

FINGERS CAUGHT IN THE COOKIE JAR!

We are often asked for our memories of our schooldays. In my case, one that stands out from my wonderful Aldwickbury years of around 50 years ago (despite being caned on 28 occasions by the HM – they were allowed to, in those days, before ‘Nanny Namby-Pamby’ stepped in with her hob-nailed boots!), was the **‘Great Biscuit Tin Incident’**.

I don’t know if it is still in the same place but, in the late 1950s, Matron’s Office was up the main stairs and halfway along the corridor on the first floor. In there, apart from bandages, plasters, TCP, Dettol and all the other accoutrements of a First Aid service, was a built-in cupboard in the left hand wall as you went into the room, below the dado rail. And in that cupboard was an old Biscuit Tin ... you know - the sort you can’t find nowadays for love or money, probably Peak Freans Finest Selection, or somesuch, in a large, genuinely tin, tin.

If memory serves me right, Matron would dole these out to any poor, sickly souls who had suffered a splinter, had a bit of a headache, or to go with the all-curing cup of sweet tea - or Bovril (yuk!).

But *I* knew better ... *and* I knew what time Matron went downstairs to her own tea. And so I would sneak in, while I knew/hoped no one was watching (at least I never got caught – in that sense, at least – but I am getting ahead of myself!) and gently open the lid of the tin, as quietly as possible, and nick 2 or 3 bickies. *What’s more, I knew that no one knew.*

WRONG! For the day of the great **‘Fingers Caught in the Cookie Jar Incident** dawned. I slid soundlessly in, as usual, opened the tin, as usual - and was horrified to find a handwritten note on top of the biscuits, with the short, but all-powerful message: **“Fingleton – Stop Stealing the Biscuits!”**

What was I to do? I reckoned – pretty quickly – that I had 3 choices: 1] immediately close the lid again and scarper; 2] remove the note altogether (I equally swiftly realised that that would have been a terrible admission of guilt!); or 3] carefully take a couple of the choccy digestives, custard creams, jammy dodgers, bourbons, or whatever, so teasingly and temptingly on display, from underneath Matron’s Missive, being careful to leave said document on top of the pile and, seemingly, untouched.

So I

Afterthought: Maybe that’s why I’ve been known as “Fingers” all my life. And I thought it was down to a typical schoolboy foreshortening of my surname! It could go some way, also, to explaining why my weight has always been absolutely spot on for someone 14-1/2 inches taller than me!

Happy times at a wonderful school – and seemingly equally wonderful today.

John “Fingers” Fingleton

