



Déjà Vue

An extract from Collett's Farthing Newspaper Bowerchalke

This extract from 'Collett's Farthing Newspaper' relates to the village school in Bowerchalke and sounds all too familiar, over one hundred years on.

"Overcrowding was particularly evident in the infants' class where children were forced to sit three at a desk or on boxes and the fragile progress observed earlier was once more arrested. The Inspector in the following year stated:

I regret to report that the elementary work this year is very unsatisfactory and that the condition of the school is one of inefficiency. The grant has not been withheld for the past year but formal warning is now given that it may be withheld at the next inspection if Her Majesty's Inspector again reports the school as inefficient.

During the following two years this threat was carried out; the grant was withheld thus depriving the school of resources at the very time that support and encouragement was most needed. Further inspections followed and clearly showed the school to be too full and understaffed for effective teaching, and so resulted in the withholding of further grants.

Following the poor report in 1905 the Rev. Edward Collett used the argument below in his efforts to support the hard-pressed teachers, when he included this item in the Parish Paper on 7th December 1905:

School was visited last Tuesday by His Majesty's Inspector Mr Hodson who spent the greater part of the day in examining the children. Unfortunately the weather was very dismal and this circumstance was likely to have had its effect on them in making their answers somewhat less bright than they might otherwise had been. We thank Mr Hodson for the pains he took and we are sure he will send us a faithful report in due time. He seemed much impressed by the fact that while the children knew the lessons which they had been taught, their way of answering was so stolid and lifeless. We quite agree with him. From some of them it is hard work to get so much as a smile. But, poor little things, in many a home they get precious little encouragement to smile! And life – with the Smile left out of it – is not worth calling life