

Fyling Hall Alumni Newsletter

No 15

Welcome to the Summer 2014 Newsletter.

Just after the Winter Newsletter was completed I had an email from **Nicki Shields (1969-1973)**. She now lives in a remote corner of South West Ireland. As often seems the case, once she began recalling Fyling Hall the memories just kept coming and I have picked a few to use here. She wrote:

“**Brian Bell** and myself have been in contact a bit over the years - we were teenage sweet-hearts at Fyling Hall and I still have warm memories of us and a few others escaping through the senior dorm windows and climbing down ladders (which the boys would put up to the windows at an arranged time) on long summer evenings to escape to camp out for the night beside a lovely little river near-by. As we were the seniors and responsible for making breakfast and supper we would gather together some bread and whatever was there to have a midnight feast in the moonlight and sit together singing and chatting and having a great time. Perhaps Brenda had some suspicions about us escaping but nothing was ever said.

I always had a great appreciation of **Mr Woolley** our headmaster during some of my time there - he was great fun and he was fair.

He allowed us off school when it was snowing to go sledging in the woods and his lovely French wife and her sister would sometimes hold a classical music concerts in the old barn- thinking about it now it was quite surreal - I felt transported by the wonderful sounds of the piano and the cello - these special moments I cherish.

During December one year - a few of us so-called seniors went down to Robin Hood's Bay to do some Carol singing, it was great fun and at the end of it we went into the pub for a drink of beer. Of

course we were convinced that no-one really knew who we were but someone obviously phoned the school and a short while later Mr Woolley arrived and joined us at the table. He didn't make a scene, in fact I remember him just sitting and chatting with us and cracking some jokes but soon enough he asked us to drink up and then he drove us back to school (I think some of us were old enough to drink) He never made a big deal about it but we got the message that this was not a cool thing to do.

Also our dear English teacher (her name escapes me now) [**Inez Jones**] she lived in the little farm with the previous headmaster to Mr Woolley [**Arthur Jones**]. We were allowed to take a short-cut to Thorpe through their farm. At Christmas she would bring us down to her lovely cottage through the flagstone kitchen and into a little parlour where we would have tea and make Christmas decorations and eat scrumptious mince pies, she was so kind and I always felt she loved us all dearly. In my memory this was a very warm safe nurturing place to be and at every opportunity I would go and see her and help to milk the goats and feed the chickens. Just being in her presence made me feel loved. She was like a very kind grandmother.”

[After Fyling Hall Nicki worked as an au-pair in France, studied in London, worked in Abu Dhabi and then ended up in India.]

“I lived for many years in India and eventually through a whole lot of seemingly unconnected circumstances including getting robbed of almost all my money and missing a bus to Manali I ended up in the Himalayas in the village where the Dalai Lama lives. By this time I had met my current life-long partner and we spent many years there doing voluntary work and teaching

English to young Tibetan monks. I continue to have connections with many Tibetan people and have been grateful for the opportunity to study Buddhism.

I now live in southern Ireland where the nature is very wild and raw. I am married, have three children (the oldest of whom was born in the Himalayas) they are all now in their late twenties and early thirties. We also have one grandson. We live in a lovely little cottage close to the Atlantic Ocean and have dogs and horses, cats, goats and chickens (not to mention all the little mice looking for warmth at this chilly time of year) and a lovely big warm Aga in the kitchen!"



[Nicki Shields (l) Christine Gurr (r) 1973]

Michael Harrison (1950s) sent various items to Clare White and myself. Amongst them was this photograph of a **Whitehall group from 1953**. The teacher's name completely escapes Michael. Perhaps someone can recall it? (Since writing this Ian Havelock tells me he thinks it might be either Miss Gibson or Miss Walker).

Included in the group are: **Andrew Kirkhall, Susan Wade, Roy Hamer, Michael Harrison, John Fletcher, Caroline Timm, Jill Munday, Sally Scargill, Ian Havelock, James (or Anthony) Williams, Eric Dale Wood. He thinks Bryony Wilson and Penny Heap** are there too.



One of the other items Michael sent was the Report by H.M. Inspectors from June 1950. It presents a fascinating picture of the school still struggling against the limitations of post-War shortages and restrictions to re-settle in Yorkshire after the wartime removal to Cumberland. The Inspectors were very complimentary about **Mab Bradley**: "The Head Mistress, who holds a First Class degree in English, is a stimulating teacher and a woman of great intellectual integrity. She is the inspiration of the School and has the gift of attracting interesting personalities to the staff. Her warm affection, free from all sentimentality, and her unusual respect for the personality of others, staff and pupils alike, together with the intellectual stimulus she gives, are in great part responsible for the general vitality, contentment and happiness of the community."

"Almost all the staff have strong personalities, yet they appear to work harmoniously together. They seem to have an unusually good understanding of children and to approach their work with vigour and enthusiasm"

The Inspectors appeared a little bemused at the idea of a co-educational boarding school (then a fairly unusual phenomenon): "The relationship between the sexes appears an essentially sane and healthy one, the boys having lost none of their virility and the girls none of their femininity by being brought up close together."

Rachael Bamford (2002-2007) is representing England in the Commonwealth Games in the 3000m steeplechase. Very many congratulations to her and we wish her well.



[Rachael Bamford (c)]

Eliza Carthy (1990s) was awarded an MBE for her services to folk singing. Congratulations to her. She also appeared at the School's end of term concert which was a highlight of the evening. The concert was held in the Barn where I remember invigilating an exam of Eliza's on a very warm day when we needed the windows open and which was interrupted by a swallow continually diving through the open window looking for a nesting site. Just one of those Fyling Hall experiences....



[Eliza Carthy at Fyling Hall concert]

Robin Elliott (1958-1962) and his wife **Lois (nee Trotter) (late 1960s)** got in touch. They attended Fyling Hall nine years apart and so did not know each other at school but in 1976 met in an elevator at Imperial Life in Toronto, Canada and married two years later.

J.C. Spender (here in the 1940s) who donated the clock in memory of his mother which I wrote about in previous Newsletters has been awarded an honorary Doctorate in Economics from Lund University, Sweden.



[J.C. Spender & his brother Philip just before the formal dinner at Lund University]

That is it for another Newsletter.

John Jeakins