

## At School



*An official school photograph taken at Froyle School in 1893. It was taken in front of the school and this was to become a tradition. At this time photographs were only taken at five yearly intervals, and even then many parents simply could not afford to buy one. However, they provide an invaluable aid to the local historian*

## The First Schools

The very earliest mention of education in Froyle has come to light in a letter written by a John Knight to his brother Stephen, who lived at Chawton Manor, regarding Stephen's son, whom John apparently treated as his heir. In the letter, dated 10th January 1616, John writes, "The imperfection you speak of in your son's speach, I have not at any time observed, butt that in speaking he doth lypse. I hope he be long since come from you and att Froyle." However, in May of the same year, he writes of his intention to move his nephew to a schoolmaster at Basingstoke because "his (the nephew's) usage at Froyle was not to my liking."

In the next century we find James Marshall's will of 1751 leaving £5 per annum to teach poor children of Froyle to read and write, but there was no known 'education centre' in the village.

But in the Census of 1841 we read of a George Croucher, aged 30, whose occupation is given as Schoolmaster. Ten years later we learn that he had a 'day school' in Froyle. George Croucher lived at the north end of Lower Froyle, so maybe his school was there. As I mentioned earlier, the censuses tell us is that there was a 'day school' in Husseys Lane in 1861, run by Harriett Walker. This school was held in a cottage just below Baldwins Farm.

What we can be certain of is that in 1852 Henry Burningham built a school room onto the front of a house in Upper Froyle, now known as Froyle Cottage. This he did in memory of his young son, Francis Carleton Burningham, who had died at the age of seven. The school was run by his coachman's daughter, Letitia Enefer.



*Froyle Cottage, with the schoolroom extension at right angles to the main building*

Froyle National School, as it was known then, was founded by Sir Charles Hayes Miller in 1867, but was not opened until after his death in 1868. His son, C.J.Hubert Miller, then a child of nine, is said to have laid the foundation stone of the new school.



According to that very first log book, the school opened quietly on Monday, November 2nd, 1868, with Mr George Veal as ‘Master’. There were presumably no processions or bands, perhaps because Sir Charles Hayes Miller was no longer alive to see the fulfilment of his plans. It was, however, a special occasion; after a Church service the opening ceremony took place in the school, performed by the Vicar, the Reverend W.R.Astley-Cooper, this being followed by tea and cake for the adults and children at the ceremony.

On that first day 138 pupils were admitted, 70 of whom had already been attending Mrs Burningham’s School just up the road in Froyle Cottage.

In those early days parents had to pay for their children’s education and many considered the three pence a week an unnecessary expense, preferring their children to work alongside them in the fields.

*“The attendance of elder children not at all good. Haymaking is about commencing. The irregularity interferes much with a uniform system of working... I fear there are many children who will not put in an appearance*

*Froyle School and its adjoining Schoolhouse early last century. They were said to have been built with the last stone from nearby Quarry Bottom*



*until after the Harvest Holiday....Parents are very much disposed to take children with them into the fields instead of sending them to school.....”*  
*(G.Veal, June 1877)*

Looking through the log books we see the summer holiday was known as the ‘harvest holiday’ and began much later than it does now, around August 12th. But it was quite flexible, depending on the harvest,

*“August 24th 1883....broke up for the harvest and hop-tying today. Very few children have been present this week, many with their parents in the field. We should have broken up before but there is every prospect of a late and long hopping in which case we should have difficulty in making the necessary attendances.”*

Mr Veal was followed by Mr John Perry in 1884 and Mr Arthur Mann in 1891. Then came the first of three Heads who were to take Froyle School through half a century of education. William Button Downes became Headmaster in 1892 and was to remain so for 30 years. He was assisted by his wife, Alice, then an uncertificated teacher, who taught the Infants and also Needlework. His children attended the school as scholars, moving on to Eggars School in Alton when they were older. They helped out with the teaching on many occasions so the running of the school was a real family affair.

*Mr. William Button Downes, with his wife Alice, and their four children, surrounded by some of the school children and staff, pose for the photographer in 1900*





In this photograph of the school, taken in 1913, we meet the Westbrook and the Brownjohn children. Among them are Lilian Westbrook, who you have already heard from, and Harold Brownjohn, who has, only recently, provided some wonderful photographs for this book. The Westbrook and Brownjohn families are two of the oldest in Froyle, being mentioned in the parish records as far back as the 1600s.

The full list of names are as follows:

*On the left:* Mr & Mrs Downes. Back row, left to right: Harold Brownjohn, Sidney Rix, Arthur Aslett, Hubert Brownjohn, Dick Beckhurst, Tom Brownjohn, Charlie Brownjohn.

*Second row from back, left to right:* Annie Munday, Edna Newport, Nellie Lawrence, Mary Munday, Alice Etherington, Lily Ellis, Daisy Page.

*Second row from front, left to right:* Rosie Cherrill, Kathleen Beckhurst, Tom Munday, Doris Etherington, Grace Westbrook, Lilian Westbrook.

*Front row, left to right:* Marjorie Cherrill, Flora Cherrill, Bill Lawrence, Ernie Munday, Bertie Gates and Ena Westbrook.

The School Log Books give a graphic picture of life in a small village and remind us that times were hard in those early days. On many occasions children came to school without warm clothing or even a pair of shoes on their feet and

many died in infancy. In 1906, for example, the scourge of Diphtheria raised its ugly head,

*“Diphtheria is developing. A child named Charles Knight died this morning and one of Munday’s children has been taken to the hospital. Only 64 are present this morning, there being quite a scare in the parish. Dr Leslie, M.O.H., came over at 11am and formally closed the school.”*

*(W.Downes, Oct 10th 1906)*

*“Adelaide Steer was buried today. Having died of Diphtheria.”*

*(W.Downes, Nov 9th 1908)*

*“School closed owing to the continued prevalence of Diphtheria.”*

*(Feb 26th - March 22nd 1909)*

But there were also some happier moments.....

In her retirement, the last Headteacher, Mrs. Nora Jupe, put together an extensive history of the school and she tells us, “There was a whole week’s holiday to celebrate the new King’s Coronation in June 1911. Sir Hubert Miller attended the ceremony and spoke to the children, describing it to them; later in the week Miss Burningham brought in some Coronation souvenirs for the children. Other excitements were concerts and magic lantern shows and even fireworks in the Master’s garden, attended by the older pupils, who were given gingerbread afterwards.”

At Christmas the children looked forward to small gifts from the managers. In 1912 the log book entry tells us,

*“School broke up today for the Xmas holiday. Sweets and oranges distributed, the gifts of the managers. The afternoon, from 3pm, spent in festivity.”*

Life went on very much as usual until the Spring Term of 1922. This was an unhappy term, culminating in William Button Downes final entry in the Log book on March 21st 1922,

*“Resigned the mastership of these schools following upon a serious nervous breakdown..... William Downes”.*

His wife and sister, who had also taught at the school, retired on April 21st 1922, thus ending a 30 year span of a school ably run by a conscientious and caring Master, helped by his family throughout the years.

And then came the man who became known not just as a good Headmaster, but also as Froyle’s Historian, Mr Tom Knight. At the same time Mrs Bygrave and Miss Pullinger joined the staff and together they brought the school through the Winning Years of the Thirties and the War Years of the Forties.

Tom Knight was highly respected by all those he taught. Don Pritchard, who



was at Froyle School from 1922 until 1931, is just one of those who remember him well, “Mr Knight was a good Headmaster, but very strict. He wouldn’t allow any talking at all. We used to sit in pairs in iron framed desks. His favourite expression was ‘Come out, you scamp!’ He would tell us wonderful stories about his time in South Africa. When he mentioned that, we knew we were all right for the afternoon. He once said, in later years, that we were a rough lot, but he wouldn’t have swapped us for the world!”

This photograph of Mr Knight and his wife was taken in the garden of the schoolhouse, which stood adjacent to the school.



In 1923 the Duke and Duchess of York were married and Froyle School was given a holiday to celebrate the occasion. Two of the managers of the school, Mr Summers and Mr Sidgwick, presented it with a maypole, so that maypole dancing could be part of the celebrations. Naturally, a special photograph was taken of the children using the maypole for the first time.



In the 1930s, under the instruction of Mrs Bygrave, the school was to excel in needlework and country dancing. In 1933 the school entered a national competition for needlework and found themselves amongst the prizewinners. The Froyle Parish Paper of St Mary & Joseph announced the results with pride,

“We take off our hats to Mary Caines, aged 11 years, (below, seated) who won second prize in the junior class for plain needlework in the National Needlecraft Competition recently held by the ‘School Mistress’.

The Competition was open to schools in the British Isles and abroad, and attracted thousands of entries. In the same class, certificates of honourable mention were gained by Marjorie Herson and Nancy Knight, while in the senior section a similar certificate was won by Dorothy Herson. Ordinary certificates for plain needlework were awarded to Marjorie Cox and Jessie Pinnells and a certificate for embroidery to Peggy Newland.

This is certainly a great accomplishment and worthy of loud cheers, so let us give three hearty cheers for the successful children, coupled with one extra loud one for Mrs Bygrave who has been untiring in her efforts of training and supervision.”

Three of the girls who were so successful have very clear memories of that competition:

Mary Caines - “I don’t remember what I made, only that the stitches were so tiny you could hardly see them. As well as the certificate, I won £1 and a lovely cream lace collar.”

Dorothy Herson - “We were told by Mrs Bygrave that Queen Mary had visited the Exhibition and seen our work. Most of my work, which was a petticoat, was done by gaslight at home, by a coal fire. I don’t know how I kept it clean.”

Marjorie Cox - “My entry was a full length short sleeved nightdress in plain white Nainsook, edged with mauve bias binding. I remember getting into trouble with Mrs Bygrave because I pricked my finger and she was worried I would mark my needlework.”





*The Folk Dancing Team at Rotherfield Park in 1935 with Mrs Bygrave and Bandmaster, Mr Leslie Seymour*



In 1935, again under the instruction of Mrs Bygrave, a team of fifteen girls found themselves taking first place honours in the English Folk Dancing Competition, held that year in Guildford. The photograph above sees them at the East Tisted Fete in Rotherfield Park on 20th July 1935, when they gave a display of their expertise. Just look at those hemlines! Have you ever seen anything so level? The reason for this was that all the dresses had to have the hemlines adjusted so that they were all the same height from the ground.

The girls are (left to right) Sheila Hill, Dora Holland, Rose Willis, Doris England, Violet Harris, Olive Rix, Nancy Knight, Peggy Robinson, Mary Burns, Marjorie Herson, Marjorie Watterson, Violet Wells, Jean McDonald and Phyllis Savage.

Jack Cooper, who attended Froyle School from 1934 until 1941, shares his memories of those days, "I remember the summers when, on our way to school, we would pop the bubbles of tar in the road where it had been poured to fill the pot holes and we would get ourselves covered with tar. It would get all over us, particularly in our hair. We hated the visit of the dentist who came in a caravan which was parked up at Froyle Place. If you had to visit him you were thankful if your name came early in the alphabet. The drill was worked by a foot pedal. Later in the day his feet got tired and the drill went slower!"

On April 18th 1946 Tom Knight's entry in the Log Book read,

*"At the end of the Easter Holidays, May 4th, I cease to be Headmaster, as I am retiring, so this is my last day of actual teaching. Mrs J.A.Bygrave has been appointed Head Mistress."*

There is no doubt that Mrs Bygrave did not have the same place in the hearts of Froyle children as Mr Knight had done. Having said that, the school continued to do well under her headship. The H.M.I.'s Report in June 1955 reads, "This school has more than doubled its numbers since the last report in 1947. There are now 85 children on roll. The three classrooms are of good size; the largest, containing the piano, is used for Assembly and when the playground is unfit for use, for Physical Education. The Infant's classroom is used as a dining room, the school meal is cooked in a small kitchen on the premises, the attendance for the meal is nearly 100%. The Offices consist of buckets. In a classroom there is a sink with running water, but wash basins are of the portable type...."

Every care is taken by the teachers to give these children a happy school-life, and to teach them to behave courteously to others; the children's ready response reflects credit on all concerned."

Asked how they remembered Mrs Bygrave, most of those Froyle children, who are now in their fifties and sixties, commented on her tinted glasses. Many found them quite disconcerting. "She always used to stare down at you through those dark glasses and you were never quite sure what she was thinking", one told me. Isn't it strange what sticks in your memory when you are a child! The reason for these glasses was that Mrs Bygrave had continuing problems with her eyes

*Mrs Bygrave, on the right of the photograph, introduces Mr Heywood, the first Headteacher of the newly opened Lord Mayor Treloar College, to the children in 1954*





*Mrs Bygrave surrounded by her school children on the Recreation Ground in Lower Froyle*

and had to undergo several operations, necessitating the heavily tinted lenses. The children probably weren't even aware of that!

After thirty five years of service to the school, Mrs Bygrave retired in 1957. We believe the photograph above is of her retirement presentation, but as there is no record of it in the School Log Books and none of those 'youngsters' can remember, we are only guessing. Whatever the occasion, Mrs Bygrave is certainly being thanked for her service to Froyle School.

The next Headteacher, Mrs Dean, was only at the school for two years, but they were very active years, with the forming of the PTA.

*"A meeting of parents was held in school this evening. It was decided to form a parent-teacher association. A temporary committee was elected to plan initial meetings consisting of Mrs Dean and Mrs Roberts - representing the staff; Mrs Robson, Mr Pros(s)er and Mr Barnes, representing the parents and Miss Chubb the Managers." (A.J.Dean, March 20th 1958)*

A permanent committee was elected in June, consisting of Chairman & Treasurer, Mrs Dean; Secretary, Mrs Tourrell, with Mrs Roberts representing the teachers; Mr Barnes and Mrs Peters, the parents; Miss Chubb, the Managers.

There was also a great deal of restoration work on the actual fabric of the building during Mrs Dean's headship and this was something Mr W.J.Lailey fought tirelessly for from the moment he took over as Headmaster in 1959.

Indeed, it was during his term of office that there was talk of a new school altogether.

*“A meeting was held in the school to discuss the possibility of a new school. It was unanimously agreed that a new school was desirable and the County was urged to proceed as quickly as possible....The question of siting was discussed, and in view of the fact that most of the population of the school was mainly centred in Lower Froyle, it was agreed that that would be the most likely and convenient place to build.”*

*(W.J.Lailey, Nov.1962)*

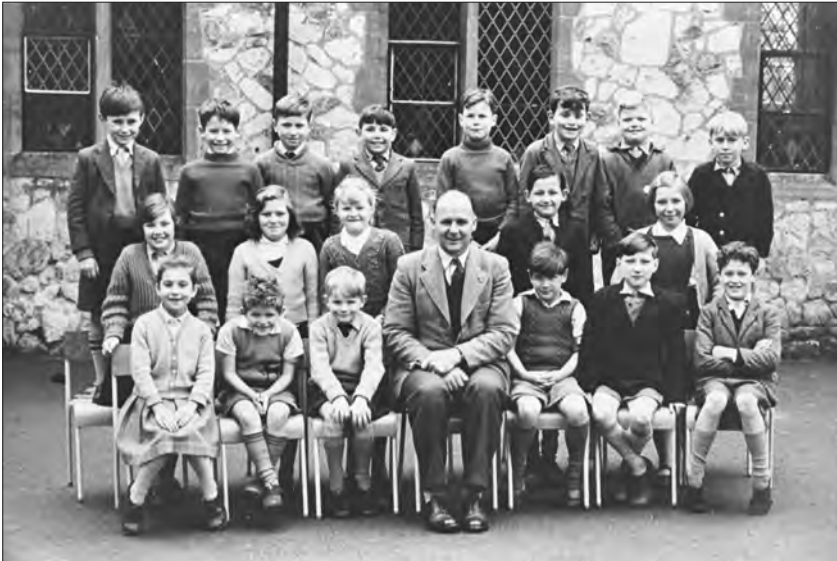
*“A meeting of the Managers was held to mark the map, provided by the County, with possible sites for the proposed new school. The most popular choice decided upon was opposite the Westburn Fields housing estate, on land farmed by Mr Thomas and owned by Mrs Bootle-Wilbraham.”*

*(W.J.Lailey, Dec.1962)*

Sadly, all this activity was to no avail. In 1964 Mr Lailey was informed that Yes! Froyle School would close, but at some unspecified date in the future, when the children would be transferred to a new school to be built in the nearby village of Bentley! That unspecified date turned out to be 1986!

Mr Lailey was another very popular Headteacher and many of his students remember him with affection. Andrew Pritchard, who was at Froyle School from

*Mr Lailey with his class in 1960*





*Children enjoying a snowball fight in the playground during the winter of 1963*

1961 until 1967, told me, “He used to produce some marvellous Christmas Pantomimes, all in rhyme. I remember us doing ‘Sleeping Beauty’. Mark Elston, Barry Cousins and myself were three pantomime fairies, complete with frilly skirts and knickers. I still remember our opening lines,

*“We’re Pantomime Fairies, our duty is clear  
We stand here before you, year  
after year*

And they ended,

*Although we’re short on beauty, you’ll agree  
We’re probably the sleepiest  
lot you’ll ever see!”*

Perhaps, not surprisingly, Andrew didn’t offer us a photograph of this magic moment in his childhood!

Patricia Wood, née Knight, at school from 1960 to 1966, also has happy memories of her time there, “Mr Lailey, Mrs Roberts, Miss Amaballino, and Mrs Tourrell, the school secretary; the peacock tapestry we all helped to do, wonderful school dinners cooked by Mrs Whittock and Mrs Binfield, Christmas plays, sports days, nature walks with Mr Lailey, and then the long walk home through the Beeches, seeing how far you could walk along the wall before falling off.”

Mr Lailey was followed in 1967 by Miss Swain, who was Headteacher until 1975. Strangely enough, I have never seen one photograph of Miss Swain and know very little about her time at Froyle at all. That is mainly because she, unlike those heads before her, wrote very little in her log books.



They were literally logs of events, almost like an appointment book, rather than the lengthy and often quite personal notes of some of the other heads. For example, nowhere does she mention the celebrations that took place in school during 1967 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the school - rather an oversight, I would have thought! Luckily, the local press were around to, at least, capture the celebrations on camera.



Mrs Nora Jupe took up her post in 1975. Little did she realise as she greeted the children on the first day of the autumn term that she would be the last Headteacher of Froyle School. Life went on very much as usual, the children excelling in sport as well as continuing to do well in the academic subjects. But numbers were dwindling and by the beginning of the 1980s there were only 22 children attending the school.

Although at the start of 1984 the school seemed to be flourishing, and about to be redecorated, there were rumours of closure throughout the year and in February 1985 an Open Meeting was called to discuss the future of Froyle School. It was clear, at that meeting, that for 'future' one should substitute 'closure'.



*Froyle school children in 1974. Steven Webb, Mark Solley, Mark Waring, Robbie Bullpitt, Gary Woodcock, Claire Cray, Karen Stupple, Elaine Maine, Sandra Shurgold, Dawn Woodcock, Mark Cray, Jackie Bramley, Patrick Mayo, Sandra Trim, Jane Waring, Robert Watkins, Paul Mayo, Wendy Shurgold, Andrew Bennett, Karen Webb, Michael Caine, Brian Shurgold.*

In her book about the School, Mrs Jupe tells us,

“The final closure proposal was not validated until September when letters, first to the PTA secretary, then to the Chairman of Governors, were received and a copy of the Governors letter was sent to the school.

After the final closure notice, parents and teachers were determined to make sure the last two terms of Froyle School were to be happy successful ones. The PTA organised a ‘Car-Boot Sale’ for funds and at the AGM they organised an illustrated story competition, for both Infants and Juniors. The stories were put on the computer by the children and the printouts mounted with the illustrations, anonymously of course. A bass xylophone was purchased from school funds, after consultation with Bentley School, where Mrs Russell (a teacher) hoped to transfer after July 1986. Mrs Jupe had already decided to retire when the school closed.”

Numbers had now fallen to 20 - a far cry from the 135 who had attended that very first day 118 years before - but Mrs Jupe and her staff wanted to make sure the school closed ‘with a bang’, so plans got under way to invite as many past pupils as possible to join the present ones for a ‘Farewell Occasion’.

I leave Mrs Jupe to describe the last few days of Froyle School,

“The main occasion of the term however, was the ‘Farewell Occasion’ on Midsummer’s Day. For more than thirteen hours, hundreds of visitors came to take part in a pleasant but sad reunion on a perfect summer’s day. Many memories were revived, prompted by a photographic exhibition in the Hall of the school’s history in decades, while in the Junior Classroom, children’s work over the past decade was displayed. Sustained by ploughman’s lunches and cups of tea, some visitors stayed all day and there were dancing displays in the afternoon, joined in by visitors. After a tea party for the school children and a disco for the teenagers, the grown-ups enjoyed a barbecue and disco and were loathe to go home until just before midnight when a thunderstorm broke - the school really did close with a bang!

In the last week of term, a Farewell Service was held in the Church; Mrs Dean and Col. Willcocks spoke about the school and the children performed their play, ‘The Conversion of Saul’, as the theme of the service was ‘Light’. Both old and new hymns were sung, the school ending as it had begun, with a service in church and tea in the school. After presentations had been made to Mrs Jupe and the staff, by Mr R. Haddock, the Assistant Area Education Officer, and autograph



albums had been presented to the children, containing a copy of their last school photograph, the cake sculpted by Mrs Trim in the shape of the school building was cut and eaten.”

At that presentation Roger Haddock presented Mrs Jupe with the ‘Gold Letter’, a token of the County’s appreciation, and he told a crowded hall, “Mrs Jupe has always been loyal, dedicated and full of the joys of the world. We thank her sincerely.”

On that final day of term, as the children gathered on the front lawn for the last time, parents joined them for a short meeting where Mrs Jupe, who was retiring that day, supervised the children as they presented their farewell gifts to the staff. Finally, Mrs Jupe closed the school with the words, “It only remains for me to now say ‘goodbye’ and ‘thank you’ as our children leave these premises for the last time as pupils of Froyle School.”

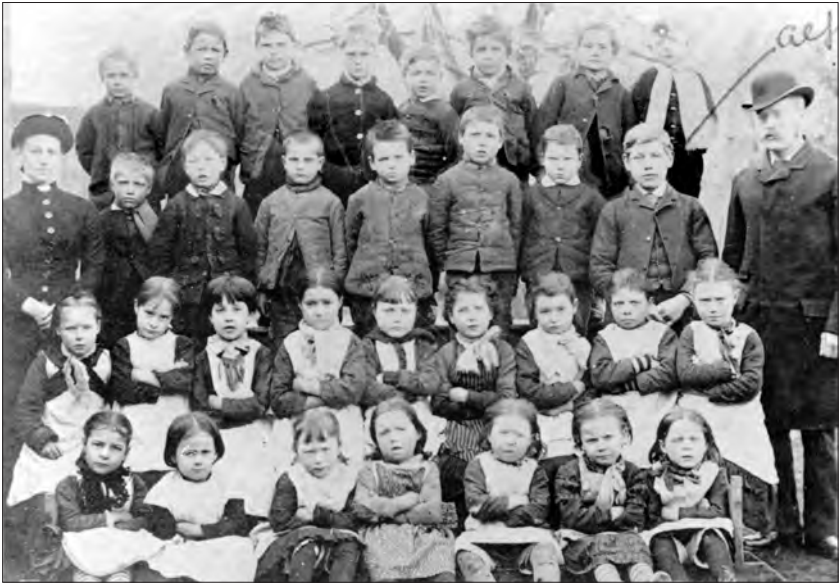
Twenty two children transferred from Froyle to Bentley School after the closure, although the building continued as a school during 1987, being used by Bentley School while their own premises were enlarged and refurbished. But in July 1987 Froyle School was handed back to the Treloar Trust, from whom it had been leased.

The Trust considered incorporating it into the rest of, what was then, the Lord Mayor Treloar College, but after discussion, decided to put it on the market, with planning permission to turn it into a private residence.

Mrs Jupe attended the auction to watch her school come under the hammer. She was just one of several local people who felt they had to be “in at the end” of the building that had played such an important role in village life.

Let us leave Froyle School with a selection of photographs from that “Farewell Occasion” Exhibition.

## Froyle School 1868-1986



*We believe this is the very first photograph taken at Froyle School and, although we are unable to date it precisely, you will notice that someone has written on it 'Alf', identifying one of the children. This Alf is, in fact, Alfred Brownjohn - someone you will meet later. Alfred was born in 1871, so that would put this photograph around 1880 I would think. The Headmaster at this time was George Veal.*





*The older children in the playground around the year 1898. At this time the younger children were separated by a fence and you can just make out their blurred little faces peeping over the top*

*The School in about 1902. Unfortunately nothing is known about the occasion of this photograph*





*The Football Team of 1908*

*All the children gather at the front of the School  
for the traditional photo in 1922*





*The Class of 1923*

*Flower fairies in the 1930s, we believe, although no-one has owned up yet!*





*The Class of 1930*

*The Class of 1950*







*The Class of 1951*



*Playing Rounders in 1954*





*Mrs Roberts' Class of 1958*

*The Class of 1961*





*Miss Amabilino's Class of the early 1960s*

*'Christmas in Mexico', a school presentation in 1975*





*The school children pose for a special photograph in 1977 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II*

*Froyle School children at an Inter School Sports Day in 1978. The girls Netball team had picked up the trophy for gaining the highest number of points amongst the smaller schools.*







*Prizewinners at Froyle School's Spring Show in 1982 with Mr Hawkins (left), Mrs J.Bootle-Wilbraham and Mr Hart*

*May Day Celebrations at Froyle School in 1985. Headteacher, Mrs Jupe, steadies the maypole, while, in the background, Miss Ireson provides the music with her piano accordion*





*The last official Froyle School photograph, taken in 1986*

*Froyle School in 1989, during its conversion into a private dwelling*

