

Ron Holland 1958–1963 – *personal profile*

In September 1958 I arrived, or at least was dropped off, by the circular lawn with my trunk. I was not big enough to carry it, so it must have been taken up to the dormitory where the unpacking was supervised.

I came to Harlow College via New cross Gate in London and Nigeria in Africa, where my father worked and we lived a relatively sheltered life. I did not have a clue about what was happening, what was expected or what boarding school was about. School in Africa was 08.30 to 13.00. At Harlow it was all day, every day. And, we wore boiler suits and ties. Kids learn fast, and what I learnt over that first half term shaped me for the rest of my life. It still impacts on my life today in lots ways, even though I did not realise it until quite a few years later.

Interestingly, the longest period of time I spent with my immediate family after arriving at Harlow College to the present day (I am now 70), was eleven months in 1964 – 1965 when I inadvertently went to Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for boys. I then joined the Merchant Navy as a marine engineer. Three years in London doing an apprenticeship, and two years at sea. By then I was fed up with uniforms and the institutional way of life, and I have never worn a white shirt since. I have no idea what happened to the various uniforms I wore.

I left Harlow with a love of sport, I think I won or nearly won the cross country race every year I was at school, I loved football, cross country and athletics but really had no love of cricket.

Academically I did not achieve much; I left with a few College of Preceptors passes and an English Literature O level. I loved books and reading. I later added four more O levels at Tunbridge Wells Grammar, and during my working life have picked up a number of degrees. Early experiences shape how you look and deal with the world, and my can do attitude was honed and developed at boarding school.

After the Merchant Navy I trained as a Primary School teacher, I did not want to specialise in one subject. I am not quite sure how I ended up as a teacher, but decided it must have been due to the time I spent with prospective teachers at the weekends on college campuses, arguing and discussing everything under the sun. Lots of very nice young women attended teacher training colleges. I loved the job, but eventually moved into management and became a head teacher. I finally retired in 2015 after 42 years in education.



Now my life is taken up with travelling in the motor home with my wife and two dogs. We thought we would spend time in Europe, because we had camped all over France, Germany, Holland and Belgium in our early holidays. However, we are discovering parts of the UK we never knew existed. Wherever we visit I seek out ukulele groups or folk clubs, and join them for the evening. Ukulele and folk festivals are another big attraction for me, and I enjoy the smaller ones with lots of local people playing and just enjoying the music. Mixed in with all this are the family and our grandchildren, they are all Spanish speaking, so that keeps us on our toes.

Life just seems to rock on, and I adapt and change to take advantage of what is available, that attitude came from boarding school. No more marathons or triathlons for me, as I now have a new knee. However, the ukulele has filled that gap and given me a whole new interest in life. I lead a ukulele group and play in a bluegrass band, all for fun and charity, and wearing shorts all year long.

I like most people, had no idea where I would end up, or what I would do in between, but my time in Harlow College probably gave me many of the inter personal skills I now use every day. Without them I could not get along on a daily basis, and I can talk to anyone about anything, even if I know nothing about it.

I can be contacted via facebook, email or mobile.

ron.t.holland@gmail.com Mob: 07738 009795