

KATHLEEN TOOTILL

1904-1997



Gwyneth Wilkie, with the help of Pat Percy and Michael Tootill,
December 2022

Kathleen Beatrice Phyllis Tootill was born on 1 November 1904 the daughter of a pharmacist, Robert Harrison Tootill, and Jessie Mackenzie Hunt. She was baptised on 7 December at Bowdon Church in

1904	Kathleen Beatrice Phyllis	Robert Harrison + Jessie Mackenzie	Tootill	Hale	Chemist	G. E. Marshall Curate
No 1286						

Cheshire and was the second and final child of this marriage. Her brother Reginald Hunt Tootill had arrived on 3 January 1901 in the final weeks of Queen Victoria's reign.

Her father by 1906 had shops at 12 The Downs, Altrincham, 136 Ashley Road, Hale, and Church View, Stamford Road, Bowdon. The family home was Carisbrooke, Heath Road, Hale.



The Tootill family in 1907 in their 14hp Humber in Heath Road, Hale

At some point between 1915 and 1919 the family moved to The Ivies, 16 Wicker Lane, Hale Barns. There was apparently some debate about what school Reggie or Rex, Kathleen's brother, could be sent to. Bowdon College did not wish to admit the sons of shopkeepers but may have been persuaded to relent on the grounds that Robert Tootill did not actually serve behind the counter. All we know for certain is that Rex went to King William's College, Isle of Man, from September 1914 to the summer of 1917. At this point, before taking his Higher School Certificate, he was pulled out of school and put into one of his father's shops with strict instructions to check every prescription made

up by the aged and unreliable manager. There was a dearth of younger men because they had been called up to serve in the forces. There he was expected to continue with his studies as well as trying to supervise what was happening in the shop.



A view of Tootill's chemist's shop, with blind lowered, at the Polygon, Bowdon. The Hunt family lived at Laurel Mount, along the road leading off to the right of this picture

Prescription Dangers

No doctor can obtain the desired results in the sick room, unless his Prescriptions are dispensed exactly as he intends them, they must be particularly accurate as to the quantities of each drug.

- * Moreover, the drugs must be high in the quality of PURITY and FRESHNESS.
- * TOOTILL'S as conscientious Pharmacists endeavour to aid the Physician in bringing back your health, we have

Dispensed over 370,000 Prescriptions.

* Your doctor trusts us with the most intricate Prescription work ; as he does, so should you. It is a most important branch of our business, requiring care, attention, and practical experience, which we can safely and honestly assure you it does get.

* Our system of recording and checking absolutely prevents mistakes being made. We don't charge extra for our high-grade service. TRY US.

Tootill's,

**Modern
Pharmacies,**

The Downs, Altrincham. . .
 The Polygon, Bowdon. . .
 Peel Causeway, Hale. . .
 41, School-road, Sale. . .

Robert Harrison Tootill also had chemist's shops at in The Downs and on Peel Causeway as well as 41 School Road, Sale. In about 1914 he moved his premises from 136 Ashley Road, Hale, to 197a.¹ Soon after the First World War ended all four shops were sold to Boot's, although they had initially been interested in acquiring only one.

Kathleen's mother was a member of the Unitarian Church, which was not far from The Ivies, and her daughter's religious faith, which was straightforward and robust, may well have stemmed from childhood attendance there. She later became a lay preacher and in 1954 she preached at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester.

Kathleen in later life confessed that she felt aggrieved that her father would spend money on boarding school fees for his son but not his daughter. Meanwhile the son felt envious of his sister who had not been banished from the family home!



Kathleen used to relate how her boots had been given to one of the maids to dry by the kitchen fire. The leather got scorched and the boots were ruined. Kathleen, knowing that the maid was likely to be dismissed, stoically endured being punished for carelessness in her stead.

Kathleen's own schooling took place at Dudley Bank School in Hale, a private school for girls. Little information seems to be available about it. During the time she was there it featured frequently in

¹ For a brief biography see Hale Civic Society, *Hale and Ashley, The Past 100 Years*, 1987, p 84

local newspapers as its pupils did well in competitions to do with science and nature. Inspectors' reports dating from 1927 and later are in the National Archives.

The school was almost contemporaneous with Kathleen, having been founded in 1903 by Miss Isabella Robertson and Miss Ethel Read and was so successful that it moved in 1906 to purpose-built accommodation at 26 Warwick Road, Hale. This became the boarding house when further premises were built across the road. As well as accommodating boarders there was a mixed kindergarten, so Kathleen may have spent her entire school career there. The stated aim of the school was to 'give a thoroughly sound education on approved modern lines and to train the girls to become cultured, intelligent, useful members of society.'² Later in life she remarked that schooldays gave her a hatred of routine.

On 18 December 1934 she was invited back to distribute the prizes there.

Certainly Kathleen was prepared well enough to go on to University, which was not an obvious choice for girls of her era. She seems to have done very well in her early academic studies and probably also in sport, but she confessed that she left school with little sense of what direction her life should take. She graduated aged 21 with a BA in Latin and English in 1925³ at Manchester University but having also followed courses in Mediaeval History and French. She passed in Latin and Mediaeval History when sitting her Intermediate BA in 1923.⁴ Her brother Rex was also pursuing his studies at the Medical School but did not qualify until 1927, so Kathleen, though younger, was the first of her family to graduate.

The Ivies was very close to Partington Farm and Kathleen reminisced about helping to get wartime harvests in. I got the impression that this was during the First World War.

When Kathleen was about 14 (so *circa* 1918) she discovered hanging from the beams in the garage a Rob Roy canoe. This sounds as though it may have come to her notice during preparations for the move to The Ivies. Kathleen managed to clean it up and get it down to the River Bollin. With a couple of schoolfriends she was able to paddle it along before it filled with water and found the experience exhilarating.

This must have been the Rob Roy canoe which belonged to an uncle she never knew, John Arthur Hunt, known as Jack, who died at Ladysmith of enteric fever during the Boer War. He had enlisted as a trooper in Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry. They were trained to fight as infantry with the added advantage that they could be rapidly deployed using the speed and endurance of horses to cross the South African terrain.

The Rob Roy canoe was 15 feet long by 2 ft 6 ins wide and could be either paddled or sailed. In this vessel John MacGregor navigated over 1,000 miles of waterways and published in 1866 a book

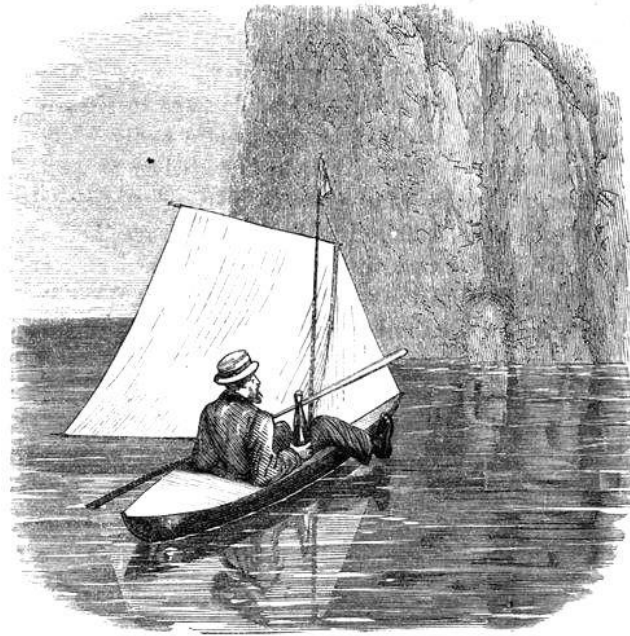
² Hale Civic Society, *Hale and Ashley, The Past 100 Years*, 1987, p 155

³ Thanks to Pam, of Manchester University Alumni Relations Team, for details of her final degree.

⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Oct 1923, p 9

chronicling his experiences in *1,000 Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe*. In the same year he founded the Royal Canoe Club at Teddington on the Thames, the first of its kind.⁵

The 1930s saw an expansion of interest in canoeing with the foundation of the Canoe Camping Club in 1935 and the British Canoe Union a year later.



Kathleen had a photograph of Uncle Jack in his canoe and although they could never have met, his interest in canoeing was passed on to her and became one of the central features of her life.

⁵ For further information see *John MacGregor, A Biography* by Edwin Hodder (1894) and *Explorers Extraordinary* by John Keay (1985) and <https://www.classicboat.co.uk/articles/john-rob-roy-macgregor-the-man-who-invented-the-sport-of-kayaking/>



Jack Hunt in his Rob Roy canoe *circa* 1896

Another enduring interest of Kathleen's from her schooldays was hockey. She played for the Manchester University team and for the county teams of Buckinghamshire and Cheshire, switching from her accustomed role as goalkeeper to full back. Always ready to help run things, she served

Buckinghamshire Women's Hockey Association	
Season 1946-1947	
Selection Committee—	President—
MISS HORDER	MISS G. M. WOOD
MISS WOOD	Vice-Presidents—
MISS BOOTH	MRS. STOTT
MISS TOOTILL	MISS TOOTILL
MRS. McNEALL	MR. BEAL
Captain—	Hon. Sec. and Hon. Match Sec.—
MISS A. M. HORDER	MISS B. STUART
Vice-Captain—	"Cairnies" Hamilton Road, High Wycombe
<i>Mrs K. HIGGARTY</i>	Tel. H. W. 159
	Hon. School's Secretary—
	MISS A. M. HORDER
	The High School, High Wycombe
	Tel. H.W. 222 (School) or H.W. 393 (Private)
	Hon. Treasurer—
	MRS. GREEN
	16 Chestnut Avenue, Slough
	Tel. Langley 160

both as secretary and treasurer for the Buckinghamshire Women's Hockey Association during the war years, as well as being on the selectors' panel.⁶

⁶ *Bucks Herald*, 11 May 1945. In 24 May 1946 p 8 it reported that she was both a Vice-President and one of the Selectors.



The Manchester University team with Kathleen as goalkeeper

What she did after graduating is not known but it appears that in 1928 she applied for a reference from William Blair Anderson, one of the most eminent Latinists of his time, who certainly recognised her potential as a teacher.

The University,
Manchester,
Jan. 13, 1928.

Miss Kathleen Tootell, B. A., studied Latin for three years in this University, taking the Intermediate, General, and Special Courses and duly passing the required examination at the end of each session. She was a diligent and enthusiastic student, showing a keen interest in the Latin books which she read. I feel sure that she will discharge zealously any educational duties to which she may be called.

W. B. Anderson
(D. Litt.; Professor of Imperial
Latin in the University of
Manchester).

Kathleen went on to spend 19 years at the The Garden School, Lane End, High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire. This was an unusual institution and its ideals seemed to have appealed strongly to her.

THE GARDEN SCHOOLS

An advert aimed at prospective parents gives some idea of the outlook of those running the school: 'Will parents who believe in (1) a spiritual basis of life; (2) universal religion; (3) the need for training in world-citizenship; (4) the daily practice of internationalism; (5) the preciousness of individuality; (6) the futility of examinations in testing the growth of individual powers and gifts; (7) the joy of living (working, eating, sleeping) in the open air; write to the principal for particulars of the Garden School, Wycombe Court, Lane End, Bucks. (Summer Term begins April 21)'.⁷

The Garden School had not started at Lane End. The 1921 census finds it at Ballinger Grange, Ballinger Common, on the ridge above Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire.

It was advertised in 1926 as being 'for girls, three to eighteen, and little boys up to public school age. The school is modern in its atmosphere, and lays emphasis on self government and the development of the individual. Music, eurhythmics, arts, crafts and carpentry are stressed.'⁸ In the same year the local press commented 'There is equal freedom in regard to work. The pupils largely take up what they desire, and the one obligation seems to be that whatever subjects they take up they must persevere with and carry through, even if it is in their own fashion and not in a way dictated by elders.'⁹

In 1921 Lucy Winifred Nicholls was the Headmistress and the Manville sisters, Kate and Julia Sophia, were co-Principals. The Teachers Registration Council records¹⁰ show that Julia had previously held the same position at Leinster House School, Hyde Park, in London, from 1895 to 1919.¹¹ Kate's record card is more specific, showing that she moved to Ballinger in 1917, having formerly been at Finchley Road. Mrs Nicholls also had been at Leinster House from 1900-1917 and then at the London Garden School, Finchley Road, until 1921 when she moved to Ballinger.¹²

Could the Finchley establishment also have been described as being in St John's Wood?

Advertisements appeared around December 1916 for the imminent opening of a branch school of Leinster House. It was to be 'A Garden and Domestic Economy School for Girls....in St John's Wood district. Moderate amount of book work. Many physical exercises, including dancing. Much attention to all Art subjects and Domestic Economy.' Its Principal was to be Kate Manville and the Headmistress Mrs CH Nicholls. Earlier that month the address for the new school had been given as 30 Nottingham Place.¹³ Domestic Economy is not mentioned elsewhere and it is not clear what aspects would have been covered. Perhaps it may indicate an attempt to appeal to parents of a wider social class than Leinster House.

Mrs Nicholls was also co-principal at these schools. Her previous experience included being Elocution Mistress and lecturer on Art at the Kensington, Putney and Croydon High Schools. Lucy Winifred White had been born in Southport, Lancashire. Aged 32 she married Charles Henry Nicholls on 1 January 1902 at Christ Church, Paddington. Her address was given as 2 Leinster Gardens and one of the witnesses was Kate Manville. By 1911 they were living at 3 St Mary's Road, Westbourne Park, and

⁷ *Daily Herald*, 20 April 1932, p 10

⁸ *The Handbook of Private Schools*, Vol 10, 1926, p 422

⁹ *Buckinghamshire Examiner*, 25 June 1926, p 3

¹⁰ Held by the Society of Genealogists and accessible also through FindMyPast

¹¹ The address was 2 Leinster Gardens

¹² An article in *The New Era*, Vol 9, p118, published in 1928 states that the Garden School had been in existence for 10½ years so it would appear that the Garden School in or near Finchley in 1917 marks its foundation.

¹³ *Marylebone Mercury*, 30 Dec & 9 Dec 1916, p 6

had a daughter, Agnes Margaret, aged 3. Charles was described as 'late Technical Superintendent, Colonial Collections, Imperial Institute' although in 1901 he had been a tutor in a private school and in 1891 a botanical student. By 1921, as we have seen, he had switched to an occupation which conformed to his wife's. He died on 15 January 1938 at Watlington Hospital, with his address given as Withurst, Lane End, High Wycombe. Mrs Nicholls was still at the same address when she died on 4 September 1962. Their daughter Agnes Margaret, known as Poppy, appeared in the 1921 census as a pupil at the school and by 1939 was a teacher of eurhythmics and pianoforte. She continued to live at Withurst until her death on 7 February 1994.

A considerable archive collection is kept at the Institute of Education covering the activities of Mrs Nicholls and her two sisters who were both teachers.¹⁴ This includes the information that Winnie Nicholls 'worked for two years for the London University matriculation but gave up her studies when her father died. She worked as a private governess (1888-1892) and then as form mistress at Kensington High School (1892-1901). During this period she trained in elocution at the Guildhall School of Music, and between 1901 and 1917 she taught elocution and history of art at various local schools including St Margaret's, Harrow, Kensington High School (up to 1909), Putney High School, Croydon High School and Leinster House School. In 1916-17 she founded and was Head of The Garden School, which was based on principles of love, freedom, brotherhood, cooperation and service.....She retired in 1937, though the school continued for another 10 years. She was also heavily involved with the New Education Fellowship, which held conferences at the Garden School.'¹⁵

The Garden School *Bulletin* [Autumn Term 1934, p 4] recorded the death on 6 January 1935 of Mrs Nicholl's sister, Mary Louisa White, who for 14 years had been Senior Music Mistress at the school and had invented the 'Letterless Method of Pianoforte Teaching for Beginners'. 'Music by ML White' was published in 1935 by Joseph Williams.

Margaret Alice Ormrod, who was also later well known to Kathleen, had been a student at Whitelands Training College, Chelsea, and taught in several council schools before moving to the Garden School, Finchley Road, in 1920. She did a further four years at Millbridge Council School, Liversedge, before becoming Vice-Principal of the Garden School in High Wycombe in 1929. She appears in the 1921 census as a widow. On 24 August 1914, 20 days after Britain declared war, Margaret Alice Cooper married George Ormrod at St John's Church, Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, by banns. This was the town where Mrs Ormrod had been born and her address on marriage was given as Marsh House, Cleckheaton. Her father, Frederick Cooper, was a journalist.

George Ormrod was also a teacher and had a post at Brighton Grammar School, following experience at Hertford Grammar School, where he can be found in 1911 living at Bayley Hall (acquired for the school in 1900). He became Private Ormrod 4203 in the 5th Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, a territorial battalion. The number suggests that he joined around June 1916.¹⁶ Mrs Ormrod's Teachers' Registration Council card notes that she worked up until 1914 at Whitcliffe Road Council School in Cleckheaton and there is then a gap until she joined the Garden School. The reverse of George Ormrod's medal card [below] previously gave an address in Maidstone for his widow.

¹⁴ I would like to thank the archivist, Jessica Womack, for making the parts of this collection which were relevant to the Garden School available to me.

¹⁵ <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/51447759-b7ed-3cb0-b6de-44402bac9dfb>

¹⁶ <https://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.com/2009/05/royal-sussex-regiment-5th-cinque-ports.html>



George Ormrod was the only master from Maidstone Grammar to be killed in WW1 and is commemorated by a plaque in the staffroom reading 'Sic itur ad astra' [thus one goes to the stars].¹⁷ He gained rapid promotion to 2nd Lieutenant on 5 August 1916. As a full Lieutenant he had the horrible misfortune to be killed in action on 19 September 1918 just a few weeks before the war ended.¹⁸

It is clear from an article written by Mrs Nicholls on 'Art at the Garden School' in *Education for the New Era*, 1922, p 85¹⁹ that art held pride of place. When they moved to Ballinger in January 1921, a large studio had been immediately established in a barn. This she described as 'the heart of the school – its atmosphere vibrates with creative energy.' The school had a Montessori class and had made overalls to send to the equivalent class in Vienna. In 1928 Miss MLV Hughes BA of the Garden School, Lane End, would be a delegate at the Geneva Preliminary Meeting of the Universal Religious Peace Conference in Geneva.

The 1921 census gives some detail of staffing and pupils at Ballinger, although only for the boarders. Mr Charles Nicholls was the games master, Margaret Ormrod taught English, as did Albert J Graver whose wife was assistant matron. Gabrielle L'Honoré, from Nantes, taught French.

Albert James Graver had been born in Norwich in 1890 and in 1911 had been employed at a school in Forest Gate, London, as a teacher of Music. Florence Kate Dyer was born on 1 January 1888 and baptised on 18 March at All Saints, West Ham, the daughter of Walter Dyer, manager of a silk mill. In 1911 she was still at home at 66 Dacre Road, Plaistow, and working as a shorthand typist. She and Albert married early in 1916 in the Romford Registration District and their son, Kenneth William Rene Graver, was born two years later in the West Ham area. Albert Graver's index card for the Teachers' Registration Council shows that he did military service from 1917 to 1918. It is impossible to be sure since his attestation papers have not survived but it seems that he may have been Private no 203849 with the 1/4 Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment, invalided out with a Silver War Badge on 4

¹⁷ <https://www.mgs.kent.sch.uk/about-us/our-history/mgs-and-war/>

A more detailed biography with a photograph can be found on the Oldham Hulme Grammar School webpage <https://www.ohgs.co.uk/ArchiveWebPages/ww1/ww1boys.html>

He is also commemorated in Chichester Cathedral and in the chapel of Kings College London <https://kingscollections.org/warmemorials/kings-college/memorials/ormrod-george>

<https://kingscollections.org/warmemorials/kings-college/memorials/ormrod-george>

See also his file at The National Archives WO 372/15/61872

¹⁸ He was reported missing in *The Times* of 8 Oct 1918 p 3, then killed on p 4, 18 Oct 1918.

¹⁹ <https://archive.org/details/IOETNE002/page/84/mode/2up?q=garden>

September 1918, aged 28. He and his wife appear in the electoral rolls for Crawley, Surrey, in 1919, living at Long Park.

The Gravers did not stay with the Garden School but moved to Amersham where they ran the Turret School, a Prep and Kindergarten establishment in Station Road. The electoral registers show them in Ballinger for the year 1927 and at Turret House, Amersham, the following year. In 1939 they are living there with Walter Dyer, Kate's father. The Amersham Museum has recorded some reminiscences of former pupils:

'With the storm clouds [of war] thus gathered, I graduated from the Turret kindergarten in Station Road where I had won the Bucks prize for hand writing, and distinguished myself on the Triangle. At the Turret it was the custom that before sitting down to begin the day, we were lined - up round the walls, holding our little white hankies before us, like a line of washing, to be sprayed with T.C.P. by Mrs. Graver with her Flitt-gun; she having a 'thing' about germs!'²⁰

The oldest boarder at Ballinger Grange was 18, another 17, two were 16 and one 15. Most numerous were those in the age-group below: three aged 14, five 13 and four 12. Below that came one 10 year-old, two aged 9 and three aged 8, plus a lone 6 year-old. The youngest pupil was Kenneth Grover, 3, who was presumably living with his parents. Apart from Kenneth the census lists 24 girl boarders. Predominantly they came from the London area, but Lancashire, Yorkshire, Berkshire, Kent and Sussex also featured. The international flavour came from the four Necessian sisters – one born in Turkey, the others in Russia - plus a Dutch girl born in Austria and one from New Zealand. So roughly a quarter of the boarders were born abroad. Others may well have had parents who were working abroad.

On the domestic side, as well as the Matron and Assistant Matron, a cook/housekeeper was employed, plus a parlourmaid, housemaid and a gardener/chauffeur.

The school was praised in an international survey which led to a report in *The New Era*, 'Freedom Through Environment' in 1927:

'Ballinger Grange....This school sent in one of the best of the exhibits of work in creative self-expression. Mrs Nicholls said that Freedom was one of the five ideals adopted, the others being Love, Brotherhood, Co-operation and Service. She showed how these ideals were presented to the children in various pictorial and symbolic ways, so that even the youngest might understand. The measure of freedom in the school was not constant, but varied with the capacity of individuals. One of the great works of the school was to teach the child to discriminate between the real self and the outward personality, the essential factor in education being the training of the will to respond to inner guidance.'²¹

Putting together the various dates, it looks as though the move to bigger premises in Lane End took place early in 1928 and Kathleen's appointment may have been part of this expansion. Local historian Mike Dewey gives the date as December 1927. ²²

²⁰ <http://www.amersham.org.uk/memories/1940.htm>. Reminiscences of Bob Stonnel. Ray Wainwright identifies the house and tells us it was a Prep School <https://amershammuseum.org/history/metro-land-exhibition/recorded-memories/housing/>

²¹ *The New Era*, Vol 8, 1927, p167

²² 'Looking Back at the History of Lane End Conference Centre', *Bucks Free Press*, 15 Nov 2019. See <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/18040431.looking-back-history-lane-end-conference-centre/>

KATHLEEN AND THE GARDEN SCHOOL, LANE END, (1928-1947)

THE GARDEN SCHOOL, BALLINGER, GREAT MISSENDEN, BUCKS.,
removed at Christmas to much larger premises at
WYCOMBE COURT, LANE END, BUCKS
(Girls up to 18 years and little boys).



Wycombe Court, Lane End

When previously offered for sale in September 1924 Wycombe Court was described as a 'singularly choice freehold property in a glorious position, 550 ft up, with lovely views' with 'central heating, electric light, a passenger lift, and good drainage; a garage, stabling, lodge and two cottages, beautiful gardens and parkland, in all over 61 acres'. The 61 acres would be mentioned frequently in the school's advertising.

It was purchased by Katherine Emma Adams for £10,000, "£2,000 of which she raised, and the remainder was left on mortgage". She "took Wycombe Court with the object of running a dairy business there and also making it a holiday resort for visitors from the North". However she had to file for Bankruptcy in April 1926, resulting in Wycombe Court coming back onto the market. It was then purchased by The Garden School of Gt Missenden, who took over their new home "of much larger premises" in December 1927.²³

In fact the move took place a week later than scheduled because the weather was so bad. At least that meant that when they finally arrived on 24 January the sun was shining.²⁴ Further frustrations were in store as they waited for the Lyceum, the classroom block, to be completed.

²³ Mike Dewey, *Bucks Free Press*, 16 Nov 2019. See <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/18040431.looking-back-history-lane-end-conference-centre/>
Also *Bucks Advertiser*, 19 June 1926 p 2

²⁴ *Bulletin*, Spring Term 1928, p 1. Institute of Education archive

At around this time an advert appeared: 'Happy, busy life at the Garden School, Wycombe Court, Lane End, Bucks. Ideals: Love, Freedom, Brotherhood, Cooperation, Service. Training of individual gifts. Creative work encouraged in all branches of school activity. — Apply Principal.'²⁵

Soon afterwards a substantial article was published in *The New Era* describing the advantages of the house and grounds, where the new block of classrooms known as The Lyceum had been opened just after Easter 1928. To allay the anxieties of prospective parents of the school who might wonder how well the new methods of education would prepare their daughters for later life and possible careers, a long list of university entrants, art students and girls embarking on a wide variety of employment is supplied and looks very creditable for a school that had only been founded about 10 years previously.²⁶



The Garden School, December, 1929
Kathleen is seated, just off-centre to the right, wearing a pale collar and a jumper.

Mrs Ormrod was offered and accepted the post of Co-Principal in 1933.²⁷

The motto of the Garden School was 'Obey the Highest: Love the Best'. An advert in 1937 described it as a 'Boarding School for girls aged 8-14. Estate of 61 acres in lovely part of Chiltern Hills, 550 feet above sea level. Balanced education on free, individual lines, with scope for initiative and creative self-expression in all subjects. Large staff of Graduates. Ordinary curriculum includes elocution, art, crafts, singing, dancing, eurythmics, games, swimming. Lessons out of doors when possible. Open-air

²⁵ *Foreign Affairs*, Vols 9-10, 1927, p 224. This was a journal published in the USA in succession to the *Journal of International Relationships* and may reflect the school's desire to attract pupils from abroad.

²⁶ *The New Era*, Vol 9, 1928, p 118. See <https://archive.org/details/IOETNE008/page/118/mode/2up?view=theater> or https://digital-collections.ucl.ac.uk/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1668617261300~105&usePid1=true&usePid2=true. An account of the school was published six years later in Trevor Blewitt's *The Modern Schools Handbook* alongside other schools such as Bedales and Summerhill which are still in being.

²⁷ *The Bulletin*, Summer Term, 1933, p 4. She had perhaps been away from the school as the Bulletin for the Summer term of 1929 notes the welcome return of 'Owaissa'.

swimming pool. Fees £120-£150 per year, according to age on admission.’²⁸ A vegetarian diet was also available.

1937 was also the year in which Mrs Nicholls, a member of the New Education Fellowship, was invited to address former students of the Maria Grey Training College in London. Taking ‘The New Education’ as her title, she laid out in considerable detail the principles on which the school functioned and how they worked out in practice. The teachers were known as Advisers and the experience of one may also have applied to Kathleen:

‘The first thing remarked by a member of staff on coming to The Garden School is the lack of any formality in the relations of children to staff. Titles are soon dropped and promotion to a nickname is a sure sign that mutual relations between Advisers and advised have become correct from the point of view of the school. The children are encouraged to express opinions and to have views about everything which comes within their experience.

When a member of staff is on duty at weekends her aim is to be within call of the children but not to attempt the management of their games or occupations so long as these are running smoothly. In practice her duties are centred on the difficult few: the others can be trusted to occupy themselves happily and profitably during a whole weekend.

Looking after the less controlled children consists in encouraging them to embark on jobs which will tend to develop their self-control rather than in constantly supervising them.’

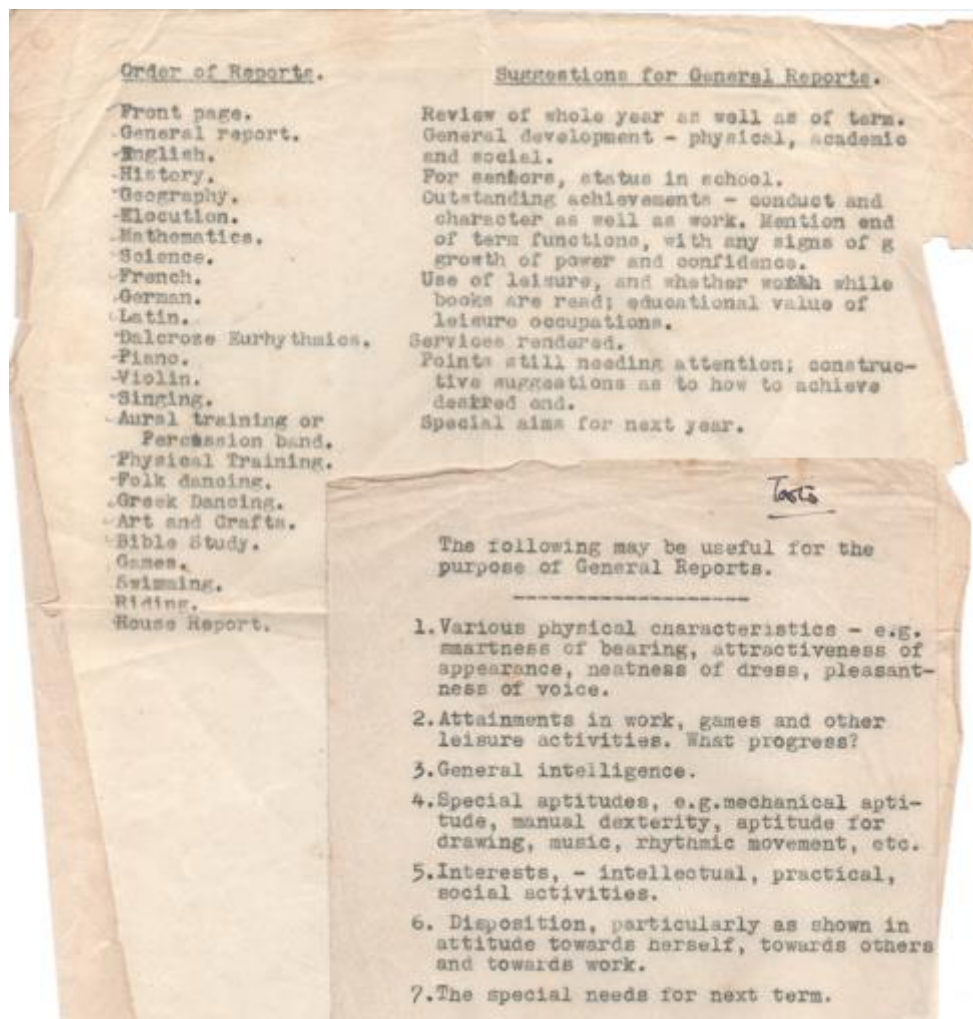
The Science Adviser was happy to pursue whatever question of interest came up. Groups were allowed a vote on what they would work on and any who dissented were allowed to pursue topics of their own choice.



A Science lesson in progress outside the Lyceum c1934

²⁸ *The New Statesman and Nation*, Vol 13, 1937, p 32

Mrs Nicholls emphasised the importance of eliminating fear and of having adults and children join in the same activities, as would happen within a family. Kathleen often reminisced that girls were not expected to stand up and be silent when a figure of authority entered the room, as was the norm in most schools, but to continue with their activities.



Copies of cribs supplied to Toots for producing end of term reports

The headings shown above to help with writing end of term reports imply that much more observation and effort would have gone into these compared with many schools which would limit information to marks gained in class and exams plus a succinct comment.

In 1934 as no 4 in the series 'Schools that are Different' and under the title 'Building a New English Race' an extensive description of activities within the school appeared in the *Daily News*.²⁹ Speech Day, like the school magazine, featured contributions from every single pupil at the school. Poetry, music and dance predominated and the reporter was struck by how traditional barriers between subjects had been broken down, with studies on the French Revolution resulting in a ballet and the Monmouth Rebellion a play. He noted the aim on eliminating fear. To this end no marks or prizes are awarded. Each girl proceeds at her own pace without comparisons being made. Much of the childrens' life was spent outdoors, with meals and study in the open air, camping out at night, and bare-legged and barefoot children running about freely. The uniform was a simple green tunic. 'I have never seen children who look healthier or sturdier or who move with more grace or who have a

²⁹ Written by JL Hodson, *Daily News*, 23 July 1934, p 6

franker look in their eyes' was his comment. Discipline was partly maintained by an elected committee of girls: 'a "wiggling" from the committee is said to be more disliked than one from the headmistress'. The easy mixing of girls of different ethnicity is also praised as preparation for a 'new world'.



The Committee 1934-5
A. Birch, A Layton, J Bradley, S Iyengar, P Koo

Pupils were engaged on producing a colouring book to help introduce younger children to the ideals of the League of Nations.³⁰

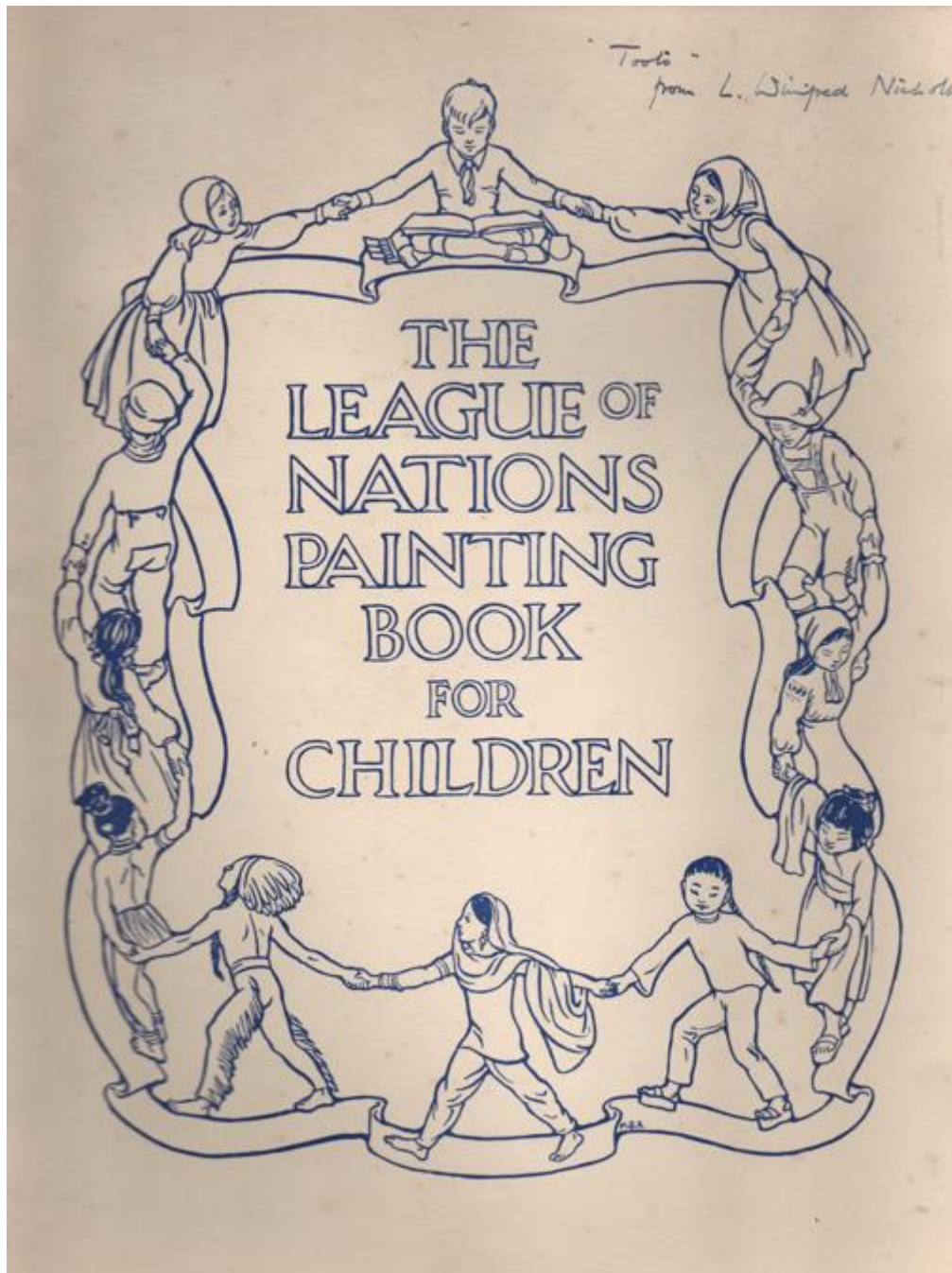
Mrs Ormrod explained that the Garden School was producing girls 'remarkable for their originality, poise, capacity to hold their own in public and in ability to rise to an emergency'.

Every term plays were put on in French, German and Latin. Mr Hodson saw a play in Latin being rehearsed by the Lily Pond and it is likely that Kathleen had contributed to this particular endeavour. Various editions of *The Bulletin* refer to recitations, an ode of Horace being sung and a play about King Midas being performed [Summer Term, 1934, p 4].

It would be wrong to give the impression that life at the Garden School was entirely free-wheeling. Once a girl had chosen a subject she was expected to stick at it and for the last two years girls preparing to take examinations for the Certificate of Education had a clear syllabus to follow. Before that girls were encouraged to follow up what interested them and, as we have already seen, many projects were pursued in an inter-disciplinary manner. How this might work in practice was

³⁰ *The Bulletin*, Summer Term 1934, p 2, notes that this has been published and a copy presented to the Queen, who sent a note of thanks. Profits from the first 10,000 copies were to go to the League, and thereafter would be split 50:50 between the League and The Garden School's Bursary Fund. By the Autumn Term orders for it had been received from Canada, Ireland, Holland and France and apparent had translated it into Dutch for his children. The drawings were the work of Paddy Bradley, Patsy Abercrombie, Audrey Birch, Jean Hayes, Mary Paterson and their Art Adviser Marjorie B Alexander.

illustrated by Mrs Nicholls: 'I passed the Science Room one day and through the windows saw a group of children, watching with breathless eagerness the movements and habits of the water-tiger. A quarter-of-an-hour later I went into the same room and found them and their Adviser discussing, with equal fervour and intensity of interest, the conditions of human life in a London slum.'³¹ The Garden School's project-based approach to the teaching of History was also picked out for mention by Olive Estil Shropshire in *The Teaching of History in English Schools*.³²



On the last page is a verse by MLV Hughes:

I vow to every country

³¹ See note 27, pp 11-12

³² Published by the Teachers' College, University of Columbia, 1936, as no 671 in the series 'Contributions to Education'. See p 91. Reprinted 1972.

My science and my skill,
My sense of truth and justice,
My friendship and goodwill;
I greet in every country The glory and the grace;
In all earth's saints I worship
The image of God's face.
O fellowship of free men!
O choirs of all the world!
Sing, sing aloud, beholding
God's flag of peace unfurl'd

A note in Kathleen's hand adds: "Hugh", a Quaker, was on the Garden School staff from 1928. She had previously been at the Mount School, York. She composed this stanza to fit between the 2 stanzas of Cecil Spring Rice's "I vow to thee my country". We asked widow Spring Rice whether it could be put in print there but she did not wish it so we had a typed "insert" which also found its way into some Unitarian hymn books at KT's instigation.'



Staff of the Garden School in 1932. Kathleen is standing, third from left.

UCL Special Collections, White Family Papers WF/4/252,
by kind permission of the Institute of Education

Mabel Lawson Violet Hughes was born in 1879 the daughter of an Anglican clergyman. She read Classics at Somerville College, Oxford, matriculating in 1897. In 1911 she was in Sunderland, where she taught at the Bede Collegiate Girls School and wrote the school song, with its refrain 'After darkness, light'. She is also remembered for another poem, 'Night'³³ and in 1915 published *Citizens To Be: A Social Study of Health, Wisdom and Goodness, with Special Reference to Elementary Schools*, followed in 1932 by *Everyman's Testament of Beauty, a Study in the Testament of Beauty by Robert Bridges*. In the 1939 Register she is described as a social worker and is living with her sisters in Hambledon, Surrey. She died in 1955 in the Darlington Registration District.



Kathleen, second from left, outside The Lyceum

It is unfortunate that one of the few personal reminiscences of the Garden School comes from a girl who was deeply unhappy there and longed for the firmer boundaries set by most schools at the time. She left after a term. Penelope Mortimer née Fletcher, born in 1918, wrote of her experiences there in her autobiography *About Time, An Aspect of Autobiography*, Chapter 8, p 119-120:

'There was also the Garden School, Lane End, near High Wycombe, Bucks, to look forward to; and, although I didn't know it then, my first experience of prolonged distress. I'm sure the Garden School meant well. It was, at that time, the wrong place for me. At the age of eleven, in spite of my poetry and prancing and carrying on, I was as firm a Wesleyan, at heart, as my father. The New School, for all its outlandish beliefs, had been domestic and tranquil as a nursery; at Blencathra, table-manners and genteel courtesies hadn't been too hard to learn. When I found myself in a place where the convention was to be 'free' and artistic and troublesome, where

³³ <http://www.durham-images.org/public/bsm/tob1955/files/assets/common/downloads/page0008.pdf> and https://dvpp.uvic.ca/poems/atalanta/1897/pom_2417_night.html

everyone else was 'difficult' – and probably selfish and ungrateful as well – I didn't know what to do; I was lost.

As I wasn't required to go to lessons, I wandered round among the mangy rabbits and cats for a few weeks, the mud (it was a wet summer, and fashionable to go barefoot) squelching between my toes. After that, for shelter, I crept into whatever class I could find, whether it was seventeen-year-olds studying comparative religion or five-year-olds pounding clay. Rabindranath Tagore visited and, since I was passing, blessed me. It didn't do any good. A'Lelia, the pretty daughter of a famous black entertainer called Layton,³⁴ shared my dormitory with about six other girls and two snoring spaniels. A'Lelia played her father's records late into the night, when I knew perfectly well I should be tucked up and asleep. I desperately wanted to be cared for, and to have somebody to tell me that I was full of sin.

I was probably bored for the first time in my life. I wrote passionate letters to my parents insisting that I wanted to work, to learn something, to be useful. I said I wanted to be like my brother, and be educated..... But they [my parents] came to visit me, and may have had plaintive conversations with the headmistress; when they left, I cried, it seemed, for the rest of the term.'

A little further on (p 127) she used the phrase 'relieved of the awful responsibilities of the Garden School', perhaps meaning that in order to flourish in such an environment, girls had to take responsibility for their own lives, something she was not ready to do.

Kathleen was known as Toots and this salutation was used on a postcard sent to her by one of the girls. The 1939 Register lists her at TGS and describes as a teacher of Mathematics and Latin. She also taught PE and had wide-ranging interests in literature and history, so as a teacher must have been very versatile.



The Register gives details of the staff living at Wycombe Court but there may have been others working part-time who were not resident. Mrs Ormrod was assisted by Katherine J Wright, the Matron, then aged 44, and Esther Dorothy Farnell who was both secretary and housekeeper. She appears to have been born on 21 March 1908 in West Hartlepool. In 1911, after the death of her father, she was with her grandfather, William Davison Pearson, a railwayman living in West Hartlepool.

³⁴ The *Bulletin*, Spring Term 1935, p 1, records that A'Lelia Layton had been elected a member of the School Committee and adds 'These five girls represented four different races.' She was the daughter of John Turner Layton (1894-1978). A'Lelia Shirley, as she became, died in 2001, leaving the copyright and royalties on her father's music to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.

Elizabeth Alice Hacker was a part-time teacher. Her birth-date, 17 September 1889, matches that in the death register for 1973, when she was living at Old Gardens, Kersey, Ipswich, but no further details of her career have yet come to light.

Muriel Joyce Brittain, who taught History and English, was born on 17 December 1911 in Wandsworth. She was baptised on 28 January 1912 at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Lambeth, the daughter of Duncan J and Elizabeth née Ogg of 12 Rudloe Road. The 1911 census shows that they already had two daughters and a son and that Duncan James Brittain was a clerk working for East India Merchants. The couple had married 16 years previously in Manhattan, USA. By 1933 the family home had moved to 9 Poynders Road, Clapham. The 1939 Register lists her father was a coding and decoding expert (retired). Her older brother, Robert Arthur, a Lance Corporal in the Tank Corps, was killed in Egypt on 22 November 1941. She later lived at 16 Tabor Court, Cheam, Surrey, and when she died on 24 June 1989 was buried in her parents' and sisters' grave at Streatham Cemetery.

Elizabeth Maria Horne, responsible for Science and Geography, was born on 10 November 1914 and baptised on 20 December at Christ Church, Streatham Hill, the daughter of Annie and Arthur Clarke Horne, a coal factor, of 38 Kingsmead Road.

Katherine Ethel McPherson was in charge of Physical Training. She was born on 13 Jan 1915 in Hong Kong, the daughter of John Livingstone McPherson, a Canadian, and Gertrude Briggs. In 1922 her mother sailed from Hong Kong with her three daughters Elizabeth, Katherine and Marjorie to England aboard the SS *Teiresias*, with their destination given as Pembury, Kent. The same voyage was repeated in August/September 1925 aboard the *Patroclus*. But in April Elizabeth and Katherine sailed unaccompanied on the SS *Cathay*, having come aboard at Gibraltar. Also heading for Lane End on the same ship were Lois Couldrey, mentioned below, and another girl of the same age, 'Pahela' [Pamela] J Wilcox, 16. Possibly they had spent the holiday together.³⁵ She taught PE at Fairfield Court, Eastbourne, before joining the staff of the Garden School in the Autumn of 1936 responsible for Physical Training, Greek, Folk and ballroom Dancing and Games.³⁶ The *Bulletin* for the Autumn term 1940 mentions Katherine twice, on p 4 and p 5. 'Presentation — Katherine McPherson, an old pupil of the school who has been on the staff as teacher of Games, Dancing, Swimming and Physical Exercises, resigned her post in view of her forthcoming marriage, and was presented with a beautiful dressing set, subscribed for by the pupils. She had other gifts from the Principal and Staff.' 'Katherine McPherson was married at Maidstone on April 18, to Dennis Fulham.' Her father, who had worked as Organising Secretary for the International Committee of the YMCA North America, died in 1947 and was buried in Tunbridge Wells Cemetery. Katherine returned to Ontario and died there at Woodstock in 2002. Her story is a reminder of the international character of the Garden School and other boarding establishments at the time.

Verona Mary Digby was in charge of the Kindergarten. Born on 2 Aug 1915, she was baptised on 10 Oct 1915 at St Mark's church, Harlesden, Brent, the daughter of Mary McGregor and Vernon Halifax Digby, a gold refiner, of 153 Holloway Road. In 1947 she married Norman Keith Rose and moved to Sundown Avenue, Sanderstead, Surrey.

Lois Bladworth Couldrey was the languages specialist, teaching French and German. She was born on the 11 Aug 1915 at 526 Newbury St, Boston, Massachusetts³⁷ and had two brothers. Her father, Paul

³⁵ There are a number of references to the three girls in the *Bulletins* of 1931, Lois and Pamela being Captain and Vice-Captain of Games, Katherine and Pamela Captain and Vice-Captain of Cricket.

³⁶ *Bulletin* Summer term 1935, p 4, and Autumn Term 1936 p 4. The *Bulletin* also mentions her sister Elizabeth who did Philosophy at London University and held a one-year fellowship at Yale.

³⁷ According to the record, which can be seen on Familysearch, her mother had been born in Sound Bay, Connecticut, and her father in Liverpool. See <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9JK-J9FQ?i=600&cc=2061550&personUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AQ2Q2-79P3>

Sydney Couldrey was a mining engineer. When she was two he enlisted in the Royal Engineers and served until February 1919 when he was demobbed with his papers stamped 'malarial case'. Aged 14 she was put aboard the SS *Malwa*, due to dock at Gravesend on 20 September 1929, on her way from Gibraltar to the Garden School. The manifest shows a number of unaccompanied girls bound for boarding schools, so perhaps parents were able to make arrangements with P&O for their safe conveyance. She made the same voyage aboard the *Kaisar-i-Hind*, arriving on 16 January 1931 and the *Cathay*, arriving on 1 May 1931. In 1926, aged 11, she had travelled with her older brother but her destination is not stated. Travelling so much may have stimulated her interest in languages. At the end of the Summer Term 1931 she left to study in Switzerland and was later said to be at school in Chexbres near Vevey. In 1934 having been offered a place at Oxford University and spent the summer in Germany.³⁸ She was another Old Girl returning to teach at TGS. After the war she lived in the areas of Plaistow and Bromley and died on 3 February 2009 in Sevenoaks, Kent.

By the end of 1940 the school was adapting to wartime conditions. Girls whose parents wanted them out of London had swelled the number of boarders and the number of day-pupils increased. Both a nursery class, run on Montessori lines, and a Kindergarten class led by a Froebel-trained teacher were needed. The youngest boarders were two boys aged 4. Much work had to be done blacking out the windows and on four nights during the Autumn term they had had to go into the shelter but no bombs exploded nearer than three miles away. Much effort went into knitting comforts for the troops. In the following term they learnt how to defuse incendiary bombs and collected money for the Spitfire Fund.

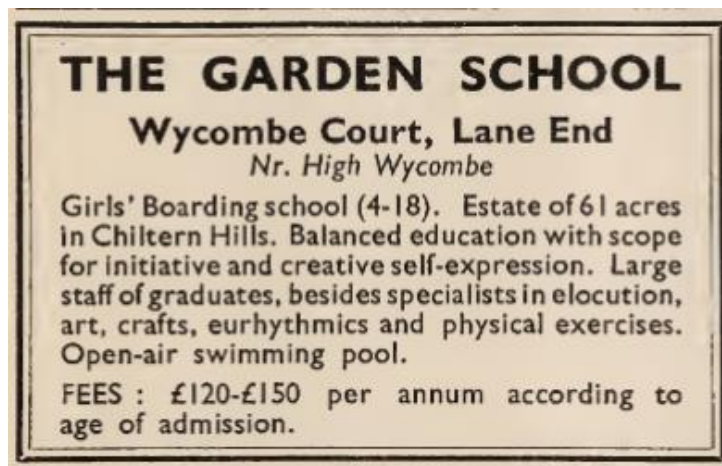
News of Old Girls showed many taking up new roles including one who was a Staff Commandant in the Women's Mechanised Transport Corps. Joy Muntz, whose interest in flying led her to become the first woman director of an aircraft company and to run, with her husband Frank Davison, Utility Airways, a firm based in Cheshire specialising in aerial photography, was reported to have been killed while training with the Air Transport Auxiliary.³⁹ She had been born in Toronto on 14 March 1910 and obtained her pilot's licence as Elsie Joy Muntz in 1930 at the London Aeroplane Club. The 1939 Register shows that she had divorced and was living with other members of her family in East Chaldon, Dorset, and was a commercial pilot. Few women held the Air Ministry's Commercial 'B' Licence.⁴⁰ The accident happened at Upavon, Wiltshire, on 8 July 1940 and she was killed instantly. She was thought to be the first woman pilot killed on active service.⁴¹

³⁸ *Bulletin*, Summer Term 1931, p 3, Spring Term 1932 p 4 and Spring Term 1934 p 4

³⁹ *Bulletin*, Spring term 1940, p 2

⁴⁰ *Gloucestershire Echo*, 13 July 1940 p 4

⁴¹ *Liverpool Echo*, 13 July 1940, p 4. For a portrait see the National Portrait Gallery: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp55034/elsie-joy-davison-nee-muntz>, where it is stated that she was one of the original eight women who joined the ATA. The accident was later attributed to carbon monoxide fumes. See also <http://www.magnificentwomen.co.uk/engineer-of-the-week/58-joy-mutz-mrs-davidson>



By 1943 it was difficult to find enough domestic staff to keep the school running so teachers and the older pupils pitched in, serving food and cleaning classrooms and dormitories. A secondhand uniform shop had been set up but demand was outstripping supply. Compasses and other mathematical instruments were also needed.

For the summer term of 1945 the *Bulletin* was able to report that the end of the war had been celebrated and a Parents' Day held for the first time in four years, although on a much reduced scale. For this Miss Tootill organised an exhibition of swimming and some of the progress of the hockey teams was also attributed to her.

Mr Hodson, the reporter mentioned earlier, had commented rather optimistically: 'At length the children are free from the damnable heritage of the last war. How infinite would be the tragedy of another that laid this new generation waste!'⁴² Sadly despite all the hopes and the efforts to build friendships between people of different nations, another war had come and gone. In August 1946 the school was larger than it had been, catering for 56 boarders and 50 day pupils.⁴³ It was advertising abroad, particularly in the USA, to attract new pupils.⁴⁴ The Garden School advertising in 1947 put the emphasis firmly on academic achievement and can be contrasted with the more fulsome 1941 equivalent shown above.⁴⁵

⁴² *Daily News*, 23 July 1934, p 6

⁴³ Advertisement for housekeeper, *Western Gazette* of 30 Aug 1946 p4

⁴⁴ It was listed in the *Handbook of American Private Schools*, Vol 30, 1947, p709

⁴⁵ *The New Era*, Dec 1947, p 194

THE GARDEN SCHOOL

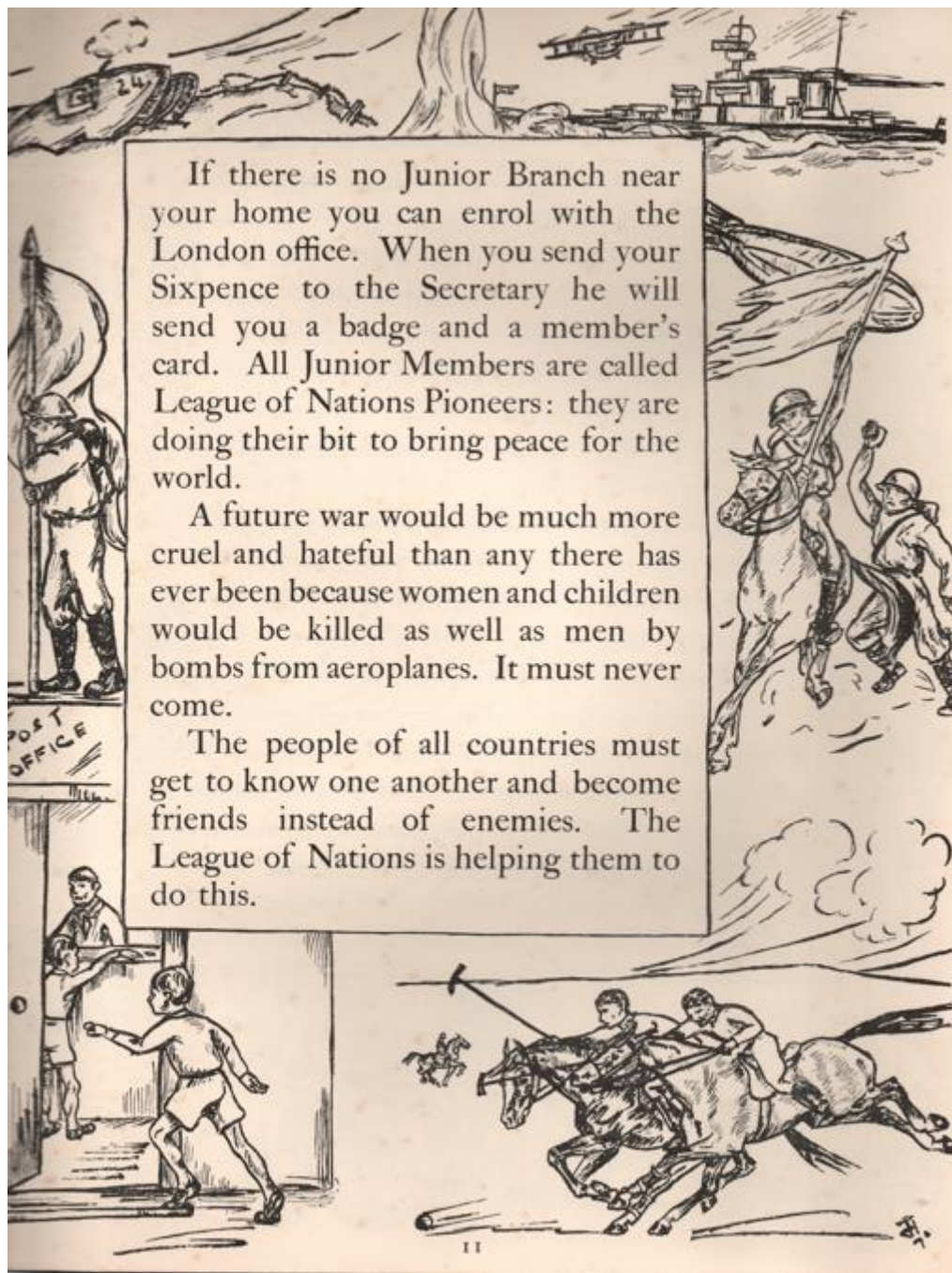
Wycombe Court, Lane End

Nr. High Wycombe.

Boarding School for girls (4-18). Estate of 60 acres in the Chiltern Hills. Sound academic work, with consideration for individual needs. Large staff of graduates. Vegetarian and ordinary diet. Open-air swimming pool.

FEES : £130 to £175 per annum.

Principal : Mrs. M. A. ORMROD, B.A.



Immediately after the war almost everything was in short supply, food was still rationed and domestic staff hard to find. Families forced apart by the war were being reunited and this may have led to the withdrawal of some boarders. Taxation had reached record levels and many families who might have aspired to send their offspring to boarding schools saved money by not doing so, or by sending daughters to private day-schools.

Glimpses of what Kathleen contributed to the school are not easy to find in the *Bulletin*, which was mainly devoted to the pupils' achievements. For the Spring Term 1930 it noted a marked improvement in the standard of the Latin play and that hockey had become much more scientific. Both of these may owe something to Kathleen.

In the summer of 1932 she contributed a lump of lava from Vesuvius to the School Museum. She took some of the Sunday services in the school, which fitted in with her role as a Unitarian preacher,

and in Spring 1938 gave a lantern lecture on 'Town Planning'. This was followed in 1944 by a lecture on hockey and in 1945 by one on Czechoslovakia. By the summer of 1944 the school had grown so large that extra activities had to be laid on at weekends. The 'Ship Project' was launched: 'Miss Tootill took the first week with a talk on the displacement of water, the density of salt and fresh water, the safe loading line, Lloyds Register and some of the chief parts of a ship. She then demonstrated the building of her own canoe and showed the use of various knots'.

This disproves the idea that it was only in 1947 that she took up canoeing and in fact she took photographs of some Garden School girls plus possibly Mrs Ormrod who visited Lulworth Cottage during half-term in June 1939. Other photos taken there the previous year show a double-seater canoe with a mast and lugsail in use at Lulworth.



In 1947 the Garden School came under new ownership. *The Bulletin* covering the Autumn Term of 1946 and the Spring and Summer Terms of 1947 announced under 'Changes' the retirement of both Mrs Ormrod and Kathleen:

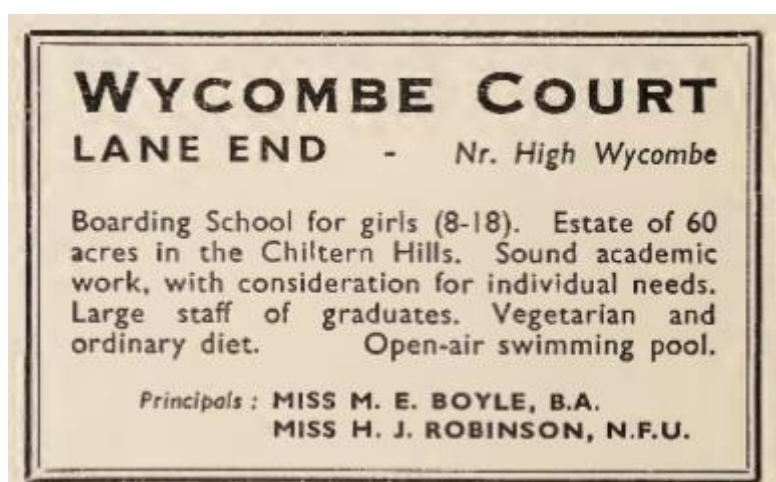
'By the time this Bulletin reaches its readers, the school will have changed hands. The strain of the war and post-war years brought Mrs Ormrod to a state of nervous exhaustion and she was advised to give up her work at Easter. So sudden a departure was impossible, but the Directors were extremely fortunate in finding Miss ME Boyle, BA (Hons, Lond.) and Miss HF Robinson, NFU,⁴⁶ who were looking for a school of our type which they might take over for the Autumn. The two ladies have accordingly become Co-Principals of the School and it is hoped and believed that the school will flourish, and be a

⁴⁶ National Froebel Union. For more information see https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/froebel_society.htm

very happy place under their direction. It has done thirty years of interesting work, during twenty-seven of which Mrs Ormrod has been connected with it. Miss Kathleen Tootill has retired, too, after nineteen years' excellent service. Both Mrs Ormrod and Miss Tootill have received many gifts in appreciation of their work, from parents, present and former teachers and pupils, and friends of the school.' Two other teachers also left at this juncture.

The school appears to have been renamed Wycombe Court School. Its records from 1949 to 1955 can be found at The National Archives under ED 109/8642/6.

Mrs Nicholls retired in 1937 but remained in the area, living with her daughter Poppy at Withurst, Church Road, Lane End, until her death in September 1962.⁴⁷ The house had been built on the Wycombe Court estate and named after her husband's estate Whithurst Park in West Sussex, where he had run holiday camps for boys. The Manville sisters can be found in 1939 at Rest Haven, Dormans Avenue, Lingfield, Surrey. Julie Sophia died first, on 20 April 1957 and Kate, who had moved to Berkshire, on 2 December 1958. Mrs Ormrod, having seen the school through the war, retired and died aged 88 on 12 October 1978 at 16 Outgaits Close, Hunmanby, near Filey in North Yorkshire. She was the last survivor of the four women who had done so much to shape the Garden School.



New Era 31 1950 p 250

Family members had always understood that Kathleen returned home at her father's behest, but the timing suggests that other factors also may have been involved, particularly as Kathleen had not only been a teacher but also a Director of The Garden School, Ltd. Perhaps the changing situation prompted her father to buy a house, 15 Whalley Road, Hale, which she had not seen, and tell her that it was hers (so that she could look after him).

It seems that Wycombe Court was a different kind of school from The Garden School. Its most famous pupil was Julie Christie, who gained 7 'O' Levels⁴⁸ there. One of her biographers called it a 'sedate' girls' school, an adjective it is hard to imagine anyone selecting for TGS. A much fuller picture emerges from a book by Christine Lee.⁴⁹ After being unhappy at earlier schools and at home, she arrived aged 13 and found everyone, staff and girls, to be 'so lovely, so kind' (p 106). At that time

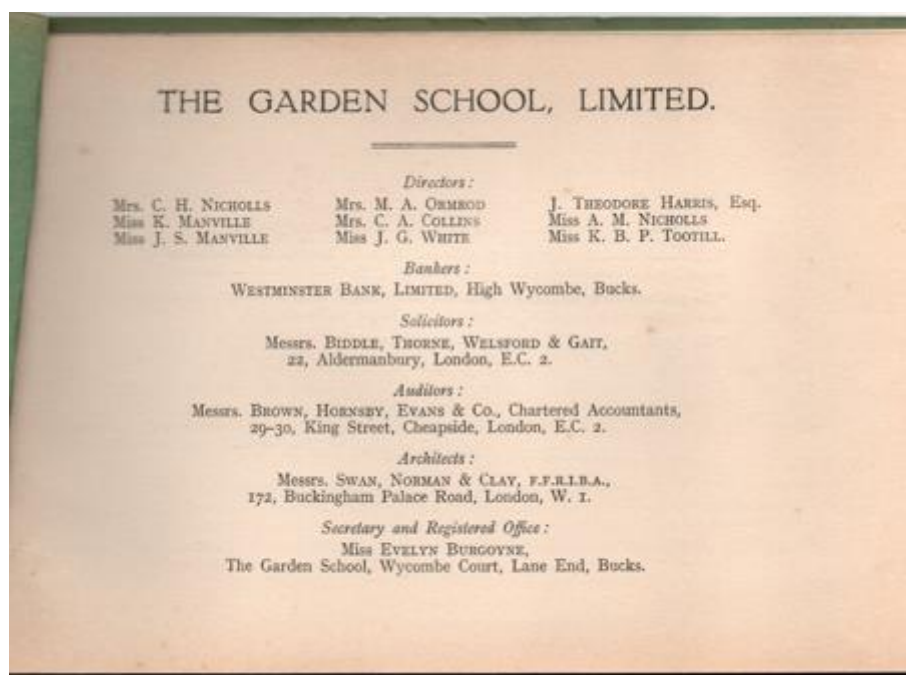
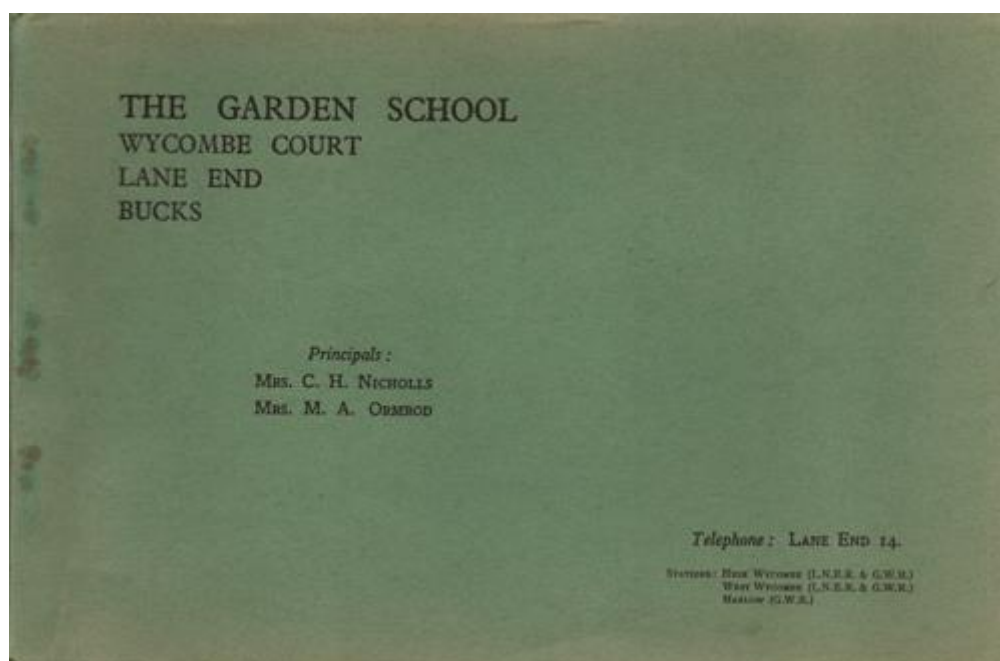
⁴⁷ An obituary was published in *The New Era*, Nov 1962, p 188. See https://digital-collections.ucl.ac.uk/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1669112462739~141&usePid1=true&usePid2=true

⁴⁸ Ordinary Levels replaced School Certificate exams in 1951 for pupils aged around 16

⁴⁹ Christine Lee, *The Midwife's Sister*, 2015, pp 104-111 and 115-116

approximately 150 girls were educated there and it 'was dedicated to teaching the social graces'. They all had deportment lessons and learned how to curtsy but she hated swimming in cold water. She loved English but cannot remember any Science lessons. She left aged 16½, also with 7 'O'Levels but not before she had directed the slightly younger Julie Christie in a play.

Julie Christie had also been asked to leave previous schools so it looks as though two Garden School traditions, helping girls who had not fitted in elsewhere to settle and providing efficient tuition for the Certificate forms, were continuing albeit in a very different atmosphere.



‘What KT did next’ — Life after The Garden School

‘Watkatidid’ was the name of one of Kathleen’s kayaks, one of the two which she built in her dining-room. It had a wooden framework with a canvas cover stretched over it and could be folded down for transport.

It is not quite clear when she took up canoeing again after her initial experience with her uncle Jack’s Rob Roy canoe when she was around 14. It appears that she was a member of the Canoe section of the Camping and Caravanning Club from 1932, later editing their magazine for over 20 years. Photographs dating from around 1935(?) and 1939 show her using a canoe with a lugsail on the sea at Lulworth Cove, Dorset, a particularly scenic part of the coast and of great geological interest. She had a holiday chalet there called ‘The Cottage’, apparently about a mile from Lulworth in the direction of Weymouth, and the photos show her there with her father and mother, with friends and her dog Bunty. Her interest in having the means to get out independently on the water was apparently revived by having a dog stuck on the cliffs. She could hear the dog barking but not see where it was and in desperation had to persuade a stranger to row round and help her retrieve the animal. She became aware at some point that the Caravanning and Camping Club had a canoe section⁵⁰ and the death of her mother in 1941 meant that she had some free time during the school holidays. During the war access to the coast was restricted for civilians and parts of Dorset were used for military training. Lulworth Camp was used for Armoured Vehicle Training⁵¹ and Lulworth Cove housed a Prisoner of War camp.⁵² There were no further references to holidays at The Cottage after the war but Kathleen mentioned bumping into ‘my late soldier tenants at Far Outlook – Sergeants Thackeray and Rufus, newly arrayed in “civvies”’ at Kings Cross station in August 1946. At that point she was carrying with her a large legal document, so perhaps was in the process of selling the property.

One trip in which she took a leading part as a member of the British Canoe Union took place at Whitsuntide, 1944, and was written up with photographs in the *Picture Post* of 17 June 1944.⁵³ A party of 16 set off from Newport Pagnell down the River Ouse. This gives some interesting statistics about the equipment then in use. A single canoe weighed around 50 lbs, a double 70 lbs and camping gear added on average another 20 lbs. First the canoe had to be assembled by bringing together the long rods and cross-frames. These are pushed into each end of the skin and then sprung into position, stretching the canvas tight over the frame. Floorboards, backrests and seats are then fitted into the rigid vessel. One advantage of having built your own canoe is that you know how to mend the frame and patch the canvas. Kathleen was described as the games mistress at the Garden School. While extolling the satisfaction of such a weekend the writer mentions the frustrations of not being able to travel in wartime, not even to Wales or Scotland, let alone the Continent. The article ended by saying that the participants could return home to dream of what to do with their canoes once the war was over. One hazard of wartime expeditions would no longer apply: the only rainproof jackets then available were war surplus camouflage ones which apparently resulted in rumours circulating in Bedfordshire that the canoeists were really German paratroopers.

⁵⁰ In 1950 the Secretary of the North West region of the Canoe Camping Club, Miss H Millner, also lived in Hale and was a fellow Unitarian.

⁵¹ <https://westlulworth.org.uk/timeline/>

⁵² <https://wartimememoriesproject.com/ww2/pow/powcamp.php?pid=2783>

⁵³ Copies of *Picture Post* from 1938 to 1957 have been digitised as part of the Gale collection, <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/picture-post-historical-archive>

According to the Canoe Camping Club's write-up 'in 1946 she rallied the Canoe-Camping Committee to get things moving in post-war Britain'.⁵⁴ Clearly she was already beginning to make her mark in other areas while still at The Garden School.

In 1947 Kathleen and her kayak *Blue Peter* took part in several expeditions. At Easter she went down the Wye soon after the great floods, prefacing her account with a quotation from Horace, 'et descrentis ripas flumina praetereunt' ['the rivers, which are subsiding, flow between the banks'].

A short trip on the Solent from 2-5 August clearly came as something of a respite after what Kathleen described as 'a period crammed with work, shadowed by some anxiety' (presumably in reference to the Garden School). This trip was not without incident as Ted [Edward Dean from Chesham] ended up in the water clinging to his kayak which had sprung a leak and filled with water. He was picked up by *Janeen*, Sir Oliver Simmonds' auxiliary cruiser yacht, signal flags requesting a doctor were run up the mast and a naval surgeon was sent over from the cruiser HMS *Superb*. An ambulance arrived to take Ted to hospital and when the expedition members, having beached the rescued canoe, asked where he was being taken, the ambulance crew answered 'Oh, so you're his friends, are you? It's dead against the regulations to ride in the ambulance....jump in, both of you.'

Later that month she joined 11 others to paddle their small craft from Balloch on Loch Lomond to Inverness, leaving on 3 August 1947 and completing the journey on the 17th, a distance of some 115 miles.



Kathleen in *Blue Peter* is on the left

Kathleen commented that not a single mishap of any consequence had taken place 'even though most of our equipment was old, worn and much patched.' Her approval of high standards also emerged when she recorded that, although they had camped in different locations on 13 nights, the

⁵⁴ <https://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/about-us/club-history/pioneering-women/>

Skipper, Jack Cuthill, having minutely checked for anything left behind, could only claim to have found one small safety pin.

With her days at the Garden School behind her, Kathleen devoted more time to canoeing, taking over as Editor of *The Canoe-Camper* in February 1951, a post she held for 20 years, later serving as Treasurer and as Secretary of the North-West branch of the Club. On becoming Editor she was hailed as 'an enthusiastic canoeist, a daring explorer....a writer who glories in the beauties of our English language.'⁵⁵ At Whitsun 1952 she won the British Canoe Union Ladies Slalom Championships at Builth Wells, having come second the year before at Armathwaite. The family has always understood that she was considered for the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952 but turned the offer down because it would have meant sacrificing too much time.



Competing at Armathwaite

No specialised training or equipment was then available. With the temperature at 40 degrees Fahrenheit [4.5 Celsius] and the water only a little above freezing point Kathleen walked barefoot to her canoe wearing shorts and a bathing-suit covered by a wind-cheater, having stuck her spectacles firmly to her face with sticking plaster.⁵⁶ Only rarely did she wear a life-jacket and she scorned protective headgear. A film exists of her putting together her canoe and enjoying whitewater canoeing on the River Teifi at Whitsun 1954.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Obituary by Dek Davie published in issue 231 of the *Canoe-Camper*, Oct 1997, pp 6-7

⁵⁶ From an unattributed newspaper clipping by an Express Staff Reporter.

⁵⁷ <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-welsh-water-river-teifi-whitsun-1954-1954-online>

Kathleen is shown in the opening shot and can be picked out later as she is wearing khaki shorts and a black bra, later covered by a yellow top, and has a blue canoe with a pennant on the bow.

Her desire to explore led her to Finland in 1951, which she revisited in 1969, again with David Hirschfeld. In that year a bronze plaque was presented to each of them for promoting Britanno-Finnish relations by helping British canoeists discover Finland's waterways and to commemorate the further exploit of paddling 400km from Tonkepurrti on the Arctic Highway to Kemijarvi.⁵⁸

In 1952 she was part of the first-ever group to go canoeing in Yugoslavia. They were aware that they were under observation. What sort of observation they discovered when Marshal Tito drove by close to the river Drino. As they grabbed their cameras a camouflaged soldier leapt out of a nearby bush pointing a rifle at them. In 1963 she was arrested near Varna in Bulgaria and subjected to around 3 hours' questioning as the sight of a canoe was completely unfamiliar and therefore suspicious. The explorers left the police station having established friendly relations.

Having by 1953 paddled over 2,000 miles Kathleen found herself at the Cyprus Street Baths, Stretford, trying to master the intricacies of the Eskimo Roll. Normally when a canoeist capsized they would have to extract themselves from the boat, bale out as much water as they could while making sure the paddle didn't float away and somehow climb back in. The perils of remaining in the water too long were exemplified by what happened to Ted in the Solent. The Eskimo Roll meant that a canoeist could go over sideways and continue the movement until the kayak came upright again and no water would be shipped if the spray covers were doing their job. But the profile of the canoe could make it very difficult, and Kathleen struggled to succeed.⁵⁹

One of her most memorable trips was the 1957 expedition to Iceland, in company with two friends, Cyril Cooper and Bryan Forsey. Their gear was loaded onto a small Austin 8, shipped across for them, which they were told was entirely inadequate for getting them across Iceland's rugged terrain, but somehow it did. They were warned of the perils of descending the mighty River Thjorsa, with 5 huge waterfalls, but that was what they had come to do. A film was made showing some of the challenges they faced, but it hardly shows Kathleen as she was mostly behind the camera.⁶⁰ In order to research the trip, Kathleen had joined the Manchester Geographical Society, later serving as its Treasurer from 1978 to 81 and President from 1982 to 1984.

The Manchester Canoe Club was also very important to her and with them she canoed round the once derelict Cheshire Ring, having campaigned for its restoration, and also went exploring the network of tunnels and basins under Manchester Piccadilly Station, where the Rochdale and Aston Canals meet.

The Summer Isles, Faroe Islands and St Kilda were also on her list of places to explore. The passport she held from 1967 to 1972 has stamps showing that she visited the Netherlands, Greece, Iceland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Tenerife, the USA (where she eyed up Niagara Falls), Finland, Austria and Sweden. Rather puzzlingly she describes herself on the passport as a social worker but it is true that she worked tirelessly to interest other people in canoe-camping so that they too could experience the personal and social benefits it brought.

On one of her trips to eastern Europe she pitched her tent on a narrow ledge not far above water level. During the night the river flooded, invading her sleeping bag. She was using a modern tent with a sewn-in groundsheet and explained to me just how quick and easy it was to throw everything into

⁵⁸ See obituary by Dek Davie mentioned above.

⁵⁹ *Daily Mirror*, 18 Feb, 1953, p 13, with photo of Kathleen in the water.

⁶⁰ See <https://vimeo.com/118461400> Several newspapers also mentioned the explorers, e.g. *the Torbay Express and South Devon Echo*, 14 June 1957, p 1.

the tent, pull out all the tent pegs and stuff the bundle into the canoe. She then presumably set off down an unfamiliar river in spate in the darkness in search of the next adventure.

A family legend which was passed down was that Kathleen had been flown out at the end of one of her trips by USAAF. She had also been given generous supplies of their meat-free pemmican as she preferred a vegetarian diet when possible. Certainly visits to the house in the 1950s might involve vegetarian pemmican soup for lunch, followed by its reappearance on toast for tea. No doubt it came in very handy on many of her trips. She did once lay aside her principles in an emergency. Canoeing round the Isle of Wight she arrived at Freshwater Bay only to find all the shops shut because of half-day closing. So she had to catch and cook some fish instead. She certainly relished the independence and simplicity that canoe camping brought. In an account of a 97 mile 3-day paddle round the Cheshire Ring she enjoyed chronicling the reactions of one party aboard a large boat equipped with hot showers, central heating, TV and coffee served with elegance. In contrast the canoeists pulled all the necessities of life out of their small craft – tents, sleeping bags, primus stove, spare clothes, water, food and in one case a camp bed. In the morning all was packed away and out came the dismantled trollies which they would use to get quickly round a set of locks.⁶¹

She put a great deal of time and energy into publicising the benefits of canoe-camping and the benefits of nature for both body and spirit, especially for city dwellers and for young people. She believed strongly that if young people were encouraged to experience adventures, delinquent gangs would cease to exist.⁶² She had been an accredited instructor from very early on and taught on many courses. On one occasion off Llandudno in May 1952 the coastguard alerted the lifeboat to some canoeists in distress. Two teenage boys became seasick and were making little headway against the ebb tide. Kathleen and the others rescued them by 'rafting up', making a solid platform out of three canoes so that each boy in turn could transfer to a double canoe while his was taken in tow. They tried to signal that everything was under control, but just as they neared the pier the maroons sounded and they put on what speed they could. 'We could not allow the lifeboat to get there first – and we didn't', said Kathleen.⁶³ She also made it plain that 'we plan these outings extremely carefully and we never take chances when we are training youngsters. Look at me, I have got grey hair, so do I look as though I would take silly risks?'⁶⁴ One suspects she often enjoyed applying the unspoken leverage of 'If I, an elderly female, can do that, what's stopping you?'

Safety and safety drills were important and she was keen that everyone should be aware of how to keep themselves safe, spelling out what people needed to know in a long letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, following yet another drowning in 1960.⁶⁵

She worked with the Council for Physical Recreation and in 1996 was secretary of the Outdoor Activity Group of the Cheshire and High Peak Sports Federation, wrote endless articles and also gave many lectures to the Townswomen's Guild, of which she was a Regional Organiser. She continued her work as a Unitarian preacher, which had begun in 1928, and in addition to that was Secretary of the House Committee of the Unitarian Training College in Manchester, helping to interview applicants for the ministry. The journalist Claire Blane, interviewing her for a local newspaper, elicited from her that she had deliberately crammed her life with fresh interests when she returned home to look after her father as she found it difficult to adjust after her teaching career. In a radio

⁶¹ Kathleen Tootill 'Canal Camping by Canoe', *Canal and Riverboat*, October 1978, p 30

⁶² *The [Altrincham?] Guardian*, 1 July 1955

⁶³ *The Altrincham Guardian*, 17 May 1957, *Daily Mail*, 13 May 1957

⁶⁴ *North Wales Weekly*, 16 May 1957 p 11

⁶⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 Feb 1960, p 2

interview she described life at the Garden School as a bit like being in a nunnery, in that she had little leisure to develop outside interests. Claire Blane highlighted her other activities – sewing her own clothes, making tents, building her own canoes [and the trolleys for them], does the decorating, repairs most things including her bicycle, scooter and car, while also growing vegetables and attending the Halle Society concerts.⁶⁶

In 1969 aged 64 Kathleen was the first woman to canoe across the Channel. She had wanted to mark reaching pensionable age by performing this feat but kept putting it off, hoping to avoid the indignity of having an escort vessel, even though this was probably an essential safety precaution in such busy sea lanes. The party, consisting of 8 men plus Kathleen, decided to set out at 8am in the hope of beating the gale forecast for later and expecting the crossing to take 6 hours. They handed their cameras over to a friend on board the escort vessel. The Force 7 gale caught them on the way and resulted in an extra 1¼ hours strenuous paddling into the wind. Their appointed photographer was laid low with sea-sickness. There were six capsizes and three rudders and two paddles were broken but Kathleen emerged unscathed having ‘thoroughly enjoyed it.’⁶⁷

Asked during a radio interview if she had ever been in peril of her life she spoke of going down the River Tana heading for Arctic waters in 1974. They knew that one section of the river had been given Grade 5 status⁶⁸ and that they would have to portage [carry or wheel their kayaks] round it. Having encountered one whitewater section they assumed that that was it and the dangers had been overstated. A little further along the river went round a sharp bend, picked up speed and roared through a narrow gorge. Escape was impossible. In her own words ‘All Hell let loose – there was no getting out of it.’ Kathleen estimated she had about 2 minutes to live. She saw the canoe ahead go vertical and the two behind disappeared. She emerged much lower down still upright and set about rescuing her companions’ capsized canoes with their vital contents. They were all surprised to have survived.⁶⁹

Not immune from the process of ageing she started to scale back some of her activities. She jokingly set up the MMMM Group (Mild Mountaineering for the More Mature), used her bike to carry shopping and eventually decided it was time to give up whitewater canoeing. This lasted until she was in camp alongside a particularly inviting river which tempted her to set aside her resolution and make several runs down some rapids. Taking on one particularly challenging piece of water she found that the bow of the canoe hit the river-bed and became stuck while the stern was still on the brink. Slowly the canoe rotated until she was hanging upside down in the cockpit. A male friend on the bank yelled ‘Whatever you do, don’t move!’ For a moment she (untypically) allowed herself to enjoy the thought of having a gallant rescuer on hand, but then heard ‘I must get my camera!’

Problems with her knees made it difficult to get in and out of a kayak but once in she was still extremely effective. She enjoyed an incident towards the end of her life where a fellow canoeist was

⁶⁶ Unattributed newspaper clipping.

⁶⁷ Unattributed newspaper clipping. Kathleen’s own account was printed in *Vigil*, 1969, p 49

⁶⁸ Class 5: Approaching to the upper limits of rapids that can be run with the paddling skill.... Whitewater, large waves, continuous rapids, large rocks and hazards, maybe a large drop, precise maneuvering, often characterized by "must make" moves, i.e. failure to execute a specific maneuver at a specific point may result in serious injury or death, Class 5 sometimes expanded to Class 5+ that describes the most extreme, runnable rapids (skill level: expert); Class 5+ is sometimes assigned to a rapid for commercial purposes, since insurance companies often will not cover losses sustained in a Class 6 rapid: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitewater>

⁶⁹ Details from the tape of a radio interview in 1982. She was also interviewed on *Woman’s Hour* in 1963 (*Radio Times*, Vol 158, p 23)

spooked by the thought of paddling across the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal while sitting right next to the sheer drop. Kathleen happily volunteered to take it across.

She died on 20 June 1997 after spending two years in various old people's homes. Her last adventure was to break out of one of them and be brought back in a police car grinning from ear to ear. She is remembered on the CCC website which not only lists her exploits but comments that she 'did all of this with grace and humour.'⁷⁰

Her ashes were scattered in the River Bollin, where her adventures with the Rob Roy canoe had originally taken place, and so that her voyages along the waterways could continue.



On the River Derwent, West Yorkshire, Whitsun 1965

⁷⁰ <https://www.campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/about-us/club-history/pioneering-women/>

Some of her photographic material can be seen in the Documentary Photographic Archive in Manchester.