



"A BIT OF A PANTO"!

or

"EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY"?

As an "Old Wulf" I have often returned to my former senior school Wolverhampton Grammar, which I attended between 1950 - 1956, but until last month I had never returned to Woodfield Avenue School Penn, which I attended as a young "WASP" between 1944 - 1950.

The opportunity arose when Rob Morrison attended our club presentation, to Uplands School, of The Rotary junior technology tournament and mentioned to me that Tettenhall were holding a similar presentation in October. Seeing an opportunity to return to my first school I asked if I might help and he willingly agreed.

I turned up late ( nothing changes there!) nor has much changed to the school. Certainly the exterior and the classroom arrangement remain largely unaltered.

The event was held in the Junior School Hall, which has a vaulted ceiling and the original polished herring-bone wood block floor.

Memories began to return - playing in the hall in the school final of the badminton competition and losing and afterwards being scoffed at by other boys for "being beaten by a girl!", but what a girl - Rachel Heyhoe, later Baroness Flint. I was too young to think to retort "I got to the final - where were you?"

I went outside and stood looking at the large playground area formed in the centre of the U-shaped buildings, with the Infants section on the far side.

More memories of playing rounders in the school team captained (again) by Rachel, who could hit the ball as far as any of the lads, which she continued to employ later as captain of England Ladies Cricket team, including many overseas tours.

I too played cricket overseas on more than one occasion - on Anglesey, playing french cricket with my kids on the beach!

I looked down and saw that I was standing on a slightly raised concrete terrace which adjoined the hall and remembered sitting on the corner playing "Jacks" with the lads, during break-times.

I returned inside and admired the purpose built stage at the far end, which brought back memories of the final pre Christmas school production entitled " And when did you last see your father?" based on the painting by W.F. Yeames, of a scene from the Civil War of a young boy being quizzed as to the whereabouts of his father, a Cavalier officer in hiding.

The lead was taken by - you've probably guessed already? Rachel. The part required long hair. I'd gladly have worn a wig and before you say it, I will - "nothing changes there either"

I was type-cast in a non speaking part as a Roundhead foot-soldier.

I have a copy of the photo of us enacting the final scene as in the painting, but I could not find it, so I went on line and found the attached picture - but wait a minute ! I wasn't the foot-soldier holding his pike ( don't you dare!).

I was seated in a large arm chair and in which during our production I was required to "loungue", for the duration of the play, (again nothing much changes !)

That's me centre stage and I'm The Captain of the Guard (with the "kinky" boots, I think I wore wellies!), perhaps I was even a General, ranking in importance with Monty or MacArthur ? No that's probably stretching it a bit too far. Sorry I got carried away. ( Reader - "you should be".)

But I was the most senior character there and crucial to the plot .

The FINALE :-

Parliamentarian Inquisitor (shades of Monty Python) "Ven did you last see your Father?"

Young Boy " last night"

Me (starting forward ) and "gasping !" \*\*\*\*\*

Rachel "in a dream"

Close curtains - rapturous applause and cries of Hoorah and Encore!! ( I exaggerate )

\*\*\*\*\* my mother said afterwards that my gasp sounded more like a belch! too much school dinner ? (nothing changes etc...)

Happy Days !

I have the opportunity of returning in the new year on behalf of the club to present the dictionaries for life to the final year school leavers, when perhaps I will have a chance to "tread the boards once again"? 70 years later!

Eat your heart out Jerry Hobbs! Now if I could only find that photo, I could frame it and hang it over the fireplace in the living room and enjoy many hours boring future visitors.

**Peter Largefellow Wright** (" On the shores of Gitche Gumee , Of the shining Big Sea Water"..... one I wrote earlier, but that's another story ! Merry Christmas)