

Primary School year's at St John's Lemsford.

I was born in 1980 and spent my playschool day's at Backhall Lane, (Historic, Listed.) a large hall down Handside Lane until around 1985 when I moved onto St John's Lemsford Primary School to carry on with my early learning. I stayed at this school till I was 11 year's old before further education's down the line.

(Note: As a young lad growing up in Stanborough my own father too attended this school, he has written his own article of his time spent here.)

St John's Primary school, 1985 approx. Below are just some of my own many memories spent at this tiny school and yes at that time there was only three class room's (originally was one class to begin with when this school opened on the 14th May in 1872.) Here I would like to add number's of pupil's per class was kept fairly small.

A typical school day. A typical school day for class room 2 & 3 would be arriving at school for 08:30am, (see map.) say good bye to our parent's or guardian and then walk off to the cloakrooms to hang up our coat's/jackets before walking into class rooms for the daily school registration that begun at 08:45am. As for the first class room led by Mrs Turville, children had to wait outside at beginning of the class day. I can remember many time's waiting for the door to be opened along side other children in the cold. Soon as the door was opened we would walk in and hang our coats in the cloak room before sitting down for the morning registration. The registration process consisted of the teacher sitting at his/her desk with the class room registration book opened in front of them on the table and they read out the name's one at a time working their way down the list, when it came to your name being called out, you would reply with either "yes Sir/miss." or "yes -teacher's name-". Each time some one replied back, a tick be made next to their name in the registration book, if no reply then a cross be marked instead. Everyday there be a school assembly held in the hall/dinning room that without fail started at 9am. Children from class room 3 would be taken from the class room to the outdoor roofed walk way (which links class room 2, class room 3 and hallway, see map.) What I can remember of the assemblies (well as one particular time of being kicked in the back.) all children had to sit cross legged on the hard cold wooden flooring in line's one behind the other facing class room 3 and no talking was allowed what's so ever during a short service. Many song's would be sung standing up from a Christian Hymn booked called 'come and praise' (I used to love this part of assembly) whilst a teacher played the tune on the piano near the far top left of the hall. On occasions the vicar from the church would partake in the assembly, one time a parent visited and played their Saxophone. If it was someone's birthday, a lidless Quality Street tin surrounded by sweets and a white candle glued in the middle be brought out by Mrs. Turville. The candle then would be lit up followed by a birthday song which everyone would sing. From upon birthday name or name's been called out, the child/children's walked up to the front of the whole assembly and help themselves to one sweet before returning back and to sit down cross legged.

The break's here do believe was kept fairly short, there was three in total; morning time, after lunch and then afternoon. Come sunshine, wet or snow all pupils had to go outside and play in the playground, however the Spinney (only used for occasional teaching with a teacher.) and the

Orchard was off limit's as was the field?? Summer time back in the 1980's wasn't too hot but come winter time's this was a different story, then it was so much colder and when it snowed it really snowed. I remember one particular wintery season, so much snow had fallen ❄ that it had blanketed all the way up embankments along side the foot path on Brocket Road even onto the hedges themselves. St John's Lemsford School at that time only had the old fashioned storage radiator's, these only produced so much heating. For smaller room's this was not too much of a problem but seeing as the hall was huge, all along side on the wall (play ground side.) several radiator's had to be placed. Looking on it now comparing with to today's winter's, much as I complained about the cold back then and the fact we HAD to go outside during breaks (90's onwards the weather indeed in the World had and still is changing) actually I really miss the fun and joy the snow had to bring, be it a few inches to several feet. Any frozen puddles that had formed on the playground was used as a mini skate rink, with one person squatting down at one end of the puddle whilst a person either side of them would take their arm's and gently guide them over the icy puddle. Mrs Carter during the winter often would be walking around the play ground holding onto a mug of hot water to attempt in keeping warm all the while supervising children as they happily run around playing. If someone had hurt themselves, they be taken inside by Mrs Carter to the library area and then be asked to sit down on either a chair or a pouf whilst she went to go and fetch the first aid kit.. Mrs Carter eventually came back with a bowl of hot water mixed with Dettol along side some cotton wool and a sticky plaster. One time over night there was once a burglary at the school, many of the pupil's here rumoured that on the school bell roof (used to notify end of break time.) a hand print from the burglar could be seen!

Teacher's. In the first class room would be Mrs Turville aka Mrs Turtle, sort of actives here be thing's like making paper Mache Piggy bank's (do believe my parent's still have mine at their house.) and making salt Crystal's etc. The classroom had a mini library area, book's included Rodger Red Hat and Rodger Blue Hat etc. Pictures from this series of book's had been painted on the wall between the library and cloak room. One particular time she taught us about life cycle of frog's and Tadpole's, to help us with this learning, in one area of the room near the door to next classroom, she had set up a fish tank full of tadpoles. Another time a mini art show for the parent's was held. If anyone was naughty or misbehaved they was sent next door and to face the other side of the doorway whilst standing up all the while being carefully watched by Mrs B. Mitchell, indeed also by any curious pupil's in this class room, mega embarrassing! I was once sent across.. (I was wrongly blamed for something, indeed was blamed for other small handful of incidents too. Twice when there was a field trip staying at Pearce House, yet was totally innocent.). Moving on from Classroom one be the next stage of learning with Mrs. B Mitchell in classroom 2. Well as math's, Art Work, Science, Reading and English being taught, learning was also done via a chalk board etc. I still have my cushion I made and a wax art. My father donated special weights in a lovely wooden box and a African type drum, hope to this day they are still lovingly kept in the classroom's cupboard. I quite liked Mrs. B. Mitchell, yes she could be stern and strict at best of time's but she was so kind. An example, during my time in this class room (Special Need's and Learning Disabilities was not recognised then.) upon noting my struggles in learning, she went out of her way and brought me a few educational work books to complete at home. During one of the reading lesson's, I read a book so quickly, she did not believe me and thus was asked politely re-read it. We had fruit tasting of various fruits from the world during one class lesson and another time looking at a preserved Scorpion, which think Mrs. J. Roden had brought in. Oh nearly forgot couple of other thing's, we even done pottery as the school had a small kiln near by. One Summer; hatching egg's, sadly only three hens hatched and a lot of children picked on me for 'taking their hens home'. Mrs Mitchell knowing my parent's kept chicken's asked if they both like take them home to look after. Today it is

frowned upon with having egg's hatched at school as deemed inhumane. Final chapter on my time in this class be the time my mother had to come and collect me (sorry mum.!) due to a yellow button stuck up my nose.. A short journey followed to the then Original QE2 hospital (sadly been pulled down.) Last time I saw Mrs Mitchell was at one of the Lemsford School Fête's. Love to know how she indeed the other teacher's, Andrew and Carrie are doing. Over the course of 100+year's the school has seen so many new heads well as Teacher's and staff. In the final classroom before secondary school move, up till 1988 there was no National curriculum so when this came out, many changes in the education system was made right up to 1999. Each classroom had a black board, in this particular class children had work book's to work through, everyone at different various stages. On the last day for those moving onto secondary school, each and every leaver would open their wooden desk and write their name inside, adding to other name's from previous leaver's. PE at this school consists of being in the school hall or outside, have very little recollection on this subject other than that I hated it. Laurie Brown/Bone father came in some time's to teach PE, PE in the cold out door's was no fun wearing a t-shirt, pair of shorts and plimsolls, think we was allowed to wear a jumper. Mrs. Kemp came in to from time to time, some time's she bought in her son A. By coincidence, several year's later upon working for a shop in St. Alban's with my then boyfriend now husband, one of the employees working there happened to be her son. Led by a teacher, children was taken to the local out door swimming pool at Stanborough, a good half hour walk away. Changing after the swimming lesson in the outside changing room's was quite refreshing some what, soon warmed up though when walking back to the school (and past my parent's house.) When came to watching television at school, a large TV with a VCR would be rolled out on a wheeled trolley and we knew be in for a real treat watching 'Stop, Look and listen.' 'Look and read.' 'How we used to live.' Over Head Projection's too come out from time to time. Those in this class was given privilege of using blue coloured 'leaky' fountain pen's, a lot of us children collected the ball's inside the empty cartridges, rubber shavings, tog's and inside plastic cap's from fizzy bottle's. The other class room's had table's work from, so felt all grown up when came to this class and was given a proper desk during the remainder of primary school year's.

Names do I Remember. Rachel Dodds (very good at art.), Jonathan Stallard, Christian Stallard, Claire Brassett, Claire Coomber, Melanie Richardson, Lorna Richardson, Hannah Kemp, Laurie Brown/Bone, Duncan Ferguson (last heard he was doing well as an Organist.), Mile's, C**** (I heard on a grape vine he had passed away.) Thomas (lived next door to Laurie in the village.) Andrew and his sister Carrie, Rory, (his father came in once to play the Saxophone.), Amanda Brook's, Miles. Have tried contact couple of people above but they chose to ignore me.

Lunch times in the hall. Everyone sat down at tables, on each table was plastic glasses with a jug of water in the middle (great fun was had pushing the cup's over slightly wet patch on the table, back of the plates and bowls embossed be a clock face.) those who was having a hot meal rather than a home pack lunch, had to wait for their turn go up to the open serving hatch. Each table took turn's and lined in an orderly queue next to the chimney wall, I can't remember if we said grace or not but once we have chosen what would like to eat immediately sat back down at the table's (meals here was basic and cooked fresh on site.). For seconds again each table took turns going up. This process was the same for desserts and puddings, no one was allowed go up for seconds unless their dinner plate or pudding bowl was empty. One time I had forgotten my pack lunch and to this day still remember mum was on the other side of the door of classroom 3 holding up my pack lunch looking at me through the window but she was denied in handing it over. Thus I ended up eating a vile and so spicy curry, was given no option. Each day every pupil was given a small carton of fresh milk to enjoy, if lucky may end up with two. Today's milk is Homogenized and does not taste the same. I remember the milk being cold and really milky, the carton did not last long, it was that good.

Bullying. Although I gained a lot of happy fond memories during my spent at St John's School, Lemsford a tinge of sadness still lingers. On a daily basis myself and two other children would be at the receiving end of bullying, one particular boy J restlessly enjoyed picking on us, one time I was pushed into the pond. From bullying here and other traumatic stuff that I've been through, yes has left me scarred but on the other hand made me tougher. For those gone or going through bullying themselves what I can say is; speak up, be heard and talk to someone you know and wholly trust, never bottle emotions and hurt up. Lastly remember it is okay to be different, be yourself.

Playground Games. What-ever the weather was, we was given no choice but to play outside on the playground, below are example's of game's played during school in the 80's was as follows; *Hopscotch, *What's the Time Mr Wolf. *It. *French Skipping. *Skipping Rope. *British Bulldog. * Kiss Chase. * Conker's (Autumn 🍂 time.) *Duck Duck Goose. etc. Only playground equipment we had then was a metal playing frame on chip bark which was near the Orchard. On this corner of the playground, where end of the long metal building ended, there was a old wooden door with a rope and wooden stick type handle to close the door shut, all you had to do to open it, just gently push. Inside would be a dark and cold empty 'smelly' space with some concrete step's going up to actual inside of the building. A lot of the time group of us including myself would dare each other to enter the 'Witches House.'" and be shut in for a period of time in the pitch blackness.

School event's. Every year the school would hold a Sport's day event which consisted of various sports such as Egg & Spoon Race, Relay, Sack Race, Wheelbarrow Race, Skipping etc. Parent's would be invited to watch the event's as they unfold, all children went into team's. Coloured fabric sashes would be used to represent each team group's. School plays took place every so often, especially come Christmas time with the Nativity play. The wooden folding panel wall with door, separating class room 3 and the Hallway would be pushed to one side and a stage be set up. One of the play's held at this school was called "Bill & Ben The flower pot man." One child had trouble playing the character Weed, which in turn then landed to me to play. "Weeeeeeeed". The first Monday of May, St John's Lemsford School held there May Bank Holiday school fête and St John's Church next door too would open there door's. All children at the school had to learn May Pole Dancing, another thing I did not mind learning.

Family connection's. During this school's 100+ year's of history to present there's been so many change's and well as many modernisation's. As I mentioned earlier my own father too attended this school, one of the class room's was in the old Master's old school house (said be haunted.) Where down the line my mother as a volunteer held cooking lesson's for children from classroom, children often went one group per session. One particular boy L came out of school eating whatever he's made that day before meeting his parent's. My Aunty Jenny helped at the school too. Upon walking home one day from school with my mother, just as we walked past the playground, we could hear the church bells was ringing behind us.. it was then I said to myself whilst thinking about Grandad Roden that one day I too will become a Campanologist. Down the line several year's later, this dream became true and for awhile I attended the local bell ringing group, my highlight was ringing in the year 2000 with church friend's. Church connection's. Mr. C. Roden my late grandfather became Church Warden along side Charlie Wager at St John's Church. If you start walking up the church tower inscribed head height on the steps is a name. On the right hand side desk as come though the second door of the main church entrance, a plaque been placed in my Grandfather's memory as a church warden. Many amusing stories been told of my grandfather and his church friend's. His wife Mrs. E. Roden, my grandma was a secretary for the local church magazine. Few week's after I was born, my parent's held my Christening at St John's Lemsford then down the line my husband and I held our wedding here, with church friend's ringing to us.

Final chapter, a brief glimpse to early 1980's. Technology was in it's infancy still back then, computer's was bigger, bulkier and at time's slow to load. At St John's School I can only remember seeing one computer and this was in the classroom 3. We was given Mimeograph work sheets to fill out, the paper had an aromatic smell and inking was pale blue. Back then photocopies were expensive to run, thus a machine called a Ditto was used instead. With little technology taking over, children would often spend many happy hour's outside playing, being inventive in their imaginative role playing game's and out-door playing was deeply encouraged and it was said fresh air was good for the health. Christmas 🎄 back then before it became commercialised and the Christmas spirit became forgotten, families often would spend time together playing various board game's and children had fun seeing what Santa had bought them. Through out my time spent at this wonderful Primary school, several children shared the latest toy fashion's from Cabbage Patch Doll Sticker's and especially what toy's they've been given for Christmas time, sometimes the school held a share and tell session's, on occasions board game's would come out. Before late 1980's back then manner's, respect especially towards the elder's, looking; clean, tidy and kept was very imperative as was discipline and also education. Not many children dared back chat to the teacher's indeed to the staff, parent's would be informed of any unacceptable behaviour of their child. Nb. several of us enjoyed making chalk dust clouds ☁ with the chalk board and chalk board eraser. Even twanging plastic ruler's between the wooden desk's and the lid's. Goodness know how got away with it during class room lesson's in class room 3, Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! My parent's when it came to my birthday's held birthday parties for me and several children from St John's Lemsford attended, game's included; Pass the parcel, musical chair's, Pin the tail on the donkey and mum's own version of Piñata. Below are some of the children's programmes I used to enjoy after finishing school, Fun House, You & Me, The Raggy Dolls. Ps. Toilet paper was likened to tracing paper and paper hand towels would also serve as water 💧 bomb's.