




Notes on Childhood  
in Harefield  
in the Nineteenth  
Century

M. Evans.

 In the late 19th century many children started school at 3 years in the Memorial Hall. There they did letters, songs, and wrote pot-hooks on slates.

Mr. Barnes of the Grove opened a Sunday School over his stables, and added a reading and writing class for adults. 400 attended this. Mr. Barnes was a Wesleyan, and the Free churches took great interest in education for the poor.

Children went at 7 years to the

Church School in the High Street.  
Miss Bullen taught the Infants.  
"She was a tartar. One of the lads  
once pinched her pie and didn't half  
get the stick." said an old inhabit-  
ant. One boy was chased round  
the blackberry bushes by the  
Inspector for playing truant, but  
was not caught.

Children had a hot dinner or a  
sandwich. In the holidays they  
worked on farms, earning about 1/6d.

A shilling would go to Mother, and the 6d. would buy a bag of biscuits. Some boys went each day after school to rake over their father's sand at the brickworks ready for the next day.

There were special tea-parties for children at the big houses. They marched, each with a mug tied round the neck.

The boys learnt to swim in the canal, and the bargees

grumbled at them for getting in the way.

Children would mostly have porridge for breakfast, and some families kept chickens, so they had eggs. They grew vegetables, and kept a pig, or bees. It seems they were mostly well fed.

Games were marbles, skipping and hoops. At Chapel Row in Rickmansworth Road they fixed their rope across the road - there

was no traffic. Pocket money, if you got any would be 1d. a week and it bought a quarter of sweets or two ice-creams. Some children picked fruit after school for a few pence. In the season boys would be kept from school to pick potatoes at 1/6d. a day. It was worth the fine.

At 12 years you could leave school if you passed an exam. One boy born in 1845 earned 1/6d.

a week at age 9, and later 3/- a week in charge of 3 horses.

Another earned 5/- a week looking after a pony and trap and milking a jersey cow. He worked from 7am to 6pm. One boy earned 2/- at age 12, scaring birds from dawn to dark. He said a lady used to give him a slice of cake which he put under his jersey until he was hungry. A boy worked at the Grove watering

greenhouses, 6 am. to 6 pm, aged 10. He was paid 6/- a week. Another, aged 13, caught and harnessed a pony, loaded up fruit and drove round Pinner and Northwood to sell it. He earned 5/- a week.

A five-year old girl walked from Moorhall to Hill End Road to school. Her mother had 12 children. She used to walk along the canal to Uxbridge and back to do shopping. People walked



long distances, but they used  
the field paths, which were  
more direct.

