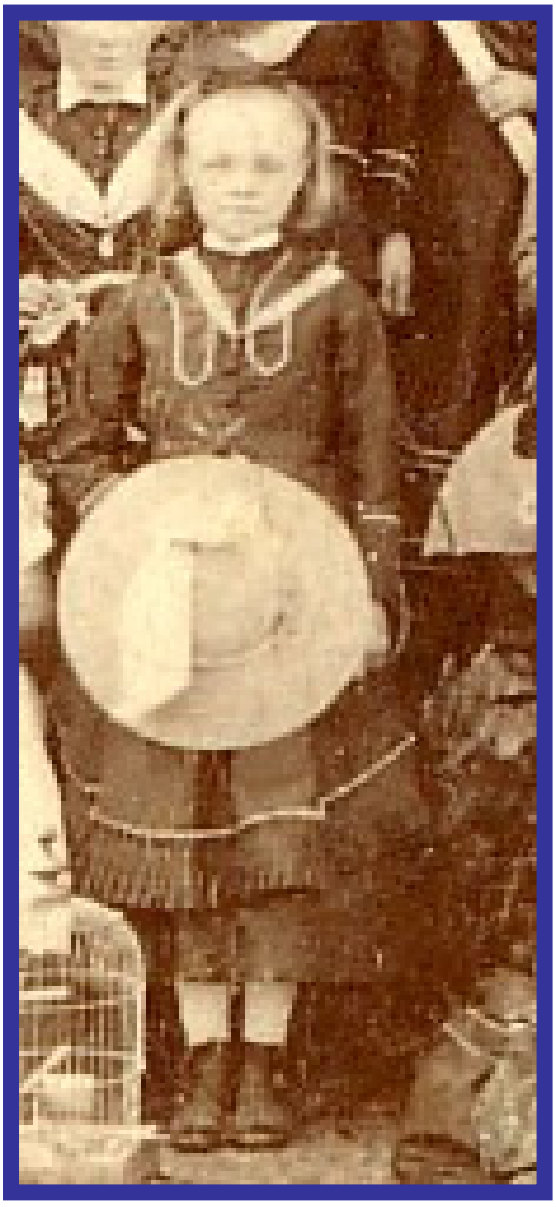
A SONG FOR THE BLUE

Early Loreto Uniforms

The only record we have of the early uniforms are from photographs, brief comments in the school magazine and a List of Requirements which is undated but would seem to be from c.1900. This list is a treasure as it also has samples of the cloth used.

The black and white photographs gives clues as to style, but of course, not to colour. It is necessary to look beyond the black and white photographs and imagine a colour filled world where one criticism of the uniforms was that they were too bright.

The early uniforms varied enormously as this was the period before the mass production of clothes. Many students would have had their own school clothes made or they would have been made by the sisters.



1876 Dress

A variety of different dresses were worn in these early days

French songs.

23rd SEPTEMBER.—Third Division Soirée (Italian) as great a success as the previous Spanish, German, and French ones. An Italian anthem to the Pope was admired by all. Wore our new uniforms at dancing, and think them very pretty, they are the old "blue of the wild hyacinth,"

with collars, cuffs and yokes of black Irish poplin, and three bands of same round bottom of skirt.

Extracts from the school magazine 'Eucalyptus Blossoms' June 1895 describing their new uniforms.

SCHOOL RECORD, 1898.

FEBRUARY.—Every school year brings some novelty, this time it is the Swedish Drill, a more energetic exercise than our Calisthenics done to music. Loose costumes are to be worn for the drill; ours are of dark blue serge, trimmed with white military braid.

Extract from 'Eucalyptus Blossoms' Dec. 1898 describing the drill or sports uniforms

to see the Exhibition. But ah! what visions rise up before us, "proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain," when we realise that we shall have to appear in rather antiquated winter costumes, for in the shade of our quiet, cloistered home we are not very particular about the fashions. Our comfortable winter hoods and large summer hats hold their own, be the fashion what it may, dainty bits of lace, up-turned or down-turned head gear, but when it comes to the time when we go forth to adorn society, then we must be as foolish as anyone else. So as the holidays approach, many a letter contains such start-

Extract from 'Eucalyptus Blossoms' Dec. 1890 describing their "antiquated" uniforms

A Song for the Blue.

(Loretto Uniform.)

A song for the Blue, the Royal Blue,
The dear old uniform tried and true,
That year after year appears;
'Tis a royal treasure our bonnie Blue Gown,
A thing of history and renown,
I love it well, tho' I haven't worn
A uniform for years.

Sweet memories come as I fondly gaze,
On the dear old relic of other days,
And the tears came quickly too,—
Ah me! how little I knew of care
In the olden days so sweet and fair,
When happy and careless I used to wear
A gown of Royal Blue.

'Tis an old, old frock, but I love it well,
And many a story it could tell,
Of a past undimmed with tears;
Ah! once I was never known to frown,
I was always merry and never down,
But now I am like the old Blue Gown
Faded and worn with years.

Some of the maids of the present day
Complain that the colour is far too gay,
They'd prefer a more delicate blue,
The "cut" they say isn't stylish enough,
The material too is rather rough,
A frill or so and a dainty puff
Would improve the Royal Blue.

O! pray thee fair maidens, don't pine and sigh,
You'll have silks and satins before you die,
And tints that become your faces;
A time will come when you'll say adieu,
Perhaps with a tear, to the poor old Blue,
And in frocks of many a varied hue
You'll air your little graces.

But ah! in the future far away,
Will your fair young lives be as bright and gay,
Your hearts as pure and true,
As they are to-day?—We do not know,
But life to me had a fairer glow
When I laughed in the old sweet long ago,
And wore the Royal Blue.

There are only a few who pout and frown
At the varied charms of the old Blue Gown,
And we'll sing our song without them.
In after years they may love it too,
When their lives are tinged with a sadder hue,
They may turn to the poor old Gown of Blue
And wish it hung about them.

We all may wish but we'll wish in vain,
For the dear old days won't come again,
Nor the old familiar faces—
Had we soft rose leaves we would pelt
The children who feel as we have felt,
Who silently kneel where we have knelt
In the old familiar places.

But they must not think we love them less,
Because they have such happiness;
Ah no! but we implore them
When to Loretto they say adieu
To be as loyal and as true,
As great a credit to the Blue,
As the girls who went before them.

Three merry cheers for the old Blue Gown,
And a sigh for those who cry it down,
A frown for every foe;
We're proud of our colour, and think it grand,
To belong to Loretto's Royal Band,
Whose uniform thrived in a foreign land
Three hundred years ago.

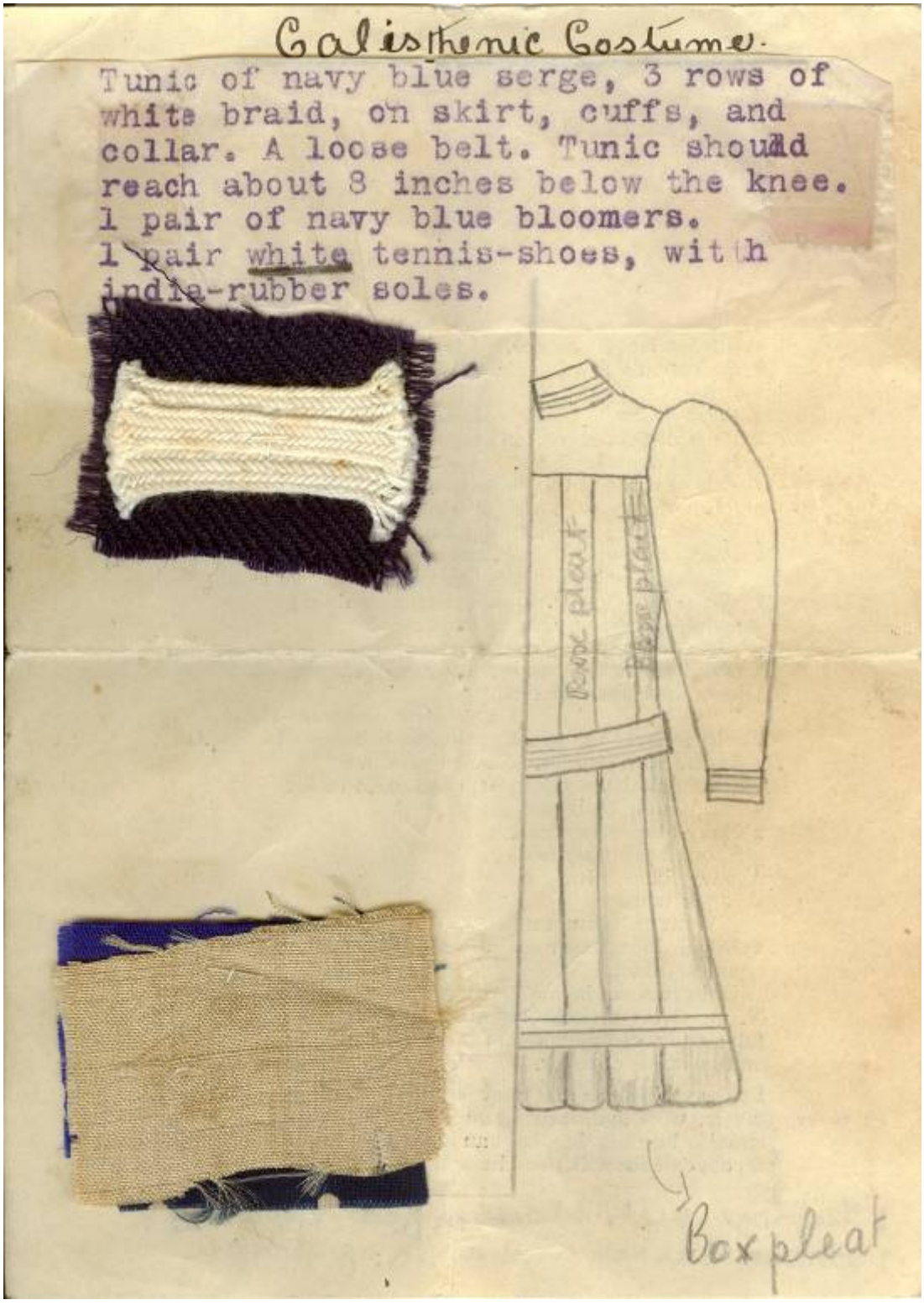
"True Blues" we are and where'er we roam
Our thoughts will turn to our early home,
And the old friends leal and true,
The years may come and the years may go,
And locks of gold may be locks of snow,
But we'll ever sing, as we're singing now,
"Long live Loretto's Blue."

Rob Roy.

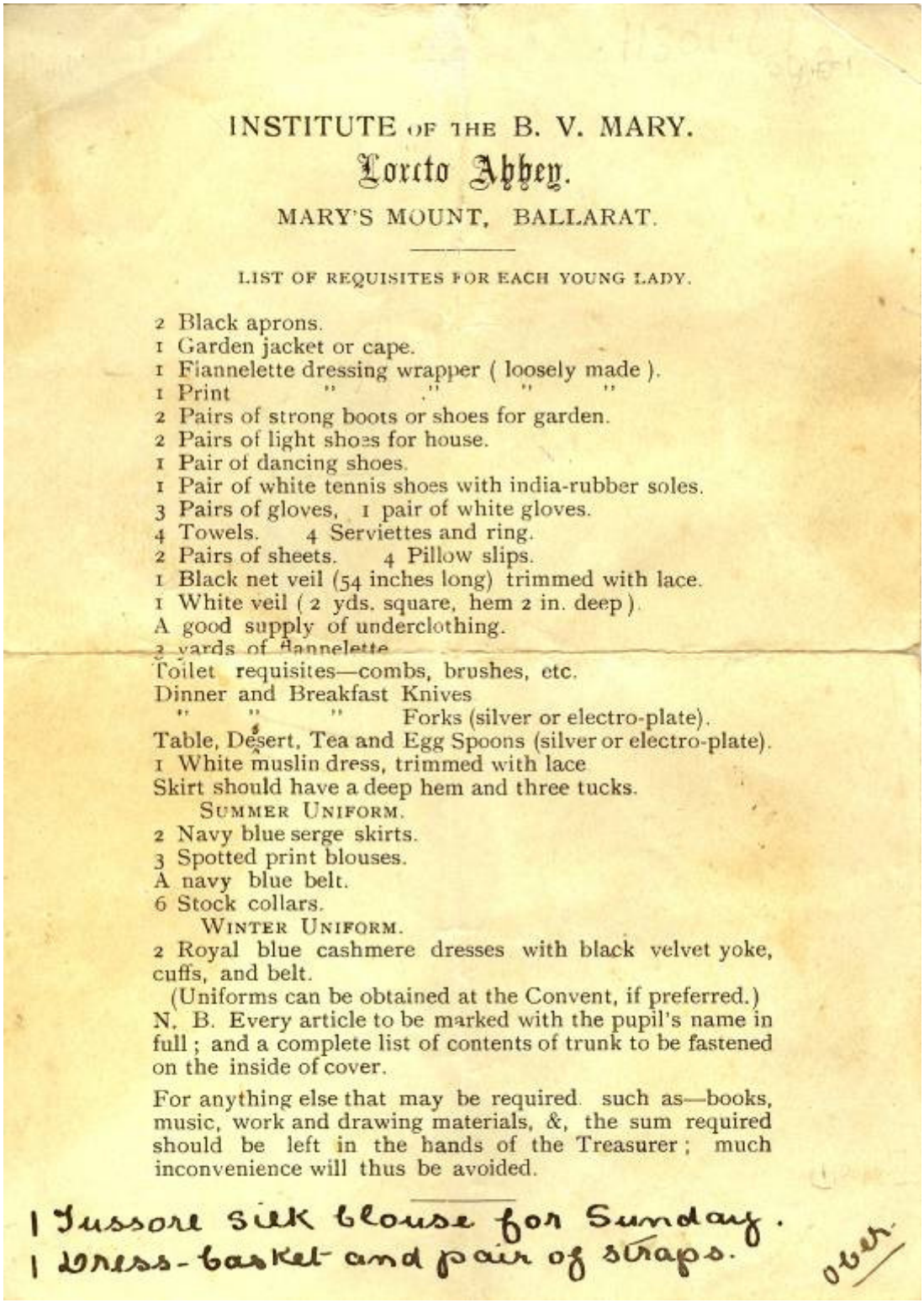
Foreign Correspondence.

SOME interesting news comes to us from th
Convents in Spain. Rev. Mother General visited th
of the Institute in the closing months of the
and was received with great demonst
joy. We quote an extract from a l
"Never did a brighter day dav
than that which brought us Rev. M
the 15th September. Never were the
decorations, tableaux and music. T
passage was festooned with pepp
coloured glass lamps hung in the
each festoon, grand Chinese lamps a
the centre of the passage. Lourdes was ablaze with light, it was
land. The Colonel, at the request of Father Zarb, kindly al
Staffordshire Band to play one evening under an awning in the
playground. This was a real treat. Father Zarb had a grand suppe
at his own expense for the soldiers. The Naval Band cam
evening."

Extract from 'Eucalytpus Blossoms' 1891 singing praise to the uniform



A description of the sports uniform with material samples for the sports uniform and the general uniform, c.1900



INSTITUTE OF THE B. V. MARY.

Loreto Abbey.

MARY'S MOUNT, BALLARAT.

LIST OF REQUISITES FOR EACH YOUNG LADY.

2 Black aprons.
1 Garden jacket or cape.
1 Flannelette dressing wrapper (loosely made).
1 Print " " " "
2 Pairs of strong boots or shoes for garden.
2 Pairs of light shoes for house.
1 Pair of dancing shoes.
1 Pair of white tennis shoes with india-rubber soles.
3 Pairs of gloves, 1 pair of white gloves.
4 Towels. 4 Serviettes and ring.
2 Pairs of sheets. 4 Pillow slips.
1 Black net veil (54 inches long) trimmed with lace.
1 White veil (2 yds. square, hem 2 in. deep).
A good supply of underclothing.
2 yards of flannelette
Toilet requisites—combs, brushes, etc.
Dinner and Breakfast Knives
" " " Forks (silver or electro-plate).
Table, Desert, Tea and Egg Spoons (silver or electro-plate).
1 White muslin dress, trimmed with lace
Skirt should have a deep hem and three tucks.

SUMMER UNIFORM.

2 Navy blue serge skirts.
3 Spotted print blouses.
A navy blue belt.
6 Stock collars.

WINTER UNIFORM.

2 Royal blue cashmere dresses with black velvet yoke, cuffs, and belt.

(Uniforms can be obtained at the Convent, if preferred.)

N. B. Every article to be marked with the pupil's name in full ; and a complete list of contents of trunk to be fastened on the inside of cover.

For anything else that may be required such as—books, music, work and drawing materials, &, the sum required should be left in the hands of the Treasurer ; much inconvenience will thus be avoided.

1 Tussore silk blouse for Sunday.
1 Dress-basket and pair of straps.

over

List of Requirements for boarders c. 1900 – describes the summer and winter uniforms and white muslin dress trimmed with lace

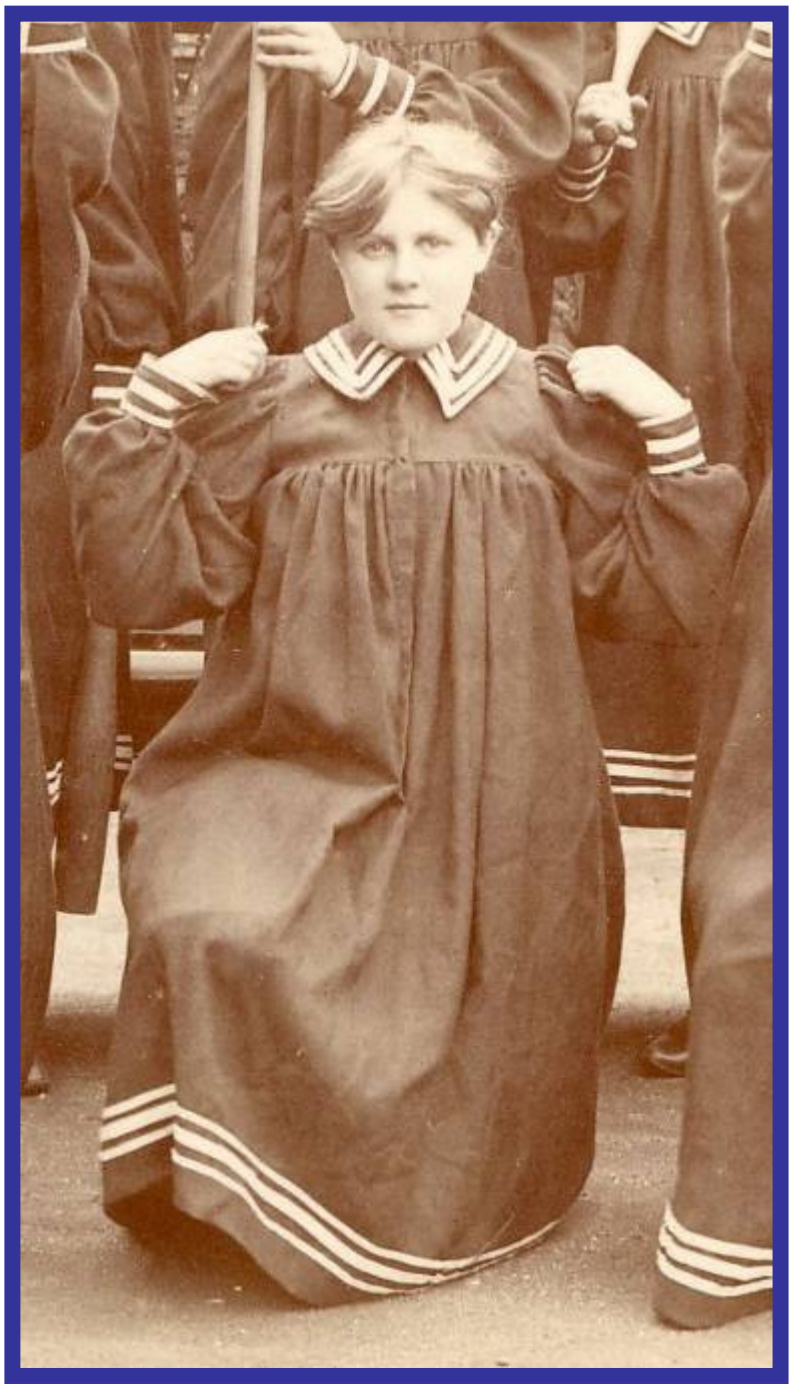
Dress 1888

By the 1880s the dresses were more consistent although still varied in design. Probably hyacinth blue as this was the traditional Loreto colour worn in Ireland.

Uniform 1895 – note the ‘mutton chop’ sleeves. She is wearing a sodality medal and sash and is standing on the flat roof of the Novitiate Building

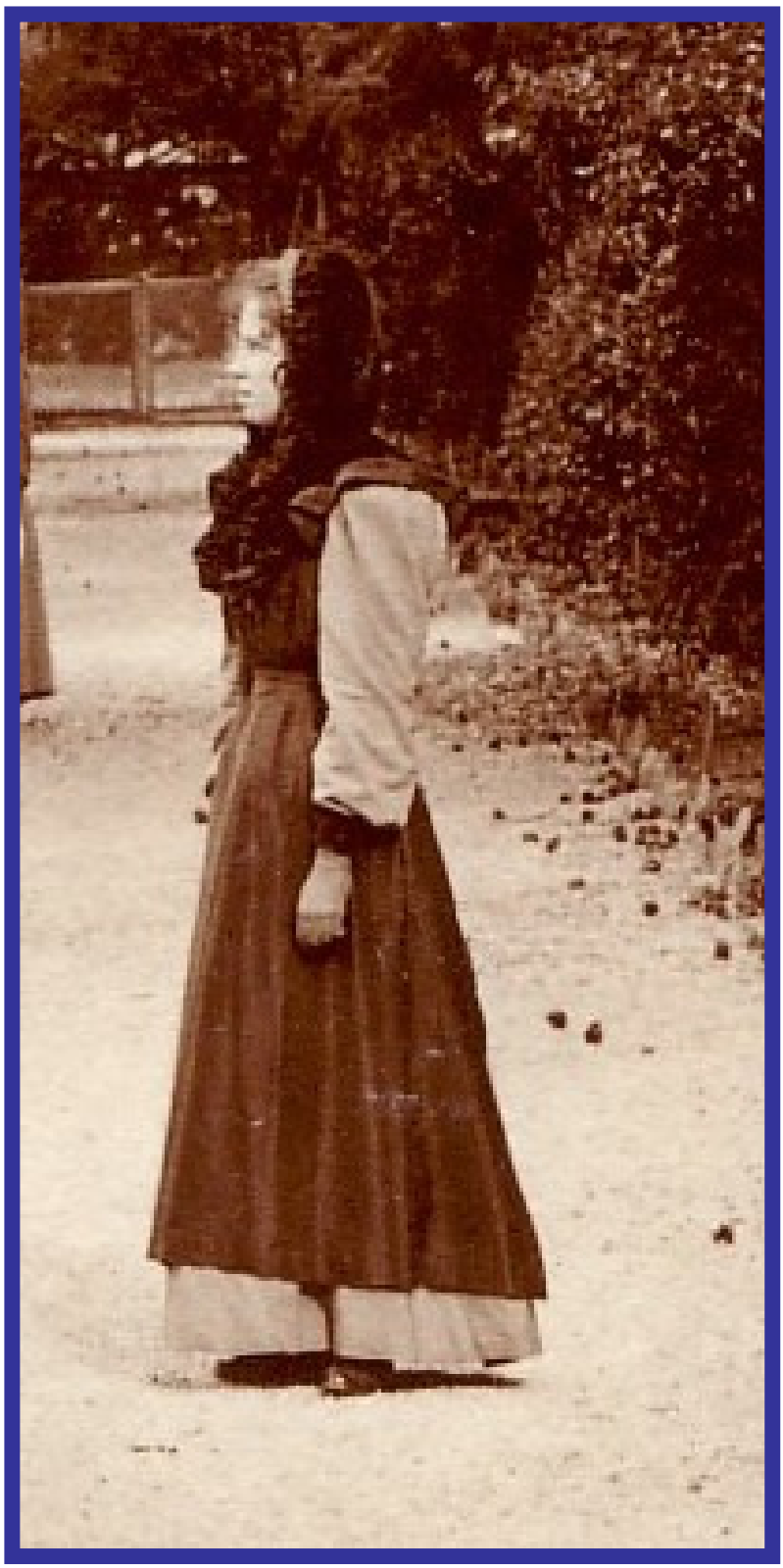
Uniform, 1899

The “new” uniform was introduced in 1895. They were a “wild hyacinth” blue with black poplin yoke, collar and cuffs. They were described in the school magazine of the time as having three black stripes on the hem which is not apparent here.

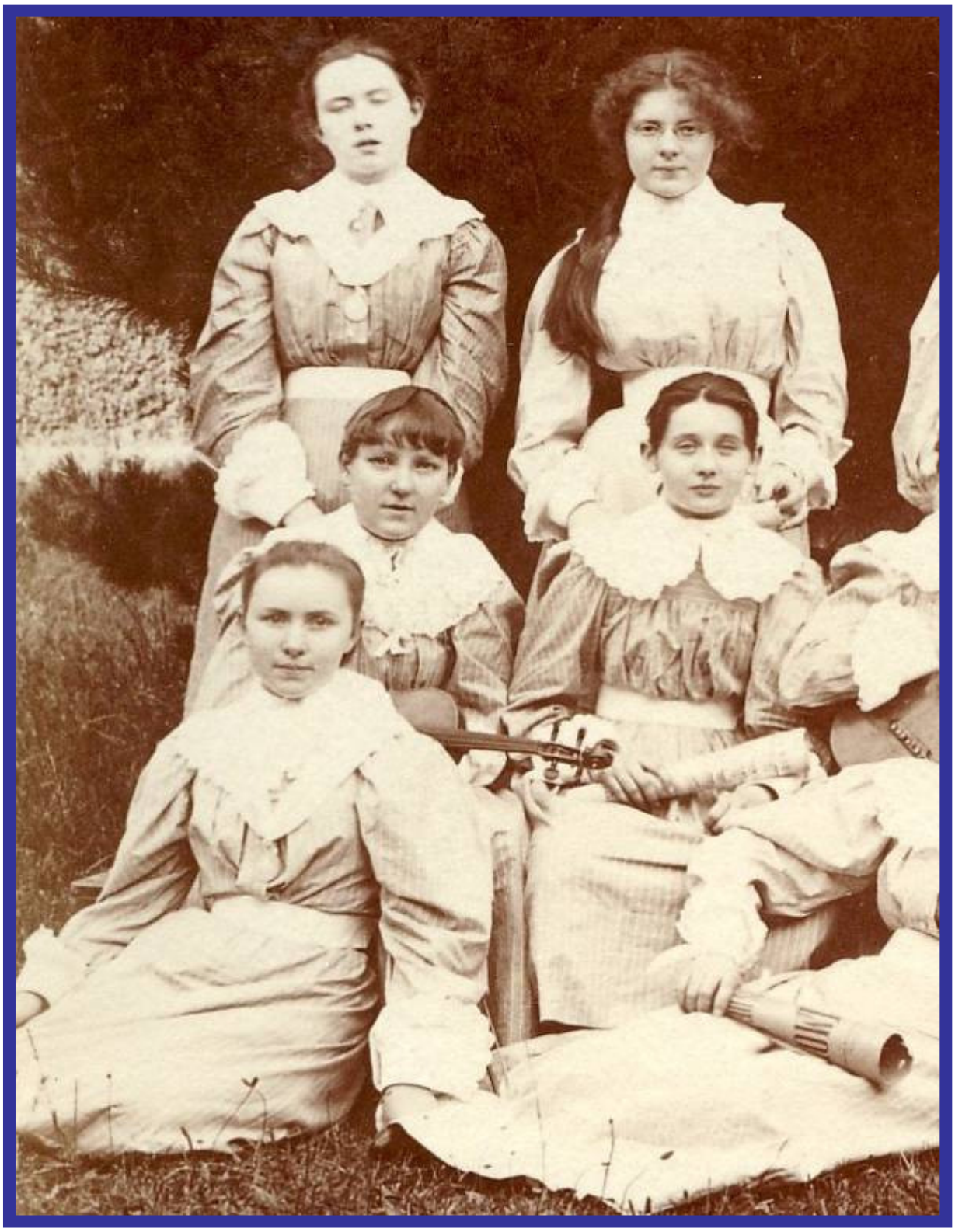


Drill or Sports Uniform 1898

These uniforms were used for ‘Swedish Drill’, a form of calisthenics. They were dark blue serge with white braid. Still worn in the 1920s but with a belt, they were called ‘tram liners’ referring to the three stripes similar to cable tram lines



Winter Uniform 1899 – note the pinafore and woolly hood. The pinafore or 'overall' was worn for games and because the blue cashmere of the dress faded in the sun.

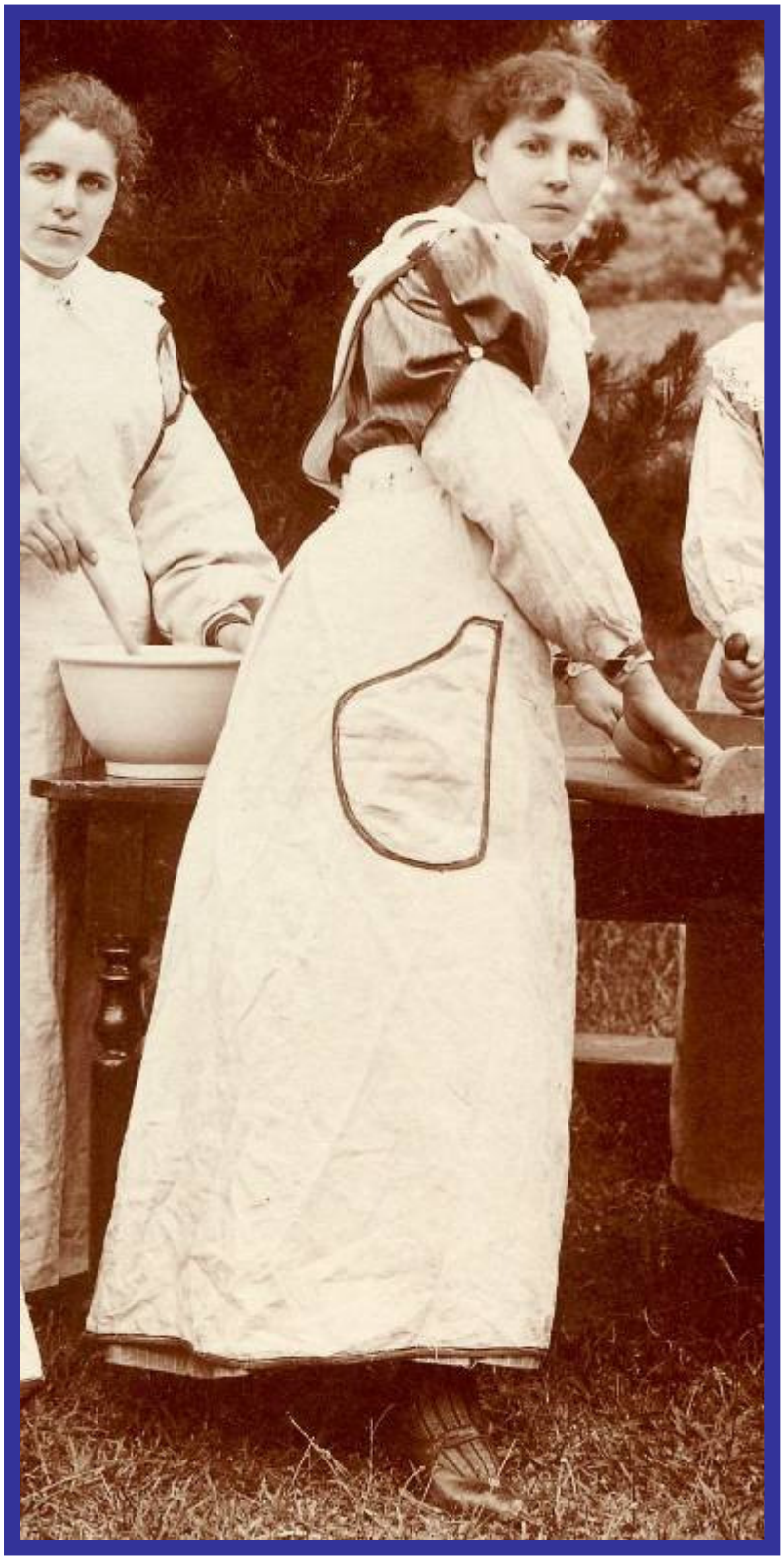


Summer Uniforms, 1898

Uniforms in 1901 – royal blue cashmere with black velvet yoke, collar and cuffs.

The Uniform in 1903 has changed significantly – note the lace shawl and collar and the blouse and skirt. This may have been the summer uniform.

Summer Uniform 1901 – They wore large brimmed hats in the sun – ‘mushroom hats’. These were possibly the spotted shirts described in the ‘List of Requirements’



For Cooking Classes uniforms were protected with large aprons and sleeve protectors.

Speech Night or Evening Wear 1899 – also worn on Feast Days and Concerts. A blue sash and hair ribbons were worn.

Basketball Uniform 1912 – different coloured berets were worn to differentiate between teams.

Uniform in 1927 – after the First World War the dresses were much shorter, worn just above the knee

Communion Veil worn on Sundays and Feast Days. Short black net veils were worn to the Chapel on week days.

Uniform in 1913 – note the first appearance of the tie. This uniform came in around 1908. The skirt was navy and the blouse was cream with pale blue spots

Winter Uniform in 1946

Winter Uniform 1951 – note sodality medal and School Councillor cross

Winter Tunic, 1955

Winter Uniform 1975 – the shorter the better!