

Selsdon School Days 1944 to 1950 – Playing Hooky



Looking at the photo above I note one obvious difference to how I remember it as a school boy. Traffic lights!

In the 1940s and early 50s very few people owned cars. Even if they did, the very strict petrol rationing meant that they could rarely use them. Hence there was negligible traffic on the roads. Even so, we had a “speed cop,” a traffic policeman on a powerful 500 c.c. Triumph Speed Twin motor bike, who came up morning and afternoon from Kenley Police Station to shepherd us across the road. On my first day I came out of school at 3 o’clock, and saw my Mum waiting on the other side of the road by the top of Kingsway Ave. There was no traffic so naturally I ran across the road, only to be “arrested” by our very unfriendly speed cop and lectured about how to safely cross a road.

Our speed cop continued with this mundane task for a few more years until increased road traffic got him back to his real job, catching speeding drivers. I’m sure that his lectures put the fear of God into them, as he had me! He was replaced by a more friendly beat copper, no longer riding bicycles, but on what became jokingly known as a Noddy Bike. This was an LE Velocette motor bike, which was not much faster than the then replaced police push bike!



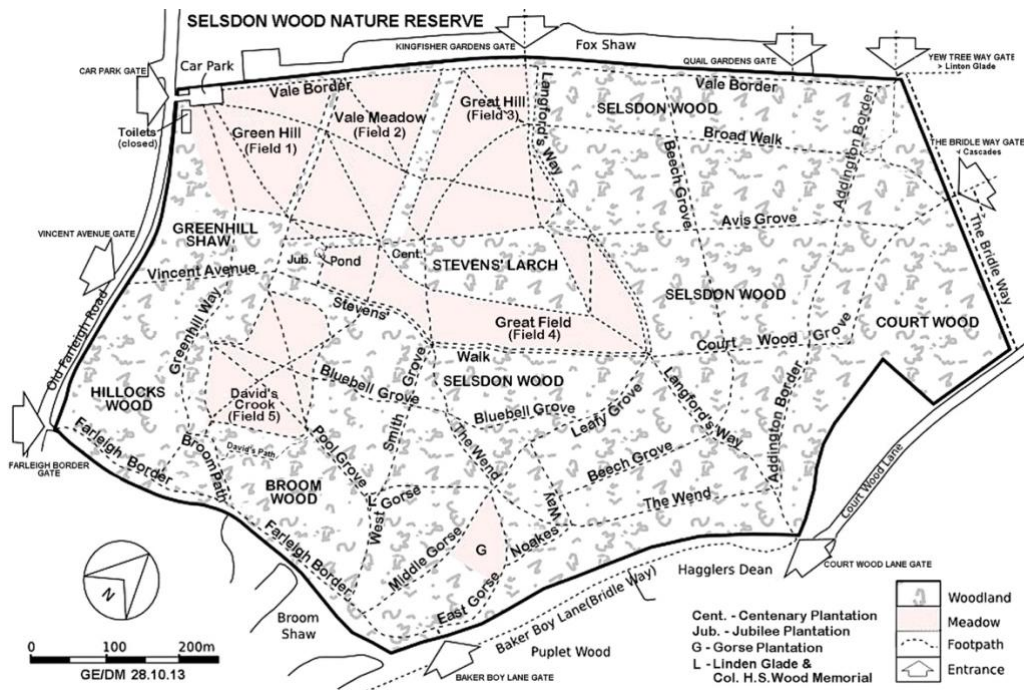
I always thought they were called Noddy Bikes after the Enid Blyton characters, Noddy and P.C. Plod, but apparently that was not true.

After Plod, we got a Lollypop Lady, Mrs Hudd, to shepherd the children over the now busier main road. Mrs Hudd lived in Greville Ave and had a son, Graham, who was a Selsdon School pupil and a friend of mine. Mrs Hudd was very popular with both mums and the school kids. She was a real character, loved by all, and sadly missed when she got replaced by traffic lights.

So back to pre-traffic lights days, our not so friendly speed cop, and my earliest days at Selsdon School.

In the absence of cars we walked everywhere, and my Dad being a great walker, I became familiar with all the local woods and foot paths. And because there was virtually no traffic I had been used to playing outside with my friends, free to roam without any supervision. When I started school I hated being cooped up in a classroom so after a while I came up with a cunning plan!

I was by then walking to school, no longer being taken by my Mum, so one nice sunny morning instead of walking to school I played hooky and went to Selsdon Wood.



But I didn't need a map because I knew my way around this woodland and when I thought it was about 3 o'clock, I went home. The problem was, that not having a watch, I had no real idea of the time. When I arrived home it was only about half past ten!

I got a severe ticking off and was marched off to school where I got another ticking off from Miss Smith my class teacher. For punishment she made me stand in the corner, in front of the class until lunch time.

But not put off, I waited a couple of weeks and did it again. The same thing, again arriving home in mid morning. Another, but more severe ticking off from my Mum, then from Miss Smith, and another hour standing in the corner. So I then decided that playing hooky was not such a clever idea after all!

My Dad would take my brother and I to see the annual, springtime carpet of bluebells in the Selsdon Wood and I was reminded of my boyhood adventures, by this picture of its wonderful bluebells.



It might now be too late to see this year's magnificent display, but do make sure you don't miss it next year! There is always something of interest to see in this our local woodland. You can find out more by following this link:

<http://www.friendsofselsdonwood.co.uk/> which includes a detailed leaflet, the map above and much more.