

Memories of an ex Harlyn Pupil, 1958 – 1964.

My apologies for any errors and omissions – it was over fifty years ago!

My memories actually start with the school being built a year or so before I went there because I was wheeled past on the back of Mum's bike and told it was to be my brother's new school, he moved there from Pinner Road School. I must have started in the Infants in January 1958 at the age of 4, very nearly 5. I can remember being quite upset at the time but was quickly befriended by Brian Dimmock and he was my best friend for a long time. I can remember being very confused because our teacher got married in the Easter holiday and went from being Miss McDonald to Mrs Jones and I didn't understand how someone could change name like that! I also remember her wrongly (that's my recollection) accusing me of 'throwing' toys back into the storage box and having to stand at the front of the class as punishment. The shame of it!



Other teachers then were Miss Herbert (known as Sherbert) who was head of the Infant School and Miss or Mrs Leech who was extremely old but very kind and seemed to take a particular shine to Brian and me. The photos of Mr Baker and Mr Thorp on the website show they weren't as old as I thought then – I guess Miss Leech wasn't either.

When we were in Miss Sherbert's class there was a bell linked to the headmaster's office and we took turns in being 'errand boy' (I don't remember the girls having that duty but I could be wrong). When the bell rang the messenger would leave the class and go to Mr Baker's office to be given some task or other.

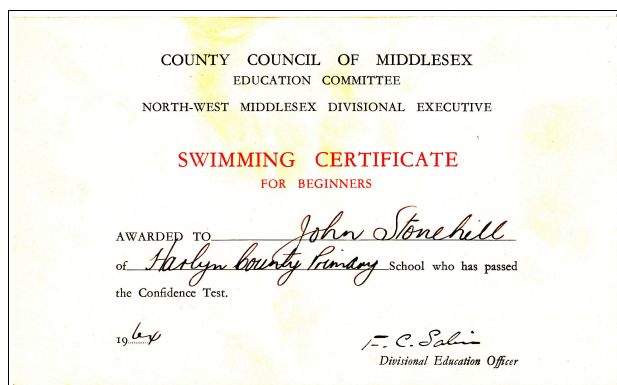
In those days there was free milk issue but I opted out and it was allowed because I lived on a farm and it was assumed that I got all the milk I wanted. Actually I disliked milk and after it had stood outside the classroom for two hours at room temperature hated it even more. We took it in turns to be the milk monitor for a week, responsible, a few minutes before morning break, for opening and putting straws into 30+ bottles of milk, back then it in was $\frac{1}{3}$ pint glass bottles.

I lived in Joel Street, about 3 km from Harlyn, but after finding a live caterpillar in my school dinner one day I opted to go home for lunch and got a lot of exercise walking to and from school. If I ran I could do it in about 10 minutes and during the summer would take a short cut across the farm fields. Very few got driven to school in those days so there were usually others, with or without parents, to walk with. The only one I remember being dropped at school by car was Christian Arkey who started this whole memory trip with the photo of the football team.

Thinking of football revives a memory, probably from around 1962, which was being taken by Mr Thorp to a game against a school in Ruislip. I went with Brian Dimmock and probably Tony Rayment in Mr Thorp's Bubble Car similar to this one>. There were two of us on the back seat and one on the front next to Mr Thorp. The rest of the team (8 players) went with Mr Baker in his car. Those were the days before 'elf & safety'! A

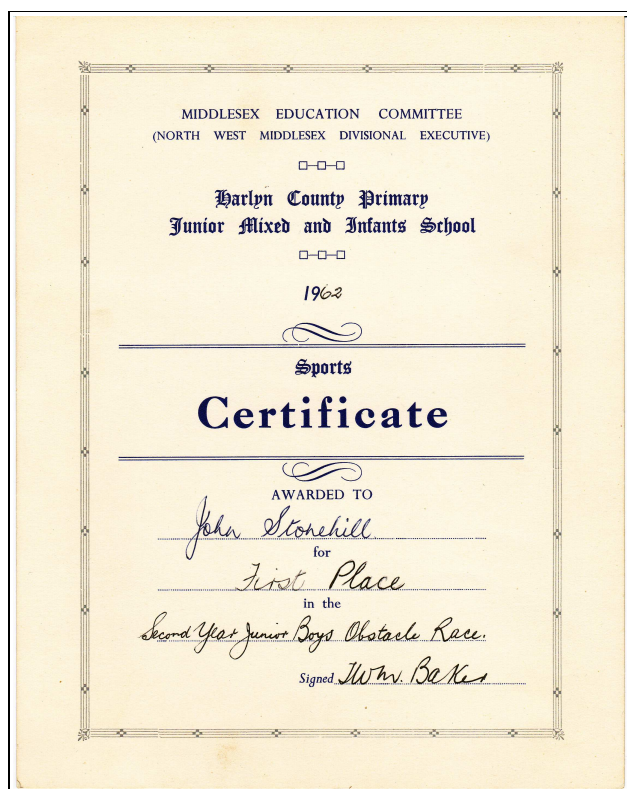
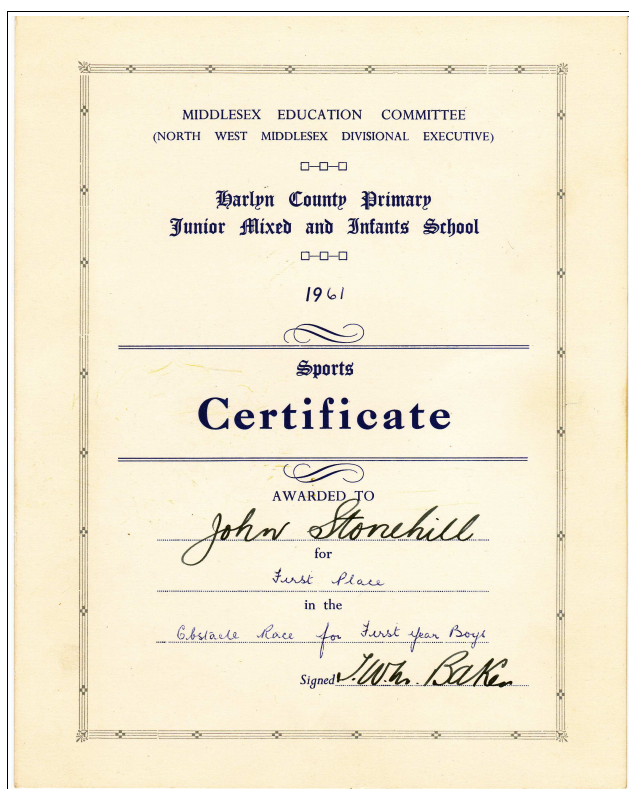


year or so later Mr Thorp changed his car to an Austin Healey Sprite which gave him much more street credibility although we don't call it that in those days..



Swimming - in the days before Highgrove swimming baths, once a week we were ferried over to Uxbridge open air pool seemingly in all weathers. Teaching consisted of being forced into icy cold water and doing whatever was necessary to get to the side before dying of hypothermia. I did get my Swimming Confidence Certificate so I suppose it worked but it was definitely cruel & unusual punishment, the only good part was getting a hot drink afterwards!

Again on the physical side there was the annual sports day, I appear to have specialised in the obstacle race and won two years running.



I don't know what it is like there now but then the school hall trebled up as assembly hall, dining room and gym and we would sometimes have to go and set it up for gym practice immediately after, or even while, the dinner ladies were clearing up after lunch. This meant putting out the ropes and climbing bars, rubber mats, vaulting horse, balance bars, etc. We had to be quiet while doing it because Mr Baker's office was next to the landing overlooking the hall. At the end of term we played 'Pirates' on the gym equipment, a game of tag but you couldn't touch the floor, you had to jump from mat to mat and onto equipment while being chased by whoever was 'it' If they caught you or you touched the floor you were out. I can remember winning one year evading capture by Thelma Stower by climbing a rope to the top and then pulling the rope up after me. The hall was also the venue for other events such as concerts, visiting speakers and on one occasion Coco the Clown, looking him up on the internet shows that he did these visits promoting Road Safety.

Does the 'nit' lady still come to visit? Once a term each class would queue up in turn on the landing outside Mr Baker's office the 'surgery' for this exercise and she would check each of us for lice. There was no privacy so we all knew who had failed inspection.

School Outings – each year we would go on a class outing to places like Windsor Castle, Greenwich, and the Tower of London. Lessons before and after would be themed around these places. For example we would learn about different navigators such as Vasco da Gama and Magellan and what they had discovered and then go to Greenwich to learn about time, latitude and longitude and visit the Cutty Sark. I can remember coming back from one outing sitting on the back seat of the coach with Mr Thorp and, I think, Kevin Huggett who did not stop talking. Mr Thorp turned to Kevin and said 'Why can't you be more like John?' I was well known for not saying anything if I had nothing to say, which was most of the time. Kevin Huggett - I broke his arm practicing judo throws. We had been practicing on the grass but at the end of break I did 'just one one more throw' onto the playground tarmac!



Going back to thoughts of walking to school – we weren't allowed to bring bikes to school except on one occasion in the last year when we took our cycling proficiency test. I still have the certificate but the pennant we proudly clipped to the handlebars of the bike has long disappeared.

Some fellow pupils in my class in no particular order, were:

Brian Dimmock – good all rounder, he was a 'best' friend while at Harlyn but I remember meeting him a few years after we left to go to different schools and I didn't recognise him at all.

Anthony (Tony) Rayment – another 'best' friend for several years, his father worked in Government offices (probably long gone) along Tolcarne Drive near the school. Interestingly I found out only recently that during WW2 these offices had been an outstation of Bletchley Park and operated Turing decoding machines. Tony went on to join the Navy.

Thelma Stower – lived in a flat at the top end of Tolcarne Drive over a car showroom. For a while at the age of about 7 or 8 she was a regular playmate of mine.

Billy Jiggins – academically not the sharpest knife in the drawer and when it came to games time he was out of the classroom like a rocket, Mr Thorp always had to call him back. One day Mr Thorp was suffering from laryngitis but had managed to tape record lessons and instructions before he lost his voice. Sure enough, anticipating the instruction to go and get changed, Billy made a dash

for the door, but Mr Thorp had remembered to record the usual response 'Come back Billy'.

Angela Hurt - who was into the Rolling Stones when the rest of us were just beginning to think the Beatles were quite cool. At around this time my mother had made me a 'Davy Crockett' hat (furry animal skin complete with tail) out of an old fur coat. Angela immediately saw that if you removed the tail it made a passable Beatles wig.

Jody Morris – I think his father was American and Jody left Harlyn to go to the USA before we moved up to the Junior School. What I do remember is Mr Baker setting up a situation in class one day where he appeared to get very, very angry and pick Jody up by his ears to emphasize a point. It was only play acting but it had us fooled – very scary! There would probably be a disciplinary hearing these days. Corporal punishment was allowed back then, I never received it at Harlyn but I think it was only ever dished out by Mr Baker and was 'only' a slap on the thigh. The punishment was probably the embarrassment rather than the pain. I don't remember much else by way of punishment but I guess we received the usual detentions and lines.

I don't know how easy it is to do it these days but I do recall that Mr Baker knew every pupil in the school and their parents. He continued to greet my mother by name for years after I had left Harlyn and Potter Street. Any pupil having learning difficulties would get extra lessons from Mr Baker as he was determined that no child would leave his school unable to read and write. Also, I guess as a way of getting to know us, he would take some classes – I remember him teaching American and possibly Russian history to us. It was the height of the Cold War and shortly after the Cuban Missile crisis so it probably had more relevance than we realised at the time. Mr Baker was also adamant that pupils should not be taken out of school during term time – illness was OK but family holidays were not and he would name and shame parents who took their children away when they should have been at school.

A few other names

Susan Wilde

Ian Fox, another Joel Street resident and the brainbox of the class

Ian Mercer

Jeffrey Walton

Christian Arkey – could speak fluent French at an early age (probably still can!)

Antony Watkins – lived in Tolcarne Drive

Barbara Shepherd – lived down Middleton Drive

Jean Backhouse – ahhh!

Christine Etherington

Diane Coney

Louis Price

Nicholas Woodman

Pete Eagland

Lawrence Scarfe

David Lonsdale

Gordon Wood

Stephen Phillips

Dave King

Alan Moynihan lived on Joel Street, his father was a police dog handler

I can remember some other names but I'm not sure if they were at Harlyn and Potter Street or only Potter Street

Teachers

Mrs Dennis – played the piano in assembly and always struck me as a bit of an ogre but she had a beautiful daughter who came to Harlyn one year as a student teacher. There was another teacher (Miss Mason?) who I think emigrated to Australia around 1962. I do remember Mr Thorp explaining what was meant by an 'hour glass figure' by referring to Miss Mason. Political correctness had not been invented then!

It would be great if this stimulated responses from others who were there at this time and there must have been several other members of the class who I have not remembered – if anyone can fill in the gaps or correct any errors I would be grateful.

John Stonehill