

Schooldays in Stoke Works

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We kids were lucky and had the opportunity to start school at the age of 3 years. I loved school. The classroom was always lovely and warm heated by a huge coke boiler adjacent to the playground. Great piles of coke lay around and the boys were always getting told off for kicking it around the playground. We all hated going to the toilet in the winter as they were situated 100 yards away at the bottom of the playground. The teachers Miss Barker, Miss Ingram, Mrs Ray and Mr Scrace were all wonderful. We went on lovely nature walks, picked walnuts from the tree in the school garden and danced to a wind-up gramophone in the playground.

I always had school dinners which were fantastic. They were served by two lovely ladies, Eileen Russell and Mrs Taylor. Eileen Russell's daughter was my best friend but we were both rather scared of her dad because he was quite strict. As we both grew up we came to realise that he was a really kind gentleman. There were always seconds of dinner and puddings on most days. I loved treacle sponge and custard, jam roly-poly and spotted dick but prunes were a nightmare.

The highlight of our school year was sports day which was held on the fields of the I.C.I. club. All our parents and all the locals lined up to cheer us on, Harvest festival was a time that was always eagerly awaited when home grown produce from the village was in abundance. We proudly carried it to school and after the thanksgiving festival it was distributed to the old and needy in the village.

Each day we had little bottles of milk to drink and in the afternoon we looked forward to a sleep on the little canvas and metal framed beds in the school. Each term the "Nit" lady came to look at our hair. The school doctor also came regularly and his stethoscope and hands always seemed freezing cold. I remember he smelt of pipe tobacco and had the leather patches on his check jacket. The school dentist also came with his mobile unit and was kept very busy each visit.