

The Breakspear Archives

A Personal Review by Christopher Clarke

I attended Breakspear from 1949 to 1955. My four sisters were also pupils there, Elizabeth from 1941, Helen from 1943, Katherine from 1945 and Jane from 1951 or 1952. Their dates are close estimates based on the difference in our ages so might not be absolutely correct.

The following is based on my inspection of the pictures shown in the Archive and my knowledge, recollection or belief as the case may be.

The first picture I can positively identify with is 1947 unidentified production 2, picture ref BJS470011. Penelope Crankshaw (NB: spelling error) was a contemporary and friend of my elder sisters and now lives in the USA. She had a brother, John, now deceased and younger twin sisters, of whom more later. I say this is the first picture to trigger my memories but I am tempted to ask how reliable are the Gazette references for dating? In the 1945 Nativity, BJS450001, there are some very familiar looking faces but I would have been only one year old at the time!

1949 Football Team: BJS490002

The member of staff, back row left, Mr K.A. Jones. I expect that is already well known.

1949 School Journey: BJS490079

Front row: Mrs Scott in centre (How many years of Breakspear children knew her?) Next but one to the right of her in the picture is my sister Helen. I have spoken to her and she remembers the trip.

1951 May Day Celebrations:

This brings me into my era. In picture BJS510005 I feature on the left of the front row bearing the great cushion (What it was for I have now no idea!) Behind me in the shirt and tie is Chris Marson, a great friend of mine who tragically died very young from early onset Alzheimer's diagnosed in his 40s. Just visible at the very back of the picture is Tommy Dudley. There are several other remembered faces to which I cannot put a name yet.

In picture BJS510006 it is much the same. I am seated second from the left, Chris Marson back row fourth from right and far right of picture is Tommy Dudley. Possibly seated third from right is Caroline Ricards who can also be identified in the previous picture, but I am not certain of the name. I find the Gazette script underneath a little confusing as to names.

1952 Nativity: BJS 520070:

The shepherd dressed up in towels, far right of picture is, I think myself. I recognize the girl in the part of Mary, but no name comes to mind. In the larger picture BJS520069 I am there again far right and the girl seated second to the left of the crib is fairly surely Elizabeth Bull.

1953 – A Coronation Pageant? BJS530001 and BJS530015:

I am finding it difficult to put these two together. The second one, BJS530015 I have an original copy of here. From the left the players are: Pamela Blake, Michael Sylvester, Elizabeth Bull and myself on my knees. I do not recollect any connection with the Coronation. My problem is that in the first picture, BJS530001, I had identified the boy at the right hand end of the second row up on the stage as Michael Sylvester, apparently younger than in the second picture. However I do not recognize any others in the first picture so I may have that wrong. The identification in the second picture is correct.

NOTE: My copy of your BJS530015 carries the Ref No 93912

1953 The Ickenham Tapestry: BJS530009 and BJS530008

Several familiar faces, one or two names. In 530009, front row second from right Kathy Polak I think. In 530008 standing behind tapestry third from left Lesley Kennet and third from right Elizabeth Bull.

1953 Music: BJS530013

Far right (Cello?), Jane Scripps I think.

1954 Open Day:

I agree with your identification of the first set of pictures as The Enchanted Ring, partly because I recognize none of it. I do recognize the next set, for obvious reasons, as The Masque of the Shoe. It may be worth noting here that there were two classes in the top age group, Mr Jones and Mr Cheslyn. It is possible that the division might have been between those expected to go on to Grammar School and those expected to go to Secondary Modern, though as I remember it there was some interchange between those two categories, if not between the two classes. Productions such as these for Open Day would have been produced by the classes separately in many cases I think.

Picture BJS540016: On the left is Michael Sylvester. Second from the right I think is Pamela Blake. The other girls are memories, but no names connected to them.

Picture BJS540017: Second from right, Sheila Gallagher, also an "I think."

Picture BJS540019: Here I am at home and know one or two names. Leading the troop is myself with recorder, not mine I am afraid. I had broken my black Bakelite instrument just before the picture was taken and had to borrow the wooden one found for me by Mrs Scott. Behind me possibly Barbara (surname unknown). Next not known. Third girl Lesley Kennet, fourth unknown and finally Jane Scripps. The taller boy is Andrew Puttick and the other, a familiar face but no name comes to mind.

A Note to consider when dating this picture, bearing in mind the comment on the archive. I left Breakspear in July 1955 so The Masque obviously cannot be later than that. Could it be a year earlier, probably not but just possible.

1954 Nativity Play:

Considering all the pictures first. Mary is Elizabeth Bull. Joseph is Peter Lyons who now lives in France. Only after he had moved there a few years ago did I discover that he had lived for years just over the hill from me here in North Wales. I have an old farmhouse here and he had a similar property only a mile away. I was in the Merchant Navy at the time and we never connected despite having many mutual friends. The Kings are myself, Michael Sylvester and the bearded one, I believe, Anthony Flint. What I do remember is how the Kings entered, processing down the aisle through the audience in the hall to the accompaniment of The Farandole from Bizet's L'Arlesienne suite, a piece of music which stays with me to this day.

BJS540005:

Back row from left. First: Kathy Polak. Third: Barbara ? Fourth: Jane Scripps. Sixth (Joseph): Peter Lyons. Front row Centre (Mary) Elizabeth Bull

BJS540006:

Standing, from left: First: Chris Marson. Second: Paul Beck. Fifth: Peter Lyons. Sixth: Andrew Puttick. Kneeling, from left: Robin Harding. (See more later, 1958)

BJS540021:

Third from Left: Pamela Blake. Joseph and Mary as before.

BJS540022:

Standing Angel, third from left: Sheila Gallagher. Rest unknown or as before.

BJS540023:

Back row centre: Sheila Gallagher.

Second row, from left: 3 Pam Blake. 4 Chris Marson. 7 Andrew Puttick. 8 Self. 9 Peter Lyons. 10 Michael Sylvester. 11 Barbara ? 13 Jane Scripps.

Third row: Kneeling from left: 2 Robin Harding. 3 Paul Beck. Centre Mary: Elizabeth Bull

Front row: To right of crib: Kathy Polak.

Another picture of this Nativity, MCP ref No 100032 will be supplied. See later section.

The Knights' Tapestry:

One of the girls in the pictures would surely be better at this one, however I will add my twopenn'orth

BJS550006:

Back row, left end: Elizabeth Bull

Front row, third from left: Kathy Polak

BJS550007:

Back row: Mrs Scott and Mr K A Jones with half remembered faces in between.

Middle row, from left: 1 Elizabeth Bull. 5 Sheila Gallagher. 7 Lesley Kennet
8 Jane Scripps

Front Row, right hand end: Ann Cornell. Is the second from left Kathy Polak?

Note or Aside: This last name is a memory. I hope I have the identification correct. At the time of the eleven plus exams I was off with, I think, chicken pox – or perhaps some other childhood ill. A special session was arranged in school for a few of us in like circumstances and we took the exam late. It was thought that we should not have lunch with the rest of the school on that day and Ann Cornell's mother offered to give me lunch as there was nobody at my home. (My mother taught for many years at Grange Park in Hayes) So we went down to Ann's home in "The Flats" as they were known to all then, down by Swakeleys (The house). I do not suppose that it will cause any great consternation after almost sixty years but I do remember that the papers we were given could obviously not be the same ones taken by other entrants only a short time before. Some past papers were produced for our use, one of which turned out to be a paper which Mr Jones had used earlier in the term as a practice for us. Fortunately I was confidently expected to pass anyway, on the practice I achieved over 90% so my eventual result was good.

1955 Open Day – The Plays – The Frolicsome Hours:

BJS 550011

Back left standing: Kathy Polak then myself. Again, more remembered faces, no names.

BJS550022:

From the left. Fourth Jane Scripps. Seventh Ann Cornell ? Ninth Elizabeth Bull. Eleventh (Right hand end) Lesley Kennet? The hesitations here are due to the action nature of the photograph.

BJS550021:

Back row from left. 1 Sheila Gallagher. 2 Self. 7 Jane Scripps. 9 Elizabeth Bull. 10 Lesley Kennet. 11 Possibly Anthony Flint – but not much to go on in this picture!

Front Row from left. 1 Kathy Polak.

Other remembered faces, no names or half remembered names.

There is another picture of this production, Middlesex County Press Ref No 102310 which I will supply. See later section.

I will now skip several years in the archive as I had left Breakspear and gone away to Christ's Hospital so my contact was minimal. However I can add a little from my sister Jane's time.

1958 4th Year Photograph:

My youngest sister Jane is in this picture. Jane died some fifteen years ago of Breast Cancer. In the period following her diagnosis she worked tirelessly for the Charity Breakthrough Breast Cancer and raised a great deal of money for them. As she said to me once she found that in her circumstances she could take on virtually anything to achieve her ends. As a result she managed to do such things as obtain from the Post Office the use of closed offices free of charge to hold fund raising events. In the end she received the Essex County Woman of the Year Award, which, at the ceremony after her death was accepted by her then teenage daughter.

My brother-in-law passed to me various pictures and memorabilia, amongst which is a copy of this 1958 picture. Jane constructed a key giving the names of almost everyone in it. The easiest thing for me to do is to send you a scan of the original, though please ask if you want it transcribed or in any other form. In the picture second row from front, second from left, "Me" is my sister Jane. Also of some interest are, in the front row centre and the second row in front of Mr K Jones, the Crankshaw twins, definitely not identical! See my note on "1947 unidentified" for their sister Penny. To the right of Mr S Jones is Andrew Harding. He was the youngest of, I think, six brothers who paralleled my own family. Robin was in the same year as me and Andrew, in my sister Jane's year, went on to Christ's Hospital where he landed in the same House as me. I think I am right in saying that all the brothers except Andrew were diagnosed with MS and died young. I understand that knowing his family history influenced Andrew's decision to study medicine, in which field he has achieved some distinction.

Additions:

I think I can add a little to your store from my own collection. I will try scanning them and sending them to you by e-mail. I expect your system can cope, living where I do my broadband connection is barely faster than pigeon post!



MCP Ref No 100032 1954 Nativity Play

Standing from left: Second Self. Third Anthony Flint. Fourth Peter Lyons
Fifth Michael Sylvester

Seated centre: Elizabeth Bull



MCP Ref 102310 1955 Open Day – Plays – The Frolicsome Hours

Rear from Left: 1 Sheila Gallagher. 3 Jane Scripps. 4 Lesley Kennet. 5 Elizabeth Bull

Seated/kneeling: 2 Kathy Polak. 4 Self.



MCP Ref No 102469

Presumably a Class picture from 1955 or possibly 1954.

Back row from left: 2 Elizabeth Bull. 3 Jane Scripps. 4 Maureen ? 5 Lesley Kennet.

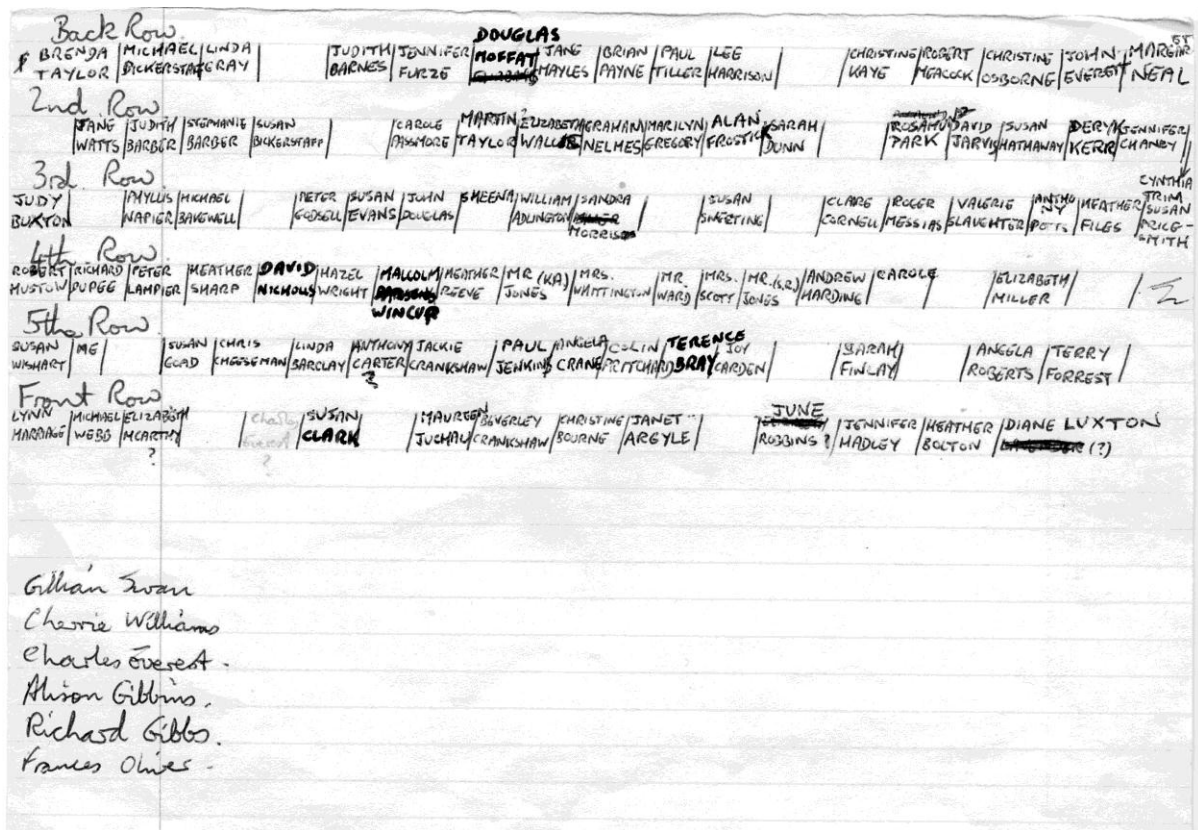
11 Andrew Puttick. 12 Michael Sylvester.

Middle Row: 1 Kathy Polak. 5 ? Wilson 11 Ann Cornell. 12 Anthony Flint

Front Row To the right of Mrs Scott: 2 Robin Harding. 3 Paul Beck. 5 Self



This picture already appears in your archive as BS580011. Below is the key written by my sister Jane. I presume that the group of names beneath are those she knew existed but was unable to attach to a figure.



If you would like me to transcribe the above I will be happy to do so. Enlargement does make it more easily legible.

NOTE: The pictures in this section will also be sent as separate attachments so as to sure that you can manipulate them if required.

CONCLUSION

Reading this through I am now even more conscious of my doubts when putting names to some faces. I have therefore removed some identifications made in my first efforts and tried to indicate where my doubts are greatest. I am also struck by the number of times when a notable (to me anyway) memory involves those of my school contemporaries who have died. Inevitable I suppose.

I hope that some of this will prove useful or interesting to someone. I will also be glad if anyone can correct my undoubted mistakes. As I have said elsewhere please do feel free to ignore or delete any parts which are not of use.

I have one or two more pictures, undoubtedly taken at Breakspear, chiefly from my sister Jane's time. Some have Middlesex County Press reference numbers or a date but there is no information to connect them with a particular event. They are perhaps more of a Clarke family archive than a School one, though other participating pupils do appear. An early colour example in one case. If they might be of any interest I will supply them.