

Fyling Hall Alumni Newsletter

No 16

Welcome to the Winter 2014 Newsletter.

Earlier in the autumn I received an email from an ex-pupil which contained an opening paragraph which immediately caught my attention: "For the first time in 50 years or so, I visited Whitby last month, by the Pickering-Whitby line. I had last used that line in, probably, 1930 or 31, when I attended The Abbey School. A year or two later, we moved to Fyling Hall." This from **Michael Igglesden**, now 91, and possibly the only survivor from the Abbey school days. He continued: "At Fyling Hall, girls were admitted when Clare was about 6 years old, and she used to perform on the school's stage! My sister, Patricia, then joined the school and was a great friend of Clare. We saw Clare on the West End stage at some time later, but she had become Headmistress when we last saw her, at the time of my previous visit. Is she still alive?"

I left in 1937 for Rugby, just failing to get the scholarship that Mab hoped I would obtain, after a wonderful existence in and around the school. Following the hunt if they were in the area (lessons in the evening), riding, making camps in the quarry (later learnt that the wood it was in was an arboretum, but to us just climbable trees - or not), cycling unchecked around the near countryside, making little lanterns for use when the power failed, and making 'toboggan' runs down the hill by pouring water over the road to form ice (alienating the farmer below). One remembers these things. I could go on, but I won't." A fascinating tiny glimpse of a lost world. I was able to measure him that **Clare White** was still very much alive and in a follow up email he asked to be remembered to her.

From a very different generation I heard in September from **George Cromack (1984-95)**

"Since 2007 I have been teaching at the University of Hull's Scarborough Campus on various programmes, specialising in Scriptwriting for Film & Television (believe it or not I was a runner up for the 2006 Young Screenwriting International Emmy Award), also developing and tutoring on a variety of Creative Writing and Study Skills based modules. More recently I also began some teaching with the Scarborough & Whitby Branch of the WEA (Workers Education Association) offering Creative Writing and Film Studies courses to the local community. I have just given a (thankfully) well-received paper at Queens Uni Belfast regarding narrative conventions within Folk Horror on film and T.V as part of their 3 day academic conference concerning the sub-genre. In October last year, *Cold Calling*, a short film produced and filmed by Calavera Cafe productions in Manchester but scripted by myself attracted some attention. Aptly enough the film premiered in Whitby at The Bram Stoker International Horror Film Festival. Recognition as a writer of prose fiction is perhaps still wishful thinking at best but a modest Sci-Fi/Horror publication was very keen to include of my work as part of an anthology. Most recently I began working towards a Film Studies based PhD.

My time served at Fylinghall is one of assorted memories, since beginning at the age of 4/5 at Whitehall in Whitby I saw many people come and go (some went then came back again).

Continuing on a loose horror theme, a recent discussion on the size of hail stones (my students like to digress) triggered memories of being sent on a run by Mr Lewis one icy winter's afternoon circa 1991. It being some sort of extreme tackling practice (or something) on the Rugby field myself and several other 'sick, lame & lazy' (in Mr Lewis' words) were to be sent on a run, 'somewhere sheltered' (again in his words). A slightly alternative version of

the then typical 'Swallow Head' run was plotted out. Of course, no tracksuit bottoms were permitted.

The gale force driven hail and sleet that struck our pasty frames as we slogged our way along the exposed hill top beyond Ramsdale and approaching Swallow Head Farm left us so numb with cold down one side no one could attempt to speak until we were half way along the railway line approaching Low Farm. We paused only briefly that afternoon to retrieve our comrades' footwear from the deep rutted trenches of the Ramsdale track.

Upon returning to school to 'check back in' and thaw out it transpired events on the Rugby pitch had ended uncharacteristically early due to the bad weather. Looking back now I console myself that this is the sort of cruel irony I've so often been told builds character."

Reunion 1970s

In November a group from the 1970s organised a reunion at school via Facebook. Several staff from that era came, including **Clare White, John Woolley, Brenda Easton, Paul Blackwell and myself (John Jeakins)**. It was very successful and later a page created by **John Peacock (1971-78)** called Fyling Hall Reunions attracted a huge amount of attention quickly gaining over 500 members anxious to discuss their own times and experiences as well as sharing photographs.

Other News

If you keep an eye on the News pages of the website you will have seen about the appointment of an old boy as Head. **Steven Allen (1989-95)**, who has helped me with these Newsletters over the years, has become the second Head to have been an old boy (the first being, of course, **John Woolley**).

John Woolley has recently written and published a new book. Called 'Walking to Hagetmau' It is about living in de Gaulle's France from 1960 to 1963. Newly married, he and Sylvie spent two years in Aix-en-Provence and a third living in Vichy while he worked at The University of Clermont-Ferrand. They

were learning to live together and he was learning to fit into her country, for which he developed an adding love. The simplicity of their life in their first flat is remarkable and their encounters with self-sufficient peasant farmers records a way of life already beginning to vanish. If you would like a copy then do contact John Woolley at The Garden Flat, 2 Upgang Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 3EA at a cost of £12. If you require it posting the price including p&p is £14. Please make cheques to J.J. Woolley.

In October The Whitby Gazette carried an unusual article about Fyling Hall in that, instead of the regular features of academic and sporting achievement, it was about slugs.... A while back the then biology teacher, Marie Perry, spotted some slugs in the grounds of FHS that looked, to her, unusual. She followed this up and organised expert opinion. It turns out through DNA testing that these slugs come from the Apennine Mountains in Tuscany a marble producing area. The belief is that they could have been imported with the marble fireplaces which were installed by the Barry family who built Fyling Hall soon after 1819 and continued to live there until 1920. So the slugs are likely to have been in the grounds around the house for a very long time before anyone caught on to the fact that they were out of the ordinary. In the article the Deputy Head, **Dr Ian Richardson** said "They are rather large and not very pleasant looking but Fyling Hall will have its own slug. That are just waiting for the scientific name. It is in the early stages and they will have to go through more testing."

