

GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

*Edited by Peter Bowbrick and
Morwenna Griffiths*

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First published 2007

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ISBN: 0 903929 11 2

Printed by: Anthony Rowe Limited,
<http://www.antonyrowe.co.uk/>

Typeset by: Bookcraft Limited, 18 Kendrick Street, Stroud. GL5 1AA
<http://www.bookcraft.co.uk/>

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank The National Heritage Lottery Fund for providing the funding without which this project could not have been started, let alone completed.

Dr Barbara Cross came up with the original idea, set up the project and got it off to a flying start.

The Local History Society in Ruddington was extremely helpful from the beginning. In particular: Gavin Walker, who gave up time to locate names and photographs for us and who also helped by reading the completed manuscript; and Alan Baseley who published two articles in the *Rudd* publicising the project. The rest of the History Society was also very helpful in suggesting contacts.

Cynthia Brown of the East Midlands Oral History Archive was very helpful, especially in advising about interviewing, permissions, and administering the developing archive of material.

We thank Joseph Windle who did an enormous amount of work in the initial stages. We are also very grateful to Joy Morrell and Carolyn Ingall who transcribed the 42 interviews with the men and women who gave us their memories of the schools.

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INTRODUCTION

This book, and its companion volume, *Boys' schooldays in Ruddington*, provides a vivid picture of being a schoolchild in Ruddington from early in the twentieth century to the 1960s and 70s. The oldest ex-pupils are in their early 90s. The youngest are still in their 40s.

Over 40 men and women were interviewed (22 men and 20 women). Their stories bring past times to life. In the years after the First World War, the girls walked to Shaw Street to learn to boil and starch the washing—mainly handkerchiefs! There was a garden for the boys during the Second World War where they grew vegetables and kept rabbits. Milk was a halfpenny a bottle (0.2p) and both boys and girls were knitting scarves and balaclavas for the troops. Others had memories of the cold baths at Highfields and the terrors of the Eleven Plus.

The two books provide a colourful picture of how national educational changes were experienced locally. For instance, we hear how curriculum changes placed new demands on schools. Cookery lessons used to be all-day affairs for the girls. Boys used to be taken out of school by local farmers to pick potatoes. All that had gone by the 1960s. There were changes too in out-of-school activities. Television arrived, and transport to Nottingham became easier. During the second world war children were taught in the Chapel as well as in their classrooms, as the village accommodated evacuees from Nottingham and Birmingham.

The project was funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Barbara Cross instigated the project using the network she had created during her doctoral study, *An Historical Investigation of Girls' Educational Experiences in a Village School 1863–1969*. (It is available in the Nottingham Trent University library.) Barbara Cross and Peter Bowbrick carried out the interviews. Morwenna Griffiths had overall responsibility for the project and, with Peter Bowbrick, edited the books. Interviews were carried out with ex-pupils who still live locally and who agreed to take part. Care was taken to ensure that the memories of the ex-pupils covered the whole period up til the closure of the school.

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Difficult decisions had to be made when editing the books. There are so many interesting, touching, shocking, funny stories in the interviews that choosing which ones to include was very hard. It was also hard leaving out some wonderful stories of adult life, for instance of experiences in the war. The books could have been much, much longer! The full original interviews can be both heard and read. The interviews recorded on discs, with their transcriptions and with copies of photographs and other documents, are kept in St Peter's Rooms for anyone to access. Transcripts are also kept in the Local Studies Library in Nottingham.

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PAST TIMES IN SCHOOLS IN RUDDINGTON

In his will of 1641, James Peacock gave a tenement and adjoining cottage for the purposes of a free-school, and money for the appointment of a school master. This was to be a free-school for the education of scholars, including younger children starting school at about six years old. It became known as the Endowed school. The term 'scholars' at that time was used for both boys and girls. Both sexes attended the free-school. Education was free, except that payment had to be made for books, and a contribution made for coal.

In 1845 a Government Commission into the condition of the Frame-work Knitters reported:

There is a free-school, an infant-school, a large Sunday-school in connexion with the Established Church, and Sunday-schools in connexion with the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Baptists. There are also various dame-schools in the village, and an evening-school for girls, belonging to the church school. A girls national-school was attempted to be established a few years since, but failed in consequence of the parents refusing to allow their children to attend unless they brought their seaming with them; as this would impair the efficacy of the school, it could not be allowed, and the school was turned into an infant school. The free-school is for boys and girls, open without expense to all the children of the parish. They are admitted at six years of age. The school is at present attended by 116 children, of whom only 26 are children of frame-work knitters. These are generally removed when they get about seven years old, and put to seaming and winding. The infant-school is attended by 148 children, of whom 59 are from the families of 41 frame-work knitters. The Church Sunday-school is attended by 101 girls and 86 boys, 42 girls and 46 boys being children of frame-work knitters

The original Endowed school building eventually fell into disrepair and was rebuilt on The Green in 1976.

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The Infants and Girls school, now St. Peter's Rooms, was built in 1852. It was opened as the infants and girls school in 1863. Boys left at the age of seven to go to the school on The Green. Girls continued to be taught at St Peter's until they completed their education. In 1969 the boys school merged with the infants and girls school to form the St. Peter's Junior C of E Controlled school. For a time the schools were administered by the then boys school headmaster, using the existing buildings. The school later moved to the buildings on Ashworth Avenue, which were previously occupied by the Girls Ruddington County Secondary school.

FIRST DAY

Mother didn't take me. Two girls who would be about fourteen took me to school on the first day and Miss Attewell was the teacher. We had slates and in the afternoon we had to have a sleep.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

I went when I was five. All the children who started at five were allowed to play with the dolls house to make them feel at home. But with my sisters taking me to school and with meeting them out of school it wasn't the strange place that it would be for a lot of children. I never did get to play with that dolls house! One small regret!

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I went in January forty-three. I was very small in height as well as everywhere else, wearing old fashioned glasses. It was a little bit daunting to say the least because on your first day, you know, wearing spectacles, children used to ridicule you, which I found not very nice at all. But eventually, you know, children got used to seeing you like that and you just got on with things.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I was really scared because I didn't know what to expect. And it was the first time I'd been away on my own, I mean I hadn't been shopping or anything on my own, I'd always been with my Mother, especially with me being a bit disabled. And so I was really scared and I had this strange idea because they kept saying when you get a bit cleverer and you go into another class, you go higher and higher. And I'd got this awful feeling that everything was raised, like on a raised desk, and we would have to walk up stepladders to get onto them. It was such a relief when I got there and found it was so different, you know.

Janet Parker b 1939

I can remember the first day. We both wore very pretty flowered dresses, identical, although we are not identical twins and we walked in and my

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sister hated school and bit the teacher and I was very embarrassed because she was wearing the same dress as me and I thought they would connect up that I was her sister. And the teacher was called Little Mrs Jones because she was the reception class teacher, taught the infants and she was very small compared with the Headmistress, Mrs Jones. And she was a lovely person and I remember her picking Jean up and cuddling her and Jean kicking and screaming and shouting because she didn't want to be there! And that pretty well established the pattern of our time at school.

I made a copy of little Mrs Jones' car in plasticine! And I was carrying it to show another teacher and it slipped off the board so I had to go back and make it again before I could take it through.

Ann Wilson b 1944

I can remember playing with shells and weighing things and not writing anything down, and being incredibly frustrated by that. We had little cowry shells to count on. And drawing with wax crayons and we had a little blackboard. Little boards as well, with chalk. But no actual books at that point. It might have only been for a term, but it seemed like forever to me, because I was so frustrated. Before I got to school I could read and write. So that's probably why I found it frustrating to be playing with things and I didn't want to play with things. I wanted to have books and write down things and learn.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

I remember my first day. It was a very, very little room which I think is the office now in St. Peter's Rooms. That was a small room. And the teacher was Little Mrs Jones, who was very nice. She was a lovely lady. I don't think there were many of us because the room was so small. I had to sit next to one of the boys and we had these *Janet and John* books that we had to look through. It seemed so big. I can remember the tables and chairs were so big and you'd have to scramble onto the chairs. And the windows seemed so high as well, but now you go in there and they're not at all.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I can remember going to school the first day, to the Infant School on The Green. My sister, Jo was already there, but I didn't want to go! I was kicking and screaming and they dragged me there! And then my alphabet

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FIRST DAY

and being told-off for knowing it, because I could read and they were doing the alphabet. I sat there thinking 'I know this, it's boring,' and I was actually hit on the hand because I was obviously not paying attention. At the age of four! A good start! I was quite shocked by it and didn't want to go again, obviously. I can remember my Dad dragging me there.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING METHODS

INFANTS

I can remember being in what we called the babies class with Miss Attewell.

We had a tray of sand that we used to practice writing on. A little tray of sand that you practiced your numbers and things. And then you went onto slate and chalk. Well a slate was like a slate that you had on roofs really. It had a wooden frame round it and then you had a slate pencil or chalk. Oh it made a horrible noise, you scratched away. You could rub it off with a duster or a damp cloth.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

Everybody sitting in a row because everybody had to pay attention. You were all facing the teacher.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

We didn't have slates. No, slates were before my time. Although, I think, on occasions when we were using coloured crayons we would have a slate. They were coloured chalks and we'd use a slate. I could read before I went to school anyway. That's something that Mother always encouraged.

Miss Attewell's class was in St Peter's rooms, at the front of the building, facing the church, in the little room. That's now the Parish Office. And then it was into the big room then, the assembly hall, which was divided with the curtain for two classes. It was a bit disruptive, really. What was happening next door behind the curtain was more interesting than your own class. Especially if someone was being called out to the front in the next class. There were about twenty five to thirty in the classes that I was in and, to me, it seemed quite crowded.

Miss Attewell used to say, 'If you're doubtful about a word, try to say it and then spell it out.' Go back and build the words up until you'd got it

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correctly. We used the chalk and little blackboards. You could rub it out, and then we progressed to pencil and paper. Sometimes it was only weeks; if she thought you were good enough you were progressed to pencil and paper. At Miss Attewell's class it was four to a table. Just sitting down at a little table for four, but then as you progressed on, it was two to a desk and you just hoped you'd get along with the person that was sharing the desk with you, and it wasn't always like that.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

Boys were in the infants until when they were seven they went to the school on The Green. Probably a few rough and tumbles with the boys because boys are boys aren't they, and pull your hair and things like that. It was part and parcel of growing up really.

We were sitting at the desks that were marked on the top, marked in squares. I think it was for counting. Yes we used them to count along. Don't ask me in what way or anything. I can't remember that very well. Then we had lids on the desks as well where we could put our pencils and things like that. And, of course initially, you didn't really do many lessons as such. It was learning the alphabet from pictures. They did have pictures on the walls even. A for Apple and that kind of thing, obviously. And we did a lot of bead work, in as much threading beads, coloured beads onto shoelaces. Making things like that. That came into the counting. As a five or six year old you needed to be able to count and so you would count putting the beads onto these strings.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

Of course, in the very, very early days, you didn't do a lot of work. You learnt your letters and everything like that, the alphabet, your two times table, etc, things like that. But for counters we used to use those little cowry shells. If you'd got to add something up and you weren't very clever to start with, you counted them out with these little cowry shells. And I thought they were fascinating, they made me think of foreign places. And where did they come from and everything, so I had to be cheeky and ask. Because it was interesting to me, everything to me was interesting in those days. We did it all on the desk, all the counting and everything, and wrote things down. Yes, it was simple but it was actual school; it wasn't playing about,

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just playing with toys. There was none of that – there wasn't the toys to play with for a start.

Janet Parker b 1939

When I was four I was in this class where you were playing with things and then at five I was in Mrs Moore's class then, learning how to read and write. It was quite formal. I can remember learning the alphabet with her and learning to write with her and sitting in rows of twos and so on. So it was formally laid out, even at that age. Then we started reading and writing, and copying the letters out. The teacher would write it along your notebook and then you would copy it.

The first class that I loved was still at the Pre-fabs and it must have been when I was about six and that was with Mrs Wild, and she was my favourite teacher through my whole education! And she called everybody 'Dear,' and so I started calling everybody at home 'Dear,' as well! Apparently I was delightful rather than hopeless. She was just very kind and very patient, and I seemed to be on the same wave length as her. So I learnt a lot in her year as well. But the only thing I can really remember is doing lots of drawings with her and putting seagulls everywhere, filling the sky with seagulls. And she did say to me, 'Don't overdo the birds, Dear'!

Johannah Perdue b 1953

Perhaps in an afternoon, we used to sit round and hear a story by one of the teachers. You know how you see children sitting round on the floor? Well we used to have rush-mats. We used to have to get these mats out and sit on those.

Helena Bradley b 1955

One boy, Brian Eggleston, used to scream blue murder at the entrance to the school and kick out. And so the teachers very quickly got into the habit of whipping his boots off before they took him into the classroom.

Shani Cassady b 1958

GIRLS SCHOOL

We enjoyed our schooldays a lot more than they enjoy them now, because we didn't have any pressure. There was no pressure. We had to do exams

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about twice a year. And we had reports because you took the report home to your parents, but you weren't pressured into anything. We had homework, but not a lot, not where you'd got to sit hours on end doing it or anything like that.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

The boys were at the school on The Green, at the boys school. Once they left the Infant school there was no mixture of the children at all, other than now and again. We were perhaps sent on errands. I can remember being sent on an errand from the big school, by the Headmistress, to take a letter to the Head of the other school and being terrified having to go to the boys school. Because we never set foot on the premises ever. I was one of the older children then, but I can remember being quite daunted by it. I can remember the parties that we had there at Christmas and we used to have sometimes film shows, and the boys would join us as well and the other schools sometimes. I'm sure I came over from the big school to watch *Tom Sawyer* on a huge projector thing and everybody sat down and watched a film.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I know when I was ten, eleven, there was fifty-two of us in a class.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

Moving up

Then you went up, for your last time, into X7. Not everyone moved into this group. If you could manage all the Arithmetic and the English you seemed to get by. Although of course we did Geography and History. I was never very interested in History somehow. Local history I loved. Geography I loved and I've still been interested in Geography through my whole life, going abroad here, there and everywhere. And always being interested in my surroundings.

Eileen Selby b 1924

I was one of the children that got caught with the raising of the school leaving age. I had to stay an extra year, to age 15. The last year was very boring. That sounds a bit unfair, because Mrs Morton was a very good

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teacher and we had her previous years to that. She was always very helpful, always understanding. If you wanted to speak to her after school she was there for you which I found very helpful. She was very kind, but it just seemed that we were just waiting to start work, and see what it was like the other side of school days.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

Some of the classrooms were where the centre is now: there was three classrooms built there and a canteen, that's just off the Green. That was a bit later on in school time and we even used what was the church house then as a classroom. We had classrooms all over the place really. We didn't move about. We had one teacher and she took us for whatever years it was you know, and then when you went up, you moved from classroom to classroom as you got older and you had a different teacher and learnt different things.

Janet Parker b 1939

In the Infant School, I can remember going to the big school, to have a look round before we went on there, and being quite overwhelmed by it, thinking 'God,' you know. You can't imagine yourself at the age of four moving onto something like that and it seemed years away and then suddenly you were there. And I can remember thinking at the time 'Oh this is huge!' and it wasn't really, it just seemed it!

Deborah Winsom b 1955

We were with boys, who were quite obnoxious at that age and we just weren't used to them. Most of us had got brothers, or we would mix with boys but certainly not have to sit next to them or worse still, hold their hands when we danced, which was just awful, an awful thing.

Shani Cassady b 1958

Streaming

The senior mistress, Miss Isherwood was very caring. So if a girl had difficulty with Arithmetic the teacher would not necessarily single them out after class but sit with them in class. There was no real streaming but she

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would probably group them a little bit. There would probably be three rows of desks. We were put in sections. It was done discretely. The top section did different work. Yes after you had left Standard 6, it was Standard 6A and then Standard 7 and X7 if you managed to get enough marks to get into X7. That was your last class. But some of them only stopped in 6. They were still in the same classroom. You were graded.

The people in X7 had to work on their own. We were given a task to do and get on with and we enjoyed it. You enjoyed being with the teacher. You worked and you enjoyed it. Of course they walked up and down the aisles all the time, so they could see whether someone was getting on with it or not. You put your hand up if you had any difficulties and keep your hand up until she could see you. Perhaps dealing with someone else and then come over and she would say 'Move over.' You would slide up at the desk. Even if there were two of you there was still room to slide.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

It tells you on here the number in class, 32 people. That'll be an average, 30 to 32 people. We used to read and everything, do mental arithmetic and things like that, as a whole class where the teacher would just pick on you all the way round.

Janet Parker b 1939

There was mixed ability. I can remember the girls sitting at the bottom of the class, not being able to do the work as ably as the rest of us. And sometimes feeling embarrassed for them because of the way they were treated in class.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

The boys school was just different. We'd always been taught in rows before, but here the classroom was arranged into six tables of six people. This was the first time we'd been taught in groups. The ones nearest the fire were the very bright children. Then the next group down were not quite as bright, but still very bright. And strangely enough, both of those groups came from the better end of the village. Then it came to my table and we were all virtually from the same area, certainly the same social standing. So we were middling, as it were. Then it went right round to the table in front of the teacher, where the kids used to wet themselves and

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play up and were not very bright at all. Six tables, six children on each table, arranged according to ability. And it was obvious.

There was definitely a social structure: where the children came from. We didn't have any children from Manor Park. We had children from Musters Road, and they were thought of as very posh, and their mums and dads came and picked them up in a car. We didn't even own a car. And then you had the middle band of kids which came from like the Brookside Road area, so they were privately owned houses. I lived in a council house on Packman Drive. We were considered perhaps the best of the council houses. And then at the very lower end of the council houses was the Elms Park estate at the top of the village. And it was nice to be able to look down on somebody sometimes.

You always knew where they came from because of their PE bags and book coverings. If you came from a poorer family your PE bag would be made out of an old curtain, and it would always be too big, and it would drag along the floor. The better off families would have the gingham checked ones. Not shop-bought because you didn't buy them in shops. They had to be made. Ours would be sewn up by hand so they'd come undone and lose a plimsoll. Theirs would be machine stitched. Book coverings; theirs would be covered in sticky-back plastic, which was something I aspired to for many years, because of Blue Peter, whereas mine was covered in scraps of wall-paper. It was a step up from brown paper, but that was it.

Shani Cassady b 1958

Classroom monitors

The monitors collected dusters and filled the ink wells: that type of thing. The ink was made up for us. We emptied the inkwells on Friday and then we had fresh ink on Monday. It came in powder in a bottle. I suppose the teachers would mix it up. We didn't touch the powder at all. We got the ink in an enamel jug and just put it into inkwells. It was not particularly crowded. Towards the end I used to have to go round and take the registers and there was a board in the museum room, on the wall and I had to record in the morning and the afternoon the total of children at school. If I remember rightly it was usually about 120 mark.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

Another little duty that people used to rush for – it wasn't a little chore or something you've got to do it because you've been naughty – and that was washing and filling the inkwells. Somehow or other I only did it about once. But I always seemed to be busy doing something else.

Two girls would be monitors and they would be on the milk, and we even progressed to having Horlicks which was either a ha'penny a cup or a penny cup. I used to have a ha'penny cup. It used to be very nice. I can see the big copper urn now with a big plunger in and one girl plunging it up and down as if she was doing the washing!

Eileen Selby b 1924

When we were at school you could buy Horlicks, Horlicks tablets. Either a tablet or a drink. A ha'penny or a penny, however much money you'd got, and prefects, two prefects were allocated for Horlicks duty that morning. They had to go round, collect up the ha'pennies and pennies to see how much water they needed in the urn and then collect the amount of Horlicks from the Headmistress, from her room, and put it in and then you got paper. Was it paper cups, I think, wasn't it? Paper cups, must have been. If you were very rich you got a pennyworth and it was nice, but that was what you got. There was no school milk or anything like that. Just mixed with water, not milk. Horlicks mixed with water, hot water. Or you could have, I think it was five Horlicks tablets. For a penny you could have five Horlicks.

Lillian Slack b 1924

I was a bit like teacher's pet though. I would be one who would clean the blackboard after school and then nip across to the Co-op to fetch the teacher an ice-cream if she wanted one. You know, do little jobs for the teacher.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I occupied quite a lot of my time adding up dinner register money and doing the Head's shopping which was very unorthodox, but it was a wonderful education for life because I used to do my Mother's shopping as well. I used to pop out in lessons, in breaks. Just across The Nook to the little shops, so it wasn't very far and it wasn't very arduous and I loved doing it. And I think I

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING METHODS

was probably a bit the Head's pet, because she was very strict and used to shout at everybody, but very rarely did I get shouted at.

We had monitors and in the big classes the monitors were required to help the girls in the bottom section. So I corrected books. The top section was on the left hand side of the classroom, the middle in the middle and the bottom section on the right hand side. So if anyone in the bottom section was stuck they'd pass their books horizontally along the row to the top section to be checked and marked, and if help was needed they came to us and we explained. But I also remember Mrs Greenwood doing a lot of marking and we used to take our sums up as we had done them, to the front of the class, and she would mark them and send us back. But I should imagine with fifty-one in the class the slower children never got that far. She used to wander round the classroom and look at what children were doing, but not to the extent that teachers do today.

Ann Wilson b 1944

Everyone wanted to be ink monitor! It was a prestigious job. We used a little metal can. And I do remember missing the hole, and ink going everywhere.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

School Uniform

I must have been probably eleven or twelve, before we started wearing a uniform. We didn't have to because there was a lot of poverty in the village, but we wore gym tunics and we had funny what we called chip bag hats, with the little badge on the front. It was the cross, with being a Church of England school. When we started wearing a uniform the school went up the ladder, as it were.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

I've got a little photograph of me in my school uniform, just head and shoulders. Gym slip and blouse. Navy gym slip and a white blouse, and the gym slip had pleats, big pleats in because when our Mum used to wash that. We had the job of sewing the pleats in then pressing them in afterwards with the old flat iron, and a damp cloth.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

In those days there was no uniform. It was wartime. And even though we had to have a uniform at the Grammar School, we were able to buy somebody's outgrown not outworn, uniform, at a lesser price and not have to part with any coupons.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

This new headmistress that we got, she developed this uniform. She'd tried to introduce one that was nice but cheap. But didn't look cheap. It was simple. You needed to wear a blouse for school so everybody had a white blouse and the badges were designed and created in green and gold. Put on your blouse on the left hand side. They didn't cost too much, maybe half a crown, not too sure but something like that. And then a skirt – well you needed to have a skirt anyway, so therefore it wasn't an expensive item. Blazers weren't in, just a cardigan, a green cardigan. So it made it nicer really to think that you'd got this uniform. I think it's better really having a uniform in any school so that there's no clothes discrimination. You know, a lot of people can dress better than others, whereas if you're all in the same attire there's not this pedigree is there?

Margaret Gardner b 1938

A lot of the mothers made clothes for their children. You had to have your coupons. And even then, it wasn't easy. My Mum used to make my dresses for me.

Janet Parker b 1939

Discipline

We had one or two naughty girls, but in the main I think most of us behaved well. One, I shouldn't mention the name but I can remember her, and in the summertime she was lifted from the desk and put in this fireplace. Inside the guard, fireguard and she was stood there for quite a while.

In the summertime we had the lessons in the churchyard. We loved it. We all behaved ourselves and listened and took in the information. We sat on the grass. There wasn't stools or seats or anything. We used to love it. And I'm sure we behaved ourselves. And yet there was just one teacher for, I don't know, 20 or so.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING METHODS

The headmistress, the headmistress had her own room and she was very fond of administering the cane. She was very fond of that. You knew someone was in trouble when she used to go rushing through the classroom and with the cane aloft, you knew somebody was in trouble. I can remember having it about twice I think! I can remember once I was eating a pomegranate in school. I'd got it under my desk, and the girl who sat at the side of me and we were both eating, when the teacher wasn't looking. You know pomegranates – you take them out with a pin! And she was caught doing it and she was sent into the headmistress with the cane and she told her that I was doing it as well. So I got the cane as well! That's the only time I can ever remember having the cane.

Miss Grant: I didn't like her. If you were not paying attention she'd just throw a piece of chalk at you! There was no law against it in those days! We were about ten, eleven, about ten or eleven.

When you told your Mum you'd had the cane – often you didn't tell her. Somebody else did! And she wouldn't give you no sympathy. She'd say 'Oh well you must have deserved it, you must have deserved it so' It was no good looking for sympathy if you'd had the cane, but it hurt. Just across your finger tips. Ouch! And she used to lift her knee up andShe did didn't she? And she always used to say the same thing, always when she was doing it she'd say 'You know this is going to hurt me a lot more than it's going to hurt you!' and the temptation there would be to say 'Well why do it then? Why hurt yourself?'

Lillian Slack b 1924

The Headmistress used the cane. I once had the cane because I made a complete mess, an untidy mess of a painting. And you know, hold your hand out and one swipe.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

All the teachers were strict, even with the five year olds. Well I must say that in certain classes you would get the cane. Or if they sent you to the Headmistress, she'd give the cane as well. It could be for making blots on your book, for instance. Sometimes that wasn't your fault because children being children used to stuff the inkwells with some blotting paper and you'd put your pen in and out would come a lump of inky blotting paper

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

and there would be a blot. But that was the norm at that time. I think the teachers wouldn't be allowed to do the things that happened when we were youngsters.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I suppose it was strict really. But because we grew up with strictness from parents and that, you didn't really notice it being over-strict. It was just discipline and you adhered to it. I didn't see any cruelty anywhere along the lines: probably got the odd tap with the ruler. Yes on the back of your hand. Probably for talking when you shouldn't be. That sort of thing, you see. But I don't think if you did anything wrong in lessons it was too nasty. I mean, if you couldn't do it, well you couldn't do it, and that was it.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

You got a slap. I got a slap on the hand once. She was a very nice teacher but I wasn't concentrating. I can still feel the pain. It was that ruler coming across my hand, but that's how they used to punish us in those days. It was usually a slap across the hand. I think odd teachers probably slapped on the legs.

Janet Parker b 1939

I myself got my ears boxed for not immediately being able to do twelve times twelve. We used to have intensive mental arithmetic tests. That was part of my preparation for the 11 plus, and I fluffed it, and I got my ears boxed. The Headmistress used to do the preparation for the 11 plus. I can remember Mrs Greenwood raising her voice, but personally I was never physically punished. That is the only incident I can remember and the Headmistress throwing a board rubber, but that was easy to dodge! They were heavy. They had wood backs. Some children were very severely disciplined and were terrified to go to school. Including my sister.

Ann Wilson b 1944

If we went home and said to Dad that we'd got smacked at school, for doing something wrong, he would probably say, 'You must have done something wrong for her to smack you,' to confirm what she did was right. My Dad never did hit either me or my brother. I think he slapped me once

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING METHODS

on the back of my legs and I can always remember my Mum saying, 'Your Dad's gone upstairs to have a little cry because he's hit you,' but that's the only time he did it.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

There was very strict discipline. You had to learn your tables and your spellings and if you got them wrong you were made to stand on the chair. They went round the class, because everyone sat in rows in those days, and they used to start at the front of the class and work their way around and you used to sit there dreading when it was your moment and hoping that you'd get the answer right! But if you got it wrong you had to stand on your chair and you spent most of the rest of the lesson, I think, standing on your chair. I only stood on the chair once that I can remember and I was just so afraid of my knees buckling and falling off the chair! Well I think you were terrified into doing it then! I think it was, in a way a better system than possibly we have now, because you really learnt the basics. Reading, writing and arithmetic. A lot of it was terrified into you, but you got a good grounding. So it was very much concentrating on the core skills.

Julie Hooton b 1953

I was sent to her once because, I can't remember why now, but I was in trouble with the teacher. She made me go and see the big Mrs Jones and I thought I'd get the slipper but I didn't. I can't think I'd done anything particularly wrong with this teacher. I just didn't get on with her. And I ended up helping to make the coffee for the teachers' break. I had to go and buy some milk from Horspools to go and do it, but it was all right actually. It wasn't punishment at all.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

They had a system where you could get a star, to have a star chart, and you could get a star for good work and all the rest of it. And we had houses. They were names of trees: Elm, Ash, Fir and Oak. There would be a competition between the houses. The more points you got, the better the house appeared to be doing. I remember being in Fir, I don't know why. I don't think my sisters were in it. We were all in different houses. Some houses seemed to be artier than others or sportier than others. Could have

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

been just a fluke. You were always aware that you wanted to do well so that your house would appear to be doing well within the school.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I don't think I noticed it being strict as a child. The rules were adhered to and that was it. You didn't question it. It was expectations really, expectations of a pupil to a teacher I think. I can remember we had a lot of respect. We were expected to work hard and be interested, but again an emphasis on having a good time and it being fun.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

We didn't ever speak unless we were spoken to. We behaved. We had to stand when they came in the classroom and address the teacher with 'Good morning, Miss,' or 'Good morning, Sir,' and wait for them to tell us to sit down. We always had the threat hanging over us of our parents going to parents' evening and being told that we'd misbehaved and we'd get a good hiding. At the girls school I never remember corporal punishment being used, not ever. And at the boys school it was only ever used on the males, but, then again, we girls didn't step out of line. It was corporal punishment. Mr Gregory used the slipper. I can't ever remember him using a cane.

Shani Cassady b 1958

Getting to school

My Mum used to take me to school, while I was on Ling Crescent. And then when I was seven, we moved to Moor Lane, which is the other end of the village. I used to go home for lunch as well, every day, and the day we moved I had to walk to the new house on my own because my brother was only three then. And Mum hadn't got time to come and fetch me. And only a couple of years ago I told her how terrified I had been, walking home that lunchtime on my own, that I wasn't going to remember the way! And she said, 'Oh you never told me this, why didn't you mention it at the time?' And I said, 'Well you were busy moving house, everything was chaotic, baby of three, toddler of three, and I just knew it was something I'd got to do.' I'd got to help my Mum by walking home at lunch time and, even now when I walk down – it was down a cut-up through Elms

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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND TEACHING METHODS

Gardens. And there's a narrow jetty there with a wall either side. But of course when I was seven the wall seemed vast, and I can remember. Every time I walk down there now, I have this sense of dread that I'm not going in the right direction. And I was just so relieved when I actually found the house! And I can still see the chaos in the living room now, with furniture all over the place and my Mum trying to cook dinner, and ...

Julie Hooton b 1953

All my friends certainly, and people that lived near us, we all went home for lunch. We seemed to have quite a long lunch break because we were able to walk back and I think we skipped and ran, up the lane, and have lunch. My Father came home for lunch too, from Nottingham. It was a good hour and a half that we had off. It seemed a long way but it was probably a quarter of a mile. Although we had to cross the road to get there which was the scary bit because that was, even then, a notoriously bad road. Nothing like a lollipop woman existed then. We would walk in a group so that there would be five or six or seven children together, walking from the road that we lived on. And an adult, one of the parents, would come to see you over and usually be there as well when you came back from the other side, to watch you back over. But the onus was on the parents to do that. There was none of this molly-coddling like the lollipop lady.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I know I didn't enjoy school particularly, because I used to leave it to the last minute to go home, to go to school in the morning. I used to be able to walk down Easthorpe Street and see the church clock and, depending on the time of the church clock, as to whether I carried on walking or whether I ran the rest of the way.

Helena Bradley b 1955

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REMEMBERING THE TEACHERS

MISS ATTEWELL

I was lucky. The first teacher in there was an old neighbour of ours, Miss Attewell. She'd never married and she had iron grey hair then, and she could move her hair as if it was a wig. You know, she could move her scalp and I used to sit there fascinated, watching this! But anyway she was very kind to me and that started me off on the three R's in there.

Eileen Selby b 1924

Miss Attewell taught everything to begin with. I know she taught me to knit. She taught me. She was a dear little person. After each sentence, she would say 'tt tt tt tt' always didn't she? My budgie does it! It just sticks in the mind these little mannerisms that they'd got. She lived in the village, but there was no teaching on subject. She taught all subjects, as did all the teachers we had. You didn't have any specialised teachers. I thought they were very clever.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

Miss Attewell was a very strict teacher. Everybody loved her, but she was very strict. And she did have a cane. Even for the little ones. You always had to behave. You know there was no messing about. It was sitting, arms folded, you know, like this. Very much erect and being very attentive. At desks, little desks. Boys as well as girls. Because of course the boys went to that school until they were seven, and then they moved up onto The Green to the boys school. We learnt all the basics. You know all this rote. And writing and basic English. She taught there for a very long time. And everyone knew her. I mean the Attewell family is still in the village and she was held with great affection.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

Well, Miss Attewell was my first teacher and then Miss Rackham. Miss Attewell was a dear, kind teacher and I enjoyed all the help that she gave

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

us; she was a very good teacher. Always helpful with reading. I found her to be very helpful. She used to come in every morning and say after prayers, 'Reading.' That was always a priority. Prayers in morning and before lunch leaving at 12, just a short prayer.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

Miss Attewell was the oldest. And in my opinion the nicest, the most caring person. If you were worried about anything you could go to her. A simple thing which was important to you, you know as a child: you could talk things over with her. Everyone said the same, I think even the boys.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

Miss Crooks

And then of course I came into the top class as it were, class 6 and met the famous Mrs Crooks. She had taught my sister and so I was longing to get into Mrs Crook's class! But I didn't enjoy the first few weeks because I think she expected me to be as clever as my sister and at that time I wasn't! And if you didn't behave you got smacked hard on the hand. I only had it once and then I said, 'I shall never have this again.' I said this to myself. But her method of teaching maths has stood me in good stead and I do thank her from the bottom of my heart for the simplicity of maths. I keep trying to tell the young generation of today the way that we were taught, how simple and how it can be passed on to bigger problems.

Eileen Selby b 1924

Mrs Crooks – luckily it was my cousins who were in her class – if people misbehaved, she used to throw the blackboard rubber across the room, and she had a very good aim.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

Mrs Hamilton Jones and little Mrs Jones

Mrs Jones was the one that scared us. Mrs Greenwood, the other teachers, they were all beautiful, really lovely. They were kind, helpful. They would help you with extra lessons if you needed them. But Mrs Jones, I know she meant well but she was a tartar. She'd throw things at you. She slapped me

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REMEMBERING THE TEACHERS

in the back once and it made me feel really sick. And I remember once my Mother told her about it because she said it wasn't right to treat children in that manner. But she said she'd got a lot of children that were disruptive and so they needed a firm hand.

Janet Parker b 1939

You behaved yourself. Mrs Hamilton-Jones, who was the Headmistress, ruled the school with a rod of iron, or should I say a stick of iron. She was very strict, very strict, and everybody was a bit scared of her to be honest. When she spoke you didn't *not* do what she told you to do. As you got older, you thought, 'Well she's not been such a bad old stick, really,' because I she taught good lessons. I mean we could all write, and we could all read and we could all know our tables. You see when we were at school it was a case of in the morning you had prayers and the register being taken and then in the first two or three years, you went through the tables. And it was, 'Sit up straight, hands folded,' and we would do the times tables.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

I was terrified of the head teacher. I've always been nervous of people who shout and she shouted. I've never been shouted to at home. I mean my parents were always very reasonable people. They'd discuss things rather than shout. And she utterly terrified me because I'd never met anyone like this before. She made it such a terrifying place and I was just so frightened! She was Mrs Hamilton-Jones. But she was the over-seer of everything. She did very occasionally teach. And oh, I used to feel sick the days I knew she was coming into class, because my demon was coming into the class and oh, it was awful! She coloured a lot of my early years.

If you were one of the chosen few, from the better-off families in the village, you were protected from her wrath then because she thought you were worth being nice to. But if you were just one of the others she wasn't really bothered about upsetting you. She definitely had her favourites and the children knew who were the favoured ones, and who were the ones that weren't! It's not a situation that would be allowed today. It was very much if you were you were in you were all right!

The other teachers were very careful. They knew their place and they knew that if they did anything wrong, they would be pulled over the coals

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

for it. She was quite a tyrant. After she'd retired, and other teachers carried on, they were a lot more relaxed. I think she did affect them. The whole atmosphere in the school really.

The funny thing was, when Mrs Hamilton-Jones retired, we all cried! The day she left, I mean we were all distraught! My Mum said 'I can't believe that you're crying because she's leaving!' but I don't know whether it was relief, or, probably, collective relief!

Julie Hooton b 1953

Nobody liked Polly Jones. She'd shout at you. She was the Headmistress. She used to shout at you and pick on you. But you just used to make sure that you didn't do anything wrong, because you just didn't know when she was going to pounce. It could be for anything, and so you just tried to make sure that you were, you know. I suppose really, thinking back, her bark was worst than her bite. But my favourite was little Mrs Jones.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I did enjoy it after the first day. It was a lovely school and the teachers generally were lovely people. There was little Mrs Jones and she was lovely.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

Mrs Greenwood

I don't remember Mrs Greenwood teaching me. I remember Mrs Greenwood for doing assemblies when we all came together in the classroom that they changed into a hall periodically where the folding wooden doors are. I think that became the hall so lots of things had to be moved. I don't remember it being everyday. She was on some occasions quite frightening, quite overpowering at that age. She was a very tall, very slim lady. I can remember feeling sometimes this is a bit daunting with her.

Mrs Greenwood left when the school was closed in 1969 to be head of James Peacock. I can remember giving a big send off to Mrs Greenwood at the same time. We all were outside for that. It was flowers and gifts she had. The newspaper came as well. She was there for a long, long time. She actually did her teacher training at the school in the 30s. She was an old

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girl. She lived in the village. Her daughter Stella was at the secondary modern that I went to. She went on to James Peacock for a while and then retired from there.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

I felt very safe at the girls school. They were the nicest teachers I've ever had and I adored Mrs Greenwood who was the Headmistress, absolutely adored her. It was a very happy atmosphere. Mrs Greenwood was a delightful woman, a chain smoker but delightful. I think she died of lung cancer, but a delightful woman.

Shani Cassady b 1958

Other teachers

And, I suppose really we started with the alphabet and various things like that, but then the second year I was in Mrs Jackson's class, and Mrs Jackson lived next door to my Grandfather in one of his houses on Kirk Lane. And we used to have a lot of Scripture because it was a Church of England school. One of the things I remember we had on the blackboard, a lot of pictures and they were turned over, scripture pictures. When it came to the one where Jesus Christ was on the cross Mrs Jackson, very quickly turned it over and said, 'We don't want to look at that.' And then one day Mrs Jackson came to school and said, 'I'm very sad today,' and her son had been killed in Ireland, with the Black and Tans. And I got on well with Mrs Jackson. She was easy, and oddly enough I found out that she taught my Mother as well so she must have been getting on in years.

And then we moved into what was called the Girls School and the next class was Miss Owen and we thought she was quite old-fashioned the way she dressed, etc. but having met her once I'd left school she was lovely. She really was interested in the village children and she did a lot of embroidery.

But I don't think we had very much in the way of serious subjects until the following Standard Two, when it was Miss Orrell. She was a beautiful person, but it was when I was in Miss Orrell's class that I had the cane. But on one occasion we'd had an examination, so I must have done fairly well, and she gave me a quill, turquoise, and I kept it for years and years, never used it but I thought it was super.

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

Miss Spray was lovely, she was beautiful to look at and she'd been to college. Because some of the teachers were pupil teachers. Miss Attewell, she was a pupil teacher. And Miss Spray introduced us to Shakespeare and all sorts of things. And then after Miss Spray we had the Headmistress, Miss Down who came from Southwell, and her parents had the Saracen's Head Hotel in Southwell, so she stayed in the village for the four or five nights and I think she had lodgings in Easthorpe Street, just went home for weekends.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

I remember Miss Owen, because we used to have a joke about her because she used to take us for needlework and for a joke we'd say, 'Please Miss Owen, where's me sewin?' you know!

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

Miss Lewis was our teacher in the first year. There were two classes for the infants, the 5 years olds and the 6 year olds. Now the 6 year olds, they had a lovely teacher called Miss Attewell and you were longing to get into the next class to get to be with Miss Attewell but unfortunately Miss Lewis went up with us. She was very, very tough was Miss Lewis. I once had to stand in the corner while she read *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* because the previous time she read it, when the wicked witch came with the poisoned apple, I hid my face in the boy's lap sat next to me. And I was told off for that. As I say, the next time she read it I had to stand in the corner. So there was no hiding my face in anybody.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My Mother was a teacher and she taught at the school. She was Miss Rose then. Lillian Mary Rose. She taught there until 1916. She would have continued for longer, only during the first war apparently, the wives had to hold down the men's jobs while they went to the war. Anyway she taught at the school from 1910 and then moved just across the road to the Co-op to hold my Dad's job down because he was Grocery Manager of the Co-op at that time.

Miss Cumberland had most influence on me. I suppose it's because I was a little bit older when she taught me. And I realised what she was

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trying to get through. And I liked her style. She was at school actually with my older sister, at the County Secondary School. And I suppose there was a little bit of a link there.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

The headmistress was Miss Hammond; she was a bit of a stickler, with the stick, with the cane. I can't remember any really nice teachers. I mean Miss Price – she used to live across the road – she was all right but I wouldn't say they were very nice.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

When I was seven I went round the other side of the curtain. There was Miss Price, Audrey Price. And Miss O'Connor and they were quite strict really, I thought. Well, it sounds a bit silly now saying it, we thought they were quite old, but they were probably only about thirty or thirty-five, probably not that. But they seemed old to us.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

I was a bit scared, and I can remember I was always sick in the morning before I went to school. My Mum took me to the Doctor's and he said 'Oh it's her nerves, just don't let her get het-up too much.' My Mum always walked me to school and, yes, it was OK. Once I'd started it was fine. I had a lovely first teacher, Mrs Chadburn. She was gorgeous. She was a really, really nice teacher. So that sort of calmed you down and I got used to school. In those days of course you had roaring fires in the classrooms and in the winter the milk crate was put in the hearth so we could have warm milk at break.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

The first teacher, my first one, was Mrs Bastow. I think it was Mrs not Miss. I think all children call their teachers Mrs, but I don't know. She used to live on Vicarage Lane, and there used to be two or three of us used to walk to meet her, every day, from her house. She was probably heartily sick of us calling at her house every morning! But she was such a lovely person and you used to go and call at the house for her every morning and walk back with her. I think she was the first one that I had and she was

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lovely. She was very gentle. I think that's probably why I liked her so much because she was like my Mother. She was a motherly person and she was sympathetic and kind. She listened to you.

Julie Hooton b 1953

There was a Mrs Tyers. She was lovely. Yes, gentle she was. She took you in her room a bit you know and she was a very gentle kind of person. There were other teachers who weren't like that, that you were quite scared of. But she was one of the ones that you warmed to because she was a kind, gentle person. You remember those, and the horrid ones you remember.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

The first teacher I had was Miss Ward. She was lovely. I thought she was wonderful. She wasn't very big, quite petite, dark hair, obviously not very old. Again it is probably another reason for thinking all of it was so wonderful, because this first teacher was really nice. When we were in Miss Ward's class, we were having a lesson and she fainted. She suddenly keeled over. You can imagine all these girls squeal, 'What's happened? What's happened?' Somebody fetched Mrs Greenwood. I remember her having to be propped up and we all sitting there terrified.

The last teacher, in the last class was Mrs Mookerjee; she was lovely as well. I think her husband was Indian. She wasn't.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

The only time I had any difficulties there was when I was in Mrs Rolfe's class, which was the final class of the infants. She was a harridan. And she didn't like me, or I got the impression she didn't like me, and it made my life difficult. No physical contact. She never touched me, but she would berate me. Eventually my mother went through to a parents' evening and Mrs Rolfe said, 'Your daughter's not doing very well.' And my mother said, 'Well you know why that is. It's because she can't stand the sight of you and you make her life very difficult.' This had no effect on her behaviour. None whatsoever.

When I was about ten, we went to the Boys Endowed School, on the corner of Asher Lane. Then we had male teachers, and it was a shock to the system. So far we'd had female teachers who, apart from Mrs Rolfe, were

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very soft and nice and kindly. The only other male we'd ever come across before was the vicar, Reverend Shrimpton, who reminded me of Christopher Lee, who acted Dracula in the film. He used to wear a big black cloak fastened under the collar with a silver clasp and it used to flap out behind him as he came through the churchyard, so he just looked like Dracula. And he used to flap over and sweep around the school. He never had anything to do with the children but he used to terrify me. Even as an adult you know, even as an adult. And he used to sweep his hair back, silver hair swept back.

Mr Gregory was the head at the boys school. He used to pull us out of classrooms, singly, and was forever testing us: mental arithmetic, learning your times table by rote, and reading tests. I remember Mr Gregory pulling out me and Wendy Fox, the girl who sat next to me, to go and make the tea. We'd never made tea in our lives and we had no idea whatsoever of how to do it. We had to go in the staff room, which you never set foot in. It was this very strange place where there were the teachers, who never had first names either, they were only Mr or Mrs or whatever. Well, we didn't know what to do. We poured the tea out and it looked so insipid that we poured it back into the teapot to try and start again. But we'd already got milk in it. Mr Gregory told the whole school at Assembly that we could not make tea because you don't put milk in a teapot. I will never forget that. He completely shamed us. I never forgave him for that. I was ten.

I remember Mr Gregory's leaving speech to us, 'You might think you're the best here because you're the oldest, but when you get to the next school, you're right at the bottom'. I thought. 'Oh thanks! Cheer us up why don't you! Why build a kid up when you can knock them down?'

Miss Catchpole came in the Endowed School as a student. We had a huge open fire in the room and Miss Catchpole would stand with her back to the open fire and raise the back of her skirt to warm her bum, showing off a pair of black bloomers. We used to giggle about it. But she was very sweet, she used to give us jelly tots when we learned a new times table.

Shani Cassady b 1958

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SUBJECTS

GENERAL SYLLABUS

We used to have quite a lot of Scripture lessons, quite a lot of mental arithmetic, which I used to love. I still do. And I think my favourite subject was arithmetic. We did handwriting, 'joined-together' we called it. We had spelling, but the subjects mainly were: arithmetic – it wasn't maths in those days it was arithmetic – composition, English lessons. No. I'm sure I'm right when I say this, it was a subject that was taken off the curriculum and when Miss Orrell came she started telling us about verbs, adverbs, etc. but that was it. We'd never really had English lessons, but we had an awful lot of mental arithmetic and arithmetic, dictation – mainly to bring in the spellings in the morning. In the afternoons, well we had drawing, sewing, and knitting. We had nature walks in the summertime, down Vicarage Lane and over the railway bridge, Fifty Step Bridge as we called it. But in the summertime we had quite a lot of our lessons in the churchyard.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

We always had assembly, and then we would have scripture lesson for a little while, reading out of the Bible. Mental arithmetic came next, ten minutes of that, but it was rammed into you and then you remembered it. And then arithmetic, and this took you right up until the break.

Eileen Selby b 1924

Then after playtime it would be English or History or Geography or perhaps History or Geography in the afternoon. We started again at 1 o'clock. 1.30 until quarter to four. And we had a very good grounding in History and Geography and Botany, nature study in general. I regret the lack of languages at school. Unless you went to a grammar school there was no chance of learning a foreign language. There wasn't even an attempt.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

We had one teacher when we were in the eleven to fifteen; she had a stab at trying to teach us German. Miss Ells, I think. This seemed very posh in a

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

village school as against in a school in West Bridgford, where they probably had subjects like this. So this teacher came along and taught us German. Unfortunately, she left for some reason, sickness or something. And I was really getting into German!

Margaret Gardner b 1938

ENGLISH

We used to do a lot of composition. You had to write about everything, about holidays and what we'd done and lots of composition we had to do.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

I'm afraid one of the things I did get into trouble for, was not being able to read very well. I realise now, I must have been slightly dyslexic. Because even now, when doing a crossword sometimes I read the answer out if it's an anagram. Because that's how I see it to start with. It's not stopped me. I mean I've written stories and all sorts of things and that, but it was a drawback for me. I used to be terrified that people would get me to read or spell. That was the only thing I hated school for was that bit. I wanted to do it but I think the more you tried the worse you became. I had to stay in class once for about another extra half an hour or more, after everybody had gone home, to try and write these words, me and one other. And Mrs Jones was very, very strict, and the more she shouted at you the tenser you got.

Janet Parker b 1939

We didn't do a lot of poetry. They used to try to get us to create a poem. But mine was very basic. I'm not very skilled in that way. The handwriting was always excellent! It's not something that I've ever had a feeling for and being asked to create your own, it's a daunting thing really. But of course, nowadays, poetry doesn't have to rhyme always. Some of it doesn't make sense to me today, but of course in those days it was always rhyming. So I used to find that quite difficult, trying to find words at the end that all matched also!

Julie Hooton b 1953

We did a lot of reading. We were sent home with books to read, I suppose, but I did a lot of reading at home anyway, because I wanted to. I can't

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remember which books we read at school. I started off reading *Janet and John*. Enid Blyton yes, but not at school.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

Reading, but you had to remember it. It was the early sixties, so the old way of teaching, I suppose, during the war, where you had to recite everything and remember everything, was still in vogue.

Helena Bradley b 1955

HANDWRITING

I can remember once, we had a writing competition. Miss Hand took charge of this. We were taught to always write with pen and ink and we had to do the up-strokes thin and the down-strokes thick. We did go to a lot of trouble doing hand-writing. You did try and present your work as clean as possible. We had to always have a piece of blotting paper. There were no biros, they weren't even heard of!

You cleaned your nib on the blotting paper. And of course, you had inkwells. You had to be very careful the way you put your pen in so it didn't go above the stem or all you would get was a blob. And oh if you made that mistake! Oh it was messy! But we managed it. If you did make a blob you'd get reprimanded. There'd be a big ring around it when your book was marked. I can remember one teacher putting 'terrible' on my book, and I felt awful. I thought she's not going to put 'terrible' on it again and she didn't! Because I tried hard, oh dear. Quite happy days though.

Eileen Selby b 1924

I didn't like writing. I was good at reading and mental arithmetic and that type of thing but I didn't like writing, I was never a good writer. I could spell but I couldn't write. So you used to get your knuckles rapped for that. The teacher would come down the aisle at the back of you with a ruler in her hand and, you know, 'What's that mess?' It was lovely to start on a clean page, you know, in your notebook, start off lovely but it didn't stay that way. Writing with a dip pen too and an inkwell in the desk. And if she rapped your knuckles, the ink would spurt off and make your writing worse anyway.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

It was in the infants where we had penmanship, as it was called. And we graduated from pencils to pen nibs dipped in the ink pot, and we had to learn how to write upwards, thin on a stroke and downwards thick. It wasn't italic, no. It was just ordinary joined-up writing, as we called it. But it was thick and thin, and I can remember learning and doing that. And then of course, coming down thick with the pen nib you had to put pressure on, and, what would happen, the pen nib would break! So you weren't very popular then, because you needed a new pen nib, and funds were probably a little bit low. You'd got to have a new pen nib, which slotted into the end of the pen. They were very keen on good handwriting. You were marked on your handwriting and your spelling. They were one of the top things in a composition that were looked at.

When biros were introduced, we were probably about thirteen, fourteen. We weren't allowed to use a biro at all. They were taboo. The teachers maintained that your writing deteriorated using those and, on reflection, your writing did deteriorate. You couldn't get a nice flow with them. Biros weren't like they are nowadays. The ink was not quite so good in them.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I was brilliant at handwriting. I used to love the handwriting lessons because I was really good at it. I was just about top of the class in that. And I actually came second in a national Brooke Bond Handwriting competition, and I got a wonderful book, a fairy tale book, which I thought was absolutely marvellous. So I was really relaxed in those lessons. Even now if I could write with a dip-in pen with a nib, I would love that. I used to love the inkwells and the dip-in pens and that sort of thing. We couldn't afford fountain pens! It was just dip-in pens then with a wooden shaft!

Towards the end of being there, I didn't have to take part in the handwriting lessons if there were any errands that needed running. I mean they wouldn't do it now, but the Secretary used to live at the schoolhouse on The Green, what was the boys school there which is now a printer's, and the house next to it – she used to live there. And myself and another girl, who were very good at handwriting, we were doing the job of taking messages to her or fetching something or what-

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ever. And so we were allowed out of handwriting lessons because we were so good! Which I was quite disappointed about because I actually enjoyed those lessons!

Julie Hooton b 1953

There was a lot of repetitive stuff in those days, copying the alphabet over and over and over. And being allowed to get to the point where you could use a proper pen with ink; that was a real achievement to get to that point, from pencil, you know. And what kind of pen was it? It was a wooden thing with a nib that was pushed into it so it was just, yes, so it stained up your fingers, and you had the inkpot in your desk, the inkwell.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

It was only in our final year we could have fountain pens or cartridge pens. At 10 or 11. Cartridge pens were quite fashionable. Fountain pens were a pain because you had to fill them from a bottle of ink. Whereas cartridge pens, you would have a little plastic tube which you inserted into the pen and the nib would force up into the actual plastic tube and drip ink out of it. And the boys found out very quickly that these were very handy for squeezing on each other's shirts. They could keep their hands clean while they squeezed these plastic tubes over everybody else.

Shani Cassady b 1958

ARITHMETIC

Arithmetic. I love it. I watch *Countdown* on television, and sometimes I've got the answer before they've written it down, but quite often I can't do it!

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

We sang every morning, the hymn of the day. And then the next period from 9.20 to 10.30 was always Maths and there'd be 10–15 minutes mental arithmetic and then problems. Everybody was terrified of problems. You put some words round a bit of arithmetic and you can't do it. And the funny thing is I was away for the first week they did decimals and it took me ages to cotton on to that decimal point and what you did with it. If you missed the first few lessons in anything you're floundering, aren't you?

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

Tons, hundredweights, quarters and pounds. 16 oz in a pound, 14 pounds in a stone, 28 pounds in a quarter, four quarters in a hundredweight and 20 hundredweights in a tonne. You'd multiply your pounds or ounces; multiply your ounces then you divide that by 16 and then carry that over into the pounds column. Your remainder is the ounces you've got and then you multiply your pounds, add it on and divide ... no, you wouldn't add it on, yes you would and then divide by 14 pounds to give you a stone. Yes, that's how we did it.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

I didn't mind tables and to this day I can still remember the tables, which was a good grounding, but arithmetic I didn't like. Mental arithmetic I was terrified about, in case I couldn't give a quick answer. I used to get so het-up seeing the teacher walk down the class knowing the next minute she would point at me, giving me a question, and I used to get so worried. Well after so long giving the wrong answer, I think you gave the teacher the impression you were just not trying and, in my case I was, but I was so het-up and worried about it that I knew what the consequences would be. It would be going to Miss Waterhouse, the Headteacher, hand going out, just one, you know, movement from her. It was the cane on your hand if you were not really trying. I found it difficult to get across that you were trying. Long divisions and things like that, fractions I used to hate. My Dad used to sit with me at night trying to help. I scraped through but didn't like it.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

We also used to learn to recite the times-table. One two is two, two twos are four, three twos are six, four twos are eight, five twos are ten and so on, and that was done en masse, the whole class reciting it. But I recall being very worried when my daughter went to her junior school and they didn't learn the tables like that, they learnt it a different way and I recall thinking she will never ever be able to do maths but you see she can!

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

We did our tables. They stretched us. Spelling was the same thing, and you'd have a little test every week. But the Headmistress Mrs Jones, used to

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come into the classroom. I can remember I was probably seven or eight, and she'd just shout out tables. So, 'Nine sevens?' and point at you, and she'd come in unannounced and do this and it was absolutely terrifying and you had to be able to answer like that otherwise you were for it.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

I never did get my ladybird badge for learning my tables. Well we had to; I can't remember who started that. I think it was a Mrs Nicholls, when she was there. And you had to learn your tables and if you learned your tables and got them all you got this ladybird badge which you could pin on, and wear. And I never did get my ladybird badge. No, my Mother used to sit hours and hours and hours, and I still want to use my fingers occasionally now!

Helena Bradley b 1955

I have never liked maths very much but I don't remember it being a problem. I got on with it and enjoyed it. The reports were always the typical: 'Conscientious, gets on with it and tries hard.' I was obviously interested. I think part of getting that result means the teacher is making it interesting for a pupil. It works both ways. If she's not got the interest then it doesn't follow through. I do remember enjoying all of it.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

We used to have a very large box of wooden rods. Cuisenaire rods. The smallest one was just a natural wood one centimetre cube, and that equalled one unit. And then it went up, so they became pink and green and blue and yellow and whatever, and they would equal that number. So it helped you with your counting. I do remember them with fondness. I don't know why.

Shani Cassady b 1958

HISTORY

We had a lot of History; we had to remember the history dates. Kings and Queens, that sort of thing. Henry VIII and all his wives! Sometimes if there's a programme on the television it comes back – that was 1600 and so and so. Didn't do me much good did it?

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

And the History, we went back to the Romans, the Anglo Saxons, Mediaeval History, Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts, you mention it we learnt all about the people, what they wore, how they would earn a living. We learnt all about Queen Boudicea who is now Boudicca, isn't it? We thought she was rather wonderful, slicing through the enemy with swords on her wheels. We did the Peasant's Revolt and the Corn Laws.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

I didn't mind History. And on occasions we were taken, say to see the Henry V film or something like that. In the cinema at Nottingham. I think it was the Odeon we used to go to. I quite liked that because you'd read about it so therefore you could understand the film.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

I don't remember an awful lot about History. I can't say that it was really my subject. I don't remember learning loads of dates, simply events. But we didn't dwell on things like the Second World War although it was all very present in people's memories and even the children at school, some of the older ones, could remember in a very real way what it was like. And even I could remember little bits, although I was very, very small. Sirens and things still alarmed me at that age.

Ann Wilson b 1944

I remember History and Geography and the maps coming down from the blackboard. They used to pull those down from the blackboard. History I enjoyed because that is something I went on to do in the next school as an exam. Mrs Mookerjee was very good with History.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

When I was in the girls school we were made to watch the moon landings. The teachers said, 'You've got to come and sit and watch this because this is history in the making. So you've got to see it.' We were made to go and watch this huge television in one of the rooms.

Shani Cassady b 1958

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GEOGRAPHY

Do you know I don't know whether I've still got my Geography book? We didn't do English towns, that sort of thing, but we knew where different things came from in the world. The wheat came from there, and the so and so from somewhere else. I don't think it was the right Geography for everybody because when I went to Boots and I went to the Boots school to be tested, one of the questions was, 'Name the six counties along the south of England.' I couldn't, and I was wiped the floor with. Mr Coe was the head, and he said 'Well, you can probably write shorthand and you can type but you don't know England.' And I know those six counties now!

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

I was always interested. We had this big globe in class. The teacher would say a certain country. The teacher would say, 'Find so and so,' and you would keep turning the globe and feel so thrilled when you put your finger on that little place. It was good.

Eileen Selby b 1924

You would concentrate on one country for probably a term and you would learn all about the population, a bit of the country's history, their industries. And their history. Countries in the empire or Europe or the Americas – the whole of it. We learnt about the country as well as rivers and towns. We learnt about the Cotton Trade in Lancashire and things like that. We used to make contour maps as well. They were good fun. And one term we did the trade winds and we had lovely maps with the trade winds on them.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

We did mostly map reading. We were given a blank map of the British Isles, say, and we were told to fill in, mostly the towns or a river, say. Or we were asked, 'Whereabouts is The Wash?' and we had to fill in things like that. And it was marked after to see if you'd paid attention because you were given, probably the previous week, a map of the British Isles with all the names on. We had the globe. We were called out in front of the class, and had to point out different countries and what the countries produced.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

I can remember we did something about the Great Lakes in Canada at one point because in those days I could name all of the Great Lakes. So that must have had an impact on me.

We had a big globe, which was mainly pink, because I remember them talking about the empire and we were very patriotic and we learnt the customs in different countries. And we looked at books, which described the customs, and sometimes we actually went out with Mrs Greenwood and made models with plasticine and papier maché. Models of villages from cultures we didn't know a lot about, like Maoris, Aborigines.

We certainly learned what they produced and we had a very real appreciation of that. Because in my early years at school we used to get food parcels from Canada, sent to the school, and when we opened them up there were shiny red apples, maple syrup, powdered potato, dried egg powder, which we could of course get in this country but only in limited amounts because we were all on ration books. But the thing I remember most of all was the cocoa powder and each child in the class used to have a piece of twisted paper with the cocoa powder and we used to dip our fingers in it and lick them and dip them again, and we loved it because food wasn't that plentiful. These parcels came once a year. Huge boxes, because there were forty to fifty of us in a class and everybody got something. So they were huge parcels. And it was the Canadian Government's present to the UK, which was distributed to schools. It was when I was very small and up to about eight. I think that the boxes that came into school were distributed to the younger children because they were the most likely to be under-nourished.

Ann Wilson b 1944

It probably would have been a term's work, because I can remember including an awful lot in this project and having to read and doing some research about the crown jewels, and finding photographs and that sort of thing. I can remember another one, in the same year, that was connected with the Olympics, the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. And that would have been a term's project as well. And we had to imagine that we were travelling from England to Tokyo and which countries we'd go over, starting with France, and write. Well we had to find something from each country and put it in a sort of scrapbook. It involved writing to quite a few Embassies of those

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countries. I remember getting some cotton from somewhere and it was all the stages of cotton, from the cotton bud as its growing right through to being combed and produced as yarn. That would have been from India, and tea as well from Ceylon. I started with France and my exhibit from France was, well our next door neighbour at the time was a French teacher, and went to France an awful lot. And so I went and asked her what she'd got. She had a tin of larks, so I had the label from the tin of larks.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

There were always projects so you were always looking up something or getting information about things. Collecting leaves and things like that. There was one to do with The Olympics, I think it was it Tokyo, and we had to pretend we were travelling through each country and what would you find in each country on your way.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

ART

Painting was another thing that we did. You would do a cone or holly at Christmas-time. In the spring you would have to paint a crocus which was not an easy flower and then buttercups and daisies. And then there would be the willow with the catkins, pussy-willow of course. All of these things taught you the seasons of the year as well. There always seemed to be something to look forward to. My favourite time was autumn. You were told to go out and gather as many leaves as you could. The pleasure of laying them out and choosing the one that you were going to paint. Mrs Crooks coming up and down the aisles to see how you were doing and giving you a bit of help here and there. All of this, it seemed to me, was always a pleasure, never a struggle.

Eileen Selby b 1924

I was never very good at art, I never enjoyed it. There used to be one girl chosen from the class to be a model to sit at the front and you'd got to draw her face. It was quite hideous really. I never liked it. I didn't mind painting and things like that, designs, drawing designs, you know, triangles, circles and filling them in, in squares you know, getting a nice pattern.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

I used to like painting days when you spread the newspaper on your desktop and you were able to do painting. I was never really good at it, but I think it was because I wasn't going to be expected to recite any times-tables or anything like that, so I was safe.

Julie Hooton b 1953

NATURE STUDY

I loved nature study and I still do! But, you had to take something, say a flower or a plant. They'd tell you what to bring and mine was a dandelion that day. And in the books that we had, there was a plain page on one side and lined on the other side and you had to write about this plant or flower or whatever it was and then you had to draw it or paint it. Dandelion leaves are very difficult to paint without drawing them first. And I did my flower first, which was beautiful, it was lovely. I painted a lovely dandelion and then I had to do the leaves and I started at the bottom and it goes like this. I went right up to the top. Then I didn't know whether to come down or start at the bottom and go up. I started at the bottom and it was just a big green blob and my little dandelion there and my teacher sent me all around the school so they could all have a laugh at it! It was meant to be cruel. I had to stand in front of the class while the little children all had a good laugh at it. Oh yes! It was awful really because I felt terrible, I did really.

I never told my Mum, I daren't, but one of my classmates told their mother. She told my Mother. Oh my Mum was furious. She went up to school. She insisted on seeing the teacher, she even went to the vicarage to Mr Potts to see him because he was the Governor. She even went to him about it.

Lillian Slack b 1924

We used to go into the fields; nature walks as well. We used to collect flowers and press those and then probably put them in a book eventually and write down what the flower was or whatever it was. We collected leaves and things like that. We used to sit and draw trees, go into the fields, past the vicarage in Ruddington, down Vicarage Lane. It's probably a ten minute walk, but it was usually a nice day. I can't remember having bad days for this. It was very nice and we would sit and draw the trees and then

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take them back and probably paint them. So that was rather a nice lesson of an afternoon. Yes, enjoyable.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I used to go a lot on nature walks as well. Just for natural history. And sometimes we'd take drawing materials and we'd go out and we'd draw trees and things like that. And the teacher would tell us all the different things we were seeing. We used to saunter. Some of us would stay to look a bit longer. But we were soon ushered together if we looked like drifting too far apart. I always remember the field down where the children's playing field is just here, at the end of Vicarage Lane, sitting there one day. It was a beautiful day like this and we were drawing trees. There used to be another big tree there at one time, and we were sitting there drawing these trees. It was our art lesson. We used to do quite a bit in the open air if the weather was nice. They used to take us to quite a few places, so it was a nice atmosphere for school.

Janet Parker b 1939

DRAMA

And then of course they were very keen on drama, so that is how I came to be dancing the minuet! And wearing those stupid shoes! That photo was one of the plays we did at our school concert. I was the Earl of Essex and what's her name, Milly Mann. Yes Milly Mann was always the Queen, but I was always a man in school concerts, always a man! Well somebody had to be, in a girls school! It was from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and it was to take part in a concert which was to raise money for buying a new piano. I was Titania and I remember all the girls who were in it and in the photograph. Bottom is missing because she had to catch the bus back to Wilford because she was a Wilford girl. She was Sheila Collingham. Right, there's only half of Iris Peel, then it's Brenda Burton, who was one of the fairies. They did all have names but I don't remember who was what. Joan Peat she was Oberon. Betty Savage was Puck and these were her elves. That was Margaret Cross, Nancy Glover and Rosa Marriott. This was Dorothy Attewell, Eileen Smith and Joyce Langridge.

Lillian Slack b 1924

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

I enjoyed music and singing, and drama. I was often chosen to be in plays, you know, in Christmas things. And of course, through the Sunday School. And of course, I was chosen to go in this when they knew I had elocution lessons, and I was in lots of reviews that they put on. For the orphanage, we used to collect silver paper. I was always the silver paper parent!

We had some stories that were made up by the teachers. We didn't do anything big or anything, but I could memorise. I used to go to elocution, and unless I walked home I would be reading my piece for the next week that I'd got to learn. And my Mother used to say 'Why do you never have any homework to do?' I said, 'Well I know it!' 'You can't know it,' she said. They used to get me in the back of the room, and I used to stand there. I used to have to stand in a certain way to say my piece. Of course my brothers would be imitating me, but I memorise things very quickly and I have no trouble. This meant that it was very puzzling for them that I couldn't get things down onto paper.

It was all just for my benefit I went to elocution because my Mother thought it would help me. I enjoyed it. The lady next door was the head: she owned the school. The Lady of Shallott, Tennyson, I remember doing that.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;

That appealed to me very much, Tennyson. My brother was doing that for school. He was at Mundella then. He was doing matriculation and I used to use his books a lot.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

Miss Crooks also was very good at poetry and we used to do this mass chorus poetry. If only I could find out, I've enquired time and time again, about this piece. It was some 'in a market' where we were all shouting different wares, you know, 'strawberries, cabbages, rhubarb, fish', everything, and you were calling it out all in different voices and it used to sound

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absolutely marvellous¹. Composition, poetry. I used to learn pages and pages of poetry and it used to nearly send my parents crackers, listening to me standing on a stool reciting it all. Different things by Walter De La Mare. I used to think that name was wonderful! Walter De La Mare!

Eileen Selby b 1924

We did *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I think I was in the first year of the junior school as opposed to the infants and the Headmistress came round our class looking for children to be fairies. Now I was always quite a big girl for my age and I can remember standing with my knees bent so I'd look smaller and would be picked to be a fairy. And I succeeded because I was Mustard Seed. I can remember I had this lovely yellow dress, Gossamer wings and a yellow little cap on my head and I was Mustard Seed. I was very pleased with that.

When our first original Headmistress retired, the new one was called Miss Waterhouse and she brought a breath of fresh air into the school. The first year she was there, we did the most magnificent nativity play. It really was lovely. All the girls that weren't actually characters in the play, we paraded with lanterns, Chinese lanterns on bamboo sticks, two abreast down the centre aisle and single file down the side aisles all carrying these lanterns. Apart from that, the church was dark. I think the whole congregation were in tears, it was so lovely. We were taught how to put the lantern out if it caught fire, 'Drop it on the floor and stamp on it, girls!' That wouldn't be allowed today would it?

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My dress I already had because I'd been a carnival attendant, and so I had a nice long dress. The cloak was a gossamer cloak, supposedly. It was a silky net that Miss Price brought in into class and asked me to stitch silver stars all over it so that it shimmered. I seem to remember that the other girls had net skirts put over their own little dresses, just for the skirts and this was Puck. That was a special costume. I don't know if her mother made it. That was Betty Savage and the wings we made in handwork. That in itself wasn't a special project it was done because we needed them for the play

Joyce Moore, b 1927

1 *Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti?

GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

I didn't mind taking part in plays, drama, just for the class. I used to quite enjoy that. Even though I was a nervous person I seemed to feel I was a different person when I was taking part. I used to enjoy that. I used to enjoy going out to the front of the class to read poetry. I used to always like that. We went to the Theatre Royal because one of the teachers was interested in Shakespeare. Oh it was – that was wonderful.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

We did have concerts at school, in the latter years, this Mrs Hamilton-Jones introduced them, and she always had a silver collection, stressed *silver!*² What the money went towards I don't know, probably school materials.

Mrs Greenwood was very good on the drama side. And we did this play. I was in, because one of the girls opted out and I was chosen. It was called *A World without Men!* And one of the phrases I had to say was 'Good God!' and of course, it was frowned upon to say anything like that. It was in the play but we weren't allowed to say it, so the word 'God' was substituted for 'Good Gardenstuff!' I had to put the same accent on the words so it came out OK and it was quite a nice play. So we did entertain parents with that.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

We used to do all sorts of plays in the classroom; we didn't do them as a big thing. Just after the War, when everything was still on rationing and we got whale meat, they were doing little sketches of a butcher. And we acted the customers that they'd get, and me being a bit of a bighead I suppose, the one thing I could think about was whale meat. So I brought this up and they said, 'All right you come and join the queue in there, you ask for whale meat,' and so I had to adlib it. But I never liked being in a play. I never liked being on the front row. I always preferred to be the quiet one at the back.

Janet Parker b 1939

I think it was usually Christmas-time, when plays were put on. I was never one of the leading lights. I just made up the background. I was a tree once

2 A silver collection meant that everybody had to put the silver coin into the collection plate. The smallest silver coin was a sixpence (2.5p). This meant that people couldn't give a penny or a threepenny bit as they might otherwise want to. And of course, that the school made more money.

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in the nativity! It was my sole claim to fame: I was a tree. We had these awful dark green knickers that we had to wear, really thick and dark green, and my Mother had to cut one of these pairs of knickers up to get the elastic, a stretchy band to go round my head. And I stuck these twigs in and I got a towel round the bottom part for the tree trunk. And I was a tree in the nativity and all I had to do was just stand there and sway gently. We did school plays every now and then.

Julie Hooton b 1953

But we'd put on really quite extravagant productions and we were able to use the Secondary Modern School's theatre for our plays. I was involved in them quite a lot so I'd be on stage. I was in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for instance, as one of the fairies. And then I think we did *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and I was one of the Seven Dwarfs! But we used to do these amazing sets. It was just our school. The boys weren't involved. It was spectacular some of the stuff, you know and I can remember making these incredible head-pieces. It was meant to be in the jungle and it was a musical. I can remember doing these incredible costumes, like a Phoenix type costume and there were a lot of animals. We had to use chicken wire to fashion these head pieces and then papier-mâché on top. It took ages and, we'd be spending weeks and weeks making these fabulous decorations for our stage productions. I loved it! I thought it was wonderful.

And then we used to go to the Starlight Rooms at the side of Horspools Bakery. We used to do things like country dancing where we would be in a circle of eight. It was all English stuff, where you were 'stripping the willow'. You were in sets and you'd have to meet your partner. It was old fashioned dancing, country dancing really. It was organised and you were counting to it. You were counting steps and how many paces you'd take one way and then another. It was good fun though! It was all girls dancing together!

Deborah Winsom b 1955

MUSIC

We had a choir in each class, and when we got to a certain age and Miss Hand used to take us for the thing and she used to stand on the piano stool. I can see her now! And one thing I always remember about her, standing

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on the music stool and she kept her handkerchief in her knickers leg! When she wanted her handkerchief she'd have to fiddle up there somewhere! These were big cotton bloomers, navy usually.

Every year she used to take these choirs to the Albert Hall in Nottingham to the musical festival. They had a musical festival every year and they used to go from all the schools. We used to win a lot. Yes we had a lot of certificates all round the room for that. It was just the chosen few who could sing in tune. Each class practised separately.

We sang folk music, things like, *Nymphs and shepherds come away*. We used to do folk dancing as well. I've got two pictures here. That was my class, that's me there. I guess I must have been about twelve, about twelvish there. So that would be about nineteen thirty-two because I was born in nineteen twenty. I'm thinking that they wouldn't be over fourteen because they had to leave when they were about thirteen. We all left round about fourteen didn't we? But don't they look older? I think we all look old but we had to leave school at fourteen and go to work so it must have been before then, and you see they wore stockings. We wore socks so I don't know what year that would be. Yes, if any of the people at the big houses round the village were having a garden party or something they would ask for a school class to go and do a display of country dancing and you'd do it to a gramophone.

Lillian Slack b 1924

Music played a big part in this time and you would be doing painting, or you would be writing a composition and Miss Brailsford-Hand would walk in. She would say, 'Rehearsal!' The poor teachers didn't have anything to say about this. They just had to let us go and we all trailed into this big hall. She would line us all up and the pianist would be there. It was an upright piano and Miss Hand used to climb on a chair and then stand on the top of an upright piano! And if anyone made a false note she would clamber down quickly and go along listening. It must have been awful if you couldn't sing because it was made very public: more or less, 'Go out of the room.' It wasn't left until the end of the lesson, to say 'Now your voice isn't quite up to the mark.' But anyway we took part in a lot of contests at the Albert Hall and we always had to wear uniform. A white blouse and a black gym slip and a tie, and of course black stockings and shoes. And the thrill of standing on that stage. I've never forgotten it.

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We did country dancing. Unfortunately I'd been in hospital and I was forbidden to do any dancing after this time. I was eleven. And I would creep out and the teacher would point her finger at the door and say, 'Eileen, in! You must not be out here,' but I did miss the dancing. We danced outside on the playground. We never went anywhere else to do games; you did everything in the playground. You were just self-contained in the Ruddington School.

Eileen Selby b 1924

We were constantly having concerts in the village hall. And constantly going into musical festivals and spending hours singing in the school choir. The Headmistress would come round and you had to sing for her and if you'd got a musical voice, then you were in the choir. And then you'd have several weeks leading up to the musical festival, practising. I forget what lessons we missed. We must have missed a lot. I can't remember whether we ever won or not. I must have been overawed with the whole thing, I think. In the Albert Hall, in Nottingham. I think I was rather overawed.

I didn't keep it up because my Father was an Italian trained bass baritone and the house was always full of music and him practising. And I never dared sing in front of him because he once went 'Aagh!' when I did sing. So it wasn't until he died I joined the local choir and thoroughly enjoyed it. I daren't do it while he was still alive. But I learnt piano at the age of 9 and got up to grade 8. I had to go into Nottingham to a piano teacher. By bus. On my own every Saturday morning, walk all the way up Mansfield Road to Caldwell Street, which is just off Forest Road and all the way back down to Huntingdon Street and on the bus home. No worries at all, my Mother never worried about me at all. I didn't dare let my children do that.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

This was to raise money for the school piano. We had pianos but Miss Hand wanted a brand new one because she liked to have pianos dotted around the school. We had several but varying in quality. But she did such a lot of music work with the school in November I think it was. I know the mornings were very misty and cool. Each year there was a school's musical festival in the Albert Hall or it may have been actually in the institute, the Albert Hall Institute. And the classes who were competing to go there

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were ferried in busloads. We were trained up in the special songs that each competitor, each class choir, had to sing and then we were judged to see who gave the best performance of it. We usually won something. I don't think we ever came back without a cup or shield. She'd be quite disappointed if we only came third but usually we came with the first.

I remember Miss Hand sitting on top of the piano, feet dangling over the keyboard. She was only small but she used to scramble up and sit up there, and then with her music, with her tuning fork, she would tap it and give us the pitch. We would have to sing without any accompaniment so that she could judge the tone of our voices and if we were in pitch. And she did voice training; she didn't call it that of course. We would start at the C octave and we would have to sing the scale. She had various types of exercises for us and I remember one was an arpeggio type exercise. Another was, 'Up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen, we dare not go a hunting for fear of little men.' It would take up so far and then you would jump to the top G and down, but it incorporated all the different notes of the scale within it. It was interesting to sing, and when we'd done that she would go up a semi-tone and we would repeat it. Then the next, and so on, until we'd reached G and she would listen to see how well we reached G. That was as high as she expected us to go. But it was quite a good range.

She also had us singing on a scale, 'Moo, mow, moor, mar, may, me, moo, mow,' which was the eight and we would have to shape the sound properly. It wasn't just a matter of telling us what to sing and listening to the tune. We'd also have to produce these good sounds. When I stop to think about it now, I think well, really, people used to pay to be taught to do these exercises, to get a good voice. So it's gone, but I did sing for quite a long time and I sang in the college choir.

Joyce Moore, b 1927

And in the summer months we used to go into The Manor, and the grounds there are beautiful. And we would perform from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They're very big trees there, so you were able to hide behind the trees and then suddenly come out from behind there and take your part on the stage, and that was always very nice. It must have been for parents. Whether Sir Harold Bowden who lived at the Manor in those days, whether he was a governor of the school at the time, I don't know. And

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that would be the reason we'd be invited there. I can remember my Mother being there to watch us, so it must have been for parents. And the sun always shone! Which it seemed to do!

Helena Giblenn b 1929

We used to do the country dancing at the Church House, which is now a museum, and one afternoon a week we used to do that. We didn't seem to enter for any special competition at all. There was a school choir. Just in the assembly room probably one day a week, one afternoon. I was never very keen.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

At Christmas, you'd learn all the different carols and go through all the birth of Jesus and one thing and another. And we went into the church one year. I know I was very, very young. We went in and there was a service in there that we all went to. We did occasionally go to the church for different things. We used to have the school choirs. I was in one but I didn't want to be. They trained me up and then I was ill and I couldn't go, which was a relief to me. But we had a teacher, later on, called Mrs Jones, the Headteacher, and she used to teach us music, singing and everything, and the choir. She went all round the class listening to the voices of us all singing, so I sang in my boots because I didn't want to be in the choir. We got right to the very end and she said, 'I need one more.' So I thought, 'Oh well, I'm all right, she won't pick me,' but she did. She just pointed her finger and she says, 'Now Janet, come to the front,' she says. And she says, 'And now you can sing properly and you can sing it right through on your own.' And I just stood there and wished the floor to open up and swallow me up. I did it all right and she says, 'I knew you could do it, you're in.' I must have been about between 8 and 10 I think.

When they did the choir they also used to do a band and they used to have the competitions at the Albert Hall. I think one year the school came first but whether it was ours or whether it was one of the older teams, I'm not absolutely sure. But I know it was done on different years including the percussion band: drums, the triangles, the tambourine. I wanted to beat a drum and I was given a triangle.

Janet Parker b 1939

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We used to do country dancing. You don't see it these days. We used to wear bands round us to denote which side, whether we were man or woman or whatever. We used to give displays on sports day.

And singing was a big thing in the school. We entered the music festival every year, but those people who were referred to as growlers, and we now call tone deaf, were eliminated very rapidly, with no thought for their feelings. The best were creamed off and rehearsed again, again and again by the Headmistress. She was competitive for us, very ambitious. We often used to win at the music festival. It was held in Nottingham. So I think it must have been the Albert Hall because in those days I was not really familiar with Nottingham City because we didn't venture out of the village much, or if we did we went to Bridgford. We were incredibly insular. But quite often we used to give our performance for the parents as well, in the big double classroom. And I remember the Headmistress stopping us once, in the middle, to say it simply wasn't good enough and making us start again in front of the parents. We were all so embarrassed! But I did love the singing and I've always loved singing.

Ann Wilson b 1944

And then as we got a little bit older, seven plus, we started on the percussion. A little band and learning to play triangles and clappers, drums and all that sort of thing. Learning music actually, learning how to read music. Basic. Didn't go on much further, because I mean that was really for Eleven Plus. I don't remember seeing a recorder at all in those days. I think that's a fifties, late fifties, innovation. It was just the clappers and the triangle and the drum.

We went to the Albert Hall and our school did very well indeed. We usually managed to get some prize and win somewhere along the line. *The Linden Tree*, I think, was one of the songs, quite lengthy. I went for about three years running there, with this choir. It was quite nice, not that I'm a brilliant singer, but it was enjoyable. A lot of schools in Nottinghamshire took part so it was quite a big event. Mrs Hamilton-Jones, the Headteacher at the time, did it. She was very, very good on the choir: she really was musical. Yes she really put her heart into it all. A lot of practising in the school room. Once she got so carried away with it, that she broke the baton. Banged it down on her desk and it shattered and of course every-

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body laughed! Because it was a hilarious thing for her to do. It was a serious thing, but she made this clatter with this baton, and getting so carried away with it all, she was. She'd shake her head, you know, really got at it.

And we did country dancing which was very nice. To music of course! Gramophone records! Indoors and out doors. That was nice, because you could get out in the summertime and do it and the playground was quite large enough for that. But then we would go up to the recreation ground, which is up Elms Park.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

When I was older at St. Peter's, we used to have singing lessons there, but only lessons in the sense of, you had to take it in turns to sing the next line of a song or something. Oh and I've got no singing voice at all and I found this really humiliating, and especially for a child eight, nine, ten years old. You haven't got much of a voice anyway. But some people to me seemed to have beautiful voices and I was awful! And, of course, when you're nervous your throat's tense so nothing comes out right anyway. And that used to be another of my dreaded lessons when we'd got to stand up and sing this next line and me and my awful voice. And, of course, everyone used to be sniggering! And that made it worse! I enjoy singing but I'm no good at it. I enjoy music. I'm not a musical person, I can't read music, but I enjoy singing in a big group because that way I can let rip and no-one knows it's me that's making the awful noise!

Julie Hooton b 1953

We all had to learn music when we were about eight or nine. Mrs Woodrow was a music teacher and very keen. She did teach us to write music. So I can remember doing some composition work at that age and having a manuscript board and staves and doing it properly. And then having to play, because she could play the piano and there was a piano in that classroom. Then she'd play out what we'd composed, so yes I can remember that but that was only for that one year though. We all learnt the recorder, or perhaps it was optional. I do remember singing at school but that was the carol service. I don't remember if there was an actual choir.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

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We didn't do much singing there. If we did it, was just in a class or something like that. But we certainly did at Secondary School; I was in the school choir there. It wasn't very big and there weren't very many boys. It was mainly girls. Boys in those days didn't want to be associated with stupid things like that you know, but I enjoyed it. Whether anybody listening to us did, I'm not too sure.

We used to learn dancing at school. I wish we'd learnt proper ballroom dancing rather than either Scottish dancing or barn dancing, because as you get older it would have been more beneficial to you than barn dancing and square dancing.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I've always enjoyed music. I just sing in a choir and I have done for years and years. Of course I sang in the school choir from a very early age. I was seven. We were quite well known for our musical productions at the school. I wasn't fazed by it. We sang at things like nativity plays. It was a big part of the course because we were linked to the church and so we would be taking part in every festival at the church. I think we sang in competitions once or twice, but I don't think it seemed that important at the time. Not at infant school or junior school. When I was older that's when it was more serious. But junior school it was to perform to our parents.

I do remember a gramophone at school, so music was played to us. It might have been educational material. But it definitely included music. We watched television at school. There used to be a musical programme on at lunch times. Just after lunch, at about two o'clock, they would be doing things on the xylophone or on the glockenspiel and we would definitely be encouraged to play instruments at school. We played things like glockenspiel, xylophone, and tambourines. You know we had a real musical leaning at that school, at St. Peter's, but it was down to one teacher.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

We used to go to the Starlight Rooms for music and movement, and it was there that I was first introduced to classical music. *Peter and the Wolf*, and *Coppelia*. We used to dance around to it, and I used to enjoy that. It was,

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‘As big as a house, as small as a mouse,’ and things like that. The next time I heard any music like that was when I was much older, in the boys’ part, when they used to bring the gramophone in. We listened to *Under Milk Wood* on the gramophone. But that was the only bit of high culture that we got in our schooling.

It was the Showaddywaddy, Slade kind of era, the early 70s. We used to have dances at school. Those are the only dances we went to. I once went to one of these dances and snogged a boy. My mother was told at parents’ evening and she thought I was disgraceful, I was just a brazen woman. I got a right telling off for that. Oh my mother went to town on me! And funnily enough, I did at one stage do some consultancy with the Police you know, in Nottinghamshire. I went up to Sherwood Lodge and there was a guy there giving a talk and I thought, ‘That’s the boy I got in terrible trouble with for snogging at this school dance.’ I felt myself going bright red in this conference. He wouldn’t remember me at all but I remembered him.

Shani Cassady b 1958

NEEDLECRAFT

One thing I had to do in needlework was horrible. I don’t where it came from, but someone had started making a petticoat with buttonholes round the sleeves, armholes and the neck and I had to carry on with that. And that was it. I never really got anywhere. We didn’t make dresses. One thing we did, when we went to cookery, we made our cookery aprons and a little cap

I had to go down to the farm, after school, to be taught how to turn the heel of a sock – no pattern. Well at that age! – I’d be seven. Eventually I did all the knitting for myself, knitted a dress for myself, and then when my brother came along, knitted his little suits. And I’m surprised now that the majority of children don’t seem to know how to cast on stitches apart from anything else.

I loved leatherwork. And I’ve still got a purse that I made and it was Miss Down who took us for that. I was never very happy with sewing. I don’t think I was very good at sewing because we had to do buttonhole stitches and tiny hems, that sort of thing. Yet afterwards, probably when I was in my teens, I went to night school for dress-making etc. and thoroughly enjoyed it. But it was just the horrible things we had to make at school.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

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When you were in the top class, when Miss Hand, the headmistress, got a hole in her stocking, she used to bring it for one of the girls to mend for her and you were taught darning. That's how you learnt to darn. Well I don't think they do it nowadays do they, because it's just go to the shop and buy a new pair! My husband says to me, 'Would you mend socks?' and I said, 'No, put them in the bin and go and get another pair!' Darning was like weaving the small part of the stocking with a hole. You had to weave it in and out the thread, and leave a little loop at the end so that it didn't pull the material at the side of it. And you had a mushroom shaped piece of wood that they used to sell in the shops, didn't they, and you'd push that in the stocking and pull it tight to make it easier. My husband can darn. He darned in the marines!

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

First of all, you started off with a handkerchief and you had to hem it all the way round. Oh dear, the stitches, they were very big and clumsy. But with practice, and of course everything was examined and passed by the teacher, so you did try hard. You used to prick your fingers and you must always wear a thimble! As we progressed I made a petticoat. It was white material with little sprigs of roses on, very tiny, and you had to do a run and fell seam down the side. So a run and fell seam for it to lie flat. I even put lace on the top and we had to chain stitch this lace on. I was quite proud of it in the end. I think I would have been twelve to thirteen then. I was in the top class when I was doing this because I've always been interested, all my life, with handicrafts. We didn't do much knitting, because our mothers taught us to knit.

Eileen Selby b 1924

Sewing started when we were very much in the junior school and we had to make a peg basket or a peg bag. It was this heavy hessian stuff and we were given thick wool to sew down the side and put a design on the front. It used to take me half the lesson to thread my needle. And at the end of the lesson you always had to unthread your needle and put it neatly in the top. So the next lesson, I was faced with having to thread the needle again. Once I'd got it threaded, I wanted to leave it threaded. So it took me a long time to do that.

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Before we did Domestic Science at the age of 11, the year before that, you had to make a cap and apron for Domestic Science. And then if you were lucky, you went on to making blouses and things like that. But it was all hand sewing – no machine sewing. We were taught how to use paper patterns, how to cut them out. Not the bought ones, these were how to make your own. How to measure, and a graph on paper. Each girl was told how to make a different shaped pattern for herself, according to her measurements.

And then Domestic Science. The first year was housecraft and we had to learn all about laundry and how to make polish, how to clean a house. And home nursing came in that. Then after the first year, we went on to cooking but we were rather handicapped because things were heavily rationed by 1940. But they were allowed just so much margarine and so much sugar and so much flour, so we were able to make sultana scones by the dozen. And vegetable soup.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

We were taught to knit, although I learnt at home to knit, and a lot of sewing. I can remember making a tea cosy or was it a pan holder? Just in plain knitting and I'd chosen pink and blue, but a girl called Sylvia was very bold. She used orange and green! Obviously it must have made some impression because I can still remember it. But we did a lot of sewing. I remember you'd do running stitches and then do like a feather stitch in between with another colour around the edge. Making mats of various sorts, like children always do. I knitted the knickers when I got to the Grammar School! And invariably children would join them initially the wrong way round so the knickers didn't turn out to be knickers at all!

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I used to enjoy sewing, making say a blouse or a skirt, or something like that. I would have been about 13 then. Obviously you progressed from the tray cloths which seemed boring and the little mats that we used to do and I used to long to get onto bigger garments. Probably you'd only just manage in one lesson to sew a cuff on and I just wanted to get on with it and get it finished. It was all hand sewing, no machines, all by hand. Tacking everything first, so you might spend an hour just tacking a cuff on

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and then it would be checked by your teacher. Then make pleats. That it was nice at the end to think that you'd put a blouse on that you'd made by hand. And to have made a long-sleeved blouse. To me, it felt wonderful because of all the months and months of work that you'd put into it, you felt that you'd achieved something at the end of it.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

And you had to make your own pinafore and cap. The previous term it was the needlework preparing you for making the pinny and the top cap. It was green and white check material, just a little pinafore with a bib, tied round the waist. And a matching cap on a bit of elastic to go around your head. Which was quite fun really.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

Shorts we had to make, for PE. With pleats in. Pleated shorts, grey, like a grey flannel it was, and I didn't enjoy making those at all. On the decorative side, like making sewing cases with felt and things like that, that was more for me. More interesting than making a dress or anything. We didn't have sewing machines anyway. It was all hand done.

At seven to eight years of age, we knitted just squares for dishcloths, with a special thick wool and thick needles. So that was quite nice. And you'd got a dishcloth then when you took it home, for Mother to use. It was quite good. We had to learn to knit and to knit socks. We would have been on for ten then. Nine, ten, I think. I enjoyed doing that. So I mastered that OK. Well I don't think I actually managed a full pair of socks at school but as I got older I did them at home. I did try gloves and mittens. Well mittens are very easy. They are to knitters anyway, aren't they? But gloves are a little bit more tricky. The five fingers. Relaxing work and you could talk as well at the same time as you were doing your study at school, with knitting. Whereas with other subjects you couldn't really talk too much. No, you'd got to concentrate hadn't you, with English and Maths and things like that.

We did very basic needlework. The material that you get with the holes in, to do cross-stitch and that sort of thing. It was very basic, there was never any dress-making or anything. It was just basic embroidery, I suppose, learning all the stitches and that sort of thing. I enjoyed it. And I got a lot of pleasure out of doing this sewing because it didn't require too

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much skill. But I enjoyed that very much. I've still got some of the things upstairs I think.

Julie Hooton b 1953

There was a very daunting lady called Mrs Tulley, who did sewing. She must have come to do the sewing. Perfection must have been her middle name because, by golly, if it was not perfect you had to undo it all and go and do it again and again. Right from 7 to 11 I did it. I have still got them all. The first year we made a dressing table set with the notorious Binca with the holes in and criss-crosses and various patterns that had to be exact, the main mat with two small ones. I did that in the first or second year there. The last year I did a cushion cover with her, with a spider's web in the middle. It was all embroidery that we did. I don't think I could ever do anything like it again. She was obviously good.

It was very dark in the room. There is only that window at the back in that room. She would sit at that end. We were struggling with our eyes. She was a big, big woman, who sat on this chair and I think we were all scared out of our whatsits with her. You daren't talk and you had to get on with it. But we did beautiful work. It is amazing what we have done has obviously lasted. I quite like doing that sort of thing anyway and still do now.

Perfection was definitely her middle name. You knew it if you didn't get it right. She was definitely, the dreaded. I don't remember much talking going off in the lesson and you certainly got it right. Each week it was, 'My giddy aunt, don't get it wrong or she will have your guts for garters!' I've kept it all. Her bark was obviously worse than her bite. I did go on. I went on to do that at the next two schools and still do it. I took it as an exam GCSE. Perhaps I like perfection as well. So that rubbed off on me however daunting she seemed at the age of 7 to 11. Yes, I went on to do a lot of that. I still do.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

COOKING, LAUNDRY

We did our cookery in the old church hall where the museum is, top of Church Street. In the coppers³, the boilers where we used to boil the hankies, that sort of thing. The laundry involved boiling the clothes,

3 The water was boiled in large copper pots – coppers – set in the brickwork.

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starching clothes and blueing them – putting some blue dye (Reckett's Blue) into the whites, to make the white look brighter. She also had to iron them. Well, irons that had to go on a gas stove. No electric irons at all. There was no thermostat, of course, so we tested the irons to see if they were hot enough by spitting on our finger and touching the iron. If it was hot enough, the spit jumped off in a flash of steam. And because my aunts, my Mother's sisters, had gorgeous handkerchiefs, much nicer than ours, I used to wash their handkerchiefs for us. I must have been a snob! We only did simple things like starching.

But the cookery lessons were lovely, thorough enjoyable. We had a whole day. Well now this doesn't happen, does it, very often. I just enjoyed cookery, especially when we were making cakes and biscuits, sausage rolls, that sort of thing. We seemed to cover just the normal simple things, but I used to enjoy making sausage rolls because flaky pastry, if I remember rightly, it had about ninety pieces of pastry because of the number of times you folded it. By three, three this, three the other. Someone in the village that eventually married one of my aunts, he used to say, 'Do you think you could make me some sausage rolls?' I used to make sausage rolls for him!

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

We used to take something to wash. Often we used to take my Dad's collars, to wash, starch and iron them. Because they always wore separate collars in those days. You mixed powdered starch with a bit of cold water first, and then with boiling water. Then after you'd washed the article, if it needed to have a bit of stiffening in it like a collar, you'd dip it in the starch before you hung it out to dry and then it used to dry quite stiff. That was starch, Robin Starch. It wasn't real laundry at school; I mean we only did little things. Little oddments. Like I say, I can remember doing Dad's. We had to take a man's collar. That would be, they'd tell you one week what to take the next week, and they'd say, 'Bring a man's collar,' and probably a couple of hankies didn't they? Just little things like that.

A flat iron. It was just a lump of iron with a handle and you heated it on the fire, on the coal fire or on the gas cooker. Then you wet your finger and touched it to see if it sizzled and it was hot enough! The only thing with them, they soon got cold so you had to have two, work with two and have one heating up while you were busy until the other one got cold. First of all

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we were allowed to do handkerchiefs. 'Can we iron the handkerchiefs, Mum?' Mum was only too pleased for you to do it because it was boring for grown-ups. We would have been seven then. After we'd moved up to Standard Two.

It was a big, old fashioned, oh very old fashioned, range with ovens. At the end of the room. More old-fashioned than ours at home because we had a gas cooker.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

I remember making apple balls for an exam and I put salt in the middle of the apple instead of sugar. I didn't make it for home, I made it for my aunt, Auntie Amy and she gave me all the ingredients. You took your own ingredients and they told you what you were going to make and I'd taken salt instead of sugar and it wasn't very successful!

Lillian Slack b 1924

And then of course, the famous cookery school in Kirk Lane! Miss Borland, an Irish lady, was the teacher there and we would go on a Friday. This centre catered for all the villages. On the Monday would be another group from the Ruddington School. Tuesday would probably be from Gotham or Wednesday from say Costock or Rempstone, or something like this. It was used the whole time. There again the teacher was so immaculate in her rules. The minute you went upstairs, you took your coat off and you'd got your basket of goods. She would line us up and call the register. The first thing she would want to do would be to look at your hand. No rings, and of course nail varnish wasn't being used then. No-one could really afford it. And her method of cooking – this was always carried on through my lifetime and I've always enjoyed it and I still have some cookery recipes that she gave to us. A very brisk lady and you got on with it. You had to take your turn at doing the washing-up and sweeping the floor and everything. Unfortunately, through illness, I didn't do any laundry, but I've managed to come through, I can keep things the right shade of white to this day, so I'm all right.

I can remember making a big jug of soup. Oh, it was delicious and I carried it carefully home. I was lucky I was only five minutes around the corner, and my Dad and my brother were there. They used to pull my leg

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and say, 'Oh we never ought to have come home today. Eileen's been to cookery class! No, we won't eat it, not today!' Anyway they did used to eat it and that was that. And I made a Christmas cake but a lot of the children couldn't afford the ingredients.

Eileen Selby b 1924

We went to cookery lessons. Not in the school: we used to go up to Kirk Lane for the cookery lessons. I know I learnt to bake bread because you couldn't get white flour then. It was white flour but there was all bran in it and so you never got white bread. But I used to make bread here for other people and we used to sieve all the bran out of it, so you finished up with white bread.⁴ You used to have it all down in the hearth when you kneaded it, all covered up with tea towels. I can remember sieving the flour and mixing the yeast and sugar into a liquid. Then all the kneading, and then you'd put it in bowls and covered it and left it to rise.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

In the war you were struggling with getting all the produce. The flour, and the margarine, and the sugar, everything had to be weighed correctly and taken, the right amount to start the day. You didn't take, say, a bag of sugar or a bag of flour. Everything had to be done the previous evening for your cookery lesson. We had wartime rationing of course, but you were allowed to buy a few items from the school stock, say if your mother couldn't manage to send any sugar. You were allowed so many penny's worth, say about three pence⁵ worth. Eggs we did have, but it was dried eggs mostly, powdered eggs, and the taste was awful. They were hard to cook with but then again it gave you a good grounding for starting to do interesting cooking, which I was. We mostly made scones and Victoria sandwich, cheese scones, probably shortbread biscuits and things like that. It seemed quite a treat in those days just to have a scone to take home, but everything was rationed and it didn't run to many things like a sandwich cake or scones. And of course home-grown vegetables you could take and we

4 This was illegal. Only brown bread was permitted, because white bread has had much of the food value sifted out: approximately one fifth of the calories, as well as vitamins and wheat germ. This was serious in wartime, when Britain was desperately short of food.

5 1.5p

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would do soup and things like that and we each had a basket and you could take produce home, that you'd made.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

It was housewifery, not just cooking. It used to be cooking one week and then laundry another week. You know, all the starching of the collars. You had to take a shirt of your Dad's, that you could wash, starch and iron. We just used to have a long table for ironing with probably only four of you being able to do that at a time, and another section would be doing something else to do with the laundry. We used the old-fashioned irons. You heated them on the cooker, and then you just flicked water on them to watch it fizzle up to see if it was hot enough. Keeping the irons clean was all part of the progress of your lesson. You cleaned everything, the same with the cooking utensils. We had to make sure everything was clean and the copper was clean. The fireplaces in this building were leaded grates so we did have to learn how to do black leading on the grates.

The irons were heated up on the top of the gas rings, and it was just heavy towels on tables to put your clothes on. No ironing board, no. To learn how to do shirts in particular. We spat on the irons to see if they were the right temperature. If they were, it usually sizzled. OK it was warm enough. And I think we just tried it a little bit on the edge of the old towels to make sure it didn't burn.

I don't think we started until we were eleven. We learnt how to bake bread and pastry. And shepherds pies and Cornish pasties. They're the things that really stick out in my mind. And fairy cakes. But of course the rations were a little bit limited even in those days as to what you could take. Oh, cheese straws was another good one that we learnt. I did enjoy it very much. And taking what we'd eaten home. It all went home. It certainly did! You were not to, you know, you didn't dare eat anything! Probably a cheese straw perhaps you had a nibble at! But yes it was nice to take Mum and Dad something back home, for them. Apple dumplings, I remember doing those. They were nice. And Eccles cakes were one of my favourites to make because they were a little bit fiddly, but the end product was nice with the currants in. So we learnt an awful lot. Well I did anyway. Basic training I suppose and I still like cooking to this day.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

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I don't recall ever doing cookery at all.

Julie Hooton b 1953

We only did domestic science at the Secondary School. I don't think there was the facilities to be honest to do it there.

Helena Bradley b 1955

PE AND GAMES

I remember we used to collect our lino mats and we had to put them down on the ground so that we could lie on them because it was just very gritty. You could feel the grit through the lino mats but we used to do our exercises and things in that fashion! So that was very limited. So by the time I got to the Grammar School, in the superb gymnasium, that was very different.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I didn't enjoy playing games, not at all. I enjoyed watching. I used to enjoy being on the touch line then, but not taking part. I used to hate it, being small and having to do a vaulting horse in the playground. I couldn't even see over the top, let alone attempt to jump over. The normal teacher taught you all along, even for games. There was teams of four, Elgar, Dickens, Shakespeare and Curie. I was in Dickens. Obviously you'd got to do it and take part but I didn't enjoy it. We went to Elms Park for games, rounders and things like that. I didn't mind that but I wasn't over keen if I'm honest. No, no I just wasn't keen.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

I couldn't do the sports because I was disabled. I'd had Polio when I was a baby, and I'd got bifida in my back, so I had a few problems. That stopped me being able to do the sports because I got a lot of infections. You couldn't do sports with infections and things, but I used to love all the other things, the crafts.

Janet Parker b 1939

We had PE, I don't know how many times a week, but we were all in different houses. It wasn't called a house. It was something else. Different coloured bands: red, blue, green, yellow, that sort of thing. And we did a

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lot of PE. Mrs Greenwood was very good at that as we got older. A similar thing to what they do at gyms nowadays, as regards arm movements and bending and stretching.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I can't actually remember any games lessons other than the drill that we did in our gym knickers. I can remember the gym kit which was bottle green knickers with a pocket and a green tee shirt, or it may have been an Aertex shirt. It was freezing cold when we did gym on the playground. We used to do drill on the playground. Occasionally we did gym in the big classroom at the front because it had a sliding door so that two classrooms would open into one and that gave us a space, but the school was always very crowded: lots of children and every spare corner filled. We used to stand in lines on the playground and do exercises. Legs apart, legs together, jumping on the spot, running on the spot, moving our arms, side of our bodies out and forward, hands on heads, hands down. It was intended to run off energy. I was not a very physical child. I did not like games.

I had frequent nose bleeds and they used to lie me on my back in the cloakroom with the big key to the big door down my back! And I used to get into trouble for laughing and objecting to lying on my back. But they were very spectacular and I rather enjoyed the attention. I think I was probably a very horrible little girl! I know I was very arrogant and very confident.

Ann Wilson b 1944

We did go swimming once a week. The Victoria Baths. And it was only the top year that was allowed to go, and then the year below. If somebody was ill from the top year, the eldest child from that year would be allowed to go in their place. So you were desperate for people to be ill, so you could go instead. There would be a bus to the baths and back. They taught us to swim. In fact one of my neighbours helped teach because she was very athletic and sporty. Mrs Richardson. She came to help. There were probably two adults, not more. Mrs Richardson used to test the Brownies. So she was obviously qualified to do it. I don't think they had classroom helpers in the way that mothers come into the classroom these days, joining in or giving a hand. We didn't have arm bands. You had floats. We were always at the

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shallow end. We were never at the deep end. I don't remember there ever being an incident where anybody was in any danger, because we weren't allowed to go anywhere near the deep end. So it was all safe. I remember the green swimming costumes and red bathing caps that we had to wear.

We did running. Inside the school there was a big hall where they had a dividing door across that they opened up. We could use that for indoor sports, like bean bag races, and we also used the playground.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

We did the cycling proficiency test at St. Peter's school. That was quite a hoot. They put a line down. You had to ride along the white line and stay on the line. There is a slope that runs down. You had to be aware that the slope went down and be ready to turn. We had to be quite proficient to apply the brakes and turn the corner. That was an extra notch on the proficiency if you could get round the corner. I have still got the badge for that.

I can remember the bottle-green knickers for games. We did it outside on the concrete bit. I can remember it being hoops and beanbags, and beanbags and balls, but not anything too wild. I can't remember anything like netball because of the room. Whenever anything went over, it went straight over into the road anyway. We swapped classrooms when we went into the hall. Once a week they were cleared and those double doors came open and we did it in there.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

Our sports day was on Elms Park which felt alien to us because as children from round Packman Drive, we would never go up there. The egg and spoon race and the hundred yard dash, things like that. But it wasn't physical stuff until we went to the grammar school. And then it really kicked in, with hockey and tennis and everything else like that. It felt like we were stepping up somehow because these were things that we had only heard about, that we didn't really have any concept of.

Shani Cassady b 1958

ASSEMBLY AND SCRIPTURE

Well we had quite a lot of Scripture to begin with, prayers. Mr Weller was the Vicar then and he used to come in to test us. He seemed to come quite

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regularly. He'd come in to ask questions and talk to us. It was Scripture first and then we had the mental arithmetic.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

We had Scripture first thing. It would be like Assembly. It was in the whole of the school, that was, in this big room. Two big doors opened, and we had a hymn and prayers every morning. Then we'd go to our own classrooms. One nice thing we used to do. When we were nine years of age, the vicar came to school. He heard you read a passage from the New Testament and if you could read that you got a New Testament. I've got mine and it says, it just says, on the flyleaf, 'Hilda Elliott was able to read the scriptures at the age of nine.' Mr Potts was the vicar. He only came in occasionally. He came in, but he didn't seem to play a very big part, not at that time.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

You had scripture every day. Every morning you did it, with the teacher, for so long. She would probably read the story and then you'd have a little discussion. We'd already had the prayer at assembly. So this was the actual scripture lesson. Miss Hand saw that we always had an assembly every morning.

Eileen Selby b 1924

We started at 9 o'clock and it was a church school, so for the first 20 minutes we had Bible reading. This was from quite an early age, I should say from 7. I found that very, very useful because it was the very, very first time I ever came across the word diligently. King Herod told the Three Kings to search diligently for the child. And I looked at that word and somebody else had to read it, thank goodness, and I thought, that's a wonderful word. Because I wouldn't have known how to pronounce it. I was too young to pronounce it, I believe. But the girl was a very regular churchgoer, she was, and of course she knew it.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

We'd start each morning saying the catechism for example. We'd always have a religious slot which the Headmistress would take. We would sing hymns and on certain days we would go across to the church. We'd leave

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school and go to services in the church. During the war there were more services in churches, and when you'd have weeks like Worship Week, you'd always troop across to the church and attend services.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

We did go to church, with it being a C of E school, on special church occasions. Also the vicar would come. He did come regularly and gave prayers and things during our morning assembly. We sometimes went to the church as a school. Ascension Day was one occasion. There used to be a choirboy singing on the roof, up the tower or whatever and the bell would chime.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

In my final year at the school we had a service in the church during Holy Week and I read the lesson from the Acts of the Apostles, and I can still recite it. After the service the Headmistress gave me a big hug and she was so pleased with me. So that was the other side of her. She loved our successes and gave credit where credit was due.

The Vicar used to come in regularly, to morning assemblies. We used to see a lot of him and we knew him well. Mr Shrimpton. I suspect the church had a large role in the school. I think it probably had a governing role because we always had to put the full title on all our exam papers, everything we wrote: Ruddington St. Peter's Junior, Mixed and Infants C of E Controlled, which is why I can roll it out so easily! The fact that it was a church school was emphasised. We had Church of England services, both in school and in the church, at holy festivals when you were still in school. Like Holy Week when we'd still be at school for much of Holy Week. I did know the Vicar quite well.

Ann Wilson b 1944

There was one thing that you used to have to try and learn: the one hundred and third psalm. 'Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, We bless the Lord, Bless His holy name'. I think that was about as far as I got on that one, as well. I think it was more to do with English than religious education to be honest.

I can't really remember any child being segregated, even for morning assembly, or anything like that. The Baptists weren't segregated in any way. I can't remember many Catholics being there. They probably went to a special Catholic school. I don't remember any Jewish children. Even

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when we were down at the Secondary School there was an Indian lad who was in our class and he wasn't segregated for RE. He never asked to be excused from morning assembly or anything. He went along with it.

I know we used to have to go to special services, with it being a C of E school. We used to have an Ascension Day morning service and I think there was an Easter one. The Ascension service sticks out. We always used to have to go to that.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I don't remember the church being particularly a strong influence. I don't feel that I was being preached at. I don't think we were forever going across the road to the church. I don't think anything was pushed down anybody's throat. I don't remember it giving off any vibes like that. If they did do it, it was very cleverly done because I didn't feel that I was being pounded that this is a church school.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

SCHOOL TRIPS

Mrs Jones: it was just her manner. She was very brusque and she had exacting standards. But I can remember as well, being invited on a school trip. It was for the older classes, but there were a few places left. It was to Newstead Abbey. I wanted to go and I'd gone in early with my money in case I was allowed to go. She asked me, 'Can you tell me what a spiral tree is? Some of the trees at Newstead Abbey are cut in a spiral. Can you tell me what a spiral is?' I described it and so I was allowed to go on the school trip. It doesn't seem fair does it? That was in the summer.

I don't think there were many school trips, but there was one when I was in the top class, when I was ten. We all went to London, the whole class, for three days. We went by coach. Which was amazing and I don't know that there were any more school trips like that. We had to stay in a couple of bed and breakfasts I think, to spread out. We went to see *Camelot* which was fantastic. We went to see a BBC radio show, and there was P.J. Proby, and Tom Jones was on as well. They were pop singers. P.J. Proby was famous for splitting his trousers and he did do on that occasion as well. Very tight trousers and he always – he used to turn around and split his trousers to the audience. He had a ponytail as well which was quite unusual in 1964.

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I was eleven then. So that would be the top class. I should think there were thirty of us. I can't remember the teachers that went, but certainly our class teacher was there. There must have been others as well because there was a whole class. I can remember having to share three to a bedroom in this bed and breakfast, and going to Lyons Corner-houses for afternoon tea. They were a chain of cafés at the time, that aren't there now. All we had were fried breakfast, and chips for the rest of the day. So by the time we got home we were sick to death of fried food. We went to Heathrow Airport. And we went on a river trip as well on the Thames. We went to the Tower as well, saw the Beefeaters. We saw the Crown Jewels. When we came back, of course we had to write a project about it.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

We went skiing with the secondary school. I went on a two-week holiday at Easter, skiing in Austria. It was the first holiday, I think, that the school had done for many years. It was 1970. I always remember. I think the cost was £70 and I came home and I said, 'Can I go?' and I can remember my Mum saying, 'Well we'll let her go because she might not ever get abroad again!' So I think they forfeited a holiday so that I could go. It was ten days and it was £70. That was expensive in those days. We used to have to pay for it in instalments. I know we had to pay for it. We had to take some money every Monday. And there was the biology teacher, the music teacher and her husband, the gym mistress and her boyfriend, who became her husband, that took us. And the only accident of the whole ten days was the music teacher who fell off her skis and sprained her ankle. All the kids were fine, no problems. I didn't enjoy skiing I must admit. I've never been back since! I enjoyed the place. That was nice.

Helena Bradley b 1955

CHRISTMAS PARTIES

And then they had school parties. Every Christmas we'd have a school party. The teachers did jellies and things like that and you took your own cup to school, plate. You took all those yourself, with your name on, a tag with your name on. We used to have a school party after school. Oh it was a big day that was when you had a school Christmas party! It was beautiful!

Helena Giblenn b 1929

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To me it was all fascinating. And Christmastime, I used to love the Christmastime because we used to do all the carols and make decorations, simple decorations. You know, the cardboard tops with the holes in that you got on milk bottles – nothing like these silver top things that we get now. I mean there were no different colours. We used to save those and wash them all up. Sometimes they were painted with some blue paint and we used to thread them up with any little bits of sweet papers, if you'd ever got any, and little bits of paper chains. We used to string them up across the classroom: the round bit of cardboard that fitted in the top of the milk bottle. You just pressed your thumb in and it made a hole in the middle. So if you took those holes out, it used to leave just a circle with a hole in the middle of cardboard. And we used to cover them with raffia and make little tiny shopping bags, and everything. It was all part of the crafts we used to do. We used to have the Christmas party as well. We all had to take our own cup, saucer and plate, and food things as well. We always were to have our name on tape on the bottom, stuck on tape on the bottom so we didn't lose it. Woe betide you if you broke it on the way or coming home.

Janet Parker b 1939

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THE BUILDINGS

You would march into the big hall. The long room. Not the one opposite the church. The one opposite the Co-op, that was the big room. Yes and there were curtains, and some of the curtains were never long enough to come down onto the floor. There the desk would be and the curtains would probably just hover above so if you were being a bit nosy you would have a little peek under the curtain to see what was happening in the other class next door. One class would be doing Geography and the teacher would be giving instructions on the board and everything else. Children would be giving answers and in this one they were probably doing poetry. How did we cope with this? You'd be listening to the other class. If you were sitting at the back you'd be listening to the others wouldn't you? But we managed it somehow. The little ones were not in the big room but in a small room of their own.

Eileen Selby b 1924

We used to have the desks with the seats attached, which were intended to seat two, but there were often four of us crammed into it. That's how I got to know my friends so well because we were squashed very close together. The four of us just used to compete with each other, I suppose. We had total confidence. We didn't quarrel. We just had a super time.

Ann Wilson b 1944

HEATING

There was a coal fire in each classroom. The caretaker used to light the fires in the morning and there was a huge coal scuttle at the side of each one. There was no radiators.

Lillian Slack b 1924

And another thing that I remember, big open fires. If you weren't very clever you got a row at the front, so you managed to get a bit more heat. But if you were clever you sat at the back, so you were a bit cold. I think there was a pipe running along. This lovely big open fire that we had with a

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guard around, of course, a big guard. And the teacher used to put more coal on and give it a poke now and again.

Eileen Selby b 1924

I remember the big open fire. With a bar round it, and I remember the milk being brought in, in the crates. The little third of a pint bottles, and I remember those all being put round the fire to warm it. Obviously they couldn't get forty bottles all on the front row and we took it in turns daily to have the warmer milk!

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

In the winter we had the great big fires, for the heating and everything. They used to have some beautiful big fires. Big open fires with the guard round. In the very cold weather, on frosty mornings, they used to put the crates of milk in the hearth, so the icicles had gone and the milk was warmed. Well I didn't like that, so I always used to ask if mine could be left cold. I didn't like milk anyway but yes, they used to warm it for us, and then pass it round at the break.

Janet Parker b 1939

You used to have coal fires in the classrooms. I'm not sure whether radiators were in as well, and you used to have to fetch the milk in. The third of a pint bottles of milk, that we used to have to fetch in from outside and put by the grate because it was like a huge fire. And then you'd have the iron railing coming round. You'd get quite a lot of hearth. You used to have to put the crates of milk for the class by the side of the hearth for the milk to thaw out in winter.

Helena Bradley b 1955

TOILETS

Horrible toilets. I never wanted to go! The school toilets weren't proper water toilets. And they were right at the top of the playing area, the school-yard. But we were very fortunate. We had water toilets at home and there weren't very many houses in the village that did, when I first started school. All the different helps – water toilets, taps in the house – came, I suppose, after the Second World War.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

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The boys were there for two years until they were seven. I can remember their little trousers drying on the fireguard. In the corner of the classroom there was a roaring fire with a huge fireguard and by break, every day almost, there were little boys' trousers drying off. I can still smell the stale urine smell!

We had outside toilets at the bottom of the yard and the little boys' toilet was first, with a wall, I should think seven or eight feet high and the girls had to pass it. We had to run very fast because the naughty little boys used to try and aim it over the top. Our toilets were very primitive. They were very low and they had a little wood seat, which was divided, into two sections. I was never totally confident that it matched my Mother's high standards of hygiene! I also wore heavy lisle stockings so going to the loo was quite an operation.

Ann Wilson b 1944

It was all outside toilets. I don't think that ever bothered anybody. We felt that was quite novel really, to go outside, unless it was awful. It was something different.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

The toilets I remember very well because they were outside. You came out towards the right hand side of St Peter's Rooms and then you went left up the yard. There were about three or four toilets there. No heating, no lighting. They were just very basic with the old Izal toilet paper in there. We couldn't have washed our hands, because they were outside. We must have just gone from the toilet straight back into the classroom again. Izal Toilet Paper was a wonderful product. I don't know who invented it. It's very basic, no softness to it whatsoever. One side is very rough and the other side is very shiny and smooth. So what you don't learn as a child is that the way you use Izal is to crumple it in your hand first and then it becomes much softer. As children you didn't quite know whether to use the rough side or the smooth side. If you used the smooth side, any product would run straight off it. And if it was on the rough side you didn't want to use it anyway. But it was preferable to the squares of newspaper that I had hanging up at home. It felt like a step up. It was much nicer, that was.

Shani Cassady b 1958

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BULLYING

At Ruddington School it was horrible. I was bullied by some girls there. I never told anyone about that. My family had a shop and they expected I would take sweets for them. But I was never given sweets. I never ate sweets. My Mother used to say, 'Do you want a sweet?' as I was going to school and I never did. I never told my parents about that! I'd got enough to be going on, without telling them that on top of everything else! But besides I didn't know what you did about bullying. I should think the teachers knew it went on. It must have gone on in their time too, when they were at school. The children used to run along the playground at Ruddington, a string of children so you couldn't pass. You'd have to turn away and go another way. It was an awful playground! I used to hate time that we were supposed to go out, because they used to gang up. They used to say that poor children were clever and rich children were stupid. They termed me as being rich because my parents were in business. That's why I was stupid, because we were rich!

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

You did get bullied a bit now and again. I got bullied badly once but that was because I was a bit different. But things like that were pretty rare. I'd be about 8.

Janet Parker b 1939

There was one incident that sticks in my mind and that was probably when I was about nine, and there was a girl who couldn't pronounce hedgehog, the word hedgehog, and the poor girl was made to stand on her chair and repeat it over and over and over. She didn't get it right once. And she'd either miss the first H off or the second. She could not say it properly, but she was really humiliated, until she was in tears. It was really dreadful. She was saying 'Egehog,' or 'Hedgog.' She just couldn't do it properly. Isn't that awful?

Johannah Perdue b 1953

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I suppose there must have been some bullying, but I don't know whether we would have classed it as bullying then to be honest. Maybe I was too innocent. I don't know.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I remember the bullying of the other children. You tolerated it because it meant that you weren't being bullied. The ones that were overweight or the ones that came from very large families or very poor families. There were some very, very poor families, and we used to pick on them unmercifully. It must have been horrendous for them, but whenever they were being picked on, you weren't. A group of girls from Elms Park estate were the bullies. There was about four or five of them. The rest of us would just call these kids names, 'Smelly' and things like that, but these girls would make their lives a misery. These were the girls that we were very frightened of, much older than ourselves. They were quite terrifying.

Shani Cassady b 1958

DYSLEXIA

I never enjoyed my time at Ruddington. They never understood me, you know what was wrong. Nobody did. I mean even now, I've never been to the doctor about this problem that I had. Words, and writing them down. I just call myself dyslexic now, but they hadn't invented the word then. They just said I was slow. My brothers said I was hopeless. My Father used to spend hours with me, going over things. He was wonderful really.

The only good thing about the Ruddington school was that they had this Headteacher, Miss Hand. She was a character, and she took all the children out that weren't reading well. I can remember it was summer and we sat outside and we all just sat and read and read, until we could all read! We didn't do any other lessons until we could read. Miss Hand had rickets. She had very bandy legs, very small and wiry. They had a rhyme about her

Miss Hand she's not very grand,
She goes to church on Sunday,
She prays to God with all her might,
And hits the kids on Monday.

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That sounds unfair. That was her though.

I had no trouble with reading and memorising things, but it was writing them down and spelling. Even now, if I write a letter it's a real pain because I've got to have a dictionary. I keep thinking, 'I don't know how to spell this word.' They're just ordinary words that I should know! In my dictionary I've got all the ordinary words written down, already in a paper, to remind me! The times that I've written them, and they still don't stay with me.

My parents knew that I would have difficulty getting to secondary school but I wanted to do nursing and they knew that I'd got to pass English exams. They didn't know how I was going to cope. Anyway I did manage. They made allowances for me at the hospital, the matron did. She made allowances for me, because when the Sister came up onto the ward, and she would tell you this, that and the other, I had to go and read it. To read it myself. I had to look in the notes and read what she'd said and then I was all right. She knew that, and I used to always go into the office and read. She used to have us, the staff, all around and just talk to us about this patient, that patient, the other patient. But I would go and read it.

But it was awful at school. I was made to stand up in front of the class and read things, and spell things, and how to spell words, and they did it deliberately, unkindly. Yes and really intimidating, because I was always afraid that I was saying the wrong thing. I would read very slowly, and actually I don't, I read very quickly. But because I was afraid I'd be wrong. So she used to imitate me as well, the teacher. She was cruel. This meant that I never volunteered. I never put my hand up like other children. I suppose that's probably why she made me stand up to do things, because they all put their hands up to answer and she would ask. And I never did because I expected to be wrong and I'd be ridiculed. So I just sat quietly and didn't.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

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SCHOLARSHIPS AND THE 11 PLUS

I did take an exam for a scholarship to the secondary school, but I didn't get anywhere because lots of the questions, I never even knew anything about them at all. Because it was just a simple school. Nobody passed. Margaret James who belonged to the shop at the corner of High Street and The Nook – her parents paid for her to go to the secondary school.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

They paid for me to go. I didn't have the entrance exam. But paying for you, that paid off. You went to secondary school and you passed the Matriculation.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

We all took the exam in the school. I passed it, but I wasn't allowed to go. Because the other two hadn't. They were a girl and a boy. My sister was 5 years older and brother 11. You were brought up in our family that everyone had the same chance. Mum and Dad couldn't afford to send me. But it didn't hold me back, because I ended up in the Civil Service. I went to night school, fourteen and a half hours of night school. In fifteen and a half hours, I had passed my first typing exam. Nothing held me back. No-one was pushing me to do this. I was doing this on my own initiative. Looking back, I am glad I did. I was just interested to do it.

Eileen Selby b 1924

I didn't pass my 10-Plus exam for the scholarship – you used to get an assisted place then to the Grammar School in West Bridgford. Only one girl ever used to pass each year. There was only one place. So if you were second in the class you didn't stand a chance. So I left school when I was 14 and then I had a good commercial training and made my living in the commercial world. I don't suppose I was really keen. I know there was only one reason that I wanted to go to the school in West Bridgford and that was because they had tassels on their berets. I thought they were rather

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lovely. I think I was disappointed because I didn't get a place and afterwards I wish I'd had one. Especially when I see my daughters going off to university and it's been rather nice.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

I can remember going off to the school on Loughborough Road for the scholarship exam. In those days it held six hundred pupils which was so much greater than the little Ruddington School. I remember that Saturday morning, walking up the drive to take this examination. I was sitting at all these, you know, everybody marshalled to these desks. And I was petrified. There were a lot taking the exam. I honestly can't remember how many from Ruddington. I don't remember anybody else ready to go at that time, only myself. Some of the girls who didn't go to the Grammar School had private education. Miss Hammond was the Head teacher when I was brought up in the village and she retired and started a private school in her house. Brenda Morley went to that school. I don't know who else went there. Just a few girls. So Brenda was able to have almost one to one tuition I suppose.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

The 11 plus exam I took twice. And failed twice! That was for the main grammar school in West Bridgford. You could opt to take another 11 plus for the Art school and also for the Textile school. They were in town. Also the Bluecoat school which was in town, C of E. But you had to be a member of the church to be able to sit that exam. Now I passed that exam to go there, but at the time the school could only offer a fee paying place. Unfortunately I never went because the fees were too high in those days. Uniform was an awful price. Yes and all the fees, so it was an expensive thing then. In the forties that was. It was 1949, 1950, that was.

I think it was just a good school. I know friends of mine, their parents didn't want them to go to Ruddington village school – it was probably a little bit beneath them – so they opted to try and get them into West Bridgford school. Village children, my neighbours, and friends I grew up with. A lot of them went to West Bridgford. They had to get special permission to get into that catchment area, but when you're older you know why. As a child you don't know. But it's just snobbishness I think. And when you look around and see one or two of these that went there, they're no better than what I am

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at the end of the day. Their parents thought it was better for them not to mix with some of the rougher children.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I remember doing the 11 Plus. I did the first part and passed it. Then it came to the second part. Well I didn't want to go to the grammar school; I wanted to go to the art school later on because they told me that they wanted me to go to the art school. But you didn't take the exam for that until a year or so later. So I passed the first part and I only let myself pass that because one of the girls in the classroom with me she says, 'You won't pass. I shall go.' So I thought, 'I'm going to pass the first part anyway.' And I did pass the first part which shook her. And I think I could've passed the second part but as I say, they'd earmarked me for the art school and that's really where I wanted to go. The teachers really tried to give us a bit of extra tuition for the 11 plus to help us get through and quite a few did get through.

Janet Parker b 1939

I actually got to the top class when I was about eight because we were allowed to progress at a rate according to our ability. There was a small group of us who were expected to do well in the 11 plus and we were intensively coached with practice IQ tests. In the top class we had an inspirational teacher called Mrs Greenwood and she taught us so much. Not just arithmetic and reading which was very thorough, but also History, Art, Geography.

The school leaving age was fourteen whereas when I went to the Girls High School, the school leaving age was compulsorily sixteen and I had every intention of staying there until I was eighteen. So it was a very different lifestyle. Because I lived in the City, just over the boundary, I took my 11 plus with my sister, in the city. All the other girls took it in the County and went to West Bridgford Grammar School if they passed. So I would have gone to Mundella if I hadn't got the scholarship for the High School. So I'd never really have gone to school with the neighbourhood children. I never did. They all went to Wilford School and I went to Ruddington.

The school was very successful. A lot of children did well in the 11 plus and went to Bridgford Grammar School. I, and my friend, went to the Girls High School. Although the Headmistress was very strict and awe inspiring, I think she was ambitious for us. I can remember on the day the

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results of the 11 plus came. She called myself and my friend out into the playground, in front of the whole school, and told them all about it and made a huge fuss of us. So she was generous with her praise when we succeeded but I also remember she was absolutely furious when in my 11 plus year I had problems with my eyes and had to have eye drops, which meant for a fortnight I couldn't see properly, because she rehearsed us intensely and she thought the fortnight off was not acceptable. She thought it was going to affect my work and that bothered her a lot

Ann Wilson b 1944

When I was just going to take my Eleven Plus I had an abscess grow on my chin. I had to go to the Doctor's every day for him to look at it. It really did make me quite ill. I think had I not had that I probably would have passed my Eleven Plus, but I didn't. I don't know whether we realised we were being taught for the Eleven Plus, but we were taught Maths and we were taught how to write compositions as they were called in those days, and poetry, and music. So all the basics that we'd probably need for the Eleven Plus, we were taught. It was funny because when we were going up to Scotland a couple of years ago, as we were going up Beatock I said I can remember "Going up Beatock, a steady climb, the gradient against her, but she's on time"⁶, and things like that. Obviously you know all your favourite poems that you were taught. Robert Louis Stephenson's *Lamplighter* and *Temerare*. And *Seasons of Mellow Fruitfulness*. We had to learn them and stand up and say them.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

It was a test to see if you were grammar school standard or whether you went onto the secondary modern. It was basically just arithmetic, mental arithmetic, which I was sure would let me down, but I think I must have scraped through. And writing a story, and reading a passage and then answering some questions on it. It was very, very basic really, but it filled me with dread, because I thought, 'I shan't be able to do this. I shan't be good enough to pass.' But I did.

To me there was the fear of not doing my best and letting people down, but then also the fear of retribution afterwards. Probably my saving grace

6 *Night Mail* by W.H. Auden

SCHOLARSHIPS AND THE 11 PLUS

was when I took the 11 plus. Mrs Hamilton-Jones had retired, so she was no longer the head, and things were definitely a lot more relaxed at school. In fact, the lady who was the head teacher then, Mrs Greenwood, my Mum used to go and clean for her, at her house, and so I knew her quite well. She wasn't a fearsome person that you only saw when you were in school. I actually related to her outside school as well and so I didn't have this fear that she'd come screaming into the room if I hadn't passed my 11 plus.

Nowadays, they practice before they do any exams, whereas I don't recall us really being prepared for it. It was, 'You are going to do the 11 plus to assess if you can go onto the next level of school.' It was this indistinct thing that we were supposed to do.

Julie Hooton b 1953

I left in sixty-five. The 11 plus started in the autumn of sixty-four I think, with the first paper that you sat for the initial selection and then you went through and took the second stage if you'd passed the first stage. It was all written exams, general knowledge, English and Maths. I didn't get any coaching for it. I couldn't tell whether there was streaming or special training for the 11 plus.

When the results came out, the names of the people that were going to take the next exam were read out to the whole class, and you knew that if your name was read out then you would take the next exam. And you knew that if your name wasn't read out then you'd failed and you'd go to the Secondary Modern school. And there's two emotions, because first of all you're absolutely desperate to hear your name read out. And once it had been read out then you felt acute embarrassment for the ones whose names hadn't been read out. They'd be in tears. So the girls that didn't pass, I can remember them being upset about it and crying.

At the end of the autumn term you found out who had passed the first section or first part of the 11 plus, just before you broke up for a holiday. Then you'd come back and take the second part. I think you took it towards the end of the spring term, but we didn't hear the results until the August holidays. You could still fail at that point. So there was another six months of worry. When you got the results, and also at the point in which you took the second paper, you had to indicate which grammar school you'd prefer to go to. But they were graded as well. Starting with the Girls High School at the

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top which took the top two percent in the county, then the school I went to, which was Brinklehurst Grammar, then West Bridgford Grammar, and then Rushcliffe which was a technical grammar actually. But there was a hierarchy. If you put down that you wanted to go West Bridgford but in fact you got enough marks to go to the High School, you would go to West Bridgford because you hadn't specified anything higher.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

I didn't want to pass my 11 plus, because I didn't want to travel to school on a bus, because if I'd passed my 11 plus I would have had to either gone to Bridgford or Rushcliffe. I'm not saying that I failed purposely, but when I did find out I hadn't passed it, I was quite relieved that I'd only got to go round the corner to school. I don't think we used to prepare for it like they do now. I didn't appreciate just how important it was. It didn't particularly bother me at that particular time in my life, at eleven years old, that I hadn't passed it. I certainly wasn't put under pressure at home.

The ones that were clever, the teachers tended to favour more. If you weren't so clever or you were mediocre, then you weren't quite such a pet. I think the teachers either lost interest, or couldn't be bothered, or gave up.

Helena Bradley b 1955

The slow learners were obviously impeding the rest of us, and they weren't sent out to have any remedial help at all, they were kept in the class. Just sort of stuck at the back of the class, and more or less ignored, which is terrible when you think about it. They'd be given a certain amount of help or shown a few things, but the teachers would concentrate really on the children who were brighter and more able.

They sussed us out, some of us who were approaching the 11 plus stage. They were, unwittingly to us, tutoring us, and giving us perhaps extra work or harder work. I do remember the spelling tests that we had because that was perhaps my forte, was English. We had individually to go into a separate room and be given quite difficult words to spell. It would only be a handful of us that were picked to do that. It wouldn't be the whole class. So there was a selection process going on but we didn't know about it. And, they were obviously testing us out and checking that we were going to be OK for the 11 plus.

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I think we were given test papers, looking back now. Especially for Maths. You know, 'If a man's digging a trench with, you know, how long is it going to take to fill?' and this sort of thing. They were quite obtuse questions some of them and we were helped with that. So we were given test papers or previous exam papers to have a go at before we did the 11 plus. I remember my form teacher telling my parents that if it was my day I'd sail it, but in the event I was a wreck. I just couldn't do it.

Mum and Dad wanted us to do well because their education was relatively short-lived you see. My Father was from a very poor family and he didn't really have a formal education. My Mum was only at school until she was fourteen. So the emphasis was definitely on the education. It was terrifying. I was in a terrible state on the day of the exam itself, to the point where I could hardly write, because so much emphasis was placed on passing. My sister had passed and gone to the grammar school and so it was all on my shoulders and I was physically ill. I couldn't do it. I remember being in the toilet most of the time. I failed it and there's no way I should have failed it.

The only option at that point was a Secondary Modern; well you just didn't go the Secondary Modern. It was bad news I had to go there. My parents fortunately were able to send me to a private school. But ordinarily I would have gone to a Secondary Modern which would have been terrible. Obviously I was quite capable of taking it and passing it. I just was terrified. When it was known that I was going to be going to another school, a private school, I was completely ostracised. My friends, they wouldn't talk to me! So the last term I was completely shunned by my friends, which was very upsetting at the time, because I'd known them all my life, and I don't think I retained any friends in the village, which was really awful. There was one girl, I think just one, Carol, who I saw but not very often. But certainly the girls that I'd known, that was it, more or less. It set me apart.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I can remember sitting the 11 plus, in Mrs Mookerjee's class. That must have been awful. But I've always hated exams. I do remember all meeting outside and doing the usual, 'Did you put ...?', 'What did you get?' It was just a course you took. You were taught and then that was it one day, the exam, that was it. You would probably realise the week before you were

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taking it. I don't think we were particularly prepared like they are now. I can remember doing little tests like your tables and spelling tests, that sort of thing. I don't remember doing any homework or homework being set. I just remember this exam, it suddenly being there. That was quite a task for us all. We weren't probably very well prepared for that. The poor teachers probably did try but we weren't aware of it.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

We went in one day. This must have been at the girls school because we had the desks where you lifted the lids. The teacher told us we'd got to prepare for an exam, which we hadn't any idea about. So we were all getting very worried about it. She passed the pencils out and everything. Then she told us to lift the lids of our desks, and we did, and under every single one was written 'April Fool'.

People kept bandying this 11-Plus phrase about. It didn't really mean much to us to be honest. A grammar school was something that we would like to have gone to, but it was out of the village. As children from a council estate we would go to a secondary school and the girls would get married, the boys would go into the factories and do their apprenticeships, and that would be it. You knew the top two tables would probably go to grammar school and then go on to university and have completely different lives from us. So you tended not to associate with them because there was no point. There was going to be no future to it. You stayed within your own group. And your parents would know each other from your own social group, so you tended not to stray out of that. You would look down on the ones below you. So, very structured socially.

Shani Cassady b 1958

SECONDARY SCHOOL

It was very much, the three Rs and not very much else. Not at Ruddington anyway. When I went to the Central School it was much different. There was much wider interests. We did science. We did nothing but walk around the quadrangle, going to different classrooms! We were all streamed in A, B and C. So they put me straight away into B. They got me in A to do some subjects and B otherwise, but it was a much broader education than the one at Ruddington. They just knew I couldn't spell, because when I went to that school I had to write a composition straight away about my other school, about Ruddington School. I can remember she read it out. 'Guilford Girls don't do this and Guilford Girls don't do that. They don't do the other.' They did behave well and of course we all had uniforms as well. I don't think I was ever top at Guilford School. But oh, I was much happier. Probably when I'd left Ruddington, I left my troubles behind. It was Ruddington, not me!

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

Off I went in the September, to the Grammar School. It was horrifying, at first. Even though my sister, Betty was starting her third year there when I went into my first. That was a great help to me. But, I felt lost at the Grammar School for quite a long time because it was such a change from the village situation. The girls and boys who had been to the Bridgford Schools all scored points because they'd had a different education from the year dot, being brought up in suburbia. So many more activities had been put into their curriculum at that time. For a while I felt as if I was chasing, but anyway, I was pleased that I did go to the Grammar School because it gave me a much more all-round education than if I'd just stayed at the village school.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

It made a huge impact on my life because it was so big. There was an upstairs and a downstairs. I recall the first couple of days, stairs at one end, stairs at the other, and you went from chemistry downstairs and maybe

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you'd got arithmetic or your maths upstairs and you'd got to fly between the two! I'd only been used to a small village school and it was quite a big shock to go to that school and everyone dressed in uniform and everyone looking the same, and going into these bigger classrooms and all these different teachers. I think, though, I must have taken it in my stride because I don't think it worried me too much. But yes that was a huge, a big difference to me: from the cosiness and the warmth of the village school to a bigger school like that. I stayed until I was sixteen for my exam. I think it was called School Certificate then.

One or two of us went from Ruddington. But then again I did make new friends. I remember doing fairly well. At one time I thought I wanted to go on, to carry on at school. Then most of the girls I was still friendly with in the village, they hadn't gone to the Grammar School and they were all at work, and I was the only one who wasn't. I think that's what prompted me that I would leave at sixteen, and go and work in an office. I did take my School Cert. I didn't do too badly; I think I got English, maths and history, and French.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

I passed to go to the art school when I was older. The art school was in Nottingham. I enjoyed that. I had some nice friends. I still see one of the friends that I went to art school with. She started on the same day as me. We were both completely new. We didn't know anybody. We started on the same day and we're still friends now. They really tried hard at Ruddington School to get people to get to different schools. There was the grammar school, there was the technical school which came later, and there was one for the boys and one for the girls. Then, of course, the boys went to a different school by then. Then there was the art school. To get to the art school, you took the technical school exams first and then you took art on another day at the Waverley Street Art College. I did get in. I did two years there but once you move out of the village at an early age, you lose touch with a lot of people.

Janet Parker b 1939

I enjoyed my four years down at the Secondary School. Oh every minute, every minute of it. It was wonderful.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

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SECONDARY SCHOOL

I went to Rushcliffe when it was the Rushcliffe County Grammar School for Girls. It was wonderful. We had separate classrooms for separate lessons and I really felt more relaxed and yes I enjoyed it. I suppose it comes down to the head. The head, Miss Crabtree, was nice. She was there when I was first there. She'd meet you in the corridor and she'd speak to you. And, I suppose it all rubbed off on the staff, that did. And discipline was very strict. Every time a teacher came in the classroom you all stood up and then you didn't sit until the teacher told you to sit. But you weren't frightened. I learnt a lot more then because I was more relaxed.

Well, it was just a Girls Grammar School. It was where the Rushcliffe School is now, as you're looking at the building, the left, what is now the school, was the Girls Grammar School. Over the other side of the road, which is now the leisure centre and that, that was the Boys Grammar School. You had separate driveways that you walked down. You weren't allowed to walk down the other driveway; otherwise I think the heavens would have split if we'd done that! We used to shout to each other across the intervening grassy area. My education from the age of seven until I was sixteen was all female.

Julie Hooton b 1953

I hated the Grammar School to begin with. My school was small. There were only two hundred girls in it. So there was just one class per year. It had been a house that belonged to Dame Laura Knight's family, the artist, and it had been a school from about 1902 or something like that. It was extremely formal and strict.

But from an academic point of view I did enjoy the challenge of it in the first three years there. I did OK. I got eight 'O' levels. So it was all right, but I lost interest. I stopped being interested in the learning: I don't know why. I had a go. I stayed onto the lower sixth, but I think probably because it was such a formal school and there were so many rules, by the time you get to sixteen and seventeen you want fewer rules don't you? And I really felt that I'd grown beyond it at that point and I wanted something else, I think. So I left. I didn't get a mention in despatches either. At the end of the year, those people that were taking their 'A' levels, and had taken their 'A' levels and were going on to university would be talked about. 'So and so's got a place at wherever,' and so on, and even some of the fifth formers,

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'They're going on to such and such a college,' but because I left in the lower sixth that was the ultimate disgrace. I wasn't mentioned even!

Johannah Perdue b 1953

We played proper games. You had tennis and not so much hockey, but netball and all that sort of thing. So that was more enjoyable than the old style at the Junior School. I didn't like having to run around the athletics track, four times on a cold morning to get warmed up! You had to run a mile before you could do anything else, and it was hard. I did used to come in last on that one! I wasn't a fast runner. But I liked playing netball. I used to play netball for the school occasionally. Tennis. I wasn't overly fond of sports, certainly not athletics. We always used to have a sports day, used to have different houses which you used to compete against.

Our class overlooked the teachers' staffroom – this is at the Secondary School. There was a boy who was a couple of years ahead of us, having a fight with the English teacher. Obviously no other teachers were there. They were having a right royal fight. We were all stood at the window looking at this.

Helena Bradley b 1955

I wasn't ever made to feel that I was lucky that I was being sent to a grammar school or that they were paying, because both my sisters went to grammar school, Brincliffe, and it didn't seem to be an issue at all. My Dad had quite a well paid job for those days. Certainly our family on the avenue where we lived, we always seemed to have a good car every couple of years, and things like colour television before anybody else had it. We managed a couple of foreign holidays. We'd go off to Italy and that sort of thing. I think we were quite lucky really. In those days people didn't really have foreign holidays and we had a caravan which not many people had either. But it didn't seem to be a huge strain, sending me to Hollygirt; it didn't appear to me to be that way anyway. And then my brother went to Grosvenor and then to the High, so he was paid for as well. So no, I wasn't made to feel that it was a problem, certainly not. And my Mum didn't work at all, all the way through.

I went to Hollygirt. It was a great school for me. It was fantastic, so I thrived there.

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SECONDARY SCHOOL

Two buses, from Ruddington, so it was quite a trek to get there, at the age of eleven. From having walked to a village school and back every day. I think we'd only ever been into town twice, so it was really quite a shock, at first. We couldn't do homework on the bus because we were usually fighting boys on the bus.

I was up to speed, apart from French. There'd been a kindergarten attached to the school and the girls who had come up from the kindergarten into the main school had learnt French. Everything else, English and Arithmetic, were fine. I was way up there with the rest of them, if not further ahead than some of them. So we had a good grounding at the Junior School in the 'three Rs'.

It was towards St. Ann's, it was a terribly deprived area to have a girls school. And walking through a really rough area to get there. It was awful because I had to wear a boater so I was a target. A boater – a straw hat, with a flat brim. To be in that area of Nottingham, walking through it with a boater on, you can imagine, can't you? I was spat at; I had my boater thrown across the road. I used to walk down to the bus: well I used to run because I was scared. Scared that I'd be caught by some of the little urchins living in St. Ann's.

There were some things going on that you wouldn't have really wanted an eleven year old to see. People being chased in the street with a knife. It was a domestic! The back of the school was cordoned off one day because somebody had been killed. You weren't allowed to go into the playground because it overlooked this street at the back. The door had to be locked at the back of the school because a man got into the school and tried to strangle a girl in the school. Not nice. We weren't allowed to use the back door ever again after that. It had been an access because the staff parked their cars at the back and they just popped through the back door. This chap had got in and hidden in the cloakrooms downstairs. It was awful. It was hushed up, kept very quiet.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I was born in 1958, so I went when I was 7, 1965 until 1969 when the school closed. Everybody was transferred to James Peacock or went on. I went to the county secondary school. We were the last girls to go. I went to the secondary modern for 2 years and then went to Rushcliffe Comprehensive

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because at that point they had not sorted out where everybody was going. Everybody knew that eventually they would be going to either Rushcliffe or West Bridgford. It was quite daunting. We were all older, and we were leaving and going to a school that was actually mixed. Because you were at 10 or 11 it was more exciting because we would be in a mixed school.

I liked that it wasn't particularly big. The classrooms were very small. You got to know everybody very, very well. You felt a bit special because there weren't so many children. I think I felt privileged really. It was a one off small school. It was at a time when schools were becoming what they are now, big, 1970s buildings, flat roofs and lots of classrooms, whereas that wasn't. It still felt very, very individual. I felt it was exclusive because it was an all girls school. I do remember quite enjoying that because it was a taste of something different at that time.

There was a uniform. Green and grey. I have visions of it being green cardigan and grey skirt; I can't visualise the tie. I think that is another reason I quite liked it because there hadn't been a uniform before. I had started to read the books like Enid Blyton, like *Mallory Towers* and *The Twins at St. Clare's*, and all that sort of stuff. I thought it was wonderful, the atmosphere of it.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

I failed the 11 plus. I did, but I didn't, because I now know that girls had a higher threshold for a pass than the boys. There was myself, Chris Hurdiss, Wendy Fox and Brian Eggleston and we were all sent down to the secondary school in Ruddington. We didn't fit. We really stuck out like a sore thumb. It was horrendous. We spent a year there.

We went through all the normal classes. We must have excelled. I remember it being a very boring time to us and very scary because we had to watch our backs. Then one day they took the four of us to West Bridgford Grammar School and they gave us a test to do. We didn't know what was going on. Nobody explained anything to us at all. We sat the test and then the next thing our parents get a letter saying that we were going to the grammar school after a year. It was a huge relief to me because I was beginning to get very frightened about school and we were all very bored.

So after that first year, we left the secondary school, went through to the grammar school and we thought, naively, that it would all be a bed of roses,

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and it wasn't. The children that we were with at junior school with, they were already amalgamated and had their own friends and social groups that we wouldn't fit into. Also we were now going into a school dominated by West Bridgford children, with whom we'd had no contact whatsoever. We didn't know them. They hadn't done the 11 plus. All of them had gone on to the grammar school. We were put straight into the 'O' Level classes, so quite obviously we were much brighter than many of them. And so we were outsiders.

But then, after a year at the secondary modern, and a year of trying to fit in at the grammar school, it all went comprehensive. So everybody that we were at school with before now came through and had nothing to do with us because we weren't with them. We were grammar school children. They were all put into the CSE groups. We remained in 'O' Level groups. We weren't fitting in with the West Bridgford kids, we didn't fit in with the children we'd grown up with and so we stuck together. It remained like that until we left school. I just think that our year had the worst of everything that happened; it was a complete mess.

Oh God, I made a total hash of 'O' Levels, complete hash of them. These are the actual words he used, 'Too stupid to be able to do 'O' Level Maths or even CSE Maths.' I couldn't do sciences because I was too stupid to do those, so I did 'O' Levels in French, English, History, Geography, whatever. I loved English and it's something that sticks with me even today, love of the poetry from the First World War, Wilfred Owen.

Then what they did was they put me with a group of girls who had gone to the secondary modern to go and do office practice, typewriting and commercial arithmetic at CSE. I got Grade Twos in those. I just was so unhappy. I didn't fit in with them at all. They never even spoke to me. And these were girls I'd grown up with. Today, everybody says 'How come you can type?' 'Ah well, I was too stupid to do Maths.'

So I did all that. I wanted to be a journalist, desperately wanted to be. I loved words and I still do. So I did my 'O' Levels and the CSEs, and didn't do very well. I got the English 'O' Level and I got Home Economics, the rest of them were all Ds. I hadn't done very well in them at all. And I wanted to become a journalist. The Deputy Head Master, called my mother in and said 'She's not very bright. We realise she's not very bright at all and so therefore we suggest what you do is put her to work with chil-

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dren.' So my parents decided the best thing for me to do was to make me work with children. So I went on to go and do a course in residential care for children. The chap there, Mike Thornhill, went to my parents after a few months and said, 'Did you know your daughter's very bright. I really think she should be taking 'A' Levels, not doing this.' They didn't listen.

Shani Cassady b 1958

LEAVING SCHOOL

I went to Binns, for shorthand, typing, book keeping. And I had to take book keeping, handwriting, shorthand and typing. The only thing I really loved was book keeping. I wanted to be a book keeper. I hated shorthand and typing and when the twelve months ended the boys were sent for book keeping jobs and the girls weren't. I went to Burton Altons, on Castle Boulevard. It was to do with the grocery business. I didn't pass the test and then I went to Boots and my Father said I must not take less than fifteen shillings⁷ a week. When I passed the test at Boots, Miss Topps was in charge, and she said the wage would be fourteen shillings. When I got home I said to my Father I nearly turned it down because it was only fourteen shillings. 'My word it's a good thing you didn't!' Shorthand and typing it was.

I just loved book keeping because it's connected with arithmetic. When I'd been a couple of days at Boots, my Mother said, did I enjoy it and I told a fib and said, 'Oh yes.' I hated it. I wasn't a bit happy there and eventually I began to go to a Mr Brock for shorthand, speed-writing, at Boots. When I first got a 120 certificate, Miss Topps was in charge at Boots and she sent for me. She said she would move me to another department and I said I didn't want to move. She said, 'In that case I'll wash my hands of you!' And I stayed in the traffic office, all the rest of my life, more or less. I did have to go to Beeston for probably six or seven years, because the chappie, he'd been in the traffic office and he wanted me and so I had to go. I really did say to my Father, 'I'm not very happy about it.' So he says, 'Well leave!' I said 'I can't leave.' I couldn't go at my age and walk out of a job and get another one. I must have been fifty. So I stayed all my life at Boots.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

When we were fourteen we knew we'd got to leave school and it was straight to Cooper and Roe's, the factory in the village. We nearly all went there. The one I went to, at the time it was men's underwear. The long underpants and coms that they used to have, with a flap on the back! And

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undershirts. That's what we did. It was eight 'til six, every day. Just running about for the machinists, fetching. If they wanted a new bobbin of cotton, you'd go up and bring them a cotton and mash the tea. We used to mash the tea in teapots for them because there was no canteen. First thing in the morning we used to go round them all and see what milk they wanted. They'd put a ha'penny in a cup or a penny and you used to have to take them down into the entrance lobby. The milk man used to come and put the milk in, a ha'peth or a penneth. We used to take it back. Then we used to go and mash.

But I wasn't there all that time because I went to work at Players Cigarette factory when I was fifteen. Players was horrible. It was a horrible job. I hated every minute. I did. Players was stripping the leaves, the leaf off the stalk. They were so strict. You couldn't talk. You couldn't even suck a sweet. The Head over the Department, it was a Mr Blower, he'd be walking around, just walking up and down, round and round the room, in his white coat all day long, just looking. If he saw anybody chewing a sweet or anything they were out straight away for three days suspension. It was terrible, a really terrible place. After that, back to Cooper and Roe! I don't know how many times I went back to Cooper and Roe's in between!

Hilda Milburn b 1920

I got my first job in the Lace Market, a hairnet factory it was. I was supposed to be going into the factory, putting hairnets on cards, and when I went on the first morning the boss's secretary, she said, 'Oh we've been looking at your handwriting on your application form,' she said, 'and we are going to put you in the office.' So, I stayed in the office and I never did work in a factory until I went on bomb filling.

It was either going into the forces or going up there on bomb filling. There were nasty chemicals, all sorts of things, but you got used to it. When it was really, really cold in the winter, one of the nicest places to be was snuggled between two red hot bombs, getting your back warm. We made five hundred and one thousand pound bombs. The empty shells came in and were all cleaned out to avoid any sparks. Then this explosive, three lots of explosives mixed together, were all put at intervals in these huge coppers and then drawn out. They went in as this powder and came out as a hot dirty sludgy coloured liquid, and they were there waiting with

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buckets. I was on, 'The Aeronautical Inspection Department' to give it its title, because we worked for the air force then.

Lillian Slack b 1924

I worked on ball-bearings, in the ball-bearings factory, during the war, at Bunny: Ransom and Mars from Newark. They were bombed at Newark and they opened up this factory at Bunny. Right out in the country, and they used to bring a bus every day, from Newark, with some work people to Bunny. I was in the inspection there. A ball-bearing, well a roller bearing, there's an inner wheel and an outer one, and then there's the race cage in the middle that held the balls or the rollers. Well I was the inspection using a micrometer nearly all the time, measuring. If they weren't right they went back to the machinists. It wasn't bad!

First I looked after a little boy for two years because of course I had to wait until I was eighteen before I could study nursing. I enjoyed that. That's when I lived in Hucknall. His parents ran The Halifax Building Society office. So I looked after their little boy. He was two, and that was easy initially.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

My first job – I left one week and started work the next. The Co-op across the road had an advert for staff at the new laundry at Daleside Road in Nottingham. I went for an interview. Mother took me down. I daren't ask for an office job, and that's what I wanted. Luckily I was put into the packing room which was as good as the office because before I knew what had happened, I was messing about with the books and taking them to the office and bringing them back. Then my Doctor intervened and said this work was too heavy for me.

I was fortunate one of my Father's customers heard I'd got to have a lighter job, and she said she could probably get me an interview at Boots. I went to see the famous Miss Topps of Boots offices. Gosh, she frightened me to death! I used to say to my Dad, with him being a joiner, 'I'm sure she puts her hat on Dad with a spirit level!' It was dead level. She seemed to sail down the room, just like Hattie Jacques did in the *Carry-on* films. When I eventually got to know that lady she was kind. I was lucky I went to the Boots school as well. I wouldn't have left Boots if it hadn't had been for the war. So I came back to my village and got a job on the depot.

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I went to night school straight away from leaving school. That would be 1938, '39. For five shillings⁸ a term and I could go to as many classes as I wanted. So I went to needlework, handicrafts where we did leatherwork. I made a pair of gloves. Shorthand and typing. I went four times a week, loved it. The classes were in Ruddington School. For the shorthand and typing we had Mr and Mrs Vernon that were the Principals of Vernon's business college on Trent Bridge at Nottingham. I never did master shorthand. That was for the East Midlands typing exam. Unfortunately that exam didn't qualify when I went into the Civil Service, so I had to take the Civil Service exam.

Eileen Selby b 1924

It must be '41 that I left. I left two days before I was 14. So I actually left school when I was 13, very proud to say that. I went straight off to the Business College. I was a comptometer operator. It's a calculating machine. How would I describe it? It was a flattish sort of box with nine columns, of one to nine, about a foot wide and 18 inches long. I've still got one in the office. I still do my figures on that. It is electric, this one. The ones I learnt on weren't. And you could add, multiply, divide, subtract, do equations, percentages. We were taught all the currencies throughout the world, all the weights and measures. The course took six months and at the end of six months you had an exam and if you passed it, you got a Diploma. The bigger calculators, the modern ones, they're not nearly as quick as a comptometer, not nearly. But it didn't print out. No, you have a display column and you have to write your own answers down.

The funny thing is that maths wasn't a strong subject at school for me, yet I earned my living doing maths. But it's a totally different approach when you work with a calculating machine. In those days of course, when I learnt it, we were still pounds, shillings and pence and yards, feet and inches. But before you could work a calculating machine, you have to bring everything to a decimal. So you have to decimalise your shillings and pence. So if it's £14 10 6d, it would be £14.525 you see.

I worked at William Hollins first, the makers of Viyella. It was wartime and we could be called up or directed anywhere. So because I was getting to the age when I could be sent into work of national importance, I went to

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work at Bestwood Colliery, which was a heck of a long way to go. I was there for 18 months. That was an exempt employment at the Colliery. Then after that I worked at the City Engineers for three or four years in their accounts department. Then I went back to William Hollins again. They rang me up out of the blue and offered me a job. And that's where I was when I had my first child and stopped working.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

I went to the Royal Pupil Centre which was in the old university buildings on Shakespeare Street and it was called Nottingham University College at that time. That was where my education was furthered. I had teaching practice at the Ruddington girls school. That was when I was fourteen and a half. I had to wait until my eighteenth birthday before I could teach.

Joyce Moore, b 1927

I took a secretarial course at the Greggs' School which was on Burton Street in Nottingham in those days. And then worked at the General Hospital. Firstly, for the Almoner and then after six months I moved and did clinical notes for the fracture clinic surgeons for Mr Burkett, Mr Brooks. And I've still got an interest in orthopaedics.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I left school when I was 14, in 1944. There was a factory, Cooper & Roe; it was a hosiery factory. There was nowhere else to go; everybody went to work there from school, as I did. I finished school on the Friday and went to work at Cooper & Roe on the following Wednesday because it was the Easter holidays. I didn't like that after a while but I was there for many years anyway. I've still got friends from working there, all them many years ago. Then, later, I went up to one of these big houses on Loughborough Road. In fact I think when my Mum was young, she used to work there as one of the servants. I can't remember none of that but this factory was in this house. Making something to do with car engines: nozzles for car engines. You went down a big tree-lined drive to this place and all the fittings were still in this house. There were big wide staircases, huge.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

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The school found jobs that were vacant, so that a group of you could go to look round. Players, the cigarette place, for the office work and things like that. But I wanted to sew. I'd always wanted to sew, and there was vacancies for trainees at the Viyella. You were trained for a year there. Just straightforward basic machining and you were very strictly marked on your work. If they thought you weren't going to make good progress to go on to a better job then they would release you after so long. Two out of the five girls that I knew made it. Then after so many years of being there I progressed to, well, being obviously a more experienced machinist and onto sample work. I always enjoyed that because there was different designs coming along. And I did enjoy that.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

And then I went to work at Joseph Burton's as a Comptometer Operator. A Comptometer was a type of adding machine. Yes it was an adding machine. Multiplies, subtracts, divides. It did everything. It was mainly the forerunner of the smaller calculators now. But this was a huge thing, and it was electric. When you were adding up you only used the figures from one to five. If you wanted eight you pressed four twice, because it was quicker than going up to reach the eight key, and you had tens of thousand, a thousand, a hundred, tens. Then you had one key for your ten shilling⁹ key. Then you had the shilling keys and then the pence keys. You got used to it. It's rather like a touch typist. I remember the day I got a certificate that I was competent and had passed to be a Comptometer Operator.

After I'd worked at Joseph Burton's for about a year, I moved jobs then and went to Viyella, and I remained in Viyella until I married. But in those days most of us kept our jobs until we got married and then you either gave up or you carried on afterwards. I carried on working because I'd been married for eleven years before I had my daughter. And then I gave up, with no intention of ever going back to work.

I worked in a sales office and that was with figures. I ended up being a Credit Controller for a company and that was a job I enjoyed immensely. That again was working with figures, computers.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

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And then when you left school finally, you just got a handshake and it was an assembly for the school leavers and just a handshake and goodbye and all the best and on your way, so to speak.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I left school at the very end of the year when I was fourteen and started work on my fifteenth birthday. Which was 1953. Children do at that age want to get away. Especially in those days, you wanted to get out earning some money to buy things that you'd never been able to have. Being restricted, yet again, due to the war. I took evening classes, in Ruddington itself. I didn't have to go far for it. I went up to the prefab where we had all these very old typewriters, as you can imagine that they were in those days. You know the Remingtons. And I enjoyed learning. Yes it was, for lessons! Evening class lessons. They opened it up at night. Just as you thought you'd escaped.

I started at William Hollins, which made Viyella and Claridella, clothing material, and worked in the office there, on the cardex as a filing clerk, until I progressed and went on to be a typist and then a shorthand typist. So eventually I finished up as a secretary. So I progressed. I went on and on and on, worked for the county council, worked for the government and finished up at the British Geological Survey in Keyworth for twenty-one years, as a secretary there.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I left Nottingham High School for Girls and went to University. I worked in teaching for ten years while I completed my family, and then went back to my old school. I spent twenty two years teaching biology at Nottingham High School for Girls and now I am the Chief Examiner for the OCR Human Biology syllabus.

Ann Wilson b 1944

My parents hadn't got a lot of money because my Father was a hosiery worker and my Mother was a cutter at Cooper and Roe's. Every man who wasn't a miner either worked at Cooper and Roe's or the lace factory in the village. When my Mum was going to work, there used to be a 54 bus that went to Clifton and there used to be perhaps twenty, thirty, women

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waiting to catch the bus to go back to work in the afternoon. So yes, the majority of people who lived in this village worked at the factory. When I finished school in sixty-two, some of the girls I worked with, went and worked in factories. But my Mother said, 'No way are you going to work in a factory, no way.'

I was very fortunate how I got my job really. My old boss, Ken Stockham, who was the county librarian in those days when I started, was playing golf with George Allan, who was the Deputy Head down at the school. Ken said to George Allan, 'My junior's left the office. I've got to get a new junior.' Apparently George Allan said, 'I've got just the girl for you!' So Ken said, 'Well, tell her I'll write to her and I'll call her in for an interview.' I went for an interview and I got the job. So I was very fortunate, very fortunate, I was.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

I went to college. I did a private secretary's course, at Arnold and Carlton College. I presume it must have come out from the careers talk at school. They had careers officers that used to look at what your strengths and weaknesses were. I'd never done shorthand or typing in my life, and somehow it was decided that I might be a good office worker. I don't know how it came about. I thoroughly enjoyed it. There was myself and another girl. I was top of the shorthand and typing course. I got one of the highest speeds at shorthand that they'd achieved there. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Well, I did Pitman's. I did the private secretary's course and they said that for the top secretaries they all did Pitman; they won't do Gregg or T-line. So we were taught the Pitman method. Then towards the end of that they brought out speed writing, which was, I suppose, like text messaging now, using certain key letters to represent a word, a contracted form of each word. Which to me, seems a bit of a waste of time really. I suppose, having done the Pitman, which you can attain huge speeds at, to me speed writing didn't really seem that speedy at all.

Julie Hooton b 1953

I did my exams. I went to Boots for three years. I didn't start nursing for three years, until three years later, after I'd left school. So I don't know that I particularly took the exams for that, but it certainly helped.

Helena Bradley b 1955

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LEAVING SCHOOL

I went through a series of jobs, getting more and more bitter. Eventually my husband said to me – I was married then with three children – ‘Look, either shut up or do something about it.’ So I resigned from my job, went over to South Notts College, enrolled on an access course, sailed through that, got a place at university, came out with a First Class Honours and got 86% – the highest mark – in the Maths module. I had to take GCSE Maths as well before I came to university and I got a B and it was my greatest achievement.

I came out with a First. And I wrote at the beginning of my dissertation, ‘For those of you who believed I couldn’t do it, you were wrong.’ I was picked up by the university before graduating and I’m now a Senior Lecturer and Course Leader and I write and I publish and I’m a magistrate and have been for a number of years. There would be no point in saying to that Deputy Head at West Bridgford, ‘This is what you condemned me to and it took me 20-odd years to get where I wanted to be.’ He’s retired. I’ve always felt very bitter it. They stereotyped us or labelled us and it was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Shani Cassady b 1958

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BREAK TIME

Ticky was one of the games we played in the yard. And tug of wars. Of course there was very little traffic and so before school, after school, we used to go to James the fruit shop, to beg an orange rope. We had it made into a skipping rope from one side of the road right to the Co-op and we were skipping and jumping. There was battledores and shuttlecocks at one time, and then a wooden top, marbles: all simple games. And snobs. I've still got my snobs!

Eileen Selby b 1924

We used to play badminton, only a very cheap version of that, with a huge feather shuttlecock. But then the next day, whips and tops started and people whipped tops to school and in the school playground and everywhere they could. Then suddenly, almost on the word of command, you were old hat if you turned up with your whip and top on the day that skipping began. I don't know how everybody knew that next day was the day to take skipping ropes. We used to pinch Mother's clothesline. Many mothers in Ruddington lost their clotheslines because we used to have a great big one where everybody skipped. That went on until, well, almost the summer holidays, skipping.

Then playing ball, playing sevens against the wall: a very intricate ball game, with a tennis ball against a wall. First of all you threw it to the wall and caught it and then you had to bounce it. You bounced it in the front, in the rear, straight round your back, and then under your legs like that. There were seven different movements in this. Then we all dispersed for the summer holidays. Then when we came back, there didn't seem to be anything much apart from marbles. It went very dead then until the next Shrove Tuesday.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

They had railings round the school when we were there; it was a bit like being in a zoo really! We used to have the third of a pint bottles of milk. But one or two parents obviously thought that that was too cold for the

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children in the winter so they would arrive on the pavement outside and push a warming drink through the slats in the railing to attract children. One or two wanted to cosset their children I suppose! The milk was invariably frozen in winter because the winters during that time were much colder than we have them now. And many is the time that all the milk would have perhaps a three inch top of ice on it, having pushed the cardboard top of the milk off. Because of course it was cardboard in those days; fortunately it had a hole in the middle. Because we would save the tops off the milk bottle, take them home, put two of them together, back to back and make pompoms with wool. We played our own games during the break. There are various buttresses if you look at the school and they used to be wonderful for playing hide and seek!

Helena Giblenn b 1929

I don't think we had homework. We had a long school day, from 9 'til 4. I think it was an hour and a half lunch, which was a long time: 12 o'clock until half past 1. Then you had your two playtimes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

Just the normal playground games, you know, ring-a-roses. There was all kinds of things that five years olds enjoyed playing. Marbles more than snobs. We always seemed to collect marbles and blood alleys as we used to call them, you know, different colours. We used to swap at playtime. The boys played, joined in as well. Boys seemed more interested in snobs than the marbles. It was mostly skipping and things like that. But there was never room in the playground. You were always bumping, probably your head on the wall. Someone would give you a push. There never seemed room to play.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

You played cat's cradle together: you wound string in a particular way around your fingers and the friend that you played with would get the middle pieces of string and twist them back over your fingers. You can play it on your own by putting the string round your fingers in a certain way and twisting the string over with your other hand. And that always seems to be quite therapeutic, I don't know why.

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BREAK TIME

Lots of ball games we played, and dob. Yes, doobby on ground and doobby off ground. You have to have a person who was on. You would all run around and the person who was on would run after you and try and dob you. If you were on higher ground than they were then you couldn't be caught, but if you were still on the same ground then it was dob and then you were on. And so the game continued. It was a very child-like game but we all enjoyed it.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

In the St. Peter's School, before we went onto the pre-fab side, we did a lot of skipping. A child at each end, and you skipped in the middle to all the different rhymes. But as we went onto the older school when we were 11 plus, we played, I don't think they call it snobs now, but that's what I used to call it. The five stones, we used to sit around playing that an awful lot. There were the whipping tops at school but I don't think we were allowed those too much. They could jump too high and break a window, although the windows were very high up. A precautionary measure I suppose. Skipping was one of the main activities and of course it was very healthy. Not that we knew that at the time. In winter time when the school playground was always iced over we couldn't play in the playground.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

We used to have a wonderful time in the playground. We used to do head stands against the wall. We used to play ball against the wall with two tennis balls then perfect our skill with three tennis balls until we got to the point where we were very accomplished jugglers. We used to skip a lot. Two people would turn the big skipping rope, and we'd take it in turns to rush into the middle and skip, and we tried to do it without stopping the rope. We played tag.

Ann Wilson b 1944

Hula hoops was putting a hoop round your waist and you had to rotate your hips to try and keep it going for as long as possible. The really clever people could get two hoops going at the same time. I had a wooden hoop, also a red plastic one which I was very pleased about. We used to rotate

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that on your hips. When you were still small enough you could actually use them to almost skip with as well.

And of course, whip and top. You used to decorate the top of the wooden top with milk bottle tops. We used to crayon them to start with, in coloured patterns, with wax crayons, so that when they were spinning it was a bit like a kaleidoscope. It made a pattern. I think it was probably one Christmas, when they used to have patterned milk bottle tops for Christmas with holly leaves on and that. We used to flatten the silver tops out and put a drawing pin through the centre, and put those on the top of the tops as well. Some of the tops were mushroom shaped and then others were conical, like a pine cone almost. I could never make those work. I was all right with the mushroom shaped one, but I couldn't get the other, pine coned ones, to work properly at all. That's still pretty dangerous really, if you didn't know how. Well, you used to set them up. You used to wind the lace round. You had a stick with a lace on, and wind it round, and then flick it to get it to spin. I suppose the impetus of the lace unwinding, used to start the top spinning, but then as it used to get slowing down you used to lash it with the lace, and then it could go anywhere! You used to lash this top to keep it spinning, but then of course you had to run down the road after it, because wherever it landed, it would start spinning again! The road was tarmac so it was bumpy, and of course it could fly off in any direction. Some of them didn't spin too well if they got caught in a rut or whatever. The pavements were better because that was a finer surface. You could get them spinning better on there. They would spin for longer on there before they hit an obstacle and stopped. We used to compete to see who could keep their top going the longest before it fell over or hit something.

Julie Hooton b 1953

It was usually running games. And tigers: running and catching us, and chasing after them. And hopscotch. I can remember chalking hopscotch on the school playground and playing that as well. We did skipping later on, so we used to take a skipping rope. You'd have two people holding a long skipping rope and then you'd come in and you'd chant various rhymes as well. French skipping was with a piece of elastic. Three yards of elastic tied in a knot. There were two people, you stretched it round their ankles and then you'd have to jump on this. That was probably when I was ten or

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eleven. You need three people minimum to do it, because you need two people standing with the elastic stretched round their legs and then the other person doing the actual skipping. But it's not really skipping. It's just jumping in between the elastic which is stretched around like that, and then jumping on and then over and sort of round. And then the elastic's moved further and further up the legs of the two people on either end. So it gets harder and harder because you have to jump higher, until you were out, and then when you were out it's somebody else's go! It was only girls that did that.

If it was really awful, raining or snowing, we went inside. We must have been outside in bad weather as well because we did seem to go out an awful lot. Sometimes, I can remember at playtimes in the mornings, my Mother had come in shopping, to do the shopping at the Co-op opposite. Quite often she'd come and see me and perhaps poke a bar of chocolate through the railings. It was horrible though because I wanted to go home with her. So it used to disrupt me actually.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

You had your skipping rope and you had a whip and top. And you'd put a drawing pin in the top and then put chalk round the outside because it made a spiral. We used to have a whip and top, and we were fortunate because we had a playground where you could really get it going up and down. It was a concrete playground, not like it's got grass there now. The tops themselves were varied. One was like a mushroom, which I preferred. Then you used to get one with a flat top which was a parsnip shape, carrot shape. You had to wrap a leather strap which was attached to a wooden pole around the top, and then you had to kneel down and put your knee on the top and gosh, I couldn't do it now to save my life! You had to hold the top with your knee on top of it, and then somehow pull the string away from the top and it would spin and you had to keep it going. You had to keep hitting it with the leather whip.

And then there was the French skipping with the elastic. You went through crazes. The rope was the elastic that you used to have in the top of your knickers, that elastic. You'd knot it around and you'd have two girls – they'd stand inside the elastic band. A large elastic band really, so they'd be apart from each other. So it was round their ankles and you used to have to

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jump onto the elastic and make patterns with it with your feet and this, that and the other. Then you'd have it at calf length, and then at knee length and you still had to jump high enough to take the elastic down to the ground. So that you had to land with your feet on the elastic. Then if you was very, very good at jumping you'd take it up to thigh length. The girls would stand opposite each other, with the elastic round and then a third person would come along and you'd have to jump into the gap between the elastic and then they'd have to try and jump with their feet landing on top of the elastic so that they'd take it down. And then jump back inside and then you could probably jump back outside. And then as you jumped across you had to take the nearest bit of elastic to you and take it across with you so that the elastic crossed-over and you were back in-between.

And then we used to have one where The Farmer's in his Den. We used to do that. You used to have a ring of children. You used to go round and round and round, singing, 'The Farmer's in his Den, the Farmer's in his Den.' Then go, 'The Farmer wants a sheep, The Farmer wants a sheep.' Then there'd be somebody stuck in the middle who was going to choose who he was going to have for his sheep. And they'd stand in the middle of the circle and then you'd go round again and it was 'The Farmer wants a wife, The Farmer wants a wife.' Then the Farmer would have to choose a wife and then they'd go in the middle. You could make it up with to how many you wanted, so many on the inside and so many on the outside, and it finished.

Another one we did, we used to play it against the wall. There'd be somebody that would be leaning against the wall like that, so you'd got an arch and there'd be a whole string of children. There was something you had to chant at the same time and the end of the line would go through, under his arm, so that then you would be reversed round, facing the opposite way. They were all holding hands and then the end of the line would go through between you and your partner, so that by the time you'd finished the whole row would be reverse way on to the way they'd originally been standing. They were the playtime games that we used to do at the Junior School.

There was always one or two excluded. Children can be so cruel can't they? You don't remember as you grow up. Unless you're the one that's left out.

Helena Bradley b 1955

SCHOOL DINNERS

THE COOK'S TALE

I was born in Nottingham. I went to Ruddington in 1936 when I was married and it was a little tiny village. It was lovely, got fields at the bottom of the garden. My husband used to work on the railway. His father was an engine driver and they lived in Ruddington. I had a baby in 1939. I didn't get a job until she went to school. I was managing on a soldier's pay which wasn't very good. My husband was called up and he went to Burma. He came back in 1945, but he was never the same man somehow. His best friend was killed at the side of him. And he said, 'No more children am I bringing into this world.' So we only had the one.

The canteen wasn't open during the war. As soon as it was opened, I went there and my next door neighbour, she was the Cook Supervisor; she was a very good cook. Then they opened another kitchen in Ruddington for the new school and she was transferred to that one. We opened this kitchen on the Green and I started at the very bottom, with the vegetables and one thing and another. Then I gradually got up and up and up, until I was the Cook Supervisor. I enjoyed cooking for the children. I enjoyed being Supervisor anyway, telling them what to do.

When I cooked, it was just one meal. One good substantial meal. And if they didn't like it, well they had to lump it. They were brought up to it you see. They weren't brought up to these fancy things, like they are these days. There was rationing, but of course with being a school, they got more. There was roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and vegetables and potatoes. They had plenty of food. There was always plenty of potatoes and bread to fill up on. I cooked just plain food, just plain food. So they had a good substantial meal. And you should see the teachers: they enjoyed it anyway.

We used to have to make our own recipes and send them into County Hall to see whether they were passed. Then they'd send them to me and often I used to change them. The County Hall didn't know. I used to change them to what the children liked.

GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

I was still a cook when my husband died in 1972. And when he died, I was 60 you see so I gave it up. So I was cooking from 1945 to 1972. Which is 27 years.

Annie Dring b 1912

WHAT CHILDREN THOUGHT ABOUT SCHOOL DINNERS

When my Grandma used to go to the Co-op, which was opposite the school, she used to bring me a bun for playtime. I thought that was a treat. There were no school dinners then. The majority of the girls would go home at lunchtime because we had a long break. The girls who lived far away would just have sandwiches. There must have been somewhere for them to sit in school. I doubt if they'd be supervised. The majority of teachers would have to stay in school. Miss Spray lodged with the Goddards in Vicarage Lane so she would be able to go home for lunch quite easily.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

There was one girl in particular, lived right at the top of Flawforth Lane, on a farm. She used to come quite regularly to school but on wet days and snowy days, well naturally, the poor lass had to stay at home. They hadn't the proper shoes and it was too far or the road was too bad. They had to bring their own food with them of course because you couldn't buy anything. They would walk from the Grange. There was a farmhouse there where a farm worker lived with his family. They would walk from the Grange into the village. There were farms up Asher Lane; several families lived there. In fact I still see one girl now. She's in her eighties. They brought their own food. And it always looked to me to be very thick hunks of bread, probably cheese, not necessarily any meat in it. It might even just be dripping which we all loved. We all loved dripping. You never saw them with cake.

This was a sad time in Ruddington – everywhere else as well. One little incident I couldn't understand at first. I went home and I said to my Mum, 'When I was eating my apple, a girl asked if she could have my coke.' Well Coke that we drink now wasn't around then, and she meant the core of the apple. She wanted it after I'd finished with it. I was lucky: I had an apple or an orange every day. So I always left plenty on the coke so one of the others could have it.

Eileen Selby b 1924

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SCHOOL DINNERS

I only had to cross the road and up the middle gitty by the Co-op to get back home. Whilst others had quite a walk to the far end of the village – or from the farms. Some of us could walk home for dinner. Perhaps we had an hour and a half, but anyway as children little things go fast. We'd go home and have our lunch and come back again.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

We used the Church House, as it was called then. You were out of the way of all the school. It was lessons up there and also for eating at lunchtime. We used to set the trestle tables up then and the meals used to come in canteens, metal canteens, from a base where they were cooked, before it was built on the green. I think they came from a main canteen in West Bridgford, delivered daily. So, before twelve o'clock, we had to finish a little bit earlier to set the trestle tables up ready for the meal, the lunch time meal.

Margaret Gardner b 1938

I loved school dinners as well because we had very little food at home and my Mother scraped the money together for us to eat in school. Not for the full week but for quite a lot of it. We used to have wonderful food and as much as we wanted. It was in a canteen on The Green. On the way back we used to call at the crisp factory on The Green. It had a little opening, and for a ha'penny they would sell us a bag of crisp bits. They used to make crisps that you couldn't buy in the shops like very cheesy ones or cheese and onion ones, and it was a real treat. My Mother used to give me the money and we used to take them back to school and eat them. In post war Britain food wasn't very exciting. My Mother neither had the money nor the skill to cook, and eating dinners in school was amazing. There was variety and quantity and I had a huge appetite. So I loved them. How they did it on the funds they had and with the shortages that existed post war, I don't know, but they managed it. They were my salvation.

Ann Wilson b 1944

If we had school dinners we had to go to the prefab on the green, if you stayed school dinners. But of course it was probably a bit too expensive for my parents. Probably by today's standards it wasn't expensive at all. But Mum had to have, I think she had a couple of jobs, part-time jobs, to

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supplement the income, because my Dad was a printer and he didn't earn very much at all. So she worked very, very hard. But, I think we had school dinners once or twice, and I thought it was very exciting, staying for school dinners. It was like eating out and in those days you didn't eat out as a family. Well I can remember the food wasn't as good as at home. But it was passable. Oh I'm sure. Of course it was not long after the war when people were used to rationing and making the best of poor ingredients. I mean things still weren't lavish in those days. It was very basic. But as long as you had a hot meal inside you, you weren't too bothered. Anyway you just wanted basic nourishment, didn't you?

Julie Hooton b 1953

Some of the children did stay for school lunches but they were almost stigmatised to have to have school lunch. As if you were poor and you had to be fed there. Whether it was because their parents worked, I don't know. Children who stayed – there was definitely a feeling that they were poor, the ones that had to have school lunches. There wasn't anything said about it. We weren't told that they were poor. It's just that you got that feeling about it. I think it was on a Monday morning that they collected the lunch money for the whole week. There were some who couldn't afford it and they must have had some sort of state help to give them free lunches.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

I remember the school meals very well. Fabulous! Fabulous! Favourite: Manchester tart, pastry covered in jam, covered in custard, covered in coconut, wonderful stuff! And cornflake tart as well! Everything smelt of boiled cabbage and boiled swede. The only thing I never ate was cheese and I still don't to this day, but they were always trying to make you eat this awful sloppy cheese pie. Then you got to an age where it wasn't cool to stay for school dinners, so we would come home.

Shani Cassady b 1958

TRUANCY

I didn't like it, school. In fact I did used to play truant. I used to go up on the park. One day I'd gone up there and I was in the pavilion and my class was coming up the park. I thought, 'What do I do now?' But as they got level with the pavilion, I went round the back of it and I got away. I can't ever remember how I got away with it. But not every week you know, just now and again. It was probably when I was late for school and daren't go in you see. It might have been that. Because you heard this bell and you'd got to be in. I'd think, 'It's too late, I can't go now, I'd be in trouble,' and disappear. I got away with it. I must have done because I can't remember any repercussions about it. I'd have got into real trouble at home as well as school. I wrote my own notes as to why I wasn't there.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I didn't truant, I wasn't allowed to. I think with it being a village, your parents got to know about it before you got home if you had bunked off. You'd know when they telephoned. So I can't remember anybody in the class, sitting in the class thinking 'Oh they've bunked off again for the day,' because nobody did do it regularly. Not in my immediate class. There might have been lower or upper. You might have got the odd person now and again at Secondary School. But not to the tendency that, you know, days or weeks on end.

Helena Bradley b 1955

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HOME LIFE

We never had a radio. I don't think we had a newspaper did we? Only on a Sunday, the Sunday Pictorial. And there was one called *The People*. Mum had one or two nice pictures because she had them framed. They were free in the paper and I remember two of them in our bedroom and I used to hate one of them. I was scared of it because it was the old Queen Mary. Queen Mary she was in this picture. And I was scared of that because it was one of those pictures where the eyes seemed to follow you around the room. It scared me because I felt that she was watching everything that I did. Oh I'd only be about eight or nine. I hated that old lady watching me.

Lillian Slack b 1924

Mother was working all hours in the shop, from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night. She loved it, but it wasn't good for me. You know, it was dreadful, really long hours. And I would be asleep in the chair, waiting for her to come and put me to bed. I was alone. All the neighbours and family if they were going anywhere, they took me! Because my Mother was working on a Saturday, I went on all the outings, with the Church, with the Baptists, with the Methodists! I went on every outing. And my eldest brother played cricket a lot, around. So he used to take me and other people there used to look after me. My Father had to go with the milk twice a day, every day, unless my eldest brother did it for him, perhaps on a Sunday. But he had to be home to go for the four o'clock, to deliver milk at four, for people's tea and in the morning.

One family had six and seven children and I used to play with the youngest, Margaret. She was my age, and I spent a lot of time with her. In the summer we had a tree house and I used to go there a lot. I can remember her mother, a huge lady she was, she used to sit with her window open. They lived in a cottage and it always smoked, the chimney, sit with the window open and she used to be sitting there cutting bread, big chunks of bread. She used to put on the stove a tin of tomatoes and we used to dip the bread in the tomatoes and I used to think that was lovely! We never had anything like that at home! She used to call for me across the field with the

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field between us. She used to call for me and I used to be really afraid of her!

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

My Father had a full-time job and he was also a singer. Many nights and weekends he was away singing. He was in big demand for oratorios, and I was brought up on Handel's *Messiah*. There was always a church or a chapel or somebody wanting him to sing the solo in the *Messiah*, *Elijah*, all those sort of things. Bass baritone. And of course, well, he was Mephistopheles in *Faust*. He had a tenor partner and they sang in a lot of Working Men's Clubs. They used to go down a bomb singing classical music, duets from the operas. They used to go down wonderfully well. And they always had to sing encores.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My Dad was a miner at Clifton Colliery. I think the pit baths started just before they finished. My Dad died in 1961. It was still there then. Over Wilford suspension bridge into Queens Drive and that's where the pit was, down The Meadows. He used to cycle at one time and then he was on the bus to Wilford corner because he used to say he was the only man that went over the Trent and under it in one night. I did ask him once if they mined under here and he said no, they went round and to Cotgrave, that way, digging the coal but not under here. Well he'd been down the pit from leaving school at 12 or 14, apart from going in the First World War. And then he just came out to go to France and then back, and back down the pit. He always seemed to be at work. He was on nights for many years. He used to go to work and then he'd come home, go to bed and you'd have somebody knocking at the door around lunchtime, 'Will you get your Dad up, see if he can come to work this afternoon.' They used to come and fetch him in.

You didn't have central heating then but we were lucky because we could have a fire up and down, so we were all right. They were much colder winters then, weren't they, than what we have now. Even with unlimited coal, there'd be ice on the inside of the windows, in the kitchen and in the bedrooms where there was no fireplace.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

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My Father was born in 1909 and by the age of 8 he was working. He went to school, though. They were a poor family, a big family. My Grandfather was in the Forces and my Grandma had to bring a big family up on her own. My Father used to go with his older brother and sit with a horse and dray down at the pits to collect coal. Then they were loading up and they'd go back to school. He used to be a bit late quite often and he got the cane for it. So Grandma went and explained to them so when they were giving everybody the cane they used to say, 'Go on then Tom,' and just bypass him with the cane.

He was a coalman. He worked for his brother. His brother owned the company and my Father worked for him and he did all his booking and everything. And delivering as well. Purely because he liked the open air. It was that or farm work and his brother needed him and he just didn't like being indoors. He'd had a good job indoors but he never liked it. And he got a lot more money but Mum said better for him to be happy in the open air. That's why they ran the little shop because it all helped. My Father wanted to join the Forces. But because he had a heavy job and he had flat feet, they made him exempt and so he joined the Dad's Army, the Home Guard and he did fire watching. We didn't see much of him because he was always out fire-watching but he always made sure that he came and laughed and joked with me in the morning. He always came in. No matter how late it was, he'd always pop his head round the door and if I was awake and he could see I couldn't sleep, he used to recite little silly poems to me.

Janet Parker b 1939

My Mother was very unusual. She was dressing us for the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. So she dressed us both in lisle stockings going to school. In lisle stockings from the age of five, going to school, attached to suspenders, attached to our fleecy lined liberty bodices. And I was actually allergic to wool. I now know what was causing it, but then it never occurred to anybody. That and the wool pixy hood bowed under my chin, on cold mornings because we had a long way to go to school.

Ann Wilson b 1944

GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

My Mother worked. My Grandmother lived with us because her husband, my Grandfather, had been killed on the railway. He came out of the First World War, went to work on the railway and he was killed. He was a linesman, and he was killed in the fog in November 1925. My Mother lived with my Grandmother, because my Mother wasn't married then. And then when my Mum and my Dad got married they got the house across the road and my Gran lived with them. She worked at home because she was a lace mender. She used to mend errors in the lace making, and she could do that at home. So, we you know, my Grandmother was always there for me .

Because there was no car she caught the bus up the Lace Market. Well, caught the bus into Broad Marsh and then walked up the Lace Market with huge packages of lace, and then brought ones that needed mending home to repair.

I can remember when I was a small child she didn't wear glasses. But obviously as she got older she did because she didn't die until she was eighty-two. When I knew her as a child she didn't wear glasses. She had wonderful eyesight because she used the finest needles obviously and the finest thread.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

Mum and Dad struggled to feed us, and clothe us and keep us warm and I never expected any more than I had. Children nowadays can have computers and hand-held games and Lord knows what, but there wasn't the things to want in those days because they hadn't been invented. I always had this feeling that we should be grateful for what we've got and not want more and not expect more. So I knew that it was a struggle for Mum and Dad to buy me the uniform. Then of course when my brother went to school he didn't have the same uniform. If it had been another girl they could have at least passed the uniform down. So you didn't desire other things because if you wanted something more expensive, or whatever, it was going to take vital food off the table, or coal out of the fireplace or something like that.

I know I had some hand-me downs from various people. Just to make ends meet, really. But it never did any harm: I think you grow up with a better sense of value and you appreciate things more if you've known what

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it's like to not have very much, and to be aware of how grateful you should be to have a full tummy and clothes on your back.

Julie Hooton b 1953

My Grandmother also took us swimming every week. She was brilliant. She took us on a Friday night, Friday afternoon, and we would go after school, swimming every week from quite a young age. Very good of her, traipsing over on the bus and taking us to swim. You see they couldn't swim. My Mother couldn't swim and my Grandmother couldn't.

My Grandfather was an opera singer, a professional opera singer during the war years. That's where he made his money, singing. He was a carpenter as well but he made more money singing. He used to record a Saturday show for the BBC. It was a light entertainment programme. He had a singing partner, so they sang operatic duets together, professionally. His name was Richard Stephenson. He died before I was born.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

WASH DAY

For our laundry at home we used to have to go right up the top of our garden where we lived, into the wash-house. All the people on the row shared it. You had your day and you lit the fire for the copper first thing in the morning. The fire was in a brick built thing in the corner with a big copper bowl in it. Lit that to get that water hot and ready for washing. Then Mum would ponch the clothes in the dolly-tub. We had wooden dolly pegs first. You put them in the hot water. And you counted how many turns you'd do. It was a wooden thing and it had three legs on it. It had two handles here and you worked it, twisted it round. My Dad used to say, a hundred times, you were a human washing machine.

When that was done, the white things went into the copper to be boiled, and then, when they came out of there, they went into rinsing water. We had the big bath, galvanised iron bath for the rinsing water. They went into there, through the mangle to get as much water out as you could. You squeezed them through two wooden rollers to get the water out. You stood and turned the handle. From there they went into water which had a bluebag – that's a bag with a little block of Reckitt's Blue dye. You just swished that in the water to make it faintly blue to bring up the white.

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Then the starched ones went into the starch and then it went through the mangle again to do all this. It took my Mum the whole day.

It was the whole day on the Monday, washing, just doing the washing. And our eldest sister, the eldest one, she always used to have to have the Monday off to help Mum do the washing because there was a lot of us you see. She always used to have Monday off didn't she? She loved it! She loved wash days! Well, she'd have a day off school! Well, I don't know how. I don't know whether she had a cold every week or what! But we did tell Mum that if you took a day off school, what we used to call the School Board Man would come knocking at the door to know why you were off school, what was your excuse? You were frightened of the School Board Man. You daren't be off school in case he came knocking at the door!

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

Washing day? That used to take all day; it was a very hard job. And in fact when I first married, I hadn't got a washing machine. For a start you've got to boil all your water and hand put it into whatever you're washing in. And the rinsing. I mean you couldn't rinse the clothes as well as you do today. We had running water and a hot water supply from the back boiler in the fireplace. But the water in the hot water supply was never hot enough to wash the whites. You'd got to have boiling water for that. It was boiled up in a copper for the washing. Then you put all the sheets and pillowcases in that. This time of the year, drying it was absolutely murder. I've got the lot now, a tumble dryer and everything.

There were no radiators to hang washing over to dry. You had a clothes-horse and that used to go round the fire when everybody went to bed. It used to dry in the remains of the heat of the fire. One winter it was so cold that when we got up in the morning the towels were frozen on the clothes-horse. That was suffering; we used to have these lovely big frosty Prince of Wales feathers all in frost on the inside of the windows. My Father used to get up very early and make the fire and I used to get out of bed quickly, run to the fire and get dressed in front of the fire. We were tough weren't we?

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My Mum had to do all the washing for four people. Definitely Mondays, which none of the mums liked really. They didn't like washdays. And if it

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wasn't fine out, it was all round the fire, on the clotheshorse. I didn't help with the washing.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

My Mother had four children. That was a full-time job: washing, ironing, cleaning, and cooking. Washing was with dolly tub and ponch, with the hand mangles. What's a dolly tub! It's a round object made of corrugated, like corrugated steel, wouldn't it be. You filled it up with hot water. A big drum about eighteen inches across, and about two foot six high. You put your clothes in and you had this ponch. And the ponch was like a half of a yard brush, with a handle, it had a flat piece across the top so you could hold it with both hands. At the bottom it had, what I can only describe as a small four-legged stool, fastened to the bottom, and you moved it up and down around the clothing and you ponched the dirt out. Then the water would have been changed, to some clear water.

My Mother used to do the mangle. I remember Mother getting the clothes into the back yard and turning them on a mangle which was two rollers built into a frame. You put your clothes through and if it was a sheet you helped Mum catch it at the back so it didn't fall on the yard. And then they were put into the basket and taken and hung on the line. I recall that you had wonderful drying days. I'm sure the weather must have been bad at times, but I can only recall having wonderful, balmy, sunny days. You always put your washing out in the frost because it lightens them.

Always on a Monday. She liked to get the ironing out of the way. Quite often on a Monday evening, that was my job. I would help with the ironing. Electric iron, I recall. I wasn't allowed to do the ironing until a certain age. Being the eldest girl, I was expected to help. It was taken for granted that I would. I was invited on a date one Monday evening and it was the person I was courting steadily and I said, 'No I can't. I've got to do the ironing.' I mentioned this to Mum that while I was ironing and she said, 'Well you don't have to do it.' But I'd always accepted that I was expected to do it.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

When I first got married in fifty-five, I recall having an electric washing machine but it was hand-agitated. You did it from side to side. The electricity was only heating the water up with the clothes; you did the rest you see.

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We didn't have central heating then either, and I can remember quite often going to bed and there being ice on the inside of the windows. And getting into enormous trouble one night as well, because my Mother had done the wash and it must have been in the winter as well, where you couldn't get anything dry, and she'd got all the towels dry and stacked them by the side of the bath, and we were in the bath. We used to have, there'd probably two or three of us in there actually. We weren't very old. And somebody, but not me, pulled the towels into the bath. So we were none of us allowed to stop up and watch *Doctor Kildare* which was just awful! I was specially aggrieved because I hadn't done it!

Johannah Perdue b 1953

They had one of those washing tubs that had a wringer on it. It was actually an electric one which was quite good in those days. The wringer on the top – you had to feed the clothes into two rubber rollers attached to it, that were, I think, operated separately, electrically. You would switch them on and then feed the clothes into these ringers. There was no hand turning of it. It was real top yes, high tech stuff. I remember my Gran showing me how to do it and feeding, and of course it was so dangerous because if you got your fingers caught in it or your hair in between these two rollers! They were electrically operated with no safety. Nothing like that, no. And we would be playing around it! Then the water would have to go somewhere that was being wrung out of the clothes and there was a bucket on the other side to catch it. The machine was pulled out and used. You slipped a hose over the tap in the sink to fill it. But it was electrically operated which was quite something.

Then, of course, drying. Well either it was on a line or over clothes horses in front of the fire. Everything was coal fired and the schools were all coal fired. I actually fell onto the fire because I caught the clothes horse. Thank god it was just embers! I had a thick coat on, overcoat, and I leant against the clothes horse, thinking it was a solid wall. I actually sat back onto the embers. But because I had my coat it stopped me being burnt.

Washing took a day with all our lot. Maybe we didn't wash as frequently then. Things were worn and put back. You didn't keep changing. You had to put on clothes more than once. Nowadays they tend to just wear it once and throw it in the washing.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

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FOOD

I can remember one girl whose parents used to go to the pub quite frequently. She was the only girl, and there were three boys as well. I went home one day and I said to my Mum, 'Can I have some bread and vinegar?' 'Bread and vinegar?' she said, 'You can't!' 'Oh,' I said, 'so-and-so has bread and vinegar for her dinner. Why can't I have it? I should like some.' 'No you aren't having it.' And this poor girl, that was all that she would be able to find in the house. Her Mum would be stuck in the pub. I tried it and I liked it! But my Mum wouldn't let me have it!

Eileen Selby b 1924

We had milk at home like that. The milkman brought his churn with the measures on the side. He used to come twice a day, put it in the jug; we'd have it in a jug ready for him. Mr Savage. Straight from the farm so it wasn't pasteurised. And it was warm, perfect for bacteria.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

Mother cooked us three meals a day, always a cooked breakfast, dinner at dinner time, and then there was tea at 5 o'clock and there used to be supper at 9 o'clock. I think it would be something like cheese and pickles at suppertime. How people used to sleep after having cheese and pickles, I shall never know. To see you through the night, until breakfast, yes and then bacon and egg the next morning.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My Grandmother had a shop funnily enough. I think that's why Dad had the shop. During the depression, she used to boil hams and soak peas for the people that was going hungry and she used to dole it out to them. The school milk came in bottles but I remember my Mother's delivery of milk was always in the churn.

Janet Parker b 1939

And spaghetti: you only had spaghetti in a tin, Heinz spaghetti. You didn't cook spaghetti. That was weirdos that cooked spaghetti and rice and that. Unless it was people from that country. If it was English people, they were

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considered to be a bit freakish. There was macaroni cheese, but that wasn't really spaghetti. That was just lumps of goo in a cheese sauce!

Julie Hooton b 1953

We had some cine films that we've transferred to video, of the forties and fifties.¹⁰ And there is one of my sister and her friend on the avenue both dressed in their school uniform. And Christmases you see as well. The way we celebrated Christmas, I know. We thought, I'm sure we thought, we were so sophisticated. Christmas lunch was bread and butter and Babycham' in the very wide glasses. The height of sophistication! Champagne perry isn't it? Marketed to look like real champagne. It was disgusting!

Johannah Perdue b 1953

HOUSING

I wasn't in a room on my own; there was three of us in a bed. And we didn't have electric blankets or anything like that. If it was very, very cold, Dad used to take the oven shelf out, lay it onto some flannel, a piece like an old blanket, wrap it up well and go and put that in the bed. And we used to have Dad's overcoat. He worked on the railway and he wore a thick black overcoat and we used to have that on the bed. But he used to come and snatch it off us first thing in the morning, to go to work! Now a boy and a girl can't even share a bedroom. They've got to have their own rooms now, more or less, haven't they? And look at us. We were all squashed up, three in a bed. I slept with my two brothers. I was the youngest girl. Mind you, if one got measles or anything we all got it!

Lillian Slack b 1924

And we only had that one light in the living room. We didn't have a light in the kitchen even. We used to have a set of candles. We had gas lights, with gas mantels. A gas mantel? Well you've got the gas pipe coming through the ceiling from the gas supply and the mantel is like a kind of little gauze bag about an inch and a half deep. You tied it on and held a match to it so it burnt. Then when you turned on the gas and lit it, it would

¹⁰ There is a copy in the museum.

glow bright, bright white, not like a gas flame. But it was very delicate. You had to be so careful with that because they broke very easily. You were always buying new gas mantels. Why it was called a mantel, I don't know.

We used to fight who was going to switch the electric light on when we first got electricity! It would be when we moved into Charles Street because there was another bedroom. It was an attic for the boys, the two boys to sleep in up there. And a front room! A front parlour! We hadn't had a parlour before. It wasn't as big as our kitchen, I don't think. It just held a small table and a small settee I think, and it was a front room. On high days and holidays we had our tea in there. And Sundays.

We also had a fire oven with the oven in the old-fashioned fireplace with the bonnet going up. And another one the other side with a hinged lid that heated the water. That was the boiler and so that was handy for bath night. Then you had a bath, in the tin bath, on the hearth, in front of the fire. You took it in turns to pop in, so you had to hope that you were the cleanest otherwise all the rest got dirty! And just top it up with another ladle full of hot water just to warm it up again.

Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924

You sometimes had chimney fires. You'd have a lovely big blazing fire and all at once you might smell it or sometimes there'd be a fall of soot down the chimney. I can remember one time. It was just before Christmas. The chimneystack was on fire and all the flames and burning soot went into them, not them trees, but a row that was there before them and all the trees got lit up. It was near Christmas, so I presume there wouldn't have been any leaves, so it didn't burn. The fire engine came and they made a good job, cleaned all this mess up they did and then sprayed up the chimney. At the time my Dad was in bed because he was working nights and when he got up, he said, 'Where's the fire?' because we'd got no fire in the grate – never seen the grate without a fire and he hadn't heard none of this. There was a fire grate upstairs that went with this because we used to have a fire upstairs as well. The brushes and things would have gone up that chimney but no, he didn't hear it.

We used to have it swept but at that time we'd had the vacuum sweeps. I think I had it once just to save the cleaning because the soot – when they clean that chimney, everything got covered in soot. They had the vac sweep

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and it was only just about a fortnight after that when it got on fire. So it obviously weren't done properly. You could go so far up it when you were cleaning the ashes out and sweeping the ledges but if you got an extra big blaze, it would set fire to the soot.

We had the chimney swept regularly and they used to put a big cloth on the mantelpiece and all round that chimney breast, the bricks all round the bottom but you still got soot on everything. Of course we didn't have a vacuum cleaner then, and you wouldn't have used it anyway because it would have smelt of soot every time you got it out. I were never into cleaning, so it were my sister that did that.

You didn't have fitted carpets then, you had peg rugs. That was it. You'd take them all outside and you'd take all your ornaments down. You always had lino. You was pretty posh there with your lino and a peg rug. We did have stair carpets but that was a bit posh actually because most people did have linoleum on the stairs. And all the bedrooms were linoleum.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

CHILDHOOD SICKNESS

Mother was looking after the children and my sister Kath she had scarlet fever. When they came to fetch Kath in the ambulance Mother made absolutely certain that I wasn't around, in case they said I could also have scarlet fever through being together. She was in Basford Hospital for six weeks and Mother and Dad could only see her through a glass frame, never speak to her.

Mrs Theaker lost her only daughter in the 1919 flu epidemic, and she was my friend. She would be my age, Connie. She lived on the same row of houses and we really were good friends. We always played together, being the same age group. Her sister-in-law, she died from flu and she left her two children, Marjorie and Laurie. So Mrs Theaker adopted the girl and her sister adopted the boy. I had the flu or I had something wrong because I remember being in bed and cutting up glossy magazines into little tiny pieces. I had a tin full, and it was used for confetti for someone who was married next door to us. That would be 1918 time when I'd just started school.

And there was diphtheria in the village. I remember Albert Harrison dying. But he was a diabetic. All the funny things to be playing with: he lived at the sweet shop at the bottom of the road, and he always wanted to

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be a parson and he, when we were playing, he always wanted to take a funeral. 'Ashes to ashes.' I think he must have been about twelve when he died. Then there was another boy, Bernard Hickling, who lived on the same road and he died when he was quite young. I don't really know what was wrong with the Hickling boy, but Albert Harrison was a diabetic. Well you see insulin wasn't – whether it was coming in, but there was nothing like that for him.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

My Mother was quite miserable when I was young because she'd lost a son, who was fourteen. He was a diabetic and he died, but the Doctors never told her and that's why she went into business for him. He was fourteen and he needed to earn his living and that's why she bought this shop. My Father became a dairyman, to help her with the shop. He died when I was three.

I didn't go to school long before I was away and then I, bong, bong, bong, for a whole year, hardly attended school, because I had one infection after another. Well, all the usual, measles, chicken pox and things like that. They took me into hospital with scarlet fever and I didn't have it. I had an allergy that caused the rash and the house had to be fumigated and my brothers had to keep away. While I was in the hospital I caught another infection, which was chicken pox. I really was ill with that, awful scars, still. At the end of the year, my Mother went to the school and asked them if I could do the year again because I'd not done it. 'Oh no,' they said 'she's got to go up.' So I missed a lot.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

There was a school board man named Mr Bradley. A big man. He came to our house once. I had scarlet fever when I was eleven, and unfortunately I was left with a valvular heart after that, and I was off school quite a bit then. He came one day to the house and of course it was only a check up to make sure that I was ill. He never came again.

Eileen Selby b 1924

The dentist used to come to the school. That was scary, definitely. I can remember the little room that it was in at the end of the corridor. You never went to a dentist other than at school. So he must have pulled teeth.

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That'd be in the middle of the war: '39/'40. They had a nit nurse looking in your head for head lice. You'd always got them if you was from the poorer community but the posh girls they didn't have them, no. They treated them with Durbac soap, a steel comb, a fine-tooth comb, a little thing like that. It didn't smell very nice.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I was disabled. I'd had polio when I was a baby, and I'd got bifida in my back, so I had a few problems. That stopped me being able to do the sports because I got a lot of infections. While I was in Harlow Wood hospital, near Mansfield and off school, I missed a whole term. By the time I came out it was winter and because of my plaster casts I couldn't go to school because it was too far for me to walk and people didn't have transport in those days. There was none of this being taken to school. You walked there. And it didn't matter what the weather, especially 1947. That was a nightmare. The very bad winter. The snow was piled right up. I couldn't see over the piles of snow and there was little cut outs for you to cross the road. I do remember that winter when we had to have our mittens and gloves on and everything and long stockings instead of little socks. There was coal rationing right from more or less the beginning of the War.

I was only 10, and so they decided that I would be trying for art school anyway. Our teacher was teaching German. I had missed such a lot that she said she thought it was better that I didn't do the German and I always wanted to learn languages. So I was given extra art lessons in one of the other classes. I used to go and sit there with Mrs Greenwood, because she could draw and paint and she decided that she'd give me extra training. I think they did pick up on individual needs, with it being a village school and knowing people more.

Janet Parker b 1939

I also hated drinking the milk. It was warm and thick, and dangerous because it wasn't pasteurised, but I didn't know that then! We had our third of a pint of milk each day, which was un-pasteurised and there was an outbreak of tuberculosis and about six children in the top class got it. In those days very little fuss was made about it. There weren't vaccinations. They were just whisked off and treated. And I don't remember whether

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they came back or not, but we were aware of the isolation hospital at Newstead.

I was almost blind in my left eye and I hadn't said anything. We had school nurse visits every year, and she did an eye test and checked us over for head lice. That was a regular occurrence. But they didn't pick up that I was almost blind in my left eye until I was ten, when I said I was. The school check up was not as thorough as it should have been. We were also very small for our age, my sister and I. Outside the normal range and that was not commented on either.

It was post war, ration books until 1953, shortage of food, shortage of money, under nourished children and disease was rife. I've already mentioned tuberculosis. Measles, chicken pox, all the childhood infectious diseases, scarlet fever, diphtheria, polio. These were all known to people in the class and I myself had known children who were very, very poorly with it.

Ann Wilson b 1944

INDOOR PASTIMES

When we were kids my Dad used to do a lot of fretwork. He'd be sawing and carving, things on the wall. He used to do quite a lot, for a hobby in the evenings, as well as mending our shoes, because we never went to the cobblers.

Lillian Slack b 1924

Toys were mainly home-made. I had a parrot with a weighted tail that used to swing. My Mum's friend bought me that for Christmas one year. But they'd had it made. They'd had one made for me and one made for their own children and everything. And I had a doll but it wasn't a new one. It was quite a while after the War that I had a new doll. They were always second-hand toys because you couldn't get the others. You couldn't buy toys from shops during the war but my Father, with him meeting a lot of people, managed to get me a dolls' house. It was just a normal wooden one with just the partitions that somebody had given him. And an old lady had crocheted two little dollies to go in the little beds. Somebody had made little beds.

Janet Parker b 1939

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My Dad was a good hand-writer and my Mum was as well. At home, there was no television. Dad used to say, 'Come on let's do some writing.' Because there was nothing to do, other than play games and read books. I think it was about 1954, 55, we had a television. When it was the Queen's coronation¹¹ we went up to a friend of my Mother's, up on the High Street. They had a television. And it rained terribly, all day. We used to play dominoes, monopoly and cards, and snap and things like that. Ovaltine was a drink¹², and it used to be a radio programme called *The Ovaltinees*¹³. They used to have a song 'We are the Ovaltinees, happy girls and boys', and you used to sing along with it. And *The Archers* of course. You listened to *The Archers*.

When the adverts came on the television, Bournvita¹⁴ had this mug with a smiley face on. A plastic type mug, that had a little blue hat, with a knob on, that you could put on over your drink while you went to go to bed, so it would keep warm. And we used to listen on a Saturday morning to the children's music programme, Uncle Mac. Prior to that, before we started school, we used to listen to, 'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.' Whatever her name was used to tell you a story at quarter to two, in the afternoon.¹⁵ You used to sit with your Mum, or my Gran in my case, listening to all this.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

My generation was one of the last ones to have an innocent childhood. Things became more prosperous once you get into the mid sixties. People started to acquire motor cars and telephones and there's more things to have in the home. We made all our own entertainment, and half the time we made our own toys as well. I had one teddy bear and one doll and that was it. My daughter could stock a shop with the toys that she's acquired over her childhood. Yet I've still got my teddy bear upstairs and he's forty-nine years old now. That was the only one I ever had, that bear. I didn't really need anything else because that was my toy. That was my

11 1953

12 Ovaltine: a brand of milk flavouring made with sugar, cocoa, malt extract and whey.

13 On Radio Luxembourg, the only commercial radio station at that time.

14 Bournvita: a brand of milk flavouring made with sugar, cocoa, malt extract and whey.

15 The programme was *Listen with Mother*.

teddy bear. I had one doll as well and you appreciated and valued things, whereas not long after my childhood there was more consumer items to have, and more things that children wanted and expected.

My brother used to play with his toys, his motor cars and that sort of thing. We had jigsaws and various boxed games that we used to play because there wasn't the children's television programmes, not so many as there are now. So we used to play boxed games together. And used to cut pictures out of magazines and make collages and that sort of thing. It was just a matter of entertaining yourself really because your parents hadn't got time to play with you because they were too busy keeping the day to day running of the house.

I don't think people socialised like they do now. Probably the British reserve, I don't know. But children didn't seem to need to be with each other. I was quite happy at home, with my colouring books, and that sort of thing. I didn't have a record player until I was fourteen or fifteen, I think. We used to listen to the radio a lot at home. I liked that. Fortunately, the girl who was my very best friend lived just round the corner from me, so it was a fairly easy walk to get there, to her. But I suppose when you're younger you need to have a parent to take you to someone's house, if it's a long way away – a long way in a sense of a child walking on their own. Parents didn't seem to have the time then. My Mum and Dad were always brilliant parents, but my Mum was confined to the house, cooking and washing and cleaning and that sort of thing.

Julie Hooton b 1953

Doctor Kildare was one of the high points of the week. I think it was on about seven o'clock on a Friday night or something like that, and *Emergency Ward Ten* preceded it. That was the English version. *Doctor Kildare* was the American. There was not an awful lot on television. I can remember Saturdays in particular before I was nine. It was one of those tiny screens in a big cabinet. Ten inches diagonally, probably, or nine. There wouldn't be any daytime television apart from on a Saturday when you had *Grandstand* in the afternoon. That was followed then by *The Lone Ranger* at teatime. So in the winter it would be tinned salmon sandwiches and *The Lone Ranger*.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

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What did we do out of school then? Not a lot really, I suppose. You used to seem to go to bed a lot earlier then, when you were really young. 'Come-on it's school tomorrow.' Even up to being fifteen I had to be in bed by ten o'clock. Certainly before then it was no later than nine o'clock. We didn't have televisions in our rooms. There was television downstairs, but you didn't have televisions in your rooms then. They were too big. There weren't any portable televisions.

Helena Bradley b 1955

When it came to appliances our family were at the fore-front. We were the first to have things like the colour television on the street. I can remember that day. It was fantastic. My street cred went up no end!

Deborah Winsom b 1955

VILLAGE LIFE

We used to have a penny bank, and Miss Sutton on Easthorpe Street used to take it. I think she was an invalid. But anyway we used to take a penny and the bankbook was a piece of cardboard just doubled in two. Outside it said Yorkshire Bank, and we used to take a penny, every Monday. Because we went to Skegness for our holiday we drew that out when we went to Skegness. It was the spending money! Quite a lot of the children used to go and queue up to put something in this bank. Miss Kempson, who was the Headmistress of the Junior school, was connected with the Suttons so it could be that she would have introduced it.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

As we sat in school we would hear the cows and the sheep being driven, on the road, from Nottingham Cattle Market on a Monday. And they would be taken into the Co-op opposite. That was Ruddington Branch Number One. My Mum's number was 808. The animals they were slaughtered in Ruddington, and we could hear them squealing, sometimes when you were in school. But you got used to it. Now it would fill a lot of people with horror but we just took it as a matter of fact. It was part of the routine. The butchery department was lovely and on a Tuesday, the smells from there, we could smell them in school at times. And you could get dripping and scratchings and black puddings. Brawn was delicious; I wish I could have some now! The bread was very good from there as well.

Just before the war the factories in the village, they used to be on short time. The factory Cooper and Roe's has only recently closed. In the village we had several factories and this proved to be quite a good earner for the women of the village. Some of the men worked on the machines but it was mostly the women. They were in hosiery, in lace and these were the factories down Station Road. Cooper and Roe's, Bakers. We used to say Cooper and Roe's top-shop and bottom-shop. The memory I have is of women going along arm-in-arm. If any of you have seen the film with Gracie Fields long ago in *Sing as We Go*, where she's going to the mill with all her friends and she's marching along. Well this was the impression I got. You

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would see them come home at dinner-time as I was around, coming from school or probably going back to school, and then you would see them coming home again. Then there would be the short times when they hadn't any work and they would be queuing up at the Exchange, Labour Exchange. It used to be in a hut, up Easthorpe Street, at one point. Then it went into the shop, the old sweet-shop on Kirk Lane. There would be queues of women, waiting to sign-on. This is how it seemed to exist until the war.

There would be war widows. from the First World War. We had quite a few war widows went out to work, and they were the only wage-earner in that house. Then came the depression. We weren't well-off, but my Dad worked hard and Mother at the side of him and they were thrifty as well. We were always well fed and clothed. The queues at the Labour Exchange, they would be right down Kirk Lane. It was at Beesthorpes they were queuing. Three days on and three days off, that was your memories. You came from school and the pavement would be full of girls, arm in arm, walking to and from the factory. They would have white lint on their hair from the factory. These were people that had been at school with you just the year before. I used to say to Mother, 'I am not going in that factory.'

Eileen Selby b 1924

My Mother and Father were in business. My Mother ran the shop and my Father was the Dairyman. He used to deliver milk twice a day in the village. In the thirties it was so difficult. People put their jug for the milk: my Father put milk in. He knew they had children and there were families. They were Christian and he said he couldn't possibly leave that family without milk, though they had no money.

Irene Tscherepacho b 1924

You always knew outside when the chimney were on fire because you could smell it. That was quite common. You'd walk along and say, 'Hello, their chimney's on fire!' All this black smoke coming out for a start and then when the flames come, that was serious. You'd knock on the door and you'd ask them, 'Did you know your chimney's on fire?' But most of the time, they'd just try to put the fire out themselves and that would burn out. It saves you having your chimney swept then you see because it had all

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burnt away anyway. They let them get on fire on purpose, so they wouldn't have to pay a chimney sweep. They used to tell you to put salt on the fire to put out the chimney fire.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I can't recall a lot of the mums working, no. I know my Mother never did. And I always got the feeling that women didn't work. Mums didn't work. No, no, my Mum didn't work and I can't recall the neighbours working either, no, no.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

My Father was about 30 when I was born and my Mum was 29, so my parents were a bit older than most. We were struggling like all other families, especially with the War on, so they did what they could. They sold lots of little things but in those days, people didn't sell other people's goods. I mean we'd got the library. My Mother sold underwear and all sorts of things like that, cottons and ribbons and everything you can think of in that line. The nearest thing then was the butchers and a shop that sold groceries down the bottom end as well. That again is a house now. Everybody respected each other's sales. They didn't sell any of anybody else's goods, so there was a nice atmosphere then. Things changed after the War. Bigger shops started selling everybody else's goods which made things a bit difficult.

Janet Parker b 1939

I think that a village is a small community. It is small. It's compact. That's what you like when you're small and compact. You feel safe and secure. There wasn't anywhere particularly you could get lost. Everybody knew everybody else. You knew all the other teachers. That was an age when everything felt safe anyway.

Kathy Alvey b 1958

MUSIC

I was one of the Beatles Generation. I can't really remember it affecting the village. I can just remember singing The Beatles at school, in the breaks. Nothing to do with music. They wouldn't have allowed that, no. The

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music at The Youth Club and so on? That would be Beatles as well, and Motown of course. We had the record players that you can stack twelve singles on and they dropped one down at a time and played it, and then dropped the next one down. In fact I've still got quite a few of my old singles. The one friend that I used to go out with, I'd go to her house and we'd listen to records but actually we listened to classical concertos more than anything else at her house.

I did ballet. Oh it was wonderful! I loved it. I did it until I was ten, which involved getting a bus from school, on my own. With the headmistress's daughter, Stella Greenwood, we both used to go. And we used to have to catch two buses and this is at the age of nine or ten. We started off in the village doing ballet there but then we moved into town, and we used to walk up to the Albert Hall, on Derby Road. And have something to eat in the canteen and then have our ballet lesson and then her father used to pick us up usually.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

I think discos were just coming into their own. I went to a few. I didn't particularly like them. I don't think we got as drunk as what they do today. A lot went to the – oh what did it used to be called at Bridgford? – *The Dancing Slipper*, which I think was where *The West End* is now on Central Avenue. And there was *Isabella's* in town which I went to. There was one called *Tiffany's*. I think that was near the Clock Tower. But they've gone. I was about eighteen. The ones I went to, once I'd started working, were more work colleagues than friends from the village. When we started working, we seemed to go our own separate ways.

Helena Bradley

We had our own record player. It played seventy-eights.¹⁶ I remember them being very brittle. They used to break very easily and scratch very easily. We had a big orange player. It was massive, with a speaker set into the front of it.

I was a bit of a disco queen when I was about eighteen. That generation, that period was incredible. I was musically aware of popular music and that

¹⁶ A gramophone record that played at 78 revolutions per minute. A record twelve inches in diameter might play for 3½ minutes.

VILLAGE LIFE

sort of thing, when I was about eight or nine. When things were just starting. I remember Dad playing a lot of Elvis Presley and having seventy-eights and dancing around the room to Elvis Presley music. That was at home. But popular music, then the Beatles, and Cliff Richard – I used to think he was wonderful. It's so embarrassing to think about it now. Yes, but I do remember getting his autograph, Cliff Richard's autograph. Oh God! I was absolutely thrilled. I don't know where it's gone to. I have probably hidden it! That was just coming through, probably in the early mid-sixties. Probably I was about eight to ten. A bit young really for the sixties I was. I wasn't a sixties child, I was more of a seventies child. That time was really exciting, musically, for everybody.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

The church used to put on little shows every so often and concerts and used to have square dances at Chapel, and barn dances and things like that, to raise money. You don't do your own thing. It's a group dance. You go round the room as a group. A circle or a square, or whatever. A barn dance is different to a square dance isn't it? A barn dance, you learn the steps of how to do the dances, probably elsewhere, and then you're told what dance you're going to do. A square dance you're actually told, and you learn the dance on the night by the caller. There used to be a guy that used to call the steps. He used to come regularly. When we were at school, *The Sound of Music* and *Oliver* shows were very popular and had just come out. So we used to sing a lot of those songs from the musicals at school. And everybody wanted to sing those. I think you probably sang the songs to death really. So no, we didn't sing the same as we did at home.

Helena Bradley b 1955

We didn't know of drugs. It just didn't happen with us. Drink, that was the big one. One of my friends did become an alcoholic and if you look back, she was the one that was always drunk, even as a 15/16 year old. We didn't drink to excess. In fact, you would probably put it on. It must have been just the cheap cider. Oh and barley wine. I tasted it once but it was disgusting. Most of them used to drink lager. That was the only vice, drink, but we didn't really do much.

Shani Cassady b 1958

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

SOCIETIES

Our teacher, Miss Spray, was Guide Lieutenant in the village. Miss Crawford-Smith was the Captain. I loved Guides. I've still got my Patrol Book, where everybody had paid a penny, ticked off, all the names.

The majority of the girls were going to the chapels and I – because my parents, both lots of parents, were Wesleyans and I hated the Wesleyans – I hated going. I used to have to call for my Father's brother and his wife because they were superintendents at the Wesleyan. I used to go into the Wesleyan Chapel with Grandma and Grandad. They paid a shilling¹⁷ a year for a pew and it was built up, and we were locked in. I think that had something to do with it. I mean to a child it's a bit frightening, surely. I used to have to call for them and go to Sunday school with them. My Mother said I was always being a nuisance. I never wanted to go. I cried and screamed, 'I'm not going.' Eventually she said if she had trouble with my sister Kath in the same way then we could leave and go to church. Kath didn't like it so we left and went to Sunday school at the church and that was lovely.

When the people went to the chapels – and there were three, Wesleyan, Primitive and Baptist – for the anniversary they had two new dresses, a winter one and a summer one, and wore the winter ones for the morning service and the summer ones for the afternoon. Those two dresses had to last for two years. Eventually the winter one with the long sleeves, the second year the elbows were out. They were mended and darned. You see if the father had been killed during the First World War the mum would have to try and do some work to look after the children. And sometimes at teatimes they would come out with a thick piece of bread. Nothing on it. Well probably margarine or a little bit of jam. But then they must have had meals because they were quite healthy.

Probably they had little gardens, but some of the cottages had only got a small yard and a little bit of garden, probably, not big enough to grow vegetables. I think there used to be a little bit of a charity thing. Once a week quite a number of the families could have a loaf of bread from Horspools, free. I know someone, and she said, 'I wasn't too proud to accept it. It was needed.'

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

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You used to have to go to Sunday School on a regular basis and you had the Sunday School anniversaries. Three times a day on a Sunday that was. And then you had outings, sort of a seaside day if you belonged to the Methodist Chapel. Sunday School? I suppose we'd sooner have not gone but you had to. I suppose it's because they all used to do it. I mean, when you had the anniversaries, the Chapel was full to overflowing. They'd be standing up even in the Chapel. It was on morning, afternoon and night but it was always full. And it was a small village then. You knew everybody then. One street further up there, there was three farms down that road. Now there's nothing, only houses.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I know as a youngster I went to Church, St. Peter's Church. Both my brothers sang in the choir, and I remember our Sunday School teacher there. My Mother was Church of England. My Father always leant towards Methodist. When I first got married, my husband had always attended Methodist so I went to the Methodist Church with him. I've always gone to the Methodist Church ever since. I don't recall going to the GFS¹⁸, after about the age of twelve. But I remember still going to Sunday School, going to Church and going to the Guides. I would have been ten or eleven then. We met in Woodley Street. I remember going camping. I really liked the Guides. I did still keep on going to the Guides even after going to Grammar School.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

I used to like Sunday School, but if they were going round and you'd got to read a verse each, I used to find myself really panicky. I loved the atmosphere of it all. I liked being with the other children but I suppose that's being an only child.

Janet Parker b 1939

Music was a great part of my life. Always, always, always, because we started Sunday school when we were three, four. So music then was the songs that we were taught in Sunday school. We used to have a lady come once a month and teach us little songs and then our Sunday school teachers

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GIRLS' SCHOOLDAYS IN RUDDINGTON REMEMBERED

always used to sing us little songs in the afternoons when we used to go to Sunday school. And then of course hymns and Sunday school anniversaries.

I used to do ballroom dancing. Up at the village hall, in the evening, I used to have lessons. There used to be two women used to come and do ballroom dancing lessons and Latin American lessons at the village hall, and I went there, on a Monday evening. I'd be nine, ten. I did all the medals and everything up to gold. We used to have to go to the YMCA for the exams and my Mum used to take me to the YMCA on a Saturday morning. We used to have to go for four weeks there before the exam just to get us used to the shape of the room I suppose.

We used to hold Sunday school anniversaries once a year. The Baptists had one. The Methodists used to have one. The Methodists' was the first Sunday in May and ours was second Sunday in May and there was always great rivalry who was going to get the most collection. I can see my Dad now, coming round the back and putting his finger up, and saying, "Yes we've done it!" You know, we've got more money! We were learning the songs that we were going to sing on the anniversary for weeks and weeks, prior to the actual anniversary.

In the Guides I was in the Bluebirds so I had a badge of a bluebird that you used to put near the shoulder, and that was your group. You worked. You used to learn how to do knots, make reef knots and all the knots that sailors use. You used to have an exam and you won a badge which you used to sew on your sleeve. Your first badge that you got was your sewing badge, so you were able to sew your badges on your sleeve. I went and did my cooking test, with Mrs Baldwin who lived down in the cottages down here. Her husband was one of the teachers at the school and I was so embarrassed because what I had to do was make custard. I thought, 'I'm going to be so embarrassed if he's in.' Well fortunately he came in just as I'd finished making this custard. And he always ragged me about it when he saw me. He'd say, 'Aye, you know you can make custard!' You just worked so hard to get as many badges on your sleeve as you could.

On Remembrance Day we always paraded from the field down there through the village, with the flags and everything, to the war memorial, and then to the Parish Church. There was always a service at the war memorial and still is. My Father was in the army and my Grandfather was

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in the army and my Gran's brothers were in the army as well. My Grandfather used to send these embroidered cards from France to my Gran. They're absolutely gorgeous cards that he used to send. I've had them all framed because they're so beautiful.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

Every year, they used to call the anniversary service. All the churches used to get together. It must have been in the summer time because you had to have your anniversary dress made. There was a dress-maker in the village who most people went to, to have the dresses made. Every year I used to go with my Mum into Nottingham and we had to choose the material that my anniversary dress was going to be made out of. You always had a white mohair, angora, bolero. A little cardigan with short sleeves, white gloves as well. It itched like mad when you were wearing it! Everyone was dressed the same so you all put up with it. The dresses all had to have smocking across the front and ties at the back, tied in a big bow. My favourite anniversary dress was pale blue with white spots all over it. It was like chiffon over a pale blue, satiny. It wouldn't have been satin but some nylon material. And these white spots and a white bolero and everything, and oh it was wonderful! You had smocking across the front as well. Oh we had liberty bodices for a short time when I was eight or nine, so we're looking at '61, '62. For the anniversary dresses. Just before the Beatles. Just before I grew up I think. It was basically like a joint church service, with congregation and all the children and everything.

I never went to Brownies or Guides. It was probably the need to have the uniform. The expense of having the uniform. As I say, we were never very well off. Mum and Dad never ran a car. They've always lived in council houses. I'm not aware of any of my close friends belonging to the Brownies, so I suppose it never really came up. If my friends had been Brownies, I probably would have wanted to have joined them as well.

The only thing I was involved in, I went to the Girls Friendly Society. We used to call it The GFS and we had a little enamel badge. I've no idea where mine's gone. We used to go once a week. It was a Monday evening, at what is now The Starlight Rooms up the side of the *White Horse Inn*. It's where the Framework Knitting Museum is and it used to be in that room there. I think it was linked to the church, I'm not sure which. It was not a religious gathering, though. I used to go to the Baptist Church on the hill.

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I didn't feel it was specifically linked to a particular church. It was just girls. And we used to go along and play games and, do a bit of sewing and that sort of thing. I suppose it's almost like a junior WI, really, a group of females getting together. I would have been ten, eleven, at the most twelve I would think. I suppose once we left the village to go away to be schooled, that's probably when it broke off because of course you had homework from the Grammar School. There wasn't really the time in the evenings to do these things. I can remember going in the dark, on my own.

We used to play games and just, I suppose, what they say now, generally hang out. It was a way of socialising with the friends you were at school with. You didn't tend to go to friends' houses so much, not like the children do now. It was more you only met up with people when you were at school. If you lived near anyone you used to play together, but if you were with friendly with someone who lived at the other end of the village you didn't really get to see them out of school.

Julie Hooton b 1953

I went to Guides so I was still involved in the village and my best friend who was at school anyway, at Brincliffe lived in Ruddington. I've known her since junior school and she was the year above me actually. Yes, that friendship carried on and then I started going to the Youth Club in the village as well, when I was fifteen, fourteen. So I was still very involved with the village even though I was going to school in town and it involved two bus journeys. In those days you all went to different schools. There were four or five different schools to go to and then you came back with your new experiences, back to the village again. I think it was good for you and good for the community.

Johannah Perdue b 1953

I think the reason I wasn't allowed to join the Girls Friendly Society, was for religious reasons because the Girls Friendly Society was Church of England and I was Baptist you see. So I think my Mother didn't let me go to that, although to me other girls that seemed to go to it, it didn't really seem to matter what religion they were in. But to her, it was 'No,' because it was a Church of England. The Baptists used to have a youth club for varying ages. That was on a Friday night.

Helena Bradley b 1955

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I was in the Brownies, and of course that was linked to the Church because it would be involved in parades and things like that. I loved it, but I didn't want to be a Guide! I don't know why. All I wanted was to get my Brownie wings and then you flew up to Guides apparently, and I had this vision of flying to Guides! And that didn't happen. I was so disappointed, but I thought you literally flew! So I got my wings and then left because it wasn't what I thought it was going to be. I think Brownies to me was just, it was good fun. We had a fantastic Brown Owl. It was good, excellent.

Deborah Winsom b 1955

There were two youth clubs in Ruddington. There was one at what used to be the infant school, and there was one at the Baptist chapel. I was brought up a Baptist, so I went there. Besides which, the one on the Green was frequented by the Elms Park kids. We used to go there every week, on a Thursday night. We didn't go into town, didn't venture that far, and didn't go to Clifton because there was nothing to do. The pub that you could always get a drink in if you were underage was *The Red Heart* on Eastwood Street.

Shani Cassady b 1958

OUTDOOR PASTIMES

The only games we ever played were netball in Gunn's. Now, we always called it Tucker Gunn's Field. When we had a break, I used to run all the way home, down the Manor Park, to have a drink of home-made ginger beer and go back again and be exhausted by that time. I don't think I'd have been able to play netball after that!

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

We used to go for long walks. It seemed safe those days. You played out until dusk in the summer. I don't think mothers were particularly worried. They knew that we were safe. We played with dolls, dolls' prams. I remember having a doll that actually had teeth in it! And that was dressed. My Mother used to knit a lot and she'd dressed the doll for me.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

There used to be the sports days and they used to have those on the fields at Elms Park. I think the boys school as well took part in that. We used to

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have all the different races and one thing and another because more or less everybody got together. Your parents, they'd make food and everybody joined in.

Janet Parker b 1939

We used to ride our bikes. I had a second hand bike, pink it was. It was like a metallic pink. Oh I thought it was wonderful, this! I knew it was second hand, but to me it was just the most wonderful thing I'd ever seen. And we used to have scooters. My Dad built us a trolley; it was a plank of wood with four pram wheels on. We used to go hurtling down the road on it, which you couldn't do now because of the traffic! We used to play together in big gangs. Not gangs like they are now, but we used to re-enact things on the television. We used to watch *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray*. What else was there? Oh *Thunderbirds*. And boys and girls all mixed together for the stories that we were re-enacting. It was great at that age because boys and girls would play together with no stigma or anything and the girls got accepted the same as the boys. It was only when you get older that boys think it's sissy to play with girls. Yes we used to play together, lots of times.

Julie Hooton b 1953

We all took part in sports, and they had a Sports Fair every year because it's part of Ruddington. There was a fete every year. Part of the fete would be the schools taking part in races there. We all used to troop up there with our plimsolls. We'd have to go through heats, but it was things like egg and spoon and sack racing. I only ever qualified if the girl didn't turn up that I was reserved for. I had to come prepared and I was dreading it. Of course she dropped out and I had to do it because she was ill. There was cine footage of me running, in a cardigan. Everybody else was in their sports kit and I'd got this cardigan flapping. I don't know why, perhaps I'd not taken it off. I'd start off the race straight and then veer and cross other people's lanes, and it was a mess!

Deborah Winsom b 1955

We used to finish at four o'clock go home, probably mess about a bit on the way. Go home, dump your stuff, find out when our tea would be and then clear off out. We didn't have homework until the secondary school. So

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living on Packman Drive, we would normally gravitate towards the park, which was near us. My best friend, Wendy, she didn't really come out much. She lived with elderly parents. So I had another set of friends for playing out. Mum didn't approve of them because, well, one of them came from a single parent family. That was terrible in those days. I don't think she thought they were of my social class though I came from quite a poor background, living in a council house. But she was still a snob, bless her.

Sometimes we used to go to other parks, never Elms Park because that was frightening: scary kids up there. They were considered the roughest of the children. There was always this big thing about Clifton kids – Clifton people were supposed to be much rougher than Ruddington Village people. Also they weren't fourth or fifth generation people from Ruddington. I was third generation Ruddington and still not considered to be fully Ruddington, so they were real outsiders. The Catholic children didn't associate with us and we didn't associate with them because they went to a different school. We sometimes used to go to the park near Musters Road. That's where the posh kids went and they had better equipment than us. Or play around the disused railway tracks or down by the brook, or go up the spinney or the bridle gate. We used to clear off and it was reasonably safe for us to do that. We never got into any scrapes or anything. We would stay out for as long as we could and then go home for our tea. Maybe go out again afterwards, depending on the weather and that was it, nothing spectacular but we just seemed to amuse ourselves. Even if it was just sitting around or sitting on swings and messing about.

Shani Cassady b 1958

THE LIBRARY

Towards the end of the school year when I was going to leave – I'd been fourteen in the April – and the last couple of months, I messed around. So I was detailed to clean the bookcase and I looked at one of the books. It was *The Christmas Carol*. I opened the book, and found written there the name Catherine Hole, my Mother. There'd be sufficient copies for the class you see, *Christmas Carol* or what have you.

We had a library in the classroom. It was after school. It was just a box, about three feet by two feet, must have been perhaps three or four shelves in, with the books. They were for the village as well. Mrs Suffolk lived at

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the bungalow on Clifton Lane – her husband had the stocking factory at the bottom – and I used to have to change her books. I got a penny for doing it! This was the thing. Then when I joined Guides, one of the things what you had to do, little jobs for people, but you must NOT accept anything. So I used to run errands for Mrs Stevens and next door and I couldn't have a penny because we took things seriously.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

I used to enjoy reading at school, but also I had help from my Mother at home: we used to sit and she used to help me with my reading. We had books at home. We started with the *Janet and John* books.

Jean Stevenson b 1933

We had a library in our shop. Originally all the books were what my Father had bought in a job lot. I think it must have been a bookshop or something but I don't know whether it had been bombed or anything. He decided that what Ruddington was lacking was a library. My Father had shelves all put in at the back of the shop, and anybody that wanted to borrow them, could borrow them, for a penny. They could take them out. If they hadn't got pennies it didn't matter, they could borrow them anyway. After that, we became agents. There's a Central Library. They used to come round and you could hire books from them. So my Mother extended it a bit more and she used to hire the books, so she'd got more modern books. They didn't have children's books in the library, because it was nearly all adults that wanted the books. Children tended to have their own books and swap them with friends. I used to buy second hand books from Boots library – travel books. I used to love to read the travel books because you couldn't travel very far, in those days.

Janet Parker b 1939

I much preferred to sit home and read and I was a great reader. I started reading adult books when I was about eight because there was little else to read. Agatha Christie for instance. I used to read all my Aunt's books and all my Aunt's magazines because there weren't any books in our house. They always bought me books at Christmas, annuals which I did enjoy, but I think they soon cottoned on that I liked to read a more substantial story.

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My Mother didn't believe in us joining libraries, but as soon as I went to the High School my friend took me to the Central Library and joined me up so then I read anything and everything!

Mrs Greenwood had a library corner where you could borrow books and bring them back and we used to take reading books home. I used to take larger reading books because I could read by the time I went to school. As could everybody in what we called the top section. There were fifty one children in our class and about fifteen of us in the top section, and they creamed off half a dozen.

Ann Wilson b 1944

I used to go to the library, but that wasn't until I was past St. Peter's School age, because I can remember the cottages that were where the library is now. Once the library was opened, I used to love going down there. I loved reading. I was always down there getting books and taking, always fairy stories about that age! We had four or six books and I used to be carrying all these fairy story books backwards and forwards from the library!

Julie Hooton b 1953

TRANSPORT

Harrisons, who had the shop, sold it to Squires and when they had the 1926 strike the trains stopped. Squires had two sons and they bought a little tiny bus, fourteen-seater, and that was how the buses started, from Ruddington into Nottingham. And on Saturday, if we didn't go into town, we used to sit in Grandma's front room and watch everybody going down to catch the train. And we'd say, 'Oh Mrs So and So's going to Nottingham!' It was Station Road then. It's Clifton Lane now. We watched everybody going to, we used to call it going to town. My Father waited for me at the top of Station Road to get off the bus to walk me home. Isn't it strange? In those days everything was so safe and yet when I went to Guides and various places in the evening Dad used to come to make sure I got home all right.

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

You could go on the train. My monthly bus ticket was ten bob a month. You could travel on that Barton's ticket as many times as you want. That

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was half a crown a week. That was still a lot of money in those days. I was earning 12s 6d at the Co-op laundry and at fourteen and a half at Boots, 14s 6d. I could go home for dinner. I had very little time to do this but my Mother had the meal on the table and I had to run.

Eileen Selby b 1924

We used to travel on a Barton's bus when we had money for bus fare. The bus driver and conductor knew us extremely well. As we got older in the school, at five to four the bus left The Nook and the driver and the conductor used to come into school and fetch us rather than go without us. They became real friends. We were quite well known because we were twins. The two of us travelled on the bus, to and fro, more days than not, although we did walk when we hadn't got the money. The fare was three ha'pence¹⁹ by the time I was ten.

Ann Wilson b 1944

When I was a child one of the village farmers, when he wanted to move his sheep from where he grazed them on Kirk Lane, to where he's grazing them on Wilford Road, near the Grange Farm, he used to bring them through the street on a Sunday morning. All of them! On a Sunday there wasn't a bus 'til twelve o'clock. There was very few cars, because in the early 1950s, people didn't really have cars unless they were a professional person. My Dad certainly didn't. My Dad was a hosiery mechanic and he didn't even learn to drive. There was nobody on this road here had a car until there was a gentleman who came to 41 and he had a car. I would say he was the first person to have a car on this road.

Maureen Gallear b 1947

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WARTIME

SECOND WORLD WAR

The glass was covered with a coarse netting which was backed with a strong glue – it smelt horrible. It was being put up whilst we were there and pressed in, so that if there was any bombs dropped the net was inside and any shattering it would fall out or even be held. Anybody inside would be protected from it. I helped to give out the gas masks. People came to the school to collect gas masks for the ordinary person or baby gas masks to fit in the pram. And there were horses' gas masks.

Joyce Moore b 1927

I would have been about 10 when the war started, in '39. I don't remember it starting. I know we used to stand on the yard at night and see all the planes going over you know, to bomb Germany, hundreds of planes. You could just hear this faint humming but you knew what it was. I can remember them dropping bombs on the depot, three I think it was. I can remember them whistling by that window one night.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I had an older brother and then there was myself. And my younger brother was born about nineteen forty-one and I had a sister who was born after the war. But I think that we didn't see my Dad too much. He was over in France at the D-Day landings. He did get injured and came back home to Scotland, and he was up in Scotland. Then I recall him arriving home late one night and my Mother hearing his footsteps coming down the avenue and he caught the bus from Nottingham. She woke us all up because Daddy had arrived home. He was in uniform and he went off again. I think maybe that's something I want to put in my back of my mind. I don't know why, because he was de-mobbed safely. He lived till well into his seventies.

My Grandfather was very good to my Mum in that he used to support us while Dad was in the Army. I remember we used to visit there a lot. We used to go over on the ferry, from Wilford, catch the ferry over to Beeston, and walk into the Rylands to visit them.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

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When it was Remembrance Sunday they asked for eight-nine children in uniform to represent the eighty-nine people who'd died from the village, in the war. My uncle was one. We all stood around the war memorial on Remembrance Day.

Helena Bradley b 1955

AIR RAIDS

We weren't in a shelter. We had one built out there and every other house had one, a brick one at the top of the garden for two families. But as far as I know, they were never used. They're still there actually.

Evelyn Barnes b 1930

I remember the sirens going. They didn't evacuate because there wasn't time and there was nowhere to go anyway. So we had to put our heads on the desk, and hands over our heads. We used to have to wait for the all clear. I remember I was at school seeing a plane come down. They'd already had the sirens and everything. I went down the yard and saw all the smoke coming out of this plane. I think that really brought the war closer.

I never liked the blackout. I didn't like those dark curtains and being shut in. Everybody had either a black blind or something to keep the light out because you weren't supposed to show the lights at night, because of the planes coming over and possibly getting bombed. My Father was on fire-watching and he had to go round telling people if they were showing a light and ask them to put it out. Everybody had blackout curtains. If they came this way they were mostly after the site where they'd got all the tanks and underground laboratories. I didn't like these dark curtains.

We went to visit some relatives near Birmingham. Birmingham had been hit that night and there was all the houses and the damage. But what seemed to be upsetting most people was the Public House had been hit and all the beer was running down the streets.

Janet Parker b 1939

RATIONING

I suppose we were very fortunate that my Father was working for my Grandfather. I can always remember Mother saying, on one occasion

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WARTIME

during the First World War, 'Grandad's terrible to send margarine.' So Mother said, 'No, take it back: I want butter.'

Winifred Scarrott b 1913

Meat rationing came in. You used to get one and sixpence²⁰ worth of meat a week. If you found out some shop had got a certain article in, you had to go and stand in a queue for it. My Father had the bacon ration and there was a time when we only got an egg per person per week. There used to be three eggs because there was only three of us in the family, 'There'd be three eggs and my Mother would say, 'Now what shall I do with these? Would you like a boiled egg or shall I make a Yorkshire pudding or shall I make a cake?' And of course we always used to say, 'Make a Yorkshire pudding or a cake.' Then we all got a bit of the egg, didn't we?

I don't know how they managed. They could make a meal out of nothing. My Father had a 600 square yard allotment and he used to grow all the vegetables and a lot of soft fruits: raspberries, loganberries and blackcurrants. And my Mother used to make a lot of blackcurrant jam because you don't need a lot of sugar for blackcurrant jam. So when I say teatime, when we had tea, it was nearly always bread and jam. But it was lovely jam, so nobody minded. So that was a big help, my Father growing all the vegetables.

Betty Kennedy b 1927

My Dad was a miner. He used to drop two and a half hundredweight of coal at the bottom there. It all had to be barrowed up to the coalhouse. That was our ration for six weeks. Which you couldn't use. It was too much but you weren't allowed to sell it or give it away. But a lot of ours went behind the shed for the neighbour so they didn't have to buy any. So you got round that.

Because my Dad was a miner, you got an extra few ounces of meat, cheese. And we had our own chickens, so you had to give your egg ration up because you'd got to fetch your corn and that for your chickens. You couldn't have the eggs as well. My Father didn't have meals at work. My Mother used to pack him sandwiches up to take to work. She used to pack two thick slices of bread and he either wanted lard – home-rendered lard

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that is – or cheese, and they were thick slices. I suppose that's why they got the extra meat and bacon and cheese ration. There was a lot of people kept chickens and ducks. We got rats, so I think they had to go then. I've had them in later years but as soon as rats appear, that's it. I can't be doing with that.

You hear people talking about going without and I'm thinking, 'Well we didn't.' We always had plenty of food. But you see, you used to go down the moors in them days catching rabbits and picking mushrooms and watercress out of the Fareham Brook. There used to be rabbit warrens down the moors. We used to go down there for the day, when you weren't at school that is. Take your bottle of water and your sandwiches for the day. Loads of cowslips, bluebells, buttercups; beautiful. And in the Fareham Brook. Not swimming, I've got a feeling it wasn't deep enough for that. We did used to go down there on a regular basis. With just friends and dogs.

I can never remember eating margarine. In fact I had some once next door and I was really sick outside; they gave me some bread and margarine and jam – to this day, I could never put jam and butter on a slice of bread at the same time. I would be sick. Mum used to mix butter and marge together but we'd never eat marge on its own.

We used to go down – there was a farm down not the next street, the one after, Gunn's, Tucker Gunn's as we used to call it. Next door, they weren't very well off and we used to have to take one of these enamel jugs and go and get a ha'peth of skimmed milk. We used to drink quite a drop of it on the way back but we used to go and get this skimmed milk. But I wasn't allowed to fetch any for here, so I should think we didn't have it.

We used to do a lot of potato picking; we used to do that instead of going to school. They used to get you from school to do potato picking and we use to go to Rempstone, Clifton, all over the place, potato picking. It was great! That was all right. The farmers organised it through the school. It was a cold job; you didn't have flasks in them days, so my Mum used to put socks and all sorts round a bottle of tea to keep it warm or whatever you took. Especially if you went sugar beet tagging, that was cold. That was pulling sugar beet up and you had to arrange them all in a ring and keep piping them all round. I think I only went once for that. I didn't mind the potato picking. It used to be staked out how much you'd got to pick, the

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two of you. Sometimes the tractor would come round before you'd picked your first lot up and you'd got to start again then. We used to move the sticks if they weren't looking, so it shortened it. There was a farmer up the lane and he would never pay you enough money for picking potatoes. I can remember there being a bit of trouble about that at school. Just that one farmer up the lane but most of them were all right.

Well you could buy bread. Horspools was a big bread manufacturer and you were never short of bread. It didn't cost much. We used to grow our own potatoes and veg then. You'd got allotments all down there and we did have an allotment. So we got our own veg and stuff down there.

At the farmyard down there we used to look into the pigswill and, oh God, there was everything in it. I think the pigs liked it. I mean pigswill was all the leavings from kitchens wasn't it? They used to come round collecting them, didn't they, from canteens, for the pigs. Of course the butchers used to kill them all. I wanted to work in a butcher's shop when I left school and I couldn't do that because they used to kill the animals. I couldn't do that. It always fascinated me when I saw them taking meat off the bone and I always wanted to do it and slice liver. There was a butcher on the hill. They used to kill them and I can't. I went in this butchers for sheep's kidneys. He said, 'No, we haven't got any but if they catch that sheep that's running down that road, we will have some.' Black puddings as well, which is pig's blood.

Sweets were rationed but you got so many. You either made your weekly ration last you the week, or you were a wee bit naughty and ate them all at once! But that was your fault if you did that. We used to have jelly and custard in abundance. And potted meat. Didn't get many biscuits, not much cake but we always used to have lots of a form of scrambled eggs made with powdered eggs. Yes and pom potatoes. Potatoes that was, I think that came from America, I think a bit like the Canadian Cocoa. A lot came from that area. You used to have to queue for liver.

We used to collect rosehips and make rosehip syrup. My Mother made the blackberries into a pie. You could wander the fields. We used to go down to the brook which years ago was a sheep dip. And there was watercress there that we could bring home and eat. And we used to go fishing for tiddlers, little tiny fish. We used to have a jam jar with string wrapped round it and a fishing net made out of, possibly an old stocking. It would be

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an old stocking, that we'd made. If you'd got an older brother that was fine, he made it for you! And we spent hours down there.

We used to go and feed the Germans up the lane, the German prisoners. Well that was a depot where the park is now. There's a park just down the road here and it was a depot. All the German prisoners were there. There used to be about a dozen lorry loads of them coming down here every day to work on the depot. I was at work then. We used to go on a bike to the bread shop and we'd get bread and go and push it under the wire to these German prisoners. They were very pleased. We used to lie in a ditch; there was a ditch alongside because it was all wired up. I mean you couldn't get in but we used to lie in this ditch. I presume there were guards there. Well, we never got caught anyway. We used to do that in our dinner hour.

Brenda MacDonald b 1935

Mother never fancied whale meat, so I never tried it. Once when I think there was a chance that she might've bought it, Dad was lucky enough to get a rabbit from one of the farms and we had that instead.

With Dad travelling about, he was sometimes lucky with the farmers and they'd give him a couple or three eggs or something, especially because they knew I was on the sickly side those days. And at Christmas he'd get a cockerel or something you know, during the War and just after the War when you couldn't get things. I remember one Christmas, all the family came round, Mum's brothers and sisters, then there'd be in-laws and everything, and Dad had got two birds. They were hanging on the bathroom door, and I was terrified to go in the bathroom. Because the bathroom went off the kitchen, the men were all sitting on stools and chairs in a row in the kitchen, all plucking these birds.

There was rationing. There were a lot of different shops you know, even in those days. Marsden's, which was where the paper shop is now, they used to be quite a big popular one. They had tins of broken biscuits and that which were much cheaper, and sometimes he'd say 'Go on, take one, if you'd like one,' things like that. It used to be that everybody chatted, you know. Nobody seemed to mind queuing for things because everybody knew each other, swapping the local gossip. My Mother didn't like the gossip. And of course, the sweet rations; we didn't sell sweets, but the sweet ration went on until 1952, didn't it? I didn't like sweets, so it didn't

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matter to me. Mum says I used to give them all away. We used to get that orange juice that they used to give you. We had to have malt as well, all these things that were supposed to be good for us. It tasted vile. My Mother used to make beautiful potato pie. It was nothing but seasoned potatoes in a pastry crust.

My uncle kept pigs. My Dad and Mum used to give one of their ration books up so he could get feed, and they shared the pig. Had this bacon hanging up in the box room and everything. Six months supply, something like that. On a Sunday, Dad would cut slices off it, but oh, it was salty. You used to need to soak it. I mean everything was rendered down for scratchings and that and the dripping and the lard and everything, all treasured things. Every single thing was used. Meat rationing lasted to 1953.

My Mother didn't have a lot of spare time with her own shop, which was haberdashery and a library. It was right the other end of the village, at the corner of Birkin Avenue. And it started off as a hairdresser's and when the hairdresser left, as it was a bigger house than my parents were in, they decided to have it and turn it into a little shop. And of course with having coupons and things, running it used to be a bit difficult. You had to have a Government coupon before you could buy certain haberdashery – all sorts of clothes.

Janet Parker b 1939

EVACUEES

The school was used for evacuees to come from London – it was at the time of the doodlebugs. It wasn't during term time and the desks had all been put to the side. There were four of us who were pupil teachers from the centre that were village girls and two of us at a time, at night, stayed with them. The headmistress was there. I think she was there each night and then went off. The WRVS – my Mother was in the WRVS – they joined during the war. They were there for emergencies. My Mother was in on the catering side. A neighbour was looking after the nursery for nursing mums. There were quite a few village people who belonged to it. This was the first emergency that I remember them having to do anything for. I remember the buses coming and spilling out mothers and children. And crying. They were in a state of shock. They'd come from London to escape the doodlebugs. They were so dreadful because their engine used to just cut out and they would drop anywhere.

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We brought them in. The Co-op had got the supplies, the food supplies. We had to help to settle them down, show them where those dreadful toilets were across the yard at the top. Then it was a matter of setting up camp. I don't know where the camp beds came from but they were produced. The floors were emptied, and those were put out. We had to give them blankets and help them to settle. So they lived in the school, there and then, that night. They'd just come to escape and we had to accommodate them. They were there for two or three nights. In the meantime people were working to find accommodation for them.

We four girls were messengers, WRVS messengers. We'd got to go on our bikes to fetch the ladies in if they were required. That didn't happen because I didn't ever have to go and fetch anybody. I don't know how we we'd have found them because one lady came from The Grange. I'd have got to go up and find her in this cottage and it was all blackout. I could have a little torch, but even the torches had to have a blue film across. Just one night I stayed over and oh dear it was so dark and cold, and we sat there. Occasionally they would have to be shown to the toilets with these torches. Miss Waterhouse was the headmistress – she'd got some of her school work there, totting up, because all we were doing really was being there in case any emergency arose. I remember being in there and she would pass a column of figures for me to add up for her and so on. About three o'clock time, oh it was so difficult to keep my eyes open. It was the first time I'd ever stayed up at night. In the end Miss Waterhouse said, 'Well why don't you take a walk around the playground? The cold air will freshen you.' So that's what I did. It was just beginning to get a little bit lighter at that time. It wasn't really dawn but it wasn't far off.

Afterwards the families were kept together and they managed to find people who could take them in. You see it's a wonder because the village already had evacuees in the first place, from Nottingham, but a lot of those went back home again. We had them from Birmingham, Sheffield, Coventry and a place nearby that had had to be evacuated as well. The school was crowded. There was a hostel in The Park where some of them went – I think they were orphans or needed special care. But they were very happy in The Park and were well looked after and they settled in with us very nicely.

Joyce Moore b 1927

When did we get the evacuees? Would it be 1940? That really caused problems with education because the school wasn't large enough to contain all of the new influx of pupils. The girls, we took what is now known as the Starlight Rooms or it's the Chapel on Chapel Street opposite the framework knitters. We used that one week of mornings, and used the village school in the afternoons that week. Then the next week we'd turn and turn about. When you were at the old Chapel it was very, very difficult. The teachers must have been tearing their hair because there were no facilities there at all. The only playground that you had was outside the framework knitters cottages there. Inside it was just the old basic Chapel. There weren't any pews or anything in there. It must have been exceedingly difficult for them.

Helena Giblenn b 1929

There was quite a few evacuees in the Manor that went to the Ruddington school. Evacuees from London and different places. They were quite different from us. We village children tended to be quieter and do a bit more as we were told. They did tend to express themselves a bit more fully than we did. I think they were used to it. They were used to more people, wider type of living and everything to us.

Janet Parker b 1939

Victory celebrations

After the war the different avenues had their own parties. Street parties. We had ours right down getting towards the railway, going towards Wilford. It was on a big field, on one of Mr Gunn's fields. My Mum had the shop and my Dad was working, so they couldn't take me. So one of the neighbours took me. For a while I'd forgotten who had taken me because when I got there I saw jelly and I thought, 'I don't want jelly! I don't like jelly!' I didn't like sweet things. So everybody's walking about and I was on my own. I was just looking round and I thought, 'No, I don't want any jelly.' So I turned round and went all the way home on my own. I didn't find out until afterwards, there was a clamour. Everybody was looking out for me because I was missing. What would I be then, about six?

Janet Parker b 1939

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The poem

With the tanks and everything being up here, where the site was, where the park is now. They had prisoners there. All the tanks and things used to be there. It's a wonder it wasn't bombed really but I think they had a go. We used to see the tanks going by. There's a bit in that poem where we're out with the boys. We were down the lane, and the tanks were coming and they sounded different. So the boys shouted, 'Come on, get down in the ditch.' So we got down in this ditch, all wet and dirty, got our heads right down. It turned out they were our tanks but we thought they weren't. I put that in the poem.

Janet Parker b 1939

Childhood

By day, the sound of pots and pans,
At night, hands rough and worn
Tuck us between white cool sheets,
To sounds of gentle lullabies
As blackness closes in, the voices come around but thin.
Suddenly we wake to a siren's wail. The drone of aircraft.
We shelter under stairs and shake with fear,
Till Father says that it's all clear.
Soon the flowers from our garden disappear, Whilst in their
place fresh vegetables appear.
The lanes and meadows though still
Produce a brilliant show of daisy, buttercup and an odd blue-
bell.
We play along the country lanes, always aware –there it comes!
Dive down! Take care! The tanks are here!
In youth, how were we to know whilst hiding in damp ditches,
cold but free,
The tanks belonged to our country.
School comes far quicker than we thought, And teachers
watch us constantly.
Then as we study in the quiet room, a siren sounds!

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WARTIME

Heads down on desks, hands on heads, we wait silent as the
grave,
Until the all clear sounds.
Time to leave for home, so out we rush, then stop to stare.
Men in strange uniform have appeared, working on the roads.
'Jerries,' someone calls. Some flee, and we despair.
But as I watch, transfixed, and stare,
From underneath a strange grey cap I see
A gentle face, a twinkling pale blue eye, a warm smile.
I smile back, and think he's just like you and I.
Janet Morley Aged 9, 1948 [Now Janet Parker]

Afterthought

Many years later curiosity takes us holidaying abroad,
And there I see a face with twinkling pale blue eye,
No longer enemy but friend.

Annie Dring b 1912 (School Cook)
Winifred Scarrott b 1913
Hilda Milburn b 1920 and Lillian Slack b 1924
Eileen Selby b 1924
Irene Tscherepacho b 1924
Betty Kennedy b 1927
Joyce Moore, b 1927
Helena Giblenn b 1929
Evelyn Barnes b 1930
Jean Stevenson b 1933
Brenda MacDonald b 1935
Margaret Gardner b 1938
Janet Parker b 1939
Ann Wilson b 1944
Maureen Gallear b 1947
Johannah Perdue b 1953
Julie Hooton b 1953
Deborah Winsom b 1955
Helena Bradley b 1955
Kathy Alvey b 1958
Shani Cassady b 1958