

Memories of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph

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Earliest memories:

My mother told me that she and my father walked past Coloma Preparatory school in Bedford Park, West Croydon and said to each other wouldn't it be wonderful if their children could go to a school like that, not thinking it would be possible.

I remember going with my parents and sister and brother to St Anne's College in Sanderstead one Sunday afternoon and their making enquiries about the school. They were directed to Coloma as there were no places available at St Anne's Prep. We lived in Caterham, so West Croydon was a much longer journey by bus.

They decided that if my mother returned to work as a nurse, they should be able to manage the school fees.

I have very fond memories of Coloma Prep. Mother Mary Constance was the headmistress. Miss Campbell's class, the reception class was an Aladdin's cave of toys and exciting things to play with. I loved the Wendy house and playing in the sand pit. I remember having a fight with a little boy called Leslie Brown who had bright



red hair, about to do with the sand pit. Rest time was a daily ritual after lunch when we had to put our heads on our folded arms on the table and close our eyes for twenty minutes or so. I used to long for it to be over as it was so boring, doing nothing. Some children had camp beds to stretch out on, and I was always curious to know why this was. I also was curious also about the children who had to have their knickers changed. Miss Campbell had a stock of off

white pants that came out most days. When I realised the reason for this I prided myself that I was not so afflicted!

A gentle little bell was rung to tell us that rest time was over, whereupon we had to stand and yawn and stretch our hands high above our heads. There was probably a little rhyme to say in unison.

One of the things I hated was 'milk time', when small glass bottles of milk were handed out with a straw. I didn't like milk, especially if it was lukewarm.

I loved the pictures in the reading book we had about Hen Len, Cock Lock and Turkey Lurkey and the sky falling on Hen Len's head.



Assembly was a daily event, where prayers were chanted, we were given news and admonished or praised. We sang all the old hymns accompanied by Mrs Robertson on the piano. On Fridays Sr Mary Constance would lead the chant: 'Today is Friday, tomorrow is Saturday, the next day is Sunday, keep holy the Sabbath day!'

Proclamation was an annual event, when Reverend Mother Mary Joachim, who was like God, came to present badges and coloured sashes to all those who had excelled that year in conduct, diligence, discipline, improvement, and other virtues. A momentous day was when Mother Mary Constance announced that they were no longer 'Mothers' but 'Sisters'. Why this was, was a mystery.