

Interview of Bob Parrott by Imogen and Hatty

This has been written by Janet Martin after the event from her notes so is unlikely to capture the exact turn of phrase.

Q. What were your school days like?

A. They were fine. Some boys used to get into trouble but off-hand I can't remember getting into serious trouble. Mr Bunting at St Peter's School used to carry out the canings in assembly. Nowadays no doubt offenders would take it as a badge of honour to be caned and at the time it didn't seem to worry them.

It was written in the Punishment Book that still exists today. It would say what the punishment was for and how many strokes of the cane would be administered. The cane was not straight but curved.

They had small bottles of milk every day. The winters were colder than now so the tops of the bottles were often pushed up (by the process of freezing) . I don't like milk even though I was a milkman for 21 years. They used to put the milk on the heater to warm it up. You had to drink it.

I can remember the teachers' names. There was Mrs Parkin. We had vocabulary on Friday afternoons.

(There was a discussion between Bob and the girls as to whether this would now be called spelling.)

Boys and girls were separated by a fence through the playing area. There were air raid shelters on the field. (Hatty talked of Anderson shelters because she knows of one that still exists.)

My father was caretaker of St Peter's School. There was a private footpath from School Hill, through the cemetery to the school and he had to go every morning to unlock the gates at each end so the children could use it and then relock them again after school. It is now open to everyone and is misused with a lot of mess.

I lived in Cobbett's Estate, now called Cobbett's Way. The house was fine. A fire warmed the water in a brick built boiler in the corner of the scullery. This was used to do the washing.

We had long gardens at the back and kept chickens. Our dog lived outside. With keeping chickens there was always the risk of vermin about so this needed to be kept in mind.

Things were the opposite way round from today. On Bank holiday we would kill a chicken to eat. Later, when I was married I would go to Mr Redman, the butcher with ten shillings to buy enough beef for three days. I was told to get a nice piece and expected to bring back some change. We would eat the beef as it was on the first day then it would be minced for the next day. Now we eat beef on special days and chicken everyday.

Mr Redman's butcher's shop was where the motor cycle shop is now in Wrecclesham. He had another one in the High Street in Rowledge.

Every room in the house had a fireplace. (Hatty then told us about her house in Froyle which is thatched and also has fireplaces in every room)

At the age of 14 I went to the Bourne for the last year of school. I used a bike to get there.

We went to Farnham to the Art School at the bottom of the Hart for art lessons. When the art teacher, Mr Roberts, left the room after setting us to work one boy put the clock on half an hour and started a chalk fight throwing pieces of chalk about. (Bob didn't quite say he joined in this but gave the impression he may have done.)

While there we sometimes did lino cuts. (There was then a long discussion about what these were and the girls remembered doing potato prints when they were younger.)

Woodwork classes were held up Castle Street with Mr Forward. The class was upstairs. I went to look at the house recently and the lady was washing the step so I could see that the stairs have now been moved. They used to go up just inside the front door.

We didn't start fights in woodwork or Mr Forward might have thrown pieces of wood at us. I made a teapot stand.

After school I worked at Rowledge Garage from 1949 till 1952 when I was called up. The owner was Mr Lumpkin. He had two sons, John and Tony. John worked in the garage.

My first job was to get the air out of the petrol pump. There was a glass at the top and you could see when the air was out. Then it was ready to serve customers.

Tony ran a radio shop across the road in the Square in Rowledge. He had to charge up accumulator batteries for people to use in their wireless sets.

(At this point we ran out of time.)