

A Friendly Glimpse



Cover picture (*now the Parish Church Hall on Quarry Hill Rd*)

Chapter One THE BEGINNINGS

For hundreds of years Wrotham was the centre of the local community. Borough Green was divided into three parts on an ecclesiastical basis, with most of the village in Wrotham, some in Ightham and, after 1843, some in Platt. The coming of the railway in 1874 started the development of Borough Green which has continued ever since. In the 1870's there were fifty houses in Borough Green, at the turn of the century there were two hundred, at the end of the Second World War, there were four hundred and by 1988 there were one thousand and three hundred houses in the village.

1870 saw the passing of Forster's Elementary Education Act, which required the establishment of local school boards. In 1891 a further Act provided that all elementary education would be free. The 1902 Act abolished school boards and gave control to County and District Councils. The Fisher Act raised the school leaving age to 14, and the 1921 Act regulated age and conditions of work for children under this age. The Butler Act of 1944 established secondary education for all children. Prior to 1875, children who lived in Borough Green attended school in either Ightham, Wrotham or Platt, if their parents could afford the pennies.

1875- BOROUGH GREEN INFANT SCHOOL

In 1875 Tolstoy wrote *Anna Karenina*, Bizet wrote *Carmen*, the D'Oyley Carte produced *Trial by Jury* and roller skating was the new craze. These facts, although unconnected with the establishment of the new infant school as described below, serve to give a chronological perspective and show how far back into history the origins of the school lie.

The local School Board engaged Robert Wheeler, an architect, to draw up plans to build on a piece of land off Quarry Hill Road, (then Thong Lane), purchased from Col. Austin of Kippington, Sevenoaks. The building was of local stone and bricks, with a tiled roof, and was lit by town gas. The builder was John Bishop.

Chapter Two

THE FIRST WORLD WAR YEARS

The year 1914 opened with all staff present and a pupil roll of 321. It is fascinating to watch the rise and fall of pupil numbers throughout the years, with epidemics, wars, birth control and financial constraints all having had their effects.

Throughout the years Head Teachers have had problems with timetabling and organisation for a variety of reasons – staff absences, a tightening of controls on staff numbers or sudden increases in the number of pupils. One example is to be found in 1915, when from 5th January to 1st March, all 71 pupils from Ightham School attended while that school was rebuilt, though in this case there was at least advance warning! This was coupled with large intakes on 28th September from Borough Green Infants and Platt Church of England School.

The war naturally had its effects on the school. October 1914 witnessed the arrival of Belgian refugee children, the army took over one classroom as an office in 1915, and in June of that year a number of both boys and girls were released under license by the Kent Education Committee to work on local farms. Soldiers assisted at the Swimming Sports in August and at the end of October the children on license returned.

The Christmas party on 21st December provided a happy note on which to end the year, with carols and the first recorded visit of Father Christmas. From 1914 onwards carols were sung and each class had its own party. The whole school would assemble in the hall and invited guests were entertained with national songs and sea shanties. Father Christmas appeared at the window over the staff room and let down sacks of oranges, apples and bonbons for the children which the infants found especially exciting. This custom continued for many years and the impact of the parties on the school was tremendous. The work that went into them, the carols, songs, plays, pantomimes and dances held over nearly 80 years, played a great part in school life. They live for ever in children's memories. Who was Father Christmas? It's still a secret.

1916 was a disappointing year for scholars as all Bank Holidays were cancelled in order to help the war effort. In March heavy snow fell causing a week's closure due to impassable roads. On 19th May the clocks were ceremoniously advanced one hour, ready to start the new 'Summer Time'

on 22nd May. On that day when an aeroplane landed nearby, several boys played truant and were punished according to their age, the eldest receiving four 'handers'.

1917 was an eventful year for the school in many ways. In April a measles epidemic caused the school to be closed for three weeks. In May a school canteen was opened with voluntary helpers to provide mid-day meals for the children who wanted them. By the middle of June seventy meals were being served and by February 1918 this number had increased to 100. This canteen was the first of many to deliver such a service in a rural district, with second helpings always being available to those in need. It was run at a profit, with the aid of the activities described below.

Eventually it had a paid cook and a helper, a system which continued for many years after World War Two. Prices were 3d for one child, 2 1/2d if there were more than one child in a family and 2d for infants. These prices changed little until the Forties.

Between the wars my mother was a cook. The ranges and boilers were all coal-fired, having to be cleaned out each day and relit early the next morning. All the flues were cleaned out every Friday. I can well remember holding a hose to squirt water into a potato peeling machine, and having to turn the handle at the same time – all of course before school even started.

In their spare time the school children started land cultivation, which later became part of the curriculum for Senior pupils. Produce was either sent to the canteen or bought by the pupils. The field, now the school meadow, was later leased and was ploughed by local farmers. Crops included potatoes and one report claimed it yielded 12 tons per acre. Boys cleared the field of couch grass roots on Saturday mornings, for 4d each. The couch they gathered was sent to the Pullers Dye Works in Perth, for use in dye making. This field was eventually purchased by the Kent Education Committee.



Primary school garden

School gardens, 5 acres, 1920

For at least twenty years the Horticultural Superintendent of the Kent Education committee made a yearly report on the gardens and offered suggestions as to the crops grown. In 1920 HMI Mr G.T. Turner reported on the excellent remedial class for 7-9 year olds and suggested that those of 11 – 12 years would benefit from work in the school gardens, as well as from

woodwork and cookery. Over the years the school won many awards in various horticultural shows and the school was closed annually for the Autumn Show of the Wrotham and Borough Green Horticultural Society.

Mr George Gomme joined the staff on 17th April 1918. He stayed for a period of some 37 years, becoming a much respected teacher.

Understandably the end of the war was greatly welcomed and an extra week's holiday was granted in August 1919 to celebrate the signing of the Armistice. On 11th November the first Two Minutes Silence to remember the Fallen, was observed by the children, who had gathered in the hall.

Many visits to the school were recorded, for it was acquiring a growing reputation in educational circles. Among the visitors were teachers from overseas and officials serving in the forces.

Chapter Three

ACADEMICS, EPIDEMICS AND WEATHER

Between the Wars

In 1921 there was the first of a series of scarlet fever epidemics. Dr G.H. Walker closed the school on 3rd November and it was re-opened on the 17th. It is as well to remember in these days when child health is taken for granted, that advances in health care have done as much to improve child education as any teaching.

This is borne out by events in 1922, another eventful year. There is the first mention of a visit by a Dental Nurse to the school, Miss Drew, whether she had to draw any teeth we are not told! Mr G.W. Clarke, the Juvenile Employment Officer, came to talk to the school leavers – an event beyond the jurisdiction of primary schools these days.

The Infant School premises in Quarry Hill were now closed and on 2nd October the infants were absorbed into the school. Mrs E.G. Hall, wife of the Head Master, who had been teaching at the infant school for some time, took on the post of Assistant Mistress in charge of Infants. The outside girls toilets were altered to cater for infants. Collapsible tables and forms were now provided for canteen dinners, but there is no hint of how they had previously coped!

The Annual Preliminary Scholarship Exams for the Kent Education Committee were first mentioned in this year. Many children were attending the Grammar and Technical Schools in Maidstone as fee paying pupils. Scholarships were won however, a practice which continued for many years.

In March 1923 came the dawn of a 'New Era'! A 'wireless receiving set' was installed in the school on 9th March and lessons via the 'wireless' became a feature of the school. This tradition of being to the forefront of technical and academic innovation has endured through the years, with the result that pupils from Borough Green County Primary School are always

able to cope with new technology around them. It is noted that on 28th March 1923, pupils were listening to selections from Shakespeare – their reactions to it are not recorded!

The Armistice Day Service was heard by the whole school in the hall in 1924, and in 1929 the service from the Cenotaph was also received. These early ceremonies must have been particularly moving for some of the pupils and staff, who would no doubt have lost relatives in the Great War.

In 1926, a Miss Somerville from the Education Department of the BBC, together with engineers, called to test transmissions from London, Borough Green then being a rural outpost.

In 1927 Mr Dixon, an assistant to Sir Walford Davies, and a Mr Smith both visited the school in connection with broadcast music lessons. Mr Hall believed music to be a major part of life. He not only assisted my father tremendously with the brass band he organised, but also played the organ at the Church of the Good Shepherd. My father lived for music, yet I cannot even whistle in tune! I recall one school exchange as if it was yesterday:

Mr Hall: ‘Bangay, I can’t hear you singing.’

The author: ‘No sir, I’ve got a bit of a cold.’

Mr Hall (looking fiercely at the rest of the class): ‘And who’s got the other bit?’!

The school won many trophies for country dancing in the 1920’s, an area in which Mr Gomme had a keen interest. Old scholars will probably remember ‘Sir Roger de Coverley’, with ‘pleasure

In March 1924 there was an outbreak of diphtheria with 12 cases in school. Although unconnected, this was the year that the annual visits of Mr Charles Harvey started. He came from the Kent Juvenile Temperance Association and was later listed under the Band of Hope. He spoke on the Hygiene of Food and Drink, with an emphasis on the evils of drink, together with assorted chemical tests. He was known commonly as ‘the alkabolic stink man’!

1924 also brought a severe flu epidemic which affected both staff and pupils. Seventy seniors, (not suffering from diphtheria or flu), were taken to the Wembley Exhibition two years running, 1924 and 1925, when it first opened. The comment in the log book states: ‘Profitable and enjoyable days’.

In April 1925 there is the first mention of students taking their ‘teaching practice’. The student was studying at Aberdeen University! How many placement visits did his tutor make?

Many educational VIPs from around the world visited the school over this decade. They were inevitably accompanied by the Chairman of the Kent Education Committee, Lord Sackville, or by the Director of Education, Sir Mark Collett. The Heads of nearby Grammar or Technical schools might also join in such visits.

As part of the Christmas celebrations in 1925 the school was entertained by a concert party organised by the Kent Community Council. Christmas was followed by deep snow in January

1926, and there was naturally a low attendance amongst both staff and pupils. The Log Books give a good insight into the history of the weather, where any odd conditions which affected attendance are duly noted. Children had to walk from Basted, Crouch, Platt, Comp and Wrotham Heath, while staff had to rely on public transport. There were very few cars then and due to the weather it transpired on several occasions that four or five staff failed to make it to school, leaving the head with a difficult problem.

Fruit and hop picking holidays were arranged with the local farmers who would contact the Head Master when the crops were ready. Three weeks were allowed for fruiting and four weeks for hop-picking.

About three quarters of the entries in the Log Books refer to events where the Head has had to make sudden changes to routine, in order to cope. Staff changes, new appointments, students on teaching practice, staff on courses and staff illnesses all find their way into these school records.

The staff's loyalty and dedication throughout the years is worthy of a mention, especially if it is remembered that School Meal Supervisors were not introduced until 1963. Perhaps an epitaph for the staff should read 'We coped!'

1927 brought snow, snow and more snow. In all 150 children were absent, and this pattern continued until the third week of February. There were also outbreaks of chicken pox and measles amongst the infants.

At this time the School Dentist operated from premises above what is now 'Kingswood Chemists', known properly as 'Welfare House'. After World War Two they moved to use Western Hall, before moving again in 1972 to the new clinic in Quarry Hill. 1927 was the first year there is a mention of a dental surgeon, Mr Saunders, examining younger children.

In 1928 there was an outbreak of scarlet fever, which meant that the school had to close for three weeks. In this year the first caretaker, Mr Fenwick resigned, to be replaced by Mr E. Scrivener.

In 1929 Mrs Sidney Lee of Pine Close gave a Sports and Tea party for all the local schools. As I was there I know the event took place after school and required a great deal of organisation.

In May 1931 school caps and berets were first offered for sale. 9th June of that year proved to be a real washout. Three coachloads of pupils attended the Aldershot Tattoo, but the rain lasted all day and no performance was given. We did enjoy the ride! On the way home the Head showed us the Silent Pool.

In December the school was shown a full programme at the local cinema, an event repeated the year after. Mr H. Sawdy, the owner of the Electric Palace was responsible for this kind gesture. Commonly shortened to the Palace, the building is to be found on the corner of Fairfield Road and Wrotham Road, later the Rex Cinema.

In September 1931 the main drainage scheme, planned by Wrotham Urban District Council some thirty years earlier, was completed, and despite the delay the school was connected. The

smell from the emptying tanker, not at the school itself, used to be terrible. My grandmother at Tudor Cottage would spray eucalyptus on the floor in order to combat it.

Mrs E.G. Hall, the Head of the Infants retired in April 1934, and was presented with a silver tea set from the staff and children, by Canon A.P. Pascoe, now the Rector of Wrotham.

In September of this year thirteen children from Crouch House joined the school. This was evidently some kind of an orphanage in the charge of a Mrs Butler, though exact details have been hard to find.



Mr W. Hall and staff, 1935

In November two hundred children are reported to be enjoying milk at ½ d for one third of a pint. This was later provided free.

In September 1936 Mr W. Hall retired after twenty five years of superbly dedicated service. Mr P. Minter, Chairman of the Managers, presented him with an 'All Wave Radio Gramophone' on behalf of everybody, and an era had come to an end. He was succeeded as Head Master by Mr Stanley H. McGill.

On 11th March 1937 Mr McGill arranged the first 'Open Day', composed of songs, physical training and dancing, as well as displays of more formal work. The attendance by parents was apparently high.

The Borough Green Parents and Old Scholars Association had its first meeting on 27th September this year. This body perhaps is deserving of its own story.

In 1938 repairs were made to the cradle at the swimming pool and in March an Evening Institute was formed, which was well-supported.

The first visit to the school of the Head A.R.P. Warden was an indicator that war clouds were forming and on 16th March 1938 officials from the Home Office and the County called to advise on air raid precautions.

Arrangements to accommodate children from other areas were finalised in September, should this prove necessary.

On a lighter note Miss Turner, a School Manager, presented the school with a sewing machine and the Parent's Association gave a new flag staff. There were visits to the silkworm farm at Lullingstone Castle, to the Imperial Institute and to the Ford Motor Works at Dagenham and a new kitchen was being built on the site of the old one, on the side of the school backing on to Station Road.

In March there were further epidemics of measles, attendance going down to 55% and diphtheria affected many of the children from Crouch House.



Mr S.H. McGill and staff, 1944

Chapter Four

BOMBS, BOOKS AND BILLETS

Education during World War Two

Empire Day was observed by custom together with Jubilees and Coronations, the school joining wholeheartedly with the village in celebrating these events. Extra holidays were given, though not so liberally in the later years.

On 1st September 1939 the school was in use as an evacuation point. This brief statement in the Log Book glosses over a lot of suffering and heartache. Over two hundred children were here who had been parted from their homes and loved ones. There were two hundred sad and bewildered children in strange surroundings – it is a story too deep to dwell on here. The final total of evacuees was three hundred and twenty eight.

Through all the holiday the School Canteen was open to feed the evacuees. The local staff, assisted by devoted London County Council teachers, kept them entertained.

On 25th September the school opened with a roll of 551! The Western Hall, now St Joseph's Catholic Church, and the Baptist Church school room were used to cope at first. Later the Church Hall and the Masonic Hall at Wrotham were also brought into use.

Time-tabling the school must have been a colossal task. Only 150 persons were allowed in the building at any one time, so a double-shift system had to be worked out. On top of all these problems there were the comings and goings of both Kent and London County officials, together with a news team from the BBC.

In December parts of the school were blacked out because of the air raids. Most of the staff stayed on over the Christmas holidays to entertain the children. The canteen had to work at full steam, being declared a 'Catering Establishment', enabling it to hold stocks of food, that would otherwise have needed ration coupons.

January 1940 brought the additional hazard of heavy snow and a short frost, with apparently no water supply from 22nd to 29th January. With a school population of around the 500 mark the problems that this would entail do not need detailing.

Work started on the Air Raid Precaution shelters in February, but there were no lights until January 1941. Mr Gomme made mention that the boys were soaked as the roofs dripped. Heating was supplied at some stage, but not in those early, vital days. The shelters came to be a valuable building resource for the school and in their time were employed as changing rooms, craft rooms, stock rooms and a pottery room amongst other uses.

The school remained open again over the Easter holiday and during the hop-picking holiday, when the staff stuck preventive netting to all the windows.

In October 1940 the day-time air raids started with a vengeance. School work had to be carried on in the shelters, though how this was achieved without lighting is unimaginable. 25th October saw only 32 children present when day-time raids were practically constant.

Firewatching duties were undertaken by the teaching staff through the war years until stood down.

At 2.20 a.m., 11th November 1940, a bomb fell where the swimming pool now stands. Fortunately it did not explode on impact. Staff, ARP wardens and the police rallied round and sent the children home as they arrived for school. Important documents in the school were removed and all the windows were opened. The bomb was inspected several times and was eventually removed by the bomb disposal squad on 27th November.

On 5th February 1941 there is an entry which states: '150 mattresses delivered to the school'. They are not referred to again, but must surely have taken up valuable space. One wonders if they were ordered for September 1939.

On 19th March 1941 an anti-diphtheria clinic was held by Dr R. Green. As may be seen in the history of the Parents' Association, this was something which had been demanded for years, but the authorities were slow to respond.

From 1939 onwards everyone was supposed to carry a gas mask in case of gas attacks on the country. On 25th March 1941 a Home Office gas van called and 400 children went through it in batches of ten to test their readiness to use the mask when exposed to gas. In May of this year a gas exercise was held in the school.

According to the Log Book there were 312 Natives and 94 Evacuees attending school on 18th July. Many of the evacuees had returned home by this time.

During October tutors from the Margaret McMillan College called to arrange for their students to carry out teaching practice at the school. This process has continued for many years, with often up to three or four students on placement at the school. On some occasions even ten or twelve students would come to observe the cooking and serving of dinners.

The school joined in various fund-raising activities during the war: Warships Week, Wings for Victory, or Salute the Soldier. Quite often these activities were combined with Open Days or National Savings Week. Open Days would tend to be exhibitions of written English, needlework or other handicrafts. A determined effort in one National Savings Week brought in 180 members, the average raised by the school being £5 per week. In the week of 19th October 1945 a special effort produced as much as £242 – a great amount of money for those days.

During 1943 the raids were less frequent and took place mostly at night, so school was able to function without so many interruptions. On 14th February, St Valentine's Day, the Log Book informs us that: 'Mr Fuller, the Regional Commissioner, inspected fire-watching operations this night'. Subsequent to this, on 5th June, one of our own anti-aircraft shells exploded in the early hours of the morning on the roofs of rooms 4 and 5,

damaging both rooms and furniture – fortunately the fire-watchers were not harmed.

In June 1944 there was a new development, the V1 Flying Bombs. According to the Log there was very poor attendance on 16th June; with half the school in the shelter. The area was declared an evacuation zone, and children were sent far away. Miss V. Gladders, for example, was sent to Mulverton School, Taunton. Instead of being the receivers of evacuees

from the Blitz, Borough Green was now having to seek safety for its own children. On 25th June the roll was recorded as being 147, a considerable drop.

By 15th August every window in the school had some damage. The caretaker and staff carefully removed the broken panes and nailed felt over the resulting holes, there being no other material. Though room 5 was repaired on 19th October, that night the roof of the girls' porch was damaged.

On 4th December 1944, after suitable farewells, Mr McGill left the school and Mr J.W. Hickman was appointed as his successor, taking up his duties on 8th January 1945.

The final year of the war opened with a very cold spell, reducing attendance to 165 out of a possible 298. On 16th April there is a note to say that the authority first paid for a pupil to be brought to school by taxi.



Mr J. W. Hickman, with son and daughter

The Library

On this same day in April the library van called, leaving non-fiction books for the first time, according to the record. The Public Library had been run from the school by various members of staff since it first started in 1922, when Mr F. Plowright wrote that he -had 54 readers, one third of whom were children, and 45 books. He also stated that he would like more books for children. The Library or Exhibition Van first visited in 1925.

In 1943 Mr McGill noted that Mrs J. Clark of the Old Manor House had taken over the running of the library. She wrote that she would like more books as about 100 land girls were billeted around the village, and also that local workers were making use of the library.

In June 1944 the library was re-housed in the Western Hall, opening on Fridays from 2.00-4.00 p.m. In 1945 Mrs Clark moved and Miss J. Nisbett was appointed in her place.

In 1957 Borough Green Parish Council pressed for longer hours. In 1962 the library moved to the Church Hall, with Mrs Kitson in charge, the hours now being Tuesdays 6.30-8.30 p.m. and Thursdays and Fridays, from 2.00-5.30 p.m. In December 1966 a move was made to the new Village Hall, opening for considerably longer hours and on more days.

In 1977 the existing library was opened; amazingly encountering opposition from some people, who thought it a needless extravagance. The new library has a readership of 3,000 adults and 1,200 children, a stock of 15,000 books and articles and has silenced its critics by proving its worth.

Chapter Five SETTLING DOWN

So peace had come as last, V.E. Day was on 8th May 1945 and the school enjoyed two days holiday. Now was the time for life to begin to settle down. The school blackouts were removed in July, and the buildings were 'over-hauled'. On 3rd August, the attendance was very low, as both Basted Paper Mills and the Stone Quarry were on holiday, with seventeen Scouts at camp. At the end of year in September, school reports were revived – there is no mention of the pupils' reaction to this news! In October, with the Borough Green canteen supplying Platt, Wrotham and Offham, 333 dinners were cooked, a figure which rose to 409 by October 1946.

December was a very cold month, with classroom temperatures varying from 38-44 degrees Fahrenheit. In January 1946 a bus was provided for the first time for pupils coming from Crouch and Comp, with the Wrotham Heath children being given season tickets. With temperatures at school being so cold, it is possible that the children were warmer on the journey to school than when they were actually sitting in lessons.

On 6th January architects from the Kent County Council came to mark the school's boundaries, and the Kent Electric Power Company removed the fuses from the heaters in the air raid shelters. After the Easter holidays there was an intake of 23 senior pupils from Mereworth, with one teacher. This entailed the use of the woodwork room as a classroom. On 29th May, all the senior children saw Henry V, a moving film at the cinema, with all the children paying their own entrance money. In 1946 seventeen pupils gained places at Technical and Grammar schools.

The following year, 1947, opened with seven weeks of heavy snow and hard frost. At one time attendance was down to 57%, until the thaw started on 10th March. There were problems with water and sanitation, but with help from the staff, the caretaker and volunteers, they somehow managed to cope.

By June things were brighter however. The children visited local firms to conduct a village survey, and ten schools took part in a District Sports competition.

In September furniture began to arrive for the proposed secondary school near Wrotham. There had been conferences regarding this school as long ago as 1931. In October German Prisoners of War began digging out the foundations for the 'temporary' Horsa huts, some of which are still in existence today. A later entry, September 1948, says that woodwork and cookery are now at Wrotham Secondary School. This meant that the woodwork room could now be used as a proper classroom, leaving the Hall free for the first time since Easter 1946.

It was in October 1947 that the first polio case was recorded. It was not until 1st December that the school was fully staffed, there having been many staff absences due to illness, since June.

In 1948 the Juvenile Employment Officer arranged for the senior boys to visit an R.A.F. exhibition at Messrs Rootes, Maidstone.

In May, a large food parcel arrived from a school in New Zealand, with which the school had been corresponding. On 17th December, a further food parcel arrived, weighing over one hundredweight, just in time for the Christmas party. October had seen the first visit of a Mobile Film unit, and in November the Canteen moved to the old Cookery room, fully equipped with new gas and electric appliances, in order to be ready for opening in January.

On 10th January 1949 the top three classes joined Wrotham Secondary School, accompanied by three teachers, Mr R.T. Dixon, Mrs Money and Miss Dale. This move also brought the subsequent unusual entry: 'The Excise Officer called and collected the Methylated Spirit Book, as this commodity has been transferred to Wrotham Secondary School.' In June of this year there were 52 cases of measles reported, and at Christmas prizes were presented for good work and endeavour for the first time.

In April 1949 there was a fall of some six inches of wet snow, which festooned the roads with telephone and electricity wires, bringing traffic to a standstill until the wires were removed. The snow then thawed that same afternoon, by which time many young trees and bushes had been destroyed.

A visit was made to Linton Park to see the West Kent Federation of Women's Institutes producing 'A Pageant of Kentish History' and a concert including pieces by Mozart and Hayden was given in school by a string quartet, entralling the children.

1951 opened with a variety of epidemics, including measles, flu and whooping cough. The absences went up from 50 children on 15th January to one hundred and one by the 18th. By 2nd March there had been 38 days lost through staff absences. One week later there were 152 children absent, and it was not until the middle of April that attendance climbed back to 90%.

The Festival of Britain was taking place on the South Bank, with Wrotham Secondary School staging a marvellous exhibition in the Educational Hall. Seventy seniors from Borough Green visited the exhibition on 28th May.

At the close of the school year in September a note is made in the Log Book to the effect that the spare classrooms, used to this point by Wrotham Secondary School, are once again vacant, with the hall once more being free.

1952 saw the usual measles epidemic in July, and schoolwork was lightened by visits to the Tower of London and London Zoo.

1953 opened with very heavy snow, resulting in 61 children being absent for the week commencing 6th January Scripture lessons were being taken by two Church Army Sisters. It was also during this year that Herbert Marsh first joined the staff at the school. At the end of May there were three days holiday for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, followed by two days for half-term In June two hundred and seventy nine children were taken to the Odeon in Sevenoaks to see the film, A Queen is Crowned.

In 1954 there was hard frost and slight snow at the end of January and the beginning of February, causing worries for the caretaker and staff. Wash basins and waste pipes were frozen as were the outside toilets, which had to be flushed by bucket.

In April a professional educational puppet show was arranged. Children from Offham were invited and the 6d attendance fee covered the hire cost of eight guineas. In June the senior boys visited R.O.S.P.A. house, on a trip organised by the Maidstone and District Road Safety Committee. When the new school year started on 24th September 1954, there were 335 children on roll, with ten teachers and the Headmaster. Many of the children lived on the new estates at Tollgate and Fairfield, which were well established by this time.

The statistics show that 1955 was a worrying year for staff, parents and of course the children. There was snow, snow and more snow from 6th January until 7th March. It was not until 7th May that things began to get back to normal with attendance being up to 92%. Over the same period there were outbreaks of flu, colds, mumps and chicken pox.

In July there was a visit to the Kent Agricultural Show in Mote Park, attended by 77 senior boys and girls.

Borough Green was growing and as evidence of this, class registers were ordered which could hold sixty names. In November the Kent County Police started cycle maintenance and proficiency classes, which continued until taken over by volunteers, amongst whom the late Mrs J. Kelsey was outstanding.

At the end of the year Mr Hickman left after 11 years' dedicated service. The school said goodbye, presenting him with a gold watch.

=====

Chapter Six

IMPROVEMENTS INSTIGATED

Mr E.E.H. Field was appointed the new headmaster on 1st January 1956. He was to remain in this post for the next 27 years. In March Mr George Gomme retired after 37 years, liked and respected by all his pupils.

In April there were 380 children on the roll, with one class having to be held in the Church Hall. Mr Field, with the aid of the Managers, and naturally the Kent Education Committee, sought to find an early solution to such problems. By 1958 a new extension was provided with a room for the staff, who had survived all those years without one.

By 1957 the roll was 397 and the school gardens had been much reduced. In February the first Crossing Patrol Warden arrived, and by April the roll had increased to 423.

In May of this year children started swimming at the Greenways Pool in Addington. (The editor well remembers these trips, the water was perishing !)

In July the first 'Summer Revels' were held, with children dancing, acting and singing. There were a few sideshows and £50 was made. At the end of July Mr Marsh completed his first stint at the school and the clerical assistant for eight years, Mrs A.O. Williams also left.

In October 1957 there was the first outbreak of Asian Flu, with attendance dropping to 65%; On 5th March 1958 the first break-in of the school's history occurred. The last day of July was another landmark in the school's history, from now on only children of primary age were to attend the school.



Mr E. H. Field with school managers and caretaker and cook

In January 1960 the footbridge over the railway line was opened, thanks to the efforts of Borough Green Parish Council. Until this time the children had to walk across the road bridge, on a very narrow pavement, so their safety was greatly enhanced.

From September of this year the local ministers, the Rev. A.W. Van der Meulen, and Pastor D. Dawson took it in turns to take assembly on one morning a week.

By 1962 five new estates had encompassed the village and the Managers decided the school would need extra accommodation. In January of this year, there was another break-in, and much valuable equipment was stolen. The burglars, who came from out of the area, were apprehended and given six months jail sentences.

At the Christmas Party the staff gave their first pantomime. These have been a feature ever since, and have been much enjoyed by the pupils.

1963 proved to be another very cold winter. It was the coldest spell for over 100 years, according to the record. The wash basins and toilets were continually frozen and the children were sent home at lunchtime. Somehow the school coped, though the problems for the poor caretaker must have been immense.

In April hatted accommodation was provided to cope with the influx, the roll now being 411, with the Head Master and 13 staff. The huts were warm, spacious classrooms, looking out onto the playing fields. In June the District Sports were revived, with five schools taking part. In July Miss Griffin,

who had been at the school for 28 years, took her sad farewell, with Dr Say, the Bishop of Rochester giving the address and making the presentation.

In April 1964 a new classroom and indoor toilets were taken into use in the East Wing.

It was also in this year that the Swimming Pool Fund was started, raising £1,000 in nine months. How many 3d bits could you fit into a tube of Smarties? This was one of the many ways in which the cash was collected by both children and parents. It was an example of voluntary work at its best. The staff and parents slaving away, with the Head Master feeding the concrete mixer. Only a year later, on 2nd June 1965, the pool was officially opened by Miss Judy Geegan, the Olympic swimmer. The pool, with heating added, is there for all to see.

In July of this year, for safety reasons, the roller towels in the lobbies were replaced by paper ones. Over this period the school was producing concerts, teaching recorders, singing in public, entertaining old people, and taking part in festivals and competitions in Maidstone and throughout the district. Mr J. Fulljames, Miss Porter and Mr Winders-were largely responsible, with much support from the rest of the staff.

In May 1966 there was the first conference on the proposed three tier education system, which was occupying everyone's mind at the time.

In this year the school entered the local carnival winning the first prize

with the Bayeaux Tapestry. In October there came the dreadful landslide disaster at Aberfan, when the children raised £43 to send to the fund. On 5th June Mr Marsh returned to the school as Deputy Head, and straightaway started his classes singing, which continued the school's tradition of entertaining people in the community.

In August, Mr Ron Fissenden started as caretaker of the school and it was in October of this year that six school meals supervisors started, giving much needed relief to the staff, who were still ready to help out when required.

By 1967 the arrangements for serving school dinners were causing concern, and the School Meals Organiser visited to see the problems at first hand. The meals had to be transported across the playground in large metal containers. This was held to be 'simply appalling!', especially in winter conditions.

On 13th May a further visit was made, with the result that plans for the new hall and kitchen were drawn up on 5th June 1967. A further two years later, in January 1969, Commander Doran, the Kent County Council Member for Borough Green called to inspect the kitchens and it was a full three years later before the hall and kitchens were taken into use, on 10th February 1972.

In 1968 there were 418 pupils on the roll, with a staff of the Head Master plus thirteen teachers. The pottery class started by Mr Field was flourishing and in July 1969, eleven pots were sent to an exhibition in Folkestone. By February 1972 the pottery had moved to the old kitchen and many children were producing excellent specimens.

1970 saw the introduction of 'At Home' meetings, with parents meeting teachers more informally to discuss children.

In the early seventies, visits were made to Holland, Belgium and France but these were not continued as they were proving too costly.

Still keeping up its early traditions of attracting academic interest from overseas, the school entertained five visiting American Professors of Education on 25th June.

Still expanding and improving, it was on 2nd May 1972 that plans were drawn up for the new Resources Centre in the lobby. This was way in advance of the movement in education for Resource Centres and has proved to be an invaluable asset to all children, in assisting learning through experience and self-directed learning.

In July the idea of the 'At Home' meetings was extended, with the result that parental interviews were made in lieu of written reports. Again Borough Green Primary School was a leader in the field, introducing and executing policies that are still trying to be introduced by local education authorities in other parts of the country.

In June Mrs P. Hatcher was appointed to the school, where the roll was now 440. To cope with this number a second mobile classroom arrived in August. Two sponsored walks around the school meadow in the lunch hours in June had raised £450.

In 1973 the footpath from the railway bridge to the school was opened, increasing the safety for children walking to school. Mrs Thatcher, then Minister of Education, visited the school and she promised that a row of trees would line the railway boundary. This promise was fulfilled in March. In May the new school block was taken into use. The old school was rewired, with new strip lighting, and the Parents' Association built and presented the new pavilion, which was opened by Colin Cowdrey, M.B.E., former Kent and England cricket captain.

In 1974 Mrs M. Lowe retired after 17 years as a clerical assistant at the school to be replaced by Mrs Joyce Riddle.

In anticipation of new legislation, the parents met the school governors at a cheese and wine party in December.

In January 1975 the managers inspected the broken boundary fence, and perhaps indicating the change in the financial climate that prevails in education to this day, no satisfactory solution has been found to its repair.

Miss Coates started teaching at the school in April, and the staff ran the Tonbridge and Mailing District Playscheme for a second year. In October of this year the Infants Department introduced the idea of a 'Parents' Talk-in' over two afternoon sessions.

In 1976 as another sign of changing times, Mr Field attended a conference at Divisional Office on children suffering from non-accidental injury - 'battered children'. In June of that year there was a meeting at the school between staff and Social Services to discuss the future of two children. Mr Field recorded in the Log Book that this was his first meeting of this type in twenty years at the school.

1977 saw a sensible decision in that council elections which had closed the school throughout its history, would now be held in Room 8, with the rest of the school operating as usual. (This was also the year when the editor returned to his old primary school to complete three weeks' observation prior to commencing teacher training course. He would like to thank the staff for their help and advice. As he has since completed a Master's Degree in Special Education and risen to be the Deputy Head of a special school, some of their expertise must have rubbed off.)

In 1979 the Borough Green Young Wives are invited into the school to see the infants at work. The roll is now down to only 279 children, with the head plus ten teaching staff. In just eight years the roll has dropped by 160 children.

In 1980 Mr Field was present when the old Infants' School was dedicated as the new Parish Hall, the building having great significance and many memories for pupils through the years.

It was in this year that cut-backs in education started. In April the Divisional Education Officer visited the school to explain to the staff, the re-deployment of teachers caused by the falling rolls highlighted

above. In September the roll was 229, falling to 197 by September 1982. The new block was now surplus to requirements, having only been in commission for nine years, and proposals were put forward for its use.

Mrs S. Williams left after 15 years to take the deputy headship at Wrotham. This year also saw the elections for the first two parent governors.

June saw a new experience in Borough Green. Children from a gypsy encampment in Ightham suddenly arrived at the school. Thirteen older children were accepted, and with the help of a trained and qualified Travellers' Teacher, the younger ones were also taken on, a total of 24 children in all. When its rolls were at their height, over the four hundred mark, the absorption of 24 children would have been much easier. When such a group makes up 1/8th of the school population then problems were bound to follow. Turbulent dinner breaks were one of the few comments recorded in the Log Book. In July the ground owners obtained a court order, and the gypsies moved on, their problems not solved, but moving with them.

On 5th October, Mr Keith Woodhams, a past pupil, who had fought in the Falklands Campaign, spoke to the children in Assembly. This was followed in November by the author's 'Borough Green Past and Present' Exhibition, which was housed at the school for five days, proving of great assistance to the 'History Trail', the school's local history study.

In 1983 'Open Days' were held during school hours, and no longer in the evenings. It was in July of this year that Mr Field retired after another twenty seven years in the magnificent Borough Green tradition of dedication and innovation. Two special concerts were given to commemorate his departure.



staff 1989
Miss C. Pickard and serving staff as of 1989

=====

Chapter Seven

IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUED

On 6th September 1983, we saw the advent of Miss Pickard as Head Teacher, the first female teacher to hold the position. The roll at the school was now 194, with the Head and six

teachers. In October two teachers went on a 2-day course on the Use of Microcomputers; Information Technology had arrived! November saw a meeting to discuss privatised cleaning.

In December the school added to its fame, when the 'Dance Nativity', produced by Miss Coates, was shown on T.V.S. at Christmas. The school was on T.V.S. again in October 1984, and there was a third appearance in July 1986, when the Rev. Tony Powell produced a mock Royal Wedding.

In May 1984 Mr Willard, a local farrier, brought his portable forge to the school and gave a demonstration of how to shoe a horse. In October, the children planted 50 pots of wild flowers to create a nature area, and in November, one hundred and ninety three trees, supplied by the Kent Education Committee, were planted by the children in the school meadow.

In November there was a 'Book Week' to celebrate the opening of the new library and computer room in Room 8.

1985 opened with a visit to the London Museum, and a performance of the Nut Cracker at Covent Garden. This was a visit of special significance as a pupil from the school, Neil Dugay, had won a national competition to design the costumes.

In June there was a two day course at Borough Green, on the Use of Computers, for surrounding schools making use of the school's equipment.

July 8th and 9th were Open Days to mark the completion of the school's contribution to the Domesday project.

In 1986 the school commenced new maths schemes, with the result that once again Borough Green is visited by other schools and academics to draw on the staff's expertise and experience. Between 3rd March and 7th March a sponsored maths effort raised £1,100 for the school. By 3rd May 1986 the school had two BBC microcomputers in use, and two Nimbus ones.

By November the pupils had raised £600 for Save the Children Fund, as a result of their efforts over two years.

On 20th November there was a technology competition for local schools- Borough Green won their section.

In 1987 we find history repeating itself. In January there were four days heavy snow, the roads were paralysed and the school was shut for one week. If we remember earlier years, they used to cope!

School numbers were increasing, and by September the roll was up to 243. In October came the hurricane that devastated the south-east of England. Fortunately the school only lost some tiles, though a few trees were damaged.

=====

Chapter Eight

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Christmas 1987 came and went and before I realised it, so had 1988. I am hoping that this little book has proved of interest to some, brought back memories for others, and shown that history is both past and present in a tradition that carries on into the future.

Omissions there may be – who can forget the water pistols in 1930, when the water consumption at the school was supposed to have doubled? Mr Hall collected them all and then ceremoniously cast them into the school's furnace. What about the boy who left the fingerprint on Mr Hall's car? Or yet again the mallet yielded by a certain gentleman!

We will all have our own vivid memories of the school, which will have particular meaning only to us. No-one will have been untouched by their years at Borough Green Primary School. I trust this book will help you remember, not only staff but your school friends. Where are they all now?

=====

Chapter Nine

AN EVOCATION OF LEARNING

There follows some brief details of the people that have guided the school over the years – for the head teachers, then other key players on the school stage. Some of them stayed for one year, others for longer. They have all left a memory in the children who have passed through their hands. In the space left I can only name but a few, those who have served longest. They must represent the others, who may have contributed much but for a shorter period.

HEADMASTERS

Success in any sphere of endeavour is dependent on the quality of leadership at the top. This has been shown throughout the history of Borough Green Primary School. There have always been problems, so many trials or tribulations. In the past these were in the main due to situations that developed in school, or as a result of growth in the village. In the present era, when cutbacks are the norm, problems and difficulties are imposed from outside the school. The school has moved and developed over the years with great success and of its own accord, thanks to good leadership, let it be allowed to continue!

The first Head Master was Mr William Hall, who held the post from 1911 – 1936. His wife, Mrs E.G. Hall, was Head Mistress at the Infants' School, transferring to the main school in 1922, to act as Teacher-in-Charge of the Infant Department. They lived to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary in 1949, a rare event for people employed in the teaching profession. In July 1950 Mr and Mrs Hall visited the school for the last time, with Mr Hall dying in November of that year. He was buried at Lancing.

Mr Hall was a man of many talents, playing football in his early years for Clapton F.C. At the school he promoted football, cricket, swimming and water polo. He was a keen musician, expecting every child to be tone perfect. His other interest that he brought to school was gardening. Above all else he was a SCHOOLMASTER, his discipline being absolute but just. The vast majority of the pupils left the school with a firm grip of the three R's.

He was followed by Mr Stanley Havercroft McGill, who was Head Teacher from 1937-1944. Mr McGill was a firm believer in public relations and in his first year of office he inaugurated the Parents' and Old Scholars' Association. When war started in 1939, he was an absolute pillar of

strength, his organisational abilities helping to solve the many problems caused by the sudden influx of staff and children from the London areas. (At least thirty of these evacuated children stayed on to live in the area.) He kept the school functioning through all the air-raids, and carried on the discipline left by his predecessor. In 1942 he initiated the formation of the C Flight A.T.C. 1023 Squadron in Borough Green and was its first Officer-in-Charge.

Mr John William Hickman was the next incumbent, from 1945-1956. He was a gentleman of the old school, again firm but just. He saw the school through the aftermath of the war and the subsequent growth in the school roll. It was during his time as Head Master that the Tollgate and Fairfield estates were built. He also had to endure the severe weather of 1947, with seven weeks of snow and hard frost, where classroom temperatures were down to 44 degrees Fahrenheit, and there were fuel shortages and extensive power cuts. He retired on 31st December 1955.

Mr Ernest E.H. Field was Head Master at the school from 1956-83. He arrived in Borough Green in an era when cash was more forthcoming for improvements to the school. He pressed for and obtained a staff room for the teachers, together with the usual offices – one wonders how the staff managed for all those years! His initial wariness of the Parents’ Association was soon dispelled once he realised its immense value to the school. During his time such varying achievements as the first television set and the swimming pool were obtained. He revived the inter-school sports, and with the aid of the dedicated staff mentioned above, music was once again brought back to the school, with concerts, festivals, revues and pantomimes. The building accommodation was expanded on several occasions, including the new school block. He was heard on more than one occasion to remark that he had no problems with discipline, as it was in the very walls.

Miss Christine Pickard arrived in 1983 to be the present holder of the post of Head Teacher, a departure from the practice of the last seventy years. Rolls were falling, monetary controls were tightening, and privatisation of services had arrived. Miss Pickard saw the advantage to both the school and the children, of taking rising fives. This project with judicious external relations and some new house building, brought an increase in the school roll, which continues to expand. New Maths and English schemes, commencing in the infants to progress through the school, have been initiated. Computers are in everyday use, with one classroom set aside as a new library and computer room. The children have appeared three times on T.V.S. in the past two years, and press and parental relations are excellent. The traditions of innovation and firm foundations are being continued, with as ever, the children in the centre. Keep it up ma’am!

FINALLY

Some of the wheels that kept the intellectual advance in motion

Teachers

Mr G. Gomme, 37 years	Miss P. Griffin, 28 years
Miss D. Gladders, 35 years	Miss V. Gladders, 25 years
Mr H. Marsh, 26 years	Mr R.T. Dixon, 18 years
Mrs S. Williams, 15 years	Mr J. Fulljames, 11 years
Miss W. Riley, 11 years	Mrs E. Smith, 20 years

Clerical Staff

There follows the indispensable clerical/financial wizards, who relieve the Head Teacher of so many worries. The first, appointed in 1944, was Mrs Irene Fellowes, who served for 5 years, to be followed by Mrs A.O. Williams, who was in post for 8 years, Mrs Marie Lowe was next in line, serving for 17 years, which brings us up-to-date with our present Jack-of-all-trades, and Master of them all, Mrs Joyce Riddle.

School Caretakers

These are the men, with their array of cleaners, who kept the school operating. The school owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mr Ron Fissenden, our present custodian, who has been with the school since 1967. Others, just as dedicated, have included Mr Tom Fenwick, 17 years, Mr Ted Scrivener, 27 years, Mr Fred Turner, 2 years, and Mr Sid Lawrence for 10 years. I would also like to mention Mrs Lillian Green, who kept the school clean for some 34 years.

School Cooks – revered and remembered by most pupils.

Mrs T. Fenwick, Mrs A. Bangay, Mrs A. Large, Mrs A. Mullinger, Mrs M. Janes, Mrs K. Hearn, and our present cook, Mrs J. Bennet. Again I would like to mention Mrs J. Thacker, who joined as a Lunch Supervisor when the scheme started in 1963, and then served a full 25 years.

It is regrettable that there are no records of the many dedicated people who served as school managers over the years. In line with secondary education they have now been re-named school governors and under the new education laws will have much greater power and responsibility in the school's workings. I would like to place on record the names of Mr S.A. Bramley, and Mrs M. Vinson, who were both Chairmen of the Managers, giving many years of long and faithful service to the school.

POSTSCRIPT

No doubt whilst you have read these pages, the memories have been flooding back. For more recent generations the quantity will be less, but their nostalgic quality is undiminished. The village happily accepted the new estates, and more importantly the people who live on them, who brought new life, new ideas and enthusiasms which naturally percolated through the school.

Over eight thousand children have passed through the school's portals since they opened in 1911. Some of these first pupils are still with us.

From woodwork to word processors, cookery to calculators, basket-making to basic, times change for succeeding generations, with teachers and pupils all absorbing the new subjects. Where will the future lie? Will they rely only on these calculators and computers? Television replacing teachers, telepathy for all? In the name of all the dedicated staff who have served Borough Green so well, I hope not.

F.G.B.

March 1989