

# Past Pupils' Newsletter

Summer 2001

Vol 3 no 2

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## **The Open Afternoon 2001**

The 'nostalgia trip', as Peter Smith called it, on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May, was the best yet! About 100 past pupils, plus assorted friends and family, descended on the Junior School between 1 and 5pm, to meet up with old classmates and school friends and enjoy a wonderful afternoon. About 30 of the past pupils were new contacts, who had seen the article on Moulsham Juniors and John Spooner's letter to the Editor, both in the Essex Chronicle on 11<sup>th</sup> May - some had even recognised themselves on the 1939 photo we included of Mr Hymas' class! It was also good to meet for the first time several of you who had not been able to make it to last year's Open Afternoon.

The feedback on the afternoon has been brilliant. Thank you to John Whittle for his letter in the Essex Chronicle on 15 June, expressing his pleasure at seeing all the memorabilia, including the Boys' School honours boards (some of which had been brought down specially from the attic). Above all he appreciated the chance to meet 14 other 'old boys' who joined the school on the opening day in September 1938. We have had similarly positive comments from many others of you, too.

A special thank you must go to the present-day Moulsham pupils and their parents, who turned out to provide their splendid drumming and dancing displays. And our gratitude as ever to the Head Teacher, Mr Kemp, for his continuing encouragement and assistance in making the reunion possible. The Open Afternoon inevitably involves a fair amount of work for him and his staff, not to mention Pat Rushbrook's help with setting up the photo exhibition, Hilary Balm's delicious cakes and my long-suffering husband's pouring of the tea! Gold stars to all of you! We have already had two very welcome offers of help on future occasions. As the numbers continue to increase, we should be more than delighted to hear from any other local past pupils who might be able to assist on the day.

## **The Newsletter**

I am pleased to report that our mailing list is now well over 300, and increasing steadily. Do keep on sending us names and addresses of Moulsham contacts who would like to receive the Newsletter. We had a bumper post-bag of news, photos and memories this term, too, and always enjoy hearing from you. I shall be delighted to receive more letters and articles whenever you are in reminiscing mood. My address is Kathleen Boot, 1A Vicarage Road, Chelmsford, CM2 9PG, or e-mail address below.

In the Spring issue, I half-jokingly suggested that we should soon have to catch up with the new technology and start distributing the Newsletter by e-mail. Since the Open Afternoon, Mike Rignall has taken me up on this, and demonstrated that the venture would be much less difficult than I supposed. Subject to further practical tuition from my young niece, who sorts out most of my computer muddles (!), we plan to send out a small number of Newsletters this time by e-mail, as a pilot scheme, to those whose e-mail addresses we already have. To save paper, stamps, and time spent copying, collating and delivering, we then hope to extend the e-mail distribution, starting with the Autumn issue, to all of you who can receive it. So please, if you have an e-mail address, mail it to me on [kathleen.boot@virgin.net](mailto:kathleen.boot@virgin.net). You have nothing to lose - the pictures will be sent as jpeg attachments, so you can insert them into the text if you wish, and print off the Newsletter in very much the same format as the 'snail-mail' version.

Greetings from Hilary and myself, and we hope you will enjoy this Newsletter

*Kathleen Boot (nee Nash)  
1951-55*

## Notes from the Head Teacher, Mr L R Kemp

The junior school is taking part in a project called 'Safer Journey to School' and the fact that all three Moulsham Schools are involved means there is possibly funding to address major issues. There will be an exhibition at the junior school on the afternoon and early evening of Tuesday 10 July setting out some of the ideas that have been considered.

Among the suggestions have been that traffic will only be allowed to turn left when entering or leaving the school with a physical barrier along the centre of Princes Road outside the school. Improvements to the parents' car park by widening the entrance and giving precedence to vehicles leaving the car park over cars using the turning circle and a footpath to separate pedestrians and vehicles. A pedestrian controlled crossing outside the school in place of the footbridge is a suggestion which has been the subject of much discussion. The speed limit along Princes Road is 40 mph and robust discussion took place over the possibility of a variable speed limit bringing it down to 30 mph during the period when most children are arriving or leaving school. There are many other suggestions involving improvements to the subway and to the safety of pedestrians crossing at Wood Street. An increase in the number of children walking to school or part of the way is an aim of the project and walking buses where children are escorted to school will be considered. The Borough Engineer involved with the project is Simon Rudge a former pupil who attended the last reunion in May.

At the Past Pupils' Reunions discussion has often focused on the distance some children walked to the Moulsham Junior School in its early days and the fact that children made the repeat journey at lunchtime. The majority of our children bring sandwiches for lunch but we have introduced a new service at this school recently called 'Pick and Mix'. This is a packed lunch service where children buy a ticket which costs the same as a hot lunch and can select five items from different sections including a sandwich, fruit, a cake, crisps and vegetables. This has had a dramatic effect on the hot meal service but the fact that the children can picnic outside, during fine weather, and you have time for more football do have a large impact.

I do remember starting my career in 1964 and living in digs in Colchester. The school lunch was then a substantial meal and provided my only hot meal of the day. During my time as a Deputy Headteacher every member of staff joined the children for lunch but we now seem to be in danger of losing the community spirit of sharing a meal together and I am more guilty of this than most. Of our present roll of five hundred and forty children, only two children go home to lunch. Times have changed.

## Memories of Mr Harold Picken, 1916-2001

Right: The latest photo we have of Mr Picken in 2000



This valediction was given by the Revd Katy Hacker Hughes at Mr Picken's funeral on 6<sup>th</sup> February:

"I never had the pleasure of meeting Harold Picken, but having spoken with some of his friends and associates, one of the first things everyone mentioned was that he was a true gentleman. He was always immaculately turned out and nicknamed "the Colonel" during his teaching days.

Harold was born in London, but the family moved to Essex, and he attended the Plume School in Maldon, a place that remained special to him throughout his life. His grandfather had been a teacher, his mother a headmistress, and this gift of teaching passed down the family line to Harold and his sister Myra. Harold was on the staff when Moulsham Primary School opened in 1938. He eventually became deputy head, and was well respected and loved at Moulsham for many years. Generations of pupils must have benefited from his considerable teaching skills - indeed there may be many here today for that very reason. Other areas of service to the community included serving in Palestine during the war, helping to found the hospital radio service, and later being involved with talking newspapers for the blind.

The other great love of Harold's life, besides teaching, was of course his wife Yvonne. They spent many happy holidays in Southwold, and were, I gather, devoted to one another. Though without children themselves, they loved to take an interest in their friends' children, happily baby-sitting and following their progress as they grew up. When Yvonne died, it seems that Harold never really recovered from his loss. His final years were spent living simply at Havencourt, still running a car, reminiscing with friends about old schooldays, and solving word games and crosswords, at which he was something of an expert.

And so, today, we thank God for the gifts that He gave Harold Picken. We give thanks for Harold's desire to use those gifts faithfully for the good of others - to educate and nurture the young. It is a wonderful calling. May we who are left, whether working or retired, continue to use the gifts God has given us for our families and our community. And may Harold rest in peace."

### **A wartime letter from Mr Picken**

For the 1941 Moulsham Junior Boys' School Magazine, the Headmaster, Mr Petchey, invited staff on active service to write a few lines for the pupils. Characteristically, Mr Picken wrote a friendly and encouraging letter, which reads in part:

"I am not your teacher now but a soldier friend of yours. I am one of those khaki clad men that you see every day doing his bit in the army to help beat that monstrous ogre Hitler. Today every citizen (which includes each one of you) must carry on his work with one aim in view - to win the war. We

shall win, too. Have no doubt in your minds about that. You can all play your parts in the fight by keeping a stout heart, making yourself useful and obeying orders.

If you are continuing to attend school regularly, doing as you are asked to do and learning all you can, you are playing your part satisfactorily. How can I be helping to win the war if I am doing just the same as I was in peace time, you may ask. Hitler's raids on civilians are done to upset the routine of our daily life. If he could completely do this he would beat us. But he cannot do it. He has rained destruction on our big cities but the people have not run away from their jobs. They are sticking to their jobs and beating him. You 'go to it' and stick to your jobs and you will be shortening the time we are all longing for - till peace comes again.

Wishing you all Happiness and Good Luck

Your sincere friend

Sapper H.J. Picken

### **Shirley Wood, nee Porter: obituary**

Many of you will have read in the Spring Newsletter of the tragic accident in which Shirley Wood (nee Porter) lost her life. Jennifer Bailey (nee Rayner), who was at the Junior Girls' School with Shirley from 1943-47, has written this personal tribute:

With school friends, recent work colleagues, and acquaintances from her sporting activities we joined with her family at the Crematorium on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2001 to celebrate the 64 years of her life. Shirley had worked for some 20 years at the Anglia Polytechnic University and had retired at the end of December last year.

Through the class reunions which were started some nine years ago, many will remember her helping to contact school friends who we had not seen for many years. We had known each other from the Junior or latterly the Senior Schools. Always keen to join in on these occasions, reminiscing about our school days and interested in what had been happening to us over the past year. Mixing with everyone with ease when attending the annual Past Pupils' Open Afternoons.

Betty Sharpe (nee Watts) has contributed these happy pictures of Shirley and herself, first when they were at school together and then some three years ago at the School's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations:



A caring mother to her two sons and popular with her four grandchildren, Shirley was close to her sister June (Tiffen) and her long-standing friend Mavis Lodge (nee Hodgkinson), both ex-Moulsham.

Shirley's sister June says that the family are arranging to have a seat placed in Hylands Park in her memory. The seat will look towards the church and village of Widford where Shirley grew up and had returned to some ten years ago. Should you walk in the park, perhaps you would like to reflect on Shirley's favourite poem:

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the diamond glints on snow,  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning' hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry,  
I am not there; I did not die.

Jennifer Bailey (Rayner) 1943-47

#### **Mr Gardiner's Class of 1939: Peter Smith remembers**

It was great to meet up with 'old pals' at the latest Past Pupils' nostalgia trip, and interesting to be able to catch up with back issues of the Newsletter. I am enclosing a copy of my old class photograph: Standard III, Mr Gardiner's class of 1939. I was very glad to meet up with John Spooner, a correspondent in the Autumn '99 Newsletter and front row left of my photo. Standing in the back row, beneath the sailing boat picture (the work of yours truly) is Ralph Smith (Professor and OBE) surely one of the most eminent of that class. How sad to read his obituary.

I do find the Newsletter fascinating reading and agree that other people's memories seem to trigger off memories of one's own. I suppose being at school throughout the war gave us 39'ers quite a lot to be nostalgic about. I was one of several transferred, in 1938, from St John's School - a Victorian building with windows well out of reach of most boys and offering no glimpse of the outside world to distract our enquiring minds. Moving to Moulsham School gave us all the nicest possible culture shock. Bright, airy classrooms with virgin desks (not a scratch on them) and huge windows, offering wonderful views, although on a hot summers day, with no blinds, it was difficult to avoid sunstroke. I lived near to St John's Church and had to walk to school up Moulsham Street, through Oaklands Park and along Princes Road. In those days, it seemed to me that summers were very hot and winters very cold. On an icy winter's day the journey to school presented many opportunities to play on the many slides. I particularly remember short trousers, wellington boots and chapped legs - I didn't go into 'long-uns' until I was nearly fourteen. Most of us children walked to school. Cars were not very plentiful and became even more scarce when petrol rationing was introduced. So walking to school was the norm - to school in the morning, sometimes being sent home again to collect the forgotten gas mask, home for lunch then back to school and home again at four o'clock. Not bad for an unaccompanied nine-year-old especially when, later, unfriendly aircraft flew overhead. Princes Road, in those days, offered little shelter - the trees were little more than saplings - but, hey, we kids were blissfully ignorant of the dangers and just found watching aerial dog-fights, barrage balloons and crashing planes (there was one near the Rising Sun in London Road) quite exciting.

In closing, before I bore you all to death with the war, I would like to endorse Brian Emmett's comments (Spring

2001). My days at Moulsham were some of the happiest and I don't think that is just a case of 'distance lending enchantment'. I just do not have a bad memory of the school and that is due to great school friends and the dedication of the teaching staff who had to cope with large classes and every disruption that being at war presented. Yes, I too am grateful for the excellent start I received at Moulsham Juniors - long may it continue to flourish.



Right: Peter in 1939: Note the prized Ovaltineys' badge!



Standing (from left): Ray Sewell, ?, David Saltmarsh, Ray Thorne, Ralph Smith, Derek Smith, Kenneth Mann, Peter Turrall, Mr Gardiner, Peter Vinal, John Whittle, Robert Bedford, John Davey, James Fleming, Ray Hatherley

Back row (seated): Tommy Howes, Dennis Poulter, Derek Meadowcroft, Brian King, Reg Folkard, Ivan Brown, Peter Smith

Second row: Roger Fletcher, Martin Lee, Ronald Hancock, Charles Dickerson, (Bunny) Boon, Ralph Turbin, Colin Mallows

Third row: Billy Harris, John Southgate, David Bell, Douglas Whipps, Tony Miller, Kenneth Walls

Front row: John Spooner, David Smith, ? Reeve, Reg Baldwin, Magnus Anderson

Missing are, I believe, Keith Lodge, Ian Gardiner, Dennis Martin, Alec Fulcher, John Howitt and Peter Wild. Among those sadly no longer with us: Ralph Smith, Kenneth Mann, Roger Fletcher and Brian King

**See also News in Brief**, page 14, on Peter's consuming 'leisure' activity since 1948, the theatre.

## **The Mussell family: 1938 onwards**

This must be a record! Thanks to Anne Bromiley (nee Mussell), we are now in touch with all six of the Mussell children who lived in Longstomps Avenue and attended Moulsham Juniors between 1938 and 1960. Anne and her brothers Derek and David were at Moulsham in the very early years. Sadly their mother died in 1940, and Anne says she will never forget the kindness and help given by the Headmistress Miss Rankin and her class teacher Miss Sawday. Eventually her father remarried, and her half sisters and brothers also attended the Juniors: Jennifer in 1950, Richard in 1954 and Jane (who is hoping to find a class photo for us) in 1956. Anne's step-mother Win was a dinner lady in the Infants' School for many years. We were pleased to meet Anne and Jane at the Open Afternoon.

Anne was at St John's School, Friars Infants and Trinity Road Springfield before coming to Moulsham in 1939. She remembers Sybil Bonvini, who lived off St John's Road, and she is still in touch with Olga Parker, nee Euston (see the 1940 photograph in the Autumn 2000 Newsletter).

Before starting at Moulsham, Derek Mussell was at Friars Infants, in the middle of Chelmsford. He writes: " From five years old to eight, I walked four times a day, there and back. Anyone who knows where Longstomps Avenue is will know how far that is. Imagine that today! We would cross over the road at St John's School, afraid the boys there would "fight" - it never happened, of course!

But back to Moulsham Juniors: it was wonderful to walk into that new classroom, with desks with lift-up lids and individual chairs, not benches, so clean and fresh. Mr Burttt taught in Class 2, in Class 3 Mr Hodgson and in Class 4 Mr Picken - what a smart man with his blond hair. He could throw chalk at you if you were talking and seldom miss the target. In Class 5 was Mr Gardiner, who seemed an old man to my young eyes, and we were a bit frightened of Mr Petchey, the Headmaster. I remember going into the air raid shelters when a raid occurred. In the last Newsletter, Brian Emmett talks of Danny Clark, who I remember with great fondness. He taught me music in the Senior School. Sometimes instead of singing in the hall, he would sit us in a classroom and read us a Just William story - he made me enjoy going to school. I have fond memories of Moulsham always.

I remember the different times of year for playing conkers, marbles, fag cards (as we called them), five stones and top spinning. After my mother died, when I was eight, I was sent to live for about a year with an uncle in a village called Maiden Bradley in Wiltshire. The school there had one room divided by a screen! Back at Moulsham, I remember Derek Phillips who went to South Africa, but died a while ago, David Brick who lives in Writtle now, Tony Rush, now somewhere in London and Dennis King.

After leaving school I worked at Cromptons as an apprentice, then National Service in the RAF to be trained as a medical orderly. On discharge I got a job in the Bata Shoe Shop and after three years became manager of the Witham Branch. But wanderlust took hold (I had been in Singapore in the RAF). I joined the Merchant Navy on an Orient Liner and was medical orderly in charge of the ship's hospital, under the ship's surgeon and a sister. That took a further 3-4 years, and I then became a representative for Sobel GEC Televisions. At the age of 31 I met and married my wife. We have one daughter, who now has her own florist shop. My wife's father had a plumbing company, so guess what - I became a plumber! Later I went into the retail business with my wife. We had frozen food shops, but when the supermarkets opened all around, we, like so many small businesses, had to shut shop. At this time I lived in Chingford, and became a County Court Bailiff and then Bailiff Manager at Romford and Ilford Courts. Now I am retired and live in Toot Hill, a village near Epping.

In closing, let me say hello to Brian Emmett. Do you remember that fight we had, Brian? About the only one I can ever remember having! Forgive me, Brian?"

### **Brian Emmett: an unexpected Coffee Morning**

Following his article in the Spring Newsletter, Brian Emmett sent us a detailed six-page essay on his wartime memories. We plan to include extracts in future Newsletters. Parts of his 'essay' were used in the Essex Chronicle article of 11<sup>th</sup> May. We also gave a copy to Mr Kemp, knowing that some of the current Moulsham pupils were studying the Second World War in class. Brian was surprised and delighted to receive a phone call in mid-March from Clare Norton, teacher of Class 4IF, inviting him to a 'Grandparents Wartime Memories Coffee Morning' on 28<sup>th</sup> March. Brian takes up the story:

"The first thing that struck me on arriving was that the school is now co-educational. I was taken aback when class 4IF turned out to be the old Class I of the Boys' School, where I started in 1938!

Much to my surprise, the articles I had written about my memories of the school and general wartime memories had been placed on the class computer, so my 'fame' had gone before me. The children had each prepared a questionnaire, and came up in turn to go through it. They asked about the school during wartime, food and rations, air raids, planes and bombs, evacuees, etc. They had also held a mock interview with me, extracting answers from the material on the computer.

I was impressed by the politeness and good behaviour of all the children and also by the fact that the class had a classroom assistant. The classroom layout was another wonder. In our day we all sat at regimented desks with lift-up lids and inkwells, facing the blackboard. Now it was at small tables of six to eight, writing with biro's. Also in our day there was nothing on the walls, but now there is a wonderful array of pictures, drawings, and posters, and even the blackboard is white! What made my day was that one of the boys lived in Goldlay Gardens, where I had lived during the war.

I was given a guided tour of the school by three of the pupils. The open-fronted sloping glass roofed veranda, which looked out on to a grassed quadrangle, was sacred ground in our day. Now the open front has been blocked in to form a corridor around the inside of the classrooms. In the former Boys School [though not the Girls'], the whole of the large windows on the inside of the classrooms have been removed, leaving an airy 'open plan' effect. Also on the quadrangle, four additional classrooms have been built. The Boys' hall was still as I remembered it, minus the stage.

The playground was the same, and to my amazement there was still one of the old air raid shelters in place, now used as a store. The class had spent some time in the shelter, trying to simulate what it was like to spend long periods of time in there during the war. All in all, my first visit to the school 62 years after I joined the class of 1938 was very moving and nostalgic."

Brian was sorry to miss the Open Afternoon, having already booked a holiday at that time. He has however recently heard from Arthur Cornell, another 1938 pupil, and plans to meet up one evening. Including our latest contacts, we now have at least 22 boys from 1938 on our mailing list. These are: John Baker, Reg Baldwin, Roy Barnard, Gordon Bennett, Roy Eaton, Brian Emmett, Peter Eves, Jim Fleming, Les Gunn, Alan Harvey, Vernon Makin, Derek Mussell, Reg Podd, C John Reed, Ray Sewell, Peter Smith, John Spooner, Ralph Turbin, Selwyn Wheeler, John Whittle, John Williams and Derek Wiseman. There may be others on our list whose start date we do not know.

Girls on our mailing list who started at Moulsham Juniors in 1938 include these 12: Margaret Adams (Greatrex), Jean Bayes, Cynthia Bendall (Carter), Vivienne Bennett (Daniels), Kathleen Duncombe (Thorp), Eileen Geer (Steel), Pamela Gunn, Brenda Halls (Eves), Olga Parker (Euston), Evelyn Turbin (Gridley), Heather Turner (Fleming) and Eileen Wheeler. Please let us know if you started in 1938 and we have not included you on these lists.

**Pauline Digby, (nee Knight): at Moulsham in the "Old Days", 1941-45**

In the Spring 2001 Newsletter, we reproduced a page from Pauline's autograph book, with signatures of the staff at Moulsham Junior Girls' School - names familiar to so many of us. Pauline says that reading the Newsletters "has brought many things back to mind of the "old days" there during the war years of 1941-45".



This photo of Pauline's birthday party in 1943 shows her with eight of her Moulsham schoolmates and one non-Moulsham friend. In the back row, left to right, are Margaret Spendlove, Valerie Devonish and Pauline herself. In the middle row, Iris Clark and Shirley Sanders. In the front row, Anne Hammond, Gill Upsdell (not from Moulsham), Janet Pawsey and Jill Devonish. Pauline is still in touch with several of these girls. Of her years at the Junior School, Pauline writes:

"The uniform prior to the war was maroon tunics or pinafore dresses and yellow small check blouses, but of course uniform was impossible during the war because of rationing for clothes. As I remember, the Headmistress, Miss Rankin, always wore a straight-skirted suit of Harris Tweed in an orange/rust large check design.

I wonder if anyone else remembers the barrage balloons we could see through the windows during lessons? We all recognised 'our' balloon, which was based along the footpath between Moulsham Drive and Princes Road, and would excitedly nudge each other when we saw it go up prior to the air raid warning. We got quite friendly with the airmen crew who attended it, and always stopped for a chat on the way home from school. It had a name: maybe someone remembers what it was? Crossing Princes Road was a hazard because of wartime convoys of lorries frequently using that route.

During the war we collected books for waste paper salvage and received badges for the number of books we were able to bring to school. I think the highest award was a 'Captain' badge. We spent hours at home 'ravelling' (ie fraying out scraps of material to make stuffing for soft toys etc). Some of it was used to stuff the 'Squander Bugs' we made to enforce the war effort of saving. We had a competition to see who could make the most elaborate 'bug'. They had an oval body with round head and pointed ears, and usually pipe-cleaner legs, and were in an upright position. I wonder if anyone kept one?"

## Dips and skipping rhymes from Diana Turbin, 1940-44

In an earlier Newsletter, the Head Teacher, Mr Les Kemp, asked if anyone remembered more dips and skipping rhymes. Diana Turbin obviously has an excellent memory, and sent in all of these. Mr Kemp has been promoting skipping rhymes with present day pupils during breaks, and was particularly interested to have the Teddy Bear rhyme, which he had not come across before.

### Dipping:

One two three four five six seven  
All good children go to Heaven  
Penny on the water  
Tuppence on the sea  
Threepence on the railway  
Out goes she (he)

**Skipping "bumps":** (double skips on the last word of each line)

Why oh she bumps  
She rides her bike  
She tears her stockings  
With all her might

### Skipping with actions:

Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground  
Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn right round  
Teddy bear, teddy bear, climb the stairs  
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say your prayers  
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say good night  
"Good night"  
(on the words "good night" the skipper left the rope and the next one joined)

### Skipping:

Sea shell, cockle shell  
Lily white, lily white over

(first two lines said while swinging the rope to and fro and jumping over it; rest of the rhyme said while skipping forwards in the usual way, the words continuing: )

My mother said I never should  
Play with the gypsies in the wood  
If I did, she would say  
Naughty little girl to disobey  
Your hair won't curl  
Your shoes won't shine  
Naughty little girl you shan't be mine

**Communal skipping:** (for this a long rope was needed and two girls willing to turn the rope - chosen by dipping. The rest of the girls took it in turn to skip in the rope)

I was in the kitchen  
Doing a bit of stitching  
In came a bogey man  
And pushed me out

When the rhyme reached "in came a bogey man", the second girl came into the rope. Both skipped together until "and pushed me out", the second girl then pushing the first out. If someone missed a beat or the rope fouled, the culprit had to take over turning the rope, and the released turner joined in the skipping.

Diana recalls that these skipping games went on until the end of the playtime break. Once the skipping season was finished, ball games took over. Among her favourites were "Pig in the middle" and "Sevensy sixty" - perhaps some of you remember them?

## School magazines and an excursion in Festival of Britain year, 1951

In the Spring 2001 Newsletter, I mentioned that Mr Kemp had found a copy of the 1950 Junior Boys' School Magazine. Before that, the only issue we had was the very first one, from summer 1939. Now, I am delighted to be able to tell you that we have magazines from ten more years! A few months ago, Frank Barker, 1939-41, called in at the school and kindly left his copy of the 1941 edition, from which we have extracted Mr Picken's wartime letter on page 4 (Obituary). Then at the recent Open Afternoon, Peter Smith, 1938, brought in the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Souvenir Number, covering 1938-48, plus individual magazines for each year from 1949 to 1955 and 1957. We are most grateful to Frank and Peter for these. In the meantime we have tracked down copies for Summer and Autumn 1963 in the school archive, so we now have a grand collection from which to plunder extracts for future Past Pupils' Newsletters. If any of you have magazines from other years, do please let us know. So far, we have not come across any from the Girls' School. If any were ever produced, we should be very glad to hear.

The earliest Boys' School magazines were in cyclostyled typescript on foolscap pages. For the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, and in 1940 and 1950, the magazine was printed professionally by Shergold Printers in Duke Street. From 1951, however, it was printed on the school's very own printing press. This was presented by brothers Christopher and Richard Horsnell, both past pupils, to commemorate the happy days they spent at Moulsham Juniors. The press appears to have continued in use at least until 1957, though by 1963 the magazine had reverted to duplicated typescript.

From the 1952 Boys' School Magazine, you may be interested to see this account of the School Leavers Outing exactly 50 years ago on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1951 (Festival of Britain year). No doubt some of you were there.

"As in the last two years, our first objective was Greenwich, but this time boys and teachers piled into two single-deck buses instead of one double-decker, so there was the added thrill of going through the Blackwall Tunnel. For the Staff, as we drew nearer to Greenwich, was the different thrill of knowing that possibly there would be no river trip, as the river busmen were on strike. However, the authorities had looked to our interests, and we were soon aboard one of the few riverbuses that sailed that morning. It was an open boat. In good weather, and aided by Mr Mitchell's expert knowledge, we were soon intent on things nautical. But not for long. Soon a shout went up - "Skylon!" And although it looked but a pin in the distance, from that moment all eyes were on the South Bank. In vain did the Staff beg a moment's glance for St Paul's, the Monument or Cleopatra's Needle; it was 1951 and the Festival was all important.

When the Dome and its companions had at last faded from sight, permanent buildings came back into their own, and Boadicea, Big Ben and the Parliament Buildings were really noticed. The river trip had to be extended to Putney because of the Festival regulations, so sandwiches were eaten on board and there was much bottle-swigging before we were again on (land) buses, heading for the Zoo. Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, Broadcasting House we hailed with delight, and at last the first giraffe's head over the fence told us that our journey was complete. For the next few hours all roamed at will, and were squirted by chimpanzees, carried by elephants, awed by eagles and vultures, and altogether fascinated by the endless variety of creatures with whom we share the earth.

Although it was a tired party that mounted the buses again, there was still energy left for playing Cowboys and Indians, or Robin Hood's Men, on the slopes of High Beech, or for spending the last pennies at the refreshment stall there, and all agreed that this made a splendid finish to a grand day."

### **Raiding the attic: Pat Rushbrook (nee Davis), 1951-55**

Many of you will have seen Pat's impressive array of memorabilia at the Open Afternoon, on the long row of tables she manned with her former classmate Maureen Baker (nee Brown). Pat unwrapped for us her carefully preserved collection of 1950s toys, schoolbooks, and photos - a real treasure trove. She had even found an example of the famous black dancing skirt, made in our day from blackout cloth with bands of coloured rick-rack braid .



Pat lived in Lower Anchor Street in her early years. Her mother, born Irene Boatman, had been taught by Miss Sawday at Trinity Road. Pat herself went to Friars Infants, and then Moulsham Juniors Girls' School. Moving house to Manor Road in 1953 made her journey to school considerably shorter. She could take a short-cut to Princes Road along the cinder track through the allotments behind Moulsham Drive. Pat recalls that 'Bundles' the tramp was a familiar figure in those days, sleeping rough near the allotments (which are now covered with a new housing development). Her strongest memories of Moulsham Juniors include playground slides in the snow (where our classmate Pauline Weavers broke a leg); playing 'up the houses'; and school dinners dished up from large tin trays - desserts including junket and coconut sponge pudding. In her present job, Pat still meets a lot of past pupils from her Moulsham days, and is currently putting together a long list of names for us.

### **Dragonflies and apple orchards: more recollections from Barrie Stevens, 1959-63**

Particularly large bright blue dragonflies would gather every summer high up in the far corner away from the door in Mr Picken's classroom and apparently had done so for many years. Moulsham is built on part of the old Mildmay family estate of Moulsham Hall, which in its day had ornamental lakes. Mr Picken put the phenomena of the dragonflies down to some inherited homing instinct. I later heard that one of the lakes had originally been sited under the school in the sunken quadrangle area! Mr Picken's class room was immediately to the left of the main entrance under the bell tower.

Insects and butterflies seemed to abound in those summer days. Perhaps it was before sprays, hedge grubbing and the Common Agricultural Policy? Boys seemed to keep creepy crawlies in match boxes and jam jars. White mice and grass snakes resided in desks. Flies were sufficiently numerous for us to flick dozens of them dead against the windows with rubber strips fashioned by cutting elastic bands.

Further to the history of Moulsham schools, it was said that with the war looming, the foundations were laid strong enough for them to become a two storey military hospital complex but then it was decided to complete them as schools after all. Moulsham was apparently built to serve the Moulsham Lodge Estate which was planned even before the war but not actually started until the late 1950s-1960s; hence my arrival at the school from the then new family home in Juniper Drive. Tile Kiln estate, then Tile Kiln farm, was all apple orchards in which some of the "new Chelmsfordians" found fruit harvesting work.

## News in brief

Congratulations to **Joy Bome (nee Sparrow)**, 1947-51, who has been awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours, for "her work in the Community, especially with music in Chelmsford". As described in an earlier Newsletter, Joy founded the Caprice wind orchestra, which has for many years put on very successful concerts in aid of charitable causes. The next major concert to look out for is the Gala Twinning Concert in Chelmsford Cathedral on 20<sup>th</sup> October together with Stadtisches Blasorchester Backnang and l'Ensemble Harmonique d'Annonay. Tickets from the Civic Theatre Box Office. We will remind you of December concerts next time.

**Peter Smith**, 1938 (see also article p.6 ), joined the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society in 1948 and has, since then, appeared in over ninety productions, both at the Regent and Civic Theatres. He has received both a Weekly News Man of Arts Award and a Civic Award for services to the Arts. In 1968 he was jointly responsible for the formation of the Chelmsford Young Generation amateur musical society. This group has been particularly successful, with some forty of its past members now in the profession, including ex-Moulsham schoolboy Gavin Wilkinson, currently on tour in West Side Story. Book now on 01245 609568 for Oklahoma (24-29 September, Civic Theatre) and on 01245 606505 for The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (27 Dec-5 Jan 2002 at the Cramphorn Theatre),

**John Spooner**, 1938, has sent some very interesting material on his time as a 'British war guest' in Canada. We will include extracts in the Autumn Newsletter. We are also pleased to have made several more 1938 contacts recently, including **Pauline and Gordon Evans**, who transferred from St John's Infants, and **Peter Eves**, whose brother-in-law Jack Dowsett (in Australia for the past 40 years) was a pupil at Danbury School where Mr Picken taught in pre-Moulsham days.

**Wendy Bryant (nee Rousseau)**, 1939-40, having lived in Portugal on and off for 14 years, was amazed to find two Newsletters in the post on returning to England in May! Wendy moved to Vicarage Road in June 1939, and started at Moulsham Junior Girls', aged 9½. She knew Eileen and Selwyn Wheeler and Sybil Bonvini, as they all went to Sunday School at London Road Congregational Church (now pulled down), where the Boys' School Headmaster Mr Petchey also taught. Wendy was also at the 'Tech' with Olga Parker (nee Euston) - photo in Autumn 2000 issue. Their Mums managed to get grey flannel on coupons to make the Technical School uniform, and also a red and blue beret, which they then cut in halves and mixed the colours. After leaving school, Wendy worked in London for seven years, and married in 1952. She has six children (three boys, three girls) and eleven grandchildren.

We were also pleased to hear from **Gordon Thorp**, a cousin of Kathleen and Pamela Thorp mentioned in the Autumn 2000 issue. Gordon, who lives in the same street as another ex-Moulsham Juniors' lad, D.Brown, in his Norfolk village, has offered to send us his own recollections of the war years spent at the Infants and Junior Schools. We look forward to that.

**Mollie Hermon (nee Bloomfield)**, 1939, who came to the Open Afternoon, tells us that she used to live in Rosebery Road, and knew fellow Moulsham pupils Pamela and Diane Woollett.

**Margaret Turk (nee Spendlove)**, 1941-45, comments that the articles in the Newsletter certainly jog the memory. In one issue, someone mentioned Miss Weller who started teaching at the Infants' School in 1939. She had lodgings in a house near Margaret and eventually became a family friend. They kept in touch when Miss Weller went to serve as a missionary in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. On her retirement Miss Weller went to live in Bosham. Soon after, Margaret's husband was transferred to Marconi's in Portsmouth and they found a house in Waterlooville, just ten

or eleven miles from Bosham, so were able to visit, especially during the latter years of her life until she died in 1996. Margaret recalls that there were a number of evacuees in that class of 1939. When they said they were going home, Audrey Weller managed to scrape together a few goodies for a party on the Friday, only to see them in school again on the following Monday!

**Joan Atkins**, 1943-47, was interested in the entry by **Anne Holdsworth (Hammond)** in the Spring Newsletter. Joan writes: " Anne and I started at Friars School at the same time, and I, too, well remember the teachers there. The third teacher that I recall was Mrs Eagling and, although I cannot substantiate this, I believe she was sister to Miss Skilton of Moulsham School. Like Anne, I loved many of those hymns we sang during the war years at Moulsham Junior School - one in particular I remember which does not seem to be heard very often these days is 'Hills of the North Rejoice' - it had such a wonderful stirring tune. I remember the harvest festival services too, and the well-known harvest hymns. I always considered my memory quite good, but there was a lovely hymn sung as a solo by Dawn Digby each harvest festival - but, try as I will, I cannot recall either the words or the tune. I am sure I sang the solo myself once , after Dawn had progressed to the senior school, and would love to be reminded of it - it is something I have thought about many times over the years.

**Norman Kerridge**, 1946-50, has followed up the e-mail printed in the Spring 2001 issue with more memories of his Junior School friends. If anyone would like to swap stories, he asks them to mail him on [norman.kerridge@lineone.net](mailto:norman.kerridge@lineone.net) . In 1946, Norman writes, "I lived in Campbell Close (off Wood Street) and Michael Cable who was 6 days younger than me lived in Widford Grove (also off Wood St). Hence began a friendship with Michael, which is still alive to this day. He went to the Seniors after I went to KEGS but then got a place at the Tech two years later. We met up again when we both attended Chelmsford Technical College for our ONC and HNC although he went down the Mechanical path and I transferred to Electrical after failing two drawing exams. It was a long trek for us walking to school each day but if the gate at the back of the Crompton sports field (now Tescos) was open we took a short cut through the field - staying well clear of Dick Cooper the groundsman. We also made a point of avoiding the "Widford Gang" and those who didn't finished up with a bloody nose. Who said hooligans were a modern day occurrence! My memories of colleagues are a bit hazy as some of them might have been ones I met later at KEGS. However, Pat Durrant stands out in my memory and thanks for the reminder of them in the last issue. Tony Raven, Malcolm Davies and Trevor Giddings. My wife actually worked with his daughter on Reception at Hawkers (In the BBC Essex building) I remember the first year teachers of Mrs French and Miss Moses. Mr Metcalf the music teacher I remember well. Other teachers would throw chalk at pupils misbehaving. He would throw the board rubber !!! My teacher in the final year was Mr Gardiner. I can picture him clearly to this day as well as Mr Petchey the head teacher - and yes I did feel his hand on the back of my leg on more than one occasion. "Standing under the board" was a regular resort of teachers when boys were naughty. I saw in an earlier issue that the fence in the playground between the boys' and girls' playgrounds no longer exists - whatever next !! The mention of the big round wash basins was another thing I had forgotten about although I came across some very similar ones in a Motorway Service area recently. I left school and served my apprenticeship at Cromptons (only recently demolished) and after spells at Marconi's have been a sales engineer selling standby power plant for the telecoms industry for the last twenty years. Rheumatoid Arthritis forced me to give up sport many years ago but I still manage to umpire hockey."

Some of you may remember **Pamela Outhwaite (nee Drennan)**, from the late 1940s. She has lived in Canada for over 30 years now, and wrote to us in February after seeing Hilary Balm's note about Moulsham Past Pupils in the Chelmer Valley Old Students' Association Newsletter. Pam still has her copy of the 1949 Junior Girls' School photo, for which her parents paid the grand sum of 3/6d. Retrieving it from "cold storage" led her to indulge in a bout of nostalgia. She was quite surprised to

realise how many names she could remember after all these years, including Head Teacher Miss Rankin, Miss Wright, Miss Barton, Miss Skilton, Miss Firmin, Mrs Taylor and Miss Sawday. Classmates and other pupils she recognised from the photo are Janet Barford, Peta Barratt, Maureen Beckwith, Mary Carver, Jean Clough, Patricia Elliott, June Gowers, Olga Green, Margaret Gruhn, Yvonne Howitt, Sylvia Jordan, Rosemary Lodge, Nancy Marshall, Elizabeth Newstead, Isobel Oxbrow, Heather Parrish, Eira Phillips, Judith Pinder, Gillian Pryor, Glenda Rainbird, Pamela Thorp, and Jill Watson. She recalls that she was quite friendly with Rosemary Lodge and Nancy Marshall.

**Graham King and his wife Junella (nee Harrington)**, both at Moulsham Juniors in the 1950s, were pleased to be passed a copy of the Spring 2001 Newsletter by Graham's old schoolmate John Macauley, and have now joined the mailing list themselves.

**Marea Irving (nee Jones)**, 1951-55 was in the same Junior class as Hilary Balm and Kathleen Boot, and is still in touch with Cynthia Schofield (nee Pledger) and Aileen French (nee Squires) from our year. Marea is an operatic and dramatic enthusiast, with both the Little Waltham Drama Group and Witham Operatic Society. She would be glad to see you at future productions of both groups. The next play is 'Stepping Out', 11-14 July in Little Waltham Memorial Hall.

**Stephen Cooper**, 1960-64, wrote a few weeks ago to say he had just been passed a copy of the Newsletter by a work colleague. He greatly enjoyed it, as it brought back many happy memories, and has joined the mailing list for future editions. Stephen came to Moulsham from Friars Infants, and recalls: "The four years at Moulsham have left a deep impression on me regarding the value of education - values I try to use in my role as a local school governor".

Kathleen Boot has been in touch with her relatives **Dan Biglin**, 1947-51 and **Tim Biglin**, 1954 -58, who used to live in Moulsham Drive in their schooldays. Dan retired early from his work as an engineer at Marconi's, and now devotes much of his time to his consuming interest of archaeology. He has been involved in a number of local 'digs' in Chelmsford and Colchester, and is looking forward to helping with a Roman excavation in Chelmsford this summer. Piecing together ancient pottery is his speciality. His brother Tim, who gained the Ann Johnson award in 1958, and went to KEGS and then Bristol University (doctorate in Electrical Engineering) is still living and working work in Bristol, and working as a software engineer.

### **Special appeal: Photos of Moulsham Junior Girls**

At present we have many more photographs of the early years of Moulsham Junior Boys' School than we have of the Junior Girls. There seem to be no official photos of the Girls' School staff, or group photos equivalent to those of Mr Hymas' and Mr Gardiner's classes in 1939. But perhaps some of the girl pupils had Brownie Box cameras and you or your parents took informal pictures of Moulsham school friends and events? If so, Kathleen and Hilary would be really pleased if you could let them have copies, or better still lend the original to scan into the computer.

#### **Data Protection Act 1984**

Please note that for the purposes of compiling the Past Pupils' Newsletter mailing list, and for no other purpose whatsoever, your name and address is being held as a computer record. If for any reason you object to this, would you please inform us immediately in writing. Unless we hear from you, your consent is assumed.