

Having only recently discovered the Priory Boys website, I would like to share some memories and nostalgia of my time at the school between 1959-64 where I followed the U and X streams after leaving Parkhurst Juniors.

Living in prison quarters at Parkhurst, some of my close neighbours included Derek Steer, Kevin Pass, Paul Hazlehurst, Paul Meredith and Michael Doree. In fact there was quite a contingent of us catching the school bus from Lonsdale Avenue or biked into Carisbrooke.

Spent the first year in 1U but short lived probably due to my poor French results under Mr. May-Miller. My favourite form teacher in year 3 or 4X was by far Jim Boote who also took us for English with such emphasis on "clauses". He was a fun character and coped well with our mischievous pranks. He also introduced us to archery and would set up competitions in front of the teaching block. There were about 30 of us in the class who included Paul Meredith, Christopher Wade, Ronald Hickman, Les Pink, Mark Way, Mike May, Roger Cooper, Patrick Keane, Martin Morey and Richard Coleman. Sorry I have missed out a lot more names ..that age thing!

Over the years I have kept in touch with Paul Meredith who served in the Navy before emigrating to Australia with his brother Mark and live in Brisbane. My wife and I visited him in 1995 on a fly/drive holiday. Paul has made the occasional visit back to the Island to catch up with family and friends. He was also friendly with Vivian Titheridge and Les Bowman. I also kept in contact with Martin Morey who sadly passed away in 2018 with that evil disease MND. On leaving Priory Boys Martin moved north to Tyneside with his parents and later settled in Northumberland with his own family and running his own tech business.

Paul Meredith and I often talk about those striking murals that Mark (and I think Les) painted that were in the school hall. I remember cycling around the Island's perimeter road one weekend with Ron Hickman, participating in the D of E Award Scheme with Martin Morey on our expedition to St Boniface Down. How lucky we were to have such vast open green spaces within the school grounds for our sporting activities including a small swimming pool we shared with the grammar school. Although not a skilled sportsman like Les Pink, I did enjoy our cross-country runs through mud and fords towards Carisbrooke Castle and beyond where a teacher would stop and give you an extra-strong mint on route in colder weather. The sport gave me a good grounding to continue running in future years. Like many, I detested Mr. Hector, but his water sports classes at Gurnard inspired me to continue with sailing and canoeing through later life.

When our class said its goodbyes to Jim Boote, we presented him with a miniature "wellington boot" that we all signed and filled with coppers collected for him.

Bill Boyland taught us History. He would often talk about Terry Perkins (pop singer Craig Douglas) who had studied in his class when the school opened. They tried to get him to perform on stage at one of the Priory Pranks but never happened. When Bill retired, he bought a pub on the quay at East Cowes where his son Peter served me with a pint on a return visit to the Island.

Can't forget to mention Terry Mitchell a young and modern teacher (like Jim Boote) who taught us Maths in the New Block. He certainly instilled into me his teaching methods which have stood the test of time. In the same Block was Mr Rann, who had exceptional building skills and taught us the basics of building construction and woodwork and also involved us in the construction of a GP14 sailing dinghy. There was also a unit in the Block devoted to mechanics and repair of motorbikes which was very popular with students.

There never seemed to be a shortage of school trips, made possible by the enthusiastic teaching staff. A couple of my favourites were the Royal Tournament at Earl's Court and the Gosport Music Festival where we played our instruments and sang in the choir accompanied by Eric Marston (the mad musician). On that particular trip we had arrived by ferry at Portsmouth Harbour in a rough swell and boarded the Gosport ferry which was the size of a tug boat. Crammed into the lower deck we tossed and turned arriving at the festival drenched from head to toe, no health & safety in those days.

Mrs Doherty who was the school secretary and very supportive to staff and pupils alike, sadly died in a road traffic accident on the mainland some years later.

My final year in the 5th form was disrupted by my father's transfer to the Isle of Sheppey where I spent six months at Sheerness school. With no prospect of work on Sheppey, I enrolled as a cadet with the fire service in London and completed a full exciting career over 33 years before retiring to Hampshire by the coast, where I now enjoy taking in splendid views of the IOW and making the occasional visit.

I take pride in what I achieved at Priory Boys with its exceptionally modern teaching facilities and outstanding enthusiastic staff providing such wonderful personal memories and experiences I will never forget.

Would be pleased to hear from anyone in my former classes or neighbours at Parkhurst who remember me to reminisce over those good times we had at the school. Disappointed that I could not attend the past reunions but have thoroughly enjoyed reading your stories on the school website with its various links.

Best wishes to you all and keep safe during the current difficulties.

Steven Aindow

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