



Friends of the Chalet School

Onwards and Upwards
102



November 2013

only a small amount, can't stand it if someone makes a cup of tea with too much milk in, as you can taste the 'milk' not the tea, and it tastes like warm milk!! How many other traumatised people are there because we had to have milk at school?!"

Hilary Hartley "I too remember school milk in 1/3 pint bottles – fine as long as the weather was cool, I loved it then, but if it was warm and going 'off' that was another story."

Concentration Camps

David Bennion "In the Confab of August 2013 Mark Taha suggests that Maria Marani might have been sent to 'the juvenile equivalent of a concentration camp' if she had stayed in Austria in *Exile*. Surely there was no such thing. The Nazi concentration camps catered for all ages. Elinor was brave to mention their existence in her books, but she could not put across the full horror of them. One of the things that visitors to Auschwitz find most moving is the rows of tiny shoes, taken from children who died in the gas-chambers. The most remarkable book I have read this year is *Fragments*, by Benjamin Wilkomirski; the confused recollections of a Polish boy, taken to the camps before he could walk, and who literally grew up there. Its contents are too harrowing to quote here. The story of eight-year-old Else Baker is equally horrific. In early 1944 she was taken from her German family in Hamburg because the Gestapo had discovered that she was adopted, and her natural mother was half-gypsy. She was sent to Birchenau with other gypsies in a cattle truck, where she spend several appalling months in a state of catatonic shock. On the night of 1st August 1944 she was transferred to Ravensbrück as Gypsy No.10,540, narrowly missing the liquidation of the gypsies in Birkenau on the following day, when 2,879 were taken to the crematoria and gassed. When her father managed to persuade the authorities that, despite her gypsy grandmother, she had been fully assimilated into German society, and he himself had joined the Nazi party, to emphasize his loyalty, she was given a shower, the first since her arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau six months before, and released. Despite being only eight, she was made to sign a document agreeing that she would not reveal where she had been, or what she had experienced. She and her father returned to Hamburg, where she would return to school, and pretend to be a normal German school-girl again. They travelled in a compartment with a German Army officer. Her father lifted her skirt, to show the great sores on her legs, and said to him 'This is what you are fighting for at the front'."





I have ever been so scared and how my son kept driving I will never know. Exaggeration – not at all!”

Frances Bailey “Not being a lover of storms (I’ve never been able to understand those people who find them an exciting experience – they can, and do, do damage!). I don’t think I’d like to experience the Tyrolean ones. My mother hated storms, and I remember, as a child, we all sat on the stairs, hands over ears, during thunderstorms, with metal objects and mirrors all moved or covered. I’m not that bad now, but my mother’s fears must have been passed on to me!”

Dorothy Stewart “I found Samantha’s article on the New York Hurricane interesting. If she had not provided herself with emergency lighting and water containers, she had at least a useful cookery book, though she may not have foreseen using it in just such circumstances when she bought it.”

Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II

Val Walker “I too was taken by Anne James’ reminiscences. I belong to a history group in my village and at the beginning of this year we were doing a course on Elizabeth II. Imagine my delight when the first session was on the evening of 6th February I was able to stand up and say ‘Today 61 years ago she actually became Elizabeth II.’ As a child of 10 I remember going into our school hall to observe two minutes silence because the King was dead.”



Sue Biggs “Regarding Elizabeth I’s speech you need to read the rest of the speech to put this part in context (‘I know I have the weak, feeble body of a woman but I have the heart and stomach of a king’). She certainly gave no indication during her life that she believed it.”

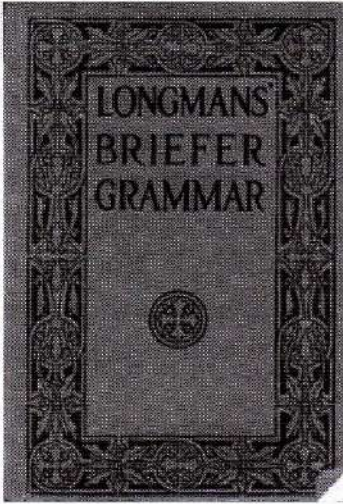
Guests For Tea

Mark Taha “Not all together, of course! Robin – without Jo or Madge, to draw her out rather than babying her. In a group – Margia, Evadne, Cornelia, Betty Wynne-Davis, Elizabeth Arnett, Joyce Linton, to discuss how to get back at the staff and prefects. Together – Eustacia and Jennifer Penrose, to discuss books. Annis Lovell and Jessica Wayne – I like them and think their people treated them rottenly. Of the staff – Mlle de Lachenais and Nancy Wilmot – she struck

me as having a sense of humour. And how about Rufus or Bruno? Do not love Joey but do love her dogs!”

More Grammatical Groaning

Frances Bailey “Yes I’m an old moaner too! My latest moans include the horrible missing of consonants in the middle of words (‘la-er’ for ‘later’ etc) and



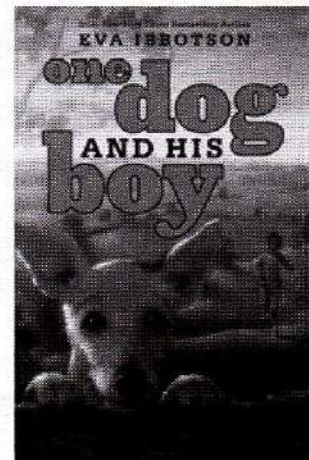
every sentence going uphill towards the end, so they all sound like questions! Incidentally, some years ago, my grandsons, then at primary school, told me they were taught to say ‘haitch’ rather than ‘aitch’. My teachers would have had fits.”

Teresa Black “I do so agree with Margo Astill about the deterioration in spoken English. On our local Metro system there is a recorded voice advising us of the next station. The one which makes me want to scream is ‘The next station is ----- change here for the airport’. Surely everyone knows it is thee airport!”

Viv Grimwade “Where do I start? A particular hate of mine is train station which has totally overtaken railway station – why? I also despair of the *Daily Telegraph* more and more frequently. Last week there was a heading asking ‘Wither blah de blah’ when it should have read ‘Whither’. To say that it changes the meaning would be an understatement. And both *The Times* and *The Telegraph* spell Cin Cin (the famous Italian drinks greeting, and, in my view, the best,) as Chin Chin. Wither (!) the future of the English language?”

St Bernard Dogs

Patricia Turner “The Chalet School series would not be the same without Zita, Rufus and Bruno. Recently I read another book in which a St Bernard called Otho plays an important part. The book is *One Dog and his Boy*, a wonderful story for any age by the brilliant Eva Ibbotson. Brave, wise, sensitive Otho is not the *One Dog* of the title but read it all the same. To improve my enjoyment I came across two beautiful St Bernards while I was reading the book. They were lying in the sunshine and just summoned up the energy to wag their tails, reminding me of another Eva Ibbotson book that features five St Bernards. This book, *The Abominables*, published after her death, is even better than *One Dog and his Boy*. These five St Bernards each have very different natures but not one of them is anything like Otho or the Chalet School dogs or the real Alpine rescue animals.”



Facebook Page

Judy Harris “Thank you for letting us know about the Facebook page. I am finding it a great way to be reminded about the deadlines for magazine contributions. Hopefully others feel the same way, and you will never find yourselves short of material!”

Newborns and their Hair

Frances Bailey “I think the descriptions of Chalet School babies being born with full heads of curly hair is just another example of EBD’s lack of experience of real babies. Many babies are born with plenty of hair, mine included, but it seldom stays, or if it does it changes colour.”



Special Persons

Fiona Preston “Dorothy Devlin says that EBD missed a golden opportunity of letting a professional woman have both sides of life when she depicted Daisy in



her marriage, and the way in which she would be ‘controlled’ by her future husband. When you consider that EBD was born in 1894, I think it is extraordinary how forward thinking she was and how, despite the fact that she did not appear ever to have had a relationship with a man, she was able to evoke such a realistic (for the time) picture of married lives throughout the series. Okay, so

she did an injustice to Daisy by deciding to stop her medical career when her marriage began but on the whole she had a pretty good stab at equality.”

Dorothy Stewart “The article on Daisy was very good, I’m always glad to read more of her. Primula seemed to disappear from some of the later books, and it seems that’s something I always write about – the disappearance of favourite people as the series continues. We only hear odd mentions of Peggy and Bride. Of course there’s a choice: do we keep on reading about the same people or do we want new characters introduced.”

The Müller Twins at the Chalet School

Mark Taha “How could they enforce that rule against the borrowing and

lending of money between pupils in practice? Daft one, in my opinion.”

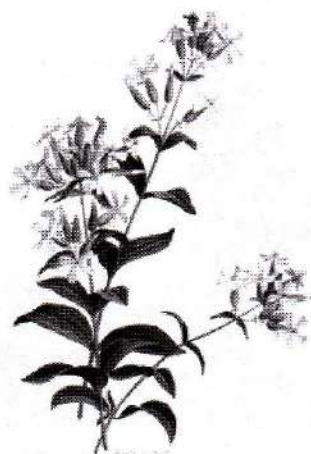
Barbara Hall “I have just finished reading *Müller Twins* and would like to add my congratulations to Katherine Bruce for another amazing fill-in. Katherine has captured the CS style perfectly and it is clear that she has worked very hard to research her storylines, so that the book is not only accurate in itself but ties in with all those preceding and succeeding it. The characters of Anneliese and Charlotte are beautifully drawn and there is a very nice balance of everyday school life, trips and mischief. I would have loved to have been in Madame’s literature lesson on *Romeo and Juliet* – Katherine obviously knows her Shakespeare. Thank you for a great addition to my CS shelves!”

Wiesing

Jilly Day “Thank you Elspeth Inch for your helpful description and map as to the location of Wiesing. Speaking as someone able to get lost in a cul-de-sac, I’d no doubt manage many incorrect twists turns through the mountains before arriving at the Sonnalpe!”

Bouncing Bet

Estelle Pover “I have just attacked mine with the garden shears. It grows round my wild life pond and the frogs love to hide in it. I like its flowers and the way it provides ground cover, but it surely does ‘bounce’. It’s really what gardeners term a ‘thug plant’, as it will take over your whole garden if you don’t watch out. It was planted here in the early 1970s for my children to investigate its ‘soap properties’ and has been used as soap by my grandchildren and now great grandchildren. It’s easily as bouncy as Margot!”



Saturday Evening Games

Ruth Gemmell “I remember reading the solution to the anagram of IOESCRS many years ago, but have not yet managed to find the source, though I have been looking everywhere except old FOCS magazines (assuming you lot would know it if so, but I might be wrong!). It was not a term familiar to me but I know I began ‘ISO’ (anagrams are harder if they begin with a vowel), and I think it was ISOCERS, which would be lines joining places of equal ‘something’, possibly aridity or similar, but I haven’t got a good Geography book and Google was less than helpful (though I’m no expert at anything to do with computers). I’m used to isobars and have heard of isohyels and others, so presume it’s something similar.”

Sports Day

Carol Grey "I also laughed at the idea of the Juniors on sports day, having completed their events, settling down to watch their elders' races etc with enjoyment. Having suffered (along with other staff) the horrors of crowd control duty on sports day I know just how much today's children enjoy watching."



Chalet Names, First Names, Unusual Names

Mark Taha "At least three American Presidents – Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Richard Milhous Nixon had their mothers' maiden names as middle names."

Frances Bailey "EBD must have had a liking for the surname Carey. We have Verity-Ann Carey and Miss Carey, who is a mistress, which could be confusing as there seems to be no relationship involved. Also, Dickie Christy refers to her step-mother as Mother Carey, though I know this is just a nickname."

Elisabeth Parsons "One thing which annoys me is that Miss Slater is almost always addressed by just her surname. I know this is quite usual for men but I have always felt it to be rather rude to address a lady thus. It makes it appear, to me anyway, that Miss Slater is not really accepted as one of themselves by the other members of staff. I know that some of the girls don't like her simply because she is a Maths mistress but surely that would not apply to the staff. When I was a nurse many years ago it was quite usual for surnames to be used because you would be introduced as Nurse and then your surname, without your Christian name being given. Even when Christian names did become known they were never used on the ward. It was also the custom in those more formal days that your patients were not supposed to know your Christian name."

Heather Kaye "I recently saw both a Cornelia and a Flavia at work, as customers' names. These are both really unusual names, and I'd not seen them outside the books before."

Saturday Early Closing

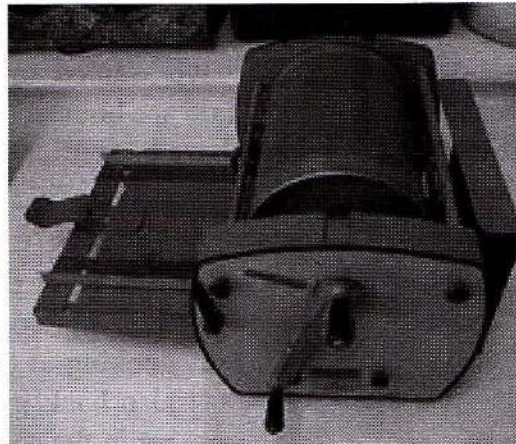
Estelle Pover "Yes, Charmian, the smaller shops definitely closed on Saturday afternoons in the early 1950s in London. I was at the LSE from 1952-55 and a 'uniform shop' would have closed at that time in that period. I cannot remember for sure, but I think Oxford Street (Selfridges, D H Evans, C&A etc) remained

Mademoiselle's Illness

Judy Harris “Re-reading *Jo Returns*, I couldn't help but think that it was not mere coincidence that led to Mademoiselle being struck down by a severe illness in *Jo Returns*. I wondered if perhaps Elinor realised that with Joey departing the school, she needed to further develop some other characters – hopefully, characters who would be able to provide the continuity from book to book that she would need following Joey's departure. Aside from the instance where Miss Annersley comforts Jo in *And Jo*, when Jo finds out that there is no longer any need to fear for the Robin's health, we do not see much of Miss Annersley before *Jo Returns*. However, in *Jo Returns*, she suddenly takes on a much more prominent role, culminating in her appointment as Acting Head. I also wondered whether Elinor considered ending the series after *Jo Returns* – the final paragraph seemed very ‘final’!”

Stencils

Susan Merskey “Ah yes, I remember them well! Typing on them, or typing several copies of letters etc using sheets of carbon paper to produce the extra ones was like a red rag to a bull to me – I would make every typing error in the book! I really only achieved a decent typing speed with the advent of computers and the ability to easily correct what I had written. The other ‘multiple copier’ where we wrote or typed stuff on a special paper, then ran off copies using a duplicator were somehow easier to deal with, providing you could stand the smell of ethyl alcohol from the newly run-off sheets. I have to admit I liked it!”



Sheila Headon “I remember my dad typing stencils and printing on a Gestetner copier - I don't know whether he had a typewriter that had a special stencil mode. Years later I used to type and print our church magazine in the same way - and used just a small portable typewriter, which definitely didn't have stencil mode. It still worked. I remember the correction fluid - it was bright pink.”

Cheshire Dialect

Mark Taha “I had friend from Wirral. Her only ‘local’ expressions were ‘chuck’ and ‘love the bones of’ – she said that was a Liverpool expression.”

Children's Holidays

Mark Taha "Holidays in term time never did me any harm. Some children would never have a holiday without them. Service personnel have British forces schools, not to mention the internet and correspondence courses. I still say Dick and Mollie should have been guided by their children's wishes."

Heather Kaye "I was interested in ViV Turner's comment about her father always taking them for holidays in 'flaming June'. I don't have any children at present, however, various work colleagues have advised me that if you now take your children out during term time you don't just need permission, you actually have to pay a fine. So families with children that can't afford the extortionate 'school holiday' prices for a family holiday, and might have wanted to take their children in off peak time are penalised. However, I do see both sides of this. I would be interested if any FOCS readers with children have been affected by this."



Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth or The Mystery of the Cooks



Charmian Bilger "I note that Karen, the cook, seems to be in two places at the same time. In *Oberland* she is cooking at the new branch in Welsen. However she is also back in Wales in *Shocks* and *Changes* which are set in the same school year. I also wonder when she re-joined the school. My *A-Z of Chalet School Characters* has her appearing in *Carola*. Before that (and in some books, after that!) Megan seems to have been in charge. The *A-Z* seems to suggest that the Karen in *Oberland* is a different one yet Miss Wilson refers to her as someone she knows well. The mystery deepens (or is it solved?) in *Mary-Lou* when both are mentioned on p142-143 (1959) and Miss Wilson refers to 'our own Karen'. Also *The A-Z* doesn't refer to her/ them in Tirol. Surely one of them was mentioned? Or

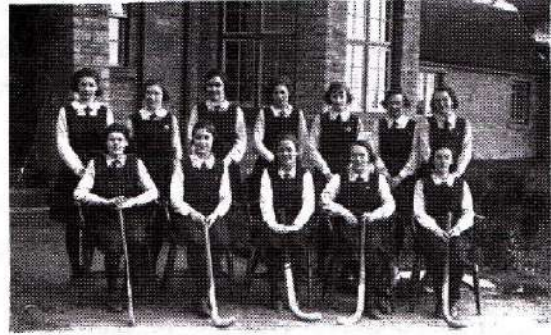
was she just one of the unending Pfeiffen family?"

School Uniforms and Blazers

Sue Biggs "Regarding uniforms – schools in Austria and Switzerland don't generally have uniforms. Like Linda Slorach if we wore blazers with summer dresses at my grammar school we didn't have to wear hats."

Nicola Pollard "Like Barbara Hall I attended a grammar school with full

uniform of blazer and Burberry style school coat. My mother insisted I wore the lot in the colder months and once I had blouse, skirt, jumper, blazer, coat and scarf on I felt as rotund as Paddington Bear! I would regularly stuff that school coat in my bag for the trip home on the bus and long for those heady summer months when a blazer over a school summer dress would suffice. What about all the items you had to carry to school? One rarely had just a school bag, often there was a basket for Home Economics, a games bag, hockey stick or tennis racquet and a musical instrument to contend with and only two hands to hold them with! As a new first former I was pleased that my older brother would offer to carry my violin case and later on my mother would call into school on her way home from work to collect the wicker basket. Our bus queue could turn into quite a scrum when the bus arrived so every little helped!”



Frances Bailey “On my morning walk to my 1950s grammar school I could see the school gates some time before I got there. Often I would see a small crowd of girls outside the gates frantically scabbling in pockets and satchels. This would mean that the head mistress was just inside the gates, checking everyone was wearing berets and gloves (yes, gloves, all year round – woolly in winter and white ones in summer!). Incidentally, I’ve noticed, probably tactfully, that no one’s mentioned matching uniform underwear – ours was large, dark brown knickers!”



Teresa Black “There has been quite a lot of discussion about school blazers recently. In my day, it was just an outdoor jacket to wear in the summer. The high school which my grandchildren attend has recently turned into an Academy, and compulsory black blazers were added to their uniform. Out of curiosity, I asked one of them what was the rule concerning them and was told they could take them off during lessons and hang them on the back of their chairs, otherwise they must be worn at all times on school premises, on public transport and on the street while wearing school uniform.”

Mark Taha “This is a minority view but I’m opposed to it on principle, as a libertarian. How could you wear a jumper over a blazer? And surely separate summer uniforms refute the claim that uniforms save parents money?”