

# OXHEY VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT GROUP

March 1997

History Sheet No.10

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## Days Gone By!

*Memories of life in Oxhey Village in the 20s by Barbara King*

Following on from Doreen, Letty and Don's memories of the 1920's. I was born in 1917, in a cottage at the top of the Paddock Roads, and started school when I was five years old at London Road. At that time, which was an Infants School, with open coal fires in the corner of the classrooms. Soon after this, the infants were moved to Oxhey School and I was there until I was eleven years old.

The Headmistress at that time was Miss Scott and the form mistresses I remember were: Miss Pitkin for the infants, Miss Sennett, who was a pupil teacher at that time, Miss Pugh, who lived in Capel Road and Miss Howe, who lived at The Load of Hay on Watford Heath.

A very distinct memory of that time was Empire Day, when we were all very patriotic and put on a pageant to represent Britannia receiving homage from all her colonies and we sang Jerusalem, Land of Hope and Glory, etc.. Whilst I was there, Miss Scott moved on, I think, to Watford Fields, and Miss Oven took over. She would visit the classrooms, often carrying the cane and, if she was annoyed with us, she would strike the desk with the cane. It was a terrible disgrace to actually get the cane and this was only administered in serious cases. The whole school assembled in the hall and the wrongdoer would be caned in front of the school.

From Oxhey, I was moved back to London Road again. This was now divided into Girls on the ground floor and Boys upstairs, and their playgrounds were also separate. One of the lessons here was Housewifery and we had a special building for this, run by Miss Pine, who lived in Villiers Road. We learned how to cook, clean the house and launder. For the laundry we each had a small, galvanized bath filled with hot water and a small piece of washing soap (probably Life buoy or Sunlight) with which we had to try to produce a lather. We usually took one of our own dresses to wash. When it came to ironing, there was a round, iron stove heated by solid fuel with shelves all round on which the flatirons were placed to heat. When we took the iron, we rubbed it on a piece of brown paper, impregnated with candle-grease, to make the iron slip easily. From the results of our cooking class, we produced dinners for some of the teachers and I can remember taking a tray over to teachers in the Boys School! From here I moved to Wafted Technical School, which was at the old Public Library in Queen's Road. All three of these schools have now been demolished.

The roads of Oxhey were practically traffic free in the '20s and we children could play skipping, tops, ride our scooters, etc., in the road. Of course, Attenborough's fields were our playground and, in the winter, the pond which was much bigger then, froze over and was used for skating and sliding. In those days, the water was held back by what we called the coffin which is now broken and lets the water seep away.

Bushey Churchyard was also a fascination to us children. We loved to wander around and look at the various memorials, angels, etc.

My pocket money was 2d per week, out of which I managed to save enough to buy Christmas presents at Woolworth's where nothing was more than 6d!! Our weekly treat from Dad was slabs of Palm Toffee (I particularly liked the Banarta flavour (from Mr. Bavit's who kept the shop on the corner of Field Road.

Money was scarce, but we had a happy time making our own pleasures out of small things.

Happy days!

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