

My Hoath School Memoirs

I started at Hoath School in 1944 - on the first day I played with a large red wooden train engine - I loved it. The war was on but I can only recall being taken to the shelter once - it was quite scary. I remember there being cone shaped concrete tank traps and rolls of barbed wire along the coast line at Herne Bay and Bishopstone. Very occasionally we heard the constant drone of doodlebugs going over and hoped the drone of the engine would not stop - as this meant it was coming down! I was not that frightened by the doodlebugs themselves but more by sensing the concern in adults.

I remember I was not keen on using the outside toilets, especially as there were often loads of crane flies (daddy longlegs) in there. From looking at your website, the overall education today is much more enterprising and comprehensive. For example, in the six years I was there, I recall only three outings - playing rounders against Lower Harde, an outing to Dymchurch and the little railway and an outing to the Greenwich Observatory. I remember being taught how to tie up shoelaces - we all were given two bits of cardboard with holes and had to learn how to tie a bow.

My attendance was good, missing very few days throughout my schooling. One day I did miss, the class had learnt remainders (4's into 10 is 2 remainder 2) and the next day I was in a right old state trying to catch up with these remainders!

The school dinners must have started around the time I started - I really hated cabbage and used to stuff all the cabbage off my plate into the inkwell hole on the desk or put it in my pocket. One day I actually ate it and was so proud, I asked for more - heaven knows why!

One teacher, my favourite (her name I cannot recall), left to teach in Alice Springs, the Australian Outback, but I could find no reference to this on your web page.

Living in Maypole, we walked to and from school, using footpaths across the field. Then, on the border line for the 11 plus, I was offered a place at Faversham Technical School but my family felt it too far to travel to twice each day so I ended up at Sturry. The bonus there was that I was in the A stream every year and finished in the Upper Fourth, the first year such a class was compiled. I clearly had the requirements to have passed the 11 plus but did not take it seriously and to some extent, this shaped much of my subsequent life. I recall getting the 11 Plus results and my dismay at my friend, June Needham, joyfully seeing she had passed and me seeing I had failed. I have subsequently passed nine 'O' level and three 'A' level GCEs and now am a CEO for a national charity so I have some misgivings about the 11 Plus and whether this is the right approach. As we used to catch the school bus outside Hoath School, I still used to keep in touch.

I recall in about 1950 going to a pupil's (Jeffrey Mann) home and seeing television for the very first time, a little tiny screen with a blurry black and white image. There were then two shops where we could buy sweets, the old post office in Hoath and Tutt's in Maypole Road at the end of the long alleyway footpath near the old Policeman's house. Mind you, money was very tight in those days, not like today. Tutt's also used to sell paraffin for oil lights and oil heaters and my job was to take the accumulator (battery) for the radio down to exchange for one charged up. Having no television, the radio was king and programmes I recall listening to regularly were: *Just William*, *Billy Bunter*, *Dick Barton Special Agent*, *Saturday Night Theatre*, *Family Favourites* and *In Town Tonight*.

The verandas were of course open then - a good place to shelter from the wind, rain or cold. We used to get our little bottle of milk in morning break and despite strenuous efforts on my part and a bit of whining, I never did get to be milk monitor!

I raised a jackdaw from a nest in Oldtree when very young and it used to follow me to Hoath School, flying high above me - the teachers were not very happy but did not know what to do.

In 1953, we held a pantomime in the Village hall to raise funds for the Flood Relief - I still have the programme.

Oh, happy days!

John Arnold