



## Tollard Royal National School

A National School in 1846 was attended by 40 children and a new schoolroom and teachers house had been built by 1855. HM Inspector William Warburton recorded that his inspection of November 1857 showed a “good schoolroom, with boarded floor, and parallel desks, (two groups); 70 to 80 children taught by uncertified mistress and one pupil teacher. Supply of books and apparatus good. Expenses paid by Lady Rivers. The replies of the children were thoughtfully made, and with much information. A good school.”

The Post Office Directory of 1867 describes a National School, “supported entirely by Lady Rivers” and named, in the listing as “Lady Rivers School” and an Infants’ school supported by the rector. By the date of the earliest surviving log book entry of the “National School, Tollard Royal” on January 6th 1868, both schools appear to have been united as there is a schoolroom and a smaller classroom. The first entry in the log book refers to the school being “reopened” with 40 pupils, although one week later 15 new scholars are admitted. By this date there are a certified teacher and a pupil teacher.

Following the reopening of the school in 1868, the children were immediately arranged into Standards according to the Revised Code of 1862 and tests began. Standard 1, comprising the younger children, was divided into two sections with one part under the supervision of a monitor\* a pupil from the top class. Subjects studied by the children in the school included Arithmetic, Reading, Composition, Grammar, Dictation and Singing, the songs learnt often having a religious or patriotic theme as in September 1868 when they learnt “God Bless the Prince of Wales”. The girls also learnt knitting and darning.

Object lessons were also taught. For example in July 1868 a class was given one on “Cherry Stones”. In the school year 1886-1887 the object lessons to be given are listed as: Elephant, Potato, Lion, Teaplant, Reindeer, Sugarcane, Camel, Cold, Iron, Ostrich, Silver, Whale, Coal Hive Bees, Salt, Needle, Candle, Looking Glass, and Bed. Infants are described as learning to count with the use of coloured balls, threading and counting beads and sticks.

There is a gap in the log books from 1871, when the head teacher Sarah Noad, recorded, “This school closes for a time as another mistress is not yet appointed...We gave the children their copy books that they may write at home.” The next entry is for January 6th 1873, “Reopened the school after the Xmas holiday”. The details of the closure are not given in the log book.

From time to time the teacher records having punished pupils for inattention, disobedience, lying, insolence or poor work. The punishment consisted of caning\* one or two stripes on the hand or across the back.

Mrs Pitt Rivers visited regularly to hear children read or look at their needlework or knotting, or to hear the children sing, and on occasions brought clothes for the children. She also distributed prizes for attainment and attendance and from time to time there would be treats for the children in the grounds of her Rushmore home.

Levels of attendance by pupils were assiduously recorded by the schoolteacher, although for much of the school’s 19th century history the actual numbers involved were not noted, only percentages. We know from the log books that the school accommodated 97 pupils, in a schoolroom 35ft long x 15ft 8in wide x 10ft 6in high (approximately 11m x 5m x 3m) for 65 children and a classroom 16ft long x 16ft wide x 10ft 6in high (approximately 5m x 5m x 3m) for 32 children.

However, how many children actually composed the pupil body at one time is rarely recorded. Nevertheless, the rate of attendance was important since this was one of the factors, along with examination performance, affecting the level of financial grant allocated to the school each year.

Attendance was greatly influenced by weather conditions: rainy or snowy weather would have a significant impact on the ability of children living at a distance from the school to attend for morning or afternoon sessions. Rain and water rising over the roads in the village, preventing the children from getting to school seems to be regular and frequent during the winter and spring months. In early February 1873, for example, only six children were able to reach school owing to deep snow.

Illness too, was a factor in non-attendance: Colds and whooping cough were prevalent in February 1868 and the latter continued into March 1868. Scarletina affected numerous pupils in February/March 1870. At the end of January 1890 influenza was so widespread amongst the children that the school was closed for a few days; on January 27th only 8 children out of 73 attended school. The influenza epidemic continued until February 1890, only to be followed by an outbreak of whooping cough.

Children were also required to help their families with agricultural work at various time of the year: In early June 1868 the log book contains a reference to a number of children absent for haymaking; on 25th September of the same year the teacher records absences due to parents requiring their children to pick up acorns. This continued into the following month when they were also away picking potatoes. In April 1873 there is a reference to absences by children who are potato planting and to children being kept at home to help in gardens. Increasingly legislative requirements meant that from 1875 no child could leave school between the ages of 10 and 12 (the leaving age at that date) to be permanently employed in agriculture unless they gained a Labour Certificate of proficiency having passed the 4th Standard. From time to time there is a reference in the log books to a Labour Certificate having been granted to a pupil.

In September 1886 and October 1887 a number of children are recorded as being away "nutting". By this date the Schools Attendance Officer was active, investigating the repeated absences of children and visiting their parents as necessary (earlier in 1873, a boy had been sent out to enquire after absent children). By 1890 parents were summonsed for the non-attendance of their children.

More infrequently, there might be financial reasons for pupils absence: in February 1868 one parent kept her three children at home for a week as she was unable to pay the "school pence", and another boy was prevented from attending school by "bad boots". Sometimes, too, girls were kept at home to help their mothers.

A somewhat inexplicable reason for absences noted in April and June 1868 was for children who were attending "club meetings" in Farnham, Berwick St John, and Sixpenny Handley. Again, in May 1886, the head teacher records that "the attendance in the afternoon is not very good as twenty of the children are away to attend a Club held in the next village (Farnham)" The nature of these meetings is not recorded.

There were, however, official holidays from school. The longest was the Harvest holiday from around late July/early August to early September. A Christmas holiday, too was enjoyed by the children\* in 1868 from 17th December to 4th January.

The children enjoyed additional days of holiday from school and occasional treats: For example, on the evening of February 20th 1868 a magic lantern was exhibited in the schoolroom and the Rector and Manager, the Rev. G. Waterfall, paid for 3 of the older children to attend. In July 1886 the Sunday School children had their treat at the Rectory, and therefore the school was closed for lessons. At Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887\* and at her Diamond Jubilee ten years later\* the school was closed for two days holiday. On the day of the Diamond Jubilee Mrs Pitt Rivers gave a tea for the poorest pupils, and twenty of the best attenders at this school.

On February 5th 1890 there was no school for the afternoon as General Pitt Rivers had arranged for a phonograph to be exhibited and a lecture; he invited the teacher and some of the children to attend.

Tollard Royal National School underwent inspections by the Diocesan authorities and by HM Inspectors, at the latter of which assessments for the following year's financial grant were made. Unlike many school log books of the period, those for Tollard Royal do not include the text of HM Inspections but merely a sentence or two of the conclusions; for example on October 27th 1886, "The School is in remarkably good order and the instruction has been given with general

efficiency". However, HM Inspection in November 1893 refers in more detail to the inadequate nature of the schoolroom, which had been found to be too dark at the south end, and of the toilets and cloakroom. Furthermore the classroom was also too small. The reported required that alterations be made to conform to the requirements of the Revised Code. Ten days later, the Rector and Correspondent, Rev. Waterfall, Mrs Pitt Rivers and another manager met at the school to discuss the problem. However, there is no further detail of any alterations made.

In July 1898 the death of the Rev. G.H. Waterfall, who had been active in the school's life from its earliest days, was a notable event. However, the results of the final HM Inspection of the century in November 1899 were good: "Creditable progress has been made during the year". The staff at this date comprised of a certified teacher, pupil teacher and monitress. In the same year the number of pupils on roll was not recorded but only the note, "Reopened school with 40 pupils".

A comprehensive programme of work was set out for the school year ending in September 1904. In addition for the object lessons for Infants, the subjects included English, Recitations, Reading, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Nature Study, Drawing and Needlework.

Attendance was still affected by weather conditions, such as in October 1909 when it was noted, "still very wet and everywhere the springs are rising". In the early years of the new century too, many boys were recorded as being absent in order to act as beaters for shooting parties.

By the early 20th century official monitoring of children's' health had become part of school life, with visits from school nurses, doctors and dentists. Furthermore, in October 1909 notice was received that "weighing days" were to take place every 6 months. A weighing machine was circulated on a rota between schools in the wider area. Regular notes in the logbooks record treatments advised or arranged for children: In July 1914, for example, three children went to Tisbury to have their eyes tested by the County Oculist.

The start of the event of the First World War is not mentioned in the log books, although, it is noted that in October 1914 the song "Gone to the War" was taught to the children. School life continued during the war years, with the recording of percentages of attendance and the return of numerous forms relating to the school and pupils to the County Council. Interestingly, the work of the pre-war Attendance Officer, a Mr. Jukes appears to be carried out by Mrs Jukes during the course of the war. Examinations held for Leaving and Labour Certificates also continued to be held.

Despite increasing monitoring of the children's physical condition, illnesses continued to result in low attendance and periodic school closures, as in mid-February 1915 when the County Medical Authority ordered closure as a result of widespread impetigo amongst the pupils. The school reopened in March 1915. Later that year, in August, there was an outbreak of whooping cough and, the next month, of measles, the latter resulted in another closure by order of the County Schools Medical Officer.

At times the War intervened in the village: At the beginning of December 1916 the school closed at 3pm to prepare for a social evening in aid of the "Star and Garter Home" for wounded personnel. In October 1917 two children were away from school in the afternoon in order to attend a memorial service at Rushmore for their father who had been killed in action in France the previous week. In December 1917, the schoolmistress recorded, "The soldiers from Bulford Camp visited this village this afternoon and had a "sham fight" on the cliff. I allowed the children to watch it from the playground". Rather late in the war, in September 1918, there are references to the children blackberry picking, as did many children from other schools; the collected berries would be sent to London where they would be made into juice for soldiers. Surprisingly, the logbook does not mention at all the momentous events of the Armistice in November 1918, although in subsequent years the Armistice Day memorials would be observed.

In March and April 1917, precise numbers of pupils are recorded: On 19th April there were 44 on roll.

Tollard Royal's long distance from a railway station and consequent transportation deficiencies appeared to be problematic when, in 1918, attempts were made to recruit a new head teacher. The necessity of recruiting a new teacher had, in itself, been caused by the anticipated problems of the distance once the existing head teacher's husband had been discharged from the army. Later, in April 1945, an HM report would refer specifically to the "remoteness of the village and the scattered nature of the children's houses".

In the 1920's the number of children on roll gradually decreased, so that towards the end of 1925 there were only 21 on the roll. By the time of the Second World War this number was slightly reduced to 20 when the school reopened on 11th

September 1939. Immediately, however, the number was increased by the arrival of 10 children evacuated from Portsmouth.

School work and occasional celebrations continued, nevertheless. On the morning of 24th May (Empire Day) 1940 the children sang songs and carried out a physical exercises display in front of visitors. Medical visits and treatments continued, with the County Medical Officer visiting in November 1941 to inoculate the children against diphtheria, and visits from the County Dentist to examine and treat the children; the School Nurse also continued to visit to make her inspections. There were occasional scholarship examinations for secondary schools. One aspect of life which was specific to the War, however, was gas mask drill and inspection.

In January 1942 the Government's "Milk in Schools" Scheme was implemented in the school; this provided for 1/3 pint of milk (approximately 0.22 litres) supplied free of charge daily.

The number of children attending Tollard Royal School continued to fall after the Second World War, with references in the late 1950's and early 1960's to numbers in single figures only. In June 1962 the decision was taken to close the school; items of furniture, canteen and playground equipment were reallocated to other schools or to storage and the school was finally locked on 26th July 1962. The remaining pupils moved to Ludwell School in Donhead St Mary parish.

\*Wiltshire Council 2011

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