

A HISTORY OF YOUR SCHOOL.

At the beginning of this century-in 1900- Miss Gayford bought a small school of thirty pupils and, early the next year, transferred it to Heathfield. This we may call, I think, the birth of Heathfield. That little school originated at the foot of Byren Hill- away over the hill of Harrow- at a house known as "The Firs". The house still stands, but its name is no longer visible, though you may see the schoolroom along one side of the house.

To know Heathfield in those days, you must imagine College Road a road of residential houses. On our side each house stood in its own garden, and in the month of May particularly it was a beautiful road to walk down, with a great many chestnut trees, lilac bushes, laburnams, and red may trees. The schoolhouse was just the double-fronted, three-storied part, and joined to the present dining-room was a conservatory. At the back was a grass lawn with flower-beds and a shrubbery at the side and a goodly number of fruit trees. At the bottom of the garden stretched a block of stable buildings.

The school grew, and when I joined the staff in 1910 there were 70 pupils of whom ten or twelve were boarders. Four rooms were used as schoolrooms, the three on the first floor, and the one on the right of the front door, which also served as a dining-room and boarders' sitting-room. Pupils entered by glass doors on the east side of the house into the cloakroom.

I wonder how you would have liked school in those days. There was no hall for drill, no real playground. The only facilities for games at the school were the pathways. No one was allowed on the lawn except to play tennis in the summer. We went to the Recreation Ground for hockey and tennis. We could only drill if the weather was fine and then we used the pathways. The boarders went for lovely country walks. I remember two favourite ones. One they called "By Snaky Lane." Turning by St Johns Church, we walked through fields to this lane, and on to Kenton Road- A country road without even a pathway, leading to several farms. The other they named "The Fairies Glade." We turned just beyond Cunningham Park, where all houses ended, into this lovely country lane and walked on to Meat Farm.

At this time there were four full-time mistresses on the staff, and two who visited for singing and dancing. We worked hard, and I sometimes think we worked all the better because of the lack of so much that makes life easier and more comfortable to-day. The difficulties ~~which~~ we are now facing remind me of these days. Oftentimes Miss Gayford would send everyone to run round the garden three times to get warm when it was too early in October to start fires; heating rooms in a summer term was unheard of.

We had our bazaars usually on a Wednesday. We worked until 12 o'clock and then set up stalls and got ready to open at 2.30. We had prize-giving days. For these we hired the Assembly Hall at the King's Head Hotel, or the Public Hall, which was used later as the Carlton Cinema. On these occasions we gave an entertainment of action-songs, recitations, short plays and musical items. I remember well the last of these in 1920, when we all trudged up the hill to the Assembly Room carrying the stage properties for the dress rehearsal. The parents of those pupils, I am sure, enjoyed those days as much as yours do our school functions now. The years of the Great War- 1914 to 1918- were difficult, but we put up cheerfully with all the restrictions, as I hope we shall again. In some ways we were fortunate. Miss Townhend, who had taken a gymnastic class at the Victoria Hall for a few of the pupils, took over the physical training of the boys at Harrow. To economise her time, she gained permission to join our class with the one she held at the School gymnasium for the children of the masters. When Captain Hebbert came back, he took over this class and we continued to attend it until we had our own gymnasium. Captain Hebbert also obtained permission to hold a swimming class for us at the Harrow School "Ducker"- a very great concession and much valued when there

were no Harrow baths.

When the education act of 1918 came into force, Heathfield was inspected by Mr. Earnest Young, who was Headmaster of the Boys' County School, and placed on the Local Education Authority's list of efficient private schools. We were preparing for a full inspection by the Board of Education in February, 1921, when an unexpected catastrophe overtook us. Miss Gayford was taken ill with pneumonia - she died within a week, on February 17th, and Heathfield was stunned by this sudden loss. The school was closed for ten days, and then re-opened for the remainder of the term, its future unknown.

The Board of Education postponed the inspection for a fortnight, but advised that it should then be carried out. In due course Miss Gayford approached me to know if I would buy the school. It seemed an impossibility, but Mr. Gallina, a parent whose two girls had been boarders for about eight years, offered to lend me the money, and I embarked upon a great undertaking; for the report from the Board showed ~~us~~ it would be a formidable task to bring Heathfield to the state of efficiency demanded for recognition. The buildings were inadequate for the 105 pupils then attending; there were not enough elder girls for the school to be considered a secondary school; new subjects would have to be introduced into the curriculum.

However I had worked in the school for ten years, and naturally I felt a very real interest in it. A letter to the parents brought replies which showed I had their confidence, and the staff promised to work under me. With this encouragement I undertook what I have since always regarded as a great trust, and, although the school is what is termed a private school, its position to-day with its buildings and its reputation, bears witness that what are termed its profits have gone back into it to increase its efficiency. It has required foresight and courage to shoulder heavy loans - I say courage, because, each time I considered an extension demanding demanding capital expenditure, I wondered whether the numbers would grow to meet the additional running costs. I will tell you the steps we have, as it were, mounted one by one.

The first need seemed to be a hard court for games and recreation. Miss Gayford had wished to improve the facilities for games, so we raised money by subscription, and the bazaar in 1922 (which realised £91) to relay the grass tennis court with asphalt as a memorial to her. It has done valiant service, and, now that you know its origin, you can think with gratitude of her to whom in reality you owe your happy times of play.

A second great need was equipment for the little ones, and I am glad to look back to the making of our kindergarten. Miss Shegog, who was the first N.F.U. Mistress appointed by Miss Gayford, in September 1920 worked with me to transform the room on the left of the hall into a children's room. A photographed picture of it hangs in the room, and it proved a happy starting-place for many little ones for fourteen years. Miss Croxson is one who began her schooldays in that room. It is a joy to me to have as a colleague one of my girls who started there.

We next hired for ~~a~~ drill a hall at No. 8, then occupied by the Council of Child Welfare. (You must remember that until 1932 Nos. 6, 8, and 10 were detached houses with gardens.) The C.C.W. had erected two halls, and very soon we hired their smaller one as well for a class room until in the beginning of 1924 our own small hall was put up. We felt very proud of having a hall in which we could assemble for morning prayers; we used it for drill, as a class-room and in its portable stage many an entertainment was produced.

It was in 1924 that part of the ~~old~~ stable buildings collapsed, and what had looked derelict now became a real eyesore. I wrote to the landlord asking him to have the debris cleared away. Since we had not been able to use the stables, he did not see why I wanted it cleared. I told him if it were my own property I should build schoolrooms there. A hint that he might be prepared to sell the property to me set my mind working on

ambitious schemes. The School now numbered about 180 pupils, and we were wanting more and more accommodation for day pupils. It had become obvious that a day-school was the districts need. I gave up boarders to make room, and even rooms on the top floor had to be used as classrooms. After careful consultation with my accountant, and, acting on his advice, I approached the Cunningham Building Society. We found that the value of the site was increasing each year as the road was changing from a residential to a shopping area. The Society was willing to advance a loan on a fifteen year basis for practically the whole of the purchase price. It was a venture ~~but~~---a weight to carry, though it was also a weight off my mind, for I knew the lease I held was running out, and I was concerned about future premises for the School when that time came.

I borrowed the money and secured the freehold in July, 1925. Plans were prepared and the building of schoolrooms began at once on the site of the old stables; they were ready for occupation towards the end of October. We spent the half-term holiday moving desks from the house to the new rooms, bringing them into use for the second half of that Autumn term. These formed our largest place for assembly for the next five years; there from ~~the~~ time to time we entertained parents and held our Christmas parties.

In a year's time we again began to be overcrowded, and in December 1926, I took No 19, the house opposite now occupied by Messrs. Biscoe and Stanton, on a three years' lease, and for that period the second farms worked over the road. It was a temporary measure, for soon I was contemplating the big extension on the west of the house. I was aiming at recognition by the Board of Education, but first we wanted a science department. Mr. Duckworth, one of the inspectors who visited us in 1921, often gave me very helpful advice, and we introduced science into the curriculum in a "make-shift" laboratory in the present music room. Gas was brought up from the kitchen below; we used a large earthen jar for water, and the girls had to be content with watching experiments shown by the mistress.

By the end of 1928, by dint of careful budgetting, I had paid off the builder's account for the senior schoolrooms, and I was wishing very ardently for a laboratory. I began to calculate that the rent I was paying for No 19 might provide interest on a capital loan for further buildings. I consulted Mr. Lidbetter, F.R.I.B.A., and after weeks of planning and discussion we agreed upon a scheme, exceeding my original intentions, to include a school hall. It was his idea that if this were built high enough for a badminton court, it would be let, thus bringing in money as interest on a yet bigger loan. I borrowed a second time from the Cunningham Building Society, and in June, 1929, excavations for the foundations of our west wing began. We watched its gradual erection, which gave us a school-hall-gymnasium, a laboratory, an extra class-room, a Staff-room and a Head Mistress's room. It took six months to build, but by the end of the Autumn term the hall was ready and we used it for our Christmas party that year. In the Spring term of 1930 the rooms all came into use.

Now we felt we could again approach the Board of Education for ~~the~~ inclusion on their list of efficient schools. Three inspectors came down and carried out a full inspection on March 25th and 26th. Their report was satisfactory and gave to Heathfield its "hall-mark"---recognized by the Board of Education as an efficient, non-grant-aided Secondary school with its own preparatory department. We have had friendly visits since from both Miss Shearsen and Dr. Dawson, both of whom have now retired.

It was encouraging that a speedy increase in numbers justified the larger premises; in the Spring term of 1931 we reached 200 pupils.

A more important development was the forming in 1930, of a Sixth

Form of six girls, who had passed the School Certificate examination, and the winning in 1931 by one of them of an open exhibition in Economics at Girton College, Cambridge. ~~Next~~ We are becoming more and more proud of the achievements of Heathfield girls who are equipping themselves for useful work and posts of high standing. Among these I am proud to speak of one who gained her L.R.A.M. Diploma under the tuition of Miss Horner, who has been my colleague since 1919. One girl is now a doctor, one is studying law, another surveying, one gained the Cambridge Economics Tripos, two have gained horticultural diplomas at Reading University, of whom one is on the Staff of Swanley College. One is Senior English Mistress at Mitcham County School; another a nurse at Redhill County Hospital. Space and time stay the mention of more, but each year I am gladdened when I hear that our girls are, not always spectacular work, but work of real service to the world.

To return to our own small plot of England. In 1930 I was offered a long lease of a sports ground in Wellden Crescent. We had been hiring courts for tennis and netball. To have our own would both greatly ease the organisation of the time-table, and give greater opportunity for more games, as grounds in Harrow for sports were more and more difficult to obtain. I accepted the offer, and again I faced an outlay not so large, but large enough with other liabilities still heavy--of £200 to convert part of the ground from ~~the~~ grass to hard courts. I have never regretted it; these courts have proved a valuable asset to the School.

All this time big changes were taking place in College Road, which was rapidly becoming a road of shops instead of houses. In 1932 Nos. 6, 8, and 10 had been replaced by the row of shops which you know well. The gardens behind had become ~~the~~ wildernesses of neglect, and I was asked if I cared to buy the land. It was an opportunity not to be missed, though I could not contemplate expenditure to convert it to a useful purpose. We cleared it sufficiently to make use of it for lessons and classes in the open air in the summer of 1933, and in 1934 a part was asphalted to provide a separate playground for the Juniors, entrance to it being made by an arched gateway in the wall.

We began in the Autumn term of 1934 with 253 pupils, and the house was again becoming strained beyond capacity. Once again I began to think if it were possible to build. There was the land--Could I find the capital for a Junior School-house? Nine years had passed since I borrowed the first loan; part of it was repaid. This time I saw the Bank Manager, and I found my position now offered enough security on which to borrow from the Bank. I approached Mr. Lidbetter, and again we spent many hours planning a building, until at last we had a design which would be built for a sum of money which the Bank would advance. In the Summer of 1935 we watched this building go up brick by brick, and almost exactly ten years ~~of~~ after the Seniors had moved to their schoolrooms, on November 1st, 1935, the Juniors moved to theirs on November 7th 1935. We had a happy formal opening on December 14th, by the Countess of Mayo, with Mr. Walton as chairman.

Now we could expand. The rooms on either side of the front door became---one the Staff lounge, the other a dining-room; and the old Staff-room was taken by the Sixth Form. One room was set apart for a library; our faithful Miss King has spent hours of her time getting it into working order; and it is, by her enthusiasm, one of our treasured features; a sixpenny fee from each girl provides a fund for purchase of new books every term, and many are the gifts from ~~the~~ parents, friends and girls who are leaving, which keep it well stocked. Miss Horner has now a ~~the~~ comfortable music-room, where she has her own grand piano as well as the school instrument, and she arranges from time to time two-piano recitals

which are a source of great pleasure.

The next year, 1936, one more addition was made---a cottage for our gardener. We felt the need of a man who could sleep on the premises, and again Mr. Lidbetter designed the little house which has charm in its setting amongst the trees which we have been able to keep. Mr. Cannings and his wife live there, giving us a feeling of security.

One small piece of land to the east of the Junior School, the leasehold of which I secured two years ago, remains to be put to some use in the future. At the moment we are assured that no building there will obstruct the light and air.

This is the record of the growth of your school up to the year 1939. But for the unfortunate outbreak of war, we should have numbered 300 pupils this Autumn term. I do not want a bigger school, for I want each girl to be able to develop her individuality through our corporate life, and I think we must lose personal touch with one another if the community is too large.

This history is written at the request of one of my Staff whose feeling is that you should know that has gone to the building up of that which you now enjoy. I would have you honour these whose names I have given you at the end of this story---members of my Staff who have given great service to this School, and have built up for it a reputation for broad, sound education. Their loyal work with me is one of the surest foundations on which Heathfield is built. Buildings of brick and stone must decay, but the real thing that matters is the spirit of a place; this cannot die. The spiritual values we have always tried to set before you are loyalty, willingness to co-operate in service to the community and to the world outside, and the happiness which comes from this and the honest and diligent use of our talents, whether many or few.

Some 1200 girls and boys have passed through Heathfield since 1921, and I am proud and thankful that hundreds of them are showing you characters that I would have you follow. They have played their part in the building of Heathfield. They value its reputation, and they look to you to carry on its traditions.

One cannot in these present days speak with certainty of the future but my earnest hope is that I may entrust the future of the School to a Board of Governors formed from my Old Girls and the many friends (among whom I count many parents of pupils) who have from time to time added some treasure by way of a cup, or book, or honours board, or some other gift. I do not want it to lose its independence, but I long to secure its permanence that many more girls and boys may lead happy, healthful school-days at Heathfield.

For us, who are here now, our task is surely to "Stand fast and hold the traditions." We cannot do better than strive to live up to the School motto;

Ernest Joyce

"Vincit Qui se Vincit"

Miss Southgate	Miss GAYFORD	Miss Davey	Mrs. Sims
<i>Miss Gaudie</i>	Miss Keller	<i>Mrs. Norris</i>	Miss Dick
<i>Mrs. Gaudie</i>	Miss Derriman	M.A. Norris	Miss Martin
A list of those whose names are honoured at Heathfield;	Miss Nightingale		Miss Woolneth
H. Cannings	Miss Franklyn		Miss Henderson
Miss King	Miss Spekes		Miss Tolsen
Miss Herber	Miss Hamlyn		Miss Crexten
Mrs. Drake	Miss Clegg		Miss West
Miss Shegog	Mrs. Garbutt		Miss Mitchell
Miss Rogers	Miss Emery		Miss Bedwell
Miss Rogers	Miss Sibley		Miss Kerly
Miss Manners	Miss Roberts		Miss Burton
Miss Clatworthy			Miss Baxter
Miss Langley			
Miss Alderton (Mrs Penn)			
Miss Kennard			