

The 2007 Reunion of Regent Street Poly School Evacuees

The Polytechnic School was evacuated from 309 Regent Street on 1st September 1939, just before the outbreak of World War 2. Because it was put on the wrong train to the West country the school was at first dispersed among four villages in Somerset. It arrived about three weeks later in Minehead, Somerset, which became its wartime home.

Annual reunions of Poly evacuees, together with their wives, have been taking place since 1991. This year, 68 years after the school left Regent Street, a dwindling number of evacuees were reunited in Minehead.

The 2007 Reunion started with the usual get-together in a pub, which this year was *The Old Ship Aground* on the Quay. Such venues were of course out of bounds to the Poly boys!

The following day, Saturday 22nd September, started with a coach trip to Castle Drogo in Devon. This provided many opportunities for reminiscing.



The main event was an exhibition of memorabilia. This took place in the Masonic Hall, which during the war was hired by the School to provide extra teaching accommodation. School magazines, photos, newspaper cuttings, items of school uniform and other treasures from the past were set out, closely examined and discussed. Of particular note was the label inscribed H82 which we all had to attach to ourselves on the day we left London. Regrettably, none of us had kept a gas mask or even its cardboard case to display!



Left Phil Haig (foreground), who has arranged all the Reunions, exchanging memories with Guy Driffield.

Right Vic Steeden engaged in earnest conversation with Alan Beck, who travelled from Canada for the Reunion.



Guy Driffield wrote two articles giving a fascinating insight into schoolboy life in Germany and Italy just before the war. They can be found in the Spring and Summer 1940 issues of *The Quintinian*, the school magazine. A contribution by Vic Steeden to the Evacuation (Autumn 1939) issue demonstrates how we city dwellers adapted to rural life in a matter of weeks. His article is entitled "A Cow with Milk Fever"!

The 1939-45 *Quintinian* magazines and other Poly school material can be accessed from the Contents page. If you or a relative attended the Poly school before or during the war, there is a List of Contributors which will help locate your writings or those of your loved ones. Mentions in reports, letters to schoolmasters and other news sent to the school can be found by a surname search.

Harold Beck (1935-42)