Class of ’58 is back at school

Hundreds celebrate Charters’ 50th anniversary

By Francis Batt
News editor

THREE headteachers got together at the weekend to celebrate the golden anniversary of the school they helped build up.

Charters School, in Sunningdale, celebrated its 50th birthday on Saturday with a garden party.

Marcia Twelftree, the present headteacher, welcomed Paul Buet, head from 1976 to 1987, and Barry Mitchell, head from 1988 to 1997, as special guests.

Sadly, the man who guided the school through its first 18 years, from 1958 to 1976, was unable to be there.

John Waddleton had to decline his invitation due to ill health.

Mr Waddleton was in everyone’s thoughts though as some of the first pupils to attend the school mixed with hundreds of other guests, including former teachers, current staff and governors.

Guests enjoyed a tour of the school, as well as a performance of Fifties-style dancing, music from the school’s Dixieland Jazz Band, an exhibition of Charters through the decades and an ox roast.

Drinks were provided by Waitrose and Gary Short from the Shorts Group Ltd.

Mrs Twelftree said: “We were delighted to have so many previous staff and pupils from the first year of entry in 1958.

“I was thrilled that three out of four past headteachers were able to meet and share their memories.

“More than 700 people attended this enjoyable occasion celebrating 50 years of Charters life,” she added.
Over 700 people attended a special garden party to mark Charters School’s 50th Anniversary. Guests included some of the very first teachers, students and governors of the school. The first Head Boy and Head Girl from 1958 returned to the school as did former headteachers, Paul Burt and Barry Mitchell. They were given a warm welcome by current head Marcia Trottier. The only sad news was that the first headteacher, John Waddington was unable to attend due to ill-health.

During the afternoon, guests enjoyed drinks and a delicious six roast. They were also treated to a 1950s based dance performance and music from the school’s Dixieland Jazz Band.

Guests were then invited to reminisce with a special Charters through the Decades exhibition which included memorabilia and films from past school events.

Mrs Trottier said she was delighted with the turnout.

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HUNDREDS of former pupils and staff returned to Charters School in Sunningdale for its 50th anniversary celebrations.

Four headteachers, past and present, spoke about the school’s success at the garden party last Saturday. Among the 700 present were people who had flown in from Dubai, Spain, Costa Rica and California, as well as others who had driven from Wales, the West Country and East Anglia. Memories came flooding back as former headteachers spoke about their time in the hot seat at the school.

Speaking about the first Charters headteacher, John Waddleton, who could not be there due to ill health, Janet Mauler, a retired English teacher, said he was a modest man, full of energy, who would start his school day at 6.30am.

She said: "When talking about this anniversary the other day, he said ‘They tell me they now have a woman in charge. We will keep them under control, I know.’" The school opened on April 23, 1958, with nearly 400 boys and girls.

Mr Waddleton remained in the head post until 1974, with his career including a visit from The Queen and the school becoming a comprehensive in 1970 among his highlights.

Paul Birt was the second headteacher until 1987.

Speaking on Saturday, he said: "It is difficult to realise how good it was to be a part of this place at that time."

Reflecting on the many musicals there have been there, he said: "How can we forget the musicals? There were always the lovely, legged girls. They always got in on the act." Harry Mitchell, head from 1988 to 1997, said: "Highlights for me are very different from the highlights from other people.

"When you look back it’s the teaching that gives the quality to the school and the continuity to the pupils."

Marcia Twelftree, who took over in 1997 and is still headteacher today, said she was overwhelmed by the amount of people who had come to the celebrations.

She said: "There’s something about this school that gets under your skin and makes you stay and makes this the best job in the world.

"I said to Education Minister Ed Balls the other day, I wouldn’t have your job for the world."

"Mine is much more interesting and satisfying and we make things happen."

Charters School highlights:

- Charters School opens on April 23, 1958.
- John Waddleton is the first headteacher.
- 40 pupils attend.
- First chairman of governors is the Rev GRM Webster.
- First head boy is Richard Peberdy and first head girl is Muriel Evans.
- First school production is Toad of Toad Hall.
- April 4, 1967: The Queen makes a visit and is given a toy panda for Prince Andrew made by 14-year-olds, presented by Susan Brundish.
- 1970: the school becomes an eight-form comprehensive.
- 1981: becomes a centre for physically handicapped pupils.
- 1992: specialist sports college status is awarded and the Artmark Gold Award is given.
- 2004: Charters receives an ‘outstanding’ Ofsted report.
- April 22, 2008: The Duke of Kent visits to honour the 50th anniversary and unveils a plaque in the entrance hall.
- 2007/08: head boy is Christopher Owens, head girl is Alexia Belavskis.
- 2008, eight tutor forms in each year, six in year 12 and four in year 13.
- 2008/09: there will be a head boy and head girl and deputies for key stage 3, 4 and 5.
- 2009/09: 1,796 pupils now attend the school.
Above: (left to right) Sheilla Butters, Josephine Wood, Ken Dowding, Marcia Twelftree (current headteacher), Jim Hathaway, Alan Welsh, Ken Spiers, Linda Crowe, and Christine Stringer. 060137a

Below: Former pupils Ron Pratt (left) and Richard Humphries look at some old pictures. 060137d

Above: Suzy Mundy (left) and Susan Brooks (current cover supervisor and deputy head of years). 060137l

Below: Former pupils Helen Munro (left) and Justine Gibson. 060137g

Above: Former teacher John Rowley (left) and Alan Osmond (current part-time teacher). 060137h

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