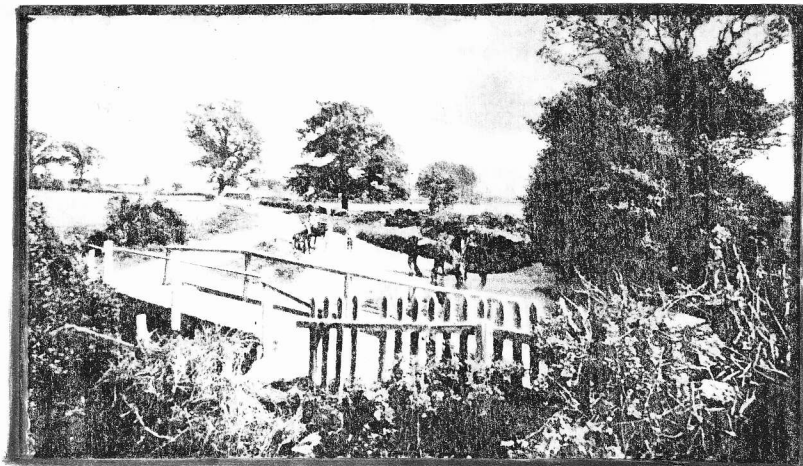


<p>VEGETABLE and FLOWER SEEDS</p> <p>NURSERY STOCK</p> <p>PATENT MANURES</p> <p>BULBS</p> <p>GARDEN REQUISITES</p>		<p>SPECIAL in FOOD for CATTLE POULT PIGEO DOGS CAGE B etc.</p>
<p>Telephone 18.</p>	<h2>J. P. BARTON,</h2>	<p>Telephone</p>
<p>SEEDSMEN, NURSERYMEN and CORN MERCHANTS</p> <p>107/86, SOUTHAMPTON RD., EASTLEIGH</p> <p>ALSO AT 1. LEIGH ROAD</p>		



MEMORIES OF EASTLEIGH COLLEGE - A DAMES SCHOOL

I must be the youngest College entrant in the country. I started my education when I was barely three years old at Eastleigh College. This school was on the site now occupied by Delbridge's at the junction of High Street and Leigh Road.* It was a red brick house with a high brick wall and pillastered entrance gate, each pillar topped with a stone ball.

The wall stretched as far as the first shops and the main ground-floor schoolroom extended up High Street to Leigh Road. The schoolroom for the very young children was up a flight of stairs and fronted by a flat roof with low parapet, still there, overlooking Leigh Road, where we used to spend our "break" time. The living quarters were at the back of the house.

My family lived in the house opposite and I was born in the room over Clemoe's shop which looked out on to Leigh Road – it's still there, although the rest of the house has long since disappeared.* My parents rented it from Bazeley's, the Florists, whose shop fronted on to Leigh Road. It was a red brick creeper covered house stretching along High Street as far as what was then Rees, the Chemists. It had a long, narrow garden alongside the house with a four foot brick wall adjoining the High Street pavement. The garden was full of privet hedges, shrubs and small conifers and at least one very tall tree. As the privet had grown quite high, the path seemed isolated from the road. There was another tall tree on the pavement outside and the garden always seemed to be full of birds.

There was a stable at the bottom of the garden, complete with mangers, at right angles to the road. Mr. Bazeley's plants were kept in the stable and I remember toddling in there to see Jack, a young lad who worked in the shop. On one occasion I entered to see a vicious and scared-looking rat cowering in a corner - Jack had him pinned against the wall with a pitchfork. He shouted for me to get out but I was fascinated - the rat's eyes seemed to glow red in the dim stable.

Up till the age of three, my days were filled with making mud pies in the garden and talking to people who peeped over the wall and admired my handiwork. I often played in our garden with Kenneth, the son of the next door chemist. Also, I loved going to the shops with Mother. Ward's the Drapers was one of my favourites as they had an overhead cash system. The money was put in a container which whizzed across on wires to the Cashier when a cord was pulled. It returned with the change and the receipted bill.

* Now, in 2003, the school site is occupied by the firm of Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Clemoe's shop, much altered, is occupied by Domino's Pizzas.

The High Street shop I liked the best sold toys and belonged to Miss Houghton - I believe she moved afterwards to Market Street - and one episode at this shop made Mother think that maybe I should start school. There was always a line of wooden horses on wheels outside the shop window and I yearned for one. On this occasion, I rushed towards the largest horse in the line and made off at a fair speed with it towards Factory Road, chased by an irate Miss Houghton. Mother stood back wondering whether to own me or not, but eventually placated Miss Houghton by buying me one of the smaller horses.

Another eagerly awaited visit was to Ingram's shop in Leigh Road, near the Station, to see the little mechanical man tapping on the window with his stick; also to Barton's, in Southampton Road, to see the live baby chicks in the window.

There were two garden gates to the pavement at the side of our house. I used to swing or stand on the gate near the front door, surveying the leisurely shoppers and chatting to the girls from Eastleigh College. They were always early for school and crossed the road to suggest I should ask Mother to let me go to school with them. The gate had a solid wooden bottom and cross-over bars at the top which I could wedge my feet between and hang on to the top bar. One day, I was standing on the bolted gate while Mother was boiling the clothes in the copper and using the big, heavy mangle. I was watching the quiet scene - not many people around, just a few horses and carts plodding along. Suddenly, I let out a piercing scream and Mother rushed out expecting to see me trampled beneath a horse's hooves. A young lady, riding tall on a high bicycle with a basket in front, had turned the corner from Leigh Road into High Street and was cycling erratically and slowly from side to side. (No one-way system in those days.) "That's dangerous" I thought, and suddenly a large taxi cab bowled round the corner and mounted the cycle. I closed my eyes but the scream came when a blood-soaked leg hit the gate. Fortunately, it turned out to be a leg of lamb which had been in the basket of the day-dreaming cyclist. She made a complete recovery from her injuries and bought me a pixie doll to make up for my scare.

Many were the casualties which were brought into our house after accidents, and this time Mother said, "That's it! You can start school and then I will know you are safe" (from rats, pinching horses and the occasional car.) So, at the beginning of the September term, 1923, I crossed the road holding Mother's hand, was enrolled by Miss Ada Gamlen and became a College pupil. It was a real Dames School! The Misses Gamlen were cousins. Miss Ada was the Principal and older than her cousin, Miss Florrie.

Miss Ada was always dressed in black and was a stern but well-loved disciplinarian. She was very deaf - Eastleigh College children were renowned for their clear diction and loud voices. One of the pupils had a very penetrating voice and Mother swore she could hear every word she yelled while in her kitchen opposite the school. Mind you, the traffic wasn't so noisy in those days. Miss Florrie taught the younger pupils in the upstairs classroom. She dressed in sombre colours and seemed bemused in a kind of way with her large brood and predictably rather tired. All the pupils chorused "Good morning, Miss Florrie" at the start of the day.

Within minutes of starting school, I had my first lesson in the strength of the male sex. Miss Florrie indicated a double row of pegs and said we should all choose one for our coats. I was nearly mown down in the rush of young bodies but managed to reach up and grab a lower one. Suddenly, a heavy hand crashed down on mine, skinning my fingers against the hard peg. It belonged to Robin Smart, son of the Licensee at the Grantham Arms. Thankfully, I noticed there wasn't as much blood as on the leg of lamb and took my place on a form. In those days, it wasn't a matter of which form you were in as which form you were sitting on!

I settled down to drawing pictures on my slate with a slate pencil. My first work of art was a yacht! We Juniors had most of our lessons on slates. To hear what must have been 20 or so slate pencils squeaking was an ear shattering experience.

The pupils downstairs had pens with push-in nibs, bottles of ink and pen-wipers. These were circles of flannelette sewn together. Most of the "senior" girls had real slide-topped pencil boxes with rubbers and all sorts of treasures- and rulers to make sure their lines were straight. We had copy-books with a line of joined-up writing and a space below for our imitative efforts. I never learned to print - I was launched straight away into "real" writing.

We did our sums on our slates. It certainly saved on exercise books as we wiped out what we had done and started again. We also had our spelling sessions on the slates. I don't remember many text-books, but one that sticks in my mind is "Little Arthur's England" from which we learned history. We recited dates en masse. I remember learning "Battle of Waterloo - 1815" and rushing home to tell my Father just how old Waterloo Station was!

"Tables" were our main strength. We used to recite all the tables from 1 to 12 in a sing-song fashion. "One one is one, two ones are two" and so on right up to "twelve twelves are one hundred and forty-four".

Geography was very basic too. We knew the capitals of all the counties in England. Not many three year olds would have known that Oakham was the capital of Rutland, but I was not so much concerned with my great knowledge as in wondering why they didn't flatten out all the ruts with a steamroller! The girls downstairs were really well into the Counties of England. It was always a hive of industry when we descended to their room. A row of desks stood along where the counter of Delbridge's is now, with the lids up like easels to support their paintings. They used to paint in the map of England with different pastel colours for the counties. I longed to try my hand at it. One day, a girl smiled down at me as she was shouldering her satchel, ready to leave for home. She said, "Would you like to see my map?" Her name was Hilda Castle and she volunteered the information that she was 13 years old that day. I remember wondering if I would ever reach that great age! I wish I knew what other lessons the "big girls" had, but we were very rarely around when they were working. I do know that they had albums of pressed flowers - their Botany lessons?

I can't remember many boy pupils but maybe I just wasn't boy-conscious at that time. I used to play Hide and Seek on the Recreation Ground (in the Shrubbery by the railings in Romsey Road) with other boys and girls from the school, including Philip Rogers, who, I believe, was the son of Rogers, the Undertaker. I used to love to sit on one of the two cannons at the Leigh Road entrance to "The Wreck" as I mistakenly thought of it in those early days. The cannons pointed menacingly down High Street. I wonder what happened to them!

The lower schoolroom seemed huge to me and very clean and bare. The upstairs room was smaller and cosier, with a coal fire in the winter. Peggy - one of my fellow pupils - was fascinated with the empty fireplace in the summer and used to peer up the chimney; we used to urge her on to shout "Black Lilac" up the yawning black hole. It was one of her favourite expressions - maybe she was an enterprising horticulturist!

We infants took our break period on the flat-topped roof with large grey slates beneath our feet. We didn't have milk and biscuits but sauntered leisurely around sucking acid drops and aniseed balls from the sweet shop just down the road from the school in High Street. I had my introduction to aniseed balls early in my schooldays. At that time, we played with small red marbles and glass alleys. One of my friends offered me an aniseed ball and I rolled it along on the flat roof, thinking it was a marble. Horrified at such waste, she scooped it up and popped it in my mouth.

One of the senior girls used to come up and supervise us on the rare occasions that Miss Florrie took a break. I specially remember Ruby Broyd. She told me one day that she had "pins and needles" in her hand and I watched eagerly for them to pop out from her palm.

We had no P.E. classes in those days. We descended to the lower schoolroom and had riotous sessions of "A Hunting We Will Go", "Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush" and "Oranges And Lemons", singing lustily as we pranced around. I don't recall singing classes, but we certainly sang loudly on these occasions. Mother across the road always knew when we weren't "working". When we had worn ourselves out at these pursuits, we often had a "Whispering Game". We were seated on forms all round the room and Miss Ada would whisper perhaps "Send reinforcements, we're going to advance" to the first pupil. This information was passed all round the room and perhaps reached Miss Ada as "Send 3/4d., we're going to a dance".

I don't think we had a school uniform - the juniors certainly didn't. I remember the girls wearing pretty cotton print dresses and the older boys were in suits with short trousers, shirts and ties. A year after my entry to the school, my parents bought a house opposite Pirelli's in Leigh Road and I used to be taken to school by Maggie Ridgway - a pretty, young "Daily" girl who helped Mother in the house. My favourite outfit was a red velvet cape with hood, over a white seersucker dress and I wore short black buttoned boots, which had to be fastened with a button-hook.

Our new home was called "The Elms" as there used to be a row of elm trees nearby and it was in the "quiet" residential area. There were allotments at the back all the way to the Salisbury railway line, with a clear view right to the old Brickworks chimney at Allbrook. Allotments bordered Brookwood Avenue (then called Cemetery Road) on each side. I used to bowl an iron hoop along the gravel road at a time when funeral hearses were practically the only traffic. I always stopped and bowed my head when they passed.

A favourite after school walk was along the gravel-surfaced Leigh Road to watch the carts splash through the water at "The Ford". The allotments followed the right-hand side of Leigh Road behind a high clay bank and hedge and then there were fields all the way to Woodside Lane, where a few old cottages stood. There was a shoe mender's hut on the allotment land where the Leigh Road houses now stand. Soon we came to a five barred gate and a path between high banks, leading to a huge oak tree. Here a low bank led down to a narrow grassy strip, where buttercups, daisies and scabious thrived. Fronting this was a poppy-strewn cornfield stretching away to the railway line. On the left of Leigh Road was an old brickfield, lush with clover, and no houses between Cemetery Road and Woodside Lane. How times change!

The old road was on a different alignment onwards from what is now the junction with Passfield Avenue (where there used to be a house) and it nudged the Barn, Granary and Garden of Home Farm where the Civic Offices are now. Beyond, on the right at a site now occupied by Manor Bakeries, were two old thatched cottages. These were the homes of Lou Meadon and the Thick family. We always took a bowl of bread and milk with us to feed an old toothless horse who watched for us from a field edging the road to Fryern Hill.

When afternoon lessons finished, there were optional dancing classes, given by a visiting Dancing Mistress - Miss Hutchings. My Mother played the piano for the classes so I was a pupil. I recall watching 12 year old Margaret Robinson standing on her points. I tried in private to emulate her but couldn't manage it in my plimsoll type dancing shoes, held on with cross-over black elastic.

Miss Ada and Miss Florrie had a family of seventeen cats - one called Peter had only one eye. He had a brother called Paul. Were they all named after Biblical characters? We rarely saw the cats since they lived in the private quarters and small garden, but they certainly made their presence felt when the door to the living room was open - I'm sure they were all incontinent!

At the age of 7, Mother decided that it was time for me to move on and I went to Derby Road School. This was when the refugees who had fled from Russia were living at Atlantic Park (The Airport) and two of my classmates were Fanny Ulanov and Nora Voshdorov, called Fanny U and Nora V by teacher. I entered Derby Road School knowing all my Tables. I could also read, write and spell well. It was a revelation to me to start doing my lessons in exercise books and no more squeaking slate pencils! Surprisingly, I hadn't been taught to knit or sew at "Miss Gamlens" - I expect these accomplishments were reserved for the older pupils.

This hasn't been a full description of life at Eastleigh College. I never graduated to the Senior section downstairs. Perhaps other former pupils can help - Barbara Bishop, Jessie Heal, Mollie Watton, Vera Wilkins, Ruth Stevens, Kittie Gray or Mollie MaIden (from the farm across the Airport) whom I remember well. When was the school founded and when did it cease to exist? Eastleigh College certainly gave me a wonderful and happy start to my education. Some pupils spent the whole of their schooldays there. Miss Ada and Miss Florrie turned out "young ladies" and presumably "young gentlemen" with a good education in all the essentials of those days.

Barbara Breach (nee Britten)

28.2.1985.