

The attached document (or should I say 'tome'?) has been a long time in the making - more than two years' worth of long plane and train journeys, plus many nights alone in hotel rooms.

After the scandal of recent times that has besmirched the reputation of my old school, I have tried to give a broader and more historical picture of Chetham's. Given that I am one of a very small number of professional musicians who remember it from the years prior to the change in 1969 from boy's public school to mixed specialist school - I spent 1964-1971 there - I hope you find it interesting. That particular period of seven years was one during which British society underwent a gigantic change, the positive and negative effects of which are still being felt.

I have wanted to write something like this for a very long time, before I forgot the details of my years at the school. It has been blogging that has stimulated my finally getting round to writing it down, and the process brought back far more recollections than I realised I had buried; as tends to happen with me, it became far longer than planned.

I have not tried to paint an idyllic picture of that period. There were inevitably good and bad aspects to my schooldays, and for me to give any other impression would be disingenuous.

I have created two main documents. One depicts a series of impressions of the school itself and of the historical context of the time I was a pupil there. The other consists of a series of memories of individual teachers who had an impact on my own future, as well as on that of many others'.

Originally I included a long section on the subject of bullying. By delving into the recesses of my memory I re-revealed scars to myself that I had forgotten I had. The section became so extended (over 4700 words) and bitter that I redacted it at first. Now I have decided to post it as a separate document to which there is a link both here, and in the main post.

I basically wanted to conjure up a taste of the good sides of school life at that time. There are plenty of happy memories to make up for the bullying culture of my first two or three years. For all the problems recently exposed, and my own decidedly mixed experience as a pupil, I am, overall, very glad I went to Chetham's. However, the bullying culture was a huge blot on daily school-life at the time, and will always remain an issue for me. As has been said many times elsewhere (including by me in the main document), it is not the bullying itself that does the most damage; it is the establishment's unwillingness to deal with it that does that.

This post is not intended as primarily about myself. The narrative is inevitably autobiographical, but I have tried to be as objective as it is possible under the circumstances of it being almost completely based upon memories. It is intended as a documentary - albeit subjective - of life at the predecessor to the present Chetham's School of Music - Chetham's Hospital School for Boys. Those two manifestations of Chetham's were very different in atmosphere and culture despite the former school's reputation for music. The story is inevitably told from my own perspective, however, for which I will have to ask your indulgence and understanding. There are several stories that are indeed largely about me, but the intention is set the stage, and show how the school reacted to me and people like me, in contrast with how things would be in the present day.

I have mostly limited my text to the period before the reconstitution of the school into Chetham's School of Music. However, there are occasional excursions into the two subsequent years 1969-71 - my sixth form years and the first two years of the new school.

Until fairly recently, other than occasionally playing concerts to celebrate this, that, and the other anniversary, and to raise money for the institution, I had virtually no contact with the school. That changed in 2006, when Murray McLachlan and Kathryn Page invited me to teach at the Chetham's Summer School for Pianists. I have been involved with this, which I perceive as possibly the best of its kind in the world, every year since. During the last few years I was also asked to teach at the school itself, once every six weeks or so. Thus I have first hand experience of how well most things are going at Chetham's, and discovered how superbly the new music school has matured into its present role as one of the greatest educational establishments of its kind anywhere in the world.

If nothing else, perhaps document provides a glimpse of another era. As always, sensible comments would be most welcome.