

# **Mr Peter Andrews**

## **Memories of St Paul's School 1934 - 1941**

“I started at St Paul's School in 1934. The Headmaster was Mr Hibberd - his son was in the same class as myself. The teachers were: Class 7 Miss Scrivens, Class 6 Miss Clark, Class 5 Miss Tyler, Class 4 Mr Downing, Class 3 Miss Mills, Class 2 Miss Dobson and Class 1 Mr Wareham.

Miss Scrivens, the teacher of the Infants, taught us how to write and do sums. She read stories to us. We also did spellings and sums from books.

In Miss Clark's class we did our normal lessons, but she also included music. There were some musical instruments such as a triangle, a drum and an instrument that you blew into and it had a piece of tissue paper that vibrated. The noise we made disturbed classes on the other side of the corridor.

Miss Tyler was the youngest of the teachers but she could control the class with her quiet charm and we learnt a lot from her.

Mr Downing taught Class 4. We were sorted into teams: boys were put into two teams, reds or greens, the girls I think were yellows or blues. He was very strict. One thing he did was to give us a question such as a capital of a country. We would write it down, take it home and bring the written answer back the next day and hand it in. If it was right we would gain points for our team.

Mr Downing was also keen on physical education and with Mr Wareham in 1934 started the Dorking St Paul's Athletics Club. The Rev A C Nickol was the President. The boys over the age of 13 joined if they were good at any sports. Mr Wareham was an official at the 1948 Olympic Games in London.

At the age of ten years we were allowed to run in the school cross country, running against the older boys of Classes 1, 2 and 3. I came tenth, beating many of the older boys. I won the cross-country cup when I was 13. Soon after the War started Mr Downing was called up for the Army and also the school caretaker Mr Sayers.

Miss Mills was the teacher of Class 3 and she nearly always wore a New Zealand brooch on her dress. There was one boy in this class who found it difficult to read so Miss Mills would send one of the boys out into the cloakroom with him to help

him with his reading – I myself did this a few times. About this time large holes were dug in our school playing field, three at the bottom of the field and three at the top, to give us six air raid shelters. We still had our football pitch in the middle between the two rows of shelters.

When the school children from London were evacuated to Dorking we could only go to school in the afternoons until they got things sorted out. During the Battle of Britain the sirens going off very often disrupted our lessons. We would pick up our books and gas mask and march up to our shelter at the top of the field. There we would stay until the all clear was sounded. Some days there was another raid and it would be the same procedure all over again.

One night a bomb was dropped which landed about 150 metres from the school. This damaged the roof and shattered windows on that side of the school and the school was closed for a day or two.

On Ascension Day, after the registers were marked, we would be marched down to church, have a service taken by Rev A C Nickol, and then went back to school to be dismissed and have the rest of the day off. This always coincided with the annual fair on Cotmandene.

Mr Wareham took Classes 1 and 2 for PE in the mornings and if it was raining we would do PE in the corridor, sometimes having the vaulting box and landing mats. When we vaulted it made a lot of noise and disturbed the classes on either side.

On Friday mornings Class 1 boys would attend school to have the register marked, then they would make their own way down to Falkland Road where the St Paul's Church Room was situated. Over the top of the Church Room was the woodwork room. Mr Roberts was the woodwork teacher. When you completed a piece of work he would mark it and write "his work, most of it."

We had allotments at the top of the field and when the produce was ready for digging up or picking it would be sold and the money went into the school funds. One afternoon we were digging in the allotments when there was a sound like thunder and a large plume of smoke could be seen in the distance. It was the ammunition dump on Abinger Common that had caught fire, thus setting off the ammunition.

One of the jobs that some of the boys in the Top Class had to do was to go into the boiler room which was in a basement where the powdered ink was stored. We would mix it with water and then take it to the classrooms and top up the inkwells.

One other job I remember doing was testing the stirrup pump every so often. You

could get quite a good jet of water and see how far it would go and then if the sun was shining you could turn it to a very fine spray and create a rainbow.

Another job for the boys in the Top Class was to distribute the crates of milk to the other classes, then in the afternoon collect all the empties and stack the crates in the corridor. We had to pay half a penny for one third of a pint of milk. It was not free.

In the spring or summer of 1939 I remember going on a school trip by coach to Windsor Castle. We had to take sandwiches with us. Then we went on a riverboat to Hampton Court where the coaches pick us up to take us back to Dorking. The boys had to wear school caps.”