The Valley Schools

I went to Netton School in 1932 - happy days. Used to get the lads lined up in the morning in Great Durnford before we went to school and we used to have a good old sing song on the way to school. Marching. I was on the outside. I was the governor you know. Get them lined up properly and get them in tune. They could hear us all over Woodford when we used to sing - they must have done, we were pretty loud. The best one we sang was 'Who killed cock Robin? I said the sparrow with my bow and arrow. Who saw him die? I said the fly with my little eye ……..' You could make a lot of verses up doing that to keep them going.
Sam Lavender



Open 1844 - 1975 Durnford School. 1930

I remember Mrs Slipper the head teacher and I also remember Mrs Pile and Mrs Pile's daughter, Ann - I took a fancy to her and I once kissed her around the corner but it never developed. She was nice. Mrs Slipper although she had to deal with big boys, she was very slender tiny lady but she managed it. She was very, very, good and very strict. I seem to remember once I had the ruler across my knuckles, she didn't use a cane she tended to use lines. You had to do hundreds and hundreds of lines but, fortunately if we had a holiday, when we went back off holiday she would wipe them off the slate, so we would start from scratch.
Monty Hazzard

I always remember the little class at Woodford School. They used to put a kettle of water on like a little bonfire for hot water so the kids could have a drink. We used to sometimes take a bit of sugar and a bit of cocoa, so we had a hot drink at dinner time too. It was very cold down there, a big place, with one big stove in the other room. The headmaster used to stand in front of the guard with his hands behind him and take all the heat from us. He told us to fold our arms and put our hands under our arms to get our hands warm before we could write. We did arithmetic, spelling and composition. He used to read out something and we had to write about it. Then he used to read something out of a book and pick on one of us to say it back, to find out if we had been listening or not. I don't think I was a difficult child. I was only shown the cane once and I did have it! We had to do our lessons in the week and if there were any wrong spellings, we had to write down the wrong words and put them right - fifty times or we couldn't go up to the cricket ground to play games on a Friday afternoon.
Barbara Portnall



Opened 1873 Woodford School, 1908

I was literally one of the first pupils in 1942 and I was there until I was eleven. At 9 o'clock we had prayers, then we had English and Maths, a bit of History and I do remember the music because I always loved the music. All the school used to go to Great Durnford Church every Sunday, absolutely without fail. I used to run wild in the marshes there, climb trees and fall off into the stream. It was a wonderful childhood. I used to ride to school at The Manor on a pony which was rather fun, down the lynch - it's called the chalk pit lynch. There was a wonderful woman called Mrs Appleby who use to live in Upper Woodford and she taught riding there and taught a lot of us local children. It was mostly local children who went to the school. Miss Ramsey was the head teacher; Barbara Butler who is still an organist here taught me when I was six or seven to play the piano. Dreda Tryon really ran the school, she was not the headmistress, but she had a big, big influence. It was wonderful.
Ann Carr



Open 1942-1992 The Manor School, Great Durnford. 1990

At Wilsford School there was a time in every year when the dentist arrived. And the dentist used to set up his evil equipment in the little room, and all those kids in the little room would be shoved in on top of one another in the big room. Whereupon you had the dentist chair and the drilling machine operated by a treadle with the dentist's foot. Of course the speed was so slow it gave you hell as soon as you touched it. Mr Lake, who was the dentist, was a butcher; he was peddling this drill and drilling your teeth at the same time. I used to dread it. It used to frighten the life out of me. It was utter misery.



Open 1819 – 1960 Wilsford and Lake School, 1929

The reason Mrs Sutton was given the post as headmistress at Wilsford School, was the fact that her predecessor wasn't very good at the discipline business - they'd hung her up on the hook on the back of the school door and left her there. Things got out of control, and Mrs Sutton I gather was put in charge to bring back a little discipline to Wilsford School, and she did with a vengeance! If you were misbehaving she used to belt you across the ear. She used to have this enormous wedding ring which was like a knuckle duster, and she used to go past you as you sat down and swipe you by the side of the head. I mean it wouldn't be tolerated now; it would be reported to some European Commission or something or other. I've still got the scars now; it's probably why I'm deaf in one ear.
George Freer