

ALUMNI – Len Unsworth

Len has challenged us to see if there are any other alumni out there who started school at, what we now know as Kenilworth School as early as he did - September 6th 1965.

Len is aware of the importance of school and the impact it can have on our life paths and the memories that it can leave us with... Len was educated in Kenilworth for all of his school life. When he was ready to graduate from primary school all students took the 11 plus examination and he writes 'with grammar school out of the question' he went to the local secondary school with many of his friends - Castle High. The school was based in some 'rickety old buildings' and the children used 'now defunct air raid shelters for their changing rooms'.

At Castle High in the early 1960s students were streamed into 5 ability based sets and Lenny was happy and a bit surprised to be placed in the middle stream - he puts this down to his 'impressive memory and boyish charm' rather than his academic abilities. At this point Lenny met one influential adult who had an impact on his life, 'Mandy' a Welsh PE teacher called Mr Davis who encouraged Lenny to push himself at sports, performing very well in cross country running, though football (as an Coventry City fan) was his main love. Mandy wanted 'You lot should all be playing rugby'. However, Mr Price, a games teacher, was a lover of football and took the lads to Abbey Fields to play on a full size football pitch, near to the War Memorial. He also remembers with fondness and pride running the fastest time on the cross country course designed by Mandy which involved two circuits of a lap which included running through Abbey Fields and across the brook and the lake known locally as Joe's Overflow.

Lenny made some good friends there, including the Utlely twins, one of whom he dated, Jim Tibbatts and Keith Beaufoy. Lenny was not a great fan of school, other than the sporting elements and spoke of the canings that were often used as a punishment. That is one of the reasons he was eager to join Abbey High School when it opened over 50 years ago in 1965. There will be more about Lenny's experiences at this brand new school in next week's Alumni News.

If any of these memories remind you of your time at Kenilworth or Abbey or Castle please email me on k.parsons@ksnadmin.ksn.org.uk we would like to feature your stories.



Picture 16: Lenny School Captain 1966.

Alumni

Lenny Unsworth Part 2 - his move to a brand new school.

With changes to the school being planned over the next few years Lenny tells us about his move to a brand new school. In a chapter entitled 'Brand New Everything' he tells us of his first day at Abbey High School. Lenny's dad brought him a brand new leather satchel and a Slazenger duffle bag and a new uniform purchased from J A Moores, gentlemen's outfitters which is still thriving in the town. One of the descendants of the original shop owner went to Kenilworth School and we will hear what he has been up since he passed his A levels in a few weeks.

For Lenny his first day 'everything seemed thrilling... it was September 6th 1965 and the doors were 'swinging' open. Lenny says 'To be first is something very special and produced a memory that would last forever'. Lenny was in the top form with a few friends with his teacher Miss Mansfield and the new headmistress, Miss Dorothy Paracutt, where she introduced herself to a 'wide eyed audience'.

The school not only had a new headteacher, new buildings but it also had a new rule that there was no corporal punishment or canings and bad behaviour was to be dealt with by a 'conduct sheet'

The uniforms at the new school were a bit ridiculous, Lenny says that the boys looked a bit silly in their bright red caps and the girls stood out in their bright red blazers. Lenny became the first Head Boy at the school – an honour he relished.

Lenny met one of his good friends here Tim Harrison, they began to hang out in Tim's Pad, an extension to Tim's family home in Common Lane. Lenny also joined the camping club and relished the opportunity to climb Tryfan, a well known mountain in Wales and quite a challenging hike – similar to the mountain walks that some of our students do today.

There is much more to Lenny's story and you can read more about his time at the school in Educating Kenilworth written by Leonard Unsworth.

