



School Days: Longdown Infants - Part 1

Longdown School stood on the Southern side of South Street and was built in 1901 to replace the 'old' Longdown School, which had been at the corner of North and West Street. The new school lasted just over half the century, until in May 1959, it was decided to amalgamate the schools at Longdown and Lowtherville. There was much controversy, and a petition was organised, but in 1960 a 'Farewell to Longdown' party was held in Holy Trinity Hall, and after Easter the children started at Lowtherville.



Hundreds of children would have passed through the school during its 59 years, and there are still many people in Ventnor who remember being 'Longdown Infants'. The recollections of the school on this page are from Michael Hardy, who was there in 1953. Mrs Webley was the Headmistress at that time, and (some readers will be amazed to learn) the children used slates and chalk for doing their work.

The school consisted of two buildings separated by a narrow public footpath with steps, which ran through the middle of the school as you can see in the photograph here. The building to the right of the steps contained three classrooms. As soon as you entered the building you found the sinks and cloakroom area, and the classrooms led off from there. Because of the sloping nature of the site, two of the classrooms were on the same level as South Street, the other was down a short flight of steps. The building on the left was mainly taken up with a large hall where physical activities took place. This is where lunch was served. The first year children had a rest after lunch and there were little beds for this - there was also a rocking horse in the first year classroom, for the first year children to play with.

There were two playgrounds behind the school, both leading off the narrow public footpath running between the two buildings. They both had iron gates and were down 4 or 5 steps. The playground on the left (in front of the Hall) had a sandpit and was enclosed by iron railings, and it had a wonderful view to the South across the sea. The playground to the right was quite small, an irregular shape, with steps going down to another play area; it had buildings around it, so it never had the same openness as the other.

The picture here shows a class in 1914, long before Michael was at the school. But he has a photograph of Longdown Infants celebrating the Coronation in June 1953 and has managed to put names to nearly all the faces. We will be publishing the picture next week and asking for your help in filling in the last gaps, so please, if you were in Longdown Infants' School, or know someone who was, get your thinking caps on!

