

Markhouse Drama Club & The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund



NEWSLETTER SUMMER 24 – EXTRACT

CMMF 'Almost the Finale'

**Ancient & Recent
Photos & Post Xmas
Get Together –
Norma's Class!**

**Cricketing Hero gets
Award**

**The C.E.L. Gigs &
Venues – in Full!**

Tribute to Marjorie Kett

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Research with a bit of
a hiccup – but not of
our making!!**

Foot (Lights) Notes

Just a Thought!

**Website Additions
This part of the Newsletter
is now on main website
page**

Welcome to this Newsletter and its range of Drama Club and Markhouse School items and of the future plans for the CMMF; also the latest on the now 'well overdue' story of all that happened in the few years before the school closed in 1966 - a future report for the website that has, unfortunately, been delayed by 'circumstances beyond our control' - as the saying goes!

Sadly, the content also follows up the earlier news of the sudden and unexpected loss of Marjorie Kett who had been involved with the Drama Club during her teaching career at Mark House and, indeed, after its closure. However, this is not the only item concerning a former member of the school staff as there is an 'quirky' item about Norma Pepperell's (Evans) 'unexpected' and recent class reunion; also for those who remember Derek Steward, the opportunity to read something of his sporting, rather than performing arts, interests!

The CMMF - Almost the finale!

The last Newsletter said much about the success of our latest CMMF Performing Arts Project at Kelmescott School in Walthamstow which now has only a 'curtain call' left for it to have been completed!

Well - the 'curtain call' in this context really just refers to the forthcoming presentation of the CMMF certificates shown below. We hope these will give the young people a warm reminder of their time and work together; also as a way of providing some valuable information about their experience and the skills they learnt which they can add into their CV's. The Kelmescott staff wanted to give some focus to this and so the presentation will be part of a larger event where a whole range of the pupils' activities, achievements and experiences are formally recognised and duly presented - to what sounds as being to a 'massed audience'

It is a good while since the actual performance last July, but this intervening period has not been without some further thinking about our relationship with Kelmescott and its Drama Department; particularly about whether, in some way, this might be continued.

To a large extent this hinged on whether there was further interest from anyone within our membership for using the remaining funds for what would then be the final CMMF performing arts project.



As was rather anticipated after the long Covid related gap and then planning and completing a project at Kelmescott, the opportunity to develop a further one was not, unfortunately, taken up. Our thoughts therefore returned to that of how, as an alternative, we might continue our support to the young people at Kelmescott - a school which we were, by this time, beginning to regard as the very overdue, but extremely welcomed, 'new' Mark

House - albeit not of the same name or on the same site as was envisaged for the rebuilding of our 'ancient home' in the latter part of the 1960's!

After discussing our thought with Krystina Lawrance, the Head of Drama, it was decided to reserve the remaining £1200 CMMF funds to support Kelmscott's future performing arts work. This sum has been split across two time frames of now until the end of the 2024 and thereafter for the whole of 2025. This arrangement, in effect, means that three different year groupings of young people will be able to benefit through access to these funds.

Kelmscott can now apply for a number of small 'one-off' grants within the above sum and, as part of this arrangement, we have built in the opportunity for the young people themselves to play a significant part in this process. In this respect enabling them to decide what use they might make of our funding and to then meet with us to present and 'argue' their application. The school are particularly keen to see this option taken up, as it will clearly widen the youngster's experience and confidence and, hopefully for the future, give them some presentation skills and experience in fund raising - a not uncommon requirement within the world of the performing arts - and, indeed, in almost all other voluntary organisations!

More news of this final phase of the CMMF in due course!

'Ancient & Recent' **School Class & Staff Photographs**

Whilst the above photograph of Marjorie on the far right of the front row of the 1965 staff team is already on the website's Markhouse pages, this particular gallery has been reformatted and split in two so that one part is of staff groups, whilst the other shows individual teachers.

The same has also been done in relation to the pupil's gallery. In this respect one part shows small pupil friendship groupings whilst the other shows full class groups with, in some cases, the form teachers - such as this 'ancient' pre Drama Club one from 1950!



It is hoped that this format will give a better and clearer presentation as their respective content, hopefully, increases!

Finding class photos has actually been comparatively good of late, but this may not continue at the same pace in the future; as it rather seems that this may not have been a regular feature of school life during all of Les Smith's tenure? BUT – nudge nudge – if this theory is wrong and you have one of your class that is still hidden from public view, then we still have the available space etc!

Not surprisingly, all of the recently found class photographs noted in the 'Website Additions' were originally posted on the Markhouse School Face Book site by former pupils. In some cases, those actually posting the photos also identified their friends with whom, as their accompanying comments suggest, they were still in touch - just like us!

Perhaps they also continue to meet up; as several of our own number did a few weeks ago after a MDC 'business' meeting in order to do a bit of overdue 'catching up' - which, quiet unexpectedly, prompted the inclusion of '**RECENT**' in the above title!

Norma's Class!!!!



This all came about when it was suddenly realised that not only was former member of staff Norma Pepperell was present, but so were 5 'remnants' of one of her classes at Mark House - as this resulting photograph shows!

We hope you will enjoy seeing this picture of their 'mini reunion' without a blackboard, text book or ink well in sight - obviously taken after a modest lunch time 'tipple' and contemplating whether their missing 20 plus other former class mates might be located for future events!

The photo has, of course, been duly posted on the Mark House School Face Book page with the hope that it might catch the attention of a few more of Norma's former pupils to get in touch; and then join Cleve Edmonston, John Oatham, Keith Sullivan, June Heath (Allitt) and Bob Jackson for the next time

!Sadly, missing from this photograph are Sid Worth and Bill Chapman who were part of this really close-knit group of School/Drama Club friends.

This further photograph shows a few more of the former MDC members who met at the Ivy Hill Hotel and includes Valerie Trevelyan (Poore), Iris McMurrough (Suffolk), Denis Heath and Dave Morgan – plus the left overs from lunch!



CRICKET – LOVELY CRICKET – OUR OWN HERO GETS AWARD

Also staying on the theme of former Mark House staff - particularly with another who, like Marjorie and Norma, was 'there at the end' – arose from a 'chance find' in a 2009 compendium edition of the Walthamstow Guardian. This featuring the not unknown interest, hobby cum lifestyle of our own Derek Steward!



The article included this super picture of Derek after he had been honoured for his outstanding contribution to coaching cricket with young people in Walthamstow/Waltham Forest. It was duly accompanied by the following citation:

'Derek Steward has coached cricket in the borough for the past 47 years and was presented with this award by David Morgan, the International Cricket Council (ICC) Chairman, at Lords during the Twenty 20 world cup tournament on Friday 12th June 2009'

This was part of the ICC's project in honouring some 1,000 volunteers across the country who have given their free time to contribute to cricket.

So - belated congratulations to Derek who clearly wasn't put off from his love of the game by the limited exploits of Mark House in this particular sport!

Whilst this above news was 'news' to us, we already knew something else about Derek's past efforts and that, in particular, he was among those who 'fought' really hard against the closure of the school in 1966; also, that despite the final disappointment he, like most of the other staff at that time, continued to teach in the borough for many years. We also know that this even included him fulfilling this role with some of the children of former MDC members!

Editorial Note: Despite a momentary temptation of allowing readers of this newsletter to think that one of our own number moves in the prestigious circles of Lord's Cricket Ground and the ICC, we can confirm that the David Morgan named as their Chairman is not the same person as the former MDC member similarly named - whose cricketing prowess amounted to 13 runs (all byes), no wickets, no catches (but several dropped) and no stumpings in 5 years of playing at Mark House. This was subsequently noted in his school report as- 'remarkably consistent poor performance'

About to be added into the website in the 'not too distant' is the really impressive and interesting records of

Cathode Elysian Lights

.....that not only widened the range of the Drama Club's activities but took those members involved, and their 'special effects lightshow' into playing a significant role in the wider world of mainstream pop and rock!

CEL was originally set up by John Oatham, Terry Hooker and Dave Paulding with Sid Worth joining them a short while afterwards; with them adapting the small store room (cupboard!) in the upper corridor in the school to experiment with oil and water based inks coated between glass slides. It was a simple affair with the slides heated up in a projector to make the inks boil and produce the desire 'psychedelic' effects on a screen - and so was born CEL - one of the very original light shows!



The full listing given in the original version of this newsletter of the Groups, Bands and DJ's that CEL backed, along with the venues they appeared at, has been added into the Websites CEL Page



Marjorie Kett

The initial and brief tribute to Marjorie that was included within this newsletter has been re-written and can be found within the Website's MDC Member & School Staff Tributes Page

WEBSITE APPEAL UPDATE

The recently circulated Appeal made due mention of how long our website had been running and of the significant coverage of the memorabilia that had been found for the 22 years of the Drama Club's existence.



What makes the breadth of coverage more surprising is that when the website started there was no discussion about the range of memorabilia that would be sought; nor of how long it would run or what might be done with the collected material, if and when, the time came to close its final curtain. In real terms its inception was almost wholly about finding a way to 'rescue' all the memorabilia that Dickie Dunn had collected on his own 'walthamstowmemories' website; also of using this to recognise the role he had played in keeping so many former Drama Club members in touch with each other after it closed

Thoughts of the website's future have now been in mind for a good while and, within this, the opportunity was taken just over a year ago to make a longer term purchase to protect our 'markhousedramaclub.com' Domain Name; whilst equally taking advantage of a proportionally lower cost. The name is now secure until the end of 2027 which will, in fact, mark the website's tenth anniversary - which may well be the sort of milestone that we should aim to reach?

Hence the recent Appeal setting out the financial implications for this and the type of help that is needed over the next couple of years. As the Appeal confirmed, the hope is to cover the forthcoming onset of an annual deficit with a few more members providing a standing order of £12 a year or £1 monthly. However, whilst this has not as yet been achieved, we have received a generous one-off donation which means that we will not hit the onset of the annual deficit for some several months later than we expected. This has been a really helpful contribution as it gives us some additional time in which to either acquire more contributors or, if required, make whatever alternative decisions are necessary to ensure that the website does, at least, reach that 10th birthday mark!

If, after reading this update, you might be interested in helping with the website's financing then please either get in touch with either Peter on pdoulton@hotmail.com or Dave Morgan dm2013cmmf@googlemail.com or via the website Contact Page. Just a couple more Standing Orders, or one-off donations, will get us closer to our target and will be very much appreciated.

The Closure of Mark House - 1966 And all That!



The past couple of Newsletter 'Website Addition' pages have made mention of our research of the circumstances surrounding the closure of Mark House as a school in 1966; also, that this had revealed an even greater amount of information than had originally been anticipated - the result of which being a fairly substantial and detailed story! Mention was also made that this would be added to the website in 'due course' - with the hope being that the 'in due course' in mind would actually be now!

Unfortunately, external and unavoidable events have intervened and so the 'in due course' might now be replaced by 'we really don't know when' or, perhaps by a more speculative view of 'hopefully some time this year'

An initial draft has been completed and this has clearly highlighted the need for certain parts to be checked and that our interpretation of the documentation, in terms of newspaper reports and council minutes, are both fair and correct. There is also a need to undertake some further research to try to fill a number of 'gaps' that are now evident in the information we have; which we hope were just 'missed' first time around - rather than no longer being available!

This would, under normal circumstances, just require a bit more time and energy; but herein lies the problem in that both sources of this information have been unavailable for public scrutiny for some time. Initially this was at the British Library who

experienced a major cyber attack leading to the closure of the reading rooms in Kings Cross and, as a result, the loss of access to the Walthamstow newspaper archives. The library is gradually dealing with this situation but the archives we need are actually stored in Boston, Lincolnshire, and whilst some of the more recent editions of the Walthamstow papers are now available, access to the ones in the period we need still appear to be a long way off!

Again, under normal circumstances we could have turned to the copies of the newspapers, along with the council minutes, held in the Walthamstow Records Office at Vestry House. However, when doing so we found that this is closed due to a substantial refurbishment and modernisation of the premises. The initial intention was to move all the archives to the Central Library in the High Street, but this has now been changed to Chingford Library becoming the short-term location – but not yet! The latest estimate about availability is ‘sometime in the summer’

We therefore wait with baited breath to see who can deliver the papers first!

However, despite this forced inertia it seems worthwhile to at least try to whet the appetite for what is to come and give some indication of how the eventual story of the closure might pan out; as well as giving a few hints about the questions this may well raise for those still with a nostalgic attachment to Mark House, its staff and the ‘fate’ of those young people who were directly affected!

So herewith a few extracts and accompanying information and thought – which ‘sort of’ begins at the beginning; at least in terms of what might have been the first public knowledge of the closure of Mark House. This, for some, if not all readers, may come as something of a surprise as the closure was reported in the Walthamstow Guardian on the 4th August 1961 – some 5 years before it actually happened.

As shown here, this probably caused a great deal of shock and surprise at the time, as it seems likely that this was the first insight that Mark House pupils and their parents, and perhaps even the staff and governors, had about the school closing.



However, as our eventual report will show, this headline was very misleading and most former pupils are likely to know that the next 5 years were not about closure, but were very much a period of development. Some may even recall that the similar fate of the nearby George Gascoigne School was also noted in this report; also that it then continued as part of a shared story with ‘Mark House’ throughout the whole of his period. It was one of much optimism for Les Smith and his increasing ambitions for the future lives for his pupils at Mark House.

Optimism replaced by an act of stupidity

But this all changed dramatically and unexpectedly in October 1965; partly in the wake of the move towards comprehensive education and particularly so because of the structure that the council wished to adopt. This was for a two-tier system, but sadly and unbelievably, without either Mark House or Gascoigne schools having a role to play.

This was a decision which Les Smith, in his account of his time at the school, described ‘as an act of stupidity’

Clearly, he was not alone in this view and this research has revealed a substantial and passionate fight back by the parents and, indeed, by the pupils themselves; as this further extract from the Walthamstow Guardian’s edition of the 26th November 1965 shows.

This particular report had been preceded in the earlier editions with both the Guardian and the Walthamstow Independent revealing the intended closures. They then followed this up with an ongoing, substantial and hard hitting coverage that reflected the anger and disappointment that the respective communities felt.

As this further ‘Petition Hand-Over’ report below shows, the parents fight back progressed to petitioning the local council and members of parliament; but although this led to something of a review and delay of the closure decision, they subsequently found themselves having to take the same action with the Secretary of State for Education. Sadly, this was also to no avail as the Minister confirmed the closure decision in April 1966; with both schools then scheduled to close just a few months later in the July.

Whilst arrangements for the transfer of the pupils to other schools was already underway by this time, the impact of this must have really begun to sink in for those who were going to be directly affected. They were facing small groups of Mark House pupils moving into larger populated schools where the existing friendship groupings were already well established, a different curriculum to try to adjust to, further travel and no doubt differing school regimes and teaching methods to come to terms with.





Perhaps, above all, the latter might have been the hardest situation to cope with; as these pupils were moved away from their established relationships with, and support from, the teaching staff that they had been with over the previous years. This could not at all have been easy and, by all accounts, not a welcomed change; particularly for those that were about to sit external examinations - even though, as it appears, many had been offered the chance to transfer earlier and thereby lessen the impact?

More is said in the forthcoming report about the optimism in the period between 1961 – 1965, the effect of the closure on the pupils and the ups and downs of the parents fight back. It will also raise questions about why the intended combination of both schools in one comprehensive was abandoned, how valid were the reasons given for the closures and was due time and attention given by the council to an alternative strategy or re-scheduling? Why did the council not just delay the development of the intended new school, rather than abandon it completely at what might be described as the 'first hiccup' encountered? Above all what justification was there for leaving this area of the borough without and secondary education provision?

In all these factors had indeed been discussed then why, as it seems from what has been found so far, was there not more media coverage of it - or have we missed something?

Sadly, the final and perhaps most poignant item of memorabilia included within the story is of the newspaper reports of the 1966 Prize Giving; the last at the school and the last words of Les Smith recounting the role and work of Mark House!

To be continued!

Foot Lights Notes

Just a Thought – In case anyone's passing?



This photograph shows what were once the schools main gates at the St James Street end of Markhouse Road, but now form the entrance to the Answar Gardens Estate – and as such have been the subject of some recent 'posts' on the Mark House School Face Book pages.

A number of former pupils have voiced the view that whilst 'they' (and we) all have 'first hand knowledge' of what laid behind them all those years ago, it seems a pity that there

is nothing there that gives a present day hint of this - or is there?

One might indeed wonder how many local people know of what originally laid behind Mark House's only remains, but judging from our recent involvement with the nearby Kelmscott School, the answer is probably 'not many - or perhaps even 'if any'

Apart from one teaching assistant at Kelmscott mentioning that she actually went to Mark House Infants, none of the other staff or parents that we met at the project's performance, knew of the school; until, that is, we sort of landed on the scene! Certainly, our post performance input about Mark House, the Drama Club and the CMMF must have come as some surprise to 99.9% of those present and, whilst this was not unexpected, it still felt a little bit sad - much in the same way as the comments made of the Face Book site had been. However, it may well be that the Gate Posts do have a name etched into the brickwork?

So, if anyone is passing and gets the chance to stop and look, then please do so and let us know via the website Contact Page. If this draws a blank then, as a few of the Face Book postee's might have been suggesting, we might have to think about joining them in lobbying for a Blue Plaque - just to prove **'we woz here'**