



The National School was founded in 1854, so in 1954 Mr Dillingham, who was the headmaster at the time, produced a booklet telling the history of the school from the Day-Books kept by successive headmasters. The front cover of the booklet is illustrated above and on the following pages are extensive extracts which faithfully reflect the mood of their time.

Fees, Prosperity and Building

Unfortunately material dealing with the actual building of the School is somewhat obscure. The first log book dates from 1863 and so probably the most interesting period of the hundred years has not been recorded.

However the original deed of conveyance was found at Shire Hall and a copy may be seen in the School. The main points are hereunder listed.

William Dodge Cooper Cooper, Esq., of Toddington Manor and Elizabeth his wife convey to the Minister and Churchwardens of Toddington a small plot of land containing 1 rood 11 poles in trust for a school for the education of children and adults or children only of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the said parish.

The School to be open to inspection. The School to be conducted according to the principles of the National Society for Educating the Poor.

The Minister may have power to use the premises as a Sunday School.

The Managing Committee to consist of the officiating minister, his curate or curates, if the minister appoints him and five other members, these being the first : William Cooper Cooper, Esq., Richard Atkins, gent., John Anstee, yeoman, John Foll, yeoman and Tho. Carte, grocer.

The Schoolmaster or Mistress must be a member of the Church of England.

It is well to record here some facts of the year 1854. The year started with an intensely cold spell with "icebergs" in the Thames endangering shipping. Britain under the stimulus of the Great Exhibition of 1851 was rapidly expanding her industry. In spite of the repeal of the Corn Laws earlier, Agriculture still prospered although the wages of the labourers were miserably low, and worse times were soon to come, with little regular employment for them. A net-work of railways was spreading over the country. The Crimean War started in 1854. All these factors influenced the life of the people in Toddington. With these thoughts in mind the Chapter heading may not perhaps be so disjointed as it appears at first sight.

Whoever built the school must have intended it to last at least a century. It is a pity that as time went on adequate money could not be raised for its proper maintenance. It must have originally been lit with oil lamps for there is an entry in 1863 that the gas fitters were in the school. These gas fittings were not removed until 1951 when the school was re-decorated and more electric lights put in. In 1890 it was recommended that increased lobby accommodation should be provided so as to avoid the necessity of hanging cloaks and caps in the rooms.

- 1865. Lowered the school fees from two pence to a penny for labourers' children.
- 1872. (July 19th). The school fees raised this week and this has told slightly on the attendance.
- 1877. All children above seven paying 3d. each.
- 1878. There are a great many fees in arrears but we cannot press the payment of them too much as many of the parents are out of work and have been so for some time.
- 1878. Two children sent to school both under three were sent home till such time as they should be three.
The Education Act of 1870 made education compulsory and it was not surprising that this was not popular with some.
- 1878. Some of the "forced" children are getting both irregular and troublesome only coming to school when obliged.
However the children were often permitted to go to work and the task of getting any continuity in the school work must have been most difficult.

1880. (5th July). The attendance somewhat decreased owing to the Board of Guardians having issued an order allowing all children above the age of *eight* to go on farm work.
1881. (15th July). School gradually thinning as the children are engaged in carrying dinners to fathers making hay, etc.
1884. (Dec.) The fees are lower than they should be owing to the great scarcity of work in the parish. Many parents have done no work for some weeks. The children in consequence are badly fed and this affects their work.
1886. (10th Nov.) Some of the fathers will have no regular work from now till March 1887. These parents earn some weeks 2s. and this has to support the family. These children cannot possibly pay any fee. I have written the above because I have lately taken a few test cases as I do occasionally and find that some of the poor children come to school absolutely without breakfast during the winter months, badly clothed and scarcely shod at all.
1897. The managers drew a cheque for £32 10s. for a new brick wall. About £28 of this has been raised by the staff.
1910. The stones in the playground do not seem much inclined to go in the ground. We borrowed a heavy roll today and in rolling the stones broke the crank.
For some years after this the state of the playground was a regular item on the agenda of the managers. One eventually volunteered to make a house-to-house collection but apparently he did not meet with much success. The playground surface of today would certainly have gladdened his heart.
Some miscellaneous entries :
1891. I have placed a set of desks in the Gallery for Std. I.
1914. Infant department to be a separate school under Miss Blower.
1917. Water ran down the north wall in streams.
1901. (23rd April). This day was received from Messrs. Malcolm & Sons the fine school organ—a gift to the Day & Sunday Schools from the ladies of the Guild.
1907. (4th March). The American organ used in the Day School is the property of the *Sunday School*. Rev. J. C. C. Pison.
In 1936 the School received notice of what might have been the closure had not war intervened.
The Local Education Authority's proposal was to build a new School for Toddington and district and use one of the existing schools as a Junior school viz. the Council School. This notice led to an appeal for funds to put the School in repair and make alterations. However the threat to close the School still remained and on December 6th, 1945, at the Town Hall there was a meeting of parents and those interested in the school. There was a good attendance and the meeting was enthusiastic over the question of helping to build a new Church School.
In January 1947 re-organisation did take place but not as originally planned. The Council School became the Secondary Modern School and the Church School became the Primary School.

Punishment

In these days nothing is more controversial than the subject of corporal punishment.

Mr. Thomas in 1878 writes : I have managed without a cane for nearly two years but owing to the influx of extra children and the noise attendant thereon. I have purchased one.

Or Mr. Billingham in 1865. One of the elder boys very troublesome and disobedient. Punished with the cane and lectured him before the whole school as I had spoken privately to him before but as it would seem without effect.

1863. (Nov. 27th). Three boys kept in half an hour for blotting their copy books.

1864. (Oct. 7th). Two boys kept in school a half hour for failing to learn their home lessons perfectly.
1864. (Oct. 13th). Two boys kept in school after the other children were dismissed for going to the Rifle Shooting match without leave.
1865. (Oct. 9th). Kept the elder girls in behind the rest for misconduct during the sewing lesson.
1865. (Nov. 14th). Punished three of the elder boys this afternoon with the cane and kept them in behind the rest for foxhunting in school hours.
1867. (Feb. 27th). Dismissed boy from the school for swearing—the boy had been often cautioned.
1872. (June 14th). Kept a boy in *the whole* of the dinner interval for being impertinent to a teacher.
1874. (May 11th). Expelled S. B. for insubordination.
1874. (Dec. 3rd). K. N. detained for loud talking in the lobby after school.
1876. (Nov. 4th). One of the boys F. S. punished for kicking his teacher.
1879. (Mar. 3rd). J. C. had been guilty of cutting buttons off from a girl's ulster—deferred punishment until I had seen the managers.
1884. (Mar. 21st). This afternoon a Mrs. H. came to school and complained that the assistant mistress had punished her child improperly (the punishment being a slap on the bottom). The parent becoming insolent was requested to take her child away from the school.

All in a Day's Work

I have kept to the original text as much as possible as the headmaster recorded the items and by keeping them in chronological order I feel that the events of the school are also a reflection on education and some of the main events of the history of the country.

1872. "One poor lad at school without a jacket. Told the boy to tell his parent to let him wear a pinafore or jacket and told him I should be sorry to have to send him home if he came in his shirt sleeves again."
1877. "A child's book was taken from the lobby by some roguish stranger."
1878. "I caused a pail of water, a scrubbing brush, a flannel, some soap and a towel to be brought into the room this morning and made some dirty boys wash themselves before the others."
1878. "A mother entered the school and took her child away. The woman who misbehaved herself last week has since been to the school and apologised, preferring to do this than to going to Woburn Court."

That there was intense rivalry between the National School and Wesleyan School is evident from the following entry :

- "I have learnt today through some of the parents that their children have been decoyed away to the Wesleyan School in consequence of their committee offering to pay their fees—they not being able to get our children in any other way and having just engaged the *Fourth* master since March and are now going to make a spurt to beat or defeat this school."
1883. (Nov. 5th). "I had to go up to the Town and send the boys down to the school."
1885. "T. G. excused school on account of want of sharpness."
1885. "I admitted three children by the name of B. from the hamlet of Chalton. They were of the ages 9, 7 and 5 and do not seem to have been in a day school before."

1887. "Last Friday week a parent was fined 5s. including costs, his boy being absent 139 times out of a possible 139, the parent having employed the boy who was able to earn 5s. weekly. The parent has shown his *idea* of the punishment by continuing to employ the boy."
1887. F. K. a lad who attended school regularly through the year has lately become deaf, dumb, blind and subject to fits in turns—through excitement in attending the Salvation Army meeting.
1889. The men of the town being employed as navvies on the "line" the farmers are employing boys for hay work.
1890. The Rector told me this morning that he should object to the school being used for the Children's Annual Concert, (object to buy prizes and certificates), if "Red Riding Hood" was performed or anything with any characters in it.
1892. On Monday last we admitted ten fresh children who are boarded out in Toddington from Islington Parish. They are well conducted children.
1892. I yesterday sent 11s. to the Lord Mayor's fund for the relief of the sufferers by the terrible loss of *H.M.S. Victoria*—the humble but cheerful and sympathetic contribution of the staff and scholars of the National School.
1895. After a Magic Lantern Entertainment in the evening, I have found :
- (1) Irons of two desks broken.
 - (2) A quantity of oil spilt on the floor.
 - (3) The bottom and roller torn off Clause VII.
- I have never before known such things to happen.
1896. A Stag Hunt Party was passing through the town, the whole of the senior boys as was only natural went off. The school therefore did not meet in the afternoon of yesterday.
1899. The boys are very keen on the War News.
1900. (March). Yesterday morning when we received the copy of the Telegram saying that Ladysmith was relieved the children were in the playground. Their joy knew no bounds—they jumped and danced about, shouting and cheering and throwing up their caps. We marshalled them all into school, soon got out our Union Jack and then marched to the Green. We sang patriotic songs, the National Anthem and gave cheers for all the Generals connected with the war and for the rank and file of the Army and Navy and for Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria. The rest of the day was a holiday.
1901. Many of the parents of the elder boys are asking if their lads can go to work for a few weeks. As the children, as a rule attend remarkably well during the greater part of the year, I tell the parents to use their own discretion. The money the boys earn helps to clothe them in the winter.
1902. I have gone to the Town Pond at 9 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. each day and rang the children off the ice.
1902. (June 2nd). Peace proclaimed. All our school flags were got out, the girls soon got large boughs of May blossom and bedecked themselves and we all marched up the town. The Rector (Chairman of the Managers) and Dr. Waugh (correspondent) met us on the Green. The Rector made a patriotic speech, "Rule Britannia" and "The King" were sung and hearty cheers given.
On June 20th there was a grand parade and June 23rd a Coronation holiday.
June 1903 seems to have been similar to June of 1953 for Mr. Thomas records that four fires were needed all one week because it was so cold and wet and that it rained continuously for over sixty hours.]
1904. The Parish Council have written complaining of the boys' ball getting kicked over into the Cemetery.

1907. The H.M.I. has ordered that the boys have to play in the playground and not in the road.
1907. 28 boys and girls have been given a basin of hot soup before they leave school at noon. 89 are given hot milk with bread and sugar before work begins in morning.
1910. King Edward VII died. Most of the children are wearing some sign of mourning.
1911. In measuring and weighing the children, though no notice was given to the children that they would be required to take their boots off there was only one instance of a scholar with unmended untidy stockings. This out of 30 children speaks volumes for Toddington parents.
1911. (July 28th). On Monday about 90 children were absent. They got up at 3 a.m. and went to various vantage spots to see if any of the aeroplanes taking part in the great race could be seen. Ten of the machines were visible. Two came to grief in sight of the Toddington folks, one at Streatley and one at Barton. A rush was made across the valley to Streatley.
1913. A huge balloon passed over the school yesterday at 4 p.m. just as the children were being dismissed. (I am sure the appearance of a huge balloon over the school in November 1953 caused as much excitement as the one 40 years before).
1914. Girls knitting socks and scarves for the soldiers.
1915. Walter Hobbs received a bible for eleven years *perfect* attendance.
1917. There is an influx of children from the London area on account of the incessant air raids.
1918. H. T. played truant this morning, visiting an aeroplane which had descended in a field near the school. Debarred from play for a week.
1920. (Dec. 13th). The Temperature of the big room at 9 o'clock was 28° and at 10.30 was only 34°. The children were kept moving as much as possible but it was too cold for written work.
1924. The children had an opportunity of hearing the King's Speech on St. George's Day through the kindness of Mrs. Ashley Pope who lent her wireless set.
1938. (Sept. 28th). Consequent upon the grave developments in Europe and the threat of war I have received notice that A.R.P. officials will visit the school and fit gas masks. Also instructions as to what to do if a "state of emergency" is declared.
1939. (Sept. 3rd). Many women and young children evacuated from London arrived.
1940. (July 26th). 152 children arrived in Toddington. I was billeting officer. The junior part of school is to be on half time.
1940. (July 26th). Muslin put in windows and other windows bricked up for shelters.
1940. (Nov. 6th). Several bombs dropped in Long Lane.
1943. (May 21st). Wings for Victory Week. We raised £187 10s.
1945. (May 9th). VE Day. The School closed.
1947. (Feb. 22nd). Nine radiators burst in the great "freeze up." School closed for two months.
1951. (May 22nd). A party of children were taken round the Church by the Rector, the Rev. F. W. Hunt.
1951. (May 24th). We received the news that the Rector had died in his sleep during the night. This came as a great shock as he seemed perfectly well and cheerful when he showed us the Church.





90 A class of pupils at Toddington National School, October 1915. The teacher on the right is Ella Neale whose salary was £50 per annum with annual increments of £2 10s per annum.

Back Row: B. Clifford, G. Ashby, G. George, F. Sharp, H. Thompson, J. Pateman, F. Childs, J. Whitbread.

Middle Row: N. Buckingham, C. Atkinson, Master Sutton, A. Smith, N. Smith, A. Dodson, M. Walters, L. Smith.

Front Row: M. Randall, M. Jarvis, A. Babister, F. Fountain, N. Groom, L. Smith, J. Buckingham, A. Wright.



91 National School Class 1930

Standing: Fred Buckingham, May Brewer, Mary Randall, Bertie Atkinson, Winnie Fowler, Aubrey Gray, Leslie Brazier, Teddy Janes, Mary Ireland, Winnie Wand.

Sitting: Sylvia Smith, Laura Ansell, Zero Innell, Sarah Brewer, Ivy Dyer, George Hucklesby, Dan Paterson, Gladys Kingham, Albert Gordon.



