

Priory Boys School 1963 – 1968 – Ray (Peter) Upton

Like Mick Baker, I was part of the 1963 group in 1 Upper

My classmates

I remember a large number of classmates and we were all part of 1Upper that migrated through the school. They included

David George whose family ran the George Inn and they seemed fabulously wealthy and had triumph herald. He wanted to join the merchant navy – did he?

Tony Dart was the icon of the class – always cool and trendily dressed. He left and I remember he came to visit me when I had moved to Cowes and commuted to PBS. He wore the bells and coloured clothes of a hippy and I was soo jealous of his style.

Peter Capelhorn – always funny and enthusiastic we went to the CGS together

Len Hickman – he always wanted to be a GPO engineer and got a really hard time from the some of the harder kids.

David Scott – his father ran Scott's Fishing shop and he was part of the Upper class but lost contact with him later in PBS. He took piano lessons that seemed sophisticated.

Gavin Hibbs – seemed very sophisticated and he and David Scott were good friends both played the piano but Gavin moved away. He was always bringing his Welsh ancestry to bare in some way.

Phil Connor – he now owns a bar in Chicago and still owes me 10 shillings – he was a lad

Ivor Warlow – always seemed to be one of the smartest of the class and was good at everything or so it seemed

Mike Lyons – he was in the ATC with me and also had a cool elder brother. Mike was one of the in-crowd.

Others who stick in my memory Geoff Wheeler, Andy Cuff (died in a motorbike accident), Morey, a kid called Cedric who always seemed to be in trouble but usually wasn't his fault.

Disappearing Students

There did seem to be some students who just vanished – maybe they moved. I remembered

- Johnny Spiegehalter who was in our group in the first year who always seemed to be top of the class and then wasn't there
- Geoff White – one of the class clowns just seemed to be stop coming
- Paul Longdon – who I did my DfE with and was a fanatic about the navy and he just left but where to

The Teachers

The teachers seemed to fall in two distinct groups. Those who had served in the War and the generation beyond it.

The teachers I recall being taught by included: Bill Boyland (History) Mr Lambert (Geography) Mr. "Killer" Fentum (Sports), Ossie Saunders (English), Mr Wire (RE – one of the new teachers who came through), Madame Way (French and the only woman on site), Mr. May-Millar (French), Mr. Mitchell (Maths), Mr Aldous (Maths – also known as SAS for his continual refrain of side angle side), Mr. Hector (what exactly did he do apart terrorise all of us but rumour has it he did some maths and outdoor activities), Mr. Milton (Moaner Milton to us) was the Biology teacher, Mr. Healing (who always the wore the St. John's Ambulance Brigade uniform – always) Mr. Rann (everyone thought he was way cool), Mr. Stanton(did he teach technical drawing?), Mr. Booth (he was always trying to get a trip to Paris going and wore arm bands on shirts – strange even then), Mr. Sewell who used to help out with games and then Mr. Flux (our Head teacher) who used to walk around in his gown.

Others who I can't put names too are the RE teacher who used to enjoy playing rugby and was always called Holy Joe, the cool English teacher who joined us for Years 4 and 5 and transformed our views on English. He always wore a jacket with the collar turned up and introduced fencing to us.

Ossie Saunders the English teacher well known for his suits. Rumour has it he called his son and daughter Romeo and Juliet. His English lessons were always in the Library and he flew Sunderland Flying Boats during the War from bases in Northern Ireland.

Eric Marston – the music teacher who led the choir and was well known for tantrums including walking off stage whilst conducting the choir because he didn't like the performance. He flew Halifax bombers and took part in the 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne.

Mr. Lambert – the Geography teacher served in the Army and took part in the Italian campaign. His geography lessons were fun but he had a short fuse and I was told that he had run in with a difficult student and they came to blows!

Mr. Stanton had lost a lung and it was during military service I was told

PBS Stuff

Here are some of the incidents I recall...

- Going to London for a weekend on a school trip and getting up early to go to Convent Garden when it was still a market and we stayed in the Church Army Hostel. We met Archbishop Ramsay at London station
- The infamous accident when we let the St. John's Ambulance brigade lot practise on us by pretending that there had been an accident with a minibus and multiple injuries. My enduring image was of about 40 kids running across the grass to assist..scary
- Taking part in some very strange piece of musical about pirates and with a wooden sword hitting Eldridge too hard so he sobbed quietly on the stage in front of the audience
- One of the teachers taking us down to Lugley stream to go exploring – I mean really it was only a trickle and he was wearing bath trunks
- We were once shown a colour film that had been made for PBS and it featured the neatest tidiest student going to PBS all by himself. Whatever happened to the film
- The new arts teacher fashion for making printed ties which was weird as it kept going on and on.....

- Sharing the Canteen with the Grammar School on a shift system and having to eat in tables of 8 with a prefect although the food wasn't bad.
- Mr Wyre and the War on Want work that included a night walk to raise money for charity
- Those awful Cross Country Runs to Carisbrooke Castle and back...well part run but a lot of walking as well

Later career

I left PBS and then went across the road to Carisbrooke Grammar and had two good years there in the sixth form. I went from there to Sussex University and Albion College in the USA. I spent two years in the Royal Hong Kong Police and then came back trained as a teacher and worked for 5 years in Hemel Hempstead before becoming Deputy Head of a school in Herts and then an International School in Madrid. I returned to the UK became Head of a large secondary school in Southend and later another one in Brightlingsea before taking a large community College in Tavistock, Devon. I then became Chief Executive of the Specialist Schools Trust and was then headhunted by the British Council to run their global programmes which I did for four years. I was then appointed Cultural Attaché and Director of the British Council in Thailand (one coup and one tsunami), then similar roles in Nigeria, South China (Hong Kong and Guangzhou) and now currently Director of the British Council in Pakistan with a team of 300.

It's a long way from PBS.

My home is now in Bath though I haven't seen for it 12 years since I have worked overseas continuously since 2003. I would visit Cowes and Newport twice a year to see my mother and father both of who have now passed away. So it's almost time for a visit

An odd moment

One of the slightly surreal moments came when I was secondary Head teacher and my father was ill on the Island. I decided to apply for the job of Head of Ryde School and was down to the final three on the interview when the Deputy Head a Mr. Mitchell –“kept saying you know I am sure we have met where it was. At a conference perhaps?” I didn't have the heart to tell him he had taught me at PBS and the idea of suddenly being Head in Ryde didn't seem that wise – so I withdrew..but very surreal