

Markhouse Drama Club & The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund



NEWSLETTER Autumn 2025

Welcome to this Newsletter and its range of Markhouse Drama Club and Mark House School items - including the latest thoughts on the final phase of the CMMF Performing Arts Projects, plans for the future of the website, a few 'miscellaneous' items, some recently unearthed photographs including one 'new find' for our production memorabilia and, sadly, some news from within our membership

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Pre Xmas – Mini Re-
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Website Additions

CMMF Performing Arts Projects

Whilst our last Newsletter reported on the hope that a further CMMF Performing Arts Project would be initiated through the MDC membership, our latest circulation about this did not, unfortunately, produce the desired result - so the earlier 'Whose Myth is it Anyway' at Kelmscott School in Walthamstow did, as envisaged at that time, look to be the last in the series!

However, the 'fall back' position was to consider building on the positive relationship that had been developed back in our 'homeland' with Kelmscott School and to explore the possibility of continuing to give support to their future drama activities.

This idea saw a good deal of progress and, in fact, resulted in giving them the opportunity to apply for some small grants spread over the subsequent year or so; but, quite disappointingly, this similarly did not work out as we had hoped. So, as the end of the period in which any grant applications would have been considered, thoughts have, perhaps inevitably, now turned back towards completing the work of the CMMF through a further project - particularly as the potential for one has recently arisen!

In this respect there is now a possibility for one that will establish a new and ongoing youth drama group and thereby be quite different to those that have previously been developed. These had mainly been 'one offs' and short term projects, although a number of them did see some subsequent work undertaken with the young people involved. Indeed, two of these, the 'Macbeth' project at Thornage Hall in Norfolk and a 'View from The Streets' in Croydon, both developed into longer term pieces of youth work.

The link for such a further project is with a community association who have not only expressed some interest in establishing a youth drama group, but are also prepared to sponsor its initial development with free access to their premises - which, helpfully, includes a stage!

However, as with anything as ambitious as this, there is still a good deal of work ahead in making all the necessary links and, in particular, finding the 'right' person to establish and lead a new group! So we are, of course, keeping our fingers, arms and legs crossed that the forthcoming 'negotiations' and 'search' result in a positive outcome!

CMMF Projects



Full details about all the CMMF Projects and how they are managed can be found on the Website

THE MDC Website

Some thoughts for its future!

Whilst the future of the website has been under discussion for a while, more recent 'events' have progressed these thoughts a deal further - with the first of these emanating from the above position of the CMMF!

In this respect, the absence of recent CMMF activity and that the above project is going to take a while before any actual work is undertaken, has meant that we have not needed to maintain the insurance that we had in place - as clearly we have no current responsibilities with young people that we need to cover. A decision was therefore taken to temporarily close the insurance cover; with the resulting savings, in effect, putting the website's finances in quite a comfortable position. In this respect the annual income given through Standing Orders, from MDC members, now just exceeds the annual expenditure.

However, the ongoing discussion about the website has acknowledged that at some point in the future a decision will need to be made about how long it should be continued and then, as a result, removed from the internet. This is mainly because after some eight years of its existence, the recent level of 'usage' within the membership and the amount of new content that has been added has reduced significantly - as evidenced by the decreasing frequency of our Newsletters and, in particular, the number of items each has listed in the 'Website Additions' pages.

It would seem that this latter position is unlikely to change and whilst still being amazed about the amount of material that has been found and archived from the 22 years of MDC productions, the increasing absence of finding any 'missing' memorabilia - particular in the final few years - has continued. This is despite some continued research which has only seemed to have revealed that earlier interest of the local newspapers in reporting 'youth drama' had steadily declined.

However - there is always the hope that someone within the membership will suddenly find a pile of old programmes, photos and press cuttings after a clear up of an attic, shed or the like!

So, whilst no date is in mind about when to close the website, it has already been decided that when that time comes the aim will be to give all our members, and the families of those sadly lost in recent years, a digital copy. The hope is that this will be an appropriate way for both current and future 'younger generations' to be able to see something of what their respective ancestors 'got up to' in their teenage years!

More recently this discussion has moved significantly forward and is now looking at packaging the digital recording in some form of booklet/magazine style publication; one that might provide, for example, something of the Drama Club's history, an extensive range of photographic material from our productions, re-unions and the CMMF Performing Arts Projects, plus, of course, our membership gallery! This is a much more ambitious plan than just providing a digital recording; particularly in terms of the amount of work that will be involved and deciding what to 'put in' and what to 'leave out' from the extensive amount of material in the website. Plus, of course, it will have a different cost factor!

Although initial enquiries have shown that the latter is not be as high as might be imagined and is achievable, this broader plan has received a substantial boost through the receipt of a further, and generous, donation from Jennifer Chacksfield (Malyon) in response to the earlier funding appeal. Jennifer's continued support could not, of course, have been anymore timely and will doubtless help towards achieving this aim of the digitised copy of the website within a more visible form of souvenir!

There will be more news of this plan in due course, but it is hoped that some former members might wish to be involved in determining the eventual content of our 'publication' - which could be 'fun' as well as helpful!

And for anyone particularly keen on being involved, there is also a need to check and update the accuracy, grammar and layout of the current website; also to edit down some of the lengthier parts of the text! So, a few further tasks that perhaps might not be quite so much 'fun' - but will still clearly be helpful!

So watch this space and, in particular, if you have some publication/layout skills - definitely get in touch!

PRODUCTIONS



Scroll through the photographs, cast lists, programmes and newspaper report memorabilia of the plays, films and rehearsals from the Markhouse Drama Club's 22 plus years.

CYRIL MALYON



Shortly after returning to teach at Markhouse in 1955, Cyril Malyon started a weekly After School Stagecraft Workshop - and thereby sowed the 'seeds' of all that was to follow!

CMMF PERFORMING ARTS PROJECTS



See the photographs and reports from the range of Performing Arts Projects that have been initiated through former Drama Club members and funded by The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund.

REUNIONS



Scroll through the photographic galleries from the farewell celebration at The Markhouse Theatre when the Drama Club closed in 1977. Through the more recent series of Reunions held between 2007 and 2017.

MARKHOUSE



Markhouse Secondary Modern School, which served its local young people in a variety of guises over the near 150 years of its existence - including, between 1955 - 1977, the home of what became the Markhouse Drama Club!

MEMBERS MEMOIRS



Scroll through and enjoy some of the cherished personal memories of, and by former members of the Markhouse Drama Club.

MARKOVIAN FILMS



The Markovian Film Club was one of several 'member-led' initiatives which quickly became a regular part of the Drama Club's programme - with some of its most 'notable' productions hosted on the website!

CATHODE ELYSIUM LIGHTS



Cathode Elysium Lights was another 'member-led' initiative that widened the range of the Drama Club's activities and took those involved, and their 'special effects', into the wider world of mainstream pop and rock music!

MEMBERS



Browse through the names of the 400 plus former members of the Drama Club between 1955 and 1977 and the Photo Gallery of those who have renewed their active interest in recent years.

TRIBUTES

Peter Kett



Following our earlier circulation about the loss of Peter Kett, a tribute to him and his Drama Club involvement has now been added within this part of the websites pages - fittingly being alongside that of the preceding entry for Marjorie.

Like a good number of other MDC members, Peter became involved via 'his other half' although he, of course, brought with him a quite different range of interests and skills - ones were that were equally as welcomed and creative as those of Marjorie's.

Our tribute, perhaps not surprisingly, mentions his son Philip's description of Peter as a 'artist with a camera' and it is this particular skill that he not only willingly shared, but one that also left the Drama Club and the website with such a wonderful and extensive range of memorabilia from our plays and events. These cover a substantial period within our 22 year history. Philip's Eulogy also gave an insight to Peter and Marjorie's family life and their wider interests - which have also been included within the websites main tribute.

For those who were MDC members at the same time as Peter it is hoped that the tribute will bring some good memories of him - albeit only of him 'front of stage'. Unlike many others who suddenly found them enmeshed with the MDC, it never seemed possible to get him 'on stage' - or on the other side of his camera!

Peter's photographs of the MDC plays and films can be seen in the websites 'Production' & 'Markovian Films' pages

Dave King

Very sadly we recently heard from Dave King's daughter Julie, of his passing on the 29th September; this after a short period in Whipps Cross Hospital in Walthamstow.

Many members will remember Dave from his time at Markhouse where he seemed to have been an 'ever present' in helping things tick over 'behind the scenes' - especially after the school closed and the building came under the auspices of Marsh Street Youth Centre. There is however, at least one known appearance 'on stage' - with this gem of information having just been 'found' through one of the photographs on display at his Wake. This is was clearly from his early days as a Mark House pupil whilst (it is thought) playing 'Mr Jubb' in 'The Town That Would have a Pageant' in 1962; so a good while before his subsequent 'front of house appearances' running the MDC Box Office in the final few years!



But Dave's presence at Mark House and Marsh Street was always well in evidence as he gave a lot of time in the general running of both venues; particularly so after the school closure where he often helped to increase access to our steadily developing 'home' - usually, and helpfully, well outside of the official rehearsal times!

Dave's funeral was at the City of London Cemetery in the presence of many family members and friends from the Evangelical Church in South Woodford; also those from the various organisations where he gave much of his time. There were also many former work colleagues from the electricity industry in attendance and seeing their presence was perhaps not surprising, given that he not only began his working life through an LEB apprenticeship, but also that he continued in this industry for some 50 plus years!

The website tribute will say more of Dave and his 'post Markhouse' interests, but in these present few lines it is perhaps most fitting to convey how much was said of his supportive role within both his immediate and wider family.



Mention was also made of his interest in trains and, in this respect, it may well be that he and Dick Dunn enjoyed comparing notes on this shared hobby - one that Dave had apparently developed in his younger years when watching them run through on the local Marshes.

Although his youthful hope of becoming a Train Driver did not materialise, he did, in later years, become a Station Master; as is shown in this photograph of him in his volunteer role with the Epping and Ongar Railway Society - on this occasion helping his grand-daughter 'alight'.

A Guardian Report also on display showed Dave receiving a 'Cup from A Queen' in recognition of the Marsh Street Youth Centre Team that won an Adventure Weekend Competition. This has been added into the Marsh Street Pages of the Website



Penny Howe (Malling)

It was very sad to learn of this news so long after Penny's loss which, as a result, has meant that we are not able to say much more than that this was within the period of 2022/3 and, at this time, she and her husband Reg were still living in the Upminster area of South Essex.

However, it is, of course, still important to make this belated mention of her as there are still a good number within our membership who will have fond memories of her - and of the time they shared with her in both the Drama Club and at the school.

Penny became a pupil at Mark House a deal later than the rest of her class as, if memory serves correctly, she joined early in the third year when her family moved to Walthamstow and her father became the Minister at the Lighthouse Methodist Church in Markhouse Road. This was just at the same time that the class became '3X' and so destined to 'stay on' for the extra year. Given that most of that class of just 19 pupils were already well under Mr Malyon's drama club influence, it seems almost inevitable that she became similarly involved.

Penny, did in fact, continue her membership for a number of years and was involved in several different roles and productions during this period - including, as this photograph from '1066 And All That' shows, that of her brilliant performance as a traditional wife to an Indian Army Captain. This was just one of the several characters that she played in that production. But her talents were not only on stage, as she also fulfilled what must have been a really different and demanding responsibility as the Stage Manager of 'The Rose and the Ring' in 1965 - as this was a fairly 'chunky' sized and multi scene production with a large cast - so it needed a good amount of organising!

The memories of Penny will be strong and warm to those who knew her well and, for one in particular, a couple have always been enthusiastically recounted when the opportunity has arisen! The first is of when Penny revealed the inner most secrets of the Lighthouse Church via ascending the steps to the actual beacon area - where her friends were shown that unlike (presumably) those around our coast, this one was quite differently 'powered' - having discovered that it was rotated by a bicycle wheel and chain! The further cherished memory, also at the Lighthouse, but at ground level, was when Penny and a few MDC friends had an hilarious evening discovering the humour of Tony Hancock - via the 'Blood Donor' on the TV! His form of humour inevitably found its way into a number of subsequent productions and, not surprisingly, Penny deserved all the accolades she got for persuading everyone to stay and watch this famed episode!!



If any of Penny's friends are able to add any detail to this information we will be pleased to hear from them via the website Contact Page or at dm2013cmmf@googlemail.com.

Changing Times

1891



View from Markhouse Road

1989?



View from The Crescent

2025



Answar Gardens

Well - has anyone, as previously requested, managed to stop to examine the old school gate posts whilst passing along Markhouse Road - just in case they do give any clue to the date the school building was demolished?

'Probably not' is an understandable answer, given that the road 'enjoys' non stop traffic, is double yellow lined and its not the most scenic dropping off point for visiting former stamping grounds! Indeed, even the 'optimistic' MDC member making the request didn't feel sufficiently motivated to exit the Bus (re: the resulting long wait in the rain) when recently passing!

However, in reality just an approximation is sufficient for the schools history and in this respect a likely date has just been unearthed through the chance sight of a note in a 1989 council minute; this commenting about the use of the premises after the school closed in 1966. It suggests that the buildings were demolished 'not long after' the 1989 date on the minute.

So clearly still no argument for a 'Blue Plaque' or the like; but perhaps a fair degree of surprise that the premises were still there, and being used, up to some 23 years after the school closure decision - where one of the reasons given for this action was that the condition of the premises made it unsuitable for use! It would seem that someone got this a bit wrong!

Foot ~~Lights~~ Notes

2025 MEMORY & EYESIGHT TEST!!!!

Having bemoaned the diminishing finds of 'new' items of memorabilia over the last year or two, the last few weeks have seen a modest, but probably short term, change in fortune - and perhaps one that might provide an amusing test of the grey matter? Hence the following images and the respective questions about them.

So - as a starter - can you identify the 4 former Drama Club Members hidden in this group in their nightwear?

For the answer see the Website's 'MARKHOUSE PAGES' Drama Club & Markhouse Members Photo Gallery



And it would be really good to confirm whether the name of the cheerful 'chap' sitting next to Dave King in this photograph, taken at his Farewell Party, was named Jim, Eddie or Stan?

He was the really helpful and friendly Caretaker who gave so much support in the years after the school closed and the Drama Club enjoyed the use of the upper parts of the premises?

The excuse re: his name - well it was some 48 years ago!



And, finally, can you name the former MDC member who was part of 'The Tinted Aspect' Pop Group pictured in this Walthamstow Guardian photograph.

It was apparently taken during a break in rehearsals at the Common Gate Pub, Markhouse Road, where they were the 'Resident Group'.

The accompanying report noted that they had just signed a recording contract with MECCA!

And a clue - he is the one actually wearing a hat!



For the answer see the Website's 'MARKHOUSE PAGES' Drama Club & Markhouse Members Photo Gallery

Letter No 3 - But not 'From America' this time!



Whilst it is unfortunately true to say that the Website Contact Page has never been a hive of activity, from time to time something, or more accurately someone, does pop up!

This is usually a former Drama Club member or Mark House pupil who has decided to google our name and duly found us! However, just to ring the changes the latest one is from someone with no connection to the MDC, or the school, whatsoever! However, it seems that he managed to come across the website whilst googling the title of a play that was clearly of interest to him - and one which we had produced - namely 'Murder in Motley'

This provided a reminder that this play had 2 cast lists - which, some 63 years after its 1962 production, may well have slipped the memory - or was too confusing anyway - perhaps even for those who were actually involved? So herewith a memory test and/or refresher - c/o a Simon Coward who clearly took great interest in 'explaining' our cast list - or lists!

'Hello - despite having no connection with this (or any other) production I think I may be able clear up a little of the confusion in relation to the two cast lists for the play 'Murder in Motley'.

It was pretty much an immediate thought when reading the two casts and some further digging in relation to other productions of this play, seems to confirm it.

When it starts, the audience believes they are watching John Cade playing the part of Sir William Ainslie and Penelope Malling playing his wife, Lady Mary Ainslie, in a play set in a country house, stately home (or similar). Then, at some point in Act 1, something happens which pulls the rug out from under the audience's feet and it's revealed that what they're actually watching are John Cade and Penelope Malling playing actors in a production that's set in a theatre.

And those actors are appearing in a (fictional) theatrical production, set in a country house, stately home (or similar), as characters called Sir William and Lady Mary Ainslie. So the business with the programme and the two casts is just to disguise the 'play within a play' aspect.

A few other productions appear to have attempted to disguise the nature of their production of this play in different ways, either by only printing a limited cast in the programme or by just listing the members of the company without apportioning parts at all. Others seem not have bothered with the illusion at all, for example at the Stockton-on-Tees Hippodrome the cast in the programme has Hugh Tate playing Godfrey Dennis - "Sir William Ainslie".

Some other productions actually seem to have had a character who is the 'Assistant Stage Manager' (of the fictional play) so whether in this production Iris Moorshack was actually the SM but also appeared as the fictional ASM, I couldn't say; but I wonder if it's a possibility if you were surprised by her appearance in some of the photos'

'Hope this helps. Best regards, Simon'



Editors Note: Having only been a mere manual labourer (scene shifter) for this production I did, subsequently, think that Iris's presence in the above photo and Mr Malyon in the one on the right, indicated that these were taken at a dress rehearsal - hence a 'hope' noted in the website that one of our cast might remember why the programme included the instruction of -

PLEASE DO NOT BREAK THE SEAL UNTIL THE FIRST INTERVAL

- which presumably revealed the second cast list? Whilst till a bit confused, I'm sure that in the light of this 'external' explanation, all those in the cast (inc scene crew et al) will now clearly remember every single detail of the plot - wont they?



A later MDC production of 'On Monday Next' in 1967 was also a sort of a 'play within a play' - but much easier to understand as the plot was wholly about the Producer's antagonism towards, and subsequent attack on, the Author. As a result of the latter, the Author was stretchered off by two ambulance men who, as seen in this production photo, couldn't stop laughing - so very MDC - albeit not without due 'management retribution' as the latter two anonymous members (otherwise identified as AS & BJ) were never given any further serious roles to play!!!!

Close examination of the enlarged photo in the website gives the suggestion that there was also a 'smile' on the authors face at the time of this exit?

I wait with baited breath to see if any comments are forthcoming but, in the meantime, thanks Simon for taking the trouble to write and providing an excuse to pull a couple of photographs out of the archives! DM

DICK's HOMEPAGE



Sadly Dickie Dunn's original website 'walthamstowhistory' has disappeared into the ether and neither ourselves or 'Walthamstow Memories' - who took over the hosting of his site from us when the MDC website was established - have been able to find and reinstate it. This is, of course, lost nostalgia for us, although all of the Drama Club and School memorabilia that Dick had amassed was copied and still remains on our website

However, as the above image shows, we still have Dick's original Homepage which has now been added to our Website Tribute to him. It is also good to recall that all the other work Dick undertook in respect of his 'Transport' interests was copied when we loaned his website to the Coppermill Pumphouse Museum. This is, in fact, an interesting place to visit - both to see Dick's archives and much of Walthamstow's industrial heritage.

The Museum, located on the site of the former Council's Refuse Centre, just off the St Jame's Park end of Markhouse Avenue, even includes an original London Underground Train - which, apparently, is regularly hired out for film productions and thereby a 'nice little earner' - as one might say?

The Museum is open to visitors on Sundays 10.30 am - 4pm if you are interested

***Within traveling distance of Chelmsford for
a pre-Xmas 'catch up' on Tuesday 2nd December?***



You may recall this earlier photo of Norma and a number of her 'much much earlier' Mark House School class members - taken when the significance of them finding themselves together again at last year's 'mini re-union' was suddenly realised!



With luck this will be repeated in just a couple of weeks time when the opportunity to again catch up with a few MDC friends has been arranged! So if you free on the above date and are within an 'easy' drive of The Ivy Hill Hotel in Margretting, or fancy a train trip with a guaranteed pick up (and drop back) at Ingatestone Station, then please come along and join us for a pre Xmas get together!

Ivy Hill in Writtle Road, Margretting, is the venue again and lies just off junctions 14 & 15 of the A12. Ivy Hill has a comfortable lounge, a full, light snacks & sandwich lunchtime menu and excellent service - plus free parking.

If you can get to the Hotel, then please come and join us from 12 noon onwards for a couple of hours - or more!

If not already done so, a brief email will also be helpful to let us know you are coming along - so that we can give the Hotel an idea of our numbers - and if you are considering the train then let Dave M know, to arrange pick up times, on dm2013cmmf@googlemail.com

Info request - Joyce Benstead (Nee Simmons).

Unfortunately our most recent emails to Joyce have been returned and noted on the computer/googlemail site as 'not delivered' - so we have not been able to get in touch with her or her sister Jean!

So if you have any current contact info for Joyce, or indeed Jean, then please let us know either via the website contact page or the email given in the above item about the 'mini re-union'. Thanks!

And

Best Wishes & Regards for the Festive period & All the best for 2026

From June, Norma, Denis, Dave, John & Peter



WEBSITE ADDITIONS - AUTUMN 2023

www.markhousedramaclub.com

As with earlier additions, those photographs noted below are highlighted in the respective pages of the website with a 'NEW' icon

PRODUCTION PAGE

- Photograph with Dave King & Denis Heath, from 1962 production of 'The Town That Would Have a Pageant' has been added

CMMF PROJECTS

- Additional Photographs have been added to 'A View from the Street' in Croydon and 'Dealing with Domestic' at Eastbrook High School in Dagenham.

MARKHOUSE SCHOOL PAGES:

Walthamstow Guardian & Independent Newspaper Reports

- Keith Eley is featured in a Report about the Tinted Aspect Pop Group
- Newspaper item of 4 Drama Club Members in Marsh Street Youth Centre Judo Group added

Class Photos.

- 1949 Photograph added. Teacher not shown/unknown

School Teams

- A clearly successful Mark House School Football Team from pre 1956. Teachers Mr Blumson (Left) and Headmaster Mr George Eastman (Right)

School Staff

- Individual photographs of Norma Pepperell (Evans) and Marjorie Kett have been added

MDC Members & School Staff TRIBUTES:

- Tributes added for Marjorie & Peter Kett
- Dick's Website Homepage added to Tribute

MEMBERS MEMORIES:

- Norma's Class! The '2024 Mini Re-union story & photograph has been added to these pages.
- Photograph added of 'Jim' (?) - the friendly and ever helpful Caretaker in the post school years!

MARSH STREET YOUTH CENTRE.

- A Guardian Report has been added showing Dave King receiving a 'Cup from a Queen' in recognition of the Youth Centre's team winning an 'Adventure Weekend' Competition

WEBSITE ADDITIONS PAGE

- This Website Additions Page has been added to the website

NEWSLETTERS:

- The Extract from the Summer 2024 Newsletter has been added to the website

Markhouse Drama Club is a non-profit making and fully constituted voluntary organisation that maintains links between, and manages the website for, former members of the Markhouse Drama Club that ran at the Markhouse Secondary Modern School, Walthamstow, between 1955 and 1977. It also manages the work of The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund that promotes and financially supports performing arts activities for young people