

Corners of Faringdon 1

Entering Faringdon from Radcot Bridge and up the hill you will enjoy the grandest of approaches to the town. A row of high stuccoed houses faces outwards and from their high sitting rooms they have no doubt the best views in Faringdon.

This little corner of the town also rewards us with a rich legacy of history. The innocuous looking shed on the left once housed the fire engine from 1876 - 1903 and Church Path leading out east towards Littleworth is one of the old corpse roads used for bringing the dead to Faringdon for burial when there was no licensed ground in Littleworth. The tall brick house on the corner of Coach Lane and Church Street was once a cheese warehouse and Grove House was built for Mr Crowdy the solicitor, then used by Dr Pulling for his surgery. It contains a strong cupboard first used for documents and then for drugs. Susan Hampshire, the actress, stayed in the top flat for holidays as an infant.



However, the next house, pictured above is known better as it was used as a school for 7-13 year olds from 1938-52. Known as Church Farm House School it was run by a very strict Miss Downs and a very musical Miss Sims.



Romney House

It was part boarding and part day pupils. One ex-pupil says it was boys only, but other ex-pupils say it was mixed. There were dormitories at Church Farm House but also at Romney House (19 Gloucester Street).

At Church Farm House the old stable was used as a classroom, chapel and song school and all pupils were given a good grounding in choral singing as the boys were sent at 13 to Cathedral Schools all over England. The girls were sent to Christ's Hospital schools. One famous ex-pupil was Mark Santer who went to Marlborough College, and Queen's College Cambridge and became Bishop of Birmingham.

The field beyond Church Farm House was extensive enough for an orchard and a football pitch though some of it has now been built over.

The school was divided into 'Houses' one of which was Shepard House named after the illustrator of Winnie the Pooh, E.H.Shepard. He used to write letters to his House and sign them by drawing a little piglet waving goodbye.

Many of the memories are of an exceptional school. French and German were taught and there were plenty of books introduced including Guy de Maupassant, Sir Walter Scott, John Buchan, Wilkie Collins and H G Wells. An all-round education was given, and they left with good manners and speech. Alan Hitchcock (later a town councillor) remembered the staff as many special and extraordinary people.

The school was in action during the war years and that might account for the meagre rations that are described: fried bread and lumpy salty porridge for breakfast and chocolate bars and syrup of figs once a week, leading to the raiding of the fruit bushes in the orchard for puddings. There were horsehair mattresses and thin blankets.

The American Army Camp was near, and they would call out to the soldiers "Have you got any gum chum?" There was a Wings for victory display in the Market Square with a Spitfire on show and two days holiday were given for VE day. The Folly was remembered as a place which they ran around in opposite directions racing to get back first.



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