

Markhouse Drama Club & The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund

NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 23 EXTRACT



Welcome to this latest, perhaps somewhat 'overdue' Newsletter and its range of Drama Club and Markhouse School items along with details of a 'goodly' amount of newly found memorabilia now added to the Website.

The content inevitably leads in with the successful CMMF Performing Arts Project that took place at Kelmscott School in July and is followed by several new and interesting items about MDC members; although, sadly, these include our initial thoughts and memories following the recent loss of Bill Chapman -as well as those of his wife Helen who reminded us that 'he never lost his fond memories of his time and friendships at the Drama Club!'

CMMF Project

Class Photos/Not included

Tribute to Bill Chapman

Memories of Dick

A Weird Coincidence/Not included!

57 Years & 358 Miles Later!

Xmas Get Together/Not included

1966 'Youth Speaks'

Unexpected Finds:

**Marsh Street Fete*
*Babes in the Wood*s*

Council Extracts/Not included

'Letter from America'

*Foot Notes/Not included
Website Additions/Not Included
- See Website Additions Page*

CMMF PROJECT

CMMF achieves its 10th Performing Arts Project back in our 'teenage stamping ground' with Kelmscott School's performance of

'Whose Myth is it Anyway'

After the disappointment of losing the CMMF Project at Tendring College just a few days before its initial performance and the subsequent period of inactivity during Covid, this latest one has been something of a 'long time' coming – but certainly well worth the wait!

'Whose Myth is it Anyway' at Kelmscott School not only met our aims for what we want young people to gain and experience through our funding, but also brought with it a good deal of nostalgia and poignancy for ourselves; perhaps inevitably so as it was staged in the school that should have replaced Markhouse at least some 20 plus years sooner than it did. Added to our 'added value' quotient, the play was also a significant 'first' for Kelmscott - in that it was their first actual production in their new drama studio!



So very definitely 'poignant and nostalgic' - and it all happened in Markhouse Road – albeit probably not quite the Markhouse Road we might all remember!

Our earlier Newsletter made much of the warm and positive welcome we received at Kelmscott and a good relationship has been developed since we first made contact some several months ago

We have also seen the same progression within the group of young people themselves and of how they enthusiastically converted their ideas into a play; particularly through those they gained from their 'Mask Workshop' with the Trestle Theatre Company.

It was interesting that they eventually choose to go with a Greek/Roman theme, rather than a Venetian one, as this helpfully linked into some of the current studies within the school; this despite the temptation of perhaps a more obvious choice of the latter theme that might have replicated the 'masquerade' scene from 'Phantom of the Opera'!

The regular visits to the school saw the youngsters developing their characters and roles over the rehearsal period and then, in early July, seeing a slick, lively and entertaining performance; all in front of an equally enthusiastic audience of parents, school staff, governors and our own small contingent of former members of the MDC!



Our 'bonus' was the opportunity to spend some post performance time with the cast (who were on a real 'high' by then) and many of the parents that were present. Perhaps not surprisingly, before this opportunity to say something about Mr 'M' and the Drama Club, none of them were aware that any of this existed – not even Markhouse itself! So, it was good to be able to say something about our reasons for funding the project and enabling their young people being creative, work as a team and enjoy the experience of being involved in drama - just as we had done some 50 plus years ago - just half a mile further down Markhouse Road!



All that now remains is for the youngsters to receive their CMMF/MDC Certificates later in the Autumn which we hope will not only be a reminder of this time together as a group, but also add note of the valuable experiences and skills into their future CV's.

However, having said *'all that remains'*, it may well be that there is some rethink of this and perhaps, having now 'contributed' something to the lives of some young people growing up in the same area as ourselves, we might look to find some other way to continue to support drama within the school - albeit not to perform with them, unless of course, some appropriate age-related roles are required in a future production!



The above photographs are taken from the earlier mask workshop and the performance. These now form part of the full report and gallery that has now been added to the Website's CMMF Project page.

And – as a finale: an extract from Cleve's post performance Facebook posting:

'It was not only great meeting up today - but I thought that Kelmscott's production was great too. Hit all the points of neediness and get-togetherness, and to think that those young kids wrote it themselves, is truly amazing.'



Bill Chapman

Our anticipation of the forthcoming CMMF Project at Kelmscott School took a sudden jolt just a few days before the performance when we received the news of the very sad and untimely loss of Bill Chapman on the 4th July 2023.

Bill had been a regular, committed and very well-liked member of the Markhouse Drama Club who will be sadly missed by the many friends he made over the years of his membership. This will be particularly so for those who also shared his Markhouse School classes and, as a group, gave much time to widening the DC activities; both in in terms of music and light shows and - in true MDC fashion - developing some new and 'improvised' resources such as the 'multi egg shell walled' Sound Studio. This having previously been the store cupboard next to the upstairs staff room!

Bill's easy and cheerful manner and his great sense of humour will have been obvious to all and it is clear that we are not alone in this view - as our contingent of former members at his funeral heard a great deal of the same thoughts being expressed among the considerable number of family, friends and former work colleagues who were present.

Among these was Bill's niece Victoria, the daughter of his sister and former MDC member Brenda, who described him as 'really being the backbone of the family' and that 'whilst he was always mischievous and cheeky, he was also the one person who we all knew we could always turn to in a crisis and he would be calm and the voice of reason. He was utterly hilarious and would have us all in stitches, but he was also the most reliable and kind person - nothing was too much trouble and he would drop everything to be there if needed'.

Since the funeral Bill's wife Helen has told us much more of both his family and post Drama Club life and we are pleased that we will be able to include this in the full tribute that will be written and added into the Website'. But perhaps, just at this point, our present thoughts of Bill should just return to those of Victoria.

'He felt like the one person who would always be there, so it is really difficult to get our heads around the fact that he has gone'.

Memories of 'Dickie' – via Facebook!!

Just to prove that our contact page is being used (albeit only occasionally!) the following message was sent by an Ian Cox, who was a friend and neighbour of Dick's when they both lived in Theydon Street. Ian contacted us to say he had just seen the video of Dickie's Concert on the MDC Website - so it definitely seemed worth reproducing his 'Wow' heading and message as well as, at the same time refreshing our own fond memories of our 'music man'



WOW - Thank you for that!

'Dickie & I grew up together in Theydon Street, I think I must have been about 6 or 7 when we moved there. We used to play out on the street in those days. I remember him having to go in for his piano lessons. When we were a bit older, we used to go all around London on a 2/6 "Red Rover" ticket, train and bus spotting (the latter because his dad was a bus driver).

My family moved to Harlow just before my 15th birthday in 1960, Dickie's parting gesture was to put his old bike in the back of our removal van as we were about to depart. So many memories! Are there any more recordings of him? I have a reel-to-reel recording from when we visited him at home in 1969, playing (and messing about) on his Hammond T200 organ.

Ian Cox

It was really good to have received this thought about Dickie, BUT the 'not so good' news of him is that his original 'walthamstowhistory.com' website, which was the forerunner to the MDC site, has disappeared both from our own Homepage link and its host website at 'Walthamstow Memories'.

Unfortunately, Walthamstow Memories has confirmed that they are as much baffled as ourselves as to what has happened and where it might be; if indeed it is still in existence. Fortunately, all of the original Drama Club and School content is safely within our present website. Hopefully the Walthamstow Memories group still have copies of his other love from the original site - e.g. all things buses and trains! It would be a real shame if all the work done on his 'other' hobbies was lost – fingers crossed!

57 Years & 358 miles later!!!!!!



This photograph from the Website's Markhouse School pages may well bring back a few exam time memories from those 5th year days which, as it has proved, was particularly so for the two former MDC members it features - Iris West (Nee Sangster) and Dorothy (Dolly) Tinnams (Nee Austin)

The answer to 'how' lies in this photograph below which was taken some 57 years later. This was of them together again just a few weeks ago; albeit this time with an obvious great sense of fun and nostalgia - plus their level of 'concentration' looking significantly more relaxed than in the one under 'exam conditions'

And the 358 miles bit? - Well, that's the distance Dorothy travelled from her Essex home before stopping off on her holiday to meet up with Iris in Cornwall - via, by the sound of it, a few unplanned but very scenic detours! It was good to get sight of this photograph and, of course, to 'hear how it went' - thanks to Dolly's follow up 'report':

'it was a lovely day talking about old times. We remembered Mr Griffiths, Mr Jones and Mr Smith the Headmaster. The deputy head who taught English (I can't remember her name) was a wonderful teacher and I am sure everyone in our class was very competent on the subject

We both enjoyed school very much and chatted about classmates - in particular Gareth Richardson who was exceptional at art' - and sadly some who are no longer with us - but we still have our memories'.

It was also good to get some update on the earlier 'exam' photo and, in particular, that it is Iris on the left - not Judith Riches as was stated in the 'original' website caption. They were also able to name the classmate sitting directly behind them as Jennifer Gosling and, given that they were sitting their GCE's, pinning the date to around May/June 1966 - so among the last group of Markhouse pupils to do so!

What a super idea to replicate the 'original 1965 pose' during what was doubtless a wonderful day which, no doubt, all felt like it was yesterday that they last spoke!



Breezy Brighton Greetings & Best Wishes from Irene Long!!

Editors Note: Unfortunately, a personal downside to this was yet another 'senior moment'. This was two weeks earlier when I had a 'mini reunion' - spending a really enjoyable day with Irene; including a stroll along Brighton Prom to her favourite beachside Tea Hut! As with Iris and Dolly, lots of memories recalled, but the 'SM' being that I had forgotten to take my camera as intended. Nor did I even realise it at the time - which, at least may have enabled a fumbling attempt to switch on my mobile – and actually use it - ugh!

However, please note that I have at least remembered to pass on Irene's best wishes - as well as conveniently having the following item, in which she is pictured, to add to our fond reminders of her!

**Youth Speaks – Superbly
Markhouse Drama Club/Marsh Street Team progress to County Final**



This unexpected find whilst researching items about the closure of the school, is this report and photograph from the Walthamstow Independent's coverage of the 1966 Annual Youth Speaks Competition. This was not only a 'lucky' and welcomed find because of featuring Drama Club regulars Barry Elliot and Irene Long, but also confirmed that the MDC participation in this event went on longer than previously thought.

As the Website production pages have shown, up to now, the last known and reported MDC involvement in this competition was in February 1962; albeit that this was something of a joint enterprise with Marsh Street Youth Centre. This find has now, of course, also raised a question of whether there was any involvement between 1963 - 1965

So - very belated congratulations to 'our team' who won the semi final but, as Irene has been able to confirm, did not manage to maintain the winning streak and go on to win the County final held the following month.

However, it seems likely that the Independent would have covered the final and hopefully further research of their archives may well reveal information about the MDC team's performance. Given that a '1963/5 gap' has now 'appeared' this research may similarly reveal some further by MDC entries and reports into the website's memorabilia

Roof Spectacular! *The immediate question to this next item in this series of 'unexpected finds' has to be one of 'does anyone actually ever remember there being a fete at Marsh Street Youth Centre' - despite this evidence that there clearly was!*

The picture and the full report from the Guardian are now on the website and worth a read as a good number of former MDC members were involved; albeit not in the climbing element - as far as is known!

Several of these are named and include at least 2 who are still able to deny all knowledge of the activities they were running and/or participating in. These include John Cade in his 'Marsh Street based' Sea Cadet capacity and, perhaps inevitably, contributing his water/maritime interests by running the 'Cover the Coin in Water' stall – ah, such daring (and dated) activities!



And - the concluding questions that might be posed after reading the full report are (i) can anyone remember what you actually had to do in 'Cover the Coin in Water' and (ii) would any of the identified activities now be considered not to be PC? Answers on a postcard etc etc!

The full text of the above items is now in the Website's 'Productions and 'Markhouse' pages respectively - with the latter in a new section for 'Marsh Street Youth Centre'

And finally - and perhaps the most unexpected find of these three, in terms of where it was actually found, is this rehearsal photograph of the 1965 Pantomime of Babes in the Woods. This appeared in the Walthamstow Independent Newspaper in the 24 December 1965 Edition.

The surprise of this is not just that it was in the Independent, which did not seem to give a great deal of coverage to youth drama groups, but mainly because it formed part of a report about the decision to close Markhouse as a school - so being part of what was a pretty extensive and 'telling' coverage of this final part of the school's history!

However, just for the moment enjoy naming those present in this backstage photograph and be content to wait, in anticipation, for both the 'sub heading' and context of the report when the full item is added to the Website's forthcoming account of the school closure. This is scheduled to be added around the New Year period.



'Letter From America' - But not from Alistair Cooke!

Our regular 'overseas' updates and exchanges with Jennifer and Alec about the CMMF Projects always include some other subject matter; be it the memories recalled via new memorabilia finds, seasonal good wishes, politics and the weather in our respective countries or hobbies that might just lessen the aches, trials and tribulations of the ageing process. The latter of these recently leading Alec to reveal his latest way of keeping fit and active – via his 'wild west' located lumberjack impersonation – well, more the hinterland of Oakland, USA!



It seems that Alec has become increasingly involved (and is now on the Board) with a Not-for-Profit organisation called the Palisades Nature Sanctuary that, amongst other things, also manages the Greenbrook Nature Sanctuary in Oakland State

As Alec became increasingly involved in the environmental aims and work of the organisation, he also developed a keen interest in helping to maintain the many trails within the Sanctuary and soon found himself on a Forestry Service two day 'hands on' chain sawing course; which, to the uninitiated, sounds 'dangerous! It appears that this was part of his 'apprenticeship' and has enabled him to wield the said equipment around and aim it mainly in the direction of branches and stumps no longer required - but, of course, all under the supervision of a fully qualified 'chain sawyer' - otherwise known as 'a proper Lumberjack' e.g., one authorised to tackle Giant Redwoods & Sequoia's etc!!

It sounds like the 'keeping fit' part is very much the result of carrying all the necessary equipment with heavy duty chaps/legging/shin guards, gloves, boots, helmet, eye and hearing protection etc - plus, of course, an actual chainsaw!

Well - despite the friendly intended 'I'm a lumberjack' quip, this is clearly not just a hobby that entails plenty of exercise, but one which has a strong and important environmental focus - so keep up the good work Alec - and be careful!



Editors Note: Unfortunately, Alec was not in the 1960 production of the 'The Princess and the Woodcutter' - as this would have perhaps been the most fitting co-incidence to mention in view of his new found hobby. However, having said that, there is alternative and somewhat later evidence of his earlier participation in woodland activities; as is shown in this photo from the MDC 1965 Babes in the Woods Panto. Note the very early version of protective leggings!