

**Margaret Pearn's**

**Memories of St.Dennis Schools**

**1940 - 1951**

**Drafted by John Pearn**

**Margaret Pearn's  
Memories of St.Dennis Schools  
1940 - 1951**

**Drafted By  
John Pearn**

**December 2022**

Copyright © Margaret Pearn

# Margaret Pearn's Memories of St.Dennis Schools

## 1940 – 1951

Drafted by John Pearn

December 2022

There were two schools in St.Dennis when Margaret started school, as the infants were separated from the juniors and seniors. Mrs.Curtis was head of the junior and senior school. Margaret does not remember much about the infant school apart from a teacher she had, a Miss Truscott from St.Stephens ?

She remembers having the class taken to the cellar of the school as it was the time of the Second World War and this was the delegated safe area for children. Here they would be among the coal/coke dust and often sang number songs such as 10 green bottles. Little contact with parents was made in those days ! Air raids from the Germans could be known to all by the sound of a siren echoing a high note and low one. The all clear was given by a single long note !

Margaret then attended St.Dennis Junior and Senior School at Carne Hill. It consisted of 6 main classrooms, corridors, cloakrooms for girls/boys, playgrounds (girls/boys) and toilets outside the main building for girls/boys. One of her teachers was Miss E.Thomas who was possibly from Lanjeth. Others were Mrs.Best, Miss Williams, Miss. I.kent and Mr.Pellymounter Headteacher. All these lived in the village and were devoted to teaching a younger generation, while taking part in community events. Teachers had a freedom to teach in those days. Mr.Pellymounter's interest in literature and manipulation of numbers shone through to students. Miss Kent, as deputy headteacher, took the girls for netball and folk dancing, while children were encouraged to spend evenings in school doing craftwork such as needlework, basketry, leather crafts and rug making. Miss F.Williams took the junior girls for needlework during the normal school day. Basic sewing was taught and practised, hence young people learnt basic knowledge for their adult life.



St.Dennis County Primary School

Girls spent time at cookery during normal schooltime. They would travel to Nanpean, while senior boys went to woodwork at Foxhole under Mr.Sweet. Not all girls and boys enjoyed such lessons but again the foundations were in place for the adult life of the period.

Sport such as netball, football, and athletics were part of the curriculum. However, in the war years and just after there were no leagues and often village schools were too small to raise a team. Girls did not play "boys" games, while boys seldom played "girls" games apart from tennis.

Mr.Pellymounter encouraged tennis tournaments and two pitches were provided. One in the upper girls playground across from St.Dennis Cemetery and one in the lower girls playground close to the garden area. Before the field beside the school was provided by the county as a school field, games had to be played in the local farmers fields and often the grass was long and cows may have been there previously. One farm was owned by Mr.Blewett and at Whitegate. He owned Carsella Farm. Another field was at Menna and owned by Mr.Stoneman.

Margaret was sports captain for St.Dennis, when in the senior part of the school and Owen Warne boys captain. Mr.Jacobs the sports master from Nanpean trained the teams for the competition held at Victoria Bottoms at Nanpean when teams from the clay villages took part i.e. Whitemoor, Trethosa, Foxhole, Nanpean, Roche ? and St.Stephens? St.Dennis won the cup. Mr.Jacobs trained the athletes and Margaret just about remembers the field beside the school.

She remembers her teachers and found help from all of them. Miss F.Williams would set an essay each weekend which had to be prepared and written on Mondays ! Miss Williams played the assembly piano during this time but when she was away from school through illness, Margaret and her friend would play.

Exhibitions of crafts were held in the corridors of the school and parents were invited to see the children's work. Purchases could be made. The money raised would enable craft materials to be bought as schools budgets then were tight. A type of Christmas Bazaar.

School milk was provided and hot chocolate made by senior girls from left over milk. Vegetable soup was also supplied. Again senior girls were involved adding the vegetables. Christmas parties often took place after the war as lights could be used on dark evenings. Children brought food to share and senior girls assisted with lower classes. One had to bring one's plate, cup and spoon as it was the time before school dinners!

Exams remembered were the preliminary to the 11+ exam and the 11+ for grammar school. Mr.Pellymounter spent much time with the boys fostering their love of literature as Mr.Sheaff remembers as well as younger people. Many a teacher regarded their work as a vocation as do many today, but we live in a different age of advanced technology. There is now just one St.Dennis school from infants to juniors. Reception infants to 11 years of age. After 11 children are bused to St.Stephens Comprehensive.

## Appendix A

A story about the infant school :-

A Christmas party remembered. It was war time but the children had a party. The school had decided on some uniform for girls and girls wore gym slips. It wasn't compulsory to wear it but many did. The local bakery provided warm jam pasties as a treat for all the children in the infant school at the end of Christmas term. Margaret managed to let the jam run out on her gym slip. It rather displeased her mother when she arrived home from school.

Visits made by the Junior/Senior St.Dennis School

Mr.Pellymounter organised local trips which increased the childrens knowledge of their immediate local area. Often the trips were during the evening. Children visited beaches such as Par and Harlyn Bay. Longer trips involving days out were to Paignton Zoo, the St.Mawgan air display and the Royal Cornwall Show. This was before the Royal Cornwall had a permanent home at Wadebridge.

Margaret remembers a visit to Camelford on a very wet day and also Newquay when the show was based at Quintrell Downs.

After the war polio was a disease suffered. The senior class was taken to the Royal Cornwall Hospital Truro close to Lemon Street to see the treatment of such children.

The memorial garden at St.Dennis School was built in memory of the boys sacrificed in the First World War. Trees were planted and some small plots created. This was situated below the boys playground. Senior pupils could tidy the garden during the summer term. Children brought their own tools such as clippers, trowels and forks which were hand tools. The garden remained for many years as we can both remember the garden until the infant school closed and transferred to the Junior/school and became the Infant/Junior C.P.

A day trip organised by a company was by train and bus to places like Cheddar Gorge, Wells and Weston Super Mare. A similar trip was to Bath. This equated with the environmental studies carried out long before more modern days!

## Appendix B

Mr.Pellymounter as Headteacher

Margaret remembers that he often came into the classroom and would ask the children to stop what they were doing and then to stand. When you answered two mental arithmetic questions you could sit down. He told them short cuts to numbers i.e.

- $5 \times 98$ , multiply  $5 \times 100 = 500$ , then take off 10 ( $5 \times 2$ ) Answer = 490.
- $7.5 \text{ pennies} \times 2 = 15 \text{ pennies}$ . In old money this equates to 1 shilling 3pennies.
- $8 \times 5 = 40$  hence you know  $5 \times 8 = 40$  (half of the 8 times table)

Mrs.Pellymounter came to the school to play piano for senior girls who did folk dancing. The steps being taught by Miss I.Kent, deputy headteacher. Folk dancing festivals were held when a number of schools appeared together such as St.Austell (Poltair) and Bodmin (Priory Park). These festivals were remembered by Margaret.

Mr.Pellymounter's mother moved to St.Dennis in her latter days and lived in the granite house at the top of Trelavour Road, just as you entered the village from Whitemoor.

## Appendix C

Mr.A.W.Jenkins – remembered by Mr.W.A.Sheaff and Margaret's father. He was the headteacher of St.Dennis before Mr.Pellymounter. He was previously head of Cubert School and left St.Dennis to become Head of Saltash Boys School. When I was headteacher at Saltash my deputy head remembered Mr.Jenkins at Saltash. He was an excellent disciplinary head, but tended to use the cane. Whilst at St.Dennis he lost his two children in an accident. I believe they were driving a car but where the accident occurred is not known to either of us.

A story of his action at Saltash concerned an unruly boy. This lad produced a good piece of work and the class teacher sent him to show it to Mr.Jenkins. He came back with tears in his eyes. The teacher asked him why ? He caned me sir and didn't look at my work. This was typical of Mr.Jenkins and would be frowned on today.

I knew Mr.Jenkins during my youth and early marriage to Margaret. He was a local Methodist preacher living in retirement at Tregunna Villas opposite the Co-op at St.Columb Road. He was preaching at Indian Queens Wesley Church and started his sermon. My friend and his sister were sitting in the back seat of the chapel and began to whisper to each other. Mr.Jenkins stopped and said "am I to continue or would you like to take the sermon ?" Needless to say they stopped and he continued !

An example of his discipline exercised in both school and community at that time and it was administered without question !

Margaret's Memories as told to me

M.E. Pearn and F.J.Pearn  
December 2022

**Margaret Pearn's**  
**Memories of St.Dennis Schools**  
**1940 - 1951**

**Drafted By**  
**John Pearn**