

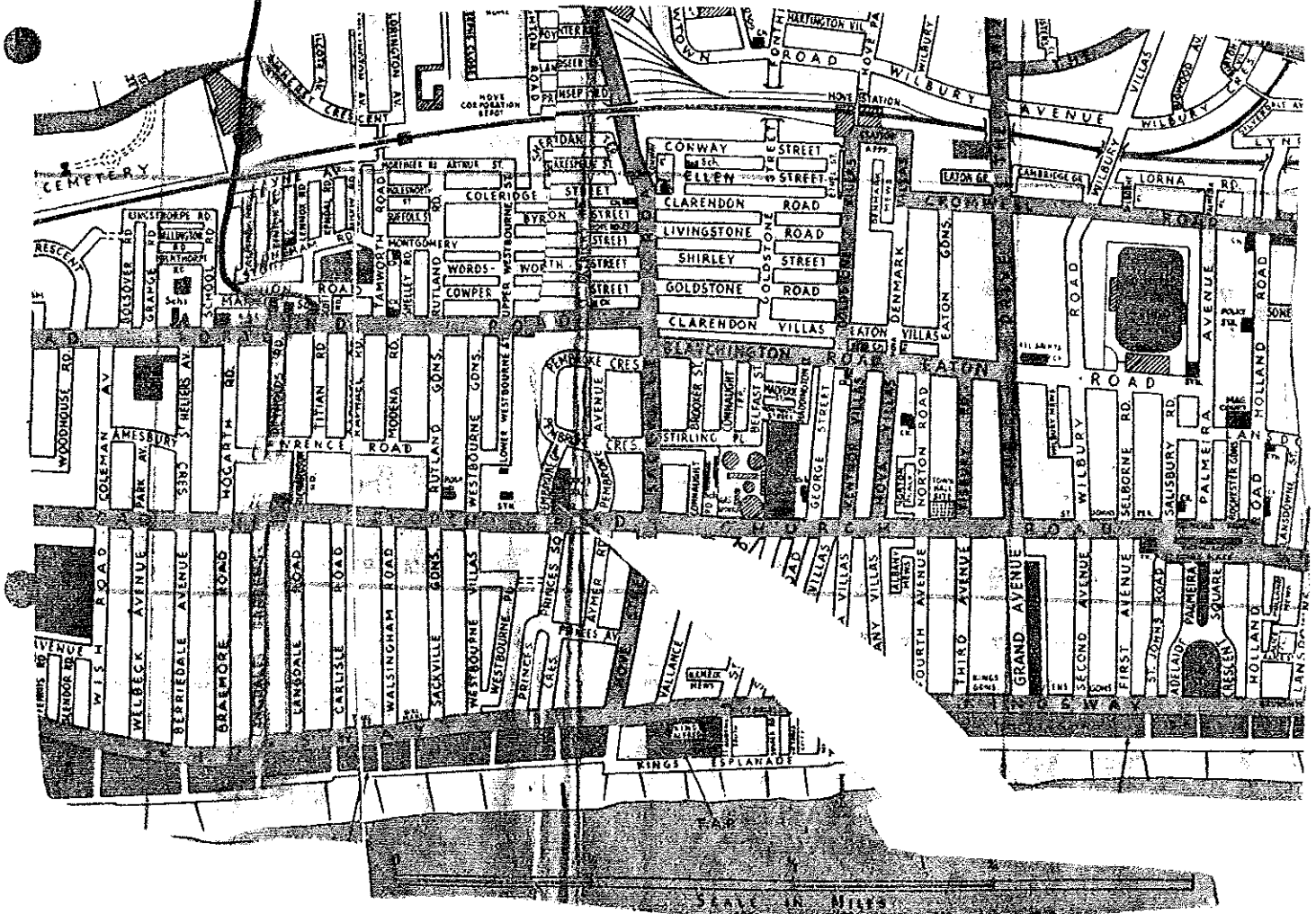
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AN INSIGNIFICANT SCHOOL

ALDRINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL, HOVE

1889 - 1943



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I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE QUEST

Aldrington Church of England School, Hove, - our school - was 90 years old. We thought it would be a good idea to find out as much as we could about its early years so that we could stage an exhibition and fair.

It seemed simple enough. What was the obvious place to look? A library. So off I went and cheerfully asked for "all the local papers printed in 1888, please."

The librarian looked at me oddly, and suggested that one might do to begin with. I saw why as soon as she dragged the volume to the desk. It seemed huger than any paper printed nowadays, and its tiny type was daunting.

I had chosen the 'Brighton Gazette and Sussex Telegraph, The Fashionable Journal of the South', published Thursday and Saturday, price one penny.

Several headachy hours later (the small print) I heaved my volume sadly back to the librarian's table. I wasn't very optimistic about finding anything about our school, and in fact I found nothing - even after many weeks' work and struggle with other newspapers. All the papers I read had Education Sections, with long and interesting articles, but though I found frequent reference to Ellen Street, Connaught Road and other schools, nothing about Aldrington.

However, my eyes kept straying to all kinds of fascinating bits of news, nothing to do with education. Who could resist a headline - 'Mysterious Disappearance of Female in Blue Hat'? There was a long account of how a Mr. Simmons had a housemaid who had gone for a walk the Sunday before in a blue hat and had never been seen again. The next issue reported 'Girl in Blue Hat Still missing!' Avidly I turned the pages. At last? 'Mystery Solved!' This was about two weeks later, and the girl in the blue hat -presumably not still wearing it - had been found - guess where? - in the attic of Mr. Simmons' house - 'in a very emaciated condition'. And that was all! What had happened? We shall never know.

Then there were all the advertisements. Royal Mail Steamers to the USA and

Canada charging 10-18 guineas for the saloon, 6 guineas for the Intermediate, and 'steerage at lowest rates'. You could rent a villa with 6 bedrooms and a bath and 2 reception rooms for £57 a year, and buy a large hotel for £2,000, a 'powerful toned Banjo' for 42 shillings, and a walnut bedroom suite for 8 guineas; a demonstration of Edison's Original Speaking and Singing Phonograph cost 3 guineas. Employment agencies advertised posts for housemaids at £16 a year, and 'Mrs. Cheesman, Professional Rubber, of many years experience is ready to attend ladies or give lessons in Massage to Nurses or Ladies' maids'... Dentists advertised painless extractions, with gas, for 5 shillings, and vets 'examined horses for soundness previous to purchase' for 10 shillings.

Crime, it appears, was not much different ninety years ago from the present day. One of the items I read about in 1888 was the discovery of a baby in a paper bag: the same afternoon I read in a local paper of a similar case in 1978 - the only difference being that the bag was made of plastic. In 1888 a magistrate remarked on an attack on an innocent pedestrian - "It is monstrous that a man cannot walk home quietly at 11 o'clock at night without being assaulted by gangs of men." Only the punishment for mugging is perhaps different today: then it seemed to have been automatically one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

Returning to the educational sections, I found an account of a year's work at Chailey Industrial School, which seems to have been an early form of Borstal. Much was made of the effort to keep down the cost of feeding and clothing these boys - you could imagine some Dickensian scenes when the amount per week for food per boy was just over 2 shillings, and the annual cost of food and clothing was £21.5.2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

Another educational snippet with a modern ring. Henry Robinson of Clarendon Road was summoned for not sending his children Hubert and Rosena to school. 'The defendant said he considered his children were learning as much at home as at the school, if not more.' This did not help him much: fined one shilling and costs.

Time was passing, and I still had no concrete facts about our school. Then I did what I should have done in the first place - looked at the School Log Books (with kind permission of the present headmistress). This partly solved

the riddle: the first entry was in fact dated 1889, when the school was officially opened, having presumably been built the previous year. But no special event heralded the opening, and I came to the conclusion that our school had been so insignificant that nobody had been particularly interested in it!

My protective instincts were aroused. Surely there must be people still alive who remembered the early days of the school? Perhaps elderly people whose memories for the distant past are vivid? So the next part of my quest was to write a letter to the local newspaper, the 'Argus', and from the replies to that letter most of the rest of my journey was illuminated.

II

THE SCHOOL LOG BOOK # 1889 - 1919

This first log book, which begins when the school was opened and continues until after the First World War, is a thick, stoutly bound book still in good condition in spite of much use. It contains a fascinating amount of information about staff, pupils and life in school which could be expanded to many books.

It begins soberly and factually:

'March 26th. 1889. I Genevieve Wickes, Assistant Mistress, took charge of this school on opening, March 25th/89. Present, in the morning, 16 children.*

The numbers gradually increased, and by June a Major Dowell was making visits to 'interview the parents for the purpose of helping those finding it difficult to pay their school fees.' We know from Miss Mainstone's account that in the early days fees had to be paid, and on July 8th there is an entry confirming her memory of another financial undertaking:

'A Boot and Shoe Club in connection with the School has been started this week, the children being allowed to pay 3d or less than that sum, 2d in the shilling will be added to the amount paid as interest.'

By this time Miss Cross had taken charge of the school. Through these pages we can watch the appearance and disappearance of many teachers, one resigning to get married, another leaving after only a week 'not having been accustomed to mixed and large classes', others being ill with 'abscesses in the mouth,' 'measles', and the usual colds, though several times it was reported 'Mistress present but unable to teach because of loss of voice'.

By July 1890 H.M. Inspectors had seen the school, and reported:

' This is a new School, showing good promise for the future. The instruction throughout has been thoroughly and carefully given. The only doubtful feature is the singing of the Infants...'

No details are given of the songs which the poor Infants performed so doubtfully, but there are some indications of other parts of the syllabus:

Recitations for 1891

- I. 'We are Seven'
- II. 'The Beggarman.'
- III. 'Lucy Gray'
- IV. 'The May Queen'
- V. 'King John'

The Infants had these Object Lessons for 1892 -

'The Sheep. The Cat. The Reindeer. Hippopotamus. Swallow.
Eagle. Fly. Bee. Wasp. Cup and Saucer. Pin. Needle.
Straw Hat. Lead Pencil. The Sea. The Gardener. The Shoemaker.
The Grape Vine. Wool. Leather. Gold. Coal.. Chalk. Rice.
Cotton. Paper. Silk. Sugar. Rain. Snow. '

No other details are given about subjects taught until 1893, when Geography is first mentioned, though the plan seems wide enough:

Geography

- I. Plan and Definitions
- II. and III. England and Wales.
- IV, V and VI. Europe.

(I, II etc. I take to mean the classes).

History as a separate subject was not mentioned until 1904.

History

- I. Few simple stories.
- II and III. Blackie's Twelve Stories.
- IV. Elementary History. ~~Bates~~ of the Monarchs.
- V and VI. General History. Chief Dates, specially Victoria's reign.

English seems to have consisted mostly of grammar:

I. Recognition of Nouns, Verbs, in conjunction with the formation of easy sentences.

II and III. Recognition of Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives and Adverbs in conjunction with the formation of easy sentences containing any of these.

IV. General Knowledge of the Parts of Speech. Simple Analysis and Parsing.

V and VI. As before and Derivatives.'

One subject which is often mentioned and which seems to have played an important part in the school was, curiously enough, Drawing. The boys took examinations in this, but we are not told what kind of examinations these were or what they practised drawing. Presumably it was some kind of technical drawing which might be useful to them in work later on, as engineers or carpenters. The cubes and cones mentioned in early memories do doubt were used for practical drawing.

The log book also contains entries about school closing. This took place not only on recognised holidays - a Royal Wedding in 1894, Jubilee Week in 1897 - but also for other pleasant occasions. Circuses were always disrupting the routine. In 1899 we read:

'Owing to Barnum's Show coming to the meadow adjoining the School the Managers thought it advisable to give a holiday on the Thursday afternoon.'

In 1898, after several entries about illness, the school was closed for a diphtheria outbreak lasting 9 weeks, and even when the children returned the epidemic had not come to an end. On December 12th there is a touching entry:

' A great gloom has been thrown over the School this week by the sudden death from diphtheria of one of the nicest little boys in the school...'

By 1910, a doctor or nurse was reported visiting the school and inspecting the children. On one occasion three boys were sent home with sore places on their faces - (perhaps Mr. Goble and his friends, who thus forfeited their watches? see Chapter VI). The dentist first makes his appearance in 1911, and, strangely, a photographer, in 1914. One wonders whether these were official photographs, since the financial details of the pupils and their poor backgrounds do not suggest that many would have had money to pay for photographs.

The first fire drill is recorded in 1915, noting that it took 1 minute to get all out and 4 minutes to get ~~back~~ out and in again. Perhaps this Fire Drill was necessary because of the outbreak of war? It is interesting, however, to note that the First World War, in comparison with the Second, seems to have made little impact on the school. In fact, apart from a reference to the War Savings collected by the school (£163.2.6. in 1918) the only way in which the school was directly affected by the outside world was when Mrs. Dunkerton left early on two occasions.- One was because her son was returning to the Front, and one 'to go to Londond on the occasion of her son's second decoration by H.M. the King.' Even the end of the First World War was not celebrated at the school; in fact, as some of the old pupils still remember, it was closed in October and November 1918 because of the influenza epidemic.

Here we must leave the log book, noting that when the nurse came on one of her periodic visits in 1919, she pronounced Aldrington to be 'the cleanest school in Hove' !

III

MISS MAINSTONE - SAND TRAYS AND HANDKERCHIEF DRILL

My name is Winifred Mainstone, born November 8th, 1898 - the ninth of twelve children. I commenced school in November 1902. Soon after this, fee-paying stopped. It had been 3 pence each Monday, but if there were three or more children in the family, only 2 pence each. Children began school at the age of 4, and the hours were 9 - 12 and 2 - 4, though after the age of about 7 you usually came out about 4.30.

We could get home to dinner, as we lived in Mainstone Road. Children who could not get home brought bread and dripping, bread and jam, a piece of bread pudding - always wrapped in newspaper. Our only drink was cold water from a shallow brown iron cup on a chain attached to the basin in the lobby. Our mother always warned us never to touch the metal rim with our lips! Most children ate the food they had brought for their dinner when we went out to play at 10.30 in the middle of the morning, so they had nothing left to eat later.

A soup kitchen was opened in Sheridan Terrace on Tuesday and Friday mornings, and the children who went there for soup were allowed out at 11.50 instead of 12. My mother was disgusted when I asked if I could have soup from the soup kitchen - it wasn't because of the soup, I just wanted to get out of school ten minutes earlier.

In the mornings the first bell was rung at 8.45 for five minutes, then there was silence for five, then the second bell rang out for the last five minutes.

Each morning and afternoon hands had to be shown, back and front, as we went in. Boots and shoes (IF you had any) had to be clean. Some children never did have any.

Half-day holiday was the last Friday in the month, IF the percentage of attendance at school had been good (over 90%). It was not always given, much to the annoyance of some parents, including mine, as we were always packed off to school regularly. At Christmas, if you had a year's unbroken attendance, you received a prize - either a book or a framed picture (religious mostly). Three years unbroken attendance brought you a watch, and it wants some believing, but this was attained by several, including the Stredwick family of Hove.

On Mondays we went to school with a bag made of material, with tape strung through it, round our necks. In it was a card marked Boot and Shoe Club. My mother used to put three pennies in each bag for all of us. This was paid out at the beginning of December, and was used by many families to buy boots or shoes for Christmas. My father took a great interest in our shoes, mending and looking after them, with blakeys, steel pe lts, the lot, so we did not need all this money for boots and shoes. My mother used it to buy extras for Christmas, and rightly so, as it had come out of her housekeeping purse.

One morning in November the Rev. Morgan turned up, and after we had said, "Good morning, Sir," we were told to stand on our forms with our faces to the wall. He walked all round and we lifted our feet so that he could study the state of our footwear. Children who he thought were badly shod, or who had no boots at all, would be given a voucher to go along to a shop in Blatchington Road for a new pair. I remember thinking this wasn't very fair: many children came to school in very old shoes or in wrong sizes, and their fathers earned quite as much as ours. As I said, our parents did all they could for us, and our father looked after our boots well. Some fathers, of course, spent a lot of money on drink. That reminds me: on our way to Catechism on Sunday afternoons we used to start out early to pass the pubs so that we could watch the dads being flung out - yes, literally flung out - at 2.00 p.m. This was another thing to make my mother angry, knowing in those early days that my father was having a struggle to keep us respectable, and we never did get a pair of free shoes.

My father was the Duke of Portland's bailiff and had the selling of his land to Hove Council. Our road (Mainstone Road) was named after our father as it was only a lane in younger days, surrounded by fields. The Duke asked if they would honour his bailiff when a road was made. Before this our address was just Mainstone, Hove, as residences there were very few then. I remember Portland Hotel just a house more or less; no Stonehna Road, just a may hedge all along. Later on my father built up a large pig farm where Wish Road is, and looked after several meadows, letting them out each year to Sanger's Circus during August. Before this, he had kept one pig (half was actually his as another man owned half) in the 'pit' which was on the ground where the park on Marmion Road is now. One day he went to the pit and the pig had vanished - also the man - so that was a real tragedy. I remember many of my old dolls were buried in that pit.

Now back to school. Cookery for girls took place on Friday afternoons. We had to bring our own flour, or meat for stews or whatever we were making. This was very difficult for our mothers. Cookery was at the Connaught Road School, and after the washing up we had to draw the kitchen, the ovens (inside and out) - all the flues etc - everything in the kitchen. I wasn't much good at drawing and I hated it. Miss Pinder and Miss Orbell were the teachers. After I left, the girls had a choice of cookery or laundry, the latter taking place at East Hove School, Davigdor Road. We didn't have drawing lessons in school, but the boys did - there were cones and cubes and things like that for them to draw.

A religious lesson took place every morning, and how tired we got of singing 'New Every Morning is the Love' or 'Blest are the Pure in Heart'. Then in singing lessons the teacher (not my favourite - I won't give her name!) - would point at a girl and say "YOU!" and you had to stand up and sing. I usually sang 'The Last Rose of Summer' or 'Drink to me Only with Thine Eyes' which seemed to be the songs she liked best.

The Rev. Ernest Morgan, that I mentioned before, lived nearby in Carlisle Road and often came in to take the religious lesson. Now and again the Rev. Du Boulay from St. Leonard's Church. The highlight, I think once a month, was Canon Rowsel (or Russell). Oh, to be taught by a Canon!

Scholarships took place when you were 11. At that time, East Hove and Connaught Road were charging 6d each Monday for education, but if you passed the examination you had the chance of attending those schools FREE. French was taught in these schools too - amazing progress. I went in for the scholarship, but didn't pass. I think it may have been because of the essay subject we were given. I remember it was 'A Monkey'. I thought, "What can I write? I've never seen a monkey. I know nothing about monkeys. I've never read a book about monkeys". So all I wrote was - I can see it now - "A monkey can climb trees." And that was the lot.

So I stayed on at Aldrington.

My first headmistress in the junior school was Miss Cross, later Miss Harris, quite well-liked. It was she who taught us letter-writing, even in those days, about 1909 - 1911. All kinds. She wrote a letter on the blackboard, it could be an advertisement for a job, a letter of thanks to a relative, how we had spent an imaginary holiday (of course we never had any in those days), and NEVER go back to a subject you have already mentioned, THINK FIRST and don't muddle everything up. I don't think I've kept to that advice in this account.

Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day always meant a trip to St. Philip's Church, to which we belonged. (The present Holy Cross Church was our social Parish Hall). By the way, my mother was in bed at the Cottage, Mainstone Road, just having given birth to her eleventh child, George, and from her bedroom window she watched the laying of the foundation stone.

In November and December of 1899 an epidemic of diphtheria broke out, and quite a number of little infants from Aldrington School lost their lives, including my little sister of 6. She could not be admitted to hospital as it was full. Nearly all the children who died are buried in the Churchyard of St. Leonard's, New Church Road.

In the school when I was there there were about 140 children. Standard I was taught on its own, also Standard II, then II and IV were taken together, and V, VI and VII. We did not all have separate classrooms, and where more than one class was taught in the same room one would have to write or read or do something quiet while the other was being taught by a teacher. We did not dare to look at the other class or disturb them. We knew what the punishment was. For girls as well as boys it was the cane. On one hand if you hadn't been too naughty, but on both hands if you had done something really bad. Then your name was written down in a log book, which was shown to the minister.

There wasn't much truancy in those days. There was a School Board man called Mr. Burgess who cycled round on a bicycle with his papers in a brown bag on his cross bar. He came to the school every morning and noted which children were marked absent, then cycled off to their homes to ask what was wrong. We had Inspectors too, who came in and asked questions and looked at books and work we had done.

Boys could leave school at 13, girls at 14, but at 12 years of age I went up to Standard VII and at 13 had received my year in it. Not allowed to leave, nothing more to learn, so I went into the infants' school (Miss Howlett was the main teacher). I was known as Teacher Winnie, and I got 1/6d per week - old money. After a short while I had a rise of 6d. My class consisted of about 20 children, aged 4, my youngest brother being one of these. At 15 years of age two shillings was not enough for me, so I left.

In those days they had sand trays for teaching writing. They were shallow metal trays like baking tins, with dry sand in. I would say, "One!" and they would have to hold their trays on their laps. "Two!" - lift it a few inches in the air. "Three!" - shake - to get the sand even. "Four!" - down again, ready to start work. They would trace the shapes of letters in the sand with their fingers. No doubt it saved money on paper and ink.

The same sort of system was used for handkerchief drill. The headmistress used to bring soft material for me to tear up into squares. I would ask every morning who had come without handkerchiefs, and hand our squares to those who hadn't. Then "One!" - bring out handkerchiefs. "Two!" - put handkerchief to nose. "Three!" - BLOW! "Four!" - return to pocket or wherever they kept them.

Friday afternoons I went along Portland Road with money from Miss Howlett to buy a 1 lb. bag of sweets, and these were handed out to my babies. At Christmas time we had a tea and a huge Christmas tree, and the two teachers and headmistress dressed a little doll for each girl and bought a small toy for each boy. No jumble sales in those days to bring in cash for treats.

Money was always short in those days, but mother and father always did their best, as I have said. One of the expenses Mother had was the money she gave to gipsies - there were many of those. The women used to come round, always with a baby in their arms. You had to buy something - my mother usually bought lace for our dresses - or they would curse you! The tramps (there were a lot of them too) were always polite and well-behaved. They would bring

an old tin and mother would put a little dry tea, milk and sugar in it. I suppose they went off then to boil it up on the fire. If they thought my mother looked kind (or soft, I suppose you'd say), they say politely, " I don't suppose you'd have a bit of bread and cheese?"

IV

MISS LELLIOTT - IN AT THE RED AND OUT AT THE BLUE

Miss Mainstone's account of the early years is so full and accurate that I can add only a few things to her chronicle. Incidentally, I had completely forgotten about the cones and cubes for the boys to draw, but when I read about them I could suddenly see them in my mind's eye on top of the teacher's cupboard!

And of course I remember her sister Mabel, who was one of my very first friends. I was not told till much later that she had died, since I was also ill at the time. I remember that while I was ill in bed the doctor kept asking who my best friends were. I answered - thinking it was more polite - "I like them all!" But he kept on asking, and in the end when he asked me the name of the little girl I played with most, I answered Mabel Mainstone, and he stopped asking questions. I now know that he was in fact trying to find out the diphtheria contacts.

I was admitted to Aldrington School in May 1899. I resided at the time at The Nurseries, New Church Road, which is now demolished, Amesbury Crescent and Park Avenue now standing on the site. A brickfield and a blacksmith's premises were adjacent to the nurseries. I went to school via New Church Road (almost devoid of houses in the stretch between Langdale Gardens and St. Leonard's Road) and up what is now Richardson Road and Titian Road, which were then undeveloped rough roadways. Around 1905 Titian and Richardson Roads were kerbed and channelled and thereby made more easy of access.

The actual building at Aldrington School at the time I was there consisted of two adjoining buildings, the Infants' Department under Miss Shutt as Head, and her two assistants, Teacher Lena (Miss Scaife) and Teacher Margaret (Miss Ockenden). The Senior Department was under Miss Cross with Miss Turner, Miss Luff and Mrs. Dunkerton as her assistants. Miss Harris came around 1906. In those days the school catered for all children from 4 - 14 years, and with a staff as small as that, two classes were often taught by one teacher. Religious instruction was excellent, and most comprehensive, and took place every morning. Being a Church of England School, we were taught the Faith as the Church of England ~~next~~ holds it, and I have been so very grateful all my life for this excellent ground work.

One lesson which was taught differently in those days was needlework. We began in the Infants, learning hemming. The teacher prepared the work by folding the material for the hem and putting a line of red and blue dots along in two rows - then the pupil had to put the needle in at the red dot and out at the blue. In fact, when I was training as a teacher, I remember preparing hundreds of hems in this way. When we had learnt to hem properly, we continued to the making of tea cloths, then pillow cases and simple pinafores. We began knitting with cuffs, then in Standard IV we made gloves - on four needles of course - and in Standards V, VI and VII we made socks.

Another thing which Miss Mainstone does not mention¹ the playground was divided into two, the West side for boys, the East for girls.

I left Aldrington in July 1907 to study so that I could become a teacher. I knew at 7 years of age that this is what I wanted to be, and my desire never wavered. My school days at Aldrington were very happy ones.

I

MR. GALE: HORSEDRAWN BUSES AND A SUFFRAGETTE

During my period as a pupil at Aldrington School (1910 - 1915) life was very different from the present day.

I recall being taken by my elder brother, Philip, to school for the first time and being stood on a table. The teacher remarked, "What a nice curly-headed boy!" I am now quite bald...

The Head Teacher in the Infants' class was a Miss Howlett, her assistant Miss Johnson, and a Miss Burtenshaw. We were taught to write on slates, and to count on bead frames.

The Vicar of St. Philip's Church, the Rev. Ernest J. Morgan, then the Rev. E. Creswell, kept a fatherly eye on the pupils. This did not mean quite the same then as it does now, wither. Fathers were stricter in those days. Smiles did not come easy to them. I don't suppose they had much to smile about.

One great day when I was 6 years old (1912) stands out vividly in my mind. It was the opening of the Marmion Road Park, which had previously been a pit. We were all anxious to attend the ceremony, but were threatened not to be let out early if we did not behave ourselves in class that day! Shades of Miss Johnson... I can still remember the whole day of effort that went into 'behaving' but I can't remember much of the ceremony - I must have been too small to see much...

As has already been mentioned, the School was surrounded by fields at this time, with little more than a cart track beyond Portland Road. There were no houses between the school and Portland Station. I say a cart track, because horses were the main means of transport. Buses were horsedrawn, starting at Westbourne street, down Westbourne Gardens, then along New Church Road into Brighton.

When I was 7 I went into Standard I, my teacher being Miss Maynard, who lived at 10 Portland Road. A redoubted lady! She was something of a suffragette, a political agitator they would call her today. She was prone to stand on a piece

of waste ground between Shelley Road and Tamworth Road (now the site of St. Peter's R.C.Church) and let the passers-by have it. Votes for Women! and all that. I can imagine her doing it too. I wonder now what the other teachers thought of her.

Searching my memory - I am now 71 - I believe I was reasonably happy at school. Not that we were ever asked, or thought about it.

On leaving school at 15 I entered the ~~service~~ employ of London and Brighton South Coast Railway as a junior clerk, serving the Company for 45 years. On retirement at 60 I was treated very well.

I think I can say I have had a very full and successful life.

VI

MR. GOBLE: SEVEN, NOT THREE!

I think Miss Mainstone's account is excellent. One thing I must point out, though, is the length of time you had to attend school without being absent before you won a watch. It was SEVEN years, not three! I have a special reason for remembering this, as I had done about 6 years and about 10 months when I had a rash on my face which the school nurse thought was scabies. So off I had to go to the clinic at Tisbury Road, with 6 or 7 other boys who were also due to get a watch, but because we had to stay away from school for a few days because of this rash, no watch....

That school nurse, by the way, used to come round the schools and look for nits in our hair every 3 months.

I was at Aldrington School in 1916, but at the early age of $9\frac{3}{4}$ I took the scholarship exams and passed for what was then known as East Hove High Grade School. I remember there used to be a small framed certificate over Standard I door at Aldrington saying that 7 children had passed the scholarship exam with over 99% in 1914... Is there anything like 99% pass these days? I remember too that I passed with what was considered a very low mark in those days - something like 91% - and this would have been better if I had had some French lessons. The idea was that children who wanted to go in for the examination had to inform the head teacher shortly beforehand, and she then arranged for them to have a few French lessons. Only three boys went in that year, a boy called Scott, Les James and myself, and Les and I passed. Up to that time the fees at East Hove School had been sixpence a week, but the year I went the fees were stopped.

I remember the horse buses running from Westbourne Gardens to the Clock Tower in Brighton. Of course, there were many horses at that time. My father was a farrier and shod horses of all kinds, from cab rank horses to the soldiers' horses. The soldiers used to parade and exercise in Hove Recreation Ground.

Now I'm thinking about the buses: after the horse buses we had electric ones, and I remember on our way back from the Steine in Brighton, when we got to Clock Tower Hill we had to get off and run to the top ~~xxx~~ to rejoin the bus there, as the batteries weren't strong enough to take the load up the hill.

MRS. CLEGG -RUSTY KNITTING NEEDLES AND PEASE PUDDING

I am Mrs. Kathleen Clegg (nee Godly) and I started at Aldrington School in 1924. I lived in Linton Road. Miss Minter was the Headmistress and there was another teacher but I can't remember her name, though Dunkerton is familiar. Miss Minter lived at the end of Portland Road, past Harvey&s shop. I remember Stredwick's shop in Stoneham Road. There was a draper's shop nearby, a dairy - was it Terry's? and a paraffin shop. Paraffin was very important for heating then. Opposite was a grocery shop with a coal yard behind it.

In my day we also went to St. Philip's Church on Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day. We walked in crocodile down Richardson Road, and the parson was a Rev. Toyne. Religious knowledge was paramount. We learned the Creed and the Catechism, and sang the same hymns Miss Mainstone mentioned. They were repeated so many times I could not forggt them if I wanted to.

We also still had the handkerchief drill! Mostly bits of rag. The much-dreaded cane was still in existence, and the sand trays. There were sliding glass dorrs between the two classrooms in the front, and one day a boy called Roy Ridge caught his fingers in them. It must have been agony but he got no/ attention till Miss Minter had finished talking, such was the discipline. There were coal fires, but we froze even in the front rows. Mr. Burgess was still the School Board man. He still rode his bicycl e. He had a moustache.

I left school at 14. I worked in the office of Maynard's sweet factory until I married at St. Leonard's church in 1940. I married a Regular Soldier who is still serving. Mr. Gale mentioned Andrew Godly, who would be my brother, who is 14 years older than me. He is now 72 years of age and lives in Maidstone. He became the ~~butler~~ butler to Reginald McKenna the Home Secretary, who lived in Wilbury Road, I think.

My Sunday School was Sadler's Hall in Stoneham Road. The preacher was Mr. Sadler the chemist in Portland Road, a saintly man with a white beard, who lived in Titian Road. Shorts the butcher's was on the corner, and Bolton's with a Pease Pudding and Faggots shop along the road (Oh, the smells!)

In the top class we learnt to knit on 4 steel needles. Mostly the needles were very rusty and had to be cleaned with emery paper. The wool had been knitted and rewound so many times that it was like string and the colour was ghastly.

If you were lucky enough to have lunch to take, the packets with your name on were put into a large box. The posh children had biscuits, but the majority had bread and ~~me~~ jam, with marg if you were specially lucky. The iron cup mentioned by Miss Mainstone stirs my memory, also the admonition never to let the rim touch one's lips, so there hadn't been much change in all those years. The lavatories were in the far corner of the playground, very primitive, and we were never allowed to visit them in the middle of a lesson. Such was our terror, one poor boy had an accident in class, and I can still see him mopping up even now. We were a bit sorry for him but it was a bit exciting too, and broke the monotony of the lessons...

All the families we knew had children who went to Aldrington School, so we all knew what it was going to be like. I had a sister who was the May Queen of Hove back in the 1920s, when we used to celebrate Empire Day. All those festivals were very important then, and we talked about events like that for years. 'I'M one of the Godlys, my sister Phyllis was May Queen of Hove'.....

VIII

MRS. COTTON AND THE MICE

I am Muriel Cotton (nee Frost) and I attended Aldrington School from 1928-43. In those days children had to move to Ellen Street or Portland Road for their last year of Junior Education before going to the Secondary or Grammar School.

I went into Miss Dagnall's class and I remember the alphabet all round the room, which we sat and changed every morning. We used Beacon Readers - the cat sat on the mat, and all about a dog called Rover. We had singing in the classroom. Mrs. Fox ~~taught~~ taught us Scottish songs. She took the second class and Miss Kibblewhite the top class. She became Mrs. Carpenter before I left, and I still have the book of poems which she gave me just before I left.

On cold days, the milk, which we paid 2½d a week for (½d a day) was put near the fire to warm. The open coal fire made a cheerful glow.

Walking of glowing, I remember an occasion when a boy was caned. I can't remember why, but I do remember the cloud of dust that came from the seat of his trousers! This greatly amused us, of course.

We kept tame mice, and my - how they multiplied! They were in a cage in the stock room. At playtime we were allowed to play with them and I remember letting them one at a time run up one sleeve and down another. It didn't seem to occur to us to be frightened of them, though I don't think I'd like to do the same thing now.

I remember learning Godd King Wenceslas for a Christmas entertainment, but I don't think parents ever came to concerts in those days. School was school and home was home, and parents only came to complain (not very often!) or to be complained to.

Mrs. Carpenter taught us handwriting - beautiful copper-plate, but then when I went to Hove County School they made me learn Marion Richardson - hence my present scrawly handwriting!

Evacuees from London descended on us, and we nearly burst at the seams. I caught head lice because I came home with the wrong beret. My mother was appalled, as only 'dirty children' had such things.

During the war we went to the shelter whenever the siren went, and I don't think one ever forgets that damp musty smell. We all clutched our gas masks and I have a hazy memory of eating biscuits there as well. In fact, as I sit here writing, the scene comes to my mind. There was a mysterious trunk covered with a curtain - we used to imagine all kinds of things were in it - coffins were favourites...

IX

MRS. PAGE IS MACHINE-GUNNED

My name is Enid Hage (nee Avis) and I attended Aldrington School from 1938-43. I remember the same teachers as Mrs. Cotton, and have many of the same memories. I remember keeping mice, and letting them run all over me - and again I'm not too sure that I would like that today!

Once a week was National Savings Day when we all had to bring a penny a week and were given a stamp to put on a car. I nearly always forgot. Then when it was full we exchanged it for a sixpenny stamp and when we had enough of those we had a certificate.

What really stands out in my mind is the outbreak of the Second World War. My mother and I were ~~out~~ on our way to Portland Road School to collect two evacuees. The siren went and the warden called out "Take Cover!" I thought he said Take a Colour, and wondered what colour he meant us to take, and what it was.

I was coming home from school one day to dinner and was passing the florist's shop along Portland Road when a German plane flew very low and started machine-gunning us. There was no warning and the next thing I knew was I was flat on my face on the ground. A lady said to me afterwards that she had to push me down, if not I would have been killed. I arrived home to the horror of my Mother with my face streaming with blood, but I was safe.

Aldrington School got hit during the war, too. I remember the dog fights in the sky, the German planes against ours, then the sirens went. If we had time we all had to go to the shelters which were across the playground. One day we were halfway across when two planes started shooting. The bullet holes made deep marks in the side of the school, but I expect they have been filled up now...

X

POSTSCRIPT - 1983

This material - as I explain in the first chapter - was collected by me in a light-hearted project for a School Fair. It developed into an extremely interesting (and often hilarious) succession of encounters with people of great individuality. The written material is of course only a small percentage of the actual information given to me - it had to be edited at the time in a form which could be pinned up on the school walls to give details of the life of the time.

Miss Mainstone's letter acted as the key - most of the other accounts were written down by me after interviewing the people concerned. Looking back at it now, I wished I could have spent more time and asked more questions, but at the time it seemed enormously time-consuming - and as it had to be finished by a definite date I was working within certain limitations.

However, as a collection of memories of an insignificant 'country' school, in an area developing into a suburb of Brighton, it has its good points. Several occur to me: the Second World War made much more difference to the local population - scattered them and changed their outlook. Mrs. Clegg, Mrs. Page and Mrs. Cotton all married well above their original levels - it is interesting to see how the women on the whole can 'rise in the social scale' with more ease than men. Men, you could say, like one of our authors, are on the other hand much readier to be happy in their appointed place...

Another point which seems strange. No mention is ever made of the sea, which is in fact just round the corner from the church they all mention. In the early days perhaps Hove and Brighton were not so popular as tourist centres. Or perhaps swimming or even paddling were not encouraged. I know that I myself was brought up in Lowestoft on the East Coast during the 1920s, and though our house was almost on the beach - and the school even nearer - no special mention was made of it. In fact, my mother took in summer visitors - at 3 gns a week full board, - it was they who went on to the beach, paddled and swam. Perhaps beaches and the sea were vaguely upper-class activities and as such neither I nor the Altrington children ~~were~~ took part in them.

I moved away from Hove in 1979 and now have no connection with the school. The headmistress at the time was a very unco-operative, bigoted woman who presented such an eccentric attitude of mind to the project that I ~~was~~ am amazed it ever got off the ground! One bizarre episode which I still remember with wry humour was when she insisted on all the teachers kneeling and praying against the Forces of Evil (politely typified by me) because one of the teachers borrowed a costume from an odd character in Titian Road who lent out Daleks, organised Jousts, and sold Blood for stage plays and had a Pentagon marked in chalk on his sitting-room carpet....

Yes, it was an entertaining summer!
