



**THE HISTORY OF  
KENSINGTON SCHOOL  
1886 – 1957**

*By*

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## HEADTEACHERS OF KENSINGTON SCHOOL

### Boys' School

Arthur Butt	1886 - 1890
John Hunt	1891 - 1894
Henry Jackson	1895 - 1925
S P Cox	1925 - 1929

### Girls' School

Mary Elizabeth Murray	1886 - 1906
Emily Frances Mitchel	1906 - 1908
M E Sneap	1908 - 1916
A W Chadwick	1916 - 1919
G Bamber	1919 - 1926
B E King	1926 - 1929

### Mixed School

S P Cox	1929 - 1950
G Morris	1950 - 1971
J G Rayner	1972 -

## CHAPTER 1

### ORIGINS

Kensington School was opened on 11 January 1886. More accurately, we should say Kensington Schools, for there were three distinct departments, all on the same site – one for infants, one for boys, and one for girls. The girls' school was at the Nottingham Road end of the site and joined on to it, where the hall now stands, was the infants' school. The boys' school was a separate block away from Nottingham Road. There was no way to walk from school to school and the playground was divided in two by a wall, one part for the boys, the other for the girls; the infants played in the small yard between their own building and the boys' building. The entrance to the girls' playground was through a gate on Nottingham Road, the boys entering the school through a gate on what is not St John's Road (1) The Teachers had their own entrance above the girls' gate on Nottingham Road (2).

To understand the need for the schools in the mid 1880's, it is necessary briefly to examine the general developments taking place in society and consequently in education at this time. In the first half of the nineteenth century, schooling was not compulsory and the state provided no free education. Whilst the rich could afford to pay to ensure that their children received an education, the majority were fortunate if they attended any sort of school. However, in many areas, schools were set up for the poorer children. There were, for example, Dame Schools, run by old ladies who often had little idea of how to teach and who saw their main task as keeping children quiet with a birch rod. Older children could go to Common Day Schools, run by a master who was often unable to read or write himself and who only taught because he could find no other employment. Charity Schools were run by the church and financed by the rich. They taught children very simply about religion and the 3R's. Such educational provision, however haphazard, sufficed for the needs of a fairly small and largely static population in which little formal education was required for survival and in which much of what was needed could be provided by the home or the church.

During the nineteenth century, particularly between 1850 and 1900, the population of Great Britain increased rapidly.

**TABLE 1 (3)**  
**POPULATION OF GREAT BRITAIN IN MILLIONS**

YEAR	POPULATION
1801	11
1851	21
1861	23
1871	26
1881	30
1891	33
1901	37
1911	47

Moreover, the distribution of the population was changing. People were moving from the countryside to the towns, which were expanding rapidly.

**TABLE 2 (4)**

PLACE	POPULATION	
	1861	1901
London	3,200,000	6,600,000
Liverpool	472,000	685,000
Manchester	399,000	645,000
Birmingham	351,000	760,000
Sheffield	185,000	381,000

The basis of the towns' expansion was industrial development, notably in the coal mining and iron and steel industries and faster methods of communication, i.e. the railways.

The effects upon education were profound. The majority of established schools were in the villages. As people flocked into the towns, there were no schools for their children to go to. More and more children were receiving little or no schooling. At the same time, the need for children who were torn from their secure, unchanging roots and thrown into the melting-pot of urban industrial society to receive at least an elementary formal education to help them survive in this new environment became apparent. Education was seen by many as being a major step in the re-establishment of the structure of authority and personal services previously provided in the village but lacking in the towns.

The churches tried to provide the necessary system of education. The Church of England set up National Schools and Nonconformists established British Schools in the towns. But they failed to make adequate provision and in 1870 Parliament passed an Education Act requiring that a School Board be elected by ratepayers in all areas in which there was inadequate provision of schools for all children between the ages of five and ten years and giving the School Boards powers to enforce attendance at school between these ages. In order to carry out these duties, the School Board could acquire sites and build schools. The result was that the number of children attending schools doubled in a few years.

In Ilkeston, the earliest provision for education was made by Richard Smedley of Risley who in 1744 left £10 per annum in his will to pay a schoolmaster to instruct 36 or 40 of the children of the poorest inhabitants of Ilkeston (5). A school was opened two or three years later in an upper room in the Round House in the Butter Market, at the top of Bath Street, under the church wall. By the mid-nineteenth century the population of Ilkeston was growing fairly quickly and this necessitated further educational provision. In 1845, the Nonconformists established a British School in Bath Street, its master from 1863 to 1873 being Wright Lissett, later Clerk to the Ilkeston School Board for many years. The Anglicans already had the school in the Round House. In 1851 they used a plot of church land in the Market Place and established a girls' school. In 1860, more church land was used to extend the existing school, the Duke of Rutland also giving some land.

The population of Ilkeston continued to grow as industry expanded. Iron and coal mining were the two great industries in the town. Stanton Ironworks, established in the 1840's prospered and grew throughout the century, notably between 1887 and 1892 under George Crompton. Coal mining had its ups and downs but generally prospered, especially in the 1870's. The great demand for lace clothing, fancy curtains, caps and fashionable stockings resulted in a boom in the hosiery and lace industries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Vital to this economic expansion were the railways. In the 1850's, the Midland Railway Company had a near monopoly in the Erewash Valley. In 1872, the Great Northern Railway established themselves in competition. (6)

**TABLE 3**  
**POPULATION OF ILKESTON 1801 – 1911**

YEAR	POPULATION	YEAR	POPULATION
1801	2,422	1861	8,374
1811	2,970	1871	9,662
1821	3,681	1881	14,122
1831	4,446	1891	19,774
1841	5,326	1901	25,384
1851	6,122	1911	31,657

The 1870 Education Act was applied to Ilkeston. It was deemed that a School Board be set up in the town. The church schools were violently opposed to this, regarding it as an attack on their power and their competence. Anglican opposition, led by the Duke of Rutland, determined to prevent the imposition of a School Board by swift action. In 1875, the boys' school in the Market Place was taken down. The Duke gave a piece of land called the Rutland Cricket Field, upon which was built the new and spacious St Mary's National School at a cost of £4,000 (8) In 1876, the Catholics built a school (9) It was not enough. The new provision failed to meet the government's requirements and in 1878 a School Board of nine members was elected (10).

After all the disputes, the School Board did not provide any further school accommodation until 1882, when Granby boys' school and Granby girls' school were erected at a cost of £5,416 (11). In 1884, the School Board directed that the Kensington Schools be built on their present site to the south of the town (12). The schools, completed in 1885 at a cost of £5,090 (13), were built for 162 boys, 160 girls and 200 infants (14). They were opened in 1886 with 53 boys and 43 girls on the registers.

The development of such industries as the Kensington lace works, Gallows Inn Ironworks, Trowell Forge, Stanton ironworks and coal mining at Trowell and Cossall led to the building of houses in what was still a largely rural area. Even in 1900, when houses had been built above the school, along Albany Street and around Gallows Inn, there was Pegg's Farm across Nottingham Road, Hooley's Farm below the school and another farm down what is now St John's Road (15). More development took place in the early 1900's, the headmistress noting in 1904 that many new houses were being built round the area.

As the houses were built, the schools grew in size as the following table shows:

**TABLE 4**  
**SIZE OF KENSINGTON SCHOOLS, 1886 – 1912**

YEAR	NO. ON ROLL	
	BOYS	GIRLS
Jan 1886	53	43
Nov 1886	166	
Dec 1886		105
1890		184
1891	184	
1894		204
1911	192	
1912		240

Thus the schools contained more pupils than they were built for and in 1907 the Borough Council resolved that 'the Town Clerk give public notice of the intention to alter and enlarge Kensington Council School, as required by the Board of Education' (16)

#### *References:*

- (1) *The road itself was only opened in 1892*
- (2) *These entrances can still be seen*
- (3) *P Mathias – The First Industrial Natino p.449*
- (4) *Ibid, p.451*
- (5) *S Trueman – History of Ilkeston*
- (6) *D Smith – The Socio-Economic Development of Ilkeston in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*
- (7) *Census summaries*
- (8) *For a brief history of education in Ilkeston see S Trueman – History of Ilkeston and R F Smith – A History of Hallcroft School*
- (9) *T Bulmer & Co. – History, Topography and Directory of Derbyshire, 1895, p.538*
- (10) *Ibid*
- (11) *Ibid p. 539*
- (12) *Ibid*
- (13) *Ibid*
- (14) *Kelly's Director of Derbyshire 1891 p.237*
- (15) *See maps of the area around Kensington Schools p. 7 & 8*
- (16) *Borough Council Minutes 1906 – 1907 p.286*

## CHAPTER 2

### GENERAL HISTORY 1886 – 1914

The schools opened in 1886 with the following comments by the headteachers in the log books. 'I, Mary Elizabeth Glover, commenced duties as Headmistress of Kensington Board School, Ilkeston, Girls' Department. I opened school with 43 scholars present, but their attendances are not marked as the registers had not come. Mr W Lissett, Clerk to the Board, visited at 11 o'clock. The day has been very wet and the room very damp and cold as the heating apparatus did not work (1). Mr Arthur Butt, Headmaster of the boys' school, wrote on January 15<sup>th</sup> 'This school was opened on Monday January the eleventh 1886. Fifty-three boys were admitted in the morning. On account of the registers not having arrived no attendances were marked on the opening day'. (2) Hardly an auspicious start, but both schools seem to have quickly settled down. That this was the case can be discovered from the inspectors' reports, extracts of which were recorded in the log books. During this period inspections were made annually (3) and the reports are therefore a valuable source of information about the general character and development of the school as seen from outside.

Beginning with the girls' school, the first report, in 1886, is encouraging, stating that 'a very creditable beginning has been made here' (4). Other reports in the early years mention the steadiness of the school. The 1897 report found the girls 'in very good order....satisfactory progress has been made'. (5). The only major problems during these years appear to have been occasional over crowding and a frequent shortage of staff to which references are often made in the log book. The 1894 report notes that 'the girls' school accommodation is at present insufficient for the average attendance'.(6). At the time, there were over two hundred girls on the registers, about forty above the number for which the school was built; by 1896, however, this had fallen to 180, with an average attendance of around 150. By 1903 overcrowding was again a problem, the report make the comment that 'the girls' school has been conducted under somewhat difficult conditions owing to frequent overcrowding' (7). But in general the reports were good and continued to be so after the turn of the century. 'This is a very good school', stated the 1902 report (8).

Some problems were caused by the death of the headmistress, Mrs Murray (formerly Miss Glover) in 1906, the report of that year saying that 'in consequence .... The work has somewhat deteriorated' (9). The new headmistress, Miss Mitchell, soon more than put things right. 'A steady improvement' has been made during the last two years in almost every part of the work (10) was the comment of the 1908 report. She was no doubt helped by the building of an extra room onto the school to help relieve the overcrowding. By 1910, the inspectors had formed the opinion that the school, with Miss Sneap now in charge, was 'thoroughly good' (11). The school is again praised in the 1912 and 1913 reports and in 1915 the report stated that 'the tone and discipline of the school continue to be excellent' (12).

We find a similar story of a quick settling down, followed by a bad patch, and then recovery in the boys' school. The headmaster wrote in January 1886 that 'the boys generally speaking are fairly well behaved and amenable to discipline, and the terribly ignorant boy, who is always supposed to be present in large numbers at the opening of a new school, in a populous district especially, is conspicuous by his absence' (13). In June 1886, Edwin Trueman a member of the School Board, visited and made the following comment – 'Boys seem of a rough character, but under very fair control. Was pleased with the prompt manner in which they obeyed the Teachers' instructions' (14).

The first report, in 1886, stated that 'this new school is under good discipline and taught with creditable results' (15). The reports of the following years were also favourable. In 1889 'the tone and discipline are good' (16); in 1891 'the boys are well behaved and displayed a good deal of intelligence in the oral examination' (17); in 1893, 'the boys are in very good order' (18); in 1895, 'the efficiency of this school is well maintained' (19); and in 1897, 'the teaching is intelligent and energetic and the work throughout the school is thoroughly well done' (20). The reports continued to be good after the turn of the century. In 1900, 'the tone continues to be excellent' (21) and in 1902, 'as a whole the work deserves praise. The tone is excellent' (22). This was despite a problem of overcrowding and the 1902 report warned that, were the situation not remedied, 'the grant next year will be endangered' (23).



The numbers attending did decrease in the following year, but despite this the school seems to have hit a bad patch during the next few years. The 1903 report is lukewarm in its compliments. 'On the whole fairly good instruction has been given ....discipline is satisfactory' (24). Things continued to deteriorate. 'Progress is noticeable ..... It is still necessary to point out that in several respects the effectiveness of teaching might well be improved' (25) stated the 1908 report.

By 1910, there were signs of recovery. There were distinct signs of progress due to increased power of teaching and control on the part of the class teachers 'but it is still desirable that the Headteacher .... Should endeavour still further to co-ordinate the work of the various parts of the School', wrote the inspectors (26). This recovery appears to have continued during the following 3 years, for in 1913 the inspectors wrote that there were still some problems of organisation but the boys were eager to do their best, which showed the good influence under which they came. The improvement continued in 1914 – 'The children are under good control and respond well to their teachers wishes .... An improvement has been made and .... There are signs of a progressive spirit in the past year's work' (27) By 1915, the recovery was complete – 'There is a healthy co-operative spirit in this school' (28).

It appears that, on the whole, both schools enjoyed a successful period between 1886 and 1914. Having examined their general existence, it is now time to examine certain aspects of the schools in more detail.

#### *References:*

- (1) *Girls' school log book 11.1.1886*
- (2) *Boys' school log book 15.1.1886*
- (3) *See below, Chapter 5*
- (4) *Report, girls' school log book 14.12.1886*
- (5) *Ibid, 6.12.1897*
- (6) *ibid, 24.12.1894*
- (7) *ibid, 15.1.1904*
- (8) *ibid, 5.1.1903*
- (9) *ibid 28.11.1906*
- (10) *ibid 22.10.1908*
- (11) *ibid 11.11.1910*
- (12) *ibid 26.10.1915*
- (13) *Boys' school log book 18.1.1886*
- (14) *Boys' school log book 3.6.1886*
- (15) *Report, boys' school log book 14.12.1886*
- (16) *ibid 18.12.1889*
- (17) *ibid 31.12.1891*
- (18) *ibid 10.1.1894*
- (19) *ibid 3.1.1896*
- (20) *ibid 6.12.1897*
- (21) *ibid 8.1.1901*
- (22) *ibid 5.1.1903*
- (23) *ibid 5.1.1903*
- (24) *ibid 15.1.1904*
- (25) *ibid 22.10.1908*
- (26) *ibid 11.11.1910*
- (27) *ibid 27.11.1914*
- (28) *ibid 5.11.1915*

## CHAPTER 3

### STAFF 1886 – 1914

In the previous chapter mention was made of several of the schools' headteachers between 1886 and 1914. This chapter will begin by looking at the headteachers of these years in more detail and will then examine the organisation of the staff during this period.

The first headmistress of the girls' school was Miss Mary Elizabeth Glover, certificated teacher of the second class. Within three months of the school's opening, she had married a Scottish surveyor who worked at Stanton Ironworks and became Mrs Murray. Mrs Murray was a tall, striking, statuesque lady with auburn hair. She was a very strict disciplinarian, having extremely high standards herself and expecting others to conform to them. In 1893, she wrote in the log book 'Careless habits .... must be stamped out' (1). If things were not done just as she required, they would have to be done again. For example, she had a house built for herself on Nottingham Road, which she named Clydesdale. She supervised all the building of the house and if the bricks which were delivered for it did not meet her specifications exactly, she would send them back. As far as the children were concerned, however, she was motivated by a genuine concern for their welfare – although it is doubtful whether or not they thought so when she banned screaming in the playground!

Mrs Murray was headmistress for twenty years, from 1886 to 1906. Upon her death, she was succeeded by Miss Emily Frances Mitchell. She was also very strict but possibly appeared to the children to be more approachable than Mrs Murray.

In 1908, Miss Mitchell left and Miss Mary Ellen Sneap became headmistress. In the 1890's Miss Sneap was a pupil teacher at Kensington School. At that time, she obviously failed to match Mrs Murray's standards, as it was recorded in the log books that 'M.E. Sneap seems as though she cannot learn lessons. She has not known one yet' (2) 'M.E. Sneap is not adapted for a Pupil-Teacher at all – she has no idea of command or discipline' (3). Things were to improve, however.

On qualifying as a teacher Miss Sneap left to teach at Chaucer Street schools and in 1908 returned to Kensington as headmistress. At the time, she was the youngest headmistress in Derbyshire. She was now an extremely able teacher with a marvellous rapport with both staff and children. This enabled her to achieve a great deal with them as the following extracts from inspectors' reports show. 'The headmistress has shown powers of organisation and direction. She has given a valuable lead to her staff and, through their loyal and capable service, her influence has been effective for good throughout the school' (4). 'The girls are well-behaved, eager, and industrious. The Headmistress supervises her school with care and thought and, through her own example, has induced the girls to cultivate refinement and restraint' (5). 'The influence of the Headmistress on the character of the girls is as strongly marked as ever and is an excellent feature of the school' (6). 'The girls are punctual in attendance, their manners are quiet pleasing, and the neatness of their personal appearance is most praiseworthy. The Headmistress .... makes her influence felt by all the girls' (7)

Miss Sneap was an extremely tall lady, very well spoken and distinguished. She was well known in the town and was a member of the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Bath Street and a member of the Library Committee. She was headmistress until 1916.

The boys' school opened with a staff of Mr Arthur Butt, headteacher, certificated teacher of the second class, and Mr Samuel Davies, assistant teacher, uncertificated. Mr Butt was headmaster for five years, from 1886 to 1891. Judging from his entries in the log book, he appears to have been very concerned about standards in the school, although perhaps with not quite the same fervour as Mrs Murray. As we have seen, the school ran smoothly under him and we find confirmation of this in his final entry in the log book – 'Have been notified that the Board have transferred me to the Headmastership of the Granby Schools. I am thankful for this honour, but leave Kensington with many pleasing memories' (8).

He was succeeded by Mr John Hunt, Headmaster from 1891 to 1894. Little seems to be known about him, but again the school ran smoothly during his three years of office and in 1894 he was transferred to Bath Street School.

Mr Henry Jackson was transferred from Bath Street School as headmaster and continued in the post for over thirty years, until 1925. He appears to have been a popular figure. An ex-pupil of the school remembers him thus – 'He was ever such a good fellow. He was strict, stern, but all the lads respected him. Girls as well. He used to get to know all of you. He'd always speak to you'. Known affectionately as 'Gaffer' Jackson, he would frequently come to school with children hanging on each arm.

Turning now to the organisation of staff during the years 1886 to 1914, the boys' and girls' schools will be considered together. Today, all the staff of Kensington are qualified teachers with a teaching certificate. This was not the position in the early years of the schools' life. At this time, it was common for the headteacher to be the only certificated member of staff. An often inadequately trained teaching staff was supplemented by pupil-teachers and monitors.

The system of pupil-teachers was originated in the 1840's by Kay Shuttleworth. At 13, promising pupils in a school could be chosen to serve a five year apprenticeship to become a teacher. They taught groups of pupils or, if there was a staff shortage (as was frequently the case), whole classes. If possible, they were supervised by the headteacher. They had to pass an annual examination and after five years could sit the Queen's Scholarship. If successful, they were eligible for a three year course at a teacher training college. The majority did not pass and remained in schools as assistant teachers (9).

The pupil-teachers at Kensington Schools usually had their own classes to teach, the headteachers checking on their progress every so often each day. These classes were often large. In 1906, reference is made in the log books to a pupil-teacher being responsible for a class of 45 children. In addition, the headteacher was often teaching all day due to absence or shortage of staff and was thus unable to supervise pupil-teachers adequately. Mrs Murray was especially conscious of this. In 1896, she noted that a pupil-teacher was responsible for a class of 45 with no help from herself. In 1890, she was forced to put a first-year pupil-teacher in charge of Standard III, the numbers being too great and the work 'a little too much in advance of her abilities' (10). This lack of adequate supervision could lead to problems both of discipline and what was taught.

Pupil-teachers were still learning and were themselves given lessons by the headteacher for two hours three times a week out of school hours. In 1893, the pupil-teachers at the girls' school attended school between 5.30 – 7.30pm for lessons; in 1894, they had their lessons before school. In the boys' school in 1898, instruction began at 7.45am. Despite this they could teach their classes wrongly. Mrs Murray often expressed dissatisfaction with the pupil-teachers' teaching and learning. 'The pupil-teachers learn their lessons very badly and don't seem to realise the importance of learning them thoroughly'(11) The pupil-teachers' lessons are about the same as usual – only half learned'(12) 'Scolded pupil-teachers about their imperfectly learned lessons' (13). In 1891 she noted that one of the pupil-teachers, herself a very poor scholar, was always teaching the class something wrong; she didn't know her multiplication tables or the parts of speech. Later in the same year she stated that one of the pupil-teachers 'is constantly teaching some wrong ideas to her class' (14) She gives one or two specific examples – a pupil-teacher writing thoughtless and pare for pear. Perhaps she expected a bit too much of young and inexperienced staff who often had to teach large classes for whole days with little help, for in the boys' school we find frequent complaints about the pupil-teachers. In fact, in an internal examination in September 1890, Standard III taught by pupil-teacher Smith had the best result.

Pupil-teachers were not well paid and it was often difficult to persuade scholars to stay on for a five year apprenticeship when they could be earning more in a factory or coal-mine. The starting salary was £15 per annum, rising by £3 per annum assume they passed the examination. An entry in the girls' school log book of 1895 reads – 'H. Brotherhood gave in her resignation as she wants a greater salary' (15) One pupil-teacher in the boys' school also decided that the prospect of a five year apprenticeship on a poor salary was not very exciting. His name was Herbert Beardsley and his story deserves to be told in some detail.

In 1888, Herbert Beardsley was a first year pupil-teacher. On April 13 1888, Mr Butt wrote that 'Herbert Beardsley has been absent this week. It was ascertained on inquiry that he left home after drawing his month's salary on Friday' (16) In fact, he had decided to leave Ilkeston and go and seek his fortune in London. He set off with his friend, a partnership in which 'Beardsley was to find the capital and his companion the judgement'. They travelled to London by train, but this took up most of their money and they arrived in London with only a few pence each.

They walked about all one night in the cold and, weary and footsore, arrived in Trafalgar Square and spoke to a policeman named P.C. Whittington. He took pity on them and offered to give them food when he came off duty. They waited and, when the constable left the station, he took them to his home and gave them a good meal. This was on Saturday night. What they did for the next day or two we do not know but during this time Herbert Beardsley lost his friend. Supposing him to have joined the army, he sought out his friend the policeman, who again gave him food and shelter.

The next day, Tuesday, he was taken before the magistrate, Mr Newton, at Marlborough Street Police Court. On being questioned as to why he left Ilkeston, he replied that his parents had died when he was four years old and that he was about to be apprenticed by the authorities but that some objection had arisen because of the expense and he preferred to leave the town and seek work elsewhere. This story was not entirely true, for his parents were still alive. The court decided to make no judgement until more information could be discovered about him. Mrs Whittington, the constable's wife, promised to give him shelter in the meantime.

However, we find the following entry in the log book for April 13 1888 – 'Later in the day information came that he had again left those in charge of him, and his whereabouts were unknown' (18) In fact, Herbert Beardsley had seen enough of London. He had decided to return to Ilkeston, this time on foot. We know nothing of his journey, but the Ilkeston Pioneer recorded that 'he arrived at an early hour on Saturday morning, tired, hungry and footsore, after tramping a distance of more than 120 miles'. It went on to say that 'the return of the prodigal was heartily welcomed by his anxious parents, and after the privation he had endured, it is hardly likely he will again wander from home on such a quixotic errand' (19). The School Board decided to overlook his adventure and on the Wednesday following his return, he resumed work as a pupil-teacher.

He does not seem to have settled down, however, for on 1 May 1888, Mr Butt wrote – 'Regret to record that pupil-teacher Beardsley is neglecting to properly prepare his lessons' (20) On 27 August 1888, on returning from the summer holidays, he wrote that 'teacher Beardsley is again missing' (21) and on 31 August comes the final entry about Herbert Beardsley – 'Beardsley has evidently finally gone. Have heard nothing of him' (22).

The monitorial system was devised by Bell and Lancaster. It was a system whereby older children instructed groups of younger children. The teacher giving the monitor work, the monitor then took it to a group of pupils and supervised them whilst it was done; on completion, the work was taken back to the teacher to be marked. Lancaster claimed that, by this system, '1,000 children may be taught in one schoolroom under the care of one master'. This obviously necessitated a large number of monitors. By the time the Kensington Schools were opened, the more common practice was to use just one or two monitors as a useful supplement to the rest of the teaching staff, paying them about £6 per annum. They often had their own class to teach. For example, in the girls' school in 1890, a monitor had a class of 36 pupils. Supervision by the headteacher was often inadequate. In 1899 Mrs Murray complained that although the monitors were doing quite well she was too busy with her own class to give them as much help as she would like. The monitors continued to teach until after the turn of the century but by 1910 their role had changed to a more modern one – by then the children who were monitors were chosen by the teacher to do certain jobs in the classroom such as giving out books.

The problems caused by overcrowding, mentioned in the previous chapter, were frequently exacerbated by a lack of staff. The teacher/pupil ration was smaller than is now generally the case. Department of Education standards laid down that there should be one teacher to fifty pupils and because of illness and the difficulty of replacing staff who left, it was often much higher. In 1890, the staff and numbers in the girls' school were as follows:

TEACHER	STANDARDS TAUGHT	NO OF PUPILS
Mary Elizabeth Murray, Headmistress	II, V, VI, VII	54
Mary Ann Harper, Assistant	IV	45
Hannah Brotherhood, First year pupil-teacher	I	45
Sarah Ellen Allen, Monitor	III	36
<b>Total</b>		<b>180</b>

The Headmistress commented that 'giving grammar lessons to Standards V, VI and VII and then Standard II is very trying to me and the numbers in Standard I are too many for a first year pupil-teacher. But under present difficulties I fail to see how I can organise otherwise' (23) In 1894, with 180 on roll, the staff comprised the headmistress, an assistant teacher and a pupil-teacher. 'I am

scarcely able to manage at all through shortness of staff'. 'I am nearly knocked up with overwork and anxiety and the discipline is suffering. We are simply managing, not making progress and I really am anxious about the efficiency of the school' (24) In 1899 Mrs Murray wrote 'I am not at all satisfied with the progress of the scholars but I am very handicapped for assistance – efficient assistance' (25). In 1900, she had a class of nearly 80 children (26). In the boys' school in 1888 there were only two teachers for 187 children.

TEACHER	STANDARDS TAUGHT	NO OF PUPILS
Headmaster	V, VI, VII	51
Assistant Teacher	II, III	80
Second Year pupil-teacher	IV	41
Monitor	I	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>187</b>

Such situations were common during the first decade of the schools' life. During the mid 1890's however, staffing levels improved considerably, the numbers of both assistant teachers and pupil-teachers rising.

#### References:

- (1) *Girls' school log book, 9.9.1893*
- (2) *ibid 7.12.1894*
- (3) *ibid 9.3.1894*
- (4) *Report, girls' school log book 11.11.1910*
- (5) *ibid 5.7.1912*
- (6) *ibid 13.12.1913*
- (7) *ibid 26.10.1915*
- (8) *Boys' school log book 4.1.1891*
- (9) *This system continued in Ilkeston until 1899 when a pupil-teacher centre was established at Gladstone Street Schools. Pupil-teachers attended for lessons on one day each week. Headteachers' salaries were cut to help pay for this measure.*
- (10) *Girls' school log book 16.5.1890*
- (11) *ibid 5.5.1893*
- (12) *ibid 12.5.1893*
- (13) *ibid 2.6.1893*
- (14) *ibid 1.5.1891*
- (15) *ibid 9.2.1895*
- (16) *Boys' school log book 13.4.1888*
- (17) *Ilkeston Pioneer 20.4.1888*
- (18) *Boys' school log book 13.4.1888*
- (19) *Ilkeston Pioneer 20.4.1888*
- (20) *Boys' school log book 1.5.1888*
- (21) *ibid 27.8.1888*
- (22) *ibid 31.8.1888*
- (23) *Girls' school log book 12.9.1890*
- (24) *ibid 9.3.1894, 16.3.1894, 23.3.1894*
- (25) *ibid 17.2.1899*
- (26) *ibid 9.3.1900*

## CHAPTER 4

### ATTENDANCE 1886 – 1914

The establishment of School Boards was necessary in order to fill a gap in the provision of education caused by a rising and mobile population. Having established a School Board, however, it was necessary to get the children into the schools they built. To this end they were empowered by Act of Parliament to compel children between the ages of five and ten to attend a school. In the early years of the School Boards, in the 1870's, it was a hard battle to enforce attendance, often against parents who were reluctant to lose valuable labour and income from their children. By 1880, however, the battle was beginning to be won and the average attendance nationally was around 90% (1).

In the Kensington Schools the attendance did not reach such a level immediately. It took some time for the idea of going to school to become accepted by parents and children, many of whom had never attended school. In January 1886, it is recorded in the log books that eighteen out of a hundred and two boys on roll had attended no school before. In the same year the girls' school log book notes that most of Standard I were unable to form their letters or figures and had little or no idea of reading; they also contain a reference to a girl of eight who was admitted to the school in September, having previously attended no school.

In the early years, attendances at the schools averaged about 80% of those on roll and the log books contain many references to poor attendances. 'Many girls only attend part-time', wrote Mrs Murray in 1887. 'Every effort to make them attend more regularly seems useless' (2). Examples of the attendances of individual children include a girl who returned to school after an absence of nine months; a girl who made only fifteen attendances in thirteen weeks and had forgotten nearly all she had learned; and a girl who was re-admitted having been away for a year and having attended no school in the meantime. In 1888 there were twenty-eight cases of pupils being absent for more than thirteen weeks in a year. By 1900, however the average attendance had improved and was around 90%.

As well as the legal requirements it was also important for schools to enforce attendance to the utmost of their ability because of finance. The aim of the 1862 Revised Code for education, devised by Robert Lowe, was to provide education which was either efficient or cheap. To this end, grants to schools were based partly on the attendance of scholars and partly on their results in an annual examination (3). Schools could claim a grant as follows:

- ☐ 4/- (20p) per scholar calculated by taking the average attendance in the school at morning and afternoon sessions throughout the year
- ☐ 8/- (40p) per scholar who attended 200 or more morning or afternoon sessions of the school, subject to examination. One third of this (2/8d) was forfeited should the scholar fail to pass the examination in either reading, writing or arithmetic (4).

Thus the less pupils who attended a school, the less would be its grant; in addition, the less its pupils attended, the more likely they would be to fail the examination. Pupils would either attend and learn or the government would not have to pay schools for them. This system of payment by results continued until 1897.

The Kensington School log books record 'the inability of girls to make progress due to the irregular attendance' (5), 'unless better attendance is enforced and I am afraid the results at the ensuing examination will be poor' (6). In 1893, a notice was sent to parents of the girls urging them to encourage their daughters to attend, as the annual examination was coming up. In 1891, Mr Roe, Chairman of the School Board, visited the boys' school and spoke to Standard V about coming regularly if they wanted to fare well at the examination.

The schools also received income from fees, each child paying 3d per week. Payment was often irregular but the problem was that if collection was enforced too strictly, many children would not come to school and the grant would suffer. 'Obtaining school pence seems a great difficulty in many families', wrote Mrs Murray in the girls' school log book in 1889 (7); in 1886, many boys were away as they were 'unable to pay fees' (8). Children often arrived at school without their school money and, being sent home for it, did not return.

The fees of poor families were remitted by the Board, but even this could cause problems. In 1886, the girls' school log book records the absence of many whose fees were remitted by the Board 'through not having obtained a new order' (9) This inducement to attend did not seem to be completely effective as the following quote from the 1887 report shows – 'The attendance is very irregular even among those children whose fees are remitted by the Board' (10) In October, 1886 fees were reduced by 1d per head for families with three or more children at School Board Schools. In September 1891 the Free Education Act was adopted in Ilkeston and fees were abolished.

The reasons for non-attendance were many and varied. Truancy was common. Mr Butt wrote in 1889 – 'the attendance is not good owing chiefly to some boys playing truant. These boys for the most part .... Have never done well and care nothing for learning. They have been tossed about from school to school and at last reached here, so at present this department suffers from their wrong doing' (11). In 1895 Mr Jackson wrote 'An epidemic of truanting seems to have broken out this week owing to the fine weather. Three boys have been severely caned for it' (12). In 1886, some boys were punished for jumping over the wall and leaving school at playtime, and in 1888 some boys were locked in rooms at dinner time for playing truant. As we have seen, children could be absent for long periods. In April, 1891, a girl returned to school, having been absent since February 'running the streets' (13).

Parents were often responsible for the children's absence, Mr Butt observing that 'parents are much to blame, keeping their children at home for trivial affairs' (14) Attendance in the girls' school was usually poor on Friday afternoons, as girls were kept at home to help with the weekend cleaning. In 1886 the Ilkeston School Board tried to solve this problem by shortening the dinner break and ending school at 2.30pm, the children staying at school to eat dinner which they had brought between 11am and 11.15am (15) A few months later dinner was from 11.50am to 12.15pm – these times were thought to be better for the children. Tuesday was wash day and this also affected attendance, and the Easter and Whitsuntide cleaning also resulted in many girls being absent.

The weather could hit the attendance. Many children were poorly clothed and shod and, if the weather was bad, they did not come to school. 'Wet and stormy weather all week. Some girls poorly clothed and very badly shod' (16) 'Storm seriously hit attendance on Friday morning. Holiday given in afternoon' (17) 'Boys soaked returning in afternoon, so registers marked and sent home' (18) 'A severe snow storm had the effect of lowering the attendance' (19) On occasions, however, the weather could help the attendance. 'Attendance better this week, as the weather, on the whole, has been more favourable to those with bad boots' (20)

Illnesses had an adverse effect on attendance. Apart from coughs and colds, two illnesses appear to have caused a great deal of trouble. One was smallpox, outbreaks of which were not uncommon. In 1902, there was a serious outbreak. In May, the girls' school headmistress recorded that attendance was low due to a smallpox scare. At the end of May, the Health Committee of the Borough Council recorded that it 'read letters from the Medical Officer of Health, stating that owing to the prevalence of smallpox in the neighbourhood, it is necessary the Hallam Fields School and Kensington School should be closed from the 26 inst. for a fortnight. Resolved: that the action of the Medical Officer of Health do be and hereby is adopted and confirmed, and that the said schools be closed pursuant to such certificate' (21) When the schools re-opened in June, there were still several girls away because of smallpox; in July, some boys were ordered to stay at home because of smallpox in the family, and in September the girls' school (and possibly the other departments also) was fumigated due to a pupil having smallpox in the family (22).

Measles was the other troublesome disease, for example, in 1896, the Sanitary Committee heard a report from the Medical Officer of Health advising that Kensington Schools, among others, be closed for at least one month, due to the prevalence of measles. It resolved 'that notice do hereby be and is ordered to be served on the Managers of the ..... schools ..... to cause the ..... schools to be closed for a period of one month from the 4 December 1896' (24).

Outside events also affected attendance. There were often greater attractions in the town than school. The visit of the circus hit the attendance so badly that a holiday was often given. In 1887, only twenty girls attended school at circus time; in 1898, only ninety eight boys came; and in 1911 only eighty four boys came. In the first two cases, attempts to hold school were abandoned and a holiday was given. Sunday School Treats were another annual blow to the attendance figures. The Church of England (St John's Church), the Baptists and various groups of Methodists ensured

that children would be absent on various afternoons during the summer term. In 1886, only sixty three boys appeared in school on the afternoon of the treats, so school ended at 3.30pm. In 1895, only 118 boys came to school on the afternoon of the Baptist Sunday School Treat and the school was closed. Attempts were made to overcome the problem by shortening the dinner break and finishing early or, in the girls' school, by having a double session in the morning and dismissing the children in the afternoon. It was suggested by Mr Jackson that the treats should be held in the summer holidays but eventually the unequal struggle was abandoned and a holiday given automatically.

If the schools were open when factories and pits or other schools were closed, attendance could go down, many children preferring to stay at home with their parents and brothers and sisters. Moreover, if parents were on holiday, they would often have no money to pay school fees. Easter seems to have caused most problems. In 1886, no school holiday was given and attendance was very poor. On Easter Tuesday, 1887, the schools were back but the factories were not, and so attendance was poor. In 1888, Mrs Murray recorded that there was a poor attendance owing to the factories being closed until Thursday. 'Some have no school money and others take advantage of their parents and sisters being at home holidaying' (25). In June, 1889, she wrote that the works had been closed the previous week, so many were absent as they had no school money. In 1900, many girls were absent for the opening of the school after the summer holidays, 'not yet having returned from the seaside' (26). The headmaster of the boys' school wrote after the summer holidays of 1889 that 'the attendance has been bad considering the fact that the boys should have had sufficient holidays in three weeks' (27).

Other events affecting attendance were the annual menagerie – in 1887 several boys were punished for loitering about the menagerie; cattle shows; the unveiling of the public fountain in 1898; the Royal Agricultural Show in Nottingham in 1888, when many girls were kept at home to mind the house whilst their parents went to the show; the meet the Lord Harrington's hounds in the Market Place in 1898; the distribution of 2,000 packets of sweets in the town at midday on 13 December 1888; and the laying of the foundation stone of the new library in 1903.

The timetable could affect attendance. Working to a fixed timetable each week (28) meant that the children knew which lessons would be on which day. The headmistress complained in 1888 that there was a poor attendance on grammar lesson days. Finally, there could be complete misunderstanding. In April, 1893, the headmistress had to send after most of the girls as they were under the mistaken impression that there was a week's holiday.

Many attempts were made to enforce attendance, using both the stick and the carrot. The attendance officer visited parents who failed to send their children to school and occasionally parents would be summoned and fined. In 1892, fines of 3/- were imposed upon some parents and in 1899 fines of 5/- were given, in one case the girl having been away from school for six months. But their effect may have been limited, the headmistress noting that 'their girls come no better' (29). The board might instruct the schools to enforce attendance. In 1890 the Board resolved 'that the headteachers of the Board Schools do be and hereby ordered to be requested to use their best endeavours personally to secure regular attendance of the children at their schools respectively. The headteachers should make themselves personally acquainted with the parents of those children whose attendance at school is not satisfactory, by calling at their homes' (30). The schools were, of course, keen to maximise attendance. In 1888, Mrs Murray and her assistant teacher visited parents and teachers were given a book in which to note down absentees and then to visit parents. In 1889, monitors were sent after the absentees. In 1890, a notice was put up outside the girls' school, a copy of which was sent to each parent, saying 'that unless they send a written excuse with their children when they have been kept away the child will be punished' (31). In 1893, parents were sent a card on which the attendances of their daughters were entered.

Absence and lateness were usually punished by the cane, but children were rewarded for good attendance in a number of ways. The girls' school attendance one day in March, 1888, was the best ever, 'so I bought some nuts and oranges and gave them to the children, as they came to school instead of staying away', wrote Mrs Murray (32). In July, 1888, she gave a ticket to all the girls who had made their full attendance. In June, 1889, a holiday was given on the occasion of forty seven prizes being distributed for good attendance. In 1890, a scheme known as the cheque system of rewards and punishments was introduced. The girls seemed to like this – the cane was not used during its first week and early attendance was much better. A week later, 'the order is still improving and the cheque system is in great favour amongst the girls' (33). In February, 1897, an Attendance shield was awarded to the pupil with the best attendance record. For a week or two



the average daily attendance increased by about twenty, but the effect soon wore off, the headmistress writing in March, 'the attendance is not at all satisfactory' (34).

Children might be let out early as a reward or as an encouragement to others. In October, 1887, on the occasion of a poor attendance owing to the menagerie being in the town, the girls who came to school were let out a little bit early to encourage the rest. In March, 1893, girls who had made every attendance during the week were allowed home a quarter of an hour early on Friday afternoon 'as a little encouragement' (35). In April, 1894, Standard III boys were allowed out half an hour early one afternoon as a reward for getting the highest percentage of attendances eight times in succession. In March, 1902, the children were allowed home ten minutes early on Friday. One other incentive mentioned in the girls' school log book is a performance of 'The Tea and Sixpence' by E T Hooley in 1898, for which there was 'a splendid attendance' (36).

Attendance was both a legal requirement and a necessity for the school. There were many reasons for non-attendance and attempts to enforce it often only met with partial or short-term success. By the turn of the century, however, the battle had to all intents and purposes been won and this victory had been consolidated by 1914. This was probably due less to schemes to enforce attendance and more to the growing acceptance of elementary education in people's minds.

#### References:

- (1) Wardle – *English Popular Education 1780 – 1970*
- (2) *Girls school log book*, 18.2.1887
- (3) see below, Chapter 5
- (4) Gosden – *How They Were Taught*
- (5) *Girls' school log book* 15.7.1887
- (6) *Ibid*, 14.6.1887
- (7) *ibid* 14.5.1889
- (8) *Boys' school log book* 26.2.1886
- (9) *Girls' school log book*, 3.5.1886
- (10) Report, *girls' school log book*, 9.1.1888
- (11) *Boys' school log book*, 29.6.1889
- (12) *ibid*, 6.9.1895
- (13) *Girls' school log book*, 24.4.1891
- (14) *Boys' school log book*, 10.5.1889
- (15) *Girls school log book*, 5.2.1886 – Johnson – *Derbyshire Village Schools*
- (16) *Girls' school log book*, 1.7.1888
- (17) *Boys' school log book*, 13.12.1901
- (18) *ibid*, 25.4.1895
- (19) *ibid*, 26.12.1892
- (20) *Girls school log book*, 2.9.1904
- (21) *Borough Council Minutes 1901-1902*, p. 161
- (22) *Girls' school log book*, 16.9.1902. In December 1904, the schools broke up early by order of the Medical Officer of Health due to there being smallpox in the neighbourhood; some of the girls were suffering from it. *Girls' school log book*, 20.12.1904.
- (23) The others were Bath Street Board School, Chaucer Board School and St Mary's National School
- (24) *Borough Council Minutes*, 1896-1897 p. 32 – In 1907 the schools were closed for a fortnight because of measles. *Boys' school log book*, 24.2.1907.
- (25) *Girls' school log book*, 3.4.1888
- (26) *ibid*, 24.8.1900
- (27) *ibid*, 30.7.1889
- (28) See below, chapter 6
- (29) *Girls' school log book*, 11.3.1892
- (30) *ibid*, 7.2.1890
- (31) *ibid*, 4.7.1890
- (32) *ibid*, 21.3.1888
- (33) *ibid*, 17.10.1890
- (34) *ibid*, 19.3.1897
- (35) *ibid*, 10.3.1893
- (36) *Boys' school log book*, 21.1.1898

## CHAPTER 5

### STANDARDS, EXAMINATIONS AND SUBJECTS

#### **Standards**

During the period 1886 to 1914 pupils spent all their school days at Kensington. They began in the infants' school at five years old, transferred to the boys' or girls' school a year or two later, and officially left between ten and thirteen years of age to go out to work (unless, of course, they stayed on to become a pupil-teacher). They did not transfer to another school.

Children sent up from the infants' department were examined and placed in the appropriate standard. In 1889, thirty-one boys who were moved up passed for Standard II, although they did not know geography, music or preparation for grammar, these subjects not being taught in their department.. The following year, only twenty-three boys were sent up. This was not enough and more were requested. Only twelve arrived, 'not out of the six-year-old class, who of course were the ones for advancement, but notorious dunces from all through the school even including four boys from the 'Babies' class. It will mean horse-work to get them anywhere near the mark. Sixteen of this Standard know simply nothing' (1)

Children were allowed to leave school at thirteen. Mr Jackson wrote in 1910 – 'The upper class is thinning rapidly owing to the boys reaching 13 years of age' (2). Until 1893, children could leave at ten if they met one of two conditions. If they were intelligent enough or had worked hard enough to reach Standard V, the exemption standard, they could take the labour examination and leave upon passing it. 'Nearly all Standard II girls have left, having obtained a labour certificate' (3). Pupils could also leave at ten if they had made enough attendances to obtain a 'Dunce's pass'. 'Three girls leave on their attendances today' (4). The children were not always sure about these regulations. In 1888, Mrs Murray noted that many girls who had passed Standard IV were no longer coming to school, considering themselves to be exempt. In 1893, the minimum leaving age was raised to eleven; in 1899 to twelve; and in 1918 to fourteen.

Pupils were put into standards according to ability rather than age. If they passed the annual examination they were moved up one or possibly two standards; if they failed, they remained where they were. In 1892, for example, all but two girls moved a standard higher as a result of the examination. Some children quickly reached the highest standard and had to remain in it for a year or two. To alleviate this problem, a seventh standard was added in 1880. Other children never progressed beyond Standard I. Mrs Murray wrote in 1902 'Standard I are doing better work, but their attainments are very varied as so many are admitted who scarce know all their letters and figures and some are very big girls and old ones too' (5).

**TABLE 5**  
**NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN EACH STANDARD IN THE BOYS' SCHOOL IN 1886 AND 1888**

1886				1888			
Standard	No of pupils	Standard	No of pupils	Standard	No of pupils	Standard	No of pupils
I	30	V	13	I	15	V	36
II	40	VI	8	II	43	VI	14
III	50	VII	0	III	37	VII	1
IV	25			IV	41		

In the 1900's this system became less rigid and it became common for less able children to be promoted a standard after a year or two so that there was not as great a disparity between their age and standard as there had been previously. The 1915 report for the girls' school observes that 'the organisation has been improved by the more rapid promotion of forward children and also by sending up the older backward girls. There are, however, still some children old for their position in the school'. (16) The 1912 report on the boys' school noted that there were fifty four children in Standard I over the normal age and the 1914 report states that many of the boys were much above the normal age for their class. Particularly in the boys' school, things were only changing slowly in this respect.

## Examinations

Until 1897, when the system of payment by results ended, the aim of schools was to get their children through an annual examination, not only for the children's own benefit but because, as we have seen, the school gained a grant for those who passed (7). The great majority of work was directed to this end and weekly internal examinations were held to check pupils' progress. At the opening of the girls' school, the girls of Standards II and III were given three simple addition and subtraction sums. The results were as follows:

Sums correct	Number of pupils
3	2
2	5
1	6
0	20

Their reading and writing was evidently little better and there was obviously much work to be done to get them up to examination standard. This was an unusual case, as the school had only just opened. Things soon settled down and many examples of the results of weekly examinations are to be found in the boys' school log books, one or two of which are given below.

**1886**

Standard	% Pass
I	57
II	80
III	56
IV	70
V	76

**Average 70%**

The headmaster commented that 'the class or work in Standard III is disgraceful' (8)

**1890**

Standard	Number	PASSED			% pass
		Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	
I	23	23	15	18	81
II	15	15	13	11	86
III	30	24	23	23	77
IV	31	30	31	26	90
V	36	30	27	19	70
VI	30	16	13	23	57

The headmaster was disappointed by these results and wrote that the work of two classes was 'altogether disgraceful' (9).

Children who did badly in these tests might be withdrawn from the annual examination. In 1892, Mrs Murray noted that six girls in Standard I probably would not be fit to attend the annual examination, as they did not know their letters at the beginning of the year. Children could even be moved down a standard if they were not capable of doing the work. In 1890, for example, four boys were moved off the work of the standard they were in. As the annual examination approached, internal tests became more frequent. The whole of the boys' school was examined three times in a week just before the 1888 examination and in 1891 the timetable was suspended in order to do work aimed at polishing up for the annual examination.

Once a year, Her Majesty's Inspectors descended upon the school for a morning and examined throughout. The examinations, both written and oral, must have been an ordeal for the headteacher and staff, worried about the following year's grant. Perhaps the greatest confidence was displayed by Mr Hunt in 1891 – 'I am glad to be able to say that every teacher in the school has worked well, and I have little doubt but that this will be seen' (10). The children, who would

have been worked extra hard in the weeks prior to the examination no doubt looked forward to the day. The examination usually finished by mid-morning and they were given a holiday for the remainder of the day.

After the marking had been completed the school would receive the results of the examination, known as the Schedules. In 1887, 85% of the girls passed, Mrs Murray commenting that the result was poor owing to the irregular attendance of the girls. The following year, 93.2% passed. In the boys' school in 1886, 81% passed as follows:

<i>Presented</i>	114	
<i>Withdrawn</i>	6	
<i>Passed all 3 R's</i>	65	)
<i>Failed in 1 R</i>	26	) 91 passed
<i>Failed in 2 R's</i>	20	)
<i>Failed in 3 R's</i>	3	) 23 failed

In 1888, the headmaster compared the results of the annual examination with those of the final internal test before it:

	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Arithmetic</b>
Test Passes	153	143	148
Examination Passes	150	147	148

The grant received by the school was based partly upon the number of pupils who were successful in the examination (11). In 1887, Mr Butt wrote 'The annual inspection took place on Thursday.....the result of the examination was considerably affected by the severe thunderstorm which occurred in the midst both on account of taking the attention of the boys and also causing a good deal of nervousness' (12). His fears proved justified. When the grant came, it was for 15/10d (79p), compared with 17/- (85p) per head the previous year. 'The reason why we have fallen below the standard of last year is in my opinion entirely on account of the violent thunderstorm which occurred' (13). In 1888, the per capita grant was 19/2d (96p), the total grant being £154/19/10d. (£194.99)

As well as the results, the Inspectors would comment in their reports about the work and behaviour of the children presented for examination. They might be critical. 'A weakness in the composition of the fifth and in mental arithmetic endangers the recommendation of the higher grant' (14) 'Some of the boys were rather inattentive during the oral examination' (15). On occasion, however they might give praise. 'The boys .... Displayed a good deal of intelligence in the oral examination' (16).

### **Subjects**

Until 1897, the subjects and their content which children were to study for the annual examination and for which schools could therefore earn grant were laid down by the Revised Code of 1862. The only subjects originally included were reading, writing and arithmetic. The table below shows the work which had to be done in each subject in Standard I and Standard VI (17).

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>STANDARD I</b>	<b>STANDARD VI</b>
READING	Narrative in monosyllables	A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative
WRITING	Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, letters capital and small, manuscript	Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.
ARITHMETIC	Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, figures up to twenty; add and subtract figures up to ten, orally from examples on blackboard.	A sum in practice of bills of parcels.

The code was gradually amended, other subjects being included in the curriculum, although their syllabi were still laid down nationally. By 1871, algebra, geography, geometry and English Literature were included in 1895 the curriculum was again widened to include nature study, poetry and P.E.

There was much criticism of the Code, it being argued that it was inflexible, not allowing schools to adapt to the needs and requirements of their children in order to stimulate their interest and promote more effective learning. In the Kensington Schools, attempts were occasionally made to break free from the constraints of the Code. In 1892, Mr Hunt proposed to have lessons on 'The Principles of Agriculture' as a 'Specific Subject' in place of algebra, it being a subject which the boys enjoyed, as they saw it as having a practical application. 'It is proposed to teach it not with a view to earning an increased grant, but with a view to giving them a real interest in the subject and a desire to know more about it' (18).

We shall now look in more detail at the subjects studied by the pupils. It must be borne in mind that the 3 R's were considered as being of overwhelming importance, whereas the following sections concentrate more heavily on other subjects.

Certain aspects of English will be examined first. Reference is frequently made in the log books to the poor standard of spelling. In 1886, for example, Mr Butt wrote that 'spelling especially is very weak, in great part owing to the way the boys speak when out of school. "Th" at the beginning of a word is pronounced and spelt as "f"' (19). Many attempts were made to remedy this weakness. In the girls school in 1886, Standard II were sent home with a dozen spellings to learn each night. In 1892, spelling books were sold at ½d each, each girl then being given 'a large number' of spellings to learn each night and were heard the next morning (20). Handwriting was done in copy books, which had to be kept scrupulously neat. Recitation was part of the syllabus – in 1890, the headmaster went round each class in the boys' school and explained all the meanings and illusions in passages. After 1895, Standard III and above had to learn poetry off by heart, but there was no opportunity for children to write their own verse.

Object lessons were very common, often being given by the pupil-teachers. An object or a picture of an object was brought into the classroom and would be examined and the children told facts about it, which they had to recite to the teacher, either individually or chanting them as a class. The orange was a popular subject, as was clay, but there were many others – in the boys' school in 1899-1900, they included putty, gutta-percha, wallflowers, camels, hair, glaciers and geysers.

History and Geography, if they were taught at all, tended to consist, at least in the early years, of the learning of long lists of dates and names. Mr Butt tried to make geography a bit more lively for the children, writing in 1890 – 'Have requested the teachers to teach interesting facts rather than long, dry strings of proper names in Geography' (21). Things had changed by the 1900's. 'Standard III are very interested in their history lessons – especially about the Spanish Armada, wrote Mrs Murray in 1905 (22). In the same year she also wrote – 'Mrs West has started map drawing 'by the eye'. It was rather difficult to attempt it at first as the girls had not done any drawing before' (23).

No reference is made in the log books to any science teaching before 1900 (24). In the 1900's, nature walks were undertaken by the girls to see such things as hay fields, the sowing, growing and gathering of oats, and tree life in winter.

P.E. was very different from today. There were no team games or gymnastics and no attention was paid to aesthetics. P.E. lessons were called drill and were on the lines of army training, being an exercise in discipline as much as anything, as the following quote suggests. 'Drill sergeant came on Thursday morning' (25). Children were lined up on the playground and were marched about in rows together, forwards and backwards, and were told to do arm movements, touch their toes, etc. In 1902, Mrs Murray wrote that 'the girls drilled and marched very nicely this week' (26). In 1895, 'new dumb bells were used for drill' by the girls (27). In 1888, they 'were taken to see the boys drilled by order of the Board' (28).

The girls did needlework and knitting. There could be problems here. Mrs Murray wrote in 1886 that 'the girls have great difficulty in keeping their examination specimens clean – although they are allowed to wash their hands very frequently' (29). It was a useful source of income for the school, however. In 1886, a Needlework Fund was set up, in which girls could deposit money to enable them to buy articles done in school. There were frequent exhibitions and sales of work. This was

virtually the only art and craft work done by the girls, although in the 1900's there was some drawing and, very occasionally, painting.

In music, there was a great deal of tonic sol-fa work. Songs would be written up on the blackboard and learnt, possibly with a piano, in the classroom. Titles of songs included 'Tis Better Late Than Never', 'Do you Best', 'Work For All' and 'Love At Home'.

The girls also did courses in cookery and laundry – these were held at places outside the school each year.

Occasionally, lectures were given by people from outside. There was an annual lecture on the dangers of alcohol and in 1889 the boys had a lecture on 'The Heart and its Action', followed the next day by the dissection of a sheep's heart and essay writing on the subject, the best twenty being given certificates.

In conclusion, it can be said that until 1897 the life of the schools was dominated by the Revised Code and the system of payment by results. The schools had to teach set subjects and syllabi in such a way as to ensure that children passed the annual examination in them in order to safeguard their income and this inhibited innovations in the method of teaching and in the content of what was taught. Children who did not pass the examination could not be promoted and this meant that they remained in the same standard, often year after year. Even after this system was abolished in 1897, it took, a good many years for the effects of it to wear off completely, for the schools to realise that they were free to experiment with their own curricula. This was especially the case in the boys' school. Internal examinations were held regularly between 1897 and 1914, the emphasis being on the 3R's. In 1911, Mr Jackson commented that 'the 3R's seem to be very well done' (30) and in 1913 that 'the examination shows the 3R's are in a fairly satisfactory state'. (31). The headmaster was very concerned about attendance and there was still a marked disparity between the age of the pupils and the standard they were in, promotion still being determined by the results of examinations held internally.

The girls' school seems to have freed itself more quickly from the effects of the system of payment by results. Although ages and standards were not quite matched, an effort was made in this respect. Attendance was not seen as so vital in the 1900's examinations largely disappeared and the curriculum widened. By 1914, the girls' school was well on the way to becoming modern in the sense of feeling able to determine its own curriculum and teaching methods; it was to take the boys' school a few more years to reach this stage.

#### *References:*

- (1) *Boys' school log book, 5.2.1890*
- (2) *ibid 1.7.1910*
- (3) *Girls' school log book, 22.11.1895*
- (4) *ibid 24.3.1905*
- (5) *ibid 31.1.1902*
- (6) *ibid 26.10.1915*
- (7) *see above*
- (8) *Boys' school log book 24.9.1886*
- (9) *ibid 5.9.1891*
- (10) *ibid 30.10.1891*
- (11) *see above, chapter 4*
- (12) *Boys' school log book 4.11.1887*
- (13) *ibid 101.1888*
- (14) *Report boys' school log book 13.2.1893*
- (15) *ibid 12.12.1888*
- (16) *ibid 31.12.1891*
- (17) *Gosden – How they were taught*
- (18) *Boys' school log book 12.3.1892*
- (19) *ibid 18.10.1886*
- (20) *Girls' school log book 3.6.1892; 17.6.1892*
- (21) *Boys' school log book 26.9.1890*
- (22) *Girls' school log book 24.3.1905*
- (23) *ibid 17.3.1905*

- (24) *there was no science teaching in Derbyshire Schools in 1886. Johnson – Derbyshire Village Schools*
- (25) *Boys' school log book 18.2.1887*
- (26) *Girls' school log book 5.9.1902*
- (27) *ibid 11.10.1895*
- (28) *ibid 21.9.1888*
- (29) *ibid 30.6.1886*
- (30) *Boys' school log book 24.2.1911*
- (31) *ibid 31.10.1913*

## CHAPTER 6

### LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM 1886 – 1914

The children marched into school in lines which they formed in the playground when the bell was rung. In the girls' school a piano played them into the big room where they had assembly before going to their classrooms. Mrs Murray was worried about where they put their coats. 'As some girls come very tidy and others are very dirty I think it scarcely advisable their hats and jackets should lay side by side on the pegs in the lobby. I have therefore numbered the pegs and divided these into three sets – clean, moderately clean, and dirty children's clothes to hang in groups and have given to each child a separate number' (1).

Life in the classroom was very different from today. Classrooms were often very crowded, with fifty to eighty children in a room. Several standards were often grouped together and this caused organisational problems in 1890, Mrs Murray had four standards of girls in one room. 'Much time is wasted through having so many to teach and I cannot do my duty by every girl by having my hands so full' (2). Conditions in the boys' school were well described by the inspectors in the 1912 Report on the boys school. 'Standards V, VI, VII and Standard IV occupy two classrooms and the three lower Standards the large remaining room. This room is not an ideal one for teaching. The floor is boarded and hollow and one end of the room is dark, the children having to sit with their backs to the window. The desks are of a poor type, too long and too high' (3).

The children sat on forms, about twelve on each row, and were rarely allowed to move about. In the 1900's they might, if they were lucky, be chosen to go out to the front and stand by the teacher's desk and read to the class. This was regarded as a great honour. They might also be allowed to give out the books at the beginning and collect them in at the end of each lesson, as the forms did not have lift-up lids and books had to be kept in a cupboard.

Writing was done on squeaky slates and children were supposed to bring a damp cloth with which to clean them. Many did not do so and had to resort to 'spit and cuff'. The children also had to provide their own slates and pencils. At first, many girls failed to do so, and all were sent home with a piece of paper, on which the following was written:

1. School money 3d
2. Clean slate
3. Long, sharp pencil
4. Slate rag or sponge
5. Clean boots
6. Clean faces, hands and nails
7. Tidy, smooth hair

#### BE IN TIME

During the latter part of this period slates were replaced by paper.

Much of the work involved copying from the blackboard and, inevitably in a crowded classroom, all children in the same standard did the same piece of work at the same time. The boys' school report of 1914 states that the lessons made too little demands on the independent thought and efforts of the children. By 1915, in their report on the girls' school, the inspectors were able to comment that 'the use of text books enables the scholars to work at their own pace' (4).

The timetable was hung on the wall. It had to be approved by the School Board and had to be followed very rigidly, only being deviated from under exceptional circumstances, for example, if it was too wet for drill, if the annual examination was approaching, or if staff were absent. In 1888, in the boys' school, part of the time laid down for Recitation and Scripture was used to improve Spelling. In 1900, Mrs Murray noted that 'I cannot adhere strictly to the timetable, but follow it as nearly as possible' owing to three out of six teachers being away (5). In 1904, the boys' school did not strictly follow the timetable as hymns to be sung at the opening of the new free library were being learned.

The timetable was suspended on one day each year. This was on Empire Day, which was eagerly awaited by the pupils as a break in the inflexible routine. Before play in the morning, lessons were



given on patriotism and the Empire. This was followed by drilling and marching on the school yard. Flags were waved and simple arm movements carried out – across chest, raised, down. There might be a piano accompaniment. The pupils together; might form a Union Jack or the letters K.J.S. Rule Britannia and the National Anthem were sung. The school was decorated with Union Jacks and bunting both inside and out. Soup might be distributed. In the afternoon, a holiday was given.

The timetable might also be suspended on the last day before the Christmas and Summer holidays. At the end of the Christmas term in 1887, for example the boys had games and raced in the yard and nuts and oranges were distributed. In 1888, they had 'a scramble for nuts and dispersed much delighted' for the summer holidays.

Lighting in the classrooms was very poor. Windows were often small and high up – children were not meant to be distracted by being able to see out. The only artificial light was provided by gas, which was not very effective on dark winter afternoons. On one afternoon in November 1886, it was too dark to continue lessons after 3.40pm in the girls' school, so the girls sang until 4pm. On one afternoon in September 1894, singing was substituted for arithmetic as it was too dark to see. The schools could also be very cold. Mrs Murray wrote in 1892 – 'The girls sometimes look nearly perished in school and they cannot work as they should' (6).

In the playground, the boys and girls were separated by a wall and they only saw each other over the top of it. Their games included whips and tops, shuttlecocks, snobs, skipping ropes, marbles, shove buttons, stick and geyser and the diabolo. There would be a great many exchanges of games between children. The infants did not necessarily have their playtime at the same time as the other departments and Mrs Murray, who would not allow her girls to make too much noise in the playground, complained about this. 'The noise is sometimes unbearable' (7) 'Sometimes we can scarce hear ourselves speak' (8).

When the children left school at the end of the day they could visit Tommy Harrison's shop at the corner of St John's Road. This was the school 'tuck shop', having a window full of cheap sweets. The children could buy two sticks of liquorice for ¼d or five aniseed balls for ½d – these would be counted out into their hands twice by Tommy Harrison, a demonstrative, Dickensian character.

Finally, a few words about discipline. We have already noted the generally good order in the schools during these years (9). This was no doubt due in part to the strict discipline, necessary in order to push children through the annual examination. However, the worst excesses of punishment, such as putting boards round children's necks, wearing dunces' caps, and tying children together with a halter, do not seem to have been used at Kensington Schools – certainly they were not regarded as normal, for no mention is made of them in the log books. The harshest punishment mentioned, and this only once, is the whipping of a girl for banging a slate about and then throwing it on the floor and breaking it. The cane was often used, for many reasons, including misbehaviour, lateness, careless work and not doing homework. In 1886, several girls were caned for being sent home for their school pence when they had it in their pockets all the time, but there were also rewards for good behaviour. For example, in 1890, two girls were given prizes for improving their writing.

## References

- (1) *Girls' school log book* 25.2.1886
- (2) *ibid* 9.5.1890
- (3) *Report boys' school log book* 5.7.1912
- (4) *Girls' school log book* 26.10.1915
- (5) *ibid* 23.2.1900
- (6) *ibid* 24.11.1892
- (7) *ibid* 19.9.1890
- (8) *ibid* 13.5.1892
- (9) *see above, Chapter 2*

## CHAPTER 7

### OUTSIDE EVENTS 1886 – 1914

Between 1886 and 1914 there were a great many outside events, both locally and further afield, which touched upon the life of the schools. Some of these have already been mentioned (1), this chapter looks at other significant outside events which affected the life of the schools.

Conditions in local industries were important to the schools. In 1892, for example, several girls left because of a works closing. During 1892, there was industrial depression in the district and families were leaving the Kensington end of town, where work was almost at a standstill, and going to Nottingham. In 1893 there was a crisis in the coal industry and many children stayed away to get soup and bread at the church. Strikes were another problem. In 1892, the strike at Trowell Forge, caused by the quality of the iron used, hit the schools' attendance.

During the 1912 coal strike, the Ilkeston Pioneer wrote that 'the greatest distress was reported from the southern district, where reside the Stanton men'. The Salvation Army, under the leadership of Adjutant Barrell, took up the work of feeding the hungry children. On the first day, this appears to have interfered with the usual routine of the school, but after this feeding began at 8.20am and so interfered little with the school. One Saturday morning, soup and bread were distributed to about 400 children, about 120 of whom would have been from Kensington, at the barracks in Chapel Street. It was very crowded and some had to stand in the yard. About seventy gallons of soup were ladled out of a copper and 'the youngsters appeared to thoroughly enjoy the savoury mess'

At a council meeting, Councillor W Shakespeare said that he feared that many children in attendance at school would be found starving if the strike continued and, thinking that feelings of humanity might be allowed to pass over desires for economy, urged the council to assist in some small way to stem the tide of starvation. The council did use its powers under the Education (provision of meals) Act, 1906, to arrange for meals to be provided for necessitous children attending elementary schools. As a result of these measures, Mr Jackson was able to note in the log book that the boys apparently are not suffering much from lack of nourishment' (2).

A boom in local industry could help schools. In 1890, there was a good prospect of more children coming to the school owing to the re-starting of blast furnaces in the neighbourhood. Later in the same year, more population was being attracted by the ironworks at Gallows Inn.

The fathers of many of the children worked at Stanton Ironworks and in 1896 the boys' school changed its hours in order to allow children to take their father's dinners to Stanton. Morning school was from 9am – 11.30am and afternoon school from 1.15pm – 4pm. Mothers met their children at the gate with a call of 'Come on, here's your dad's dinner'. They would give the dinners, in a basket with a lid or a basin with a cloth tied over the top, to the children, who would then run as fast as they could to Stanton and back in time for afternoon school.

Annual events included the fair, the circus, and Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie. They were usually, though not always, the occasion for an annual holiday. As the fair arrived, the children congregated on Nottingham Road to watch the caravans, pulled by big steam engines or by horses. Lord John Sanger's Circus was a common visitor. In 1895, the children could see a Japanese God, a talking horse, Madame Pauline De Vere, and more besides, all for 6d (2½p) (3).

On February 15 1887, Ilkeston was granted a charter as a municipal borough, the town thus having new rights as a self-governing body. Schools and workplaces were given a day's holiday in order that their inhabitants could attend a ceremony in the Market Place. It was a dull and cloudy day and the Ilkeston Pioneer noted that fears were entertained that the clerk of the weather did not view the Incorporation Ceremony in a favourable light. The rain, however, held off, although there was 'a pitiless, biting east wind, which swept across the Market Place'. Despite this, the Market Place must have been both colourful and noisy. It was decorated with banners, bunting, flags, wreaths of evergreen and mottoes of various shapes. Thirteen or fourteen thousand people were estimated to be present, including more than five thousand children.

The children from the southern districts, among them those from Kensington, arrived first. The centre of the Market Place was barricaded, a space being reserved for them by a large force of police. The school children 'shouted with glee at the thought of a day's respite from their tasks,

and in anticipation of the part they were to play in the day's events'. Mr Sudbury, the first mayor of the town, commented in his speech 'what a blessed sight it was to see so many children there looking clean and well dressed'.

Each child was given a medal presented by F W Goddard & Sons, lace Manufacturers, inscribed Ilkeston Incorporated, 15 February 1887 on one side and Queen Victoria Jubilee Year 1887 and a picture of the queen on the other. 'The youngsters seemed quite proud of their decoration'. No doubt they were also pleased with the nuts and oranges which were distributed (4).

In 1894, a holiday was given in the afternoon for the opening of the new hospital by Lord and Lady Belper. Later that year, a holiday was given for the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire to Ilkeston to open a bazaar. A year later, the Duke of Bedford visited the town and a holiday was given. In 1898, a Wild Beast Show visited the town, and in 1901 the schools closed for an afternoon for the Ilkeston Agricultural Show. In 1904, the council resolved that 'the school children should have a half holiday .... And be present in the Market Place ... And sing under the conductorship of Mr Arthur Butt' on the occasion of the opening of the Carnegie Free Library (5). A holiday was given in 1910 because the school was being used as a polling station in a by election caused by the retirement of Sir W B Foster. In 1911, the schools were closed one Friday afternoon due to the death of Wright Lissett, the long serving Clerk to the School Board. In 1913, the children were given a holiday so that they could watch the Sherwood foresters on a route march through Ilkeston. In 1914, King George V and Queen Mary visited Ilkeston to open the new County Secondary School. The children were given a holiday and on one day marched to Victoria Park where they sang.

One afternoon in 1903, at 1.30pm a shock of earthquake was felt throughout the district, not the only time in the school's history that this happened, due to the fault in the geological structure of the Erewash Valley.

National events, notably concerning the royal family, also affected the school. In 1897, the schools closed for a week to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The children went to the market Place and sang the National Anthem and hymns. There was a free gala at the Recreation Ground and tea for the children. The town was decorated with flags and there were illuminations outside the Town Hall and beacon fires on the hills. In addition, the boys sang Rule Britannia and God Save the Queen at school and had a scramble for nuts. In 1900, a holiday was given on the eighty first birthday of Queen Victoria. When Queen Victoria died in 1901, 'the school was closed on Wednesday in consequence of the lamented death of our gracious Queen Victoria' (6) and 'by order of the Board a short memorial service was held in the school .... And schools dismissed at 3pm' (7). In June, 1902, the schools were closed so that children could have a tea provided for the Coronation festivities of King Edward VII, and a week's extra holiday was given in summer. In 1911, a holiday was given for the coronation of King George V and lessons on the coronation were given and coronation hymns learnt.

Events abroad could also have an impact on the school. This was especially the case regarding the Boer War. In 1900, a half holiday was given to celebrate the relief of Ladysmith. News of this event reached Ilkeston at about 11am in the morning of March 1 1900. It was received with the greatest jubilation and spread like wildfire. There were displays of Union Jacks from many windows, many people wore red, white and blue, children paraded the streets with ribbons flying and even dogs were decorated with the national colours. The Ilkeston Pioneer reported that the town had not been so deeply moved for years. (8). A Short time later, another holiday was given for the relief of Mafeking. In 1902, a half holiday was given to celebrate the end of the Boer War.

## References

- (1) see above Chapter 4
- (2) Boys' school log book, 22.3.1900, 19.4.1900; girls school log book, 18.3.1912; Ilkeston Pioneer 8.3.1912, 15.3.1912, 22.3.1912
- (3) Ilkeston Pioneer, 18.10.1895
- (4) ibid 18.2.1887
- (5) Borough Council Minutes 1903-1904, p.276
- (6) Boys school log book 25.1.1901
- (7) ibid 1.2.1901
- (8) Ilkeston Pioneer 2.3.1900

## CHAPTER 8

### WORLD WAR I, 1914 – 1918

The early part of World War I seems to have made little impression upon the life of the school. Men were away fighting in the trenches but life, including school life, continued much as normal back home. There are few references to the war in the log books of 1914 and 1915 and reports of those years make no mention of conditions being any different because of the war. In 1914, geography in the boys' school included war news; in 1915, Mr West 'a motor driver with the Expeditionary Force now on furlough' came and spoke to the oldest boys about some of his experiences at the front (1); and the children were no doubt delighted in September 1915 when an extra week's holiday was given to enable teachers to help with Registration Work and in October and December of that year when a day's holiday was given for the same reason. But the overall impression in these years is that the war was seen as being remote and having little relevance for those at home.

As the war of attrition in the trenches dragged on, it began to play a greater part in the lives of those at home. In Ilkeston, its realities struck home hard when, on the evening of January 31 1916 a Zeppelin circled very low over Ilkeston Market Place and caused some panic before flying off. This was evidently a reconnaissance flight for it returned later that night with the aim of bombing Stanton Ironworks. People in the town tried to hinder it by climbing up lampposts and putting out the lights and it only succeeded in dropping a bomb in the fields near the ironworks. The following morning 'very few children turned up' at the boys school. 'The visit of the Zeppelins the previous evening was the cause of the poor attendance' (2) Those absent had gone to inspect the bomb crater and word had obviously spread round by the afternoon for 'less still presented themselves' (3). Only 188 came to school. In the girls' school, 77 girls were absent in the morning and 97 in the afternoon. Both schools therefore closed in the afternoon.

The attack must have worried people, for a week later there was a poor attendance in the schools owing to a Zeppelin scare, 'many of the children having been up very late at night' (4). In September 1916, there was another raid which adversely affected the attendance.

Collections of money were made to help with various aspects of the war. References to collections in the log books only begin in 1917 but money had been collected before this through the Overseas Club. In 1915, every child attending school on Empire Day was asked to bring 1d for the Overseas Club to send 'to the brave sailors at the front to whom we owe so much' as a tribute to 'the gallant men who are fighting for the honour and freedom of our glorious Empire' (5).

One soldier was obviously grateful for he wrote a postcard, posted at a Field Post Office on 7 September 1915, to the girls' school. He wrote:

***"Dear little maids, I am smoking your cigarettes whilst writing this and in wishing that all your troubles may end in smoke I thank you for your happy thought and kindly gift. It is raining as I am writing this but it would not rain too much to interfered with our going out and giving the German Huns a jolly good hiding. You cannot realise the effects of this cruel war until you see the ruined Churches and the villages wrecked and shattered by shot and shell and thank God our gallant Comrades and Allies will do all in their power to stop them from ever serving the homeland and same as they have served places in Northern France and Belgium. Wishing you every success with sincerest thanks to all of you friends"*** (6)

In 1917, collections became more regular. In September 1917, entertainment was arranged on the Pimlico Grounds to raise money for the Prisoner of War Funds. The boys raised £3.3.6d. The girls had an exhibition and sale of work and raised £5.6.8d. In 1918, the boys school made arrangements to assist regularly in the Prisoner of War Funds. The first week of September 1918 was devoted to the same cause. There was an exhibition of work, which the boys visited, having sent in pastel drawings and plasticine and mecano models. In January 1981, a Tank Week was held, the boys raising £870.0.6d and the girls paying £17.12.9d into the Tank Account of the local War Services Association.

The number of men away at the Front meant that many gardens in the neighbourhood of the school needed to be cultivated in their absence. The children were used to help here, Mr Jackson

writing in 1916 – ‘The men left behind will see to those who are gone. The boys I have no doubt would be delighted to assist anyone needing assistance’ (7).

The U boat blockade, which resulted in a shortage of food in 1917, led to the introduction of a variety of schemes for raising food production, making much use of school children. The boys expanded their gardening activities, beginning gardening on a regular basis. ‘The boys started gardening this week, but not “school gardening”’. The idea is to increase the production of potatoes and if a permanent tenancy is obtained to introduce gardening as a subject when peace returns’ (8) Gardening continued into 1918. In January ‘the boys commenced winter digging the allotment’ (9).

In 1917, rationing was introduced. In June, the girls cookery classes were suspended. In October 1917, one of the girls school teachers was absent helping to distribute sugar tickets at the Town Hall. Towards the end of the year, Mr Jackson noted that some irregularity was being caused by boys being kept from school to fetch butter or margarine. In the girls school, one girl was absent, being sent to buy butter; on another day, several girls didn’t arrive until 9.30am having been sent to town for butter, some of them having left home at between 7am and 7.30am in order to queue up and ensure that they received their ration.

In March 1918, the schools were closed in order to allow the teachers to help with the ‘Food Ticket’ scheme. At Easter, an extra two days’ holiday was given in order to recompense the teachers for the loss of the Christmas Holidays, which were given up to carry out a rationing scheme’ (10). In June, the schools were closed for a week, to allow new ration books to be issued.

There are few references in the log books to people connected with the school. In June 1916, Mr Smith a teacher at the boys school, ‘joined the colours’ (12). He was replaced by Miss Eyre. In October 1916, an old boy of the school, Corporal H Mees, won a Military Cross for conspicuous bravery on the field. Towards the end of the war, news came from Mr H Hooley former pupil-teacher and assistant teacher, was in German hands. Mr Crookes, the deputy headteacher at the boys’ school, was very involved in local committees concerned with the war, helping to organise recruitment, Tank Week and food rationing.

The war ended in 1918 and by 1919 things seem to have returned to normal. Mr Jackson notes in March 1919 that ‘Miss Eyre was transferred to the girls’ school on Thursday, her place being taken by Mr H A Purchase, who has been demobilised’ (12). In June, a Peace Fair was held in the Market Place. Despite causing a certain amount of disruption, notably between 1916 and 1918, the war did not appear to have a profound effect on the life of the school.

#### *References*

- 1) *Boys’ school log book 5.2.1915*
- 2) *ibid 4.2.1916*
- 3) *ibid 4.2.1916*
- 4) *ibid 11.2.1916*
- 5) *Postcard in Ilkeston Public Library – reference section*
- 6) *ibid 16.3.1917*
- 7) *Boys’ school log book 12.5.1916*
- 8) *ibid 16.3.1917*
- 9) *ibid 25.1.1918*
- 10) *ibid 29.3.1918*
- 11) *ibid 2.6.1916*
- 12) *ibid 21.3.1919*

## CHAPTER 9

### BETWEEN THE WARS, 1918 – 1929

We have now seen how, with the ending of the system of payment by results, the schools slowly began to change what and how they taught (1). By 1918, they appear to have shaken off most of the effects of the system and by 1929 felt completely independent.

During the years 1918 to 1929, the Inspectors did not visit annually. The timetable no longer needed outside approval and internal examinations were only held once a term. The curriculum began to broaden and, as will be seen, now included out-of-school activities. For example, the allotments continued to be tended – there is reference in the log books to the growing of potatoes. In 1921, the boys were attending the Woodwork Centre and also went to the swimming baths.

The disparity between ages and standards continued to diminish as children were moved up a standard once they had achieved all they could achieve in their existing standard. Thus they would be at most two years from the correct standard for their age.

In 1918, the schools were still all-age schools, the majority of pupils leaving to go to work at fourteen. They might leave a year earlier if they had enough attendances or if they had passed the labour examination and assuming that they could get a job. This was not always the case. In 1922, a boy returned to school, having obtained a labour certificate but being unable to find work.

The only other exceptions were those who managed to gain a place at the Ilkeston County Secondary School or, after 1919, at Hallcroft School. The County Secondary School was opened in 1914 and, under the 1907 Free Place Regulations, eighteen free places were provided. The first boy from Kensington School to gain a place was Norman Tatham in 1927; the first girls were Kathleen Hann and Hannah Pierrepont in 1923. In 1926, a special class was established in the girls' school for those considered to be capable of passing the 11+ examination for Secondary School entry. In 1919, Hallcroft changed from an elementary school to a Higher Grade School. This was in response to the 1918 Education Act, which made it the duty of local education authorities to secure practical and advanced instruction for more intelligent children. Entry was by an annual examination at 11+.

The inspectors' reports of the period show the general pattern of work and behaviour in the schools. The girls' school appears to have run efficiently during this period. The 1922 report stated that 'this school is conducted in an orderly manner ..... The behaviour of the children is excellent' (2). The 1927 report said – 'The Headmistress has the work well in hand and with the loyal co-operation of the staff has already accomplished much. The girls work with real interest' (3)

In the boys school, there are two reports which praise the work done. 'The children are under good control; they work industriously and show a desire to please their teachers', stated the 1920 report (4). In 1922, the report noted 'the quiet and orderly atmosphere which .... Prevails and the thoroughness and careful preparation which mark the teaching call for a word of praise' (5). The 1925 report, however, revealed 'a depressing state of affairs .... A re-organisation is necessary' (6). Mr Jackson had just retired, having let things slip somewhat in his last three years, after more than 25 years of, on the whole, successful leadership.

Mr Jackson retired on 29 May 1925, with the comment that 'Today I resign from the Headmastership on attaining the age of 60 – on a pension, after 31 years of service' (7). He was succeeded by Mr S P Cox. Mr Cox was to be headmaster for 25 years. He soon succeeded in putting the school back on the right course and became a strict but much respected headmaster, with an extremely good record of getting children to the Secondary School.

There were three headmistresses of the girls' school during this period. In 1916, Miss Sneap was succeeded by Mrs Chadwick. She was tall, elegant and gracious, and very charming and pleasant. She was gifted artistically and musically. Mrs Chadwick expected a high standard of behaviour and conduct from the children but in a tolerant environment, for she was very good with them and treated them well. When Hallcroft became a Higher Grade School in 1919, she moved there as headmistress of the girls' school. Mrs Bamber moved the other way, from Hallcroft, to succeed her as headmistress at Kensington. Mrs Bamber was very strict, even forbidding in appearance and had a formidable reputation as a disciplinarian (8). In 1926, Miss B King became headmistress,

having previously taught music at Hallcroft. She again tried to create an atmosphere of refinement and tolerance. In 1929, she left to become headmistress of the newly-opened Cavendish Girls' School.

Building continued around the schools during these years and by 1931 the pattern of housing was much as it is today. The number of children in the schools continued to grow and in the boys' school in particular this led to severe problems of overcrowding. The 1920 report speaks of 'adverse conditions', the average attendance exceeding the accommodation and the teaching in the main room being 'seriously handicapped by the presence of three classes working side by side'. The result was 'a tendency for teachers to raise their voices – at times they are quite unnecessarily loud, in the desire to get work done – and their labours become unduly strenuous without corresponding results'. Progress was generally slow and work only reached a fair standard (9). The problems were relieved to a certain extent in 1921, when the large room was partitioned, the result being a quieter and more orderly atmosphere. But in 1926, there were 211 boys on roll in a school built for 162, a problem which the headmaster tried to solve in April by sending Standard II down to the Bridge Mission. They had to return in May for the room was needed as a Feeding Centre during the General Strike and they only returned to the Bridge Mission in August.

In 1924, evening sessions were held between 5pm and 7pm. They took the place of afternoon sessions and were designed to enable parents to attend. 22 fathers and 52 mothers of the boys and 6 fathers and 16 mothers of the girls took advantage of it. Despite their great interest in the appreciation of the work done, Mrs Bamber commented that the gas lighting was not very good in most rooms and that 'the work done in books during the Evening Session was found to be inferior to work done in the day time' (10). Evening sessions were therefore abandoned.

In the boys' school, morning sessions reverted to 9am to 12 noon as few boys took dinners to Stanton Ironworks any more.

This period saw the development of out-of-school activities, notably in sport. Physical exercise was still termed drill, but football, swimming and school sports all took place during these years. In 1923, a school football league was formed. Mr Jackson wrote that 'we are busy getting a team together' which, something of a new departure, 'necessitates work outside ordinary hours' (11). The team's pitch was on Corporation Road.

Inter-school swimming galas were held, the boys winning the shield in 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1929. In 1928, Mr Cox commented that the swimming shield was lost after three years 'but a capital struggle took place' (12).

In 1925, the boys entered the James Cup, an inter-school sports trophy. They won the tug-of-war and came 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 7 schools. The following year they won the cup. Teams for sports day were not always very carefully chosen. In the girls' school, there were no heats and little practice. Girls could be chosen to compete at random by teachers as they filed into the classroom.

Music was well done in both schools. A joint music festival in 1923 brought a warm letter of praise from the Town Clerk. 'The festival was well nigh perfect' One member of the audience was 'filled.....with amazement....I expected great things from the children and got a great deal more than I expected. To them I say from the bottom of my heart, 'Bravo!' and 'Thank you!' (13)

Outside competitions were entered. In 1926, the boys gained 2<sup>nd</sup> place out of 5 entrants at the Ilkeston Music Festival and won £1.10.0d. In 1927, the choir went by train to attend the Loughborough Eisteddfod. The Junior Choir, (under 13), was 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 9 entrants; the Senior Choir (under 16), came 2<sup>nd</sup>, winning £2. In 1928, the Junior Choir again came 3<sup>rd</sup>; the Senior Choir came 1<sup>st</sup>, winning the Lacey Shield and £3, and the orchestra came first and won £2.

There were also school trips. For example, there was a trip to Wembley in 1924; to the Rutland Foundry in 1927; in 1929 to Matlock to see the local waterworks, petrifying wells, rocks and caverns; and in 1929 6 boys went to camp.

Empire Day continued to be celebrated. The programme in the boys' school in 1927 included lessons on how the Empire was acquired, 'an imaginary trip around the Empire', drawing the Union Jack, and a massed demonstration of singing and marching, in which the pupils formed the letters K.B.S., and songs 'Motherland' and 'Where the Flag of Britain Flies' were sung, ending with the

saluting of the flag and the singing of the National Anthem. During the celebrations 'the Infants were admitted to the school ground and were interested spectators' (14).

Armistice Day was observed. The service in the boys' school in 1926 included Kipling's Recessional and Motherland, an address on the meaning of Armistice Day, what World War I cost in lives to the nations involved, the aim of the League of Nations, two minutes silence, the Dead March and the National Anthem.

Regular medical and dental inspections were made. A dental inspection of 1929 passed 12 out of 200 children completely fit. Health Week was an annual event in the schools' life. Activities undertaken during this week included lectures on various aspects of health, visits to the sewage works and films at the King's Picture House or the Scala Picture House.

The major outside event affecting the school was the General Strike of 1926. As a mining area, Ilkeston was hit badly. Families went hungry and children were fed at the Bridge Mission Room. The number attending on the first day was 11, but it increased as the strike continued. The teachers helped with the feeding during the Whitsuntide holiday.

Other national events were the wedding of Princess Mary in 1922 and the marriage of the King's son, the Duke of York, in 1923, for which holidays were given. Local events included the visit of Bronco Bill to Ilkeston in 1920; a treat at the Stanton Ironworks in 1923, the school being closed at 3.30pm to allow children to attend; and a visit to the fair in 1927, when 3 boys were left behind. In 1921, there was an eclipse of the sun and 'a good view of the phenomenon was obtained' (15).

Between 1918 and 1929, the schools continued to become more modern. The curriculum became broader. More and more activities were undertaken out of school, and several children left at 11+ to go to a secondary school. In 1929, another major step was taken when the school became a junior mixed school.

#### *References*

- (1) *see above, chapter 5*
- (2) *Girls' school log book 6.4.22*
- (3) *ibid 11.5.27*
- (4) *Boys' school log book 19.4.20*
- (5) *ibid 29.3.22*
- (6) *ibid 2.7.25*
- (7) *ibid 29.5.25*
- (8) *see Smith – A History of Hallcroft School*
- (9) *Boys school log book 19.4.20*
- (10) *Girls' school log book 17.11.24*
- (11) *Boys' school log book 14.9.23*
- (12) *ibid 1.8.28*
- (13) *Boys' school log book 8.11.23; Girls' school log book 9.11.23*
- (14) *Boys' school log book 24.5.27*
- (15) *ibid 8.4.21*

#### **ERATUM**

Norman Tatham, Kathleen Hann and Hannah Pierrepont are the first boy and girls recorded in the admissions registers as winning a scholarship to the Secondary School, although Leslie Hanson and Evelyn Clarke went there in 1917.



## CHAPTER 10

### BETWEEN THE WAR, 1929 – 1939

In 1929, the boys' school and the girls' school joined. They had been moving closer together in the preceding years – we noted the joint music festival of 1923 in the previous chapter.

On 3 September 1929, the log book records that the 'school opened as a Junior Mixed School' (1) Boys and girls moved from the infants' school together and left Kensington at 11+. In 1926 the Hadow Committee had recommended that there should be a break in education for all at eleven, i.e. that there should be a change of school. This change was implemented in Kensington School in 1929. Before this, as we have seen, some boys and girls transferred to the County Secondary School and Hallcroft School at 11. In 1929, the Cavendish Schools were opened and any children at Kensington School who were 11 and who were not going to the County Secondary School or Hallcroft School were transferred there – there were 94 boys.

There were 2 inspections of the school during these years. The report on the first, in 1932, stated that 'this re-organised Junior department is doing very creditable work. The teachers are keen and intelligent, and the children are safe in their hands. The total effect is pleasing to contemplate ..... The fundamental subjects are very well taught and a high standard is aimed at and achieved' (2).

The second report in 1939, also praised the school. It noted that, for the first time for years, 'most classes are now of reasonable size'. The Headmaster, Mr Cox, and the staff were praised – the former 'serves his school well' and the latter showed 'much evidence of conscientious effort'. The children displayed 'diligent perseverance' and often 'reach a level of attainment which is sometimes beyond their natural powers'. The report concluded, 'In general, the school may be regarded as a successful one of its kind. The tone is bracing and staff and children co-operate well, while the Headmaster's unobtrusive and fatherly influence is felt throughout' (3).

The school was streamed during this period. There were three streams in each year, pupils being placed according to ability, with a special remedial class. The 11+ examination became prominent and scholarships to the County Secondary School, based on 11+ examination results, were considered to be very important in Kensington School.

**TABLE 6**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS WON BY CHILDREN FROM KENSINGTON SCHOOL**  
**1931 – 1938**

Year	Scholarships	Year	Scholarships
1931	2	1935	10
1932	6	1936	6
1933	5	1937	16
1934	8	1938	11

**In 1935, the scholarships gained by Ilkeston Schools were as follows:**

Kensington	10
Chaucer	4
Granby	3
Catholic	1
Hallam Fields	1

The major event of these years was the fire of 1935. It broke out in the early hours of Sunday, February 10 and was caused by a spark jumping out of the coke boiler in the boiler house at the back of the school. A slow fire was kept going over the weekend in winter so that the school would not be too cold on Monday morning.

The fire spread and the infants' department, which was where the hall is now, was ablaze when Doris Carter, returning home from a dance, discovered the fire at 2am. The roof was in flames 'which quickly rose to a great height and lighted up the vicinity for a great distance'. Mr Staniforth, the caretaker, was alerted, as were the fire brigade, which arrived within minutes. The main part of the fire was put out in an hour, but it took until 6 o'clock to extinguish it completely.

Several thousand pounds' worth of damage was caused. The infants' department was virtually destroyed – two classrooms were gutted and two were badly damaged by fire and water, the roof in another classroom was half burnt away. Miss A King the Headmistress of the Infants' school, had been in the post for only 8 months and had ordered new furniture and stock, all of which was destroyed. In addition, a little harmonium which had belonged to her father and which she used for assemblies was burnt (4).

The Junior School was closed for a week 'owing to the heating apparatus being out of gear' (5). Meanwhile, the infants were housed in Cavendish School for between 6 and 8 months and then in St John's Mission.

In July 1936, the school was re-opened by the Mayor as a Junior School only. Speeches at the opening ceremony noted that the fire was a blessing, giving a chance to make the school more up-to-date. A new hall, medical inspection room and staff room had been built in place of the infants' department and the block apart from the rest had been joined up.

The aim was to move the infants' department to a new and more spacious site away from the main road. Land had been acquired for this purpose on the Sudbury Estate. The aim was not achieved for 35 years, however, when, in 1971 Larklands Infant School opened (6).

Meanwhile, the infants stayed at Kensington. The new hall was used as a classroom and the effect, according to the 1939 report, was 'to curtail certain activities for which space is essential'. It went on to say, however, that the juniors were polite, having 'shown themselves good hosts to the infant classes concerned' and that the goodwill of all meant that there was no friction (7).

Extra-curricular activities continued to be important. The first school sports were held in 1933, when St George, Red House, won with 52 points. The 1935 sports, held on the Rutland Recreation Ground and won by St David, Blue House, included familiar flat, relay, skipping, 3-legged, sack, egg and spoon and obstacle races, and also some less familiar events, such as potato races,, a girls' waitresses' race, a boys' bricklayers' race, girls' house dressing, a blind driving race, a needle threading race, and a hobble skirt and poodle race. There was also a mothers' race, walk and run, in which there were 20 competitors, the prizes being a pair of silk stockings (1st), a companion set (2nd), and a bottle of scent (3<sup>rd</sup>). The Ilkeston Pioneer reported that 'a large gathering of parents and friends assembled in ideal weather and saw some spirited racing. At the end of the proceedings, the Mayoress presented the cup, congratulating the winners and consoling the losers with the comment that they knew it had done them good. The scholars gave 3 cheers and the school yell and the proceedings closed with the National Anthem' (8) The 1936 sports, won by St George, included such unusual events as a 'do as you are told race', a scooter race, a Sedan chair race and the Kenso glide.

Inter-school sports were held, the boys winning the junior cup in 1930, 1931 and 1932.

In 1932, the school football team reached the final of the junior cup, only to lose 1-0 to Loscoe. Mr Cox noted that it was 'a keen struggle', but Loscoe were 'a very big type of boy for Junior' (9). In 1935 Loscoe again defeated Kensington in the final, by two goals to one. This time Mr Cox wrote that 'part of Kensington team absent through illness – worse luck'. (10).

There was also cricket. For example, in 1930, Kensington scored 100 and Granby 67, Kensington thus winning by 33 runs.

Music continued to be a strength of the school. In 1929, the junior orchestra was first and the senior orchestra 5<sup>th</sup> out of 80 entrants at the Nottingham Music Festival. In 1930, the school

orchestra came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Derby and North Staffordshire Music Festival. In 1931, it won first prize at the Derby Music Festival. In 1934, 1935 and 1936, the choir won the Ilkeston Music Festival at the Town Hall. In 1937, the pipe band played at a concert at Stanton-by-Dale, at which church Mr Cox was organist.

1932 was a successful year for the school. It held 5 cups – for the boys' and girls' inter-school sports, the boys' Hospital Sports, the cricket cup and the Loughborough Violin Contest.

Empire Day was still commemorated. In 1930, the school assembled in the boys' playground. Rule Britannia was sung, followed by Where the Flag Britain Flies and a tour round the Empire by the headmaster. The flag was then saluted, followed by the singing of God Save the King. The ceremony ended with cheers for country and school. In 1931, the letters K.J.M. were formed, there was marching in single file, to eights and vice versa, saluting the flag, and mass singing.

Another feature of these years was Pound Day, on which parcels and eggs were sent to the local hospital to help patients who, in the days before the National Health Service, would have to pay for their food and who, therefore, in many cases, would not be able to afford very much. 580 eggs and 100 parcels were collected in 1930; 480 eggs in 1931; 502 eggs in 1932, of which 400 were sent to Ilkeston Hospital and 100 to Nottingham Hospital; 533 eggs in 1933; 453 eggs in 1934; 470 eggs in 1936; and 44 eggs in 1939.

Outside events affecting the life of the school included the jubilee of George V in May 1935. There was a tea and concert at St John's Mission and Crypt, the Council putting aside 4d per child for a commemoration mug and tea party. In January, 1936, the scholars went to the Market Place for a ceremony for the proclamation of Edward VIII and a week later the school was closed for the burial of George V. Later in 1936, there was another ceremony when George VI was proclaimed and in May 1937, George VI was crowned. In July, 1937, there were celebrations to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ilkeston being made a borough. The scholars were given tea and gifts, but rain prevented a pageant and P.E. display. Balloons were, however, released by them. There were holidays for the marriages of the Duke of Kent in 1934 and the Duke of Gloucester in 1935.

Events of note in the school were a jumble sale in 1930, described by the headmaster as 'a gigantic success' (11) It raised £13.14.0d and the money was used to buy a gramophone for £12.15.0d. In 1933, 19 dual desks were received from Gladstone Girls' School to replace the long no-backed desks; two 6 seaters and 11 4 seaters were still in use. The allotments were still cultivated and one year the cabbages raised nearly £3 at 1d each – despite the problem of them disappearing in the evenings and at weekends! They also resulted one year in an epidemic of caterpillars, which marched from the allotments and invaded the school buildings in their thousands. Finally, one rather amusing entry occurs in the 1935 log book – 'Opened school after summer vacation after usual summer cleaning – walls however not brushed this holiday – caretaker no brush' (12)

#### *References:*

- (1) *Log Book 3.9.29*
- (2) *Report, log book 21.9.32*
- (3) *Report, log book 17.5.39*
- (4) *Log book 14.2.35 Ilkeston Pioneer, 15.2.35*
- (5) *Log book 14.2.35*
- (6) *Ilkeston Advertiser 21.7.36*
- (7) *Report, log book 17.5.39*
- (8) *Ilkeston Advertiser 28.6.35*
- (9) *Log book 28.4.32*
- (10) *ibid 14.3.35*
- (11) *ibid 28.3.29*
- (12) *ibid 3.9.35*

## CHAPTER 11

### WORLD WAR II, 1939 – 1945

The Second World War appears to have affected the life of the school much more directly than the First World War. The day to day running of the school continued, the 11+ examination and inter-school sports were held and the fair still visited. Despite this, however, the conscription of much of the male population and the consequent shortage of teachers, the blackouts, which began in November 1940, the regular gas mask checks, which began in 1941, the air raid shelter practice, and the acute shortage of food and paper must profoundly have affected the running of the school. During the early years of the war, school was only help part time and many lessons were done sitting on benches in the air raid shelters across St John's Road.

How much the children themselves were affected is open to doubt. Many of the events may have been exciting breaks in the routine. For example, it was often difficult to get them into the air raid shelters, as they were busy looking for German aeroplanes, real or imaginary.

In 1938, there were signs of the forthcoming conflict. When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, the staff collected £1.1.0d to send to the Czechoslovakian Distress Fund and at the Armistice Service peace hymns were sung and a message from the Archbishop of York was read.

When the war began in 1939, it resulted in immediate changes to the routine of the school. In September 1939, it was closed as teachers were being used for A.R.P. work and in May 1940, the Whitsuntide holiday only lasted for 1 ½ days, the Board of Education having ordered this as a war-time measure.

In August and September 1940, the Germans made 2 major bombing raids in the Ilkeston area. Following the Midland Railway line, they were aiming at Stanton ironworks and further along, Chilwell Ordnance Depot. Many of the bombs fell around the Kensington area. In the first raid, on the night of August 30 to 31, bombs fell on Larklands Avenue, one going through the roof of a house, Sudbury Avenue, Hallam Fields Road, Gallows Inn, doing damage to Gallows Inn pumping station, park Crescent, the corner of Glebe Crescent and Greenwood Avenue, where water mains, gas mains and the footpath were damaged, Greenwood Avenue, Brook Street, where a bomb crater was made in the road, Nottingham Road, where damage was done to Mace's Furniture Shop and one bomb fell into the canal, the corporation tip, damaging houses on Corporation Road and the streets leading off it, and in The Triangle. None of these bombs exploded. Several families were evacuated to the other end of town whilst the bombs were rendered harmless and this resulted in many evacuees from school.

The second raid took place on the night of September 4 & 5. One high explosive bomb fell on Nottingham Road, between Shipstone Street and the river bridge. It exploded, making a crater in the roadway and damaging the water main and houses around, notably 412 Nottingham Road, which was subsequently demolished. Another bomb exploded near 367 Nottingham Road, destroying two houses and badly damaging twelve others. There were no casualties from either bomb, as the area had been evacuated following the previous raid. A 3<sup>rd</sup> bomb exploded on the corner of Inglefield Road and Manners Street. One house was destroyed and others were damaged and there were 16 cases of shock. More families were evacuated as a result of this raid.

Children of evacuated families were taught for a time at people's houses until they were allowed to return to the area on 16 September (1).

Practical help was given to the war effort. In January 1941, 11/6d was collected for the Spitfire Fund. In April of the same year, a big effort was made when the War Services Campaign was begun. The target for collection was £50.00. The amount received was £559.5.6d and the total collected in the town was £22,536. In May, £1.15.0d was collected for the Mayor's Comforts Fund. In December 1942, a collection for charities at the Christmas Concert raised £5.12.6d and £3.11.0d was raised for the Red Cross Prisoners of War Fund. A Savings Effort was made in April 1943 and £502.7.6d. was collected, the target being £250.00.

Male members of staff left the school to join up. In December 1940 Mr Littlewood left the staff to join the Admiralty Research Department. Mr S Jackson left in July 1941 and in October 1941 Mr Moseley joined the R.A.F.

The shortage of teaching staff became acute in 1943. A class of boys was transferred to Hallcroft Boys' School in May and June due to a staff shortage at Kensington. Mrs Cox, the headmaster's wife, was called upon to teach for several short periods in 1943 and also in 1945. The problems of loss of male staff were exacerbated in 1943 by the long absence of Miss Murray, whose class had 11 supply teachers during the year, as did the class of boys transferred to Hallcroft.

In 1944, the V-2 bombers began to descend on London and the south-east and many children were evacuated. Several came to stay with families in the Kensington area and 23 girls and 14 boys attended the school. The first girl came from London and was admitted on July 10 and the first boy came from Deal in Kent and was admitted on February 9. The last girl left on June 18 1945 and the last boy on June 22 1945, both returning to London.

In 1945, the war was ended. In May 1945, two days' holiday were given for victory celebrations. Temporary war-time staff left and men called up for service returned to the school – for example, Mr Jackson returned on April 24 1946. In June 1946, children held sports on Victory Day. Gradually, things returned to normal.

#### *Reference*

- (1) *Lot book 2.9.40 – 16.9.40 Civil Defence reports in Ilkeston Public Library, Reference Section.*

## CHAPTER 12

### THE MODERN PERIOD, 1945 – 1957

Between 1945 and 1957 the school seems generally to have run smoothly despite severe overcrowding and a large turnover of staff. An inspector visited the school in 1945 and was very pleased with the standard of work in the 'A' stream classes, which he considered to be a year about the usual junior school standard. In 1947, Sir Roger Curtis, H.M.I., visited the school and 'expressed satisfaction with all he saw or heard – a very efficient staff' (1).

There was an inspection of the school in 1951 and, following the inspectors' report, the Managers sent a letter to the Headmaster, Mr Morris, telling him and the staff 'how happy they felt that the Inspectors have given you such a good report about the way in which the work of the school is carried on in spite of the many difficulties regarding lack of accommodation' (2). In 1954, the Headmaster described the school year as being 'moderately successful' (3).

Mr S P Cox retired as Headteacher in 1950. He made the following final comment in the log book – 'Today I took leave of my school, staff and pupils after 25 years' service. I shall treasure many happy memories of teachers and pupils alike ..... It only remains for me to wish my successor all that he desires to accomplish' (4). His successor was Mr G Morris, who became an extremely well-respected Headmaster, remembered by many as a great gentleman.

In 1954, Mr P Wearmouth joined the staff, the only teacher from these years still teaching in the school. He began in July 1954 and joined the staff permanently in September 1954, taking a class in St John's Church Hall.

The school was organised on a streamed basis during these years. During the years of World War II, passes to the County Secondary School by children had continued to be regarded as important in the school. This remained the case between 1945 and 1957. The school was certainly successful in this respect as the following figures show:

YEAR	PASSES	YEAR	PASSES
1940	20	1949	19
1941	13	1950	28
1942	18	1951	12
1943	19	1952	11
1944	10	1953	16
1945	18	1954	21
1946	16	1955	23
1947	22	1956	16
1948	30		

In 1941, results compared with those of other schools were as follows:

Kensington	13
Chaucer	11
Granby	9

Overcrowding was a chronic problem. In March 1947, a class in the hall had to be sent home as an examination was being held there and there was nowhere else to put them. On his retirement in 1950, Mr Cox noted that 'the overflow class has always been a regrettable handicap but this will be non-existent now for two classrooms are being erected for 1950' (5).

However, the baby boom of the post-war years, together with housing development at Hallam Fields, resulting in a child population in the area with which the existing school was unable to cope, meant that the numbers at Kensington increased so much that the new accommodation which was provided was totally inadequate and overcrowding became worse rather than better.

**TABLE 7**  
**Numbers of children on roll at Kensington School**  
**1947 – 1956**

YEAR	NUMBER
1947	382
1951	454
1952	509
1953	583
1956	630

In October 1950, one class had to visit the park on a nature study excursion and another went to the public library in order to make enough space for an examination. In February 1951, the new classrooms, across St John's Road, were opened. By September 1951, there was a class in the hall and by December of that year the hall was crowded to capacity.

In 1952-1953, with more than 500 on roll, St John's Church Hall and the school canteen were used as classrooms. In August 1953, 169 children were admitted, making over 580 on roll. The teaching staff consisted of the Headteacher and 13 assistant teachers. New rooms were taken into use, but the hall still contained a class and there were two classes in St John's Church Hall.

In 1954-1955, there were classes in St John's Church Hall, the hall and the canteen. In 1955-1956, an infant classroom was taken over to help cope with an intake of 162, and in 1957 there were two classes in the dining hall and 3 at St John's Church.

Several of the classes contained 50 or more children. The classes in St John's Church Hall were divided only by screens. Mr Wearmouth at one time had a class of about 50 4<sup>th</sup> year children in the room which is now the library. They were seated on old-fashioned long desks and the only way they could get in or out was to climb over the top of the desks.

Many of the children came from Kirk Hallam, where new housing meant that there were too many children to fit in the school. In 1955, they were transported to Kensington each day on two double-decker buses and by 1956 four double-decker buses were bringing about 270 children from Kirk Hallam each morning and taking them back in the afternoon. This necessitated stringent organisation and strict supervision 'to avoid disorderliness and perhaps accidents' (6)

The duty of supervising children on and off the buses was onerous for members of staff and could even be hazardous, for example, if the bell was rung while they were settling children down on the top deck !

In May 1957, a new junior school was opened at Kirk Hallam but it was too small by the time it was opened and this resulted in a protest by parents and a threat to boycott Kensington School (7). Thus the problem of overcrowding was alleviated but not solved.

The school canteen was opened in 1950. It was used for the first time in July, when the meal was sent in containers from Cavendish School, arriving thirty-five minutes late. 2 days later the first meals were cooked in the canteen. Previously, meals had been eaten in St John's Mission Hall and after October 1947, in Cavendish School canteen.

Electricity was installed in the school in October 1951, to replace the gas lighting.

The winter of 1946-1947 was that of the big freeze-up. The canal was frozen over and it was possible to walk up it from Gallows Inn Bridge to Cotmanhay. The weather severely affected the attendance at school, the worst week being the first one in February.

DAY	PRESENT	ABSENT
Monday	296	82
Tuesday	181	201
Wednesday	232	150
Thursday	252	130
Friday	250	132

In 1952, a holiday was given to commemorate the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fair.

In February 1957, the geological fault in the Erewash Valley again caused an earth tremor. Mr Morris wrote that 'between 3.50 – 4pm today a heavy earth tremor was experienced in Ilkeston with some slight damage to buildings. Most of the classrooms .... Experienced the shock, but here in my room and in 2 other classrooms nothing was felt. A further slight shock occurred on the night of the 13 at about midnight. No damage to the school has been discerned, and there were no injuries, though one or two children are said to have been shaken from their chairs in the classrooms'.

The school just missed the most serious effects of the worst earth tremor in the region for 200 years. Hundred of pounds worth of damage was caused, mainly in the Brook Street area, where 64 chimney pots were destroyed, leaving gaping holes in the roofs and the road littered with rubble (8).

Several national events which affected the school during this period concerned the royal family. In November 1947, a holiday was given for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip. The Headmaster recorded in the log book in February 1952 that 'King George VI passed away in his sleep during the night (9) and 2 days later 4C visited the Market Place to hear the proclamation of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II to the throne. The following week a short service was held in the hall for the funeral of George VI. In May 1953, 3 days holiday were granted for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. In June there was a tree planting ceremony by the combined schools of Ilkeston and the next day Coronation Mugs were distributed to the children. Later in the month the children visited the cinema to see a film entitled 'A Queen is Crowned'.

The children visited the King's Cinema in 1954 to see a film about the conquest of Mount Everest. A collection was made for the Hungarian Relief Fund in 1956, raising almost £19.10.0d. The Headmaster made the amount up to £20, commenting that it was 'a very creditable effort on the part of the children' (10).

In 1957, the Ilkeston Advertiser ran a series of articles on Ilkeston's Junior Schools. Number one in the series was Kensington School. The article, entitled A School Where Every Child Gets Its Chance – Here Building For The Future Begins in Earnest, will serve as a fitting conclusion to the history of the school up to 1957. It noted that the school was nearly bursting at the seams, but that despite this it strove to see that every child had a real chance. Mr Morris was described as being 'very enthusiastic' and he was quoted as saying that 'I want to give every child an opportunity according to its ability, whether it be of grammar school level or below'. The article concluded as follows – 'The happiness of Kensington children and the regard in which the school is held by parents shows that Kensington is doing a magnificent job' (11).

#### References

- (1) *Log book 22.5.47*
- (2) *ibid 17.9.51*
- (3) *ibid 27.7.54*
- (4) *ibid 28.7.50*
- (5) *ibid 28.7.50*
- (6) *ibid 3.9.56*
- (7) *Ilkeston Advertiser 17.5.57*
- (8) *Log Book 11.2.57 – Ilkeston Pioneer 15.2.57*
- (9) *Log book 6.2.52*
- (10) *ibid 22.11.56*
- (11) *Ilkeston Advertiser 24.5.57*