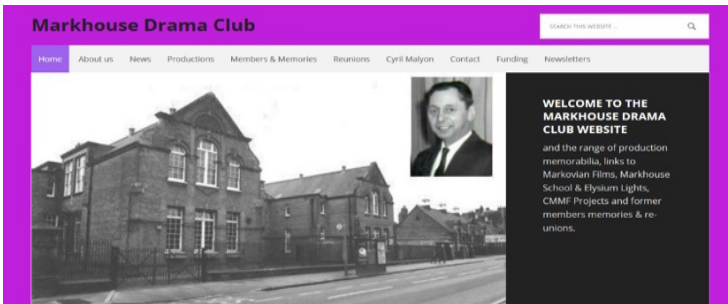


# Markhouse Drama Club & The Cyril Malyon Memorial Fund



**SPRING 2026  
NEWSLETTER**

## *'And Now For Something Completely ~~Different~~ Surprising'*

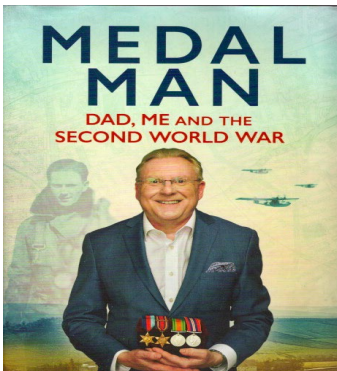
*It's Definitely 'JIM'*

*Dave hidden horde!*

*'Life With The Girls' &  
'Murder in Motley'*

*Website Additions*

*And - Our Surprise  
feature*



Well you may well think that receiving this Newsletter is somewhat 'surprising' - for two reasons! Firstly because you might recall that the December edition noted that our Newsletters have been seeing a declining amount of content over the past couple of years - particularly in terms of the amount of memorabilia being found - and, as a result, that the frequency of their 'appearance' is declining and is now only about once a year!!

So - you might well ask how come another one has now been circulated so soon after the last one?

The second reason is likely to be of what does the book cover, shown in the adjoining column, have to do with the Drama Club?

Well - I can only say that it does and in a way that I thought worthy of circulation 'poste haste' - particularly as the story behind it only became complete a few days ago!

So I hope its 'build up' catches your interest and that the resulting story will prove an interesting and pleasant surprise; also a very nostalgic one if you were one of the 'first generation' of MDC members who were also pupils at Mark House School. DM.

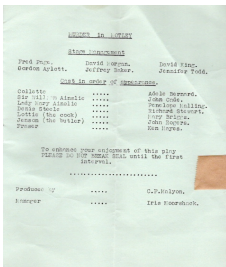
## **But Firstly - Other News!**

In contrast to the comments in the December issue about the limited amount of 'new' memorabilia coming to light, the last few weeks have, in fact, proven to be quite the opposite! This is virtually all down to Dave King's daughters; who have not only gone through what sounds to be Dave's quite sizeable archive, but have also kindly passed on their Drama Club finds for our use. In fact it actually sounds as if there might not only be more to come about the Drama Club, but also something of the other activities that went on in the premises after the school closed. So we may well get to know, as we now have through one of the following items, what else was going on 'beneath us' - on the ground floor!

But firstly a follow up to the '**Memory Lapse**' item in the previous Newsletter; this asking for thoughts of the name of this friendly and helpful caretaker who served us so well for a good number of years. His photograph had been on display at Dave King's Wake and although there were some varying opinions on whether his name was Eddie, Stan or Jim, the eureka moment was in asking Dave's daughter Julie to see if there were any clues on the photo itself. This confirmed that it was '**Jim**' So thanks to him for all he did for us and its good that we are now able to add a much better title to his website picture than just 'caretaker'!



And - as with 'JIM' - a further confirmation has come to light which also relates to an item in the last newsletter; this where a non MDC member had sent us an explanation about the note of '**PLEASE DO NOT BREAK THE SEAL UNTIL THE FIRST INTERVAL**' in our '**MURDER IN MOTLEY**' programme



As it happens this further treasure from Dave's archives rather completes the story because, as you will see, this copy of the programme shows the actual seal - in place and intact! Given the latter, could it have belonged to someone in the audience who was too wrapped up in the brilliance of the performance to worry about the instruction? However, whilst intact, it nevertheless still looks like just a bit of brown sticky paper - but no doubt an effective one!

But will the Waltham Forest Archives want this creative masterpiece if we decide to hand all our memorabilia over to them? We might well find out - anon!

These recent finds bring two further 'mysteries' - albeit only initially, as some emailing and a bit of 'scenery induced deduction' has already solved the name of the play in this photo from Dave's archives. This clearly shows John Payne and Jill Hayden fronting a library or study setting. But, unfortunately, this time, no date had been marked on the back. However, John and Jill got the memory cells underway and had ideas about what type of play it was; but the key clue came with another of Dave's collection coming to light - albeit one that was clearly not a MDC production!



As you will see in the photo below, the set in this is the same as the one behind John and Jill and, helpfully, a note on its back states it to be the '**Annual Prize Giving of the International Youth Centre**'. It is dated the 22 October 1975

Our website shows the production of the 'The 4 Musketeers' Panto in December 1975 and John Wooldridge's comedy 'Life with The Girls' earlier in July. Fortunately we already have a very complimentary NODA Report about this latter production and this not only names John and Jill in the cast, but also states that it is set in the Library of Sir Edward Savidge House! So it seems certain that the library set was left in place to back the International Youth Centre's subsequent use - or perhaps the set builders were on strike or couldn't be bothered to move it! But regardless of the reason, the welcomed result is that we now have several '**Life with the Girls**' photographs to complement the existing script image, cast list and NODA Report.



However, whilst a helpful source of information, this equally left a 'mystery' in terms of who and what was The International Youth Centre? Were they just an occasional visiting organisation, or one of the many and various groups that used the downstairs part of the premises - with, as it appears, our occasional support and access to our facilities! Part of the mystery is that the title on this photograph is stated as a '**a CENTRE**'; whereas a further photograph in Dave's treasure trove shows one of the 'stage group', standing by his car by the Front Gates who is noted as Lionel Kidd - 'The Headmaster' - which, of course, suggests a 'School'

**Any clues please?**

And just to keep the 'Life with The Girls' photos in good company, another collection was found for the '**Puss in Boots**' panto of December 1974. Whilst we already had several photographs of this panto, most of this new find were different and so the Gallery now has a larger and more varied collection - included some 'behind the scenes' group shots.

## WEBSITE ADDITIONS

### PRODUCTION PAGE

- Several photographs added for the July 1975 production of 'Life With The Girls'
- Additional photographs added to the Gallery of the December 1975 'Puss In Boots' pantomime

### TRIBUTES

- A Tribute to Dave King has now been added

### MARKHOUSE SCHOOL PAGES

- Photograph of 'Jim' - the MDC Caretaker added to the Marsh Street Youth Centre Gallery

### NEWSLETTERS:

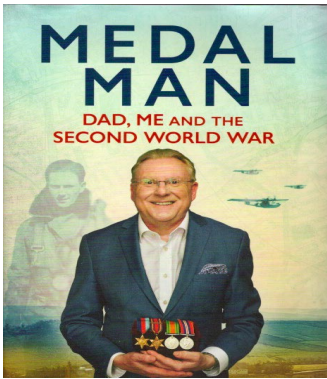
- The Autumn 2025 Extract & this SPRING 2026 Newsletter have been added

### FUTURE ADDITIONS

- The story of the closure of Mark House School will be added in July - marking its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

As with earlier additions, those photographs noted above are highlighted in the website with a '**NEW**' icon

## And now for the 'surprise' bit!



The following story, based around an amazing bit of luck, could so easily have been missed when it started early on the Sunday evening prior to the festive break! This was when yours truly, after a fairly hectic day doing really nothing at all, was trying to balance a wavering attention span between a Sudoku puzzle, keeping an eye out for the start of the Antiques Roadshow and just 'snoozing' - with the latter inevitably beginning to turn towards falling asleep!

However, as the Roadshow started it did get catch my attention; albeit only momentary as I thought that the main theme of this edition might not move me much away from the snoozing direction. This was, at least, until the opening bit was finished, which, as I found on my subsequent play back, was the intro to an edition on 'Toys and Children'.

This had begun with a number of the experts talking about childhood toys that still held cherished memories for them. As my above comments suggest, I didn't pay this bit my usual level of interest until the Medals/Military expert appeared - my favourite subject area - when I guess some in built mechanism resulted in taking my attention span as far as it was likely to go at this point - **fortunately!**

This was of Mark Smith, of the above book, and he was holding a small Teddy Bear which he began to talk about; firstly saying that it **'had been given to him on his birthday - which was Xmas Day 1963'**. At that point he continued that **'at that time my dad was a Headmaster in Walthamstow'** - which was also the point that nearly had me falling out of my chair and moving the fastest I had done all day - the latter according to Jenny - my instantly alarmed wife!

I didn't catch the rest of what he said until playing back the programme a while later, as I was far too busy 'attacking' the iPad and browsing 'Mark Smith/Antiques Roadshow etc'. This was because I was 99% sure that there was only one Headmaster named 'Smith' in Walthamstow at that time - and that was Leslie Smith - 'our' Headmaster at Mark House! Fortunately my browsing exertions proved fruitful, as I found some references to his background and, in particular, that this Mark Smith's dad had been in the RAF and flown Catalina aircraft over South East Asia in the Second World War!

Whilst remembering what I did last week is an occasional problem, the memory for 'yester-years' is another matter and perhaps those of our members who were in Mark House Class 5X in 1960/1 may, like I do, still recall Les Smith's occasional diversion from our Economic History lesson into tales of his RAF days. Also - again if my memory serves me correctly - sometimes with a few 'actions' throw in!

However, on return to the playback, I found that he had continued by saying that **'a group of girls at the school had clubbed together to buy the toy and gave it to my dad to give to me when I was born'**

Now I knew nothing of this story (which virtually ended his bit of the intro) but a phone call to Norma, who had begun teaching at Mark House in the September 1963, took me to 100% certain as she recalled this further part of Mark Smith's story about his dad - albeit not with any recall of who was involved! Curiosity, of course, still got the better of me and a further call to Susan Cave (Riches) confirmed that she had also been at Mark House at that time. Susan said that whilst she also recalled the 'gift' she had not been part of the group of girls that had been involved. What a shame - had she been so it would have brought the story full circle!

However, there is, of course, the chance that one of our current 'ex Mark House' members might have contributed a portion of their pocket money at that time and, if so, please let me know - you never know but the following 'further events' might lead to some fame - or even an appearance of the Antiques Roadshow!

So, beside learning of the Mark House girls thoughtful (and still cherished) gift, this 'chance hearing' of Mark's Smith's initial words has also led to our hope that this might well, at some future point, be the way in which we can add to the website's story of Leslie Smith; particularly his post Mark House career and life. Up to now we have had little other than knowing of his move into Curriculum Development Research at Goldsmith College after leaving Mark House - oh, and of course, continuing to support the former Walthamstow Avenue Football Club!

So having been incredibly fortunate to find this connection, we thought that given the very friendly persona that comes across when Mark Smith is on the Antique Roadshow, it was worth trying to contact him. This was with a hope that he would be prepared to help us fill in the above 'post Mark House' gaps about his dad; also that he would be pleased to learn about our website and all the memorabilia and thoughts it contains about his dad!

So we duly wrote to Mark and the response was both instant, positive and not only very complementary about our website, but also included invite to meet him - **BINGO!** Thank goodness I didn't nod off at exactly the wrong time!

Unfortunately the first planned meeting was postponed but was rescheduled and took place last week - hence, this 'unexpected surprising and hopefully interesting' Newsletter!

It was privilege to meet Mark and, of course, to be able to ask our questions about what happened in his dad's career and life after Mark House closed in 1966. Mark said that his father had remained at Goldsmith's College until his retirement in 1989, although during this period his research work resulted in him spending a good deal of time elsewhere as a visiting lecturer; both in other parts of this country, in Europe and also in America. It appears that these were for quite varying periods and included both short and much longer term engagements - particularly in the USA where he also received an Honorary Professorship Award for his work. Retirement may have been quite a substantial change after such busy working life, but apparently he remained very active and continued to enjoy his love of writing. His resulting books covered WW2 and his own his wartime service, his research and developments in educational curriculum and, of course, an account of his time Mark House. The latter was written in 2002 and thanks to Dickie Dunn's safe keeping of the copy he was given, the extracts of this are in our website.

Little is, in fact, said in the latter report about the closure of Mark House and in discussing this with Mark, it appears it was similarly the case that he spoke little of this chapter in his life - and particularly not of its final phase! Mark thought his dad did not remain angry over what happened when the school was closed - although one could easily understand that he had every right to be - but that he had felt a great sense of sadness about it. It is not hard to imagine, in this respect, that the effect on what happened to his pupils and colleagues would have very much led to these feelings.

Sadly it was not long after writing of his Mark House years that his health deteriorated and he died in 2004 - with, as Mark's book tells us, the Service Eulogy being read by Derek Stewart - who was not only originally taught by him whilst a pupil at Gascoigne School, but subsequently joined him as member of his staff team at Markhouse.

So - not only did managing to catch those few brief words on the Antiques Roadshow occur at just the right moment, but so was the overall circumstances and timing just right for being able to try to make contact with 'our Mr Smith's' son - Mark! This was because it was also just at the point at which Mark's book, featured at the start of the Newsletter, was published - almost to the day - yet another coincidence?



Leslie Smith. 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday picture

Reading '**Medal Man, dad, me and the Second World War**' has provided an interesting, enjoyable and nostalgic read

It is a fascinating story and although it says little about Mark Hose School and the Drama Club, it is very nostalgic about Leslie Smith's RAF days, insightful about Mark's own career path and how his generation made their way in the 1980/90's. It also says much about Mark's life Walthamstow - both in the period that followed our own teenage years and, indeed, right up until he moved away just a couple of years ago!. There are, of course, also some good stories of the 'nuts and bolts' behind the scenes of the Antiques Roadshow and a good range of photographs relating to all these areas of his book. Perhaps most poignantly, there is also an ongoing, sad and 'single' story that ties father and son together as it runs through from the first to the final page.

A couple of our members have already read Mark's book and, like myself, they think it is really worth buying. Its available from all the usual booksellers - or perhaps even loaning a copy from the Walthamstow Central Library in the High Street!

It seems likely that our contact with Mark Smith will not end at this point, as there may be other opportunities to talk to him and equally, of course, for him to hear more of how his father and his staff at Mark House turned the school around.

**It was good to be able to tell Mark how much his dad - 'our Mr Smith' - just like Cyril Malyon - played such an important and positive part in the lives of so many young people. DM**

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**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 Mark House 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**