloists. I had a verse in "Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven", which I never sing without recalling my knocking knees! And "Lord dismiss us" at the end of the year.

Miss Skilton took us for singing. We began with exercises from the "Do, re, mi" chart on the wall, and followed this with traditional folk songs and sea-shanties. The second music lesson each week was percussion. We were assigned an instrument for the term with no haggling (she was very strict), and played from large music sheets with a different colour for each instrument. Drums were the most prized, partly because of the timbre, but also because players stood on the desks at the back!

I have many more memories, including Music and Movement in our knickers (navy blue) and vests in the hall, Sports Day on the field, concerts with percussion and singing by alternate classes, Christmas plays, and the Country Dance displays (black skirts with coloured ribbon around the bottom) in the central quad. It is still all very vivid and I could go on forever.

As for myself, I went on to Oxford University where I read History (1972-5) and also completed a Music Diploma (1972) and teaching qualifications in Music and History. I am now a Chief Examiner for A-Level History, the author of several History textbooks and a freelance speaker at Historical Workshops and Study Days for teachers and students. I also teach music privately and in schools - a far cry from the days when I nervously accompanied a lower class percussion band at one of the school concerts! I also sing in the semi-professional English String Orchestra Choir. I am married with three sons - 17, 15 and 13 - who have all been choristers at Christ Church Oxford and are now musical scholars at Uppingham School Rutland. Yes, Moulsham gave me an excellent start and I have much to thank it for.

From Pauline Digby's Autograph Book

Pauline Digby (nee Knight) was at Moulsham during the war years, from 1941 to 1945. In our next issue we shall include some of her wartime memories. Meanwhile, here is a copy of a page from her autograph book, with signatures of most of the Girls' School staff in 1945. Pauline notes that only Miss Barton is missing, and thinks she may have been too scared to ask!

Where are they now?

Darrel Reed and Pat Durrant have so far identified an astonishing 161 faces on the 1949 panorama photo of the Junior Boys' School, with the help of former pupils who are also colleagues at Marconi's. The photo and provisional list of names will be on display at the Open Afternoon, when we hope some of you will be able to identify yet more of the boys. Among those recognised, Darrel reports that Tony Smith (from Chaucer Road Springfield) and Tony Watkinson emigrated to Australia; Billy Chiddley's mother was a lollipop lady; and Barry Tarling founded the "Silhouette du Barry" hairdressing salon. Bernard ("Bunny") Dowsett owned a BSA Gold Star motorcycle in the early sixties, when the Long Bar in Baddow Road at the rear of the Regent Theatre was a popular haunt for bikers! Eric Smith worked at Marconi's Waterhouse Lane when Darrel was serving his apprenticeship, and used to live in the Manor Road area. David Stevens currently lives on the Meadgate Estate. Billy Clarke lives on the Chignall Estate and is currently working for Marconi Applied Technologies; Michael Digby was at Marconi Radar in Writtle Road until it closed down in 1992 and now believed to be working at Marconi's Basildon; Melvin Durrant (Pat's cousin) was also at Marconi Radar. Tom Barrett worked at RHP until about 1987 and then joined the Water Board. Sadly, some former pupils have died. We understand that Roy Hagger died of cancer in his early 20s, Brian Rippingale was killed on duty as a policeman in about 1967, Stephen Driscoll died of a brain tumour some 20 years ago; and Lenny Spencer tragically collapsed and died at work at RHP Chelmsford one Saturday morning in 1969.

Eileen Wade (nee Saunders), lived in Rosebery Road when she attended Moulsham Junior Girls' School from 1941-45. She is still in touch with some of her former classmates, including Yvonne French, Evelyn Cox and Joy Hayward, who was married on the same day as Eileen. For their "joint" silver wedding anniversary, Eileen had a request played for Joy on the Ed Stewart Show! Other Moulsham children who lived near her included Molly Bloomfield, Joy Fenton, Eric and David Hayward, the Woollett family (Tony et al) and Corinne May. Towards the end of the war, Eileen remembers the "doodlebugs" coming over Chelmsford - if they heard one on the way to school, the children had to run either home or to school, whichever was closer. Home was usually deemed to be closer!

News in brief

Mike Cable, 1946-50, will be celebrating his 40th wedding anniversary next year. He has two sons, both married with two children each. Mike worked as a Chartered Mechanical Engineer and had the good fortune to be able to retire at 51. He is an elder of the United Reformed Church in Maldon and this takes up quite a bit of his time. He is also a keen golfer and spends several weeks a year mountaineering in Britain and abroad. In 1950, Mike wrote a story published in the school magazine, which we plan to reprint in a future issue.

Pat Rushbrook (nee Davis), 1951-55, seen here in 1951, has a wonderful collection of childhood toys, books and treasures, together with photos of her own and her mother's schooldays. Do you remember five-stones, Jacks, and French knitting? We have asked Pat to display some of this material at our Open Afternoon, and will include an article on her memories of schooldays and Chelmsford in the Summer Newsletter.



Anne Holdsworth (nee Hammond), 1943-1947, has sent some further memories of that period:

"I wonder who remembers all the girls going round humming or whistling the Harry Lime theme - a popular film of the time - until the teachers forbade us to sing it any more!

Does anyone remember the tubular bells which stood on the platform along with the piano? Were any pupils allowed to play these bells? I know I should have loved to! As far as I remember, our usual instruments consisted of drum, castanets, tambourines, triangles and one pair of cymbals.

When in class 4 in 1944, we made diagrams for maybe two months showing the weather. I was so happy to be the person chosen to look at the weather vane above the school bell to see which way the wind was blowing that day and enter it on our charts.

At our harvest festival services, we sang all the well-known harvest hymns, and our harvest gifts were sent to the 'Red House', a retirement home in London Road, between the Rising Sun and Princes Road. I have a fond memory of the beautiful hymns sung from our red-covered hymn books. The green books which followed had the hymns in a different order with some of my favourites missing. The last time I saw a copy of the red covered hymn book was in Terling Church about 20 years ago. I turned every page, and what wonderful memories it brought back.

Like so many other pupils of those days, I attended Friars Infants, where our Head Teacher was Miss Amey. Another teacher was Mrs Day, but what was the name of the third teacher - was it Miss Bedford or Miss Eagling, I wonder? So many happy days were spent at both schools".

Francis Greatrex, 1944-48, was in the year below his brother Quintin and their cousin Brian (article in the Autumn 2000 Newsletter). He writes: "We lived in Beehive Lane (where Honey Pot Close is today) so we had to walk down to Avenue Road to catch the school bus. In the summer we used to walk home across the fields after school thus saving our bus fare of 1d! Other boys in my year were Gerald Canfield, Peter Kistruck, James Dobie, Basil Campen, James Bulbeck (deceased 1999), Peter Watson, Alan Hare, John Branson. As far as I can remember we all went to KEGS except for Alan."

Sandra McCarthy, 1964-68, writes: "Thank you for the recent issue of the Newsletter which once more sent me down memory lane. I only moved back to Essex last year after more than 30 years away, but each time I go to the crematorium (I'm a vicar...) I drive past the school and think back. Sue Davis' article on p. 15 brought back memories of teachers - Miss Barton, Miss Aldridge and Mrs Alty - and yes, there was a lady called Mrs Shacklady. Your last issue mentioned Miss Cook, and as soon as I saw the name I remembered "Gertrude" (how I knew at that age I don't know!) and I had a hazy image of her in my mind, the kind of image that is liable to disappear if one tries too hard. I also remember a Mrs Greenwood who taught us music for a while - I must have irritated her as I remember her eyes flashing with anger at me - ironic that I later went on to study music at university! My chief memory of the Juniors is sitting round the edges of the quadrangle one very hot summer's day - I'm not sure if it was a sports day or some other special event. I am still in touch with my "best friend" from those days, Gillian Peace (now with a 10-year-old daughter and married) - at her wedding I met up also with her parents and sister Wendy, a couple of years younger, and also married".

Jennifer Bailey (nee Rayner), 1943-47, was amused to read Brian Greatrex' story of the competition between Front Door Monitors from the Girls' and Boys' School to be first to answer the door bell. Jennifer remembers that in her day there was a similar race to be first to answer the telephone. She was the Girls' School Telephone Monitor, sitting nearest to the door in class ready to jump up quickly when the phone rang, and delighted in adopting a suitably "refined voice" when answering on behalf of the school!