

Chilblains at Chailey

Yet again Annie Goodhall stirs the dormant depths of my mind with her stimulating [article](#) explaining the dubious aspects of chilblains at Chailey.

My memories go back to the 1940s and hard winters we had in those days. I was at St Georges, which was the residential part of the Heritage Craft School for disabled children, and in between school hours and meal times we were bundled out onto the playground come rain or shine, or even snow.

There we had an open-sided pavilion to take shelter if need be, but with the exuberance of life in our young bodies, more likely than not we would be out on the playground unless forced to dive for cover by a downpour of rain.

My chilblain memories come from snowballing and spending time in the playground getting chilled to the bone. But, when the shivering consequence of being exposed to the winter elements took hold, we would rush to the communal bathrooms with their six baths and 25 wash basins separated by wooden forms, above from which our numbered towels hung symmetrically from rows of pegs.

We would steep our hands in hot water and feel the stinging effects of life returning to our frozen fingers, although sometimes, we would seek out a radiator on which to warm our hands in the extensive corridors of St Georges where we could warm ourselves, only to find their tepid warmth was not enough to heat the sprawling expanse of the building.

Unfortunately, there was a price to pay for these small attempts at luxury and, sure enough, two or three days later our fingers would swell up like red and purple sausages, itching beyond belief and extremely painful at the same time. A visit to the dispensary to see the nurse was unavoidable where, not only were we treated with camomile lotion to stop the itching, but also lectured on how to avoid getting chilblains by not putting cold hands into hot water or on lukewarm radiators, rather to allow them to warm up naturally, which to us appeared impossible because we never seemed to get warm.

Jack Hayward.