

January 2024

# THE SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE

## PAST, PRESENT - AND FUTURE?

### Welcome to our newsletter!

Hello and welcome to our first School Meals Service newsletter. This is a space where we will be sharing some brief updates about our work (and, as a general rule, all food-related puns will be intended). Thank you to everyone who has participated so far, whether through an oral history interview, attending one of our events, sharing your written memories via our website, or sitting down with us for a chat. We really appreciate the time you have taken to share your memories and experiences of school meals!



QUESTION 1 *Once a week I have to take my dinner to school as I live some distance away and have on that day to supervise boys dinner. I take sandwiches for this meal, sometimes a party which I ask the cook to warm up in the kitchen. We have suggested that we might be allowed a meal "on the school" when we do this duty but the suggestion was turned down.*

#### Upcoming trips

In January, the Sheffield team will be visiting the West Glamorgan Archives in Swansea to listen to oral history interviews recorded between 1976 and 2013. This is a valuable opportunity for us to hear people's memories of school meals in Wales in the early 20th century, with some of the interviewees talking about growing up in the 1880s!

This is a response from a male School Master to a Mass Observation Directive sent out in 1948. Mass Observation was a social research project that took place originally from 1937 until the 1960s. They often sent questionnaires (or 'Directives') to volunteer respondents. I am currently working my way through the online archives for information about school meals during the Second World War in particular.



Our first featured photo has been kindly shared by Sue and Terry, of their primary school canteen in Winchester. Thanks both! Although this photo was taken in 2010, the service hatch hasn't changed since the 1960s! If you'd like to share a photo please email [isabelle.carter@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:isabelle.carter@sheffield.ac.uk)



#### Taking stock

This month, the full School Meals Service research team will meet in London to discuss our progress so far. Fieldwork led by our colleagues at the University of Wolverhampton at our four partner schools in London, Cardiff, Bradford and Glasgow is now complete! Our research into the history of school meals policy led by University College London and the oral history interviews led by the University of Sheffield, remains ongoing.

#### Calling all lunchtime supervisors and dinner ladies!

Do you know anyone who worked in these roles at school before the 2010s and who might be interested in talking to us? This is a gap in our research that we are currently very keen to plug. We would very much appreciate it if you could please spread the word!