

Oral History Project

**Produced by
the Year 3
pupils of
Shelford
School in
1998**

**"Lots of things
have changed, one
way and another.
It does you good to
talk about the old
times..."**

**Mrs Hilda Matilda
Easy
Aunt Tillie
(aged 90)**

**Great and Little Shelford
Primary School pupil
from 1917-1920**

February 1998

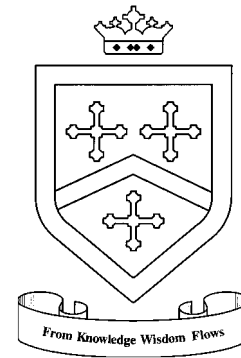
Introduction

I have at last found time during the summer break to present some of the children's work, written in class and at home during Spring 1998. The lower junior children aged 7-8 years old (in Key Stage 2) undertook a project on our school's history as we examined the History of Education over the last 2,000 years. We did this within the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. We could not allow such a fascinating collection of interviews to go the way of all exercise books!

We were amused to discover that some of the things children do and find funny don't change much over time! We found out, for example, that Greek children played "knucklebones" in a very similar way to the more modern games of "Jacks and Jinx".

We also discovered as we did our researches that a great deal of interesting information was stored in people's memories and that this information alone, given in a spirit of honesty and openness could sometimes prove unreliable unless substantiated by other forms of evidence. We rediscovered the importance of photographs and other ephemera carefully stored in people's houses as treasured possessions. This was exemplified for us by the variety of old exercise books and school artefacts which soon appeared in classes for us to examine, each with their own provenance.

We wanted the children to behave during the project like history detectives and to use historical questioning and interpretative skills for themselves. We planned for them to speak and listen to many different people, and to decide for themselves whether what they were being told was a "fact" or a "point of view". We also wanted them to think about why the people in the playground all those years ago said and did what they did. We set the children a challenge to encourage them to find out as much as they could about the school through ORAL history. They were to ask neighbours, relatives and friends about what life had been



like when they were schoolchildren. They were to discover what life had been like both in school and in the playground for Shelford Primary Pupils.

We had been very fortunate in that we had been given several copies of an excellent written account of our school's history. This book had been written by a great friend of school, Mrs Marjorie Westbrook, in time for the school's 150th Anniversary. We all read and used this book as a valuable framework. In our roles as historical detectives we persuaded Mrs Westbrook to come and talk to us about how she wrote her history. We were all delighted that she turned out to be so approachable, so willing and able to tell us so much. She had undertaken a huge amount of real detective work and had pieced together the story for us as a labour of love working from surviving logs, photographs, oral history, ephemera, letters, committee minutes, artefacts and newspaper cuttings. Starting from her initial question: "When was the school first built?" she had spent many months accumulating information and had finally been able to write her authoritative account for us. Just as in life generally there turned out to be many "missing" bits to her historical puzzle, including the story which would have been told though the headteacher's words in the first School logs. These logs have been lost. There were many "blind alleys" to become lost in too!

You will find in this booklet children's pictures and interviews; their rhymes and playground dips. The original interviews have been taped

and kept in school; these transcriptions reflect each child's view of what they thought important to record at the time. While editing the tapes and selecting what was important the children were learning to behave as historians, and to record, as all historians must, their view of the past. In many cases what they found out echoes or adds to the "official" history of the school, but in some cases we wonder which version to believe.

I present these passages as a teacher who is proud of her pupils' achievements. I am humbled by the thought that so many different people have had their lives touched by the school's influences and that for them and us, the school continues to be a formative part of many lives.

Amanda Tuck
August 1998

Playground Games

I asked many different people about the sort of games they played when they were young. My Granddad remembers playing conkers and marbles. My Uncle was the marble champion. A lot of people played with a yo-yo.

Another favourite game the boys like to play was called Hot Potato. You had to hit some people below the knee with a ball, and everyone ran round very fast so that they would not get hit.

One popular game with the girls was Hula-Hoops. They placed a large hoop around their waist and wiggled to keep the hoop up. My favourite game would have been conkers. You would need a shoelace pushed through the middle of a conker and tied. Whoever smashed the other person's conker with theirs won.

By James, year 3

Which year would you say this was?

The Sailor

A sailor went to sea, sea, sea,
To see what he could see, you see,
And all that he could see, see, see,
Was the bottom of the deep blue
Sea, sea, sea.

Found by Scott, year 3

He says:

"This is a very old clapping rhyme and plays on the words see and sea. They sound the same but mean different things. Children in the olden days liked playing with words like we do. I bet children said this in our playground years ago. Maybe 70 years ago."

Dips

Dipper, dipper, dation,
My operation,
How many people
Waiting at the Station?
Sick is the one
Who lands on six.
Surely you will not be IT?
1,2,3,4,5,6!

By Amy, year 3

We talked about the methods children have traditionally used to decide who will play which parts in playground games, and Amy said that this dip would be for when you play "Stuck in the Mud".

Year 3 liked the rhyme because it had a station in it. There was a station built in Great Shelford some years after the school started. We thought about how exciting it must have been for the children in our playground in the early days of the steam engines to have seen the London trains passing the end of the field belching out their smoke. We mentioned this in our class assembly when we did a playground dance. We thought that the children probably would have waved to the driver a bit like the way the "Railway Children" did.

Ibble bobble

Ibble obble
Black bobble
Ibble obble
Out!

By Charlotte, year 3

She thinks that this is just a nonsense dip and it sounds nice. If you land on the out you will not be "IT". She didn't know how old it was - perhaps 100 years old.

Playground Dip

Little Miss Piggy fell down the sink,
How many gallons did she drink?
Five?
The one who lands on number 5 will surely not be IT.

By Jessica, year 3

She writes:
"Everyone who wants to play puts their foot in and someone goes round the other people's feet saying the rhyme. When you get to "How many gallons did she drink?" the person you landed on says a number and you count round the circle".

This is a more modern rhyme because it talks about the Muppet character Miss Piggy. It may still be about 20 years old.

Ball Bouncing Rhyme

Poor mother bought some cheese
It made poor father sneeze
The cat had a fit in the cellar
The dog had the same disease.

By Christopher, year 3

This rhyme helps you to keep time when
bouncing balls.

Skipping Songs

Tell no stories,
Tell no lies,
I saw a Chinaman
Doing up his flies...

By Hamish, year 3

As a class we discovered quite a few rhymes
which were a bit naughty, and some which
were just plain rude! We thought that the
playground would be a good place to be a bit
cheeky in the olden days, after all it was not a
place for adults!

Mickey Mouse

Mickey Mouse,
In his house,
Pulling down
His trousers.
Quick, Mum,
Smack his bum
That's the end,
Of chapter one!

By Thomas Nimmo, year 3

This was as old as Mickey Mouse - about 80
years?

Clapping Rhyme

Chinese men are very funny
This is how they count their money,
Usha, usha, turn round and pusha.

By Rosie, year 3

You work with a partner on this one and clap
hands. When you turn round and pusha you
look like the picture here!

Rosie thinks that a strange and foreign
language which few Shelford children could
understand like Chinese must have sounded
funny to children in the olden days.

Rosie did a picture of an abacus for us during
the project to show that she did understand that
Chinese people counted money that way.

Mary had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb
She also had a bear
I've often seen her little lamb,
But I've never seen her bare!

By Matthew, year 3

He says:

"Although some people might think it's new, lots of "Mary had a little Lamb" rhymes are actually over 100 years old. Some were made up in 1886. As you might have guessed there are many other "Mary Had a Little Lamb" rhymes apart from the original nursery rhyme. Some are very funny and some are rude!"

Alliteration

When Walter the Worm
Went into the Water,
Walter the Worm
Was Wet!

By Alex, year 3

A Skipping Rhyme using the "W" sound!

We asked year 3:

"What would YOU write if YOU had to make a record of 1997-8 for children in the future to look at and learn from? You are the History makers. Tell the story in a short school log of the year 1997-8 in Shelford Primary School."

Jane's Log - 1997-8

September 1997 We left year 2 and Mrs Brittenden's class and Mrs Tuck joined the school to be our year 3 Class teacher and Deputy Head.

November 1997 We went to the Fitzwilliam Museum to see Ancient Greek things like old pottery and statues. Then we went to the Synagogue and learnt all about the Jewish religion and the places and ways they worship. After that we went to King's College Chapel and Mrs Tuck said we were some of the luckiest children in the world to have the chapel so close to where we live. She said that some people travel from all over the world to see it. It had a roof which was very high stone and it looked like trees with branches high above your head.

December 1997 We had a nativity play but we weren't acting in it. The Infants acted the parts and we sang the songs and watched. It was in church as usual.

February 1998 The Inspectors came and it was really scary but we passed and the school stayed and they watched our assembly.

February 1998 We had our book week and we had a Magic Lantern Show and then we had to do Little Red Riding Hood books choosing a type of rhyming.

March 1998 The girl's toilet got flooded because someone kept the tap on trying to wash down some sick. Mrs Tuck and Mrs Quinlan mopped up some of the water at dinnertime.

By Jane, year 3

Home Challenge

"Find out what life was like for someone who was at school some time ago. This person may have just left - or may have been at school 50 years ago! Then write a piece for a newspaper as if you are a reporter for a local paper."

Nana Shirley

By our reporter Alexandra, year 3

During the Second World War my nana went to the Brunswick School. The war went on from when she was five until when she was ten. During that time she used to play in an air raid shelter. The air-raid shelters were in her playground, near the bottom.

My nana went there when there was a bomb overhead, or if they were practising. They practised twice a week. They took their gas masks.

She used to go and sing songs to comfort the little ones. She would sing things like, "All things Bright and Beautiful" and "Nick Nack Paddy Whack" and "Pack up Your Troubles in your old Kit Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile".

Nana never cried when she went down the shelter. In fact she thought that it was fun. There was an all-clear siren when it was safe to come out.

Nana only had 1/4lb of sweets once a week during the war. This was the same as two mini jelly tots, a mini-kit kat, a mini rolos and a mini-fruit pastilles.

GP in False Teeth Trouble!

A boy got into trouble yesterday because of chattering false teeth.

A boy at Shelford School was known as GP because he laughed like a guinea pig! Another boy called Fred put false teeth that chatter when you wind them up into GP's desk. Everyone in the class knew except for GP. When GP opened his desk everyone in the class laughed like a guinea pig. Poor innocent GP got into trouble with Mr Doyle, the strictest teacher in the school.

Gas Lights and Coal Fires at Shelford School.

Our local reporter, Sophie, interviews Mrs Beryl Burakowsky (was Beryl Flack) about life at Shelford School during the Second World War.

Over 60 years ago life was very different at Shelford School. When it was dark the teacher lit the gaslights which made the rooms very yellowy. When it was cold the teacher made coal fires in each classroom. Wet clothes could be dried around the big fireguards.

Mrs. Burakowsky started school in 1934. She told me how the teacher sat on a big high desk at the front of the class. She climbed up the steps and she could see everybody!

The classrooms were quite like the ones today. They had a blackboard and desks. The windows were very high up so you couldn't see out of them. You could smell the horses as they ploughed the field and you could hear their harnesses jingling.

In the playground the children played marbles, skipping, five-stones and cat's cradle.

Something different from today was that the school children were divided up into houses. There were four different ones and the children wore different coloured bands to show which one they were in. They were:

Sycamore -	yellow band
Larch -	blue band
Oak -	green band
Chestnut -	red band.

These houses were used for teams and games.

Mrs. Burakowsky said that it was a nice school but she liked to play in the fields best. When she grew up her children went to the same school as she did.

Interview with Miss Andrews!

Exclusive by James, year 3

Today I spoke to a wonderful old lady called Miss. Andrews who has lived in Shelford all her life. I asked her some questions about how her school life was when she was at Shelford School.

"What years were you at Shelford School?"

She replied, "1931".

"What were the names of the teachers you liked best?"

She replied that in the infants she liked Miss Marfleet and in the juniors she liked Miss Human.

I asked how the desks were arranged back then. She replied that they were all in rows facing the teacher.

"What games did you play when you were at school?"

"A good game was Jinks. To play it you need five stones which were flat. Then you throw them into the air and turn your hand fist side up and see how many land on your flat hand. Also hopscotch."

"What were your duties at School?"

"Maybe to fill the inkwells."

"Did you like going to Shelford School?"

"Very much." She said that she liked drawing and modelling very much too.

"How have things changed from today?"

"Mainly the punishment has changed. The boys were hit with a ruler on the back of their hands, or on their bottom. Boys and girls did not play in the same playground, it was separate."

"Everything was done in our heads. There were no calculators in school in those days."

She showed me photographs of the school in those days. They were of the cookery classes.

"As you get older you remember things better from the past than happen now."

**Mrs. Easy - Little Shelford
(91 years old on February 20th 1998)**

Hamish (year 3) interviewed this lady, known locally as "Aunt Tillie".

Hamish started by asking what games they used to play. She said hop-scotch, marbles (with the marbles from pop bottles, ginger beer "glarnies"), hockey, skipping, maypole dancing, spinning top, "trumble" the hoop, nicky hole. She said that the children used to play on the road, and laughed.

When asked "How did you get to school?" she said that she always walked.

When asked about how many classes there had been she replied that there were two infants and two junior classes. She says that they were taught by two teachers, one called Mr Smith, and one called Mr "Bobby" Howe.

She said that they were in "Houses" and that there were three, green, yellow and blue.

"Houses was like a team", she said. "You belonged to a colour and any competition like sport you did for your house."

Hamish asked how big the room was, and Aunt Tillie said that it was one big room partitioned off. She recalled that the room was heated by round stoves called tortoise stoves because they were slow burning. The room was where reception is now.

The caretaker, M. Gifford, lived in the schoolhouse where Mrs Quinlan's office and rooms above are. When he retired the kitchens and hall extension was built. The playground was not so big. It went to the white marks on the churchyard wall. That was the boys' urinal. The playground was hard and rough. The toilets were at the back. No flush, just buckets.

The school was lit by paraffin lights, there was no gas lighting then.

There was a building on the left as you walk up the path to the school (the Institute) where the boys did carpentry and gardening and the girls did needlework. They also taught them knitting, darning and crocheting, and mother helped with this at home.

When asked about school dinners Aunt Tillie said that there were no lunches as the kitchens were built later. She walked home to Church Street Little Shelford to have hot dinner. My father came home too.

When asked if she ever got up to mischief Aunt Tillie said that if you were naughty in school you would get the cane on your hand. She said that she would paddle in the Cam on the way home. She also said that they caught sparrows for pies.

Mrs Easy went to Shelford School when she was 10 and left at 13 years of age (1917-1920) and then she went to work. Money was short, but "people used to help each other out years ago".

Aunt Tillie's Dad who would give her "the top brick off the chimney" had made frames for all her pictures. "The best photo is the one which remains in your mind or your heart."

As a five year old child Aunt Tillie had spent six weeks in the "fever hospital" at Oakington. Her Dad had taken her eggs with her name on them.

The Headmaster in Aunt Tillie's time was a Mr Smith, and he had an assistant - Mr Bobby Howe. They were respected teachers, but they used the cane when they needed to. Mr Smith taught the top class, and Mr Howe, an ex-serviceman, taught the class below.

Aunt Tillie also talked about mothers who went to work after their housework to do jobs like wheat gleaning to gather the corn to make the bread for the family. She talked about lovely bread with butter from the farm. Other jobs which had to be done (and which children had to help with) were egg collecting for the chicken's eggs to feed the family. They also went tree stripping and potato picking. They had to help with all the harvesting work apart from the household jobs.

Aunt Tillie's son Colin went to this school and grandson Mark became a pupil at the school from 1967-1974 and he recalls his grandfather playing cards and dominoes by oil lamps.

This has been compiled with the help of Colin Norman (Aunt Tillie's son)

Four Children to One Desk

A report by Tom about life at Shelford School during the Second World War

When the war broke out children from London were sent to the villages and the countryside where it was safe. When I interviewed Mrs Beryl Burakowsky, whose maiden name was Beryl Flack; she told me about the school during the War. There were so many evacuees sent from London that four children were seated around one desk! She told me that they talked quite differently and were used to playing in the streets not the fields. She remembers that they seemed to like the school anyway!

Mrs Burakowsky remembers a little Jewish boy. His family were running away from the Nazis who were being horrible to the Jews. The little boy came from Czechoslovakia and did not speak a word of English at first. The teacher told everyone to be kind to him.

Mrs Burakowsky said that everyone had to carry their gas masks all the time. This was in case bombs were dropped on the school and the children and the teachers had to practise air-raid drill.

When the siren sounded the whole school had to walk to King's Mill where they sat under a great big horse chestnut tree.

There were no bombs dropped on the school but people heard bombs that were dropped on London and saw the glow of the fires in the night sky.

By Thomas, year 3.

No More Mushy Peas!

By our reporter Maya

Sarah left Shelford Primary School last year (1997) and I had a chat with her. We talked about the teachers. Mrs Lyne was her favourite teacher because she was funny and you played lots of nice games. She was her first teacher.

She also talked to me about her trips. The first trip she can remember was when she went to Hunstanton in year 2. Her favourite trip was when she went to Devon in year 6. She went on a sleepover there.

Uniform

In reception the uniform was the same as it is now but there were more yellow jumpers. She liked the uniform and most of the colours.

She talked about games. She played hopscotch and in the summer she played rounders. She said that she had rhymes for when she skipped. I asked her to tell me one of them so she said:

"Teddy bear, teddy bear
Turn around.
Teddy bear, teddy bear
Touch the ground.
Teddy bear, teddy bear
Climb the stairs.
Teddy bear, teddy bear
Say your prayers.
Teddy bear, teddy bear
Turn out the light.
Teddy bear, teddy bear
Say "Good night"."

Sarah liked skipping and was good at it. She did the "Jump Rope" for the British Heart Foundation. She had to skip for an hour which took lots of practice.

Parties

Sarah had lots of Christmas parties. I asked her to tell me about one and she said that they went into a year 5 classroom and they had all sorts of party games. She also liked all sorts of assemblies. In year one she did an assembly called the "Three Little Pigs" and she was the mummy pig.

We talked about other things too. She said that sometimes the whole school watched videos. She said that she played some instruments, the piano, recorder and trombone.

For topics she did the Rainforest and the Tudors in year 5, Water in year 4, Minibeasts in year 3, the Victorians in year 2 and Our Grandparents in year 1. There were groups in the classroom. These are the groups she was in:

Cauliflowers
Purple group
Red group
Table one
Table two

Mushy Peas!

Things are much the same now at Great and Little Shelford School except that some of the teachers are different and the children have changed and the names of the groups have changed too. The school dinners are different too, because we don't have mushy peas any more.
