A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DISCIPLINE IN NEW SOUTH WALES CLASSROOMS

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Introduction
The dynamics of the classroom, the interplay of power, the manifestations of socialisation, and the influence of agency are some of the key issues of interest to educational researchers in recent years. Critiques of the epistemological positions taken in research, and of the language of educational policy and reform, have stimulated an awareness of the need for radical new research perspectives, not least in the History of Education. Understanding what actually happens in classrooms is extremely important for a great many reasons, whether one's interest is learning outcomes, policy implementation or school culture. However, one of the most glaring omissions in the historical record is that we know virtually nothing about what happened in classrooms even in the fairly recent past, yet such information is vital to the theory building which will enable us to make sense of the present. Debates on discipline, and in particular the abolition of corporal punishment, do not appear to have been informed by history except in superficial and emotive ways.

For the historian interested in the history of classrooms, the 'official' record offers little, so the task requires the location of published biographies or autobiographies, personal documents such as school reports and school memorabilia and, if possible, diaries and oral history interviews. One of the most interesting issues with respect to classrooms is that of pupil-teacher relations, but the latter did not have a high public profile in New South Wales prior to the fifties. In the Education Gazette, and the minister's annual report, there is little if any indication that personal, let alone personable, interaction actually took place between teacher and pupil. However, publications that aimed to assist the teacher to be successful were more cognisant of the behaviour and perceptions of pupils, particularly in the area of 'discipline'.

Then, as now, discipline (in terms of classroom management and control, including punishment) was/is seen as critical to successful teaching and also to the development of responsible citizenship, although over time the trend has been away from overt teacher control and toward the creation of an environment consistent with the attainment of student self-control.
Remembering serves a function. It helps us to make sense of the present and incidents of punishment or other extreme events may well figure prominently in such recollections of our past. Memories of school often give punishment a very high profile. The brutal schoolmaster is a common character in western folklore. In personal memory vivid characters and momentous events dominate, acts of cruelty among them. The emotion attached to physical punishment makes it a fertile field for memory and myth to merge. In 'popular memory' classrooms earlier this century were 'controlled', ruled by the rod, places where fear predominated.

Memories of school discipline vary tremendously. There are informants who tell complete stories about particular episodes of discipline, some of which have been polished through frequent rendition. Others recall fragments of specific episodes, still others only have impressions. Furthermore, in the act of telling there may well be conscious deletions as well as unconscious ones. In addition to creating possibilities for Wal's memories of teacher control 880017
I can't remember too much about infants school. The only thing was that there was a doctor who had a practice just on the corner across the road from the school. If you were a naughty boy the headmistress used to send you across there and he'd give you the cane. The headmistress couldn't hit hard enough. If it was only a minor thing she'd give you a belt herself, but if it was a bit more than a minor thing, a person being naughty, she'd send you across to the doctor. If you didn't do well enough at school or if you mucked up in the playground, a bit of fighting or anything like that she would send you across. There was always a stream of kids going across to the doctor's place. They were quite big classes, I'd say about forty or more in the class. I think the only way in which they could keep control of the kids was to keep sending them to the doctor.

corrroboration, recourse to a large number of oral histories provides insights into collective memory.

One other source of personal recollections about classrooms is the biography, yet in biography and autobiography the very process of transforming memories into literature results in the exhaustive examination and intensive analysis of memories. As a result they take on a larger-than-life, totally incomparable, quality that undermines their usefulness with respect to historical generalisation. Manning Clark's biography provides a good illustration of such treatment:
There was a teacher we called 'Scaramouche' because of the temper he displayed whenever he was displeased with us. One day in 1927 Scaramouche blew up with a boy named Knox Jamieson, and threatened to flay the skin off his hide. I am not sure now of the words, except that I got the impression that Knox Jamieson would be lucky to escape with his life, I as usual allowing my unruly passions to overheat my mind. As was to happen many times in my life, I borrowed from the bible the words which would express for me this sense of terror. Knox Jamieson's 'last state', I said to myself, would be 'worst than his first'. But no, it was not so. Knox Jamieson defiantly said, 'I appeal to the Headmaster!' Scaramouche himself looked scared. Scaramouche agreed. A boy with courage had won a victory over a man with power. Right could sometimes triumph over might, and that was something which no previous event had prepared me for...Knox Jamieson won his appeal, and Scaramouche controlled himself for the rest of the year. Manning Clark, The Puzzles of Childhood. Manning Clark: His Early Life, Penguin, 1990, p.174.

The paper will return to Knox Jamieson later. Suffice to say at this point that Manning Clark experienced the rule of the rod in the twenties. By that time educational writings and official documentation strongly suggest that educators had begun to question methods of instruction that relied on physical persuasion in favour of moral suasion and self discipline. However, during the forties there would appear to have been an uneasy alliance between old methods and new theories; authoritarian and democratic approaches, and as will be demonstrated in this paper corporal punishment still played a significant role in classroom management. Were educationists creating their own myths? There was certainly a glaring gap between rhetoric and reality.

If attention is to be paid to the actors in the story of schools then there are, at the very minimum, four perspectives: those of officials, teaching staff, pupils and parents, and each of them can be further problematised by considering factors of age, gender, class and ethnicity. This paper attempts to cover only limited ground, focussing on white students and tentatively exploring the construction of gender in the classroom. Specifically the key aim is to identify the practices of school teachers with respect to discipline as they were generally perceived and understood by school pupils.

More than one hundred and twenty oral history transcripts were collected with the assistance of many postgraduate History of Education students between 1988 and May 1993. The one hundred and twenty utilised for this paper constituted those which fell
within the pertinent age and geographic parameters as well as meeting acceptable interview standards. The interviews constituted a pilot study for a more extensive study of youth transition in NSW 1930-1950 now under way. The informants resided in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. They attended a variety of schools throughout the state, although the majority attended school in the Sydney area and north of Sydney along the coast and in the Hunter area. About fifteen percent attended private schools, and the majority of them Catholic schools. The oldest informant was born in 1900 and the youngest in 1943. The age range tends to follow the shape of a skewed normal curve with the great majority born between 1914 and 1935. About 64 per cent were female. The informants were volunteers contacted through personal networks. They were asked to relate, in a semi-structured interview format, their school experiences. Seventeen of the transcripts constitute a specific study of women teachers who taught in the fifties in NSW, they are prefaced by the letters WT and were collected in 1991. The rest constitute a specific study of the school and school to work transition experiences of 103 informants. The two sets of data are entirely complementary in method. The sex of the informant and date of birth are included in the referencing. The transcripts are available through the Department of Education Curriculum Research and Resource Centre at the University of Newcastle.

There is no room for a discussion of oral testimony and the nature of memory here, although the author has dealt with the topic elsewhere. Allyson Holbrook, 'Methodological Developments in Oral History: A Multi-layered Approach', Australian Educational Researcher, vol.22, no.3, 1995 (In press); Allyson Holbrook, 'A Chorus of Condemnation: Memories of NSW Teachers' Colleges 1940s-1950s', OHAA Journal, no.16. 1994, pp.37-45. What the author has done in this paper is to focus on comments by the informants that shed some light on their perceptions of discipline as children, its forms and implementations and their expectations and reactions. Thus the totality of each person's story and the way they have related it has definitely not been ignored in the historical analysis, yet neither has the data been subjected to a sophisticated narrative analysis. Weight has been given to information that proved internally consistent and verifiable. Before proceeding to the oral histories, however, it is important to examine something of the contextual framework within which school discipline operated.

After that I went down to Canterbury Primary School which was about a mile away... Actually I didn't like primary school very much, mainly because you had the same teacher in front of you all the while. You started a year with a teacher and you had to put
up with that teacher for the whole of the year. I didn't mind being at school because I used to enjoy playtime but I didn't like the idea of having a teacher stand over you all the while.

Regulations and Philosophy
At the turn of the century teachers were taught that absolute discipline was an indispensable condition of successful teaching. If teachers were to survive in large classes, deal with resistance to compulsory schooling, win respect from those students who only responded to physical punishment, satisfy the demands of their employers and earn sufficient income, then corporal punishment was necessary. Furthermore, there was an overriding social agenda which aimed to shape pupils into citizens who would be obedient, productive, workers and citizens. As one educationist put it: 'one of the things they come to school to acquire, over and above certain arts and accomplishments which are generally termed education, is the practice of obedience'. Joseph H. Cowham, School Organization, Hygiene, Discipline and Ethics, London, Westminster School Book Depot, 1906. There was widespread social acceptance of the practice of physical punishment albeit under certain conditions. The operation of social institutions such as the law and religion reflected this acceptance. The fact that such punishment was often used to excess attracted criticism, particularly from those concerned with the welfare of children. Such criticism generally drew the response that corporal punishment was a necessary evil if society was to be best served by its schools, the sub text being that there were elements in society defined by class that required such control. An eminent barrister and inspector of schools in London drew on the law and religion in his telling response in 1911:

The opponents of corporal punishment fail to realise the actual conditions of school life and the nature of childhood. The school must be allowed, without unnecessary interruption, to pursue the aim of its existence. The machinery of government is devised to secure this end. Anything that interferes with this arrangement must be brought into line or cast aside. Society is protected against the lawless individual by a graded system of penalties, and why not the school, which is a preparation for society? The penalties of the school are the milk of human kindness compared with those imposed by society. The school too is in a tutelary position in regard to each of its scholars. If a child will not conform to the law as a child, it is less likely to do so as a man or woman. The iron regime must therefore be brought into play to compel obedience, for the child's own sake, apart from the interests of the other members of the school community -- or his last state will be worst than the first. 'He who has not been chastened is not educated'. S.E. Bray, School Organisation, London, W.B. Clive, 1911, p.281.
In both England and New South Wales the regulations pertaining to corporal punishment set out in the Education Acts of the late nineteenth century remained pretty much unchanged throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Corporal punishment referred to any physical punishment, ranging from the cane (the regulation method) through to tapping on the head (forbidden). The regulations were clearly intended to moderate excessive punishment, although they were also very general and thus open to a wide-ranging interpretation. In NSW corporal punishment was supposed to be a measure of last resort and only the principal teacher was to inflict corporal punishment unless he directed others to do so on his behalf. The latter was initially a reflection of the late nineteenth century when schools were usually conducted in one room with the principal teacher invariably present, but as the twentieth century progressed the pragmatic interpretation was increasingly to safeguard the punishers.

According to the regulations corporal punishment was not 'recognised' as an aid to teaching, i.e., for failure or inability to learn or for not having done homework. Degrading punishments were to be avoided (these were not defined) and the 'boxing of pupil's ears and the tapping of children on the head were 'strictly forbidden'. Given the possible range of physical punishment, it is perhaps significant that only the two are mentioned and they concern hitting children around the head. The Teacher's Federation Handbook for 1944 told teachers they would be 'well advised' to 'take great care to avoid blows on the head or any part of the body liable to permanent injury', because punishment which 'endangered life and limb', was 'in law, excessive and unlawful, and the best advice is to cane only on the hand'. New South Wales Public School Teachers' Federation, Federation Handbook, Sydney, 1945, p.160.

Ideally teachers were supposed to maintain control of their class by other means. In NSW general Instruction 16 attached to Regulation 123 reads:

The estimate of a teacher's efficiency will be affected by the extent to which the effective government of the school is secured without resort to the use of corporal punishment. When resorted to in extreme cases, it should be administered to the palms of the hands in the customary manner. Public Instruction Act and Regulations and General Instructions to Teachers.

By the thirties educationists were avoiding speaking about, let
alone defending, corporal punishment. The approach to child welfare in general was becoming more 'scientific', and less driven by notions of morality. Psychology, including educational and vocational guidance were providing alternative frameworks for approaching classroom misdemeanours. If key officials like the highly respected James McRae, Director of Education in Victoria, were to be believed the move toward less authoritarian approaches in primary schools was well under way by the 1930s:

In the modern school there is much more of a true family spirit than there was in the old. Relationships are more human, more easy and more natural. Constraint and coercion have become replaced by interested and joyous co-operation. The school of today is a happy place -- a true centre of sweetness and of light. J. McRae, 'The Child at School', The Growing Child. A Series of Five Lectures on Child Management Educational Research Series, no.12, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1932.

There was clearly a very strong desire to be seen to be moving towards less authoritarian, less 'Fascist', practices in schools during the war years. C. McRae, Principal of the Sydney Teachers' College, in a public lecture on 'Education for Citizenship' advocated self-government in schools, placing responsibility on the pupils and treating children to bring out the best of their inherent qualities, stating by way of contrast that:

The totalitarian state knows exactly what type of citizen it wants. It knows precisely the qualities that it wishes to encourage. The aim of its education is to secure obedience, discipline, unquestioned acceptance of the glorification of the state, and the leader of the State. C. R. McRae, 'Education for Citizenship', A Report of the Speeches Delivered at the Broken Hill Education Conference, Melbourne, ACER, 1943, p. 28.

The NSW Education Gazette was very circumspect about corporal punishment despite what would seem to have been continuing instances of excess. In the first edition for February 1943 a short note was included to advise principals that it had 'again' become necessary to draw attention to instructions 'prohibiting the boxing of pupil's ears, tapping of children and such forms of punishment'. Education Gazette, 1 February 1943, p.10. In 1944 another brief note put forward the view that modern trends and strict observance of departmental regulations had resulted in

I wasn't any good at spelling or reading, mainly because I had a speech defect, I'm tongue-tied. As far as singing was concerned I used to last about two lessons in the beginning of the year and you used to get caned for not singing in tune. Then after that
they got tired of caning so as soon as the singing lesson started they used to say, 'Jones and [indicates others] out!' There was usually one other chap. So instead of singing lessons we used to go out. It wasn't too bad because we used to play marbles.

A 'progressive decrease in corporal punishment' and that its elimination would be achieved if the provision of 'recreational and teaching facilities' were 'adequate' in all schools. Education Gazette, 2 October 1944, p.278. In February 1951 there was quite a full restatement of the regulations with the additional comment that the Department would take a very serious view of contravention of the regulations. Education Gazette, 1 February 1951, p.48.

In the 'democratic school' self discipline was regarded as 'discipline of the highest order' and 'dominated by purpose, not maintained for the sake of order'. Freeman Glenn Macomber, Teaching in the Modern Secondary School, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1952, p.169. Articles in the Education Gazette spoke of student self-realization, and the fostering of happy human relationships in the schools, and of discipline in its fullest sense being the 'shaping of attitudes and beliefs and not only manners and conduct'. Education Gazette, 1 January 1952, p.10; 1 April 1953; p.121. Unsurprisingly, the move to a more democratic approach in classrooms was a slow process, as long as teachers were seen to be efficient (and inspected) on the basis of control and the adequate coverage of a crowded curriculum, corporal punishment in some form was seen to be a necessary if not publicisable practice. Certainly this was the conclusion drawn on the basis of an extensive study of teacher's attitudes toward corporal punishment undertaken in England in the late forties. After finding, among other things, that the highest incidence of the use of corporal punishment was recorded with respect to misdemeanours considered to be contraventions of school regulations, the researchers concluded that a significant reason for punishment was:

To create and maintain conditions they deem necessary for the fulfilment of their professional responsibilities in the environment in which they have to teach; and in order to safeguard their personal integrity. National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, A Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools, London, Newnes Educational Publishing Co. Ltd, 1952, p.253, p.359.

With respect to the latter they argued that not only was an uncontrolled class unacceptable to society generally it could lead to psychological damage for the teacher. In England it seemed that teachers were not ready to give corporal punishment
up and the documentation seems to suggest the same for teachers in NSW. Concern about the issue, especially relating to the stresses attributed to changing social conditions, low staff morale and large classes, prompted the Education Department and Teachers' Federation to take a particular stance on the requirements for effective non-authoritarian discipline in 1957. Department of Education New South Wales, 'Discipline in Schools'. A Statement Prepared by a Committee Representing the Department of Education and the New South Wales Teachers' Federation and presented to the Honorable R.J. Heffron, MLA, Minister for Education, Sydney, July 1957.

For teachers, however, there was no escaping the fact that a class of quiet obedient students were regarded as a significant achievement. One of the informants made the point that when she first became a teacher she was very school-marmish:

You had the kind of classroom where there is little communication between the child and the teacher, and if you could hear a pin drop nearly all day you had made it as a teacher.. 1990/0025 F:1943

R. Freeman Butts and American Educator who was invited to study and comment on Australian Schools made a similar type of observation in 1954:

There is also a fundamental distrust of freedom as an essential ingredient of the educative process. It is a belief that formality, orderliness, discipline, quiet, and efficiency are the best outward signs of good classroom procedure even at the primary level.

I felt indeed, that the routines of discipline were often carried out to the extent that children seemed diffident, shy, self-conscious, inarticulate and sometimes downright frightened. R. Freeman Butts, Assumptions Underlining Australian Education, Melbourne, ACER, 1965, p.59, p.69.

As one child wrote (with the approval of her teachers) for the school magazine:

I should come early every day,  
And all my teachers rules obey,  
Be here before the school begins,  
And silent when the signal rings...  
Doreen Gray (1A), 'The Central Magazine', 1930, p.31.

But, children did chatter, were distracted, did 'play up' and break the rules and so did challenge the teacher's authority. While a variety of discipline strategies were taught to young
teachers in college, the novices received plenty of advice from 'old hands' in the schools they went to who believed that corporal punishment had a place even if not in

As far as maths is concerned I can manage maths all right so I didn't mind it and I liked geography. But a lot of the emphasis was on spelling, dictation and reading. Well I was no good at reading out aloud and as far as spelling was concerned, I could write a composition using all the words that I should be using, I spelt them right. But when it came to dictation or a spelling test I couldn't do it. I don't think I could relate the sound to the word sufficiently fast enough...usually it would be the first one or two [words] that I'd have a chance of getting but then I think a kind of panic set in...The teachers used to pick on the ones not doing too well and you'd get the cane.

their own classrooms. Teachers' college lecturers were mostly teachers. A recent case study of seventeen teachers who taught in New South Wales schools in the fifties indicated that the lecturers providing the most practical advice were held in high regard by their students, although from the author's studies it is not clear whether such advice incorporated covert support for physical punishment. One informant clearly remembered one lecturer saying that 'a bit of good honest fear' did not 'hurt' children.. Holbrook, 'A Chorus', op. cit.; WT19910007 F:1931

Punishment books testify to the exercise of corporal punishment but they are known to be incomplete. An informant suggested that a particularly vicious teacher of his would not have had the time to put all the instances in the book:

    I'm in there for pinching watermelons. I only got two cuts because I was only eight but some of the others got four. I got the cane. We all did every morning. If you two seconds late you got the cane. He wouldn't have had time to put them all in the book!. 1988/0014 M:1927

That particular teacher apparently caned routinely every morning.

The author has examined several punishment book entries for schools in the Hunter. They show a wide range of misdemeanours, none of which tend to pertain to areas that would be inconsistent with the regulations. Bullying, rebellious and unruly conduct, laziness, swearing, and dangerous play usually figure largely. Similar types of misdemeanours were given prominence by British teachers as reasons for corporal punishment along with 'talking'. National Foundation, op. cit, p.241.

Ex-pupils' perceptions of classroom discipline
A close reading of the interview transcripts yielded some very similar patterns of experience as well as some very individual
ones. One of the features of memory is that people recall extremes. Generally speaking the informants recalled very few teachers in any detail. Given that most children would have experienced at least twelve teachers there is a large amount of missing information. At the time of writing the author has completed another thirty interviews over a three month period in a parallel, albeit more extensive, study. Special attention has been given to the problem of only a few teachers being recalled and informants are encouraged to try very hard to identify as many teachers as they can, and at least give their impressions about those they remember least. 'Punishing' teachers and much respected or liked teachers are remembered in some detail, but that those who are not remembered in detail are not remembered as punishers per se and are often lumped together as reasonable, usually strict, types of teachers.

What has emerged in all sets of interviews is that teachers are remembered primarily for their personality traits and sometimes appearance. Personality traits and disciplinary traits were recalled as both sides of the same coin. What a teacher taught and the way they taught were linked in the informants' memories with their personality, which essentially meant the way the teacher controlled either the class or the individual informant. In primary school in particular, teaching was 'discipline' for children and all else, for example content and methods of learning, flowed from that. The importance of discipline also created pupil expectations, and this aspect will be discussed later. Thus some generalisation about recollections about teachers seems possible here. In memories of school exceptional teachers in either a negative or a positive discipline sense are far outweighed (in number and depth of detail) by the great group of non-memorable ones whose disciplinary approaches would not appear to have challenged (memorably) the children's expectations at the time.

In third and fourth class we had lady teachers and they couldn't hit hard so it didn't matter much. In fifth class we had a lady teacher too. She could hit hard but unfortunately she couldn't aim straight. I often came home with welts. It wasn't because I was misbehaving, just because I couldn't do the right spelling and that.

The remainder of this paper will examine the forms of negative (punishing) and positive (motivating) disciplinary practices, what children expected, and how they responded to such practices (or as close as one can venture given the nature of oral testimony). The analysis concludes with some general statements about children's perceptions of discipline and a schematic
representation of the findings.

Some extreme experiences
There were instances of treatment that would not have found their way into any training manual, such as the teacher who scared pupils with a large lizard or used a broom handle instead of a cane. 1989/0008 M:1928 He was seen by the students to be 'mad'. Some teachers who behaved strangely or were somehow 'unsettled' would appear to have been returned soldiers. 1990/0027 M:1931; 1993/M:1919 Laurence specifically remembered that one returned serviceman literally crept about with a cane using it without provocation: 'We came to despise him'. So much so, that as a boy the informant vowed he would return and settle the score when he grew up. 1989/0004 M:1916 In a colourful account Shirley remembers one boy:

He used to have a very low voice. The poor kid was probably terrified. And I remember this lady [teacher] saying, 'Speak up'- BOING - 'Speak up'. The poor kid couldn't speak up so he got bashed to death. 1990/0006 F:1931

The boy survived such punishment. Others received worse two informants each had first-hand experience of a primary school nun losing all self-control beating them excessively. In both cases the children were moved to another school by their parents.


Experience of a 'mad' teacher was rare. Acts of what may be described as calculated brutality or sadism by teachers were slightly more common. For example, the (usually) male teacher who seemed to enjoy inflicting punishment for offences well outside any official guidelines, such as not being quick enough or smart enough to complete a task or not completing homework. Wal's experience with spelling exemplified sadistic behaviour on behalf of a teacher, with the teacher putting the pupil through an almost choreographed public ritual of humiliation and physical pain. One of Walter's teachers always had a string of figures up on the board when the students marched in and they were supposed to do the calculation while still entering. They 'got the stick' if they could not answer. That was the way every day started in that particular primary classroom, moreover, they were even caned for not knowing work if they had been away and missed it.

1990/0020 M:1922

A substantial number of informants recalled that they were unjustly punished. For some the sense of outrage they felt was all the more vivid because it was the only time they were punished. Many of them preface their recollections of being caned with 'I got caned once and it wasn't my fault'. For
example, Nita received one stroke of the cane once in her school life because she didn't know a 'different' poem. The children were told to recite a different piece of poetry each and they only knew about four and so by the time the teacher got to her the previous pupils had covered all the ones she knew, hence she was caned. WT19910006 F:1912

For others the sense of injustice was subsumed in miserable resignation because they were so often being punished, and they were so often victims. Elizabeth was punished often. She could not say or spell the word 'punctuate', and that made her infants teacher 'cranky' she recalled but she was never caned in infants. Then she moved to another school and was 'terrified' of her first male teacher. She was in a composite class and used to get into a lot of trouble for being distracted by the fact that the others were being taught different work, so she was 'caned a lot, you know, with a big bamboo stick'. She became resigned after a time. Another male teacher she had for the composite fifth and sixth class was 'only good' for caning. She was caned for not doing homework and for setting off down the beach when she 'shouldn't have'. She was caned by the headmaster for getting tired and not keeping up when he gave the school physical exercises. She remembers being caned so frequently that she took to rubbing pine-tree sap on her hands, and on one occasion having blisters from the cane. For not knowing the right way to do division she was sent down to a lower class for maths and that really hurt, she recalled. That seemed to have a greater impact on her than the cane. 1991/0005 F:1928

And sixth class. What was his name? Oh, Batesy. He had a bit of a name for belting into you. He'd start the spelling lesson and ask me yo spell a word like 'especially'. Well, I wouldn't hear the 'E' and started with 'S'. He'd say, 'Come and sit out the front'. Then he'd say, 'Spell it again', and I'd say 'S?'. He'd get hold of the cane and wham it across my leg and keep going. He'd say, 'Try again' and I'd say something and eventually I had to get down to 'A?', 'B?', 'C?'. When he stopped whacking me I knew that I had the right letter.

Forms of discipline - as punishment
The intention in this section and the next is to describe the types of discipline the informants recalled. It does not attempt to provide an all inclusive list although there is sufficient detail to create categories. What this particular section reveals is how punishment practice in a large number of classrooms differed very greatly from the regulations, providing substance to support the inferences drawn from the items in the Gazette given above.
Physical forms of punishment included, either caning by the principal, or by the classroom teacher, mostly across the hands, infrequently on the legs, or the use of the ruler almost exclusively by the classroom teacher across knuckles, legs, and ankles. Another common practice was slamming a book across the ear or on top of the head. There was the 'cuff' usually around the region of the head; the 'prod' with fingers or knuckles in the ribs, or a 'rap' with the knuckles on top of the head.

1990/0002 M:1907 Alf got a 'whack on the head' because he decided to change his seat. 1988/0001 M:1928 Joan recalled 'if you spoke you got a book in the ear or knuckles rapped on your head'. 1991/0002 F:1940 'Slaps' with the hand were received by primary children, or a 'pat on the bottom' as one informant who was speaking of her practice as a teacher put it. WT19910001 F Children could also be targets for a piece of chalk or other missile. 1991/0008 M:1930

Non-physical forms included 'exclusion', ie detention ranging from 20 minutes to an hour after school and involving hard work', 1989/0009 F:1904; 1991/0003 M:1914; 1990/0020 M:1922 placing the student behind a blackboard, standing them in front of the class or sending them into the corridor, often to sit in front of the principal's office, or into a corner. 1989/0009 F:1904; 1990/0003 F:1926; 1990/0026 F:1919; 1991/0007 F:1924, WT19910005 F:1938 Alan recalled being thrown out of a science class for mimicking the teacher and was never allowed to return. 1988/0029, M:1933 Withdrawal of privileges could include being taken out of a school play or banned from sport, also students could lose marks. 1991/0002 F:1940; 1988/0002 F:1922; WT19910017 F:1936C There were 'chores', unpleasant, time-consuming, jobs such as picking up rubbish or being kept after school to mix the ink. Writing out lines was also regarded as a chore. Finally there were spoken (or shouted) forms such as the threat (of corporal punishment, being kept down, or kept in), the warning, the straight reprimand, the chastening comment, the sarcastic or humiliating comment, the more extended 'talking to', and the angry, emotional tirade. 1988/0021 F:1924; 1988/0026 M:1928; 19900027 M:1931, 19910005 F:1928; 19910023 F:1934C; WT19910015 F:1929. The latter was described by Jim as 'ranting and raving'. 1990/0008 M:1930

It was only in the spelling part or reading that I used to get belted like that. As far as maths was concerned other kids got the stick. I did well in maths. I can't remember getting praised at all. He never said you were doing a really good job or anything like that. You were either right or wrong. If you were right, well that's enough praise. If it was wrong, well you knew it!
There were recollections of being 'talked to' in private. Margaret recalled a teacher giving her a talking-to when he met her with her school friend by chance outside the school. His concern was their giggling and laughing in class. She attested that 'straightened us up'.. 1990/0028 F: 1933 Some teachers were quite public in their determination that they would not cane and that they preferred 'a word'. One such headmaster 'Kilgour' was at Fort Street selective high school..Clarice Morris, 'The School on the Hill': A Saga of Australian Life, Sydney, Morris Publishing, 1980, p.84.

The author of Tom Brown's Schooldays has recorded that Arnold of Rugby only once lost his temper in class. It was when a boy rendered the first two words of Triste lupus stabilius, as 'the sorrowful wolf', and he boxed his ears. Similarly Kilgour's only angry outburst, to my knowledge, was on the day when a boy in M1, translating an unseen aloud, rendered the beginning of a sentence by the woeful phrase: 'He said this thus.' But he did not box the offender's ears.. A.R. Chisholm, Men Were My Milestones, Melbourne, MUP, 1958, p.27

A visit to the principal could mean having the ground 'cut from under 'you verbally.. WT19910017 F:1936C From some teachers a withering glance or gesture was enough. In one school 'the headmaster put the onus for discipline back on us' and teachers were 'able to look at you and make you feel a heel'.. 1989/0005 M

The vast majority of the forms of 'punishing' discipline recalled were public. They took place while a pupil was at their desk, in front of the class or in front of the school. Cuts in front of the school were usually reserved for major contraventions of school rules. Joan recalled a public caning because a boy had told a lie.. 1991/0002 F:1940 Loretta received 'six of the best' in front of an assembly for throwing a stone and hitting a boy on the temple.. WT19910017 F:1936C Serious moral or physical infringements such as bringing alcohol to a school dance or knifing a child did lead to expulsion.. 1989/0005 M; 1989/0002 F:1933

Although caning often took place in the principal's office it was still a public event as usually the children knew what was taking place. One principal caned the boys on the verandah. Von recalled she feared for her brother as she could see the canings taking place from her classroom window. She recalled them as 'vicious' and she was often reduced to tears by the spectacle.. 1991/0007 F:1924
What is clear, even from the writings of the commentator Freeman Butts, is that the primary school principal was often feared by the children because of his/her role as a punisher. Freeman Butts, op cit, p.69; 1991/0008 M:1930; 1990/0001 M:1931 Ted recalled the principal's power to 'nearly take your hand off' with 'six almighty cuts'. 1990/0002 M:1907 Peter stressed that 'the big fear was to go up to the boss's office'. 1990/0001 M:1931 Enid recalled being a good student who drew maps well, so well that the principal on inspecting her book accused her of copying instead of freehand drawing, and called her a liar when she denied the charge. He sent her out to wait for him and she was 'very scared', but her classroom teacher intervened. Enid anticipated an apology given her public humiliation but she never received one. 1990/0002 M:1907; 1990/0026 F:1919 According to Ken it was a daily occurrence for kids to get 'shunted down to the headmaster for three or six of the best' explaining that 'school was to learn, not horse around'. 1990/0034 M:1932

Some teachers never touched the children but provided physical evidence that they would if necessary. They might walk around holding a cane or ruler or flexing it. WT19910006 F:1915 Emma recalled a Scottish teacher in sixth class who 'we loved dearly', 'but she scared the daylights out of us, because her custom was to run up and down between desks, rapping on the desk with a ruler'. She did not ever attack the girls but the suggestion was that 'you'd better smarten it up'. WT19910014 F A proportion remembered the cane being used 'a lot'. 1989/0010 F:1911, 1989/0003 M:1914; 1990/0017 F:1914C; 1990/0006 F:1917; 1993/0003 F:1923; 1988/0031 M:1928; 1990/0032 M:1928C; 1993/0002 F:1934; WT19910016 F:1930; WT19910017 F:1936C Such usage was interpreted by informants as extreme 'strictness'. One informant referred to 'strong discipline' and another to 'direct' and 'severe' treatment. 1990/0031 M:1916; 1990/0018 M:1926C Moreover, children universally knew what general and unquestioning obedience entailed. These points will be taken up again in the last section.

One of the most frequently recalled reasons for punishment was rule infringement. What were rules for one teacher may not be rules for another. Rule infringement could be 'Two-up' in the toilets, playground 'rough-house', not completing homework, untidy work and ink blots, copying, eating in class, and writing with the left hand. Marie began to run away from school at age six for being caned for not using her right hand. Her parents intervened and she recalled being allowed to use her left hand from then on. 1990/0011 F:1927. See also 1990/0005 M:1930; 1990/0009 F:1927; 1991/0002 F:1940; 1991/0008 M:1930; 1992/0003; WT1991/0003 F:1939. Talking and whispering could result in
corporal punishment, as the general rule was that you did not speak without the teacher's permission. 1991/0002 F:1940; 1991/0008 M:1930; 1992/0001 F:1904. Children would talk, and despite punishment would continue to do so, as one informant pointed out: 'Amongst others I used to play up a bit... got caught talking'. They would give 'the cane for the least thing'. 1990/0002 M:1907 Untidy appearance and poor personal hygiene would attract punishment. Cleanliness inspections were common. Emma recalled:

I can remember the third class teacher whose name was Mrs Maxville, and who inspected our finger nails every Monday morning to see who was biting their finger nails. And if you bit your finger nails, she would give you a wrap on the knuckles just to remind you it was better not to do that. Mrs Maxville was a very nice motherly lady except with this custom of hers which was a little fierce..WT19910014 F

Nicotine stains on fingers could result in the cane. Interestingly no-one mentioned smoking among the informants, but smoking was cited as a common misdemeanour by teachers in the British study, and it does crop up in school punishment books as well. 1990/0005 M:1930C; National Foundation, op.cit, p.241.

The other two most frequently remembered reasons for punishment were inability or failure to do work in class, and as a warning to behave or to learn. Many examples can be found elsewhere in this paper. As Joan commented you 'had to know' the work and work acceptably fast or be punished even if you did not know what for. 1991/0002 F:1940 One of Sylvia's primary teachers hit her around the ankles with a ruler when she could not do her subtraction. She remembered not wanting to go to school.. 1990/0025 F: 1943 A sixth grade teacher was recalled because 'he was a fanatic for you knowing the basic facts'. Every Friday he set a test, and for every mistake the pupil was given one cut of the cane. Such infamous behaviour became a 'joke' among the students.. 1989/0005 M Joan was deterred from school by the cane whereas others seemed to arrive at some level of emotional accommodation in the face of inevitable corporal punishment. This will be pursued further in a later section.

Forms of discipline - positive motivation
At least as many instances of positive motivation were recalled as negative or punishing ones were. Children were positively motivated to learn or behave through formal prizes, such as books (and holy pictures in some Catholic schools) as well as stamps or stars on good work..1988/0029 F:1923; 1988/0042 F:1923; 1990/0015 M:1930C; 1991/0008 M:1930; 1993/0001 M:1919; WT19910005 F:1938; WT19910019 F:1919C. Rewards also came in the form of treats and
privileges (running errands, ringing the bell, raising the flag).

1988 0013/M:19141991/0007 F:1924. There were edible treats like
tangible but very powerful ones which involved teachers indulging
the class.

The most striking example of the latter is that of the teacher
reading stories. Pupils apparently 'loved it' when teachers read
to them.. 1991/0004 F:1936 For example, Walter remembered that
his teacher Mr Mulroney was 'very hard on people who didn't
conform to his rules. If he said sit up, you sat up and didn't
ask questions'. Mulroney 'did not teach with the cane in his
hand', yet the pupils 'knew it was there'. He never gave the
cane for 'not being able to do anything' and he would read during
the last ten minutes every day and never withdrew that activity
to punish. In Walter's mind the pupils thought highly of their
teacher because of all those qualities.. 1990/0020 M:1922
Another informant said of another teacher, 'we'd all work like
crazy just to hear' her read because she was so good at it. 'She
sat on her desk and read with feeling' and the 'class didn't
move'.1988/0002 F:1922

There was also the positive comment or gesture. These might
involve a word of praise or more overt demonstrations such as
reading out a pupil's work to the rest of the class..1989/0016
1990/0017 F:1914C; WT19910020 F:1934C Pat was very proud when one
of her compositions was sent off to higher class to be read out..
WT19910015 F

As indicated above in the reading example students reacted very
positively to some teacher's personalities and such personality
factors were extrapolated to everything those teachers did, so
much so that the very way those teachers operated was construed
as a reward for good effort or good behaviour or conversely as a
punishment for poor effort and behaviour. One informant recalled
a teacher who motivated them using little devices that would keep
them guessing.. 1988/0016 F:1917 Another made maths 'so
exciting...the day she first showed us algebra the whole class
was on a high'. 1988/0020 F:1926 One headmaster knew everybody,
as well as being an interesting teacher, a combination described
as 'marvellous'. 1991/0008 M:1930

For some informants the best remembered teachers were those who
were interesting, and some comments suggest inspiring teaching,
such as 'opened doors for me', 'set me on fire', and 'I remember
her [a nun] with quite a glow. She whipped up interest in me for
all sorts of things...We even acted out [a play] in the
playground for fun'. 1990/0034 M:1932; 1990/0006 F:1931 For Annabelle, 'Miss Hargood made me feel interested in doing well for my own sake and not just to please my father or other people', and as a result she tried to please her. One day that teacher set a long list of sums and promised threepence for the pupil who finished them first. Annabelle finished them overnight, but when she presented them realised the teacher was disappointed and decided that the cause was her over-eager response, a conclusion confirmed in her mind by the fact that she never received the money. She never dared to ask for it. 1989/0015 F:1922 At her selective high school Emma had 'some just wonderful teachers, including a 'little brown sparrow of a lady who set me on fire. This teacher 'never praised excepting in the most restrained terms but if you read out a composition and Ella Whitelaw said 'Oh good girl' you were made for the rest of the day'. WT19910014 F Some were seen to make a real effort to organise extras such as a camping trip, or a visit to a sporting event. 1990/0021 M:1925

[Because of the intervention of his father Wal was not made to repeat a year in Bates's class and went instead to Summerhill Intermediate High]

When I got there I found the atmosphere was absolutely different. There was no cane, that was one thing. I can't remember getting the cane at High School. The cane was used if you mucked up or did something serious, but you didn't get the cane for not knowing something. You might have got the cane for not doing your homework, but not because you tried to do the right thing and gave the wrong answer...

Teachers who listened, were understanding and sympathetic were also remembered, 1990/0005 M:1930; 1990/0013 M:1934; 1990/0031 M:1916; 1991/0001 M:1931C; 1991/0002 F:1940; 1991/0008 M:1930, WT19910011 F:1927 such as:

Eddie Armstrong. I learnt more off him in twelve months than I reckon I learnt of any of the others...he was a more understanding bloke...he seemed to sympathise when he knew you wasn't up to standard. But the other ones, they used to give you a book over the earhole if you were close enough. 1989/0001 M:1908

A sense of humour in a teacher was rare but valued. 1989/0023 F:1933; 1990/0034 M:1932; WT19910019 F:1919C.

On balance more cases of positive motivation were cited in relation to the secondary school experience than the primary one. A child could change their opinion of school entirely after the transition. 1990/0025 F:1943 One interesting comment was that the teachers were 'more business-like'. 1990/0024 F:1924C
Several comments with respect to Catholic schools do indicate that in those particular informants minds primary school nuns were 'tough nuts' 'unbending' and 'unapproachable', but that things did tend to improve noticeably in secondary schools, the nuns and the brothers, were not as 'harsh and tough'.

Boys and girls who attended state selective schools generally referred to how they were treated more as adults and were expected to exercise self-control. A typical description of such a school would be 'marvellous teachers, strict but fair', clearly linking good discipline with quality of teachers. The cane was more of a 'serious business'.

Boys fared worse

The interviews provide some insights into the construction of gender in the past and many informants raised the issue themselves. While girls over 14 n state schools were not supposed to receive the cane and this seems to have been adhered to there was also some perception among teachers that younger girls should not be caned, because girls were less likely to be caned than boys. Nonetheless they were not excluded from physical punishment as was evident in the previous section. Teachers who tended to cane a lot would seem to have caned girls and boys, but there is also the suggestion they were not as hard or relentless with girls. It would appear that boys in many schools often 'fared worse' than girls for equivalent misdemeanours. By way of illustration the boy who stole watermelons (see quotation above) received the cane, whereas a young girl who stole her sewing teacher's silver thimble had to write a confession as punishment.

The females interviewed had fewer memories of corporal punishment, and the cane in particular, than boys. Girls who attended single sex primary schools seemed to have rarely experienced the cane unless they had brothers, and then they knew more about caning. The cane was more of a feature of punishment in boys only primary schools.

Girls may well not have been caned 'as hard' as one informant recalls, but they often got 'the ruler' instead. Many a mistress wielded a ruler on hands, knuckles, ankles and legs. A ruler on the legs would ensure children remembered dance steps for instance, or would speed up the transit from playground assembly to classroom.
Punishments were recognised by the informants as taking on gender definition in less physical ways too, boys picked up papers in one school while girls were 'kept in'.

On another level girls behaved in different ways to boys in their own estimation. If the female informants were explaining why they were not punished they often used the expression 'goody goody' whereas males never did. For many girls, a teacher's 'big' voice could be enough to keep them in 'control', but not the boys. A number of boys responded to no less than caning when it came to obeying a teacher's rules, and boys were nominated by a number of informants not only as the recipients of harsher punishments but deserving of them as well.

One informant recalled that boys would 'give the girls heaps' for being treated more leniently. Certainly children who were on the good side of the teacher, or at least seen to be because of gender, appearance, conduct or good marks, were liable to be seen as 'teacher's pets', and as such objects of derision if not bullying. In teachers handbooks from the period novice teachers were warned, for the children's sake, not to become too friendly toward them or give them too much praise because of the other children's reaction. The British research on discipline undertaken in the late forties cited previously surveyed boys and girls on how they ranked incentives and deterrents and the lowest ranking was praise and the highest was a favourable report for home followed by good marks. One feature of many of the interviews was a lack of expectation of praise at home or at school. As 'Wal' pointed out: 'if you were right well that's enough praise. If it was wrong, well you knew it!'

A further aspect relating to gender relates to women as 'punishers'. As Wal's testimony indicates female teachers did use the cane, although, he does indicate that boys felt the women teachers hurt less and the impact of the punishment on them was commensurately lessened. Women teachers were not seen to be any more or less fair and just than male teachers who caned frequently:

   Miss Showers...couldn't stand a bar of me and she belted me all through the sixth...I didn't have to do any damn thing. If anyone else misbehaved she gave me a belting just as a warning.

In one informant's memory one female teacher 'bashed you for the slightest reason', while another recalls that in secondary school her female Art teacher used to 'crack you on the back' as she
Emotional accommodation
Few parents challenged corporal punishment and frequently followed it up by administering more: 'You never split that you got into trouble at school because you'd just get a hiding at home to reinforce what was said at school'. WT19910017 F:1936C
The exceptions would seem to have been unusual excess particularly if the welts were very visible and elsewhere than on the hands. One informant made the point that they took the harsh punishments for granted. 1990/0017 F:1914C Another pointed out that he 'used to get six of the best at the beginning of each science lesson without fail' because his teacher: 'Was one of those people. He just didn't like me. I took that as a matter of course'. 1993/0001 M:1919

Many informants, particularly, but not only males, regarded the cane as necessary for their own good, and it must be borne in mind that parents were seen by children to be the upholders of what happened in schools. 1988/0032 M:1925C; 1988/0040 M:1934; 1991/0002 F:1940; 1993/0002F:1934 Some were very used to corporal punishment at home and there is one clear instance of a girl with a particularly violent home-life. 1991/0002 F:1940

Acceptance can lead to adjustment and thus a much lessened emotional investment, a factor amply demonstrated by Mercurio in Caning: Educational Ritual, a study of a private boys school in New Zealand. Joseph A. Mercurio, Caning: Educational Ritual, Sydney, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975. One Informant, Elizabeth, who was 'always in trouble' said of caning 'I don't think it made any difference having the cane. It didn't do me any harm. It would sting for a while and you would feel sorry for yourself'. WT19910005 F:1928 It would seem that for some children the cane was not much of a deterrent: 'Got cane from about every teacher for talking'. 1990/0024 F:1924C Two of the informants mentioned the fact that the same people seemed to get into trouble all the time. 1989/0008 M:1928; 1989/0003 F:1933

With few exceptions it would appear corporal punishment was accepted by all the informants. As pupils those who least frequently received the cane were the most concerned and outraged about it. 1991/0002 F:1940 As one informant put it: 'There was a certain disgrace in getting the cane. It hurt and boys weren't supposed to cry'. 1989/0006 M:1921, and another: 'To get the cane was the worst thing in the world. It was embarrassing and it bloody well hurt'. 1988/0032 M:1925C Because punishment at school was so public, its recipients had to adopt acceptable responses to it or be ridiculed by their peers. In the words of
one: 'Smacks hurt your dignity more than your hand'. 1988/0025 F:1940 Boys especially not expected to flinch during caning and one female informant indicated that girls thought them 'brave' if they did not. 1989/0019 F:1939

Children had no options other than to either meekly, fearfully or boldly take the cane, run away. 1989/0011 F:1910; 1990/0009 F:1927 or retaliate. They would be punished no matter what the option in most cases. Clark's Knox Jamieson was certainly an unusual case, threatening his teacher with calm confidence. Some children prepared their hands if caning was frequent. One informant remembers boys hitting them against a brick wall to harden them up. 1990/0002 M:1907 You 'had to hold out' your hand when told to. 1991/0002 F:1940, if you did not the teacher might hit your knuckles instead. Pulling one's hand away prolonged or possibly worsened the punishment, especially if the teacher caught the hand on the up-stroke. 1990/0002 M:1907 Hiding the teacher's cane was one form of retaliation. 1989/0009 F:1904; 1989/0003 F:1933 None of the informants spoke of a child threatening a teacher with physical violence, although the author came across one incident in a very recent round of interviewing.

The teachers had to walk across the playground to our classroom, so you could see them coming. It would take a couple of minutes to walk across so it gave us a kind of break...I think the main thing was that the tension was gone too. A [primary] teacher at the beginning of the year would find out pretty quickly if you weren't too good at spelling and from then on you seemed to be in the bad books the whole while. You just couldn't do anything to please them. At High School you had different teachers, and you also had that break in between and that probably relieved the tension. Also too the spelling and dictation weren't there and that was the thing I was very weak at. So once you got the weak things out I concentrated on the good things. I did three years at Summerhill and finished up dux of the commercial section.

The playground escape
While the majority of classrooms in primary schools were not regarded as terrifying by children, the environment was nonetheless repressive and conducive to a build-up of pressure and tension. When a class was dismissed these tensions exploded into the playground. The playground was the site in which pupils could mimic adult behaviour, even the aggressive behaviour of their teachers, vent frustration, resume other agendas in games and play, as well as escape and find refuge. Most of the informants saw play-time as their time and the teachers did not appear to figure largely. However, classroom discipline could and did extend into the playground, and some teachers imposed more overt restrictions on activities than others. Common restrictions were those connected with rough play, but one
informant recalls his resentment at being 'cuffed around the ear' by a teacher for reading in recess. 1990/0013 M:1934C

An examination of how children utilised their play-time and the meaning they attached to their activities, as well as teacher incursions into the playground would make an interesting study. Folklorists, such as June Factor. June Factor, 'Games and Australian Folklore', paper presented at the Issues in Australian Childhood Conference, QUT School of Humanities and School of Cultural and Policy Studies, Brisbane, 23-25 September 1993. have been engaged in such work, but there is still much to be learned about how such activities illuminate what went on in classrooms in the past and what children made of school. It would appear from some of the interviews that children frequently valued the time they spent at play in the school more than the actual time in the classroom.

Expectations and responses
It was established earlier that in the past children regarded the teacher's personality and their discipline as a unitary concept. Discipline was control and teachers were expected to be controllers. Several informants made it clear that when they were children they understood one did not generally question teachers even if they resented a teacher's behaviour. 1988/0008 M; 1988/0026 M:1920; 1988/0038 M:1932; 1989/0009 F:1904; 1989/0015 F:1922; 1989/0016 M:1921, 1991/0007 F:1924. As will be more clearly demonstrated in this section, they were judged by the children according to their methods of discipline, although some already had established reputations. If they did not meet expectations then the balance of power could tip in the opposite direction. Extreme forms of positive and negative discipline were experienced and in relation to negative forms, often 'accommodated'. Positive forms of discipline were mentioned frequently, at least as frequently as negative ones, but the negative ones were usually related in more detail. Women teachers were seen as punishers and girls as receivers of punishment but to a lesser extent than male teachers and boys. There is substantial evidence to dispel the myth of female exclusion from corporal punishment and to prompt historians to look more closely at the construction of gender with respect to school discipline. Finally in the memories of the informants discipline as punishment was associated with primary school rather than secondary school. In this context it is worth noting again that the regulations prohibited the caning of girls after the age of twelve. Moreover, there was a general belief among educators prior to the forties that punishment was more effective in the 'formative years' of pre-adolescence. Possibly such factors did contribute to less general use of the cane in the
secondary years, or perhaps the tensions that led to punishment such as the presence of just the one teacher, and very large classes were absent in secondary schools. The extended quotation from 'Wal' in the Appendix points to that as does the quotation from the Education Gazette of 1944 given above.

Compression of detail is a feature of memory, thus the categories that follow may well represent this compression, but they may also represent the uncomplicated ways in which children made judgements in the past. Going by how informants described their responses to and expectations of teachers there seems to have been two types of teachers, and to use words used very frequently by the informants, teachers could be 'strict' and/or 'nice'/'good'. Where they were described in the latter way the majority of informants were female.

Strict teachers were not necessarily liked or respected and nice/good teachers were not necessarily teachers who did not punish.

The strict teacher exhibited a combination of the following: they caned frequently, they were impersonal, rigid, 'straight', emphasised rote learning and utilised competition. Rote learning and competition through testing seemed to go hand in hand. Teachers who aimed for good performance on public exams were invariably strict.

The good/nice teacher was thoughtful, treated the pupil as a
person, was understanding, did not depend on the cane or use it frequently, made lessons interesting and provided encouragement to learn or behave appropriately using prizes, treats, or praise. Such was the 'meek' teacher the children would not 'play up' on because he would 'talk to' them or the gentle nun who had a way of making them learn without them realising. Nice teachers would give a child a chance to explain, and in one case did not punish a child who hid instead of attending sport.

Miss Smith, according to Jean, was 'understanding', 'fair but firm', 'wouldn't stand any nonsense at all', 'excellent, and very inspiring'. This combination evokes the image of the teacher who was strict and nice/good. A teacher falling into both categories was typically described as: 'Fairly strict', 'not brutal or harsh', would help you if you were trying', but would be quick to reprimand and punish if one was playing around. Indeed, one of the characteristics of such teachers was that they 'made' the students work. One informant spoke of a sixth class teacher who was much respected because he was 'so savage' and insisted on a 'very high degree of work'. Another pointed out 'we were scared to some extent [of some teachers], but if we did the right thing by them there was no reason to be scared'.

The combination of strictness, fairness and motivation is a complex one:

The one man whom I really remember is Brother Brady, the teacher of my Bursary class. We all admired him and we all feared him. He used the strap a lot and we virtually learnt out of fear. The thing was that he knew that you could do the work before he put the fear in you. He really brought the best out of people.

Ken recalled:

The fellow who taught is Latin. He really was interesting...They used to call him 'Slim Jim'. He was a real funny fellow. He made us study. The kids hated him. Oh, they loved to hate him, in that he made us study. He was good! I can't remember any of his methods, but I know we were scared of him.

Dorothy hated one teacher who would 'bash you for the slightest reason - if you blinked your eyelashes in assembly', but summed
up all the rest as: 'I really liked my [other] teachers. They were all very strict'. Her memories exemplify the importance placed on fairness and the nexus between 'good' and 'strict'. This form of presentation of memories about good/nice/strict teachers is a common one among informants. It is also strikingly evident in an autobiographical-come-social commentary publication in 1929. The teacher writing the book mused on caning:

Canes were futile things; I am sure there is not nearly the naughtiness in schools now that there used to be in the days of canes. The children here never need the cane, the girls that is. The boys may: I do not know. When I went to school I was caned rather frequently. Mostly it was for talking; I was full of ideas and never bothered to contain them. I do not think caning had much effect upon me...she must have been a hard sort of person, and a humourless one...All the same she must have been a very thorough teacher in some ways. Whatever she made us learn, useful or otherwise, I remembered it.. Helen Sinclair, Tales Out of School, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1929. pp.195-6.

All of the elements of contradiction connected to harsh punishment are evident in this quotation, from the grudging admiration for the overly strict teacher who taught well, to the belief among the education professionals in some quarters that punishments were no longer so harsh as they were. Clearly the children could not appreciate the latter perspective.

The teachers who fell into both groupings strict and nice/good maintained what the children thought was good order, were fair, ie did not punish arbitrarily, and the children knew where they stood. It would appear that obvious 'guidelines' and 'knowing how far they could go' were important to pupils.. 1991/0002 F:1940; 1990/0019 F:1910

The Figure below attempts to present these conceptual categories. It does not represent scale.

Figure: Perceptions of Teachers' Discipline

Students accepted all degrees of strict and nice/good teachers

with two exceptions, the 'crazy' or brutal teacher and the teacher who might have had some nice qualities but lacked control over the class.

The 'mad' or viciously brutal teacher was discussed earlier. Teachers could be very strict, even punish frequently, but not be seen as mad or brutal. The crazy/brutal teacher had no redeeming
qualities and lacked self-control or was excessively and coldly brutal in the pupils' eyes. The nice but 'weak' teacher would not have the respect of the students. In both cases their exceptional behaviour would inevitably prompt resistance, for example hiding the cane or giving the teacher 'a hard time' if they could not control a class. With respect to the latter children might play practical jokes such as leaving through the window mid lesson. 1991/0003 F:1940 or scaring city teachers sent to country schools with the local fauna. 1990/0025 F:1943. Straightforward disobedience was another tactic:

I remember the chap in third class. He was the greatest no-hoper of a teacher that one has ever met. He had absolutely no control over the kids whatsoever. And he was always threatening he was going to cane. And one day he actually brought in his cane, which was a twig off a peach tree! I've never seen anybody with such a lack of control...everybody just laughed. He just had no control. We didn't learn anything. He was just a laugh. The kids could just control the whole place. 1990/0001 M:1931

One female informant recalls a young blonde teacher who they admired for her looks and being married to an American, but they 'gave her a terrible time' and 'would have her in tears'. It would seem, 'everybody mucked up on her because she was young' and because they 'were so used to having these old maids who were fabulous teachers' and who 'petrified' them. 1990/0033 F:1927

Some teachers were simply ineffectual, ie, not 'very good':
She didn't have any imagination herself, or creativity and she absolutely squashed that in everybody...she couldn't handle the class. The boys used to tease her. She was silly. She was a big, butch kind of a lady. Somebody had a cold and blew his nose and she said, 'You're a very rude little boy. You should go outside the blow your nose. You shouldn't be trumpeting like that in here. So then they were all putting their hands up all the time asking could they go outside to blow their nose. She wasn't a very good teacher. 1888/0016 F:1917

Pat remembered the nuns commanded respect but if there was a 'weak' one you might have a 'bit of fun with her', although not 'vicious' fun. WT19910015 F:1929

at all given the size of the classes and the 'wild' types of children they were. 1989/0008 M:1928; 1991/ M:1914, Such thoughts are worth mentioning, for they are the inevitable by-products of recalling the past from a present perspective. The analysis above however, has been developed within such constraints, using the processes of memory to inform the conclusions and to help to identify those aspects of memory that would seem to provide the best approximation of how the informants experienced school when they were children.

Conclusion
This paper has attempted to make a limited foray into the history of classrooms. The entry point is discipline (read as teacher control mechanisms and classroom management) because discipline was so intimately bound up with the child's experience of school in the past, or at least the memory of that schooling, although children's story books, rhymes, even entries in individual school magazines indicate the central role of discipline in general and punishment in particular in the child's world if not in their actual experience. What became clear from an examination of forms of punishment was that a large number of teachers were not guided by regulations about corporal punishment, and sometimes ignored them in spectacular fashion. Classrooms were not necessarily ruled by the cane but the atmosphere was repressive because most teachers were strict. Children accommodated strictness and tough, even harsh, control and most teachers were not resisted. Those most likely to be resisted were overly and brutally strict, or lacked control altogether. For the most part children conformed and did not question the authority of their teacher to behave as they did. Most parents would not have either. Yet it is also clear that for many corporal punishment was no deterrent to breaking a teacher's rules. Children developed expectations about how a teacher should control a class and responded very positively to those who combined strictness with good/nice qualities.

There were teachers who were seen to be good but not necessarily strict, especially teachers with a long history of being at the school. It would seem nonetheless that the vast majority of teachers were strict in one way or another. For most children school was a rule bound routine to be tolerated, suffered, hated, enjoyed or loved. How teachers controlled their class was very largely the key to those feelings.

Endnotes