

# June 1912



## Headteacher's log

### Monday 17

Saturday's Army Day held on our school field was a great success. Among the marching displays were two by His Majesty's PFI (Private Finance Initiative) units. The Tesco Fusiliers were very impressive, but were excelled by special guests, Royal Marines from HMS Marks & Spencer. Interactive events were especially popular; machine-gun clay pigeon shooting and six fun things to do with mustard gas. A Lifeguards surgeon demonstrated alternative medicine by boiling a lance.

### Tuesday 18

Our designated Save the Planet Support Adviser was in school today to update a subject, PE, for which new orders have been laid. Staff were shown how to train children in shallow breathing to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. PE is in the spotlight at the moment. The Government is very concerned about working class children being underweight. Confectionary stalls are being set up in schools with free cakes and sweets rich in sugar, fat and carbohydrates.

### Wednesday 19

Like all primary schools in the county, St Cryptosporidium's had a special assembly today. There was a large attendance of parents, and the Mayor of Middlemire was present. This was to give thanks for twenty years of phonic methods of teaching reading. Crude rote learning of alphabetic recognition and mindless word memorisation had resulted in very disappointing standards of reading throughout the 19th century. 'Phonics' has released children from narrow reading vocabularies, so that they are better able to relate printed words to words that they hear. Strangely, the national press

When you've finished those, Master William, here's the rest of your cake. Soon have you big and strong!



seems unaware of the good news. It reports employers' outrage at school leavers unable to read or spell, and of firms having to employ German clerks to cope with English paperwork. There are bitter complaints about poor spelling. HMI have re-administered tests from the 1880s and '90s; the results are significantly worse, according to a leaked report.

### Thursday 20

The new English KS2 syllabus is far from settled. English teachers are enraged at being required to teach *Tom Jones*, *The Beggars' Opera* and *Pride and Prejudice* to 10 and 11 year olds. Miss Cartwright, our Co-ordinator for Multimedia/Multisensory Communications Education, brings me weekly reports of unrest in her professional association the MMCEA, which is apparently being driven to civil disobedience. MMCEA describes the books as completely outside the interest and comprehension of young children or, indeed, most normal adults. It has drawn up an alternative list of more modern and accessible books which will resonate with the feelings of today's KS2 age children. This list includes Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Jack London's *White Fang* and (forthcoming) Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*.

### Friday 21

Canon Thunderton-Armstrong, our Chair of Governors, led school worship this morning. He broke the news of the death yesterday afternoon of one of our most distinguished governors, Colonel George Armstrong Crabbitt. George Crabbitt had an outstanding military career on the Afghan border and in the Transvaal. On retirement he moved to Slimepond Hall, joined our governing body and chaired our finance committee. When we were grant-maintained, he was Responsible Officer for Finance. The Colonel liked making money almost as much as he liked watching the effects on other people of money being saved. He also enjoyed killing foxes and pheasants, and was partial to a pipe of opium and a glass of Cognac. His final moments were not easy, but the Canon, who was at his bedside, had the privilege of hearing his last whispered words. Though conventional they were sincere. They will be on his gravestone, rather boringly I fear, amongst many other recent headstones with the same epitaph: *I had fun*.

■ Leonard Bookman