

"SMALL BEGINNINGS"

No 4

Summer 2002

The Newsletter of the former pupils of the old Barling Primary School is aimed at all ex-pupils, staff and friends of the school.

In the last issue of this newsletter (i.e. Spring 2002) Tony Alps wrote a delightful article on his memories of Barling during his schooldays. This article has triggered memories from other former pupils, so this issue is devoted to them. However, prior to these school-day memories it is worth mentioning two former pupils who are (possibly) our oldest members, Olive Matthews and Eric Jeffries.

It is believed that Olive Matthews at 100 years of age (born April 1902) is the oldest living person that went to Barling School, which she attended from 1906 until 1915. Olive was not only born in Edward Cottage but lived there while she went to school. Edward Cottage is located on the Little Wakering Road between the Castle Inn and Kimberley Road. Olive was a very keen member of both the local W.I. and Barling Evergreens. Her surname, more correctly, is Truss, while previously to that it was Horner. Currently, Olive lives in a retirement home in central Southend.

Olive is (understandably) rather frail but still can remember a few things from her school days. Olive remembers that she walked to and from school every day as there was no other form of transport. At the time Mr Shephard was the head-master and he organised a savings scheme for the pupils whereby each child would take one penny to school every Friday. While her favourite teacher was a Miss Duckham. Memories of playtime with hopscotch, skipping, and generally running around has stuck in her mind. However, perhaps one of her greatest memories is of the friendships made with other girls in her class. These included Rose Smith, Olive Whiffen, Daisy Bell, and Molly and Rose Sutton.

Eric Jeffries at 96 (in October he will be 97) is the same generation as Olive Matthews and knew her as a child. Eric attended Barling School between 1910 and 1919 and during that time lived in Little Wakering. Throughout this period he walked each day to and from school. During his time at Barling School, Eric enjoyed learning arithmetic, going on nature walks and gardening. Subsequently, Eric spent his entire working life in the building industry as a plasterer. For many years Eric was a senior member of the local unit of the Royal Observer Corps. He has also lived in Barling and Great Wakering. Currently, Eric is living at a retirement home in Southchurch.

For this issue of the Newsletter, the surnames of former pupils will be as used at the time that they attended Barling School.

MEMORIES

This is from Peter Carey. Peter attended Barling School between 1939 and 1947 (approx.)

One night there was an air raid over Barling and the anti-aircraft guns at Shopland and Alexandra Road (in Great Wakering) were blasting away. During this raid two bombs landed near Barling School.

The first bomb exploded on the School Playing Field near the main road and threw large lumps of earth and clay around the immediate area. The blast damaged the end of the nearby houses (Falklands), wrecked the telephone kiosk and damaged the air-raid shelter. One particular large lump of clay landed on top of the head teacher's (Mr Stone) car and compressed its roof down to the floor while body and mudguards were pressed on to the wheels - a total write-off.

The second bomb landed nearby with an equally dramatic effect. The bomb exploded leaving a large crater in the corner of the School Playing Field that was furthest from the main road on the side nearest to the lane that leads to Baldwin's farm. In other

words, the explosion was near to the cottage (Myrtle) that is located at the rear of the School. This cottage was at the time occupied by a Mr Harry Street who, at the time, was in bed. Apparently, the bomb blast weakened the floor in which Mr Street slept making the bed (minus mattress and occupant) fall through to the ground floor.

Curiously, Myrtle Cottage suffered less overall damage from the second bomb than Falklands Cottages suffered from the first explosion.

Peter has lived in Portugal for a number of years after spending much of his working life on the rivers and coastal waters of Eastern and Southern England.

This is from Sheelagh Chapman. Sheelagh attended Barling School between 1940 and 1947.

I remember the bombing during World War Two. One morning, during my early school days, I arrived at School to find a bomb had made a large crater in the middle of the school field. Luckily for us children, we were sent home while the area was made safe.

I remember the annual school photo, usually taken in the back playground, carefully avoiding the large pile of coke used for the old black boilers that heated each room. The children were divided into separate houses. Mine was "Hudson" **, which meant that we could be identified by the wearing of red bands. Anyway, we were lined up with the back row standing on a bench while the front row was seated. Once settled it was "... all smile nicely please.." followed by click and it was over for another year !

We always seemed to find plenty to do in the long summer holidays. Sometimes my sister (Doris) and I were allowed to cycle as far as Hockley Woods on our rickety second-hand bikes. We often used to take a picnic lunch but usually it was eaten long before twelve o'clock. Then we cycled all the way back home from Hockley to Little Wakering. All that cycling made us hungry again for more food, so two large slices from a coburg bread loaf that was topped with dripping or home-made jam made us feel a lot better.

The mention of bread has reminded me that it was Bob the Baker who delivered, on a daily basis, bread and cakes to most houses by horse and cart. The loaves were kept in the cart covered by a large tarpaulin sheet.

While at school, Sheelagh lived on the corner of Barrow Hall Road and Little Wakering Road. Currently, Sheelagh and her husband live in the west of Essex.

** Peter Griffiths writes, "I think that Hudson was the name given to the red team; Raleigh, the green; Livingstone, the blue; and finally, Cook, the yellow team". Please contact Peter (see back page) to confirm or clarify these details.

MEMORIES - continued

These memories are from Barbara Bush who attended Barling School between 1948 and 1952.

I would often walk from my home, which was next door to the Exhibition Inn at Great Wakering to get to school in Barling each day.

The roads always seemed so long and winding and there was very little traffic on them in those days; quite a few bicycles as I recall. Often after school I would go up to Weir Pond Road and stay with an Aunt Elsie Eves, until it was time to catch a bus home, which would only take me as far as Coronation Close, I would then walk the rest of the way home.

In the late summer when the corn was high we would run through the cornfields and play hide and seek. Now when I think about it, what terrible damage we must have done to those poor farmers' fields of corn.

When I first started at Barling School they did not have proper sanitation* and a special truck came round to empty "the lavs" once a week - we made sure we kept well out of the way at those times! Play times were often spent skipping, playing hopscotch, or five stones (knucklebones, as they are called today). Nothing really changed there.

In the school holidays I would go pea-picking or spud bashing with a friend and her parents. The extra pocket money would give me money to buy threepenny worth of broken biscuits or some OXOs to

suck from the tuck shop on the way to school.

I remember one year wanting so much to have my friends come home to my house for a birthday party, something I seldom had, having a step-mother who had a shop to run. However this particular year I invited about 6-7 friends. They all piled on the bus after school, all in their best party dresses and birthday gifts in their hands. Now here am I wondering how on earth am I going to tell these happy people that there is no party after all! In fact, I waited until we got off the bus at Coronation Close before telling them! I do not remember what happened after that but can well imagine how upset they and their parents must have been over the whole incident.

Discipline was much more strict in those days and the cane was often given for something no more serious than talking in class. I was the recipient of such punishment on more than one occasion.

I loved sports day; it was a great day off from the usual routine of daily lessons.

Barbara married in 1958 and emigrated to New Zealand with her husband and three daughters' in 1971.

** Main drainage was not installed in Barling & Little Wakering villages until the nineteen fifties.*

These are from Geoff Bell who attended Barling School from 1939 until 1946 (approx.) Throughout this period Geoff lived in Kimberley Road, Little Wakering.

One of the more vivid memories from my Barling School days was when the school suffered bomb damage (during the Second World War), out of which I expected to get an extra holiday. At that time the School was on the long summer shut down but the damage to the School was repaired before the start of the new term, so that killed off the idea of additional holidays. Another memory was the fun during the summer months when on the way home from school. This sometimes meant swimming in the creek that was at the bottom of Kimberley Road. As a general rule, most of us that went swimming did not have towels and afterwards had to run around to get dry, as our parents did not know or approve of these water activities. Perhaps the most enduring memory of those days is of the friendships made and the fun that I shared with friends after school hours.

In 1967, Geoff and his wife Yvonne left the UK and emigrated to South Africa, where they both still live.

Current Position

- **Reunions:** In 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002 there have been formal reunions of ex-pupils. During December 2000 several ex-pupils of the old Barling School went to the morning assembly at the new Barling School for the presentation of a green picnic table. Laurie Street spoke regarding the previous Barling school pupils' reunions. He said that the money raised from the 1996 reunion paid for two trees which he helped to plant, with the aid of some of the present school children, at Barling School. He also said that the money raised from the 2000 reunion paid for the green picnic table. This was donated in memory of Miss Riley, who had been a teacher for 41 years, from 1923 to 1964 at the old Barling School and who had passed away in March 2000, aged 95 years.
- **Lunchtime Gatherings:** After the 2000 Reunion a group of ex-pupils got together and held small lunchtime informal gatherings in local hostelrys. The next will be held on Saturday 5th October (12.15) at the Castle Inn, Little Wakering. All former pupils, family members and friends welcome. These Gatherings (some might say, mini-reunions) sometimes serve a specific purpose, such as: to meet and welcome a former pupil who lives overseas and is unable to attend a full reunion (e.g for Norman Snow during 2001);
- **Geoff Bell**, a former pupil (see article on previous page), has made available part of his personal web site for old Barling School information and photos to be stored and accessed, you can inspect the site at <http://www.geoffbell.co.za/villages/index.html>. Indeed, Geoff has not only kept all the electronic records up to date but also acted as the "global" focal point for matters related to the old Barling School.

The next Newsletter - Autumn 2002

The next Newsletter will be available at the next Gathering (5th October 2002 (12.15) at the Castle Inn). The Newsletter will not only contain Memories but also a report (including financial details) of the 2002 Reunion. If you are unable to attend the Gathering yet would like receive a copy then please contact Paul Abercrombie – see box below for details.

Contacts

Should you wish to help or if clarification/further information is required, please contact one the following:

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