

# Old Beaumontians Newsletter

March 2007

Issue 50

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## Editor's Comments

### Newsletters

Our thanks go to Beaumont School Reprographics Department for their continuing support in printing and collating our newsletters. With this March edition, we have changed the format, which we think, has improved the presentation and so we will continue with this layout for future editions. We hope you will agree it is far better than the old "pink un," which has been with us for many years.

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### Old Beaumontians web page.

In future you will be able to view details of the Old Beaumontians on the World Wide Web by accessing the Beaumont School web site ([www.beaumontschool.com](http://www.beaumontschool.com)). Having entered the site, click on the tab **about us** scroll down and find **Old Beaumontians**; click on this tab and you will find details of the OB's. There is a short paragraph describing the history and objectives of the Old Beaumontians, plus an edition of this and a previous newsletter (December 2006), a membership application form, and details of future events, (in particular that of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion). Shown on the facing page of the site is a picture of five ex Beaumont girls, who attended the 1988 (50<sup>th</sup> school anniversary) reunion. Thanks to Mary Rickard who sent us the photograph.

We would like to encourage you to use the site, as it provides details of the happenings at Beaumont School and of the OB's.

We also offer a word of thanks to the head teacher (Mrs Hitch), Jackie Turner and Kevin Taylor who have given their time and support in setting up this OB's web page.

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### Amy Houghton

It is with sadness that we record the death of Amy Houghton. Amy was a founder member of the Old Beaumontians and served on the committee for many years. Amy attended Beaumont school and left in 1952.

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### Memory Lane

I was prompted by a letter, which appeared in the January edition of Beaumont Life, sent in by Bill Nicholson, who now lives in Devon. Bill reflected on his time (1956 / 1958) spent as a pupil at Beaumont School and also on his career in the Police Force. With the contents of this letter in mind, can you tax your memory and let us have **your** recollections of your days at Beaumont? What about school dinners, were they as bad as we are given to believe? Playground games, what sort of things did you and your friends get up to? Was it playing?

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Marbles, tag “flicking” cigarette cards, or playing with a skipping rope? Were you invited to stand in fear and trepidation outside Miss Ellis’s office, sent there for some minor indiscretion, like being caught passing a note to one of the boys! Did you go for swimming lessons at the open-air pool in Cotton Mill Lane? After school in the evening did you switch on the radio and tune in to “Dick Barton Special Agent.” Having left school, did you become an apprentice at a local company, continue in further education, or work in shop, office or factory? We would like to hear from those of you who went into the armed forces, either being “called up” for National Service, or sign on for a career in the Navy, Army or the Royal Air Force. Did you see active service?

Send your memories to Don Lowe: - email [djlowe@ntlworld.com](mailto:djlowe@ntlworld.com)

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## Presentation shields

You may recall that the OB’s have been asked to sponsor a number of trophies for pupils at the school. A picture of one such proposed trophy is shown below. Should you have alternative suggestions please contact us!



Presentation shield

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## Your Letters

Dear Don (*An e-mail from Sylvia Turner*).

Thanks Don I received the Old Beaumontians Newsletter and found it quite interesting as I used to be in the same class at school as Janet Breed (Jean Shields sister). Jean’s memories of Beaumont Girls School are exactly mine with the cooking/laundry and the sewing of our gingham dresses, the cooking of dinners by the time I was there we were cooking for the teachers and not parents.

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Miss Sparks, Miss Flegg, Miss Pickering and Miss Ellis the headmistress were all part of my schooling and I can remember vividly the lovely lavender garden that Miss Flegg was so proud of.

Nice to hear of my old stomping ground Hill End hospital etc. as I used to live in Camp Road and remember the servicemen at Hill End in fact they used to pass by and give us children chewing gum!

Best wishes

Sylvia

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Hello Don, *(An e-mail from Mike Neighbour).*

Many thanks for the December Newsletter.

I was most interested in the article about the GN branch railway line, which ran through Fleetville, Oaklands and Smallford. I was only about eight when the passenger service finished in 1951, but I do remember just one short passenger train.

After that there was some freight and scrap, for the following ten years or so. My vantage point was invariably the Camp side of the humpback bridge in Ashley Road. Beside the bridge was an old iron railing with a gap in it. I could sit at the top of the cutting if I heard a train coming. I was occasionally lucky to see a train trundle over the bridge on Sutton Road and unlucky to have to walk under it if the weather had been bad and the road flooded, which it invariably did.

The crossing, which was mentioned, is rather an oddity. I remember it with gates (was I mistaken?) but I recall no gatekeeper's house and the station was in fact a halt (see below) so, who could have opened and closed the gates? Perhaps the road user had to do so!

Hill End halt was built when the hospital was opened in 1899 and like other halts on the line would only stop by request, in this case by the staff and visitors to the hospital. The siding was a track, which led directly into the Hospital grounds on the St. Albans side of the halt so that coal and stores could be offloaded.

The de Hav. workers probably used the only private halt on the line at Lemsford Road. As far as the timetable was concerned it didn't exist. The remnants of all these halts and stations are still visible in some form or other along the Alban Way.

This myth about pennies on the line: I heard so many so-called accounts, especially at Beaumont, that kids must have been queuing up with coppers at some vantage point or other. I remember buying (play - ground Trade you know) a bent penny from someone, which also entitled me to re-tell a version of the story which went with it! That was the nearest I got to placing anything on the track.

Cripes, my parents would have had a fit! I probably sold the coin again later- along with the story- for a small profit, or bartered it for an object of more immediate interest.

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Incidentally, while London and Middlesex authorities built the other mental institutions, Hill End was Hertfordshire's own. During WW2 the hospital was also the evacuated home of departments from Barts Hospital; my aunt was a Barts nurse there at the time and took part in some of the plays and shows which were performed there. It was Napsbury Hospital, which doubled up as a military hospital during both world wars, although there were possibly some military personnel at Hill End too.

As youngsters living in St.Albans didn't we learn and perpetuate a warped impression of the work, which went on in these monolithic institutions; using the names of these places as terms of abuse to those of our peers who arbitrarily we didn't care for; Hill End and Cell Barnes were quite mild in the abuse context, but Napsbury was simply beyond the pail! As adults we may now be ashamed and rather embarrassed, especially if we come across people who were long-term patients and hear their stories. As children we knew no better of course.

*Mike Neighbour*

**Footnote.** From my recollections Mike, there were gates at the Hill End level crossing and a gatekeeper who had a hut sited on the hospital side of the crossing. Don.

Can anyone else contribute to this ongoing article? If so please E-mail [djlowe@ntlworld.com](mailto:djlowe@ntlworld.com)

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We have recently heard from Ann Bailey that the old Central School building in Hatfield Road (refer to December issue 49 of OB's newsletter) is still in use. Ann does not however know what purpose it serves! Any ideas?

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Dear Mr Lowe (*Writes George Hooker from St. Albans*)

Please note my "new address" as above, having moved from Hazelmere Road after some 47 years. I wish to thank you for the Newsletters that I have received during the past months.

I see that you are interested in hearing from pupils that attended at the opening of Beaumont in 1938. I was part of the 1<sup>st</sup> year intake, as to make up class numbers the final date for reaching the age of eleven was extended from 31<sup>st</sup> August until 31<sup>st</sup> December. Thus I started at the age of ten years eleven months completed three full years finishing in December 1941.

In issue 49 Jean Shield mentions the carrying of gas masks during the war, which fortunately we did not have to use. However we did spend a lot of the time in the Air Raid Shelters whenever the sirens sounded. Also a lenient approach was taken to arriving at school in the morning, if there had been a long warning during the previous night. This was probably taken advantage of more by the boys as we used to stay up to watch the fires burning in London and follow the Search Lights and Ack Ack fire as they searched for German bombers.

There was also digging for Victory when we grew the vegetables for the school meals and potato picking on the local farms.

I am enclosing a cheque for £20 to help with your costs.

*G.H Hooker*

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## **Beaumont School 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion**

Discussions with head teacher (Mrs Elizabeth Hitch) have confirmed the date for a celebration reunion; it is to be held at Beaumont School on **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2008**.

The reunion will be open to all ex staff and pupils who attended Beaumont School since it's opening in 1938.

You can help by letting us borrow your old photographs, and any other items of memorabilia that you might have tucked away in the attic or cupboard. Please contact any member of the OB's committee or Jackie Turner at the school.

Although the cost of reunion has not at this stage been seriously considered, it has however been suggested that thought be given to fund raising to off set some of the expense. We would be grateful for suggestions!

As the both the School and the Old Beaumontians want to make this day, a day to remember, please make a note of the date and publicise it wherever possible!

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## **Extracts from Beaumont Life (December 2006)**

Uniform. Many students wear scarves to school in the cold weather, which should be plain black, plain maroon or the new school scarf. Many schools in the area now have their own scarves and the Beaumont scarf (£8.50, black with an embroidered emblem) can be bought from Stevensons. Please ensure that other scarves are not worn from January.

## **From the Head Teacher**

News has just come through that Beaumont has successfully been authorised to teach the new International Baccalaureate from September 2007.

At the end of November one of our caretakers, Ray Crook, retired after nine years at Beaumont; he will be greatly missed. He was responsible for the wonderful gardens, which help make our school environment so pleasant.

## **Extracts from Beaumont Life (January 2007)**

## **From the Head teacher**

I am delighted to be able to tell you that we are now members of the "Most Improved Schools Club" within the Specialist schools and Academies Trust. This is the group of specialist schools, which have improved results of 10 points or more for 2006 versus 2003 5+A\* -C.

This is due to the very hard work put in by students and staff at Beaumont and all the Beaumont Community can take pride in this membership.

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### **OLD BEAUMONTIANS COMMITTEE**

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### **NEWSLETTER**

The next Newsletter will be published June 2007. Please let me have your contributions by mid May.  
Don Lowe [djlowe@ntlworld.com](mailto:djlowe@ntlworld.com)

### **EMAIL ADDRESSES**

If you have an email address or have recently changed it please let us know!