

Memories of Lemsford School 1924 - 1932

by Ellen Willox (née Murray)

As my family lived on a farm on the St. Albans side of Lemsford, called Astwick Farm it meant about a three mile walk to school each day and back again in all weathers. No school buses or taxis in those days and very few people had cars. So the first days at school were quite daunting, but there were many country children in the same position.

I started school at Lemsford in 1924 when I was five. At that time there were three classrooms and three teachers - Mr Ladbury the Headmaster who lived in the School House and taught in the main classroom; Miss Edwards in the middle classroom and Miss Clarke in the infants.

The Infants room had tiered forms at one end for the children to sit on with a shelf running along in front for books etc. An open fire with a guard in front was the only heating. Often in the winter we sat with our coats on to keep warm. In the middle classroom and also in the "Big Room" as we called it we had long desks with a separate compartment for each pupil to keep their books in so that we always sat in the same place. The middle classroom also had an open fire with a guard in front. I think the "Big Room" had an enclosed stove.

As there were no school dinners we had to take food with us, mostly sandwiches in the summer or just some fruit and in the winter we would take a potato to bake under the fire in the middle classroom. The children from the village went home for lunch but we children from the outlying farms had to manage the best we could for lunch and either ate our food in the classroom or in the summer out in the playground. As we got older we would sometimes walk down to the village and buy a little treat for a penny or so at Suzie Willmott's shop just the other side of the bridge on the right.

The toilets at that time were outside earth closets at the end of the playground. As I remember it there were three playgrounds - the main one at the side of the school a small one for the infants and another on the side next to the School House - all connected of course. The playgrounds at that time were covered in gravel so there were a few grazed knees at times. On the other side of the main playground there was an area of gardens which the older boys used to tend and presumably learn something about gardening.

There was a building called the Dining Room at the road end of the main playground but it was never used as a dining room whilst I was there because the Headmaster had it filled up with his model railway layout and we were not allowed in. One of my brothers who was very good at making things was allowed in at times to help build a new station or something of that kind,

The Playing Field was down the hill a little on the left-hand side of the road where the boys played football and we sometimes practised athletics but not often. The girls played Stoolball and Netball but I cannot remember exactly where we played or if we ever played other schools - we were not very good in any case as there was not really enough competition.

There was a sliding partition between the Infants Room and the Main classroom and some years Mr Ladbury would organise a concert. He was very good at producing these shows and a lot of work was involved as well as lots of rehearsals and costume making for those taking parts. A stage would be built over the forms in the Infants room the partition opened and the audience sat in the Main Classroom. The shows were put on for several nights and were always popular. It meant we had to walk there and back again if we were taking part, or to see the show.

Some years at Christmas time we were all invited to a party at Brocket Hall and were all given a small present.