

*Good Morning  
Children*



*Memories of School Days*

*1920's and 1930's*

*An Age Exchange Publication*

# *Good Morning Children*

EDITED BY PAM SCHWEITZER

PHOTOGRAPHY : ALEX SCHWEITZER

“GOOD MORNING CHILDREN” IS PUBLISHED BY AGE EXCHANGE TO  
COINCIDE WITH THEIR YOUTH THEATRE PRODUCTION OF A PLAY BY  
THE SAME NAME.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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# INTRODUCTION

“GOOD MORNING CHILDREN” is a collection of London pensioners’ memories about their schooldays in the 1920s and 30s. They all now live in South East London, though the schools they remember are as far-flung as Aberdeen and Plymouth. The contributors are members of the Age Exchange Reminiscence Group which has been meeting under the aegis of the Inner London Education Authority Adult Education Service for the last five years.

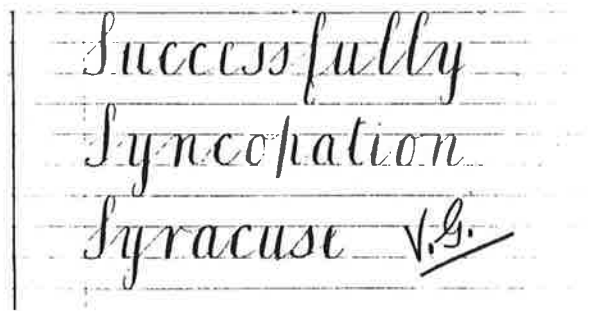
Each term the group decides on a different theme they wish to explore, and over the years we have held wide-ranging and fascinating discussions, recorded a great many memories on tape and in writing, and got to know each other very well. In addition, the group has been actively involved in all the Age Exchange Theatre projects and publishing ventures, contributing stories and photographs, assisting on scripting, attending rehearsals, advising on production and helping at performances.

Many of them now help to run the new Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre in Blackheath, working with groups of elderly people who visit us, and also doing a lot of educational work with visiting school children.

The Age Exchange Youth Theatre (children aged ten to fourteen) have prepared a play based on these memories of schooldays. Members of the Reminiscence Group have worked with the children on the production, often taking the role of teacher in their improvisations to give the children a taste of the atmosphere of classrooms in the past.

Some items in the book are written contributions and others are edited transcripts of group discussions we have held on various aspects of schooling. This has resulted in a mix of styles, where some entries have a more colloquial flavour than others. We hope that the reader will find the result interesting and enjoyable.

Pam Schweitzer.



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# THE AGE EXCHANGE REMINISCENCE GROUP



*Age Exchange Reminiscence Group (left to right) Bill Welch, Jennie Hinchelwood, Margaret Kippin, Joan Welch, Edie McHardy, Ellen Clark, Gladys Eagle, Sally Flood (visiting) Milly Gardner, Pam Schweitzer, Vivien Prince*

The book opens with an edited transcript of a discussion in the reminiscence class about why we all attend and what we get out of the group. We had a visitor with us who was curious to know the answer to these questions. Not all the group are represented in the discussion as they happened to be away that day.

## **MARGARET KIPPIN.**

I wanted to join the class. It was just before I retired, and I wanted something that would keep the memories going. I came along, and we found immediately that we triggered off each other's memories. When we first started, we couldn't get it out quick enough. You know the group really got going fast.

I know nostalgia is a sort of complaint of the elderly, but it's also healthy to keep memories. Everybody knows, through reading history books, about what happened to Lord and Lady So-and-so, but not many people know about what happened to Joe Bloggs or Mary Bloggs in the street, and it's history. It's documenting the history of the ordinary person, which I think is quite important. You realise our lives were worth something after all.

When we were young, it wasn't done to ask adults questions, you see, whereas my grandchildren ask me

all sorts of things. As children, you couldn't ask. You listened, and if you were lucky you might pick up a thing or two. But you didn't ask, and I regret that, especially nowadays.

I think for people of my age the present sometimes is a bit uncertain, the future is sometimes a bit dull, so we go back to the past. In the group we picked out, on the whole, the good bits — though we did bring up some sad bits as well, and I found once or twice it was painful, but it was a therapeutic experience.

## **JOAN WELCH.**

When I first went to enrol in the class, the person doing the enrolling said, "Reminiscence? What's that?" I said "It says it underneath. 'Exploring Living Memory.' It explains itself." I find it helps me to forget all the stresses of today, when I go back to earlier years and relive it.

## **BILL WELCH.**

We knew it was going to be talking about the past, but we didn't know how far it would go and what would be involved, like working with actors and being on television. We've really enjoyed it, no doubt about it. I think it's tremendous.



*Vivien Prince working with a group of visiting schoolchildren at the Reminiscence Centre.*

#### **VIVIEN PRINCE.**

Well, I joined really because I saw a notice in the local paper about Pam wanting to know anything about local history or events that had happened, and as I'd lived here all my life, and my mother and generations of my mother's family had lived here, I thought I'd get in touch. I'd really just got over looking after my mother. I had found that trying to keep her mind stimulated was one of the hardest things possible. One of the happiest afternoons that she had, in recent years, was when Julian Watson, from the local history library came round with his tape recorder, and she was talking to him about her memories. I think I heard her memories for about six weeks afterwards, she was so excited. And I realised that there must be something in it.

I have found this class very stimulating. I've enjoyed listening to other people's lives; realising how similar they were to mine in many ways.

I've enjoyed the plays by the Age Exchange Theatre very much. It's always been a bit of excitement when we've had a play and been on the book-stall, and the general buzz of excitement. We've come to the rehearsals to work with the actors, and given, perhaps, a little bit of help — I remember I came to a rehearsal of "The Time Of Our Lives", when they wanted a Walls Ice-cream man to sell cornets, and I said: "Ooh no, they didn't sell cornets then!" And little tiny things like that, where we all help and can contribute, so it sort of makes a big whole. And I've enjoyed the television people coming down.

There's been a general interest among the Blackheath people: "I saw something about your group in the paper". I think it's been of general interest all the way round.

#### **EDIE McHARDY.**

I come to the reminiscence group for mental stimulation really. Sometimes you feel a little bit of a has-been, because people are rushing by you. Once you've retired, you don't seem to matter quite so much as when you were working. Things change so much now. Everything seems to go so quickly that you feel that everything's rushing over you, and then when you come to this class somehow or other you relax, and you sort of catch up with yourself a bit.

And I enjoy working with the young people at Age Exchange, like the other week, when we talked to them about hop-picking, and they were interested in what Ellen and I said. You just felt that something was getting carried on. It seemed before that all that happened in your past life was going by the board, wasn't important and wasn't going to be recorded. But when you come here and discuss it, and then see it printed in a book, you realise it has got a little importance really. And I think it stimulates your mind, going back to the past and it's not only the past you think of; it's the future as well.

#### **ELLEN CLARK.**

I went to see an Age Exchange play at the local community centre because it was freezing cold in my flat as they were putting all new central heating in! I couldn't get over the play. I kept saying to the lady next to me, "Oh yes, that's right," you know, remembering things I'd forgotten. I ran and told my friend about the play and about the reminiscence group which I'd heard about from Margaret who was helping with the teas. She'd said, "Do come. The more the merrier." So that's how we came, and we've not looked back.

## MILLY GARDNER.

I retired last June, and, apart from doing housework and general shopping, which was rather dull, my mind wanted stimulating, so I thought I'd join a writers' class. At the writers' class I met Vivien, and she introduced me to the Reminiscence class. I'd never heard of a reminiscence class before and I found it very interesting, and, there again, that stimulates one's mind: do a little bit of writing; thinking back on old times. The old days always seem to be much better than the time you're living in to me, I don't know why, but . . . in the old days you were all very poor off; you had very little, and yet somehow you look back on it and you smile to yourself at certain things that happened, and you sort of say, "Gosh, they were good old days, weren't they?"

By the time I was old enough to be interested in what my mother did as a little girl, she was practically dead anyway. So I had to probe through my family and ask a lot of questions. But then they were all second and third hand. So I will never, ever really know the actual truth of it. So when somebody asks me what I did as a little girl, I'm interested enough to tell them, because I think it's a good thing to hand my memories on so that they can compare things.

Anyway, I enjoy coming to the reminiscence class. I enjoy meeting all the people there — we all seem to have a lot of things in common, which I think is a very good thing.

*Gladys Eagle helping in the Reminiscence Centre.*

## GLADYS BARRETT.

I've always been really interested in history and listening to people older than myself. Mind you, there's not many older than me now. I remember listening to my mother-in-law talk about when she was a kitchen maid in service in a big house at Eltham. She told a story about how they had — I think you'd call it Game, and it became rather putrid or nasty, and even my children love hearing about this. They always say: "Please, Nana, tell us what you did with the rabbits and hares . . ." She used to put it in the sink and wash the maggots down the sink.

I loved listening to her talk about when she was in service, I really did, and it's gone on from there. This is the reason I joined the reminiscence group, to hear other people's stories. I kept scrap books for years, of pictures of places that have been demolished. It's a thing I've always loved doing.

## GLADYS EAGLE.

Well, I came to the group through a friend. I had never heard of reminiscence before. Going down in the car with her to Brighton, I told her the story of my life. She said to me: "You must write it down. I'd like you to see a lady I know about joining a reminiscence group. You'd find it very interesting you know."

So that's how I came to reminiscence classes. I'd never heard of it, but everybody all my life has said, "Why don't you write the story of your life?" — because my life's been so different to everybody else's, you know.



## JENNIE HINCHELWOOD.

I do like dwelling in the past; I don't like the world as it is today. I had a wonderful childhood. More happened to me as a child, than happened to some people in their whole lives.

Where I lived as a child, in Glasgow, it was everyday was something. Going to school was great, and leaving school, getting your first job. Just the general living. Up to the age of seventeen I had a marvellous life, and I think it's deteriorated. And I do like reminiscing. I like talking to myself. If I'm walking along the road, I'm creating little stories, just to make the time go and make the journey go. Or if I sit on the bus or the train, I always have a little chat. So I like going back.

A tune always puts something in straight into the memory. Or you hear somebody say something, it floods back to you. And this is what I found with this class that people said something and then, "Ooh yeah, I remember that", or, "I did that". But little differences, I think with Edie and I, as we both came from Scotland so we give it that little difference between the English and the Scottish.

## DOROTHY BARTON.

I started by writing a history of my life for my family, because they kept asking me questions about what happened in the old days, and I told them. My daughter said, "Why don't you write it down?" So I did.

Then one day I saw an advertisement in our local paper, asking for women who'd done work in the war to get in touch with Pam Schweitzer at Age Exchange, so, just out of curiosity, I rang to see what it was all about. And someone came and interviewed me, and said that what I told her was going to be included in a play. And I must admit I felt a bit dubious at the time, because I thought perhaps these young people would take the mickey out of what we'd done in the war, and that kind of thing.

So when I was asked along to take part in a rehearsal of the play, I went in with this frame of mind. But I must say I was really impressed and delighted to see what they did. What amazes me is the fact that the playwrights and actors take all these odd reminiscences — little bits and pieces — put them together and make a really interesting and recognisable play out of it. Every time I see this happen I'm always astonished by it. You can actually pick sentences out of the play that you yourself have actually said, and yet it all fits in beautifully. It doesn't sound as if it's written or spoken by twenty or thirty different people.

And then Pam suggested I join the reminiscence group and so I did, and I found it very interesting indeed.



*Reminiscence Centre.*

## PAM SCHWEITZER.

I started this group five years ago as an Adult Education class, and at first we didn't know quite what we were meant to be doing.

We were not sure what a reminiscence group was. We were creating the idea of it as we went along. Some people thought it was mainly for writing, and some people were not interested in that, but did like the idea of a discussion group. Others had just come along to see what it was all about.

But gradually it became clear that people enjoyed listening to what others had to say, and that one person's memory sparked off lots of others. When you put everybody's memories together you got something that was a very full statement of the group's related but different experiences, and a picture of whatever particular period or subject we were discussing began to emerge. The actors, with whom I was working at the time were able to use the group's reminiscences as a basis for reminiscence theatre shows, working closely with the pensioners throughout the process.

I enjoy coming to the group because I think they're such a tremendously nice bunch of people. I look forward to it. Also it's one of the few areas of my work where there is some continuity, because very often, when you're working with actors, you're working very closely for a very short period, as though they're the only people who matter in the world for just a month or two, but then they go off into the wide world and you don't see them again, because the nature of their work means that they're simply unavailable, doing something else. So I do need some sense of continuity in my work, I think, and this group has come to mean a lot to me. They are the people who have seen the Age Exchange project develop from scratch into something really rather exciting and they have stayed in touch with all the different bits of it: the plays, the Reminiscence Centre at Blackheath, the books and all the events.

# WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG.

## FIRST TASTE OF SCHOOL.

I was about three and a half years old when I started at Lucas Street School, Deptford. I walked to and from school with my mother because we lived nearby. At some time during the day, we had to have a rest on a blanket and small pillow which each child had to collect from a hook labelled with its name. I can't remember if we did any lessons, but I do remember being in a "band" and playing a triangle, which was apparently considered suitable for my size, while other children had tambourines or drums and anything else that made a noise. We all bashed away at our instruments and tried to keep in time with the teacher who tapped out a tune on the piano. It must have sounded terrible, but we all loved it, and looked forward to our music lesson!

Because I was a sickly child, my mother wrapped me up a bit, and cold air was never allowed to touch any part of me. The doctor had advised that I should wear light-weight boots to support my wonky ankles, and over these, I wore a pair of tan gaiters, made from fine leather which covered the top of my foot like a spat, then continued up my leg and over the knee. The first few times I wore these to school, the teacher made a gallant effort to do them up, for of course I could not do it myself. They had buttons next to each other, all the way down, so there must have been about thirty or forty buttons which all had to be done up with a button hook. And you try dressing a wriggling four year old with hundreds of buttons, being shouted at to keep still. Soon I went out after school to meet my mother fully dressed, but with the gaiters neatly folded under my arm!

Mother must have had a few words with the teacher, for after a while the gaiters were kept for after school and weekends, and I was put into black woollen stockings, hand-knitted for me by my grandmother. These were held up by elastic garters, and over the years were a sore trial to me; if the elastic was too tight it hurt, and if it was too loose, the stockings hung in wrinkles down the legs. I hated those stockings, but any efforts to destroy them only resulted in a new pair from Granny and a telling off from Mother.

Dorothy Barton

## FRIENDLY BOBBY.

We were always told to cross the road where the policeman is, particularly the children in the infant school. There was a daily competition in the morning and the evening time — who could hold the policeman's hand. And, you know, there was a bit of a struggle to get in front — because the Policeman used to stand there, two kids on each hand, and you'd follow him across the road you see.

Arthur Wellard

## LITTLE PRISONERS.

And I remember one class in the infants, this particular teacher, her punishment to me was ghastly. You remember the big school fireplaces. Well, when the fire wasn't alight of course, if you misbehaved, she used to get hold of you and put you over there behind the big iron fire guard. And, poor little devils, they used to cry. I don't know how long you stayed like that. And one day it was my turn. Yes, I'll never forget it. Well to me, in my little mind, it was like being a little prisoner.

Arthur Wellard.



*Bill Welch and his brother on front steps.*

## A FLYING VISIT.

My Mother took me to school on my first day. It was walking distance — it was only just along the road from where we lived. She took me into the school and then she left straightaway. She went shopping down Plumstead, which is just round the corner from the school — and lo and behold, when she got home, I was waiting on the front step for her to come home. And she got a laugh when she saw me there. She said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I don't like school Mum." She said, "You're going tomorrow." And she took me again the next day and of course I stayed there after that. And that was my first day at school.

Bill Welch



## TWO FEARFUL MEMORIES

My first school was a small private kindergarten in Dover, run by two elderly ladies. One day for reasons I cannot remember, I arrived at school without my knickers! (My mother says it was probably because I left things until the last minute.) I was about four years old at the time. I must have leaned over for some reason, and I remember a little girl called out to "Miss" that I had no pants on. It was what followed that I have never forgotten. This lady approached me in a menacing fashion, and told me that I was "a very rude little girl". I could not understand her reaction, and I recall a feeling of deep shame; so much so that I ran straight out of school and somehow found my way home much to the consternation of my mother, for it was quite a distance. That lady should never have been in charge of children.

I do remember my very first day at proper school. We had a shop and I had been desperately keen to start going to school. And the headmistress used to pass the shop and I used to stand out there with my skipping rope saying 'When can I start school?' The schoolroom was designed with a series of small platforms each with a row of desks. At the bottom was the blackboard, not with an easel but on a stand with castors. On the first day, I sat at the back of the class. And when we were going out to play, the teacher said, "Now children, quietly go down these steps and don't run." But being a

rather energetic child, I ran down these platform steps and landed on my face. I split my lip open on the castor. The teacher took me home screaming and covered in blood to my mother and I was whipped down to the hospital. I had to have three stitches in my lip and carry the scars to this day. That was my first day at school. A hard lesson to learn!

Margaret Kippin

## AFTERNOON NAP.

Well, I can remember when I first went to Maryon Park School in Charlton, there was an hour in the afternoon when you all had to lie down on the beds, and I think I've been a light sleeper ever since. I really used to dread that. I was watching everybody else, thinking, "Ooh I wish she'd wake us up." I shut my eyelids every time she walked round. I really dreaded that and I was watching everybody else.

Ellen Clark

Did you in your school turn the tables upside down and put the hammocks on, because that was what they did in the school I was at. You turned your table upside down and there was like a canvas in the form of a hammock that fixed on.

Margaret Kippin

*Marvels Lane School. Infants at rest. September 1930.*



## BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Mum used to take my brother to school, that was walking distance — Fossdene Road School. There's two years difference between us, and I cried all the time when my brother had gone. And I just nagged Mum's life out of her, because I wanted to be the same as Eric. I think she had a word with the headmistress, and she agreed to take me into the babies' class. So I went to school too.

Joan Welch

I can remember going to school early but I didn't mind because I had a twin brother so there was two of us, which was nice. I liked it. And then one thing spoiled it. As I got a bit older we were separated. Up to then, I sat next to my brother as well you see. And I did like it, up to when we got parted. I think I was a bit of a tomboy because he would go with the boys and of course, he would take me with him. So I had to play boys' games as well as girls' games.

I think my Mother missed us, when we first went to school, because she used to come round quite early for the lunch time — you know waiting out there, which we thought was good, and had a nice meal. She'd say, "Look at all the dumplings, all floating on top" — that's because we had been good at school, so we got something extra. Then we'd go back again to afternoon school.

Ellen Clark

## THE SCOTTISH CONTINGENT

I lived with my grandmother in Glasgow, and she walked me to school. It wasn't very far away. She used to come down again at eleven o'clock to the school gate with what was called our 'piece'. It was a very big Scotch bap which you can still get now. It was always one of these hot rolls mixed with local butter. Yes, she would hand it through the gate, like feeding the animals. And that was during our morning break, when we were locked in the playground. All the mums did that.

Jennie Hinchelwood

I used to take my piece with me in the morning. Nobody came down to the school with me. But I remember the different playground games. There used to be, I think you called it hopscotch here, we used to call it beddies in Scotland. We used to throw a stone up and chalk the numbers out.

And sometimes you just went round arm in arm with another girl or another two girls. And it was wonderful then. You had a friend, you know. And you used to walk round and round the playground with your friend or friends. But I can't remember much about the classroom at all when I was very small.

Edie McHardy

My sister and I walked together to school until I went to a different school when I was twelve, when I either walked by myself or called for friends. After a day at school with its strict discipline and time tables, it was lovely to get home to Mum, always there, and sit in the kitchen by the fire chatting about what had happened during the day, while helping Mum to get tea ready.

Dorothy Barton



*Dorothy and Lillian (nee) Jones, aged eight and six.*

## A COUNTRY GIRL.

I went to a village school in Southern Ireland. We were up in the mountains. My nearest neighbours were a mile and a half away.

I remember my journey to school. We used to go by pony and trap round the roads, which meant a long way. You had to walk up the hill, it was very hilly. And from then onwards, the bottom of the hill it was fairly level to the school. And then the pony and trap were housed while we were at school, near the school, and then we'd put the harness on and go back. My brother Jim drove, or any one of us would have to drive. But going and coming back there were two families, so the springs of the trap were very often broken.

My mother got tired of mending the springs, so then we had to walk across the hill. That way we had more fun because we met the other farmers' children from all over the countryside on the way. But going there was a race, from the time we left home to the time we went to the school door we never stopped running. I don't know what would happen if were late.

Jane Bruder

# WHAT WE WORE TO SCHOOL.

## WINTER WOOLLIES

I was remembering when I first started school. I was one of seven. We were quite poor off — everybody was in those days anyway, so we were no different to the next person. My mother and my eldest sisters used to do a lot of knitting. They knitted most of our clothes. We had skirts with knitted tops and they were constantly let down as you grew, you see. I remember when my turn came finally to go to school along with the others — it was the winter time — and we had quite a little walk to go to school. There was a corrugated roof on the chapel alongside the big Sunday school, so we called it the Tin Chapel School. You went there from the age of five to about nine, nine and a half.

It was in Plymouth. I lived in a village called Peveral. And at the beginning of the winter my sisters had busily knitted us all long pink, vivid pink scarves. When we set forth finally on a very cold morning, my mother wrapped us all up. The scarf went round your neck once, crossed over your chest, came through again, then up and around, and fastened with a great big safety pin. Up underneath my jumper attached to the knitted piece there was another big safety pin with a big piece of handkerchief, which was usually my father's shirt tail, so that you could have a good blow, and bring your pullover down on the top you see.

I well remember the three of us setting forth, all looking exactly alike, going to school. And I was going for the first time and crying, and my mother saying, "I shall be there later on, in the playtime." And when playtime came the three of us walked up a long alleyway to the gate, which was locked, and there she was with a thermos flask and some little mugs. She was filling our little cups with hot cocoa and passing them through the gates so that we three little tackers could have our hot cocoa in the middle of the morning so that we didn't quite freeze. Because I suspect, looking back on it, we were all rather undernourished and we needed something to keep us warm you see.

Milly Gardner

I didn't wear gloves, because in the winter I can remember having chaps on my hands and they used to bleed. And mum would give me some Melrose to put on my hands because they used to bleed. I don't know whether we couldn't afford gloves, but I never seem to remember wearing them.

Joan Welch

I don't ever remember wearing gloves because if you wore gloves you were a big jessy . . . that's a big softy.

Jennie Hinchelwood

*School Children 1925. Note their ragged clothes.*



## BOOTS AND SHOES:

It was much cheaper for your dad to repair your shoes than it was for you to go to the snobs. That's shoe repairers. They used to call them snobs. He could buy a sheet of leather for about 1/6d. You'd cut out your square, soak it, buy an ounce of brads, like tacks you know. You got the last and you used to get the knife and cut the leather out to size — and you'd soaked it to make it easy for cutting — and then you'd tack it on. Then you'd use resin round the edge. Whereas if you wanted a sole and heel — if you sent that to the snobs to be done it would cost you about 3/6d. Well you could do about four pairs at home for that, you see.

Bill Welch

We lived in plimsolls and in the winter we had wellington boots and I remember going to see my Aunty, who was quite wealthy, and I stayed with her for a little while. And she took me by the hand one day and said, "Now come along Millicent, we are going to the shops to buy you a pair of shoes" — a pair of hard shoes they called them in those days. So off we went to Falmouth and we stopped outside a shoe shop window. And she said, "There you are, now take your time, you can choose any pair of shoes you like." And I said, "Can I Aunty?" "Yes", she said, "just take your time."

I remember standing there, gazing in the shoe shop window. And I finally did make my choice — they were brown leather and had a flap with little scallops on it and a little buckle that went across the flap. And she said, "Have you made your mind up?" I said, "yes". She said, "Which pair have you chosen?". I said, "I'd like that pair please Aunty." She said "Alright." I said, looking up at her — because I was only small — "Do you think we can afford them?"

I got my shoes and my aunty remembered that the whole of her life. When she died about five years ago, at the age of 80, I went to see her before she died to show her my husband because she'd never met him and she told him the tale and she said, "I've never ever forgotten her little face looking up at me and saying, 'But are you sure we can afford them Aunty?' Because you'd heard so many times . . ."

Milly Gardner

## CHARITY BOOTS.

On occasions the headmaster at my school, Calvert Road, would call needy boys to his office to try on discarded boots and shoes donated by the more affluent families in the area.

I recall in the 1920's, one morning my father, unemployed at the time, giving me a note for my teacher excusing me from school that same afternoon. He took me to a local R.O. (Public Relief Office) then in Ormiston Road, Greenwich, to obtain a relief ticket for

a new pair of boots from a footwear shop, Robert Bond. I dearly wanted shoes but these were forbidden on public relief tickets, so boots it had to be. I remember one of my older brothers hammering iron studs and blakeys into the heels and soles to make them last longer. I was allowed only to wear them on Sundays, or in very inclement weather to make them last that much longer again. Meanwhile I had to wear the jelly soled plimsolls.

Arthur Wellard

I lived with my Grandmother and she took me to school. The shoes that I can remember wearing were what we called baby peggies, they were black patent with ankle straps. And to get a pair of these on, ooh you thought you were showing all over, you know. Because I happened to born on the same day as the Queen, Princess Elizabeth, she used to dress me in whatever the Queen was wearing. She would try and get the same as she had. The long white socks. The powder blue coats. And she tried to arrange my hair the same way and actually sort of reliving her Royal touch about it.

Jennie Hinchelwood



*Jennie Hinchelwood with American doll present, and wearing her baby peg shoes.*

# GOOD MORNING CHILDREN

First thing in the morning would be assembly in the main hall with a prayer and a hymn, followed by a few words from the headmistress. Then we would all march out in an orderly fashion, class by class, to a rousing tune played by one of the children who had piano lessons. The standard of the playing varied considerably, so that one day we would leave the hall in time to a swinging march rhythm, while the next day, a fumbled hesitant piece of music put us all out of step. Piano lessons were an "extra", and those of us who didn't have lessons, envied even the bad players.

Dorothy Barton

## SCHOOL RULES.

Perhaps it would be as well to explain the arrangement of schools prior to the Education Act. The school building was usually on three floors. The bottom floor housed the infants, the next the girls and the top the boys. We had separate entrances for boys and girls. At Ravensbourne School, the infants entered through the girls' entrance.

I cannot remember many rules associated with elementary school. The only two that come to mind are:

- 1) Girls and Boys must keep within the bounds of their own playgrounds.
- 2) Boys are obliged to take off their caps as they come up the stairs. A monitor was placed to ensure that this happened.

I was once a monitor. Monitors used to have to stand, and as the others came in you had to tell them, the boys, to take their hats off. "Rats off, rats off." Because they weren't allowed to go in to school . . . they had to take their hats off as they were coming in to school I remember — because sometimes it used to be turned into instead of "hats off", "rats off."

I remember at junior school, we had a prayer at the start of the day, and before we left at the end of the day. I even recall one of the vespers we sang as a class.

Lord keep us safe this night  
Secure us from our fears  
May Angels guard us while we sleep  
Till morning light appears.

Margaret Kippin

We never had school uniform. The nearest to school uniform we had was the pimple hat. A round circle with C.R.S. on it in yellow letters, Calvert Road School. I don't think people could afford a uniform. They didn't have the money. Apart from that we used to wear, in the summer, very cheap what we called 'Jelly' soled slippers. They were a dark black canvas, very cheap, about a shilling a pair I think they were, with a jelly

sole. And what happened was that after a while they often parted from the sole, or you made holes in them.

Arthur Wellard

## BLOW, BLOW, BREATHE AND BLOW.

Once gathered in the classroom, there was the handkerchief drill. We were asked to produce our handkerchiefs (usually tucked up our Knicker legs, or even pinned to our chests). Heaven help you if you had forgotten it! Some children might produce a rather soiled piece of rag, and I can remember the scathing comments of the teachers. Then we all had to give our noses a good blow, following which there were deep breathing exercises. All designed to clear our heads for the day's work!

Margaret Kippin

I don't remember whether we had handkerchiefs or a piece of the old sheet or something like that. And, whether we used to use it for our nose or not I don't know, but we used to wrap our old gobstoppers up in it — you only ever used half of it you see and the bell's gone and you'd got to go to class, mustn't eat in class so you wrap it up till next time.

Bill Welch

You rushed into your classroom, and there was the babble of voices and the punching and the pinching. And then the teacher finally came in and rapped on the table with her ruler and you all became very quiet and she said, "Right, now stand" and you all stood. And she'd say, "Hankies out".

Milly Gardner

Very few children at my school had handkerchiefs, simply because they would lose them. We would make do with pieces from old pillow cases or old shirts. Many boys wore black or dark brown jerseys. In the cold weather when we had runny noses, having lost our makeshift hankies we would draw the cuff of our jerseys across our noses, known as cuffing it. I got into trouble at home being repeatedly told off for such a disgusting and unhygienic habit.

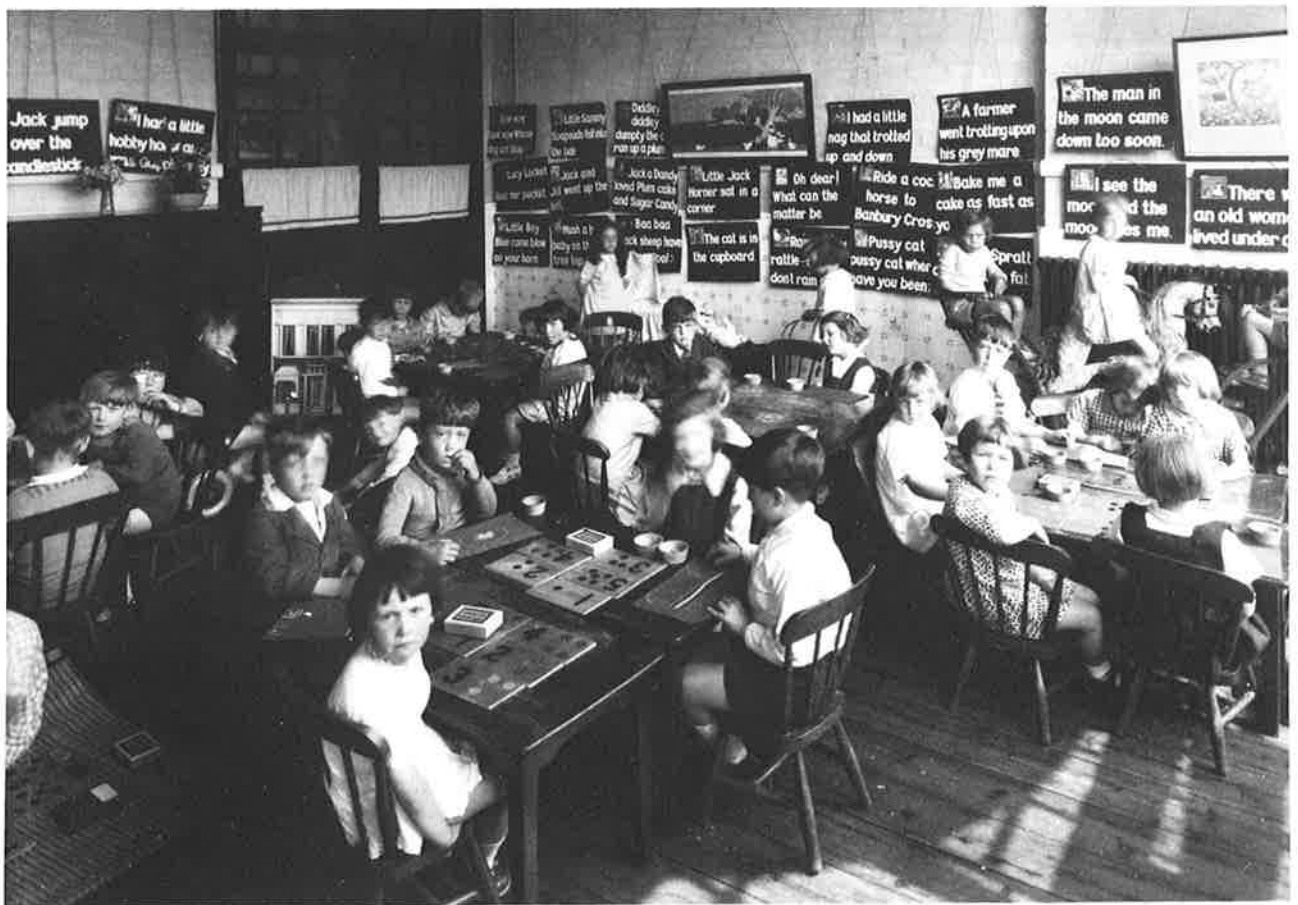
Arthur Wellard

Then you did a little song — you might have sung "All things bright and beautiful" or something like that. And then on very, very, very cold days, they would make you march around the classroom, right round the outer edge of it. March, march, march — so that you got warm. You see you didn't have central heating like you've got today, there was no heating.

Milly Gardner



*Henry Fawcett School, Kennington. Playshop. 1930s.*



*Granton Road School. Infants Classroom 1929.*

# SIT UP AND PAY ATTENTION.



## THE THREE Rs.

Much has been said, in criticism, about the method of learning parrot fashion, both with spelling and the tables. All I can say is that most of us did remember them. I cannot remember learning to read, but by the time I was eight years old I was an avid reader, and remember how thrilled I was belonging to the library and bringing home books to read, continually being told by my parents to "take your nose out of the book". The method of teaching spelling also, when we were taught to break the words down syllable by syllable was quite effective.

Margaret Kippin

I don't remember actually being taught to read, but we must have started fairly young because I was a fluent reader when I was seven years old. I do remember learning multiplication tables though. We sat at our desks and chanted all together, "One two is two, two twos are four", and so on, all in a sing-song rhythm and at the top of our voices. The funny thing is that tables learnt this way are never forgotten, and like most people of my age I can still answer quickly any questions about tables.

Dorothy Barton

*Downham School. Infants Classroom with new desks. 1927.*

A B b D t F g  
a b c d e f g h

We sat in wooden desks, with two joined together, and you all faced the teacher and the blackboard. As you faced the teacher, she could see the whole class, and you all had to look at her, so you were concentrating all your efforts towards the teacher. And she could see who was not concentrating, so you were made to learn. We learned parrot fashion, by continually repeating, repeating, repeating.

I think it went home. And when we were doing our writing, we all had our own little exercise books and the teacher would walk up and down the aisle, and she would glance down at the book. If she thought you were not concentrating, she would give you a dig, and say, "Concentrate, come on my girl, get on with it . . ."

Milly Gardner

## COPY BOOK HAND.

When I was at school they used to have these nibs and we used to play darts with them. Throw them on the old desk and try and stick them in. And then we used to go down to the teacher, or monitor, and tell him that your nibs got crossed and dented, "Can I have another nib?". And he used to say, "Well how did it get like that?". And you said, "I don't know sir." And he used to cuff you round the ear'ole and give you another nib.

Bill Welch

I remember, in the very early days of my schooling, the slate and squeaky slate pencils. But the writing . . . how excited we became when we were told that we were going to learn proper writing with pen and ink . . . but how disastrous! I remember having to practise the loops; press down heavy for the downward strokes and light for the upward strokes; and those horrible pen nibs which scratched and somehow made blots all over the place, and arriving home with ink stained fingers.

I remember the powdered ink. The teachers had nice proper ink for their ink wells, but we had powdered ink. And people put blotting paper in the ink-well, didn't they? But what I remember about it was the blots. We had these copy books, and you had to copy the sample letter. There'd be a P or whatever at the beginning of the line and you had to go along the line. And I don't know whether it was just me or not, but these nibs seemed to make blots everywhere. I used to come home with ink all over me. You weren't allowed to develop your own style of writing — you all had to do the same style. You called it copy book hand.

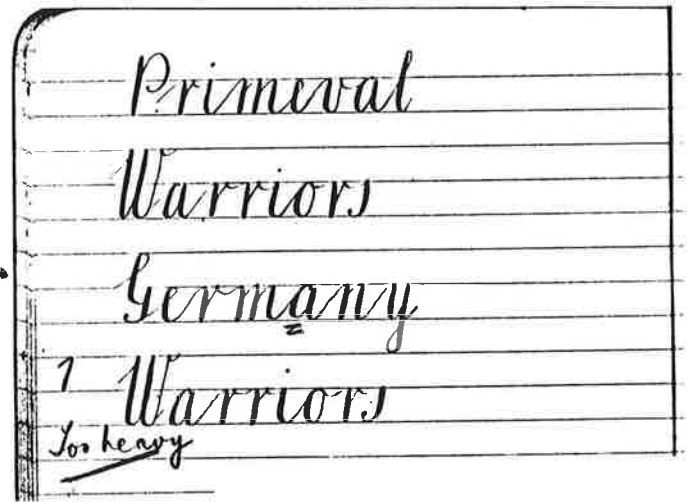
Margaret Kippin

Among many other things taught in schools when I was a child was handwriting. We had sheets of lined paper with letters of the alphabet down the left hand side, one letter on a line, and we had to write a whole line of each letter all joined up. The tops of taller letters like "t", "f", and "l" had to be a certain distance above the line, while the tails of "f", "g" and "y" were below the line. We used pens with metal nibs and liquid ink which splattered all over the paper if the nib crossed, which it quite often did. We had to ask the teacher for a new nib and have a good explanation for why the old one was damaged or there was trouble. We took great pains to write clear, sloping letters, but unfortunately my handwriting has deteriorated considerably since those far off days.

Dorothy Barton

I remember the pen nibs and the slates, and the writing paper, or sort of jotters that we had, exercise books. Where we went to school in Scotland, we didn't have lines like that, we had little squares, to help us figure out how to write our letters. You'd use these little boxes to make sure they were all the same size and shape. It was light going up and heavy coming down. You needed a whole row of the letters.

Jennie Hinchelwood



*Practising shaping letters.*

I remember the pen nibs. And we weren't allowed to use fountain pens because we were told that if you used a fountain pen your mind was going the whole time — but to stop and dip the pen into the ink would give you that little bit of pause for thought. I don't know if there's anything in that but that's what we were told.

Edie McHardy

## DESKS AND THINGS.

At the beginning of the school year (which was September) we turned up into a higher form, thus a new schoolroom with a new form teacher. Certain things, however, remained the same. The arrangement of our desks in rows facing the teacher and the blackboard. Our desks had an attached wooden chair/seat. The desk itself had a space at the top to put our pencils, pens, rubber, ruler, etc, and there was an inkwell. In those days biros had not been invented and we used a pen, that is a penholder with a brass pen nib. The usual make was known as a "Relief Nib".

The desk top itself was a sloping piece of wood which opened, in which we could put our appropriate books. These desks must have seen generations as they had collected many carvings of names of former occupants — often some weird and wonderful designs possibly drawn because such an owner had to sit through a very boring lesson. Although possibly many an attempt had been made to obliterate the tell tale marks on the desks many had been so deeply carved that this task had been impossible.

A further reference to pens, in that a treasured possession was a fountain pen. A usual request was for that as a birthday or Christmas present. These had a type of minute pump at the side in order to draw up ink into the body of the pen. In this way one could write a few lines at a time, instead of a few words. From what I could remember the trade names of these favoured pens were that of "Swan" and "Bluebird". It was very important to keep the nibs of these pens very clean with clean blotting paper otherwise blobs would be the outcome or ink leaking onto one's work, because the nib would be clogged up with old ink.

Vivien Prince



# SPENDING A PENNY.

In my junior school you were never allowed to leave the class for any reason once class had started. Not even to go to the loo. So we just sat and “busted”.

If my mother had given me a dose of medicine the day before she gave me a note for the teacher asking her to allow me to go to the W.C., as we called them.

These school lavatories were always situated out in the school yard, a good distance from the actual school. If it was raining, well, you just got soaked through as you ran there and back.

The loos themselves were very primitive. They were housed in a long low-lying brick building. The bricks were white-washed inside and out. The roof was corrugated iron and it was noisy when the rain pattered down. The loos were very small pans with wooden seats. Great big long chains hung down from the ceiling to be pulled. There was no paper, but if you needed some you could usually find some pages of someone’s exercise book, maybe even your own. Sometimes there would be comics. The door had a big gap top and bottom and just had an iron latch. There were no washing facilities at all.

Hardly anyone shut the doors, for loos were jolly good meeting places. We swapped exam or class questions, recited poetry, swapped jokes and we swapped comics and marbles. We arranged meeting places and generally gossiped. If my friends were sitting on the loo very often I would do a tap dance for them. A kind of entertainment as they sat! The loo wall was a jolly good wall for doing “handstands”. We would tuck our tunics up the legs of our navy blue drawers, and with hands and heads down our legs would be up against the wall. We’d stay like that for ages. Yes, school loos were interesting places.

Milly Gardner

Some of the girls used to play about in the lavatories at playtime. The lavatories had doors with a big gap top and bottom. One day I remember a girl kneeling on the floor trying to look under the door at someone inside, and her head got stuck. A teacher came in and after a long time releasing her, turning her head this way and that, she sent her to the headmaster.

Iris Gange



*Belleville School. Water Closets. 1936.*

Toilet facilities at most schools were appalling, the lavatories being out in the playground in two separate blocks, one for girls and one for boys. The doorless entrance opened onto a block with six or eight cubicles, and the door of each cubicle was sometimes a foot shorter than the door frame, so that there were wide gaps at the top and bottom of the door. These few toilets usually had to serve the whole school, so the floors were always running with water, while the smell was indescribable! I used to try to hold my breath for the length of time I needed to use the school lavatory, or else try to wait until I went home at lunch time. The caretakers were supposed to clean and look after these toilets, but seldom did, and I’m surprised we didn’t go down with typhoid or something similar, but somehow we all seemed to be none the worse for using these insanitary buildings. Perhaps the intense cold in there killed off all the germs. Who knows?

Dorothy Barton

# SCHOOL HEALTH.

## NITTY NORA

Periodically a school nurse called to examine our heads for nits and fleas. She was unkindly nicknamed Nitty Nora. At home on occasions my mother or father would make me kneel down on the floor over a sheet of newspaper, using a fine toothed steel comb scraping my scalp in an unpleasant manner searching for those undesirable pests. How I hated this and how I cried! Some parents sent their boys to the local barbers to have their hair clipped, leaving a fringe at the front. This type of haircut was known as a tar brush haircut.

Arthur Wellard

A vivid memory of early school days is the visit of Nitty Nora, the school nurse who came to inspect our heads for lice. We had to line up, one class at a time, and the nurse would go through each child's hair with a metal comb looking for nits or worse, dipping the comb into disinfectant after each use. Anyone found to have nits was given a card to take home, telling the mother to take the child to a special centre where its head was washed and disinfected, and in very bad cases the hair was cut off as well.

It was surprising that people in the 20's and 30's managed to keep themselves and their children as clean as they did, when most houses did not have a bathroom, or hot water on tap. All water had to be boiled in kettles or pans on top of the black iron stove, and washing hair was a nightmare.

Head lice were very common among children and my mother was almost paranoid on this subject. Every Thursday evening for years Lily and I had a thick, sticky, very smelly grease massaged into our hair, which was then wrapped up in part of an old sheet so that the grease did not get on to the bed clothes during the night. Combing out our tangled sticky hair in the morning was not much fun, and my sister, who had very tight curls and a sensitive scalp, screamed all the time hers was being combed. We had to keep this stuff on our hair all day Friday, then after tea it would be washed off with hot water and soft soap. After drying our hair in front of the fire Mum would make us lean over the table, which she had covered with newspaper, while she went through every strand of hair with a fine toothcomb, accompanied by more yells from Lily when it was her turn! When Mum was finally satisfied that we had not collected any more "visitors" in our hair during the week we both had a cup of tea and a piece of cake before going to bed, and I reckon we deserved it.

Dorothy Barton



*Henry Fawcett School. Infants Washing, 1937.*

## CONVALESCING.

The school doctor periodically called at my school where girls and boys were examined. As a child I was anaemic, attending the Shadwell Hospital for treatment. A school doctor recommended me for a fortnight at the L.C.C. convalescent centre at Bushey Park and I was most unhappy there. On arrival, the head of the convalescent centre assembled us newcomers before him. He stood on a raised platform in one of the huts we would be allocated to. He was elderly with close cropped grey hair and one arm. In his hand he held a cane. The best description of him in retrospect is, he looked like a prison camp commandant supervising "Appel". Swishing his cane he told us the rules and stated if we broke them we would receive a touch of the "Bushey Bender", a reference to the cane in his hand. I hated him and my stay there.

Arthur Wellard

## SCHOOL JOURNEY.

One day our headmaster sent for me and other boys to see him in his office. When it was my turn he asked, had I been to the seaside. In all innocence I replied, "Yes sir, Greenwich Beach." "No" he replied, "have you been to places such as, Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs?" In truth I had not been to the seaside at all. He handed me a sealed envelope to give my father and to bring back a reply the following morning. The envelope contained a discount fee for a two week stay at a Country Holiday Fund Centre at St. Mary's Bay, Dymchurch.

I went with two of my school teachers Mr Tebbut and Mr Jennings whom I liked and respected and boys from my school whom I also knew. Our teachers supervised us at mealtimes encouraging us to eat as much as we liked, with second helpings if you wanted. One dinner time Mr Jennings was encouraging us to have more butter beans, "shirt lifters" he called them. One boy near me said "Why does Mr Jennings call them shirt lifters?" Another boy replied, "Cos, they make you fart". We all roared with laughter, even our teachers joined us. But what a happy time I had, and such a contrast to my miserable time at Bushey Park.

Arthur Wellard

Each year some of the better off girls went for a fortnight's holiday which was called "School Journey". They usually went to the Isle of Wight. When they returned to school, lovely and brown, and saying what a wonderful time they had, the rest of the girls, who had been working hard at school, were green with envy.

The poorer girls were given a free holiday in the country, staying with families in their homes. This was called "Country Holiday", and the girls really enjoyed meeting and making freinds with other young children.

Doris Barlow

## COD LIVER OIL AND MALT.

When schoolchildren were classed as too thin, or not looking too healthy by the nurse in the medical room, some were given an extra glass of milk, and others had a teaspoon of cod liver oil and malt. The spoon was covered in strong plastic, so that it could be washed easily. This happened at playtime.

Doris Barlow

## COMMON ILLNESSES IN SCHOOL YEARS.

Soon after starting school, to Mum's horror, I came home with a dirty head — nits! As a child I had pretty curly hair. Unfortunately, because of this traumatic discovery, Mum cut my hair off herself. She was too ashamed to take me to a hairdressers, although it was no fault of Mum's I got a dirty head. She kept me very clean although we only lived in a small flat without a bathroom.

When we were young we got all sorts of things wrong with us. The health of children wasn't as good as it is today because our living standards were much lower. We had children in the class who were underweight who had to go for sunlight treatment. Many had chest trouble which eventually turned to tuberculosis. They had to attend a special chest clinic for treatment. We had one near where we used to live. A few in the class had ringworm in the scalp. They had to get their heads shaved for treatment; it was very contagious. They wore a cap to cover their heads. We often caught impetigo from sitting on the toilet at school. They were in the playground and I don't think they were ever cleaned.

I suffered from rheumatism from a very young age, mainly, I should think, because our house was cold and damp in the winter. I also got colds frequently. Mum used to rub my chest with warm camphorated oil in the morning before leaving for school. I was given a piece of cube sugar with eucalyptus oil to eat. I was very ill with mumps as a child, and I was suspected of suffering with scarlet fever and diphtheria as I had been in contact with friends who had been taken to isolation hospitals. Some children had had infantile paralysis and wore a special built-up shoe. They looked very awkward and we made fun of them, not knowing any better.

We had the usual medical examinations. Periodically the nurse came round with her enamel mug containing lysol and went through the hair with a special comb, and the children who were under-weight for their age as well as being given sunlight treatment were sent away on country holidays.

We also had measles and chicken pox and mumps as indeed they do today. As our diet was poor, owing to shortage of money, our teeth seemed to go bad very quickly and be in need of attention. Attending the dental clinic was a very traumatic experience. Another reason why our teeth went bad was owing to the amount of medicine we had to take through the illnesses we suffered.

Joan Welch

22. 2. 26. There have been three cases of Scarlet Fever among the children since the Christmas Holidays, and in consequence of this, a special examination of the children's throats took place this afternoon.



*Bentworth Road School. Drill in the Playground.*



*Chester Road School. Cod Liver Oil and Malt. 1929.*

# PLAY TIME.

## SCHOOL MILK.

When it was playtime we skipped or had a game of hopscotch. We had a few lessons in the mornings, then in the break we had a small bottle of milk and in the afternoon we had to have a little rest.

Lillian Baverstock

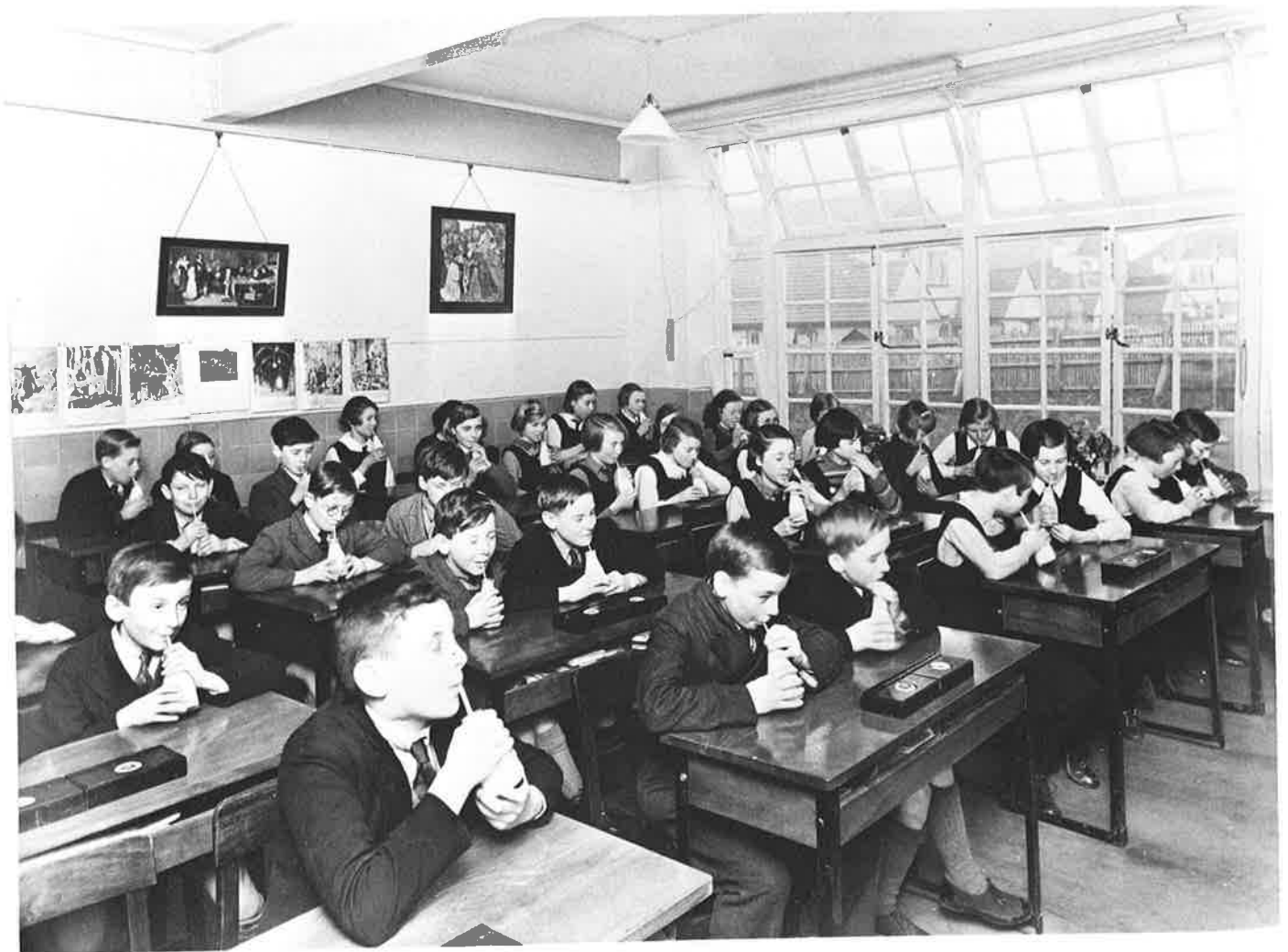
I remember the school milk but it wasn't everybody who could afford the school milk. So when you could get the school milk you felt that you were really tops, you know, really wealthy. It was a halfpenny for a third of a pint. And you drank it through a straw. And I think the straw was the attraction because that was something out of the ordinary because we didn't have straws normally.

Eddie McHardy

In playtimes, we used to play the cigarette cards, used to get them in the cigarette packets in those days. Then there was Jacking Five Stones, Whipping top, Buzz — that's throwing the ball at one another, try and hit one another, when the ball hit him he was buzz, and he had to hit somebody else with the ball. We used to play that. Conkers, when they were in season, we used to go round playing conkers. And all sorts of things like that.

And the teachers they used to come out at playtime. They used to walk up and down talking to one another in twos, you know. And I think that's because that stopped the fighting — because I was in a boys' school. You used to have a bit of an argument in the class. You know someone would flick something at you, and you'd say, "I'll get you later on for that". And the teachers might think, "Well, there's going to be a bit of a scrap out there during playtime so we'll just march up and down and keep an eye . . ." Now you see those prison films where the wardens are walking around, it was just like that. They were walking up and down keeping guard in other words.

Bill Welch



*Coopers Lane School. Boys having milk at break. 1936.*



*Daubeney Road School. Infants in the Playground. 1930.*

#### PLAYGROUND CRAZES.

I can remember when I was about seven. Do you remember the seasons at school? There was a season for spinning tops. A season for skipping. A season for playing bat and ball in the playground. You had to twist round, then catch the ball, and there were so many rhymes. Can you remember the rhymes? Skipping rhymes. They used to do the skipping to special rhymes

...

One two three O'Leary . . .  
My ball's gone in the airey  
Don't forget to give it to Mary.  
Not to Charlie Chaplin.

After a period everybody got fed up with skipping. Then one would perhaps bring a top. And then everybody else would bring tops. I don't think it tied in with any particular season of the year.

Gladys Barrett

One of the games we used to play in Scotland, I don't know whether you did, was called "Poor Roger is dead and lies in his grave". You sat round in a circle and you sang this song. I can't remember that one very much. It was "Poor Roger is Dead and lies in his grave." And then, "They planted an apple tree over his head." And somebody had to be the apple tree. And then, "Poor Roger got up and gave her a kick." It was a playground game, we used to play in Scotland. Another game we played there was "What's the time Mr Walker?"

Margaret Kippin

#### THE MARYON PARK SCHOOL PLAYGROUND SONG ELLEN REMEMBERS.

When Arithmetic is over and we're tired and weary quite  
Of the stubborn rows of figures that refuse to add up right  
When the tables and the problems have our brain in sorry plight  
Then we hurry down the stairway and the playground comes in sight

Then it's play up Maryon, hear the din  
Watch the ball and mind your shin  
Play up Maryon, join the fray  
Precious minutes fly away  
Soon you hear the whistle blow  
Fall in line and up we go  
We've had our fun  
The best side's won  
Play up Maryon  
Play up Maryon Park.

Ellen Clark

I remember during the break, the teacher would walk around the playground, reading a book. She had a whistle she'd blow, and she'd shout, "You over there, behave yourself." Then she'd line you up and you'd go back into class. In the lunch hour, only the poor children, those on the parish, were given lunch in school. I used to wish I was poor so I could have a dinner, because the smell coming out of that canteen was gorgeous.

Jennie Hinchelwood

# SPARE THE ROD.

The theory that one's schooldays are the happiest days of one's life does not correspond with my experience. Whoever expounded this idea forgot how vulnerable children are.

Attitudes in our days were different. Perhaps it is better now? What was it like then?

We regarded teachers with a mixture of awe, fear, respect, and in rare cases affection. Their word was law.

The cane was very much in evidence, particularly in the boys' schools, and for a time I went to a school in Scotland, and there the strap was used.

However I consider the worst form of punishment was the barrage of sarcasm and verbal abuse which some teachers inflicted on their pupils. This was far more damaging to the sensitive child than a quick stroke of the cane, which could be quickly forgotten. The words went deeper and had a more lasting effect.

Margaret Kippin

Well I think most teachers had a way that they would use sarcasm. You used to feel it would be much better getting the strap and getting it over with because it would carry on for quite a long time sometimes.

Eddie McHardy

## A PUBLIC DISGRACE.

Discipline was very strict in schools when I was a child and the ultimate punishment was the cane, usually administered by the Headmaster in his office. When I was about 13, at an all girls school in St Helier, one of the girls was caned in front of the whole school at the express request of her mother, because she had consistently stolen money and other things over a long period. The girl was already crying as she was escorted into the Hall by a member of staff, and I watched with horror as she received three strokes of the cane, terrified that one day it might happen to me.

I felt physically sick, not because I was sorry for the girl because she deserved her punishment, but because I felt demeaned and shamed by being forced to watch her humiliation. Whether or not it had any effect on her behaviour I don't remember, but it certainly stayed vividly in my mind for the rest of my schooldays, and perhaps, after all, that really was the point of the whole business.

Dorothy Barton

## REIGN OF TERROR.

It was not always what they said, it was the look — there was a teacher, she had piercing eyes and when she looked at me she used to reduce me to tears. She didn't like me at all, and she barred me from taking my scholarship just because she hated me. They took somebody else in preference to me. I said to my mum, "You should have taken it up. . . I would have done." But Mum, you know, being a bit subservient, they wouldn't do anything, would they in those days?

This teacher used to come up behind us and biff us on the head with the thimble on her finger. And, you know, you're doing your contours on the map and you might be getting something wrong, you're concentrating on it and all of a sudden she'd go boom, boom, boom! Then she used to fix you with this awful look — she had very dark eyes — and I used to cringe, and you know I always used to feel as though I was going to cry you know. Teachers could make you feel terrible.

Joan Welch

In our school years, we were much more in awe of our teachers, we were terrified. I mean you didn't dare run down a corridor. You did not dare eat in the street. I can remember my geography mistress used to live near me and I was sucking a lolly — you know in the bus queue, and I saw her come and I dropped this lolly right in the gutter because I was terrified. But I mean it was a totally different thing, wasn't it?

Pam Beddoes

Our teachers wore capes. They floated about like bats. If you saw them coming, woah, you know! You did respect them. If you went home and told your parents that you'd either got the cane or the strap from the teacher, they didn't back you up. You deserved another one if you'd done something wrong.

If ever you saw the teacher on the way to school, or at any time when you were out and about, you always got off the pavement, and said, "Good afternoon Miss".

Milly Gardner

The headmistress in our day she was a person apart. When she came through the corridor you stood there with eyes down — you didn't dare look at her, let alone do anything wrong.

Dorothy Barton

**STICKS AND CARROTS.**

I remember the teacher, when we were young, used to bring sweets in once a month. Thinking about it now, it must have been pay day. Anybody who'd been very good got so many sweets. Then you'd get perhaps a black mark and you'd get a sweet less, and that was an incentive I suppose. And these sweets were a luxury then as well because we didn't get all the pocket money that kiddies get now.

And as you got older the punishment we got was the strap. It wasn't the cane in Scotland. It was the strap, for girls as well as boys. I think your pride got hurt more than anything. And the worst thing of all was if you should cry in front of the class. You musn't cry. It was a sense of shame then if you cried. It was more than your life was worth.

And the boys used to pull their hands in sometimes and blow on them. They would hold their hands out for the strap, and they'd pull them in quickly and the teacher would get the strap on her leg.

We had a signature book and if you were extremely good you got a signature. And at the end of term there was a prize for the most signatures.

Eddie McHardy

**DOUBLE PUNISHMENT.**

There were times when I was top of the class for a few months, and then I'd be bottom of the class. The reason might be a different teacher I didn't like, so I didn't concentrate, or it might have been a time when I was larking about, which I'm afraid I often did, and had the cane for it. I used to screw up bits of paper and flick them across the room with the ruler, with messages written on them.

Once I was sent out of the room to another teacher. The whole lesson in that room stopped whilst that teacher said, "Yes, what do you want?" He probably knew anyway. You said "Oh Mr. Ward I've been sent to you to get the cane". And all his class would prick up their ears, and you'd have to say what you'd had the cane for. "I flicked paper across the room instead of listening to history." "Ah yes, all right, fetch the cane for me then", and you had to stand in front of the whole of his class, so you had a feeling of humiliation, because there might have been some of your friends, there might even be your brother in that class, who's sure to tell your mother when you get home, that you've had the cane, so you get another one as well.

Milly Gardner

Date.	Name of Child.	Age.	Offence.	Amount of Punishment.	Signature of Teacher who inflicted the Punishment.	Initials of Head Teacher.
23-1-24	Hook, Betty	8	Laziness - Bad Work & continual lateness	One stripe on each hand	A. Rhoden	A.R.
29-1-24	Hook, Betty	8	Laziness & lateness	One stripe on hand	A. Rhoden	A.R.
30-1-24	Hook, Betty	8	Laziness & lateness	One stripe on hand.	A. Rhoden	A.R.
11-4-24	Hook, Betty	8.	Destroying a book	Two stripes on R. Hand.	A. Rhoden	A.R.
					J. Balun Chairman of Managers Nov. 21st	
28-1-25	Butters, Joan	10	Continual lateness & bad work	One stripe on one hand	A. Rhoden	A.R.
					A. Rhoden Chairman of Meeting March 8. 1925.	
14-7-25	Butters, Joan	10	Very bad work.	One stripe on each hand.	A. Rhoden	A.R.
16-9-25	Hook, Betty	10	Very bad work - laziness & rudeness!	Two stripes on each hand	A. Rhoden	A.R.
1-10-25	Hook, Betty	10	Continued rudeness & laziness	Two stripes on each hand.	A. Rhoden	A.R.
					E. Goddard Jones Chairman of Managers 25th Oct 1925	



### SPEAKING OUT OF TURN.

One look from my teacher, you knew if you were speaking out of turn. And you knew that when you wanted to say something, she would give you a sort of nod, yes all right. You didn't have to indicate, she'd just nod.

I did have the strap, just for being, not cheeky, but doing something wrong. Perhaps I was late, or well, I was a bit of a brainy type, so if I was given a test to do, I'd do it, and then I might sit back and start singing. Then I'd hear, "Out here McLevy" . . . boom!! I accepted it. It never worried me at all. I never told anybody at home I'd got it.

Jennie Hinchelwood

### ADVERSE COMPARISONS.

Yes, well I had an elder sister and she was brilliant, by all accounts. And this teacher that taught her expected me to be the same. So if I ever did anything wrong, it was always: "Margaret was a lovely girl. Margaret . . .". And if she said it once . . . Sometimes I would just be sitting listening to music, and all of a sudden, up would come, "Now if Margaret was here she would know the answer to that . . ." and that went on and on all through my school. Which was a terrible thing . . . dreadful.

Ellen Clark

### HOPPING THE WAG.

Playing truant, or, hopping the wag as it was known in those days, was as prevalent then as it is now. The school board man, known in later years as the school attendance officer, would be out and about during school term, stopping and questioning children and visiting their parents. Some children received double punishment, by having a hiding from Mum and Dad, and on return to school receiving the cane and your name in the punishment book.

Arthur Wellard

### YOU DON'T FORGET.

I have very strong memories of my Scottish education. It was a very small school but the headmaster was a dedicated man. Once, I did something terribly, terribly naughty. I stole a pencil case, you know, unpremeditated. I went into the cloakroom. Saw this brightly coloured pencil case and on impulse took it. Of course there was a big hue and cry. And I took it home, hid it, and my mother found it in bed and she said, "Take that back." So I took it back and told them I found it in a ditch. But I mean it had been raining overnight and it was pristine clean. We got over this, but when I left that school the headmaster presented me with a beautiful pencil case. And that's something that, you know, you remember.

Margaret Kippin



*Classroom in 1920s showing stepped classroom.*

# SPECIAL EVENTS.



*Lucas Vale School Deptford.*

## THE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH.

I remember when the school photograph was taken. Well, we were supposed to turn up looking clean and presentable on the morning for the photograph to be taken. But often they didn't get round to taking your particular class until late in the afternoon, by which time you'd been out in the playground playing several times, and you were absolutely filthy. And I've got a school photograph and some of the children are literally black. Their knees and their faces look absolutely appalling. And when the time came to have your photograph done they just sat you down and took it. You weren't allowed to go out and wash or get yourself prettied up. You had to sit there and you had your photograph taken. We looked like a lot of urchins.

Dorothy Barton

## THE SCHOOL PLAY.

In our school play once I was a fairy and Charlie, my twin brother, was an imp and I had to have white anklestrap shoes and my mum said I couldn't have them so I went into school and said to the teacher that I couldn't be a fairy in the play. When she asked me why, I said it was because I was naughty and couldn't have white anklestrap shoes. I suppose my mum couldn't afford them. Well the teacher sat up all night knitting me a pair.

In another play, my mother emphasised that I speak slowly and clearly so I could be heard. Well I only had one line to say and when it came to my turn I had to say, "How tired they are poor things." I stood up and shouted out, "HOW TIRED THEY ARE POOR FINGS." Everyone laughed, but my mother could have died.

Ellen Clark

## PRIZE GIVING.

We had our yearly prize-giving, and I've still got one of them which is a Bible, dated 1935. I use it every day now. I had a scroll too, which I think my elder sister still has, for coming second out of the whole of Plymouth for knowing stories of the Bible. All the schools in the Plymouth area entered, so I didn't do too badly there.

Milly Gardner

I had one prize for English. Being an only child, I was always well dressed, and so I presented the bouquet and made the speech to the Mayor or the board of governors.

I used to come home crying if my mum had been to the school, because she weighed eighteen stone. She was my adopted mother, and she was a very big lady. You know how kids talk, they used to say, "Your mum's fat, your mum's fat." I went home weeping, "They reckon you're fat Mum." And she said, "Just tell them Pamela, I am pleasantly plump."

Pam Beddoes

On prize day our local M.P. in this case, Sir George Hume would distribute the prizes, or it might be a local councillor if the M.P. was not available. One of my few attributes at that time was being very good at drawing and composition, so often I had a prize. During the General Strike my teacher brought in a cottage loaf for the class to crayon draw. Having the highest marks at the end of the lesson the loaf was my reward. When I went home with it my father said "We've got a bread winner in the family, well done boy, well done". Little did I know at the time the suffering the General Strike meant to so many families around me.

Arthur Wellard

## ARMISTICE DAY.

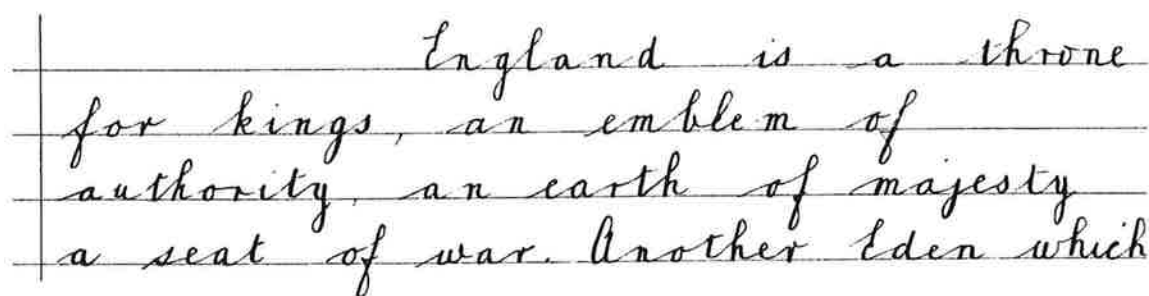
We didn't have a big assembly hall but at eleven o'clock sharp on Armistice Day, everything stopped throughout the whole school and on the very stroke of eleven o'clock we all stood in silence for that two minutes. You couldn't hear a cough or anything, there was perfect silence for the whole two minutes. After that, we just said a little prayer, sang a song, and sat down and carried on with our lessons.

Milly Gardner

I can remember my Mother had lost a brother and I used to feel I'd got to feel sad. You see I didn't know this Uncle, but I thought on behalf of my Mother I'd got to feel sad.

And there was the service at the Cenotaph, which we were aware was going on. And of course everything stopped. I mean the buses stopped. Everything stopped.

Margaret Kippin



England is a throne  
for kings, an emblem of  
authority, an earth of majesty  
a seat of war. Another Eden which

Armistice Day was another important event during my school life. Remember, this was in the 1920s when the Great War was fresh in people's minds. Not being blessed with a school assembly hall, Armistice was observed in our individual class rooms. I remember my class teacher at the time, just before 11 o'clock, asking us to stand in silence. We could clearly hear a single gun being fired at Woolwich Barracks marking the start of the silence and this same gun fired again at the end. Afterwards he told us of the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for our future and how grateful we should be. We then continued with our lesson.

At that time, there was a spate of silent war films about the Battle of the Marne, Battle of the Somme, Ypres, Battle of Jutland, etc. After school when these films were being shown at the local cinema, the Trafalgar in this case, we would run all the way to the cinema to get there by a quarter to five to get in for thre'pence, for after a quarter to five the price increased to fivepence. I know I saw them all. In my childish innocence I thought how brave the soldiers were, going "over the top", some falling dead or wounded. In my teenage years, at the same cinema I saw "All quiet on the Western Front", a film which completely destroyed any romanticism of schoolday war films. For the first time the horrors of war and the useless carnage really hit me hard. Incidentally as a schoolboy my father, an ex-

sergeant major and three of my elder brothers who served in the war, occasionally sang a parody on the Great War. I still remember to this day both the words and the tune.

We won the war, what was it for?  
You can ask Lloyd George, or Bonar Law.  
We beat the German, the Austrian and Turk  
\*That's why we're all walking round out of work  
We won the war, what was it for?  
But the next time the enemy's at your door  
Take him in and shake his hand,  
Give him a dinner and treat him grand  
What's the use of fighting any more?

Arthur Wellard

A teacher at school had a brother killed and she used to cry and of course all the girls in the class were sort of all weepified with sympathy with the teacher. But we knew it was something really awful, lots of people had died, because there were lots of books with pictures. Nothing moved in the streets. And the bus driver got out of his bus, to stand and wait for the two minutes.

Edie McHardy

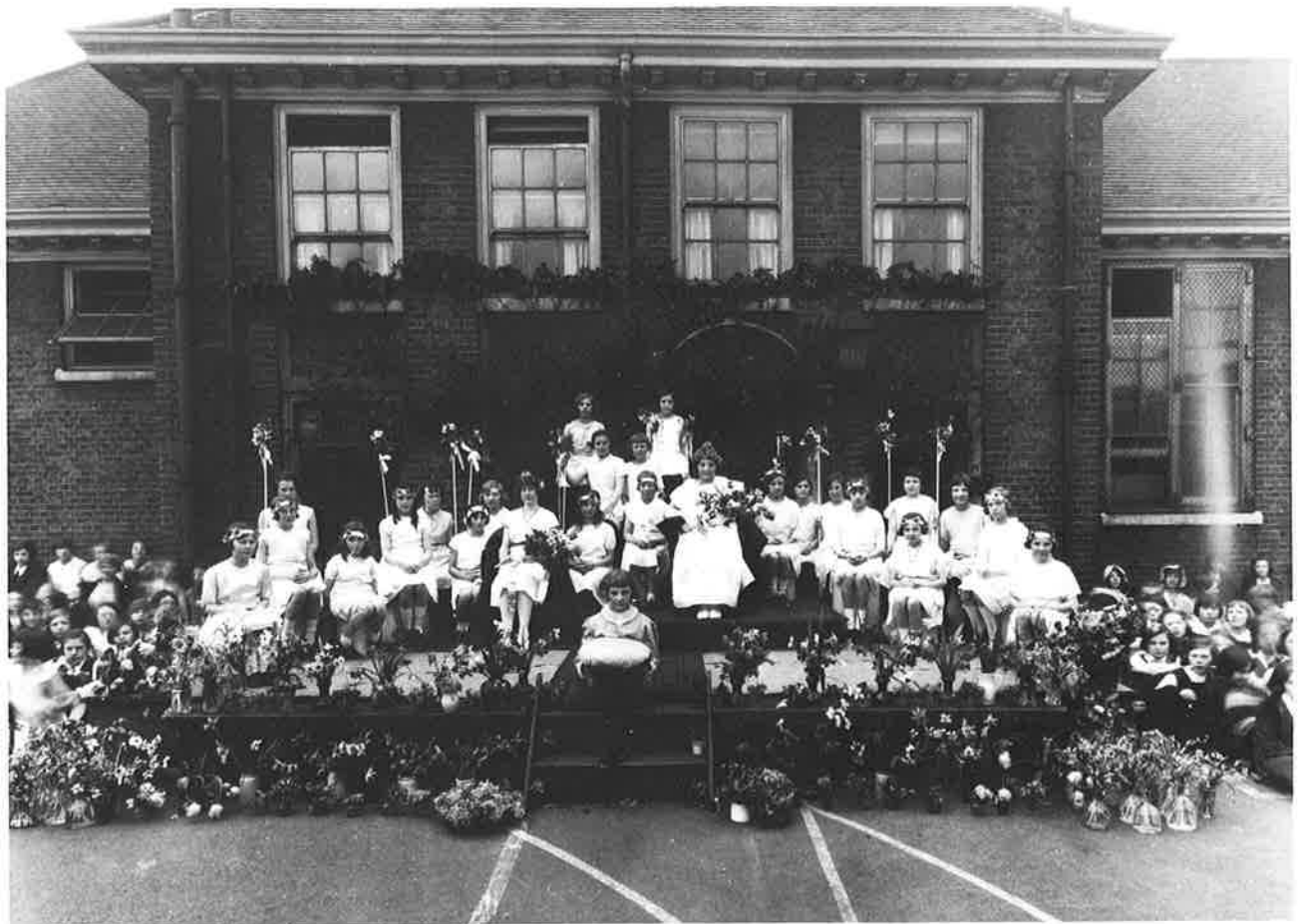
## MAY DAY.

Two of the most exciting days at school were Mayday and Empire Day and the one I remember most vividly was Mayday at Lucas Street School when I was about seven or eight. A Maypole was fixed up in the school playground with long pieces of rope hanging from the top and it was explained that these would be replaced with coloured ribbons after we had learned to do the dance movements. We all took our places, boys facing one way, girls the other, and each with one end of a rope in our hands we walked the intricate bobbing and weaving movements of the dance over and over again. The practise went on for weeks until a few days before Mayday the ropes were removed and coloured ribbons put in their place, and we went through the routine yet again, this time skipping the steps to music. We were delighted to find that at the end of the dance the ribbons were plaited round the pole in a lovely coloured pattern, and finally the whole dance was performed successfully to our parents, who had come specially to see us dancing round the Maypole.

Dorothy Barton



*Lancaster Road Infant School. Maypole Dance 1937.*



*Townmead Road School, Fulham. Mayday. 1932.*

## EMPIRE DAY:

Each year on Empire Day there was a parade in the school hall. Some wore Girl Guide or Brownie uniforms and everybody carried a penny Union Jack to wave. We sang songs like "Rule Britannia" and "England, Our Island Home", waving flags as we sang. After the parade we had the afternoon off.

Doris Barlow

On Empire Day we used to come into school with a clean apron on and red, white and blue ribbons in our hair.

Phyllis Myers

Talking of school dancing last week reminded me not only of dancing but marching, singing, etc., which was part of the celebration on May 24th, Empire Day.

Gladys Barrett

*24.5.29 Empire Day was celebrated in the usual manner - patriotic songs were sung and the flag saluted. School was closed in the afternoon.*



*Ivydale Junior School, Peckham. Empire Day.*



12. 5. 31 Empire Day was celebrated this morning.  
National Songs were sung by the pupils, & an  
address was given by H.T.  
The afternoon will be kept as a holiday.

Empire Day at my school was an important occasion and entailed much rehearsal. Apart from rehearsing patriotic songs like, Land of Hope and Glory, What is the meaning of Empire Day, Hearts of Oak, etc, saluting the flag was the "piece de resistance". This task was seconded to Mr Jennings an ex-world war one soldier who served in a Highland regiment. For a week prior to Empire Day he had us in the playground, plus the school piano and music teacher, and in class formation to the accompaniment of martial tunes we marched in military style. Mr Jennings shouting orders — Eyes Left — Salute — Arms Down. If we did not do it to his satisfaction sometimes he kept all of us behind for a quarter of an hour after school time until he was satisfied, or perhaps fed up. But, not to worry, Mr Jennings had us to perfection on the day. Any drill sergeant would have loved us.

Arthur Wellard

We used to sing our Empire Day song at Richard Street School. How did it go?

What is the meaning of Empire Day? Responsibility,  
Self-sacrifice and duty served, blended with sympathy,  
True to the flag that we all adore  
Proud of its mighty sway  
England expects that every man  
Will duty's call obey  
On glorious Empire Day.

The Empire Day event was in the morning and then we had the rest of the day off. You'd go home and Mum would say: "How did you get on? How did you do? Take that frock off." We'd take our frock off, and our shoes and our socks, and put on old ones.

Ethel Robinson

## CHRISTMAS TIME AT SCHOOL

Christmas at school was very good. We would make paper decorations and hang them around the classroom. In the school hall was a huge Christmas tree laden with presents bearing our names. We used to spend ages just walking around the tree to see if we could spot a present with our name on. Each class had a Christmas Party on a different day, and there were cakes and bags of sweets for everyone. We played lots of games like Musical Chairs and Blind Man's Buff. When the party ended at four o'clock, we went home with our presents, fruits and sweets.

Doris Barlow

At school as at home, Christmas held a fascination for me. A few weeks before Christmas in the classrooms we would be engaged in making decorations for our classrooms. Pots of paste, brushes and different coloured strips of paper would be made into paper chains whilst a chatter of conversation could be heard. Mainly this talk centred around our expectations of the toys we hoped we would get on Christmas morning: a Tansad folding up scooter, roller skates, a Lines Bros. pedal car, train sets, soldiers, a meccano set, a magic lantern or a steam engine?

*Wenlock Road School, Shoreditch. George V Silver Jubilee. 1935.*

Sadly, despite our dreams, there were some boys at my school who on occasion fell into the category of a popular song during the 30's — "The Little Boy that Santa Claus Forgot". Mr Berdinner one teacher I had would, during the weeks before Christmas, read us instalments from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" he had me spellbound. It is a book I have read at least three times since my school days.

Arthur Wellard



*Laxton Street School, London, S.E.1. Christmas 1933.*

# SOME MEMORABLE TEACHERS.

## A BATTLE AXE.

My headmistress was a bit of a battle axe. We called her "Carry Carter" amongst other things. She was a tall well built lady, her figure somewhat resembling a bell tent. Scanty hair, scraped into a bun, smallish head by comparison. Her usual attire was bottle green shapeless dresses, nearly down to her ankles. She wore a man sized wrist watch, and had a habit as she strode along, with feet splayed, of suddenly stretching her arm out at full length, swinging it round, to look at her watch. Woe betide if you happened to be passing; you were likely to receive a blow on the head. We tended to duck or swerve when passing her.

She had strange ideas; she seemed to see evil where it was not. I remember on one occasion, having had to go to her study for something — it was Summer Term — and I was wearing ankle socks. As I left the room, she called me and pointing rather angrily at my legs told me to, "Pull those socks up. Do not exhibit your legs like that my girl". From then on we were forbidden to wear ankle socks.

Margaret Kippin

## AN UNFAIR TEACHER.

You only had to turn your eyes to the next person, and you were a cheat. The desks were separate, and the teacher would always walk up and down to see you weren't looking. I remember one lesson. I did look sideways, but I wasn't cheating. The teacher thought I was cheating and I got the cane on my hand in the hall. I had to go out to the headmistress, and she got the cane out and went right across my hand. Then my name was put in the punishment book. I never forgot it because I wasn't cheating. But I couldn't prove it and you didn't argue with teachers then. I don't think I cried. I think I was angry.

Elsie Lehane

## TEACHER'S PAY DAY.

One thing I remember from when I was about elevenish, was once a month the teachers used to get paid. The teachers used to have to go out, and they would come back, and they used to get the money, and they always used to count it out on the desk because they never had cheques in those days, it was all cash. And it looked like a lot of money then, and I used to think to myself, "I'm going to be a schoolteacher when I grow up, because I remember seeing all those notes, maybe it was only about £12 or £13, but being all those notes it looked a lot, and they used to count it out before they put it in their bags.

Elsie Lehane

Well we had a rhyme about three of our teachers. We made a rhyme. They were Miss Brooks, Miss Benson and Miss Walker. Miss Brooks was very fat, Miss Walker was very thin and poor old Miss Benson had no — well she was no oil painting by any means. And it used to go, "Skinny Walker, Fatty Brooks, Great Big Ben and her scare crow looks." We used to have a giggle.

Vivien Prince

## A MOST UNFEELING TEACHER.

I went to about six different schools. And one I went to they had French there and I'd never seen French before, written or spoken — I didn't know anything about it. And the first time in this class the woman teacher — who was a French national — she knew I was a new girl, and she knew I had never done French, and she wrote something on the board and she said, "You, stand up and read it." And she made me stand up and read French, which I had never seen before — I had no idea.

And of course I couldn't read it — the girls laughed, and she called me a cretin or something, and, do you know, after that, I never forgave that woman. I refused to learn French in her class. I sat there with my arms folded and I wouldn't learn. When we had the half term exam I had nothing, I got 0. And she got into trouble, because I was top of the school in Maths and English and they couldn't understand why a girl who could be top in English could be bottom in French.

And the headmistress called me in and asked me why, and I told her. She said, "Has she been unkind to you?" And I told her and she said, "Ah yes, well" (I can remember what she said to this day), "You go back into that classroom, and by the end of term exam you'll have slightly higher results, otherwise you'll have me to deal with, and I'm a very different proposition to Mademoiselle." So I did. She never did it to me again, but I thought that was the most unfeeling, wicked thing to have done to a child. I got my own back though!

Dorothy Barton

## AN OLD TORTOISE.

I went to Blackheath Road School in Deptford. And I always remember the headmistress there was huge — and she had a dress that went right down to the ground. And she had a little tiny head. And when she spoke she sort of put her head forward, and she had a big brown dress and she looked like a tortoise! You know when tortoises put their heads out of their shell. That's my memory of the headmistress. I remember her name was Miss Rhees, which was a Welsh name I believe.

Gladys Barrett





*Iris Gange at Woods Road School Peckham, London, S.E.15. Iris is in the front row, third from the right.*

### **A FAVOURITE TEACHER.**

From the age of five to about nine years, we all went to the Tin Chapel School. It was called this because it had a corrugated iron roof, and it made an awful din when we had heavy rain or hail-stones. I must have been about seven or eight when I had my favourite teacher. She was the one and only favourite teacher I ever had. Her name was Miss Collingwood. She was plump, and young with a round face that was always pleasant. She never scowled, or looked fiercely at you. Her hair was a very light brown and it was extra long. It hung almost down to her waist as it covered a rather large hump on her back. I liked Miss Collingwood, and she trusted me. I was the only girl in the class that she ever sent to do some shopping for her. She would call my name about mid-morning, and I would go up to her desk which she would open to bring out her purse. In my small hand she would place a coin maybe a sixpence or a shilling, and then ask me to run up to the dairy for her. "There's a good girl, and bring me back a quarter of lean ham."

I was glad to get away from whatever lessons we were doing, and feeling mighty proud of myself to be entrusted with teacher's money. I loved running through the deserted village, because all the kids were in school except me. Up to the dairy I went. It was a very clean, very cool shop. You could buy milk, and different cheeses. These were great big cheeses, and you asked for a piece to be cut off according to how much you could afford. There were eggs of course, and a variety of cold meats. A man all in white overalls would appear to serve you. I watched as first a piece of grease proofed paper was laid upon the slicing machine. Then a lump of ham was placed against the cutters and the machine would make a funny noise as it sliced, going to and fro, to and fro. It did this about four times. A piece of grease proofed paper was placed on top, then it was picked up and wrapped carefully inside a larger piece of proofed paper with the ends tucked neatly in. Money changed hands, and I would nip smartly back to school with Miss Collingwood's lunch. She always thanked me very much. I sensed somehow that she liked me. Why I never knew, but I certainly liked her.

Then one day she was no longer in class, and a new teacher called Miss Pill took over. Sums, singing, and poetry were never quite the same under Miss Pill somehow. Weeks passed and then we were assembled in class one day and told that sadly Miss Collingwood would never return, because she had died, and if we could all bring threepence each we could all send a lovely bunch of flowers for her funeral. I was absolutely shocked at this news. I couldn't picture classes without Miss Collingwood for ever and ever. I went home for lunch. I remember it was winter time and I sat in front of the open coal fire and just stared into it looking at the hot coals, and crying my eyes out. I didn't eat any lunch that day, and I didn't go to school either for several days, because I became very poorly. I worried about getting my threepence to school, and I believe one of my brothers took it with a note from my mum. By the time I was well enough to go back to school, everyone else seemed to have forgotten Miss Collingwood, but I never did.

Milly Gardner

### **A CARING TEACHER.**

Mr Burns was my Headmaster and he was very enthusiastic that his pupils progressed and got every chance and parents were invited to discuss their children with him. Books had to be bought by the parents and a list of requirements was given each year. Before use we had to cover them carefully with brown paper and treat them with great respect as they could not be easily replaced. Sometimes the more expensive ones were bought second hand if in good condition. My mother must have sacrificed a lot to buy us a set of "The Book of Knowledge" encyclopedias which helped a great deal. She used to get other reference books for us by collecting coupons from a magazine — I think it was John Bull — a dictionary in particular I remember was used for many years until it literally fell apart. Being brought up to care for books means that I get extremely angry when I see schoolchildren of today throwing bags and books around in horse-play.

Edie McHardy

## CHALK FLINGERS.

One of my teachers was called Mr Cruickshank. He was a tall chap and he could be a bit robust at times, by throwing chalk at you and goodness knows what when he got in one of his tempers. Our teachers always used to come to school in a very smart suit, collar and tie, always looked smart. And we used to always look up to them. We'd never answer them back, wouldn't dare to. And we used to respect them. In spite of the way they treated you at times.

The headmaster, Mr Hunt, was a gentleman, he was. We only saw him a few times, you know, if you were sent to his study to go and get the cane or something like that. And he used to say "What have you been doing now? Now what have you asked for?" and all that. He was a gentleman he was, Mr Hunt.

Bill Welch

At ten years old I sat for a scholarship at Woods Road School, Peckham, and then moved to Lewisham. I attended Saint Mary's School there whilst awaiting the results, and was in the top class with a man teacher.

He was expert at flicking chalk across the classroom at inattentive pupils, one of which, a boy, sat next to me. Several times a week I had to take the boy and two others to a seat in the corridor and help them with their reading. The boy next to me often got the cane from the head-master, for disrupting the class, stealing and other misdemeanours.

Iris Gange

## A FIERY TEACHER.

It was 1936 and I was ten. The whole class of mixed boys and girls transferred to another class-room for a history lesson. The teacher was Miss Hitchcock and she had flaming red hair. It was the brightest of bright copper! She also had a very quick temper. We quickly settled to our lesson, but we all shivered, because the open coal-fire was almost out, and the room was very cold. After a while Miss Hitchcock excused herself, telling us to copy from the blackboard. The minute she was gone we all jumped up, saying how cold we were, and we leapt about to try and get warm. I looked at the remnant of a fire, only just smouldering in the grate. I looked at the coal scuttle, and the shovel, and decided to put some coal on the fire. This done, I poked it about, the smoke rose and the sparks flew, and back came Miss Hitchcock!

For a few moments we carried on with our lesson. Then, in a loud but seemingly kindly voice she asked who it was who had put coal on the fire? Thinking I had done everyone a good turn, I shot my hand up, and said, "Me Miss." Her neck turned red, her face went a beetroot colour, and her already red hair went so red, that to me it looked as if it was on fire, and I felt scared. She ranted and raved, and then said I was to stay behind at four o'clock and write the story of George Stephenson and the Rocket, and I was not to make any spelling mistakes, else I would have to do the whole lot again! Well, I did as I was told, but I was late home, so I got a good caning from my mother as well.

Milly Gardner



9-10-31. Miss Collins, Head Mistress of the Girls' Dept., came to see the four girls eligible for promotion to her school at the end of the term.



*Eddie at Ferryhill School, Aberdeen. Third from right, second row.*

### A JUST TEACHER.

At about the age of seven or eight, the class moved to the primary school which was upstairs and the teacher assigned was responsible for about forty children, mixed boys and girls. Miss Clark was the lady who was the one who I was lucky enough to have and she had the job of moulding these children and teaching them every subject except needlework and P.T. (Physical Training). She disciplined us mostly with kindness but, if necessary would use the strap, known as the tawse, to the hand. She was very fair and the culprit always knew the punishment was deserved as the class was warned for what reason this would be done. We believed Miss Clark implicitly when she said it would hurt her more to do it, so she had the sympathy of the other pupils. The worst thing to affect the culprit was to cry in front of the class — a tough little world.

And then when she praised you, oh that was seventh heaven! She was very helpful to everybody I think. Any punishment was a deserved punishment. If you didn't learn your spellings, you knew you were being fairly punished. I remember her and she was just so marvellous to all our minds I think. Everybody thought well of her. I can't remember anybody being frightened of her. She must have been just in her twenties I should think, but of course she seemed quite old to us.

Her methods would be criticised nowadays but we knew what was expected of us and she taught us the joys of learning and living and we all thought so highly of her that she got the best out of us. She was our friend and mentor for the four years until we took exams for higher education and the pupil pass result was very good. She never showed favouritism.

But my worst experience really was the report cards with my Grandmother. My brother was eighteen months older and I had two cousins similarly aged — and my Grandmother was a sewing mistress in another school because she'd been left a widow. And of course when report cards came in if we did well Grandma was extremely pleased but the other three were agin you. But if you did badly you had to suffer Grandma's displeasure. So, whichever way, you couldn't win.

Sometimes we had a student teacher to take the class and when the school inspector came we knew to be on our best behaviour. If the class got restless we had to sit with our hands on head or arms folded over our chests — both exercises were very effective.

Eddie McHardy

# SOME SECONDARY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES.



## SCHOLARSHIP GIRL

I was entered for scholarships for two fee-paying schools, both in the London area. I failed to win one scholarship by one or two marks, but the governors were apparently so impressed with my work that they offered me a place if my parents could pay part of the fees. Some hopes of that with my father an out of work carpenter! I didn't get the results of the second exam for some time, and in the meantime the landlord of our house in Charlton decided to sell up and we had to get out. There was a new council estate being built at Carshalton in Surrey and my parents were offered a house down there by the London County Council. I didn't want to go in case I won my scholarship, but was told that I would be able to go to a good school in Carshalton.

Some weeks after we had moved, I heard that I had won my free scholarship, but had forfeited it by moving out of London as it was not transferable. I am afraid I raved and screamed at my poor parents after getting the news, and it took me a long time to get over it. I had always wanted to be a teacher, and to do that I needed to go to a school where there was a chance of getting to college or university. There was no chance of this at the ordinary council schools. Children there left school at fourteen and went to work.

Dorothy Barton

## CLASS RULES.

- I was educated at the local High School in Blackheath. In the twenties and thirties, class distinction was far more marked than it is today. There were a certain number of scholarships open for the more academically minded children from the nearby state schools. The examination age of such was about eleven years.

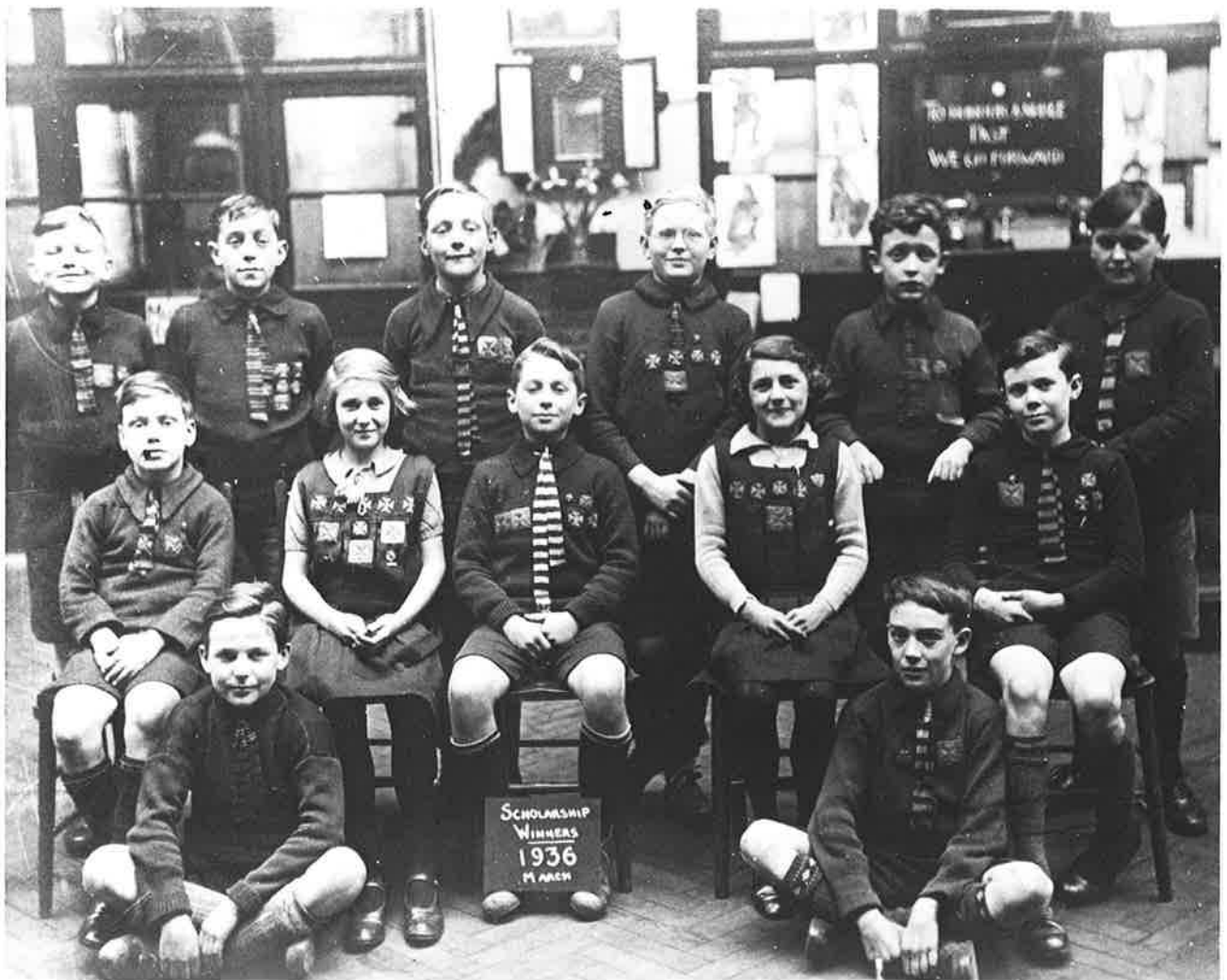
We, from the more affluent families, may have appeared little horrors to these exceptionally gifted children at first. To come from Invicta Road or Sherington Road Schools rather than from Oakland House School (the nearby private preparatory school) meant that financial handicap held a social stigma. However, I feel that we, from the more well-off families soon realised that these children were well above average with regard to school work and were "real people" as ourselves. In fact many a life-long friendship has been the result of this "open scholarship" arrangement.

There was the opportunity for these pupils to gain grants for attending the school. I am not sure of the financial extent of these grants. Actual school fees were covered, but whether school uniform, books and sports equipment were, I know not. In later years I was to learn, first-hand, that one such had to be content to play netball, not lacrosse, because her parents were unable to afford a lacrosse stick. This particular person eventually went to Oxford and obtained a 1st class degree in Maths. Girls were given help in making applications to universities, and some grants were available. A high percentage of these "above average" children made it and have enjoyed excellent careers.

Another stigma for the family was that of parents' divorce. I am still very friendly with the victim of such. She had, she thought, a very happy childhood circle of young friends. Unfortunately her parents divorced and immediately, many parents of her so-called friends, forbade and broke up these childhood friendships. Doors were closed to her of the homes which had hitherto been opened.

I think the war broke down these "closed" social barriers. We were all in the same boat and tragedy can strike right across the social spectrum.

Vivien Prince



*Ellerslie Road Junior School, Shepherds Bush.  
Scholarship Winners. 1936.*

## LOOKING THE PART.

When I went to Greenwich Park Central School (nicknamed Guinea Pigs College) we were issued with a list of rules. I cannot remember all of these. There were the usual ones about school uniform but the ones that stick in the mind are related to our out of school behaviour — on the way home.

We were NOT allowed to walk with our blazers and coats undone.

We must NOT walk more than four abreast along the pavement.

We must NOT go into a sweet shop on the way home.

We must NOT take our caps off on the way home.

I clearly recall some girls being called on to the stage at assembly and threatened with expulsion. Their crime had been that a teacher had spotted them playing football-cum-netball with some boys on the way home from school.

We accepted these rules without much question.

Clothes had not been a great problem at elementary school. My grandmother was a dress maker and kept me supplied. However it was a different matter at Central School.

The regulation hat was a black velour. My mother could not really afford this, and suggested that I wear my navy blue guide hat with the school band. I felt a sense of grievance because I had bought the guide hat myself by saving money I had made by running errands. Furthermore my mother had stopped me going to the guides sometime previously. The coat should have been a plain navy blue Burberry. My mother bought the coat at Percys in Deptford High Street; it was light navy and had a small cap attached at the back.

How I longed for a plain navy blue Burberry. My gym slip was also a cheap one which meant that the box pleats were very skimpy and the stockings I had were black lisle. I realise that to buy the tie, regulation navy and orange girdle, hat band and so on, were all extras and at that time finances at home were at a very low ebb, but I admit to feeling envious of my friend as I stood next to her in assembly, and instead of applying myself to my devotions, would, with open eyes, gaze at her woollen black stockings, which looked so much better, and at her generously pleated gym-slip. In actual fact she was lucky that she had an older cousin at Askes and received her cast offs.



September 1931. Iris Gange aged 10 at Lewisham Prendergast Grammar School for Girls, in her new uniform, having won Junior County Scholarship.

### REVISITING MY OLD SCHOOL.

I paid a visit to Prendergast School in Lewisham this year, 1988, the first time for forty-six years. I joined the school as a pupil in the summer of 1931, on passing the Junior County scholarship, and left prematurely in December 1936 because of the sudden death of my father. I had hoped eventually to become a teacher, but had to leave to help support my mother.

I entered the school with mixed feelings as I felt sure it would have altered out of all recognition and I would feel a stranger. I was pleasantly surprised. There was quite a lot of new building, but I hardly noticed that when I came across the old classrooms. Sitting at one of the desks, I thought of Miss Willoughby, my form mistress, Miss Laidler, Miss Mobbs, Miss McGregor and Miss Wendover who taught me various subjects. The latter I remember vividly. She was the gymnastics teacher. I was never one of her favourite pupils as I used to dodge to the back of the queue to avoid turning somersaults over the bar which I was terrified of. She always found me out, and I was made to do it twice for every once I had missed. In the hall I looked for the ropes we used to climb, from which I had a nasty accident. I had forgotten to wear a tie-pin and at the top of the ropes my tie wound round, choking me. I let go to release the tie and fell down on to an upturned balancing form astride, knocking myself unconscious,

Miss Franklin was my headmistress and I can remember sitting trembling outside her door, waiting to see her for some misdemeanour, for discipline was very strict in those days. I went into the old chemistry lab where we used to do experiments and make awful stinks. I looked out of the window and saw the playground where we used to play cricket, and where at breaktimes I used to line up for a glass of milk and a penny chocolate buzz bar, and I knew I was home.

I look back with grateful thanks for the education I received as a Prendergast pupil. Latin, so often frowned on, taught me the meaning of words and other languages. Maths, which I loved, has meant an easy working life without the need for using a calculator, and kept my brain active. Even the dreaded gymnastics has kept me able-bodied over the years. I only wish I had been given the opportunity to finish my education.

Iris Gange

### WOMEN OF THE FUTURE.

There was a "House" system at Greenwich Park, and Inter-House competition was quite keen. The Houses were:

Austen (Jane)  
Beaufort (Lady Margaret)  
Bronte (Anne)  
Hilde (St.)

We did develop a certain pride in our school, or perhaps it was just instilled into us? I remember the school song at Greenwich. It was sung to tune of "Marching through Georgia".

### SCHOOL SONG

Women of the future, we will work with might and  
main,  
Never shall the honour of our School receive a stain,  
In our eyes the light of truth shall never shine in vain.  
"Hold high the torch" be our watchword.

Chorus:

Hurrah, hurrah, we'll work and play and sing  
Hurrah, hurrah, we'll make the rafters ring  
Austen, Beaufort, Bronte, Hilde, fond memories will  
bring  
Hold high the torch be our watchword.

Other schools may flourish, they may win their trophies  
too,  
Effort is for all to make, though prizes may be few,  
But the girls of Greenwich to their colours will be true,  
"Hold high the torch" be our watchword.

Schooldays soon must have an end, we cannot tarry  
long,  
Earnest days await us, we must face with courage  
strong,  
They will find us ready, in our hearts the proudest song:  
"Hold high the torch" be our watchword.

Margaret Kippin

**NORTH OF THE BORDER.**

By the time the top class of my Aberdeen primary school was reached all the children could be said to have a very sound standard in every subject except foreign languages, and were disciplined to sit examinations to decide their future education.

There were many opportunities to sit examinations for grammar schools or colleges, and the varied choice in many cases involved the chance of getting monetary grants. Mr Burns, our Headmaster, was a great believer in the Central Secondary School which was similar to the comprehensive schools of today. It was possible for slow starters to gain a rightful place, but that is another story.

Starting in the secondary school was not so easy as it meant leaving the close-knit class of seven years and starting out afresh. One girl from the class — Margaret McRitchie — and myself remained together and, although we were not chums, it was nice to have a familiar face around when the great adventure of growing up began.

Those pupils who did gain a scholarly place had their names put on the board which occupied one side of the ground floor of the school. This was in gold lettering and was considered to be a great honour.



*Eddie and three friends going along Union Street, Aberdeen, to sit exam for bursary for secondary school. 1933. The girl 2nd from the right is Margaret McRitchie who, although not a chum, did go right through school with Eddie.*

The best part of starting at a higher education school was the longer summer holidays — the whole of July and August — school starting on 1st September unless of course that day fell on a weekend.

The Central Secondary School in Aberdeen which Mr Burns recommended, was in the centre of Aberdeen and again there were no school dinners. Many of us were able to go home for dinners but the pupils who had to come into Aberdeen from the surrounding country areas had to bring sandwiches with them.

*Aberdeen Central Secondary School.*

*Eddie's Report Card 1935-6.*

Each pupil had to be kitted out in uniform — for girls a drill slip and white blouse, green blazer, green beret or velour hat for winter and panama hat for summer. Socks were allowed to be worn for the first year, but after that long black stockings and of course navy blue knickers with the inevitable pocket (small for hanky). The uniform showed up in the street and if any pupil was seen behaving in an unseemly manner by a teacher a reprimand could be expected.



*Aberdeen Central Secondary School badge. Motto: I aim at higher things. Two blue bands represent the Rivers Dee and Don. Aberdeen is situated between mouths of these two rivers. Two torches of learning and Aberdeen University which I presume was the higher things where we were supposed to aim.*

On the first day one was placed in the appropriate form ranging from A to C for girls — at the end of the year it was rather like football divisions as the last few from A form were moved to B and the top few from B were moved up for the second year and similarly for the third year. It was reckoned that the top form were university quality, B form would eventually be trained more for business and C form for domestic science or some such thing but that was after the third year was finished.

ABERDEEN CENTRAL SECONDARY SCHOOL											
SESSION 1935-36											
REPORT ON <i>Edith McHardy</i>						CLASS <i>III B</i>					
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
	Mark	Mark	Mark	Mark	Mark		Mark	Mark	Mark	Mark	Mark
	Obtained	Obtained	Obtained	Obtained	Obtained		Obtained	Obtained	Obtained	Obtained	Obtained
	Out of	Out of	Out of	Out of	Out of		Out of	Out of	Out of	Out of	Out of
	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	100	100	100
ENGLISH	88	99	100	87	100	HANDICRAFT	...	...	...	...	...
HISTORY	50	50	100	87	99	SCRIPTURE	25	15	100	...	16
GEOGRAPHY	50	50	100	24	100	PHYSICAL EXERCISES	4	...	...	...	...
LATIN	150	75	75	99	100						
FRENCH	150	102	3	112	36	PERCENTAGE MARK	...	69.0	...	62.7	75.8
MATHEMATICS	150	134	75	103	11	RANK IN CLASS	...	5	...	17	3
SCIENCE	100	83	4.5	89	100	NUMBER IN CLASS	...	21	...	30	27
ART	100	50	75	4.5	58	TIMES ABSENT	...	0	...	0	0
NEEDLEWORK	...	...	...	...	...	TIMES LATE	...	0	...	0	0
COOKERY - LAUNDRY	...	...	...	...	...	CONDUCT	...	100	...	100	100

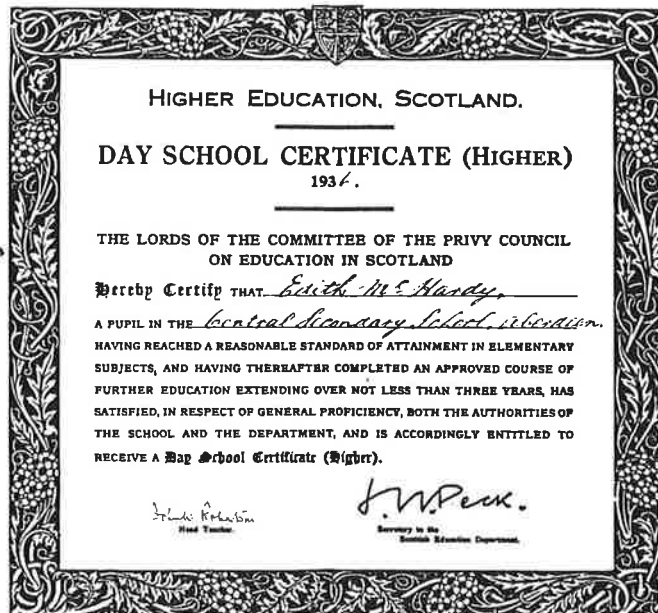
There was a different teacher for each subject and some were very good, but to my mind it was not comparable to having one good teacher who could hold your interest. Most of the teachers had nick names but the only two I can remember were French teachers — one Ma. Bois (Miss Wood) and she held everybody's interest as she had a wig which by the end of the class became displaced if she could be aggravated enough. The other one was Plooky Forbes — Plooky being a Scottish name for pimply — she threw a pointer at anybody who annoyed her, but I don't think she intended to hit target (luckily). She did intend it to rap knuckles though!!!

There were exam result times in the year and report cards had to be taken home and signed by a parent — not always a happy time. Every morning there was assembly in the school hall and there would be hymns, prayers, announcements good and bad, and after that the school song was sung. Then the pupils would go to classes supposedly full of goodness and pride, in the school of course, not in oneself.

Tuesday afternoons were free, school finishing at one o'clock. This was for sporting activities or studying at home — I cannot remember sport being anything other than recreational although we did play to win against other schools.

There was no physical punishment for girls then as we must have been considered too old but we would be given a hundred lines or writing French vocabularies so many times or mathematical problems to solve or some such thing.

The third year was the most important — at the end of that year we had to sit for the Day School Certificate — without which it would have been impossible to go on for further education.



In the fourth year those who wanted business training were given a very sound education in everything to do with office work and everybody else would follow the studying of the subjects to enable them to try for university or whatever.

Unfortunately I had to leave school at the end of the third year as my family had moved to London and I was glad to join them there. Perhaps I should have had a further year's schooling in London but being fifteen years old, I felt it was time to start work. This I did at the South Metropolitan Gas Company and went to evening classes for shorthand, typing, English and arithmetic for two years.

Edie McHardy

*Aberdeen Central Secondary School*





## THE HAPPIEST DAYS . . .

I attended St. Georges Road Advanced Central School in Glasgow from the age of ten and a half. I had passed my qualification exam, which was equivalent to the English eleven plus examination. Uniform was compulsory: a navy gym slip and white blouse. I liked to wear plimsolls which helped me to run to school before the second bell rang. There were two bells; one was to warn you it was 8.55am., and the second one that you should be in the playground waiting to enter the building. We marched into our classes to the sound of stirring martial music. The captain of each class led us, and the rear was brought up by the Vice Captain, and each of these appointments were selected by the class pupils.

Each lesson lasted forty minutes and when the bell rang we all dispersed to the next lesson in an orderly manner. Our classes were segregated, boys had separate classrooms and playgrounds. Attendance times were 9am to 4pm with one hour for lunch, which you had at home. There were no school dinners unless you were poor. There was a break in the morning and another in the afternoon, a teacher was always present in the playground, no straying outside.

The toilets were usually out in the playground — one for boys and another for girls. We played games with balls, throwing them up against the wall, sometimes as many as four all going at once. My favourite school organised game was Stool-Ball, this was the forerunner to cricket, other school sports didn't interest me. Those inside the gym were one big pain, especially country dancing and climbing ropes!

I was a tomboy type, though I enjoyed History, Geography, Composition (story-telling) and Arithmetic. Our register teacher was a Mrs Miller who taught Art. I never knew her first name and didn't want to. All the teachers wore black capes, one in particular a Miss MacDonald used to fly into the room like a vampire in flight, calling loudly "Good morning girls", she always held our attention!

Punishment was given in the form of a three-pronged leather strap. Also sometimes you were given a choice — one hundred lines or the strap — I nearly always chose the strap, at least that was over in a few seconds and I liked to get out into the local streets to play at roller skating up and down (showing off how good I was!) There weren't too many motors on the streets then.

The Headmistress, a Miss Murray taught Hygiene to all the girls, this covered cleanliness, a brief talk on periods — there was no sex information, this you "learned" from your friends in the lavatories at playtime or walking home. I had a special boyfriend, but no mushy stuff like holding hands or kissing — ugh!

I left school at fourteen years old in 1939 and during my three and a half years at St Georges Rd School I was Vice-Captain and Captain twice. I enjoyed my years at school, it was exciting and happy at the same time. The old cliché about schooldays being the happiest days of your life is also my comment. It was a great time experienced by me and I have some wonderful memories to reminisce about and I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Jennie Hinchelwood



*St George's Road Advanced Centre School, Miss Miller's class. 1939. Jennie Hinchelwood (nee McLevy) is third from the right, second row from the back.*



22.10.31 Left the school in charge of Miss Batters from 2.20 to 3.40 in order to take the children of Class I to Greenwich Park for Nature and General Observation lesson.

#### SCIENCE AND NATURE STUDY.

Bunsen burners and litmus paper are the things I remember best. I could see the flame coming up on the bunsen burner and it was always fascinating to see the paper change colour. I didn't question how it changed. I didn't have that sort of mind.

Jennie Hinchelwood

I remember someone falling asleep over a bunsen burner, and the opening line of the science lesson, which was always the same, "Adjust the apparatus". I don't remember what we did.

Vivien Prince

As girls we didn't do science. We were sent to cookery instead. But we did have nature study. We went to the

park and drew silver birches and learned the names of the different trees and bushes.

Ellen Clark

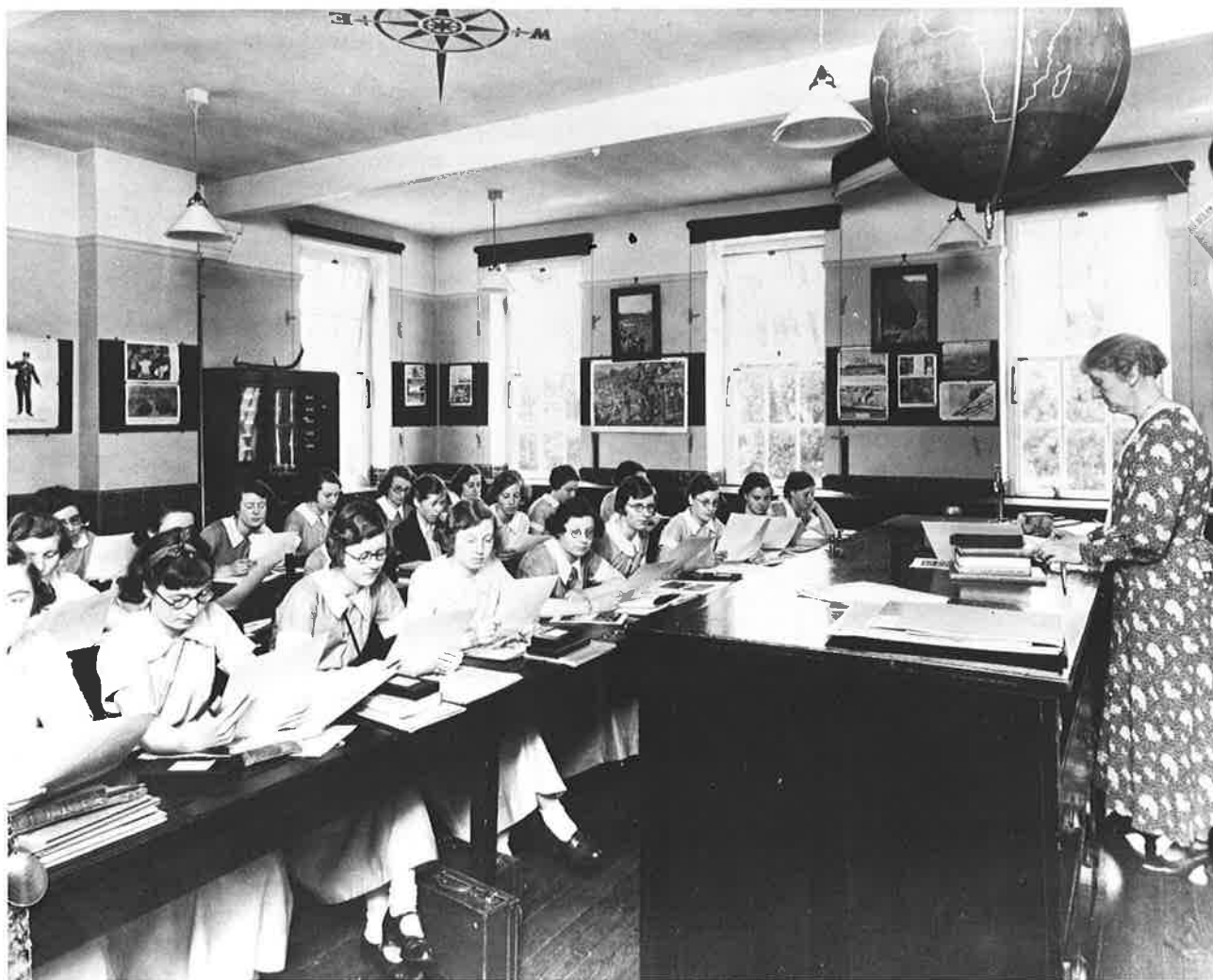
I remember sticky buds, putting them in water and watching them open. And mustard and cress on flannel, and blotting paper. Didn't they smell, though!

Gladys Barrett

We used to have all the flowers on display with their names on. Later we had a competition, each form against each form, and we had to say what they were. When we were more advanced, we had to learn the Latin names, then the families, and we had to learn all three.

Vivien Prince

20.10.31. The School Harvest Festival was held this morning, after which the gifts of fruit and vegetables were sent to the Blackheath and Charlton Cottage Hospital.



*Honor Oak School. Geography Lesson. 1936.*

### **INTREPID EXPLORERS.**

I liked geography at school, especially drawing maps with rivers and mountains carefully inked in. It was interesting to see a large map of the world unrolled over the blackboard, most of it coloured red as part of our Empire, and I found it fascinating to learn about these far off places I knew I would never see. I loved reading about intrepid explorers who had first discovered these countries, and about the people who lived there and what their lives were like. I suppose I was lucky to have had teachers who were able to make this subject so interesting that they held my attention, although I know of several people who say they always hated geography at school.

Dorothy Barton

### **TWO VICIOUS TEACHERS.**

We had two vicious teachers. There was a teacher that, when he came round the classroom while you were working, he had a stone ring on his finger and he used to reverse it, and hit you round the head. Sometime you'd get a cut.

And then the only woman teacher we had, she had a map ruler — a black round map ruler, and she used to rap your knuckles. And this particular morning she rapped a boy's knuckles — I can remember his name, Albert Walters, and his knuckles were in a terrible state. And, of course, in the afternoon up came his mother — a very big woman. And I won't repeat the language. The headmaster had to smuggle the teacher out of the classroom and lock her in his office. Because, if that woman had caught her I don't know what would have happened.

The favourite was Mr Jennings. He was a strict disciplinarian, but he was the best teacher and the one we most respected. He really made you work. If you went into his class it was called 'going into the slaughterhouse' because he used to shout and hoot and bang the cane on the table. It was more a demonstration of his rule over you — more than using the cane, which he only did occasionally.

And another thing with Mr Jennings — and it's strange you know — if he came to school in his trilby hat you'd know that was alright. But if he put his bowler hat on, they'd say, "Look out, Jennings has got his bowler hat on."

Arthur Wellard



*Creek Road School, Deptford. Sewing Class. 1938.*



*Cookery Centre at Hither Green Girls School.*

## LITTLE WOMEN AND GOOD WIVES.

In pre-War schools children were not only given a sound basic knowledge of academic subjects, but also had lessons on Cookery, Housewifery and Laundry; at least the girls did, I can't speak for the boys since I only went to all-girl schools after Primary age. One school I went to in Carshalton in 1934 had a special building with the Laundry downstairs and a fully equipped flat upstairs complete with 'baby' which had to be bathed and dressed when the housework was finished. We all looked forward to our turn of child-care and had great fun splashing 'baby' in the bath and putting on a nappy, in those days a terry towelling one folded into a triangle and held together with a large safety pin.

The laundry was equipped with several large sinks where the clothes were washed by hand with soap, and several wooden airing racks hung from the ceiling. In the middle of the room was a large, pot-bellied, black iron stove (coal fired) with metal ledges round the outside to hold the old-fashioned heavy flat irons. These stood bases against the stove, getting hot ready for use when the washing was nearly dry.

Each girl took one or two small articles from home to wash, like tablecloths, pillow cases, etc. and after putting on our aprons and headbands, we washed and rinsed our clothes, not forgetting the 'blue-bag' rinse if the articles were white. Then powdered starch was

mixed into a paste with boiling water and diluted with cold water, and after being starched and put through the wooden rollers of the large metal framed mangle, the clothes were hung on the racks to dry.

While we waited we had to write in our exercise books exactly what we had done and why, and also answer questions put by the teacher. If there was still time to spare, we sat and carefully hemmed white linen head and wrist bands, one to stop our hair being caught up in the mangle, and the other to protect our wrists in case the heavy irons slipped from our grip and fell against our arms.

We all enjoyed these lessons without ever thinking they were meant to help us become more efficient wives and mothers, and I think it's a great pity that girls are no longer given this kind of instruction in school, often the only place where some of them have the chance to learn any home skills.

Dorothy Barton

We went to another school to do housewifery. There was a big round thing like a fire with all the irons — flat irons they were, around it in partitions. You learned laundry and laying the table nicely.

Phyllis Myers



*Durham Hill School, Downham Estate. Girls Domestic Work.*



*East Lane Domestic Economy Centre. 1930.*

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

The only punishment I can remember was — girls used to go to cookery, housewifery and laundry. Well, I remember in the laundry there was a huge round stove like a funnel with flat irons, not electric irons. The teacher said, "None of you girls ever stand with your back to the stove". I had long plaits at the time, and I had my back to the irons and I'll never forget she pulled both my plaits ever so hard. It didn't make me a particularly good laundress. I've always hated ironing from then. And needlework.

Do you remember when you had pieces of material and you had to do samples? And if you made a mistake you had to undo it very carefully and use the same cotton again and if you did it two or three times the cotton was black. It was filthy, and if you pricked your finger and you got blood on the sample, that was terrible.

Elsie Lehane

At the end of the playground there was a building used as a Cookery and Laundry unit. Those children whose mothers could afford it used to bring cooking ingredients to make a meal or some cakes. The other

children got their ingredients from the teacher.

The teachers' dinners were cooked by the children in the cookery classes and when it was lunchtime two of us were detailed to put the dinners on a tray, cover them with plates, and take them up to the teachers. We had to carry the dinners up four flights of stairs. When we had climbed two flights we used to sit down on the top stair, remove the covers from the teachers' dinners, take a handful, eat it, and then put the covers back again. It was a good job the teachers never found out or we would have been sent for the cane which the headmistress kept in a drawer of the desk in the hall.

In the laundry section we were taught how to wash and iron and there we used to see who could make the most soapsuds when the teacher wasn't looking. We would bring small items from home to wash and iron, and some ended up with large burn marks on them. This occurred when someone turned around to talk and left the hot iron on the garment. When the teacher examined the clothes and saw what had happened she made us stand in the corner until school was over, and then we got scolded when we took the garments home.

Doris Barlow

29. 5. 31. An Egg Collection was made today on behalf of St. John's Hospital, Lewisham. Fifty eggs were brought.

# MORE MEMORABLE TEACHERS



*Gayhurst Road School Choir 1937.*

## **HER GIRLS.**

One person I do remember is a Miss Mac Donald, quite small, not attractive, gun-metal coloured hair and a very severe short hair style. She flew into the classroom, greeting all the girls and her eyes not missing a thing. She would dart up and down the aisles and surprise each pupil with her questions. She taught us geography, History and English. Her gown literally took off as she moved around, and our entry into the school building was encouraged by her playing a rousing march on the piano.

We were always referred to as her Girls and to me she remains in my memory as 'the teacher'. I think fondly of her now, but in those distant school days, she was the one who must be obeyed and heaven help you if you didn't! She could wield her three pronged leather strap with great effect and she never missed her target. Her height was no more than five foot but to us girls she was eight foot tall.

Sadly there are not many around like her. One showed respect but with a slight amount of fear and awe. I am deeply grateful to her for the devotion she bestowed upon 'Her Girls'.

## **A SURPRISING TEACHER.**

At one school I went to we had a young music teacher who appeared at first glance to be quiet, dowdy and insignificant. She had short dark hair, pale skin, and wore plain skirts and blouses and sensible shoes. She was very slim and fairly short and spoke with a pronounced Welsh accent, and although she spoke fairly quietly her voice carried a surprisingly long way.

She arrived at our school in mid-term and at her first lesson with my class we had to sing a song we all knew while she walked up and down the rows of girls listening to each one carefully. Those who could sing even slightly in tune were put into the front rows, the rest at the back, and we were told that we were going to sing as a Choir, come what may! Most of the girls thought it a great lark, never having sung in a choir before, and had very little interest in the subject, but Miss Davis suddenly started to sing and we were all startled into silence. From this quiet young teacher came a lovely contralto voice and we all sat there spellbound, listening and wondering if we would ever sing like that.

From then on the singing lessons were very popular and everyone worked hard learning to sing scales etc, and practising the songs we were taught. None of us could read music, so Miss Davis would play the tune for us on the piano and hum, or sing the words, and we would copy her. Some of the songs we sang reduced us to fits of giggles at first, because they were not what we would have chosen ourselves. A few I can remember were: Last Rose Of Summer, The Skye Boat Song, Nymphs and Shepherds, Where the bee sucks, Where'ere I walk, and one with a lot of Hey Nonny Noe's in it, which caused the collapse of several girls. Everything was rehearsed over and over again until it was perfect, and all our hard work was finally rewarded when we actually won a minor competition for school choirs!

One day after school Miss Davis took some of us, including me, to a performance of 'The Mikado' after finding out that we had never heard or seen any musical shows or performances. I thought it was wonderful and remembered that evening for years. I also remember, with affection, the young Welsh teacher who took a class of mainly under-privileged children and kindled in them the beginnings of a liking for music that could be added to over the years.

Dorothy Barton

## FRIENDS AND FOES

Elsie Simpson was my best friend throughout my school days. We met every morning and went into the playground together. She was a very quiet reserved girl and she always gave her free time to studying to obtain high marks in any exams. I was quite the reverse, I was boisterous and noisy, rather a big built girl and I never seemed to find time to study. This was uncanny as I was always one place in front of Elsie in our exams.

We never quarrelled and in some ways I protected her from any bullies, as she was not given to fighting (too ladylike), whereas I loved to get into a scrap.

One girl in particular Susan Fraser, the daughter of a restaurant owner (in fact it was a flop house for down and outs, it was called Fraser's Eating House), she flaunted her 'money' everyday and tried to win friends this way and if you didn't join in her admiration then you received a lashing from her foul tongue.

One girl in my class was a real little madam, but what amazed me was that she always wore this dark green dress, also she was teacher's pet. This dark green dress really worried me because I could never understand if there was a reason why she had to wear that. Another thing that annoyed me was the way she walked so stiff and upright. I would tell my mother about this dress and ask her if she knew if her mother had to wash it at weekends and get it ready to wear to school on Monday.

Jennie Hinchelwood

*Secondary School Staff.*





## ELEPHANTS DANCING.

I'm stocky built now and I was just as stocky then. We had a mixed group for dance, but I didn't enjoy it a bit. I felt awkward. And I was told I was awkward, I danced like an elephant. Well that really boosted your ego . . .

Well the pupils and the teachers wore gym slippers. Actually one teacher was fat and one was thin, it was like Laurel and Hardy. And they were very light on their feet. If you didn't do it right you got the old strap from them, just the same as the ordinary teacher. Oh no, it wasn't for pleasure. For those that were graceful it might have been a pleasure, but for us that were a bit sort of heavy footed, certainly not.

Jennie Hinchelwood

## A SUBLIMELY RIDICULOUS TEACHER.

Of all the teachers I had during my schooldays, one in particular stands out in my memory. She seemed to us girls to be very old, although probably she was in her late forties, early fifties. But the clothes she wore looked so old-fashioned that she could have stepped straight from an Edwardian photograph. She wore her hair in a bun and her blouses always had long sleeves and high stand-up collars. And pinned to the front of the blouse was a pendant watch. Her skirts were full round the bottom edge and reached almost to her ankles. And on her feet she wore narrow pointed toe shoes.

She was our English teacher and was a very good one indeed. But she also took us for one other lesson. This was eurythmics — a kind of classical Greek dancing, full of ballet-type movements. And the dancers were usually shown in pictures as wearing flowing white garments. Because we were all about thirteen or fourteen years old, she didn't consider it proper for us to prance about in our vests and navy blue knickers. So after undressing down to underwear we had to put our gym slippers on again over them. I've yet to see anything more ridiculous than a group of young teenagers attempting to be graceful with bare arms and legs sticking out of navy blue pleated gym slippers. And, as you can imagine, none of us took it very seriously.

But the thing we found most amusing was 'Miss' demonstrating with sweeping arm movements and graceful bends — while fully dressed in her usual clothes, including shoes. No-one dared to laugh unless they could get behind her for a moment. So quite a lot of time was spent trying to out-manoeuvre each other in order to get into a position where we could have a good giggle without being seen.

If we'd had a P.E. teacher, a young P.E. teacher it would have been different. But this teacher, actually she was a very sad lonely person really. And she looked so old-fashioned you know — with her hair in a bun and

these tight high collars, doing this eurythmics. I mean she looked as ridiculous as we did. To us, you know, it was a great joke.

Dorothy Barton

## SPORTING LIVES.

We played many different sports. There was netball, cricket, hockey, swimming and athletics. It was great to be in the first netball team and visit many different schools when we played away. We wore navy gym-slippers with a red sash around the waist and a white blouse. We really did look smart. We used to get an extra glass of milk before we played a match. The teacher insisted that everyone wore a hat when we walked to our swimming class about a mile away from school. Anyone without a hat had to stay behind and go to a later class in the afternoon.

Although there was plenty of sport, which most of us enjoyed, we still had to work hard at lessons. We had History, Geography, English, Science, Nature Study, Needlework and Singing. Our choir had the honour of being chosen to sing in front of Sir Kingsley Wood.

Doris Barlow

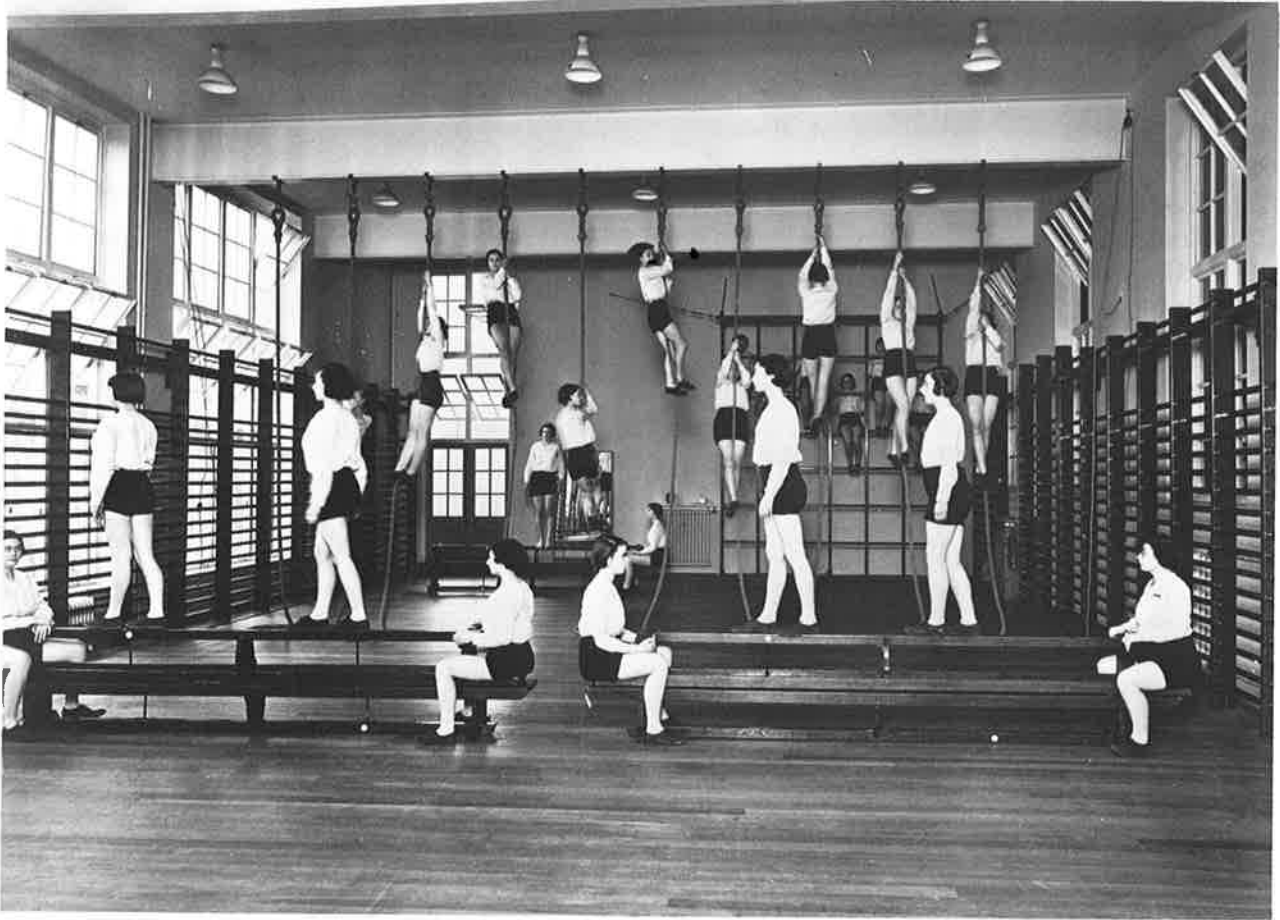
## A BRILLIANT TEACHER.

I have already written about an old fashioned teacher who took us for Eurythmics fully dressed in a long skirt and high-necked blouse, and this teacher also taught us English. She may have been a figure of fun dancing in the Hall, but in the classroom she was a brilliant teacher. She made the English language come alive for me and it was my favourite subject. I loved the poetry we had to learn by heart, and the way she explained it to us made it clear and interesting. I read a great deal even out of school and because of this I was put in charge of the library where pupils were allowed to borrow books to take home. This caused me to be called 'Teacher's Pet' by some of the girls, but I didn't care. She was very strict and in a way rather spiteful, because anyone who annoyed her was often slapped hard on a bare arm several times for quite minor offences.

At lunch times she had a small packed lunch which she ate at her desk after we'd all gone home, and often before I went home she would ask me to run outside into the street to buy a small carton of yoghurt from the milkman.

In some odd way that I couldn't explain at the time I felt sorry for her, because she was not popular, and girls made fun of her behind her back. I always felt that she was a very lonely person, getting older, and sometimes looking very tired, trying to teach a difficult subject to teenagers who often didn't want anything except to leave school as soon as possible.

Dorothy Barton



*Aylwin School Bermondsey. Gymnasium. 1936.*



*Honor Oak School Art Room. 1931.*

# LEAVING SCHOOL

## THE SCHOOL INSPECTOR CALLS.

Apart from English, arithmetic, history, geography, handwriting, spelling, and mental arithmetic lessons, we also had housewifery, laundry, cookery and French. I was about twelve years old at this time, and living at Carshalton, Surrey.

Discipline was strict and if the headmistress came into the room, the whole class rose to their feet in one swift movement and stood until we were told to sit down. The teachers' attitude in those days was that we were at school to be educated and that's what we were going to be, whether we liked it or not.

Every so often a School Inspector came into each classroom to ask questions of the children and judge the teacher's fitness to teach. We usually knew in advance when the dreaded inspector was going to come, but of course had no idea of which lesson we would be in when he came, or what questions he would ask. I can remember one occasion when I was in an English lesson and we were reading and discussing a poem when the Inspector walked in. He took over the

*From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim's Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes.*

*Exercise book*

class while the teacher, quite a young woman, stood back and looked slightly apprehensive. For of course her job depended on whether we impressed with our answers or not. At one point, we came to a line which contained the words "Swiftly slapping sails", and he suddenly asked what this sequence of words beginning with the same letter was called. There was a deathly silence in the class and an anguished expression on the teacher's face, when I suddenly remembered I'd read the word somewhere, and putting up my hand, I gave it correctly, alliteration. "Spell it", he said, and when I did so, also correctly, he congratulated the teacher and left. We were all so relieved that everything had gone well that the teacher so far forgot her dignity that she rushed over to give me a hug, which needless to say, I found extremely embarrassing! The School Inspector of those days was such an awesome personage that even his name seemed to be spoken in capital letters!

Dorothy Barton



## CATFORD CENTRAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

### Report of Pupil's Attendance, Conduct and Progress

For the Year ending March 1929.  
 Name Shipp Dorothy Year Fifth  
 No. of Pupils in Form 44 No. of Times absent 26  
 Place in Form \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Times late \_\_\_\_\_  
 No. of Pupils in Year 44 Conduct Excellent  
 Place in Year \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT	MAXIMUM	Achieved	SUBJECT	MAXIMUM	Achieved
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE			SCIENCE		
ENGLISH		V.G.	ART		
HISTORY			PHYSICAL EXERCISES		Swimming, Judo, Table Tennis
GEOGRAPHY		B.	NEEDLEWORK		
ARITHMETIC		V.G.	SHORTHAND		Passed the London & Commerce Society
ALGEBRA		V.G.	BOOKKEEPING		
GEOMETRY		V.G.	TYPEWRITING		Passed for the London & Commerce Society
FRENCH		Excellent	HOMERWORK		

Remarks: Dorothy has done an excellent year's work and has obtained the full Certificate of the London Chamber of Commerce (Junior). Her influence has been excellent.  
 C. E. Smith, B.A. Form Mistress.  
 The School is proud of Dorothy. E. M. Hodykinson, L.L.B. Head Mistress.  
 Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*School Report.*

London County Council.  
 Catford Central School for Girls,  
 Sandhurst Road, S.E.6.  
 18. 4. 1929

Dorothy Shipp has completed a five years' course in the above Central School and has made excellent use of her opportunities here. She has received instruction in Shorthand, French, Bookkeeping, Typewriting in addition to the usual subjects of a School curriculum. Her speed in Shorthand is already 90 words per minute & her Typewriting is good & careful.

Dorothy has gained the Full Junior Certificate of the London Chamber of Commerce which includes a test in Oral French. She gained distinction in Arithmetic, Geography, English, Elementary Mathematics, Shorthand & French.

Dorothy is a quiet refined girl of pleasing address & courtesy of manner - She exerted an excellent influence on her comrades at school, & is in all respects a girl whom I can most strongly recommend. She has my best wishes for her future happiness & success.

Signed E. M. Hodykinson L.L.B. Head Mistress

*Dorothy Shipp's school leaving testimonial from Catford Central School for Girls 1929.*



Chaucer Street School. After-care conference. 1939.

## LEAVING SCHOOL

I remember there were Trade Scholarships to different schools to do hairdressing, dressmaking and soft furnishing. You could apply for these scholarships when you were thirteen.

Dorothy Barton

We left school, regretfully for the most part, at 14, and we were each given a written character reference to present to prospective employers, and taught how to apply for work. All in all, I think we left feeling that we had a good education and were fairly healthy after all the sports.

Doris Barlow

Mr. Jennings the top class teacher persistently impressed upon us the need to learn a trade to stand us in good stead for our future. He told us, during our school years we had worn the backsides out of our trousers, kicked our boots and shoes to bits, not giving a damn how they were to be replaced. When you leave school he told us, we would be standing on our own two feet and outside the protection of the school and it would be a harsh world to face. At the end of term, boys like me leaving school would line up to shake Mr Jennings' hand who wished us in turn the best of luck impressing for the last time — "Don't forget lad, learn a trade."

Eton and Harrow have their respective school songs. So did my own humble elementary school. I remember the tune but regretfully I can only remember a few words of our school song. It went as follows:

Boys standing side by side  
 Beneath this roof today  
 Soon will depart . . .  
 Full half a league away,  
 And as the years roll on  
 Bringing the tides of men  
 Our hearts will yearn, our thoughts return  
 To those old days at school again  
 So, hand in hand, like brothers stand  
 Through grief and joys, may Calvert boys  
 Stand hand in hand.

A most fitting tribute to all my class teachers I feel, whom I liked and respected, in particular Mr. Jennings, a strict disciplinarian and an excellent teacher.

Arthur Wellard

# London Chamber of Commerce

(Incorporated).

## Full Junior Commercial Education Certificate.

This is to Certify

That Dorothy Shipp

aged 16 years, has been examined under the Commercial Examination Scheme of the London Chamber of Commerce and has been found qualified to receive this

### FULL JUNIOR COMMERCIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

for proficiency in the undermentioned subjects taken at one and the same examination:—

#### OBLIGATORY:

1. ARITHMETIC. (with distinction)
2. BOOK-KEEPING.
3. COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY. (with distinction)
4. ENGLISH. (with distinction)
5. A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE. — French. (with distinction in the written & spoken)

#### OPTIONAL:

Elementary Mathematics. (with distinction)  
Merchant-50 words for practice. (with distinction)  
Handwriting.  
Typewriting.

Winter 1929.  
Date of Examination.

*Robert Scott*  
President of the Chamber.

*Robert Smith*  
Chairman of the Commercial Education Committee.

*Stephen Bennett*  
Chairman of the Council.

*Robert H. P. P. P.*  
Principal, Commercial Education Department.

*H. H. H.*  
Secretary of the Chamber.

Dorothy Shipp's Commercial Certificate from the Chamber of Commerce 1929.

# OUT OF SCHOOL

## SWEETS AND TREATS.

I remember as a little girl walking to school with my sister Dorothy. Sometimes on the way we would stop at a small sweetshop in Tanners Hill where I would have a "Halfpenny Dip". This was a box full of envelopes containing cards with things written on them like 2oz, 3oz, Hazlenut Bar or Double Six; but these very seldom turned up. Usually I got a card showing "Liquorice Bootlace" or something that could have been bought with a 1/2d anyway.

Lillian Baverstock

Unless an aunt or someone like that gave you a ha'penny or a penny you had to "make do" on your ha'penny a week pocket money. It was always the same routine. We'd got our ha'penny, now what shall we spend it on? We never needed to buy such things as comics, marbles, or whips and tops because these were constantly being swapped, along with the fag cards of favourite film stars. No, we could spend the whole ha'penny on SWEETS, goodie goodie.

In those days you could, if you chose, spend a farthing on some sweets, and a farthing on some other kind of sweets, so you had divided your ha'penny up you see.

We always spent our ha'penny in the corner shop. It wasn't just a sweet shop. It sold fruit and vegetables, reels of cotton, tinned fruit and tinned meats and I especially remember large tins of salmon which was cheap in those days. The shop keeper was a lady whom we called "aunty" although she was never our aunt. My mother did a lot of general shopping here, and it was always "put in the book". This book was totted up once a month, and "aunty" usually came to tea and got paid.

Having got our ha'penny, we would dash down to this corner shop, and one window sloped towards the pavement. It was always full up with nothing but sweets. There were sherbet dabs, and liquorice laces, white milk chocolate drops, pink and white sugar mice. There were posh chocolates too of course, but as we could never afford them, we concentrated on what we could afford for our ha'penny. I don't know why we spent so much time lingering over this window really, for we nearly always came home with the usual gob-stoppers, all different coloured ones, five for a ha'penny, cos they lasted such a long time!

Milly Gardner

There was always a sweet shop next door to the school selling home made toffee, tablet (pure sugar), soor plums (boiled sweets) and macaroon bars (sort of a thick tablet covered in coconut).

Jennie Hinchelwood

## POCKET MONEY

We didn't have regular pocket money as children, so it was quite an event when my sister and I had a ha'penny or penny to spend on sweets. There was a little sweet shop in Tanners Hill and we'd spend ages trying to decide what to buy. Treacle toffee was a great favourite because it lasted a long time, and stuck our teeth together. The toffee was made in large slabs and was broken up by the shop keeper with a small hammer supplied by the toffee manufacturer.

Another favourite was a sherbet fountain which was a long thin cardboard tube filled with sherbet powder, with a hollow tube of liquorice sticking up out of it. Liquorice bootlaces were nice too, but my own favourite sweet was a creamy caramel toffee, much softer than treacle toffee and with a more delicate flavour. We never bought chocolate because this was too expensive and the only time we tasted it was on Christmas Day when we opened the chocolate pennies in our stockings.

Dorothy Barton

## SUNDAY SPECIAL.

At the weekends I liked to play with a whip-and-top, or alley-gobs (now called five stones) with my friends in the street. Another favourite game was to dress up in our big cousins' old clothes and high heeled shoes.

We lived with our aunt and uncle at this time, and I used to love to watch Aunt Eliza polish her kitchen stove until it shone, and to watch Uncle Harry make ice cream in a kind of wooden barrel. He used to sell this from his front room until the food inspector came round and stopped him; although everything was always spotlessly clean he didn't have a license apparently.

On Sunday after Uncle had finished his after-dinner nap, Dorothy and I were allowed into the front room and for me this was the best part of the week. Aunty's parlour not only had a square of carpet, but also a piano, and gas lights fitted with shades like small chandeliers and when the lights were on, the colours in the "drops" of the chandeliers were lovely. There was a pub just round the corner, and every week the ice-man came to deliver huge blocks of ice, which he carried into the pub on his shoulder. While he was inside, all the children would rush forward to grab bits of ice broken off the block, and dash off again before we were caught.

Lillian Baverstock

On Sundays, myself and my younger brother used to go round to my mother's friend and she always used to make lovely cakes and pies, beautiful, with all lovely roses on the top. All fancy roses she used to do. She only had two sons. I used to think my mum was a good cook, but she couldn't do that.

On Sunday night we had beef which was very cheap then. My father used to carve it, and he used to take the best, nicest bits, you know, as he was the wage earner. We had a kitchenette and then there was the front room and the gramophone was in it, but we never went in there except when aunts and uncles came.

Phyllis Myers



*Dorothy and Lillian (nee) Jones, aged four and two.*

Sometimes we went to a Saturday matinee at the cinema, and when we came out we bought a bag of hot roasted chestnuts from the man standing outside with a red hot brazier on wheels. I used to like watching the chestnuts roasting on the fire, and to walk home eating them, while chattering about the film we had seen.

Lillian Baverstock

## CHILDHOOD GAMES

When I was a child there was practically no traffic through the short street where we lived, so most of the children played together in the street. A favourite game was skipping, often with two girls together in the same piece of rope singing:

“Salt, Mustard, Vinegar, Pepper.”

while turning the rope fairly slowly then turning and jumping much faster while counting:

“One, Two, Three . . . etc.”

With a girl turning each end of a long piece of rope stretching right across the road we also played a skipping game we called “All in Together”.

This consisted of one girl who started skipping and chanting a rhyme, to be joined by the others one at a time, the idea being that everyone should be skipping and chanting all at the same time, but inevitably one girl would catch her foot in the rope and the whole game would start from the beginning again.

Ball games were very popular, and because the end house had a large blank wall alongside the pavement, we used this for all kinds of games, only stopping for a while after the occupier rushed out at us yelling that her pictures were jumping off the wall!

The boys played cricket and football against this wall, while if a group of girls were playing together one would hit the ball against the wall with her hand, then run to end of the line. The second girl leaped forward to hit the ball as it bounced off the wall, to be followed one at a time by the others, the idea being to keep the ball in motion all the time.

The girls also used the wall to do handstands against. We'd put our hands flat on the ground near the wall, then kick our legs upwards until we were standing upside down against the wall, having first tucked the ends of our skirts under the elasticated legs of our knickers, not entirely to preserve modesty, but because a dangling skirt got in the way and you couldn't see what you were doing. Another version was to do a handstand about eighteen inches from the wall, so that you were in a graceful arch, then walking down the wall until you had done a complete back-bend then walking back up the wall again to regain an upright position. How we didn't break either our necks or our backs doing this I don't know, but hand-standing was an absolute craze at one time.

Dorothy Barton

## STREET PEOPLE.

When I was a child at school there were all kinds of street traders and workers that we don't see nowadays. First was the lamplighter who went round just before dark turning on the street lamps with a long pole he carried on his shoulder. The lamps in those days were lit by gas and had to be turned on and off manually. In the quiet early mornings the footsteps of the lamplighter as he turned off the street lamps were often the first thing you heard when you woke up.

Other regular visitors to our street were: The Muffin man who carried a tray of uncooked muffins to sell, and announced this by ringing a large hand bell: A man who sold shrimps and winkles from a small barrow, usually on Sunday afternoons, calling out "Winkell" in a gruff voice as he wheeled his barrow along. He had metal measuring jugs of different sizes to scoop up the winkles with, before tipping them into the customer's own basin: The Hot Chestnut man, who stood in busy places in the winter with a coal brazier roasting chestnuts which we bought for a penny or so for a bagful. They smelt lovely and the paper bag full of newly roasted chestnuts made a good handwarmer.

When I was young, Boat Race day was much more interesting than it is nowadays. In Deptford there was a man who walked round the streets selling Oxford and Cambridge blue rosettes made of ribbon. He carried a large round padded board on the end of a long pole, and the rosettes were arranged on the board in a pretty pattern. My sister always bought a light blue rosette, so of course I had a dark one! We listened to the boat race on the wireless set, along with the rest of our family, and whoever had picked the winning crew wore their rosette for the rest of the day, while the others got thrown away.

Another regular and very important visitor to our street was the local Policeman, with his high-collared uniform jacket, his helmet and long black shiny cape in wet weather. He was the voice (and hand) of authority and he knew everyone, often by name, and was extremely well respected by upright citizens, and feared by the others! Early in the 1920's our local 'copper' appeared one day accompanied by a 'lady policeman' as I described her to my mother. She was the first Policewoman I had ever seen and even now I can remember how awful her uniform looked with high laced-up black boots, a long thick skirt which reached the top of her boots, and a modified version of the helmet. A lot of people pursed their lips and 'tutted' at the idea of a Policewoman walking the streets, but eventually we got used to them.

Dorothy Barton

*Edie and goodness knows who somewhere in Scotland.*

## TIME OFF IN SCOTLAND.

Sometimes it must be thought that schooldays were all work and no play but this is far from the truth. There was no television and when radios came on the scene they were only put on for certain programmes as the accumulator could not be wasted. Most houses still had gas lighting so electricity was not available as it is today.

Any time spent indoors was spent doing homework, reading or playing games (draughts, snakes & ladders, ludo, Jig-saw puzzles and suchlike). Most of our spare time was spent out of doors and I was lucky to spend my growing up years in Aberdeen in a shortish road. There were quite a number of children living in this road so there was never a shortage of chums to join in outdoor fun. As there was not much traffic in those days it was quite safe to play in the road and should we get a little too noisy we would soon be kept in line by one of the adults — all of whom had to be obeyed.

There were seasonal games like skipping, bools (marbles), hoops or old bicycle wheels used in the same way, hopscotch which we called beddies, ball games, tag, hide and seek and truth or dare. The favourite treat amongst many giggles, was asking the name of one's favourite boy or girlfriend depending who volunteered to tell the truth. Two dares I remember were knocking at somebody's door (not real neighbours I would add) and running away. The other one was going to the local shopkeeper to ask if he had any 'wild woodbine' — a brand of cigarettes. When he answered 'yes' the scallywag would retort cheekily, 'well, tame them', before dashing out of the shop. It is realised now that the man must have had the patience of a saint as he must have suffered for years and didn't once complain to our mums who would have tamed us!!

In winter we had some heavy snowstorms and of course children, as always, enjoyed the sledging, snowball fights and sliding which was then possible. If it was during the holidays that was better still and was in great contrast to the summer holidays which were spent mostly on the beach or in parks or other open spaces with varying numbers of friends. There were lots of



entertainments to be enjoyed, as in all seaside towns, and many a picnic we had eating sandy sandwiches (aptly named).

### A SPECIAL FRIEND.

It was a glorious time but the friend with whom I remember spending many happy hours with was Margaret Gracie. Her family moved to Aberdeen from Montrose about the same time as we moved from London and she lived a few doors away. Every Sunday we used to go for long walks after being at Sunday school in the morning and most Sundays we would go to church first — it was normal procedure for most of our friends. Everybody wore Sunday best and there was no playing — some parts of Scotland were very strict and nothing at all was permitted apart from reading the Bible. Even in Aberdeen, card playing and such like would be frowned on in some homes but friends and relatives would visit. A favourite pastime on a Sunday afternoon was walking round cemeteries. Margaret and I must have visited all cemeteries in Aberdeen several times. We were natural experts on gravestones, or so we thought.

Often we would walk out of town and visit family friends of ours who had a farm at Shiel Hill some miles past the Bridge of Don. We liked the farmhouse tea of boiled fresh eggs, oatcakes and scones which we had before walking home. Another favourite place was the Shakkin' Briggie (shaking bridge) which crossed the River Dee. It did really shake as people walked across it. In the winter we'd walk to the Bay of Nigg where huge waves would break on the rocks and there was one occasion when a trawler had gone aground on the rocks and we found that rather awesome.

Occasionally Margaret's mother and father would take us to Lunan Bay where he would collect seaweed which he called dulse or desse and apparently it was a delicacy to eat but whether it was cooked or not I do not know.

I can't remember what Margaret and I talked about on our walks but over the years we must have found many things to discuss. One episode which stays in my mind was when we realised that when friends' mums went to a maternity hospital they came home with a baby. We worked out that this disproved the stories we had been told about the doctor bringing the baby in his black bag. We decided that babies must be stored in the hospital until required but how they were stored we could not fathom out. For some time our walks would take us past the hospital, but eventually something more interesting must have cropped up. It was some long time afterwards before I learned the true facts which were not nearly so thought provoking.

During those years perhaps the greatest thrill of all was the aeroplane. When one was heard we would rush outside and gaze up with the same wonder that the modern child would give to a UFO or the arrival of ET. I think Sir Alan Cobham was the name of the hero flyer who used to come with his flying circus and give exhibitions in the sky.

*Eddie and Margaret Gracie at farm at Shiel Hill*



In looking back over the years, perhaps no friendship has equalled the innocent companionship Margaret and I enjoyed whilst growing up. We shared so much including families, without thought and there was always so much to do.

Eddie McHardy

### THE FACTS OF LIFE.

I left school at fourteen years old and fairly ignorant of the facts of life. We had no sex education at school only personal hygiene, but of course the mysteries of sex were still there but not really discussed by the adults. More than often this was secretly mentioned in the playground, the lavatories and sometimes from your best friend who knew a friend etc! Having a boyfriend was recognised but all the hugging and kissing that goes on today, was considered soft and not the done thing. We were always a little shy of showing our feelings (it's a part of the make up of Scots people not to be too emotional, even today the kissing amongst friends when they meet does not go down too well).

I don't feel I missed out on anything. I enjoyed my childhood and my teen years. The chase of boy and girl was a great experience, sometimes heartbreaking, and the girl who ended up "in trouble" was often used as the example of what happens to you if you are a "bad girl". Unwanted pregnancies did happen and it was an unforgivable sin to have this happen. There was the old story (which is still used today) by the boyfriend of "if you loved me you'd let me", and many a girl fell for that old cliché. There were no social welfare services to help out, the family sometimes accepted the responsibility but there were times when the poor girl was literally turned out on the street to fend for herself, the Salvation Army and various churches helped out. The comment these days of a "love child" applies to one section of the community, whereas the young girl who falls for the line 'if' and becomes pregnant, is not as glamorous as the media would have us believe.

Jennie Hinchelwood



# AGE EXCHANGE REMINISCENCE BOOKS

The Age Exchange is a theatre and publishing company working with London pensioners on shows and books which record their life experience and their current concerns.

It is a feature of all these books that the contributions come from many pensioners, are lively and easy to read, conversational in style, and lavishly illustrated with photographs and line drawings of the time. All the stories are told in the original words, from transcribed tapes, or pensioners' written contributions.

The following books are already available:

'Fifty Years Ago: Memories of the 1930's, a collage of stories and photographs of day-to-day life around 1933. £2.50.

'Of Whole Heart Cometh Hope': Centenary memories of the Co-Operative Women's Guild, being the history of the Guild in photos, advertisements and, of course, stories supplied by older women who have had a life-long involvement in the Co-operative movement. £2.50.

'What Did You Do In The War, Mum?' This book of memories, photos and line drawings provides a clear picture of the wide range of jobs which opened up for women in the war years, and of their undoubted skill and ability in these new areas. These individual stories, full of detail and humour, project a positive image of women as flexible and resilient workers. £3.

'A Place To Stay': memories of pensioners from many lands. Ethnic elders from the Caribbean, the Asian sub-continent, the Far East, Cyprus and Poland tell of their arrival in Britain and their experience of growing old here. The stories are told in English and in the mother tongues. £3.

'All our Christmases': a book of Christmas memories by Greenwich pensioners. £2.

'My First Job': Pensioners' memories of starting work in the 1920's and 30's. £2.

'Can We Afford The Doctor?' was a frequent cry before the days of the NHS. This book examines health and social welfare in the early part of this century when people often had to rely on their own resources and remedies to cope with illness or disability. Childhood diseases, infectious diseases, accidents and more serious illnesses are recalled. Doctors and nurses remember their early years of service and conditions in homes and hospitals. The book has many photographs and illustrations. £3.

'The Time Of Our Lives', is a compilation of memories of leisure time in the 1920s and 30s. Spare time was limited and money always in short supply, but the stories reveal the energy and enterprise of young people who made their own entertainment in the days before television. Pensioners who are now in their seventies recall vividly the comedy of their courting days, the dance, cinema, rambling, cycling and outings of their youth. Generously illustrated with photographs and line drawings, this makes good reading for all ages. £3.

'Many Happy Retirements'. "For anyone who has sat through conventional pre-retirement courses, being lectured at by experts, relief is at hand. Wisely used, the refreshing new source material in this lovely book from Age Exchange, with its case studies, transcripts and dramatised cameos, is guaranteed to revitalise even the dullest course." Michael Pilch, Vice President, Pre-Retirement Association. £3.95.

There are special prices for OAPs who wish to order any or all of these books.

In all cases postage and packing is an extra £1 per book.

If you would like to order any of the above titles please write, enclosing cheque to Age Exchange, 15 Camden Row, Blackheath, London SE3. If readers are interested in hiring our touring exhibitions of photographs, they should contact us at the above address.



Layout and artwork by Pam and Alex Schweitzer.

Silver jubilee 'Celebrations. The pupils attended the Gaumont Palace, Lewisham, in the morning. The managers + the L.B.C. kindly entertained both girls + infants in the Parish Hall in the afternoon. The services of a conjurer were procured + tea was afterwards provided. Each child received a jubilee medal. 7. 5. 35



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