

Joan Abbott, "Rose Retreat" The Street

My memories of Harkstead School

My first connection with Harkstead was when I commenced school in January 1929. We were living at "Shop Corner," Erwarton. My father, Mr Charles Lusher, was a gamekeeper for Mr Sydney Wrinch. Accompanied by my two elder sisters, Mary and Ruth and the other eight children, I went to school taking my packed lunch with me. We had to walk to school; there were no school buses nor were there any school dinners.

Harkstead School was also a Senior School then with three classrooms. Mrs. Constance Ward, who cycled from Holbrook, taught the infants. The Juniors were taught by Miss Norah Stebbings, who cycled from Erwarton and the Seniors taught by Miss Anne Harrison who lived in the School House with her two spinster sisters - Miss Margaret, who was also the Church organist and Miss Nell, who we used to take our reading cards to, to hear us read. If she thought we had tried hard, she would reward us with a dolly mixture from her sweet tin. We enjoyed going round to see Miss Nell.

Harkstead School was a Church School and the parson would sometimes come in and take us for Scripture lessons. All through the Lent school days we marched into the church in twos, said our prayers, signed a book to say we had done so and marched back again.

When I started school we had slates and slate pencils to do our work. Each morning we said our tables through. The school was heated by a combustion stove that burnt coke and also heated the radiators in the Infants and Junior room. Miss Elsie Polly used to get up early every morning, walk from Polly Cottage in The Street, in the dark and sometimes wet days, and light the fire, so it was nice and warm when we arrived at the school. In the afternoon when the lessons were finished, she was there to clean the classrooms. She did this for years. Mr Jack Grimwod used to empty the toilet buckets. These two were very reliable people.

In May, when the high tides were in the school time, we were taken down the shore for swimming lessons. Mr (Policeman) Page was our swimming instructor and we received certificates for 25 yards, 50 yards and a hundred yards. We had a big bell on the wall that was rung first time at ten to nine and again at five to nine. If we were on the drag, we would run to make sure we were in the playground when the hand bell was rung, just before nine o'clock.

I think it was 1932 or 1933, Miss Harrison, told us she was retiring and they were moving to Salthouse in Norfolk. We were very sorry to see them go, they were very kind people.

Mr and Mrs Vic Hill moved into the School House in the August Holiday, as newly weds. Mrs Hill was a good teacher and taught for many years.

In 1935, it was decided that Harkstead School should become a Junior School. All pupils of eleven or over were to be transferred, either to Holbrook or Shotley School, which ever was the nearest. We were provided with new cycles, capes and leggings. We were pleased with our new cycles, our first ones, but it was sad saying goodbye to our school and teachers.

In 1975 Harkstead School was closed, the pupils went to Chelmondiston Junior School. Harkstead School is now a private house.



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