

Memories of a High Wych School Parent - HWH 73

Theo van de Bilt

Clearing out the loft recently, as you do, I came across some old issues of the High Wych School Magazine. Leafing through them brought back some happy memories. As some of you know I moved to High Wych in 1979, two years later our son Tom was born. Tom was at High Wych School from 1986 until 1992 so my experience as a parent dates from that time. I was a member of the PTA and the editor of that school magazine.



1979: John Emmanuel and his staff – Mr. Rix the caretaker with Bunty the school goat

We knew about the school before that of course and of John Emmanuel the headmaster. My personal involvement as said was as a PTA member. At that time two ladies were very much in charge of the PTA: Maureen Leman and Adrienne Richardson. We also got to know the staff: Mrs. Dudderidge, Mrs. Gorman, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Withers, Mrs. Wilkinson et al. The PTA meanwhile organised the annual fete, school discos, quiz nights and other fund raisers. Then as now money raised by the PTA paid for a number of 'extras'. A list from 1990 mentions books, badges, leavers' presents, an overhead projector, 2 tape recorders with microphones and a computer interface including a 'turtle', The fetes in particular were great fun with parents manning the stands and lots of dressing up. Normally these fetes had a theme: Alice in Wonderland, Cowboys and Indians, Robin Hood, Hollywood, Space and Europe. My role on various occasions was as a French Gendarme, the Sheriff of Nottingham and once as Mrs Sdrawkcab an 'alien fortune teller' (backwards spelt backwards, yes?). I wore a bra on my back (?!).

The newspaper collection in particular lives on in many people's memory whether as pupils or as parents. It carried on for several decades and many were involved. Linda Emmanuel tells us that the Paper was sold on to a company called Hartman Fibre. They used to send a 38-ton articulated lorry that had to reverse through the old school gates (near the church) to be loaded from the shed. Both Hartman Fibre and the paper shed still exist the former being of Danish origin and a leading exponent of moulded fibre packaging and the latter still a listed building. Most parents being away at work when the lorry turned up, John Emmanuel allowed the children to help with the loading; they thought it was great fun! Nowadays this might be frowned upon. High Wych School collected literally thousands of pounds that way

and won multiple awards as being the top school in the paper collection game. I also remember the paper collection as a social occasion with John and Lynne Shearman, who lived in the schoolhouse, sometimes organising a barbecue afterwards.

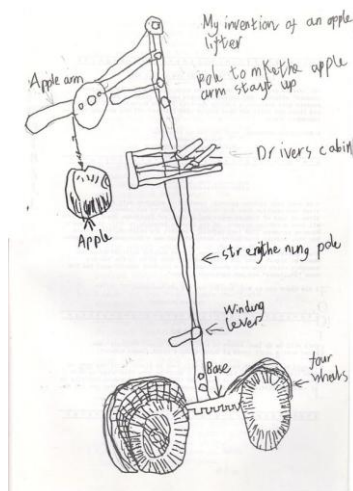


Paper collection in 1974 - ditto in 1990



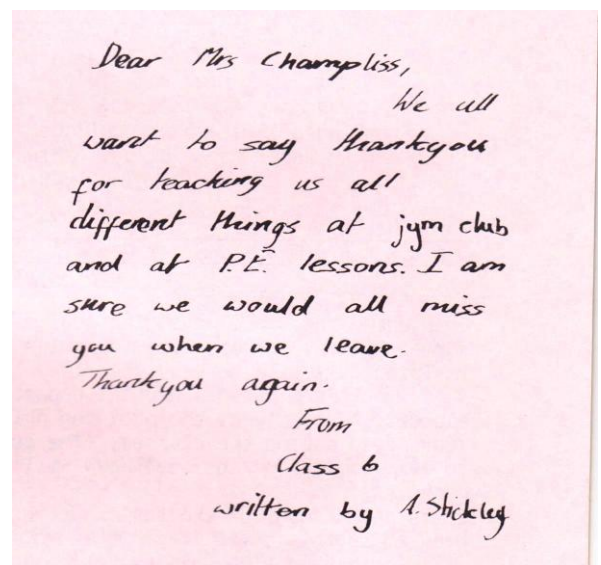
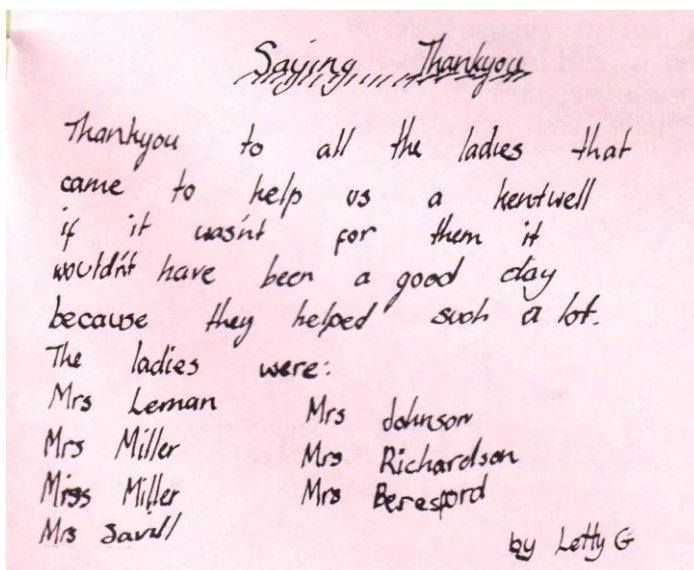
Nowadays High Wych school has a website of course and a Facebook page to show off the best children's work and for keeping in touch with the PTA. In the pre-digital age the school magazine performed that function. I had the honour of being its editor for a few years. It was great to look over and select children's project work, drawings or writing. Coming as I do from a publishing background I tried to use some of that experience. Apart from the selection of material there was the photocopying and the collating, hard work sometimes but great fun.

One impressive bit of project work in 1989 was the 'apple lifter' invented by Andrew Kennedy in 1989 then in class 5. He described how you turn the handle and pull a string through the drivers cabin. It had three bits to help it stand up. Here it is. The photograph shows two girls playing with it, one of these being Fay Harris



The Valentine poetry competition was another memorable feature of the magazine and was very successful. Robert Newman wrote: 'My eyes are so red, my heart is so blue, I may be crying, but I do love you'. 'Matthew Leman wrote: 'My feelings for you, I would like to make plain, I'll be your Tarzan, If you'll be my Jane. Some poems were experimental and 'free form' most were far from sentimental. Stephen Richardson dedicated his to a ghost. Jamie Reid wrote that 'if you send me a card that is red, I'd probably fall down dead'. It would be interesting to see what today's High Wych pupils would write.

The thing I am most proud of was involving class 6 in producing the last magazine of the school year. Once again it involved a lot of work. The children took part at every stage, the writing, the drawing the design, the pasting, the stapling and the collating. An article about the world cup got lost, but another pupil came in and rewrote it. A page with thank you notes really vividly brings back some memories of the time. Let me show you two of them.



The magazines have now been donated to the school.