



Mrs Eileen Smith, nee Baker.

I was a 12 year old girl in 1943 at St Peter's School in Audborough Street. I loved singing in the choir and one day the teachers picked me out with several others to sing in the Open Air Theatre production "The Pay of the Pied Piper" We had to make some of our own costume pieces and there were 200 children in a cast of 260. The children came from many different schools and the principle actors were all professionals. We rehersed from January till July. It was an absoulutely wonderful feeling being on the stage in the lake. There could be up to 8000 people in the audience, the record was 9000. We had two shows a week, Monday and Thursday through until September.

The Orchestra came on a coach from Leeds and played from a floating pit. The costume and sets were often made by firms from London. "Goods" of Scarborough did the electrical work. The audience often came in coaches from Leeds and York. They had cushions, or you could buy them, coats, umbrellas and thermos's. If it started to rain during the performance you could hear the russel of hundereds of macs going on. There was no heating and the dressing rooms were under ground and had wooden duckboards to cover the water on the floor. At first the stage was grass but got too slippery so it was covered over. We were given hot cocoa during the interval to warm us up. We had to make sure our costumes and hats were secured well in case the wind got up.

I remember one night when the Red Indians had to pass by the stage standing up in a canoe with a flaming torch, they got stuck in a shallow area and fell into the water. A boat had to come and rescue them, the audience loved that. The moving stage got stuck half way across once and we had to keep singing the same song until they manged to free it up. Sometimes bats flew across or a line of ducks swam past during the performances. We didn't get paid but were invited to an end of year dinner dance at the Grand Hotel. I met my husband there and many of the women did, it was like a marriage bureau.

The 15th and last show I did was The Merrie Widow in 1959. The shows became less popular towards the end and the scenery and costumes were less spectacular. They tried some modern productions there like Technicolour Dreamcoat and a James Last Concert.

The Amateur Operatic Society put on shows during the winter at the Floral Hall, Opera House and Arcadia. I used to work at Marshall and Snellgrove in the dressmaking department. The shop had a very smart Commissionaire at the door and we once made the wedding and bridesmaid's dresses for Lady Cayley. I also worked at the Soda Bar in the Corner Cafe. I used to play tennis on the courts behind the Open Air theatre, they later became Marvel's Fun Park. Working every summer meant Eileen's first holiday away from Scarborough was her honeymoon to London in 1956.

Show list for the Open Air Theatre, Scarborough.

1932 Merrie England
1933 Tom Jones
1934 Hiawatha
1935 Carmen
1936 Merrie England
1937 Pageant of Faust
1938 Tannhauser
1939 Bohemian Girl
1943 The Pay of the Pied Piper
1944 Midsummer nights dream
1945 Merrie England
1946 Maritana
1947 Hiawatha
1948 Faust
1949 Robin Hood
1950 The Vagabond King
1951 Song of Norway
1952 Desert Song
1953 Annie get your gun
1954 Cho Chin Chow
1955 Oklahoma
1956 King's Rhapsody
1957 White Horse Inn
1958 Showboat
1959 The Merry Widow
1960 Summer Holiday
1961 Carousel
1962 Rose Marie
1963 Desert Song
1964 South Pacific
1965 The King and I
1966 The King and I
1967 Student Prince
1968 West Side Story