

B is for BOYS

When did I start noticing boys? Before I left Junior School I was making Valentine cards to be hand-delivered or slipped into someone's bag but my first crush was for a boy from the secondary modern school who caught the same bus as me every evening. I'd sit upstairs by the window, willing him to get on at the stop by his school. The bus tickets had a series of numbers along the edge. I added up the numbers and, if they totalled 21, it was my lucky day and he would notice me and even ask me out. Not that I would have been allowed to go on a date but a girl could dream! I found out where he lived and took every opportunity to walk by his house, slowly, in the hope that he'd see me and come to the nearby park. He never did!

I had my first real date when I was 14 with a house painter who was working on our estate. He was 17, had greased hair in a quiff and smoked Woodbines. He took me to the pictures. I wanted to see '*Taste of Honey*' but he told me it wasn't suitable and insisted we went to see '*The Absent Minded Professor*' instead. That relationship went nowhere.

During my school years I had crushes on boys and male teachers but no real relationships.

I had a mighty crush on a sixth former when I was in the fourth year at the Grammar school. I effectively stalked the poor guy, left notes in his desk, anonymous, of course, and tried to discover where he lived. He did eventually ask me out. We went to the cinema. No idea what film we saw as we smooched all the way through. He did have a habit of standing me up though. However, I may sometimes just have missed him because I wasn't wearing my spectacles! I would hang around outside the cinema or by the bus stop, feeling more and more foolish as the time ticked away. Then I would walk on for a hundred yards, put on my specs and double-check that I hadn't just missed seeing him. But he was tall, over 6 feet, so I knew I hadn't really walked by him. I was so fed up one evening, having taken the bus to Stalybridge where I waited over an hour without him turning up, that I left him a stinking letter in his desk on the following Monday. We never spoke again. I did learn stuff from him though as he professed to being a Communist and he liked jazz.

I met other boys through youth club and chapel activities which, until I was 18 and had some money of my own, was the extent of my social life. We were all in the same boat though so the social life was fine. We had youth club every Friday night, regular dances and socials and outings and trips to Blackpool or Belle Vue.

I met my first steady boyfriend through youth club. He was part of a large group who regularly got together. Two years younger than me, he invited me to go to a school production of Gilbert & Sullivan in which he was appearing. That was our first 'date'. I was 17 and he was 15. At one of our Sunday evenings at someone's house, we'd played 'Spin the Bottle' which meant that whoever the neck of the bottle pointed at when it had been spun around on the floor went off to smooch in the hall. A later discussion amongst the girls had given S. top marks for his kissing! All very innocent.

We went out together, on and off, for over 4 years. He was my first love. I went through every possible emotion during our time together. I broke it off many times but, somehow, we always ended up back together.

The final break came when he went off to University. I had been working for 5 years by then and had seen lots of other boys in the meantime. Some from Manchester University or UMIST gave me a taste of the world outside Ashton. So, I decided to apply for college myself and went to Aberystwyth where there was no shortage of interesting men.