

LITTLE GADDESSEN REVISITED

On a beautiful day in early May 1971, Miss Macleod took me and Miss Edwards, by car, to Little Gaddesden in Hertfordshire where we were able to recall the happy times we spent there during the School's evacuation period during the war.

The first place we arrived at was Frithsden. We saw the row of tiny cottages one of which, at that time, was occupied by Miss Beresford-Peirce who taught music in the school; we saw the signpost to Nettleden near here and later one to Ivinghoe - both delightful villages. We then took the road towards Ashridge House and passed in front of it. This reminded us of the many walks we took in the surrounding park and, as we motored through the beech woods with the sun pouring through the delicate young leaves on the trees, another memory came to us of the school picnics there where, with the food in large laundry hampers and containers of orangeade, we spent many happy hours; even the pathway through Golden Valley to Berkhamsted was still there. Soon we came to the Green and found Denison House with its tall, interesting chimneys, so we drove through the familiar gateway.

The house had been divided into three different dwellings, but we could recognize our old school quite well, though the stables and garage where Miss Lester taught the Kindergarten had become an attractive cottage. We thought of Jane, the cow, who occupied one of the stables in our day. The charming thatched music room had become part of another cottage. Luckily we were able to see the garden through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis who now live in the older part of Denison House. There was now a long wall which cut "our garden" in two, but the cedar trees were still there. These were a great joy to our Froebel children and the 70 foot high one was regularly climbed by the boys and the whole village would be astounded and quite nervous to see them at the very top enjoying the glorious view. Imagine our joy when Mrs. Lewis took us indoors to see the alterations. Just inside the garden door we saw the space under the stairs where a member of Staff slept on a camp bed. On the front landing we saw the sick room with its alcove where Miss Bowtell, our charming and efficient Matron, had her bedroom. The Nursery bathroom close by had the same interesting wallpaper of a design made from children's drawings; it looked as good as ever. A room behind had been a classroom where Miss Churchill taught and she had a "shut-up" bed in the corner, discreetly curtained off. The billiard room, used as a dormitory, was also there. Downstairs was the

Chinese room where Miss Caiger-Smith had her classroom. Outside was that happy garden where plays were acted and on one occasion we had a circus with people dressed up as strange animals and Miss Lester as ringmaster. Sometimes on moonlight nights we had midnight feasts with hot cocoa and biscuits from the kitchen - occasions the children loved.

At last we had to leave, going past Miss Pratt's little shop, past Ringshall and Deerleap, down to Northchurch and back to Roehampton and Ibstock Place where the dormitories today are named after those delightful villages reminding us of the war years spent under the care of Miss Priestman and her Staff at Little Gaddesden.

N. Stainsby.