

SCHOOL

Memories of Ewelme Schooldays

Tape 1 – Herbie Winfield

Attended from age 3 – headmaster 1921 Mr Quixley. No proper playing field – playground near Almshouses ash pit. 80-100 children attended Wallingford Grammar School. Herbie won a scholarship to Grammar at age of 13 (4 scholarships awarded a year) - ‘only way for village children to escape gardening/agricultural/house service circle’. Concerts and pantomimes held at the school.

Tape 2 – Edward and Beryl Justins

Attended 1926-35 – Mr Quixley headmaster. Very handy with the cane. Boys used to secretly burn his canes in the stove.

Lessons – religious education, maths and composition.
2 or 3 teachers with about 20 children in a class.
Remembers ‘Nitty’ Norah [Nit Nurse] and school dentist (treadle drill).
The Ewelme Scholarship – Edward’s sister won one.

Tape 3 – Doreen Reason

Attended 1929, stayed until 14 – headmaster Mr Quixley. Lessons were 3 R’s. Playing field/WC’s existed. Rounders for sports etc. Mr Quixley very handy with the can, hit across the face, even girls. Two other teachers. 3 classes, infants’ downstairs, 2 classes (Mr Quixley took intermediate upstairs). 3 weeks summer holidays they helped with harvest, stooking etc.

Tape 5 – Bill Standbridge

Four children attended village school – can’t remember headmaster’s name but George Cannon was the second one.

Tape 6 – Marjorie Miners

All her children attended. Headmaster Mr Quixley then Mr Jones. Wallace last child to win Wallingford Grammar Scholarship for day boy in 1944 – had to cycle there. Her daughter won a County Scholarship.

Tape 7 – Doris Chamberlain

Secretary of Ewelme School with Peter Sykes and then with George Cannon with whom she worked as a volunteer as she should have retired.

Tape 8 – Cynthia Winfield

Attended school from 1939. From Infants to 8 yrs were taught upstairs, divided by a curtain from 9-10 yr olds. Downstairs children from 10-14 were taught. Those who passed 11 Plus went on to Wallingford Grammar. Most got to the school by bike whatever the weather. They cycled across the airfield via Green Lane.

Tape 9 – Moira Calvert

Brother had a scholarship/exhibition from the school although he did not attend it but was a village resident. Mr Quixley the head. Moira attended St Anthony’s along with several other village children including those of Sir Claude Severne, the Gemmells and Barrington-Ward’s.

Tape 10 – Amy Reeves

Attended from 5 – 14 yrs old. Mr Herman followed by Mr Quixley. He was assisted by Mrs Minnie Harris who taught needlework, and Miss Walker. Prayers started the day, then lessons including games. Classes were large. They had sandwiches for lunch. Went to Wallingford Grammar (with Herbie Winfield) on a Ewelme Scholarship.

Tape 11 – Bill Edwards

Didn't go to village school as he moved to Ewelme in 1952 though connections with the village go right back before this time [1902 Edwards family bought Fords Farm].

The schoolmaster, Mr Herman was employed by the farmers to measure the ricks. The measuring technique used – a stone and string. 18d per sq yd for thatching. One rick cost £6. Mr Herman was thought of as a very good schoolmaster and was clerk of the Parish Council.

There was originally no playing field at the school but Lady Hambleton had given a field for the use of the school. [Elliotts Field].

Windows and figures [shields?] on school had been brought out and renovated.

Tape 12 – Mr and Mrs A Rowse

All four children went to village school – eldest now 51 started at age 6 – 8. David Jones headmaster then, followed by Roger Coles. Had 3 teachers. David Jones had been a Grammar school head so standard was high. Played football on playing field, probably Lady Hambleton's field. Stayed until age 8, school was part of village. RAF Benson sent a lot of children – especially officer's children.

When family came to village it was largely agricultural, working class. Very little transport after the war so all children naturally went to the school. Now every family has a car, have higher education and aspirations and look at a 2-teacher school and think it hasn't got the facilities. The whole nature and structure of the community has changed.

Thought it would be nice to have a playing field and Mr Rowse instigated it. It took a 10 yr struggle. Mr Rowse was chairman of the Parish Council at the time.

Tape 14 – Barrie Blakeley

All three children attended. His son from 6-9 yrs old and daughters from 5-8.

Tape 15 – Barbara Blakeley

Her 3 children attended at different times. Has known 4 head teachers. Mr Nicholson in the 1960's, Mr Sykes, George Cannon, David Price. Helped Mrs Nicholson with the Infants. Later taught history for a year with George Cannon. There are now 2 teachers, the head and another, but when her 2 children attended there were 3 classes. The third class was held in the annexe (formerly the curate's stable). At one time 60 pupils, 20 to a class. Many of the children were from farms around, farmworker's children and a few RAF children, as they had the choice of the Station or local schools. In 1990 Barbara was asked to write an information piece for RAF Benson, describing the school for RAF parents.

Ewelme school has a dip at the moment but it seems set to grow, we have just appointed a new headteacher, the first woman Wendy Jacobs. [1996] There is an extension forecast for RAF Benson which could produce pupils. Children should be encouraged to attend the school.

Lessons – there were big changes with the national curriculum and the 1989 Education Act when schools took over their own management for the finances. Had an effect on the governors because the head teacher had to manage the finances. Local management of schools –about 80% of the money needed to run the school was handed over to the management of the governors and now it is about 95%, so the Local Education Authority only administers a small % of the money. All the money comes from the taxpayer via the government and to the LEA in Oxford. Largest expenditure is on teachers' salaries.

The lessons have now been affected by the new National Curriculum before that it was basically the 3R's. Mr Nicholson was one of the most enlightened teachers she has ever met, an academic, and definitely inspirational. When she taught history for a year, she started with the Celts and went up to the Victorians.

New facilities ie playing field – the use of the piece of field that belonged to the Old Rectory. Lady Hambleton allowed the school to use it.

How are Governors appointed? There are 16 governors, some are foundation governors and these are people who represent the church side of things. 2 represent the diocese. 2 the Parochial Church Council, Ewelme Trust side. 2 represent the Exhibition and 2 the actual almshouses. 2 represent the Parish Council, 2 from the LEA, the Rector is ex-officio.

The Exhibition is a sum of money that the Trust keep to one side for educational purposes and any child of secondary school age who has this connection with Ewelme can apply if they are going on to a fee paying school or to a special school ie dance or music. They have to go to Christchurch, Oxford for an interview with 3 trustees (her son gained this and had to read the bible to the board). It was means tested. Believe it is now worth about £1,000 pa.. This also applies to children of Marsh Gibbon school.

Each Governor serves a term of 4 years. They had a former ODC Councillor Basil Deed. They are supposed to have someone to represent the business community and that is why Barbara Rowse is a governor. They have to have the whole of the community represented on the board of Governors.

Children went on to schools in Wallingford and Watlington. In the 1960's Icknield School built purposely for the catchment area before that most went to Wallingford.

Tape 16 - Kath Baker

Attended from 4 1/2 yrs to 11 (circa 1940-1951). Mr Quixley head. Other teachers Miss Walker. Three classes one downstairs and two upstairs. Lots of pupils as RAF Benson sent children and also evacuees.

Formal lessons, learned tables by rote and used blackboards. Pupils who did well at maths rewarded with a book. For art they usually drew the church, and their work was entered in the Flower Show. Lots of religious instruction by the vicar (Mr Jenkins).

There was a Bishop's Prize (Canon Vincent Strudwick. The prize was a book, no longer presented. Now the Ewelme Trust Grant) for the best RI student each year. Had a written exam. Last lesson on a Friday was the Head reading aloud a book, usually Wind in the Willows. Did not have 'fancy' lessons, swimming or cookery, just 3 R's. Did not pass 11 plus and went to Dorchester Secondary Modern by bus. Those who got the scholarship and went to Wallingford Grammar had bicycles supplied as no buses were provided.

New facilities ie playing fields/WC's – always had PT once or twice a week in the playground whatever the weather.

Played usual seasonal games, hopscotch, skipping and rounders on the Common. There was a sports field at the back of the New Rectory and a tennis court. Rector Ieun Williams dug it up and made a vegetable patch.

Tape 17 - George Cannon Headmaster 1971-1986

Came to Ewelme Christmas 1970 to take up post of headmaster. Mr Peter Sykes left in the summer 1970 and his wife carried on temporarily. She was not appointed as such. I took up post in January 1971. Came from Singapore (RAF School Changi) with 1000 pupils to school of under 89 pupils. There until Easter 1986, almost 16 years.

There were 89 children in 3 classes. Three classrooms as they used the old stable as a classroom for the middle class. An infant class in the lower room, the lower juniors in the annexe and the upper juniors in the top classroom. Newly appointed Mrs Sian Fussel (there 4 or 5 years) as the previous infant teacher left. The middle class taken by two ladies - had half time with them. They were Mrs Smith who lived in the house where Lady Jones now lives, her husband designed that house which won an award, the other was Mrs Teversham from Pangbourne. GC took older children.

Tried to keep numbers of infants to lowest level, 20+. The others 30+ had most in the upper room, annexe too small for more than 20 children. Mrs Tindall helped the infant teacher and was there until after 1986. Children came from Swyncombe, Cookley Green, Clacks Farm and the RAF and Fyfield. RAF personnel took a large part in running the school sports days. RAF did not have a school at that time.

Taught in old fashioned way, 3Rs and blackboard. Learned tables, spelling and hand writing formal grammar. Asked at my interview what I thought of Child Centered method of learning, this was the 'in thing' when I came. I retorted any teaching I did was 'child centered'. Almost blotted my copy book as the interviewer felt the concept was his 'thing'. Formal lessons, English and Grammar. Used to introduce children to books finished Friday afternoon with a story. New technology was coming in visual and audio. Had not got to the VCR yet but because GC had done so much teaching overseas was going to show children some slides. Got a projector and the children asked 'do they talk' - I said I shall do the talking. It was an indication of child's perception in what you saw and listened to. Children encouraged to read books. Individual projects - which got them into habit of researching, cannot research if you can't read. Kept a diary of books they had read and write a short resume. Encouraged to read books like Treasure Island, Black Beauty, old classics, I read to them, and tried to use the school library service which was excellent in those days. Librarian was kind and gave GC more than his quota for reading and research. The librarian would come in and choose 3 books and read excerpts and say I will leave these until I come next time, this sparked off interest in books as she read well. We fed children as much as we could.

History of village - the Infant teacher had infants up to 7 and I had them up to 11 so you had to be careful you couldn't plug the same history year after year. There had to be a gap but I felt I would be a complete moron if I did not teach them about history of this marvellous place. We are part of the history in the school.

Queen Mother came to visit RAF and came to see Lady Hambleden who was a Lady in Waiting. We were doing some history in the church when the Queen Mother walked in. Lady H introduced me to her. And the children spoke to her, very natural with them. By this time we had got up to Alice Chaucer's tomb and one of the children explained about the effigy and about the skeleton underneath. Another child tugged the QMs skirt and poked at the centre section and said "She's in there you know. And she looks like that" The burst out laughing. Lady H told me Queen Mother thought this funny and related it to the family in London who thought it was hilarious.

Teaching methods evolved over century - We have to remember that schooling provided by the Government had only been in situ for about 30 years. The 1870 Act and the emphasis was on the 3 R's. We have records of then of children being examined in School in Ewelme and the inspector would come and would take them for reading, writing and 'summing'. Punctuality and attendance emphasised. I am writing a brief history of the school and for the school.** Attendance important. Used as labour at home and on farms. Some of the older children left at 14 and girls went into service. Men found jobs locally and jobs in Oxford as industry developed. People were realising in the late 19th century that there were other things to study. Girls did needlework, boys gardening and woodwork. There was a Night School for woodwork, boys would come after work. Mr Franklin (big landowner) had 5 other people helping him with the youths. The headmaster was Mr Herman who came towards the end of the 19th Century and was a great innovator and was widening the idea of education apart from being just the 3rs.

Some had to pay for the schooling. Paid to come anyway to school about a penny or 2 pence for basic education. Had to pay to come to the night school about a penny. Gained an exemption if their attendance was good. Attendance mattered. Parents not penalised directly - but without the attendance figure the grant to the school was cut down and the teachers salary was cut down and materials reduced. Headteacher couldn't get his capitation and order as he wishes, had to submit to the managers and there is an occasion where inspector came and said children should write in books not on slates, so there had to be a special order, and ink was ordered by the gallon. Things changed. The curriculum changed maybe there would be an object lesson, a bird in a cage say, they would draw it, and examine it, write about it.

When I went into teaching there was a timetable of lessons, 10 minutes for roll call. Religious instruction was compulsory under 1944 Act, so long allocated for reading, maths etc. Day time tabled, in a sense you knew where you were. Gradually timetable disappeared and topic idea came in and something called Humanities - history geography covered a multitude of things and interwove. See the sense, life isn't compartmentalised, things blend together. I could go along with that. Timetable too restricting. Didn't use timetable in Ewelme, we did things by mutual agreement. Had to be elasticity. I used TV excellent programmes for children - sex education. I wrote to parents and had seen a preview so knew content. A baby was being born. I only had one person who said NO. I showed it to the other children. About 8 - 11 year olds. I used new facilities.

Dont know if Mr Sykes used timetable method. He produced the genealogical chart in the church. He did a great deal of Art.

Eleven Plus abolished so after Ewelme children would go to the comprehensive school in Watlington. I feel we were unfair to the bright children - we cared for those who couldn't achieve. A lot of time given to Slow learners. I always felt it was a mistake not to encourage those who were above average and could really get on given the chance. So several children sat for private schools around Manor School, Abingdon or Headington High School for Girls. Several sat for them and were successful except parents couldn't afford to send them there but there was an arrangement through the County whereby a bright child could be assisted by the County Advisor the child was allowed to leave the school and go on to the County.

When Education Act came in we had Primary Education, Secondary Education and Further Education. There were still Grammar Schools (Henley Wallingford) but this was replaced to the 3 tiers. We had comprehensive schools which sought to stream children, non-academic and academic and the academic would go on to Further Education. So at that stage 11 Plus phased out. I have had some successful pupils who did well. One won RAF scholarship and was trained for PPL and to go to University for Engineering Degree but he contracted ME and had to give up.

The School and the Church - Ewelme is an Aided School and was founded by a religious body. Aided schools still do and always did have a rather special privilege in the question of religion and religious knowledge. The aided school could teach according to its foundation. Ewelme a C of E school so we could teach according to tenets of C of E. Yes - Church always had a good part to play in the life of the school. Mr Herman (headmaster) was Choir Master and he and the Rector's daughter used to train the Choir. Many things held in school and in church. We went to church on Saints Days and the Rector would come and take one assembly a week. Always had a Nativity Play at Christmas.

Bishops Prize - Tied up with being a C of E school. Because you had this right of teaching according to beliefs and practices of the Church of England you could have inspectors from the diocese who would give a test to children to see if they had gone through the syllabus and how well they had done. Winner received the Bishops Prize. The actual giving of a prize had ended the year I arrived. I remember a priest calling on me from the Diocese and he came to welcome me to the school and he left a bible which was the last of the Bishops Prizes. I didn't know the boy it was for as he had left. Hard to win - questioned and recited passages from the scriptures had to show understanding of teachings of church - mainly for the older children.

Games - used to do football with the boys and get occasional help from Kevin Smith who had been a pupil - he spent time on Tuesday afternoon teaching them - we also played other schools Benson and Nettlebed. One day I couldn't find eleven boys to field a football team so we used Caroline Miners - we put her in football gear and she fastened up her hair. So we called her Fred instead of Caroline - and we won. Girls played Rounders and Netball (RAF Benson School). Tip and Run (which I played as a boy) it was a game between Cricket and Rounders. We went swimming, hired a bus to go - the whole school went to Turners Court and then Carmel College and we used the gymnasium there. Always someone provided by the County to put the children through the ASA Swimming Certificates and badges and had a mother who Mrs M Davey from Lower Farm she came and supported the swimming. Silver Bronze - life saving.

Why did interchange between village and RAF Benson peter out? Because they got their own school. Keeping our numbers up was important but we didn't like poaching, but on the other hand some RAF parents liked a small school like ours. We still get RAF children until almost within about 4 years of my leaving. They did decline obviously.

Mr Herman retired in 1926 after 30 years. Then Mr Quixley, I hear he was a strict disciplinarian and the cane was frequently on view and on bottoms. He tried to keep up the traditions and standards which Mr Herman had begun here. One day a man knocked on the door of the school house and said he was Mr Quixley's son and would I mind him looking at the school house where he had lived as a young boy. We took him up to a bedroom and he reached the latch on a level with his waist and said I remember the time I had to stand on tiptoe to open this latch.

Mr Coles was friendly with Rouses who had a lot to do with school.

Ghosts - Children expect a ghost in an old school. They would ask was I was scared if I worked alone here at night. Do you hear anything? I hear mice running about. Sometime after this a child brought me up something to mark. I did mark on the spot sometimes. I was teasing really. I said I will have to have a word with Joey about this. Work stopped. Joey? Who is this. I looked back at the beams and I said. Joey they dont know who you are? They all looked up at beams agog - I said I will have to introduce you. This is Joey but we cant see him. Can you show yourself. All right you are very shy. Anyway, they want to know more about you. And so we didn't pursue it any more after that. Every night after the school had finished we said a prayer before going home. Good afternoon boys and girls, good afternoon everybody, then someone piped up Good afternoon Joey. This became part of the ritual of going home after. No-one took it seriously. Although, when I was doing some research about the school, there is an old spiral staircase which is largely boarded up, and an inspector came at the beginning of the century and saw how dangerous they were and it had been reported a boy had slipped down and injured himself. I dont know if he died of his injuries but he did die. I told the children about this afterwards. One story my sister came to stay with my grand daughter in the school house, and my sister had come down for breakfast but Karen was dawdling upstairs. My sister asked what were you doing - 'I was talking to that little girl in my bedroom.'

Tape 18 - Brian Orpwood

The playing fields were called Elliotts Close. Sir Donald Somervell gave them. Lived at the Old Rectory. During the war they were ploughed up and he remembers laying them back to grass after the war. There was an air raid shelter – a dirt covered one.

Brian went to Wallingford Grammar from the age of 5! [sic] Reg Winfield ran a taxi service to take the children. At the Grammar from 1931-1940.

Tape 19 - Norah Hardwood

Attended school from 1917 from age 3 for 11 years until 14 yrs old. Mr Herman head followed by Mr Quixley.

Used a tray with sand in which to draw figures and letters. Chanted tables. Taught a lot of history and geography. Can't remember the type of reading scheme. Mr Quixley very concerned with handwriting and children spent much time practising. Cooking lessons took place in the annexe. She made macaroni cheese. Religious instruction. If you were Catholic, you didn't have to arrive at school until 10.30 am to miss religious instruction.

On Friday afternoons the boys played ordinary ball games on the Common as part of the curriculum and the girls played stoolball. This used a square board on a stand and was a mixture of cricket and rounders. Girls also skipped.

Suffered from asthma and spent a lot of time away from school. All went home for dinner. Tortoise stoves heated the school. Two upstairs and two in the bottom fuelled by coke. Caretaker, old Mrs Tanner stoked them – kept the school exceptionally clean. No lavatories – just buckets and no segregation of sexes.

Tape 22 - Lucy Tuckwell

Mr Herman headmaster and choir master, later Mr Quixley.

Tape 23 - Frank Godden

Went to school at age 5 – 14. Mr Herman head was a good one. Had 2 or 3 other teachers. Remembers practical lessons, carpentry and gardening, girls did needlework. Garden between school and Old Rectory. Mr Herman took carpentry. Frank went home to lunch and finished about 4.0 pm. Played football and cricket.

Tape 24 – Michael Gilbey

Went to the school at age 4 (1934). Mr Quixley a kind but strict disciplinarian. Very regimental in his approach. Marched boys 3 abreast with forks over their left shoulders up to the allotments. Said ‘plant deep, plant right, then they are sure to be all right.’ Very helpful to those who were academically slower. Put a lot of time into getting the less educated children forward. He sincerely loved Ewelme. If you were wrong you had the cane. Mick left school at Standard 7 which was the top class. Passed exams for the Grammar in Wallingford but his parents could not afford to purchase bicycles for the children to go.

Lessons – geography, history, RE, English, writing and arithmetic. Mr Quixley taught by rote and memory aids which he remembers to this day.

‘No Plan Like Ours To Study History Wisely’ eg

Normans/Plantagenets/Tudors/Stuarts/Hanoverians/Windsors.

‘English Cavalry Never Mount Nasty Nags’ eg Battle of the Civil War –

Edgehill/Chalgrove/Newbury/Naseby etc. He can still recite the cotton and wool towns and the northern rivers by rote.

Very strict religious instructions from the Rector – Mr Humphreys who used to go to the school in the morning and there were scripture lessons later in the day. All the children from Ewelme of his age would know more about religion than other children today. Believes emphasis on religious knowledge was beneficial for children and should be more today.

Mrs Scaldwell was the caretaker – the Gilbey children would go to school extra early and were given a sweet each to fill the coal scuttles for the stove. One cold wet damp days they were able to hang up their wet clothes on the fireguard so they wouldn't get colds and chills. A lovely old lady who lived a long time.

A teacher, Miss Walker he remembered with affection – she lived just past Greenways shop in the High Street. She never married or had men friends but was very kind and patient with the pupils. Gave more to the village than she ever took out of it.

In the war the boys and girls were issued with navy blue wool and they all knitted balaclavas, gloves and scarves, presumably for the Navy – so all boys taught to knit as well as girls.

Tape 26 – Lydia Benson

Bruce started about 1973/74 when Peter Sykes headmaster. He was succeeded by George Cannon. The Icknield School was twinned with Ewelme so Lydia built up bonds between the two schools. Ewelme children went there at age 11. Lydia was frequently in Ewelme School as an Icknield teacher and Ewelme parent. George Cannon headmaster, children taught self-discipline. George believed in strict discipline and taught children a love of learning. Children in rows with the 3Rs emphasised. Three classes - infants 5/6, then 7/8s were in the annexe. Rachel Cooley the teacher - George Cannon taught the 9/11s upstairs.

Lydia started there after retiring from Icknield in 1990 under David Price who was introducing the modern style method of teaching at tables and getting away from the by rote 3Rs methods. Only two classes then, 5/8 downstairs and 8/11s upstairs. Had 2.1 teachers. Lydia taught English, History, creative drama, music and RE and also specialised in children with special needs. David Price specialised in Maths and Science. Hardly any children went home for lunch because due to economic circumstances and changing attitudes most mothers now worked. Hot meals brought in containers from Benson School. Many children had sandwiches. No milk provided so all had to bring own drinks.

In the 60s and 70s discipline was excellent as the parents backed the teachers. However as the 80s and 90s progressed the children of the ‘60s’ parents many of whom had to work for economic reasons - then many children went home to empty houses with TV babysitters, many families never sat down and had a meal together, and some children began to run wild.

Many working mothers worked to send their children to private schools which became fashionable in the early 90s and it was mainly the incomers (in Chaucer Court) who sent their children to private schools.

However, the school was made up of mainly village children, some from RAF Benson, and some from Benson village (rather than go to the larger Benson school).

Tape 27 – Marilyn and Melissa Fletcher

Marylyn went to Ewelme School - Mr Coles headmaster. Very sport orientated. Played behind the new Rectory (1955) and the present playing field. At age 11 went to Icknield in Watlington. There were three teachers including the head. His class was in the annex, the upper school was with Miss Walker and Miss Lewis had the infants. Remembers the May Pole dance being encouraged by Miss Walker. Melissa went to Benson school.

Tape 28 – The Winfield Family

Richard attended School from 1955 – 1961. Mr Coles headmaster. Three classrooms used, annex in his last year. The quality of the school was better in his day. Better organised, three teachers and more discipline in those days and one knew where one stood. Teaches were easy going until you did something wrong and then you knew all about it. Mr Coles was seen in the village a year ago – a very old man.

The girls, particularly Rachel enjoyed their time there. The headmasters were George Cannon and David Price. Sarah, under Mr Cannon to begin with and then Mr Price enjoyed it but with some reservation. She did say that during her time classes became smaller and she felt she benefited as a result. Facilities at the school are much the same as they were other than the playing field, which was much bigger in Richard's day. Richard lived in the Martyns Way when he was at school and remembers one of his teachers lived in the village, can't remember her name, but she lived in Brian Orpwood's cottages up the road – now restored and individually owned.

The girls described the teaching styles of Mr Cannon and Mr Price as quite different. Girls went to play school in the Reading Room from 1980. When the new hall was being built Barbara Perriton offered the playgroup accommodation in her summer house.

Tape 29 – Alan Benson

George Cannon Headmaster. Lower Class and Top Class in main building. Annex. Desks around with 2 or 3 on a desk. Moved to different areas of room to do different things. Not formal rowed desks. Personal reading attention from outside helper. Coloured Pirate book readers. Cannot remember teacher's name. Mrs Blakeley? Teacher in Annex was Miss Cooley. 5-7 Lower Class Annex 7-8. The 9s –11s in top class. Went to school in 1974 - 1980. Had assembly every morning with Mr Cannon. Rector came once a week (Friday?) to take assembly with short sermon, biblically based.

Games - football, rounders on the field opposite.
Left at 11 to go to Icknield.

Mother working full time during this time. Mother left about 8.30 am to go to Watlington. Breakfasted together. Got to school and played before called in. Walked to school. Usually had a game of football after school until about 4.0 pm and arrive home about 4.30 pm. Mother back before 5.30 pm. Lunch at school. Brought in from another school - RAF Benson? Liked custard. Cannot remember price. Icknield School in Watlington - mother teacher there. Caused problems. Couldn't be trusted. Regarded as a 'snitch'. Often travelled on bus whilst mother went in car - to distance himself (in eyes of other children) from her position. Their experience used by a maker of TV programme Grange Hill to illustrate problems of child and mother being in same school. Henley schools did not have buses laid on.

Tape 30 – Bob Quixley 1

Mr Quixley, the schoolmaster, retired in 1949 aged 67. He had wanted to go to 69 to coincide with RQ finishing at Oxford University, but this could not be done. He retired to Cornwall. Bob remembers him at the age of 78 living in her home - he always had 1 or 2 Secondary school pupils who were struggling with some lesson, usually maths. In Looe there are many people who remember him and are thankful for the extra-curricular help he gave them.

Bob's sister Isobel was born in Cornwall in 1916 - (there was another daughter suffered oxygen starvation at birth and was very spastic). Isobel went to Wallingford Grammar and had such excellent results in Higher

Certificates that the Headmaster encouraged her to go to Reading University. Isabelle said it would be Oxford or nothing! Unusual for daughter of ordinary village schoolmaster. She was first girl from Wallingford Grammar School to go and certainly first girl from Ewelme [village] to go to Oxford University.

Bob followed her to Oxford in 1947 after going to Wallingford Grammar and Henley School. [Bob also had a year in Penzance Grammar during the war]. Before University he had a year teaching, unqualified and unpaid at Dorchester on Thames. April to September 1947 as an uncertificated teacher (paid!) at Watlington - Benson - Woodstock.

The 11 Plus - not called that it was the County Scholarship Examination. Age range of children at Ewelme was 5 - 14 (school leaving age). Those who didn't pass the 11Plus stayed at Ewelme until age 14. Only many years later RQ realised what had been going on in the school in accordance with the standards of education. Children joined the infants at 5 in the classroom downstairs and then at age 7 or 8 went upstairs to Miss Walker's class. Miss Walker and Mr Quixley worked very well together (she stayed at the School House initially). The two teachers taught two classes in the same room, and although there was a curtain rail across, RQ cannot remember curtains ever being drawn. Was not distracted by what was going on in other class. Young scholars who were sitting Scholarship Exam would take part in classes normally for the 13/14 yr olds, as a consequence of this when he went to Penzance and was asked by the headmaster what standard he had reached RQ said he could do simultaneous equations. The head didn't believe him and Bob had to prove it. *"It wasn't until many years later that I began to realise that Ewelme School was very good and there were some astounding things done."*

Miss Walker and Mr Quixley held arts and crafts classes, he remembers book binding, cutting cardboard covers, binding corners and spines and even embossing the lettering on the covers. Miss Walker had embroidery, sewing, smocking and knitting classes. The boys had a little bit of primitive woodwork. At a later stage the boys were taken to Dorchester School by bus once a week for woodwork and technical work - much later - probably when boys were 11/1-ish.

Interviewer Read in the Parish Records of 05/04/1905 pages 101, 102 and 103, that the scholarship exam was too hard for pupils of 11. (See Minute records under Scholarship).

Bob said - that was in the days of Mr Herman who retired in 1925 and preceded Bob's father. He lived in the area for some years and cycled around the district. He had reputation for great ferocity and RQ doesn't recall record of Ewelme School's entrants to Grammar School was particularly good in his day. In his fathers day a great many pupils went to the Grammar School. It led the County in terms of the numbers in proportion to the numbers of students in the school.

At a Harvest Festival Supper in the village hall about 1988 he was re-acquainted with Norah Harwood who remarked that Mr Quixley revolutionised education in Ewelme because he believed that education was for everyone not just for the children of rich families. She was quite insistent that 1925 was the beginning of the revolution in education in Ewelme. [Obviously an oblique reference to the problems earlier in century].

Mr Quixley had a reputation in [our interviews] for being very strict. Bob's wife said he was a very quiet, gentle man when she knew him, although he was in his later years then. He had been an Army schoolmaster in the UK and in India for most of his teaching career. Discipline would have been second nature to him.

George Cannon said he heard he was a disciplinarian and bearing in mind he was teaching children from RAF Benson he was in an environment that needed discipline.

Bob never saw him cane anyone except to smack them on the hand. Bob wondered if some of the stories [we] had heard were referring to Mr Herman. (Henry Justins interview refers).

Mrs Quixley said - must have been difficult there were village children, evacuees, service children with their fathers away.

Bob - cannot remember when 3 class arrangement started. Said there was a teacher Minnie Harris [GC said her son Herbert is still alive]. Miss Walker came in about 1932. Remembers having a celluloid penny

whistle and when she came into the school house to stay with the family he was hiding at the top of the stairs out of sight and piped "The Wearer of the Green" an RC Irish song and she was a Protestant. She was a kind person, kindness itself. Had beautiful handwriting, especially her 2's.

A typical school day. Ringing the school bell - the older boys regarded this as their prerogative and would take turns pulling the rope at the top of the stone stairs from 8.50 - 9.0 am. Started at 9.0 am first thing was to call the Register. Possible to see the church clock and the school was organised by simply looking at the church clock. Then morning prayers and a hymn and a short Bible reading. Mr Quixley took it. Always encouraged singing as he had a good bass voice. Miss Walker played piano. At approx 9.30 am always had mathematics first lesson as Mr Quixley believed children's mind were fresh then. Would have written maths and mental arithmetic - all liked to race and see who had answer first. Great fun. Playtime - about 15 mins. Infants 'little 'uns' played in small playground along side headmasters garden. Played chase, tag or more organised games. The girls played singing games. Bob spoke to Cynthia Winfield recently and suggested they record these songs. One song they sang has been used recently in a TV advert. They would sing and perform various movements, would hold hands, go around in a circle and back again. One girl or a boy would be seated on a school bench and a certain amount of teasing - one of the lines ran 'Let the boys say what they will, Johnny ? loves her still.' This was accompanied by shrieks of laughter and was all done to poke fun at any romantic interlude of the time.

Mid-morning snacks - nothing provided by school. In mid 30's they delivered milk and during the War it was a regular thing for children to receive 1/3 pt milk, probably provided by Reg Winfield.

Other games - What's the time Mr Wolf? Skipping games and lots of rhyming songs. Seasonal games, conkers in Autumn, in the Spring and Summer marbles or glass alleys, they were very big marbles with lovely patterns. Whipping tops came into the village shop (Mr Poupart's). Marbles was structured game and object to win other players marbles. Mothers made little draw string bags to keep them in so they wouldn't wear holes in pockets.

Cigarette cards very popular, great educational boon. Remembers John Players on Wild Flowers of the English Countryside, beautiful colour pictures, cowslips and buttercups etc. Recognises quite a lot of education came from looking at cigarette cards and learning from them. Lots of boys became avid collectors.

Whipping tops - and bowling hoops which were wooden and could be bought in the village shop. Some of the luckier boys had fathers who made iron hoops - probably discarded cart wheel rims. The stick to run that was 12 to 15 inches long with a little hook at the end of it so that the it could be stopped quickly.

George Cannon - remembered time Bob called at the School House whilst he was headmaster and asked to see the bedroom Bob had as a child (when he was about 10 to 21 when he finally left home). He remembers not being able to reach the Suffolk latch (with a spring).

Structure of the school day - After morning prayers it was always mathematics - when children got to the top classes it was not just arithmetic, but geometry and algebra and a very good standard was set. Bob remembers being taught simultaneous and quadratic equations - pupils couldn't avoid being taught what the older boys were being taught as there were 3 age groups in one class - standards 5, 6, 7 would cover age range of 11-14. Didn't find it distracting but exhilarating. Remembers boy called Bill Eyres (or Ayres possibly from Ewelme Down Farm) who was 14 and very good at maths, top of the school when Bob was about 11 yrs old. One particularly complex problem his father set and Bob was able to do it before the 14 yr old - very excited about that.

After maths lesson which would go from approx 9.30 to morning break at 10.45 (guess it would be English) or history or geography but then once a week we would have some form of General Science which would be inclined towards horticulture or agriculture, being the mainstay activities of the village. Art - drawing, painting and design work. Had special stippling sticks with patterns cut in the end to decorate panels to put on the book binding efforts. Girls did needlework, sewing, crochet and knitting. Gardening - one afternoon a week but in the busy summer period it could be more. Boys very good and grew excellent crops. School

garden was to the north west of the house, to the left of the path which leads up to the west side of the cloisters.

Lunch - When Bob was first at the school children brought their own sandwiches. Some children came from a long way - those from Green Lane had almost a mile to walk and in January or February there was frequently heavy snow. The Drewitt children came all the way from Clacks Farm past the Old London Road past the London Road Inn and the "KCB" (Keep the Countryside Beautiful) which ran through where Benson Aerodrome is now. The old men referred to this road as the Turnpike. The Hewitt children came from Ewelme Down Farm but they cycled. Walking those distances at 5 yrs old was quite a hike.

Eventually school dinners began during the War - the War revolutionised some things and the pattern of life changed considerably. As there was food rationing the Oxford Education Committee realised it was important for children to have good food in the middle of the day. It came in heated canisters from Benson school. Many of the children probably ate better as a result of the War than pre-war days. The rationing entitled them to butter, margarine and meat, maybe some of those items never appeared in the diet of the poorer children. Lunch break was probably from 12.0 midday to 1.15 and school finished at 3.45pm.

In the afternoon there was gentler activity scholastically, then drawing, painting etc was done. Friday afternoon was games afternoon, part of which devoted to real games where the girls would play netball and rounders and the boys would go into Elliotts field and play football or cricket.

Already mentioned importance of cigarette cards for visual information. [They provided clear illustrations at a time when colour in books, papers and magazines was comparatively rare]. Miss Walker and the teachers took interesting magazines like Teachers World and Pictorial Education. Children looked forward to arrival of these as Miss Walker would pin up the centrefold of the magazine and the children were fascinated at the ideas in pictorial form to enable her and others to develop the theme. There were nature study walks looking at things in the hedgerows - fortunate to have a broad base of catholic interest in the way children were educated at Ewelme.

Religious education undertaken by teachers (not the vicar!) when RQ was teaching at Dorchester and then Watlington as unqualified and unpaid he took RE. At Watlington Mr Day the headmaster gave him a guide book of what should be taught and each day there was a small section of biblical text with explanation.

George asked if there were other teaching aids such as a gramophone, magic lantern or film strips. Bob couldn't remember that - "chalk and talk" and picture diagrams were the primary teaching aids. There were 2 staircases in the school - a wooden staircase Mr Quixley did not like used as it was so noisy - the children used the stone steps which are worn down in the middle by the hobnailed boots of the children. On the glazed balcony at the top of the wooden stairs there was a large cupboard with two glass doors which contained teaching aids - the next of a weaver bird, a stuffed blue jay, the first fossils he saw and there were 'thunderbolts' which were sausage shaped, rusty brown affairs and it was after when Bob studied geology he discovered that they were iron pyrites nodules that came from the chalk pits adjacent to Ewelme common.

No radio in the school - the village didn't have electricity before the War. In the school they had oil lamps - in handsome big brass lamps suspended - shades which were dark blue on the outside and white inside and shaped like a large mouthed bell. Suspended over the lamp was a huge wrought iron hood with an iron ring around and the lamp sat in the bottom. They had to be trimmed and cleaned every day during winter. They were not very often used as school tended to finish before it got very dark. Fires - in tortoise stoves - big boys were allowed to fetch scuttle of coke and coal - considered a great distinction only for the senior or next to senior boy could do it.

Numbers of children in the school? Continued to grow especially in the War with evacuees and RAF Benson children and children of those who came to work there. As the reputation of the school grew others would make excuses to send their children to Ewelme, although the Education Authority disapproved. There were about 120 maximum RQ remembers. This was an age range to 14/15. George Cannon said there were 87 when he took over in 1970. (An age range to 10/11).

Tape 31 – Lizzie Winfield – (Interviewed by George Cannon)

Mr Herman's first wife died then he married one of the teachers –

Alice Harmer her father lived in Cloisters.

We did have different teachers, [they] came from Wallingford.

What time did bells ring –

Quarter to nine and nine o'clock.

Twice then. By a monitor or the headmaster?

No, the boys used to take it in turns.

What was the school heating and lighting like?

Fires in the grates and then stoves were put in.

You had grates.

Yes fires in the grates upstairs and downstairs and then they put stoves in.

What about lighting?

Lamps hanging down on iron rods.

They are still there in the top classroom.

We had curtains to separate the classes.

How many classes?

Two different sections upstairs. A line of seats all down that top room, just room to walk through between the seats.

Can you remember the old iron desks. What were they like to sit on?

They weren't bad they used to get a bit hard sometimes.

How many of you sat on them? The desks were about 9ft long?

I think there were five in a seat. We went by numbers and my number upstairs was 86 girls without the boys.

You had infants downstairs and upstairs you had 3 classes. So that meant you had 3 teachers upstairs? Can you remember any names?

Mr Herman - Miss Hewitt from Wallingford - they used to come out from Wallingford, mostly from Wallingford.

What lessons did you do?

We started with scripture first thing in the morning that was until quarter to 10. Then afternoons it was mostly sewing for the girls - the boys used to do drawing and gardening.

Was there any PT - or anything like that that the boys did?

Well, we used to do drill in school - every day.

What sort of things did you do?

Well, all sorts of things - up and down. We used to have exercises.

Were you in lines?

Yes.

You did that every day that's interesting. Can you remember the Inspector coming to school, what happened then?

Well, he just examined our books, looked at them, that was all. Mr Herman didn't used to like him coming.

Did the Inspector ask you questions? Was Mr Herman there in the classroom?

Oh yes, sometimes but the Inspector didn't do a lot of talking to the children.

What sort of things did he do?

He used to come with the Register and talk to Mr Herman. He didn't ask any questions.

I was going to say you had 2 kinds of inspector - His Majesty's Inspector and also the Diocesan Inspector who came to examine you for scripture.

Yes, that's right. My brother had the Bishop's prize 2 or 3 times.

He just asked questions too did he? What sort of things did you have to prepare for him to come?

We didn't make any preparations - he just would appear and ask questions on religion and that was it. We had to be able to say the Collect. We said it every day. We had prayers every morning and hymns.

Where was the piano?

There was one upstairs and one downstairs.

And Mr Herman was a good musician I understand.

Yes, he was a good headmaster. He was there all the time I was there. Very strict he was I was there with him just at the beginning and then it was Mr Quixley..

You don't remember Mr Quixley do you Granny?

No, I was not at school with him, I had finished. Mr Herman was all right - very happy in the village.

He was Parish Clerk whilst he was headmaster. What were his duties?

Mr Herman used to collect rates and that sort of thing.

Mr Franklin he used to come around the school to see if the attendance's was all right. I will tell you an incidence about a cousin of mine. WE had a cousin who lived up at Fawley and she had a weeks holiday from school so she came down to us and of course our school was open, and she didn't come to school. He happened to see her and he came to my father on the Friday and said 'I understand you have got a girl staying with you - she hasn't been to school.' Dad said, 'Oh yes, that's right, she is on holiday.' Franklin said 'She is in our jurisdiction and she must come to school - you will send her to school Monday wont you?' 'No,' Dad says, 'she is going home Sunday.' He was very domineering. I can just remember him.

Tape 32 - Bob Quixley 2

Railings in front of school - were they taken away for the war? Can't remember. Old photographs of the school classes might show it.

Where were the old toilets? Mrs Scaldwell cleaned them. Main door of school on ground level at north-western end, big double doors which were the original west doors of the church. South east end where playground is, lavatories were underground. Down in the underground section - if you think of lower playground as being at ground level. If you go out of the door at the end of those classrooms nearest common there is a passageway and the infants and girls lavatories were in that section and the boys used the opposite side, nearer to the cloisters, also down the steps. Fairly primitive earth closets, but there was a drain from there - don't know where it went to. There were lavatories in the cloisters in two small blocks the sewer pipe went down into the far end of the playground and the manhole cover and there was a holding tank. In pre-war days there was an emptying of that on Friday evenings. Postman Shepherd one of men responsible for emptying sewage from there. Wheeled up to common and buried in a pit adjacent to allotment gardens up there.

Tape 33 - Bob Quixley and Brian Orpwood (Interviewed by George Cannon)

GC You left in 1949. The 1944 Act had come in, schools had the option of becoming aided by then and it meant a lot of renovation work to be done. Was that done in your father's time.

RQ I don't remember a lot of renovation in the last few years we were here.

BO I remember the toilets had to be done.

GC When they built the new ones I expect. The photograph in the Exhibition with two clerics - one is St Clair Thomas and the other is the Bishop of Oxford and the occasion is when the work had been completed sometime in 1950s and they had a little ceremony and it was now an aided school. It has occurred to me your father might have started the work.

RQ I have no recall of that at all.

BO They used to empty the lavatories and take it up opposite the playing field and bury it up there. Perce Tuckwell and Harry Shepherd used to do it on a Friday night.

GC I imagine then this work was done after your father left. The new toilets, boys and girls cloakroom under one roof. All been part of the necessary improvement to get the school the aided status. The aided school is responsible for the main outer fabric of the school and the County will look after the inside. The County would pay for the cloakrooms and kitchens to be installed.

BO Mr Jones and Mr Coles came after his father.

RQ Mention is made of the new building in the headmasters garden grounds. I was looking and it strikes me some buildings have disappeared. The lavatories for the almshouses have gone.

GC They were demolished when the renovations took place. There were interior toilets built. They have cut away some of the garden and will build two classrooms. The old mortuary will be the power house for heating. The wash-house has disappeared. Two classrooms will run parallel with the main building going down almost to the wall. The almshouses on one side will look down onto two classrooms about 5 - 6 m away.

Tape 34 - Carole Allen

School - I absolutely adored. Miss Coombes was the infants. Miss Walker and Mr Quixley. He was a retired Indian Army teacher. What he didn't know about India was no ones business He gave me a love of India ever since. I adored it.

At 3.40 pm every day we sang a hymn - "The day thou gavest Lord is ending". I used to look out the window on my left and see the church clock. There was a magic stone outside the window which was reputed to get up and roll. The stone was at the bottom of the path.

I remember Miss Coombes was a very pretty infant teacher and when we had concerts in the Reading Room one of the pieces was White Christmas. She sat on a log with a Christmas Card in her hand and people sang in a semicircle behind her. Many years later my year 11s and 12s did a similar thing and I told them where the idea came from. I think they thought I was Methuselah. I was always dragged into the history lessons with my stories and being an evacuee. In fact I used to get worried when I was invigilating GCSE's as I opened the history paper to have a look at it and I used to think Good Lord I can answer these questions from memory.

One funny incident I remember in Ewelme School when we hadn't been there very long. One of the boys had pinched someone's hat on the way home from school. Mr Quixley was querying him and the boy stood up and he said - 'Please Sir, I gived it him when I goed home.' I thought this was really very funny.

Sports - I remember the cricket matches. We all had to play cricket. Peggy Drewitt was very good at it. I can still draw a map of India as well East Ghats, West Ghats and the Himalayas across the top. Mr Quixley gave me a love of geography and of course I did become a geography teacher, geography and maths.

Tape 35 - Eric Knowles, Wallace and Marjorie Miners

Mr Quixley had wonderful little sayings as memory aides - English Cavalry Never Rode Nasty Nags - to remember the battles of the Civil War. He encouraged boys to learn a trade, save money and go abroad. Do something useful and go and see how the other people live. He was marvellous.

Tape 35 - Eric Knowles, Wallace and Marjorie Miners

Wallace was 9 in 1942. Eric sat in the same seat at School for 3 years. Miss Walker lived next door to Fred Greenway. Miss Coombes came later.

Written Interview 39 – Gillian Jenkins (nee Biggs)

Gillian Biggs, born 1939. Father at RAF Benson. Went to the school in 1947 to 1950.

Headmaster Mr Quixley then Mr Jones. Other teachers Miss Walker and Miss Coombes.

Remembers –Mr Quixley rapping her knuckles for inattention. A curtain dividing 2 classes upstairs. Milk being warmed round iron fire (wood burning) Learning tables by heart – much appreciated later. Being House Captain of Suffolk House (blue) with Maurice Kent. Other Houses Chaucer and de la Pole. Winning the girls 80 yards sprint. Seeing TV for the first time at the Headmasters house – Mr Jones. Going to Mr Greenways shop for Horlicks or Ovaltine tablets instead of sweets. Gareth? Jones in her class (son of Mr Jones Headmaster) Passed 11+ then moved to Watford. Still has a peg bag made in Miss Walker's class. Still in use but many times repaired.

Gillian sent the 1947 First School Sports Programme and one from 1950 which are in the Archive.

Remembers one of her prizes for winning a race was The Adventure Book for Boys!

Written Interview 40 – Peter Townsend

Peter Townsend was one of Mr Quixley's pupils who joined the school in 1938 and was thus one of the first children to come from RAF Benson.

“I came to Benson with my parents in late 1938 or early 1939 when the aerodrome was first opened. In fact, building was going on the whole time we lived there. My father was then a sergeant in the RAF and we were the first occupiers of one of the newly-constructed married quarters. I was nine years old. I attended Ewelme School along with, perhaps six or seven other children living in the quarters; no officers' children attended the school. They lived at the opposite end of the camp and we never saw or played with them.

Going to school entailed a walk along the country road [now Green Lane] from the camp with wild roses in the hedgerows, passing over a bridge then turning right at the inn with allotments on the right, passing the paper cum grocery shop on the left with the watercress stream on the right, past the Manor and the Queen's [sic] pool and so to school. The alternative route was across the fields to the wooded lane that ran down to the school, I recall once finding a plover's nest in that field. We always went to school unaccompanied, although my father had a Singer 9 car I was never driven to school nor were any of my friends. Roads then were practically free of traffic.

At school I was in a class with a lady teacher but was sometimes taught by the headmaster, (Mr Quixley] I remember we did a certain amount of science in that I recall putting earth in a jar with water and seeing it breakdown into the constituent parts. We took our lunch to school but instead of milk we were given Horlicks to drink. We had games in the field opposite the school, and played in the schoolyard. On Mayday we danced round the maypole after weeks of rehearsal.

I belonged to the Cubs and sang in the Church Choir. The church always had a pungent smell as there was an iron cauldron near the church door with boiled liquid giving off fumes to stop the deathwatch beetle. There was a garden fete in the rectory next to the church, I remember, with boys from the reform school near Wallingford performing athletic feats.

It was a very happy time for me, my grandparents lived in Shiplake and we frequently visited them for the weekend. The song for that summer was 'South of the border down Mexico way'. But September 3rd 1939 ended the idyll. Once war was declared my father was posted to France with the Squadron and we had to leave Benson within a week or so. I never did get the class prize I had won!”

(Peter's memoir is interesting in its record of the iron cauldron by the church door to deter the deathwatch beetle! I wonder when the beetles were finally overcome and the cauldron removed. I mentioned meeting Peter to Carole Allen nee Knowles (she and her brother Eric were also Service children at the school during the War). She remembered a boy shooting an air rifle from across the brook, and thought his name was Peter Townsend. The pellet went through the hood of a pram containing the infant Jennefer Miners, an incident also recalled by Marjorie Miners. However, for the record, Peter confirms he was definitely NOT the culprit and certainly chronology seems to have removed him from the school by the time of that incident!)

Tape 41 - Herbie Harris

School – attended under Mr Quixley who was more suitable for teaching men than children. He was in Army school master and a disciplinarian. But he seemed to get results. Friends in school were characters –

John Winfield, Dore Winfield's son. Harry Walkin and Arthur Walkin, Olive West a builders daughter, her father used to do work at the Almsouses. I remember Lizzie Cherrill, Miss Moss (teachers). Lizzie sister to Mr Cherrill the carter. Charlie Carter was also a carter. Mrs Tanner used to clean the school from time to time. School Days – stayed here until aged 14. Straight to apprenticeship in Dorchester. We used to go there in an old Bean Coach belonging to Harry Aldridge just for woodwork on a Monday.

Were you involved in school gardening?

Not during the war - Which part of the site did they garden - triangular garden at the back of the old carpenters workshop (where Mr Herman used to teach the boys woodwork. Herbie has a bookshelf made by his grandfather Herbert Winfield in his almshouse) which they now use for teaching – called the annex now – [formerly the Curate's Stable]. There was a path from the school and iron railings and a path and a triangular piece for the school garden was between there and the Nurses Cottage. I don't remember a well. I left school in 1937. I went to Dorchester.

The Quixley's - George Cannon said - Bob Quixley came to the school to visit and went upstairs to the bedroom where you have to go up a step and had to he said I remember when I could hardly reach that latch. He is now 73. Herbie was 7 or 8 when they first came to the school.

Herbie remembers Isobel Quixley – they used to call her Bel. Peggy was the other girl but a bit handicapped. Something went wrong at her birth.

File 42 – Eileen Mencarini –

Eileen stayed in the village from 1939 to early 1946. She attended the Ewelme School throughout this period with Mr Quixley as her Headmaster, or 'Boss' as she called him.

File 46 – Derek Robinson

Ewelme School and Subsequent Years. - Mr Coles was headmaster and the teachers were Miss Coombes and Miss Walker. Education was very much different than today. Miss Coombes was my first teacher, I remember her as being young and very attractive. Miss Walker would teach the older children and was a very strict and disciplined. Nature Walks were part of our education and after a lengthy period up and around Ewelme Common we would draw, paint and describe what we had seen. On some of these walks we came across rabbits infected with Myxomatosis, which was a man-made virus developed to control the rabbit population in Australia. As children we were horrified with what we had seen. After some decline the rabbit population developed a resistance and has since recovered. Maypole dancing was a standing tradition for the School and would often be a feature of the frequent village fetes. As a junior I was member of the percussion band and what a racket we used to make – it must have been difficult to keep a straight face as a listener. School milk was delivered by Mrs King and in winter would become frozen. We would bring it inside and place by the coke stoves to thaw out before mid-morning milk break. The birds always pecked the silver tops on the milk. The coke stoves were regularly topped up by the teacher, and were guarded and would glow red. School Church service was held every Friday morning. The routine daily assembly was triggered to the sound of the Ting Tang Bell and took place on first floor of the main building. Listening to School Radio broadcasts was part of our education. On some evenings Mr Coles would set up his projector to show movies, which were watched by village folk before television was a feature of every home. During the early days at Ewelme Primary School my academic progress was somewhat static. I expressed myself in my paintings and drawings – the School encouraged this and much of my work was put on display some - of it was shown in Oxford. Up until the age of 9 years I failed to realise the importance of learning and would not be told. A long period away from School was to follow. On my 9th birthday I was taken into hospital for what was initially diagnosed as Polio, though subsequently 7 days later was diagnosed as Osteomyelitis in the left hip. I was hospitalised for 6 months and my father would visit by cycling to the Winfield (now called Nuffield Orthopaedic) if no other transport available. After my 6 months hospitalisation and 7 months away from School, the realisation that I was well behind my friends educationally kick-started me. At this point I could hardly read or write. My subsequent progress was very good with full encouragement from the School.

Written Interview 48 – Valerie Tee White

From 1947 to 1952 my family was stationed at RAF Benson. I attended Ewelme C of E for two years before continuing on to Wallingford Grammar School. I was encouraged to participate in the Girl Guides in the village as well as the church choir, where I sang for about 5 years. Rev. Kenneth Jenkins was vicar at that time. Mr. Fred Greenway (local grocer)) was instrumental in my participating in village activities!

Mr Quixley rapping my her knuckles for inattention. A curtain dividing 2 classes upstairs. Milk being warmed round iron fire (woodburning). Learning tables by heart – much appreciated later. Being House Captain of Suffolk House (blue) with Maurice Kent. Other Houses Chaucer and de la Pole. Winning the girls 80 yards sprint. Seeing TV for the first time at the Headmasters house – Mr Jones. Going to Mr Greenways shop for Horlicks or Ovaltine tablets instead of sweets. Gareth? Jones in her class (son of Mr Jones Headmaster). Passed 11+ then moved to Watford. Still has a peg bag made in Miss Walker's class. Still in use but many times repaired.

I remember winning top prize at sports day either 1946 or 1947 and have a couple of photos doing the high jump, with my dress tucked into my knicker legs! I also have a photo of me walking away with the large trophy after having it presented by Rev. Jenkins.

Dr. Quixley rapped my knuckles with the ruler once for not doing a good job in drawing! I recall my mother actually requesting a conference with him over the incident! I was not in either Mrs. Coombes class (she taught the infants downstairs), or Miss Walkers (she was the other side of the curtain from Dr. Quixley). Also bunked off school one afternoon, having had a doctors appointment and was too embarrassed to take the note in to Mr Quixley. Hid behind the Gym on RAF Benson and was ratted on by Alan Filer as he walked home from school and noticed me there, so ultimately had to face a rather severe lecture from Mr. Quixley and my parents!

Worst memory was the terrible outdoor toilets - wooden seat with a bucket a frighteningly long way down underneath it. The odour was, to say the least, pungent!

Favourite memories of life in Ewelme were balancing on the narrow boards across the watercress beds; climbing on the thatched roof of the guide hut; participating in the annual pageant; learning to ring the church bells and swinging on the ropes (when the verger wasn't looking!), cycling into the village for hot bread right out of the baker's oven and riding around in a rather antiquated bus carol singing outside lovely, large homes and being invited in for a hot drink and mince pies. I also recall an article being written about the choir in a national magazine - Picture Post - or a Sunday supplement - can't remember which. BBC broadcast one of our church evening services and Richard Dimbleby came to the village to interview some of the prominent villagers and play their favourite music on the radio, during the years my family were at RAF Benson.

Two of my good friends who lived in the village were Jennifer Miners and Jenny Townsend who lived next door to each other in Watercress Cottages, in the middle of the village. Jennifer also married an American and lived in New York, but spent every summer in Ewelme. She sadly died in her 40's of a rare form of cancer and is buried in the cemetery behind the church. My husband and I visited her grave about six years ago during a vacation in England.

49 – Mick Phillips – written memoir on Frith website – August 2007

A pupil from RAF Benson married quarters. Attended in 1957 aged 10. Mr Coles was the headmaster and Miss Walker was my class teacher. We were 9 and 10 year olds in the upstairs room and the younger children were taught downstairs by a Miss Lewis, who got married around that time to someone from RAF Benson.

I remember Miss Walker being presented with some flowers at assembly one morning by Mr Coles to mark her 25th year at the school. She was a rather serious Irish lady in her fifties who rapped my knuckles for not understanding fractions and read to us from Wind in the Willows on Friday afternoon. I remember were Richard Rowse who took me to his home after school one day to show me the bees his father kept. That seems to have been a good idea as I believe he is now the Managing Director of Rowse Honey, a major company in the area and trading on an international level. Albert Crockett, David Reeves, Geoffrey Hutchinson and Tony Munday were local lads I believe and Graham Gladding, Peter Hayes, Roger Setterfield, Robin and Derek Prior, Michael Reynolds and Raymond Jalland all had fathers in the RAF as I did.

I have been back a couple of times with different wives over the past fifty years and the magical quality is that very little has changed. On a quiet Sunday afternoon with only the school building and no cars or people to give a reference to the decade, I could easily have been ten years old again.

Interview 50 – John Nicholas Light

The headmaster of Ewelme School in those days was a Cornishman named Mr Quixley. He and his wife were doing their bit for the war effort. We were not ‘official’ evacuees from the blitz on the naval dockyards which enveloped Portsmouth, but they took in my mother and her two small boys as lodgers. I had an uncle at RAF Benson and he must have found us a place to go. Mr Quixley might well have been near retirement age, and if it wasn’t for the war may have been back living in Looe. Mrs Quixley was an elegant grandmotherly figure who had great vitality and enthusiasm for life. They had three children aged between mid-twenties to about twelve. My second road into music came through their second daughter.

I happily recall the lovely Isobel who only appeared infrequently because she was in the RAF, a WRAF officer, and came home for weekends from time to time. *“Isobel will be home today,”* was always said with delight by Mrs Quixley and received with excitement by me. The particular scene that comes back to me is in the Quixley’s living room which we seldom entered. Mr Quixley is sitting quietly in the shadows in a corner of the room; Mrs Quixley is proud and central. My mother has Richard, my little brother on her knee. I’m sitting beside them very still. It is dusk and I know nothing about the realities going on all over Europe and the world. The shadows here are warm and in some way mysterious. At that age I couldn’t have known the idea of ‘the romantic’ but this is what I experienced. I’m transported into another world. Isobel is playing the grand piano; Schubert I’m sure; certainly Beethoven. I wonder if she always ended with a Brahms Lullaby especially for me because I loved it so much and it was near my bedtime?

File 51a/b – Julie Evans and June Evans Sawyer

Mr Quixley was Headmaster of the village school and Miss Walker the only school mistress. Miss Walker taught 5-10 year olds down stairs, whilst Mr Quixley taught the 11-14 year olds upstairs. My sister Pat attended the senior school and my daughter June had her introduction to school life with Miss Walker.

Interview 52 – Margaret Robins McCurley

I joined Ewelme Church School – reputed to be the oldest [Primary] school in England – beautiful buildings – Church, Almshouses co-joined to the school. Mr Quixley was our headmaster together with two other staff – ladies whose names I no longer remember. The upper room was divided by a heavy curtain and held two classes; the lower room was for the infants and doubled as the dinner room. Mr Quixley was very strict and pretty scary. He had been a Colonel in the Army and had taken to teaching after his retirement. The winter was 1947 – one of the coldest we were every to experience. Snow fell before Christmas and remained until February. The five barred gate at the end of the drive disappeared – we just walked over the top! I was still attending Ewelme School, riding the three miles each day on my bike [from Benson]. Impossible while there was several feet of snow, so I pushed it. Arriving at school - it was deserted. Mr Quixley, the headmaster, called out from the top of the stairs ‘What are you doing here Margaret Robins? There’s no school today – go home.’ The walk back home seemed endless and it was so cold, I almost collapsed in the kitchen after mum asked my why I had come back home. She bundled me into bed with a hot water bottle and a cup of cocoa.

Interview 53 – Gill Owen Falconer

I first attended Ewelme School when I was about six. My father was stationed at R.A.F. Benson and he managed to arrange for my mother and me to stay at the school house with Mr. and Mrs. Quixley until he could find us more permanent accommodation. I remember being quite overwhelmed by the school building – it seemed huge and dark to me and the vast school dinners (usually stew) were also beyond my capacity!

We soon moved to a bungalow opposite the London Road Inn on the other side of the airfield (I don’t know if this still exists) which was run by the Parkers. So I used to have to walk down the lanes to school with my mother or the Parker children. It was a lovely walk through cornfields and wild areas with lots of rabbit warrens but rather a long way for a six year old to walk twice a day.

I remember thinking my teacher (can't remember her name but she is in the 1944 photo) [Miss Coombes] was the most beautiful person I had ever seen but I also remember being very afraid of Miss Walker who sometimes taught us.

In the summer we loved to play in the field opposite the school, making daisy chains and having races.

I returned to Ewelme School in December 1948 when I was ten years old when my father was again posted to Benson. I lived in married quarters on the camp this time and came to school by bus with other children from the camp, among them Jean Maurice and her brothers Derek and David.

I was just in time to take the 11+ exam – quite a shock for me as I had spent the previous year in Singapore and had never heard of it. However to my great surprise I passed as did my friend Jean. We were in Mr. Quixley's class which was quite an experience. When we wanted to go to the toilet (down the stairs, along the bank to a door in the wall) we had to say "*Please Sir, may I have your permission to vacate the premises temporarily*"!

I remember coming in from play on lovely sunny days to see, to my horror, the blackboard covered in his beautiful copperplate writing – maths problems, how my heart sank. On Friday afternoons as a treat we could get out of a cupboard some very battered books, including Palgrave's "Golden Treasury", and also choose some songs from a book of traditional songs, like "*Early One Morning*" and "*Golden Slumbers*". Apart from these "leisure" activities we worked very hard and achieved a good grounding in basic skills.

Jean and I left in the summer of 1949 and went as boarders to Brackley High School in Northamptonshire as our parents wanted us to have a settled secondary education which was not possible with all the moves entailed in RAF life. Jean and I are still in touch and she is my eldest son's godmother.

Ewelme gave me a feeling for history and continuity which has stayed with me all my life since.

File 56 – Philip Cleverley

I survived two teacher, Miss Lewis, young, very nice lady, married whilst I was at school, and the other teacher was Miss Walker, who we called Fanny, she was the one everyone feared. I do remember learning to write in italic's in Miss Lewis's class, and we all purchased italic fountain pens

File 57 – John Cleverley –

Ewelme School, we were allowed to take a look around because Carol was with us, and the fact that I had been a pupil there. As it turned out, it was somewhat an emotional experience for me, because I had enjoyed being in the school. We had a look at the bell which is I am told still rung on a daily basis, I think by one of the pupils. The best bit of the school visit I think was looking into the room where we used to eat our school meals, because I still have a photograph of my self sitting in that room and eating school lunch, and when I went through the door it felt great. I went to Dorchester School between 1954 and 1958 when we left Ewelme.

File 58 – Aubrey Gilbey

School – Mr Quixley headmaster with Miss Walker and Mrs Harris. Fine gentleman Mr Quixley, excellent school master but quite strict, he had been in the Army, used to mimic our Oxfordshire accent and say "I will loirn you!" A fair man and honest man and used to play football with us, we used to try to trip him up. We had to share the top classroom. Mr Q had a dais with a desk on, about a foot high so he could keep an eye on us. My friends were Laurie Luker and Geoffrey Young and an evacuee called Joe from Orpendon. We used to climb the oak tree at the top of the hill and crawl along the boughs over the road and drop acorns on people passing underneath. We started school at 9.0, went home for lunch and finished at 4.0. In 1939 a lot of evacuees came from St Saviours in Paddington, London and were put in the upper class – 12 and 13 yr olds, but they were so backward compared to us. The last 4 or 5 months I was at school, myself, Geoff Young and a couple of girls had to try to bring the evacuees education up. [The Paddington evacuees did not stay long as Ewelme was considered unsafe!]

I didn't want to leave education and I could have gone to Wallingford Grammar but my father couldn't afford to send me with the uniform and sports equipment needed. So I left school at age 14 – didn't go back

after the Xmas term at the end of 1940. Mr Quixley said if I wanted to go back to evening classes I was most welcome so I did until I was about 16 2 or 3 evenings a week.

File 60 – Keith Wheatley

I went to the village school in the Lower Class which was run by 2 ladies, the upper class was run by the Head Master who I cannot remember meeting. My cousins being older than me and were in the Upper class and I believe June went on to Wallingford Grammar. I was taught how to knit and sew (which served me well in later life). I still have a scissor case I made. A smattering of French and some Greek Mythology. I doubt however, if Greek Mythology is still a subject? Looking back I wondered why Greek mythology was taught, although I have found it useful on occasion. The serious work was done ‘upstairs’ and I believe the school had a very good pass rate for Wallingford Grammar.

I didn't know the teachers names, universally all lady teachers were known as 'Miss'. [Lewis and Walker] Opposite the school was a field which had a set of swings, probably gone as an Elf 'n Safety risk? We sang a song called ‘*Golden Slumbers*’ at the end of the school day, it might not have been a hymn. It used to begin ‘Golden Slumbers while I sleep’. Can't remember the other words but do remember the tune. Probably unique to the Ewelme teachers. London schools did not have such a practice. I suppose like Assemblies and prayers before school which are now banned, their end of the school day would suffer the same fate.

File 68 – Angela Munday Taylor

I was at Ewelme school then passed the eleven plus and went to Wallingford grammar for one year only as it became boys only and I had to travel by bus to the new grammar school for girls at Didcot. The bus left from the shepherds hut about 7am and went all round the villages picking up pupils. So my day was long and then when I got home I had 2 hours homework every night!!! And the children think they have it hard now. I was the only child at the Grammar school from the village at the time but some pupils attended the Grammar school from the RAF camp.

File 72 – Roger Kent

Like virtually all the village kids I went to Ewelme CofE school. Tony Reeves from the Shepherds Hut was given the task of ensuring that I got there on my first day, but I wasn't that keen and ran home at dinner time, with mum none too happy at having to take me back. A lot of children from the big houses in the village started their schooling there, before going off to prep schools at a later age. Coming from a wealthy or privileged background was not always key to a happy childhood, as we realised when a boy showed us the welts on his back, left from a thrashing from his father. Mr Coles was the headmaster when I started at the village school, but was replaced by Mr Nicholas for my final year. I believe that he moved to Ewelme from Cornwall. Miss Combes was my first teacher as an infant, followed by Miss Walker, who everyone called Fanny, not to her face though. I don't know if that was her Christian name or not. During my last year we were taught by the headmaster. On leaving Ewelme school, I was awarded the Bishop's Prize, which greatly pleased my mum. When Miss Walker retired, I believe that she returned to Northern Ireland. Her home in the village had been No.4 the Terrace.

The biggest influx of new faces at the school came with the completion of the Hampden Way and Britwell road estate, some of the new pupils were from families that were rehoused there after the demolition of Mount Farm before it was redeveloped as Berinsfield. After the village school, I went to Icknield school in Watlington, this was different to my eldest brother Maurice, as in his day, Dorchester Abbey school was the designated secondary school. I left Icknield at fifteen and started a craft engineering apprenticeship at Pressed Steel Fisher at Cowley.