

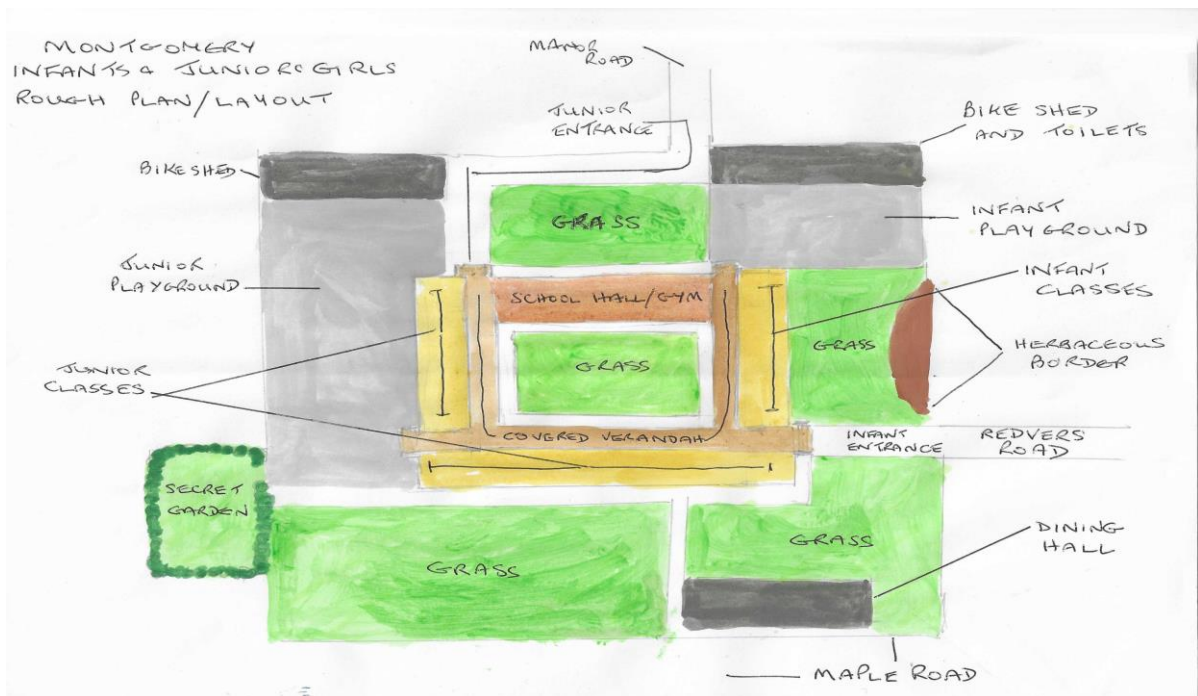
Life during my time at Montgomery Infants and Junior Girls School 1958 to 1964

I suppose people can be forgiven in thinking that Montgomery school was named after Field Marshal Montgomery given that two roads leading to the school were named after General Redvers Buller. However, it wasn't. It was named after Jesse Montgomery a well known education reformer who believed that all children should have access to education not just those from privileged backgrounds. Built in the 1930s as a mixed infant school and junior girls school it served the community of St. Thomas well, as it still does, alongside St. Thomas Infant School and John Stocker junior boys.

Living in a part of St. Thomas in dwellings cramped and close together with doors fronting on to the pavement, no gardens and only a back yard to play in, where you had pollution from the trains trundling overhead nearby and from all the vehicles at street level, going to Montgomery school was indeed a 'breath of fresh air'.

The school building itself was built in what I would describe as similar to a Roman villa, a brick, wood and glass building with a green square in the middle on an extremely large plot of land. It was surrounded by large open areas which were either grassed or concreted as playgrounds. I would think those who suffered with hayfever dreaded spring and summer coming.

The classrooms ran alongside 3 of the sides with a verandah and the school hall, also used as a gymnasium, on the other. Each playground had a 'bicycle' shed, although there was bench seating around the sides where we would go at playtime if it was raining and we weren't allowed to play on the grass. The only other building was a large dining hall situated not far from the entrance at Redvers Road. Houses backed on to the grass area near the bike shed and they went all the way down to the Redvers road entrance. There was a border of flowers and shrubs along the wall and I remember most vividly an enormous Kniphofia (Red hot poker), which, when in flower, its red, orange and yellow colours stood out amongst all the other plants. Infant Classes 1, 2 and 3 took up one side of the building with class 4 tucked around the corner.



So, on to my first day at school in January, 1958. I wonder how many children have the police called on their first day at school. In those days you started school right after your 5th birthday and as my birthday was at the beginning of January I started school at the start of the Spring Term. I lived at 187 Cowick Street at that time and my half sister, Jennifer, who was 10 years older than me, took me to school before going on to St. Thomas Senior School which she attended. Our mum worked and I don't think I ever remember her taking me to school. Anyway, the journey each day I was in the infant section was up Cowick Street, under the railway viaduct, turning right into Buller Road, then through to Brunswick Street and Redvers Road. At the end of the day we came out that way and I walked, along with others back to our flat, Jennifer was already there. Unfortunately, my mother had arranged for my aunt to pick me up but she thought that the children would come out at the Manor Road entrance, which it the entrance we used as Juniors. So, after a while, when I hadn't come out she went and asked where I was. The police were called apparently and our local 'bobby' went to go to our flat, saw Mr Rowe, who had the fruit and veg shop on the ground floor who told him that I was in the flat with my sister. Panic over. Can't imagine what my aunt must have gone through. I suppose you'd probably class me these days as 'street wise' but I think we all were in those days.

During my time at the school, Miss Hamilton, was the headmistress. A formidable Scot with steel grey hair who always wore tweeds and brogues even in the summer when she would at least take her jacket off if it was really hot. I know a lot of children were afraid of her, I wasn't, but then I didn't get in to trouble either.

Our uniform, not compulsory, was purple/mauve and grey in colour. Grey pinafore and cardigan with white shirt and purple tie for the winter and purple/mauve gingham dress for the summer. Most girls had their dresses and cardigans made either by their mothers or aunts or a neighbour who was a good seamstress. My dresses and cardigans were made by my Aunt Alice.



The infant school staff included Mrs Hardy, a lovely woman and our playtimes were supervised by Mrs Willey who sat on the bench seat in the bike shed. She was always knitting but the thing I remember most about her is that she had, tied around her waist, a piece of string which was threaded through a toilet roll. If you needed to go to the toilet, which was outside alongside the bike shed then you asked Mrs Willey and she tore off 2 sheets. If you've ever used Izal just think of baking sheet paper, hard as anything.

Life for the first 3 years spent in the infant section with Mrs Hardy and the other teachers whose names I have forgotten. I was in Classes 1 from the January until August and then classes 2 and 3 before moving onto the juniors. These classes formed one side of the school building with a cloakroom. I'd been given a watch for Christmas and when I went to school could proudly tell the time. The watch had a picture of Cinderella on the face and a red strap. I'd taken it off at school sometime during that first year when washing my hands and left it on the side of the washbasin. I forgot to put it back on and when I returned to get it sadly it was no longer there and we were never asked if someone had lost a watch. In the final year of the infant section there was incident in the classroom when a little boy AH (I shan't use his name although I remember it) kicked the teacher and was sent to Miss Hamilton for 'the slipper'. That was the only time I ever heard 'the slipper' mentioned and we never saw AH again, I think he was taught elsewhere from then on.

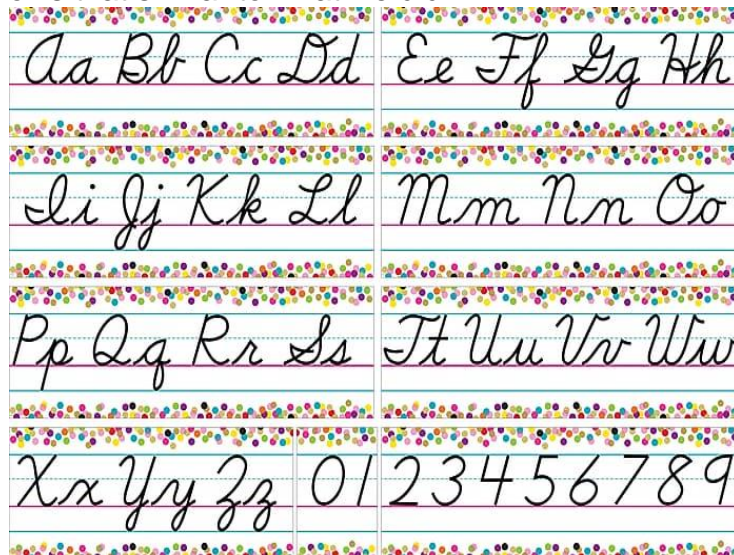
When we left the infants to go into the juniors we said goodbye to the boys in our class who then went on to John Stocker Boys school.

The junior section took up 2 sides of the building. Classes 4 to 12. The 'A' stream were classes 5, 7, 10 and 12 and 'B' stream 4, 6, either 8 or 9 (can't remember which but one of them was a remedial class) and 11. I'll explain about Class 9 later or rather its teacher, Miss Trout. Miss Fouracre and Mrs Jenkins were the younger of the junior school teachers. Mrs Fouracre took us in Class 5 and Mrs Jenkins first in Class 7 and later in Class 12. Mrs Jenkins also took Girl Guides at Emmanuel Hall.

Some lessons were more enjoyable than others but sitting behind desks all in rows was how it was in those days. There would be writing lessons, weekly we'd have to do what

seemed as pages of Aa, Bb, Cc etc. Then, came cursive writing (joined up writing), practice for that every week.

The picture here shows that similar to what we did.



We'd also have, on a Friday, a maths test and a spelling test. We'd also be taught our 'times tables' by rote each week starting a 1 until we got it right and then we went on to the next one until we got to 12. It did help with mental maths though. All our exercise books had the times tables and other mathematical information on the back. Not that we were allowed to have these on our desks during the test.

ARITHMETICAL TABLES																	
MUSCULATION TABLE Units.....1 Tens.....10 Hundreds.....100 Thousands.....1,000 Millions.....1,000,000 Billions.....1,000,000,000			AVOIRDOIS WEIGHT 16 Drains.....1 Ounce (av.) 16 Ounces.....1 Pound (av.) 4 Quarters.....1 Hundredweight (av.) 20 Cwt.....1 Ton			IMPERIAL DRY MEASURE 2 Gills.....1 Gallon (Imp.) 2 Pecks.....1 Quarter (Imp.) 4 Quarts.....1 Gallon (Imp.) 8 Bushels.....1 Quarter (Imp.) 4 Quarters.....1 Ton			STELLING MONEY TABLE 4 Farthings.....1 Penny (d) 12 Pence.....1 Shilling (s) 20 Shillings.....1 Pound (£) 20 Shillings.....1 Pound (£) 20 Shillings.....1 Pound (£)			LONG OR LINEAR MEASURE 12 Lines.....1 Inch (lin) 3 Feet.....1 Yard (yd) 5 1/2 Yards.....1 Fathom (fm) 1770 Yards.....1 Mile (mi)			SQUARE MEASURE 144 Square Inches.....1 Square Foot 9 Square Feet.....1 Square Yard 30 1/4 Square Yards.....1 Square Rod 40 Square Rods.....1 Acre 640 Acres.....1 Square Mile		
ARITHMETICAL SIGNS + Plus: Sign of Addition - Minus: Sign of Subtraction x Sign of Multiplication = Sign of Equality = Sign of Proportion √ Sign of the Square Root ∛ Sign of the Cube Root ∞ Therefore: Sign of Infinity			CLOTH MEASURE 2 1/4 Inches.....1 Nail 4 Nails.....1 Quarter of a Yard 4 Quarters.....1 Yard 3 1/2 Yards.....1 Ell (Eng.) 5 1/2 Yards.....1 Ell (Fr.) 6 3/4 Yards.....1 Ell (Ger.)			TABLE OF MOTION 60 Seconds.....1 Minute 60 Minutes.....1 Hour 24 Hours.....1 Day 7 Days.....1 Week 4 Weeks.....1 Lunar Month 365 Days.....1 Year 366 Days.....1 Leap Year 52 Weeks.....1 Year 12 Calendar or Solar Months.....1 Year 13 Lunar Months.....1 Year			TABLE OF TIME 60 Seconds.....1 Minute 60 Minutes.....1 Hour 24 Hours.....1 Day 7 Days.....1 Week 4 Weeks.....1 Lunar Month 365 Days.....1 Year 366 Days.....1 Leap Year 52 Weeks.....1 Year 12 Calendar or Solar Months.....1 Year 13 Lunar Months.....1 Year								
MULTIPLICATION TABLES																	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12							
2	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24							
3	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36							
4	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48							
5	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60							
6	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60	66	72							
7	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84							
8	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80	88	96							
9	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	90	99	108							
10	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120							
11	33	44	55	66	77	88	99	110	121	132							
12	36	48	60	72	84	96	108	120	132	144							

Personally I used to hate story writing when we had to write the story with the inevitable title of 'what I did in the holidays'. For someone like me, whose father was a builder, we didn't go anywhere as he was working most of the time, his few weeks off would be at Christmas time when you couldn't really go anywhere because of the weather and if you could afford it, which many couldn't.

Idyllic days were when as older juniors we were taken in to an enclosed grassed area which was surrounded by a large hedge, a secret garden. In summer our teacher would take us to sit on the grass, listen to stories or poetry, to read our books and make daisy

chains.

Our class teacher in Class 10 was Miss Berryman, who didn't walk anywhere, she strode. She could be quite severe at times but she had a love of drama as well as dance and used to take us for eights and reels. Miss Berryman, played hockey for the Devon hockey team.

Our teacher in Class 12, our final year, was Miss Harse. I didn't start at the beginning of September as I was in hospital having my appendix out and the school sent a lovely present of a selection of fruit to the hospital for me. Miss Harse only taught me for a few weeks as she sadly died at her desk during one lunch time. I remember that so well. We were playing with a ball and it went through the open window of our classroom. She was sat therewith her head resting on her desk, one of the tall old fashioned ones, and we were calling to her to ask for our ball just thinking that she was asleep. Ofcourse she wasn't. It was very sad but we weren't really told that she had died. Mrs Jenkins who had taken us in Class 7 became our final teacher in the school.

Miss Trout who taught in Class 9 was the teacher no one would want in a million years. I know you shouldn't speak ill of the dead but she was horrid. She metered out punishment on a regular basis, hitting children over the knuckles with a ruler. Miss Trout taught my half sister who actually tied her to the chair and hit her with the ruler on many occasion. There are numerous stories about Miss Trout and her hitting children. When she retired parents were asked to contribute towards her leaving present. Children were asked to bring, I think it was 6d, in to school. I can remember arguing with my mum because I didn't want to take any money in. Her present was a nest of 3 wooden coffee tables.

In 1962 the school put on a pageant. King Charles¹ and Queen Henrietta Maria coming to Exeter in 1644. Their daughter, Elizabeth, was christened in Exeter Cathedral. The pageant was held on the green in the centre of the school. Sadly, I don't remember much about it, but I do remember I was a peasant/serf. Life hasn't changed!



Photo courtesy of Nesta Carpenter

Our children seem so very sheltered these days, not so in my day. On many occasions Janette Peak's dog would come to school and she'd be given a skipping rope to use as a lead and let out of school to take it home. On one occasion Miss Hamilton wanted a letter taken to the Headmaster of John Stocker School and because she knew I had to walk past it on the way home asked me to take it there. So, I was let out of school earlier to take it there. Imagine those things happening now!

When I was about 9 or 10 the schools in Exeter were invited to send a pupil to represent

the school for a presentation of a silver bowl to the Mayor of Exeter. For our school, names went in to a draw, but your name only went in if you had school uniform. In those days uniform wasn't compulsory. My name was picked out and when the day arrived, after lunch at school I went to the Guildhall catching a bus from outside Ivor Doble's up to British Home Stores and made my way up to the Guildhall. No one accompanied me and I can't imagine that happening today on any scale. We were packed into the Guildhall and saw the presentation, along with a lot of speeches – too many speeches for us children and that was it. We all trooped out and made our way home. The bowl is still on display in the Guildhall and I saw it when I visited the Guildhall with my husband.



In class 10 and 12 was where we learnt sewing and knitting. I don't think we did much knitting but definitely a lot of sewing. Starting off with sewing 2 pieces of felt together to make a comb wallet we progressed to peg bags where we did a sort of applique work and dressing table runner sets in gingham to show off our skills in running stitch, cross stitch and blanket stitch. The final thing we produced was a stuffed felt toy. I made a squirrel holding a nut. I still have it put away somewhere. Someone else did a white swan – it wasn't really white by the time they finished though.

My walk to school from 1958 to 1959/60 was short and relatively easy. I lived in a flat in the last building before the bridge. Our door was on Cowick Street. I mostly walked to school with my friend, Sandra Patch and her sister, Sheila, they lived opposite in Browns Buildings. We used to go past Lethbridges' the poulterer, then under the station viaduct up towards the turning into Buller Road. You passed many buildings sadly in need of demolition and that area always felt dirty and dusty from the amount of traffic and of course the trains, steam ones in those days. Just before you got to the yard which wound its way round the corner of Cowick Street and Buller Road was a shop which fascinated us children, basically because on show were a selection of false teeth – dare I say smiling out at you.

On Buller Road we passed, up towards Redvers Road, the Evangelical Church. It had a pool underneath its floor. My parents weren't religious but I went there for Sunday school, probably because they gave you a little book and a religious picture stamp to stick in the book every week you went and if you filled the book you had a present.

In 1958/60 demolition of the buildings around Exe Bridge started and we were moved. Some people went to Burnt House Lane whilst others, like us and the Patch family were moved to brand new houses in Broadway. When we moved there it was a lot further but we still walked. Can't remember anyone catching a bus even in bad weather, so come rain or shine it was by Shanks' pony, apart from the winter of 1963 when nobody went

anywhere, and certainly not to school.

If you've ever read the Pied Piper of Hamelin, that's what we seemed to be making our way to and from school, except there was no Pied Piper. There were a number of children living on Broadway estate so we all went together. Sandra Patch who now lived next door, Brenda Salter who lived opposite, Maria Gage who lived down the road, to name a few. We'd go down through Greenway and cross the road onto Dunsford Hill, down past John Stocker school and turning left onto Buddle Lane from where even more children came, including Jeanette Peak who was in my class. We went quite a way along Buddle Lane until we reached two shops with a lane in between. One was a wool shop and I think the other might have been a butchers. The lane led to Maple road. Sometimes some of us would run down the lane to leap frog over the concrete post at the bottom. At the bottom of the lane was the sweet shop, which you would go in for a packet of sweet cigarettes, a bag of sherbet or similar, that's if your parents had given you a couple of pennies to spend. I seem to remember a lane that used to go between the houses near Brunswick Street which we used to get to the junior school. All changed now ofcourse with roads blocked off and new housing. During my final year because Sandra Patch had gone to St. Thomas Secondary Modern, she was a year older than me, I used to call for a girl called Janet Lyddon who lived in one of the private houses on Parkway and we'd walk down Cowick Lane and then across to Buddle Lane or down through Wardrew Road. I used to call for her and had to wait outside until she was ready. If it was raining Janet's mother would ask me in to stand in the hall if Janet wasn't ready but her father never did, he'd answer the door, say she wouldn't be long and shut the door again with me waiting outside on the doorstep. Janet never played with any of us on Broadway so I never saw her outside of school. She also didn't pass her 11+ whereas I did so I never saw her after the end of the summer term in 1964.

I used to stay in for school dinners. The dining hall was situated a little way from the school and on the whole the dinners were good, but you were made to eat them. There was one time when we were served bullock's heart and it was revolting. A member of staff stood over me to make sure I ate it even though I was retching. It wasn't until I was actually sick that I was allowed to leave it. I know this happened to a number of other children as well.

Like school dinners, playtime was replicated throughout the schools in the whole of the country. We made our own fun. Games like Farmer's in his den in the infants progressed to other group activities such as tag, hopscotch by writing the numbers on the ground with a stone and using the same stone to throw onto the square, skipping or jacks. Sometimes we'd ask for a long skipping and see how many we could get in to skip at the same time. I can never remember drinking our milk outside during playtime though. We used to sit at our desks to drink it from the small glass bottles.

The school hall was used for assemblies, for dance and for gym, PE taken outside. I used to like some assemblies when they'd bring out a wooden gramophone and play what I learnt later was classical music. As I got towards my final years in the juniors I used to hope that, as we'd be the last to leave the hall ,that the other children would take their time in leaving so that I could listen to the end of the piece being played. A favourite, and still is, was the Moonlight Sonata.

I can't reminisce about my time at Montgomery without mentioning the flooding. We were, on occasion, sent home early if the waters started to rise. One of the girls, Nadia Danilenko, lived in Brunswick Street, and I've said to her that every time her name is

mentioned I just visualise the sandbags outside her house. They always seem to be there! There was one occasion when I was there, probably 1960, when the water rose so quickly that we had to be evacuated from school. We all trooped out via the infant section where there was a ladder up against the school wall. One at a time we climbed up that and over the wall and through a back garden and out through someone's house on Maple Road I've often wondered if the house was our caretaker's house. Dread to think what they're hallway was like after we'd all trooped through it.

Then finally to the 11+. It didn't bother me taking the exam as we were used to taking tests every Friday, this one was in 2 parts and just longer. Being in the A stream most of the class passed and we then went on to continue our education in Bishop Blackall. One or two did pass for the Maynard school, it may have been more but families would have had to have been a lot more affluent than the majority to have attended there. We said goodbye to some good friends at the end of that year. Sadly, I was the only one of my group of friends from Broadway who passed the 11+ so all my friends from there went on to St. Thomas Secondary Modern. This was the saddest bit as when we moved schools my friends on the estate would call for me to come out but I would have homework to do and it wasn't before long they stopped calling.

I don't think I've ever heard anyone, other than those who had Miss Trout as their teacher, say that they didn't like their years in Montgomery School. I enjoyed it and I have some lovely memories of the building, the staff and the pupils in my class who went on to Bishop Blackall with whom I am still in touch.

So, 65 years on, although I no longer have my school reports I do have one reminder of my time at Montgomery, apart from my memories – my school tie.

