

Clarence Road Secondary School

School for me was an enjoyable part of my early years attending the above school from the age of seven until I was fourteen at the outbreak of war (1932-1939). The school consisted of junior and senior departments. In the juniors the headmistress was Miss Slater. The classrooms were large and held forty pupils. Large windows allowed plenty of light for the black board, which was on an easel. Girls sat at the front of the class and boys at the back. Two pupils shared a double wooden desk with inkwells on top and a lid with a compartment for books underneath. The design of the building was one long single-storey building accommodating both junior and senior sections.

The playground was divided for juniors and seniors. At the rear of the school was a very large grassed playing field for gym. At the furthest side was a building shared by girls for cookery classes and woodwork for boys.

I recall when pupils reached eleven they filed along a corridor and through a door into the senior school. That moment for me was 'magical'.

The headmaster was Mr Pasco, who lived in Clarence Road. The teachers were Mr Monk for physical education and maths, Miss Smith for French and needlework, Miss Davis for art, English and foreign countries, mainly India, and Miss Bruce who taught geography. She always wore vivid, colourful patterned dresses. Miss Smith and Miss Davis both lived at the YWCA in Clarence Road. One teacher's name escapes me, but she was very strict on spelling and chose several of the class for a Spelling Bee competition in the school hall. Needless to say we won.

Before going into school in the morning many pupils visited a nearby sweetshop (Smith's I think), choosing confectionery that did not attract the teacher's attention.

I return to my first sentence, an enjoyable part of my early years.

Ellen Dollery

The Conservative Pantomime

Peascod Street was busy on winter evenings. Apart from the pubs and hotels there were two cinemas, while the shops, if not actually open, remained lit. There were attractions too in neighbouring streets – the Playhouse, the Theatre Royal and the Royal Albert Institute with its orchestral concerts, lectures, choral society and Gilbert and Sullivan performances. However, on three or four evenings in February (in most years from the 1890s to the dark nights of the Second World War) there was something down to earth and extra special for over two thousand children – the Conservative Club Pantomime.

We entered through a narrow passage close to Holmes' fish and chip shop, and some hundred yards beyond an excessively tall sign, which kept spelling D A R V I L L E S to the night sky. I am told that the Conservative Club Hall stood where Fenwicks stands today. If this is so then the owners have taken away the magic.

With the sound of Fred Hewitt's fellow musicians tuning up and the cast (as yet hidden behind the plush curtain) falling over scenery we knew we were in for something good. One or two smartly turned out members of the St John Ambulance Brigade stood in readiness in case someone, overcome perhaps by excitement, might need resuscitation – head between the knees and face to face with the Sal Volatile bottle. Otherwise there was no question that we would be anything but well behaved, for who would be so stupid as to compete with the high spirits that would shortly break out on stage.

We were about to be totally involved in a show that drew on an early Victorian innovation but which had its origins in ancient Rome. But what did pantomime have to do with The Conservative Club and would any of us know a Conservative from, say, a Roman? These Conservatives (whoever they were) were obviously kind folk – for each of us would be handed a bag of sweets, an orange and a bun before we were finally ushered into the night. Our exit, by the way, was through another passage, this leading into Oxford Road, from where some of us would make our way back to the Borough Bus stop, home, bed and dreams of wonders untold.

There is something generous about pantomime, a quality that the Windsor Conservatives were keen to be associated with. Wasn't Robert Richardson-Gardner (Windsor's first wholly Conservative MP) associated with gifts of coal and pork pies? Let no one mention bread and circuses for that would take us back to Rome and its decline.