Greensborough Primary School 140 years

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Dear pupils!

I am honoured to say a few words about my school days back in the 1950’s. It might seem a long time ago, over 60 years, but when you reach my age – 75 -you will see that it isn’t really such a frightfully long time. Time does pass, sometimes very quickly. Ask your grandparents!

Back then Greensborough was almost country. We lived on Poulter avenue, just below the station, and had three cows, forty hens, a dog and cat. It was built by the first settlers in Greensborough William and Mary Poulter in 1853! Do you know any of their offspring and relatives?

The old house is no longer standing in the valley. Now there is a nice park, but when you look down at it from the station, can you imagine a boy your age lugging a big bag with cucumbers and tomatos up the hill to the vegetable shop on Main street and selling them. The owner Mr O’Neil gave me a handful of shillings and coppers for them from his pocket which I gave my dad. He let me keep some of it and I shared it with my little sister Aija. We, after all, weeded the garden, and pocket money was our reward.

Another chore I had was to feed the hens, chop wood for the stove, and, with my big brother Aivars milk the cows. The frothy mik straight from the milk bucket was delicious! We made our own butter, curd, and cheese. That’s why I still have strong bones!

We had the best eggs; dad sold them at Eltham High Shool where he taught math. There were never enough eggs – today we would say -demand outstripped supply.

Now you will want to know how on earth we managed to live without TV, not to speak of smart phones! How could we have survived without Twitter, Facebook, What’s Up, and all the other apps?

Not only did we survive, we had great fun!

First of all we enjoyed school. Every day was exciting. I wonder if we did not spend more time outdoors than inside the old brick building. We played football, cricket, marbles, all kinds of games. The girls played tag, hide and seek, and did a lot of skipping.

Best of all it once snowed and we shot out of our classes shouting and screaming to throw the already melting snow at each other. The teachers didn’t mind and when we trooped back they continued the lessons where we had interupted them.

The were regular football and cricket matches between the red, gold, and green teams in the school, and between other schools. We also had athletic competition games between these schools, like the Olympic games. My brother came second in the 100 yards sprint!

The queen with the duke visited Australia on her coronation tour in 1953 if I'm not mistaken. We were taken by train to the Melbourne stadium which was packed with school children from all the schools in the Melbourne area. The queen and the duke standing drove in circles in the stadium (there were older pupils standing in columns in the centre too) and we all screamed like mad without stopping. Unforgettable!

Later, when she visited Latvia in 2006 and I shook her hand, she and the duke were astounded when I told them I had already "met" them in Melbourne...

I actually did watch the real Olympic games, when they were held in Melbourne in 1956. I had started attending Heidelberg JuniourTechnical School, and bought tickets to watch the track and field games in the Melbourne stadium. What excitement!

And we did learn the subjects offered in class. The teachers were just fine.There was a young man who always came in a suit and white shirt with a stiff collar and tie. He always had a musical key that he lifted to his ear to get the right key of the song and then off we started with Waltzing Matilda in full throttle. Actually, all teachers wore suits then and the lady teachers, as always, dressed very nicely.

We got free milk at school in small bottles that were brought in metal crates in the mornings. After a while, chocolate was added to the milk which met with our great approval! We brought our own sandwitches to school from home.

I remember a debate between one pupil in my class who’s father was a farmer with a teacher who taught history and social subjects. The question was which country grew the most wheat. The teacher maintained that it was America, my māte said that it was the Soviet Union. Many years later the Soviet Union started to buy wheat not only from America and Canada, but also Australia!

Now, of course, there is no Soviet Union, and I could return to my home country Latvia.

We had great fun after school. We had with our home-made tin, wood, and tar cannoes in the Plenty river? We pretended we were in a jungle on dangerous missions and paddled up un down the river below low hanging branches and darting across shallows all the time ready with our bows and arrows for the enemy lurking in the bushes and trees along the banks.

My sister’s task was to bail out the water from the leaking cannoe with a tin can, if it had sunk, I would have to rescue her as she had then still not learnt how to swim. I was a good swimmer since I had plenty of practice in the Plenty river.

Our neighbour John wanted to build a submarine. Luckily he never finished it, otherwise he and his sister might have drowned.

Of course, we older boys had our favorite girls with whom we were secretly in love, but never dared admit it, but the girls knew it well enough and tried to look as pretty as possible.

Well, that’s about it. Hope you enjoyed my story of life as a kid in Greensborough “back in the good old days”?

We kids had a lot of fun, there was not one day that was boring!