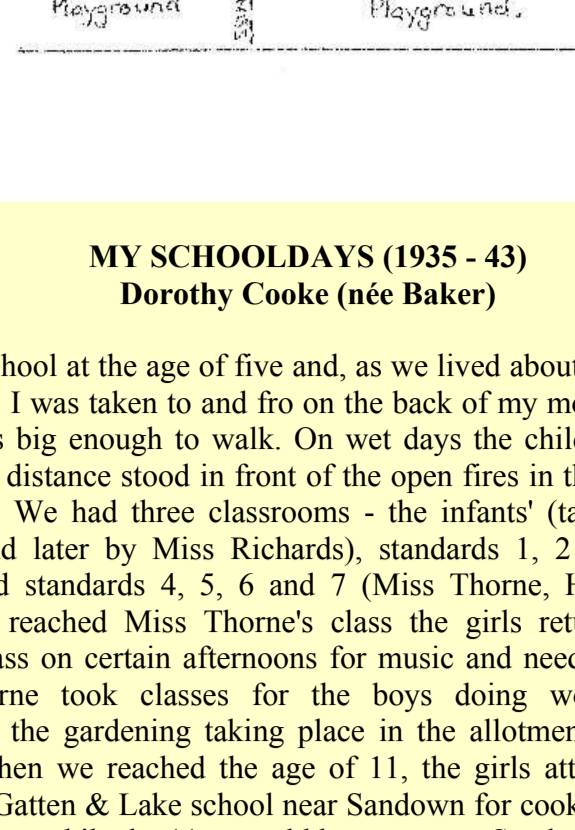


Is this how you remember
Godshill School?



MY SCHOOLDAYS (1935 - 43) Dorothy Cooke (née Baker)

I started school at the age of five and, as we lived about 1 miles from the school, I was taken to and fro on the back of my mother's bicycle until I was big enough to walk. On wet days the children who had travelled a distance stood in front of the open fires in the classrooms to dry off. We had three classrooms - the infants' (taught by Mrs. Harvey and later by Miss Richards), standards 1, 2 and 3 (Miss Webb) and standards 4, 5, 6 and 7 (Miss Thorne, Headmistress). When we reached Miss Thorne's class the girls returned to Mrs Webb's class on certain afternoons for music and needlework while Miss Thorne took classes for the boys doing woodwork and gardening, the gardening taking place in the allotments behind the school. When we reached the age of 11, the girls attended weekly classes at Gatten & Lake school near Sandown for cookery and home management, while the 11 year old boys went to Sandown for weekly classes for woodwork and metalwork, travelling to and fro on ordinary public transport. Also at the age of eleven we sat an exam. for the Grammar School and although there were regular "passes" not everyone took the opportunity as most had to leave school at fourteen to work. The girls and infant boys shared one end of the playground whilst the older boys played in the area between the school and school house (then occupied by Miss Thorne and her mother and Miss Webb). In our last year at school we were allowed to go to nearby fields for our midday playtime. These fields are now the housing estate.

We had no school dinners until the 1940s, children living near the school went home, while the rest of us took sandwiches and sometimes during the winter potatoes to bake beneath the classroom fire.

Prize-givings and concerts were held annually with parents and friends being invited to these evening events, prominent educational people presented the prizes, with the Scripture prizes being presented by the local Church and Chapel dignitaries on alternate years. Miss May O'Connor was a popular guest at the prizegivings. The Christmas Concert consisted of sketches and songs with a shadow play sometimes being included. One particularly popular item was 'Ten Green Bottles'. Ten pupils dressed as green bottles stood in a row while others sang a song as follows...

*Ten green bottles hanging on the wall
Ten green bottles hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle should accidentally fall
There'll be nine green bottles hanging on the wall.*

and so on with one 'bottle' falling to the ground each time on the word 'fall' until none were left standing.

Another annual ceremony took place on Armistice Day (always on 11th November in those days). The poppy seller came in during the morning and after buying our poppies we sang an appropriate hymn and observed a two minute silence on the stroke of 11 o'clock.

Annual visitors included the dentist, doctor and the nurse who came to inspect our heads. This nurse came on a bicycle with a black bag on the handlebars and the conversation of the day was whether she was carrying a baby in it or not. We were not so enlightened in those days.

Lessons as I remember were Scripture and maths every day, with English, Composition, History, Geography, Nature, Poetry, Music and Needlework and Handicraft being fitted in during the rest of the week, and when necessary (which was pretty often) spelling and multiplication tables would be worked on.

When we were 15, we became eligible for the "School Journey". This was a trip to Winchester for a few days, but as war became imminent trips like this were all cancelled. We did however manage to get in a day trip to Stonehenge, going over on the paddle steamer 'Princess Elizabeth'.

When I was about 7 or 8 I remember we all looked out of the windows at the back of the school to see a waterspout in the sky. It was a long way away - somewhere over the Solent I should think.

When war broke out some of our friends came to school with news that their fathers had been called up for the services. As we came from a farming community our families were exempt as they were needed on the farms to produce food. As the war got worse we took in evacuee children from the mainland to our homes. We took two brothers from Portsmouth (aged 5 and 6). As a mother myself now I realise how heartrending it must have been to let the children go, but with the air-raids getting so bad there was no choice. Most of the children going to homes in Rowd had never seen a farm, or farm animals, before and some of the escapades had to be seen to be believed! Of course it worked both ways as the farmers and their families had never before had close encounters of a permanent kind with town children and conversations on both sides were peppered with comments on what he or she had said or done and what would or would not be eaten, done or tolerated. It became an unwritten law to say nothing about buses going to Hyde and the boats, as it was quite possible that some of them would have gone home if they could have found a way.

As the war got even worse our classes at Sandown and Gatten and Lake were cancelled and we were told not to loiter on our way to and from school as air-raids became frequent. I remember seven of us running for cover in a ditch near Meryll as a German plane came over very low before coming down in a field at Bleakdown. It was so low that we could see the pilot sitting in it quite clearly. After coming down safely in fields, he walked to the main road where he stopped a passing van and after showing the driver where his plane was, he then presented him with his flying gloves and gave himself up.

On another occasion one of our planes passed over very low before coming down at Ford Farm. This one had bits of wood dropping off as it went. After this it was considered too dangerous for us to walk to school from outlying areas and so my father (Harry Baker from Rowd) was contracted by the Education Authority to take us to and fro in his van. I was not unduly worried by the planes. The two things I hated most were gas-masks and Bren-gun carriers. We took our gas-masks with us wherever we went and had regular practice during which we had to keep them on sometimes for up to 20 minutes or half an hour. I could never breathe properly in mine and consequently was half suffocated after five minutes! The Bren-gun carriers and tanks terrified me as they had a habit of swinging round in the road and as I couldn't see the crew as they are hidden away inside, I suppose I thought they couldn't see me. I always seemed to meet these monsters after my mates had turned off the main road to reach their homes and I was left on my own for about three quarters of a mile. At one stage we were asked to collect stinging nettles and raspberry leaves for the war effort (for medicinal purposes), but what with the boys chasing the girls with the nettles and the girls (me for one) collecting the raspberries along with the leaves, this little enterprise soon fizzled out! The older girls took a turn to knit sea-boot socks and a frustrating exercise this turned out to be. We used thick wool on bone needles (no steel needles then) and as the needles snapped under the strain, we carried on knitting on the jagged stumps until our fingers were raw. But we didn't mind as it was for the sailors.

Our evening events during the war years had to be held either in the afternoon which proved awkward for the farming community, or when enough blackout curtains could be borrowed from parents and friends to black out every window in the school as not one think of light was allowed to be seen after dark, and the rule about this was strict. Air-raid shelters were dug in part of the allotments and we were expected to get into these in the shortest possible time at a blast from Miss Thorne's whistle. We didn't mind this at all as by the time we had all got in, been counted and got out and back to the classroom again, we were too late to continue with that particular lesson. However, when the shelters had water standing in the bottom of them it wasn't quite so good!

In the years before the war we had the 'Stop-me-and-Buy-One' ice-cream man visiting us on his bicycle. He came during the lunchtime break and we bought ice-creams over the school wall. He carried the ice-creams in a large container fixed to the front of his bike, and looked very clean and neat in a white coat and peaked cap. We also had visits from time to time from rag-and-bone men who exchanged goldfish for rags which we took from home. A lot of business was done over the school wall including chatting to troops during the war as they passed by on route marches. But of course we weren't old enough to get full benefit from this latter encounter!

School dinners started at sometime in early 1940, with a part of the centre classroom being partitioned off to make a kitchen and trestles and benches being put in to eat at. A local lady cooked the meals with the older children taking turns to wash up and sometimes helping with other chores such as preparing vegetables.

Extract from School Log Book - 11th July, 1944:

"Very little work was possible this morning owing to time spent in the shelters. It is very difficult to hear a siren here - today a child was posted outside in the garden. The children were brought up for dinner in groups, as no All Clear was heard."

ooOoo

SOME MEMORIES OF GODSHILL SCHOOL DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR by Laura Hunt, née Gray

Quite a few of the pupils of Cottage Grove School in Portsmouth were evacuated to the Isle of Wight, because Portsmouth was considered a high risk area. With my two brothers, Leslie and Peter, by my side, we arrived at Godshill School early in November 1959. I was 8, Leslie just 6 and Peter just 5. The two boys were chosen to go to Mr and Mrs Morris at Godshill Post Office and I went to the Station House to live with Mr and Mrs. Beasley and their son Kenneth. At school Leslie and Peter were in Miss Richard's class and I went to Miss Webb's class. We sat at long bench type desks with a shelf underneath. (I hated it because I had to sit next to a boy.) We sat with our backs to the road facing the fire place, needless to say we never felt any warmth from the fire unless close to it. On our left hand side was a wooden screen which was opened on Friday mornings for hymn singing. We had hymns and prayers every morning as well, of course, but Fridays was a proper scripture lesson and hymn practice. We were only allowed to write with a pen dipped in ink, which used to get rather thick when blotting paper was put in it. We had a pencil for drawing and we had to keep the pencil for the whole term. Drawing lessons used to be on Friday afternoons, and although I was not a very good artist it was still a favourite of mine.

Miss Webb used to take the girls for needlework and the first thing I attempted to make was a pillow-case. I had started the seams when I lost the needle so was not able to carry on with it until I found it again! Luckily I found it down a crack in the floorboards. I did progress to making myself a dress, everything done by hand. I've always thanked Miss Webb for making me interested in needlework as it was something I carried on doing after I left school - making my own dresses, coats, my wedding dress and of course clothes for my two daughters later on.

At the beginning of the war we all had to have 3 injections (I can't remember what for). I had had mine in Portsmouth but because they had no record of them I had to have them all over again. I considered myself most unfortunate. At this time the most popular game played by the girls was hospitals. We all lay on the ground by the fence under the hedge. The thorns of the hawthorn were used as the needles for injections to inoculate us and the leaves were used to rub on as the disinfectant! Another game the girls played at that time was "going up the wall" - that was standing on our heads or hands with our skirts tucked into our knicker legs. We were only allowed to do that round the back otherwise the boys or passers-by would see our underclothes. Yes, we were segregated from the rough and rude boys.

Our playtime was different to the infants except lunchtimes. Another game was kerb or wall, which was a chasing game. We also played singing games like "The farmer's in his den".

Our drill (P.E.) was purely exercises in the playground and games were a few skipping exercises and balls and hoops. We played rounders and shinty in a field that the cows had just vacated. It was also on a slope so it was hard work trying to hit the ball up hill. I think the boys played a little football.

By the time we were in the top class we were 11 and were expected to help with the infants. I enjoyed that. Miss Thorne was our teacher, then Miss Moody. Our cookery classes were an adventure in themselves as we had to catch the bus outside the school and go to Gatten & Lake School. I was now living at Hill Bank Cottages so caught the bus to Godshill at Sandford, and I still had to do this on the days we went to cookery classes, - this seemed pointless to me but I suppose it was necessary, even if it meant catching another bus straight away to go back the way I had come! We had cooking in the morning and house-craft in the afternoon. Of course rationing made it difficult to make many dishes but we managed to grasp the basics of cooking. I'm pleased to say they let me off the bus at Sandford on the way home. Peter was now Mr and Mrs. Baker at Sunnyside Farm. School dinners were introduced at Godshill during the war as in other schools and I must say I enjoyed them all - except semolina with a spoonful of jam in the middle. We all had our own cutlery and a mug and a piece of oil-cloth to put on our desks to have our meal on.

The lessons I enjoyed besides drawing were English and Singing. We had no chance to learn music or play an instrument but I enjoyed singing the now old-fashioned songs like 'There the bee sucks', 'Barbara Allen', 'Great Grey River', 'Where Ere you Walk' and 'Oh who will o'er the downs with me'. Of course the boys used to emphasise the words 'to win a BLOOMING bride'.

Some of the lessons were held in the air-raid shelter. We actually quite enjoyed going there as it made a break in routine and we played word games etc. I wasn't so keen on the mental arithmetic rounds. I remember one particular day when we had spent quite a long time down there and when we came out we were told to go home early. By this time I was living with my mother and baby sister and brother Peter at Peartree Farm at Whiteley Bank. There had been a local raid and we had been told that Peartree Farm had been bombed so you can imagine our feelings when we came over the brow of the hill and saw the farm still standing. The chimneys had holes in them and there were holes in the walls too. When the Germans came over they had machine gunned my mother in the garden whilst she was hanging out the washing. She grabbed my sister Christina and ran indoors and hid in the cupboard under the stairs. If she had been in the room she was normally in, she would have been injured, as the bullets went through the window and into some of the furniture. The farm belonged to Ruth Kerley's mother and she was getting the cows in for milking when the raiders came over so she dived into a ditch. Luckily no-one was hurt at all.

To go back to our lessons, we had sums, English every day, geography, history, nature, spellings, mental arithmetic, reading outloud, poetry and of course scripture once a week. No French and very little geometry or algebra, even though we were there until we were 14 or 15. I was not very good at any-thing but did pass the first part of the scholarship exam (later the 11 plus). On the day I should have taken the second part I wasn't there, as it had been decided about this time that it was too dangerous for us evacuees to live here!!! So we uprooted again and went to Sussex, from there to Berkshire, on to Southampton, then because Leslie had stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Morris we decided to come back to Godshill. This time we went to live with Mrs. Kerley at Newington House, near Whitwell.

At first we walked to school then Mr. Baker found room for us in his van. We then moved to Little Stenbury so had to walk again. Leslie later went to Newport Grammar School (now Nodehill Middle) as did Christina later on. Peter went to Freshwater Agricultural School and I finished my school days at Denmark Road School in Cowes, catching the train either from Godshill or Whitwell to Merstone, changing there for the Sandown train to Newport and Cowes. Although we didn't progress beyond the basics of the 3 R's we had a good grounding in these subjects and this knowledge has enabled me in my adult years to gain 4 O levels (I am studying for geography O' level) and an A-level in English (if you can believe it). These were all obtained at the College of Arts and Technology at Newport.

I know the war was a terrible thing but it gave me the opportunity to live in the country and learn how to love it. Although I live in Newport now, I did get married at Godshill Church and I still think about it with nostalgia, and thank my lucky stars that I didn't have to grow up in Portsmouth.

(Footnote: July, 1945: School closed for Summer holiday. Derek Wodhams, Laura Gray, Derek Callaway, Keith Dyer have been accepted for Cowes School.)

ooOoo

Remembering

I remember when I was young
So many years ago
The pram we had, the clothes we wore
But the place - I did not know.

My sister and I, we sat in this pram
The old fashioned type, with big wheels
We were dressed alike, hers blue, mine pink
With hats like silk cotton reels.

The next I remember, is going to school
I was three years old at the time.
We sat on hard benches, with tables in front
Which kept us all in a line.

The very young girls just sat in two rows
Down the side of the large school room
The older ones sat in the centre, in desks
In front of the teacher to learn.

I wasn't too keen, I didn't learn much
When the great outdoors I would see.
But I'm thankful that little school of the past
For the start in life it gave me.

It was Godshill school, in the Isle of Wight
Which stands there to this day.
'Tis bigger now, more modern too,
But I prefer to remember it my way.

Vera Green (née Downer)

A LETTER FROM MRS G KRASNICKA, NEE BUXTON, NEE GWEN MORRIS, FORMERLY OF BAGWICH, GODSHILL, NOW LIVING IN WATERLOOVILLE, HANTS

Dear Friends,

Here am I a great grandmother in my 72nd year asked to write a few lines of my memories of Godshill School 1919-1927. Born in October 1915 I must have started school at the age of 4 as I remember so vividly being lifted on to the school wall to watch the Victory March in 1919. I do not actually remember my first day. My parents lived at Godshill Park Farm when they were first married and my brother Bill was born there but then we moved to Bagwich where we lived for 17 years and I am not sure where we lived on my first day. I shall never forget those war shattered farms and mules as they sat on the banks of the lane leading to Moor Farm unraveling their puttees and partaking of their meagre rations of soup from the mule driven soup kitchens. Soon after I remember once again being lifted on the school wall (near the boys' gateway) looking up at the 1914-18 War Memorial and taking part in the very first Armistice Service. Another of my early memories is of Miss Hollis (Addy) teaching me to knit with green wool on wooden meat skewers. I loved my school days and really enjoyed every subject except Maths. I hated them then and I hate them now. In these days our education did not apply to which year we were in. There was always the challenge of going up a Standard to try to do well all the time (good enough). I think that was an incentive to each term (if one was the good (not just swotting up before an exam). The children who lived in the village went home for a hot meal but most of us lived in outlying farms so had to take sandwiches and usually a big hunk of farm house fruit cake or bread pudding. I often ate it all in the morning play time leaving me free to wander at will according to the season in the dinner hour. The teacher always encouraged us to collect, label and name and press wild flowers and grasses all through the year. In the early spring we always competed as to who should discover the first celandine or the wood anemone. Then there were the wild primroses and daffodils, or lent lily. In May the Punches were a wonderful sight of white cow parsley, bluebells and red champions - a sight I shall never forget to my dying day. Then later in the year we used to go up to the beech copse. The boys to collect conkers and we girls to collect sweet chestnuts to ripen for Christmas. In these early days there were no rubbers such as Wellingtons and as we had a very long and wet journey through the moors and fields we girls wore long black laced up leather boots. They constantly needed repair and when this was so we used to sit on the village cobbler's wall and eat our sandwiches while he soled and heeled our boots. On other days we sat on the wall of the village blacksmith's or watched him shoe the horses. In those days a favourite toy was the hoop. Most girls had wooden ones but if the blacksmith was not too busy and in a good mood he would make steel hoops for the boys which made a lot of noise on the then gravel roads. Of course Godshill was always a mixed school and I really believe that we spent more time in the church and in the old churchyard. I can remember almost every detail of it - especially the small replica of a church where bodies were laid on slabs of slate (I think in 'lead coffins'. We used to climb up to look through a broken window while others knocked 99 times on the door. We really believed that if they knocked 100 times the Devil would chase us away with his pitchfork.

I am writing this 2 days before the General Election. How well I remember when Captain Peter Macdonald came back from the War where he was wounded and left with a limp which made him rather a hero in those days. The politicians had their say outside the school gate at the bottom of Church Hill. Also we used to have evangelistic meetings from time to time and even an old man with a hurdy-gurdy with a monkey on the top. Another early memory was of the Vicar's son who was in the Royal Flying Corps landing his plane (which seemed made of wire and calico) in the meadow at Bridge Court. I think there is a cemetery there today. As we lived at Bagwich we did not have a newspaper delivered so it was one of my jobs to pick up the Daily Mail, Farmer and Stock Breeder and an ounce of St Julien pipe tobacco from Billy Crook's shop after school and as I dawdled home over the fields and the brook I read that newspaper from cover to cover. It was a very exciting time to grow up with people like Amy Johnson, Jim Mollison, Charles Lindberg and many other pioneers making the headlines. The head teacher was Miss Maud Allen and I have always felt that she had very individual and progressive ideas on education. She acquired one of the first radios for the school and we were very fortunate to receive some tuition from it. At 11+ I was fortunate enough to pass the exam which took me to Newport. Buses were just arriving on the Island, so I walked to Rookley School where I was picked up. I did not completely lose touch with Godshill as I still went to Whist Drives and the village hops on alternative Friday evenings, but some of my old school friends I never saw again. However I have kept in touch with quite a few in spite of the war and all that went with it. Friendships were formed which have never been broken and as my health broke down when I was 27 I have always been grateful for those active days of my childhood. Being confined to a wheelchair and my bungalow I have not been able to do any of the things I had planned as a child, but I have so many interests that a 24 hour day is never long enough for all I have to do. I have been married twice and had 2 children by my first marriage (a farmer in Hertfordshire). I have seven grand children and 3 great grandchildren. My second husband was in General Second Wladyslaw Anders Polish Corps. I met him in connection with my Red Cross Work. Both are dead. Being a Bone Marrow Victim I set up a trust in Lloyds Bank, Waterlooville to raise money for Bone Marrow Research and I still do my Polish Relief work in memory of my late husband. I feel that I owe a great deal to my parents (both of whom died young) and to the environment they created for us, and Godshill School played an important part in it for me.

Yours sincerely,

G.K. Krasnicka,
34, Forest End, Waterlooville, Hants.

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Thank you to all of you who have contributed to this magazine. If any of you have any further reminiscences you wish to add, please let me have them and I can add them to "Memories of Godshill", Volume 2, in time for the 1989 re-union.

R.E. Hames Headteacher July 1987