

# "SMALL BEGINNINGS"

No 6 (e)

Spring 2003

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

On the morning of Tuesday 19 November 2002 a group of friends and former pupils of the "old" Barling School attended the "new" Barling School for a Presentation Ceremony at a special assembly. The Ceremony was to present a cheque (of £161.27) to the "new" School, these monies representing the surplus funds from the Reunion that was held at the School during July 2002.

The headteacher (Mrs Taylor) thanked the former pupils for their generosity and explained that this money would be spent on contributing towards purchasing grasses, shrubs etc. to assist with the landscaping of a small area at the rear of the School. Furthermore, Mrs S Taylor invited "former pupils and friends" back to the School to inspect the landscaping work once completed.

The friends and former pupils that attended the Ceremony included Graham Ridley, Roy Richards, John Pavelin, Dawn Mumford, Valerie Mott, June Mott, Vi Mitchell, Betty Deadman, and Paul Abercrombie.

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This edition of the Newsletter is the first that is available in both electronic and hardcopy formats. For those with full email facilities this Newsletter will be available electronically in Portable Document Format (i.e as a PDF file). While, at the same time, it remains available as a printed document.

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

## **Memories**

### **LES GILKES (attended Barling School 1946 to 1952)**

When at primary school, I did not have a care in the world. Often, the question has been asked " who was your favourite teacher" ? To that I would always answer, Mr Learmond, as he did so much for us kids at school, while, at the same time, running the Youth Centre in the evenings. I vividly remember Tony Deeks and myself coming top of the class and the reward was a trip to The Festival of Britain, and then to see Danny Kaye "live" at the London Palladium - what a treat.

The summer holidays would come along and I would often spend time with Ray Mott, Stan Witton, Tony Deeks, and Titch Little. Sometimes a few of us would walk to Wick Farm, and take a bottle of cold tea over to both Ray and Tony's dad's as they would be working with the horses that were at the Farm. Anyway we used to do so many things that our parents would rarely see us during the daytime. While in the evenings we watched the coaches from Southend seafront that came on "Mystery Tours to visit the castle at Little Wakering " and, (surprise surprise), ended up at the Castle Inn Public House. On one such occasion that I remember, a "courting" couple, who were passengers from one of those

coaches, took a stroll down Wick Lane, so we decided to follow them. When the man saw that we were following, he called us over and gave us some money to go away. With the money, off we went to Joe Mowlems shop and bought some sweets. Afterwards, we went back down Wick Lane to look for the couple but, however, when spotted we got chased away. Obviously, the man did not see the funny side of the situation.

Then came our teen years and , on a Sunday morning, cycle speedway was often on the agenda. On a Sunday evening, we would often pay a visit to the Ritz (Cinema) in Southend. While on Saturdays, we sometimes performed during a skiffle evening at the Castle Inn. I recollect that our line up for this event was Ray Mott on drums, big bearded Willie on the piano, Bob Petley singing, and me on guitar. I remember that we got just one paid booking (a wedding) at the Crown Public House in Rayleigh - and that was our one and only claim to fame.

Back in the "good old days", an expression first heard from our grandparents and then from our parents but, interestingly, now we say the same thing to our kids !!

## BOB AVERY (attended Barling School 1954 to 1960)

After leaving Barling School, I went to the 'new' secondary modern school in Great Wakering; it seemed a vast and very strange place compared to the primary school! Following school, and after training as an engineer, I joined the Merchant Navy as an engineering officer, sailing on a variety of ships, ranging from old "tramp" steamers plodding around the South American coast, to super-tankers and fully automated container ships. Eventually, I was lucky enough to land a lecturing post at a marine engineering college in London, and subsequently worked at a number of different colleges in London and Kent. For the past five years I've been a government education inspector for colleges. Now married for over 30 years, we have two children who have fled the nest. Throughout this time we have always lived near Southend.

I have some fond memories of my days at Barling School. We (my twin brother Peter and younger sister Jane) lived out in the far-flung reaches of Barling, near the junctions of Barling Road, Barrow Hall Road, and Shopland Road. We cycled the three or so miles to school on the good days and sometimes caught the 4B bus on the rainy days. I enjoyed going back to school after the long summer holidays and will never forget that overpowering smell of newly applied, damp varnish. Miss Riley and Mr Learmond (the headmaster) are the two teachers that always spring to my mind. I probably owe a great deal to Miss Riley, who provided me with a good grounding in the '3Rs'. I remember building balsa wood model aeroplanes under the steely eye of Mr Learmond, and we would all then go out into the school field to test-fly them - generally a pretty disastrous event. I suspect that Mr Learmond enjoyed it

as much as we did. Before nine o'clock in the morning, Mr Learmond would listen to the old 'wireless' in his classroom, and when the 'pips' sounded, that famous old hand bell would be given a good shaking. On some afternoons we would watch streaky old black and white films about deep-sea fishing trawlers and steel blast furnaces. Afterwards, we would then be expected to write down something about what we had learned, in doing so it was necessary to dip a rusting pen into an ink well that was full of discarded chewing gum and sweet wrappers!

I thought that the school dinners at Barling School were great. I still salivate at the memory of the chocolate-covered rice crispy cake and that 'cream' - the stuff seemed fantastic then, but I have no idea of its ingredients. I certainly haven't tasted anything like it since (and perhaps I wouldn't want to). The Sports Day was always a fun event - with Mr Learmond appearing to take great personal pride in the array of prizes and cups. I remember winning a slalom bike race and being awarded a 'state-of-the-art' dynamo lighting set - it was the only prize I ever managed to win during all my days at school.

The more memorable extra-curricular activities centred on fun and games in various back gardens and summer evenings in the 'parry' (Parish) meadow next to the Castle Inn pub. In addition, there were the rare occasions to attend exciting film evenings held in the school. I can vaguely recollect sitting in a classroom with my young pals, watching 'North-West Frontier' whilst Mr Learmond struggled to keep that whirring old projector going. They were certainly the good old days!

- **Saturday Lunchtime Gatherings (at 12.15)**

Since late 2000 a group of former pupils have, on a quarterly basis, held informal lunchtime gatherings (mini reunions) on a Saturday in local hostleries. All former pupils welcome including teachers, other members of staff, relatives and friends.

The most recent Gathering was on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2003 at The Cherry Tree, Stambridge Road, Rochford at which 18 persons attended.

The remaining dates for 2003 have been confirmed as:

3 May, at the Red Lion Public House (High Street, Great Wakering);

19 July, at the Castle Inn Public House (Little Wakering Road, Little Wakering);

18 October, at the Rose Inn Public House (Silchester Corner, Wakering Road).

- **Assist the School**

The Barling School headteacher (Mrs S Taylor) would like to be able to call on former pupils for their expertise on subject areas in which they have studied or have an some knowledge (for example, astronomy and embroidery). If you are interested in being included please contact Paul Abercrombie (see box below).

- **Internet**

Geoff Bell, a former pupil living in South Africa, 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 [www.geoffbell.co.za/villages/index.html](http://www.geoffbell.co.za/villages/index.html).

- **June Claydon**

June has lived in the South West for a number of years. If you would like to get in touch with her then please contact Paul Abercrombie (see box below). A photograph depicting all those that were in her class at school has now been placed on the Barling School website.

- **Reunion Contact List**

Peter Griffiths (see box below) is trying to build up a contact list for future reunions and would be very happy to receive names of people's classmates and, if possible, how to get in touch with them.

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

- **Valerie Ridley (nee Mott), 34 Laburnum Grove, Hockley, SS5 4SG**  
Telephone: 01702 205612                      email: [valham@bushinternet.com](mailto:valham@bushinternet.com)
- **Peter Griffiths, 22 Gracedale Road, London SW16 6SW**  
Telephone: 020 8769 6799                      email: [p-pgriffiths@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:p-pgriffiths@tinyworld.co.uk)
- **Paul Abercrombie, 2 Coombes Grove, Rochford, SS4 1DX**  
Telephone: 01702 544078                      email: [paulabercrombie@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:paulabercrombie@tinyworld.co.uk)