

# February 1912



## Headteacher's log

### Monday 5

Mr Starhawk, our Advisory Teacher for Spiritual Development, has not lasted long. He was meant to be with us for a month, beginning last week. He was not at school on Friday, and today I had a medical certificate giving as reason for absence the strange malady of 'foreboding'. There was a note explaining that on Thursday he had seen two crows on the school lawn.

### Tuesday 6

Starhawk was, of course, an additional teacher here, anticipating staff absences in February due to usual winter illnesses. Ms Cartwright has disappointingly chosen this week to meet her stated INSET need, with a course at the clinic of Extroverts Anonymous. I hope she will be cleared to teach next half-term, because I have nominated her for the post of ZQD Co-ordinator. I don't for the life of me know what ZQD is, but appointing a co-ordinator will go a long way towards fulfilling our responsibilities.

### Wednesday 7

Ms Oakenstaff confiscated a box of twenty-four 12-bore shotgun cartridges at lunchtime today. They were in the possession of Silas Ditchcrawler in Y5, whose family live most of the year on stolen game. Ms Oakenstaff saw the box sticking out of Silas' satchel, and she initially confiscated it because she read on it a warning that traces of nut might have been present during manufacture.

When she carried the box into the staffroom, Mr Peel demanded that the cartridges be

handed to him, saying that explosives in the possession of a suffragette like Ms Oakenstaff breached the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Ms Oakenstaff indignantly denounced this slur on the Sisterhood, but said she would hand over the cartridges to anyone except Mr Peel who, she said, would use them for out-of-season field sports. They are now on my desk, for me to return to Mr Ditchcrawler. That should be worth a pheasant.

### Thursday 8

Who would have believed, after her strong professionalism yesterday, that Ms Oakenstaff would today overstep the mark by teaching a music class *The March of the Women* by Dr Ethel Smyth? And as though to embed the suffragette battle hymn in the children's memories, she emulated Dr Smyth's recent performance in Holloway Prison by conducting the children's singing with a toothbrush. The Chair of Governors and I have been deluged with complaints all evening.

### Friday 9

Talk about people letting their private convictions obstruct their teaching! With Ms Oakenstaff's indiscretion still reverberating through the village, our curate Mr Smoothman's leading of collective worship this morning excited astonishment. Children complained that they couldn't understand what he was saying because of a wooden cross tied round his head and hanging in front of his face. Afterwards, when I asked him to explain himself, he said that last Saturday he'd been to a conference at which participants were introduced to a pattern of daily devotions based on acting out the hymn *Abide with me*. Today's verse begins 'Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes.' He then told me that at the conference he had met a teacher from this school; none other than Mr Starhawk. Starhawk shared with him that during personal counselling that day he had been healed of his fear of dying by meditating on Hebrews 2:14-15. This had changed his life. Next day, Sunday, he would return to his former church, Slimepond Christian Centre. I thought hard after Smoothman left. Starhawk hasn't returned to school this week. Could it be, I mused, that his renunciation of paganism had disqualified him as an Adviser in Spiritual Development? Surely this couldn't be true – not in England. Could it?

■ Leonard Bookman



Ditchcrawler! What do you think you are doing?  
Go and wash your hands this minute!