

Penwortham Priory Post



Priory Celebrates its 70th Year With Reunion Event and Time Capsule

A chance comment by one of our Class of 1953 led to a fantastic 70 years of Priory reunion in the Rose Garden.

Our very first head girl Sonia Ward asked her daughter Josephine Tingle, when she said she was playing badminton at Priory two years ago, if she could see if Sonia's photograph was still on the wall.

This led to some investigation, contact with the school and finally a reunion of a Class of 53 to mark a historic event for Priory.

"It's amazing all this happened because of one comment," said Josephine. "When I said I was playing badminton at Priory, mum asked if her picture was still up in the hallway."

"This led to us asking the school, them finding memorabilia which was under the stage, our family digging out our own photographs and then mum coming into school."

We did an article on this, which ended up in the Lancashire Evening Post, and Sonia mentioned Head Boy Roy Rich. He got in touch with the school and the rest, as they say, is history!

Six of that original class of 1953, then Penwortham Secondary Modern School, came into Priory and it brought back memories of their school days.

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70th Anniversary Special

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Now in their 80s, they loved returning to the place where they are a big part of the history.

Phyllis Tattersall, who became an embroideress, said: "It is a bit strange coming back, I think I have only been back once before. It doesn't look the same at all!

"I remember sewing lessons and cooking. It's exciting to be back."

Barbara Coombes, nee Bolton, admitted she remembered going for a dance with Roy Rich 'back in the day.'

"It's lovely to be here. It's the first time I have seen Roy in a long time, we used to go dancing together!



Barbara (top row third from left), Roy (middle row, fourth from left), Sonia (middle row far right)

"What I found really strange is I used to cut through the woods to come to school. You can't do it now as there is all fencing around the school. I had to walk the long way around today!

"I used to love French with Miss Pickup. I left school at 15 and worked in textiles before I had children and now I have grandchildren. Sonia and I were bosom buddies at school and we used to live next door to each other but we haven't seen each other for a while."

Roy brought in his Paris pack, including what was then his passport.

"I remember going all the way to France and back and we didn't have to show it once," he laughed.

Cliff Philipson said: "Coming back recalls happy times, we were the first intake so it was a brand new school.

"I remember there were two tennis courts and I was a prefect and librarian."

Cliff, who went on to be a Rep for three firms, one being HP Sauce, brought his school report which described him as 'quiet but efficient' and said he 'stuck to a job and saw it through.'

Mayor of Penwortham Cllr Ian Watkinson said: "It's great to be here. The reputation of Priory is first class. It's been brilliant looking at the old memorabilia – I was reading the punishment book to see if I knew anyone! It's been great to see all this history."

Principal Mr Eastham said: "It's wonderful to celebrate 70 years of Priory – Priory has been serving the local community since 1953 and that's a great achievement.

"It's been lovely seeing people sharing stories and looking at the memorabilia."

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70th Anniversary Celebration Event
Thursday, 29 June 2023

Order of the Day

10am Arrival of Class of 1953, former staff, dignitaries and friends of the school
Tea and coffee served



Meet and greet, commemorative pin badges distributed to guests, explore archive photos and memorabilia, view slide presentation

10.30am Speech by Mr Matt Eastham, Principal

10.40am Unveiling of time capsule by Mr Andrew Watters, retiring Geography teacher 1994-2023

11am Tea and scones served in the Rose Garden
Rose planting by Class of 1953 (photos)

GUESTS TO DEPART FROM 12 NOON OR STAY ON IF THEY WISH TO MEET ALUMNI GUESTS (ALL YEARS) ARRIVING FOR ARCHIVE VIEWING AND TOURS AT 12 NOON AND 2PM.



Celebrating 70 years
Penwortham
Priory
ACADEMY 1953-2023

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A rose was planted in the Rose Garden by the Class of 1953 – it was an 'Anniversary Rose' selected by gardener Mr Farron.

"As long as the school is here, the rose and the plaque to go with it will be here," said Mr Eastham.

There was also a time capsule unveiled, which consisted of, among other items, the Headmaster's Log from 1953, photographs from various groups through the ages, the front page of the Lancashire Evening Post from 29 June 2023 and drone photographs of the school.

This was unveiled by Lead Geography teacher Mr Watters who will leave Priory this month after 29 years at the school.

Former teachers and staff at Priory also attended the 70th celebration as well as a presentation to Mr Watters for all his years at Priory.

There were also tours around the school for past pupils and more 70th anniversary events planned this year.



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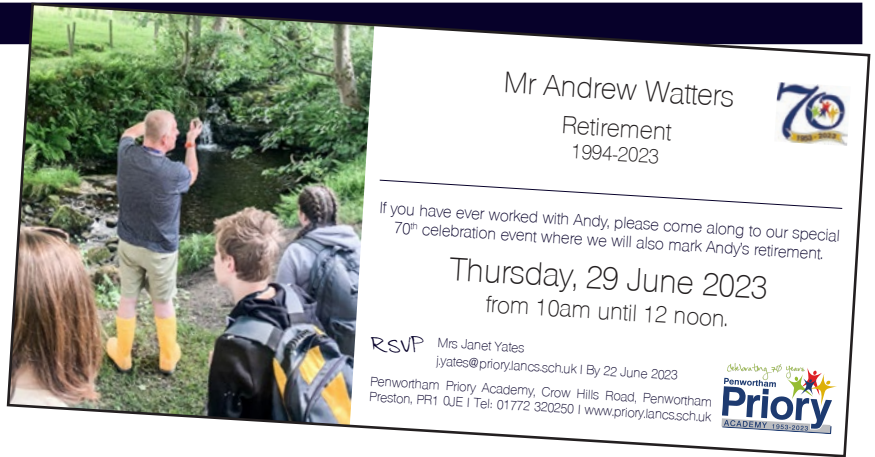


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Time Capsule Marks Geography Teacher's Long Service

The school's 70th anniversary coincided with the retirement of one of Priory's longest serving teachers.

Geography teacher, Mr Watters, began his career at Priory in 1994 and a 70th anniversary celebration event provided the perfect opportunity to recognise his 29 years' service. Colleagues from Priory's past were invited into school for a special event on 29 June along with Class of 1953, Penwortham's mayor and fellow councillors, South Ribble headteachers and trustees.



Principal Mr Eastham alongside the Mayor of Penwortham Cllr Ian Watkinson and Mr Watters



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Alumni Return For 70th Celebration Event

Not to leave out Priory's alumni, the 70th anniversary meant we could invite former pupils from all years back into school for the afternoon of Thursday, 29 June.

Past pupils were able to view our archives which were displayed by decade in the conference suite, catch up with former teachers and classmates, and tour the school.

Following the event, we have been overwhelmed by the amazing feedback and heard of the disappointment that so many couldn't make the event. After a review, we are pleased to say that we will be repeating the alumni event and tour next summer!

We would like to say a special thanks to Janet Edwards (nee Clough) who donated her Priory uniform from 1970, Jeannie Hogarth who donated photographs from 1971, and Roy Rich who donated his exercise book from 1953 documenting the school trip to Paris. All items will be stored in our archive collection and shared with Priory pupils past and present for many years to come.

Thank you also to Ruth Hesketh (nee Bennett) Class of 1953 who unfortunately couldn't attend the event but very kindly donated £50 towards the school's fundraising, Owen Hughes who loaned his slide rule which was used in a Maths exam in 1968 and Sally Ann Mawdsley (nee Orritt) who loaned her collection of photographs from 1986-1991.



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Mr Watters To Retire After 29 Years At Priory

Mr Watters has been called a 'legend,' 'absolute star,' 'incredible,' 'fantastic' and more by pupils who were lucky enough to be taught by him - before he runs off to watch more of his beloved Everton FC!

Lead Geography teacher Mr Watters, one of Priory's longest serving members of staff, will leave at the end of this term after 29 years at Priory – with spells in Accrington, Heysham and Lancaster before that.

While he acknowledges teaching has changed in those decades, he is also the first to admit that basically it has stayed the same.

"The pupils have always been the centre of it all – that hasn't changed," said Mr Watters. "Teaching is always about being fair, having knowledge and being kind and you have got to be straight with the children.

"If you are straight with them, they will always do well and that's the same if it was the 80s or the current day.

"New technology has obviously helped to change the way we teach but the demands remain the same – you want your child to make progress, be happy in the classroom and like your subject and that has essentially remained the same."

He has heard some of the tributes to him from past and current pupils and teachers.

The 60-year-old said: "It makes me very proud to know I have made a difference. To survive being a teacher, you have to evolve your role and I have done that.

"I have been Head of House, Head of Year, Head of Humanities. I have taught geography, geology, history and have stood in at English, Science and Maths classes.

"I am equally proud of the children who took vocational qualifications and, through that, today have become better employed than they would have been.

"I am proud of my evolution and the commitment and passion for my subjects. I am as committed today as I was all those years ago, I was still holding revision classes



Mr Watters in 1998 | Sports Day 2021 - team Hodder through and through!

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on Sundays for my current geography students a few weeks ago.

"I am still passionate about all the subjects I have taught, they are just taught in a different way.

"I remember you used to wheel a black and white television into the classroom and watch special school channels which were old programmes. We have progressed from that and I am proud I have evolved and adapted. That's thanks to the many good head teachers I have been under who have set the right culture which staff and pupils buy into. They have been amazing to work under and they allow you to do your best work.

"I have had great relationships with colleagues and pupils. You build up those relationships. Some with pupils are like a piece of elastic – you must never let them snap and you must keep them going.

"I have also always had a very good family behind me who have supported me and they will keep me busy in retirement."

Mr Watters will largely be remembered for his international and Duke of Edinburgh trips.

"I have been on 100s of trips but whether it's Iceland or Windermere, the backdrop is always the same – it's about giving children new experiences. You take them to places with the 'wow' factor and I have always enjoyed doing that."

He has also enjoyed instilling his love of Everton Football Club into his pupils.

"My name is on my classroom door with the Everton badge! I got 100 Everton mouse mats and they were given out as prizes whether pupils wanted them or not!

"It was a massive decision to retire and I still can't believe I am actually doing it. I need a few physical things doing – operations on both knees, my ankle, my nose so I can breath easier - and it would have required me to take a lot of time off which I have never done in my teaching career, so the time is now right.

"I will miss Priory terribly, it's been an amazing place to work and it's always changed for the better which is one of the many good things about Priory."

Former members of Priory staff turned up to a



Mr Watters on his 60th birthday last month alongside the Humanities Department staff | Below at the Year 11 Prom in 1998 with Mrs Cooper, Mr Rhodes, Mr Eastham and Mrs Rhodes.

special event to say goodbye to Mr Watters in his role as Priory teacher and he was presented with a special 'geography' cake, made by Vice Principal and Food Technology teacher, Mrs Cowell.

Principal, Mr Eastham said: "Andy's work day in and day out has been life enhancing and life changing for all his pupils.

"He has provided so many different opportunities for so many young people whose life he has shaped for the better.

"He has been a wonderful teacher and colleague and a role model to pupils and colleagues over the years. He has earned his retirement."





Class of 2003 & 2005: Paul & Ian Briscoe



Two former Priory pupils have been working to improve the school and returned for the 70th anniversary celebrations.

Paul Briscoe, who left in 2003, and his brother Ian, who left in 2005, both work for Austin Watson, a builder and joiner company based in New Longton.

"We have done various jobs at the school over the years and obviously we have a bit of a soft spot for Priory so we enjoy working here," said Paul.

"We have put in the new kitchen and constructed the cavity for the time capsule. We also recently completed the new patio for the 70th celebrations outside."

"It's always great to come back - and see the people who used to teach us. We were well behaved!"

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Class of 1953: Leigh Wilson

Priory's 70th anniversary has reunited several former pupils who were at the school when it first opened in 1953.

We have already met Penwortham Secondary Modern School's first Head Girl in Sonia Ward (nee Taylor) and Head Boy Roy Rich, who said they were stunned by the transformation in the school when they have visited over the last year.

Leigh Wilson, who lives in Cleveleys, also came forward and, after speaking to Sonia and Roy on the telephone back in January, hoped to meet up with them in person and visit his former school.



"I really enjoyed my time at Penwortham Secondary Modern as it was then," said Leigh, who is now 82. "What sticks out is I remember the school nativity where I was Angel Gabriel.

"I remember I had two broken wrists and a fractured knee cap after vaulting over the horse in the school gym!

"I just had to descend in white and fortunately my plaster casts were white too! I just appeared and disappeared and thankfully did not have to move."

Leigh went into an apprenticeship after three years at Penwortham Secondary Modern School.

"I was talking to Roy and he went onto study further – I didn't really know that was an option. My dad always said to get an apprenticeship and I had a choice of three at the time.

"I went to day/night school and went onto get my Higher National Certificate and went into developing programmes.

"I went onto work with NC (Numerical Control) Machinery, now CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machinery, which was the first in the country.

"We moved to Southampton, I also worked as a Senior Manager at UniLever and eventually we went into the brewery trade, running pubs in Stockport, Bootle and Chorley.

"It's certainly been eventful! When I was at school I didn't know what I wanted to do."

Leigh, who has three children, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren, was also into sport – despite his mishap in the school gym! – and has run five marathons as well as being a keen cyclist, which he took up late in life.

"From Penwortham, we moved to 13 addresses but I still keep in touch with people via Facebook. It's been surreal seeing Roy, Sonia and Barbara again – I can remember some of the days clearly, like the time Roy got hit by a snowball and it affected his vision – and I couldn't wait to see them in person and see how the school has developed."

Schools Remembered: 1932-1977

A Journal by George Coward, Priory teacher 1953.

George Coward was one of the first teachers at Penwortham County Secondary School in 1953. When he retired he wrote a fascinating and amusing account of his time in education, including his many years at Priory.

Here we have extracted some snippets from the science teacher's journal that you might find worth the read!

AND SO TO PENWORTHAM:

The new Headmaster, Mr.R.Summers, made a faux pas right at the start by calling a staff meeting for the twenty-one teachers on Thursday, 1st January, 1953 at 10.0 a.m. when all were on holiday and several out of town - a New Years Day holiday in the North and Scotland but not in the South where the Head had lived! Only a handful of Staff turned up so we had to meet again when the school actually opened on Monday, 5th January.

The Fifth Year excursion was to Jodrell Bank where we met Sir Bernard Lovell and his staff. We listened to the illustrated lecture and learned a great deal about the stars and use of the radio telescope. From there we went to Manchester Airport and settled in the visitors lounge with splendid views of the planes landing and taking off. A well-dressed official-looking man approached us and asked if we were in charge of these young people. Wondering what was coming next, we answered "Yes, a Fifth Year from from Penwortham near Preston". "Good", he replied. "I am the Agent for 'The Rolling Stones' pop group and I will pay each one £1 if they will come down and cheer the Rolling Stones as they leave the plane. The photographers are all there and I have permission to organise the crowd scene".

Of course 'our lot' were delighted at the prospect and would gladly, given the opportunity, have cheered the pop group for the fun of it. In the event the plane stopped right in front of us, but the Rolling Stones had to come down the steps three or four times, waving and being cheered 'before they got it right'. We saw it later that night on T.V. but they had edited the film because the group and our cheering Fifth Year appeared only once!!

On the occasion of the school's 40th Birthday, I revisited the school and met staff, pupils and 'old scholars'. Everything had changed for the better. I did a tour with my former Head of Biology and saw the well-equipped Labs. and high-tech. apparatus. The atmosphere was a happy one and as for academic results, the Penwortham Priory High School came high up in those (controversial) League Tables. Ruth and I came away with the feeling that here was a well organised school offering wonderful opportunities for all pupils who were willing to give of their best and put to good use such talents as they possessed.



The original teaching staff at Penwortham County Secondary School, 1953. George Coward bottom row far right.



Above photo: The Key Stage 3 dining room in 1953.

Left photo: Photo courtesy of former pupil Pete Wilkinson taken with George in the 1990s.



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The Headteacher's Log Book



Extract below from the same date 70 years earlier:

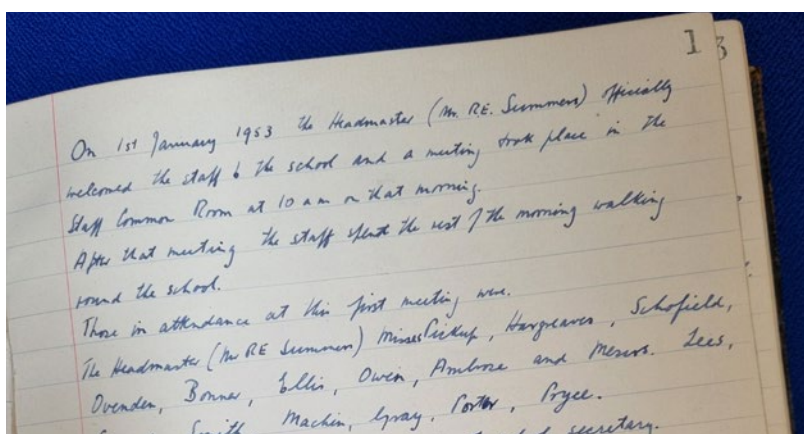
29 June 1953

HMI Mr Morris accompanied by Mr Downes spent the day here discussing the teaching of English.

Extract of the first entry by Mr Summers, Headteacher, on 1 January 1953.

The Headteacher from 1953, Mr Summers, kept a journal to record the day's key events. We have recently discovered some of these beautifully scribed logs in our archives and our resident historian, History teacher Mr Eccles, has revelled in reading them and noting how things have changed.

Mr Eccles
Lead Teacher of History



A Picnic at Priory

Friday, 30 June was the date set in the calendar for a whole school 70th Anniversary celebration picnic and sponsored walk.

The day was to commence with a sponsored walk in the morning followed by a picnic event on the school field for the remainder of the day. There was to be traditional games and activities, music through the decades and a whole school photo - all topped off with a picnic lunch. Pupils were also to get a free ice cream!

Unfortunately, persistent rain forecast for the day meant we had to cancel our plans, however, the Mrs Dowson's Farm Park ice cream and fruit sorbet didn't dampen the spirits of these Year 7 and Year 8 classes on the day.

700 cartons delivered - one for each of us!



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70th Anniversary - Keeping it in the Family

Priory proudly celebrates its 70th anniversary this year and we have been digging through our archives to look at how the school has changed since 1953.

There'll be many celebrations and stories over the 12 months but firstly we had a chat with current pupils who have had members of their families attend Priory, either as Penwortham County Secondary Modern School or Priory Sports and Technology College before it became an Academy in 2012.



Photo shows original line up of staff in 1953 with Mr Summers as Headteacher.

Pupils from Years 7-11 were amazed at the photographs, enjoyed seeing their families on some of the photos as well as spotting teachers who have spent most of their careers at Priory. It certainly means it's always been a family affair at Priory and the school has had a huge impact on its local community over the last 70 years.

Year 7 Connor said: "My mum was in Mrs Simpson's form who is still here now. She said Mrs Simpson was her favourite."

"Both my mum and dad came here – as well as Mrs Simpson, I think Mr Taylor and Mr Faulkner taught my mum and dad as well. It is a bit weird having the same teachers as your parents!"

Finn said: "I think my grandad came here, I am not sure, but my dad and uncle certainly did. My sister Macie is also here in Year 10."

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Year 11 **Aimee** said: "My dad came here which is one reason I came here. He did well at school and was really into science and works at BAE Systems now. I haven't followed in his footsteps as I am not into science but I am enjoying school life."

Ebony, also in Year 11, said: "My mum has told me stories about her time at Priory. She loved sports when she was here, she was a gymnast, and also did cross country. I didn't inherit that – I do not enjoy sports! It is nice having some of the same teachers here though."

Holly said: "My mum and grandma came here. My mum is a hairdresser while I am more into drama. My mum came to look around at Open Evening and was impressed with how it had grown."

Amelie's grandma Joan Frost went on the school's first trip abroad to France in 1961.

"I think my grandma enjoyed geography and history while I am more into graphics," said Year 10 Amelie.



"My grandma can still remember a lot about her time at school and we talk about how it has changed."



Lewis said: "My mum came here and my sister, who is six years older than me, also came here. I think Mrs Lewis-Lavender taught us all."

Logan said: "My mum and dad both came here, I don't think my dad was the best behaved. They both have said how the school has changed dramatically building-wise and with the subjects."

Year 8 Evie spotted her dad on one of the school year books.

She said: "He has a shaved head on the picture and it's the same haircut he has now! I also saw his best friend so I have taken a picture and I can embarrass them now. I came to Priory partly because my dad had been here."



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70th Anniversary Alumni Event

Thank you for your feedback...

"I came with my two sisters and we had a wonderful time. It was a strange feeling in some parts remembering our time there and where we took exams. The added areas and gardens are amazing. Thank you so much for the invite. The students we met were very polite and courteous and looked smart in their uniforms. I wore royal blue when I attended many years ago. Hope I'm around for the 80th anniversary!"

"Any chance you might do this again in the near future? Sadly, due to an unexpected commitment, I was unable to attend and would dearly love to see my Alma Mater."

"Great afternoon it was so strange seeing how much the school has changed! Mr Eastham you're doing a brilliant job."

"What a great day. Thank you to all your team. It was a privilege to be there."

"Hi, just want to say a big thank-you for letting me have a tour round my old school. I've got to say I'm very impressed, it's brought about some good memories. Thanks again."

"A thoroughly enjoyable visit. How much the school has evolved since my time. Amazing facilities fit for modern times and a principal with an obvious passion for education, the school and students. Thank you."

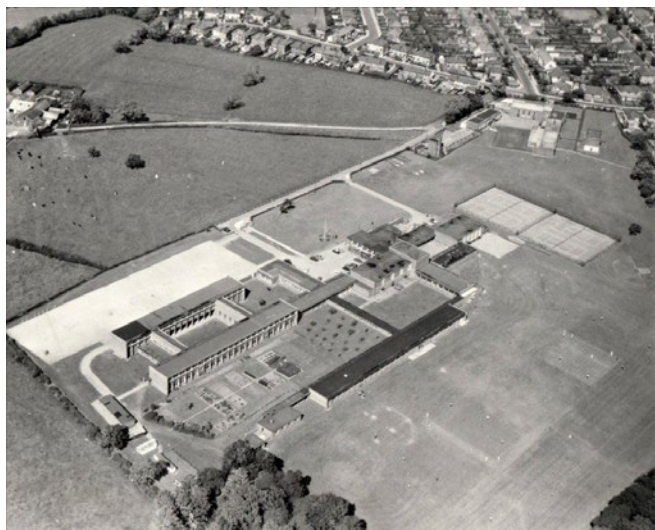
"Sad to have missed this - back in the area one week too late. Looks like a great time had by all."

"Wow, what an interesting tour of Priory, wish they had all those facilities back in the sixties and saw a couple of Oldies like myself. Interesting to read the teacher's log books and a very informative tour by the devoted Headmaster. Well done for advocating all the changes, it looks a excellent school to attend."

"Attended the ex pupils open day yesterday and I was very impressed with how the school has evolved since the year I left in 1973. Mr Eastham was an excellent host and it is clear he fosters a spirit and a culture that is designed to help every pupil make the most of their school life in preparation for their future careers. The trip brought back many memories and whilst I enjoyed my school time, I think that if I was 12 years old again I would much prefer what I saw yesterday. As a retired business consultant and ex HR director I have experienced many organisations, where I would quickly feel the culture of a place. I have to say the school I experienced yesterday felt on point for today's world, so keep up the good work and keep evolving."



Arial photo of the school estate taken in the 1950s and in 2020.



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Message from the Principal

We'd just like to take the opportunity to thank everyone that came to our 70th Anniversary event and to mark the retirement of our long-serving teacher, Mr Andrew Watters, in such large numbers. It was great to see so many familiar and friendly faces. We hope you enjoyed the opportunity to look through the photos and memorabilia, and to chat to friends, colleagues and former pupils of the school from your time here at Priory. It was a day to remember!

Thanks again for coming and showing your support. We really appreciated you being there.



Where are they now?

If any past pupils and staff would like to get in touch with the school, please contact with our alumni liaison, Mrs Yates, Communications & Marketing Manager.

j.yates@priory.lancs.sch.uk

Tel: 01772 320250

Keep in touch!

Are you aware of our Facebook group for Priory's alumni, including former and current staff?

Just go to the school's Facebook page, click 'visit group', add in the year you left us and we will let you in.

www.facebook.com/PriorySTC

www.facebook.com/groups/penworthamprioryalumni

In this Facebook group, you can see what former classmates and teachers may have posted. All posts are tagged with 'classof...' so you may like to search for posts from your era however there is also 'formerstaff' and 'buildingsandfacilities'. Feel free to add your own post or photos of memorabilia.

The group was only set up a couple of years ago and it is already packed with stories, however, we always welcome member participation!



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