



£4



The County School
Grammar School for Girls
Grammar School for Boys
Broadoak Comprehensive

1935-1999
Memories

Introduction

Thousands of boys and girls from Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset have been educated in the Broadoak School buildings. Hundreds of teachers have worked here. For this reason any collection of memories must invariably be a snap shot of what happened here between 1935 and 1999. As editors we have tried to select a wide range of stories. Stories that might cause a chuckle, raise a tear but will certainly revive many more memories. It has been like putting together a jigsaw, but with some of the pieces missing. We apologise if there are omissions but hope that the book will give you a flavour of what it was like to belong to a school that has shaped the lives of so many young people over seven decades. Finally, we would like to thank all those staff and students who have taken the time to make contributions.

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A Brief History of Broadoak School

The original Weston-super-Mare County School for Boys and Girls opened in 1922 in Nithsdale Road. In 1935 the County School for Boys and the County School for Girls opened on the Broadoak Road site. The new building, with its distinctive tower, divided into two schools. The girls' school was based around the west quad and the boys' school was based around the east quad. After bomb damage in the War (1942) and the 1944 Education Act, the boys' and girls' schools continued on the same site, but were now known as the Weston-super-Mare Grammar School for Girls and the Weston-super-Mare Grammar School for Boys. (The official name change was in September, 1945).

In 1971 they merged with Uphill Secondary Modern School to form Broadoak Comprehensive School. The Sixth Form Centre was based on the Uphill site and the main school on the Broadoak Road site.

In 1997 it was decided to replace the 1930s building with a new school.

Weston Grammar School at Nithsdale Road

1922 - 1935

I was a pupil at Bridgwater Grammar School until Weston Grammar School started in 1922 in Nithsdale Road. I was transferred to Weston in January, 1923, and my number in the register was seventy-two.

The army hut behind us was the domestic science room and Miss Bryant the teacher.

Mollie Dennis.



Mollie Dennis & Maude Kilby

Twenty Years of Birds

Jean Bird joined Weston Grammar School for Girls in January, 1938, a few weeks before her tenth birthday. In May, 1945, she was awarded an open scholarship in electrical engineering at Southampton University. The school had a holiday to celebrate her achievement.

She was the only woman with one hundred and ninety-nine men, (mainly returning from the forces) in the Engineering Faculty. At twenty she became the University's first woman engineering graduate.

We were a family of three with a long association with the school during the period from May, 1925, until July, 1945, with a break of only one term.

Mary (aged 10) May 1925 - July 1933

John (aged 10) Sept 1931 - July 1937

Jean (aged 10) Jan 1938 - July 1945

Mary Bird, 1925-1933.

K.Stucky? Maude Kilby, Nancy Benn
(Groundsman in the background Mr Dowdell?)

An Old Girl's Memories of School Days at the County School (Nithsdale Road)

A lecture launched our initiation into what was then known as "Secondary Education". STC: "You are here to work and we have no time to teach you manners or how to behave yourselves. For the next five years, you have hard work in front of you and the opportunity is there for you to obtain qualifications to launch you into a good career. You have already achieved the first goal by passing the entrance examination and the outcome of that is entirely up to you."

Fellow pupils came by train and bus from as far afield as Yatton, Clevedon, Claverham, Sandford, Winscombe, Rooksbridge and Cheddar.

There was the 1st Form for under elevens (fee paying only). New entrants (scholarship and fee paying) were sorted into Lower Remove 1 and Lower Remove 2 for the first year, and Upper Remove 1 and Upper Remove 2 for the second year - mixed sex classes and for 3rd Form. By the 4th Form we were single sex and mixed only for chosen subjects. During the first two years, we only split into sexes with domestic science and needlework for girls and woodwork for boys.

One thing which seemed unusual to all our new girls was reference to the "basin room". What was that?

We didn't catch on at first, but eventually the penny dropped and we realised it was a polite name for the toilets.

The Headmaster usually took mental arithmetic once a week for the four Remove Classes and he was very quick with his questioning - you had to be alert and appear very interested or he would jump on you. I was called by him one day to stand up and face the class. My knees shook - what had he found out about me? "OK, congratulations, top of eighty-two pupils for the term's work." I almost fell down with relief.

Girls were taught basic cooking (rice pudding, potato soup, scones, rock cakes, short crust pastry, home-made mince meat, shepherd's pie), basic laundry (whites, coloureds, woollens, bluing, starching, ironing), basic housework (scrubbing, polishing, cleaning metals, scouring dirty pans), basic sick room care (cleaning so as not to disturb a patient, preparing invalid foods, attractive trays, flower arrangements).

In needlework we learned cross stitch, embroidery, knitting, darning, how to make a pattern for clothes from our own measurements, how to carry that through with cutting out the garments and making them. It was amazing how much we learned in two hour periods each week in our first two years.

The main school hall had to double as a gym and the equipment was kept at one end, opposite the fixed stage. There wasn't a uniform for PE, so girls had to tuck their school blouses into their navy blue knickers and run around in their long, black lisle

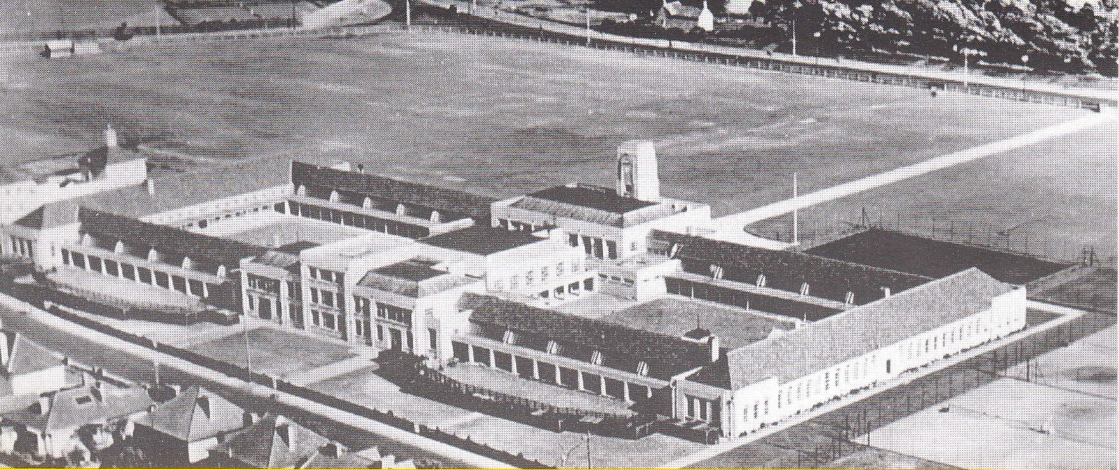
stockings and black gym shoes. If a gap appeared where tops of stockings dared to slip outside elastic knicker legs, a cry would come from our gym mistress, "I CAN SEE SMILES!" If any male pupil or staff came into the hall during our PE, we would dash to the corner and turn our back in confusion and embarrassment. Nobody should see you in your knickers.

Every two or three weeks, the gym mistress would check the length of gym slips. We had to kneel on the stage and she would use a ruler to measure an inch off the ground and that was regulation! We liked them longer than that and used to puff ourselves up to the point of explosion until our checking was over then relax and let the skirt return to our chosen length.

On sports days, girls still had to wear blouses tucked into knickers - no smiles - and again were covered with confusion and embarrassment, cavorting around the playing fields and no where to hide from male grimaces.

Girls learned to play cricket and we had our own equipment. Some of us were taught to score. I had pretty good throwing power and won a competition for throwing the ball the furthest distance (girls).

I was in the First XI for hockey at fourteen years old and thus qualified to wear a school colours girde on my gym slip instead of a navy blue one. This was something to be proud of. We had good teams and a great number of away matches on Saturdays in both hockey and netball.



1935 – The County School Weston-s-Mare

We used to have to make our own way to Knightstone Baths for swimming - no transport provided. It was very carefully arranged that a class would be due at the baths for the last morning session of school time or the first or last session of the afternoon to avoid disruption of school work. Thus, we used our own time! Reduced lunch hours or late home.

We had very good and inspiring tennis lessons and, as we progressed through the school, were allowed use of the courts after school and on Saturdays.

During the autumn term, speech day was held at Knightstone Theatre and governors sat on the stage. Class prizes were presented and speeches made on work and achievements. School Certificates (Oxford) and Matriculation Certificates were also given out to present pupils and those who had recently left to start their careers.

There was a great deal of stress put on all pupils to present themselves in immaculate dress - boys in grey trousers and school blazers and girls in white dresses, beige lisle stockings and black shoes. A watch was kept on any girls who might be in a conspicuous condition and have a less than "whiter than white" look to their dress. On more than one occasion, I have seen dresses tweaked up by a female member of staff to see if "unheard of!" navy blue knickers were being worn instead of white.

This also happened to me when I was playing the fiddle in the school orchestra! Tweaked by a senior mistress.

We had a very able and talented musician in charge of music - Maurice Popplesham, Bachelor of Music and organist at All Saints Church. We had to make our own way to lessons which were held at the Wyndham Lecture Hall in Addicott Road. It was here we learned to open our mouths wide to let the sound come out and to ignore

how ugly we might look in so doing. He really did get the best out of us and there were successes at local Eisteddfods to prove this.

"Pop" also conducted the school orchestra, and I am proud to have been a second fiddle in the production of "The Mikado". Knightstone Theatre was booked for three nights and the cast (including some recent leavers) were excellent. Orchestral practise was after school, providing own instruments and paying for own instruction.

I can recall double periods of physics on Thursday afternoons, when the heat in the corrugated iron buildings in summer would be unbearable. We would be trying to concentrate on "the coefficient of linear expansion" or explaining what a British Thermal Unit achieves, and to distract us from such knowledge would come the strains of an organ grinder outside our classroom window turning his handle to the

strains of "Oh I do like to be beside the seaside" and "Keep the home fires burning". I was sent outside the door one afternoon for trying to suppress a giggle which became an explosion.

I can recall an exciting announcement about uniform - The girls are to have summer dresses to wear instead of gym slips. We had to go to Butters in High Street and be measured for them. Butters was replaced eventually by Owens. The material was white pique, and edges of collar and short sleeved cuffs were in yellow. We all looked very nice decked out in these, with our Panama hats with the school band and badge. The difficulty was that white pique seemed to attract the dirt and soon looked quite grubby so unless you had two made, when your dress was in the wash-tub (no machines) back you went to the gym slip.

After about two years, a blue gingham dress was introduced which could be worn alongside the white pique until that was too passé.

Beige lisle stockings had to be worn with summer dresses by everyone above First Form. They were just as hot as the black and purgatory in hot, sticky summers. First Form were allowed ankle socks.

I used to have trouble over hats which I still detest. I cycled to school mostly, unless the weather was too bad, and my hat would ride in the basket until I reached the end of Southend Road and then it had a ride in the correct position. It was rather difficult cycling with one hand on a Panama in Weston's breezy and busy roads. I was reported two or three times and called for a lecture on trying to be proud of my school uniform. I was, and very proud indeed, but I hated hats and any excuse would suffice.

It wasn't really the best time to sit your Oxford School Certificate after five years hard slog with all the excitement of a new school next term. Quite a number of class-mates would be leaving after the exam and those of us who were staying on had to make up our minds about subjects to study for higher and dizzy heights of Sixth Form and becoming prefects.

We spent our post-exam period in a rush of packing books, turning out cupboards, assembling sports equipment, monitoring junior classes while staff had emergency meetings. I can remember the exalted feeling of great importance dishing out a third of a pint of milk to first formers.

We had a meeting in the "new school" (sixth formers only) with staff on the day before opening the new school, and were told our responsibilities as prefects and shown around the premises which seemed to us like a luxury hotel after our corrugated empire. We looked with awe at the showers and the mind boggled at the library and Sixth Form rest room up in the tower area. It made us realise how lucky the young ones were to have such luxurious accommodation, and we hoped they would appreciate their good fortune. We had carried quite a lot of equipment and parcels of books

from the old school before the end of summer term, so everything was ready for the OFF.

Our "old" school caretakers were Mr and Mrs Dowdell, a lovely couple, who were always happy with us and so kind. I suffered badly from bilious attacks and many is the time when poor Mr D. would have to come to the classroom, bucket, mop, sawdust, and clean up after me. I had a bad bout of jaundice when I was young and used to be so ill, I couldn't walk to the basin room. Poor man never batted an eyelid, and we were friends long after I left. Mrs D. used to cook dinners for pupils who came from a distance - at 10d a day - lovely roast meals, served in the room where we had just been having needlework!

Our Latin master used to mark homework and written work with added expletives. It was something to get eight out of ten. What an effort!

Our English master gave us the nearest we ever had to sex/morals advice. The poem "Airly Beacon" (I believe) describes how a young lady and boyfriend were courting on said beacon and the last verse portrays her sitting there (after a while) with his child upon her knee. "Now," says said master, "you must all remember this. BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS. Get them in the right order. MARRIAGE first, then BIRTHS, and DEATHS will follow on inevitably." Sex education in 1935.

Freda Haine, 1930 - 1935.

Picture opposite: Girls School Hockey Team, probably 1936-38.
Gwen Bessell, Betty Hake, Joan Decent, Kathleen Pople, Pamela Hamilton, Joan Stratford, Thelma Bevan, B Hancock, Mary Coles, Eileen Wilkes, Eileen Moore



1935 - How the New School was Different

I remember the scaffolding being set up ready for building the science labs and staff rooms and a gale blowing it all down in twenty-four hours.

I remember changes in routine. No mixed classes, no longer teachers coming to your classroom, but having to go to their classroom for each session. No longer any walks to the hall in Clevedon Road for music lessons. Each having a shoe bag on her peg in the cloak room to hold house shoes which had to be changed on entering or leaving school. I remember special, short sleeveless tunics in pale blue for gym classes.

When King George V died and Edward VII was named King, we all wore badges with his picture on it. When he abdicated we wore then upside down.

Grace Webber, 1932 - 1937.

Thirty - six Years

Lancashire born Miss Moss came to Weston to be the school's geography teacher - and stayed for thirty-six years. She was Deputy Headmistress for several years and retired in 1971 when the school became a comprehensive.

Looking back over her years at the school, Miss Moss has vivid memories. She recalls one weekend in June, 1942, during World War II, when a bomb was dropped on the girls' school and it was burnt to the ground.

"I lived in Quantock Road at the time, several roads away from the school. From there I saw a line of flames engulf the school. I rushed

down there and helped the local soldiers carry books and stationery out of the small section of the building which wasn't burnt.

The fire didn't get into the boys' school. Out of all the furniture in the school, only five desks were saved.

Many of the girls were just about to take their School Certificate, so we had to coach them in any part of the building which could be used. And nearly all of them passed the exam," said Miss Moss.

The school is in a direct line with the aircraft factory, now Westlands Aircraft Limited. The next day German radio was reported to have said that a factory in the west of England had been successfully bombed. They had bombed the wrong building and hadn't realised their mistake! So no reports of the devastation of the school were allowed in the local papers to make sure that the Germans didn't realise their error.

The girls all started their summer holidays early, and when they came back next term they used half of the boys' school. The girls' school was rebuilt one room at a time and it was completed in 1949, seven years later.

During the '50s, the number of pupils in both the girls' and boys' school rose from three hundred to six hundred, so builders moved in for several years to enlarge the building.

As well as the standard curriculum, there were many different activities at the school, including trips abroad, drama and bee-keeping! During the '60s, pupils took part in BBC 1's Top of the Form and one year the team got through to the final.

In 1971 everything changed, the steel partition in the main hall was pulled back, and Broadoak Comprehensive was born.

Miss Moss, 1935 - 1971.

The 1930s

Folk who spend a lot of their time in nostalgic reminiscence of the good old days are often accused of living in the past and being out of touch with the reality of modern life. But I believe it was Winston Churchill who said: "A country that ignores its history is not fit to face its future." It was not until I visited the library of Broadoak School in June, 1998, sixty years after leaving the said school, that I realised the significance of the past and the pleasure it can bring in reviving lost memories. So here are a few of my own.

I had one year at the County School when it was housed on a somewhat primitive site in Nithsdale Road - known to pupils as "the old cow sheds". Then we moved to a brand new building on its present site and became known as the Weston Grammar School; that was in 1934 when I was twelve years old. I left the school in 1938, having been a Sixth Form prefect, with a tassel on my cap.

I have some rather hazy memories of those school days. The somewhat doubtful novelty of the new school in 1934, was that the boys and girls were to be separated and the impressive school assembly hall (common to both

departments) was divided by a huge mobile wall which was drawn back, manually, by a winch for special occasions when a large hall was required.

Each day began with full school assembly including a hymn (from our own school hymn book), prayers, notices and (when called for) a warning from the Head against any infringement of school rules.

Discipline was strict, school uniform compulsory and behaviour to and from school carefully watched - many a time I was reprimanded for not wearing my school cap! One of the worst offences was "hobnobbing" with girl pupils on your way home - I was once brought before the Head for talking to my own sister on the way home.

Sport played an important part in the life of the school: rugby, cricket, cross country running, athletics and gymnastics - hockey and tennis were confined to the girls' school.

The physics master, "Bill" Davies, was well known locally as a keen sportsman, being a Welshman, he had played "rugger" in his younger days and was a keen member of the Somerset County Cricket Club. We also had a gifted sports master, "Joey" White who had played rugby for

The County School at War

The school in Broadoak Road rose once before from its own ashes.

In 1940, when air-raids threatened London, train loads of children were sent to safety in Weston. Girls and boys from Barking Abbey and Mitcham County School shared the County School buildings, now Broadoak School. Weston pupils attended in the mornings and the evacuees in the afternoons and on Saturday mornings.

At that time, boys and girls had separate schools, always rigidly segregated. A famous invisible frontier ran north south up the drive and through the hall, dividing boys on the east from girls on the west. Even eye contact across that frontier was forbidden on pain of dire penalties. The same rule applied to the London evacuees.

On the night of 28th and 29th June, 1942, one hundred high explosive bombs and ten thousand incendiaries fell on Weston which was also raked with low level machine gun fire. Thirty-two unexploded bombs had to be found and made safe.

The attacks were part of the enemy "Baedeker raids", so called because the targets were chosen from towns that figured in the German Baedeker guide book to Britain. Bombs hit Lance's Corner (now Argos), Marks and Spencer, Oxford Street, and the corner of Moorland Road and Devonshire Road. One batch of incendiary bombs burned the nave roof of St. Nicholas Church in Uphill and set the roof of the Girls' County School ablaze. Three sides of the quad were destroyed.

Somerset and could "run like the wind". He became a popular and highly respected Westonian with a keen interest in local government; he was one time Mayor of Weston.

The music master, Mr Thomas, (another Welshman) was a gifted choir trainer and the school choir, of which I was a member, excelled on many public occasions. He also formed a male voice choir giving public concerts at the Winter Gardens and open air summer concerts at the Rozel for Weston's visitors.

The calibre of the pupils was evident during the Second World War, when many lost their lives, especially in the RAF. A glance at the school's War Memorial "Roll of Honour" will confirm this. There was a special Commemoration Service conducted by the Bishop of Bath and Wells on 1st October, 1953.

**Rev. Keith Dimoline,
1933 - 1938.**

In those days, children were made of stern stuff, turning up at school the next day, carrying their completed homework and ready for lessons. Rosemary Hodges of Wrinton was then a twelve year old pupil at the County School. She still remembers the smell of burnt books and smouldering gym shoes that filled the air. The Headmistress was Miss Farthing. Her secretary, Molly Skane, worked all her life in the school.

As Weston no longer looked so safe to the evacuated schools who promptly returned home to London. Until their buildings were patched up, Weston Girls moved in to share the boys' building. That looked like a social revolution; but the old social customs survived. After the bombing, the invisible frontier was re-aligned on an east west axis across the quadrangles, where it was still rigidly enforced.

When the bomb damage was repaired, and the girls and boys returned to their own buildings, the frontier went back with them, remaining in force for another quarter century until the schools were at last united as Broadoak School.

Donald Brown, 1958 - 1965.

German Bombers on their way to Filton

At 11.38am on Wednesday, 25th September, 1940, class 3(A) were distracted from their studies by the roar of approaching aircraft. The air-raid sirens had not sounded so we did not follow the precaution of taking refuge in the slit trenches dug around the perimeter of the playing field.

An indulgent master allowed us to go into the quad to look up into the bright blue sky.

There we observed large formations of silvery bombers around which buzzed fighter aircraft. Naturally we assumed they were "ours", but no-one could recognise the types of planes as they flew high above.

It was a few days later that we heard that a daylight bombing raid had taken place on Filton Aircraft Factory causing considerable loss of life and damage.

Don Andrews, 1938 - 1943.

A Girl from Mitcham County School

I was a pupil of Mitcham County School in Surrey and in 1940 we were evacuated to Weston and attended what was then known as The Grammar School. At about the same time, Barking Abbey School from Essex was also evacuated and together we shared the school day.

Gas masks were obligatory and arriving without one meant being sent home to fetch it.

On one occasion, due to some unfinished homework, I conveniently forgot mine in order to, I thought, avoid the first lesson. However, this plan soon back fired, when instead of the leisurely stroll back to collect it, I was given an unexpected lift by car. Consequently arriving back at school in time for the dreaded lesson.

Happy days.

Joan Exon (nee Snell), 1940.

Essex Evacuees

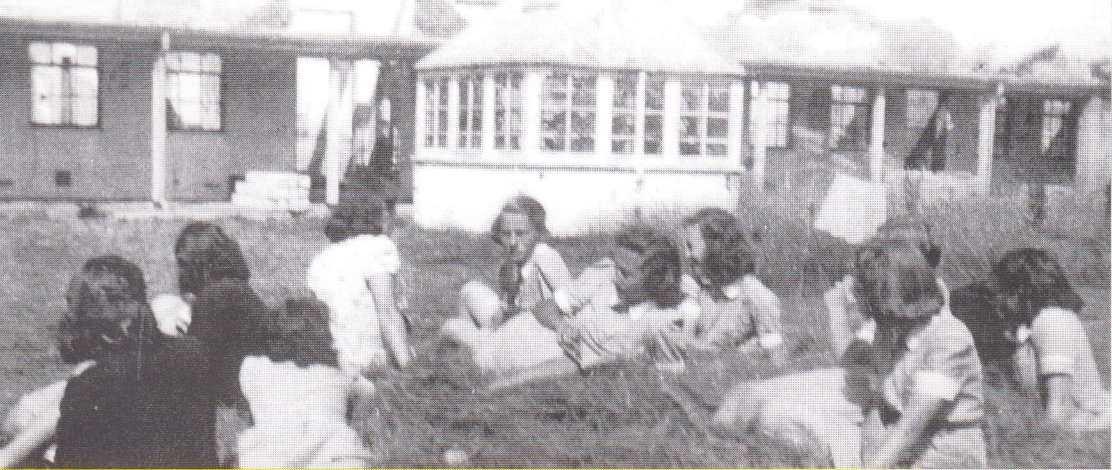
From September, 1939, until July, 1942, Barking Abbey School in Essex was evacuated to Weston-super-Mare. At first they shared the boys' and girls' County Schools, but in October, 1940, Mitcham County School arrived from Surrey. Mitcham County School shared the boys' school and Barking Abbey shared the girls' school. The Weston students attended from nine to twelve-thirty and the "evacuees" attended from one-thirty to five-thirty.

There were so many air-raid warnings that it was decided not to interrupt lessons unless the official spotter, Mr Phillips, signalled that enemy planes were near. During the air-raids of June 27th and 28th, 1942, many of the Higher School Certificate and General Schools Examination papers were burnt. Barking Abbey had to borrow papers from Mitcham County. The exams went ahead as usual!

In July the evacuees returned to Essex.

The Editor.

Picture opposite: County School for Girls, summer 1942 following fire damage – evidence of burnt classrooms in background. The three girls in the centre are Nancy Hellgar, Nesta James and Rhianon Davies



Sirens and Summer Dresses

Our first greeting in assembly was when Miss Farthing announced - much to our disgust coming from the top class at junior school - "The babies must sit at the front!"

Two smells that stuck in my memory were those of the formaldehyde in the biology lab and the terrible acrid odours of burning after the incendiary raid on the school. I lived in Brendon Avenue and actually watched the flames of the school during the incendiary raid which devastated the girls' side.

When the siren went during a school lesson, we had to get under the desk or bench - as I did during a science lesson. We also had rehearsals with the whole school trooping across the playing field when the siren went, making our way to Uphill Manor; we were a prime target!

We liked our school uniform, but used to contort our hats into weird shapes to be more glamorous, although we were forbidden to speak to the boys. Strangely, we had to kneel down to have our summer dresses fitted and the hems had to be six inches above the knee.

At seventy I can hardly believe that I reached the top of the gym ropes and swung to the neighbouring one.

We had a tennis exhibition by the then great Dan Maskell.

There was a flatlet for domestic science training. When any girl felt poorly she was allowed to lie down in the bedroom - regarded as a treat! I still remember useful hints, helpful in running a home.

As new girls in 1939, we had to stifle our giggles when the Headmistress (the feared but respected Miss Farthing) contorted her mouth and nasal sounds to instruct us in French pronunciation. However, it stuck in my mind and has been very useful in my travels to France.

Mary Ashley (nee Thomas), 1939 - 1945.

Segregation, Discipline and the War

The school was strictly segregated and was, to all intent, two single sex schools on the same site. The line of demarcation ran from the gate on Windwhistle Road through the clock tower to Broadoak Road, where there were two separate entrance gates, separate bicycle sheds and separate school entrances for boys and girls. Pupils were never allowed to enter the school from the Windwhistle entrance and the main drive was, in effect, a "no mans land" between the sexes.

Discipline took various forms. In order of severity they were:

- * returned work - if work was not satisfactory, it would have to be done again after school hours
- * physical correction - used by teaching staff and prefects for instant discipline offences, eg. talking, inattention, distracting behaviour, flicking pellets or elastic bands
- * lines - used for minor discipline offences
- * detention - this was used for serious discipline offences and meant the offender had to return to school on Saturday morning
- * official caning - this was administered by the Headmaster for major discipline offences
- * expulsion - the ultimate punishment.

On the east side of the school, there was a large, wooden hut and next to it an old by-plane which were used by the school's Air Training Corps. When bombing raids started, local residents became nervous that the aeroplane and the playing field would be mistaken for an airfield and would attract the attention of German bombers so, to avoid this possibility, the aeroplane was removed.

During one air-raid on Weston, a parachute land mine bomb landed on the promenade near the entrance to the present beach car park. These bombs were designed to cause blast damage. In addition to blowing a large hole in the promenade, it jammed the entrance doors to the school!

When there was an air-raid and the weather was fine, we retired to trenches which had been dug around the edges of the playing field.

The aircraft factories at Oldmixon and Banwell were protected by barrage-balloons and on one occasion one of these broke from its moorings and the cable trailed across the playing field.

On the golf links opposite Brean Down Avenue, there was a battery of anti-aircraft guns and when these opened fire during the day time, the noise was deafening.

Prior to the invasion of Europe, a large number of American troops and their equipment gathered in Weston. One of their installations was a set of seventy-five millimetre anti-aircraft guns and point five

inch anti-aircraft machine guns. These were situated on the golf links slightly to the north of the existing British guns. The Americans who manned these guns were billeted in various houses between Broadoak Road and Moorland Road. These soldiers proved to be of great interest to school boys who found their free and easy attitude a great contrast to the rather stiff, social attitudes of British culture at that time. For instance, they would let us examine their equipment and vehicles at close quarters. Also they were generous with chewing gum and sweets which, by that stage of the war, were in very short supply.

Graham Venn, 1939 - 1945.

Secret Notes

Our social life improved during the War really. When I first started at the school there was strictly no real contact with the boys' school next door - we were in real trouble if we talked to them in uniform at all. Then came our evacuees, Mitcham County School next door and Barking Abbey to us, a mixed school! We had social events together occasionally and we were very curious to find out who sat in our desks when we weren't there! Some of us had boys, so we wrote notes and left them inside and, of course, were found out and "up before Miss Farthing" for our bad behaviour. Considering how segregated we had all been, it's amazing how many partnerships started then - one of the Mitcham Old Boys became my brother-in-law.

Marguerite Moore (nee Hale), 1937 - 1942.

From Hockey Captain to Tax Inspector

The school was bombed in 1942 and our books etc. were damaged by water. Our parents had to collect our red shoe bags and PE stuff that were floating about in the cloakrooms.

The school quadrangle was dug up and used as allotments. Each class was responsible for a piece. Prizes were given for the best kept allotment.

When the sirens went (for air-raids) we had to sit under our peg in the cloakrooms, until "all clear" sounded.

We had to have a signed docket from school to get our school uniforms from Butters or Walker and Lings. We wore modern tailored, navy blue pinafore dresses, white blouse and tie, black stockings, blazer and velour hat (winter) and blue and white cotton dresses, white ankle socks and straw hat (summer term). Later we couldn't get the hats so that rule was relaxed. We wore a pale blue, Grecian style dress, and matching knickers(!) for gym.

We were able to buy a doughnut or bun (with a bottle of milk) at break time in the morning (but they were rock hard by lunch time).

Solomon the goat, grazed on the grass tennis court. Miss Nellie White (who taught biology) did bee-keeping after school (in school grounds).

I was First XI school hockey captain for two years and we used to dye our beige stockings a dark crimson for our inter-school matches as we couldn't get any special sports kit during war time. We had lovely playing fields for our hockey and netball in the winter and tennis and rounders in the summer (we were the envy of some of the private schools who just used the sands for hockey). We won "colours" for our sporting achievements and cups for house matches and the school tennis tournament. Our gymnasium was very modern for those days and it was a very good school to be part of. We had good school hockey, tennis and rounders teams.

We collected for National Savings Stamps in school to help the war effort. There were charts on the wall showing how much we'd got towards a spitfire etc. We also picked rosehips, elderberry flowers and stinging nettles (which were hung up to dry outside the French windows of the classrooms - on the walkway) and these were used to make medicines.

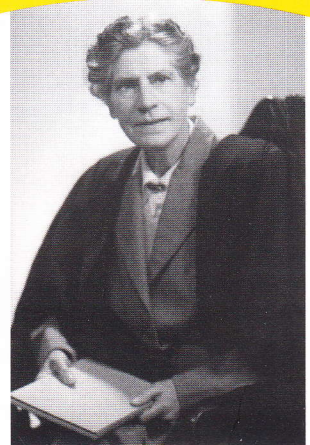
We had Wyndham lectures (slides) and prizes were given for the best essays (reports regarding the lectures).

The boys' and girls' schools were quite separate and we weren't supposed to talk to each other while wearing school uniform! (I married a prefect in the boy's school and so did others!). We used to have "unofficial" hockey matches between the girls' First XI and the Sixth Form boys - these were held on the sands and the boys used to cheat and use rugby scrum tactics!

My teachers were: Miss Farthing (Headmistress who also taught French, scripture and arithmetic), Miss Measures (Latin), Miss Bourke (French), Miss Frampton (English), Miss Campbell (history), Miss Moss (geography), Miss White (biology), Miss Newman (domestic science), Miss Rowe (art), Miss Berlandina then Miss Bennet (PT), Miss Sheppard (maths), Miss Brice (English) and Miss Webber (history).

I didn't go on to university, but sat the Civil Service exam in February, 1947, and was appointed as a tax officer at HM Inspector of Taxes, Weston-super-Mare in March, 1947.

Margaret Peacock (nee England), 1941 - 1947.



Miss Farthing, Headmistress



Harvest Camp at Pershore – 1945

No Parties, but Plenty of Potato Picking

We were not allowed to attend parties, dances or visit the cinema during the school week. Our parents were sent a note to that effect.

I also remember, to help the war effort, most of my form and our mistress went to potato picking camp at Minsterworth during the August holidays. We were paid 8d an hour - approximately three and a half pence. All great fun, but hard work.

Valerie Croft (nee Hitchens), 1941 - 1945.

Boys at War

It is difficult to select from five years at the school what can be of interest to those who now occupy it. The most momentous was certainly the German raid in 1942 which used incendiary bombs to burn out the girls' half of the original school. The Headmaster was T.E. Lindfield MA who was a rather remote figure.

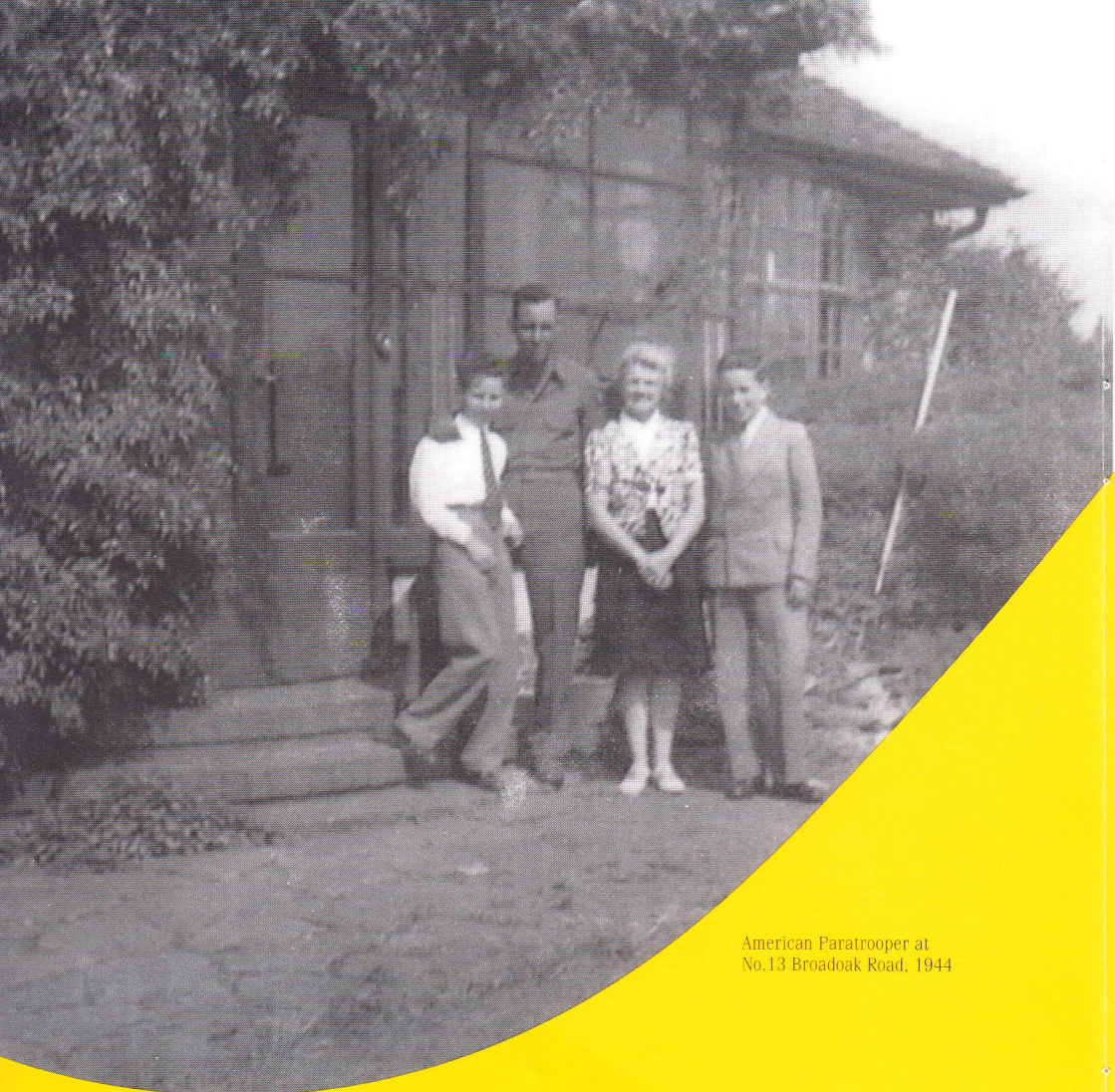
The Sixth Form boys, who were part of the school, were asked to stay at the school over night along with one master to do fire watch duty in case of an air-raid. The devastation at the school was so great that one can hardly imagine a few prefects and one master with fire buckets and a little water could have made any difference to the outcome of the fire.

There was a victory garden on the school grounds and the students were assigned to work on it during certain periods. A few of us decided to cut out of the school during this gardening period and about five of us ran head long into the Headmaster on the street. This merited a special individual visit to the Headmaster's study and two strokes of the cane he kept, on the buttocks. You could hear the swish of the cane and an abrupt thwack while waiting in the corridor outside of the study.

Leonard Reeves, 1941 - 1946.

1940s





American Paratrooper at
No.13 Broadoak Road, 1944

The 101st Airborne Division in Broadoak Road

My parents brought me to live at 13, Broadoak Road in March, 1944 when I was almost fourteen. The house still stands and is just a few steps away from where the new school is being built. Because I had such a short way to go to the then Grammar School for Boys, I

was nearly always late! My brother, ten years older than myself, was away in the RAF.

Our house was requisitioned for us under government order because my father was involved in war work making war planes at the Oldmixon factory near by. The buildings are still there. We had only been in the house for a few weeks when, one afternoon, the local billeting officer came to tell us that

"..... before nightfall..." two American soldiers would be coming to stay. Shortly afterwards bunks were installed in the upstairs bedroom which, as you can see as you pass by, still accesses the balcony of the house and an hour or so later our two compulsory guests arrived.

Gerald Martin, 1944 - 1948.

Memories of Teachers

The Headmaster, Mr Lindfield, was known to the boys as Slink because of his habit of slipping quietly around to check the progress of lessons.

Mr Hill, the history master, was known as "Food", pronounced to rhyme with "good", because it was alleged that he pronounced "food" that way. I must say I never heard him do so but somebody must have done. It was Mr Hill who told us of the original, ex-military, school buildings in Southend Road, the site of which may be seen because of the newer development between the Victorian houses on the south side.

Mr R. H. Pope was known as Reggie, and was a very able French teacher, who had taught at the Sorbonne. I am grateful to him for teaching me much of the French I know, and for stimulating my study of other languages.

Mr Hay, the Deputy Head, was known as "Curly". He did not have all that much hair, but he did wear a very tattered gown (but he had a good one for official occasions!)

Mr W. J. Davies, known as W. J., was the physics master, and a former rugby blue. He was very Welsh, and his catchphrase was "right you are".

Mr C. Pinton, one of the maths masters, was known as Chas, and loved to talk about cricket at the end of term.

Mr Bucknall taught chemistry. He had a pronounced Somerset accent, knew his subject backwards, and appears to have written five books on his subject. He was very insistent in stressing the work of what he always called "The Almighty" in matters scientific.

Mr G. Thomas taught music and rugby, at both of which, like a true Welshman, he was an expert. We called him Tommy amongst ourselves.

Mr G. (George) White taught geography and PE. He had been a Major in the Commandos in WW2, had fought in the jungle, and put his knowledge and experience to good use in the gym, where he built assault courses and made us go over them like soldiers.

Mr H. H. Lawrence, who taught Latin, and was known for some reason as Mike, was noted for his loud, sonorous emphasis of the long "a" of some of the Latin words.

Maurice Broom, 1941 - 1948.

1940s

How do you think Mr Churchill got to where he is today?

I was in a Fifth Form (5a) maths lesson towards the end of the War (May 1945, or so), when Mr Winston Churchill was at the pinnacle of his career. We were in the build-up (as we might call it, these days) to the Oxford School Certificate examinations. The class was being taken by Mr C. N. (Speedy) Harris, a normally most mild mannered, but occasionally apoplectic, gentleman.

The class was not being all that attentive, and this moved Mr Harris to launch out on a lecture extolling the virtues of perseverance and commitment, without which he assured us, our exam results would be abysmal. Warming to this theme, Mr Harris, eventually climaxed with a question which the assumed had but one answer. "How do you think Mr Churchill got to where he is today?" he thundered.

Most of the class would have been prepared to leave it at that. But not "Nip" Watts. "Nip", as I recall him, was occasionally wayward, but was very bright indeed. He was quite unimpressed. With a measure of nonchalance yet in a firm voice he volunteered, "because he is the son of Lord Randolph Churchill".

Mr Harris hadn't expected any answer, and certainly not that one. He could hardly contain his outrage at this summary dismissal of his message. He went near ballistic. Sadly, I have forgotten the final outcome, except that my maths results weren't up to much. Mr Harris was probably right, all along.

Alec Kingsmill, 1940 - 1948.

A Head Girl Remembers

I remember vividly the night the school was bombed, then viewing the smoking ruins the next morning.

I remember the new school magazine, "The Phoenix" (rising from the ashes!)

I remember the form allotments on the sandy soil of the playing field perimeter.

I remember the wonderful Miss Frampton who taught us English all the way up the school.

I remember the school buns.

I remember the amazing Mr Evans, the groundsman, who tended all the sports fields and tennis courts with fierce devotion and the day the school goat ate his ration book. He was incandescent with Welsh rage!

I remember the camaraderie of the school hockey, netball and tennis teams. We lived for all the sports, under excellent tuition by Miss Bennet.

I remember the respect and affection accorded to Miss Farthing our Headmistress.

I remember the most beautiful banks of glorious flowers around the stage for speech day. The connecting doors were open wide so that we could combine both the boys' and girls' halls for extra seating. The imposing presence of the governors and the chairman Mrs Miller-Barstow on speech day.

I remember myself, making all those votes of thanks and winning the Sixth Form Cup in 1949.

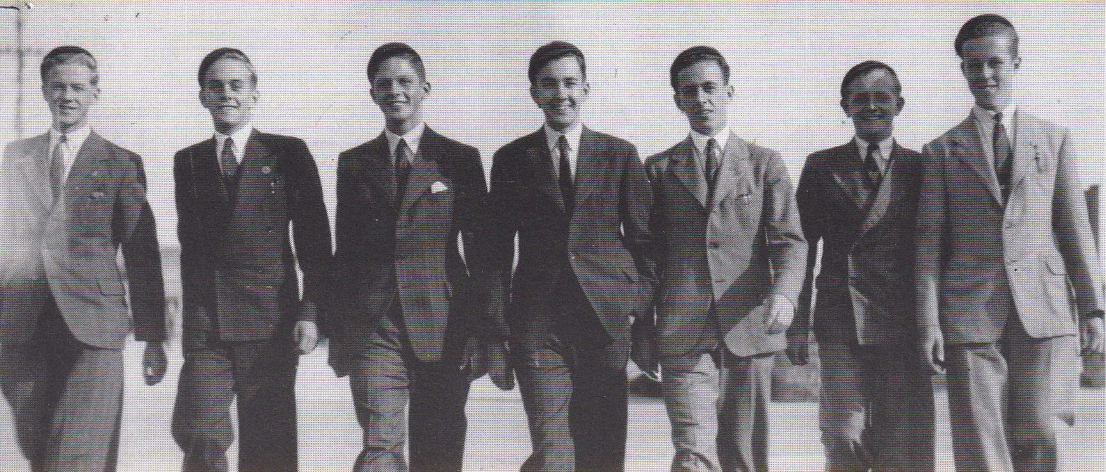
I remember rushing for the swimming bus; all those lessons and competitions held and the Knightstone baths.

I remember the success of Rossendale House singing "The Green Hills of Somerset".

I remember the strong winds that blew everyday, or so it seemed, as we cycled in droves up and down Beach Road.

I remember, last but not least, the most valued of all my memories - fun and friendship.

**Janet Williams (nee Lovell),
1942 - 1949.**



Boys Learning to be Men

I remember the day we beat the Old Boys. It was their inaugural match, that very first season after the War, and I was a lanky member of the Fifth Form, newly arrived in the First XV.

I watched them assemble in the changing room. Some wore fearsome scrum caps. There were handle bar moustaches and faces burned mahogany by the Indian and African sun. These men were huge. They had legs like tree trunks. They also had a look in their eyes I could not begin to understand.

Out on the pitch, things looked a little better. In the kick-about, it was clear they were short of practise. Passes were dropped or fumbled. Their backs, having run down the pitch to see what it felt like, stood at the far end doubled over and breathing heavily. One was being sick.

From the tail of the first line-out, I looked at their stand-off who would be my target if they got the ball.

He was at least smaller than the rest, but puzzlingly square-shaped. In theory, if you tackled low, you would up-end your opponent. I think I got hold of one ankle and a knee on that occasion. Accordingly, I lifted my sights. Next time, I arrived in his mid-rift, which was much more comfortable.

"Go easy, you young b*****," he panted, "I haven't played a game since 1941."

There were harder encounters of course and the score mounted, but by half-time we were closing the gap. It became clear that the referee was delaying scrums and line-outs to give the Old Boys time to get there. Some lay flat on the field after each scrum, heaving gently.

It was unthinkable, of course, that we should beat them - boys against men. But in the last minute, with the Old Boys two points ahead, Robin Hood lived up to his namesake and produced the

Above picture: A photograph taken on 30th September 1947, on Weston's sea front, near Knightstone Baths, following the school's memorial service at the Parish Church in Grove Park, that afternoon...

From left to right are D.W.(Derek) Porter, A.J.(Alec) Kingsmill, J.R.(Jim)Owen, B.W.(Brian) Davies, C.J(Chris) Roberts, J.S.(Jeff) Hynds and G.(Gordon) Court.



Jim Owen, Head Boy 1947-1948

splendidly unexpected. He galloped off downfield and, as a very large Old Boy closed on him, he checked, side-stepped, and unleashed a drop-goal that would not have been out of place at Twickenham. The whistle blew and it was all over.

In our innocence, we had achieved the impossible. Later that evening, three of us did the unthinkable. Strictly against all protocol, we walked with three members of the Girls' Grammar School along Kewstoke Toll Road. They were not wearing hats. We were not wearing caps. I remember to make matters worse, we were singing "Why Do Robins Sing in December?"

It is odd how song lyrics recall the mood for a moment. For me that moment was about more than the sound of girls' voices, and moonlight on the Bristol Channel, although it was about that as well. Robins also sang in December because a school playing field at Broadoak Road lay that night covered in stud-marks. Some were made by boys learning to be men. Others were made by men discovering with gratitude that it was time for rugby again. Whatever is built over that pitch will cover more than it knows.

James Owen, 1941 - 1948.

Up Before the Headmaster

I was a "scholarship boy", and my year was the last to pay for books, uniform and sports gear. By Bristol Omnibus, it cost one old penny (1d) from the Boulevard to Broadoak Road. Many country pupils from Cleeve, Claverham, Yatton and Clevedon travelled to Weston by train. It was a serious offence to be caught proceeding to school without cap, tie and blazer.

Staff favourites were George White, who returned from the War with rippling muscles, to take us for games and PT. It was reputed that he was once a reserve for the England rugby team. The only female staff member was "Dusty" Miller, without doubt every boys' heartthrob. The most feared was Big Bill Davies, a crack shot with a blackboard duster.

Yes, it was the main drive that was the dividing line between the boys and girls at break and lunch hour - regularly patrolled by both duty master and mistress - but some how overcome by Jean Innes and Geoff Saunders. They married soon after leaving school, and Jean found fame as a prolific writer of historical romantic novels, under numerous pen names, including her maiden name and Rowena Summers.

Even in those days, accommodation was at a premium, and singing/music lessons were held at the church hall in Moorland Road under the auspices of Mr Thomas - it always seemed to take an hour to walk back to the main school. His tuition held us in good stead when all Weston schools took part in a pageant to celebrate the United Nations (circa 1948), at the Winter Gardens. The Grammar Boys, all twenty of them, had to march across the ballroom singing "Yankee doodle dandy", complete with make-up. They marched in embarrassment to the cat calls of other Weston school boys who considered us "rather too big for our boots".

Our last day at school for a group of fifth formers was eventful - we decided to settle an old score with the most obnoxious prefect and the object of the exercise - to "de-bag him". We cornered him in the trophy room, and were ready to carry out the threat, but through the door came George White to the rescue, and we all ended up in front of the Headmaster - "Tiny" Price. His leaving words to your truly were, "If only you had put as much effort into the classroom as you did on the sports' field. Every success in the future, but don't ever come to me for a reference." I did feel a little better, when years later, I was invited back to school as Mayor of Weston, to present the prizes at speech day, albeit by a different Headmaster. Ah well - happy days.

David Driver, 1944 - 1949.

Maths, Cricket and Girls

Mr F. R. Bateman was recalled from retirement in 1940 to teach maths and English to the lower forms. He had, to us, a commanding presence and brooked no nonsense. His trademark was his manner of awarding detentions for misbehaviour - mostly inattention. "Boy!" he would shout, "What's your name?!".

On being told he would whip out a little black book from the inside pocket of his jacket and bellow "Your name goes down once". Three entries and a Saturday morning detention was given.

In middle school, our maths teacher was a Mr C. W. Pinton. Undoubtedly a good teacher he was also a keen cricket lover. One day, whilst writing on the blackboard, he suddenly turned round and asked "What's a no-ball Porter?" The second half of the lesson was all about the rules of cricket!

Still keeping to the subject of mathematics, Charlie Pinton was succeeded by Mr C. N. Harris. Whereas Mr Pinton would teach one geometry theorem per lesson (and plug away until the majority understood it), Mr Harris taught five on the first occasion that he took us for the subject. We never did learn his first name because from that moment onwards he was always known as "Speedy"!

A good friend, Chris Roberts, had a great sense of humour and loved practical jokes. One day, in the Fifth Form, he shut himself in one of the cupboards at the back of the classroom

with the intention of staying there for the whole lesson. Unfortunately he sneezed and fell out! It was towards the end of term and this episode resulted in his suspension for the remaining weeks.

In 1946, I was privileged to be made Head Boy. One day, I was called into the Head's study (Mr F.R. Price, or Tiny as he was known to all on account of his six feet, three inches or so) and was told that he had learned that, against the school rule, I had been observed cycling to school with a girl. As Head Boy, he said, I was expected to set an example to the whole school and I would therefore cease this practice forthwith. As I had been committing this "crime" since the Fourth Form, and as I considered the rule to be ridiculous, I found myself refusing to obey. Mr Price was rather taken aback at being challenged in this way, but recovered sufficiently to order me to take twenty-four hours to consider my position. I was to return the following day and then agree to abide by the rule or be sacked from my position as Head Boy.

It should be understood that the twelve prefects and I were good friends. So leaving the Head's study, I called a meeting and explained the ultimatum to a very receptive group. I told them of my decision to stand firm and that, to avoid being sacked, I had written out my resignation and was going to hand this over as a response to the ultimatum. Within an hour I had twelve written resignations in support of mine!

At the appointed time, I confronted the Head with my bundle of papers and suggested that he find a new group of boys to assist with the running of the school. Further more, I assured him, no other sixth former would accept the job of prefect.

We retained our positions and the following year all the Victorian rules about boy/girl fraternisation were abolished.

The girl in question has now been my wife for forty-six years!

Derek Porter, 1940 - 1948.

Dinner Time at Weston Grammar School (Girls)

Dinner duty was covered by members of staff, eg. Miss Caws who taught French and Miss Boon, history who claimed to be the reincarnation of Mary Queen of Scots!

The tables seated eight girls and all meals were expected to be eaten. If anyone hadn't eaten her dinner, Miss Boon or Miss Caws, who patrolled the dinner hall with a soup ladle or a long-handled large serving spoon, would tap the girl on the knuckles and tell them to eat the food. The rest of the table were not allowed to clear or to have their puddings if the plates were not empty.

The worst dinner was: a slice of corned beef, a scoop of "pom" (like today's smash only very dry and powdery), a spoonful of cold, sliced beetroot, and a spoonful of cold beetroot juice put over the "pom". UGH!

Marion Davies (nee Loxley), 1949 - 1951.

Picture opposite: Grammar School for Boys 1st XI – July 1948
A.J.Kingsmill (Scorer), ? , Geoff Hynds, Henry Slade, John Williams, Chalky White, Peter Malsen (owner of photo), Rodney Berkeley, Ray Humphries, Hayden, Peter Williams, John Neath, R.N. Davies



Domestic Science at the Girls' School in the 1940s

I was appointed as the domestic science teacher at the Grammar School at Weston-super-Mare in 1946. Owing to war damage, there were no domestic science rooms. I had, therefore, to take theory lessons as necessary at the Grammar School during the mornings. A couple of lessons were taken in the boys' school.

In the afternoon, four days a week, I had to go to Locking Road School where we were allowed to do practical work. I bought a bicycle and most of my dinner hour was spent in getting to Locking Road. The children came by bus or cycled.

Besides teaching, I was responsible for the menus for school dinners, ordering food and checking accounts for same.

Every Friday I had to check every form's dinner register to see that money received equalled the dinners eaten! I then prepared the money ready for banking. I was allowed two and a half hours a week non-teaching time to deal with this.

At the end of every term I had to check and see that the money spent on food did not exceed the allowance from the county for school meals.

As well as this, I was responsible for dressing school plays, but was not expected to spend much money, even when there was a large cast!

Then came the day when plans were produced by the county for a new Domestic Science Department. What joy there was when we were able to move in!

Mary (Bunty) Tracey, 1946 -

The Girls' Grammar School in the Early 1950s

In January, 1949, I took the scholarship at Yatton Junior School and passed and was allocated a place at Weston Grammar School depending on an interview. My first visit there was for the short aural interview with Miss Farthing, in her office, during the summer term before I was due to start in the September. I remember being very nervous, but as I was accepted, I guess I must have made a reasonable impression!

That summer holiday my mother kitted me out with the formidable list of requirements. The school colours were maroon and yellow. We had ties and scarves in these colours. In winter, we wore navy pinafore dresses (a little more modern than the usual gym slip!) which had to be a certain length off the ground. They had to be made to a certain pattern and in a woollen serge. We had white blouses. Nylon stockings were not allowed (far too sexy!), but we wore "Nora Batty" style ones. No jewellery, nail varnish or make-up was allowed. Hair was kept fairly short unless tied back or in plaits. We wore navy blue knickers in winter and white ones in summer (the kind that old ladies wear today!) For PT lessons, we wore a short, blue gym slip, daps and white socks. Summer dresses were made of a blue cotton material with white lines making a squared pattern.

I remember my first day quite clearly, I was just eleven years old and my mother had asked an older girl to keep an eye on me! We caught the 8.15am train from Yatton. We were issued with season tickets which lasted a whole term and could provide free travel at weekends. There was a double decker special bus which would take us along the seafront to school and cost 1d for the journey. This penny could be claimed back, but the return journey's fare could not be claimed because the authorities felt there was plenty of time to walk to the station to catch the 4.35pm train as school finished at 3.50pm.

That first day, the newcomers were put into a classroom next to the corridor in the boys' school because the school had not recovered from war damage. The school seemed quite large after our little junior school and being in the boys' school made it more confusing to find our way around. I think at some point we assembled in the gym and I remember clearly a girl called Hilary Evans, she seemed to leap around and had a floral dress and bunches. Another girl was Adrienne Curtis and they became my firm friends.

We had the chance to order a sticky 1d bun for the term which we ate with our milk in the morning break. That first year we had a Miss Harding as our form mistress. She was young and she taught us geography. She left to be married at the end of the first year. Her favourite hymn was "My Song is Love Unknown" which we sometimes had in assembly.

After exams, Miss Farthing came round to each class to talk to us in turn to discuss our results.

We were not allowed to leave any of our school dinner, even the fat on the meat. The teacher on duty would inspect our plates. The Head Girl sat at the head of the table when I first went and criticised the way I held my fork!

Freda Star, 1949 - 1954.

Drama at the Grammar School

I was a pupil at the school from 1947 - 1954 and was appointed Head Boy (my name as A.R. Watkins is somewhere on a board recording such things) and I went on to read English at Oxford.

I was much involved in school drama productions, in particular "The Happiest Days of your Life", "The Enemy of the People", "Journeys End", and in the famous (I suppose) first production by amateurs of "Waiting for Godot" which was done by boys at the school and me as a recent leaver.

Roger Watkins, 1947 - 1954.

Florins and Half-Crowns

I was told at my appointment interview that I was the first overseas teacher ever to be appointed to the school. I arrived from Australia in January, 1957, and started teaching within two weeks of arriving in the country.

My first day as form teacher was very difficult. I made a complete mess of collecting the weekly dinner moneys because I did not realise the difference between florins (two shilling pieces) and half-crowns (two shillings and sixpence). Not a good start for a maths teacher.

In my second year (1958) I went with John Hill and a group of Sixth Form boys to a residential course at Dillington House near Ilminster for (I think) a period of four to five days. This was a most memorable life style (country manor) for the boys and myself.

Geoff Simpson, 1957 -1959.

Weston-s-Mare Grammar School, taken by Mr H.Wood with Mr Pinton watching on right, both retired ex members of staff. E.J.Guthrie setting a long jump record of 19 feet 11 ½ ins on 24.04.1957

