

# GOOD HISTORY

Journal  
of the  
Eynsham Junior  
History Group



Special Issue  
No 2

## School Creed

This is our school,  
Let peace dwell here,  
Let the room be full of contentment,  
Let love abide here,  
Love of one another,  
Love of mankind,  
Love of life itself,  
And love of God,  
Let us remember  
That as many hands build a house,  
So many hearts make a school.

From "The School Creed" of a School in Canada.

## Acknowledgements

The Junior History Group wishes to thank Mr & Mrs Baines, Mrs A Holt, Miss A Price, and Mr Keates for assisting with material for the talk on which this booklet is based. We must also acknowledge our use of information and photographs gathered from The Oxford Times, The Oxford Mail and The Witney Gazette. We also thank Mrs S. Chapman, many of whose photographs were found amongst the School's archives. We trust that all these people will be satisfied to know that their work is helping the school to maintain its position in the community.

We also hope that former pupils will be pleased to see their work reprinted and re-appreciated.

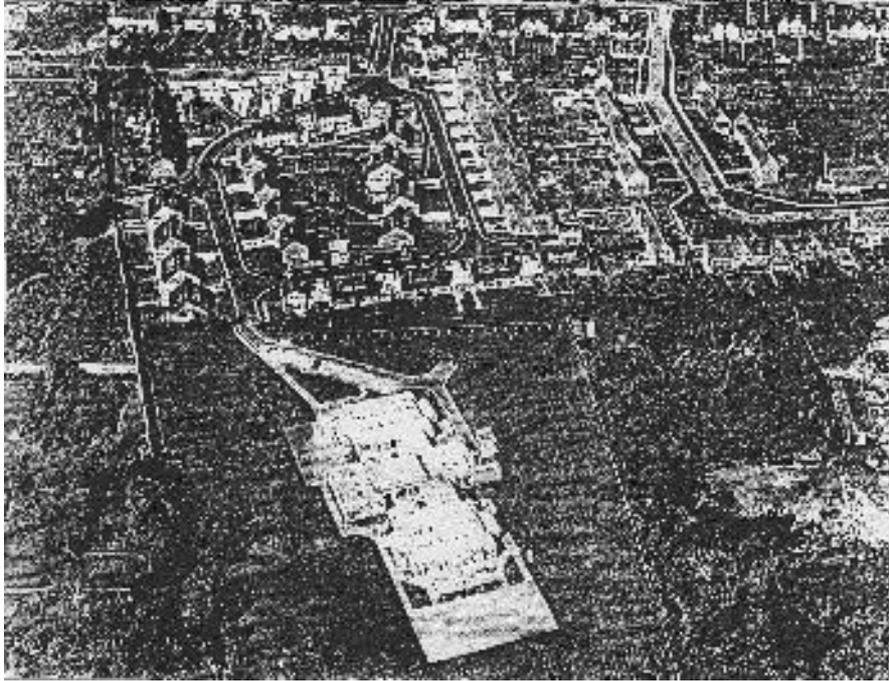
Group Members who took part in the talk on the 4th March 1999 were: Emily Beach, Helen Crump, Yasmin Denney, Jesse Goodall, Erica Gornall, Rosy Hammond, Zipora McKechnie, Lucy Phipps, Jessica Scott, Grace Shayler, Sayra Tekin, and Nadia Wood.

Good History is the Journal of the Eynsham Primary School Junior History Group

All proceeds from the sale of this booklet are for the purchase of history books for the use of the children at Eynsham Primary School.

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## OUR SCHOOL



Aerial view of Eynsham Primary School from a series of photographs shown in the Witney Gazette in the '70s.

When we were asked by Eynsham History Group to give a talk at one of their meetings in 1999 we had to think of something that would be quite different from Public Houses, a subject we researched in 1997. We had recently done research into Eynsham shops, past and present, so we had to come up with another subject. Several times during meetings we had heard people mention the school fire, which although for some of us is something we experienced, for the children at school now is a piece of history. We therefore decided to look at the history of *Our School*.

To help us in our research Emily Beach (our Secretary) wrote to Mrs Baines (who used to be Miss Purbrook before she married the first Headmaster, Mr Baines). It is from her reply that we learnt about the background to the creation of the school.

In the 1960s educationalists began to think about the way children were taught and how methods could be improved. It was realised that the more schools enabled individual children to organise some of their own time and to choose to study some of the things that they were really interested in, the happier and consequently better behaved they were. This meant that, instead of lots of square rooms in which children sat in straight rows all day facing the teacher and the chalkboard, all doing the same thing at the same time, school buildings would have to be rethought and spaces created for different activities to go on all at the same time, so that it would be possible for each person to choose where they went and what they did and be, to some extent, responsible for themselves. It was at this time that the phrase "child-centred education" came into being. This has often been misunderstood but here in Eynsham the designers of our school wanted to show what they meant by the phrase and how it could work for the benefit of the children.

The Chief Primary Adviser for Oxfordshire at the time was a lady called Edith Moorhouse who is now in her 90s. She encouraged headteachers in Oxfordshire to consider how they could arrange their classrooms to enable the children to work more as we do now. One of those headteachers was Mr George Baines, who was then working at Brize Norton Primary School, and when a big new school was needed in

Eynsham, (which was a quickly growing village in those days), Miss Moorhouse and the school governors appointed him to be the first Headteacher. Miss Moorhouse was later awarded an OBE in recognition of her wonderful work in education.

The design and building of the school was very different from anything that had been done before. For one thing the ideas came from teachers who were not architects. One thing they wanted to do was to make the actual building a learning tool so that even the bricks are very special. You can see clearly when you are in the Assembly Hall that the bricks are unusually 12 inches long and the windows help to measure in yards. Of course, now this is not so helpful as we measure using the metric system. However, the ideas for specific spaces for specific activities were carried through and so a kind of 'geographical discipline' was imposed on the organisation of the children's work.

The first building was what we call the East and West Wings joined by the Assembly Hall, Kitchen and Offices. The West wing had a huge stock cupboard in the middle of it, dividing it into two class areas and it was rather pokey and dark. (We have heard from some old pupils this was a good place to hide).

All the children of the village aged between 5 and 9 were the first to move into the new building. The village had grown even quicker than expected so the 10s and 11s had to stay in the Old School near Bartholomew School for quite a number of years. The North Wing was built as a Nursery but was soon full of school-age children and it was many years before it eventually became the Nursery as intended.

Mr Baines had two terms to prepare the teachers at the old school for the new system of working that would be in place at the new school. We are not sure that all the teachers were happy about the new arrangements but Mr Baines had his own way of doing things. One day he called all the teachers and children out onto the playground and sorted them out from 'year' groups into new 'family' groups, rather as we tend to choose teams for games, so that some children who had started that morning in one class finished the day with another teacher.

The new school opened in April 1967 and it took some children a little while to get used to their new surroundings. Some of the teachers had the same trouble, but the system was soon in full swing and the great stream of visitors began.



Patrick Gordon-Walker talking to Miss A Price and Mr G Baines

Visitors came from all over the world. One day all the Education Ministers of the then Common Market countries came, during their tour of English schools. Two Education Secretaries came to the school. First, Patrick Gordon-Walker and then Edward Short. As Patrick Gordon-Walker was crossing the Assembly Hall after some infants had had a movement lesson one little boy stuck his foot out and the Minister found himself tying shoe laces. Any adult was expected to be a help.

There were several articles written about the school, some in educational and architectural journals and one in the Readers Digest Magazine. Mr Baines travelled to nearly all the counties in the U.K. and to Germany, Iceland and Canada explaining what he and the staff and children were doing and why.

During our research we watched a video which was made in 1969. (Incidentally it was the first schools programme made in colour). We were able to see what the East Wing looked like then and how the children worked. It was very like what we do today but we were surprised that the five-year olds were working with the nine-year olds and we liked the art work they were doing. Looking through the magazine produced by the school at the time of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee we found out something of what one child thought of being the subject of a documentary film.

*"I remember that our class was selected to show how a class circulated about the school during a school day, and to show this we were given green nylon smocks to wear while we were out of our "bay" and we had to come to school in the same clothes for about a week! I can clearly recall the technicians setting up lights all over the place and also cameras being set up in our bay. In the end they only showed a small part of that sequence even though the cameras seemed to have been in the bay for a number of days. Just before the BBC started filming the teachers told us all to avoid looking at the cameras and to carry on as usual. I remember I was very disappointed at the end because when the programme was eventually screened, I didn't get into the picture even though almost all the rest of my class got in during the part shot in our bay."*



Miss Purbrook (later Mrs Baines) and a group of children during the filming of *The Expanding Classroom*, 1969.

Sadly, 1969 is remembered in the school's history for a very different event. Mrs. Richards told us that in July of that year she was staying with her husband and children in Bristol at her parents' home. They had just come back from Egypt and her daughter Lucy was due to start school in September. Mr Richards spotted an item in his newspaper. Eynsham school, to which their son Martin had gone when it opened, had burnt down. It was a shock.

It was more of a shock to the children who had set off for school on the morning of July 8th. Dawn Collins was one of those children and she wrote down her memories for us which have already been published in *Good History No. 6*. These seemed so moving we are including them again here.

*"As I got halfway along Beech Road I suddenly glanced up. I noticed the awful smell of smoke. As I got closer to school all I could see was the burnt remains of my school. I just froze to the pavement with tears rolling down my face, not being able to say anything to anyone. I dont know how long I stayed there. I can remember someone telling me to go straight home!"*

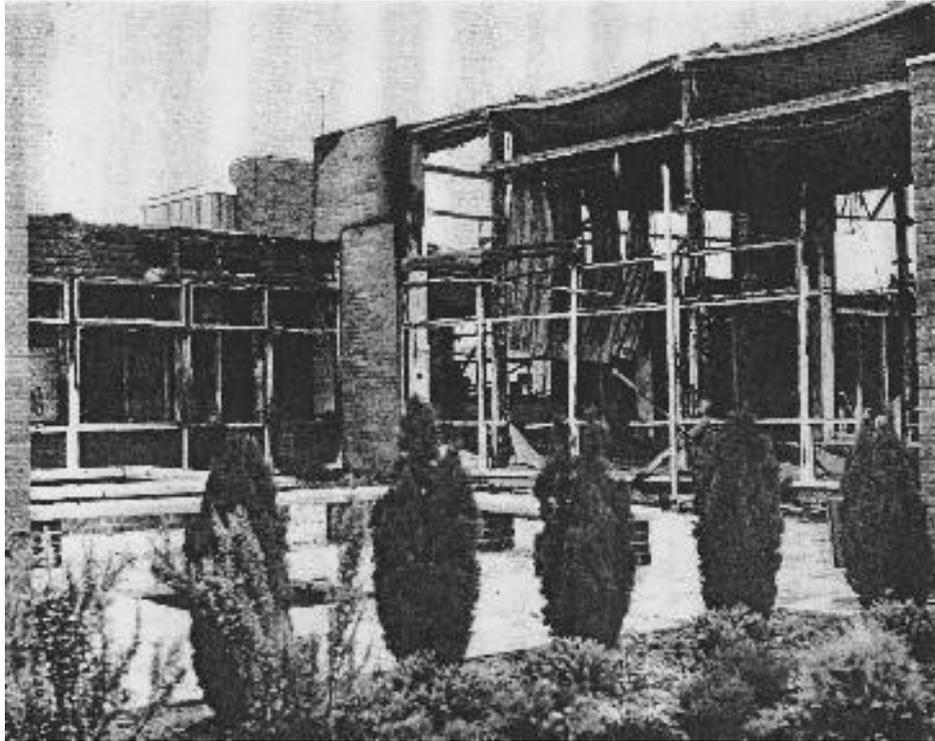
*As I sat at home all I could think about was my pencil case I had left in school the day before. I am sure the fire left many of us with frightening thoughts. I can remember that everytime I went to bed I took my shoes and coat with me, just in case. Even today it seems very sad that all our work, books and many other things were lost for ever. A part of our lives."*



Firemen trying to control the fire July 11th 1969

Jesse Goodall found out from her mother how she felt on the day.

*"My mum was 7 years old when the fire happened and used to go to school on the coach from Witney Road. Mrs Fisk who organised the coach had to tell everybody that they couldnt go to school that day because there had been a fire. My mum was worried, so my Nan took her down to the school to see the awful mess. The whole roof of the school had gone. The furniture, books, chairs, pictures and displays were all spoilt by the water the firemen had to use to put out the fire. My mum remembers they had an extra two weeks added on to the summer holidays."*



The burnt out shell of the school

Lucy Phipps' Dad told her that he had taken some of his toy cars to school for a display and that they were lost in the fire too. It is obvious that these events made a big impression on the children and teachers. Mrs Baines told us that neighbours had rescued the rabbits that they had in school but that the two mice, Aramadil and Jay, sadly died. We learnt some more about Aramadil and Jay from the same Jubilee magazine. Apparently there had been quite a search for a pet shop in Oxford which sold mice but eventually the mice had been found and installed in one of the bays in the East Wing. Soon there was rather a large number of mice as Aramadil and Jay proved to be eager parents. Eventually it was thought better to keep the two mice apart as mouse accommodation was in short supply. All the young mice were sold or given away and that is how there were only the two originals left at the time of the fire.

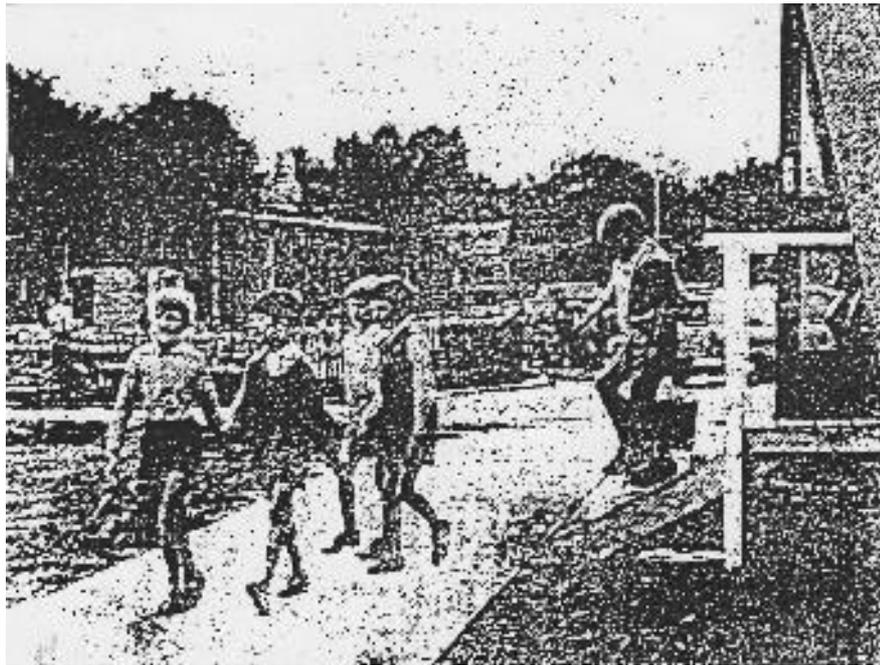
Miss Price told us about what the teachers had to do. Luckily, Mrs Baines had taken a set of class-lists home so that at least the teachers had some idea of all the children who should have been at school, but it was necessary to go around the village to check on addresses and about any children who were likely to be starting in the September. Mr Keates who was teaching at Brize Norton at the time remembers a request being sent to his school for any spare furniture they might have but Mr Baines only wanted new or very good stuff. Fortunately, the North wing had survived and the teachers were able to set up temporary headquarters there while they prepared, as best they could for the next term.

It was also a shock for Mrs Holt who had just been appointed to start in the September of that year. She told us how she had joined the other teachers towards the end of the summer.

All the new equipment and furniture was in the extension ready to put into the temporary classrooms, but where were the temporary classrooms? The teachers had named the name tags for the coat pegs, named the exercise books and cut up the painting paper and all they needed were classrooms. At last they arrived. The teachers put up the displays and got everything ready as fast as they could for the children to come, but still the start of the term had to be a few days late.

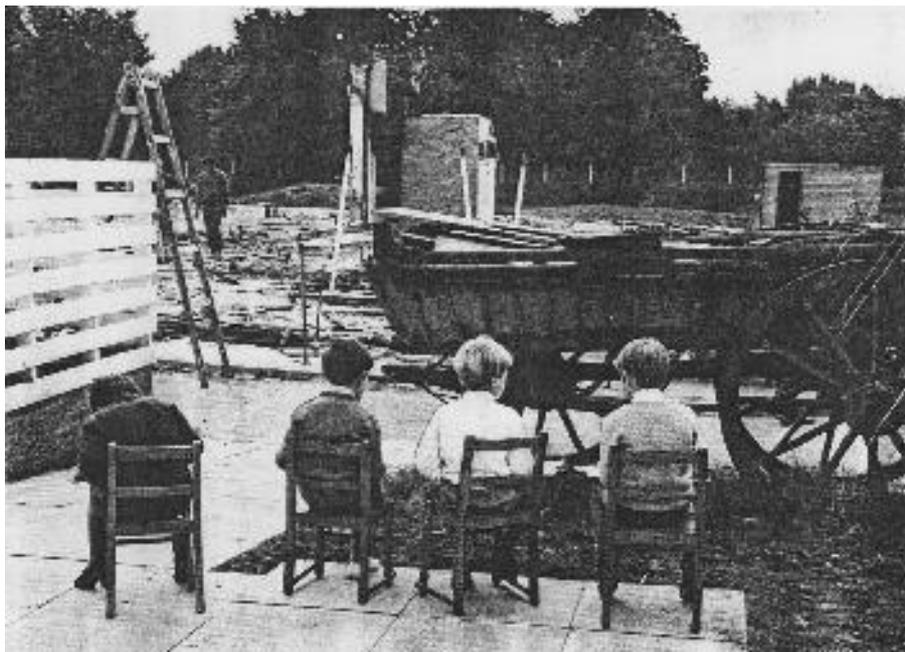
The temporary classrooms were usually called the caravans and they stood where the swimming pool is now. There was one caravan where three teachers worked together and another block of 'rooms' where four teachers worked.

There was a toilet block and a staff room. Mrs Holt (who has left now) worked in the extension (now the Nursery) with Mr Harding and the classroom assistant Mrs Brown, where there were two groups of children.



Children moving from one 'caravan' to another

At the beginning they had 64 children in their unit but it gradually became 84 children. For assemblies everyone squeezed into the large caravan. They also ate lunch there. All movement had to be done outside so it very much depended on the weather.



Learning carried on while reconstruction took place

After the school day the teachers used to go and inspect the progress that was being made by the builders. By the end of the summer term 1970 the new school was ready. So the teachers had a busy summer holiday moving furniture again! Mrs Holt said she thought they would have been well qualified as furniture removers.

Then the builders came back again to build six new bays (the South Wing) and the Games Hall, so that the school looked as it does today.

When the school started up again the school dinners were brought in by taxi from Carterton school and the canteen ladies had to go to other schools to work while the new school was being built.

Mrs Hedges, Jesse Goodall's grandmother came in to help clean chairs and tables and when the kitchen was nearly ready she helped to get the new equipment sorted out. She remembers that before the new school opened lots of parents and grandparents had a big sale in the Bartholomew School Hall to make some money to help buy new things for the school and it was from this band of helpers that the Parent Teacher Association was formed.

When the new school was ready to open Jesse's grandmother started work in the kitchen. It was October 2nd 1970. She later took charge of the kitchen after the retirement of Mrs Joan Halley.

Soon life in the school was back to normal but its population was still growing. There were fourteen classes now with about 35 or so in each.

At the end of 1974 Mrs Richards was appointed to start teaching in the following January. As it happened, her daughter had left the school in the July before. In the same January having ceased to be a school parent Mr Richards became a School Governor.

As a parent, Mr Richards, a generally non-practical man, had found himself on the Ideas Committee of the PTA. It was from this committee that the ideas of the swimming pool and the original climbing frames came. As a Governor he was, of course, involved in the appointment of teachers but as he tells us, luckily at that time Governors were not as involved in the finances of the school as they are now. As Governors do now, he made visits to the school and sometimes heard children read. It made a change from listening to his students. He was also drawn in to play the piano for a number of entertainments which were put on by the PTA. He remembers one particular evening when a Mr Brian Jones elected to sing "*The Galloping Major*" as part of an "Edwardian Evening". Unfortunately, Mr Jones had very little idea of timing and as much fun was to be had out of seeing if the pianist could keep up with the singer as in the actual song. Incidentally, it was during this evening's entertainment that Mr Norman Hayes played the wicked Sir Jasper and Mrs Holt the Damsel-in-Distress. He also recalls when certain energetic mothers danced the Cancan.

Another form of entertainment put on by the PTA were pantomimes. Usually there were three performances in one afternoon with collections for school funds. The first pantomime was rather political - *Dr Who and the Lorries*. This was part of the village protest against the large gravel lorries which were rumbling through Eynsham at the time. After that, the pantomimes, which went on for several years, were loosely based on well known fairy tales. In 1978 it was Cinderella and these are some of the comments which were gathered for the Newsletter.

*I liked Cinderella going to the Ball best of all....*

*I liked the chair that Cinderella sat on..*

*I did like Cinderella's Godmother. I liked the colour of her wand. ...*

*I liked it when Buttons threw out some chocolate buttons for us....*

*I liked the ugly sisters best of all. They made us laugh.'*



The cast of Cinderella. Ann Wotherspoon, Diane Gough, Ann Gibbons, Lauri Hugill, Harry Isherwood Mary Evans, Adrian Townsend, Judy Weedon, and Marilyn Oakey.



Puss-in-Boots was the most exciting pantomime as the original "Puss" had to pull out at the last minute and the part was taken by the producer who couldn't quite remember all the lines and so each performance was slightly different but successful thanks to the flexibility of the other members of the cast. An afternoon to remember.

Mrs Richards had joined the school when Miss Audrey Cook left. It was quite a change because her last post had been in a school in Cairo where she had had a class of 8 and 9 year olds of mixed nationality. Here she had a family group of about 35 children with ages from 5 to 9. After about 18 months, when Bartholomew School needed more room for their 6th form, the 5-9 year-old family groups came to an end. The children were to stay at the Primary School as they do today until they were 11 and the groups were to be re-arranged so that there was a Lower School, a Middle School and an Upper School. At that time the Lower School was in the East Wing, the Middle School in the West Wing and the Upper School in the South Wing. Mrs Richards was to have joined the Upper School and had looked forward to teaching hockey among other things but two weeks before the end of term Mr Baines decided that because of some anxiety on the part of another teacher Mrs Richards should join Miss Price in the East Wing with the Infants. At that precise moment she was not best pleased for at one point in her training she had vowed that she would never be an Infant teacher! However, when she started off that following Autumn term with only about 17 in her group she thought that she had not done so badly. She went on to teach in the East Wing for another four enjoyable years.

It was during this period that Mr & Mrs Baines did an exchange with a Canadian headteacher and his wife, also a teacher. While Mr & Mrs Baines were in Vancouver, Eynsham Primary School learnt about Canada and in particular about the North American Indians. By the time the exchange finished the children knew a great deal about Totem poles! The only disappointment was for the teachers who had thought that they might get a chance to visit Canada, but it didn't happen.

However, a glimpse of some of the things that were happening during the 1970s can be seen from some extracts from the School Association Magazine of Autumn Term 1979.

*The recent Book Fair was popular: highlighted by Roald Dahl's visit.*

*...Chess Club ....this term people have come to play, advise and talk to us about chess. This has proved interesting. Among the people were Mrs Webb, Mr Smith, Mr Hodges, Mr McGregor, Mrs Chapman and Mr Wilson. These people we thank very much.. Tim Smith*

Comments on Firework night, which that year made a profit of 97p, from the younger children:-

*The Niagara Falls looked like socks hanging on a line.... Noisy, zooming and whizzing around, Banging like thunder With me just under, The Fireworks flew in the dark sky... The fireworks looked like the Blackpool Lights...*

*The Canal Tunnel*

*The water in the tunnel  
Was deep, dark and dingy.  
The arched roof of crumbling stone  
Was dark with moss and soot  
The water, dripping, dripping, dripping.  
A sharp sound shattering the silence,  
As we drifted into the tunnel  
From the open air and light.  
The boat man bleeped his horn,  
A violent sound, echoing, echoing, echoing,  
Along and round the tunnel  
The engine roared the boat reversed  
We floated backwards away  
from the echoing darkness  
Into the light once more. Terry Linford.*

The Church. ...*There were garoyles. They are to stop the water from running down the church. Then we went in the church and saw the font where the babies are christened. There is an ugly face on it to frighten the devil away. ...Katy Walsh.*



The Holt, Mill St. by Michael Robinson

Autumn. ...*the old mans beard looks like soft clouds billowing and rolling in the sky. ... Annette Hewitt*

The Hawthorn Bush *The hidden unsuspected hawthorn bush rustles and shivers in the cold morning breeze. It wakes to find the dawn song sweet and intense. Each berry seems to appreciate the autumn morning in its full beauty. But now a hungry robin discovers the helpless berry. The temptation is too much. The bird pierces the soft skin with its needle sharp beak. A stream of ripe juice gushes out. Next a wasp finds its prey. It attacks the berry which falls to the ground apparently destroyed. Winter comes with its sharp piercing air. The countryside shivers with cold. Hungry birds scavenge for food amongst the stiffened ice branches. But unseen under the ground the seed of the berry develops growing towards the cold air till at last the plant peeps through the soil. Summer arrives bringing new life. The hawthorn bush stands elegant and proud. The seed which was once thought dead is now filled with life. How surprising to think that life survives.* Carl Bryant.

1983 was another year when there were changes. Mr and Mrs Baines retired at the end of the summer term. During the autumn term a 'supply headteacher' took over the school so that the newly appointed Mr Keates could start his duties at the beginning of 1984. Since that time except for a year when Mr Keates took a sabbatical year of study he has steered the school through all its changes, such as the

use of the North Wing for its original purpose of a Nursery department and the continuing changes to the Curriculum.

Eynsham school has always tried to be part of the community and we have been grateful to the community for its help. Our involvement with Mr Whelan our Group Chairman illustrates this. Mr Whelan and his wife first came into school when they found a barn owl which had just been killed. It was barely damaged so they brought it in for the children to see. Luckily, at that time we had a parent who was a taxidermist and he stuffed the owl and made it available for children to draw for many years to come. He also stuffed other small animals and birds which also became models.

However, it was not until after Mrs Whelan's death that Mr Whelan became a more permanent part of school. We would like to use his own words from a piece which he wrote for the Volunteer Reading Help Annual Report in 1990.

*" My wife died three years after our Golden Wedding Anniversary, and I found myself alone, having outlived my relatives. Friends said, 'You have to make a new life'. All I wanted was the old one back.*

*A poster asking for volunteers to help a child read made me realise that there was an avenue open where old age could be an asset. After acceptance and training I was introduced to my local Primary School.*

*I was scared on my first morning, but the staff could not have been more helpful. When I left school that day, it was with a feeling of satisfaction - I was wanted.*

*Gradually, I became accepted as part of the school community. During the school year I was drawn more and more into the school's activities - carol singing and Christmas plays, May day celebrations, Sports Day. Finally at the end of term it was with a sad heart that I saw children who had become my friends leaving to go on to the Comprehensive School.*

*But I was back again next term to take on more children. Yes, I had found a new life"*



Mr Whelan with some of the Group.

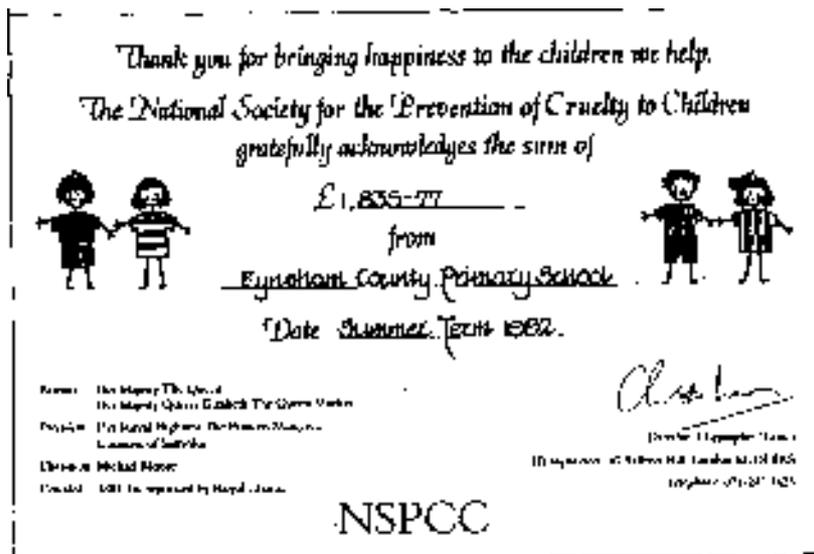
We discovered that the children and parents of the school have always been generous in their help to others. In our studies of the old Infant School Log we learned that even in the 19th century they were sending gifts to children in London.

*1898: July 1st. On Thursday after a lesson on 'A walk in the town', the children were asked to bring flowers to send to a school in London. We were able to send a big box full of lovely flowers, the children being delighted with the idea.*

This tradition has carried on and every year the school as a whole and individual children help to raise money for a range of charities. Two examples are given below.



Helping OXFAM in 1984



Helping the NSPCC in 1992

Sometimes charity has to begin at home and we know that lots of things we have in school would not be there if parents and friends did not help us to raise the money. From the School Association Newsletter of Spring Term 1978

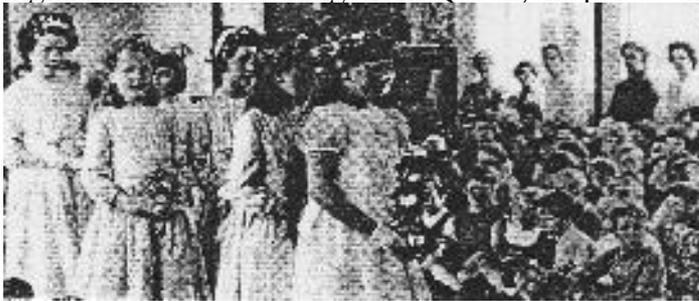
*The School Staff have been almost overwhelmed by the exceedingly generous support for the sponsored "Sum-in" and warmly thank everyone. As well as stimulating the children into greater effort for their arithmetic the project has raised over £550 for School Funds..... As well as raising £42, the Pantomime was a great success..... Warm thanks to Mr. Townsend, who arranged the concert by the Oxford Concert Brass....£27 was raised.*

Another great fund raiser was Mrs 'Peckham' Lane. For years she organised the "Sunny Smiles" collection for The National Children's Homes. It was very difficult to say "No" if you met Mrs Lane with a book of raffle tickets or a collecting tin and she help to raise money for many school projects. Many former pupils and parents will have vivid memories of Mrs Lane.

"Peckham" Lane slimming to raise money for the swimming pool



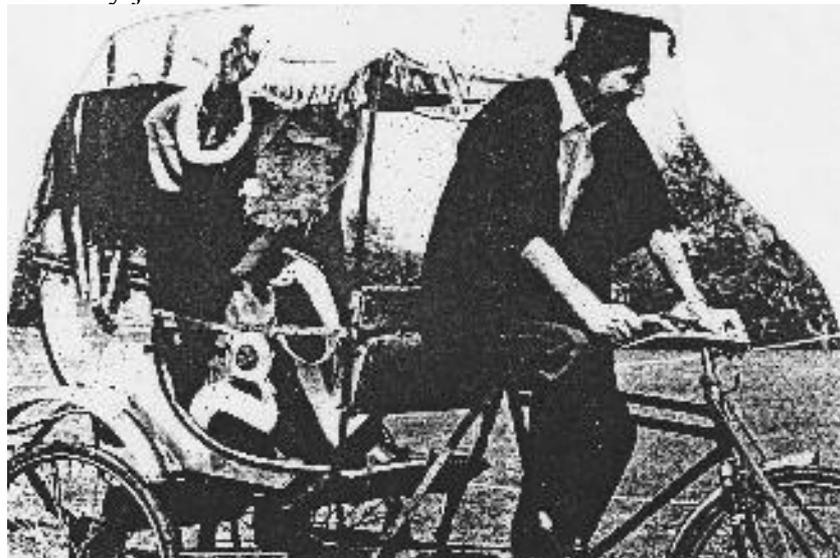
Mrs Lane always enjoyed the May Day celebrations, a tradition started at the school by Mr Baines. Through the years there have been many changes but the basic ingredient of the crowning of the Queen, the parade through the village and the



Ann Langford, the first May Queen and her attendants

country dancing have remained. At one time there were tumblers and mummers but demands of the curriculum and the interests of different teachers have influenced the changes, however, the Maypole remains central to the dancing and we have our Morris men again.

For a number of years the school has taken part in Eynsham Carnival ably led by its Headteacher who has entered into the spirit of the occasion in various guises. We also thought he was good as a rickshaw man at a school fair but said we preferred him to keen his day-job!



Mr Keates, the rickshaw man, School Fete, 13th June 1984

A date which is very important to us as a Group is 1987 when the first Junior History Group was formed and our first article appeared the next year in *Eynsham Record No 5*.

At the beginning of the Autumn Term 1987 eight children were chosen by the teachers for a project on local history research. They were Tom Pollard, Adam Hooley, Stuart Langston, Jenna Haskett, Kelly Langford, Hannah Osborne Nichola Hartigan and Peter Sonley. At that time an afternoon a week was put aside for the work and we made visits to the Oxfordshire Archives, then called the County Record Office and the Bodleian Library. We also gave our first talk to Eynsham History Group in the Spring of 1988. Peter Sonley went on to write his own article for the *Eynsham Record No.7* (an example he set for others) and during her time at Bartholomew School, Jenna Hasket gave a talk to Eynsham History Group about aspects of Eynsham during the Second World War.

Our group has produced other articles for The Eynsham Record and then in 1995 we produced the first edition of our own Journal *Good History* This came about when we were able to meet to include some boys and girls who had moved on to Bartholomew School. It was their idea and they made it happen.

We have continued our close association with Oxfordshire Archives and we are very grateful for all the help the archivists have given us. We have also made other interesting trips including the visit to the dig at Stanton Harcourt which we featured in *Good History No 6*

This review of the school since it was built in 1967 probably leaves out as much as it puts in. We are always pleased to hear from any one who has special memories of their time at this primary school. Although once again we are losing members of the Group at the end of the summer term, there are new members joining so that we hope to continue to be part of the history of Eynsham Primary School



Our school is a happy school.