

BURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL
RECORD OF THE
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MEMORIES AND REMINISCENCES

When Miss James asked me to write a few words for the magazine on the changes I have noticed in the school from the time I was there to more recently when my elder daughter, Rosemary, attended, I thought at first I would find very little to say. How wrong I was and on reflection I find a great deal has changed.

I started school in the preparatory department just before the 50th birthday celebrations for the girls' school. I faintly remember a party and a large cake, I think with candles, but I regret I don't remember seeing Miss Kitchener - the only headmistress I haven't known well - who, I have since been told, came to the party.

Looking back, I suppose the first change I notice is that the two schools are now separate. No sharing the hall, the gym, the various labs, the book room including Miss Bradburn, and in those days no swimming pool.

The next change must be the school uniform, the wearing of which was very strictly enforced from the day you started to leaving in the sixth form. Gym slips and blouses, navy gaberdines or coats in the winter, and blazers only in the summer with school dresses, and always the awful grey felt hats - all bought from Miss Sedgwick in The Rock. The only thing you could do with the hats was to put a tuck in the back - the more daring you were, the bigger the tuck. Even underwear came into it in my early years. After gym there was always the shower to endure. I remember to my mortification the shame three of us felt - no names mentioned - because we wore combs and everyone then knew. I have also discovered since that my mother once rang Miss Neild to say that she thought I had gone to school without my liberty bodice! I can't imagine what Miss Neild thought or said about that.

Although we shared the same building, the boys and girls were kept quite apart. Looking over the wall onto the boys' playground as we came up the drive to Tenterden Street was quite forbidden - no eyes left.

The way we went to school has also changed so much. No cars blocking Bridge Road (or the Boulevard as it was then called). We all went by train, tram or bus, but I always travelled by tram which I used to catch by the Peel Monument and alight on the return journey at the Umbrella opposite the old Derby Hotel.

I am sorry to note that the house system has died a death. When I was at school, there were five houses - Clive, Kitchener, Peel, Crompton and Byron, all depending on the district in which you lived. There was great competition between the houses in all aspects of school life and I well remember, as Captain of Peel House, very proudly collecting the Work Cup one year, to the great surprise of at least Miss Pemberton.

Every year, we all had a house party and Peel House was very fortunate at that time in having Freda and Betty Darlington whose father used to bake us a marvellous cake every year. One time it was in the shape of the school baths, and on another occasion the cake resembled a house - all beautifully decorated.

Later, the names of the houses were changed to the names of famous women - the first expression of women's lib perhaps, but I always felt it very sad the change was found to be necessary.

During the time I was at school, the staff seemed to live for ever. I don't recollect many changes and they all appeared mainly single, apart from Mrs. Palmer-Felgate and Mrs. Roskell who is now a School Governor. Misses Taylor, Naylor, Pemberton, Watson, Smale, Creaser, Heath, Dobson and dear Miss Hoyle who was quiet and serious and rarely smiled; I often think about her and hear her words of wisdom. Also I remember Miss Alcock in form one, who seemed very old, and Miss Smith in transition, with her "Great, wide, beautiful, wonderful world" and Miss Ashworth who taught music and who also used to win prizes for knitting fancy jumpers. Not to forget Miss Langton and Miss Hepworth and elegant Miss Hoole.

Discipline was very strict: I don't know how we

dared go to the "tuck shop" which was out of bounds, as was the short cut behind Bury baths.

The ghosts of three headmistresses, I am sure, now walk the school. I, for one, can still hear Miss Neild's firm footsteps on the top corridor.

School trips are also very different. Not for us the holidays abroad - we had a weekend at Overhadden, or an exciting fortnight pea-picking at Rainford Junction in the pouring rain and living under canvas.

I cannot think of school without prize-giving - never did I imagine I would attend so many. Before the war, everyone wore a white dress and black lisle stockings. I remember Rector Hornby, who was Chairman of the Governors, always making a joke about the swimming pool we were always going to have and which seemed a long time in coming.

School days in war-time must have had its difficulties. Coupons for uniforms, food rationing with Louie the cook and her large steam puddings, but my chief recollections were of Miss Perigo's first morning in prayers when the sirens sounded and we had to retire to the air raid shelters and the rule that if the sirens sounded during the night, school would start either a half or one hour later the next morning.

The work which we go to school for I don't suppose is so very different, except there is perhaps now more pressure. The present O and A levels were then School and Higher School Certificate. We didn't have the latest equipment in the science labs and language labs and no parents' evenings. Computers had not been heard of, but each generation has made the most of what was available at the time.

Founder's Day is very similar. The headmistress still leads the school to church, but now with the growth in numbers there is an overflow with its own service at school. I think that everyone attending school has loved the Founder's Day service. That is shown by so many girls

having one or other of the hymns included in their marriage service. Perhaps I could question at this point what has happened to "City of God how broad and far"?

One thing that has not changed over the years is the friendships forged at school, many of which develop into lifetime friendships and for which I am most grateful and I am sure in saying this my daughter would agree with me.

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