

Hi, Tim,

I'm Michael (now known as Mick) Baker, a former pupil of Priory Boys School. I've just found the website, which has brought back a lot of very happy memories. There's even a photo with me in it, of the school choir. I am in the 3rd. row from the front, 2nd. on the right, with a big beaming smile.

I joined Priory in September, 1963 (blimey, where have those 50 years gone). A lot of things I can remember very well. The first day I went there in 1963 it was pouring with rain, and all the first years had to wait outside until eventually we went to the dining block. I remember going on a camping trip to North Devon by train in July 1964, camping next to a farmhouse in a village by South Molton (but I can't remember which teachers came with us), I remember having to push the old school minibus to get it started, the pale blue Commer with the raised roof, and going to Snowdonia in 1968 with Mr. Mitchell and his brother, with 3 other boys, and some things I can not remember at all. Who was the Technical drawing teacher? I presume Mr. Saunders taught English, I remember, Mr. Mitchell taught maths, Mr. Martin physics (or was it chemistry).

I made so many friends. The first class I was in, 1U, only had a couple of boys from Barton Junior that I knew. The first friend I made there was Glyn Richards (now sadly no longer with us), who lived in Gunville Road, not far from the old railway line. His dad had a chemist shop in Newport, in the High Street, a couple of hundred yards from the Medina Cinema. Then there was David George and Len Hickman. David's parents ran the George Inn. When I went to see him at home the first time, it was my first time in a pub (I've made up for it since). Len's dad was a caretaker at a church at the bottom of the High Street. Then there was my best friend of all, Tony Dart. We were inseparable, until his dad's job took him off the island in 1965. I saw him once since then, he came over for the pop festival in 1969, and came round to see me.

Other friends I made there in later years were Pete Thompson, Tony Morey, Jack Toole, Barry Blackburn, Keith and Andy Woods, Trefor Salter and Brian Newton (he's the tall lad in the back row of the choir). These I all knew when I was a Scout with 1st. Newport (more of which later). Unfortunately, I've lost touch with them all.

What have I done since 1969 since I left Priory Boys School? Immediately after, I went to Highbury College to learn how to be a chef. After two years there, my first job was at the Bugle Hotel, Yarmouth. I moved around a bit then, went to Torquay for Summer 1973 working in a hotel, came back to the island, and worked at the Royal Hotel, Ventnor. Met a girl there, Mo, in 1974, got engaged, and married in 1976 (still married to her). After a couple of other hotel jobs, in Mudeford and Salisbury, changed trades entirely, and went into engineering. I've been a CNC turner for nearly 30 years now. I live in Fareham, but work in Gosport, and I drive through lee on the Solent every day, so I can look over to the island. We had three children, two boys (33 and 29) and a girl (32). As for hobbies, when my youngest son was a Cub Scout, they asked for volunteers, so as I enjoyed my time in Cubs and Scouts with 1st. Newport, thought why not. 20 years later I'm still in charge of a Cub Pack, it keeps my young, intellectually there's not a lot of difference between me and 8 to 10 year old children (a lot of people say that intellectually the Cubs struggle to get down to my level). In October I'm bringing them over to the island (27 at the last count), and we'll be going to Carisbrooke Castle, as well as other places on the island. I will point out to them where Priory Boys School was, where we used to do the cross country runs round the Castle, and most probably bore them silly.

Anyway, got to go. Thanks for the website again, I'm going to show my granddaughter the photo with me in it, she most probably will have a good laugh. The depressing thing is that

she's older now than what I was when that photo was taken. If you're in touch with other Old Prioryians (don't know if that word exists), give them my regards,

Mick Baker

Formerly of 1U, 2U, 3X, 4X, 5X, and 6th year