

## **Memories of schooldays 1921-25 in Bidford-on-Avon**

### **Mollie Henderson**

When I saw the renovations going on at the Church Hall, I was reminded of my very happy days spent there when it was Bidford Infant School. I was there from 1921-1925. I can remember my first day as a very shy four and a half year old. I had a dark red velvet dress with a starched pinafore over it and new brown boots which my mother had buttoned up the sides with a button hook which I still have. I didn't really want to go to school, I was happy at home amongst all our animals, cows, horses, pigs, poultry, cats and dogs, so it was with a very heavy heart that I went clutching my mother's hand.

Miss Lizzie Smith was a tiny five footer and it was into her class I went. She wasn't what I expected in a teacher, she was kind and patient with us. She sat in a high chair where she had a good view of all of us all. At the back of the chair hanging on a nail was a cane but to my knowledge she didn't use it, but all the same, it was a deterrent. I think there must have been twenty five to thirty of us in the class, the desks being in rows of five. We had those lovely books "A is for Apple" and we soon learnt our ABC and to count to ten on a large abacus. Miss Smith liked us to bring flowers for the classroom, preferable wild ones, and she would put them in meat paste jars. In the afternoon we had what was called 'Heads Down', folding our arms and resting our heads for about 15 minutes, sometimes some of us actually went to sleep!

The last two years were spent in Miss Quaill's class, a very austere lady with a stern manner which made us very afraid to do or say the wrong thing. She also had a cane and was not afraid to use it. Her classroom was quite bare, she didn't believe in "frills and furbelows" as she put it. We were there for one reason only and that was to learn and she made sure we did!

On reflection, I can only say that I am sure what happens in those first years at school is that it is the groundwork that really counts and we certainly got that from Miss Smith and Miss Quaill. Happy Days!!

Miss Smith lived at Marlcliff and came to school on a bicycle, she was sister to Mr William Smith from Clay Hall Farm. Miss Quaill was not a Bidfordian but while she was here she lived in a cottage on Tower Hill where Chris the hairdresser now lives. Miss Lizzie Edgington lived in the house by the school and if any of us fell and hurt ourselves in the playground we would go to her to be 'tidied up' and comforted. My mother told me that she lived in the house rent free in return for keeping the school clean and tidy.