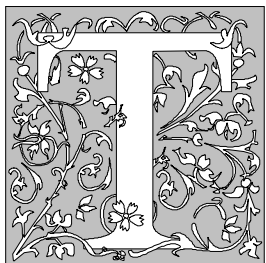


Teachers



eachers tend to stay a long time at Reedham Park—though they don't always plan it that way. Mrs Ordoyno agreed to help out for a fortnight and ended up staying for thirty years and more. Mrs Dunmore was one of

the very first teachers, but then moved away during the War. On her return she settled down to raise a family. But one day in 1956 came a telephone call. Could she help out for a while . . . ?

Mrs Dunmore

I have known Miss Routledge for sixty years, and remember clearly the first time I saw her.

My brother was already a pupil at Reedham Park when she took it over, and Miss Routledge called to introduce herself to my parents. I had a Victorian-type stepfather, who believed girls should stay at home. Miss Routledge, however, had a different view

and it bothered her to see me without anything to do. She therefore lost no time in persuading him to let me help her at school. I used to teach the Kindergarten which consisted of very few pupils, who had their tables on the platform until the room we call the Milk Room was built on. We were very excited about that, and it was used as the Kindergarten. The cloakroom was in the porch and to get to the loo one had to go outside and round the back. This meant, of course, coats and shoes if it was wet. Another memory is of heating milk in a saucepan and pouring it into mugs

for the children.



Mrs Dunmore in the 1930s

Before Miss Routledge first came to Reedham, while she was training, she used to take holiday posts looking after children who were home from boarding schools. She taught at a school in Wallington and while there she met a Miss Kathleen Lambert-Smith who took her home to visit her

parents, and she became very friendly with the family. Mr Lambert-Smith helped with the legal side of starting Reedham Park. Although Miss Routledge had very little money she would not borrow from them but just managed to make ends meet. Mrs Smith became almost a mother to her.

Miss Routledge had a large black tabby cat called Niggy. Niggy spent a lot of time on the top of the porch, which he reached by climbing up a wire door. He was always exercised on a collar and lead,



Mrs Dunmore in the uniform of her secondary school in Streatham. 'It was scarlet and violet and I hated it,' she said.



Miss Routledge and Niggy the cat, pictured during a rare descent from the porch roof.

and I remember he used to sit on my lap if we were having tea in front of the fire in the big room. Miss Routledge used to say it was because I always sat still, and she was more restless!

One year Miss Routledge started taking parties of children to Hayling Island for two weeks holiday. She would rent a house called Creek View, which I believe belonged to a teacher friend. We took extra camp beds and also Niggy in a basket. There would be two or three helpers, of whom I was always one. There would be a walk before breakfast, wet or fine, with half an orange to suck, then back to breakfast with cereal. There were morning trips to the beach where they had swimming lessons; after lunch playtime on the beach with sand castles and other model competitions; some days we would go for trips, one of which would be to Portsmouth for Navy Week. There the children would be taken over various craft—an aircraft carrier, a submarine and always over *HMS Victory*. There was also a small amusement park with bumper cars which the children loved. Miss Routledge would never go out in the evening leaving the helpers in charge, but would guard the children herself just as she does now! These holidays of course ceased when the War started.

Miss Routledge had a guardian, Miss Willen, of whom she was very fond. Miss Willen became a nun



Creek View, Hayling Island.



Miss Routledge and Mrs Dunmore on the beach at Hayling.

and one afternoon during the War I was having tea with Miss Routledge when a taxi came up the school lane and out stepped Miss Willen. The Convent had been taken over by the military and the nuns had to move out. Miss Willen took a room in Croydon and occupied herself with good works until her death.

During the War the fathers made two air-raid shelters, one was underground and the other an Anderson. We used to have half the children in each one. As I was inclined to suffer from claustrophobia I used the

Anderson. If the All Clear did not go before lunch, Miss Routledge would go and cut sandwiches for the children. In those days all the children went home at lunch-time unless their parents sent a note.

If the warning went in the afternoon and it got past school time, parents would collect them and sometimes I would take them home if there was no enemy activity. I wasn't with Miss Routledge for all the War as she had too few children to need me. Most were evacuated.

I was married in 1941. Miss Routledge, with her usual generosity, took me into Croydon and bought my wedding outfit (my stepfather died before the War). I then moved out of the district and missed all the excitement of the later part of the war years, when Miss Routledge became a Warden.



Mrs Dunmore on the day of her wedding to her late husband Godfrey.

I came back in 1949 and of course started seeing her again. My eldest son Christopher was born in 1948 and she bought me a lovely pram for him. Of course when he started school he went to Reedham Park, and it seemed to me that neither Miss Routledge nor the school had changed. In fact one day when I asked him what he had been doing he replied, 'Mummy, you know, you used to teach there!'

It seems that the curriculum has always been the same, except of course for being brought up to date. Reading, Arithmetic, English and General Knowledge have always played an important part, with many extras to help broaden the children's minds.

She has always been fond of the theatre, and I remember before the War we would go up to town, call at a Lyons Corner House, probably the one in The Strand and collect sandwiches etc., then queue for the 'gods' to see various plays.

She studied ballet and tap dancing to teach the children and even took up fencing for a while. Then there were the outings with the children—museums, the Tower of London, the Zoo. Originally they were taken by train and underground and they would be taken into a Lyons for a drink of orange and a bun. Then the school grew and a coach became necessary. The outings stopped when the IRA scares started.

I remember Miss Routledge used to take the children up to the Recreation Ground in Higher Drive for cricket and football, and the spring sports, before she had her own grounds. The school plays were performed on a platform which was put up by the fathers every year, the planks being kept up in the rafters in the big room. Everything used to be packed under the stage. Until the Milk Room was built the children changed in the little kitchen, which was also her bedroom. She had a camp bed which she put up every night, and did her cooking on a gas ring.

My second son, Anthony, was born in 1951 and followed his brother in 1955. One day the following year the phone rang and a familiar voice said, 'My dear, one of my teachers has had a breakdown, will you come and help me out for a little while?'

I'm still there!

Mrs Ordoyno

I came to live in Old Lodge Lane in 1932—I believe I am the longest-serving resident in Old Lodge Lane—and Miss Routledge started her school in the September. My two daughters Jill and Carol were pupils and did well when they went on to their big schools. After they married they each had two children.



Mrs Ordoyno at the piano for Drill Display.

It was before my first grandson was born that one day Miss Routledge stopped me in Sainsbury's and asked me if I could help out for a fortnight until she found another teacher. That was over thirty years ago! My four grandchildren, now married and settled down, all came to the school and I was their first teacher in Kindergarten. Over the years I have made many good friends through the school, and my late dear husband George joined in all the activities connected with the school.

A strange coincidence was brought to my attention only this year. The same day that I was born in Nottingham, the little school was first consecrated as St Barnabas church. So it seems like fate that I have had so much to do with the school.

Mrs Gonsalves

We had just moved to Coulsdon (Hannah was barely two), and the Avon lady called. She stayed for coffee and told me about this wonderful school in Purley run by this old lady. 'She must be 60 something' she said, 'and it's such a good school you really should get over there quickly and see if she'll take Hannah. You have to put their names down at birth, you know!'

The following Wednesday I waited nervously in the Big Room for my interview with this terrifying person. She wrote Hannah's name down and told me to come back in two years time! When we returned she confirmed the place, fishing out the original scrap of paper. Just as we were leaving, Miss Routledge said, 'I'm losing my music teacher at the end of this term.' 'I'm a music teacher,' I said. That was it, really.

When Hannah and I arrived on our first Thursday I wondered how I would tell Routie that I was expecting a baby next April. I can see her face now. 'Oooh!' she said, 'How lovely! I love babies.' And I had thought she would be cross at the inconvenience. Millie was immediately put on the list.

There followed thirteen years of my happiest teaching. Abiding memories are... of Dougie Irvine's trousers wound round the wheels of Cinderella's carriage, necessitating his public debugging by Routie

... of Fireworks Nights making soup and hot dogs in the pouring rain with my dear friend Jan Lane, the bonfire having been built by Roger and John and other Dads in the afternoon ... of fun-packed Games Nights brilliantly organised by the Lockes ... and, of course, the New Year's Eve parties, a tradition that Routy has kept for sixty years.

How delighted she was when a camel turned up one year (we were in Arabian fancy dress!). It cavorted around the room, and then Des O'Rourke and Noel Cuniffe stepped out from under each end! A French theme led to Annette Sargeant choreographing a Can-Can (we practised all afternoon). We had Victorian, 20s, 40s, film stars, you-name-it themes, all ending up with the now traditional sing-song round the piano (song-sheets provided).

We can never repay Miss Routledge for what she has done for us as a family; for the friendship and love we have had over the years; and for the priceless foundation she has bequeathed our children.

Oh, by the way ... the Avon lady was Jackie Irvine!

Mrs Goodwin

My first introduction to Reedham Park was in 1959 when my daughter, then aged four, started school.



*Above: Mrs Goodwin
Below: Mrs King*



My son was soon to follow. I joined the staff years ago, teaching Lower Prep full time. After eleven years of enjoyable hard work I decided to retire. I had a good rest and joined the staff part time five years ago. Thanks to Reedham Park and the children I still enjoy work.

Mrs King

A friend introduced me to Mrs Parker who in turn introduced me to Miss Routledge. Mrs Parker's two boys were at the school and I was looking for a school for my son. That's how Reedham has always functioned, on a family or introduction basis. Little did I know what was in store!

One morning I was

watching my son walking up the lane when another parent gave me a message—would I please see Miss Routledge at once. My blood ran cold. ‘What has Kevin done now?’ I thought. With trepidation I made my way to the Milk Room, where Miss Routledge greeted me with a smile. It can’t be too bad, I thought.

Miss Routledge asked me if I would cover for Mrs Thompson, who was convalescing. It would only be reading, and just for one term. I agreed. My experience as a Sunday School teacher, Brown Owl, and teaching various subjects in primary school would stand me in good stead, I hoped, and besides, I love working with children.

I wasn’t sure what I had really taken on. My senses told me it would be more than just reading! Little did I know. My mornings, indeed my life, would never be the same!

Mrs Thompson was a very good teacher. Filling her shoes would not be easy but I would do my best. She returned at Easter 1982 but I was not leaving! Miss Routledge asked me to take Trans in the afternoons. I entered a whole new world of woodwork, art, ink writing, homework on every conceivable topic and eventually needlework.

In due course I took on Upper Prep in the mornings which meant I was working all day.

After a couple of years I found it necessary to give up the afternoons and Trans to reduce my hours and allow me to work with my son on his O-levels.

When I was working full time I remember my first task of the day in winter would be to de-ice and replenish the bird-baths. One morning, after a particularly bad storm, I arrived to find Miss Routledge, mop in hand, ankle-deep in water. On another occasion Mrs Gordon and I were caught in a freak downpour in Purley and arrived at school drenched right through. Miss Routledge could not contain her amusement as she hastily despatched someone to bring towels for us to dry off.

Of course there are many such memories—risking my life on those rickety steps to pin up art pictures; staggering into school with giant sunflowers; fainting on a trip to the Science Museum; the Bonfire Nights, the Christmas Panto, the staff dinners all spring to mind—ask Mrs Gonsalves about the foil and the Yorkshire pudding!

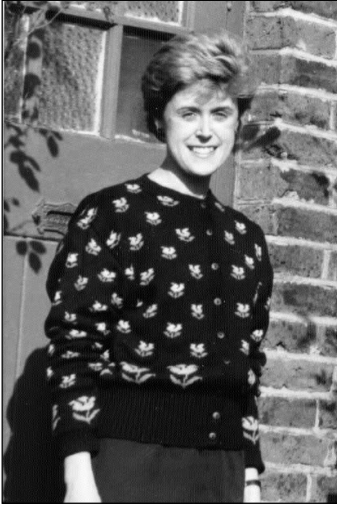
My favourite memories naturally concern the children. I remember when Kirsten Cownie was in Trans how her mother met me at the bottom of the lane, saying, ‘I know your secret—you’re afraid of spiders.’ My brave attempt to remove a rather large specimen from Kirsten’s jacket had not fooled

her, who related to her mother how I had trembled. James Eke I remember for his knack in diverting my attention while placing a spider on my head, to the delight of the class.

Not to be forgotten is the dance with a skeleton, on loan from Mrs Shortt for an anatomy lesson. I forgot that with the screens down Miss Routledge had a clear view from the Big Room of my waltz, and my embarrassment was as great as the children's amusement.

By far the nicest birthday was my last one when the children gathered in the classroom, not an adult in sight, and ushered me inside to the tune of *Happy Birthday*. I was so unprepared that tears of joy rolled down my cheeks. Thanks, Naomi! My home is be-decked with treasured pictures of the children and their gifts, and I have kept all their notes and cards.

Just as roses have thorns, so it hasn't all been plain sailing at Reedham. There have been occasional disputes over the years, and sadness too. I recall the most recent being the death of Richard Wilkes. It saddened me greatly having seen him battle through Transition and having a happy year in Upper Prep, go on to senior school then lose the fight against leukemia. We shared the same birthday and I treasure his cards and his memory.



Mrs Martin

Mrs Martin

My association with the school started about thirteen years ago when I first met my husband, who was an ex-pupil of the school. My husband's family are close friends of Mrs Ordoyno and I used to love listening to Glad telling us her tales of the Christmas Pantomime.

I was very fortunate one year to meet Miss Routledge at my in-laws' house and was fascinated at her life story. At the Golden Jubilee I attended the afternoon function with my husband and met many of his classmates. When my husband and I started to think about a school for our eldest daughter my husband said there was no other place for our children to go but Reedham Park. We were delighted that Megan was accepted and with great pride I went to the first pantomime. It lived up to all my expectations and I could relate to all the stories that I had heard from my husband and his family.

Later I was asked by Mrs Mole if I could come in to the school to hear some of the little ones read. I was

in the school once a week for two years. In the summer of 1992 I was asked by Miss Routledge if I would help her over the lunchtime period, where I make sure the children eat all those goodies that are in their lunch boxes. I also help some children with their reading and watch over the children while they let off steam in the playground during lunchtime.

My youngest daughter has now joined the school and both my daughters are surprised that my husband knows what they do at school. It is a great satisfaction to my husband and myself that our children are able to participate in the 'Reedham Park School Experience' and all that can be gained from it.



Mrs Smith

Mrs Smith

One day my mother arrived to say that my worries were over! She had found a school for my four children.

My mother's love of books had led her to meet a lady in our local book shop. This grandmother was frequently seen buying

books of all kinds—dictionaries, classical, nature etc. These were all for her seven- and nine-year-old grandchildren at Reedham Park School.

After searching along Old Lodge Lane several times, I finally managed to discover the school, nestling quietly amidst the gardens. Two of my children have since left the school and moved on to their senior school, and my third is due to leave at the end of this year. They all feel that Reedham Park and Miss Routledge helped them get where they now are.

I first began to work at the school in 1987, taking over the needlework from Mrs Woodley who was semi-retiring, though she was still to judge the Autumn Fruits and Spring Flowers. The Seasons was to be my first theme! How to make lambs, rabbits, Victorian ladies in an English country garden and robins on snowy branches look realistic by the hands of six- to ten-year-olds. It was quite a task. I spent much of the year threading and rethreading needles. But I must say the end result was very pleasing.

The following year I took over Lower Prep, as Mrs Shortt was leaving to have a baby. That first day I don't know who was more nervous, me or the new class! At the beginning of my first exam week, I remember managing to knock over both jugs of water during the painting exam! A little girl

sweetly put her arm around me and said, “You don’t seem to be having a very good day, do you Mrs. Smith?” It certainly put me at ease!

I thoroughly enjoy working with the children and their lovely smiles and chatter seem to take away one’s little day-to-day problems. Only last week a little boy in my class asked: “Mrs Smith, can I put a python at the end of my writing?” He meant of course a hyphen.



Mrs Tann

Mrs Tann

Unlike most of the other members of staff I had no previous connection with Reedham Park School, in fact I had never heard of Reedham Park School.

One Sunday morning I received a visit from a colleague I worked with at a local state primary school telling me a Miss

Routledge at Reedham Park School was looking for someone to work in their kindergarten. Two telephone calls and three days later found me driving up and down Old Lodge Lane searching

for Reedham Park School. After three quarters of an hour I finally found and met Miss Routledge and so began my association with the school.

It has taken me some time to understand and learn the traditions and methods of this unique education, but as I have progressed, my own upbringing and seemingly unimportant life events are now coming into their own. This has led me to believe that fate has played a part in my life and introduced me to a remarkable lady, Miss Routledge.

Mr Valenti

When I moved to Purley in September 1957, (with my first child only three monthsold), I little realised that I would, some four years later, be beginning as long an involvement as I have had, with ‘the little school across the road’; first as a parent, then as a successor to Tom Boyle’s father Desmond as Mass chauffeur and occasional helper, then as a grandparent and finally as a not very good part time teacher. In settling for a house in Old Lodge Lane, I had lined up



Mr Valenti

a convenient station, convenient shops and what appeared to be a convenient school.

What I had sinfully overlooked was a convenient Church, and before I was able to afford a car, my wife and I found ourselves saddled with the purgatory of getting to Dale Road every Sunday. I wouldn't recommend pushing a pram up Burcott Road to anybody! It was, however, at around 7.30 a.m. on my first Sunday in Purley that I first set eyes on the lady who was to play such a large part in my family's life.

I fairly quickly found out who she was, but I cannot remember how I found out that I had to get in quick if I wanted my daughter to attend the school. Fortunately I did find out and so it came about that I waylaid Miss Routledge after Mass one Sunday morning and obtained the application form by the completion of which I unknowingly sentenced myself to a longer term than the Great Train Robbers!

I remember, in the early days, helping to erect the stage for the Christmas Pantomime, an annual chore. The boards and supports rested on the beams above the room where the audience now sit and so the proceedings commenced with a fairly tricky ladder act to get everything down. Although the number of pupils was smaller in those days, so was the room available for spectators, and the annual crush for this event has been an eternal problem. I

remember too how worried I was whether Miss Routledge would see my fourth child through. He has just left university! The day that my grandchild was born Miss Routledge marked the occasion by breaking her ankle, and I began to worry whether or not my grandchild would make it to the school. She is now in her third year!

Outside of this my chief memories as a (parent) relate only to homework and the trials and tribulations thereof with four children all completely different in character and each presenting a different set of problems with regard to the way they tackled it. At occasional tired moments I impishly persuaded them to add little embellishments to their compositions for which, regrettably, they suffered and not me; but it was fun to get away with it at times, as for example did the rendition of the 1066 sentence 'William told his soldiers to pretend to run away' as 'William commanded his battalions to simulate a precipitated retreat'. I never knew how that one got away!

While on the subject, I should, I suppose, own up to the worst May poem ever written, which went:

*All hail to our May Queen,
The fairest yet;
But in our English summer
She'll just look wet.*

The ensuing reprimand and inevitable rewrite was not taken too lightly by the offspring that suffered, while I grudgingly thought that my 'wit' had gone unappreciated. I recounted all this at work the next morning and was firmly put in place by the following which I found on my desk after lunch:

*'I am', said a chap called Valenti,
'One of the cognoscenti.'
But his efforts at rhyme
Were rewarded in time
With a mark of nought out of twenty.*

In normal circumstances that would, I suppose, be a reasonably humorous note to finish on, except for the fact that it would be quite wrong not to acknowledge the eternal debt of gratitude which all my family owes to Miss Routledge. Everyone that I meet who has had some sort of connection with the school always mentions what a deep and lasting impression the school makes. My family is no exception, and at every family get-together, the conversation invariably turns at one stage or another to the school, and then the anecdotes from all my children fly thick and fast.

It is difficult to imagine how differently my children may have developed without Miss Routledge's guidance and help, but I know that they will always be grateful for that guidance and

help and will always treasure the memories that they built at the school. As for me, I know that given Miss Routledge's longevity, I have a job for life! Thank you again Miss Routledge, congratulations on your Diamond Jubilee, and long may you continue to do your great work.

Mrs Woodley

How did I become involved with nature study? I really couldn't say. I have always, since a very young child, been interested in wild flowers. Living in London it wasn't a very easy hobby to pursue. Fortunately my parents loved the countryside and the family spent all available holidays walking the woods and downs around the perimeter. Our main two weeks of the year we went to what were faraway places in the 1920s—parts of Devon, Cornwall and North Wales, staying on farms in remote villages. In these places I found plenty to interest me.

I also received a good deal of help from people I met at school and church, bringing me plants they had found on their holidays to identify. The most unusual plant to come my way was in much later life, an enormous sugar beet brought in from Lincolnshire by one of the carmen, when I was at business.

At grammar school I studied botany and was

the first pupil to achieve distinction in the Matriculation examination in that subject.

I passed my knowledge on to my daughter. From her earliest days I took her for long walks in her pram talking about the flowers I could see, mostly to amuse myself, as it was war time and my husband was in the RAF and I lived alone. It must have done some good as by the time she was two she knew a good many common flowers. While she was at Reedham Park she won the Nature Prize each year and when the time came for Miss Routledge to find a new judge I was asked to fill the gap.



Mrs Bird



Mrs Coombe



Mrs Mole and Mr White



Mrs O'Rourke