

Memories of DGS

My brother, Barrie, and I were enrolled in Dundalk Grammar School in 1948 when I was 8 years old and he was 7. This was because our parents had separated and neither of them could, single-handedly, look after us as they both needed to work.

Neither my brother or I can remember all that much about the three years we attended Dundalk Grammar School but several things do stand out. Firstly and foremost, we remember the winters seemed to be bitterly cold as there wasn't any central heating in those days. Cook always filled up our hot water bottles at night prior to going to bed, and they were still lukewarm the next morning. This was a blessing because we were then able to use that water to wash instead of the freezing water from the tap (In those days, hot water from a tap hadn't become commonplace like today).

As boarder, we had to do 'prep' every night in a very large room (I'm sure it was the area where Mr. Drury's office etc. is now) and a female teacher used to be perched on a podium which looked down over us. We can't remember the name of this teacher, but we do remember her being very stern and uncompromising: we weren't allowed to make a sound. If we wanted to leave the room for any reason, we were reliant on her benevolence which could be a bit disconcerting if one wanted to go to the toilet. She was, however, very helpful when we had problems with our homework.

On Friday evenings, after prep was finished, we had to stay at our desks and write our weekly letters home. In those days we wrote with pens with the 'scratchy' nib which we dipped into inkwells. Needless to say blotting paper was our best friend! As soon as we had finished writing our letters these were then read by the teacher and if there were spelling mistakes we had to write them again. Also, if we happened to say anything untoward the letter was torn up and we had to start all over again leaving out the offending remarks.

The dining hall always appeared to me to be quite huge but on a reminiscing visit back to Dundalk a few months ago I was amazed to see it wasn't that big after all.

Whenever it was the birthday of one of the pupils, and they had requested a party, this room was used for that purpose with all the lovely homemade cakes and sandwiches laid out.





There was a wonderful tuck shop at which we spent our pocket money although unfortunately we didn't have too much of that as our parents weren't so well off. I can remember one day Rev. Handbridge told us that he had acquired a revolutionary new pen called a 'biro' and that we could buy one from our pocket money if we wished. He did say however that we could not use it for lessons as it would "badly affect our handwriting." We were incredulous when we saw how this pen worked. It seemed to write forever without running out of ink! The biro, however, was not cheap so only one was purchased between the two of us.

Another memory was the long walk, crocodile style, every Sunday morning and evening to the church in the town for the services. Not content with that, on Sunday afternoons we, again crocodile style, had to 'go for our Sunday walk.' We invariably came out of the school gates, turned right over the bridge and seemed to walk for hours (probably no more than one hour there and one back but it seemed forever!). I remember hating those 'Sunday walks!'

I have no recollection whatsoever about there being a pig sty in the school grounds and cannot see why there would be one but my brother talks about helping out with the pigs from time to time. At his age I should think he was more of a hindrance than a help!

The lessons I enjoyed most of all were Elocution, French, Latin, Irish, English and I loved playing tennis. I did a few piano lessons for a while until my father found out how much extra it was costing him and a stop was put to that. I am unable to recall the names of any of our teachers but seem to think they were mostly female and all very kind. I think they felt sorry for my brother and myself because we were real boarders in that our parents lived far away (Mum in England and Dad was in Belfast) so we rarely saw them. In fact, our school holidays for instance, were often spent in school with maybe one or two other pupils who couldn't go home for whatever reason.

Our days at Dundalk came to a sudden end with the wonderful news that our parents had decided to get together again and we were all going to live in Belfast. Sixty two years later my brother suggested that we go to our old school. We were kindly shown around by Mr.

Drury and we are most grateful to him for giving up his valuable time to enable us to indulge our memories.

Written by:

Diane Perle (nee Gibson)
and Barrie Gibson

