

Reminiscence Of Coundon: September 1967 – July 1974
As remember by Grace Bradford

We wanted to include on our website some information relating to the history of Coundon Primary. As an ex pupil, I volunteered to write a short piece based upon my recollections and experiences. I hope you enjoy reading this brief personal account which attempts to give snapshots of school life from 1967 – 1974. I have to confess my memory for names is not the best and I apologize to the teachers whose names now escape me, however, may I assure you, you are not forgotten.

Coundon at this time was divided into three separate schools, Nursery, Infants and Juniors. Mrs Cuthbert was head of the Nursery, Miss West was head of the Infants and Mr Cooke was head of the Juniors. There were three entrances to the school site, Forfield Road, Southbank Road and Clayton Road.

I started the Nursery in 1967, it was a large wooden building with big airy rooms and a lovely outdoor play area dominated by a magnificent willow tree (which continues to flourish). The pegs in the cloakroom had little pictures underneath them mine was an apple. The teachers were kind and approachable. I seem to recall that I stayed there all day, school dinners were provided which I heartily enjoyed with one or two exceptions, those being, spam fritters and liver with onions (even thinking about them now makes me feel a bit queezy). After dinner we would take a nap, the teachers would magically produce little camping beds and blankets and we would snuggle down for an hour or so. Our days were filled with drawing, painting, playing, model making and listening to stories. Friday was a special day as we were allowed to choose a sweet to take home.

In September 1968 I progressed to the Infants. I was more than happy to attend, my sister Isobel was in the second year and my brother Jim was in the third, plenty of people to look after me should the need arise. There were a few children crying, hanging on to their mother's legs fortunately I wasn't one of them. I think my teacher was called Mrs Llywelyn. I remember learning to read with Dick, Dora and Nip the dog, alphabet friezes on walls, the tiles around the sinks depicting colourful peacocks and being punched so hard on the nose, by a boy who shall remain nameless, that it bled profusely. We also used to have a tuck shop where you could buy penny sweets like chocolate bars in the shape of hammers and saws or toffee chews, fantastic.

Christmas concerts were the typical nativity, I was once cast as an angel and had to wear a white gown and a tinsel halo. I had to stand against the wall with my arms outstretched gazing upon the holy family. I loved it, the feeling of joy when I looked up and saw my parents in the audience was immense.

We also had a Christmas Fair in the hall where you could buy gifts and stalls where you could win prizes, but the best bit was going to see Santa. There was a sleigh in the corner of the hall with a screen in front of it, when you were sitting comfortably the screen came to life and it felt as though you were 'dashing through the snow on a one horse open sleigh', magical!

The Infants School site was split as I recall and when I moved up to second year I was in a big brick building, which faced the Nursery. Playtime was fantastic; there was a huge playground for us to run around, the favourite game being 'tig'.

I must admit we made the most of our playtimes, no one was allowed to stay in, nobody wanted to. Life in the classroom was very different to today, no lively discussions, no collaborative work, it was very much 'I talk, you listen and learn'. We all did the same thing at the same time. Good work was rewarded with a star,

when you accumulated three stars you were sent to Miss West's office. She would look at your work, congratulate you and give you a toffee. I was lucky enough to be sent several times for a toffee but even though I knew it was a treat

I was timid and a little frightened by Miss West.

Children, whom the teachers deemed to be 'good' or 'trustworthy', became monitors. There were pencil monitors, milk monitors, table monitors, there seemed to be monitors for just about everything, these jobs were highly sought after. The milk monitor had a special plastic tool that enabled them to push the tops down on the milk bottles without sticking their thumb into the milk, ingenious! Once the silver tops were removed (the bottle tops were collection for guide dogs for the blind or some such cause), the monitors had the job of placing a wax coated paper straw into each bottle. These were then distributed throughout the class. In the summer the milk was always warm and really quite sickly, in winter it was ice cold.

Janet and John replaced Dick, Dora and Nip. We attended craft lessons where we were taught how to knit, weave and sew. We used to knit brightly coloured squares which were then all sewn together to make blankets, these were then sent to help 'those less fortunate than ourselves'.

Moving to the Junior School was a big thing. The Juniors site was situated opposite the first year Infants classrooms. It was a long brick building with a corridor running the length of it. At one end there was the hall, school office, library, Mr Cooke's room, toilets and art rooms and at the other was Mr Duckham's classroom and the staff room. The classrooms had huge windows looking out onto the corridor on one side and the playground or car park on the other. The outdoor windows used to open in a concertina fashion and in the summer it felt like there was a side missing to the classroom. As you walked up and down the corridor you were able to have a good look inside the classrooms at what was going on.

Our desks were in rows, the old fashioned wooden desks with lift up seats attached and lift up desk lids complete with ink pots. I recall one boy lifting the seat just as his friend was about to sit down, obviously he didn't mean to hurt him, they were good friends, unfortunately as he fell to the floor he caught his head on part of the seat and cracked his head open, there was blood everywhere!!

My teachers in Junior School were Mr Lyde, Miss Davies, Mr Petty and Mr Duckham. Mr Lyde was a gentle giant who loved to play the piano, 'The Gollywogs Cake Walk' being a firm favourite. He hated telling children off, I remember his punishment for inappropriate behaviour was to litter the floor with tiny pieces of paper which the 'naughty' child then had to pick up piece by piece. Miss Davies taught us French and Country Dancing, I thoroughly enjoyed both.

Mr Petty was everyone's favourite. He used to tell us stories about his trusty penknife and the story we loved to hear him tell was that of a boy called Albert, who got eaten by a lion. We were all so sad when Mr Petty announced that he was planning to retire at the end of the year. Mr Duckham was a formidable man and could reduce you to a quivering wreck, fortunately, he liked me and I became one of his stockroom monitors.

Each classroom had a speaker on the wall and we used to listen to radio programmes and I'm sure Mr Cooke could relate messages to each class via this system.

At Junior School we were taught how to use a sewing machine, cross-stitch and more complex knitting patterns. I loved these lessons, Mrs Malinson was the teacher, and I was allowed to make an enormous lion. Mr Duckham taught basket weaving. I recall weaving an oval tray decorated with wooden beads. At the end of the year you were allowed to buy the objects you had made. I remember the struggle I had getting that lion home!

We were given the opportunity to learn an instrument, and had a thriving orchestra. I played the clarinet; many of us were taught how to play the recorder. Mrs Parkinson took choir and orchestra practice. Mrs Bows was in charge of the rounders and netball clubs. She used to accompany us on our Saturday fixtures. Mrs Bows and Mr Bruce took us swimming both at Livingston and Coventry baths. We used to eat jelly cubes on the bus when returning to school. I'm sure Mrs Bows was connected in some way to art. I do remember making masks in her room once and one boy wanted to make his mask look really good, so he cut chunks of his own hair off and stuck it onto his mask. It did not get the rave reviews he had hoped!

Every morning we had assembly in the hall. Mr Cooke would stand on the stage at the front, we would be standing in rows and at the end of each row was the class teacher. We used to sing hymns my favourite being, 'O Jesus I have Promised'. We were expected to listen carefully to Mr Cooke; any children caught talking would either have their legs smacked or their heads knocked together!! There was an enormous clock at the back of the hall and Mr Cooke used to say he wanted us to be so quiet that he could hear the clock ticking! P.E. lessons were in the hall, there was no such thing as a P.E. kit then, you had to do it in your pants and vest.

We had dinner in the canteen (this is now the present day Nursery). We had to wash our hands before going over with that horrible carbolic soap. The dinner lady would examine our hands as we left the washroom, sending back those who were not sufficiently clean. We sat in groups around tables and had to say 'Grace' before we ate. I can still recite the prayer, 'For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen.' There were metallic beakers and jugs on each table and someone was water monitor. The dinners were tasty and healthy. I don't recall chips being on the menu it was usually mashed potatoes. In the summer we would have salads and I vividly recall the unusual taste of carrot jelly, bizarre!

The toilets were outside in a block (the remnants of this building can still be seen on the field). They were cold and smelly and the toilet roll was that horrible shiny paper about as absorbent as a raincoat! The toilet had a covered walkway at the front and this was a great place to meet up at playtime.

Playtime was spent playing numerous games, 'tig', 'bulldog', 'kiss chase', 'May I', clapping games, conkers, clackers (these were later banned as they were deemed a safety hazard), French skipping, skipping, marbles, 'ball against the wall games', the list goes on. Every so often there would be a craze. I remember one called 'sock ball'. The rules were very simple, you got an old sock, put a tennis ball in the foot end then you would stand with your back against a wall and whack this 'sock ball' around your body! It was great, some people got very adventurous. I think this was banned in the end too. Another craze was those brightly coloured corrugated tubes that you would spin around your head and they would make a noise. I think they went the same way as the clackers and

'sock ball'!! Playground injuries like cuts and grazes were treated with one of two things, Witch Hazel or yellow magic, this was a liquid that turned your skin yellow on contact, great stuff. The various ointments, plasters, pills and potions were secured in large wooden first aid boxes that were strategically fastened high up on the walls. There was always a bucket of sawdust at the ready in each class incase anyone vomited, pleasant!!

Wet playtime was spent in the hall playing board games.

In the summer months we were allowed on to the field. This was great. Coundon house looked onto it and there was (and still is) a fantastic oak tree in the middle near the hedge. We would enjoy competing in handstand contests and engaged in a variety of gymnastic activities. There used to be an old shed or something there too which we thought was haunted, we used to dare each other to go and knock on the door!!

Every summer there was a sports day. The field would be packed with cheering parents and screaming children. I have a certificate somewhere awarded to me for coming third in the 'novelty' race!

Fourth Year Juniors put a leavers show on at the end of the year.

I remember performing in ours 'Cinderella'. I was Baroness Stoneybroke, I wanted to be Cinderella, never mind! For us life at Coundon was coming to an end and we began preparing ourselves for Secondary School. Many of us had taken the 11+ exam. My classmates were transferring to schools such as Barrs Hill (this was an all girls grammar school) Bablake and Blue Coat many were heading for Coundon Court. Our last few days were spent signing autograph books (tradition) and promising we would never forget each other.

My last school report states '... with continued effort and perseverance she should do very well.' Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would return to Coundon Primary as the Deputy Head Teacher! When I took up this post the old nursery had gone as had the huts and the infant block, demolished, replaced by a brand new, state of the art building filled with high tech' equipment. The old first year infant building was still standing along with the hall and the Junior School.

The memories came flooding back as I walked around. It was bizarre when I realized my office was Miss West's old office the one I had visited all those years ago to receive my toffees! I knew there were plans to knock these old buildings down which saddened me. I was fortunate enough to teach in the 'old building'; my classroom was the one that had been my class as a child when I was with Mr Petty! Happy days!! When the time came for the bulldozers to move in a raffle was held, the winner could get into the bulldozer and start the demolition, two children were winners and I was also allowed to climb in and knock part of the school down. I must admit, I had a lump in my throat and more than a few tears in my eyes! Coundon Primary was and is a wonderful school, I hope that the memories being created now are as happy as those created by the 'old schools'. I feel privileged to be not only part of Coundon's past but part of its future too.

Name of pupil: MARIE... BROADBENT... Class: 2... Average age of class: 11.200

Grades: A - Excellent B - Good C - Average D - Poor E - Very Weak

Subject	Grade	Comments
<u>English:</u>		
Reading and composition	B	
Handwriting	B	Neat legible style
Spelling	B-	
Grammar	B-	
Creative	B-	Submitted in a diary Not a very wide vocabulary

<u>Mathematics:</u>		
Mech and Problems	B+	
Geometry	B+	Neat & careful work done T.A.C.
Arithmetic	B-	A willing worker E.H.D.

<u>General Studies:</u>		
Science	B	Good worker
History	C+	
Geography	B	

<u>Practical Subjects:</u>		
Art	C+	
Craft		
Needlework	A	Has produced very good work D.H.
Music		Capable though not wholly reliable participant in school musical activities
P.E. Games		Has represented the school at athletic evenings and rounds R.H.B.

Comments: An intelligent girl, very reliable, and a well conventional worker. With continued effort and perseverance she should do very well.

Class Teacher: J. B. Duckham

Head Teacher: T. A. Cottle

A very satisfactory year's work T.A.C.

Kindly acknowledge the receipt of this Report and return the acknowledgement slip to the Class Teacher.

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