

## **Dorothy Gascoigne**

*I was born in England and went to an all-girls school where we did the usual... reading, French, typing, book keeping. We carried on till the beginning of the War (World War II) doing French and, just in case we got taken over by the Germans I did German and, in case we got taken over by the Russians I did Russian. I can't remember a word of it now, although I could do the French part, most of it.*

*Then I worked at a woollen mill as assistant to the accountant. The firm bought wool in Yorkshire & brought it down to Lancashire where the mill was. When I was 20, I ended up as one of the Managing Director's secretaries because many of the people who would have had jobs like that had gone to the war. When War ended my boss went out to Tasmania where they had another woollen mill, and I was asked by the other Managing Director to "look after this New Zealand guy" who was on rehabilitation leave. He had worked in New Zealand for a firm that bought merchandise from the firm I worked for, and then, as a Nzer, had become a flying officer in the RAF. Later, he became my husband and we came out to New Zealand in May 1946.*

*My son went to Selwyn Kindergarten (named after Bishop Selwyn) when he was four. The kindergarten was in St Andrews Church hall in Epsom. I started off in Selwyn Kindergarten as a mother helper, taking my 3 month old daughter with me. They had enamel bowls placed on a wooden plank for the children to wash their hands and each child brought its own towel for the week. Everything had to be put out each morning and put away into a little room after the kindergarten session, because the hall was used by the Scouts, the Girl Guides and so on.*

*Mrs Peg Batten was Chair of the Selwyn Committee at that stage, and a very forceful person she was! The Selwyn Committee began to raise money to replace the kindergarten on land that was granted to the AKA by the City Council. Joy Munkowitz was on this Committee as Treasurer and was also Jessie Neill's right hand lady. We held Committee meetings sitting in the graveyard when it was fine, and frantically worked to raise funds to open this new kindergarten, which is now Lady Cobham. One fair we had raised 700 pounds, mainly in coins, and Joy, who was a large lady, took it home that evening and slept on it Saturday and Sunday and took it to the bank on Monday.*

*We also had morning teas with a bring and buy... you took something to sell and you bought something and you took a plate for morning tea and the money went to Lady Cobham. These were held at whoever had the biggest house at the time, and we made masses of celery and marmite rolls, I can remember those. We all had small children and after the War not much money to go around. There was also a Mothers Club that helped provide food for the fairs.*

*We started in 1950 and it took years to raise the funds. The AKA had no money to give, but the Ministry of Education gave a 2 for 1 subsidy on the*

*building and 2 for 1 subsidy on equipment. They did this for all new kindergartens throughout the country. They published a book listing which types of equipment could be subsidised. We had to raise, I think it was 7,500 pounds. That would have taken us 6-7 years. Yes, it must have done because Debbie my third child was on the first intake to Lady Cobham in 1957 so it would have taken us seven years to do it. My youngest daughter, Jenny, went to Lady Cobham in the early '60's, and Debbie's daughter also went aged 4 – she's 25 now!*

*Lady Cobham finally opened in 1957. It was opened by Lady Cobham herself, the wife of the then Governor General. There was a great hoo ha, because it was the first time a kindergarten had been called after a person other than Constance Colegrove who had been a Principal of the Kindergarten Teachers College in the early days. Several people resigned from the Committee because they thought it still should have been called Selwyn.*

*At Lady Cobham I was Secretary, Treasurer, and cleaner. We did all the cleaning ourselves because we couldn't afford to pay someone else to do it. We washed windows, we got our husbands involved, did the gardens and mowed the lawns. There would have been 20 children then with a teacher, a teacher aide and a 'mother help' who helped clean up. We had a different 'mother help' at different times. There was only morning kindergarten, no afternoon kindergarten if I remember.*

*At that time the Association was looking for new people to go onto the Council. I was 26 or 27. I'm 78 now! Peg Batten said "You'd be good", so I was chosen by the Committee to represent Lady Cobham, but also stayed on the Lady Cobham Committee until about 1965. At Council meetings there were the President Geoffrey Myers, Honorary Treasurer Des O'Halloran, and the Association Secretary Jessie Neill, and I can't remember the others. Of course, as new members we were too scared to open our mouths.*

*Jessie Neill had her office downstairs, next to Myers Kindergarten's area. She died in 1978. She had not resigned very long before she died. We never knew how old Jessie was, but I think we found out in the end that she was about 84 when she died. When she was ill she said she didn't know what to do with her money, but a friend suggested that because the Association had been such a big part of her life she should leave them her money. And she did.*

*She really was marvellous. With Jessie there, they needn't have had Council at all, they could have had Jessie and she would have done everything. Jessie said where the students went, she said where the teachers went. As far as I know, Jessie was always there, she was there when I came on Council. She sat in at Council meetings and took all the Minutes. Jessie and Des O'Halloran between them decided whether you could have this or have that or not. You didn't have to worry about your kindergarten site because Jessie would already have looked it over, talked with the builders and seen to nearly everything.*

*I know she died in 1978 because I helped to clean up her house and all her bits and pieces. She knew every student and did the salaries as well, because at that stage the Government didn't do the salaries. They were done by the Association. She did the salaries and every card was written out by hand. She must have been an amazing person and you can tell by her bequest to the Association that it was her life. She had a very good garden and made apple jelly and jams, and supplied the old Logan Campbell Kindergarten from her full pantry.*

*Originally I think there were 24 on the Council and then I think it got split up to be representatives from each East, North, West and South areas and that is when Marge Fogarty would have come in representing the North Shore. We arrived at Council meetings, but there wasn't much we could do in those days being so young. People from the top seemed to control it. If something affected your area or your kindergarten then you brought that up at Council. Council sub-committees were Finance, Building and Education. Most of the Council work was done by the sub-committees.*

*The Council met upstairs where the Girl Guides had the back part looking out over Myers Park towards Greys Avenue. We used to meet at lunchtime. The Girl Guides had a secretary who in the middle of our meeting always needed to go to the kitchen and she would clomp, clomp, clomp through. Eventually we got enough money and the Girl Guides were given notice. The partition along the back of the room was taken down and offices made for the General Manager, three Supervising Head Teachers (with a typist) and Mary Williams who was Treasurer.*

*Margaret Dean, wife of George Dean the City arborist, was office manager. She then resigned, the lady who did the salaries was ill and eventually died, so at that stage nobody could decide who was going to take over as office manager. Judy Dent, who was a Council member, said she thought she could do that job but would need help. So Judy did the office administration, which included dealing with architects, builders, and the Education Department for various kindergartens. I said I would do the salaries part of it, Mary Williams managed the accounts, Joy Ramsey was the principal Supervising Head Teacher, Joanna Greenhough was in charge of all playgrounds and equipment including the Equipment Room downstairs and Judy Gilbert was our resource officer. We had a Resource Room downstairs filled with a mixture of interesting 'treasures' that were gladly taken by teachers for their kindergartens, and stuff that we would never use.*

*However, our resources upstairs were very scant and Mary Williams and I used to bring our own typewriters in with us on Monday morning and take them home on Friday night. Eventually there were sufficient funds for the Association to buy some secondhand equipment.*

*Later, a fourth Supervising Head Teacher was employed. That was Cynthia Girling. They had offices in the main building and each looked after a different*

area. They were all fully trained and had been Head Teachers at kindergartens for a long time.

Judy Gilbert, one of the Supervising Head Teachers, was a whiz. She was small, full of vitality, and still is. Judy was the one who would go out to the fantastic places in South Auckland and come back and say, "Look what I've got! A whole lot of seconds plastic buckets!" They would go into the storeroom and, on a Friday afternoon when all the kindergarten teachers came into Myers to meet with the Supervising Head Teachers, they would rummage through the Resource Room and go home with their cars piled up. I can remember, she came back one day with all these little red plastic jugs. Everybody went for these red plastic jugs. I've still got my one at home.

Next door to Myers Kindergarten was the YWCA. One day a man came along and he had these wooden tables and was dumping them. He'd taken them out of the YWCA and asked if the kindergartens could use them. The answer was "Yes!". There we were with 25 of them piled up downstairs at Myers!

The Kindergarten Teachers Association reps used to come to a meeting with the Supervising Head Teachers on a Friday. If there were problems between staff in a kindergarten the KTA reps would bring that up for discussion at the Supervising Head Teachers' meeting. I recall Mary-Anne Gundesen and Robyn Houliker were reps.

During my time on the Council, different people came on with different ideas on how to run the place. We had a Canadian guy, Michael Beausoleil. He was charming, but he didn't have any notion at all about managing kindergartens and didn't last long. Then the place was just run by us girls in the office who were left, Judy, Mary, Joyce and myself, and Marj Fogarty would come in and advise when needed. Marj was still on the Council but also working.

I did the teachers' salaries but at that time they were paid directly by the Government. I had to collect the information from their sick leave and leave without pay schedules, and type it all up onto forms for the Education Board who had a deadline on Friday at 6.00pm. If they had leave without pay or sick leave and they forgot to send in their pay sheets in time they missed their salaries for a fortnight, but could get an Education Board advance of salary.

Kindergarten maintenance was under the auspices of the Education Board and the Education Department. For instance, if you needed a new roof, you rang the Kindergarten Association and they put the application into the Education Board or the Department of Education who organised it and paid for it. Also, the ASB used to make a lump sum grant to the AKA to be divided up between kindergartens.

As the years went on, we did eventually get people on the Council like Bruce Slane, a solicitor, and Ken Hayr, a headmaster who became a school inspector. People who were in various professions or ran their own businesses came on for the reason that they had children at our

*kindergartens. As the time went by we got more people with management skills. Sometimes people only stayed on Council for perhaps a year or a couple of years while their children were at kindergarten, which meant there wasn't the continuity of knowledge of the Association. All they had more or less was an interest in the kindergarten they came from.*

*To begin with, we were all more interested in our own individual kindergartens as treasurer or whatever position we held. After a while we realised that it was a big area that we were responsible for. From the 60's onwards there was more building of kindergartens and many kindergartens would have been built in the late 70's. I think it was probably because as a country we were more financial.*

*The biggest way of raising money for the Association was the floral carpet we made on the floor of the Town Hall. It was open for 3 days - Thursday, Friday and Saturday and people paid an entrance fee that went to the AKA. We couldn't start till the preceding Tuesday and then spent hours on our hands and knees. Two or three Council members had done it for years. We had a pattern to follow, and used African marigolds, pansies and other flowers with lots of little bits of greenery. It covered the Town Hall floor, leaving just enough room to walk around.*

*In 1961 we held a Kindergarten Variety Show in the Auckland Town Hall. The Kindergarten Committee of Lady Cobham did the "Seaside Adventure", in which we sang "O, I do Like to be Beside the Seaside". We had handmade costumes of red and white and blue and white stripe, and mobcaps with frills around. The men wore navy blue singlets and navy blue trousers down past their knees. A well known pianist played and we danced. Another volunteer had shown us how to dance and made us sing properly. Right at the very end, when we'd all finished dancing, along came this very slim lady in a bikini! It was a great success!*

*At that time we had the influx of Pacific Islanders who did not speak English and were shy, had no money and no transport and didn't understand the purpose of kindergarten. I used to go to the committee meetings at kindergartens in the Otara area. This was around 1974.*

*It was very hard work getting the South Auckland kindergartens going, even though they were built by the Government and we didn't have to raise any money for them. The government built Clydemore, Favona, Bairds, Mangere Bridge and Kingsdene, I think. Bairds Kindergarten in those days was a creche type of kindergarten where they had lunches.*

*After Clydemore Kindergarten opened, I can remember the mothers used to bring their children and they would sit in the storeroom next to the teachers office and socialise and have coffee and then take the children home. That's what they thought they we're meant to do. At Clydemore we had our first male kindergarten teacher, Evan Audley from Australia and trained in Australia. For a lot of children it was wonderful to have a male teacher.*

*Kingsdene was a good committee, a good Head Teacher, but getting someone to take the Treasurer or Secretary job was difficult. I remember one time we got an Island man and he said he would be Treasurer and everyone sort of said "Oh good!" so I wrote out a cheque and when he went to sign it he brought out a pencil. I said, "You can't sign a cheque with a pencil". Then he admitted he'd never seen a cheque.*

*Fortunately, we had a few Maori and Pacific Island teachers then, for example, Dawn Matata at Kingsdene, Elaine Derbyshire and Lesley Pohio.*

*I was on the Council for 30 years and became Vice President, keeping my fingers crossed so I wouldn't have to be President. I finished in 1984. Luton Dawes had come on as General Manager after Michael Beausoleil and because there was a ruling that kindergarten teachers had to retire at 60 he decided that I should resign when I reached 60, so then I went and worked for the Education Board. I was made a Life Member of the AKA and given a greenstone pendant as a memento of my time there. Later I gave it to my youngest daughter to make up for all the time I spent at kindergarten meetings and wasn't home when she came home from secondary school.*