THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

Article 1 : WELLESLEY AVENUE INFANTS SCHOOL
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It was when I was 3 that my family were among those who moved into the top part of Wellesley Avenue (there was no Wellesley Avenue South then). Numbers 1-31 were the first houses on the estate together with some on Morse Road. Opposite were a row of trees marking the drive to Mousehold House. Soon the building of the school began in 1934, and I remember watching the first children arrive at the new school. By that time more houses had been built.

I was JEALOUS, why couldn't I go to school too? There began a time of 'let's pretend'! I would get ready for school, join a group and walk as far as the gate, then go back and join another group and do the same again. Eventually my time came, new arrivals gathered at an open French door facing the playground. Apprehensive children yes but not me. My small brother was weeping and eventually my mother jumped the queue, introduced me to the teacher and fled! The room on the front corner was the reception class. There were 6 other rooms, 2 facing west. On the north side was a big loftier room known as the hall. A Miss Day taught in there if it was available but it was also used for P.T. classes and so on. My first teacher was I think Miss Swallow. The classrooms were very formal, we all faced front where there was a blackboard on an easel. On the back wall was the alphabet with small pictures for each letter —A for apple, B for ball, C for cat, D for dog, E for egg and so on.

Each class in fine weather would have time in the playground with exercises and games. Games? London's Burning, Oranges and Lemons, London Bridge is falling down, What's the time Mr Wolf —we knew them all! Work was serious, but by the end of the year there were very few of us who could not read. My brother and sister attended later, and and my youngest brother started in September 1939 but had to wait a bit until the air raid trenches had been provided in the playground, each with an entrance at both ends. One leading event in peacetime was Empire Day, there would be a display of some sort — maypole dancing sometimes, a visit from the Lord Mayor or Sheriff with parents arriving to watch. To us it was very exciting, would today's children find it so? Are there others out there with more memories? If so please share them before it is too late to tell them. Today the school is no more, demolished for the building of the new medical centre, but the memories remain of pupils both young and old.