

## CHAPTER 1

# The First Sixty-Four Years

In the summer of 1981, St Mary's Church of England School in Buckland, Surrey, was sadly forced to close after a long struggle by parishioners to keep it open. The school building, erected in 1862 on the north side of the village green and now a private house, remains the only physical reminder of a school that served generations of young children and which was highly regarded in the village. Its closure was marked by a Thanksgiving Weekend, which was generally assumed to celebrate 119 years of service to the local community. Yet those attending might well have celebrated a much longer period – 159 years – since the school on the Green was essentially a continuation of the National School, a little way down Rectory Lane.



**The site of the original school in Rectory Lane**

This earlier school was so-called because it was set up by The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. Founded in 1811 with the aim of planting a church school in every parish of the land, the society's first annual report the following year stated its objectives more specifically, reflecting the fairly limited educational aspirations for children that prevailed at the time:

To communicate to the poor ... by means of a summary mode of education ... such knowledge and habits as are sufficient to guide them through life in their proper stations ... and to train them to the performance of their religious duties by an early discipline.

Before 1870, the provision of primary schools was left entirely to voluntary bodies, among which the National Society was the most prominent player. According to the Victoria County History, published in 1911, the school in Buckland opened in 1822. The building and garden no longer exist, but the location is given on the Buckland Tithe Map, 1846, which shows the ownership of each plot of land and what the tithe

payment amounted to. From the section of the map reproduced below, it can be seen that the site, numbered 174, was a little way down the east side of what is now Rectory Lane, where today a line of houses ends with two garages. The school occupied a plot by the beginning of a hollow called the Buckland Sloughs, where today a stream goes under the road by some railings. The Sloughs ran eastwards to Lawrence Lane, and provided a route to school for pupils who lived on that side of the village.



Section of Buckland Tithe Map, 1846 (© Surrey History Service)

### The first teachers

We do not know the name of the first teacher, but by 1841, according to the census return, a William Robertson, age 30, was the schoolmaster. Born in Mickleham, he lived by himself in a cottage on the Green. The 1851 census return records the same schoolmaster, now married, occupying 'The Knob' on the Green with his wife, Mary, and a servant aged 16. The house was opposite the church on land now occupied by 'The Old Rectory'. A 26-year-old curate, Randolph Liveson, presumably at the village church, also lived there as a lodger. The same census return records a schoolmistress called Miss Susan Bedale, age 51, living in a cottage on the Green, though it is not recorded whether she taught at Buckland School.

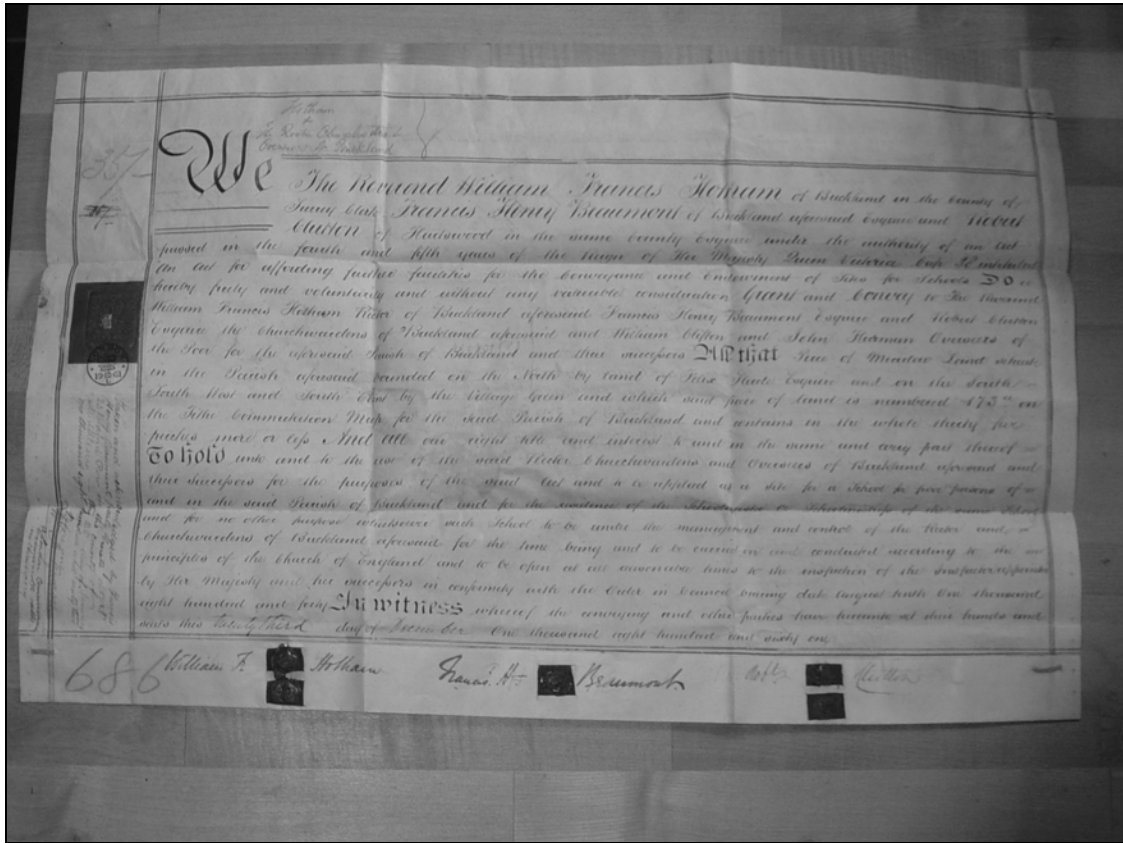
In 1855, the 25-year-old Miss Maria Gale, born in Kennington, was appointed to

succeed Mr Robertson, and lived as a boarder on Buckland Green. This was not the same as the village green opposite the church but a former green that is now crossed by the railway on Lawrence Lane. According to the rector's cash book covering the period 1855-80, Miss Gale was paid £7 10s a quarter in her first year; this was increased to £8 15s the next year and remained at that level until 1863, when, rather mysteriously, it was reduced to the original amount. In present day (2004) values, these stipends represent around £17,000 and £20,000 per annum respectively, using an average earnings measure developed by Lawrence Oliver. The upper figure is roughly equivalent to the starting salary of a teacher today.

At that time, education was neither compulsory nor free. Even poor children had to pay for their schooling, and this was formally justified as morally legitimate and a cost that families could afford. In evidence to a parliamentary commission in 1834, the Rev. William Johnson of the National Society said that parents valued education if they had to contribute towards its provision, and that school fees were 'in keeping with the honourable independence of the English labourer'. He went on to argue that 'the money could be well spared, as the very poorest children have been in the habit of spending upon trash and sweetmeats at least a penny a week'. The parish magazine in July 1932 records the childhood memories of some Buckland villagers 'taking a penny a week for their schooling', and the rector's cash book that records Miss Gale's salaries also shows the amounts of 'children's pence' collected each quarter, for example £1 9s 1d for the first three months of 1860. A little arithmetic suggests that there were therefore around 25 children in the school at that time – ironically just two more than the numbers on roll when Buckland School was forced to close in 1981. By the mid-1880s, the fees had doubled to two pence a week, but the school would have been able to charge this for only a few years since school pence were abolished by law in 1891.

## **The new school**

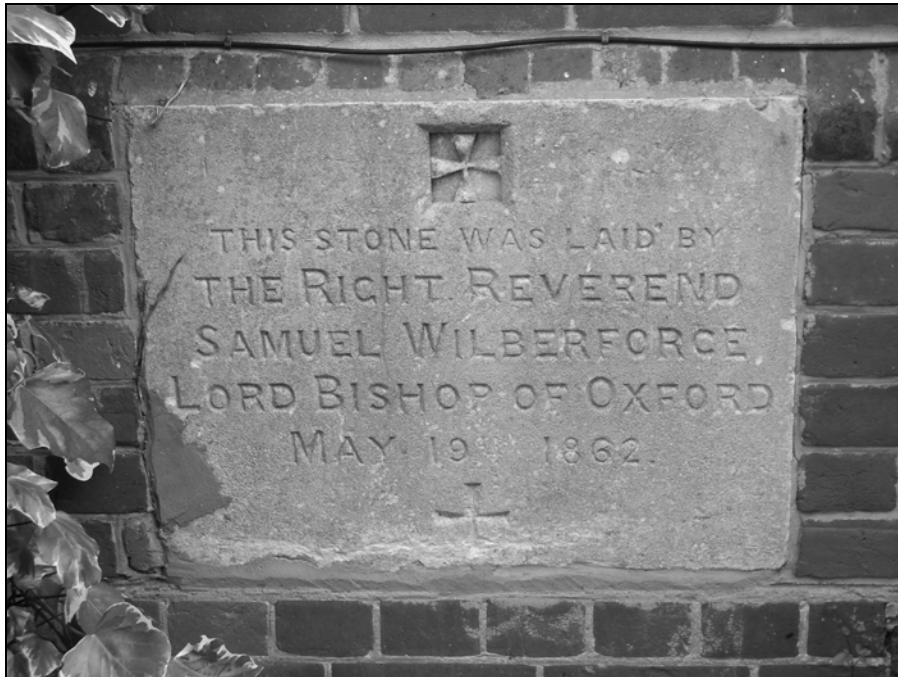
During the 1850s, the school building became too small and in a state of disrepair. Fortunately, a Mr Felix Swade of Lambeth came to the rescue. He owned a meadow on the north side of the Green, and in 1861 he exchanged this for the school land, which was owned by the school trustees – the rector, William Francis Hotham, and the churchwardens, Francis Henry Beaumont (also lord of the manor) and Robert Clutton. This enabled a new school, together with a teacher's house, to be built right in the centre of the village and opposite the church. By a Trust Deed dated 23 December 1861, made under the powers of the School Sites Act 1841, the trustees granted the newly-acquired land to themselves plus two overseers of the poor, William Clifton and John Harman, and their successors. (Overseers of the poor, with the churchwardens, would have been responsible for setting and collecting the parish poor rate and distributing benefits.) These five gentlemen thus became the new educational trustees for the village Church of England school, which was to be open to HM inspectors. The Trust Deed made clear that the children admitted should be from poor families, and an admissions register for 1865 to 1952 shows that, at this time, the parents worked in local trades such as blacksmith, bricklayer, farmer, gardener, butcher, carpenter, coachman, shepherd and publican. It was not until the twentieth century that the school admitted children from more privileged families.



Trust Deed for the new school, 23 December 1861 (Photo by Duncan Ferns, PCC records)

#### Transcript of the Trust Deed

We the REVEREND WILLIAM FRANCIS HOTHAM of Buckland in the County of Surrey Clerk FRANCIS HENRY BEAUMONT of Buckland aforesaid Esquire and ROBERT CLUTTON of Hartswood in the same County Esquire under the authority of an Act passed in the fourth and fifth years of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria Cap 38 intituled an Act for affording further facilities for the conveyance and endowment of Sites for Schools do hereby freely and voluntarily and without any valuable consideration Grant and convey to the Reverend William Frances Hotham Rector of Buckland aforesaid Francis Henry Beaumont Esquire and Robert Clutton Esquire the Churchwardens of Buckland aforesaid and William Clifton and John Harman Overseers of the poor for the aforesaid Parish of Buckland and their successors ALL THAT part of meadow land situate in the parish aforesaid bounded on the north by land of Felix Swade Esquire and on the south south west and south east by the village green and which said piece of land is numbered 173a on the Tithe Commutation map for the said Parish of Buckland and contains in the whole five porches more or less and all our right title and interest to and in the same and every part thereof TO HOLD the same unto and to the use of the said Rector Churchwardens and Overseers of Buckland aforesaid and their successors for the purposes of the said Act and to be applied as a site for a School for poor persons of and in the said parish of Buckland and for the residence of the Schoolmaster or Schoolmistress of the same school and for no other purpose whatsoever such School to be under the management and control of the Rector and Churchwardens of Buckland aforesaid for the time being and to be carried on and conducted according to the principles of the Church of England and to be open at all reasonable times to the inspection of the Inspector appointed by Her Majesty and her successors in conformity with the Order in Council bearing date August tenth one thousand eight hundred and forty IN WITNESS whereof the conveying and other parties have hereinto set their hands and seals this twenty third day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty one



**The foundation stone of the new school, safely preserved by the Mr and Mrs J. Lane of The Old School and reproduced with their permission**

Parish minutes record that the new school and teacher's house, to which Miss Gale transferred, was built the next year at a cost of £793, £695 of which was raised by subscription without any call on the parish. The remaining £98 came from the sale of old almshouses with permission from the Poor Law Commission. The building, much altered since, exists today as a private residence known as The Old School.

The first stone was laid on 19 May 1862 by Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford and son of William Wilberforce, who is associated with the abolition of slavery. Samuel was particularly interested in education and had previously been Archdeacon of Surrey. One of the foremost public speakers of his day and a prolific writer (his son estimated he wrote more than 6,400 letters a year!), he is also famous for his dramatic public encounter with Thomas Huxley in 1860, when he disputed Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. In 1869, he was appointed Bishop of Winchester. He died four years later after falling from his horse on the Abinger Roughs near Abinger Hammer, where a memorial cross can be seen today near Leaser's Barn.

The architect of the new school was Henry Woodyer, who had been responsible for the rebuilding of Buckland Church. He designed 300 buildings in all, including innumerable churches, other village schools, Cranleigh School, and additions to Eton College. His love of sharply pitched roofs is evident in the design of Buckland School.

Originally, there was just one classroom, but, in response to recommendations from HM inspectors, the parish vestry agreed in 1874 to add another room for infants, though this was not built until twelve years later. The new room, which cost of £132 14s 6d (a sum raised mainly locally, though the National Society gave a small grant), increased the official accommodation from 66 to 90 children – more than sufficient for the

number of pupils which then averaged just 50.

By a clause endorsed on the trust deed in December 1886, the school renewed its formal association with the National Society, an arrangement that continued right up to its closure in 1981. From time to time the Society gave grants to the school for repairs and renovation, the condition being that the children 'are to be instructed in the Liturgy and Catechism of the Established Church as well as the Holy Scriptures'. Additionally, the school was subsidised from a charity founded by a Mr Edward Johnson who lived in Weymouth. How he came to be connected with Buckland is not known, but by an indenture dated 17 March 1857, he had given £300 to the National Society to set up a trust 'to assist in the Endowment of a School for the education of the children of labouring and other Poorer Classes in the Parish of Buckland'. The money was converted into Midland Railway Stock and produced £11.15s a year. Records of correspondence between the school managers and the National Society show that the capital was later re-invested in other concerns and that the school continued to benefit from the trust until the late 1970s – though the letters suggest that the annual returns (which continued to be around £11) were not always easy to extract from the Society!

From 1876, children at the school also benefited from a charity known as Smith's, which was used to fund a shoe club for the pupils and to give small scholarships to 'well conducted Poor Children' who attended the school.



**The school across the Green 1906, perhaps the earliest surviving photo of the school**

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Surviving invoices show the kind of expenses that the school incurred during the 1880s. In September 1881, for example, £1 was paid for a diocesan inspection of religious instruction; in January 1882 the school paid 6s 6d. as the quarterly wage for hiring a lady to sweep the room, 9s 6d for a new table cover, dusters, towels, cotton and needles, and £1 6s for a ton of coal; in August 1886, 4s was paid to Messrs Gorman and Ralph for sweeping two chimneys. In 1881, various classroom materials were delivered

from the National Society's depository in Westminster, and these show that slates were still in use at that time even though exercise books were also being ordered:

|  | s. | d.  |
|--|----|-----|
| <b>20 May 1881</b>                         |    |     |
| 3 doz. exercise books                      | 3  | 0   |
| 1 doz Moffatt's copy books                 | 9  | 0   |
| 1 box Marshall's pens                      |    | 9   |
| 1 Davis Arithmetic Pt2                     |    | 6   |
| 3 Murray's geography books nos. 2, 3 and 4 |    | 11¼ |
| <b>22 November 1881</b>                    |    |     |
| 2 gross pens                               | 1  | 11  |
| 2 quires of blotting paper                 | 1  | 8   |
| 2 doz frames slates with tin corners 8x6   | 9  | 4   |
| 2 doz ditto 9x7                            | 10 | 4   |

It is difficult to estimate how the sums involved compare to today's values; but, on the basis of the retail price index, a shilling in 1881 was roughly the equivalent of £3.27 in 2004. This suggests, for instance, that each exercise book in 1881 cost the equivalent of roughly 27p today, and a small slate the equivalent of about £1 27.

In 1866, Miss Sarah Ann Ketteley succeeded Miss Gale as headmistress. At first, her remuneration was £7 10s. a quarter, the same as her predecessor's, but it was increased to £7 18s 11d in 1869. Four years later, in 1870, the 20-year-old Miss Ellen A. Turner from Gloucestershire took over, and lived at the school house with her mother, Annie Turner, who acted as housekeeper. In her first year, Miss Turner earned £12 10s a quarter – considerably more than Miss Ketteley, and subsequently was given £15 a quarter until she left the school in 1878.

The rector's cash book records that Miss Ketteley was succeeded for a short time by a Miss Bailey, who too was paid £15 a quarter, until Miss Harriott Rachel Shakespeare, age 25, took over in 1880, residing at the school house. Although Miss Shakespeare was given the same total remuneration, her school salary was just £12 10s, the remaining £2 10s being paid for playing the organ in church. One wonders whether the £15 a quarter paid to the previous two headmistresses also included remuneration for supplying music at St Mary's.

By the mid 1880s, the school was undoubtedly a thriving concern, catering for about 50 pupils. This was twice the number that were on roll in 1860, partly, no doubt, because the child population in the village increased during the 1860s (census returns record 48 children aged 5-10 in 1861, 66 in 1871 and 64 in 1881) and partly because education up to 10 became compulsory in 1880. However, since the days of Miss Gale, the managers had failed to attract head teachers who were prepared to stay for a good length of time – but that was about to change with the appointment of Mrs Eliza Thorpe.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Mrs Eliza Emma Thorpe, 1886 – 1910**

During the twenty years between 1866 and 1886, four head teachers had been in charge of the school; each had been appointed in their early 20s, and none had stayed for very long. Yet between 1886 and 1964 – a period of 79 years – Buckland School had only three head teachers. Eliza Emma Thorpe, born in Hackney, was the first of these long-serving schoolmistresses. Although the year of her appointment has not been recorded as such, it was almost certainly 1886 since the managers' minutes note that at her retirement in 1910 she had served for 24 years; also, Kelly's Directory lists her as in charge of the school in its 1887 edition.

Unlike her immediate predecessors, Mrs Thorpe was not an unmarried youngster when she took up office but an experienced teacher aged 40 with husband and children. She evidently made some impression on the village since pupil numbers began to soar. At the start of her headship, the average attendance was 50, but it had risen to 60 by 1890 and to 78 by 1903 – i.e. an increase of 56 per cent over 18 years. This cannot be accounted for in terms of population figures in the village, which actually fell during this period (census returns record 155 children aged 3-13 in 1891 but only 108 in 1901). However, higher pupil rolls were no doubt encouraged when, during the early 1890s, education became free (it had been compulsory for 5-10 year-olds since 1880) and the leaving age was raised from 10 to 11 in 1891 and to 12 in 1899). By 1907, however, pupil numbers had returned to 60, and remained at that level for the rest of Mrs Thorpe's term.

#### **The school staff and grievances over pay**

Although Mrs Thorpe's husband, William, taught drawing to the pupils, HM inspector in 1888 noted that school was under-staffed in terms of statutory requirements. Two assistant teachers were accordingly appointed. These were Sybil Theodora, age 21, the Thorpes' daughter, and Edith Florence Baker, Mr Thorpe's step-daughter. They lived in the well-occupied school house with Irene Grace, age 17 and apparently of no occupation.

Miss Baker seems to have worked as both a teacher and a cleaner. In February 1899, in her position of cleaner, she wrote to the rector, as chairman of the managers, asking for a wage rise:



Dear Sir,

I should be most grateful if you would, at the next meeting of the School Managers, ask them if they would give me an increase in my wages as school cleaner, etc. If you compare my work with that of cleaners of the Church and Parish Room, you will find that I am paid the least for the most labour. I cannot write all that I have to do, but should be most willing to explain to the gentlemen any time they visit the school buildings.

I am. Revd Sir

Yours faithfully

Edith F Baker.

A month later, she wrote again to the rector. Presumably in response to a request for further information, the lady pointed out that she was given just 2s a week for regular cleaning plus 4s. 6d. at Christmas and Easter for 'scrubbing', which involved taking down maps and dusting and sweeping the walls, washing slates and inkwells, and disinfecting hat pegs with 'pure carbolic', a disinfectant made from coal-tar. There appear to be no records of the outcome of Miss Baker's request, but we know that by 1905, six years later, her wage for regular cleaning had been increased by 50 per cent to 3s. She was still paid 4s 6d a week for scrubbing twice a year, but also 2s for cleaning the windows, 3s a quarter for washing towels and dusters, and 15s a quarter for emptying the closets.

Buckland Parish statement of accounts show that Mrs Thorpe's annual salary was £81 19s in 1893 and that ten years later it had risen to almost £150. By 1904, according to the managers' minutes, she was also benefiting from a superannuation fund of £2 4s 0d, but had to pay £8 a year to rent the house. The two assistant teachers who had been appointed in 1880 were clearly well regarded since the managers in 1906 agreed to increase their salaries by 50 per cent, from £5 to £7 10s a year, 'on account of good work done in the school'. However, the county staffing committee agreed to this only on condition that they passed the qualifying exam. The assistants stuck their heels in, saying they had no time to prepare and that it would cause them too much stress. After representations from the managers, the staffing committee gave way!

## **Tough standards for pupils and teachers**

A number of reports from government and diocesan inspectors have survived for this period. As well as commenting on the standards achieved under Mrs Thorpe, these give interesting snapshots of the curriculum of the time and the kinds of teaching that were expected by officialdom.

Under the Revised Code of 1862, the government allocated annual maintenance grants to elementary schools on the basis of the children's regular attendance and attainment in certain subjects – the notorious system of 'payment by results'. The tests, administered by one of Her Majesty's inspectors, were organised in six 'standards', corresponding to the six years of school life from the end of the infant stage at the ages of 6-7 and the end of primary school at 11-12 years of age. Syllabuses were prescribed for each of the six standards, determining what was to be taught – an early version of a national curriculum. For example, Standard I required children to read a narrative based on monosyllabic words and to write on a slate or the blackboard capital and small-case

letters; in arithmetic, they were asked to write and name at sight figures up to 20 and to add and subtract orally figures up to 10. By Standard VI, about the age of 12, children were required to read a short paragraph from a newspaper or book, to write another paragraph from dictation, and to calculate sums that involved adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, including examples drawn from everyday practice (such as bills) involving money, weights and measures. Teachers therefore awaited the annual inspection with a good deal of anxiety. At first the inspectors' tests were limited to the three Rs and needlework for the girls, but from 1867 the range of subjects that could earn a grant was extended.

The annual parliamentary grant was administered by a Select Committee of Privy Council, set up in 1839, the precursor of a department for education. In 1893, about half Buckland School's income came in the form of government grants and a third was proceeds from a voluntary rate; smaller sums came from Johnson's Charity (see Chapter 1), a sale of needlework, and the hire of a room for parish council meetings. The school accounts show that income increased steeply from £81 10s 4d in 1889 to £154 14s 11d in 1893 and £202 15s 11¼d in 1896 – a rise of almost 150 per cent in seven years. This would be partly a result of rising school rolls, as described earlier, but may also reflect improved performances in the annual tests during the early 1890s.

There appear to be no records of inspection reports before the late 1880s, when the picture painted by the inspectors suggests a school of well-behaved pupils under teachers who were diligent, if not always rising to the inspectors' expectations. In 1888, HM inspector reported:

The discipline is very good, and the sewing is well taught. Both elementary and class subjects are very satisfactory in the first and second standards, but the work of the upper standards should be improved, both in respect of accuracy and intelligence. No maps have been prepared in the fifth and sixth standards. The infants are well taught, though the reading of the second class is rather indistinct, and they should write their letters more slowly and carefully. Urinals should be provided for the infant boys.

In 1893, the inspector was more upbeat. Although complaining about the state of the fabric – 'a matter that should be attended to without delay' – and the need for more office space, he noted that 'this little school continues in a very satisfactory condition'. He had only one complaint, and that was about needlework: 'Larger stitches are essential in the work of young children.' As a result of this inspection, Buckland School obtained the highest possible grant in all subjects.

In 1897, the system of 'payment by results' was abolished, and Buckland School would have been free from the pressure to 'teach to the test'. Perhaps this is behind the thoughts of the inspector who, in January 1903, gave general praise for the quality of teaching but also suggested a certain lack of rigour:

The teaching is as sensible and vigorous as ever, but with an increasing tendency to discursiveness. The infants' room is much improved in appearance. Sounds of letters should be carefully taught here, and counting on fingers should not be

allowed. I have often had to call attention to this defect. Too much slate arithmetic is taken.

The next year, HM inspector again praised the quality of teaching, in spite of a criticism about reading:

The children behave well and attend regularly, and, in the main, they are taught with zeal and success; but a determined effort must be made to train them to read less monotonously.

The inspector also referred to 'object lessons'. These were commonly represented in the curriculum of elementary schools, and comprised a series of disconnected lessons on miscellaneous topics such as 'cat', 'leather', and 'salt'. The idea was to encourage children to look at their environment with a keen eye, but, as the inspector for Buckland in 1904 implied, the reality did not necessarily match the intentions:

The object lessons fail in their purpose unless they are illustrated in such a manner as to foster habits of observation and tend to teach children an intelligent interest in their surroundings.

This inspector went on to comment on the inadequate heating arrangements – a matter that was to plague the school for the next half century - and recommended that the poorly ventilated stove be replaced by an open fire.

Mindful that they were now accountable to the newly formed Surrey County Council, which acted as the education authority, the board of managers responded to the inspector's criticisms by informing the council's Education Committee that efforts were being made to encourage the children to read with more expression, to improve the object lessons and to provide an open fire. However, their endeavours seemed to have met with only partial success since the next year, in spite of noting general progress and praising the standards of attendance and discipline, the inspector again criticised the children's reading:

The attendance, especially of the younger children, is remarkably good. Very satisfactory discipline and tone prevail, and some good general progress is being made, though the reading is still very monotonous and the history lessons might be more effective.

In the autumn of 1906, HM inspector was again impressed with the children's social training: 'The children attend with commendable regularity and punctuality, and they are well trained in habits of cleanliness and tidiness'. But he had some harsh words concerning their standards of achievement, appearing to attribute the fault to the personal failings of some of the children rather than to uninspiring teaching:

There appears to be a larger proportion of dull, apathetic children than usual, who do not respond to their teacher's efforts as readily as could be wished; and the habit of indiscriminate answering tends to hinder individual effort.

In the last year of Mrs Thorpe's headship, 1910, HM inspector visited the school again and presented a substantial report on its work, giving us greater insight into the kind of official expectations that were set at this time. He remarked that the infant room had 'little space for games or marching', but he thought the infants were taught satisfactorily, if rather unimaginatively:

The children are sympathetically and, for the most part, suitably taught. Additional story reading would be a distinct advantage, some writing other than from a copy might be attempted in the first class, and the instruction in number should be less restricted than it is at present, the ball frame being more frequently used and the advantage of dealing with tens more fully appreciated.

In commenting on the older children, the inspector praised their behaviour and considered they attended 'with remarkable regularity and punctuality'. As regards the teaching, he thought much was 'creditably done', but saw weaknesses in the three Rs and disliked the way the children had developed 'the habit of answering indiscriminately'. As well as suggesting that more attention be given to mental arithmetic, he urged the teachers to adopt an approach to number work that would enable the children to appreciate its application in everyday life:

Time should be regularly set apart for practice in mental calculations throughout the school, and all forms of irregular answering should be checked. In the written arithmetic it would be well to devote some of the time now spent in the lower classes in manipulating masses of figures to the working of simple practical problems.

He also thought that the children read without feeling and considered them to be unforthcoming in responding to his questions:

The reading is good of its kind but is sadly wanting in expression. The children can write composition very fairly; many of them, however, are very slow in oral answering, and cannot be induced to give expression to their thoughts.

The criticisms of drawing lessons reveal the mechanical approach adopted at the time: 'In the Drawing exercises greater use should be made of actual objects and less time spent in reproducing flat copies.' Drawing was then an essentially male activity: while the boys drew, the girls sewed:

The girls, who do no Drawing, are responsible for a good display of needlework of a very practical kind, but they do not mend their own garments, nor are they able to answer simple questions about their work.

Diocesan inspectors of religious instruction also called regularly on the school, and their reports for the 1890s are more positive than those of HM inspectors, speaking consistently of high standards and alert children. In May 1889, the inspector reported 'evidence of very careful and accurate teaching' and noted how the children 'were quick and intelligent, and took a great interest in the examination'. Although he found it necessary to advise staff to draw practical lessons from Old as well as New Testament history, to explain the meaning of the Lord's Prayer to the younger children and the

order for Morning and Evening Prayer to the older ones, he thought that ‘repetition of scripture, hymns, catechism and collects was reverently rendered’. The report for 1893 was even more favourable:

The results of this school merit, as in past years, the most unreserved praise. ... Special praise is due to the repetition in the Lower Division, and to the Prayer Book knowledge of the older children. ... The teachers are warmly congratulated on the success of their labours.

In 1896, the inspector was again fulsome in his praise:

This school is first rate. The infants and Standard 1 have been taught a more than usually wide syllabus in a stirring, graphic fashion that has brought both the details and the practical daily lessons well home to each child in a way that will not soon be forgotten, and also drawn out their thinking and answering powers in an unusual degree for such young children. They are bright too, and seem to be under capital motherly and robust influence. ... Tone, discipline, and interest are excellent throughout, and the school takes a high place among country schools.

The report for 1903 was short, but to the point: ‘The School is well and intelligently taught in both divisions.’

## **Charities and savings**

The parish accounts give us some insight into the ways the children could be helped to buy clothing and save money. The shoe club, run by Smith’s charity (as explained in the last chapter), enabled every child who had attended the school regularly to pay one penny towards the cost of a pair of boots, and the trustees of the charity added three shillings when the child’s account reached 3s. 4d. In 1889, 51 children (almost every pupil) earned this bonus.

From 1892, the school ran a savings bank and urged parents to save the money that used to be paid for school fees before education became free in 1891. Contributions of two pence a week (corresponding to the previous fee) were recommended, and were credited to the National Deposit Friendly Society, which had a branch in the village. Since the money could not earn interest until £1 had been saved, the school managers added a farthing for every attendance over 360. In 1893, 28 children made deposits amounting to £11 17s 3d, and the sum gained for extra attendances amounted to 16s 4d.

## **Surrey County takes over and resists paying the bills**

On 1 April 1903, under the Education Act of the previous year, the school was taken over by Surrey County Council. Two days later a new board of six managers held its first meeting in the parish room; three of these were Foundation managers who represented St Mary’s Church.

The minutes record that the Foundation managers comprised the rector, Rev George Slade, who was chairman until his death in 1905, and the two churchwardens. One of

these was Francis Henry Beaumont JP (1834-1929), the same lord of the manor who had signed the Trust Deed in 1861, and who was now elected treasurer. He remained a manager until 1920 when he resigned at 86 years of age because of failing eyesight. The other Foundation manager was Alfred J. Keen, a solicitor. The remaining three managers were: Freddy Ray Fletcher, another solicitor, who lived at The Orchard in Slough Lane and who was co-opted by the other Foundation managers; W. Arthur Champion, a blacksmith and farmer who lived on the Green with his family (probably in what is now Applecroft), and was appointed by the Parish Council; and Steven Clifton, who went on to serve as the county's appointee for thirty-eight years.

All expenses connected with teaching were now borne by the county, the parish remaining answerable for all capital costs and structural repairs to the school and the teacher's house. At various times during this period, however, the managers had trouble in persuading the county to meet the regular costs of running the school. The minutes record a ridiculous episode in July 1907, when the county refused to pay 5s 6d for lamps and 1s 10d for a new football bladder, arguing that these should be payable by the school since the items were classed as 'fair wear and tear'. The managers insisted that the articles were essential for teaching, and as such should be paid for by the county, pointing out that 'lamps are a necessity for carrying out the work of the school in winter, and physical exercises are insisted upon in the curriculum'. But their protests were in vain, and the county stubbornly held its ground.



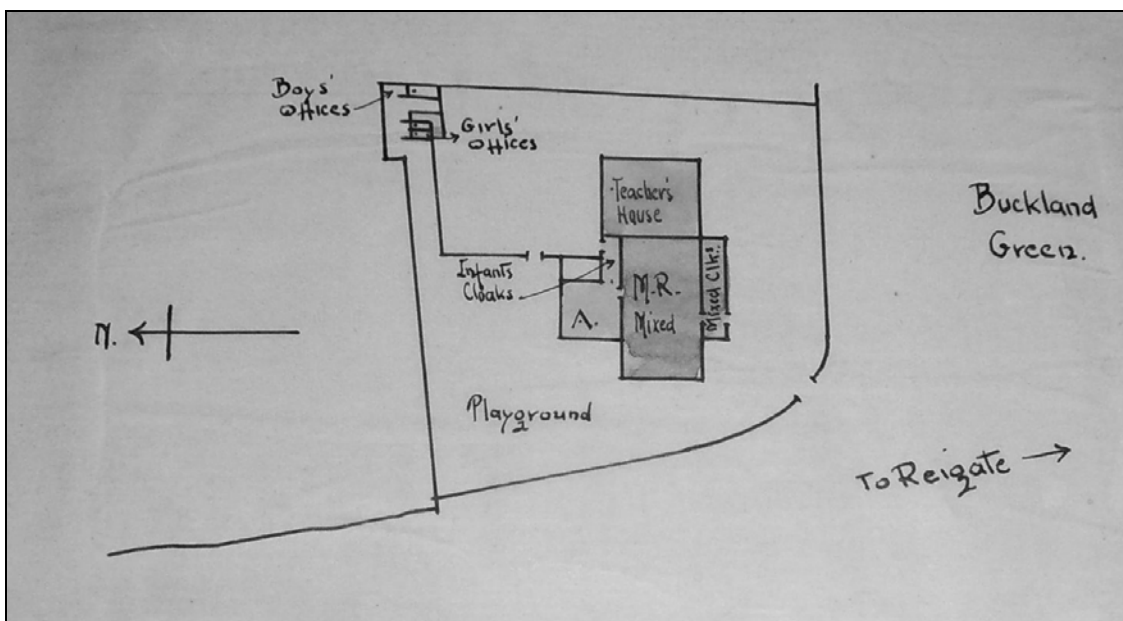
**Pupils in 1905 (*Dorking Advertiser*, 28 February 1980,  
© Surrey History Centre)**

## **Problems with the building and grounds**

At that time, head teachers were not members of the board of managers, but Mrs Thorpe was customarily invited to attend the meetings and present a report. She regularly drew attention to the poor state of the building, pointing out such matters as leaks in the roof and smoke from the stove flue. Indeed, one of the Board's first acts was to extend the Easter holidays to two weeks so that repairs to the building could be carried out. In 1904, Mrs Thorpe complained about the bad state of the playground and wanted it asphalted 'for drill purposes'. The managers hesitated, because they, not the

county, would have to foot the bill. In the end, although the county surveyor too expressed a preference for asphalt, the playground was gravelled at a cost of £40, partly paid out of funds from the Johnson Trust.

In 1905, the county Education Committee's surveyor visited the school, and his detailed report (now in the Surrey History Centre) includes a description of the buildings and playground (see plan below) as well as an assessment of their condition. The rectangular main room (marked MR Mixed on the plan) was 35ft by 10ft, and said to accommodate 63 junior-aged children at 10 square feet per scholar – though the number on roll was only 47. A Musgrave stove at one end of the room provided inadequate heating – a matter that HMI had criticised the previous year. Each of the long desks, made by Jarretts of Croydon, sat six or seven pupils. The much smaller but squarer infants room (marked A on the plan) was 16ft by 14ft. This could accommodate 25 children at nine square feet per scholar; although only 20 (including six under five years old) were on roll. The surveyor said that the infants room was too small for its purpose and below the minimum size required by the Board of Education, but at least its open fire provided more adequate heating than the main room. The infants' desks, each for four children, were made by G Hammer, and were in 'very fair' condition.



Plan of school from the county surveyor's report 1905 (© Surrey History Centre)

The report was generally critical about the state of the building, a verdict that the school was never to throw off. There were many signs of settlement: the brick walls, 14 inches thick, had been underpinned ten years previously, but many cracks that had once been filled had been replaced by new ones. The external woodwork was 'very fair', but needed painting, no decoration having been undertaken for ten years. The roof showed signs of leakage in many places, and its south-facing aspect needed stripping and retiling. The surveyor found the classroom windows, made of leaded lights, in a dirty state, while the cleanliness of the floors was described as 'very inadequate'. The boarded floor in the main room was 'much worn' and needed to be renewed in one

area. Although the walls and ceiling had been distempered two years previously, the walls were cracking in many places and the ceiling showed signs of leakage.

As we have seen, the playground on the Rectory Lane side, shared by all the children, had recently been gravelled, but the surveyor found the surface ‘not very good’ and requiring attention. He also considered the playground to be too small, but noted that children could play on the Green just outside the school.

He then went on to criticise the cloakrooms: the infants’ he found ‘altogether unsatisfactory’ and recommended that new accommodation be provided, adding that the older boys and girls should have separate facilities. The toilets were evidently rather primitive, the outside ‘offices’ comprising pail closets to which would be added waste lime. Their cleanliness was the responsibility of Mrs Thorpe’s step-daughter, Miss Baker; as we saw earlier, she was paid 15s a quarter for emptying the pails twice a week. The surveyor thought this frequency was ‘barely sufficient’, but said the closets and urinals – in contrast to the windows and floors – were ‘very cleanly kept’, though the fabric was old and in poor condition. Drainage was to a cesspool in a meadow behind the school.

The school house comprised, on the ground floor, a parlour, kitchen, scullery, and lavatories using earth closets; upstairs were two bedrooms. Unlike the school, the house was on mains water supply and, again in contrast to the school, was judged to be in fair condition, though in need of external decoration.

The surveyor summarised the repairs required and the estimated costs as follows:

|   | £        |
|---|----------|
| Roof and gutters  | 3        |
| Renew portion of boarded floor in main room                           | 2        |
| Outside painting  | 3        |
| Internal redecoration after making good plastering and stopping leaks | 30       |
| Paint outside of teachers’ house                                      | 2        |
| <hr/> TOTAL   | <hr/> 40 |

For several years after the report, the managers discussed how to respond to the surveyor’s recommendations. At first, they talked in terms of repairs and decoration, but eventually decided on major renovation. In 1908, new flooring was laid in the main room, which was also provided with a new stove, and brick paving was put down in the boys’ lavatory. During the following summer, a new cloakroom was built for the girls and infants, water was laid on, sinks were provided in the cloakrooms, and the playground was re-gravelled. The work was carried out by G Cummins & Son for just over £220, which was raised by a voluntary rate on all house property in the village assessed at £10 or more.

The managers decided not to enlarge the infant room since they considered the number of pupils did not warrant it. In this, they were supported by the county surveyor, though Secretary of the Board of Education wrote to him insisting that the plans would be approved only ‘on condition that a larger classroom for infants may be required if circumstances should render it necessary’. The Board also said that, once the alterations



were completed, the school would be able to accommodate 24 infants and 63 older children – 87 in all – under the current regulations. The renovations were evidently a success, at least for the time being, since a general report on the school by HM inspector in December 1909 noted that ‘considerable improvements’ had been made to the school premises. Maybe, but the state of the building was to be a headache for the remaining lifetime of the school, even after extensive work in 1958.

### **School motto: myth or fact?**

Written on a page near the start of the managers’ minute book is the school’s motto: ‘Carry Peace and Friendship you little Brothers wherever you go’. Since this follows a note about school repairs in 1906-08, it is possible that it dates from the same time; however, there is no record in the minutes themselves of the motto being agreed, so it may have been adopted in the previous century, perhaps in a very early period when only boys were enrolled. Curiously, no other record of the school refers to this or any motto, none of the past pupils or staff members interviewed can recall a motto, and the shield made for the school in the 1960s included no motto; so, if there ever was a motto, it seems to have fallen into disuse.

### **A popular head and a happy school**

Mrs Thorpe seems to have been a popular head, both with pupils and parents. In 1980, Archibald Dench could look back on his schooldays in Buckland from 1901 to 1909 with much affection. He told the *Dorking Advertiser* that the school was ‘a lively, happy place, crowded with more than 60 pupils’. He recalled that it was known locally as ‘The College’, and one of the boys’ favourite hobbies was sailing home-made boats on the village pond, which they nick-named ‘Buckland Docks’. The school then had its own cricket and football teams that played in the grounds of Buckland Park, now a disused sand pit. They also enjoyed joining the Buckland Park Beagles, organised by Major Francis Montague Beaumont, son of the lord of the manor, and running after them provided plenty of exercise!

In June 1910, Mrs Thorpe resigned due to long illness, which, according to a memorandum by the county Education Committee, had led to the school falling into ‘a bad state’. Nevertheless, she had served for longer than any previous head teacher and had steered the school through major statutory changes. During her period of office, education had become free, the school leaving age had been raised twice, and the school had become accountable to the county council. Standards of achievement, while varied, had never been less than satisfactory in the eyes of government inspectors, while the school’s ethos and provision for religious education and worship were ‘first rate’ according to the diocesan inspector. We also know that at least one ex-pupil thought the school a happy place.

Mrs Thorpe’s achievements did not go unacknowledged. At a public ceremony in September, the managers and parishioners presented her with a cheque for £37 6s ‘as a testimonial for her excellent work in the school during the past 24 years’.

