

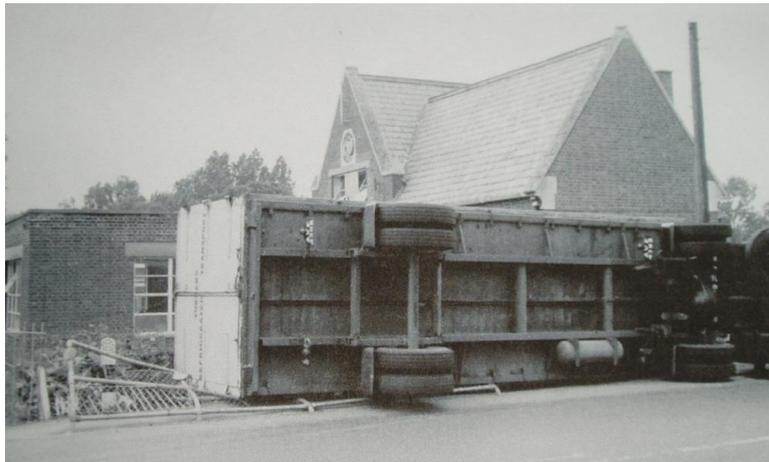
2 Minutes - The Difference between Life & Death!!

Just like now Hildersham children since the closure of the Hildersham National School have gone to Abington for their primary education. 2 Potential Tragedies were avoided at Abington Primary school in the 1960s that could have turned out oh so differently.

I like all the other children of my generation re-trod the steps of many children before me in the 1960s.

During my first year at school in 1960 there was a real panic as the head master Mr Faulkner caught Tuberculosis (TB), & all of us children had to go on an emergency & rigorous course of injections.

Then 5 years later, on Thursday 17th June 1965 at 12.04pm, not many weeks after taking my 11 plus, another near fatal accident occurred.



You will note the time carefully, 4 minutes after 12 noon. At dead on mid-day we had left our classroom nearest the road and either gone to lunch in the school hall or walked home for lunch those leaving the school at 12.02 pm mostly with their parents; just two minutes later a huge Turner's refrigerated lorries had turned over on its side as it had come round the Abington post office corner, as this was the main A604 route before the bypass the lorry slid through the flimsy metal fence and ended up embedded in the school class room we had been in just a few moments before.

The Cambridge News of Friday 16th June 1965 explains, under the caption "Children survey the damaged fence after yesterday's crash": (I am in the middle with my back to you)



Cambridge News of Friday 16th June 1965 - Protests after Crash:

The fears of Great Abington villagers about their troubled corner reawakened after a lorry crash yesterday when two minutes made the difference between life and death for a party of school children.

Children at Great Abington Primary School who do not stay to school meals went home together at 12.2 p.m. and two minutes later a refrigerated lorry came round the corner from Linton. It tipped sideways it bludgeoned its way across the footpath before crashing on its side into the front gardens of the school house.

Now the villagers of great Abington are certain to renew their protests about this corner.

The chairman of the parish council, Mr Ray Smith, of 3 Magna Close, says: "This will come up at Monday's parish council meeting, I can assure you".

"For years we have tried to get the corner controlled, either with a halt sign or traffic lights. But we can never get them from the Ministry of Transport"

But there seems ample testimony in the village that the spot is accident prone. "There has never been a fatal accident, but there have been some nasty clatters and near misses" says Mr Smith. After yesterday's days accident he thought the corner would be the main topic of the next council meeting.

The headmaster of the school, Mr F. F. Knights, points out that a vehicle only needs to go slightly wrong round the corner to be heading straight for the school.

"Luckily, the majority of children stay to school meals" he says. "The group that go to Great Abington had just passed within a minute or two along the footpath yesterday."

Playground: the front yard of the school is out of bounds to children because of the danger of the traffic. They use the playground at the back. "Accidents are very frequent at the corner," says Mr Knight. Two weeks ago there was a minor accident on the Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday of the same week.

Not very long after the accident, the construction of the A604 bypass was agreed and in this aerial photograph of June 1968, three years later you can see the bypass under construction:

