

## Christmas at Hamble School early 1900s

'Our School' was a very nice building set in a plot of ground facing on to the road leading down to the Common and Southampton Water. Attached to the school building was a very nice house. Here Mr and Mrs Snell (Headmaster) lived.

The school building was very high, had long windows with small panes of glass which opened at the top, activated by a cord, which swung them outwards. There were quite a dozen or eighteen on each wall. You entered by two front doors; one led into the infant's classroom, the other to the main room.

A big fireplace, well guarded, kept the small classroom warm in winter. The big room accommodated classes 1, 2, 3, one end, and 4, 5 in the middle and 6 and 7 the other end. The school master took 6 and 7, Miss Clarke 4 and 5, Miss Smith 1, 2 and 3. The infants had a separate teacher (name escapes me). Round iron stove burning coke one end and a very big fireplace at the other end burning coal and coke. It was always lovely and red and glowing and sent out a lovely heat. Those sitting at the back did get chilly, but then warm clothes and boots would be worn.



I really must tell you about the lovely Xmas party we used to have at school. Admiral and Mrs. Fullerton paid for it all. The folding doors, which separated the classrooms, would be opened wide and in the infant classroom would be put the biggest Xmas tree. It would be overloaded with really lovely presents and on the floor as well. A child's name would be on each parcel.

The village firemen were on duty in case the candles (coloured) caught the tree alight. Tinsel, bells and all sorts of things would decorate the tree. My, how beautiful it used to look! The lovely spread on the table for tea makes my mouth water now. White cloths and strands of tinsel and Xmas paper, paper hats, crackers, the lot would be there.

The village policeman would be Santa Claus. The Admiral would be dressed in his grand uniform and his wife in a rich evening dress.

We kids loved it, how grand it all was, a real Christmas do. Then the gifts were all given out and by now the parents had arrived and we would all sing carols etc. and God Save The King. Then we would go home loaded with apples, oranges, bag of nuts, sweets and the big present off the tree.

Happy, happy Christmases they were.

*Extract from Annie Williams memoir. She was born in 1898 and was the daughter of well known Hamble character 'Uncle Bob' Williams. They lived at 6 Mercury View and then 'Oakdene' in Satchell Lane. Hamble only had one school, in School Lane, to which all the village's schoolchildren attended.*

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