

## Memories of my time with the B'rumigem Phil

By Penny Crompton (nee Morse)

I was in BPO from 1960-69. Starting at the age of 14 my conductor for the whole of that time was Ken Page.

Margery Elliott (next to me in the photos) was my flute teacher. She brought me along to "expand my repertoire!" and hone my sight reading skills – something which has borne me in good stead since!!

After my "apprenticeship" I was allowed to play 2<sup>nd</sup> flute in a performance of Tchaik 4 as HER skills were needed on the piccolo part. My understanding was that this symphony was regarded as a bit "off the planet" for an amateur orchestra at that time – Ken Page was trying stretch and progress us!!!

Much later, as a mature music student at Bangor Uni I found myself doing that same picc part- and probably suffered the same nightmares that she did!

My parents noted that BPO was an "old" orchestra – there were many people with white hair – but of course we were still feeling the loss of a generation killed by war – so I really was the baby of BPO! They also were amused by Margaret , the drummers assistant – she frequently clashed the cymbals for us – but her hairstyle at the time meant that every time the cymbals came together the "air pressure" blew her front fringe in an upwards direction – you can imagine therefore the sword clashing sequence in the "Romeo and Juliet" Overture!!!!

BPO also ventured into operatic productions , I certainly remember doing "Madame Butterfly" – I think in Smethwick? Masonic Hall or Town Hall? I also remember the detentions I received because I got behind with my homework that week – teachers were less understanding then!!!!

During my time there Ken Page suffered the tragic loss of his son (Tim?) who was run over in a car accident. Ken felt that his best way through was to throw himself into his work and career – at about that time I think he played (was involved with) the Amadeus Quartet????

Another notable fact was – for a time – David Munrow(the bassoonist) was a member of BPO – presumably a student at the Conservatoire? ( although I don't think we called it that then!!) (see Town Hall photo). Ken was always in favour of encouraging youngsters and was obviously pleased to have David – such a tragic loss to music.

On a personal note, after 12 years of not playing at all, I retook all my grade exams progressing to Degree Recital in 1993 – and subsequently teaching. I have played in several local orchestras and bands , with my latest musical addiction being recorders – where it probably all began many years ago at school! All the groups I belonged to were all amateurs and perform to raise money for charities – so as a member of these groups I have probably helped to raise thousands of pounds for others – not a bad epitaph for the baby of the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra!!!