

"Search for Truth in the Company of Friends"

# Thorns Memories 1951-2017

*"That short walk to campus always made Hawthorns feel like a world apart, a place with its own culture and vibe"*



1951-2017

## HAWTHORNS FAREWELL CELEBRATION

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SATURDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2017

# Introduction

A Hawthorns Farewell was held on Saturday 14th October 2017 for Thorners to make a farewell visit and to celebrate Hawthorns' life. The first students moved into Hawthorns House during 1951 and Hawthorns Halls retired at the end of 2017 as part of plans to improve and extend student accommodation on campus. This oral history of "Thorns" was begun by Dr Chris Harrison (Class of 1968 and Senior Lecturer 1976-2017). We have added some of your memories.

**Chris Harrison** (1968): "In December 2017 Hawthorns Hall of residence at Keele University ("Thorns") will close - and with it over sixty years of history of resident students in the village. It all began in 1951 when the university bought the big white Hawthorns House and its grounds to accommodate twelve men students who could not be squeezed into the wartime army huts that comprised the new university's first residences.

"Hawthorns was soon extended as a more permanent site. Five brick blocks were erected and large parts of the old white house converted into student study bedrooms. Those early students, all male, lived under the benign regime of founding lecturer and warden, **Paul Rolo**. The Thorns hosted playing fields for the first three years; the old changing rooms and showers, located in the basement of the white house, survive to this day. In many ways the village welcomed this development. Local women got jobs as cleaners; the pub and shop new customers; the parish church additions to their congregation. Others found the arrival of students irksome but came to accept their new neighbours.



*Photo: Hawthorns House in 2015*

"In 1976 I returned to the Thorns, first as a Resident Tutor and later as Assistant Warden. The Thorns was now run by **Carole Holder**. She was a *bonne viveur*, a cook of distinction, and a prolific party-giver at which Thorns students mingled with some of the great and the good of the University and beyond. She did more than anyone I knew to bring staff and students together. Part of Carole's policy was to make the General Block a welcoming social space for students. Thorns Balls were legendary and came to rival the Union's Balls for the quality of the bands and the cheapness of the tickets. They had themes and Thorns' students loved to dress-up! The Thorns Bar also ran a regular disco and attendance was high. My memory of these years is of a constant stream of social events.

*Photo: Hawthorns House in the 1950s.*

"In those days before mobile phones students relied on public pay phones to stay in contact with their families. The University provided one pay phone in the General





Block and two outside the Flats. Degree results were published on the Hall notice-boards. However, the night before we Wardens were told who had failed. It was our task to warn those failures in advance. It was widely known that was my task and every trip to Block or Flat was closely monitored. The student concerned was seldom surprised.

"I left the Thorns in 1987 after ten years' service feeling I had done as much as I could. For me, the Thorns was a special place and exemplified our founder's ideal that Keele students should pursue knowledge in the company of friends. And, of course, these friendships and memories last a life time."

## From the 1950s

### *"The Original Thorners"*

The Original Residents of the Hawthorns 1952-1953, remembered by John Groom and supplemented from correspondence.

Founding Class of 1954: **Peter Briggishaw, Clive Collier**

Pioneer Class of 1955: **Mike Cowdrey, Ray Garner, Bernard Gilhooly, Chas Gill, John Pleavin, Don Thompson**

Pioneer Class of 1956: **David Burton, Ray Challinor, Keith Clement, John Golding, John Groom, Julian Hooper, Ron Jones, Donald McIlwain, Jim Treadwell**

Pioneer Class of 1957: **Stuart Milner**

Class Uncertain: **Brian Noble, Roy Trowel, Courtney Treasure, Norman Livesey, Philip Levy, Alan Cubbon, John Miles**



*Photo: Originals Keith Clement and John Groom visited the Hawthorns in 2016*

**John Groom** (1956) and **Keith Clement** (1956): "We were a mixed bunch, some straight from school at 18 and some following two years National Service. In the early days, we shared rooms and in one case there were four to a room, eased later on to two to a room. Initially none had bicycles, but soon acquired one since the walk to Keele Hall for meals

involved a walk of over a mile. Later on, a lift to the College in the morning could be obtained on the back of a lorry driven by the husband of the lady who was in charge of domestic affairs at the Hawthorns. None of the students were obvious academics, although some were evidently keen on Left Wing politics, one, **John Golding**, eventually becoming a Labour MP. In addition to the Students' rooms equipped with gas fires (free) there was a large kitchen with a gas oven, a laundry room and a well upholstered communal lounge which mostly served as a Listening Room on Sunday afternoons. The Hawthorns itself was placed in a large garden with a walkway through a Rhododendron Tunnel to the Sneyd Arms at the top of Keele Village."

**Clive Collier** (1954): "My first view of Keele goes back a long way. From 1942 to 1945, as a schoolboy, I delivered newspapers to Home Farm Lodge. In winter, with the Wartime blackout, it could be a dangerous adventure. Finally, I can only join in with "Long live Keele (PS For ease of identification, I'm the guy, whose motorbike was put on the Keele Hall roof in 1953)"



*Photo: A cosy shot inside Hawthorns House. One of the "Originals" **John Groom** (1956)*

**Clive Collier** (1954): "I am one of the graduates of 1954. None of those first undergraduates, brought together in 1950, could ever have foreseen what a wonderful institution U C N S would become. There were about 150 of us. Am I the oldest survivor? As one of the original occupants of the Hawthorns, having won the best room

on the turn of a coin, I was interested to see that you are now retiring the place. I'd love to see it all again, but I'm too decrepit to travel, having chosen to end my days in this lovely wee town in the Borders. I wonder how many of the other original denizens are left. I know that two of my dearest friends there, "**Tommo**" **Thomas** and "**Josh**" **Reynolds** are no longer with us. I have to say that, when I arrived to serve in Malaya in 1954, most of the British administrators were public school and Oxbridge and I had to fight my corner. Being so much in favour of independence, some saw me as a 'loonie lefty'."

**Don Thompson** (1955): "Very sad to learn that The Hawthorns is to close and it was fascinating to read the comments of past Thornites. I moved there in my second year (1952) and lived first in the main house then in the corner room in the first extension. There I stayed till I graduated in 1955. I recall a very hung-over **John Golding** (1956) - later an MP - returning late to the start of the 1953-1954 year. He began his political career very early on! I remember a night just before the start of the following year when a boozed up **Ray Garner** (1955) fell into a trench and broke his leg. **Paul Rolo** (the warden) was not amused. God willing, I will drag my weary bones to the October event in the hope of meeting old mates."



*Photo: Another cosy shot inside Hawthorns House. With another "Original" **Dave Burton** (1956)*

**Brenda Dawson (Warne)** (1960): "I first met my husband **George Dawson** (who died in 2011) at a Hawthorns Freshers' party in 1956 (where the Hawthorns inhabitants looked over all the Fresher women and tried to get first pick... I am sure times have changed). I was invited by one member, but left with George. We were together for 55 years - so I think we

made the right choice! Cheers, fond memories and good wishes to all the "Thornies!"

## ***A Hallowe'en Raid***

*Photo: Hawthorns residents with Herbert the Dragon.*



**John Groom** (1956): "For reasons not now easy to recall, the somewhat bumptious Hawthorn dwellers alienated those living on the main Campus. Several weeks before Halloween there was a rumour that the campus dwellers would mount some kind of attack on the Hawthorns. In preparation for this, buckets of water and dustbin rubbish were placed on the first floor landing and on the roof of the portico above the main door. It was hoped that Dr

**Ben Noble**, then living at the Hawthorns, would play his bagpipes during the "battle" but in the event he absconded. After the first assault, the "attackers" obtained dustbin lids to shield themselves from water and rubbish, in the manner of Roman soldiers and their shields. A few stones were thrown breaking a few windows and after sporadic skirmishes **Paul Rolo**, the Warden, arrived in his Morris Minor and screeched to a halt in front of the main door. The attackers promptly evaporated and all became peaceful. Subsequently Paul Rolo put up a notice to the effect that every student would be fined 9 old pence to cover the damages but to the best of my knowledge it was never collected."

**John Groom** (1956): "At the outset, part of the Hawthorns was derelict and uninhabited and there was a small amount of roof sheeting and pipes made of lead which took very little effort to remove and stash in a carrying bag. There was a man in the village who evidently was a bit of a fence and he

gladly exchanged the bag of lead for cash. The cash was then used to supplement the Xmas party fund to which every student in the College was invited. Most of it was spent on producing a strong Punch and those not in the know wondered where the funds for the Cider and Spirits came from. Some time later one student, attempting to use an unoccupied room as a dark room, had the misfortune to find that the sink in the room was devoid of its drain pipe."

**John Groom (1956):** "The Sneyd Arms served as an unofficial annex to the Hawthorns and most people went there in the evenings where there was always a raucous singsong of student and other songs round the piano. The landlord also produced excellent cheese and onion sandwiches which helped those who could not be bothered to walk to the main Refectory at Keele Hall in the evening. From memory, Closing Time in those days was at 10.30 p.m. A pint of beer cost about 10 old pence."

**John Groom (1956):** "Parking was not a problem since Dr **Edmund Papst** was the only person to own a car at the Hawthorns in the early days. The Papstmobile was an open top Austin 7, probably 1930's vintage. Most people either walked or cycled; bicycles often lacked obvious owners and were left for anyone's use."

## From the 1960s

### "The New Originals"

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "All changed in the early 1960s. A new Hall of Residence with many blocks was built on the site and an extensive general block provided both a refectory and many rooms for student use; there was even a sewing room and a full sized billiard room. This new complex was presided over by **Iolo Roberts** and **Eileen Lake**. The student blocks were strictly separated by gender with men in blocks A to F and the women in the blocks behind. The mid-1960s saw the great student protests against the "hours rules" where male and female were segregated overnight in observance of the current age of majority of 21; a rule more honoured in the breach than in the observance."



**Liz Walton (1968):** "I lived in the Hawthorns for my final year. I remember spending the afternoon in one of the labs on campus and coming out to find several inches of snow through which I had to wade my way back to the Hawthorns in flimsy shoes. We were snowed in there for my 21st - no post, nobody could travel up for the celebrations. Ended up drinking sherry and eating cake with the other residents on my floor"

"Concourse", 8<sup>th</sup> November 1968

**Bob Digby (1971):** "I was part of the first cohort to the 'new' blocks (A-F men, G-M women) when they were built in 1967. Spent four remarkably happy years there."

**Trevor Bannister (1971):** "As the original occupant of Hawthorns A5 I am saddened that the life of the Hall is coming to a close. I thought of the room as the height of luxury when I first moved in, spent three happy years there and then moved to a flat in Z Block when it became available in 1970."

**Daniel Joseph (1971):** "I moved in when the buildings were brand new!! ...now they're knocking them down!"



**Chris Harrison (1968):** "In the early 1960s the extended residence was presided over by wardens Iolo Roberts and the extraordinary Eileen Lake. She is remembered for her eclectic make-up (she never quite got her lip stick to fit her lips) and her poor driving skills, once driving her car through the holly hedge into the Sneyd car-park. It was known for years after as the Eileen Lake Memorial Gap."

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "The mid 1960s saw the great student protests against the "hours rules" where male and female were segregated overnight, a rule more honoured in the breach than in the observance. In 1970 the five new blocks of four-bed flats were added; they fell outside of the usual restrictions and provided accommodation for 48 weeks of the year. So the Thorns headed a revolution in student living. For that year I acted as liaison officer between the students and the university. The most dramatic incident was the night when I was summoned to deal with a knife-bearing intruder. Some students had taken pity on this guy and offered him a bed for the night. Once ensconced, he pulled a large kitchen knife and began to threaten the residents. Three fled and one was left in the flat with the unwelcome guest. The police were called and so was I. By convention the police could not enter university property without a warrant except by invitation. We reached the locked flat-door and I offered one of the officers my master key only to be told I had to unlock the door myself and invite them in. It was a scary moment instantly defused when we found the visitor slumped in a drugged haze on a chair in the kitchen. Panic over! Most of the time my duties were more mundane, including accompanying **Flo Andrews**, the Hall Manager, on her termly inspections of the flats. Most memorable was one student's room whose bed sported a rich silk-cover on which lay a riding crop and hand-cuffs. Since these were not against the terms of the lease we made no comment and passed on."



*Photo: Clearing Snow at Hawthorns, 1969*

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "The Sneyd Arms became a student pub in the 1960s. The students drank in the Lounge even though prices were lower in the Public Bar. By convention, the Bar was left to the locals and the academics. The Sneyd also doubled as an off-licence as supermarkets at that time could not sell alcohol. Students bought flagons of cider (then the cheapest drink) and a ghastly wine marketed under the brand name Hironnelle in heroic quantities."

**James Atherton (1967):** "An Annexe resident set off a railway detonator which exploded and reverberated around the newly built blocks. Some girls became hysterical, **Iolo Roberts** was out in his dressing gown (it was about midnight) trying to ascertain what had happened. He never succeeded. I think it was officially attributed and recorded as a movement of the nearby Silverdale Fault."



Photo: Hawthorns "Unit 1", May 1960.

**Jennifer Waterman (1963):** "My musical education really began at the Hawthorns. I listened to a whole variety of music with a fellow student of whom I have fond memories. He had built his own speaker system so the sound quality was strong and powerful in his small room. There I first heard Mozart's Symphonia Concertante by David and Igor Oistrakh, Orff's Carmina Burana, Beethoven's String Quartet No. 16 in F major, op. 135 and those words "Es Muss Sein", amongst other works. He also introduced me to William Walton's Balthazar's Feast. I also heard quite a bit of Ray Charles, including 'Hey What'd I say' with the line " See the girl with the red dress on" and "Hit the Road Jack" but also very early Beatles like "Love, Love Me Do" as well as Snooks Eglin and Robert Johnson. So such music is always touched with Keele, and especially Hawthorn, memories of those far away days in the early 1960's. Too, I remember other Hawthorn dwellers, friends of my music educator, who were a wonderful band of friends together."



## From the 1970s

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "In 1970 five more blocks of four-bed flats were added to the site. These were very popular because they fell outside of the usual restrictions and provided accommodation for 48 weeks of the year. So Thorns headed a revolution in student living. For that year I acted as liaison officer between the students and the university. By 1970 there were 580 student rooms on the site, more than doubling the population of the village. Surprisingly, there was very little friction between village and students, partly because the new blocks and the refectory provided work for locals and partly because the students brought even more customers to pub and shop."

**Jane James (Aldworth) (1972):** "Chris and I were one of two married couples who moved into the new blocks in 1970. Then Chris - studying for a PhD at the Communications Department - was offered the resident tutor's (rodent rotor's) job at the Hawthorns and we lived in one of the three little flats for five years. Our first daughter Helen was born while we were there and we were offered the upstairs two-bedroomed flat when that happened. Chris and I took over a small patch of garden outside to grow rhubarb, radishes and raspberries. We stored our tandem in the old garages."

**Jackie Westwood-Demetriades (1972):** "My first hall of residence was Hawthorns in 1968 and we were the first *human* inhabitants - we had an interesting issue with the local cockroaches that also felt they had priority!! Very fond memories of this hall - I started there and graduated from there. Hope whatever you're replacing it with generates the same great memories."



*Photo: Hawthorns, 1970 - building continues*

**Tony Clark (1978):** "The wonderful friendships that grew amongst those living in A Block. The water cascading down the stairs after a mammoth water fight. The lovely people who looked after us; Doreen the Halls Secretary; Les the friendly security guard; all the refectory staff who fed us so well; the general block parties; the window locks that afforded easy access to rooms, sadly now double glazed to deprive students of fun! I loved the village setting, there was just nothing like it, 'Thorns was just the place to be."

**Paul Toland (1978):** "Climbing up from the top floor window to the roof of Hawthorns A block to sunbathe during the hot summer of 1976."

**Ruth Norris (1974):** "I remember my finals celebrated in 'Thorns and our shared flat."

**Richard Markham (1979):** "I lodged at Hawthorns for my first year 1975-76. I have fond memories of trying to get to Foundation Year lectures in time. I continued my association with the Hall throughout my four years. Sad to see it go but all things change. I posted this of me outside "my" block (L) on a flying visit back in 2014. I was a rarity in having a car right from the start and could actually park it more or less next to the door!"

*Photo: Richard Markham - The Return.*



**Chris Harrison (1968):** "In 1976 I returned to the Thorns, first as a Resident Tutor and later as Assistant Warden. By then the Thorns was run by Carole Holder, a larger than life lady in every sense. She was a *bonne viveuse*, a cook of distinction, and a prolific party-giver at which Thorns students mingled with some of the great and the good of the university and beyond. Carole asked me to oversee the student run bar which at that time opened twice a week. I found a pretty shambolic organisation. Although the turn-over was quite large we were making no profit. I doubled the student bar-staff wages, banned all drinking behind the bar, and instituted regular stock checks and hey presto we started to make substantial profits".



*Photo: Residents of Hawthorns F Block in 1973: Paul Stevens, Stephen Pask, Stephanie Croxton, "Nonney" and M Morling*

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "What to do with this money? Suddenly the Hall Council ceased to be just a talking-shop and became an instrument for fun. Let us have bigger and better Balls they decided. Many Balls had themes, such as Vicars and Tarts; oh how Thorns' students loved to dress-up! This was the age of The Rocky Horror Music Show and I saw more lingerie, and not just on the girls, at these balls than I had before or since. The Thorns Balls came to rival the Union's Balls for the quality of the bands and the cheapness of the tickets. There was even a black-market in Ball tickets. The better the bands, the louder the music and soon we started to get complaints from the village. What should we do about

that? We decided to hold a Christmas party for the elderly of the village plus representatives of the village community such as the parish council, the shop keeper, the vicar and the publican. **Carole Holder**, with help, provided a buffet for over 100 people, the students devised and performed a cabaret, and I acted as Master of Ceremonies. The first part of the evening ended with a raffle, before we retired to the student bar for a disco. It was amazing what talents emerged. There was musical entertainment from our Music students; old-fashioned recitations; even a conjurer. The most memorable and certainly the best appreciated by the old men was a dance troupe made up of scantily dressed girls whose principal covering were costumes made out of black bin-liners. We also had imported acts, the best of which were the Globular Sisters. Imagine two portly bearded middle aged men dressed in dinner suits, sporting blonde wigs and heavily made-up singing songs from Noel Coward. The effect was hilarious. These parties proved a great success and complaints from the village ceased.”

**Chris Harrison (1968)**: “The Balls made a substantial profit and the Hall funds grew and grew. What to do with these excess funds. I suggested the students run a free coach trip to Alton Towers and later to Blackpool. We also ran a coach trip to Blackpool for the village pensioners. The Thorns Bar ran a disco alongside the cheap booze and attendance was high. My memory of these years is of a constant stream of social events, many fuelled by alcohol”.

**Chris Harrison (1968)**: “**Thorns Radio** was set up as a pirate radio station run by and for Thorns students. The resident staff chose to turn a blind eye - or should that be a deaf ear - to its existence, until enforcement officers started to make enquiries. The pirate radio station ceased broadcasting but was replaced a few years later by KUBE Radio, a legitimate community radio based in the Union.“

**Chris Harrison (1968)**: “In those days the university provided one pay phone in the General Block and two outside the Flats. All went well until we started to get massive bills not covered by money in the boxes in one of the phones. Our suspicions were aroused when we noticed this phone attracting queues of students waiting to use it. The GPO sent an investigator but he could not work out how the fiddle was being worked until we found the instigator of the scam, a clever electronics student, who under promise of no prosecution told the GPO how it was done.”



**Anne Copley (1974)**: “I lived in M block in my first year then move to the LFA flats for P1, P2 and P3. Followed by a year in O block when doing a PGCE. Loved the walk to campus to get to lectures.”

**Margaret Cook (1974):** "I was sad to learn that Hawthorns was closing. My close University friends and I were resident there for our whole four years (and most of us still meet regularly once a year)."



*Photo: J Block 1973, by **Paul Stevens** (1976)*

**Chris Harrison (1968):** "On the whole Thorns students were honest, but not all. When Vice-Chancellor Brian Fender ended pre-paid food service at the weekends students began cooking in the Blocks. And soon we got a spate of thefts of food from Block kitchens. Eventually, the perpetrators were tracked down by some students to one of the Flats. I was summoned and early on Saturday morning the irate students and I called on the flat. The door was open so we went in. On the table was a carrier bag full of food. We asked the occupants whose it was. They denied all knowledge of it. I got them to agree that these looked like stolen goods and that therefore I should call the police. I pointed out that the thieves would be easy to trace since their finger-prints would be on it. At this point they confessed. One of them was planning to be a lawyer so a criminal conviction would scupper his career prospects and they agreed to let me deal with it which I did with fines. The food was returned to the student kitchens."



**Chris Harrison (1968):** "On the whole Thorns students were reasonably behaved, the main complaints being excessive noise and damage to rooms. However, there was one case which did exercise me and that was a case of homophobic bullying. Julian was almost a parody of a queer. He was short, dumpy and minced around the Hall and on campus arm in arm with his boyfriend. His fellow students thought him fair game and on a regular basis wrecked his room and subjected him to personal abuse. When I discovered this I knew I had to act, but how? One night after the pub I summoned a Block Meeting by the simple expedient of setting off the fire alarm. The residents tumbled out of their rooms to find me waiting at the entrance to the block. I tasked them with the bullying of Julian. "But he's a queer" said one student, as though it were a justification. "So am I" I replied but that doesn't justify you making Julian's life a misery. Shocked, the students retreated to their rooms and from then on they left Julian alone but transferred their venom to me. They would

scream obscene chants outside my rooms late at night, but significantly never had the balls to say it to my face. Years later one of those students even wrote me an apology. In time the abuse ceased and the students became reconciled to having a gay Resident Tutor and so in a strange way the Thorns became the spear-head of Gay Liberation at Keele. We even raised funds to support people with AIDS.”

**Anon (1979):** “Thorns C block. I remember G, a cockney who inhabited the room immediately on the right as you walked in, who was a big Elton John fan. He used to play Funeral for a Friend, full blast, with his door open. I remember P (he was Greek) who bought a ton of lamb, along with a ton of ouzo and a BBQ (liberated from the family restaurant). That was a very memorable Sunday afternoon.”



**Chris Harrison (1968):** “Student deaths were rare and in my time none were from suicide. These deaths were mainly sudden and violent: a car accident; a fall from a cliff-top; a stabbing on the football terraces. The consequences in Hall were often extreme and we acted as bereavement counsellors to grieving friends. It was my job to attend the funeral out of respect for the student and their family; my presence as a representative of the University was uniformly welcomed but it was not an easy task. Where I knew the student well I mourned with the rest.”

**Jeremy Duggan (1980):** “The very happiest of times... B13 from Oct '76 to June '78. V36 from Oct '78 to July '80... Such memories: founding Thorns Radio with Chris Mac. DJing in Thorns Bar Thursday & Sunday evenings... Cath from Silverdale - B Block long suffering cleaner, a lovely lady who managed Thorns... packed lunches from Thorns dining room... queuing at the phone box down Quarry Bank Road... Grumpy Post Office owners... even grumpier landlord of Sneyd Arms' - Geoff... best friends ever made were made there... B Block... D... E... F... W... & J block for the ladeez!”

### ***An unusual Hawthorns visitor - Colonel Walter Sneyd***

“I was at Keele from 1970-74 (a mature student: 11+ failure with no ‘O’ or ‘A’ levels who had been on a one-year course for ‘second-chance’ students at Hillcroft College. The fact that I came out with a First says a great deal about what Keele offers in my opinion!) I was based at Hawthorns and, in the refectory there, we started to see an elderly vicar eating in the refectory. Our little group of students befriended him. He was Colonel **Walter Sneyd** who had lost an arm in the First World War. I believe he was in Intelligence during the Second World War. Because his studies at Oxford had been interrupted by the First World War (and possibly also because of his disability) he did not complete his

degree at Oxford as a young man. He had come back to Keele in his retirement to remedy this situation and he was lodging somewhere in Keele village. Clearly he had been offered access to the refectory for his meals. I think he was using the University Library for his studies. He was a gentleman of the old school but we became very friendly with him (cutting up his meat, for example) and he did finally complete his Oxford degree (and was able subsequently to sport 'MA' after his name). I stayed in touch with him after Keele and we used to meet twice a year - once in London where he always came for the boat race (and was fortunate to be on one of the boats following the crews) and then in Oxford where he came to stay in a residence for clergy. During this time he was vicar (or retired vicar)



of a village in Monmouthshire. He was very supportive of me, especially when I was researching for my Keele History doctorate in Suffolk. It was here I learnt of his death - a postcard I had sent to him from Suffolk, where I was staying at the time, was returned to me with simply the word 'Deceased' on it! Walter was something of an eccentric - or perhaps fairer to say he was of a different age - impeccable

in manners and courtesy. We did not learn a great deal about him personally and it wasn't until after his death that I learned he had been married and widowed. He had said nothing to us of this significant area of his life but he had hinted of Intelligence adventures during the Second World War."

*Here (above) is a photo of five of us in 'K' Block on the eve of Finals 1974: **Maggie Smith, Mazda Jenkinson, Maggie Cook, Tat Canby** and, prostrate on the floor, **Edwin Carmichael**. We are praying at the shrine to St Jude, Patron of Helpless Causes.*

## From the 1980s

**Andy Poole (1985):** "Four years living in A block. Great times, drinking in The Sneyd most nights apart from the weekly 'Thorns night. Went back years later when my daughter went to Keele and was put in Thorns F block - nothing had changed in over 20 years!"

**Ian Brunt (1983):** "Two years A block, two years in the flats in W block, 1979-83. Great years."

**Simone-Davis (1985):** "Bare-foot in Ball gowns, making our way to 'Thorns after a summer ball. Five o'clock in the morning with brilliant sunshine and a dawn chorus. Absolutely glorious and the epitome of my time at Keele."

**Trevor Parry (1983):** "Hawthorns had their own parties. I remember seeing Big Country in the refectory just as they hit the big time. They were delayed due to a car accident on the way. The Bootleg Beatles played in one of the smaller rooms once. The lounge had an early asteroids machine with green graphics. For every so many points you scored, you got another life. People got so good at it that 10p would last all day and we would do shifts keeping it going. Somewhere nearby, possibly on the right hand side as you crossed the main road, was a large house with a long drive. There was a Citroen SM Maserati parked in the drive. A rare car and very valuable."



*Photo: 1984 Flats interior by Trevor Parry*

**Stephen Field (1984)** "Happy memories 1981-1984. C block for two years then one of the flats for my last year. Thorns Radio broadcasting from C Block with **Alan Clifford** aka The Salty Dog. Lazy summer term nights playing 30-a-side football. And the winter of 1981/82. Building such a massive snowman on an access road that a JCB was brought in to clear it. And refectory pie and chips. A staple of survival!"

## For the Domestic Staff - "Marj"

**Andrea Horton (1986):** "I was a student at Horwood and my mum, **Marjorie (Marj) Horton**, was a cleaner (or 'domestic') at Hawthorns from the early 1970's until her retirement in the mid 1990's. Working at Keele was something many of the local women did; it offered part-time work that fitted around school hours and a bus service from neighbouring villages. Plus the questionable bonus of second-hand sheets when they were being thrown out (at least they prepared me for the sheets at Horwood). Mum began working in the original Hawthorns blocks but was THEN assigned the new building known as Templar House. New buildings were rare in those days and she loved it a lot. She worked hard to keep it clean and woe betide any other cleaner that didn't put the mop bucket back. I remember rushing in to Templar House to tell Mum that I'd passed my driving test and she was in the cleaner's cupboard remonstrating with the mop.



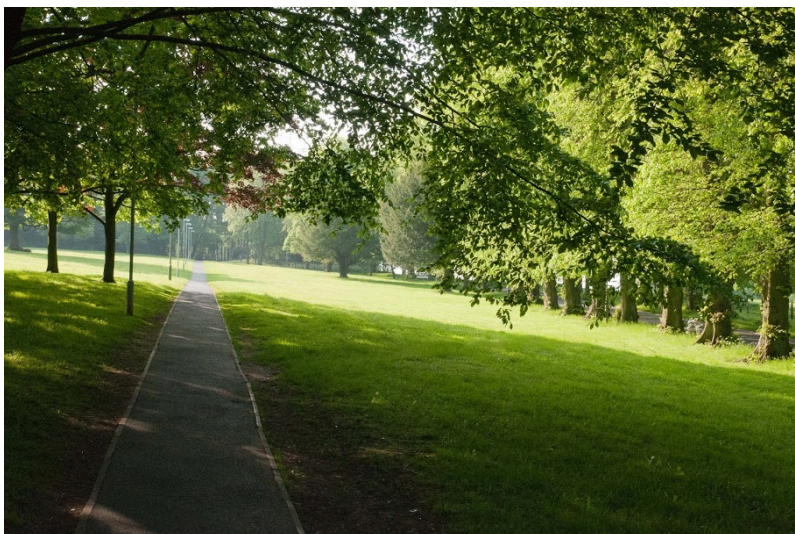
To Mum, the students whose rooms she cleaned were her family; she was surrogate mum, confidante and agony aunt rolled into one. She was so proud of each and every one of them and she missed them when they had graduated. But the students looked after her too. It was no surprise that when it came for me to choose a university, it had to be Keele. Payphones were few and far between on

campus, so it was great to be able to call my Mum using the internal telephone system. The downside was that this service was only available between 09:30 and 12:30 Monday to Friday when Mum would be sporting her pale blue overall (later changed to a Kermit-like green) and wielding a duster. Mum got me a summer job cleaning at both Horwood and Barnes but after a couple of weeks I decided it wasn't for me. Instead, Flo Andrews asked if I would run the bingo sessions for a contingent of Americans coming to stay at Hawthorns as part of a Saga Holidays tour. My boyfriend and I managed a handful of sessions but the Americans didn't really get the hang of it and Flo quickly sacked us. We were quietly relieved.

Mum was a life-long Trade Unionist and would rise to become Chair of the Keele University branch of UNISON (previously NUPE). She was instrumental in getting pay rises for the domestics and always kept the management on their toes. She remained active in the trade union movement for many years after retirement and was always involved in one campaign or another. She also kept a keen eye on developments at Keele. Latterly she suffered from Alzheimer's disease and is now buried in Keele Cemetery overlooking her beloved Hawthorns. When going through her personal effects I found a collection of thank you cards she'd received from students over the years. Knowing the fun she had working at Hawthorns, I think the pleasure was all hers."

*Photo below: Walking to the village, by Ulf Janicke (1990)*

**George Haylett (1983):** "I arrived at Thorns as a Fresher in autumn 1979 and left nine years later, having been a resident undergrad and postgrad, resident tutor and finally deputy warden. Early on, it was clear that Thorns was very different from the other halls. It had character, it had characters, it had an attitude and it had the Sneyd Arms on the doorstep! Thorns was my surrogate family. I don't believe that sense of "belonging" happened in other halls. I think the feeling was built and nurtured by the approach and style of the residential staff at the time – **Carole Holder, Chris Harrison, Flo Andrews, Eva Procek** (and later **Peter Jackson**). They were ably supported by Beryl, Les, Jack, Henry and a whole bunch of resident tutors – and of course, I remember **Bev Skeggs** (my E/F resident tutor) with fondness. In my final year as an undergrad I was the Thorns Bar Manager. At the time, we opened on Thursday night for the Thorns Disco. Who remembers Kung Fu Fighting from the



turntable of **Rajesh Bhasin**? The Thorns Balls were the big event of the year, and we really did manage to "punch above our weight". I will leave it to others to detail the astonishing array of bands we managed to book – all down to the incredible foresight of the Social Committee... who seemed to have a perpetual gift for booking bands who were just about to break into the big



time. There is one event that I view as an example of the caring, pastoral and protective nature of Thorns. Way back in 1985 (I think), Chris Harrison championed a personalized communication (to the Thorns students; from all resident staff) about awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS. This was way before the mainstream media had picked up on the issue. But for most residents it was about the parties.... And soon it will all be gone... and I for one will miss it greatly.”

**Andy Daley 1989:** “Our flat - W32 I think, definitely W block, but it's been almost 30 years - was known as the Love Shack. Such a proud boast for four young men to have their flat known as that, however it was only because we used to play that song by the B52s over and over. We loved that song, and whenever I hear it, I am taken straight back to 'Thorns and my time at Keele.”

**Andy Gosling (1985):** “A5 was my home from 1982 to 1985. Absolutely loved my time at the Hawthorns.”

**Duncan Baldwin (1984):** “E10, then Templar House for my final year (it was new then) in 1980-84, good times on the whole. Every time I hear a door bang...”

**Andy Gosling (1985):** In March 1985, my last few months at my beloved Hawthorns and who did we get to perform at Thorns refectory? Only the Pogues - a truly awesome evening that will always stay with me.

## From the 1990s

**Nina Bunton (1994):** “Coming out of a long illness, Keele was the balm I needed, and Hawthorns was the cradle where I began to grow again. I had a flat right up the top of the lane (V21?) and it faced the fields. Peaceful, sunrises every day, a great foursome in the flat, good times. That first winter was really snowy and my little Mini got stuck on Keele Bank trying to get down to swimming in the morning! Later that weekend we walked along the lane towards the services and the drifts were taller than me (5 feet tall)! In the summer, the sounds of the countryside drifted over our studies, and in that 1991 summer the Keele bypass was put in - my car turned a lovely shade of red from the dust. I was sad to leave Hawthorns after two years but knew that it had been special and I was on my way to be a pioneer exchange student at Ball State University, USA. Hawthorns would always be the best accommodation!”

**Pauline Vickers (1994):** “I lived in Thorns for the whole three years I was in Keele I loved it so much. It was like a community all of its own. The walk also did you good - allowed you to sober up or walk off the hangover in the morning. We had many a good night in the Sneyd and the Thorns bar £1 a pint days, aaah! Used to queue for the payphone and collect the post from the reception area. Also had a chip or two at the restaurant. #thornsforever”



*Photo: That oh-so familiar lane to the village, 2011*

**Lisa Eades (1994):** "Arriving at Keele for the first time and allocated Cell Block H. A sink in a cupboard; what more could anyone want? A fantastic group of girls who made being a fresher a joy. Who can forget Helen's Christmas Dinner on the landing?"

**Kerry Brudenell (1995):** "I remember the squirrel that use to live in the tree

outside my window when I was in block A. As well as a very hot summer in 1993 when we ended up half flooding the block during a water fight. As well as sun bathing on the roof of block F after the cleaner accidentally left a cupboard open giving us access to the hatch onto the roof. Finding an old TV in the attic of R block and converting it into an "Evil Edna" look alike."

**Emily Brough (1999):** "I remember many wonderful things from Hawthorns as I was in Halls A block all three years from autumn 1999 to summer 2002. One of my earliest memories is sitting out on the big landings outside the kitchen in the block getting to know all the other people who lived there and making friends some for life. Big enough to be fun and small enough to care those blocks and the bar with its quizzes and party nights where integral to how much I loved my time at Keele!"

**Luisella O'Shea (1990):** "My husband John (1991) and I spent all our time at Keele at Thorns. That bit of distance was great, not living over the shop. I really appreciated it after I had chickenpox in the spring term of my second year. I was contained in a ward of the health centre, in splendid isolation. Friday night, I was lying in bed itchy and miserable and I could hear the Union disco!"



**Matt Egerton (1994):** "I spent half my second year in the all-male F block before moving to the sanctuary of The Oaks; great fun although the night everyone was ill from some home brew wasn't great! I remember it was 20p one way on the bus to the Union which was welcome on a bad night."

**Debbie Hawker (Lovell) (1988 – 1994):** "I lived happily at Hawthorns for 6 years, as an undergraduate (room D26, then P

block), and then during my PhD. During my PhD I was an assistant warden. I have fun memories of being called out in the night to stop parties (my glasses steamed up and after giving a stern order that the party was over I walked inside a cupboard mistaking it for the door to leave by), as well as being phoned at 2am by a student ordering a pizza (someone had put the duty warden's phone number on

the pizza delivery advert). Not to mention the student who phoned the duty number to complain that she had flies in her room. Happy days - I'm sorry to hear that Hawthorns is retiring. I made so many great friends in those years."



**Lee Melton (1995):** "I don't know where I spent the most time, C, F or P Block. Or Templar Bar."

**Kerry Brudenell (1995)** "Definitely Templar Bar that was all three years the others were only for a year."

**Sarah Body (1996):** "Z block for me. Z5 flat for two years. Loved it there. Remember it - **Tracey Dale** and **Karen Weetman**? Plus Andy and his washing up mountain I kept relocating to his bed!"

**Kate Golding:** "Two years in D block for me 1994-95 (D18) and 1995-95 (D23). Lots of memories. Those halls were awesome!"

## From the 2000s

**Rach (2009):** "Arriving back in halls to find my block mates playing Mario Kart on one of the floors. I then decided to play and lost. However I played again and beat them to prove that I could, even when highly intoxicated."

**Paul Wagner (2005):** "In all seriousness, it was a place of good but strange times. I'll miss it. However, somewhere with a boiler that can fill more than half a bath for the nine it services will hopefully replace it."

**Anneliese (2002):** "I spent all three years on Hawthorns, but on my first day I found myself living upstairs from some very strange boys! I remember telling my Mum not to worry I wasn't going to go out with any of "those weirdos". So that was how I met my husband."

**Lucy Wain (2008):** "We got moved Block halfway through the year due to refurbishment. We felt really put out to move across from L block to C block... until we realised it was much nicer after the refurb! Also was a much nicer location. We had a field that we played rounders on a few times next door!"

**Rachel Baddeley (2002):** "Five of us are making a 'pilgrimage' back to block H! We're bringing all our children too... to show them where it all started! Three of the babies wouldn't exist if it wasn't for Keele!"

**Rebecca Patel (2005):** "My Hawthorns memory is my first year in 2002, meeting my husband at Templar Ball and my parents cooking a roast dinner for the whole block on our first term! Unfortunately my husband has now passed away but those memories of our meeting and our subsequent love story will stay with me forever."

**Dan (2009):** "My room had damp and I got a chest infection for the only time in my life, coincidence?"

**Thaila Skye (2004):** "My parents and I moved all my stuff into my new room in K-Block and as I waved them off and went back to room, for a split-second I felt alone and scared. This was the first time I had lived away from home, and I didn't quite know what to do with myself - until there was a knock on my door! The girl next door told me that the entire block was going to the poster sale and asked whether I wanted to come. So the whole of K-Block walked down to the poster sale together whilst getting to know each other. It sounds silly, but during that walk I felt as if I was part of something incredible. It was the beginning of some amazing friendships that were formed in K-Block during 2004 and I'll always be grateful for the lack of space, the messy kitchen, and of course the shabby-yet-perfect Templar Bar."

**Matt Sykes (2001):** "This photo shows me just about to leave Keele for good in July 2001. My old Ford Escort packed up and ready to go outside 'House 2' (home for my final year) and the empty X block (closed due to rising damp I believe)." **Amanda Caton (2004):** "Ha ha ha I inherited the "no parking" parking space that September!" **Jill Hanby (2004):** "Ha yes, Amanda Caton, **Andrew Penn** got a massive dent in his bonnet when half a branch fell on it from that big tree! Boy, I was in trouble for parking there."



*Photo: Matt Sykes, parking his car in the No Parking space.*

**Claire McLennan (2006):** "I texted my parents about visiting Keele before Hawthorns gets pulled down as I can't make the October event and I noticed that the suggested auto-correct following words after I typed "Keele" were "street" "university" ....and "squirrels" ...."

**Jill Hanby (2001):** "I started at Keele in 2001 in what was then an all girl's E block! Such a surprise being so far from campus and only in a girl's block, but it wasn't a problem for long. Loved the walks to campus and more importantly found that F block next door was all boys! The poor student rep who lived between these two blocks. I vividly remember heading to F block in fresher's week wearing a Union Jack cowgirl hat (as you do!) Walking past room two with a guy sitting on an amp, playing guitar with a few others. Two weeks later we met again in the Union. Nearly sixteen years later we are still together. Now married with two kids. **Andrew Penn** and I will NEVER forget Hawthorns!"

**Dominic Miles-Shenton 2000:** “After spending FY and undergrad years in Barnes, my first postgrad year was spent in Templar House. Apart from windswept 20 minute walk to the Chemistry Department instead of 5, it made me think about what I'd missed out on by living in the centre of campus for my undergrad years.”

**Philip Carrington 2005:** “The best place on campus would never have met my wife if I have never stayed there. Four of THE BEST YEARS of my life... 2002-2006!”

**Tom Reynolds 2003:** “I met my wife-to-be when we were both freshers living in C and D blocks.”

## From the 2010s

**Duncan Fryer (2014):** “Having a huge snowball fight at 11 in the evening between Z, Y, W and V Blocks.”

**Caroline (2014):** “Being served hot chocolate after coming home at 4am from the library.”

**Hayley Wharrick (2012):** “Moving in to S Block on my very first day at Keele in 2012. I met all my lovely housemates who became like family and I met my now fiancé for the first time as he moved into the room next door!”



*Photo: Hawthorns Entrance in 2011*

**Ethan Clarke (2013):** “Hawthorns is at the heart of the symbolic community spirit and togetherness that Keele is renowned for. It was home to where real independence, academic initiative, intimacy and long term friendships started. The memory that probably stands out the most and I'm sure resonates most with the whole of L Block in 2010 is "Henry Hoover" night. My Top 20 memories are 1: Henry Hoover night / 2: Staying up until the early hours on the landing finishing group assignments with Emma & Andrew / 3: Danger darts, then danger hangers, then danger glass with Ryan... / 4: Tamhoy / 5: Movie nights on the top landing / 6:

Enya naps with Jess and Becky / 7: The endless dirty pots and pans left on the side to 'soak' / 8: My room on the middle landing (Room 12) used predominantly as social space / 9: The Halloween Party / 10: Debbie the cleaner - lovely lady / 11: The L Block Christmas dinner / 12: Being the L block representative with Jodie / 13: Having a biscuit and a brew and Just talking and confiding with Danielle / 14: Being next door neighbour to Kristian / 15: Winning the best block award for that academic year / 16: The shower that never drained properly / 17: Making long lasting friends for life with the whole block / 18: The support from the whole block when my dad passed away / 19: The merrily intoxicated shopping spree with Emma after celebrating end of exams / 20: Being the last out of the block and toasting the year end with Chris at the pub.”

**Cathy Smith (Riley) (1973):** "I spent my first year in hall at Hawthorns, in M block if my memory is correct. Unfortunately I'm not able to attend the farewell, so I am glad that I was able to have a wander round with my daughter a few years back when I attended the guest lecture in the American Studies department. All this has made me reflect back on my student days at Keele and what the experience felt like, rather than just on the academic outcome and its role in my career. This crystallised out in the form of a poem...."

## *Back in the autumn of '69 - Reflections*

*In velvet and denim, loons & flares,  
Long skirts and short dresses, platforms, afghans,  
Freshers eager for life,  
We arrived on campus  
Anticipating, frolicking  
It was the hippy era ripe with optimism & hope*

*Long haired youth tuned in and out of learning,  
Not for all long hours in the library  
Some turned on, man, and luxuriated in the space & time of university life  
Others studied diligently  
Wrote their essays,  
Revised, sat exams - passing by the era's invitation to drop out...*

*Remember the Foundation Year?  
A tapestry of knowledge unfurled day by day  
Full breakfast on board, bright or bleary eyed students absorbed concepts of physics,  
chemistry, culture, literature, psychology, politics, astronomy  
The whole panoply of learning,  
It seemed an unending intellectual smorgasbord*

*Later drinking coffee in our rooms  
Hours spent listening to music - playing records by Cream, Hendrix, Moody Blues, Pink Floyd,  
Dylan, Stones  
So many bands  
The songs of our youth spun into the fabric of our lives*

*Walks in Keele's grassy parkland, by the lake, through the woods  
Contemplating life, the universe, everything  
And absorbing the natural world*

*Student life left behind, the real world was harder than we realised  
Still, we made a go of it, made our parents proud*

***Thanks Hawthorns, you were amazing!***





*“Search for Truth in the Company of Friends”*

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