

Account of Purley on Thames

Reminiscing on Purley School

R200369 2/6/2017

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Mrs McLoughlin was a teacher at Purley Church of England School from 1958 to 1973. This article was published in Purley Parish News May 1973. Formerly R000061

To go back only seventeen years it can be seen how the present school has made giant strides. I came down to Purley from my home in Caversham in May 1958. A miserable stormy wet through day. Floods everywhere including Purley. The school was then a very broken down looking spectacle.

The school wall was groggily standing up in places, and in others flat on the ground. "Playground" a veritable sea of mud. A very dark day to start with, the school rooms - then no terrapin - even more dark because of ancient leaded lights inter-diamond with opaque green glass! Water from a badly leaking roof was being caught in buckets, two gas burners making an indescribable noise - but not much light - in the centre of the room. And to cap it all an enormous ventilator (which looking back now, looked like a space rocket gone wrong) was whipping and clattering round in seeming incalculable fury at the storm.

Oh dear! I thought I would stay for about six weeks to help them out, and here I am fifteen years later. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that the lady who was headmistress at the time, told me proudly that she had just had hot water laid on in the school! She then went on to show me a large gas boiler in what is now the staffroom, but was then full of first year junior children. It seemed that her last lesson each morning was given in a very steamy atmosphere as the

water had to be hot for the washing up of dinner plates etc.

When I arrived to commence my duties as an infant teacher the following September, I found quite a transformation. The County had taken over; the offending ventilator removed, the whole roof re-done with new tiles. The outdated windows mainly replaced with clear glass, electricity installed, and a new cloakroom, kitchen and toilet block added.

Happy and funny memories crowd in at this point. Throughout the following twelve years we all strove to make learning the three Rs exciting and acceptable. Christmas concerts, harvest festivals, open days, prize days, school trips, sports days, exhibition days followed in a never ending sequence. And in amongst it all we scarcely "missed a trick" as the chances arose to inculcate some intricacy of spelling, reading or numbers.

We always seemed to be working towards something, which is really what life is all about isn't it? Throughout all this I must mention two people who helped to see it through, one is Mrs Luker who was the dinner lady and the other the ubiquitous and ever dependable Miss Skerritt.

Ah well, all good things come to an end, and it is now with great sadness I must bow out of Purley where I have spent so many happy years. I shall greatly miss everywhere and everybody. However I leave with the comforting knowledge that the school is now an oasis of comfort, learning and luxury. The grounds are like a park, and abound with climbing frames and other attractive features. Inviting little seats are under the trees, and the whole place radiates happiness and familyness" Purley children are very lucky indeed.

