

# Looking Back

by John Pearn 2018 - 2019

## Looking Back

by

**John Pearn**

2018 - 2019

**The China Clay District**

**The last area of Cornwall  
to be re-organised to secondary education**

**St.Dennis CP School**

**1951 to 1962**

and

**St.Stephen in Brannel Secondary School**

**September 1962 to December 1964**

**A period of 13 years**

**Original Handwritten Document**

**Pre - editing**

Article prepared exclusively for the  
St.Dennis Village Website

By

Studio9KC

Copyright © 2019 John Pearn

## Acknowledgements.

My career and life has been shaped by the actions of many I have admired. One of the greatest influences has been from people, staff, pupils from St. Dennis school over a period from 1953.

The reason for writing "Looking Back at St. Dennis" is the fact that I met a girl from Trelavour Road in 1953 and in 1958 married Margaret Tucker, daughter of Arnold and Ivy Tucker, at Carne Hill Methodist Church. Margaret and I have had over 60 years together. She has supported me in my career from 1953 in National Service, College at St. Luke's, (Exeter), been my school secretary, ancillary classroom assistant at St. Merryn C.P. School, and secretary at Burraton C.P. Junior and Infant (Saltash). This covered a period over 25 years.

Margaret attended St. Dennis Infants School under Mrs Curtis, Headteacher, and St. Dennis All Age School from 7-15 years. She benefited from the Headship of Mr. Pellymounter and the teachers, namely Mrs. Jacobs, Mrs. Best, Miss Williams and Miss Kent - Deputy Head. She captained the Netball Team, Athletics Team and was Head girl in her final year.

Acknowledgements (continued)

Her memories have helped me in latter years to write about our early married life when we lived in Indian Queens and taught in St. Dennis and the Clay District. She added much to my knowledge of the St. Dennis School staff!

Mr. Pellymounter as Headteacher gave me the opportunity to do a "home teaching practice" at St. Dennis School in the Spring Term 1956. This was compulsory for students at St. Luke's. He placed me with Miss Williams in a class of 10-11 year age group. He was a Headteacher who assisted in the training of his pupils, young teachers, for life after school. Summer trips were organised for his pupils to have a wider view of the surrounding area. He retired in the summer of 1956.

Mr. Lewis was appointed to follow Mr. Pellymounter and I found him to be most helpful as a probationer. His approach to discipline with the children was tempered with care. As a Welshman he was a sports enthusiast while he gave those of us teaching the senior pupils a chance to specialise in preparation for the Secondary re-organisation. A Parent Teacher Association was formed and extra funds raised.

Acknowledgements (continued)

Miss Kent as Deputy Head had a vast knowledge of St. Dennis families. She gave the girls a love for Arts and Crafts, folk dancing, and girls netball, while looking after their welfare. A world-wide interest led to her being selected for a Commonwealth Exchange to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in 1959-60. She changed positions with Mr. Kelsey and he took her senior class. Miss Kent encouraged me to follow her example in 1985. By this time she had retired and came out to visit us in Victoria, Vancouver Island, British Columbia where I spent two full terms teaching in Glanford Elementary School.

My love for sport was fostered by Mr. Jacobs. He trained the schools under 11's, under 13's and under 15's Soccer teams as well as the Athletics team. Time was spent after school in the school playground. His knowledge of marking football pitches and circular tracks was invaluable in later years. Competitions at County level were entered and so the pupils would know that life after school would be competitive! In those days groundsman did not mark school pitches but did cut the grass with gang mowers!



## Acknowledgements (continued)

Miss Williams supervised my teaching practice in 1956. showing me many aids which could assist me in the teaching of basic subjects such as English, Mathematics and environmental studies. She could name all the local wild flowers while junior girls were taught to sew which would stand them in good stead in future years. Her love of music led to the formation of a Junior Choir which enjoyed singing some Gilbert and Sullivan Music. So I received a good introduction to school music as we shared the playing for school assemblies.

Another St. Dennis Teacher - Mr. J. Solomon, the son of Mrs. Solomon - music teacher and conductor of St. Dennis All Stars Children's Choir, was Headteacher of Trevisker C.P. (R.A.F. St. Eval) where I was appointed Deputy Headteacher in 1964. Here I was able to develop my own sporting activities, while Primary school music was expanded. All staff were supported in achieving academic excellence ~~and to seek~~ promotion. The use of parents was outstanding in this school and it is to all these teachers that I feel have meant so much in my own career structure.

Finally, I met by chance Mr. Trevor Rabey at Carne Hill Methodist Church during its demolition, and discovered that we knew one another through St. Dennis School and St. Stephen's Secondary School. Myself as a young teacher and Trevor as a pupil whom I taught! Modern technology has helped us to communicate ideas, photographs, documents from the past aided by my son-in-law - Mr. Ray Waters expertise in the use of this technology. I trust the document Trevor will produce may interest many people who know St. Dennis well, also new residents of this "China Clay Area".

# Looking Back at Saint Dennis C.P. School Between the Years 1957 - 1962

## Introduction

I was appointed as an assistant teacher in the summer term 1957 and remained at the school until July 1962 under the headship of Mr. R. Lewis. The Governors during this time comprised of people from the villages of St. Dennis, Whitemoor, Nanpean, Forchote and Trethosa, also St. Stephens. This was changed by the Government in the 1970s when each school had to have its own Governors.

Saint Dennis had 2 schools. The Church of England School was for Infants (5-7 year olds) and situated at the junction of Fore Street and Tre Lavour Road. St. Dennis C.P. School catered for the 7-15 year olds near Carne Hill Chapel. This was known as an All-Age school as there was no Secondary School in the China Clay Area at the time.

## My teaching experience in

St. Dennis School in 1956 Spring Term.

I did a home teaching practice in the school when Mr. Pellymounter was Headteacher. At the time I was a student at St. Luke's College, Exeter. I worked with Miss. Williams, who taught the Top junior class 10-11 year olds. This stood me in good stead for the interview in the summer of 1957. Mr. Pellymounter had retired and was followed by Mr. Lewis.

There was an accommodation problem at the school in 1957. The school roll exceeded the classroom spaces. Fortunately the Carne Hill Methodist Church came to the rescue and allowed the first year junior class (7-8 year olds) to use the vestry as a classroom. This was used during 1956-1958. The teacher looking after the class was Miss B. Paynter. Children came back to the main school for dinner time.

The First Class I taught - July 1957.

My career started with a group of 15 boys in the main corridor of the school. The boys were aged between 13-15 years. There were 5 class doors opening into this area. Toilets for the boys and girls were situated across the yard so any child wishing to go during lesson time passed through the front or back of my class! Perhaps less than an ideal situation for the class. Mr. Lewis, backed by the Governors, complained continually about the overcrowding to the Cornwall Education Authority. In the summer of 1957 a large number left the school and so the children fitted into the six classrooms in the main school and the vestry at Carne Hill Methodist Church. My class was 11-12 years and Miss Kent had the 13-15 year olds. Mr. Kingdom taught 12-13 year olds.





## Sport - Football, Netball, Athletics, Cricket

The school enjoyed a sports programme due to the enthusiasm of Mr. G. Jacobs, and Miss I. Kent. County competitions were entered in football, while netball was played against local schools. The school ran its own sports day in the summer term and took part in the Inter-School Sports held at Victoria Bottoms, Nanpean.

The playing field by the school provided opportunities for training. Mr. Jacobs knowledge of lay-out for football and athletics allowed the school to practise relay racing on a circular track with take over boxes and enjoy a running in lanes. Miss Kent trained the netball teams. A jumping pit was constructed. Such facilities were due to the enthusiasm of staff before there was any County provision.

Mr. Lewis was a cricket enthusiast and often came into the boys playground during the summer term to bowl 'spinners' to the senior boys. Staff and some PTA members would play the senior boys at cricket as an evening activity.

One of the most successful years was 1969-60 when the under 11's won two county competitions. The team, under their captain ~~David~~ Martin trained by Mr. Jacobs assisted by Mr. Riley, Mr. Kealey and myself.

Senior Boys to Foxhole, Senior Girls to NANPEAN.  
Arrangements for Woodwork and Domestic Science

Senior girls would spend a whole day at cookery. This would mean the girls catching a service bus to Nanpean which had a special room. Miss Coleman was the teacher taking our senior girls.

Senior boys spent a day at the woodwork centre and this was run by Mr. H. Sweet. To fit this arrangement there was some exchange within St. Dennis school staff. Miss Kent would take Senior girls for Needlework, while I took senior boys for Technical drawing and modern literature.

Physical Education

The school had no gymnasium and so Physical Education was done on the sloping playgrounds. Miss Kent would take the girls from my class and her girls in the Girls' Playground, while I took the boys of our classes into the Boys' Playground. P.E. during the winter was often abandoned because of rain or coldness!

Other Subjects

Mr. Lewis was keen on some specialisation and a sum of money was set aside for simple science equipment such as test-tubes, trough, gas jars, beehive shelf, spirit burner and some chemicals. It could be called "Stop Bucket Science", as obviously we had no laboratory like in Secondary Schools.

An epidiascope was purchased through the Parent Teachers Association. This enabled the teacher to use pictures from books and display on the screen for class viewing. An aid which enhanced History and Geography teaching.

In my first teaching post at St. Dennis All Age school I formed a choir with Miss Williams as accompanist. Children here were quite natural singers and we entered a Junior Choir in the County Music Festival at Perranporth Memorial Hall. The children sang well but did not win the class which had been won for several years by Perranporth C.P. school under Mr. Nancarrow.

Miss Williams was keen on Gilbert and Sullivan and so a number of songs were learnt from the shows. In the late 1950's, early '60s there were few presentations for parents. Recorders were being introduced in schools and I attended a course run by the County Music Adviser at St. Austell, but did not use this until transferring to the Secondary School - St. Stephens-in-Brannel 1962.



## Changes in the Organisation of the Senior part of the School 1960-61.

As a result of the complaints about the accommodation for senior children a decision was made by the authority at County level to transfer children from St. Dennis to Treviglas Secondary Newquay. The age groups would be 13-14 years and 14-15 years. The age groups 11-12 years and 12-13 years would be left at St. Dennis. They were unable to fill Treviglas Secondary! St. Stephens, the last Secondary School to be built in the County, was being built! As Newquay had Tretherras Secondary it would have been a better plan to build St. Stephens before Treviglas and complete the re-organisation of the Clay District. Were the parents, teachers, managers consulted? Perhaps someone knows the answer!

Such re-organisation in numbers would mean a loss of staff for St. Dennis School. Mr. Kingdom moved to Foxhole school, Mrs. Best retired, while Mr. Rouncefield moved back to St. Ives. Miss Kent, Deputy Head took the 12-13 years, while I took the 11-12 year olds. Miss Kent during 1959-60 had exchanged her post with Mr. Kelsey from Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada. This was known as the Commonwealth Exchange Scheme for teachers.

## The Final Reorganisation in Secondary.

### Education for the Clay District 1962.

In 1961-62 St. Stephens in Brannel Secondary School was built and children of the 11-15 year age group would transfer to the school in Sept. 1962. The schools involved were St. Dennis, St. Stephens, Foxhole, Nanpean, Whitemoor, Trethosa and Lanyeth. This would mean a reduction in staff for the above schools.

The Headteacher of the new school was to be Mr. Wallis, who had been Head of Poole Secondary between Redruth and Camborne. The appointed Deputy Head was Mr. I. Greaves. Posts were offered to teachers likely to lose their positions in the clay district schools.

The following staff were offered positions. - Miss Kent Senior Mistress, Mr. Guest - Metal Work and general subjects, Mr. Pearn Geography, some Music and English. (St. Dennis teachers)

Photo of St. Stephens  
Front entrance

## Final Reorganisation (continued)

Mr. Kingdom - History, English, Mr. Sweet - Woodwork (Forchde staff)

Mr. Dunn - Music, general subjects (St. Stephens staff)

Mr. Pideaux - Slow learners (Whitemoor staff)

Miss Coleman - Domestic Science (Nanpean staff)

After a term's trial the staff of the above schools were all offered posts of responsibility for their subjects. Further staff were appointed by the Headteacher and Governors. Mr. Howes - Head of Mathematics

Mrs. Pearce - Girls' Games & P.E., Mr. P. King - Boys' Games & P.E.

Mr. Horne - Head of English, Mr. Mason - English Mrs. Ridely Handicrafts, Mr. Hankin - Religious Education, Mr. Cousins (Geography) Further appointments followed for Art, Rural Studies and Domestic Science.

Governors included representatives from each contributing school and village. The Chairperson was Mrs. Colyma of St. Stephens.

Photo of the back entrance  
and Geography Room.

## Features of St. Stephens-in-Brannel Secondary

Compared with our village schools the facilities were a revelation! Specialist rooms such as Woodwork, Metalwork, Art, Music, (bell-shape) Domestic Science, Gymnasium, Needlework, Slow learners room, (laboratories) Hall, Dining Area and Indoor Toilets as well as playgrounds for Netball. The Sports field was just outside. Such facilities should make learning a pleasure for both children and staff.

A brief description of the Geography room illustrates the provision for the subject. Map drawers for large maps, a hanging globe, a pull down from the ceiling for maps. The room was situated on the Northern side giving a panoramic view of the countryside. Visual aids such as a film projector and a slides projector allowed the outside world into the classroom.

The caretaker had a bungalow on site. He was Mr. B Strongman (ex Army) He was keen to maintain a high standard of cleanliness. White pillars had a 6" black area on the base to stop any scuff marks!

At St Stephens my main subject was Geography. I did some music in the school's new Music Room which was bell shaped. Mr (H) Dunn was the Music teacher but I supported him and again a <sup>Harold</sup> choir was formed. Harold played the piano and I conducted. The First Annual Speech day was an important occasion for the school and the choir performed on Thurs. Nov. 14, 1963. in the presence of Mr. Watkins - County Inspector, Governors and parents. The pieces sung were Yeomen of England - Ed German, Sweet Contentment by Handel, Oh Johnny was a Rover - Sea Shanty, Creation's Hymn Beethoven, On Wings of Song - Mendelssohn and Steal Away - Negro Spiritual. Mr. Watkins addressed the school and presented the prizes. Valerie Beswetherick ex St. Dennis pupil won the first Music Prize. Other prizewinners from St. Dennis School were Michael Trelease (3rd Yr.) Jack Dunn (3rd Yr. Form Prizes), Marion Martyn (2nd Yr. Form Prize) Denis Smith (1st Yr. Form Prize). Stephen McClure (History), Adrian Wilson (Geography), Nigel Richards (Science), Margaret Metherell (Religious Education), Paul Wiczorek (Engineer Drawing) Nigel Prynn (Physical Education). Colours - Athletics P. Wiczorek, M. Trelease Football M. Trelease, N. Richards, N. Prynn. Netball V. Beswetherick,

# **Looking Back**

by

**John Pearn**

**2018 - 2019**