

Ernie Rayner

1962 - 1968

LIFE AT REEDHAM 1962 - 1968

I can still picture my first day. The bus ride from home to Kingston, then on the 725 Green Line coach to Wallington Green and finally the 234A to Old Lodge Lane. In those days I was a bus enthusiast (something that to this day has never really left me) and this is why the journey is so clear. That walk up the drive and then those steps! The saddest bit when you see your mum walk out the door and know you're on your own. I joined at the start of the first year in Seniors (1962 when we were taught in the main building.

I remember having to march into the dining room for breakfast, which consisted of bacon and fried bread, or perhaps boiled eggs. Fish- fingers, fish- cakes or beef burgers often made up the variety of evening meals, I think.

Thursday was parcel day - tuck and pocket money perhaps? I liked getting parcels because mum would sometimes send me comics and the odd Mars bar and Crunchie which went into your tuck box. On certain days the whistle would blow in the playground and the shout, "Tuck!" would come from the master's lips. Then we would charge through the playroom to the masters' room, eager to grab our favourite sweets. On Saturdays we would get an opportunity to buy tuck from the tuck shop and the monies would be deducted from our money-box accounts. I have a memory of the masters reading out a list of those people who had been sent money, together with the amounts. All to the envy of some of us!

I was seldom if ever called upon to play football or cricket, other than in the dormitory competitions. I did join the scout troop and I can lay claim to being a member of the 23rd Purley Senior Scouts and to going on that famous trip to Sweden and Denmark about which much has been written on the website.

Other memorable events : Visiting days. Home alones, leaving at 10.30, the London Bridge party leaving earlier than that. Being given my first pair of long trousers at 14! The film shows given by the Variety Club on Fridays. Festival Day. The Gang Show organised by Brian Voigt. Learning to play the guitar with the encouragement of David Connor. Developing an appreciation for the pipe organ through Ian McDonald when he played in the chapel. Learning to ride a Lambretta with Trevor Harriman. The trips to Littlehampton on the Orange Luxury Coaches, and Christmas carol-singing collections on cold winter nights in the Coulsdon area.

On reflection, my days were happy ones, even though my mother died whilst I was at Reedham. Being 16 at the time and with no other family, I stayed at Reedham over the 1967 Christmas holidays under the care of Mr and Mrs Knight. I was eventually placed with a good family in 1968 and I still see them regularly to this day.. Like many colleagues, I have not stayed close to Reedham since leaving and have not been active as far as ROSA is concerned and so I am pleased to be able to make some contribution now. I am sure we could all write a book on our experiences. To some people I'm sure Reedham died when the building was pulled down. But we know that is not the case and the Reedham Trust proves the point.