

*. . . . and so to end one story,
and to begin yet another,
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A SHORT ACCOUNT of PILTON SCHOOL



by
REGINALD NORMAN

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF PILTON SCHOOL

Before Pilton School merges into the larger unit of the Blue Coat School, Pilton (now being built) it is good to have this account from Mr. Norman. The three teachers who are leaving shortly, Mr. Sherratt, Miss Hill and Miss Turner, and who have given such good service to the community through the school will also, I know, be glad to have this record.

JAMES WEST.

Vicar of Pilton.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF PILTON SCHOOL

There are very many interesting old buildings in Pilton, not the least of them being the old School which stands at the West end of the Church. The school has played a considerable part in the history of our parish, and for its beginning we must look back to when George III was King. Then the chamber over one of the Almshouses was used as a school and stood between the present sexton's house and the Arch. It is here that our present school was started in 1815.

The school was evidently started in connection with the National School Society, founded in 1811 by Dr. Andrew Bell "on the principles of the established church." Such schools were called "Bell schools" or "schools upon the Madras system." It would appear, according to the late Rev. W. H. M. Bagley, in his book "Pilton Church and Priory" that "in 1789 Dr. Bell was Minister of St. Mary's Church, Madras, and whilst there occupied himself in educating the orphan children in the military asylum, and, being obliged from scarcity of teachers to introduce the system of mutual tuition by the pupils, he found the scheme answer so well that he became convinced of its universal applicability. This constitutes the Madras system, and initiated the Pupil Teacher system which has ever since been more or less maintained."

It was on this system of Dr. Bell's that the Church of England soon started schools of its own. Our school was one of these and was first opened and used as a National School on 22nd October, 1815, by William Saunders, Master, with a salary of £45 per annum in consideration of his wife being engaged with him for the purpose of instructing the girls in knitting and sewing plain work. Later, on 29th September, 1830, the Committee appointed John Lemon as Master, with a salary of £30 per annum exclusive of the weekly pence paid by the children. The old school carried on for 26 years; then, owing to the increase of population, it became so overcrowded that in 1841 our present school premises were opened.

There is preserved in the North Devon Athenaeum the first account book of 1815, relating to our original school. In it appear the following items:—

- 1815 Paid Barnstaple cryer for putting up advertisements, 6d.
Paid Pilton cryer for a cry, 3d.
For cleaning the schoolroom chimneys and Pair of Bellows, 3s.
A woman for washing the rooms, 4d.
For quills, paper and ruler, 4s. 10d.
For $\frac{1}{2}$ doz. slates @ 10d., 5s.
- 1827 July 20th. Paid for whiteliming the school, 2s.
For repairing the desk, 9d.
Painting the schoolroom, 3s. 6d.

The Reverend W. C. Hall, M.A., was responsible for the present building which was opened in 1841, a date that will ever be worthy of commemoration of one of the most important and beneficial contributions made to our parish; for thus opportunity was given to poorer children to obtain a sound and religious education. Prior to 1800 there was scarcely a village in North Devon which could boast of possessing a school and the rural people as a rule could neither write their names nor read, and were obliged to put a cross for their

signature, as the Marriage Registers prove. Names were notoriously variously spelt in those days — our forefathers were not so particular about spelling as we are to-day. For instance, on half of a page in our Parish Register at Pilton we find "dead" spelt in six different ways: "died; didd; dide; dydd; dyde; dyed."

This was in 1654, a few years before the time of our constable's account; we must be prepared then for some peculiar spelling.

The school premises were built at a cost of £382 17s. 6d. and paid for out of funds raised in the following manner: (1) Subscriptions, £129 1s. 0d.; (2) Bazaar, £128 16s. 6d.; (3) National Society's grant £25; (4) Treasury grant £100. At various periods under the necessity of providing increased accommodation the school was extended and enlarged. In 1874 extensions cost £50, whilst in 1895 the final enlargement was made at a cost of £483 12s. 2d. Two lofty classrooms, in the early Perpendicular style, were erected, together with spacious cloakrooms for boys, girls, and infants.

Externally the walls are of local stone with Gorsham Down dressing. The school crest worked in is displayed on the outside wall of the entrance, whilst on the interior the rooms, each 26ft. by 16ft., provide additional accommodation for over eighty scholars. The new rooms were built from plans prepared by Mr. F. W. Petters, of Barnstaple. The contractors were Messrs. J. Hancock and J. Copp, of Pilton. Sums were raised to meet the costs, as follows: (1) By subscriptions and concerts, etc., £263 12s. 2d.; (2) Loan by Messrs. W. Fisher and W. Gould under an order of the Charity Commissioners on the security of Mrs. Tetherby's house, £200; (3) National Society, £20. The first annual Government grant was in 1867 and amounted to £38 5s. 2d. Later — about 1872 — it increased until it bore by far the greater part of the cost of carrying on the school. It was then that the school pence were abolished. An old Ilex oak which stood in the playground until recent years was probably planted to commemorate the opening of the school in 1841.

(N.B.: In an inscription on a stone in the church it is stated that Edward Fairchild gave for teaching poor children to read 13s. a year for ever to be paid out of a tenement at Horridge in the parish of Heanton Punchardon.)

Thousands of former scholars have since prospered in life: many becoming wealthy, others rising to high rank in the Services, others becoming clergymen, teachers, solicitors, journalists, musicians or achieving success in commerce. Of them we may well feel proud. Many who are now steadfast members of the church look back with joy and thankfulness upon their old church school, where they gained the benefit of their early education. Memories are short, but it is good to remember those past the half-century who owe their sound learning and religious education to Mr. W. J. Lord who became Master in 1887 and who held office during the stirring time of the Great War. At the same time will be remembered the good work under the lengthy leadership of Mrs. G. W. Lee of the Infants' Department, who was appointed in 1889.

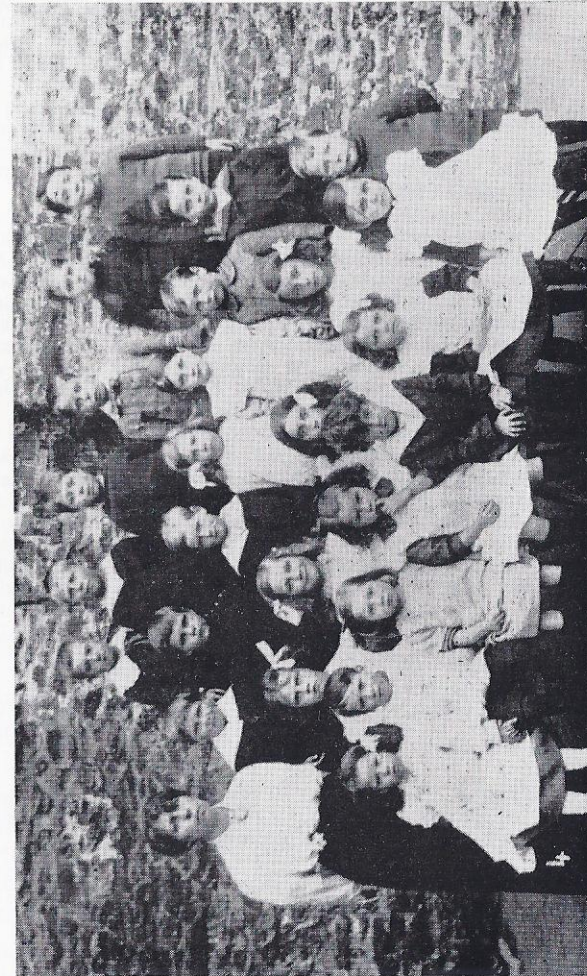
The school was always full. Pupils came from far and near, including some of the outlying districts such as Ashford, Marwood and Kingdon's Gardens (via Smoky House Lane) in the Shirwell district. And from Pilton West, the districts of which include Westaway, Upcott, Pilland, Tutshill, Anchor Mills, Roborough and Playford.



Pilton Church School Soccer Team, 1921-22, with Miss Constance Gravestock and Mr. W. J. Lord, Headmaster

In old log books we find the following entries :

- 1863
 April 1 Admitted three children from Sir Arthur Chichester's school 3 miles distant (Shirwell).
 April 6 School very full but worked well.
 April 7 Two old scholars returned. Been at work for six months obliged to put them in a lower class than they were before leaving.
 April 8 Much displeased with my first class boys on account of their copying. Spoke to them of its evil and threatened corporal punishment. Found it repeated and executed my threat.
 Sept. 4 School conducted by Pupil teacher and one of my old paid monitors for a week during my illness.
 Oct. 19 Admitted 5 fresh scholars in the evening school and 2 in the day school.
 Nov. 6 School not very full, being market day.
- 1864
 Sept. 6 Punished a boy for playing truant.
- 1865
 July 13 School rather troublesome.
- 1867
 Jan. 4 Very severe frost, only 19 in attendance.
 Jan. 14 Punished several for behaviour in church yesterday.
 Mar. 23 Punished 5 girls for leaving playground to go gathering flowers.
 May 13 Admitted a boy from Shirwell.
 May 24 Queen's birthday, half-holiday.
 May 30 Many absent in the afternoon in consequence of the meeting of the North Devon Hussars in Barnstaple.
- 1868
 May 21 Ascension Day. Attended Divine Service in the church, half holiday.
 May 28 Several children came in late, having stayed to watch the cavalry.
 June 9 Punished a boy for spending his school money.
- 1869
 May 24 Admitted 3 boys—two of them from Marwood.
 May 25 Kept in several of the big girls during Recreation time for playing with the boys.
 June 2 Holiday. Grand Field Day of the Yeomanry Cavalry.
- 1872
 Feb. 6 Heard the whole school repeat the Commandments.
 Feb. 14 Half holiday as it was Ash Wednesday.
- 1873
 Sept. 8 Engaged Miss Ellen Much to assist in the school at 1/- per week.
- 1874
 Jan. 5 Admitted William Yeo and William Prideaux, both of Prixford.
 May 18 Engaged Ann Gilbert as Monitor at 1/- per week.



Pilton Church School Infant Class, about 1917, with Miss Florence Saiton

- 1875
 June 13 Sent home William Jago for school fees. He has not since returned.
 Aug. 2 Odd Fellows Fete held at Pilton, half holiday.
- 1876
 Mar. 14 School closed on Good Friday, also a holiday given on Easter Monday.
 Sept. 15 Attendance very low on account of the Barnstaple Fair.
- 1877
 Aug. 22 Admitted a boy from Silver St. School.
- 1879
 May 30 Mrs. Williams of Pilton House kindly sent 10 quarts of milk to be given to the children at 11 o'clock.
- 1881
 Jan. 21 On Tuesday snow began to fall heavily, continued all day. Snow falling throughout Wednesday. On Thursday the school yard was covered to a depth of 2 ft. Drifts 5 to 6 ft. and in the lane leading to the Parsonage 9 to 11 ft. No such weather remembered by the oldest inhabitant since 1812. A sharp frost followed on Friday; on Saturday water sold for a half-penny a quart. Wells at Bradiford and near the Unicorn Inn opened by order of the Mayor.
- 1888
 Mar. 6 Very poor attendance to-day as no less than thirty children's parents are affected by the fire at Raleigh Works.
 April 2 Admitted Arthur Ridd from Horwood.
- 1889
 Jan. 16 School closed as at Election of County Councillor it was used as a Polling Place.
- 1891
 June 11 Arthur Ridd was detained until 12.55 p.m. and was punished for neglecting to learn his poetry.
- 1892
 Jan. 22 The school will be closed this afternoon in consequence of the memorial service of the Duke of Clarence.
- 1892
 Feb. 29 Thomas H. Hancock having accepted a Pupil Teachership at the Blue Coat School, Annie Bowden has been appointed monitoress in his stead.
- 1893
 April 25 Ginnett's Circus being in town this afternoon only 55 children present.
- 1896
 Oct. 26 The 2nd Battalion Devon Regiment reached this town at mid-day en route for Ilfracombe, only eighty-six present.
- 1901
 Feb. 14 Miss A. Bowden temporary assistant mistress having been appointed to Newport N. S. Barnstaple is permitted to terminate her engagement forthwith.
- 1903
 Mar. 25 Miss A. Bowden appointed Asst. vice Miss Harris to commence April 1st, 1903.

Among old-time customs appertaining to local government in which the school and church took part "Beating the Bounds" was somewhat of an exciting occasion. For instance, in September, 1895 we found a party of 200 smiling faces took part. Starting shortly after ten o'clock from the Guildhall and travelling at a very smart pace first proceeded through High Street and then traversed Braunton Road. Just outside Pill Farm at the Newport end the final stage was entered upon, about one-half of the party being conveyed in boats down the River Taw and thence up the Yeo to Rolle Quay, a distance of about two miles. At the Guildhall, where the party separated shortly afterwards hearty cheers were once again given for the Mayor. The distance covered was about ten miles, the Guildhall being reached shortly before five o'clock.

Writing more than a hundred and fifty years after that humble beginning we cannot but admire the spirit of faith that initiated the undertaking. To-day, owing to the steady growth of population, the Department of Education has demanded a much larger and more modern building. This, we can happily say, has been approved and will be erected on a site already reserved for the purpose, situated below the grounds of Pilton Abbey, a short distance south of the present school. If the work goes according to schedule, it should be ready for use in 1968.

Since the retirement of Mr. Lord, known in local tradition as "Daddy Lord", as headmaster the school has had several changes, Mr. Arthur F. Stacey followed Mr. Lord. He was succeeded after twenty-six years by Mr. Claude E. Dix, who was followed five years later by Mr. Charles Sherratt, the present headmaster, who was appointed in 1954. Mr. Sherratt is a keen educationist and with children he is always happy; most important is his courtesy and kindness. Apart from the headmaster, we have also to remember the splendid work of our other past and present teachers. Those of the past who have served us well (and are now at rest) and are constantly mentioned by many of the older parishioners and often by those who have emigrated to other parts of Britain and abroad and have since returned. They include: Misses Florence Sutton; Jessie Mountjoy; M. Totterdell; Anne Bowden; Anne M. Copp; Frances Louisa Thomas, Nora Amy Pickard, and Ethel Daisy Millward (Supplementary Teacher).

Of our present teachers, four in all, we must say that the headmaster is fortunate in having the co-operation of colleagues who are all persons of knowledge and devotion to duty. For long service rendered Miss Edith M. Hill, a Piltonian and former scholar of the school, fairly takes the lead with forty-one valuable years to her credit, with Miss Beatrice L. Turner with a grand total of twenty-eight years, and Mr. Kenneth Morrish, five years.

The following have been the Head Teachers in the two schools—until 1841 there appears to have been only one.

1815 to 1818	Mr. Saunders, assisted by his wife.
1818 to 1820	Mr. John Hooper.
1820 to 1825	Mr. G. White.
1825 to 1830	Mr. Bear.
1830 to 1837	Mr. Lemon, with Mrs. Lemon from 1835.
1837 to 1841	Mr. Howard.

1841 to 1847	Mr. Henry Dendle.
1841 to 1849	Miss Elizabeth Gliddon (died in the cholera epidemic).
1847 to 1850	Mr. Parsons.
1849 to 1850	Miss Crabb.
1850 to 1851	Miss Barrett.
1850 to 1854	Mr. Hunt.
1851 to 1854	Miss Squires.
1854 to 1866	Mr. William Beer (died).
1854 to 1875	(?) Mrs. William Beer.
1866 to 1867	Mr. W. Thomas.
1867 to 1869	Mr. Charles Jarman.
1869 to 1871	Miss M. J. Souch.
1871 to 1873	Mr. Henry Fry.
1873 to 1887	Mr. W. H. Reeve.
1871 to 1889	Miss M. Souch.
1887 to 1923	Mr. W. J. Lord.
1889 to 1927	Miss A. Beer (Mrs. G. W. Lee).
1923 to 1949	Mr. Arthur F. Stacey (including the Infants in 1927).
1949 to 1954	Mr. Claude E. Dix.
1954	Mr. Charles Sherratt (the present Headmaster).

In bringing this little booklet to a conclusion, it may be interesting to give a few particulars of the past and present population of Pilton. "There were", says the Rev. Bagley, "about 200 families in the Parish in 1744 and reckoning five on an average for each family there would be just 1000. No public school, but three children were taught to read by the charity of Mr. Edward Fairchild" (a charity mentioned earlier in these pages) We find in 1801, at the time of the Rev. W. Spurway, M.A., who was Rector of Pilton for 65 years, that the figures show a population of 1,230, 564 females and 666 males. There were 233 inhabited houses. In 1851 the table of population shows 1813; in 1901 2,238; in 1931 2,669; in 1961 2,500; while the latest estimated figure is 3,250.

17.4.67.

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SCHOOL ROOMS OF PILTON,
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	£	s	d
Barbor, Mrs. Rawleigh House.....	3	0	0
Bencraft, Stephen Esq.....	1	0	0
Brown, Mrs. Pilton.....	5	0	0
Brown, J. Esq. Roborough.....	1	0	0
Chichester, Sir Arthur, Bart. towards Site.....	15	0	0
Clay, Miss Pilton.....	5	0	0
Davis, Mrs. Broadgate Villa.....	0	5	0
Dennis, J. Esq.....	1	0	0
Fernandez, Mrs.....	1	0	0
Friend, a.....	0	10	0
Friend, a.....	0	1	0
Gosset, Isaac Esq. Jersey.....	1	0	0
Graham, Mrs.....	1	0	0
Graham, Mrs. W. H.....	1	0	0
Griffiths, Mrs. Torquay.....	1	0	0
Hall, Major, Torquay.....	10	0	0
Hall, the Misses, Torquay.....	3	0	0
Hall, Rev. W. C.....	10	0	0
Harding, T. Wrey, Esq. Upcott.....	5	0	0
Harding, Miss.....	3	0	0
Harding, Miss, friend by.....	2	0	0
Harding, Robert Esq. Exmouth.....	2	0	0
Hiern, Mrs., Pilton.....	1	0	0
Heathcoat, Mrs.....	0	10	0
Heathcoat, Miss.....	1	0	0
Carried Forward.....	£74	6	0

	£	s	d
Brought Forward.....	74	6	0
Hill, Mrs. E. Pilton.....	1	0	0
Hodge, William Esq. Devonport.....	5	5	0
Hodgson, F. Esq. (M. P.).....	5	5	0
Jones, Capt. Burnell.....	1	0	0
Jones, Capt. Charles Burnell.....	1	0	0
Lister, Mrs.....	0	10	0
May, Capt. Broadgate.....	5	0	0
National School Society's Grant.....	25	0	0
Parminster, Mrs., Exmouth.....	10	0	0
Scott, Mrs. Broadgate Villa.....	5	0	0
Staunton, Mrs.....	2	0	0
Tetherly, Mrs.....	5	0	0
Thank Offering, a.....	1	0	0
Thorne, Richard Esq.....	2	0	0
Treasury Grant.....	100	0	0
Upcott, the Misses.....	1	0	0
Western, Mr. George.....	0	5	0
Whyte, James Esq. Pilton House.....	5	0	0
Whyte, Charles Esq.....	2	0	0
Wilford, the Misses, (Sarah Anne,) and Maria.....	0	10	0
Wilford, Capt. Edmund, Royal Artillery.....	1	0	0
Wilford, Capt. Royal Rifles.....	1	0	0
Receipts at Bazaar.....	254	1	0
	128	16	6
	£382	17	6

EXPENDITURE.

	£	s	d
Paid for Site of School.....	65	0	0
Enrolling in Chancery, the Deed of Purchase....	5	5	0
Messrs. T. and P. Hartnoll, Joiners as per Contract.....	115	0	0
To Ditto for Extras.....	12	3	4
Messrs J. Knull, Masons, as per Contract.....	110	0	0
To ditto for Extras.....	26	5	11
Mr. Abbot, for Superintending Works.....	10	10	0
Carried Forward.....	£344	4	3

	£	s	d
Brought Forward.....	344	4	3
2 Stoves and Flues.....	12	9	0
Desks, Forms and Sundries.....	7	11	3
Clock.....	1	4	0
	365	8	6
In hand towards Iron Railing, in Front of School	17	9	0
	£382	17	6

Mr. Hooper Law most kindly drew up the Deed of Purchase, and would make no charge for his Professional Services.

Examined and allowed by us,

T. WREY HARDING.
JAMES WHYTE.
RICHARD THORNE.

[BRIGHTWELL AND SON, PRINTERS.]