

50 years on! Can it be so long since a group of excited children and staff started a new life in our pristine Infant School in Pothouse Lane.

My teaching life began, after leaving college, in the school in Shayhouse Lane, then known as Stocksbridge Secondary Modern, which housed, on different corridors, an age range between 5 and 15. Our dept. used the top corridor of about six classrooms. The Junior dept. ( Headmaster, Ron West, a well known and well loved local gentleman) had the corridor at right angles to ours, and the seniors used the rest of the building.

School meals had to be eaten in the classrooms as we had no hall, so nowhere either to have proper school assemblies. P.E. activities took place either outside in the school yard, weather permitting, or in the classroom. Trying to provide some kind of exercise working around desks proved quite a challenge.

We did have water closets but these were outside at the top of the playground where we trooped as a class, several times a day, as it was not considered safe for individual children to go unattended to use these facilities. Shrieks of laughter accompanied little boys efforts to aim at the top of the wall.

Building of the new school at Pothouse went on for some time but the day finally came when we were able to take the children, in a long crocodile formation, across Linden Crescent to view our new home.

Soon after this came the excitement of moving in and how lucky we felt that day. Miss Briggs, our Headmistress, travelled to work by bus from a farm at Wharnccliffe Side, where she lived with her widowed brother, quite a walk. She had to walk on country lanes to reach the main road and bus stop. Teachers rarely had cars in those days! She now had the use of her own room and toilet facilities and we, the staff had a good sized room and a toilet.

The children's toilets and washbasins were such a bonus, no more cold, wet playgrounds to traverse, and lovely hot water for hand washing. Washing hands before lunch became a pleasure, not a chore.

Then the joy of the big Hall! we couldn't believe the space available to us, superb for morning assembly, music and movement and P.E., the children really had the freedom to move around and express themselves. Meals were also served here; tables were set up just

before 12 o'clock and a very well equipped kitchen and wonderful cooks. (Mrs Denton's name comes to mind here) provided us with appetising hot food. Bringing sandwiches to school was unheard of, so children not having school dinners went home for lunch.

Teachers at that time, as far as I can remember, were Miss Broadhead, Miss Whitehead, Mrs Wild, Miss Violet Broadhead, Mrs Gilman, and myself, also Miss Tyas from Penistone. As far as I know, only Mrs Gilman, now living in a home, and myself are still living. What a sombre thought! Still I know that some of the children I taught then, are now grandparents, so they are probably wondering where all those years have gone to also.

We did leave our old home slightly reluctantly in one sense, as we had lost the security of belonging to a large School. We could call on the Biology dept if we had problems with tadpoles, for example, or any other animals we had in our class. If our wooden toys became damaged we could get help from the Woodwork dept. and senior boys brought round to our classrooms the crates of 1/3pt milk bottles which the children drank each morning. Little five year olds, away from Mum for the first time, could sometimes be consoled by an older brother or sister located somewhere else in the same building.

We soon settled very happily into our lovely new building, and got on with building the foundations of a good education. Good reading and number skills, as well as social skills were our goal.

Perhaps the buckets needed in later years on the top corridor, to catch the leaks from a sloping, felted roof could have been avoided had the Architects designed differently, but hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Many of the children from that period have gone on to have great careers and interesting, fulfilling jobs. I hope their memories of Stocksbridge Nursery and Infant School as a starting point to their future achievements are as happy as mine.

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