

Chelsfied School Log Books: 1883-1920

Connection with the Waring family

When these logs start the school was funded by a grant from the school board; payments of fees from pupils; and occasional donations by wealthy patrons. The Waring family, who lived at Woodlands, and were one of the chief landowners at the time, had a close relationship with the school. Mr William Waring was the chair of the school board and is recorded as having made many visits, to check registers, give prizes, and speak to the children about their behaviour.

11 March 1887 Mr Waring visited this morning and requested the children not to chalk the fences in the parish.

18 October 1887 Mr Waring came & spoke to several boys about their interference with the WaterStop Cocks placed in the village.

The Waring daughters visited the school regularly, read with the children and even took some classes when teachers were sick. The Waring family would have had a close knowledge of the children and their families, many of whom would have been employed by the family. By 1895 Mr Norman was Head of the School Board and took over the duties of prize giving and checking registers.

Attendance

Attendance is a preoccupation of the Head's log. It was not uncommon for a third of the children on the school roll to be absent. As an incentive, prizes were given for good attendance. The headmaster, Mr Bailey, frequently recorded poor attendance, on account of the weather; which is not surprising given that many of the children had to travel a good distance from places like Skeet Hill and Shoreham.

8 January 1886 Mr Waring visited and examined Registers. Severe snow storm on Wednesday. Only about 20 children have attended since in consequence.

Sickness

Illness was another common cause of absence. Especially in the early years the school was overcrowded and poorly ventilated, and disease spread quickly. It was not unusual for children to die of their illnesses.

5 March 1884 Ada Filmer died on Sunday after a fortnights' illness.

21 November 1887 George Harlow died on Saturday from Croup.

11 November 1890 Lily Crowhurst died this morning from Congestion of Lungs & Heart Disease.

31 December 1894 Reopened after Holidays. Mary Ann Whitehead died during the holidays from Rheumatic Fever.

17 April 1899 I have to record the sudden death of Edwin Whitehead aged 5 years. He was apparently well this morning but while playing out in the road in the dinner time directly after having eaten his dinner fell down and died almost immediately.

17 June 1910 A collection has been made among the children to purchase a wreath to be placed on little Ella Stanley's grave. This little girl died from Tetanus following a fall which her arm was cut on a flint.

In October 1892 a measles outbreak closed the school for about three weeks, and the school had to be disinfected.

24 October 1892 There are 70 absentees this afternoon the majority of whom are absent through measles.

25 October 1892 Contacted Mr Street Sanitary Inspector informing him of the Epidemics.

26 October 1892 Measles on the increase – 86 absent.

27 October 1892 There are 95 absentees this afternoon.

28 October 1892 Measles seems to have reached its height. There are 95 away today. Nearly all those who have not already had it are absent.

31 October 1892 The Medical Officer Dr Butterfield has recommended the closing of the schools to prevent further spread of the disease. The Chairman of the School Board in accordance with the above recommendation has instructed me to close the schools until we receive permission from the Medical Officer to reopen.

21 November 1892 Reopened after having been closed for 3 weeks, during which time the schools have been thoroughly disinfected and cleaned.

Several of the scholars have not yet returned – a great many have not recovered from the Measles.

Working on the farms

Many children were also away in May for hop-binding, in June for fruit picking, and again in August for hop-picking. The school usually closed for three weeks in September in recognition of the hop picking season. Some parents simply defied the rules and kept their children away from school to work, or to look after younger children.

18 January 1892 Samuel Sinfield a boy admitted in October last year has only attended 9 times up to this date. He has been summoned twice by the Board but his father refuses to send him to school. Today Edmund Foreman saw the boy working for his father on a stack at Hewitt Farm.

7 June 1907 Several children away today "minding babies" while their mothers go fruiting.

In early logs, Mr Bailey noted that some children appeared in October who had not been in school since the previous June. He lamented the lack of an attendance officer to chase up the children.

23 January 1885 In consequence of having no "Attendance Officer" for this district a great many scholars are absent.

By 1890 an attendance officer had been appointed and his activity is noted in subsequent log entries.

The children were also absent for festivities and fairs in Pratts Bottom and St Mary Cray.

1 May 1889 A great many absent in the afternoon. Gone to the "May Pole" Festivities at Cray.

5 November 1891 Gunpowder Plot. Several absentees this afternoon, gone to Cray for Fireworks.

Sometimes they were just away.

30 January 1895 The Attendance Officer (pro tem) called on Mrs Laidlaw as her boy Charles had been absent for a fortnight. She excused his absence on the ground that he had been suffering from Bronchitis etc. Later on in the day the boy was seen out sliding on the pond. The next day another visit was made by the Attendance Officer who found him out on the pond.

Schoolwork

The Minister and his wife were regular visitors to the school. Revs Baugh, Barnes and Cole are all recorded as visiting, and teaching scripture; they would also hear the children read from the Bible.

When the children were in school, the infants were treated to a variety of "topic lessons". The topics are regularly recorded in the Logbooks and included subjects as diverse as camels, sheep, tea, coal and even porosity.

Recital and learning by heart was a key element of school life, and Mr Bailey records each year the works the children were required to learn. These ranged from chunks of Shakespeare to poems by Longfellow, McCaulay, Southey and others not now so well remembered.

The logs record the many **challenges of running a village school** at the time.

Many children arrived with no learning at all.

2 April 1894 Annie Banfield 6 years 8 months old and never before been to a school. She does not know a letter. Comes from Lone Barn Orpington

Discipline was an issue, with boys occasionally punished for "obscene language" and "indecent behaviour", and the occasional expulsion:

8 June 1883 Obligated to expel Thos Hills from this school for carrying stones in his pockets and threatening to throw them at the teachers' heads. He has been very tiresome lately.

Prizes were given annually for proficiency and good conduct and recorded in full in the logs with the prizewinners names.

7 March 1883 Prizes were given to the girls by Mr Waring for the best needlework; and prizes of books were given to the other scholars for proficiency in Elementary & Class subjects. Several ladies gentlemen and parents were present to witness the distribution. The songs & pieces of Recitation prepared for HMI were gone through.

23 October 1908 Messrs Norman, Fox & Rowley representing the managers visited this afternoon, when the Medals & Certifs. won during last year were distributed by the Chairman. In all 10 medals & 31 certificates were obtained. Frances French won one for the second year in succession. It is also worthy of note that Margaret, Edith, Cyril & Ronald Bates, all members of the one family won medals for perfect attendance & that in spite of the fact that they live at Goddington & have a long way to come in all sorts of weather.

Health and safety

Accidents were a regular occurrence, especially children falling over the school wall.

8 February 1886 Horace Alcock fell over the school wall and hurt his head. Sent home.

In one part of the playground the wall is only a foot high.

19 August 1887 Ernest Deamer fell over the school wall on Monday and cut his forehead

26 November 1888 Ralph Foremena tumbled over the school wall & hurt his shoulder

19 June 1907 Today Thomas Potter, during the mid day break, fell from the girder supporting the shelter in the boys yard and fractured his collar bone. The boys have been frequently warned about swinging from this.

20 June 1907 Sanitary inspector called today. He recommends a man to be appointed to scrub the lavatories thoroughly once per week.

Maintenance of the school building was often a concern.

30 January 1912 Frost has upset all flushing apparatus in W Cs. This morn have to make water boil in copper to free same. The whole of this apparatus needs protecting against frost as it is in such an exposed position.

4 February 1912 Owing to the frosty weather all the flushing apparatus has been out of working order. Have had to put a "Boy" to heat copper in Caretakers room & thus by pouring down boiling water – thaw the "pans".

Mr Bailey also had concerns about abuse of some of the children.

31 May 1886 Complained to the Medical Officer Dr Alfrey of Mrs Kimber's treatment towards the Pauper children in her care Lizzie & Charlie Mankelow. He has promised to report the case to the Board of Guardians. Mr Waring & Mr Fox both inspected the bruises on the children above mentioned

If the logs make school life sounds harsh, there were some treats recorded too:

4 May 1883 The children were this day entertained by a conjuror, after school, through the kindness of Mrs Brind, of Court Lodge.

30 July 1884 A Potter from Staffordshire exhibited the working of a potter's wheel – he made about 20 articles with the clay including cup & saucer, teapot etc. This took the place of a lesson.

And despite the difficulties inspectors reports were generally very positive and most children achieved well in their school exams.

15 February 1887 Received the Exam Schedules. Results=82 percent of passes. Only 7 scholars failed to pass their respective standards throughout the school.

28 February 1888 Results = 92 percent of possible passes. Only 3 scholars failed to pass their respective standards. There were no failures in Reading.

Life beyond school

The logs also recorded the occasional **historical event**:

22 January 1901 Our Beloved Queen Victoria died at Osborne House at half past 6 o'clock.

24 January 1901 Albert Edward Prince of Wales Proclaimed as King Edward VII.

2 February 1901 Funeral of Queen Victoria.

Mr Bailey's tenure as head came to a tragic end in 1906. The log resumed after the school holiday in the hand of Mr Waite and records the death of Mr Bailey in a motor accident at Hands' Cross.

7 August 1906 School reopened after Holidays. Took temporary charge of this school today, owing to the sad death of Mr. Bailey, who died from the effects of injuries received in the motor accident at Hands Cross R E Waite. Very poor opening attendance (112 in 148).

Mr Bailey had been on a summer outing to Brighton when the bus carrying the party ran out of control on Handcross Hill. Ten people died in the accident. Mrs Bailey and her daughter carried on working at the school, but had to move out of the schoolhouse when a new head, Mr Butcher, was eventually appointed. Mrs Bailey

eventually retired from the school on 6 February 1911, and a was presented with a Chesterfield settee.

6 March 1911 Mrs Bailey who has been infant mistress here for the past 26 years was this evening, in the schools presented with a Chesterfield Settee by Mr Norman Chairman of the Managers. About 110 persons subscribed to this testimonial. A large number of these were present at the actual presentation.

First World War

The 1914-18 war had an impact on school life with the Head, Mr Butcher, becoming a special constable and eventually joining the Royal Flying Corps, leaving the school in charge of Miss Tester. The children entered into various activities to support the war effort, including "protecting telegraph wires". Licences for agriculture were granted to allow some of the older children to work on the farms to maintain food production.

10 August 1914 Most of the Boys of the upper division are away "Scouting" on the main road to guard Telegraph wires.

18 August 1914 The Headmaster will leave school tomorrow 19th at 3.40 in order to get to "Point Duty" at the Knockholt Tunnel at 4 o'clock as one of the "Special Constables".

13 May 1915 An egg collection was made for the wounded. Result 10 doz eggs and 3/-cash.

25 May 1915 An Empire Day collection for providing comforts for soldiers was held today & realised 17/-.

5 August 1915 A J Waring Esq Chairman of the Managers visited this morning. The Headmaster will be absent part of this afternoon, by permission of the managers, in order to attend a meeting of enumerators, for National Registration at the Union Offices Park House Bromley.

10 November 1915 A J Waring Esq visited to report reply from K E C respecting the conditions of the enlistment of the Headmaster. Mr Ed Norman visited in connection with Lord Derby's recruiting system.

17 November 1915 The Headmaster absent from school today at 9.30 a.m. to go to the Dentist, having been accepted for service with the Royal Flying Corps.

23 November 1915 Resigned the headship of this school today – for the period of the war to serve in the Royal Flying Corps. Geo Butcher.

8 February 1918 All boys with the exception of 5 in mixed department were away from school to see aeroplane that came down before school commenced.

There appears to be no record of the **Armistice**, although this could be because many children and the Head were suffering from influenza. Mr Butcher returned on 27 January 1919. The school did commemorate the Armistice in 1919.

27 January 1919 Resumed the position of Head Master of this school today after an absence of 3 years & 3 months. Geo Butcher.

11 November 1919 Alteration of Timetable: Lecture given on "Armistice" & "League of Nations". Hymn "O God our Help" sung & the 2 minutes 11-11.2 observed as a time of Quietude. Lecture more elaborated 1.30 – 2 to Upper Classes.

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