

Small Beginnings

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

Special Interest Articles:

- Memories of Miss Riley
- Memories of Little Wakering

Reunion Lunches

A group of us meet for lunch every few months to catch up on news and socialise, but also to plan the main reunion events.

We meet at the Rose Inn, Barling, at 12.15ish. The dates are:

July 25th 2009
October 24th 2009
January 23rd 2010
April 24th 2010
July 24th 2010
October 23rd 2010

All friends and partners are welcome.

Website News

Nearly two dozen of us met up at The Rose Inn for another really enjoyable lunch session on April 18th, including the usual mix of joking and reminiscing and catching up.

Our main piece of 'business' was to discuss a suggestion from Terry Mumford. He wondered whether we should try to raise funds for the maintenance of the website by getting a donation from the development company that has bought the Star Lane brickfield. In exchange we could offer the company some publicity on the website. We discussed this proposal very seriously and numerous points were made and opinions expressed.

Suddenly, the conversation took an unexpected and very welcome turn when Geoff Wright offered to sponsor the website for a whole year. That means that we now have enough money pledged to enable the website to continue up to the end of 2011. Therefore, we do not need to raise money from elsewhere, though we did (and do) thank Terry for helping us to think ahead.

I know that everyone will join me in thanking Geoff for his wonderful generosity.

Peter Griffiths

Memories of those who shaped our young lives - Miss Riley

I have happy memories of a school day. Miss Riley was my teacher and taught us the times tables and scripture studies, also writing. She lived on Foulness Island but lodged at Barling on weekdays, with Mrs Jack Watson.

Vi Sivell (nee Mitchell)

Miss Riley was always very kind and patient with us as I remember. She once tried to teach me to knit but then gave up her tea and lunch breaks to undo the knots and tangles in the wool. She must have succeeded because I now love knitting and have made numerous garments for friends and family over the years.

I remember once she produced a play where we had to wear grass skirts. Again she gave up her lunch breaks to help us make them out of raffia. For the play we were covered in cocoa powder to darken our skins but as we got hot it melted and became very sticky and streaky.

Doris Bracci (nee Chapman)

Those who remember Miss Riley will agree that she was a lovely Christian lady, and I remember her kindness to the Cobb family at Dam Farm, Little Wakering. Speaking personally, she became more than a teacher, a gracious friend, particularly through the SU meetings I think. These were held at the little Mission Hall along the road from the school I believe – our last visit to Barling confirmed that the building had been demolished. The Cobb children all attended the Sunday School at the Mission, and mum and dad often came to the morning and evening services. I wonder if others recall the Mission activities.

Ernie (Ernest) Cobb

My main memory of Miss Riley was her patience while teaching me embroidery. My work always ended up as a grubby, screwed up mess (how I envied other girls who produced neat and clean work!) but Miss Riley constantly helped me to produce an acceptable end product. She never criticised, was always encouraging and awarded me an end-of-year prize for "effort". It certainly wasn't for a beautiful piece of needlework.

I believe that her faith in my abilities influenced my decision to become an occupational therapist. In those days we had to be skilled in crafts, which included the dreaded embroidery, but I had confidence that, given time and effort, I could achieve anything. This belief carried me through my chosen career where confidence in people's abilities is the essence of the profession.

Incidentally, I am now a skilled dressmaker, knitter and embroiderer.

Lynne Askham (nee Marshall)

Sad News

Since the last edition of Small Beginnings, it is with regret that we have some deaths to report:

Margaret Bailey, sister of David and formerly of Twyford Avenue, in February.

Victor Abrey, brother of Maureen Petts, in February

Happy News

Peter was 70 on July 16th and we'd like to wish him a happy birthday and hope he had a good day. We know that his daughters were planning surprises.

Memories of Little Waking

I grew up in Little Waking in the 1920s -30s.

The first British Legion meetings were held in a small building, which was situated between Little Waking Church and the small bowling green (a house now occupies the site it was on). The building was built by Albert Burgess a builder, and the British Legion meetings were run by Albert Burgess's wife and two daughters, and I used to go there with my parents to their Saturday social evenings.

Later on the British Legion moved to Great Waking to larger premises which was in the former vicarage in Great Waking high street.

The building in Little Waking Road then became a box factory, which made all different types of boxes. In the fifties the box factory was used by a Mr Ingram of Thorpe Bay who manufactured cosmetics and I worked for him a time. About the same time there was waste paper depot in Little Waking run by the Holland family.

Mr Alan Shepherd was the head master of the old Barling School and the other teachers who taught there were Mr Shepherd's wife, Miss Riley and Miss Turner who became Mrs Bright. There were three classes at that time. The school was heated by coal fires, and the bottles of milk which arrived in crates were put to warm by the fire so the children would not drink very cold milk. The children sat in a circle around the fire eating their lunch (sandwiches) no cooked dinners.

I left school at fourteen years of age. I lived in a house at the Run Corner for a time and my mother had to collect water from a stream in a field to use in the house.

A fair came once a year to the village and was held in a field in Kimberley Road, called Brown's meadow. The fair had swinging boats, roundabouts and coconut shies which cost a penny a go.

The vicar of the parish was a Reverend Reynolds who came to the fair to chase up children who should have been attending choir practice.

I hope this gives you some idea of what life was like in that era.

Vi Sivell (nee Mitchell)

German Bombers over Foulness and other drama

There has been some interesting discussion and information regarding German bombers over the area during World War 2. Peter has sent articles from Mike Burles, Gordon Wiseman, Norm Snow, Mick Prior and Neil Punnett to those of us with email, and they have made interesting reading.

They are on the website at <http://www.barlingwakingvillages.co.uk/index.html>

Terry Mumford has added some photos of the Barling Youth Club Drama Group to the website. You can find them in the usual way or directly via this address:

<http://www.barlingwakingvillages.co.uk/barling/DramaGroup1950s.htm>

They'll bring more than a few memories back for some of us. There are other stills from plays and other shots of the YC elsewhere on our website.

Village Website

The village website contains copies of past newsletters, and photos from various reunions.

There are also many photographs of people and events in Little Wakering, Great Wakering and Barling villages, and Barling School.

It is easy to navigate around and is well worth a look.

Terry Mumford works very hard to maintain and add to this excellent website which can be found at

<http://www.barlingwakeringvillages.co.uk/index.html>

(click on address to go to website)

If you would like to contribute to "Small Beginnings" please contact:

Lynne Askham
Mulberry Cottage
48 Thomas Bell Road
Earls Colne,
Essex CO6 2PF

Phone: 01787 224237

Email: lynneka@btinternet.com

Paul Abercrombie initiated "Small Beginnings"

Thank you for your contributions to "Memories of those who shaped our young lives" related to Miss Riley. Mr Learmond would be a good subject for further articles and your contributions will be welcome