

Schooldays In The Twenties



Hickman, moved from Swannington to start the new school. Nationally, by 1939, two thirds of all children were receiving some form of secondary education. The Butler Act of 1944 formalised the Hadow recommendations, secondary education was provided free for all and the 11-plus exam was introduced; from 1947 the school leaving age was increased to 15. Although the dual system of Church and LEA schools was retained by the Butler Act the funding of Swannington C of E School became altogether more secure when, in 1947, the move was made from 'aided' to 'controlled' status.

One may reasonably hope that the duties of the school governors, while remaining onerous, will never again be as taxing as they were in the formative years of the school. One must be grateful to their predecessors who had sufficient faith and determination to fight for the survival of the institution in which they so profoundly believed and who bequeathed to us a school of character and quality.

SCHOOLDAYS IN THE TWENTIES

Ray Fowkes

The teaching staff when I started school in 1924 was:-

Mr Page	<i>Headmaster</i>
Miss Robinson	<i>Scholarship class</i>
Miss Hickman	<i>Standard two</i>
Mrs Hammond	<i>Standard one</i>
Mrs Rowse/Miss Smith	<i>Infants</i>
Mr Willett	<i>Special Needs & Sport</i>

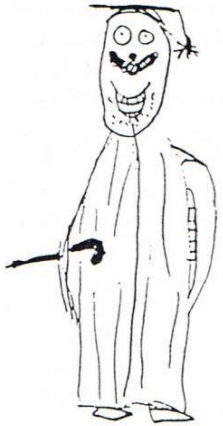
Mr Page, Miss Robinson, Mrs Hammond and Miss Smith all lived in the village, and as in those days teachers were held in the very highest regard and respect we knew that any indiscipline out of school could well come to their notice.

After September 1934 Swannington became a junior school taking pupils up to the age of eleven; those who passed the scholarship went on to the grammar school usually until the age of sixteen, those who passed the next grade going to Broom Leys Central School until the age of fifteen, whilst the remainder went to Bridge Road School, leaving at fourteen.



Looking back I feel that in the Infants class we were very kindly treated and kept entertained whilst the foundations of life's learning process were laid. There was not a great deal of progress made in Standard one, due no doubt to Mrs Hammond being unqualified. I learned in later years that the County Education Authority had wanted to replace her but as it was a C of E school the local members on the board of managers prevented this. No doubt this was out of what can only be described as a mistaken sense of loyalty to someone who lived in the village. When we reached Standard two, however, the difference of being taught by someone properly trained was soon evident.

And so to the Scholarship class. Miss Robinson, known affectionately to generations of Swannington children as Emma, but never addressed thus as we had too much respect for her. She was quite a paragon among teachers. Everything she did was to help and encourage the pupils entrusted to her care. Nothing was too much trouble and she had such a delightful manner that it was almost impossible not to learn. An example of her generosity was that those pupils who were fortunate enough to pass the scholarship she took out for the day, with all expenses paid, either to the seaside or to London. In the days of the depression this was a treat indeed and I am sure all those who were so privileged have never forgotten it, the recollection being with the warmest feelings towards Miss Robinson. Miss Robinson's room was heated by an open fireplace on the wall nearest the playground and by a freestanding "tortoise" stove in the centre



of the wall adjacent to the road. Now at morning playtime Miss Robinson made tea for the staff, boiling the kettle on the open fire. On one occasion whilst drinking my mid-morning milk I observed that the kettle was boiling and rushed to lift it off the fire. Unfortunately I forgot to use the cloth left handy for picking up the kettle and the pain when I grasped the handle was so acute that I dropped the kettle and the boiling water spilled on the floor. There was a commotion, and no doubt I screamed out, but was not given any sympathy for my hurt when Mr Page rushed in from next door. Probably it was due to his realisation that his precious cup of mid-morning tea would be delayed that he gave vent to his irritation by calling me a blockhead, thickhead, dunderhead, etc., and all I had tried to do was to help!

We always had a Christmas party. One year Miss Robinson composed a song for what was to be a mock snowball fight, the snowballs being made of cotton wool. Unfortunately, and to our class's great chagrin, when this game was tried out at the younger children's party it was realised that the older ones would enter into the spirit of the game with too great an enthusiasm and the whole thing was called off.

One of Mr Willett's duties up to 1935 was to coach the school football team made up of pupils from the headmaster's class, and an extra-curricular activity carried on for much longer was as a referee in the Coalville league. He was first class in both duties and when he refereed adult matches they were played strictly according to the rules with no transgressions allowed by either team. Unfortunately it was not unknown for other referees to be intimidated but not Mr Willett who was held in the highest esteem throughout the district.

Mrs Mac



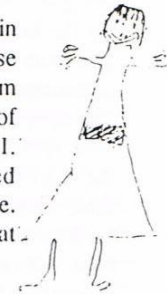
Whilst I am sure it was a step forward educationally, the transfer of children away from the school at eleven seemed to make the village lose something of its identity. Obviously when children left school they had to seek employment out of the village but those three years from eleven to fourteen spent in the

village school had given them a greater sense of belonging. Although I must say that in spite of receiving part of their education elsewhere, those brought up in Swannington felt themselves part of a clan or wider family and in later years no matter how far abroad they had travelled nor how long since they had seen one another, they would immediately feel at home. Parochial almost to the extent of being chauvinistic, but to me it has always been a wonderful feeling to meet up with a fellow Swanningtonian.

SCHOOLDAYS IN THE THIRTIES

Eric Bullen

The majority of the children attending Swannington school in the 1930s, naturally lived in the village but a few, whose families had earlier connections with the school came from surrounding areas such as Limby Hall and the Swannington side of Coleorton. Among the latter were my brother, sisters and I. Although we lived in what is now Moor Lane, we attended Swannington School because our mother had been a pupil there. The distance of our daily walk was not so very much more than that of children living near Hoo Ash or the top of St George's Hill.



The appearance of the school buildings in the 1930s differed little from the present day except for the recent addition of the flat roofed entrance hall. An area of tarmac in front of the school was the only smooth part of the playground. Between it and the wall of the adjacent Co-op stores was a strip of ground of uneven surface which ran from the entrance gates, past the infants classrooms and the boys' lavatories, up to the top playground. The school playing field also had a neglected look with infrequently mown grass and a strip of bare earth, which served as a cricket pitch, in the middle.

There were four classrooms, the 5-7 year old infants were taught in the North end of the school and the Juniors in the South end. Between these two teaching areas was the school hall. The two junior classrooms were created by dividing the large chapel-like South wing with a sliding wood and glass partition which was permanently closed. The hall could also be partitioned but this was invariably open. All the classrooms had adjacent cloakrooms which were essential in days when pupils walked to school in all weathers.