

St Bernadette School

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St. Bernadette's School

The opening of our first parish school is recorded as follows in the school Log Book.

“25th April 1938. St. Bernadette R.C. School started to-day in the temporary Church building which has been approved by the Board of Education for the accommodation of eighty Infant Children – ages five to seven – pending the erection on the existing site of a permanent junior mixed and infant school. General plans for this school, which will hold 200 children. She admitted 45 children today”

(Rev. J.J. Bentley)

(Correspondent Manager)

On 10th January 1938 the school was transferred from temporary accommodation to the present permanent building. Sixty additional children were admitted, bringing the roll up to 105.

Since then the school has grown rapidly. The war years were difficult, and tutorial classes in private houses took the place of regular schooling until the erection of shelters.

In December 1939 was again resumed and in spite of many weary and anxious nights and days the children flourished and the number continued to increase.

First communions, Confirmations, Nativity Plays, parties and all the usual activities of normal life were carried on in an attempt to give the Children all the spiritual and material things that they enjoy in peace times.

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The 1940's

During the autumn months of 1940 there were severe raids and routine was considerably disturbed. Nevertheless school continued with frequent interruptions for journeys to shelters, practice in Gas Mask Drill and Fire Drill. This was the pattern of life at St Bernadette's during the war years.

In March 1942 the school had mid-day meals for the first time. By April 1944 the roll had increased to 276 children. There was now an average of 26 in a class and it was evident that an extension to the buildings would have to be considered.

The end of the war in May 1945 brought great relief. To the older children the news was strange and bewildering. They had never known life except with this background of conflict, fear and caution. So accustomed had they become to talk of death, damage and injuries that the "Lenten Alms" for which the teacher appealed was understood by some small ones to be the "Legs and Arms" collection. The money collected (they thought) was to provide artificial limbs for wounded soldiers.

The children were now able to go on visits to places of education interest so that during the next few years, Hampton Court, the Zoo, the Tower of London, Westminster Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, Windsor and many other places were visited.

Netball and football with neighbouring schools were started and the school took an active part in the music festivals and sporting events in the area. Road Safety talks, film shows and slide lectures from various people now began to form part of the school programme. Swimming, drama and gardening were encouraged as recreational activities.

The first open day in 1949 brought a great number of parents and friends, and since then has been an annual event.

In 1951 the school had its first General Inspection by the Ministry.

The following is an extract from the report:

“The Ministry of Education, 12th February 1951.

On the whole the staff is an outstandingly good one; the teachers make a very strong team, each having a particular contribution to make the work of the school.

The Head Mistress (Sister M Colette) is a good organiser and there is mutual confidence and respect between her and the rest of the staff. This is a good school.”

“Education consists in preparing a man for what he must be and for what he must become here below in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created: there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man’s last end and therefore the most solemn part of parents’ duties in the religious and moral education of their children”. (Pope Pius XI)

The home first of all and above all must work for this end. Parents are the child’s first and last teachers; the home it’s first and last school. Our school is (we hope) a powerful ally of the home. It can never be a substitute. It is true to say, and has been proved many times that the influence of parents, family and home “hound” a man all his days either as a blessing or a curse.

The task of the school is comparatively straightforward when the children have already had some training in Christian principles at home. This begins with the forming of a child’s sense of values – in other words the training of the heart.

We, in school go on from there with training and fostering the growth of spiritual of spiritual, intellectual and physical potential. Unfortunately parents often see these three aspects in the reverse order. The Spiritual is their last concern, if indeed it is there at all. A home where spiritual values have first place produces children who are pride and light in our school. Catholic parents absolve themselves far too easily from this all important duty of training the heart of their child. We in the school and parents at home would do well to think long and serious on this. We must use every means in our power to teach

and train by word, vigilance, admonition, correction – and where necessary – by punishment. But above all and before all we must teach by example.

Mrs Joan Neugebauer was a greatly loved dinner lady for many years. It would be almost impossible to say how much we all loved her. She was there for us always – in and out of school hours – washed church linen – ran errands – has a stall at fete – etc etc. Sadly we have no large picture of her as she was ever in the background – Main responsibility at Concerts – running with an Infant to cloakroom when about to dance onto stage.

“Look for me in the Nurseries of Heaven”

St Bernadette School Football Team 1980

Our school football team have had a marvellous season this year collecting the major silver ware in the district. Never before has St Bernadette's football team known such success and by winning the local league, the knock-out and the District Cup, they have firmly established themselves as the best team in the district. Their familiar black and white stripes have become a regular feature at Hayes Stadium, since our success, The District Cup in particular is our most valuable prize. Teams have been competing in this competition since 1948 and it is taken 32 years to reach St Bernadette's. The names of our players are: Brendan O'Brien - Paul Hanrahan – Alex Oliver – Andrew Vernassa – Anthony Rhodes (Captain) – Steven Bath – Anthony Cliffe – Don Kelly – Robert Seastram – Keven Fitzgerald – Peter Keohane – Tony McGuire.

In the 1950's the school continued to grow very rapidly, reaching a roll of 270 in 1955.

In February of that year the school suffered a great and sad loss. Mr Richard Whyte had been one of the foundation managers. He loved the school and took a keen interest in it's problems and progress. His genial personality and unfailing courtesy and friendliness were an inspiration to all. Everyone missed and mourned this loyal and faithful friend of St. Bernadette's. May he rest in peace.

Discussing with managers and architect were now well forward for the much needed extension.

On the 11th February 1958 the children sang the Mass to celebrate the centenary of the first Lourdes apparition. There was a record attendance of parents and parishioners. The feast of the school's patroness was kept with the same solemnity.

During the Easter holidays twenty children and two Sisters went on a centenary Lourdes Pilgrimage. This was unforgettable experience for all. It was wonderful to visit Our Lady's Grotto, to kiss the spot where St. Bernadette stood and to visit her home and school.

The year 1959 brought many happy events. The girls netball team won the cup at the inner school rally at which twenty schools had taken part.

In June of that year Cardinal Godfrey (R.I.P.) confirmed over ninety children.

On the 15th July there was a Religious Inspection and on the 17th July a concert. On the 24th was held a very merry Sports Day in the event of which the Fathers and Mothers took a large part. It was a rollicking event and a care free finish to a strenuous year.

In October 19 (Feast of the Holy Rosary) His Eminence, the Cardinal laid the foundation stone of our new church. It was a great occasion for the children who could look forward to many happy events in their new parish church.

On Holy Thursday 1961 the Blessed Sacrament was moved from the school hall to the new church and the first Mass was said on Holy Thursday evening. It was a memorable day for the parish but still, we in the school missed the presence of the gentle Master who had been with us since 1938.

Since our School children's first years Our Lady has been crowned each May by our school children as Queen of Hillingdon. In May 1940 we had our first crowning. All the children and a great number of parishioners walked in procession. Since then it has been an annual event to which the children look forward with eager affection.

It is very important that adults realize the importance and significance of this ceremony. Just as Our Lord is our King; so too Mary is Our Queen, and the last day of May is the feast of the Queenship of Our Lady. She is the Queen of Heaven and our Queen too. We choose the month of May when the flowers and budding trees are at their best to crown her with blossom.

This act of homage performed by a small child on our behalf is for all of us. Let us say with the children the act of consecration and let us ask Our Blessed Mother to help us to mean what we say and to perform what we promise – WE CONSECRATE TO THEE – does our way of life reflect this idea of being as children of God and His Mother?

On Sunday 30th April 1961 the first Solemn High Mass was sung in our new Church and on the feast of Corpus Christi that year we had in our first First Holy Communions.

In February 1962 Mr Fenton retired from his post as caretaker. He had served us faithfully and well for 22 years and knew and loved every one of the children. He was certainly loved by them in return.

On 26th March 1963 our team won the final contest and shield in the LOCAL Road Safety Quiz in which eighteen schools took part.

On the 25th April 1963 the school celebrated the 25th Anniversary of it's opening. Our old friend Sister M Philippa was in Rome the previous Easter and obtained for us from Pope John a blessing to mark the occasion. As Sister M Philippa was the first teacher (with the Head Mistress) to be appointed to St Bernadette's staff, we were particularly delighted to be remembered by her and in such a beautiful way.

On July 1963 the children gave a concert to celebrate the school's 25th birthday. The Managers, Education Officer and many parents and friends attended and we had a merry evening.

We now come to the events of 1964 – 1965

Last year we had for the first time some parents meeting and were very encouraged by the evident interest and response.

This year for our meeting of Parents and First Communicants we had a record attendance. We hope that all parents have remembered their part in the preparation of their child for Our Lord's Coming.

Your child is a potential Saint and a future citizen in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is up to you to see that he does not lose his inheritance. Many of our greatest saints were the children of saintly parents – St Theresa, St John Bosco and our beloved Pope John. It was the example and training of their parents that did so much to make them what they were.

Children are so trustful and believing. They make the most wonderful audience in the world.

If we have certainly failed to use these marvellous dispositions and opportunities. How can we foster their spiritual growth? By leading them to God, awaking faith that leads to a deep, sincere appreciation of Him and a desire to live as his friend.

An ounce of good example from parents is worth a stone of what we say in school. What parents say and do is real. If what we say at school chimes in with what goes on at home it becomes real and one gains power from the other.

Sister Margaret Beary R.I.P

Margaret – a native of Hillingdon – had her primary education in St Bernadette during the war years. She entered our Novitate and made her vows in 1960. She taught in London all her active life and - in spite of a long history of ill health, suffering and pain – she was in school till Christmas 1997. She was a gifted teacher and a gentle, unassuming person. R.I.P.

Margaret Beary, a former pupil at St Bernadette's recently made her First Profession as a Sister of Mercy at Harewood Avenue Covent, London NW1. The Parish congratulates Sister M Isobel and assures her of it's prayers for her future happiness. 1960.

Saturday, 30th April was a very important day in the life of Winifred Graham, a member of this parish, when she received the habit at St Edward's Convent of Mercy (The Novitate House of the Westminster Sister's of Mercy). She is just 17 years old and was a pupil of St Bernadette's School, Hillingdon, Father Frederick Row of Westminster performed the ceremony assisted by Father Stancy, C.M.F. of this parish. She is now "Sister Mary Peter. (Extract from the Hayes Parish Newsletter 1955)

25th Anniversary of St Bernadette's

25th April 1963

This was a very happy occasion. Many old pupils, parents, colleagues, friends the Mayor and Education Officer friends came to our evening celebration. The church was packed for our Thanksgiving Mass in the morning. Those of us – including mostly parishioners (who were around in 1938) – could hardly believe that many of our Infants were the children of our first pupils of 1938.

Evening Entertainment was a comic parody on the T.V Show – “This is Your Life” “Dominic Sullivan was Eamonn Andrews and Vincent Fulford – Sir Cyelio Handlebario – very famous ex-pupil of St B's recently returned from the moon. He has received the G.O.B. (Grand Order of the Bicycle) from the Queen. (Hence the title!!!).

Hymn of St Bernadette

Sweet Peasant Maid, most Favoured Child of God,

Mary's own one devoted to her word.

Chosen on earth her lovely face to see

To your beautiful Lady say one Ave for me.

Dear patroness of our own Church and School,

We would surrender all to Thy wise rule.

Make us like Thee – true, humble, pure and just,

St Bernadette, Oh pray to God for us.

Hear Thou our voices soaring through the skies,

Asking Thy light and aid from paradise,

As now you worship close to Mary's throne,

St Bernadette, tell her we are your own.

The utmost for the highest things of all,

Living this motto we will never fail,

Get us for this Thy faith and strength of will,

Then all through Life we will by Thy children still.

(Tune For all the Saints).

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