



The Ex-Pupil/Ex-Teacher Series
Number 1



Ray Carter
(at the School 1925-1931)

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Present: Ray Carter, Isabel MacLeod:

I was born at West Side, Clapham Common and I moved to Addiscombe on 11th January 1924. A few days later I started at Woodside School. In 1925 I passed the Scholarship to Selhurst Grammar School and I started there in September 1925. I remember the day quite vividly. My mother took me on the first day; thereafter I went on my own and then started cycling.

Because I appeared undernourished and small my parents arranged for me to have lunch at School every day. It cost 1/- a day, or 3/6 for four days. If you didn't want a cooked lunch, which was excellent all the time I was there, you paid 1d for the use of knife and fork and cutlery and brought your lunch. I suppose there were just under 100 for lunch every day and probably 50 brought lunch, and the rest went back to their homes because their mothers were there. I thoroughly enjoyed my school days. I had good companions; I was mad keen on sport. I made up in enthusiasm what I lacked in skill – but I still managed to enjoy myself very much indeed.

[IM about SGS – uniform?] Yes. Most definitely. Our uniform identified us as to which House we were in – Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. I was in Alpha. We were required to wear the uniform virtually all the time, even in leisure time, that included the cap, which had the distinctive colour of the House you were in. In those days we didn't wear long trousers until you were quite old. In fact, I took Matric in short trousers in 1930 when I was just coming up to 16. I can't imagine my grandsons nowadays...Until you were in the 4th Form you had a Junior School tie, which you were expected to wear, then after the 4th Form you wore a Senior School tie.

I was very proud to be in Alpha House. Alpha was good at all sports except swimming. We never came anywhere in the swimming. [IM: Where did you go?] We went to South Norwood Baths at the top of Birchanger Road.

Outstanding points. Attending Assembly in the Hall every morning. We sang hymns which had been chosen, the Head master did a reading. We didn't have an organ in those days. The Rev ___Hughes (nicknamed Snowball) played the piano for our hymns. Of course, I still love those hymns, which are very fresh in my mind- my favourite being "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform". Morning Assembly was really something. The whole school attended. The lower forms and 6th Form were down on the level, on ground level. 4th and 5th Forms were on the balcony

[IM Number of boys?] About 500. I am still in touch with four or five. This is the Magazine of the first term I was at School. I was in 1A. Mathematics. I was in the Honours List – it was the

last time I was in the Honours List, other than for drawing. There were some really clever boys. I don't think I was ever lower than 7th in class, but I never got a prize or got in the Honours List. I was just fairly good at everything but not outstanding. It's funny that I became an Accountant– it was not really maths but arithmetic -and that was what I was good at.

I am still in touch with John Gooding, Charles Lemon, and Eric Austin. I am just about to make contact with Arthur Sparkes. While I was on my last cruise, I tracked him down in Who's Who and found an address. I am going to send him this list and ask him if he knows where any one the others are. Cecil Dodd and Bill Dodd were twins: their father was killed on the morning of 11th November 1918 – terrible. Several boys had fathers who had been killed.

Ronnie Chapman in my class, he was next on the alphabet, he got eight distinctions in General Schools – the most anyone had ever got. He then went into the Civil Service, took the Civil Service exam and came out near the top, or at the top. He went into the Estate Duty Office as it was (now the Capital Taxes Office). Sadly, he was killed on one of the 1000 Bomber Raids and is buried north of Paris.

School has meant a terrific lot to me – the Old School and the Old Boys. The masters we had were dedicated - at the end of a day they were perfectly happy to give more of their time, I know they didn't get paid any extra. They would umpire for us, help us with our games and sports, and coach us. [IM – anyone in particular?] Mr Parkinson, was my Form Master, he was an excellent master, Mr Wedd who us taught French, Mr Barlow taught us Maths, two brothers - Mr Sibley was our gym Master (he moved on) and his brother took his place. When you got up to the 4th you took History and Physics (Physics started off as Heat Light and Sound) or Geography and Chemistry. I took History and Physics. Mr. F T B Wheeler was the History Master. He was an outstanding character – I think he rowed for Oxford in the Boat Race. He was a real character. I really enjoyed school.

[IM – Building still quite new?] Not all that old. The main building, I learned was built in 1913 so when I joined in 1925, it was still in pretty good condition. It was really a lovely school. Did we have to wear plimsolls in school? In those days we used to wear Blakies and we would have scraped the beautiful parquet flooring. No, we wore shoes in school, but you didn't have things that made black marks across everything.

[IM Contact with SGSG?] We were pretty well segregated. The only contact was in the Senior School, and we went in the playground by Whitehorse Road and would shy-ite the girls as they walked up Whitehorse Road to come round into The Crescent. There was certainly not a lot of contact in school time. I can't remember being particularly friendly with any girl. I was more interested in cricket and sport.

Although cricket was my first love, by the time I left school I had got interested in tennis as well. I was only short but I was quite a good tennis player. Elsie and I belonged to Wydehurst Tennis Club from about 1937, and '38 and '39. In '39 I won the Men's Singles, the Men's Doubles and the Men's Handicapped Singles. Then they dropped a bomb on the club and I've still got all the cups upstairs. They've got some names of boys from Selhurst on them

I wanted to become a Foreign Correspondent in a Bank when I left school, but in 1930 jobs were few and far between. I couldn't get a job, so I stayed on at School until the next May. One day, Mr Bentley, the Head Master, asked how would I fancy a job in a Chartered Accountant's office? I said, "What's a Chartered Accountant?" One of the Governors, Alderman Peet, who was Mayor of Croydon for several years, was a Partner in Brown Peet & Tilly, with offices in Croydon and London. I went for two interviews and was given the choice of:

1. Junior Audit Clerk in Croydon
2. Office Boy in London

My father gave me the best advice that he ever could which was to start as an office boy in London which I did. I went to 37-38 Mark Lane and stayed there until 1936.

I started work at £1 a week in 1931. [IM The train from?] Woodside. Out of interest, think of how inflation has gone. My parents started me off with a suit of clothes and a three months' season ticket to any London station for £3-7-0d. It remained the same until the outbreak of War. There was no inflation. When I was a Junior Audit clerk going round the countryside we used to get an allowance. We started off with 17/6 a day; within a couple of years they had cut it down to 15/-. There was deflation. [IM: Depression?] Yes, it was the Depression. I don't know whether I actually saved but I used to give my mother half a crown a week. Unbeknown to me, she put it aside and by the time we got married she had accumulated £100 and helped us with our furniture, virtually bought most of our furniture. I set aside 5/- a week for fares, about 5/- for lunch, and 5/- a week for holidays. We used to go Holiday Fellowship. It was an organisation set up by the Quakers – they had guest houses all over the country, it was all very prim and proper – for two guineas a week. You could have a fortnight's holiday, pay your train fare and have some spending money - all for £10. Not bad.

Most of the staff at Baker Peet & Tilly were recruited from Selhurst Grammar School or John Ruskin – one senior was George Ratcliffe (well –known in Old Croydonian folklore). He took me under his wing and persuaded me in 1933 to join him, and to become Joint Treasurer and Social Secretary. I did, and with the exception of the War Years, I have had some connexion with the Old Croydonians ever since. I remained close with him after the War. We got on very well and he even named one of his sons after me.

Then I joined a firm called Herbert Hill & Co. They promised me that they would give me articles instead of paying the usual 250 guineas provided I turned out to be satisfactory and that they would do it within three months. Actually they did it within six weeks. I signed my articles in 1936. I took the Intermediate in 1939, came 17th in England with Honours and within four days I was in the Army. I had joined the Territorial Army in 1938 and was called up three times – for the Munich Crisis, in the summer of '39 and was de-mobbed, and again in August '39 just before the outbreak of War.

I landed in Normandy, went through France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. I was very lucky to come out without any ill effects. I learned a lot about how the other half of the world lived. I came out of the Army in November 1945. I was very lucky to come through the War unscathed. At the end of the War, I am very pleased to say I was awarded the Military MBE. The citation in the London Gazette read “for gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe”.

To go back - in 1937, while I was still a Junior Articled Clerk, but older than most articled clerks, I became involved with the documentary film industry. I met the founder of the industry, a man called John Grierson, who is very well known all over the world. He actually coined the word “documentary”. I acted for the leading documentarians, so when I came out of the Army, I was offered a job with the Producers' Guild doing technical costing and production management. I started with the scripts and a stopwatch and would work out how much a film would cost. It was extremely interesting.

After two years I was persuaded by Herbert Hill to go back to the profession. I took my Finals and passed in July 1950, and they made me a partner on 1st October 1950. I stayed there until 1971, by which time I had become Senior Partner and circumstances had changed. I set up in business in South Croydon with my son, John. Raymond Carter & Co is still going strong in South Croydon after nearly 34 years.

Leaving London was all for the best. It enabled me to slow down somewhat and as a result I have lasted the course much better. I am still going to the office three times a week at the age of 90. I have been very very fortunate. I always thought of writing a book and I have known the title for a long time– “A Round Peg in a Round Hole”. It's just what I have been. It was good luck that I became an Accountant and nothing else. It has suited me down to the ground.

Other little things. My mother was French. She had come over to England about 1890 at the age 18. She had become a governess to begin with and then she was teaching French at Pitmans. I was the youngest of the family, with two much older brothers and one sister. My

father died in his 80th year. My mother was a tough nut and carried on and was quite active until just after she was 96.

I got married on 1st June 1940 to Elsie Davies, who I had known since just before her 17th birthday – and we now look after each other. My four children are Gillian, John, Pauline and Hilary. We have accumulated ten grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren plus one adopted. Our two elder daughters, Gillian and Pauline both emigrated to Australia. Our grand daughter came to our Golden Wedding celebrations in 2000 has stayed here and now lives quite close. Our eldest great granddaughter is much much taller than I am and she represented Australian young ladies at gymnastics.

I have been a mad keen supporter of sport, cricket and football ever since I was a little boy. I first went to the Oval in 1922 and have been a regular attender there ever since, apart from the War Years – I am still a member. I have supported the Crystal Palace since we moved to Addiscombe in 1924. I only go about once a year now, because it's a bit on the cold side in winter.

We have had a very very good married life. We have had our shared interests, but also our separate ones. My wife became a Roman Catholic soon after our marriage. In 1945 she became involved in the Union of Catholic Mothers and got very involved and ended up as the National Treasurer – one of the top three officers in the country and was awarded the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, which is a Papal Award for services to the Church. She also got very much involved in taking the handicapped people to Lourdes and that was also recognised.

I think that's basically a potted story of my life.

In a separate untaped conversation:

Ray showed me a magazine article in which he was mentioned when he won the Roebuck Cup – awarded to an individual who has served the film society movement above the call of duty. Ray was Honorary Auditor of the BFFS [British Federation of Film Societies]. He was involved with the Beaconsfield Studio from 1958 to 1966 at the time when Hayley Mills made her first film "Tiger Bay". Ray himself was the star in a film made c.1938 with Julian Huxley and entitled "Time of your Life". The subject was "time". It started with Ray catching a train from Woodside Station and ended with him arriving at his office desk. A close friend in the film industry was William MacQuitty [1905-2004], the film producer, writer and photographer who died last year, and is perhaps best remembered for a definitive film about the sinking of the Titanic, "A Night to Remember" made in the 1950s.