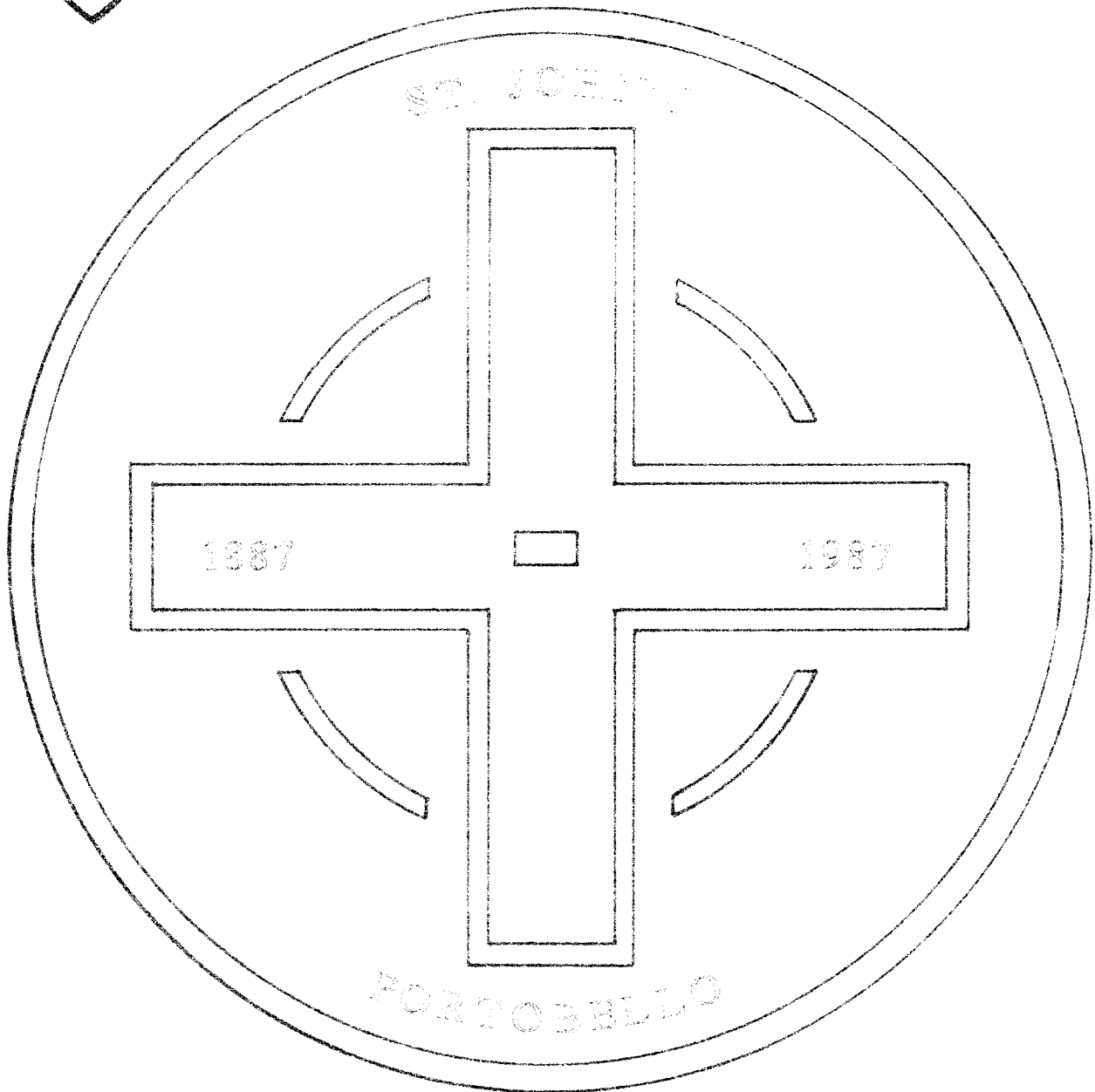


# SCHOOL CENTENARY



1987

St. John's (Portobello) School,  
Hamilton Terrace,  
Edinburgh, EH15 1NB.

Dear Parents,

I am very proud to be the Head Teacher of St. John's School at the time of its Centenary and I consider it a great privilege to be able to write the forward to our Centenary Booklet.

I hope you will enjoy reading the childrens stories and glancing at the photographic section which spans every decade of the 20th Century. I am sure you will also enjoy Miss Burns' potted history of the school.

Congratulations to Jane Burnett who won our competition to design a logo for the front cover of this booklet.

Talking of enjoyment, I can honestly say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in St. John's since I took up my post here in September 1980. I have had great pleasure from working with the children, and the support given to the school by you our parents has also been a source of satisfaction to me.

The future is an exciting one. The Primary School Curriculum like Topsy seems to grow and grow.

At present time our curriculum is made up of Religious Education, Language Arts, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Science, Art, Music, Drama, Craft and Physical Education. In the near future these subjects will be augmented by Health Education, Multicultural Education, Social Education and possibly even Sex Education. These subjects must be presented in an integrated fashion, a cross-curricular approach must be adopted and all abilities must be catered for.

All this must happen within the confines of a week which allocates 25 hours to pupil/teacher contact. The children must be encouraged to show investigative skills as well as research and recording skills and must be allowed freedom, choice and independence. They must also of course be numerate, literate and well behaved.

You can see then that there is no danger of any of the teaching staff or pupils becoming bored as we enter our second century of education at St. John's.

Another major innovation in primary education in recent years has been the increasing involvement of parents in the life of the school. Our extremely successful club afternoons this time last year are a good example of this.

A new parent asked me recently when we would be having an open day for parents. I replied quite seriously that I hoped that every day in St. John's was an open day for parents. You know that you are welcome to come in to the school at any time so please feel free to do so.

Our numbers continue to rise. 47 entered Primary 1 this session, another 41 are coming next session and already we have 34 names for August 1988!

I look forward to a happy centenary celebration, I look forward to the future and I also look forward to your continued support in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,



E.J. Brack,  
Head Teacher.

May 1987

## *PRESENT DAY PERCEPTIONS*



MY SCHOOL by Claire McMillan P1L.

I like my school because I like playing out in the playground and I like working in the classroom. I like working on my blue sum book because it has some sums in it. I like the adding sums and the take away sums. And I like the classroom because I like the paintings on the wall and I like my teacher.

MY SCHOOL by Lydia Cameron P1M.

I love coming to school and doing maths. I love having stories from the teacher. I love doing maths in my second stage and it is Book 2. We have a puppet show. I love playing in it . We can bring in puppets or there are two other puppets called Minnie Mouse and Kanga.

MY SCHOOL by Alan Gillam P2.

On Mondays we get Gym and sometimes we have to get our Come and See books. This school is the best school in the world. One time we went to the zoo. And we have a teacher called Mrs Cooney and we have a teacher called Miss Burns. Sometimes we get Gym on Thursdays. Last year we got Miss Service but we have lots of fun with Mrs Cooney. In primary one we went swimming with the 2s and 3s. There are lots of toys at the back of our room and sometimes we get to do sheets. We get lunchtime at 12 o'clock and have a place where you can get crisps. On Saturdays I go to football training and my Dad is going to take over. When I first came here I did not want to go for I was very scared to go and meet the new people, but when I saw the classroom I went to the best toy I could see. When I had been there for two weeks or so, I started to like the class. I made friends with Euan and Arthur and we have been friends for ever and ever. But the thing I dont like is the work we get. Sums and all sorts of work. On Saturday or Monday me and Arthur will be going to Blackburn Rovers.

MY SCHOOL by Anastasia Cameron P3.

My school is called St. John's school. It is very nice. I am in Pr3 and I am 7 years old. I came here because my Mummy and Daddy moved to 7 Durham Road, and this is the nearest and nicest school. My teacher is called Sister Siobhan. We have got an upstairs and down stairs. I am on the upper part. My best friend is called Claire Gilmour and she is a very nice girl. My favouite thing to do is sums because I usually get them right. We help people to try to make them good. Claire has only come to my house once. We have all been very happy. I try to do my best at school, and sometimes I get a smile.

#### MY SCHOOL by Steven Hislop P4.

My school was 100 years old on Valentines Day, but I dont love the school you know. My school has got more than one hundred in it , more than some other schools, especially St. Bernadettes. My school is very good. I'm glad I came to this school. This school is a Catholic school. My school is next to Portobello High School. Luckily enough we have got a fence to stop them from coming in.

The club I go to on a Monday every two weeks is learning how to play football. We like to play soccer solo, it is very good, if you win you get a trophy which Danny has just won. We learn how to head a ball, shoot with the ball, and learn how to do ball control.

The other club is Educational Games. The games that there are is: Blockbusters, Trivial Pursuits, Brit Quiz, Boggle and Trivia for Kids. The game I really like to play is Trivial Pursuits. I have won once and lost once. I'm good at answering some of the questions.

I play for the shool team some times. For the school I have scored three goals, one penalty and the others were just ordinary goals. The teams I have played are: St. Mary's twice, Campsie, Langlaw and St. David's. I like to play football with my friends, and because the football game we play is not banned.

This is the best school I've ever been to.

#### MY SCHOOL by Louise Delaney P5.

St. John's school will be celebrating its centenary on the 14th February 1987.

In 1936 my Granny and Grandad (Delaney) were pupils at St. John's. It was a Secondary then. Some of the teachers were - Mr Gordon (Headmaster), Mr Duffy (English), Mrs Hannen (Algebra and Geometry) which is now called Maths. Sister Vincent was very strict. Canon Franklin the parish priest was very nice. Mr Ritchie took Science. Cooking, Laundry and Science all took place in the school annexe in Bath Street which is now Towerbank Primary School annexe. Some of the boys wore "Tackety Bits".

One day a boy came into the classroom with his "Tackety Bits", the teacher told him to go back out and enter silently. After three attempts he took them off and came in with bare feet.

The pupils used to cycle to school, one came on a little fairy cycle from Newcraighall. You could see all the bikes leaning against the playground wall and at the end the little fairy cycle.

They had phone practice after lunch, the teacher went in one room and the pupils in the other. The teacher asked a boy what he had for lunch and the boy shouted so loudly (that a phone wasn't really necessary) "Mince and Tatties".

The girls played Hockey in the part of the playground which is now the janitors house and garden. They had Mass every Thursday morning.

The boys football team won the Inspectors Cup in 1936 and my Grandad was a player in the team.

My Auntie went to St. John's from 1961 to 1964. The headmaster was called Mr Meenan. Her favourite teacher was called Mr O'Rourke (Geography). There was only a small number of pupils in the secondary, all of whom were girls. The primary department had boys and girls.

They played lots of sports including Hockey, Netball and Athletics.

Most of the girls worked very hard and my Auntie won lots of prizes.

The uniform was the same as it is now but I dont think any of the girls now would iron their hair under brown paper like she did.

St. John's is all primary now and boys and girls both go.

Two years ago my big brother was part of the team who won the General Knowledge Quiz (I went to the final round).

On a Thursday night I go to brownies which is held in St. John's. Starting from the 9th February we are having clubs again (from P4, P5, P6 and P7). Every year we have sports days, it involves the flat race, the skipping race and lots more exciting sports. My Dad writes the certificates for football, the sportsmen of the year (my cousin was one of them last year) and of course the sports certificates. We have got two computers in my school and we also have work games and fun games. St. John's Nursery used to be in the building across the road from the school but now is in the annexe which is in the school playground. The teachers that come only once a week are called Miss Gibson (Art), Mrs Dale (Recorder playing), Mrs Roger (Music), Mrs Shaw (Sewing). We are having a student called Miss McCallum (Fiona). We go swimming on a Wednesday from 2-10pm to 3-20pm at Portobello Public Swimming Baths. Our teacher is called Mr Carragen. In February we are having a special Mass. Father Duffy, Canon Rae, Sister Campion and Cardinal Gray will all be there. St. John's is the best school I have ever seen.

#### MY SCHOOL by Lisa Renzi P6.

My school is a very happy school. It is called St. John's. We have 10 teachers - One of them is called Miss Lonergan, shes my teacher, she is on exchange from Canada. My school is 100 years old. There are 240 children in the school, but including the nursery there are 310. We have 2 playgrounds, one which the boys play football and the other, the girls play in. I remember once when it was Miss Lonergans birthday we sprung a surprise on her, we put balloons in the classsroom but before she had arrived at school, after we had got everyone to sign their names on a birthday card that we had made. At 9-15am we had brought a birthday cake by Claire M, a bottle of wine, 3 boxes of chocolates and the whole class singing happy bithday. She was lit up with joy. One of my happy memories was when the teacher, Miss Lonergan, had asked group 3 to do some maths, and one of the boys in that group which was Douglas Falconer, said and I've got the answers to them! That was really funny, I started twisting and laughing, I could'nt stop laughing, but I nearly got lines. A final touch about my school, Mr Fraser is our janitor is really funny, sometimes he kids me on because I'm Italian. But I dont mind. I really like my school. I think if anybody else can tell me that their school is better than St. John's I would like to know, because I think my school is the best.

#### MY SCHOOL by Caroline Maloney P7.

My school is the best in the world.

You should see how it is.

School starts at nine am.

Closes at three twenty pm.

History is a subject I like.

Okay is computers.

Oral work is something great.

Lessons of all kinds are great fun.

St. John's has been my school for seven years.  
Time has flown since the day I started.

Jumping, skipping, happy children.

Old games, new games they play.

Happy children cheer up sad children.

Nobody can be sad for long.

St. John's is a happy place.



A class group from 1905. Leo Stone (front left) went on to qualify as a doctor, served in France during World War 1 and worked as a G.P. on Tyneside during the Blitz in the Second World War. He was one of nine members of the Stone family who attended St. John's from 1902 to the 1940's. His sister Nora later became Infant Mistress at St. John's.

## *DECADE BY DECADE*

A class photograph from Bath Street in the early part of this century (1910-20). The class teacher is Miss Donlevy, Sister of Canon Donlevy.



A class group from 1924

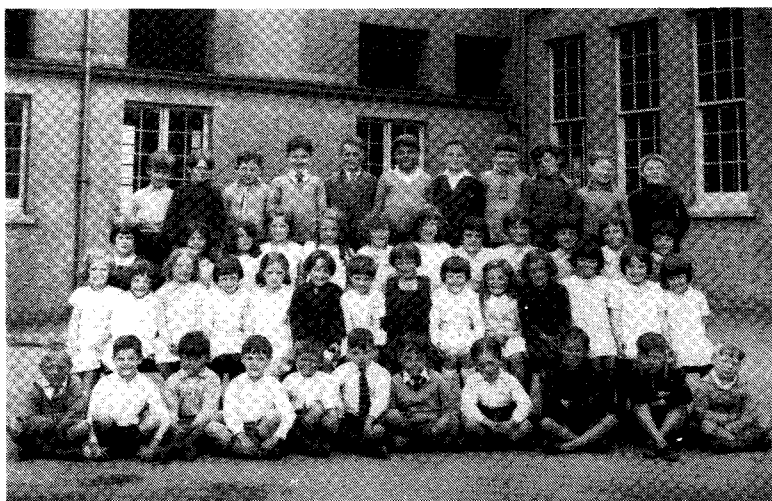


Primary 1 class of 1925



### THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

The Inspector's Cup winning team of 1936. We think that the players include Joseph Phair, Edward Byrne, William Byrne, Arthur Delaney, Joseph Bell, Dennis Scally, D. Gallacher, Robert Clifford, Joseph Nolans, David Wood, L. Holligan, W. Rafferty, P. Connolly, J. Carrigan and Robert Phair.



A group of St. John's pupils in session 1931-32.





The St. John's football team which won the Edinburgh Primary Schools Association Cup in season 1949-50. We have not won the trophy since although we have come close on a number of occasions since most recently in season 1985-86 when we lost after a replay in the semi-final.

## *DECADE BY DECADE*



Primary dance 1950's style.



The art class at St. John's in the 1950's. The Teacher is Felix McCullough formerly Evening News Art Critic, Art Teacher at Holy Cross, Assistant Head Teacher at Holyrood High School and currently Depute Head Teacher at St. David's Dalkeith.





Dancing team from the 1960's



Netball team from the 1960's



The current Holyrood High School sixth form seen at their Infant Christmas Party in 1973.

St. John's  
1887 - 1987  
by  
Christine W. Burns

St. John's School was opened on 13th December 1886. The Head Teacher at that time was an Ursuline Nun, Miss Mary Potts. Her name in religion was Sr. Mary Theresa but since the only source of information we have is the School Log Book, she is referred to in there by her own name.

Other members of the staff were Miss Mary Power and Miss Annie Power. The School Manager appeared to play a prominent part in the life of the school, the first one being the Rev. Fr. P. Morris. The school was housed in Bath Street and 73 children attended on the first day.

Almost immediately the manager wrote to the Education Department asking that the school be placed under Government Inspection. This was agreed to in January 1888.

On 15th February 1887 the school was formally opened by the then Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. A speech was made by one of the pupils followed by a prayer and a song.

The Manager was a constant visitor. It is not clear from the Log Book whether these visits were undertaken as priest or whether as Manager he was checking up since the emphasis appears to have been on the level of attendance and the keeping of registers.

By December of that first year the roll had risen to 142.

The first Inspector's Report in December 1887 commented on the excellent behaviour of the pupils and the great kindness with which they were treated. The slate writing was good but the arithmetic in some areas was weak.

The turnover of staff in the early years was fairly rapid with pupil teachers being used to supplement the others.

Holidays were in some respects shorter - 6 weeks in the summer, 2 weeks at Christmas non at Easter apart from Good Friday but many other closures are documented. The school closed on Holidays of Obligation and for such events as the Musselburgh Races (the traffic was heavy), bad weather (children not having suitable clothing), Queen's Birthday, Sir Charles Dalrymple's picnic for country children and epidemics of measles, chickenpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever and whooping cough. There were many visitors to the school from far and wide, particularly from Perth where the Head Teacher had taught before. By 1890 Canon Joseph Donlevy was Manager and he was not above testing the children in Poetry and Spelling before the arrival of H.M. Inspectors. The Canon's sister, Miss Agnes Donlevy joined the staff in 1895 and was to remain in St. John's for many years. Children came from Musselburgh, Newcraighall, Liberton and Niddrie on foot.

The first Head Mistress retired through ill health in June 1897 and she was replaced by (Miss Elizabeth Thornton) Sr. Mary Paul. By 1900 there were five class teachers, two pupil teachers and the Head Teacher. In September 1910 Miss Bull, Physical Drill Mistress began work in the school. The school was now housed in two buildings, the main school in Bath Street with an annexe for the older pupils at 2 Windsor Terrace.

The remodelling of the school buildings was on the cards for years and was delayed time and time again. The Inspectors report of 1914 commented on this fact and noted with concern that in the first infant class there were 75 pupils under the charge of a certificated teacher and in the second class there were 62 children with a non-certificated teacher (Article 79).

During the First World War life seemed to be relatively undisturbed. Sr. Mary Peter

and Sr. Mary Vincent joined the staff, a Zeppelin raid took place, certificated teachers received a War Bonus of £10 per annum backdated and all schools were closed for 3 weeks in 1918 during an influenza epidemic. In all, seven former pupils visited the school "home from the front".

On May 16th 1919 the school was transferred to the care of the Edinburgh Education Authority. Almost immediately Sr. Mary Paul found herself attending numerous meetings and filling in "requisition sheets" with her class split between the other teachers and Canon Donlevy found himself redundant. Canon Stuart who was a member of the Education Committee became a regular visitor. Sr. Campion and Mr. Quigley joined the staff.

On the 15th December 1926 the formal opening of the new building took place at Hamilton Terrace. All teachers and the two top classes attended the ceremony. The ground had been bought from the Duke of Abercorn for £3735 in 1924 and the cost of the completed building was £26,000. The 12 classrooms were at the time expected to accommodate 600 children. A tea party was held in the school through the generosity of the Dowager Countess de la Warr who was apparently a very good friend of St. John's.

In 1929 the school became the centre for Catholic mentally handicapped children in Edinburgh. The unit began with 55 pupils and three teachers and was apparently independent of the school although there are notes to the effect that cobbling was taught to the boys. The classes moved out in 1931 when St. Christopher's School was opened.

The children were taken on a large number of outings - Edinburgh Castle, Craigmillar Castle, the Brickworks, Botanic, Art Gallery - and each year the Lord Provost entertained one class at the King's Theatre while others went to the Bungalow Picture House financed by the Convent Fund.

In January 1931 St. Mary Paul retired, having spent 40 years in the school. She was replaced by Mr. J.P. Gordon, the first Head Master. Many innovations were introduced. In 1931 the first Parents' Day was held with an exhibition of the pupils work. A House System for games was introduced; there was a Prefect System; a Tuck Shop was started and the Head Teacher entertained the leavers to strawberries and ice-cream.

In 1936 the football team won the Inspector's Cup at Tynecastle. It was the first time in 43 years that a Catholic School had achieved this. Thirty goals were scored by the team with only two goals against. Mr. Duffy and Mr. Robertson were team managers and the school was granted a half day. Sadly, Mr. Duffy died a few months later from pneumonia.

During the thirties there was an annexe at Niddrie which was the beginning of St. Frances School. The staff at that time seemed to be seconded to the annexe until the official opening of the school in July 1935.

In September 1938 Mr. Gordon became Head Teacher at St. Ignatious, Mr. Meehan became head of St. John's and was to remain so until his retirement in 1965.

In August 1939 the staff were recalled early to make arrangements for evacuation. Gas masks were issued to the children who attended on three consecutive days. On 1st September 148 children were evacuated to East Linton.

The children remaining were taught in groups in St. John's Guild House, St. Angela's Convent and at 37 Bath Street. Groups were also started in Craigmillar, Newcraighall and Northfield. In all 209 children were still in Portobello. By February 1940, air raid shelters had been erected in the school playground and the groups all returned to school. There are several entries stating that an air raid warning was sounded and the children went to the shelter where after a short prayer lessons continued as before. On 6th May 1941 following an air raid the night before the children from Jewel Cottages and Newcraighall were unable to reach school because of damage to roads and property and the lack of transport. Mr. Damer and Mr. McKenzie were both called up to the forces. The pupils in the Secondary Department were allowed a week off to help with "tattie howking" a practice which continued until 1955.

In 1948 there were two items of interest. In January 1888 the school had been

officially recognised by the Scottish Education Department for the first time and in January 1927 the present building had been opened. In order to celebrate these events the staff had a Dinner and Social Evening in the school. In all 33 attended and enjoyed thick soup, cold meat, potatoes, green peas, jelly, fruit salad, ice cream and coffee. This was followed by a Beetle Drive, Impromptu concert and dancing.

In February, during a snow storm one lunch time, a light naval training aircraft was forced down in the playing field next to the school. No damage was done but St. John's reached the front page of the "Evening News".

By 1958 overcrowding was becoming a serious problem and one Primary 7 class was housed in an A.T.C. hut. The teacher who came to take this class resigned one month later because her health could not stand up to the conditions in the hut. Heating problems, frozen pipes and flooding of the playground seem to have been an on-going saga which even today has a familiar ring to it. At that time too the first pupils were selected for violin tuition.

By 1962 Miss Gourlay was officially mentioned as Infant Mistress and Mr. J. Davies was Depute Head Teacher. Whether this occurred in 1962 is not clear from the Log Book. It is also stated that the Secondary boys were no longer at St. John's and there remained only four classes of girls - 130 in all - who were housed in Bath Street Annexe. There were 13 classes (455 pupils) in the Primary Department. In spite of the small number of Secondary girls the following year the Third Year Girls won the Trophy for hockey - no mean task for such a small school.

In 1964 Sr. Champion retired after 44 years teaching in St. John's. In addition to teaching she had for years run after school clubs for girls, winning trophies for country dancing, singing and netball. She was presented with a watch which possibly she still has. Mr. Meehan retired in July 1965 and at that point St. John's became a Primary School only. Mr. Wm. Power took over as Head Teacher. Mr. Harry Bocker was appointed Depute Head Teacher and Miss Gourlay remained Infant Mistress. Joining the staff as a Visiting Music Specialist was Mrs. Dale who is still "visiting" in her capacity of travelling Portobello musician extraordinaire.

Mr. Power's first winter was once more dogged by frozen pipes and problems with heating but there is now an obvious change in emphasis from the educational point of view in that teachers were now also leaving school to attend in service training on different aspects of the curriculum. A great many students worked in the school from Craiglockhart Training College and Crossing Guides became the norm. Mr. Bocker was appointed Head Teacher of St. Mark's Primary in October 1967 and was in turn replaced by Mr. W. Stanley as Depute Head Teacher.

In June 1969 Miss Gourlay retired after spending almost her teaching life in St. John's. She was succeeded by Mrs. Donnelly and the Infant Department was transferred to St. Bernadette's.

In 1971 Mrs. Donnelly the Infant Mistress became non-teaching and the first "Parents' Evening" to discuss the children's progress took place - 330 parents attended over two evenings.

At the end of that session Mr. Power and three other teachers retired or resigned, Miss Jordan (31 years), Mrs. Nugent (16 years) and Sr. Elizabeth (9 years). Mr. H. Bocker returned as Head Teacher and on the death of Mrs. Donnelly was joined by Mrs. Alice Shakespeare as Assistant Head (Early Education).

During the 1970s St. John's continued with their previous success in both sport and academic achievement.

In August 1980 Mr. Bocker retired and was replaced by Mr. E. Brack. Mrs. Linklater (Mrs. Gaye Plant) was promoted to Head Teacher at Hermitage Park School and Miss C. Burns was appointed in her place as Assistant Head Teacher. These appointments created the nucleus of the present teaching team of the mid 1980s.

In writing this very brief history of the school it has not been possible to include many names and incidents which doubtless you who are reading it maybe looking for. For this I apologise. There have over the years been many priests, teachers, secretaries, janitors and other auxiliary staff, all of whom I know have made St. John's the place that it is today.



Nursery pupils working on the computer program  
Granny's Garden in 1985.

The Centenary Year Teaching Team of 1987:



Back Row - Left to Right  
Miss Jane Stoddart, Mrs. Margaret Mackay, Mrs. Jane Watson, Mr. William Fraser,  
Mrs. Margaret Reilly, Miss Josephine McKeon, Miss Margaret Lowrey.  
Front Row - Left to Right  
Sr. Columba, Mrs. Catherine Cooney, Miss Christine Burns, Mr. Edward Brack,  
Mrs. Irene Robinson, Mrs. Margaret Robertson, Sr. Siobhan.

The logo on the front cover of this publication was designed by Jane Burnett P7.