

Village Echoes

The Local History Society was recently given a small collection of postcards postmarked 1939 and 1945, along with some cardboard slips which appear to have been designed to teach arithmetic. They were found beneath the floorboards in The Knowle, which at that time was part of the much larger building which formed Pinehurst School in West Road, run by Miss M. B. Reid.



An undated brochure promoting the school provides the information that it was established in 1930 in Heathfield, Sussex as a “co-educational home for school children from 3 to 12 years of age”. Although the date when Miss Reid brought the school to Goudhurst is, as yet, not known, it was probably about 1935/1936, which is when Oakleigh, the house it took over, was sold.

In October 1951 Miss Reid informed the village, via the parish magazine, of her retirement; after 21 years as Principal of the school she had sold it to a Mrs D. M. Price “who had a long and varied experience with young children”. Mrs Price did not stay long, however, as in June 1953 the parish magazine was used to inform the village of a further change. The widowed Mrs Caroline Elizabeth Gertrude Feek had taken over as Principal and she remained at the helm until 1962 when unfortunately, as reported in the London Gazette two years later, she went bankrupt and the school presumably closed.

Miss Reid’s aims for the school were “to create the home-like atmosphere of a large family and give individual and motherly care, so essential to children, particularly those whose parents live abroad”. The school took day-pupils as well as boarders, and the Goudhurst Millennium Book (p220) contains the memories of one such pupil. The outdoor life, including sunbathing, was encouraged and the school also kept its own ponies, although at least one riding teacher in the early 1950s found it easier to provide her own (Millennium Book p 298).

Before the war, school-fees ranged from £30 a term to £120 a year for boarders, and day pupils paid £4, £6 or £8 depending on their age and whether they attended for a whole day or just a morning. Lessons deemed as extra (dancing, piano, riding) were charged a set amount per term. By 1946, the only other date for which the Society has any specific information on the school, the fees for boarders had risen to £42 per term.

Unusually for those times, the school provided “both meat and vegetarian food, with an ample supply of vegetables, fresh fruit and salads provided every day”. The vegetarian option is possibly the reason why one former pupil, a life-long vegetarian who contacted the Society recently, was sent there at the age of 5 in 1949.

If anyone living in Goudhurst has any memories/photographs of the school, the Local History Society would love to hear from you. Likewise, if anyone knows Miss M. B. Reid’s full name or anything about her, that would be a bonus!

Local History Society
Email: info@goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org