

The Three R's Past and Present

in

Bramdean and Hinton Ampner

This booklet originated from a request to Bramdean and Hinton Ampner Parish Council to produce a new version of the pamphlet "A Musical Reunion at Hinton Ampner" which told the story of Hinton Ampner House being used as a boarding school for the evacuated pupils from Portsmouth Girl's School during the Second World War.

The Parish Council felt that this would be a good opportunity to compile a small social history snapshot of the educational establishments in the two parishes in the present and recent past.

A small working party advertised for content and collated the material which follows. As with all witness testimony it will not always match other people's memories or experience but the booklet may be of interest and will perhaps stimulate discussion. It is amazing what a variety of educational establishments two small parishes with a total population of only 566 can contain.

Thanks to everyone who has been involved in either contributing, producing or editing this small slice of local history and special thanks to Councillor Felicity Hindson who provided funding from Hampshire County Council for the printing.

With no apologies for inadvertent inaccuracies and in the hope that you enjoy the stories ,

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A Conversation with Audrey Blake about the Old School in Bramdean and Hinton Ampner School

On a cold, miserable Sunday afternoon in January 2010 I became a time-traveller. In front of Audrey's blazing coal fire she took me back decades to tell me about the Old School in Bramdean and Hinton Ampner School in the 1920's and 30's.

Audrey was born in Bramdean in 1923 and started school at the age of 5 in the Old School which was situated on the site of the present Village Hall. Audrey remembers that the date 1865 was picked out in shepherd's crowns (or fossils called echinoids) above the windows and so this was presumably the date that the school was built.

The small school was basically one big room heated by coal-fired tortoise stoves and it had two entrances- one for girls and one for boys. The infants had a small room heated by an open fire and their own teacher. Playtime saw the children rushing around a big grass playground or using the outside toilets.

At the age of 8 the children graduated to the school at Hinton where they generally stayed until they were 14.

Everyone walked to school and Audrey remembers that on occasion there would be a flood at Little London when the springs came up and the children would be carried across the water by workmen. Water was a feature of the village and there was even a pond at the bottom of the playground at Hinton which delighted the children if not the teachers.

There were three teachers at Hinton School. Mr Page was the Headmaster and lived in the School House next to the school. He hailed from Birmingham and retained his Brummie accent much to the amusement of his pupils when he said "puppy dog". Another teacher Mrs Garner lived in Portsmouth and came to school by train every day. She was deemed rather exotic as she was the only person the children had seen with dyed red hair. Miss Budd was local. She never married and lived in New Cheriton.

Mr Page is remembered by Audrey as a good teacher with a fondness for history and this was possibly the reason behind the school outing to Hampton Court on a coach. Even though subsidised by the council this cost the vast amount of 3/6 (17.5p) and not everyone in the school could afford to go. A trip to the seaside

seemed to be an annual event along with the visit from the Royal Tank Corp who came for the weekend on a courtesy visit to Sir John Capper who lived at Bramdean House. He had served with them in the First World War and was also connected in some way with the R101 airship which Audrey remembers passing over Bramdean.

Audrey remembers Lady Capper with particular fondness as she was generous to the village with a Christmas tea party and a present for everyone, daffodils for the children to give to their mothers on Mothering Sunday and a chocolate egg at Easter. Attendance at her Sunday School earned a child a *halfpenny*? which would be taken home to their mother.

Scripture was taught at the school by the vicar and other lessons included some subjects familiar to children today such as geography and PE (physical education) but also different subjects such as needlework for the girls, spelling bees and singing lessons. Children were, however, called by their surnames and it was common to be caned on the hand for bad behaviour. Much store was set by "learning by heart " and Audrey can still recite Wordsworth's "We are Seven".

*A SIMPLE Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?*

*I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.*

*She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
--Her beauty made me glad.*

*"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said
And wondering looked at me.*

*"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.*

*"Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."*

*"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,*

*Yet ye are seven!--I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be."*

*Then did the little Maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree."*

*"You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."*

*"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side."*

*"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them."*

*"And often after sunset, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there."*

*"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away."*

*"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I."*

*"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."*

*"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
"O Master! we are seven."*

*"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"*

*'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"*

1798

Holidays were usually spent playing in the fields which all had names and the children all helped out with harvesting. This involved “stooking” or stacking up the sheaves to dry or helping build the rick in Tanners Yard. A favourite game was to wait for the threshing machine to almost finish cutting so that only a small circle of hay was left in the middle of the field and then to knock out the escaping rabbits which had been “rounded up” into a smaller and smaller circle. It would be rabbit stew for supper that night.

Like the older children in Wordsworth’s poem Audrey left her childhood behind, left school and at the age of 14 went into domestic service in West Meon.

As I walked home I returned to the 21st century but could not help thinking that school life had not been too bad in the 1920’s and 30’s even if the poems were a bit gloomy.

Letter from Deirdre G. Smith in Totton

I arrived at Hinton Ampner Endowed Aided School as a very nervous newly-qualified teacher – Miss Bendle, in September 1957 after attending Salisbury Diocesan Training College for the previous two years and being privileged to live in the idyllic Cathedral Close. The Headmistress was Miss Cock and she was responsible for the eight to eleven year olds and I was in charge of the infant class with ages ranging from four to seven plus. There were only two classrooms and no hall so physical education had to take place in the classroom with the desks and chairs pushed back –very limiting, or in the small playground. Dinners prepared in the school house next door were eaten at the desks.

The head teacher and I travelled to school from Winchester on the bus, so there were no after school clubs as we had to leave fairly promptly to catch the bus home. I have very happy memories of my time at the school. The parents were very supportive and friendly. I was often showered with flowers and home – grown vegetables. I especially remember the beautiful dahlias I was given each year and I kept the plants for many years.

The classrooms were very cold in the winter and I remember hugging the old black stove in the corner when it wasn't gushing out smoke and keeping it continually stoked in the hope it would send out some heat. I was very sad one hot sunny day to arrive at school to find all the pet fish had died owing to my naivety in placing the aquarium in a sunny window. However the class enjoyed the burial service in the garden reading out their poems and prayers and singing their favourite hymns. Yes, teaching was so much more relaxed in those days – no sats, tests or targets to achieve. There was infinitely more freedom in the planning of lessons. I remember the interest the children showed in a spider crawling across the window, so I took the opportunity to stop what we were doing to study the spider bringing maths, art, language and drama and creative writing together. Would this be possible today I wonder?

Unfortunately I only stayed at the school for three years as I left to get married. Since then I have taught in many schools but my very first school at Hinton Ampner leaves me with the happiest memories. The children were friendly and very keen to learn and the parents were wonderful.



Temporarily at Hinton Ampner in 1986 whilst Cheriton School is being re-furbished.

Insert picture of Hinton Ampner School today

Hinton Ampner House



Hinton Ampner House today

Photo by Eric Trickle



Black and white photos from Frances Sallis

Hinton Ampner House in 1940



Girl Boarders from Hinton Ampner House meet the hounds Hunt and Miss Trigg and her choir in on the garden room step, Hinton Ampner June? 1940

