

## Chapter 6

### School Days.

I started school at Tawstock Easter 1932 aged 4 years and 8 months. We walked about a mile to school from Collabear. Miss Nash who lived at Hillside Farm was the infant teacher when I started. She was a very good infant teacher she had a lot of patience, she probably needed it with all of us infants around her. I think an infant teacher has probably got the hardest job as she has to start to create an interest in the children to encourage them to learn.

When I started school there were about 24 children in the infant classroom. Miss Shapland who lived in a cottage in the village which is now called Primrose Cottage was the Head Teacher. She was reported to be a good teacher showing good instruction and good discipline over the years according to school inspectors reports. Miss Shapland became assistant mistress in 1895 and head mistress in 1905. This post was held by her for 28 years retiring in 1933 through ill health. She certainly had discipline, there were several wrought iron brackets around the room to hold oil lamps, on each of these would be 2 or 3 canes hanging. They were like miniture walking sticks with a curved handle. So you can see if the need arose she was never very far away from a cane.

According to the 1891 census at the same cottage lived a Mr John Shapland occupation Certified Teacher, aged 51 born at South Molton. His wife Sarah 57, Mary Alice daughter 18 pupil and Annie daughter 16, dressmaker. Mr Shapland was the head-master at Tawstock prior to his daughter Mary Alice Shapland taking the post.

When I started school there were still several old fashioned desks in the big room. Desks that would seat 4 or 5 pupils, they comprised of a desk top, a ledge in under for books and a seat with no back rest. The other desks were of a newer design seating 2 pupils with a hinged desk top and a closed compartment for books. In the infant room the desks were the same design but smaller for infants.

The Head Teacher had one of these old fashioned desks across the top of the classroom where she would sit to control the class. She also had a pet dog he came to school with her every day it was a golden and black cocker spaniel she called him Jimmy. Often she could be heard calling the dog saying, "Come along Jimmy my lambkin". Jimmy would sit up on this desk top on a cushion by Miss Shapland.