

Library Report - When Good Friends Leave.

Centenary Year in the BBC Library was highlighted with 200 extra clients – the Year 7 students embarking on Middle Schooling. In addition, the Library played host to a bevy of timetabled groups, because of the lack of classrooms in the College, capable of coping with the influx. The statistics for bodies in and out of the Resource Centre would be impressive as census material for the 9 school months!

But 2002 is much more memorable for the departure of two of the mainstays of the BBC Resource Centre Staff, Ann Baker and Heleen Kubik. What better way to finish *this year* by saluting the work of both and expressing our collective thanks for everything that they have both done for us during their time at the College?

It does not seem 19 years since I met Ann on my first day in the Birtles Library and Heleen some years later when she came to offer her services to us as a volunteer mother. Without these two women, we could not have built the team which has been such a strength in our service delivery to our teaching colleagues, to BBC students, to the wider BBC community and to our friends!

Where would the English Department *and* the Library have been without BOOK LADY–; for it was Ann who took up the challenge of developing the Wide-Reading programme from a promising start in 1993, to the fully flourishing, publicly acknowledged success that it is today.

Ann introduced the concept of reading for fun – not duty, and backed it up with activities that boys could relate to and wanted to be involved in - totally “sweet and cool”! The fact that our Wide-Reading project was copied (and is still being copied, Challenge Cups and all) by other schools is proof of its success under Ann’s jurisdiction.

Who was the wise confidante and partner who provided total support when the big challenges like the automation of the Library and the transfer to the Y2K system had to be achieved? “*This too will pass*”... is a phrase that will live in my memory forever!

And who had the best sense of the ridiculous, coupled with an ability to genuinely enjoy life to the full? You knew that you had found a soul-mate when you could both cry over the same picture book and be reduced to helpless laughter over Spectator cartoons together! I always think of the last lines in *Charlotte’s Web*, when I think of Ann’s friendship over the years:

**“It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer”.
*Ann is both.***

Who was the public face of the Birtles Library in the Resource Centre?

Heleen Kubik's sure hand on the tiller of day-to-day operations combined firm impartiality, an expressively warm welcome, genuine empathy for the boys and for their parents and infinite patience in her dealings with them.

It was to Heleen that the volunteer staff and work experience students turned, it was to Heleen that the BBC strong men came, with tentative queries about *library bookings and colour - copying and laminating of their children's latest artwork at kindy and primary school*; it was Heleen who did the thankless jobs: library bookings, Musical ticket sales, bills processing and reconciliation, and coped, on the side like a conjuror, with Seniors on Spares!

It was Heleen who understood how the informal networks of the College operated.

It was Heleen who gave one courage and solace when life dealt out the really tough personal challenges – and who gave you the strength to believe that you could cope with bereavement.

The analogy from Lord of the Rings seems strangely appropriate when you think of the Resource Centre Staff:

We have come together from disparate backgrounds; Britain, Oregon, French Pacific, Holland and Australia

We believe in one another and are strong in our unity.

And, we are dedicated to a quest.

If you think of the anachronistic and suspect evils abroad on the Internet, then we are carrying The One Ring.

But if you think of Galadriel's talisman to Frodo, the phial of light from Earendil's star, "*a light to you in dark places when all other lights go out*" we are custodians to a greater Knowledge.

We have been lucky to have Ann and Heleen as companions on this journey – and we will cherish their continuing friendship .

Their going leaves the College the poorer.

**Helen Derrick
Head of Information Services**