

This is the second collection of writings by members of the Pen and Palette Club, following *Down Memory Lane* in 2015. For the first time our lady members have contributed and I believe these collective memories of our distant schooldays make for an interesting read. Thanks to all the writers and to Sue Jackson for printing.  
Malcolm Yorke (President)

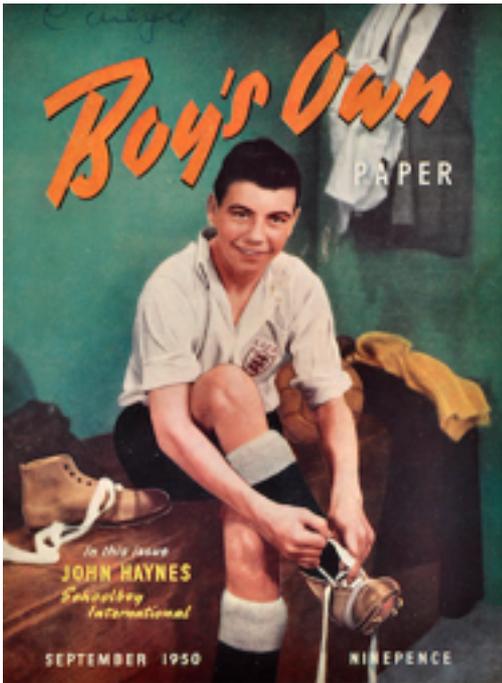


Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like a snail  
Unwillingly to school.

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## Yellow Pages

At a boot-sale recently, I bought a bundle of the Boy's Own Paper from the 1950's and 1960's. Someone was dumping their old memories but exhuming lots of mine. Those magazines contain a treasure map to the lost world of my school days.



At school, I recall, we had countless clubs catering not just for sports but for all the pastimes and diversions that obsessed us in a pre-computer era. I was a member of the choir, the chess club, the cinema club, the debating society and briefly, the gardening club; which on the single occasion I attended it, roamed the school grounds trimming bushes. Presumably the caretaker was pleased but kids using pruning-shears would not be permitted now. So many hobbies! After a jolly cross-country run or a meeting of the Sea Scouts we could be playing bridge, tinkering with a crystal wireless, collecting bird's eggs or writing to pen-pals in distant parts of the Commonwealth.

Among heroic fiction and advertisements for stamp approvals, chest-expanders and Ovaltine, I found articles in BOP catering for all these interests. Fascinated readers were not content just to observe. Most features were of the "how to..." variety. There were endless guides to military modelling, model railways, aircraft, boats and slot-racing; but also

astronomy, hiking, slight-of-hand, sailing, code-breaking, book-binding, bee-keeping and building an igloo.

When not working on mains-voltage electrical projects, life for boys was far from risk-free. With a casual relationship to knives and air-weapons many went to school "tooled-up" and at Scouts learned axemanship. Chemistry experiments could be hazardous. At my school, science genius John Watson made explosives, played with mercury, and rendered Derek Walker unconscious for nearly a minute with chloroform. (He received a strong caution from our teacher.) By the way, what ever happened to chemistry sets?

Even photography should have carried a health warning. One article described how to portray "the excitement of a racetrack collision" using Dinky cars and cigarette smoke!

John Anderson

### **School Memories 1934 - 1939**

My memories of Primary School date back to 1934 - 1939 in rural North Wales, where my father was a farmer. We lived nearly 4 miles away from the local school so the local authority provided transport in the form of a 'Hackney Carriage', a big car that collected 9 or 10 of us from outlying homes. It was a somewhat unreliable service carried out by one of two brothers - who sometimes forgot to turn up. So we could wait in expectation, after the school day ended, and eventually give up hope and walk home - for my brother and me it was a long way. When we arrived home our parents hid their anxiety - there were no telephones! However there was no fear of violence and there was very little traffic.

I remember that there were 46 pupils, most would stay until the leaving age of fourteen, but a few would move on to grammar school at the age of eleven. There were three teachers. One in an infants' room, and two in a big room which they shared, one teacher for classes one and two, and the Head took classes three, four and five! No selection by ability.

Apart from the three R's we were introduced to a smattering of history, geography, biology and music. A music festival took place every summer in the local market town where all local schools gathered to sing their prepared pieces, guided by a lady conductor. Some hilarity was caused

on one occasion when her garter snapped and fell to the floor during the performance!

A peripatetic violin teacher was provided for those interested to learn and instruments were free of charge.

Generally, discipline was strict but kind, although the Head sometimes lost control of his temper and hit some of the boys on the head with a large thick pencil. Parents were tolerant of this as he was said to have suffered 'shell-shock' in the 1914-18 war.

Bearing in mind that many of us had long journeys to school the headmaster's wife made Horlicks for us at morning break. There were no hot meals; some children lived near enough to go home for lunch, the rest brought sandwiches and flasks of hot drinks.

All in all it wasn't a bad experience.

Two things are worth mentioning about my Primary School. The building was of unreinforced concrete and still stands today as a listed structure, unoccupied of course.

The other interesting feature relates to the two titled spinster ladies who lived locally; they gave us a Christmas party, and presented each of us with an orange. They earned some renown by collecting French impressionist paintings around the start of the twentieth century, which they bequeathed to the University of Wales. These are now housed in Cardiff University.

Oh! What a long time ago these things took place! I suppose what stands out most obviously is the ease with which we now communicate, compared with those times.

Eleanor Barron

## **Lollipops and The Whispering Giant**

My brothers and I regarded terms at boarding school in Northumberland as unfortunate interruptions to home life in Africa. Term end would start before dawn when we were woken by matron. We dressed in school uniform and carried only an overnight bag with a few essentials, including teddy bears. The Headmaster, would drive us in his large Jaguar to Woolington Aerodrome. There we would catch the dawn flight to London in an Ambassador twin-prop plane of the local airline, BKS.

At Heathrow we were placed in the care of the "Universal Aunties" who looked after children in transit. With our onward flight being ten

hours later we were deposited all day at an airport hotel and left to our own devices. A favourite game was to put our Teddies into the lift, press the down button and dash out before the doors closed. Then a mad scramble down the stairs to watch the reaction of adults as the lift doors opened in the lobby.

That night we would catch a BOAC Bristol Britannia "Whispering Giant" four engined turbo-prop plane. First a short hop to Amsterdam and another to Rome then one to Tripoli. Then the longest leg, over the Sahara, to Kano in northern Nigeria. And the final leg to Lagos.

These "Lollipop Special" flights delivered children to all corners of the earth. Cabin crew would allow pillow fights so long there was no mass charging down the aisle, upsetting the trim of the aircraft. Boys would take turns at the cockpit controls. Girls would play at being air hostesses. An hour out of Lagos the boys would be taken to the toilets at one end of the aircraft, hair combed, ties straightened, shirts tucked into shorts, stockings pulled up and turned over garters. Girls would have the same treatment at the other end of the plane. All would emerge from the plane to none-the-wiser beaming parents.



Jeremy on left with Family in Nigeria

Our parents would drive us back through 90 miles of dense jungle to our home in the City of Ibadan. Swimming, playing tennis, squash and golf, partying, riding in the jungle, bar-b-queues with whole pigs on spits, going on safari, wandering around the teeming local markets in complete safety without parents would gild our days. Until the day of dread would arrive and we would have to make the return journey from our beloved African home to the northern wastes of Europe.

Jackets would emerge with mould that had grown in the heat and humidity, revealing badly sponged food spills from the previous term.

The return flights were always sombre affairs. But we knew that in a few weeks term would end and life would begin afresh. And we would smile in anticipation.

Jeremy Bell

### **The RGS, Newcastle, where I started in the sixth form, 1948 - 50,**

Anatole Theakstone taught French even though he was Russian and had an Edinburgh degree. He organised an exchange visit with a French family, La Comtesse Guy de LaPrade in Paris. Her son Dominique, and I exchanged for 3 weeks each. The apartment in Paris was very spacious and close to the Eiffel Tower. Dominique told me his father, a Captain, had died on the field of honour. He himself was totally infatuated with anything military and he walked me all over Paris.

I see that later on, Dominique, in his role of a 'simple militant' of the FM, set a bomb off beside the RN19 when De Gaulle was passing. Later he was a Councillor at St. Jean de Braye.

The RGS opened up many new activities and opportunities. The mornings opened with words from the headmaster and bible reading by a Prefect and a hymn sung to the tones of a magnificent organ.

Sport was immensely important to many of the boys. I joined the gym club and the Newts. Bill Tunstall encouraged me until I could really surge through the water. Peter Taylor was an extremely powerful swimmer and could throw the ball in water polo at fearsome speed so that it would hit the other side of the baths and come straight back.

He was very athletic, and at lunchtimes would be storming up and down the rugby pitch in full kit practising passing the ball with 3 or 4 colleagues. He also gave piano recitals but decided he was not good

enough to play professionally and went on to become the Lord Chief Justice. Strangely, he was never Head Boy.

During the morning and lunchtime breaks we enjoyed playing quoits in spaces between the buildings. One of our group, Humphrey Potts, became a brilliant Judge, and Geoffrey Bindman became a QC, and Rabinneau was the French Consul's son.

Another popular game was to bash a tennis ball against a wall with the inside of your clenched fist, rather like squash..

Geoffrey Bindman and I played on the RGS chess team and would play against various clubs in Newcastle. The railway men's club in Gateshead had a blind member. He had his own board with special pieces, and you moved your pieces for him. At the Newcastle Junior chess championship, Geoffrey unfortunately managed to beat me in the final.

Ian C. Brown

### **Pat's School day's**

I suppose it all started with my mum leaving me at the school gate aged about 5 and I was left on my own in the playground watching her disappear on her bike. It all went downhill from then on! Lots of tears and once running after her only to be severely reprimanded by Dad who knew how to make me behave! Friends were made and I even sang in a schools' combined choir with (Sir) Adrian Boult conducting! (\* see picture!) Parents want the best for their kids and thinking I would not get into the Grammar School without help I was enrolled into their Prep School! This did not improve my education by much as my report showed at the end of my first year! The resounding head Teacher's remarks at the end 'Not Good at cricket' were a bit cutting I thought!



**Liss Village infants  
Choir before Dr Adrian  
Boult Conducted us !  
Pat seems to be sur-  
rounded by girls!**

With those comments ringing in my ears, I inevitably failed the 11+ (twice) and so I ended up aged 13 in a 'Crammer School' in Portsmouth. Meanwhile all my friends had departed to the Grammar School. I found that I was not quite as bad as all that and with perseverance and a dint of hard work I managed three 'O' Levels and as these were in what could be termed the main subjects - Maths, English and Physics. the Headmaster of the Grammar School welcomed me with open arms to complete my school education all for free in the 6th Form! Its a funny old world— — — — —

Pat Cooper

THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL,  CHURCHERS COLLEGE, PETERSFIELD

REPORT ON P. Cooper Summer TERM, 1946.

FORM 2 POSITION 12 NO. OF BOYS IN FORM 14 AGE 10.1 AVERAGE AGE 9.10

SUBJECT	TERM ORDER	EXAM. ORDER	REMARKS	TEACHER'S INITIALS
ARITHMETIC	13	9	Very poor work.	W.P.
ALGEBRA				
GEOMETRY				
ENGLISH GRAMMAR	12	12	Poor.	C.R.
SPELLING & DICTATION	13	11	Careless.	C.R.
COMPOSITION	12	10	Needs more thought.	C.R.
READING & POETRY	12	12	Improving.	C.R.
WRITING	7	10	Very untidy.	C.R.
LITERATURE	7	8	Fair.	C.R.
LATIN	11	12	Poor work. Dreamy. Capable of better.	L.O.H.
FRENCH	12	12	Far below standard, but he tries.	<i>[Signature]</i>
HISTORY	12	11	Could do better if he concentrated more.	C.R.
GEOGRAPHY	13	12	Inattentive + backward.	W.P.
DEVINITY		5	Quite good.	C.R.
NATURE STUDY	11	11	Fair. Seems very interested.	<i>[Signature]</i>
DRAWING			Fair.	26.9.
MUSIC				

ABSENT ME. Still very backward. He does not always concentrate.  
Not good at cricket, Conduct excellent.

NEXT TERM BEGINS Yves. 24 Sept. *Watson de Eric* Headmaster

That dreaded School Report!

## Rural Schooldays

For the first ten years of my life I grew up in a rural part of the west of Ireland and my first school was about a mile and a half away which meant a long walk in all kinds of weather. I am the sixth boy in a family

of eleven and I have many memories of going to school with siblings and other neighbours but three things stand out, the morning ritual, walking in snow and the schoolmaster's car.

Living in the country, my mother had a great belief in home remedies and there was a morning ritual last thing before leaving home every day. We were all lined up and given a spoonful of cod liver oil – ugh! If you tried to feign sickness to avoid school, my mother had an unfailing solution. Castor oil was warmed on the Aga and you were given a liberal dose. For those of you who don't know, castor oil is an extremely effective purgative. Once experienced, you would have to be dying on your feet before you ever pleaded illness again.

Snow obviously meant that the weather was colder and made the journey to school more difficult but there were many positive features associated with it. The familiar landscape was transformed into a magic kingdom with interesting shapes to feed the imagination. Sliding on ice and snow fights delayed us on our way. Our winter foot ware consisted of wooden soled clogs with

a steel ring. The ring gathered snow when walking and we competed with each other to see who would have the largest amount attached. I remember sometimes struggling along with over six inches of compressed snow attached to my clogs while others tried to knock you off your pedestal.

Our headmaster always passed us in his car on the way to school. He has a temperamental Austin and if there were only a few of us, he very occasionally stopped to give a lift. I remember one morning he passed us and then the engine stalled for some reason. He asked us to give it a push to get started again and we willingly obliged in the expectation of a lift. We strained and pushed and strained and pushed and eventually the engine started and next thing the car was rapidly disappearing into the distance, leaving us covered in smoke and no lift!

Happy Days!

Desmond Dunleavey

## **My School Journeys**

From 1930 until 1938, when the impending war intervened, my state primary school made annual journeys to the Continent. Successively

they went to Holland, France, Belgium, Denmark, Gibraltar and Morocco, Finland, Jersey, Germany and Sweden. I first joined them, aged eight, to visit Finland in 1935. The trip lasted nineteen days and cost £8.



Frank in his overcoat!

We travelled by sea, steerage class, aboard a small Finnish passenger ship that called at Copenhagen on the way. The teachers, also paying steerage, were accommodated in the first class. My memory is of tiers of bunks, boys being seasick and abundant meals including a large dish piled high with boiled eggs for breakfast. Helsinki was a blur apart from the municipal sauna (pronounced 'sowner', not 'sor-ner', we learnt), but I well remember the paper mills up country at Valkeakoski. There, great rafts of logs lay in the river. They were taken into the mill

on a conveyer belt and fed into a huge drum where they were converted into wood chip preparatory to boiling. While we were there a dreadful accident was avoided when one of the attendants fell onto the conveyer belt and began to travel towards the drum. Another man pressed a switch to stop the machinery. Looking back I suspect the whole thing was staged for our benefit. The managers had kept a supply of live salmon ponded specially for us to feast on.

We visited a Lap village where a Laplander in traditional dress was on display for our arrival. We were not quite in the land of the midnight sun but the nights there never got dark. At midnight a farmer told our leader he was off for a couple of hours' fishing. I believe they catch up on sleep in the winter.

One day we crossed the sea to Tallinn. Estonia was at the time an independent country, later falling to the Soviets. We also spent a day in Vipuri with its medieval castle. Following the Finnish-Soviet war of 1939 the town was ceded to the Russians where it remains as Viborg.

We travelled about by train and were interested to find that the train windows were double-glazed against the cold. For the same reason

houses in the country had ladders mounted on the roofs, ready for the removal of snow.

Our 1935 school journey was followed in successive years by trips to Jersey, Germany and Sweden, in all of which I took part. and the series continued until war put an end to them. They were a central part of my life in primary school.

Frank Evans

## **School Days**

Every School day started with “Have you got your clean handkerchief, milk money, dinner money, school bag and gas mask?”



**Norma Hickey**

My local school was closed during the war and I travelled over to Newcastle’s Town Moor to West Jesmond Infant School. Thanks to Mr Hitler I was almost six years old before my State Education began.

On my first day at school a lady called Miss Ross met me in the corridor. She put out her hand and I took it but when I looked back my Mother

had disappeared. Miss Ross told me she was taking me to the “baby class”. She also disappeared and there I met Miss Smith BUT there were no babies - just children.

Soon I was promoted to class 2 where you did “adds” and “take aways” on a big blackboard. I enjoyed this number work until money sums were introduced. I was given some dog-eared cardboard discs covered with pictures of coins. I was given a disc marked 6d and told to buy 2 apples displayed on a tray and each priced at 2d and then tell how much change I would receive.

I could not do it as I could not explain that I only had PRETEND money which would not buy anything at all. Anyway I had never received change in my life before as I only ever had a 1/2d pocket money.

In 1941 I was in Miss Wood’s class, class 3. The reminders of war were all around. At the sound of the Air Raid Siren we collected our gas masks and quickly went to the shelter in the school yard. After a long raid my anxious mother rushed to check on me and I greeted with “Guess what - Miss Wood has another name - her name is Winnie”. I had overheard another teacher say, “How long do you think this will last Winnie?” Fancy teachers having names like ordinary people.

As the clock in the Infant’s hall had stopped. Miss Wood instructed me to go to the Junior School and read the clock in their hall. I remember skipping across the school yard and, to my horror, I could not understand it. The clock was different. A junior girl passing me told me the time and told me they were Roman Numerals! Miss Wood said “Well done - you can go every day until the clock is mended”.

That night my Dad taught me all about Roman Numerals!

Norma Hickey

## **Schooldays**

Junior school and football practice every Wednesday at the end of the day to try out for the team. I attended every one, I tried my best, I wore the correct strip and had the boots. I could run faster than the coach and dribble past him with ease although he was past sixty five and chain smoked ‘Capstan Full Strength’ (untipped) throughout practice and indeed through every lesson in class. There didn’t seem to be much to it.

Kick the ball as hard as you could towards the other end and twenty boys chased after it. If it happened to be kicked towards your end then twenty boys chased it the other way. If you were unlucky and it came towards your head then you 'headed' it. Most professional players still play that way even today.

I suppose there were other boys who were better than me but none more keen to play for the school. You would think I might have been noticed at some point but I was not selected once.

Senior school and a new game called rugby. None of us had ever played before. Different rules but clearly more skill required. I liked the look of it.

Boys of all sizes and with differing abilities could play. No one was left standing on the touchline. Scrums, kicks, passing backwards, hand offs, grub kicks, drop kicks, line outs, up and unders, tries, between the posts, early baths. I loved it. Straight on to the team with game on Wednesday afternoons, another for school on Saturday mornings and a third on Saturday afternoons for Percy Park colts. I don't think I missed one for seven years.

You may think I would be sad to have been rejected during my junior school years but I am so glad not to have developed a love for football. Just think, I could have been a supporter of Newcastle or worse still Sunderland. I could have wasted time and money watching a game played by (in the main) overpaid incompetents. Instead I found a game I have loved playing and watching. Who could forget that Jonny Wilkinson drop goal ?

I raise a glass to my former, chain smoking, coach.

Paul Hickey

## **SCHOOLDAYS**

Our school motto "Lignum crucis arbor scientiae" (the wood of the cross is the tree of knowledge) conveys the flavour, if rather dated now, of the value of Christianity in education. Denstone College in Staffordshire is one of eleven public schools founded in the 19th century by Nathaniel Woodard, a Church of England priest. Old boys include journalists Rene Cutforth, SPB Mais, and Quentin Crisp (actual name Denis Pratt and who detested his schooldays) and rugby players WPC Davies and Alastair Hignell.

During my time, 1951-1956, discipline was strict. Weekly meetings of the prefects would include canings (smoking was a heinous offence) while masters would beat for more serious offences. Fagging duties were imposed on juniors who were not allowed to pass their seniors with their hands in their pockets. The day began at 6-45 a.m. with a service in chapel before breakfast. The food was unappealing but the basis of a healthy diet with no risk of obesity. The teaching was of a high standard. The French teacher had a 100% record of passes at O level but at a cost. Conducting the viva with an anglicized accent reminiscent of Edward Heath made for good marks but not for talking to the French. The Latin Master's cryptic term report ("Some Hope") still puzzles me. Having wanted to be a journalist, mother said (one, or at least I, did what was told then), having talked to Uncle Archie (a Professor of Medicine in Glasgow) medicine was a better option (they were right) resulting in a shift to scientific subjects at A level. Fortunately academic criteria for acceptance to Medical School were less stringent in those days.

Other activities included the school choir, peaking at 13 with Once in Royal David's City. A week's trip on the Norfolk Broads with the school chaplain and three other boys was an education in controlling a boat, church architecture and pubs. The annual dance with girls from, our sister school, was excruciating as, I learnt later from an old girl, it had been for them. Not mixing with girls in one's formative years was a major omission. Sporting activities included off-spin for the school at 16 (not beyond), being too skinny for serious rugby and rugby fives.

Denstone provided me with a moral compass for later (not always followed) and a knowledge of others gained from living in such close proximity to them.

Alan Kerr

### **First Love and Wellies !**

My first experience of school was during 1945 when I started at Walkergate Primary School. My recollection of those days was walking along Appletree Gardens with my sisters and I suppose my mother, watching my father running and jumping onto the platform of a moving bus with his coat billowing in the wind. I had to pass the Puroh factory, where milk was sterilised, and I am surprised that the smell of the milk did not put me off it for the rest of my life. It was at Walkergate where I met my first love – Joan Armstrong. I was about six at the time and we were

meant for each other. (I met her again later, when I was 16, took her out, and completely misread her message to me when she began to sing a popular song at the time, "Two different worlds, we live in two different worlds" (Ronnie Hilton). I joined in heartily but alas, she was trying to tell me something!

In those days, some mothers used to appear at the school gates to watch their charges during the playground break. I remember one time, I was called over to the gates and some very kind mother told me that I had got my wellies on the wrong feet and helped me put the situation right!

In 1948 we moved to Heaton and I joined Chillingham Road Junior School. I was there until 1952, and can remember learning my tables and generally behaving myself. Highlights were during lunchtimes when in summer we played cricket using an upturned milk crate as a wicket; skimming milk bottle tops against the wall (disapproving of anybody who didn't wash the tops, so that curdled cream remained on them); playing chucks, and in autumn, conkers. In winter, during the snowtime, I was part of a team charged with making a slide of ice which ran from one end of the yard to the other. Weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

David Kilner

### **On a Wheel and a Prayer**

"Come along, get up, you'll be late" A desperate maternal voice got me out of bed for a hasty breakfast and a frantic search for yesterday's homework - not done. Traffic was light, it was wartime but I wriggled my old bike into the slipstream of a Midland Red bus and the rest was easy. I even arrived on time, 'good morning Solihull!'

The homework was done, copied would be a better word and assembly was survived. My attitude was noticed, the English master wrote of me in December 1949 - 'he seems to have a sleepy disposition, perhaps he sits in a sleepy part of the room'. It was a bad thing to be overall bottom of the class but I was saved by the ability to draw and an encyclopaedic knowledge of chemicals - their explosive properties in particular. Writing this in 2016, I suppose I'd better leave it at that!

Progressing from year to year through the school certainly opened other interests, such as the CCF (Combined Cadet Force). Especially when

we were inspected by the likes of 'Monty' himself. He went round us with our hats on and once with them off. To this day I do not know why. His request for a day's holiday was of much more interest. Promotion in the CCF was based on effort. I rose to the dizzy rank of Sergeant on the back of creosoting the CCF hut in a weekend.

With the exception of tennis and swimming I loathed sports. There were two areas of respite. The CCF Summer Camp assault course run by the Guards and where I always fell in the river and secondly, the option to go shooting instead of hockey in the Spring term. We were all crack shots; there were two types, group at 60 yards those who could put 5 303 bullets in a 1" group and those who found that a soft lead pencil produce a hole the same size.

Perhaps to soften the martial side of the school, confirmation classes were offered to senior boys. These well taken up, especially by borders, the cynical saying it was the excellent breakfast provided even in wartime.

In the last years at school, we were repeatedly asked what we were going to do when we left. I always solely replied - "do Medical research" with only the vaguest idea what it meant. The Chemistry master finally nailed me - "stop doing nothing and start doing something." I did, but that's another story!

Ian Lavelle

### **Schoolboy Loyalty.**

We were a class of sixteen boys who had chosen the 'Technical' course in preference to the usual 'Arts' or 'Science' course options before Matriculation found at other Grammar Schools. Gateshead Grammar School had introduced this to prepare pupils for careers in the heavy industries of Tyneside. Instead of Physics and Chemistry on our timetable we had Mechanics & Applied Heat and also Technical Drawing.

It was during such a drawing lesson where we occupied a high benched science lab with our small drawing boards tilted on a brick that I wish to acquaint you. Our tall stools were impractical and uncomfortable, everyone usually preferred to stand. The teacher set us our task for the lesson and it required little or no supervision as everyone was interested and diligent so he used the period to do some marking in which he usually became totally absorbed. One pupil was not in the mood for work

that day, he was 'Tot' Gaul, nick- named because he was six feet three inches tall at 15, and his height was way ahead of his mental age and he loved pranks. He decided in the still quiet classroom with everyone engrossed that he would stealthily steal everyone's stool and pile them in a corner which he did over the course of the lesson without the teacher noticing.

When the lesson bell sounded and heads came up the teacher saw what had happened during his class and was furious. Upon failing to get a response to his command for the culprits to own up he lined up everyone and proceeded to ask each pupil in turn if they had been involved and all replied no, but when Gaul was asked he said " I put some of them there Sir".

He then announced "As no one else has owned up everyone will get 'four of the best' and produced his thick leather belt. Systematically he went through the whole class with two strikes to each hand, we could almost see the steam coming from his ears he was so annoyed. But before he started he said "Gaul as you were honest you can go now"

Wry smiles passed amongst us but silence was maintained despite our throbbing hands. Retribution was not even contemplated, we all thought it was a wonderful schoolboy joke and Tot's reputation as the class clown was considerably enhanced.

Norman Lees.

## **Schooldays Remembered**

School day memories are varied as were the number of schools I attended, NOT because I was expelled from any, but through my father's career movements. Although I was NOT unhappy with school life they were certainly NOT "the happiest days of my life". Looking back, childhood was that wonderful time when all you had to do to lose weight was to take a bath!!!

My early days until I was 10 were spent in Northampton where my memories are fairly vague. When I reached 11 years of age I went to Scarborough grammar school, adjacent to Valley Bridge, later to become a temporary home for Alan Ayckbourn's theatre. Scarborough was an open town during the war, in other words, undefended, so if you heard an explosion you knew either a landmine or bomb had landed.



This is a picture of me aged six  
looking very smart!

On the 1st September 1941, the day after my 12th birthday, the family were waiting to rent a house in High Heaton the following day. My father had just taken up the appointment of General Manager of the Odeon theatre and restaurant and had arranged for us to spend one night only on the downstairs restaurant. That night the Germans bombed the Forth goods yard which resulted in 50 deaths, 100 injured, 1000 people made homeless and 300 tonnes of food stuffs including sugar butter and animal fats destroyed. That was my scary introduction to Newcastle, hearing ack ack defences for the first time, and devastation close at hand.

I was very fortunate to obtain a place at Rutherford College, Bath Lane as the term had started. The vast majority of the teaching staff were not eligible for war service and the school itself was showing its age although the standard of education was good. This was in the days of School Certificate followed by Matriculation, for those who attained the necessary standard. Discipline was strict with the cane and strap used.

War time conditions meant that school textbooks were old and could not be replaced with new ones.

In sport we were fortunate for playing cricket as we were allowed to use the Benwell Hill ground with its facilities. However we were not so lucky for football using the open Nuns Moor site, which had no changing area so it was not very inviting in winter. Cricket stumps were used to mark the pitches extremities and goal posts. Despite these problems, we had an excellent first team and had to play all our competitive games at our opponents' schools where we had the luxury of sheltered dressing areas and proper goal posts.

Alan Sidney-Wilmot

### **“THAT SCHOOL REPORT ”**

At the outbreak of war in the summer of 1939, my elder brother and I were on holiday with our uncle and aunt who lived at Kirkby Thore in the Eden Valley some eight miles south of Penrith, still then in Cumberland. We had cycled over from Newcastle, a journey of about sixty miles which meant climbing over Whitfield Fell and then up and over Hartside. My brother had a twenty inch bicycle with a Sturmey-Archer 3 speed gear while I had a smaller eighteen inch bicycle with no gears at all, but it was a great adventure and we had many happy times at Kirkby Thore.

Within two or three days of the declaration of war, we were summoned to get to Penrith to join the many other boys from school to be evacuated there, and who had travelled from Newcastle by special train. So my brother and I cycled to Penrith and were directed to join others who also had their bicycles and to ride together about three miles further North to a large country house which was to be our wartime home. It was something of a Spartan existence with no beds but only mattresses on the floor but nevertheless we had a good time there and cycling into Penrith and back each day to share classrooms for the afternoon only with the boys of Penrith Grammar School.



Picture taken 1941 at Bow School Durham  
City

However it was not to last for at the beginning of 1940 we both found ourselves no longer at Penrith but sent off to boarding school at Durham without our bicycles where the schools had not been evacuated.

I do not recall having any discussion with my parents about this sudden move save for one short reference to my school report for the 1939 summer term:

- for my Latin of that term were the words -“This boy is urgently in need of help“

I remember that I was somewhere near the bottom of the class and I remember that my father was angry, not so much, I hoped, with my poor showing in that subject, but with the author of that report itself.

Who should have been helping me? Surely that should have been the Latin master himself !

So the decision was made, though without any consultation, certainly not with me, that both my brother and I should learn Latin elsewhere!

Some time later I attained a credit in Higher Certificate Latin!

Alistair Sinton

## The Headmaster, Todmorden Road Junior School, 1946

S. D. Smith. That was his name. I can remember the style of his initials: 'S.D.S.', like three small yachts racing in the wind, a bold, sloping hand at the bottom of the school reports, giving them dash and authority. I don't know what the S and the D stood for, but I liked to think they stood for Samuel Daniel, but that's just a guess. He was remote, and unknowable, although he did sit at his desk at the front of the school assembly hall, off which, through half a dozen doors, were the classrooms, where groups of thirty-odd, children busied ourselves learning how to read and spell and add and multiply, and other necessary things like the life-cycle of the salmon and the germination of the bean.



Kelsey flying kites with his two elder brothers

He was a big man with a square close-cropped head, and he dressed in a dark pin-striped suit. I think he must have caned me once, since I was always resentful because I was punished on some unfair accusation a girl had made. I have a vague idea that it concerned her knickers, but I hadn't done it and all that remains is indignation at the injustice.

But I do remember being sent out to see Mr Smith on quite another errand. Perhaps it was Miss Greenwood sent me; Miss Greenwood, our beautiful red-haired teacher, with whom I was in love. She had, after all, let me paint the blackboard at the end of term, emptying all the inkwells

into a jar and using the ink to paint the blackboard black after a term of chalky attempts to turn it white.

And I can't remember why she sent me, except to get the ultimate praise for a piece of work I had done, which I was to go and proudly show to the Headmaster. Schoolwork came easily and it never seemed worth praise, but I went. Out into the huge, echoing assembly hall, a small child not knowing quite why it had to confront the pin-striped pillar of Mr Smith with whatever piece of work it was. "Please sir, Miss said I had to show you this." He looked at it. Smiled. "Well done, young man," he said, and, fumbling in his pockets, he brought out a ha'penny, which he presented to me with great ceremony. "And don't spend it all at once."

Kelsey Thornton

### **Evacuees!**

Army blankets.....khaki mattresses.....gas masks.....a smell of antiseptic.....what on earth was going on?

People seem to have been using our school during the night! We went to our desks as usual and as usual nobody told us anything.

Rumours spread quickly. " They came on the train from LONDON". "We've got to have one living with us"....." They've got nits"...

Lessons went on as usual in that tiny village school in Wiltshire but we soon found out that our numbers had doubled, we now had about 80 children on the school! The evacuees had arrived and every child wanted one living with them.



**East Knoyle Village  
School  
circa 1950**

Unfortunately my poor mother already had a houseful of her own children and felt that her wartime effort was to offer a period of respite to respectable adults who had been traumatised by the air raids. This meant that while other families suddenly had new brothers and sisters to play with, we had to behave ourselves and be quiet and polite all the time!

Playground games suddenly gained new rules and we learnt new songs and rhymes. Gas mask parade (or was it practice ?) took on a new meaning but I was too young to be worried.

The big boys from London must have found it very strange working in the school garden and having to help with the potato picking week.

I wonder how those who were staying in the outlying farms coped with walking 2 or 3 miles to school each day. I never heard anyone complaining.

The village families who looked after the new children must have been amazing; I remember some of the children returning year after year for a little holiday well after the end of the war.

It is interesting to remember how well we all integrated as children, but we heard little of how our parents felt!

Janet Cooper ( Neé Tuck)



Janet Tuck aged 5

## **My Education**

I was five. It had been determined that I needed educating. My next door neighbour, Yvonne, who was six and knew the way to school, would take me. I learned The Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from Yvonne", I recited. My loving parents decided I was dyslexic. At the age of seven I took an exam and so entered the prep department of the Town's High School. One day my father, a teacher at the school, entered my classroom and declared, "If he gets less than three for his maths, then thrash him". My father always had my education at heart. When I was eleven I passed the eleven plus exam. Immediately war broke out and I was evacuated to Hexham. I arrived part way through the term. I was to join a class run by the French teacher. I asked some boys for his name. I knocked at the staff room door and asked for Mr Froggy. I can still here the roar of laughter that came from within this room.

When I was fourteen we accidentally killed our History teacher with a hand grenade. It was a shame because I liked History. I loved art. Our teacher was a Russian called Miss Kluckvin. In my class were the two Cox twins. One day we were being taught how to draw the human body. I couldn't see over class heads. "Why are you bobbing about"? Miss Kluckvin demanded. "I cannot see for Cox". I replied. The class dissolved into laughter and Miss Kluckvin turned a deep shade of red,

Being wartime and there being a shortage of teachers it was decided that the class would drop art. Three of us decided that we wanted to carry on with art. We went to see the Head, "I know what you really want," he roared "You want to sit with the girls! I'll cure you". We had to drop Physics. We were put in a room on our own with equipment and an object to draw. We got no tuition or criticism. Even so, one of us obtained a distinction and the other two credits in the School Certificate exam.

When I was sixteen I met and fell in love with Nan. She decided that I need educating, so a few years later I married her. She became a teacher and for the next 43 years I continued my education.

Charlie Wesencraft

## CORPORAL PUNISHMENT JESUIT STYLE

At the tender age of 11 I boarded the bus in Chester-le-Street on 16 September 1947 heading for my new school in Sunderland. As I handed my eightpence ha'penny to the conductor I wondered what awaited me at Corby School, of which I knew little apart from the fact that it was run by the Society of Jesus, had never visited and did not know how to reach. Alighting from the bus in Park Lane I saw some boys in no particular uniform and proceeded to follow them, which turned out to be a good move for we eventually arrived at the right place, to my profound relief.



Corby Form 1 1948

I was soon inducted into the first form of 30 boys from all parts of County Durham, this being the only Catholic grammar school in the County. The Jesuits turned out to be a kindly group of men; priests, scholastics, or men in training, and a few lay masters. All proceeded without too many cultural surprises until the question of corporal punishment arose.

Corporal punishment was widespread in schools at that time, if not universal. The teachers in my elementary school, as primary schools were termed then, used a stick of three quarter inch diameter, although the Headmistress, Miss McIlvenna, relished the use of a long bamboo cane on the bigger, and poorer, boys. Punishment books were not in use then.

The Jesuits' method turned out to be highly refined. The master awarding the punishment would write a "bill" detailing the name of the miscreant, his offence, the number of strokes to be administered and the date

followed by his signature. The offender was then required to present himself to the “ferula” room at 12 noon or 4pm as the case may be. The ferula was a leather strap shaped like a beaver’s tail. After waiting his turn in the queue, there was always a queue, which added to the refinement of the punishment, the boy would hand his bill to the “duty” master who would enquire, “which hand?” and administer the required number of strokes, quite dispassionately. Even at the age of 11 we boys thought that this was a fair way of proceeding, but after it happened to me the first time I took good care that it never happened again.

At the end of the summer term we departed for the holidays and on return we found that the school had been taken over by the Christian Brothers. As the darkness closed in we knew that we had been living in a paradise never to return.

Peter Wallace

### **The f-fagging fried egg**



On Great Gable in 1953

My early years were spent in smoky Huddersfield, afflicted by annual bouts of bronchitis. My Cumbrian parents decided that a healthy mind in a healthy body would best be achieved as a teenager by sending me to St Bees School, situated on the western tip of that beautiful county. The remote village was named after St Bega, a medieval Irish princess who landed there, and the school was founded by Archbishop Edmund

Grindal in 1583. It survived until 2015, when it gave up the financial struggle of being in the wrong place to attract fee-paying pupils.

St Bees was certainly a bracing establishment, the prevailing westerly winds blowing unhindered through the dormitories, bringing sleet and hail with them.

To strengthen our characters further, pupils of all ages wore short trousers, saxe-blue socks, and open-necked shirts, except on Sundays, when ties were required.

Among the numerous ancient privileges enforced rigorously by the prefects was fagging, whereby second year boys carried out various duties for the prefects, enabling them to live a life of swaggering leisure, honing their leadership skills. One of the fagging tasks was cooking tea on a gas-ring in the basement changing rooms, frying with left-over butter scraped from dirty plates in the dining room.

One of the prefects was called Gough, pronounced Goff, and when my turn came for tea-fagging, he said he would like a fried egg on toast. He gave me the money for one egg which I carried home carefully from the village tuck-shop. I had never fried an egg, so I started early. I melted the almost rancid butter and broke the egg into the pan, the yolk mixing prettily with the white. I cooked it thoroughly and it soon resembled a crinkled piece of burnt leather which I put on the toast and then tried to keep it all warm until the dreaded "FAG!" call came. Another fag, the runner, answered the call and returned to say that Gough wanted his tea. I took the burnt offering and knocked timidly on the study door. When it was flung open I saw four prefects sitting around the table, and I proffered the plate with a violently shaking hand, squeaking "F-f-f-fuGoff"!

The resulting uproar can be imagined. The good news was that I was never again required to cook tea, and I never again had bronchitis.

John Wilkin

## **Primary Schooldays**

I began First Hill Infants School, Pitsmoor, Sheffield, at the age of four in September 1942. As an only child I was not used to sharing and on my first morning I bashed another boy in the sandpit for taking my bucket. I was marked as a troublemaker.



Aged about six

Bombs were falling thickly on Sheffield and I spent most of my nights in the damp underground Anderson shelter in our garden. There was a gun battery at the top of our Cookswood Road and the Luftwaffe were determined to knock it out. There were gaps in the road where houses had taken direct hits and our next door neighbours, the Garsides, had a huge bomb crater in their back garden. Mum and I were sheltering under a marble slab in the pantry when the bomb fell and it blew all our windows out. Dad was on night shift in the steel works. At school we practised filing down into the school cellars, where we would all be buried alive if we were hit. In the playground we sang:

*Hitler only had one ball*

*Himmler had something similar*

*But poor old Go-balls*

*Had no balls at or-or-orl.*

Without understanding a word of it.

At seven I crossed the asphalt yard to the Juniors, mostly staffed with spinsters and men just returned from war, like Mr Sims my class teacher. Miss Meakin, the Head, caned me in assembly for whispering jokes during prayers. Miss Bacon asked us to illustrate a Bible story and I drew Adam and Eve, but omitted the fig leaves and made a guess at what was underneath. It might have been a good guess because there were guffaws from the staff room and it didn't get pinned up, even though I was the best artist in the class. Playtimes were spent kicking a ball and fighting – my rival as cock of the walk was Jonny Fantham, a thicko who later played for Sheffield Wednesday. I was in love with Carol Tinker, and very soon after with Margaret Whitehead.

Then I got double pneumonia and missed six months off school just before the Eleven Plus exam. I lay in bed, grew 4 inches and read everything in the local library. I finished the exam papers early and drew pictures in the margins to show I was good at something even if I couldn't do their stupid sums.

In spite of this I scraped a pass into Sheffield City Grammar School and my real education began.

Malcolm Yorke

### **Floreat Lectona 1947-51**

School days, for some, the fortunate ones, are often regarded as the best of times and happily for me this was so as a pupil in a small Church of England girls' school in Leighton Buzzard. The Victorian school stood in the large grounds of St Andrew's Church as did the hall and the almshouses – a thriving community.

Our formidable headmistress, Dr E.V.M. Arthur MBE, ruled us with stern benevolence. A beanpole of a woman who had more than a touch of the fabled Miss Jean Brodie, she was a strong influence on me.

Seasons largely defined our activities. In winter the iron stove and metal fireguard was useful for drying snow-sodden mittens and hats. Small bottles of frozen milk were warmed by the fire. Maths, mental arithmetic, English, spelling tests and music dominated, but no art at all.

Summer was relaxed with PE outside, each child on their own oval coir mat; country dancing with music from a windup gramophone; nature walks around the churchyard, which at the time didn't seem so strange, Throughout every season there was always music and singing.

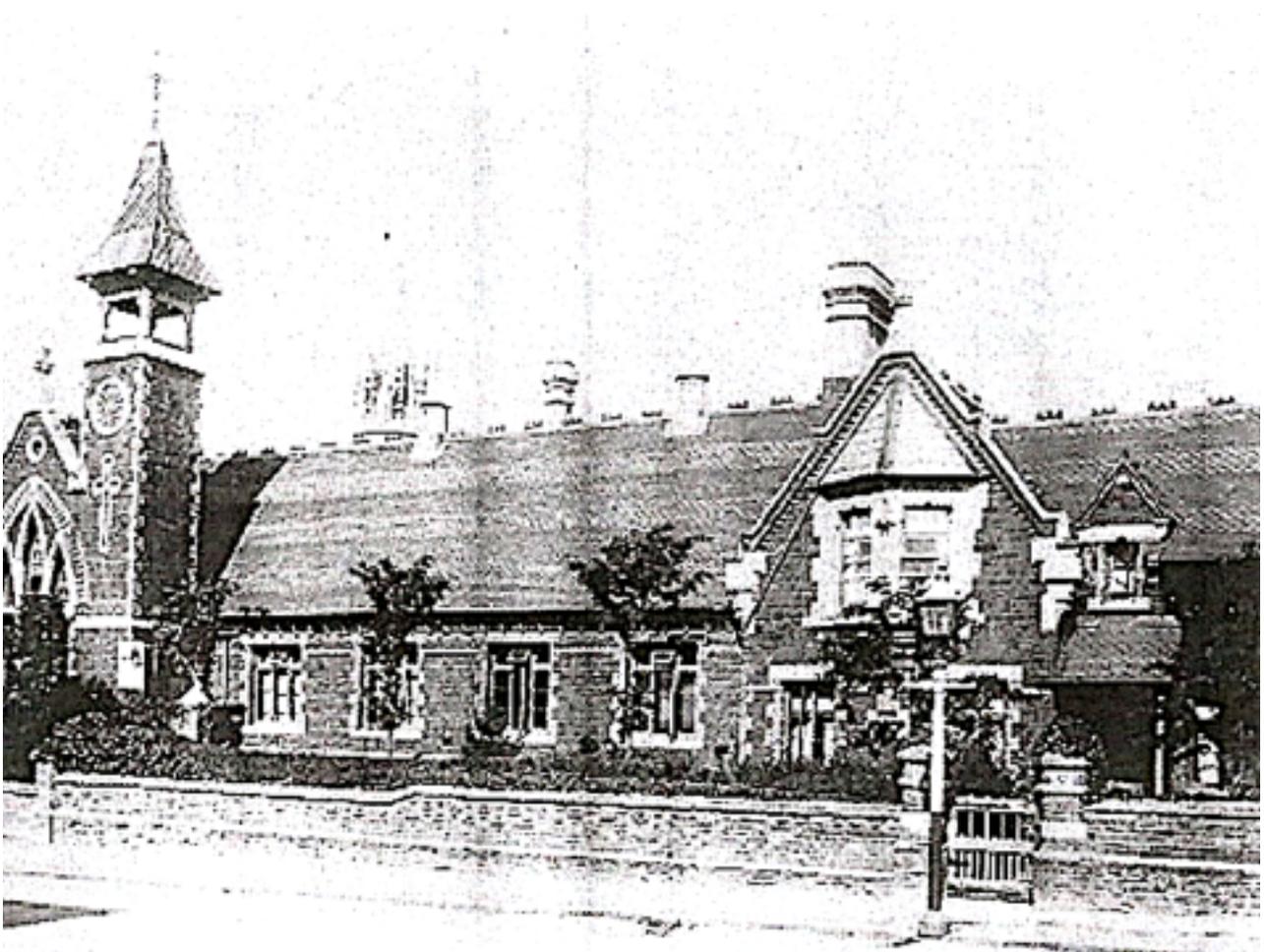


Mavis Aged 5

Very popular was 'Singing Together', a BBC radio programme which began every Monday morning, whilst on Tuesdays and Fridays we all filed into the unheated church for a service. No cosy stoves in the corner there so we sang to keep warm. There was little mention of religion for the rest of the school week.

Once, as Captain of Bunyan House (there were three houses named after Bedfordshire poets), I had to read a passage from *Pilgrim's Progress* but only remember the ordeal of standing up in the pulpit on front of clergy, teachers and puzzled peers.

More happily remembered were the school trips. I read music and was a member of the recorder band which in 1949 went to London for a workshop run by Carl Dolmetch, followed by hearing him play in the Wigmore Hall. Afterwards we had tea in Lyons Corner House at Marble Arch.



St Andrew's C of E School Leighton Buzzard

Later Miss Arthur took us to Jersey, travelling by coach and then overnight ferry from Weymouth. We were seasick into little pink cardboard bowls!

Jersey was memorable with its castles, fishing trips, St Brelade's Bay and the German underground hospital with its labyrinth of damp tunnels. On the grimy limewashed walls initials and dates were scratched in – haunting even then five years after the island's liberation.

Another trip was to the Festival of Britain in June 1951 where I briefly got lost. Miss E.V.M. Arthur was not pleased!

Mavis Yorke

### **Life as a five year old!**

My school days began on my fifth birthday. A beautiful sunny April morning in Coventry, my birthday cards scattered on the eiderdown. My mother burst into the room "You are five and you are going to school". Happiness dissolved, so very unfair. The school seemed to consist of

one very large room, one teacher and lots of children – I sat at the back (I always sat at the back). On this first day the teacher rapped my knuckles with a ruler.

Part of this early period was the regular visits of the Luftwaffe to our city, and I remember being led to shelter four times in one day. We wore tin-hats (bought at Woolworths, tin not steel) and carried our gas-masks. No bombs came near us so the experience was not frightening; it was exciting, there was lots of singing – *There'll always be an England* was a favourite. I also have a vivid memory of standing in the school yard on a cold June 6th, everyone had heard the wireless and quietly repeated “They’ve gone over today”.

Always sitting at the back, also dealing with a dip-pen, as the left hand moved across the wet ink, was a handicap to progress. Eventually Art came onto the menu, “Oh you never said you could draw” said the surprised teacher. “You never asked” I thought.

Once a week the Headmaster would instruct us on English grammar. Although the pupils disliked him, I now see that he was a good man working with no teaching resources beyond the blackboard and chalk. He ensured that we could all sing Blake’s *Jerusalem*, and recite some Wordsworth or Browning.

How can some teachers be unpopular and others loved. I have been part of a class where the subject was Pi – no one would answer the teacher’s questions. I am sure that all the class knew the solutions, but they would not respond. Peer-pressure was strong.

Another’s technical drawing classes brought out the highest standards. Boys bought the hardest pencils sharpened with fine sand-paper to produce the most perfect lines. He examined the drawings with a large magnifying glass, “I never give 10, yours is quite good at 9 and 31/32nds”. He always kept his authority yet was loved entirely. He put me in a secluded corner of the class-room, provided an easel and allowed me to paint during some lessons – I am very grateful.

Bob Young