

Dinton School 1939-1946

I started school in 1939 aged 4 years old. My brother was still there but my two sisters had moved on to Queen's Park School in Aylesbury. My father, grandparents, many uncles and aunts, cousins etc. had also attended this school many years earlier. For most of these older ones this was the only school that they attended and for them schooling ended at 12 years old so that they could start work to earn money to help at home.

My first teacher was a Miss Counter who was very kind to us all but kept a firm discipline in class. There must have been about 30 pupils in her class at several different levels. We sat two to each desk in rows for each level although these levels were referred to as 'Standards'. There were 2 playgrounds, the juniors had a separate one complete with toilets away from the elder boys and girls large playground again with toilets. This had a line drawn across the middle. The girls in one half and the older boys in the other half. The toilets were quite 'primitive! As the school was Church of England we had regular visit from the Rev.Drury.

After about 3 or so years in the junior classroom I was then put into the senior classroom into the lowest 'Standard' where the Headmistress was a Mrs. Mclsaac. Again no nonsense and firm discipline was maintained. (complete with cane which she used as necessary!) To me Mrs. Mclsaac was the greatest! She coached me in class with special lessons in Arithmetic and English. The final term was the taking of the 'Scholarship' (forerunner of the 11+) and on passing was a place at Aylesbury Grammar School where I was determined to go!

During the war years all the school windows were 'taped' with sticky tape diagonally across each pane so that if a 'bomb' dropped nearby the tape would reduce the effect of glass splinters. We also had to take our gasmask to school each day and this was placed underneath our desk until we went home which was each lunchtime and at the end of the afternoon. At some time during the day the teacher would shout 'Gas...Gas..Gas' and we would stop what we were doing and reach for our gasmask box, take the gasmask out of the box and put it on. The teacher would then go to each child and check the mask was on properly. Initially there were no school meals and we had to walk home each lunch time. I think that school meals were introduced in 1945-46. My recollection of them was that the food was awful but it saved the long walk home and back!

As most foodstuff was on ration including tea Mrs. Mclsaac had difficulty making her tea ration last the week. She lived alone most of the time in the school house as her husband was away doing his bit for the war effort. There were 6 of us in our house and tea was not one of our favourite drinks so our mother had far more tea than she ever needed. Mrs. Mclsaac asked me one day to ask my mother that if she had any spare tea could she sell her some of her surplus. Although this was forbidden my mother would wrap a 4oz. packet of Brooke Bond tea (minus the 1d. Coupon) in newspaper and I would take it and discreetly put it on Mrs. Mclsaac's desk. At some point during the day an envelope containing a few pennies (just the actual cost as prices were fixed in those days) appeared on my desk. This went on weekly until I left in the summer of 1946 and no-one else ever knew!

The 'Scholarship' exam came in 2 parts. Pupils had to pass part 1 else they couldn't take part 2. Whilst the exam took place all the other children had the day off. A short time after taking Part 1 the results were known and the Part 2 pupils were told of the date for this event. Some weeks after Part 2 Mrs. Mclsaac read out my name as I had passed both parts and would be offered a place at Aylesbury Grammar School starting in the next Autumn term. Those who hadn't passed would then go on to Queen's Park School also in Aylesbury.

Gordon Weedon.