

Made in Wilhemshaven - Paul Levitt

I wonder how many proud mums and dads have been presented with the same kind of self-made gifts that must have been churned out by the barrow load in craftwork classes at PRS? In 1960, we had pottery and woodwork in our first-year curriculum, the latter being exclusive to boys, but I think the pottery might have been for both sexes. Anyway, we had Mr. (Tom) Bernardes for woodwork, and hearing from his son (Peter) recently reminded me of what a great teacher he was and prompted this story.

Projects could be as ambitious as you liked, but obviously took longer if something elaborate was chosen. Due to the limited number of lathes, etc., it wouldn't do for everyone to choose making a fruit bowl, like I did for instance, but there were plenty of other useful items to go for, including things like teapot stands, at least one example of which survives to this day and is still in regular use 44 years after it was made!

I think we used to alternate pottery and woodwork classes on a weekly basis, so that progress on a 'future gift' was somewhat slow. As a departure from the usual clay dishes and pots that were turned out in our pottery lesson, Mr. Follows used to let us try our hand at more artistic pieces such as figurines and the like. I was never any good at reproducing the human form with any degree of accuracy, either in 2-D or in 3-D, so both the 'grimacing pugilist' and 'regency period lady' figurines I made turned out more like faithful replicas of the Hunchback of Notre-dame and Frankenstein's bride (not necessarily in that order) despite my best efforts.



I never did metalwork at PRS, but I do admire those lads who produced the Drake Boys gong back in the 50's (photo courtesy of Norman King). Just exactly how many weeks of effort went into making this The Gong great Drake Boys collectible will go untold, unless there are any TWA members who can perhaps shed any light on it for us? What ever happened to the gong remains a mystery to this day. Having been in contact with the school in Rinteln, I was assured by the head that despite a lot of memorabilia having survived the relocation, enquiries regarding the gong have drawn a blank. The last staff member from the Wilhemshaven days retired in Easter 2002, but Brian Carter, the last housemaster of Drake Boys, remembers it very well and can still see every bit and piece of it, even after 33 years!

It seems the gong was taken over to the Collingwood/Howe block and placed on the old Howe (juniors) stairway where it was used in conjunction with the ship's bell on the Collingwood (seniors) ground floor. According to Brian it was finally packed up for transportation to Rinteln when the school moved there. It begins to sound like a 'fallen off a lorry' job. So, if anyone can throw any light on the gong's whereabouts, please get in touch. There are at least two DBs who'll make it worth your while.....won't we Norm?

Paul Levitt