

Greenleaf Road Schooldays

By Colin Doman, Feb 2015 [[email](#)]

I spent the whole of my school life from 5 to 15 years within that 'pointy' triangle formed by Greenleaf Road, Melville Road and the short baseline of Forest Road. The layout of the three schools was such that one started at the infants in the centre of the three buildings, then moved to the juniors on the left as seen from Greenleaf Road, towards Forest Road. Last of all in the group, to the right-hand end and at the apex of the triangle was the much more imposing McGuffie School, just before the Greenleaf / Melville junction. All three buildings had their main entrances on Greenleaf Road, with no exit from the juniors onto the relatively busy main Forest Road; this part had protecting railings all round.

I can recall my mother on that first morning at infants school standing at the open door of the classroom waving me goodbye and I, with trepidation, trying to put a brave face on it all from within. I was certainly not tough. I cannot remember my teacher's names apart from two; the head, Miss (or Mrs) Richmond and a Chinese, or at least oriental, lady by the name of Miss Strawn. Funnily enough, I had recalled that name clearly all down the years but had lost it in the last few. This morning I looked at a charity bookshop window display which was celebrating the Chinese New Year and by the time I got inside to examine the shelves found myself silently reciting her name. Such is memory: It's all in there, it just needs a trigger to bring it out. Miss Strawn may have been my first teacher, or possibly my second after a short spell with a very dimly-recalled Miss Williams. Wonder if any other ex-Greenleaf readers can throw any more light here?

I'm sure that both the infants and the juniors school buildings were Victorian, and I believe that the old infants building still stands at this time - at least it did on passing a year or two ago - though no longer used as a school, perhaps a community centre these days. The juniors building has long since been replaced by the usual modern square 'pre-fab' type, seemingly without any architectural merit at all, with demolition of the imposing McGuffie (built 1911-1915, if I remember the stone inscription along the frieze correctly) following later. This area is now private dwellings.

The head of Greenleaf junior school was Miss A L Mauler. Going forward in time, I have her signed and dated 'Best Wishes' for July 18th 1958, this being my last day before transfer to McGuffie. Other notable lady teachers remembered are: B A (or is it B W?- difficult to be sure) Dodd, with 'Good Luck, 17.7.'58' inscribed), D Westwood, Lodder and Lavery. Also a 'Famous at Last' signature from Mr M Hutchison who I believe was the Physical Education teacher. He was one of relatively few male teachers, which also included Maxwell and Bramhall, if I remember correctly.

With best wishes

A. L. Maule

July 18th '58

Good luck from B. A. Dodd.
14. 7. '58

With best wishes
D. Westwood

G. E. Cowley

G. A. Jamlin

B. A. Jamlin

good luck

M. G. Green

How I hated P.E., but not because of him, I hasten to add. I hated any classes of a sporty nature, games including football, and particularly the weekly compulsory visits to the High Street Baths for swimming lessons (building now also long-gone). Sport of any kind was not for me, and frankly still isn't. My best subject was science; chemistry and physics. I can recall particularly one of my first tastes of football, not on grass but the hard tarmac surface of the school playground. During the match nothing had happened regarding goals

scored for a long, boring time so in frustration I kicked the briefly-possessed ball into my own net, pretending to all that I had been confused as to which 'end' I was playing. That's my excuse anyway, but it certainly stirred them up!

One Greenleaf Road incident comes to mind, not directly connected to the school but occurring just outside it, which formed a great distraction from the usual daily routine for most pupils, girls and boys. That was the morning of the great lorry spill, when a lorry or van carrying its load of decorative coloured beads of all shapes and sizes destined for who knows where, and passing along Greenleaf Road, shed its load all over the road between the junior school gates and the Walthamstow Police Station yard. This interesting diversion made instant collectors of many pupils who were enthusiastically searching out every nook and cranny of the roadway and gutters for days on end. All this was long before the days of car trips to and from school, so the pupils were free to spend their early-arrival and leisurely going-home time on this task. Luckily, we had no official school uniform to get ruined in the process.

Finally, aged 11 1/2, I transferred to William McGuffie further up the same road, and classmates recalled from those later days are David Archer of Mansfield Road, Alan Cole of Osborne Grove and, particularly in the last year, Barry Keen of South Countess Road. That's another story of course but I still wonder where they went?

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