

NINETEENTH CENTURY VILLAGE SCHOOLS

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Four west of Severn schools were studied:-

1) Tirley Church of England, (2) Staunton Church of England, 3) Forthampton and (4) Redmarley d'Abitot. Having studied the Log Books of above named schools it is possible to visualise something of village life and the way in which schools were conducted after the introduction of universal education.

An extract from The Revised Code of Regulations for 1875 determines the use of Log Books:

Art. 36

"The Principal Teacher must make at least once a week in the Log Book, an entry which will specify ordinary progress, visits of managers and other facts concerning the School and its Teachers, such as dates of withdrawals, commencements of duty, cautions, illnesses etc., which require to be referred to at a future time, or may other wise deserve to be recorded."

Art. 39 states that the Log Book should include "A summary of the Inspector's Report after his annual visit".

Art. 40 states "The Inspector will call for the Log Books at every visit and report whether they have been properly kept". 1

FORTHAMPTON

In 1818 there were said to be 30 children attending a Sunday School, and between 40 and 50 attending two or three charity schools wholly supported by Mrs. Yorke. In 1883 Joseph Yorke supported a day and Sunday school with 60 children. He built a new school which was in union with the National Society in 1837. He retained ownership of the building, and said in 1849 that the school was under his control. By 1846 there were over a hundred children, with some of them drawn from other parishes, and subscriptions and school pence. Attendance had fallen to 40 by 1889. The school, a tall single storey building of brick, was closed in 1931, and in 1966 the children went to school in Tewkesbury.²

TIRLEY

In 1816 there was a dissenting Sunday School there, but in 1818 there was said to be no school at all in the Parish. Presumably any children attending school then went as in 1826 to the day school at Hasfield for both parishes. By 1833 there was a Church of England school in Tirley with an attendance of 40 on weekdays and 55 on Sundays. It was supported by an Endowment producing £5. a year, by subscription and by annual sermon. The children were taught by a man and his wife. In 1842 a part of

1. Gloucestershire Record Office 5334/1
2. Victoria County History, Vol.8, P.208.

the glebe was conveyed for the site of a new National School, which was built in the same year. The Capital sum of the endowment helped to pay for the building. In 1846 there were 56 children in the school apart from those who went on Sundays only, but only two Dame Schools still survived. The new National School was built of the same sort of stone as the Church, and included a teacher's house. A classroom was added in 1896. Average attendance was 43 in 1863, when fees of 1d. and 1½d. were paid, 58 in 1897 and 36 in 1938. By 1964 it was a 'controlled' school with an attendance of 60.¹

STAUNTON

School erected by subscription in 1862, with residence for mistress, at cost of about £700, it will hold about 80 children, average attendance 66. The site was given by Sir E.A.H. Lechmere, Bart. Miss Alice Rose, mistress.²

REDMARLEY D'ABITOT

National School (mixed) erected in 1860 for 130 children, average attendance 78. Miss Eileen Merrick, mistress.³

These four schools are similar in that they all had a wide catchment area which necessitated the making of long journeys by many pupils.

The log books studied were all compiled between 1850 and 1890 prior to the advent of metalled roads. Several references to "Shoe Clubs" imply the difficulties of obtaining suitable footwear; therefore inclement weather accounted for many absentees. Flooded roads, severe storms and heavy snowfalls also prevented children reaching school.

The following recorded facts bear evidence of repeated cases of truancy and closure of school for long periods: meets of the local hunts; mops and fairs at Gloucester, Ledbury and Tewkesbury; driving game for shooting parties; gathering wood after a gale; assisting with harvesting of fruit, corn and vegetables; epidemics of mumps, influenza and scarlet fever.

In the nineteenth century schools were also used as village halls, consequently there were many official closures to enable the building to be prepared for concerts, club meetings, rent collections, distribution of charity money and all social functions.

It is very obvious that the length of the term was determined by the head teacher, and that the holidays usually coincided with agricultural pursuits. As far as can be ascertained schools were expected to open approximately 400 sessions annually. "April 13th 1873. Wet day, bad attendance, school closed. The Master can well afford to do this for a few days, or even a week, inasmuch as the School has now opened 347 times already this year."⁴ Inadequate artificial lighting caused early closure, thereby enabling children to reach home in daylight, so avoiding absenteeism on these grounds.

1. Victoria County History, Vol.8, P.104
2. Kelly's Directory of Worcester, (1888) P.181
3. Ibid. P.172
4. Gloucestershire Record Office S265/1

The introduction of 'School Pence' in 1875 served a dual purpose. Primarily to supplement school funds, secondly to encourage better attendance parents were encouraged to pay a month in advance.

Charges were:-

"1st Child in family	8d.
Other children	4d.
Weekly - 1st Child	2½d.
Other children	1½d."

This entry is followed by the remark "Nearly all the children brought a month's money in advance, so I hope to have more regular attendance".¹

The attendance registers were treated as a legal document, and an error in marking was almost criminal and could result in dismissal of the head teacher. It was the duty of the incumbent and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (H.M.I.) to examine the register at each visit. Many log book entries bear testimony of mistakes discovered and teachers being duly admonished. As a result of a visit of H.M.I. to Redmarley School in July 1872, the registers were found to be inaccurate and the Government grant reduced by one tenth with a threat of the loss of the whole. One senses the relief felt by the head teacher when registers were returned from H.M.I. "(without note or comment) so I conclude they are perfectly accurate, which is a real unadulterated consolation".²

The first recorded date of the visit of an attendance officer is in the log book of Tirley School, 6th October 1882.³ Subsequent visits were irregular and presumably considered unimportant. Of the four log books studied this is the only reference to an attendance officer mentioned.

In order to maintain academic standards an H.M.I. regularly visited schools and gave an annual examination followed by a report. There are numerous entries relating to such visits. The government grant and teachers' salaries depended on a favourable report. The following extracts testify to the importance of this.

"1876. September 2nd. Received this day from Education Department the Report of H.M.I.

The Infants appear to have been utterly neglected, their attainment in Reading, Writing and Number are almost nil - and for Object lessons and Form and Colour there is not even apparatus. Under the standards, Reading is fair except in the first, writing fair on slates, moderate on paper, Spelling and Arithmetic imperfect, more than half present failing in these subjects. The girls' needlework is fairly good, and boys know a little grammar, but of Geography hardly anything is known. As a whole the attainment reflects discredit on Mr. Durston. Discipline pretty fair. Not even a paid monitor to assist. A box of Form and Colour, Object Cards, Infant Gallery and more clothes pegs are needed, and a second door should be made so as

1. Gloucestershire Record Office S265/1
2. Ditto
3. Ditto 5334/1
4. Ditto S265/1

to provide a proper separate approach to the Offices, which seem imperfectly drained. One tenth deducted from Grant for faults of instruction; Grant under Article 19 (B)1 must also be withheld. That under Article 19 (A)3 has been allowed with hesitation. J. Watkins name removed from Register of Pupil Teachers serving in the school."

Teachers were expected to adhere to a rather rigid timetable which had to be approved by the H.M.I. Great emphasis was placed on religious education, especially the catechism, with special regard to the Duties. The vicar paid frequent visits to the school and expounded on "their journey through life". An extract from a diocesan Report says "The private prayers taught seem rather long for home use".¹

Church was attended with great regularity. Needlework was an important part of the curriculum, usually taught by a visiting mistress, often four times weekly. The master had to compile a list of object lessons suitable for a year's work. Many long lists of these are recorded. This is an extract of some for Infants:-

March 1888

Lead pencils, carriage wheels, silk, matches, the dog, the elephant, the duck, paper, snow, chalk, oranges and iron."²

Many songs and poems were taught and often performed for visiting celebrities, e.g. 'The Village Blacksmith', 'Bruce and the Spider', 'The Lost Child', 'Goodnight and Good Morning'.³ A few references to the teaching of arithmetic are recorded.

One pupil's book belonging to Joseph White of Maisemore (who was later apprenticed to James Morris, grocer of Gloucester, for the sum of £49) shows the type of problem taught. "What sum did the gentleman receive in dowry with his wife, whose fortune was her wedding suit? Her petticoat having two rows of furbelows, each furbelow having eighty-seven quills, each quill twenty-one guineas. - Answer £3,836. 14s." This problem was laboriously calculated with numerous rows of beautifully formed figures. One wonders if it helped in calculating his grocery bills in later years.

In 1882 is the first recorded school visit to the Royal Porcelain works at Worcester, also the first annual Prize Distribution. A concert in the school had raised £4. 17s. 6d. and sixty-eight books were purchased for prizes.

In each school there was one qualified teacher (who resided in the adjoining School House) assisted by either a monitor or a pupil teacher dependent on the number of pupils. As noted before, salaries were paid by results. An appointment of a head teacher at Redmarley D'Abitot in July 1874 gives these details:-

1. Gloucestershire Record Office S 265/1
2. Ditto S 334/1
3. Ditto

"Salary £50 per year, plus whole of school pence, plus half the Government Grant, but to pay a Sewing Mistress at two shillings and sixpence a week. (123 on Registers)."¹

Universal education being introduced in the nineteenth century caused many problems to arise. It appears that working class parents did not consider it necessary to send their children to school regularly, but preferred them to work at home to supplement their meagre income. One teacher comments "It is somewhat singular to notice how seldom parents think of the duty of keeping children regularly at school."²

The impression gained from the study is of the almost insurmountable task undertaken by teachers. The educating of unwilling pupils without the co-operation of parents, and at the same time maintaining academic standards required by H.M.I.s.

1. Gloucestershire Record Office S 265/1
2. Ditto S 146/1.