

BOARDING SCHOOL

Well those happy days, like any days, happy - or unhappy days for that matter - came to an end; in my case with a bump, because this is where I went to boarding school in Salcombe. For what reason I was taken away from Modbury school, and how they managed to find the where-with-all to send me to a private school, I know not, but to Hazeldene I went. I suppose on reflection that Doc realised that my education was leaving a lot to be desired. There were three of us from Modbury school that ended up at Hazeldene, each as hopelessly behind as the next - Miss White called us dim, stupid, spineless (interesting one that) hopeless and un-teachable, and those are only the names I remember. Miss White was fortunately only a junior teacher. She really, really did look like a monkey by the way. She taught languages and sewing; she was always so disgusted by my efforts at French and German that she could not even find it in her heart to compliment me on my sewing which must have been O.K. I was always a blouse or apron or something ahead of the others and if she didn't like a seam, out it came. Of course I was always ahead with my German, because of having learned it when small, but she didn't appreciate the Viennese part, and would only say I had the most appalling accent she had ever heard! The school was run by Miss Surman - academic department, and Miss Wheatherston - other. It was to Miss Wheatherston that you went to when you thought that you also had caught mumps, which I did in the fullness of time, for the second time. I rather think it was a very good school. I actually started learning to learn there, and began to enjoy the precision of geometry and the way it fell together provided that you knew the things that the previous pages said that you must learn. Miss Surman was marvellous with Shakespeare, History, and Scripture. In English school style they called me Ridgy short for Ridgway. "Yes Ridgy" she said a few times near the end of my time there, "I think you are beginning to get the idea". Unfortunately I didn't get too far with the 'idea' because my people ran out of silver to sell and I left at the tender age of 16. This was a problem for all because I had not taken, nor, as was required by the state, passed, my school leaving certificate. I remember Miss Surman saying that she would simply have to say that I was 'school leaving certificate standard'.

They were a nice bunch of girls there and in a way I enjoyed it, but I have always been homesick when away from home, and still am up to a point. Our suitcases were kept in an attic and about a week before the end of term came down for packing. I can remember the excitement of that occasion, and similarly I remember ruining the last week or so of my holidays dreading going back. Our generation really appreciates the way teaching has changed throughout the years, and now one of the things that teachers first do, it seems, is see that children enjoy school, and mostly they do.