

ELIZABETH "BETTY" TYE

1942 - 1948.

Mrs. 3rd July, 1996.

Dear Mrs. Hare,

Chenies School's 150th Anniversary is nearly upon us and I have only just realised that I "promised" to write an account of life there during & after the war. The weeks fly by don't they?

The earliest recollection of Chenies School is my very first day when, to my horror I saw my big brother Bob - aged about 6 $\frac{3}{4}$, disappear through the screens. I was told he was a big boy and had to go into the next class now. I seemed an awful long while until I saw him at playtime!

I remember that school days at Chenies were essentially very happy. Discipline was high on the agenda and so I, personally, appeared to be a "posdy-posdy" as I lived in fear of a "whack" with the ruler or a stinging smack on the forehead if I misbehaved.

I recall most of the teachers during my years there: Mrs. Haden who wore a pink satin blouse with a long brown skirt or a white satin blouse with a long black skirt, Mrs. Carter was a treasure, too. Mrs. Life, the Head whom we called "Governess", loved us all but was very strict. Miss Howe's aim was to teach well & get us through the scholarship (as ~~the~~^{it} was called then) to the Grammar School. We had extra homework & got there - I have the prizes to prove it! There was a Mr. Down for a while and a Miss Lane too, but my favourite teacher of all time was Mrs. Hamilton, a Scottish lady who wore make-up, a maroon blue check skirt and a pearl necklace. I should dearly love to see her again, but it's too much to hope that she is still alive.

I vaguely remember taking my gas mask for a while and one day being issued with a tin of chocolate powder which we were to take home & have hot drinks made, but I started eating it on the way home & nearly choked to death!

We rarely played games or had P.E., and when we did, had to use balls that we had made - there was a shortage of tennis balls etc. We made the balls by binding rags together, enclosing them in a "section" of hosiery stocking which was sewn up & then coloured blanket stitch was worked on them. We also made pen/pencil cases and raffia mats.

What excitement when it was library day. A big wooden box appeared and we could choose a book from within. Aged about 10, I used to help slow readers before the start of lessons in the morning.

For a time a few of us helped the "Paper Man" deliver his

newspapers before the start of school at 9 am. This "help" came to an abrupt end when a newspaper was torn due to a misunderstanding between two children as to whose turn it was to put the paper through the letter-box!

One day I was disturbed by the appearance of a bouquet of rosebay willow herb which was to be presented to Lady Benson when she visited the school. I thought it was a pretty poor show that a titled lady was to have wildflowers (however attractive) given to her. I was assured by someone that they were merely to be prescribed with - the real bouquet was to be delivered fresh, on the day. Phew! What a relief!

I told my friend Doris James in 1945 that my little brother was starting school and she told me not to be silly. I've never understood why I was silly, especially as Ron did start that very day! I was chatting to him yesterday as we were pouring over his chemist school reports. We were having such a laugh and for me a tear, to all the emotional bits!

The three of us used to travel to & from school on the 335 bus, Windsor to Watford with others from the Nightingales Lane area. There is no bus route along that road now. We didn't know that chemist school had such a good reputation even then, but our mother didn't want us going to Chalfont St. Giles school as we would have to cross the main road by the "Pheasant". Heaven knows what the traffic is like now!

One warm summer afternoon my brothers & I didn't go home on the bus after school, but wandered off to Latimer with the children from the Latimer/chemist area. We had a great time in the fields & along the river. I don't know what time we eventually arrived home - had to walk I expect - our mother was frantic, and, needless to say we never did it again!

School dinners were pretty good considering it was wartime. We had to walk in "cossack formation" to the Lang Room, chemist hall every day. The ladies who cooked for us were sisters called The Hisses North were so rocking. We used to sing a song to them at the end of term (Miss Howe composed it) and, yes I do remember the words - I shall sing them on the 11th if anyone is desperate for nostalgia! When we were 10 or 11 we became dinner monitors, a great honour, however we never seemed to have sufficient dry tea cloths & blotted drying papers.

We also say "Happy Birthday" at lunch time to the lucky person, different words from the usual - maybe Miss Howe composed those, too, I'm not sure, but I remember them - and I remember some children mixing "thoughtful" & "awful" & getting across the wrong sentiments altogether!

Although I've passed through Bohemia many times in the bus & by car, I have only visited the school, once since 1948 when I left. I had to help with preparing sandwiches etc. for a church "do", requested by people at my church, St. George's in Little Chalfont when we lived nearby.

One event that I enjoyed thoroughly when I was 9 or 10 was being "May Queen" & wearing a long dress & sitting in a high chair. The dress was Olga Bohace's bridesmaid's dress which I didn't know about until very recently. Olga is giving me a lift on the 11th in the morning & will take me home ready for my brothers & their respective wives to take me to the evening session (hopefully).

I must see if I can come to the fête on Saturday. I do hope all is going & will go well for these exciting occasions, I'm looking forward very much to seeing you & have spread the word around to several former pupils. We have some memorabilia too.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth "Betty" Johnston