

TRINITY MEMORIES by Ray Liffen (1955-1960)

GETTING TO SCHOOL

Starting at Trinity in the autumn of 1955 meant there were three ways to get to this new school from my home in Bounds Green – the trolleybuses, my bike and, of course, walking. Mostly I used my bike, but the trolleybuses offered shelter on rainy days. The disadvantage was that if the lower saloon was full it meant upstairs and the foul reek of tobacco smoke. I've never smoked and my dislike probably started with the upper decks of buses and trolleybuses.



Incidentally, do others remember how the 521 and 621 trolleybuses, which came from Holborn and terminated at North Finchley, managed the left turn from Jolly Butchers Hill into Bounds Green Road and past the school? As the trolleybus approached the junction, the driver would slow, the conductor would jump off the rear platform, run to a particular support post for the trolleybus wires, and pull down a handle attached to a dangling cable. This 'changed the points' and the bus proceeded round the corner. Once past the junction, the conductor released the spring-loaded cable, ran back, and jumped back on the trolleybus which then picked up speed. This was happening many times an hour, day in and day out, but it always fascinated me when I saw it.

CALLING THE REGISTER

Here are the 28 pupils that were in my class when we were 5A. They may have varied slightly over the five years I was at Trinity but other members of the '55 intake should recognise many of the names.

Janet Andrew	Nigel Blythe
Jacqueline Bilyard	Norman Fahey
Mary Davis	Martin Gray
Janet Habgood	Colin D. Hawkins
Anne Hardiment	Raymond Liffen
Ann Harris	Alan E. Locke
Angela King	John O'Hara
Diana Mayes	Alan Pegrum
Valerie Player	John Pelling
Madelaine Rossiter	Richard Potter
Linda Saville	David Salvatore
Pat Wakeling	Harry Shawyer
Eileen Williams	Ian Tarling
Barbara Wines	David Tickner

Our teacher in the first year was Mrs Naish, who taught Maths. She and Mr Hamshire ran the Maths Society and it was through this that I visited the BBC's Lime Grove Studios. Little did I know that eight years later I would join the staff of the BBC and work in those very same studios.

THE MATHS SOCIETY VISITS THE BBC

At that time there was a programme on Children's Television called 'All Your Own', Introduced by Huw Weldon, it featured items about children and the things that they'd done.

One short clip from that programme in 1957 has achieved cult status because it features Jimmy Page, most famous for his time in Led Zeppelin, playing guitar in a skiffle group but telling Huw that when he grew up he wanted to do biological research!

The Maths Society visit on Sunday April 8th 1956 came about because, as an 'aid to maths learning', a puppet play set in space had been devised. I don't know how the programme learned of it, but this clip from the 'Wood Green Observer' shows Nigel Blyth demonstrating one of the puppets to a researcher.. I'm afraid I can't identify any of the other people in the picture.

mers Green.

SPACESHIP PUPPETS ON TELEVISION



Photo: Tudor Press, 5 Tudor Chambers, N.22

SEVEN pupils of Trinity Grammar School will go before the television cameras on Sunday to be interviewed by Mr. Hugh Wheldon in the B.B.C. programme "All Your Own" in which they will give an excerpt from their puppet show "From Trinity to Infinity."

The play, written by mathematics teacher Mrs. June Naish and produced by Mr. Gwilym Morris, a master, was seen by a television producer last year and liked by him, but it was only three weeks ago that Mr. Morris heard that the play was to be televised.

The puppeteers, all of whom manufactured their own glove puppets, are Patricia Wynne aged 15, Janet Kiedyk aged 14, Marion Howlett aged 14, Laurence Brown aged 14, Colin Westney aged 14, and Nigel Blyth aged 12. Hazel Martinelli aged 13, is the announcer.

In addition to operating the puppets the children also provide their own animation.

The story of the play is what happens when two spaceships land on the planet of Infinity. The spacemen, who have all come from earth, have names such as Mr. Cube or Mr. Rectangular Prism, and they are made with heads corresponding in shape to their names.

The very humorous dialogue is couched almost exclusively in mathematical terms, but in such a way that one does not need a specialised knowledge to understand it.

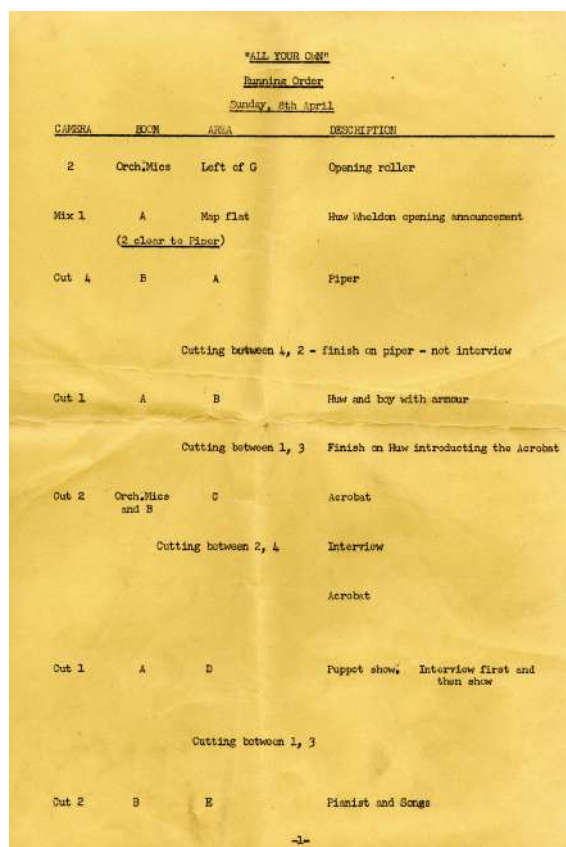
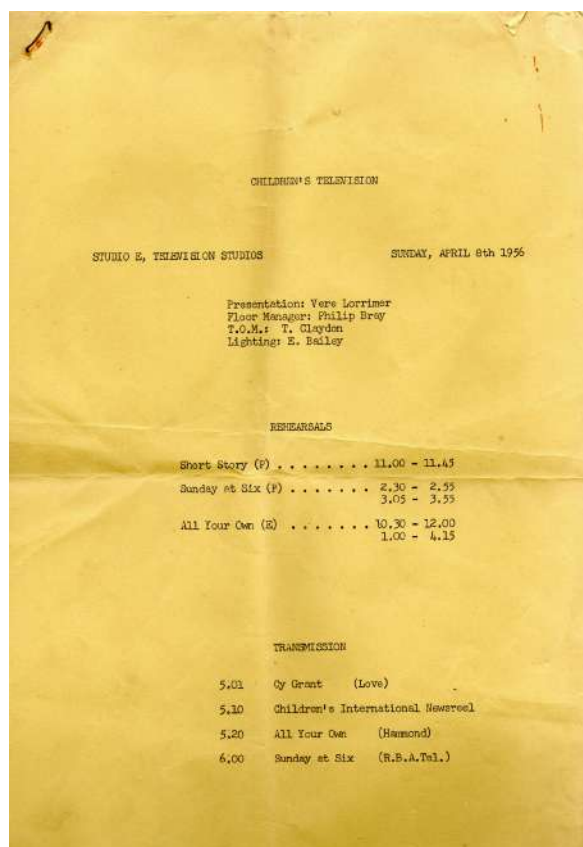
The clever designing of the sets and properties, including a spaceship, was done by 16-years-old Peter Kenway, who is also stage manager.

Television viewers will see scene two of the play.

The children will meet Mr. Wheldon for the first time tomorrow (Saturday), when he will get them to tell him about themselves. The television cameras, however, will be entirely unscripted and Mr. Wheldon may ask the children any questions he chooses.

The picture above shows four of the children showing their puppets to television talent scout Mrs. Symont when she visited Trinity school for a rehearsal of the show last week. Standing behind the children is Mrs. Naish.

I was a 'first reserve' (in case someone got sick) so went to the studios as part of the group but did not get to appear on the programme. We travelled from Wood Green using the Underground (Lime Grove Studios were in Shepherd's Bush, West London). On the day I managed to pick up a copy of the script.



The script tells me that also on the show that day were a piper, a boy with armour, an acrobat, a pianist with two songs, a woodwork boy and a drummer boy. Quite a busy programme!

DAY TRIP TO HAVERING-ATTE-BOWER

Under Mrs Naish, our maths education certainly had a practical side. In the summer term we had a day trip to, of all places, the village of Havering-atte-Bower in Essex (now part of the London Borough of Havering). We had to measure distances and buildings. Why that particular village was chosen I'm not sure, but it was a memorable day out.

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

A few months earlier in 1956, on Thursday and Friday the 15th and 16th of March, the school put on three one-act plays in the new school hall in White Hart Lane. I was 'Thunder' in *The Play Of The Weather* by G. Mountford Williams, with a cast from the first years. The other plays were *Admetus* by Arthur Swinson, with a cast from the fifth form, and *Jenny In The Orchard* by Charles Thomas, which was performed by four members of staff, Edith Munro, Myra Stanbury, Raymond Sieman and Gwilym Morris . All the plays were produced by Gwilym Morris.

Costumes (for ADMETUS) and Wigs ... CHAS. FOX, LTD.
 Costumes for remaining plays designed and made by ... MISS E. MUNRO
 Assisted by MISS M. JONES and MISS E. KAY.
 Settings designed, constructed, and painted by MR. M. PENNEY
 Assisted by MR. G. H. WILLIAMS, MR. A. COOPER, MR. L. LAMACRAFT, D. WILLIAMS and M. REDRUPP.
 Furniture kindly loaned by ... MR. W. G. OWEN, Quality Furnishers, Wood Green.
 Garden seat kindly loaned by Park House Stores, New Southgate
 Garden chairs kindly loaned by L. C. Dept., High Rd. Wood Green
 Make-up ... MR. R. A. WEAVER and MRS. M. BAKER
 Business Manager ... MR. E. WILLIAMS
 Assisted by MR. P. HAMSHERE.
 Box Office Assistants:
 June Croft, Christine Patman, Beryl Cullen, B. Bower, D. Crapps.
 Programme Sellers:
 Beryl Higgs, Grace Breed, Carole Smith, Pat Gibbs, Eileen Marriott, Doris MacDonald, Kathleen Weedon, Margaret Walker, Jeanne Turney.
 Stage Managers ... M. REDRUPP AND D. WILLIAMS
 Back-stage Assistants:
 Mrs. M. Collins, Mr. G. Wood, E. Piper, J. Hagarty, Thelma Hodgson, Margaret Stevens, L. Manning, R. Doherty, G. Rees.
 Lighting and special effects supervised by MR. E. STRANGE
 Extra Electrical Equipment by STRAND ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING CO., LTD.

The Producer wishes to thank all who have co-operated in the production of the plays and all who have attended the performances.

TRINITY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

PRESENTS

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY
 MARCH 15 and 16, 1956, at 7.45 p.m.

WHITE HART LANE
 NEW SCHOOL HALL

THE PLAY OF THE WEATHER
 ADMETUS
 JENNY IN THE ORCHARD

THE PLAY OF THE WEATHER

BY
 G. MOUNTFORD WILLIAMS

CAST:

(Where two players are shown for one character, the first-named will appear on Thursday).

CHAIRMAN OF UNIVERSAL WEATHER, LTD.	Raymond Sieman
FROST	Roger Faulkner
RAIN	Janet Welch
SNOW	Victoria Clark
HAIL	Lee Harvey
FOG	Raymond Conner
THUNDER	Raymond Liffen
LIGHTNING	Anne Strowger
WIND	Elaine Worby
RAINBOW	Martin Gray
SUN	Sonia Adams
1st CLOUD	Mary Martin
2nd CLOUD	David Crease
3rd CLOUD	Patsy Wilton
B.B.C. ANNOUNCER	Terry Scott
CRICKETER	Valerie Player
UMBRELLA MAN	Julie Hassall
NEWS-REEL MAN	Angela Foster
WASHERWOMAN	Margreen Burton
1st BOY	Nigel Blyth
2nd BOY	John Mercer
	Keith Sellwood
	Peter Haines
	Pauline Busby
	Margaret Stevens
	Anthony Rawle
	Tony Dimitriadis
	John Baxter
	Richard Carr

Understudies: Julia Waite, Josephine Moss, Michael Hardcastle.

SCENE: Up in the Clouds.

TIME: The present.

ADMETUS

BY
 ARTHUR SWINSON

CAST:

(In order of appearance)

ADMETUS. King of Thessaly	Anthony Gale
CLEON. His servant	Kemal Ghafur
ALCESTIS. His fiancée	Anita Phillips
	Jill Sims
APOLLO. God of Music, Prophecy, and Archery	David Howes
A SENTRY	David Battlebury
	Anthony Jones
PERES. Father of Admetus	Colin Hale
CLYMENE. Mother of Admetus	Carol Billen
HERCULES	Alan Stokes
A PRIESTESS OF DEATH	Elaine Hutchinson
A MAID TO ALCESTIS	Jill Sims
	Anita Phillips

NOTE—At the time of the play, Apollo, who had offended Jupiter, was condemned to spend one year on Earth, tending Pheres' herds.

SCENE: A room in the palace of Admetus at Pheres.

JENNY IN THE ORCHARD

BY
 CHARLES THOMAS

CAST:

(In order of appearance)

MRS. ARTHUR CRANLEIGH	Edith Munro
THOMAS EDENFOLD	Gwilym Morris
JENNY HEYCROFT	Myra Stanbury
TOM EDENFOLD	Raymond Sieman

NOTE—This play is included in J. W. Marriott's selection of "The Best One-Act Plays of 1946-47."

The plays produced by GWILYM MORRIS.

SCHOOLWORK, SPORT AND GIRLS

As the years went by and I moved up the school, memories of the lessons and the staff who taught us are, I have to say, very few now. The subjects were there to be learnt, homework had to be done and exams appeared at intervals. My class stayed together by and large, with some showing promise in particular skills. Johnny Pelling, for example, was an excellent footballer and it was said that Tottenham Hotspur had their eye on him.

For me, P.E. and sport were things to be endured rather than enjoyed. This included swimming, which took place, as I remember, at a baths in Western Road, Wood Green, near to Barratt's sweet factory where they made licorice allsorts.

Perhaps because I only had brothers, I found the girls in the class somehow unattainable. Although I had friends among the boys, it wasn't until I went to college that I started having girlfriends.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

To supplement pocket money, I started doing a paper round as soon as I reached 13, which I think was the legal age at that time. It meant getting up very early (a habit which has never left me and which has come in handy in later life), cycling round to Mr Hunt's 'News Con Tob' (Newspapers, Confectionary and Tobacco) in Fletton Road, Bowes Park, collecting a large sack of newspapers and delivering them to nearby roads before returning home to get ready for school. Don't bother trying to locate Mr Hunt's shop now (it stood opposite the 'tin chapel') – it has been converted to a house.

Having learned to cycle at an early age, my brothers and I were allowed a freedom which seems extraordinary to many of today's parents. My bikes were just ordinary boy's bikes with no gears but they took me far and wide over North London - Potter's Bar or Chingford, for example. Cycling was normal in our family. Dad cycled to work every day from Bounds Green to Peckham and later to Camberwell, In 1957 the whole family cycled to a holiday camp near Sevenoaks in Kent (including travelling through the Blackwall Tunnel which at that time was single-bore with two-way traffic). The next year I did the same journey independently.

That same freedom extended to the Underground system. Living near Bounds Green Station on the Piccadilly Line meant that London was open to me for the price of a child's ticket. Here are a selection of programmes from the 'National Schoolboys Own Exhibition' (held in the Horticultural Halls, near Victoria) and the 'Hulton's Boys and Girls Exhibition' (held at Olympia) which I went to on my own.



My parents did not get a TV until 1958, so there was only BBC radio to listen to around the house when I started at Trinity. Those in charge of music at the BBC had only limited 'needle time' (for playing records) and, in any case, they ignored the rock'n'roll which was beginning to creep into the hit parade so it was not until the summer of 1956 when I heard *Rock Around The Clock* played on a wind-up gramophone at summer camp and I realised what I had been missing.

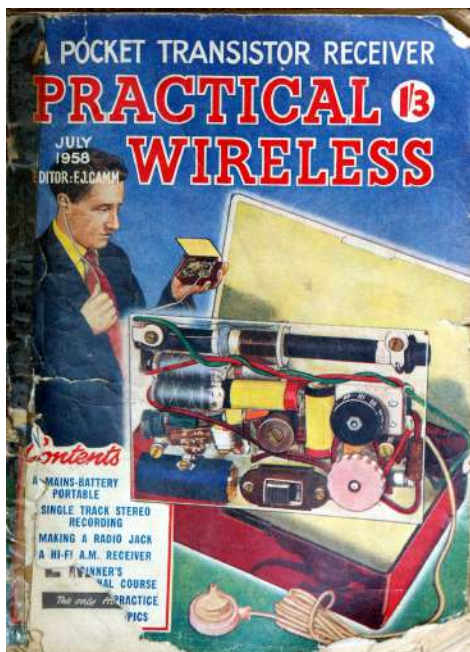
That changed everything. Very soon I was selling my stamp collection (to the stamp dealers shop in Tottenham Lane, Hornsey) so that I could buy rock'n'roll records. Not only Bill Haley, but Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly and Little Richard. It was Keith Goldie, another of the '55 intake, who introduced me to Little Richard. He lived in New Southgate and I remember visiting his house to hear those new exciting records.

The start of my record buying (when pocket money allowed) meant a trip to Saville Pianos Ltd at 142 High Road, Wood Green. Their shop was on the east side, just north of Noel Park Station. Ten inch 78rpm to begin with, since the family radiogram would not play 45s. I could play my records with thorn needles, which gave a 'mellow' tone and needed sharpening frequently or steel needles, which were louder but wore out the record grooves faster. It wasn't until 1958 when I managed to buy a small, second-hand, portable record player which played 45rpm and 33rpm. First vinyl purchase? The EP *Rebel Rouser* by Duane Eddy.

THE HOBBY THAT BECAME A CAREER

To bypass the BBC and hear records from the hit parade, the answer was Radio Luxembourg. My first steps, in 1956, were a series of crystal sets, mostly with parts from a shop in Commerce Road, Wood Green that sold electronic junk and ex-service equipment.

The problem with crystal sets is that they are very insensitive, which resulted in the signal from 'Lux' fading in and out in my headphones. Something better was needed and I progressed to transistors in 1958. Henrys Radio advertised a two-transistor radio kit in Practical Wireless, price 50/-. For such a major purchase I went with my Dad to their shop at 5, Harrow Road (later obliterated by the Marylebone Flyover) and came away with a set of parts, together with a black case with a white lid to fit them in.



From other adverts in Practical Wireless I learned that there was a treasure trove of component shops in Little Newport Street and Lisle Street off the Charing Cross Road. Nowadays these streets form part of Chinatown but in those days Lisle Street in particular was one of London's red light districts. As my visits were during the day (thanks once again to that freedom to use the Underground on my own) my 14-year-old self was unaware of the area's night-time reputation.

Not all my experiments went according to plan. Owing to a misunderstanding about the connections to the rectifier in a power supply, 240 volts a.c. was applied to a large electrolytic capacitor. The electrolyte in these capacitors is a liquid. When it exploded it spread sticky brown goo over a wide area of the living room.

However, one learns from experience and these small steps in radio construction, and the increasingly complex gear that followed, were the beginnings of a career in electronic engineering. The knowledge that they gave stood me in good stead when, in 1963, I was accepted by the BBC as a Technical Trainee.

FAREWELL TO TRINITY

By 1960, my Dad's commute was to Balham, a long journey whether by bike, train or tube and my parents decided to make a move to South London so that he would be closer to his work. A house in Croydon was found and we moved on the 2nd of September. For me it was an easy transition as I had taken my O levels (with passes in English, Maths, Applied Maths, French, History, Physics and Chemistry) and I could move straight into the 6th Form at Selhurst Grammar School. My brothers (both younger) had to change schools at more difficult times.

The O level that I failed was English Literature. The set book that year was *The Mill On The Floss* by George Eliot. Somehow I just couldn't get on with that sort of book. I preferred detective stories and, when younger, the Biggles books by W.E. Johns and the Bunst books by John Newton Chance.

BACK TO TRINITY FOR ONE DAY

I was allowed a day off from Selhurst in the spring of 1961 so that I could attend prizegiving at Trinity. The prize (for Physics) was a book of the pupil's own choosing and here I encountered some disapproval. It was expected that a 'suitable' book would be chosen, a text book, for example, so that it would 'look good' when presented by the guest speaker. That year the guest speaker was Sir Hugh Casson (architect, interior designer, artist, and writer and broadcaster on 20th-century design. He was the director of architecture at the 1951 Festival of Britain on London's South Bank). My choice was *Great Short Stories of Detection, Mystery and Horror*. It was published by Victor Gollancz Ltd who gave their books gaudy yellow dustjackets – *not* the sort of book that Mr Dalrymple wanted to see as an example of pupil choice. However, as I had already left the school there was not a lot he could do about it. I still have the book, though not, sadly, the dustjacket.