

Book Reviews

A History of King's Sutton Primary School 1909 -2009, by June Smith. Card covered, A5, 90pp, 55 illus., £5. Available from the Post Office, Kings Sutton; The Banbury Museum Bookshop; and the Old Hall Bookshop, Brackley.

This is a delightful 90 pages of local school history. Using a variety of sources – school log books, HMI and OFSTED inspection reports, personal memories and photographs – June Smith has conjured a fascinating account of the development of schooling in King's Sutton over the last century, and placed it within the broader framework of changing government priorities and educational practice.

The early days are full of freezing classrooms, learning by rote, high absenteeism due to illness, weather and the Banbury Fair (!), and punishment books where stealing fruit from trees and chewing gum (post 1945!) feature prominently. The book then charts the effects of the Depression, the Second World War and the social changes of the 60s on the school until we reach our modern times of child-centred education, small classes, technology and the National Curriculum.

The ups and downs of every day life are here – jokes played by staff on pupils – and vice versa, country dancing and cycling proficiency, boilers breaking down, classrooms bursting with wartime evacuees, raising money and sports days. Much has changed and much, it seems, remains the same.

The views of a number of headmasters and inspectors chart the varying fortunes of King's Sutton's school. From 1919 when the 'work of the school is in a critical state' to 2006 when OFSTED described the school as 'outstanding', 'a very special place', and all points in between, June Smith's small history is a repository of facts and memories which will fascinate local people for many years to come.

Rona Rowe

The new issue of *Northamptonshire Past and Present* (no. 62, 2009, £3.50 + p&p, Northamptonshire Record Society, Wootton Hall Park, Northampton NN4 8BQ), includes an amusing transcription of 'The Letters of Jane Pope (1744-1818) of Astrop', by Avril Pedley. She was a well-known actress who played at Drury Lane from childhood to old age. In the summer when the theatre was closed she left London for her home in Astrop, living quietly and visiting members of local society. Over twenty letters (1805-1814) survive and are well worth reading for their entertainment as well as for the occasional local references: "Farmer Goff is just arriv'd from Banbury Market Day, ... ready to unlode contents from that great mart of Business..."

Other articles maintain the journal's usual high standard. A highlight for our members will be the very flattering review of *Banbury Past through Artists' Eyes*, and a well-deserved commendation of Paul Hayter's recent 'Assisted Emigration to Canada' (*C&CH* 17.8)

J.G.