

Clive Grumett recalls friends and masters at Lanfranc:

Peter Boyles

I remember him best, tall, slim with blond hair. If you didn't know him you'd assume he was a bit shy and introvert, which he was, but he was also a gentle soul and was just getting round to girls. He was a good football player and played for the school sometimes. Peter had a good brain, proven by the fact he got the 4th form prizes for maths and metalwork and obtained his RSA Technical Certificate in six subjects in his final 5th year. Peter, Bob Edmeads and myself were quite good friends in the final year and often spent time hanging around together.

His passing was especially sad as his father had died the previous year and Peter was an only son. This is why I believe that Mrs Boyes did not want Peter buried in the mass grave; I think he was buried in his father's grave. I remember meeting Mrs Boyes both at the school in the days before the funeral day and afterwards, when Bob Edmeads and I visited her at her home in Thornton Road. Considering the grief she must have been going through she was nothing but kindness, concerned about how we were feeling and how we were doing.

John Bradbury

John was a boy with a lot of energy and drive. Involved in the school play each year and if I remember rightly play a woman's part one year. He was one of the school prefects. Won the school prize for geography on both the 4th and 5th years and did well academically.

Edward Gilder

A quiet and studious person and rather unassuming but had an enquiring mind. I always remember him asking questions – lots of them. Edward was not very interested in the sports side of life but academically he was good in the area of drawing both artistic and scientifically; he won the Technical Drawing prize in his last year.

David Hendley. An energetic school prefect.

Edward Prosper

Another one of the quieter boys and he was taller than the average. Not really interested in school and didn't do well academically (*in fact I can't see he got any results either for GCE or RSA which seems strange*). He was a school prefect. I have a vague recollection he had only one parent, his mother.

Lawrence Sims

I'm sure he wore glasses and was a character, always smiling and joking about. Not sure if he was a school prefect but as the 5th form (*was he 5th or 4th*) was not large the majority were if they could cope. Another one like Edward Prosper who just seemed to have stayed on at school, but didn't do well in the exams. (*Another one where there is no record of achievement either scholastically or on the sports field*)

The Masters

Beacham (John)

The geography master who was also in charge of the school prefects. A slim and tall man with a direct approach to life, especially discipline which is probably why he was in charge of the prefects. Un-married, but I believe he had a girlfriend, he and Mr Budd were the key masters that arranged the school overseas trip each year. I went on the previous year's trip to Switzerland which was led by both Mr Beacham and Mr Budd. I didn't go on the last years trip simple because my parents couldn't afford it.

He used to take 'detention' and had to deal with some of the more rebellious school boys. I was in detention in my 3rd year for some minor offence when Mr Beacham had to deal with one of the more rebellious guys. They got into quite a slanging match, which I thought was going to lead to blows, and the boy walked out of detention. I remember being quite shaken by the event.

Looking back I realise he was one of my role models in my younger years.

Budd (George)

The chemistry master, a shorter more rotund man with a gentle disposition. Rather a laid back attitude to teaching and difficult to make angry but had the ability to make his subject interesting. I always remember him showing us what happened when you dropped sodium in water (whizzes around in the water like crazy) and put a match to magnesium (burns incandescently and you can't put it out as it generate its' own oxygen).

Mr Budd, Mr Taylor, the Physics master, and the Biology master (whose name I forget), shared the science labs at one end of the school. He and Mr Taylor used to arrange films of a scientific or historical documentary nature at the end of term to fill in the time after exams until school broke-up.

Memories of other Masters

Mr. Fowle - The Headmaster. A kindly man of average height, slightly portly, greying and balding. In my time at Lanfranc he made major improvements to the school in many areas including dress and discipline. When I first went there jeans were accepted as part of school dress and the school was seen as being at the bottom of the league in Croydon. By the time I left it had a better reputation; a small 5th form with academic success, regular school plays, contacts with local industry including the Thornton Heath Rotary Club and certainly a good boxing record. The tragedy must have been a serve blow to him as I believe he retired shortly afterwards and died shortly thereafter.

Norman Cook

The sport or physical education (PE) master who had a no-nonsense approach to us boys. Firm but fair was his approach and many of the boys including the tougher ones respected him. He was behind the school's success in the boxing area and instilled in me an appreciation of the amateur side of the sport especially Amateur Boxing Association events. Medium high fairly well built and pretty fit. He was at the school for 37 years and has a commemorative stone at the mass grave in Croydon Cemetery.

Taylor

Physics master and role model to many of us. He had planned to emigrate to Australia and left the school at the end of the term as I and many on the trip did. I remember a group of us presented him with a leaving present at the school assembly near the end of term. Because of the tragedy he remained in the UK and returned to the school in September 1961. I never knew if he did finally emigrate.

In the darker days that followed the tragedy and after I had started work I visited him at his home a number of times and realise later what a great support he was in helping me put the tragedy in context with life and seeing my way forward without many of the friends I'd expected to share some of the future with.

Gubby

Syd Gubby was the Woodwork master and probably one of the longest serving masters when I started there in 1956. Had a quick temper if you did things wrong, which in carpentry with young boys was not difficult to do. But he also instilled in you the basics of the skill, which I remember to this day. He also treated you differently as you grew up and if you showed aptitude in his subject giving real encouragement and praise. He is also remembered with a commemorative stone at the mass grave in Croydon Cemetery.

Clive Grumett recalls hearing the News of the Incident.

I was on holiday with my family in Sandown on the Isle-of-Wight where we were staying in a typical family guesthouse. That morning I had got up early and gone out for a walk along the cliff tops above Whitecliff Bay as I was a bit restless because I'd left school and was just about to start work as an apprentice. On returning I looked for the paper which was normally delivered to my parent's room but my Dad said it hadn't arrived and he wanted to talk to me. He then took me to a quiet place in the guest house and broke the news to me. It left me numb. Needless to say Dad had hidden the paper until he'd told me. This happened on the Friday and we were returning home on the Saturday.

The days leading up to the funeral

On returning from holiday on the Saturday afternoon there was a note through the letter box and a message with the neighbour to call one of the Masters – Mr Fowler, the deputy head. I was asked to come down to the school straight away as they wanted the help of me and other boys in the arrangements going on there.

The boys and masters coffins had been set out in the school hall. The gym was reserved for flowers from the families and a large marquee had been erected on the front football pitch to receive flowers from the general public. There was a police presence on the main school entrance drive from the Mitcham Road to control people entering the school.

A team of senior boys either who had just left or who were now coming into their final year was set-up and we had a number of jobs assigned to us. If I remember rightly Mr Cook was in charge of us. One of our jobs was to assist the many funeral companies involved in identifying the huge number of floral tributes arriving and getting them direct to either the gym or the marquee.

Another was to help direct families and friends who were visiting the school to wherever they were trying to get to.

One of the more emotional jobs was at the school building main entrance, directing people, opening doors for families and friend and helping where we could. Here you saw real emotion on display including raw grief. For boys of 16 to experience this on such a scale was a challenging time and left indelible memories of one of the faces of a tragedy.

The Funeral- Memories of the funeral

Before the internment in the mass grave at Croydon Cemetery in Thornton Road Thornton Heath there was a service at the Croydon Parish Church in the old town. We had to make our own way to the church and the school contingent met outside the Parish Church on the right hand side. It was a very crowded and it took a while for us all to find one another. Mr Taylor and another master, Mr Hemmings (English Master) were there to shepherd us. We sat in a reserved area on the right side of the church. The middle sections were reserved for the families and other Croydon dignitaries. I don't remember much about the service. (I do still have a copy of the program).

After the service we boarded coaches that had been arranged to transport us to Croydon Cemetery. The roads were lined with people but it was a sad occasion and there was no waving or cheering; these were just people who wanted to pay their respects.

The committal service around the graveside was a sad view, seeing all those coffins lined up in the mass grave. Many of us stood on the mounds of earth that had been dug out from the grave.

After the service was over some of the families and friends stood around talking for a bit but most just moved away to journey home in their small grieving groups. The official part of the funeral was over. The boys who attended were left to our own devices. After saying goodbye to my friends and some of the masters I just walked home up Thornton Road with an overwhelming feeling of anti-climax.

Clive Grumett - My history

Like many of the boys who were leaving school that year I had obtained an apprenticeship with a local company – in my case Baker Instruments in the Purley Way opposite the old gasworks. The Company had been taken over by Vickers but had not yet changed its name. The Company made microscopes, survey instruments and gun-sighting equipment. I served a 5 year apprenticeship gaining an ONC and then an HND in Mechanical Engineering. I took redundancy in 1968 following the election of a Labour government who cut back on armaments and led to the closure of my firms factory. After a nine month period at Kingston Polytechnic obtaining a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering I joined Shell International Petroleum Company in the Exploration & Production division in August 1969 as international staff in the Production Operations function.

Following initial training in The Netherlands, I carried out assignments in the U.K. North Sea, Republic of Gabon, Malaysia, the Sultanate of Oman, Federal Republic of Nigeria and The Netherlands. During this career, spanning 32 ½ years, I gained a

wide and deep knowledge and significant experience in the production area of the oil and gas exploration and production business with assignments in engineering and later in management positions. My final position was as one of the Vice-Presidents in EP.

Along the way I married Liz in 1970 and we have three sons, all who have done well in their chosen careers. Through them we have four grandchildren and counting.

Following my retirement in 2002 I worked as an independent Exploration & Production consultant in the area of oil and gas production and development leading reviews/audits and running specialised events and courses for oil companies. I am now fully retired from work but not from life.

Throughout my life since August 1961 I've often thought that I have had the chance to live a full life, something they did not. It was not the only but it was certainly is one of the drivers in my life.

Some of the boys who didn't go who I remember.

Robert (Bob) Edmeads

The brainy one amongst us achieving 4 GCE's and 7 RSA plus the Mechanical Trades Course prize. We remained friends for a number of years after school but work and private lives took us in different directions and we lost contact.

Barry White

Keen on motorcycles. Lived in a road off Green Lane in Thornton Heath.

Morris Gourd

One of my school friends who lived near Thornton Heath Pond. His mother was the Manageress of the Granada Cinema at the Pond, now being redeveloped after years as a bingo hall.

Barry Read

He left at the end of the 4th form. Always a good sportsman he went on to work with the General Post Office (GPO) as a carpenter. He lived in the same street as me and was one of my best friends during many of my childhood years. Now lives in Wales, but his sister (Pauline) still lives in the Thornton Heath area but I don't have her married name.