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HARPENDEN

VI

THE SCHOOLS

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Introduction

This account of the history of schools in Wheathampstead and Harpenden has been written by Elisabeth Field and Jane Harris. We are grateful for the help of the members of the W.E.A. classes on the Local History of the two parishes and of Lionel Munby, their tutor. Our information on pre-nineteenth century schools consists mainly of brief references in various documents, drawn to our attention by members of the classes who were working on them. Lieut. Col. J. H. Busby, M.B.E., also contributed important information. Our chief sources for Victorian schools were the log books which all school heads had to keep after 1863, and we would particularly like to thank Margaret Pankhurst for her work on the Wheathampstead log books, and for collecting the earlier nineteenth century material, and John Fisher for his work on the St. Nicholas School log books. We are grateful to Mr. Roberts (Head of Manland School), Mr. Thomas (Head of St. Nicholas) and Mr. Warner (Head of St. Helens), for making the log books available. For background knowledge of the educational system, and information on private schools, we have drawn from a thesis by J. H. Smyth, 'Education in Harpenden, A Historical Survey 1850–1970'. Several residents of Harpenden and Wheathampstead have told us about their school days, and thereby enabled us to put flesh on the otherwise dry bones of historical fact. Most of the newer schools have been dealt with extremely briefly through lack of space and some small schools have been omitted entirely, in the hope that readers will find the more detailed accounts of Victorian schools of greater interest.

ILLUSTRATIONS

A Calendar of Important Events

Where the name of a school is given with no other comment, this is the year in which the school opened.

1808–14 British Society founded.
1811 National Society founded.
1815 Wheathampstead National School.
1833 Government Grants began.
1850 Harpenden British School.
1858 Harpenden National School.
1861 Newcastle Commission Report.
1862 Revised Code - Payment by Results. Wheathampstead National School moved to new buildings.
1865 Harpenden National School new building opened.
1869 St. Mary's, Kinsbourne Green.
1870 Education Act establishing School Boards able to levy rates.
1874 Bowling Alley School.
1875 Gustard Wood School.
1880 Mundella Act made School attendance compulsory up to 10.
1887 Rev. R. H. Wix's St. George's School moved to Harpenden.
1890 St. Hilda's in Rothamsted Av.
1891 Act ended Fees in Board Schools and payment by results.
1894 British School closed.
1895 Harpenden Board School.
1897 Victoria Road buildings.
1898 Hardenwick moved.
1902 Act made County Councils into L.E.A.s, ended School Boards. Gave help to Voluntary Schools and provided for Secondary Education.
1903 County Council took over Board School.
1904 U.S.C. took over St. George's.
1906 National Schools renamed Church of England Schools.
1907 St. George's site rented by Rev. Cecil Grant for his Keswick Coeducational School.
1919 St. Dominic's—Bowers Cottage.
1924 St. Dominic's moved to Harpenden Hall.
1928 National Children's Home.
1931 St. Dominic's moved to Welcombe.
1932 Gustard Wood School closed.
1933 Moreton End School founded.
1937 Lea House School founded.
1939 Manland Schools (opened).
1944 Act defined Primary, Secondary and Further Education, with different forms of Secondary Education. Board replaced by Ministry of Education.
1946 St. Dominic's reorganised as Primary School.
1948 Lea House School moved to Aldwickbury, changed name. St. Mary's Church School became L.E.A. School.
1950 Batford Primary School.
1955 St. Mary's closed, Roundwood Primary School opened.
1956 Roundwood Secondary School.
1957 Batford Infants School.
1964 St. Dominic's new buildings.
1964 St. John's (Bowling Alley) closed, The Grove School opened.
1965 St. George's became Grammar School (Voluntary Aided), Wood End Primary and Wheathampstead Secondary Schools opened.
1966 Hardenwick moved to Sandridgebury. St. Nicholas School new buildings opened.
1967 Crabtree Lane Primary School.
1968 Grove Infants School.
1969 St. Helen's, Wheathampstead Primary School opened. Aldwickbury transferred to an Educational Trust.
1971 Beech Hyde Primary School, Wheathampstead, and Crabtree Infants' School opened.
1975 High Beeches J.M.I. and The Lea J.M.I. opened.

VI

THE SCHOOLS

Early Schools

The Victoria County History, published in 1908, says that 'Educationally Hertfordshire has not in ancient or in modern times been prolific of great results'. [VCH II p. 47]. This seems, to say the least, a debatable statement; however, one result of education should be the ability to read and write, and we find that over half the wills made in Harpenden and Wheathampstead in the seventeenth century were not signed: the testators made their mark. Wills were not made by everybody; the poorest and least educated were least likely to make wills. Less than a third of local people had achieved even a first step towards literacy by learning to write their signatures. During the Middle Ages it is probably safe to say that the clergy and representatives of the Church were literate and also the leading families like the Brockets, from whom County Sheriffs and Members of Parliament were chosen. By the seventeenth century the large landowners and people of influence in the community were newcomers connected with the City of London or the Court. These were obviously educated men. We know that Sir John Wittewronge studied at Trinity College, Oxford, where he matriculated on 17 October 1634 and in 1637 he had a period of travel abroad. His father, Jacob, who fled from Holland to London with his parents at the age of six, was educated at the Free School in St. Albans before going on to Magdalen College, Oxford.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Godman Jenkin of Blakesleys, who was baptised in 1657, was educated at 'a school in Harpenden then controlled by a Mr. Worting'. This is the first reference we have to a school in the area. Joseph Worting was curate at Harpenden from 1684–86. There are two other references to schools in the seventeenth century. From the parish register at Wheathampstead, the burial of Mrs. Mary Small from The Place School was recorded in 1689. When The Old House in Leyton Road changed hands in 1693 it was referred to as 'a messuage . . . known by the name or signe of the Black Bull, now The School House'. Early in the eighteenth century (1704–5) Thomas Serrey (of Flamstead) is mentioned as a schoolmaster [Harpenden Hall records]. It is difficult to gauge the educational standards of the yeoman families of the time. If we look at the Carpenter family, we find that George of Falcons End who died in 1571 leaving £837 did not sign his will, but his grandson Henry, a tailor, could sign

his name for he witnessed his uncle's will. Affabell Catlin was literate for he was frequently employed making deathbed wills, witnessing wills and taking inventories, but other Catlins appeared illiterate; their wills were unsigned. Thomas Neale of Pollards was obviously literate, for as well as signing his will, he left books worth £20.

The slender evidence we have from wills and militia lists appears to indicate that by the end of the eighteenth century literacy may have spread to more of the community. All except two of the constables who prepared militia lists between 1758 and 1785 could sign their name. These include men whose occupation is given as cordwainer, butcher, farmer, grocer, tailor and yeoman. The new type of marriage registers introduced after Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, required both brides and grooms to sign their names or make their marks. These give a more gloomy picture; but there is evidence that social convention may have inhibited some who could sign their names, particularly women, from showing off.

Between 1715 and 1745 the house in Leyton Road known as Bennets was leased to the Reverend George Barnard, who was curate at Harpenden. In order to augment his income he instructed 'the sons of neighbours in his house'. His own son may have received a good education here, for he later became headmaster and then Provost of Eton. In the eighteenth century it was fairly common for clergy to run a small school in this way. The militia lists show other eighteenth century schools in the area. Recorded as schoolmaster in some of the years covered by the lists are John Grover, Joseph Cheworth, John Savory and Thomas Gregory; Thomas Gregory had previously been the workhouse master. John Grover had an assistant master, who was described in the lists as 'usher to Mr. Grover', and in 1775 he advertised his school as 'situated in a village which for sweetness and salubrity of air, pleasantness of situation and rusticity of prospect, can be excelled by few in the kingdom'. [Quoted in *Harpenden Hall* by John Busby, p. 5].

A schoolmaster with an interesting sideline was William Dyce, who was elected aletaster for Harpenden in 1793. This information comes from the records of the Church Commissioners. From the same source we know that there were two boarding schools in Harpenden in 1799. One of these may have been the girls' school run by Mrs. Mercier at Welcombe. The school was in existence for some time, though perhaps not occupying the same premises. A Victoire Rousseau, 'French teacher at Mrs. Mercier's boarding school', was buried in 1801. In the 1826 Directory Mrs. Mercier is listed as having a Ladies' Academy and in 1839 (Pigots) there is an entry: Elizabeth Mercier, Boarding School. The school must have closed shortly after this, for in the 1843 Tithe Award, the occupier of site 561, a house on Church Green is given as late Mercier. In 1818 a 'Dissenting Grammar School for Boys' was opened at Blakesleys (Harpenden Hall) by the Reverend Maurice Phillips, Harpenden's first Congregational Minister

who had been the first headmaster of Mill Hill School. In 1821 the school had forty-four boys and four resident masters. On his death in 1822 he was succeeded by the Reverend Solomon Leonard and the school continued until 1839. Two other Harpenden boarding schools are mentioned in the 1837 Directory, one run by John Smith and the other by Phoebe Parrott. A further school, which appears in the 1851 Harpenden census, is a Juvenile Academy run by Mary Mercer Johnson, aged twenty-four, at 11 Turnpike. The Report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Education describes the local private schools in 1833. Harpenden had 'One Daily School (for children of the poor) containing 37 males and 5 females; and — Three Boarding Schools: at two of which are 40 males; and at the other 20 females; in all the above Schools the instruction is at the expense of the parents'. [H.C. 572 (1834) IX p. 360].

At Wheathampstead, as in Harpenden, there were several small nineteenth century schools. The Directories of 1826 and 1839 list the Reverend James Doulton, curate at Wheathampstead, as the proprietor of a gentlemen's boarding school; the school was on the site of Wheathampstead House. Mr. Doulton's school was in the news in January 1836 because of a fire in a shed on the school premises. The *County Press* reported that 'two pupils of the Rev. Mr. Doulton had been playing with a small cannon near the shed, and upon one of them discharging it, the match was blown from his hand into the thatch, which immediately ignited'. Another clergyman running a school was the Congregational Minister Reverend T. Gilbert who 'had exerted himself to open a school in which children received an unsectarian education. This school was in a prosperous state, and its beneficial result had already become conspicuous'. [*Hertford Mercury*, 5 September 1846]. In 1847 Gilbert moved to Highworth, Wiltshire, where he started a British School. We have no further record of his Wheathampstead school. The Directories show other schools: in 1837 George Gifkins was running a boys' day school, and from 1845–1882 Eliza and Fanny Hooker were running a ladies' school; Eliza apparently combined her rôle as ladies' schoolmistress with that of licensee of the Bull Inn! In 1851 and 1855 William Trustrum, an agent to the Hope Mutual Life Office, was running a boys' school, which was situated at old Marford and had eleven boarders at the time of the 1851 census. From 1851 until 1878 a ladies' boarding school was run by Hephzibah and Jane Wynter; this school was carried on by Hephzibah alone until 1895. A short-lived preparatory school, run by Edward Edwards, seems to have existed at Marford from 1859 to 1862. The 1833 Select Committee report lists three private 'daily schools' in Wheathampstead: in one '(commenced 1822) are 5 males and 20 females; the other two (commenced 1829) contain 28 males and 11 females: . . . the children are instructed at the expense of their parents'. [H.C. 572 (1834) IX p. 368].

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

One of the most important educational developments of the late eighteenth century was the foundation and rapid growth of the Sunday School movement. In Sunday schools the 'children of the poor' were taught reading and writing as well as the Scriptures, and there were no fees. In 1800 the Rev. John Ord established a Sunday School at Wheathampstead and in 1802 John Bennet Lawes gave a cottage near the Church in Harpenden for a Sunday School. The rules of the Wheathampstead Sunday School merit quotation in full; the text is in Appendix Ten.

Thirty subscribers gave £15 13s. 2d. in the year, and the rector's father, the Reverend John Ord, gave twenty testaments and twenty prayer books.

A government enquiry in 1819 elicited the information that in Harpenden there was 'a Sunday school, supported by voluntary contributions, in which about 70 children are instructed'. There was no other endowment for education but 'the poor are desirous of having the means of instruction'. The statement was signed by the curate James Jenkyn. The rector, the Reverend G. T. Pretyman, made the Wheathampstead return. There was no mention of the Sunday School, but there was 'a national school, built in 1814, supported by voluntary contribution, in which from 80 to 100 children usually attend. The poor are satisfied with the education afforded them at the National School'. [Digest of Parochial Returns to the Select Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders. H.C. (1819) IXA, pp. 355 and 363].

A later report revealed that there had been considerable progress in the years 1819 to 1833. There were, in 1833, three Sunday schools in Harpenden: 'at one whereof, are 40 males and 70 females, who attend the Established Church; the mistress receives a salary of £8 8s. per annum; another appertaining to Wesleyan Methodists, consists of 72 males and 67 females, the other to Independents (commenced 1819) of 22 males and 37 females: the above Schools are supported by subscription, and the two last mentioned have small lending libraries attached; there is also a lending library for the use of the parishioners generally, kept in the vestry of the Church'. Wheathampstead, we are told, in the same stilted but informative language, had 'Two Sunday Schools in one whereof are 30 males and 50 females who attend the Established Church; the other consists of 23 males and 22 females, and appertains to Methodists: in both Schools the children are taught gratuitously. There is a lending library at the Church, furnished by the Rector'. [H.C. 572 (1834) IX pp. 360 and 368].

Voluntary Schools

In the early nineteenth century two rival school societies were founded which aimed to give daily education to many children as cheaply as possible. Joseph Lancaster, a Nonconformist, had developed a system whereby he could teach up to 500 pupils by using monitors chosen from among the pupils. In 1808 he founded what became, in 1814, the British and Foreign Schools Society, usually referred to as the British Society. He was also responsible for the use of slates in Victorian schools. An Anglican, the Reverend Andrew Bell, had earlier experimented on similar lines in Madras, and on his return to Britain founded the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, otherwise known as the National Society.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD NATIONAL SCHOOL

The earliest National School in the two parishes was on Wheathampstead Hill. It is listed in *The English School — Its Architecture and Organisation;* built at a cost of £183, the building (36′ × 15′) was intended to hold one hundred scholars. The money was raised by donations, which amounted to £106 10s. 0d., and by public subscription. Local people agreed to make an annual contribution; this amounted to £63 in 1815. Every annual subscriber of £2 or more was appointed a member of the committee 'to superintend all transactions, relative to the National School'. This committee appointed a five man 'special committee' to superintend the building and fitting up of the school room. The Reverend G. T. Pretyman and Drake Garrard, Esq., were elected Presidents of the general committee. From early minutes we learn that 'It was unanimously resolved that none but the Cottagers' children be admitted into the School, unless upon proper application being made to a subscriber for the admission of a child of any other description, it should appear to a majority of the Committee that the child is a proper object of this charity, in which case the Committee shall have the power of electing them. No child shall be admitted into the school without being recommended by a subscriber and having its appointment sanctioned by the Committee'.

The accounts for 1815 show where some of the money went:

Aug. 3rd	pd	Dunham bricklayer on his account	£40. 0. 0
Aug. 19th	pd	Dunham remainder of bill	£20. 6. 2
Aug. 20th	pd	Latter of Hertford a draft on National Society	£50. 0. 0
Sept. 23rd	pd	Latter remainder of his bill including Stone Mason's account ...	£29. 7. 3

Expenses for levelling the ground:

	pd	Slow a week's work at 2/6 per day	15. 0
	pd	Hedges 3 weeks' work at 2/6 per day	£2. 5. 0
	pd	Croft 2 weeks' work at 2/6 per day	£1.10. 0
Oct. 29th		A stamp ½d., paper, ink and pencils ...	7. 2
Nov. 11th		Coals and wood	11. 0
Dec. 24th	pd	Miss Dixon a qrs. salary from Michaelmas to Christmas with her expenses to and from London ...	£12. 2. 0

Several accounts were obviously held over until 1816 for payment, presumably after the second annual contributions had been made:

Jan. 16th	pd	Kilby's bill for forms	£17.18. 9
Feb. 10th	pd	Mr. Parrott for erecting 2 privies	£5. 7. 6
Mar. 29th	pd	the plumbers' bill	£7.14. 6
	pd	Gutteridge of St. Albans for 2 stoves for school	£6. 6. 6
	pd	Baker at the Bull for beer while the men were digging at the school ...	7. 6

That the school was successful is made clear by the Commons report in 1833: it contained '50 children of each sex, and is supported by annual subscription'. As log books were not kept until after 1863, the account books and newspapers are the only sources available from which to get a flavour of life in the school before 1863. For instance, in March 1818, the accounts show that a dinner was given for eighty children. The bill for the food totalled £3.8s.10d., including 12s.8d. for 19 lbs. of beef!

A newspaper report of 1846 shows that there was some ill-feeling over the way the National School was being run, under the guidance of the rector, Canon Pretyman. The Reverend T. Gilbert stated that his reason for opening a school (p. 235) was that 'At the village in which he lived, there existed a "National School", which, however, was closed against all who would not consent for their children to learn the Church Catechism, and attend at the Established place of worship on the Sunday'. By 1855, however, many parents must have been satisfied with the running of the National School, for another newspaper reports on a school treat:

> On Wednesday last the Reverend G. T. Pretyman gave his Annual Treat to the National Day and Sunday School children. 113 boys and 72 girls partook of an abundant supply of plum cake and tea in the school room, followed by cricket, kite flying and foot races in a meadow near the Rectory. The amusements terminated at 8 o'clock by the ascent of three fire balloons and singing the National Anthem. [*Herts Advertiser*, 21 July 1855].

Canon Davys described the old National School building as it was in its last days: 'a long, low building . . . The floors were brick

and the fittings poor and shabby, the most conspicuous piece of furniture there being a wooden armchair with a footboard, which was always hurriedly brought forward whenever a visitor entered the school, the climb up Wheathampstead Hill being supposed to bring on a dangerous attack of exhaustion'. [*A Long Life's Journey*, p. 60]. After it was pulled down the site was used as a drill and playground until it was sold in 1899; and the Wick playing field was bought.

By the 1860s the old school on the Hill had clearly become inadequate, for it was built to hold only 100 pupils. On 16 April 1862 the foundation stone for a new school, at Bury Green, was laid by Mrs. Drake Garrard of Lamer, and the ceremony was followed by a church service, the sermon being preached by the headmaster of Harrow; over £65 was collected towards the Building Fund. The architect for the new school was a Mr. Browning, and Mr. Edward Jones of St. Albans was the contractor. His tender was for £919 and his work was praised by the architect, for it 'had been executed under considerable pecuniary difficulty'. The building had three rooms, one of them for the infants, and was financed, like the old one, by donations and subscriptions, but this time Government aid was also forthcoming. The school was insured for £500. Mr. C. B. Drake Garrard of Lamer donated £200 and the Bishop of Peterborough, the Patron, £50. As in 1815 the larger subscribers were to be appointed members of the Management or Building Committees. The children assembled for the first time in the new school on 29 December 1862. At a public dedication by the Bishop of Rochester, on 20 January 1863, a further £95 was collected. The handsome building, well-loved by most Wheathampstead people today, was in use as a school until 1969; it has now been given a new lease of life (Plate 25).

HARPENDEN BRITISH SCHOOL

Harpenden lagged behind Wheathampstead; the British School was opened in 1850, and the National School in 1858. In 1847 a meeting was held to consider the setting up of a school, as a result of which a letter was circulated (see Appendix Eleven); it listed the principles of the British and Foreign Schools Society, which were:

I That in all schools established in connection with or assisted by the British and Foreign School Society the sacred scriptures in the authorised version or extracts therefrom shall be read and taught daily.

II That no catechism or other formulary peculiar to any religious denomination shall be introduced or taught during the usual hours of school instruction.

III That every child attending the day school shall be expected to attend the particular Sabbath School or Place of Worship which its parents prefer. [Parish papers in Harpenden Hall].

Early in 1848 the site, 'the waste between Mr. Baileys and the Old Chapel, fronting to the footpath and running back to Mr. Lawes's field' was obtained; the land being given in trust by John Bennet Lawes. The original proposal for a school accommodating 300 children proved to be too ambitious, the subscriptions not reaching the required amount, and so a smaller school was resolved upon. The contract went to Mr. Trustram; the total cost of £468 was met by a government grant of £105 and subscriptions amounting to £363. The school, now the front part of Park Hall in Leyton Road (Plate 26a), opened in May 1850; it had two rooms, one for boys and one for girls each capable of containing about eighty scholars. Mr. Melville was in charge of the boys and Miss Hayward of the girls. The average attendance during the first year was sixty-seven boys and fifty-five girls.

A report on the 'Social Conditions of Harpenden' in 1858 describes the school as 'valuable', 'replete with everything essential to secure a sound Education'. W. L. Rogers, who prepared the report for John Bennet Lawes, thought the headmaster a 'Superior man' but found him 'greatly discourag'd by reason of the positive indifference of so many of the Parents . . . This is not confined to the poor but many decent families such as Farmers'. At the time of the report the average number of children (girls and boys) attending the school was 156. W. L. Rogers considered this a very low number from a population of nearly 2,000 and thought it indicated how little education was appreciated in Harpenden. School at that time was not compulsory, of course. In the year in which this report was made an infants' school was added to the British School. It opened in a temporary building on 4 August 1858, and moved into its new premises (later the Fire Station) in January 1859. The school was erected by Lawes at his own expense on his own land 'there being a demand for yet further school accommodation' and lent to the school managers [Col. Durnford. *Origins, History and present position of the schools*. 1891]. The fittings for the school were provided by donations. In 1871 it was amalgamated with the Boys' and Girls' British School and brought under one management.

The Harpenden British School building was subject to various alterations over the years. A gallery was a usual feature of schools built in the nineteenth century; consisting of tiers, it enabled the teacher to see all the pupils more easily. At the British School a logbook tells of the collapse of the gallery in the girls' schoolroom in June 1864: 'Today a most remarkable casualty has occurred — a great many children were working as usual on the gallery this afternoon, when all at once hearing a noise I turned round just in time to see the gallery giving way and the children being precipitated to the ground. One little girl had her leg bruised, with this exception all escaped injury.' The gallery must have been repaired, for in 1876 it was removed. In September 1866 the girls' school room was made smaller because of the low number of girls attending the school and

the extra space was given to the boys (see p. 244). While the alterations were taking place the girls were moved to the Clubroom, Garden Fields. In May 1871 the boys' school was enlarged further so as to make room for another group of desks, the cost being met by John Bennet Lawes. The number of girls attending increased and by 1879 their room was far too small, and an additional classroom was built for them. John Bennet Lawes gave the land, and his sister, Mrs. Warde, supplied most of the money required. The school was apparently heated by a stove which was assembled in October, and taken down in April. Fires were not necessarily started immediately the stove was assembled, but in April it was a matter of fine judgement as to when the stove should be dismantled. After being caught out by a cold spring in 1866 Miss Fleming, the girls' mistress, had the stove left intact until May.

HARPENDEN NATIONAL SCHOOL

The National School opened in the same year as the British Infants' School, 1858. The school started in cottages on the same site as the old Sunday School. It used the cottages until July 1864 when it was rebuilt in the same area; it became eventually St. Nicholas Church of England Primary School (Plate 31a). When the National School opened, an existing small school in a cottage nearby, run by a Mrs. Whitehouse, was clearly going to suffer. To avoid this, Mr. Lydekker of Harpenden Lodge provided Mrs. Whitehouse with stationery, pencils and string with which to start a shop instead, thus founding the well-known Harpenden newsagents and stationery shop. While the National School was rebuilding, a clubroom at the back of the Red Lion (72 High Street) was used as a classroom. The freehold of the new piece of land as well as that on which the old schoolroom stood was handed over to the School Managers by John Bennet Lawes.

The new building, opened on 2 January 1865, consisted of one main room with a room off it for the infants. The schoolmistress in charge of the school in its early days was Miss Jane Grey. She is recorded in the 1861 census, aged twenty-one, as a boarder at a house in Sun Lane. Although there was only one room, it seems from the log book that there were four separate classes for children over six. Perhaps this was one reason for having a gallery. The National School, like the British School, certainly had one in 1876. Two log book entries read: '12.5.76. Gallery removed from the end of the school, a great improvement' and '19.5.76. Last Saturday Gallery in the classroom extended, improving the room very much'.

John Bennet Lawes obviously played a large part in the setting up of both the British and National Schools in Harpenden. He was a member of the Church of England, and H. Addington, one of the signatories of the 1847 letter asking for support for a British School, was the curate at Harpenden. So it is surprising that the British

School was established first. Local feelings about Canon Pretyman may have played a part (see pp. 118–119), but in any case Lawes was broadminded for his time: 'in religion, although firmly and thoroughly believing in the truth of the Christian Religion and (ready) to accept it as the guide of my life as far as I can understand it and being at the same time a regular attendant at the services of the Church of England, still I cannot admit to the right of that church or of any other church to teach dogmatically what truths are necessary for my salvation'. [*Diane: A Victorian*. Macdonald Hastings].

PLAITING SCHOOLS

There may have been competition between British and National Schools, but they both faced a more serious competitor in the plaiting schools. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the hat industry had been long established in the South-East Midlands. Hats were made from straw plait produced by people working at home. Since the money earned by a wife and children in plaiting could equal the earnings of an agricultural labourer, full-time attendance at a proper school could mean a substantial drop in the family earnings. Plaiting was mainly a female occupation, though boys were taught and went to plaiting schools until they were old enough to do farm work.

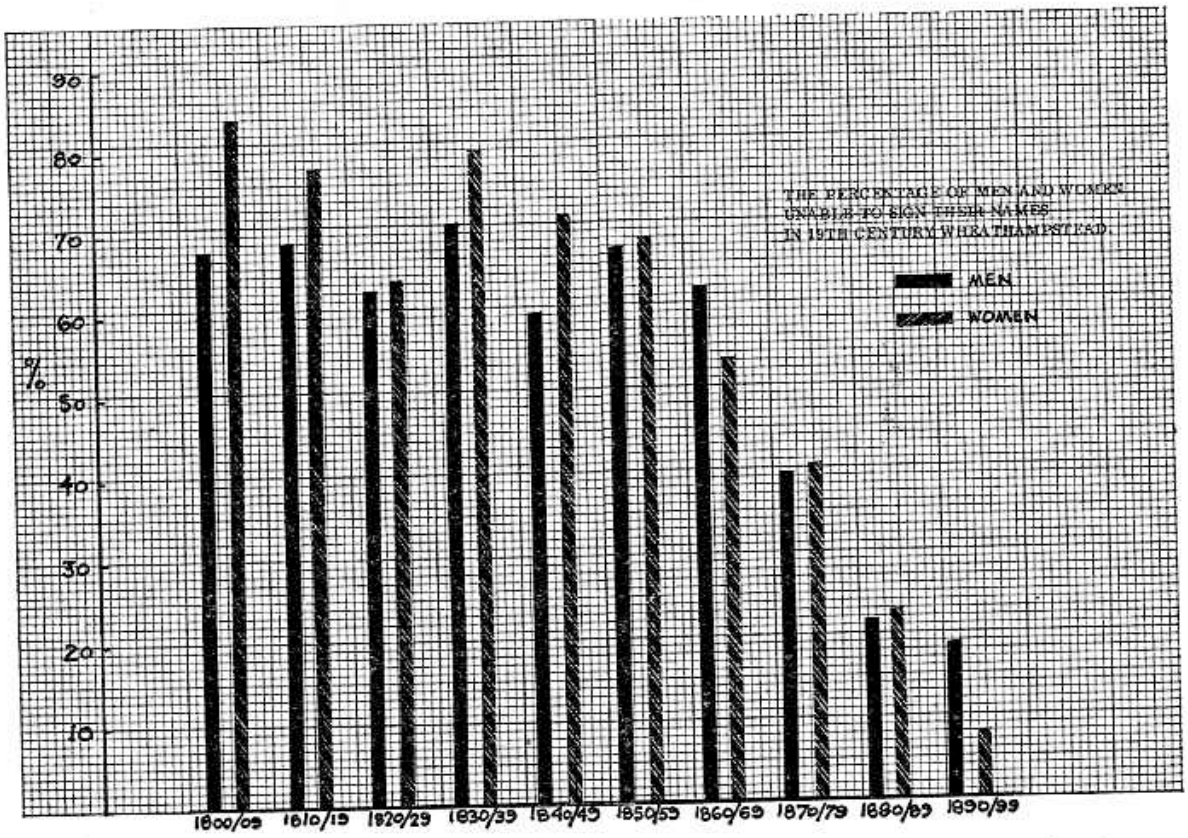
> Numbers of children are sent to what is called 'Plaiting Schools'. There they pretend to combine Instruction with plaiting. This is a mere sham. The great aim appears to be 'what they can earn'. It was really painful to witness so many children of such tender years sitting close packed in heated rooms superintended by a Female urging them on in their work. It was to me surprising how cleverly their little nimble fingers twisted and plaited the slender straws moistening them with their little lips — To confine children so young and so many hours without that cheerful healthful recreation so suited and needful for their years I felt was cruel. I had with many of the Parents much serious converse over The evils of the system — The permanent injury done to themselves and children in depriving them of that invaluable Treasure — Education — The indifference of many was surprising — Everywhere the Answer was the same 'We can't help it Sir they must do it or we could not support them'. The children earn from 2/- to 5/- weekly and sometimes more (the Parents assured me). [W. L. Rogers' 1858 report].

From Ellen Vaughan's *Thirty-three Years at Harpenden* we know that Betsy Crane of Stakers Lane, Mrs. Bruton of Church Green, and Mrs. Farr of Kinsbourne Green were popular plaiting mistresses. Edwin Grey in *Cottage Life in a Hertfordshire Village* adds more: at Betsy Crane's school there was 'a little time given to reading or learning to read a verse or two from the Old Testament, then plaiting'. He also describes the interior of a plaiting school: 'Low forms arranged round three sides of the room were the usual seating accommodation,

the schoolroom being "lighted up" on winter evenings by a single tallow candle or a rush light . . . no account being taken of the overcrowding or the closeness of the room'. The fee for the tuition was 1d. or 2d. per week. Edwin Grey knew of no school where writing or arithmetic were taught 'probably for the simple reason that these old ladies knew nothing of it themselves'. (pp. 72–3). We have no information about such schools in Wheathampstead. Plaiting schools appear to have survived until the 1870's.

LITERACY, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, AND NEW SCHOOLS

It is precisely at this time that the evidence for a definite increase in local literacy appears. The following chart shows how the percentages of men and women not able to sign their names in Wheathampstead's Marriage Register changed between the decades 1800–09 and 1890–99.



In the Harpenden marriage registers for 1813 to 1837, about two-thirds of those marrying did not sign their names. The Registrar General reported that 50% of the men and 56% of the women who were married in Hertfordshire in 1841 only made a mark. Hertfordshire was, then, one of the worst educated counties in the country. The census returns for the two villages give an idea of how many children were attending a school of sorts for the years of 1851, 1861 and 1871, the years for which census returns are available. At

Wheathampstead in 1851 58% of the boys aged five to thirteen and 40% of the girls are described as scholars. By 1861 these figures were respectively 61% and 62%, but by 1871 the percentage of girls described as scholars had dropped to 54. In Harpenden in 1861 62% of the boys were described as scholars, but only 46% of the girls. The existence of plaiting as an occupation in the district was mainly to blame for this low figure; in the 1861 census return for Harpenden, forty-three girls of thirteen and under were described as plaiters, and eight as bonnet sewers.

Children first went to school when very young. The 1851 and 1861 Wheathampstead census returns show that many children began school at four years old; by 1871 the starting age had dropped to three, especially for the boys. In each of the three years at least two children attended school at the age of two. Children seem to have started school even earlier in Harpenden: in 1861 three seems to have been the starting age, but fifteen two-year-olds and one girl aged one were 'scholars'! School attendance reached a peak at seven or eight years, but declined sharply after the age of ten, the boys mainly becoming agricultural labourers. It is remarkable how few girls were employed as domestic servants; only two were in Harpenden in 1861.

There are signs that school attendance was improving substantially in the 1860s and 1870s and this would explain the great increases in the numbers of both sexes signing their names when marrying, in the decades 1870–9 and 1880–9 (see chart p. 243). The new Wheathampstead National School opened with 100 children in the main school and fifty infants. By the 1870s these numbers had increased to about 120 older children and seventy infants. The numbers dropped slightly when Gustard Wood School opened in 1875, with an average attendance of just over sixty children during the first year.

The number of boys at the British School continued to rise steadily. In contrast the attendance figures for the girls' school vary considerably. In 1863 the Inspector wrote: 'there are so few girls in attendance that the state of their instruction is hardly an adequate test of the teacher's energy or perseverance'. The attendance did not improve and by 1866 the situation was critical; the Inspector's report for that year stated: 'It may be doubted whether the numbers are such as to make it worthwhile to continue this as a separate school'. In 1867 he reported: 'The girls in the neighbourhood are kept away for straw plaiting'. It was in 1866 that the girls' classroom was reduced in size. Immediately the numbers began to rise, possibly due to the efforts of Miss Fleming who became headmistress in 1863. If girls were absent from school she called at their homes to find the reason. In May 1867 she recorded: 'Average attendance this week is 44.6. For the corresponding week last year, 23.4'. An average of about forty was maintained until 1872, when it dropped to twenty-six. Miss Fleming had left at the end of 1871.

There do not appear to be any figures available for the opening years of the Harpenden National School, but in 1863, the year before the school moved into its new building, the average attendance was sixty. By 1870 the numbers had swelled to over 100, of whom about a quarter were under six and a quarter were over nine years. In 1873 the average had reached 122. As with all schools the numbers on the roll were much higher of course, for instance in 1873 195 children attended the annual school treat!

With an increase in the number of children attending school, both Harpenden and Wheathampstead National Schools had to be relieved of the pressure of numbers by the building of new Anglican schools to serve outlying areas. St. Mary's National School at Kinsbourne Green was built as a combined school and church. It opened in 1869 with seventy-two pupils. The land was given in trust by the Reverend William Smyth, lord of the manor of Annables. The school was closed in 1955 and the building was bought by the church (see p. 127). Bowling Alley Infants' School, situated opposite the Rose and Crown public house in Southdown Road, on a site given by Lawes, opened in 1874 with seventy children. This school later became known as St. John's School and remained in use until 1964. At Wheathampstead a school at Gustard Wood was finally opened in 1875; the plans had been presented in 1871 and the first stone was laid by Mrs. Drake-Garrard in 1873. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners offered the site on Gustard Wood Common (Grid Ref. 175160) free of charge. They also gave permission for the old school on Wheathampstead Hill to be demolished so that the materials could be used in the erection of the new school. The Hertfordshire Board of Education voted £40 towards the expenses, and the National Society promised £30, a 6d. rate was levied on the larger rate payers, and voluntary subscriptions were invited to meet the rest of the costs. Edward Browning, who had planned the new National School at Wheathampstead in 1862, was the architect. The building, designed to hold 180 pupils, took nearly two years to build. It is possible that financial difficulties caused the delays for there is a record that the estimated cost was £523 excluding legal expenses, and in 1874 the money available was still only £443. Boys left the school at seven to go to the Wheathampstead school, but girls stayed on until they left school. The school closed in the early 1930s.

FEES AND GRANTS

In the early days the schools received no financial aid from the government, the running costs being met by voluntary donations and subscriptions from local people, and by the school pence paid weekly by the children for their tuition. During the year 1851 Harpenden British School received £188 19s. 6d., made up as follows:

Boys' pence	£35 14 5½	Donations	£77 7 2½
Girls' pence	£20 7 10	Subscriptions	£55 10 0

The children paid different amounts, depending on the father's occupation, the fee ranging from 1d. to 1s. for boys and 1d. to 6d. for girls. For 1853 we have information telling us the number of children paying each amount.

Amount paid	1d.	2d.	3d.	4d.	6d.	1s.
Number of boys	20	26	2	3	20	5
Number of girls	16	33	8	3	3	

The figures seem to indicate that a large proportion of the children came from poor families. If children forgot their school pence they were promptly sent back home to fetch it. The fees at the British School were higher than those of the Harpenden National School, for in October 1873 'two girls have both left to go to the National School. They can't afford to pay the school money and buy their own books'. [Log book of Harpenden Girls' British School].

At Wheathampstead, for the opening of the new school in December 1862, the managers adopted a scale of payments whereby labourers' children paid 2d. per week, tradesmen's children paid 6d. per week and farmers' children paid 1s. per week. Shortly afterwards the managers found it necessary to add an intermediate price of 4d. per week 'to meet certain causes' and they also approved a plan to halve the payments in the case of large families after the first and second child. Changes were made in the scale of payments from time to time, thus in 1876 double price was charged if 'the Inspection (by the school inspector) be not attended'. From the revised scale of this year it appears that the intermediate price, now lowered to 3d., was for 'small tradesmen, servants and persons earning more than an ordinary labourer'. Sometimes children had to miss school if their parents could not pay the school pence. In June 1873 a tea party for the 'Chapel Sunday School' was held 'and as they had to pay an admission fee several children could not afford school pence as well and did not put in an appearance'. On one occasion, in 1879, a bill for school pence was sent to the Poor Law Guardians of St. Albans, who were responsible for a particular pupil.

Government aid was first paid to schools in 1833, but the first reference to any such aid for Wheathampstead and Harpenden is to a capitation grant of £9 11s. paid by the Privy Council to the Harpenden British School during the school year May 1859 to May 1860. The government had become worried by the rapidly rising cost of education and so in 1858 it appointed a Royal Commission (the Newcastle Commission) to investigate the provision of a sound and cheap system of elementary education. The Commission produced a detailed six volume report from which the government, anxious to economise, chose to carry out its most controversial recommendation, payment by results. From 1862 under this system, the schools were paid 4s. for every child in average attendance, plus 2s. 8d. per subject for every child who passed an annual examination in reading, writing and arithmetic. How this worked can be seen from figures available

for the Harpenden National School for the year 1863–4. The average attendance allowance of 4s. was paid for sixty-four children, but only thirty-eight of these earned the 2s. 8d. grant for reading, thirty-nine for writing, and thirty-nine for arithmetic. There were also seventeen infants, that is children under six, for whom a grant of 6s. 6d. was allowed. Hence £12 16s. was awarded for attendance, £15 9s. 4d. for the examination in the three R's and £5 10s. 6d. for the infants.

The basic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic were divided into six standards (see Appendix Twelve). To receive the full annual grant it was necessary for children over six to pass all three examinations in their standard, and having once taken an examination for a standard they had to move up a grade the following year, whether they had passed or failed. Naturally this forced teachers to concentrate on getting as many pupils as possible up to the standard of passing the tests, often at the expense of other subjects. The examination was conducted by the school Inspector on his annual visit. In their instructions to inspectors the Committee of Council for Education suggested that a pass could be obtained if 'reading is intelligible, though not quite good, dictation legible, and rightly spelt in all common words, though the writing may need improvement and less common words may be mis-spelt; arithmetic, right in method, and at least one sum free from error'. The system had many critics.

Although the system was introduced to cut costs, which it did on a national scale, grants falling from £813,400 in 1861 to £636,800 in 1865, the Harpenden British School actually did better under the payment by results grants. The school received £8 15s. in 1861, but under payment by results in 1864 the boys' department earned £44 12s. 8d. and the girls' about half that amount. The Wheathampstead school was not so fortunate; during the sixteen months from May 1861 to September 1862, the mixed and infants' departments received a total grant of £81 10s. 8d., but during 1870, the next year for which figures are available, the total grant was only £31 17s. Because a substantial portion of the government grant was tied to average attendances, the managers of the schools devised various schemes to encourage good attendance. In 1876 the Harpenden National School repaid, to the parents, the school pence for the first quarter of the year, for each child who had attended 250 times in the year; and a half year's pence on 400 attendances.

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Attendance at school was irregular, for many reasons which give an insight into the lives of working people in Victorian England. Much of the following account is taken from three school log books: those of the Wheathampstead mixed school, the Harpenden British Girls' and National Schools. Log books had to be kept from 1863.

At Harpenden most of the references to straw plaiting are in the 1860s; in Wheathampstead the industry seems to have lasted longer,

with such entries as 'many girls make it a rule to stay at home in the afternoons to do straw plait' in 1872 and, in 1875, 'irregularity of many girls is much greater than usual in previous years, accounted for by the briskness in the straw trade'. At most rural schools the summer or harvest holiday was not decided in advance but depended upon when local farmers started harvesting. It then usually lasted for four clear weeks. Even so, many children were kept away from school at other times in the year to help with hay-making, gleaning, weeding, fruit-picking and acorn collecting; the acorns were fed to the family pig or sold as pig food. This is borne out in the log books: 'October 1868. This year the acorns are so abundant that the children are kept away from school to pick them up and sell them' [Harpenden British School]; 'June 1872. Half the boys have gone picking weeds out of the corn'; 'July 1874. Many boys away in the hay-fields' [Wheathampstead].

Illness, bad weather or poverty accounted for a great deal of absence. The usual illnesses of measles, mumps and scarlet fever, and the affliction of chilblains occur regularly in all the log books, but in addition to these we learn of an outbreak of smallpox at Bowling Alley in 1864 which led to the children there being kept at home in quarantine. There were deaths recorded too: one from diphtheria in Harpenden in 1875, and two from 'fever' and whooping cough in Wheathampstead. Not only did illness cause much absenteeism, but without the modern aids of injections and antibiotics, illnesses generally took much longer to get over; in some cases a child might be away from school for several weeks. Bad weather also is mentioned often in the logs: '4.1.67. Very cold — only 23 children present — sat round the fire to work' [Harpenden National School]. The average daily attendance in 1867 was eighty. '28.2.73. Snow. Girls from Kinsbourne Green and Old Bell unable to attend' [British School]. The main reason for poverty leading to absence was the lack of shoes and warm waterproof clothing, especially in winter. If we try to imagine the difficulties of tramping to school by unsurfaced muddy lanes and footpaths, wearing ill-fitting handed-down boots, to sit gently steaming all day in a schoolroom with one inadequate stove, we can soon see why bad weather was a severe deterrent.

Truancy when horse racing or fairs were being held in the area was a very common occurrence. Every year horse races were held on Harpenden Common, usually on the Friday before the Epsom races; this led to log book entries such as the following: '17.5.67. Came to school in the morning and found so few children that the school could not go on in the ordinary course — kept them for a short time and then dismissed them. Came again in the afternoon and found no-one present. This want of attendance is owing to the Races' [Harpenden National School]. At the British School, because so few children attended, race day became an official holiday, thereby avoiding low attendance figures in the calculations for grants. Fairs held

at Wheathampstead, Gustard Wood and Harpenden's 'Statty' Fair all led to mass absenteeism. The Statty Fair was held in those days on Church Green; it must have been impossible for teachers and children at the National School to keep their minds on their work!

TEACHERS AND PUPIL TEACHERS

An impression can be formed from the log books of the men and women who wrote these accounts of each day's work. The reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors describe the state of the school under each teacher. The character and skills of the head teachers were all important for they were usually the only qualified members of staff. Until 1846 teachers were sometimes given a little training by the National or British and Foreign School Societies, but this was largely inadequate. Manuals for teachers were published, showing for instance a short story with a moral to be read to the class, together with a set of questions about the story. Sometimes even the answers to be expected from the children were given, lest the teachers be unable to work these out for themselves! The senior pupils in the school were used as assistant teachers, or monitors. In 1846 the pupil-teacher system of apprenticeship was introduced by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth because the two voluntary societies were becoming increasingly unable to provide sufficient teachers for the new schools they were building with the help of Government grants. It was decreed that a pupil-teacher should be attached to a master or mistress competent to see him or her through the course of instruction. He should receive instruction for at least one and a half hours, five days a week, before or after school hours, for which the schoolmaster received a fee. The pupil-teacher must be at least thirteen years old and physically fit and was required to read fluently, write neatly, spell and punctuate correctly; know weights and measures tables and be able to do simple sums; know the parts of speech; have an elementary knowledge of geography; repeat the Catechism if attached to a Church of England school; teach a junior class 'to the satisfaction of the Inspector'; and in the case of girls to sew and knit. [*Educational Documents, England and Wales, 1816 to the present day*, p. 53]. Locally, the apprenticeship fees for some of the pupil-teachers were paid out of Marshalls Charity funds. Each year the candidate was examined and at the end of the fifth year a certain selected number of pupil-teachers entered an open competition for a course at a training college. Successful candidates were awarded exhibitions of £20 to £25 and were known as Queen's Scholars. The training college course lasted two years and at the end of it the teacher sat an examination for a certificate, which entitled him to receive an extra salary from the Department of Education. In 1847 schoolmasters already in the schools were allowed to sit the certificate examinations and so qualify for this extra salary.

When Wheathampstead National School opened in 1815 Miss

Dixon was appointed as its first teacher. She was paid £14 a year, and her landlady, a Mrs. Iredale, was paid an additional 10s. per week for her board. In 1819 her salary was increased to '£30 per annum with 2 rooms and lodgings found for her'. In 1820 she was joined by a second teacher, George Nash from London, who was paid £22 10s. a year. In 1827 a married couple were paid a joint salary of £50 to take over the school. From 1829 there appears the first low-paid unqualified assistant, on £12 a year and all found. Miss Dorrington and William Gatward, the senior and junior teachers, in 1859 received £40 and £30 respectively, but were able to augment their salaries by small extra payments of five or six shillings a quarter for sweeping the school, or 2s. 6d. for repairing the clock. The salaries at Wheathampstead rose little until the move to the new school in 1862, when the master of the mixed school received £50 a year plus part of the government grant, this being determined by the Inspector who examined the children.

Between 1862 and 1900 the Infants' School at Wheathampstead seems to have had a succession of eight mistresses in charge, Miss Dowsett being the first, while the main school had nine masters. Their standards varied considerably, a fact highlighted by Her Majesty's Inspectors' reports. Poor Mr. Pratt who had taken over the new main school in 1862 had to take a cut in his salary: '1866 H.M.I. report, Master Mr. Pratt: Discipline is fair but children are not accurate enough in elementary subjects . . . Reduction in grant'. In 1872 Mr. Humphreys came in for criticism: 'attainments are still deficient . . . boys are not drilled'. The standard was still unsatisfactory in 1879 (see p. 258). Perhaps Wheathampstead's trouble lay mainly with the fact that some teachers had other jobs outside the school, a fact referred to by the Inspector in 1873 and 1874, and to the quick turnover of staff, especially in the 1870s.

Throughout most of the 1860s Wheathampstead had two pupil teachers for the main school, with another one for the infants. Sometimes pupil teachers started their careers as monitors. Sarah Nash, monitor, was sent home twice in 1865 to have curl papers taken out of her hair. By 1874 there were four pupil teachers in the main school, even though the average attendance was only twelve more than in 1862. Their presence did not help the standard of work in the school, but this could well have been because they were not being instructed properly by the master who at that time was employed 'with pupils other than those of the school' which was 'incompatible with the proper attention to his duties'. In 1876 Canon Davys took a pupil teacher with the choir on a four-week jaunt to Switzerland and this became an annual event.

When the Harpenden British School opened in 1850 Mr. Melville was in charge of the boys and Miss Hayward of the girls. The 1851 census returns confirm that Miss Hayward was still there but that the boys had a new master, Mr. Cooper; he was still there in 1854

[Kelly's Directory]. The boys were indeed fortunate with the arrival of John Henshaw in 1861; he remained as headmaster until 1903. In 1866 on an inspection Matthew Arnold wrote 'I have seen few village schools as good as this' and on his last visit to the school in May 1871 he wrote on John Henshaw's certificate: 'I take leave with regret of this school, as one of the very best in my district'.

At the girls' school, Agnes Fleming (1863–71) was popular with her charges, receiving presents from them on her birthday. She enjoyed taking the girls for walks and, on occasions, she went into the playground and played with the children, 'which highly delighted them' the log records. One summer she had the cherries gathered from the tree in the playground and distributed them among the girls. One thing she did perhaps was not so popular with the girls: she opened the school on Saturdays or started school earlier on occasions in order to prepare the girls for examinations! After Miss Fleming left in 1871 the attendance and the standard of education dropped.

The British School infants were fortunate in having good mistresses: Miss Athowe 1858–68, Miss Fleming (the sister of the Girls' schoolmistress) 1868–78 and then Miss Callcott who stayed until 1895. The inspectors in their reports speak of 'good progress', of children being 'well taught', 'good discipline' and 'much care and pains in organising varied occupations for the children', conveying a very favourable impression of the school.

Up to 1863 a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Gilbert, were acting as master and mistress at the Harpenden National School, with Jane Gray as infant teacher. She took over the whole school from 1863 until 1868, assisted by one pupil teacher and one or two monitors for an average attendance of sixty children. From 1868 the Reverend Edward Thomas Vaughan, rector of the parish, and his daughter helped occasionally with some of the teaching.

CURRICULUM AND METHODS OF TEACHING

Most of the evidence we have for subjects taught in the Wheathampstead and Harpenden schools comes from the log books and thus there is little to report before 1863. It is interesting to see that plaiting went on at the Harpenden British and National Schools before 1866. It was pointed out at a meeting of the National School managers in 1866 that plaiting was only allowed on 'one or two afternoons a week instead of sewing' and that lessons were carried out while plaiting was in progress. The most important justification for this was that it was the only way to keep many of the girls at the school; they would otherwise have deserted to plaiting schools. However, the Inspectors directed that plaiting should cease and the ban became completely effective by 1867. At Wheathampstead there was a resolution at a committee meeting that plaiting should not be introduced into the new Infants School.

The basic subjects, reading, writing and arithmetic, were given

a great deal of time on the timetable, often at the expense of other subjects. The new Wheathampstead National School seems to have started in 1862 with an ambitious list of subjects, for prizes were given in 1863 for drawing, scripture, reading, gardening, music and needlework, while the examination subjects for 1864 included drawing, catechism, history, spelling and geography as well as the three Rs. Unfortunately the Inspector's reports kept saying year after year that the standard in the elementary subjects was not high enough and gradually examinations in the special subjects were dropped. Canon Davys has a story that when the new National School building was opened in 1862 the master asked the elder boys, in their first lesson, to write an account of Wheathampstead. One boy wrote: 'Wheathampstead is a pleasant village in the valley of the Lea. There are thirty public houses and Mr. Davys is the Rector'. At the Girls' British School in Harpenden Miss Fleming introduced English, geography including map drawing, and English history in the 1860s. Here there was also a lot of singing but comparatively little mention of religious subjects, and sometimes periods spent in the open when girls were taken primrosing, blackberrying, or occasionally to Rothamsted Park to play. Miss Fleming had another side to her character. Homework was set and on one occasion she noted in the log book: 'have given G. more home lessons to do as I hear that her father complains that she has not sufficient — however he shall never again have cause to make a similar complaint'! When Miss Lee arrived in 1876 she had found the arithmetic standard particularly poor; on testing the girls according to H.M.I. standards she found only six passed out of over fifty girls. By 1878 she had improved the standard as some children were offering grammar and geography as extra examination subjects. Standard VI geography covered a wide syllabus: physical features of N. America and Asia, political geography of N. America, India and Australia; and general outlines of Africa and S. America. Africa was a centre of contemporary interest, though still in part unknown: the historic meeting of Stanley and Livingstone was in 1871.

Needlework and knitting were always compulsory for girls; eight hours a week were spent on it at the British School in 1868, during which Miss Fleming told or read stories to the girls. One was *Ministering Children*, a story 'in which the high-born young ladies . . . did acts of charity and rescue work among the needy villagers' [L. P. Hartley in *The Go-Between*]. At Wheathampstead sewing lessons were supervised by women who came in specially for this purpose, as the teacher in charge was a man. At all the schools the work done by the children was sold once or twice a year, the girls receiving a proportion of the money for themselves. In the 1860s the boys at the Harpenden National School were also taught to knit; it must have been popular as a log entry shows: 13 July 1865 'Allowed the boys to knit in the afternoon for good conduct during the previous part of the week'. Miss Lee records in the British School log yearly exhibi-

tions of needlework held at Watford between 1878 and 1883. Although the work for each exhibition was started in good time sometimes 'ordinary lessons had to be suspended so that . . . girls could get on with their needlework'. At this time the standard in needlework was high and in 1883 six prizes were won by the school. Miss Lee also introduced Domestic Economy as a school subject, but this was sometimes dropped until after the examinations.

At the National Schools there was considerable concentration on religious subjects. The higher classes were frequently examined in the Catechism. Visitors to the school provided the religious education on occasions, for instance in 1865 the Reverend J. B. Cane gave a lecture on the Holy Land at Wheathampstead. He arrived complete with specimens of water from the Dead Sea, the Jordan, the Nile, the Cherith and the Red Sea! The British School, being non-sectarian, provided visitors to their school of a quite different sort; in 1865 a runaway slave from S. Carolina lectured to the children! 'The lecture did not answer our expectations' was Miss Fleming's comment, which was unfortunate as the children had to pay a penny each to hear it.

As to teaching methods, the question and answer method of teaching originally introduced by the founders of the National and British Societies was used for the most part in the nineteenth century. It was probably the only method by which large numbers of children could be taught by unqualified monitors, who used a textbook and 'heard' the various groups of children call out the answers in unison. An example from the Reverend Dr. Brewer's textbook, *My First Book of English History* will show what it was like:

'Q. Who was Henry VIII?
A. Son of Henry VII.
Q. What was his character?
A. As a young man he was bluff, generous, right royal and very handsome.
Q. How was he when he grew older?
A. He was bloated, vain, cruel and selfish.'

It has been pointed out that 'if an ill-disposed examiner asked the questions in the wrong order, the sham was disastrously exposed'. [G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People 1746–1946*, 1964, p. 308].

Object lessons, a considerable improvement in method, are first mentioned locally in 1873 when a pupil teacher at Wheathampstead Infants' School was taught how to give an object lesson on 'The Orange'. Familiar objects were studied in detail and no doubt a skilled teacher could take the opportunity to introduce snippets of history, geography, art and elementary science into the work. A list of 'Natural History and Objects' for the year 1884 is in the Harpenden National School log book. Object lessons are first mentioned at the Girls' British School in 1886. In 1891 Mr. Clark mentions instructing his pupil teachers in the giving of object lessons. Each object was

used as a theme for a week and was brought into as many lessons as possible. In 1894 Mr. Lawes brought specimens from Australia for a museum at the Girls' British School (see Appendix Thirteen).

MISBEHAVIOUR AND PUNISHMENTS

Minor offences such as late attendance, noise or carelessness were obviously then, as nowadays, quite common. In the early years of the British and National schools these misdemeanours were always dealt with by the child being kept in after school. On the other hand offences such as inattention, disobedience, bad conduct, talking in lessons, truancy or showing temper were often punished by caning. Rewards were given to encourage the children; '25.4.66. Gave an additional five minutes in the playground as a reward for great attention and industry at lessons'. Sometimes the children were caught eating apples at the wrong time, but usually all that happened was that they had them taken away. If a child turned up at school dirty or untidy he might be sent home again. At Harpenden National School, there were eight cases of truancy between 1863 and 1870. At the British School there is one reference to 'guerilla warfare' going on between some of the smaller children in the dinner hour and another of a girl breaking one of the windows of the boys' school. There were more serious offences: '12.6.64. A boy punished for copying in Dictation'; and '5.5.68. Punished a girl today for impertinence to the pupil teacher'. The most common misdemeanor was the charge of blotting a copybook: '2.8.67. Two children kept in for carelessly blotting their copybooks'. In the one case of punishment for theft recorded during this period, it was left to the Rector to decide the culprit's fate: '20.11.63. A boy taken to Mr. Vaughan's for stealing a knife from a little one'. Sometimes parents sided with their children against a teacher over punishment. Harpenden National School, in 1866, 'expelled three children because their parents refused to submit to authority and the rules of the school'. At Wheathampstead, in 1862, a boy was dismissed from school 'on account of his insolence combined with the trouble his mother has caused'. He was obviously readmitted because there was another 'fracas with Mrs. N. about her boy being caned yesterday'. In 1874 the master at Wheathampstead was attacked in the school by the fathers of two boys who had been kept in, and another parent had written asking that her son should not be kept in again. He had apparently been interfering with some baby birds in a nest, but his mother thought that if he was punished all the boys from Marford should have been punished too for they had all 'had their hands in it'. She ended her letter with the kind of comment teachers have become familiar with: 'I can always rely on what Tom tells me as he will always own when he has told a falsehood but the others tried to get him into trouble. When you have had as many boys of your own as I have you will have better sense than taking notice of such a simple thing hoping there will be no more trouble about it as the Birds are flown.—

Yours truly, A.P.' Teachers were usually more lenient with the infants, especially when the hot weather made them fidgety.

HOLIDAYS AND TREATS

Schools had six weeks holiday each year, four in the summer for harvesting, one at Christmas and one at either Easter or Whitsun, depending upon when Easter fell. But the children were often given odd days off during the year. At the British Girls' School, for instance, the Church Sunday School treat usually merited one day's holiday, while the non-conformists only received half a day for theirs. Sometimes a half holiday was given for the Foresters' Fête and for the local flower show, or after H.M.I.'s annual visit; the Foresters were a friendly society. Special occasions often led to a day's holiday, occasions such as the opening of Harpenden National School in 1864, 'Polling for the County' in 1874, royal marriages such as that of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark in 1863, or marriages of the local gentry. In 1866 the British School girls were taken to church in the morning and then given a half holiday because the day had been set apart by the Bishop for prayer on account of the outbreak of rinderpest, a highly contagious and fatal disease of cattle. This was the last outbreak in this country. Special church services gave more days off for the National School children.

In the early 1860s Mrs. Warde arranged an annual tea as a treat for the Harpenden British School children just before Christmas. 'They came at half-past two, played out of doors until half-past three, when tea was served, consisting of tea, cake and bread and butter . . . The evening was occupied in various amusements — asking riddles, singing, etc., and partaking of refreshments'. The British School children had a treat in honour of Mr. Charles Bennet Lawes' coming of age in October 1864. The children had lessons for a short time in the morning, were then dismissed and told to reassemble at twelve o'clock. They then walked to Rothamsted Park where they were joined by a band, and after marching round the lawn several times they were conducted to a large barn specially decorated for the occasion. Dinner was then served, after which the youngsters amused themselves with games and dancing until tea-time. 'The day was ended by a beautiful pyrotechnic display on the Common'. The Harpenden National School children had their own summer treat in the Lydekkers' meadow.

INSPECTORS, MANAGERS AND VISITORS

Her Majesty's Inspectors played a large part in the school life of the nineteenth century, for they not only visited the schools giving the teachers what help they could, but they had to examine all the pupils in all the schools. For the years 1866 to 1871 inclusive Matthew Arnold was the Inspector who visited the British School every spring to examine the children. Matthew Arnold, who was respected for his work in education as well as for his poetry, was a strong opponent of the government's payment by results system, mainly because he

realised that children were crammed in order to get them through examinations without understanding what they were being taught.

As well as the annual inspection by the H.M.I. the British School was inspected by its own inspector from the British and Foreign Schools Society. During the 1860s a Mr. Milne carried out this inspection. Also at this time the school held an annual public inspection, on a purely local level, at John Bennet Lawes' laboratory. Preparation for this event began in October, and in December the children were put through their paces. It must have been rather a nightmare for them, even though in 1863 it is recorded that 'It went off admirably. Everyone present was astonished at the quick and correct replies given by the boys to all the questions put by the examiners. The girls also acquitted themselves creditably. The chairman pronounced the needlework *excellent*'. There is no record of this public inspection taking place after 1866.

The local gentry — many of them connected with Rothamsted — took a very great interest in Harpenden schools, especially the non-sectarian British School. For many years Mrs. Gilbert was the correspondent for the school, and as part of her duties she copied the inspectors' reports into the logbook. At first Mrs. Lawes was the most frequent visitor to the school; she went nine times during 1864, twice taking pears and once apples during the autumn. Gradually this rôle was taken on by Mrs. Marianne Warde (Plate 27a), John Bennet Lawes' sister, who not only visited the school but gave a good deal of practical help in preparing the girls for examinations and assisting with their needlework. John Bennet Lawes played an enormous part in getting the school started. Whenever there was any deficiency in school funds both he and Mrs. Warde gave money generously.

Soup was served to the poor regularly on Fridays at Lamer and in the early days children were encouraged to go, but around 1880 when school attendance became compulsory, children were no longer served. An extract from the *Herts Advertiser* of 1889 records that the Rector, Canon Davys, presented Mrs. Drake-Garrard with an album containing water colours of Wheathampstead and Gustard Wood schools, on behalf of the teachers and scholars. Also presented was an illuminated address expressing the thanks of the subscribers for the interest taken by Mrs. Drake-Garrard. The signatures of nearly 500 subscribers were included.

The correspondent for the Harpenden National School for over thirty years was Canon Vaughan, who was responsible for the overall running of the school, engagement of staff and for claiming the grants. He visited the school often to hear the children recite hymns. The Lydekker family of Harpenden Lodge helped in many ways; they gave the school Christmas tree in 1870 and they gave the children apples, pictures and other awards. Mrs. Lydekker brought needlework for the girls to do and in 1876 the children were given a Magic Lantern show by G. W. Lydekker (Plate 27a).

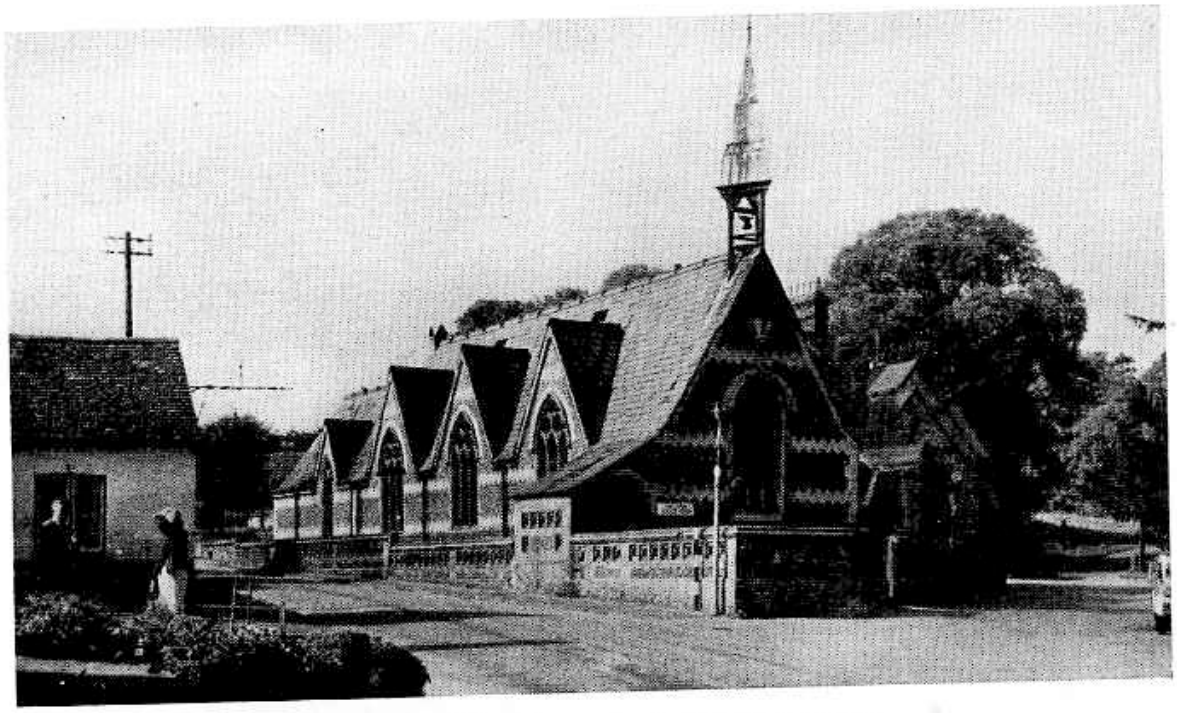
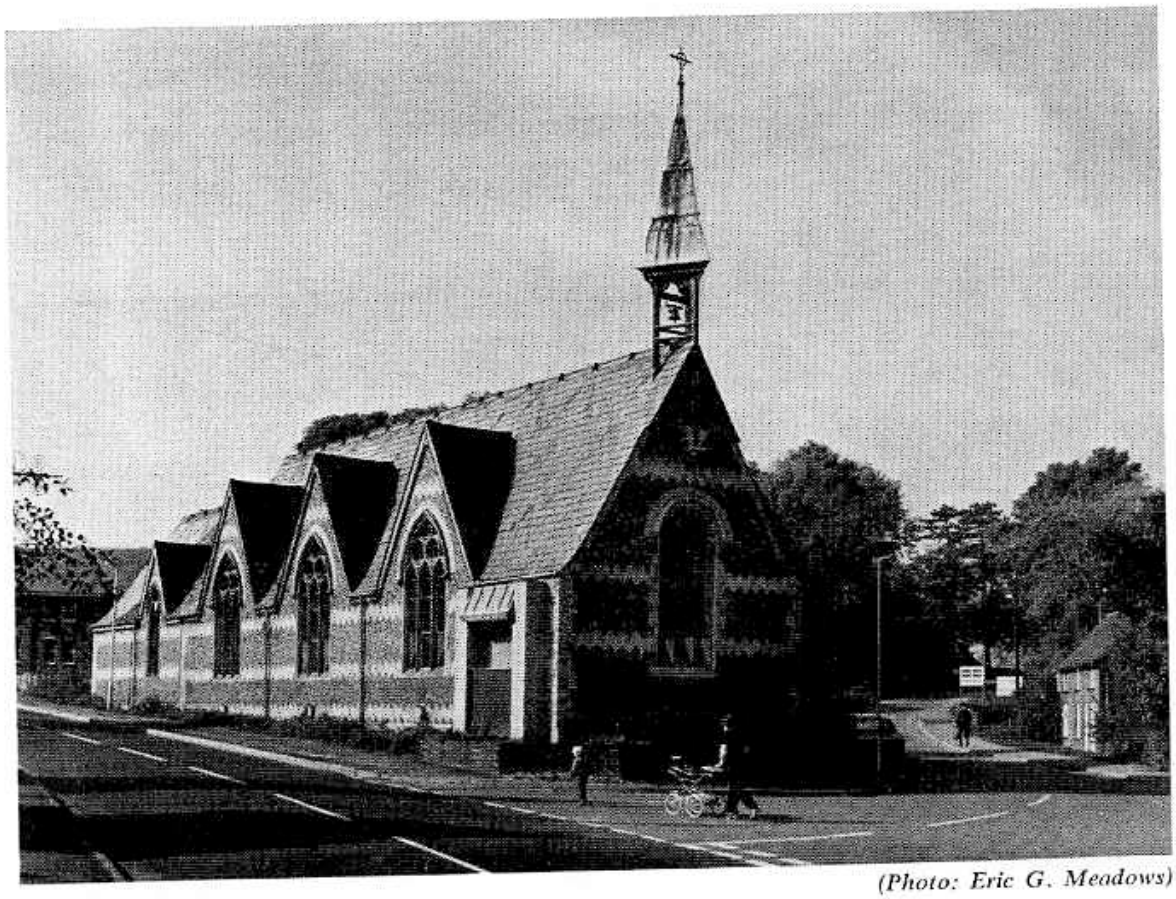


PLATE 25a Wheathampstead National School



(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 25b The old school building converted to architects' offices

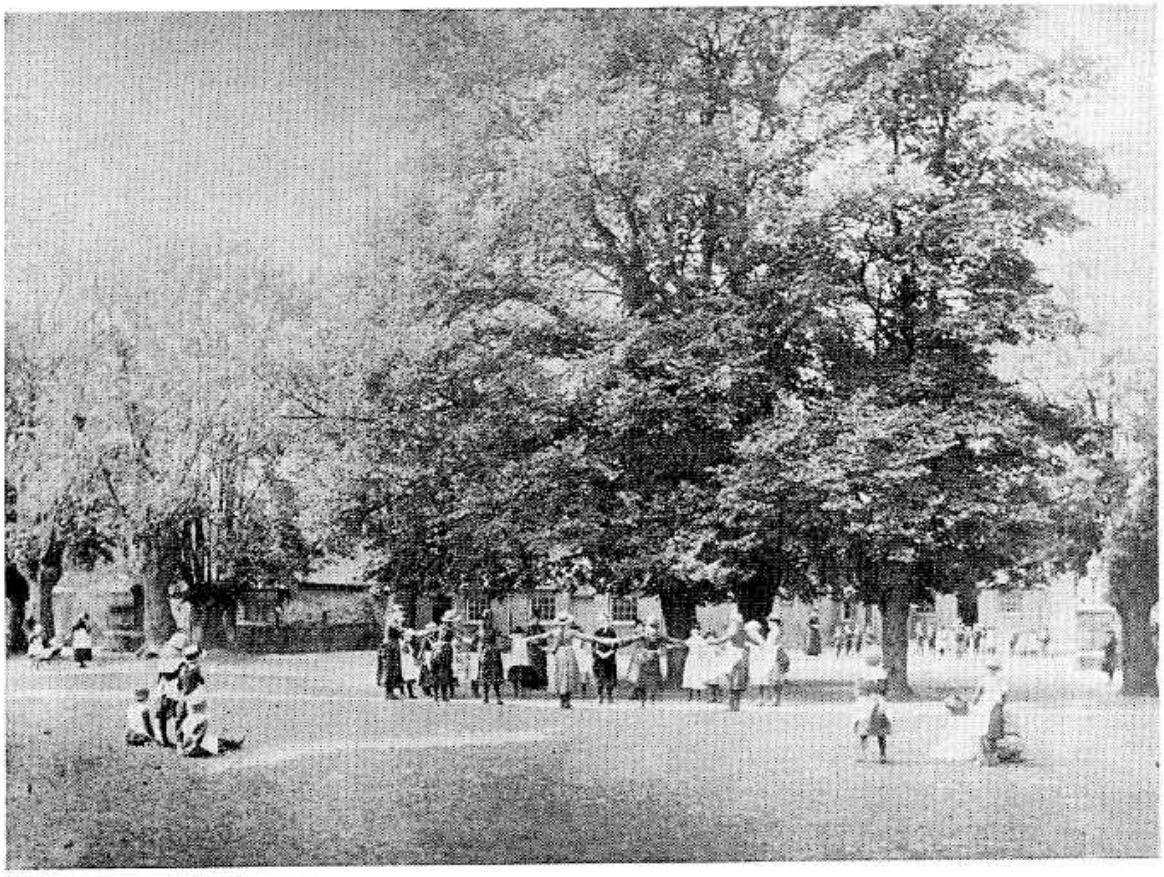
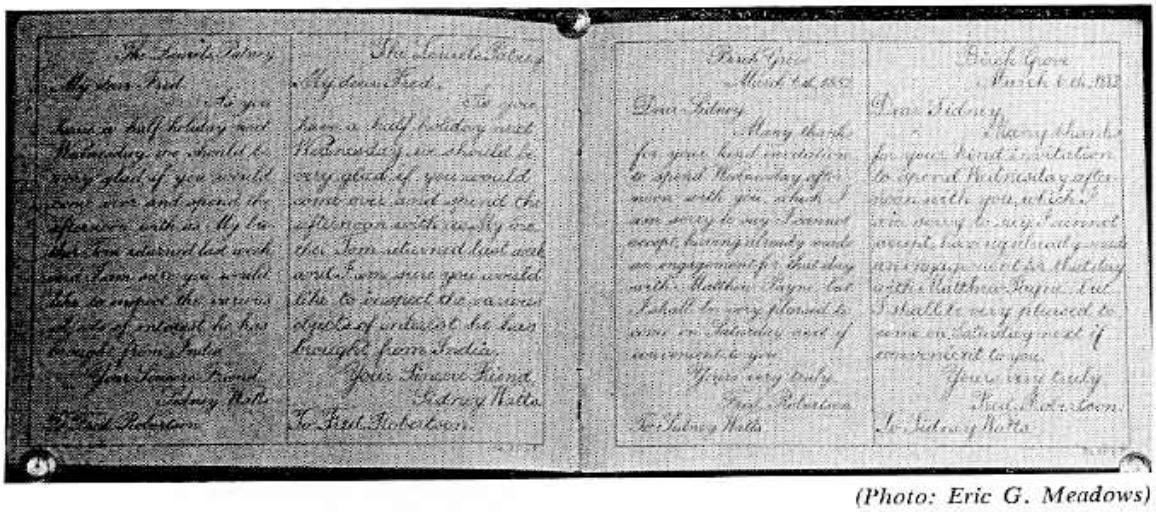


PLATE 26a Girls in a ring outside the old British School in Leyton Road



(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 26b Copy book from Gustard Wood School

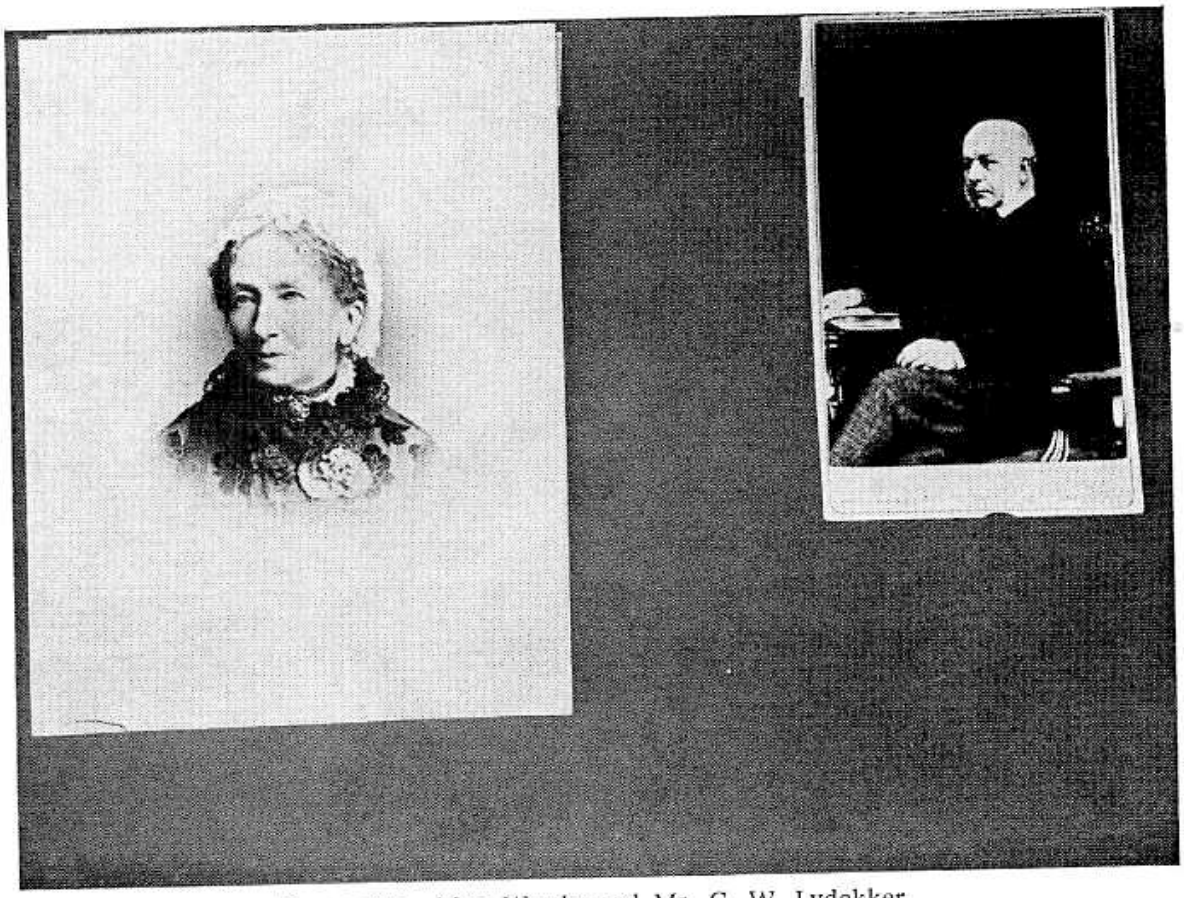


PLATE 27a Mrs. Warde and Mr. G. W. Lydekker

PLATE 27b Tom Clark and his staff (Wheathampstead National School) in the early 1900s

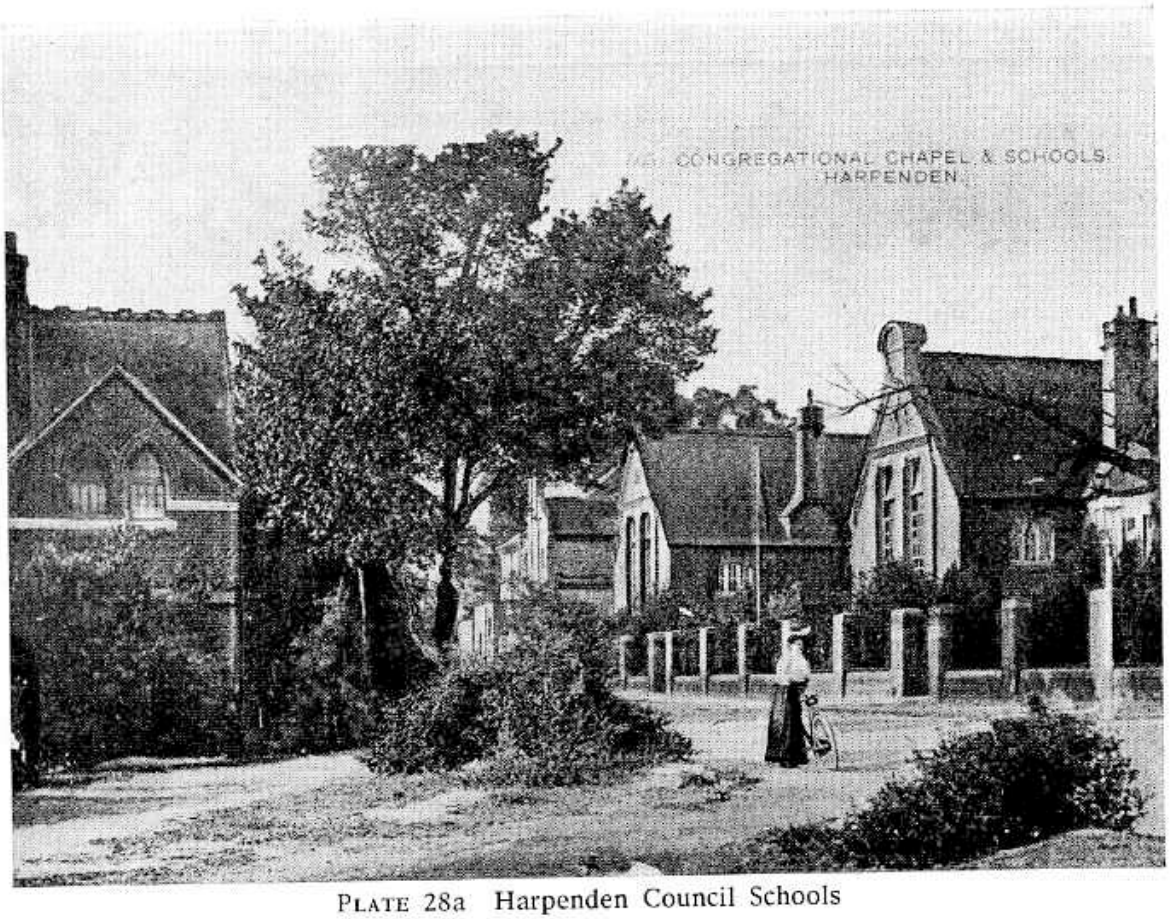


PLATE 28a Harpenden Council Schools

(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 28b Further Education Centre and Library

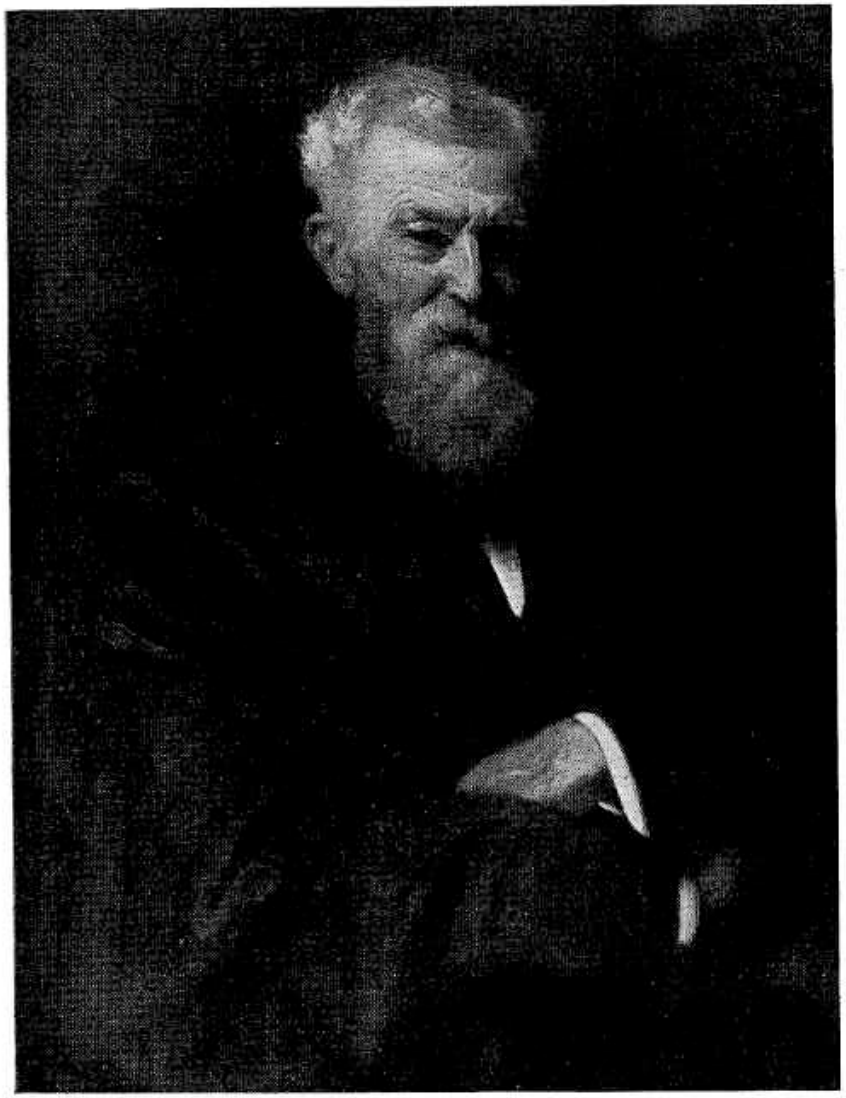
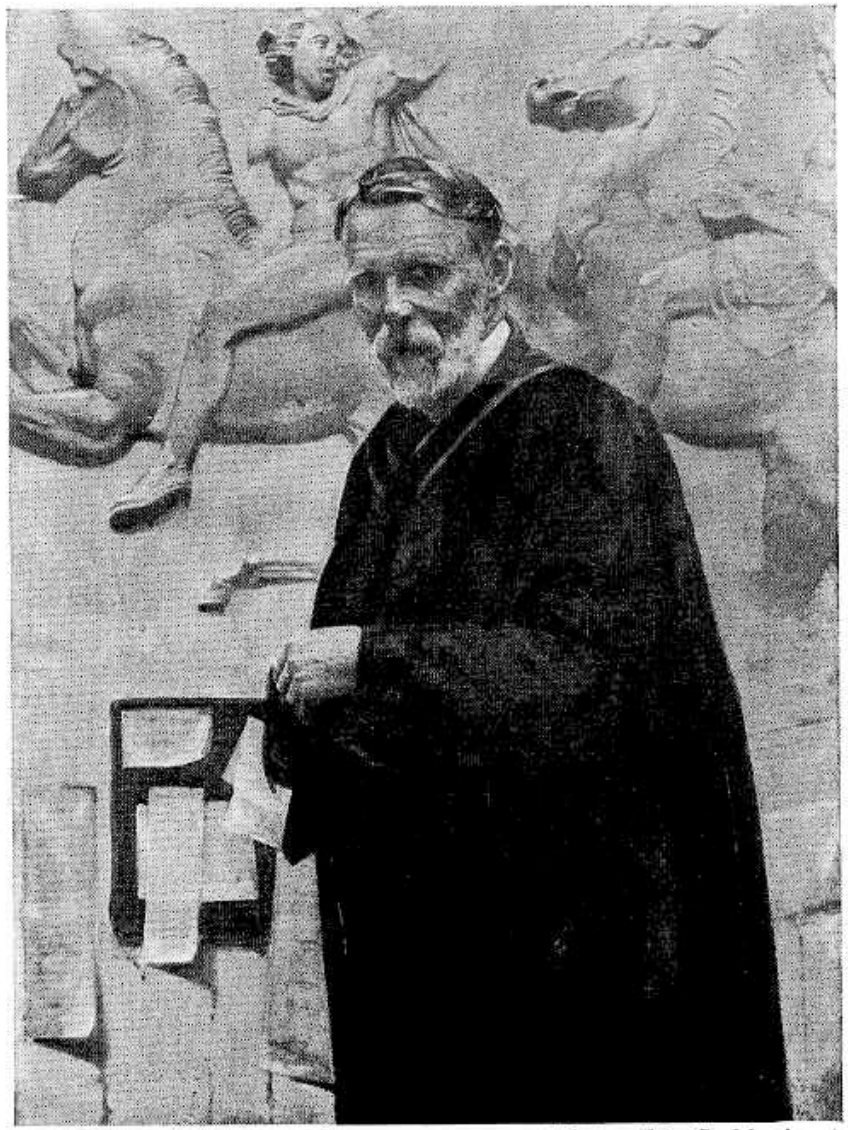


PLATE 29a John Henshaw



(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 29b Cecil Grant

By Courtesy of St. George's School

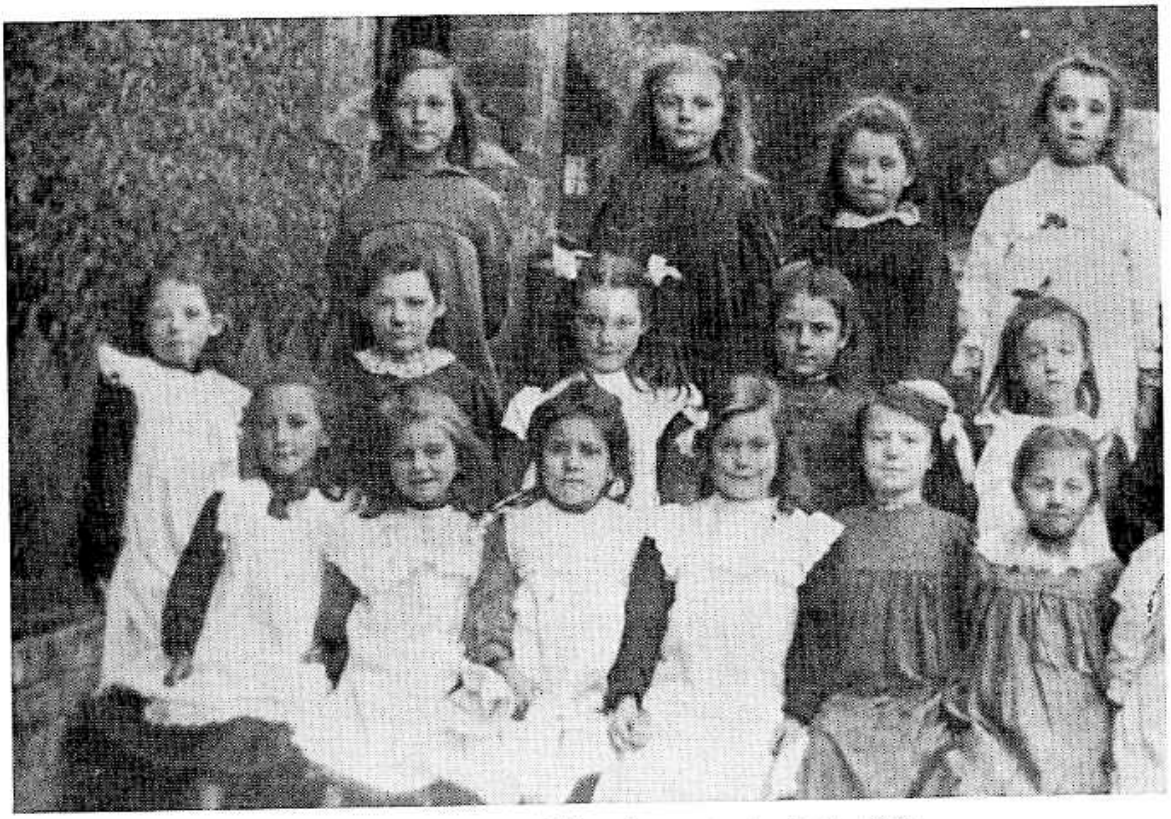


PLATE 30a A class at Wheathampstead about 1920

PLATE 30b Wheathampstead School outing to the Zoo about 1925
(Miss Warren centre front)

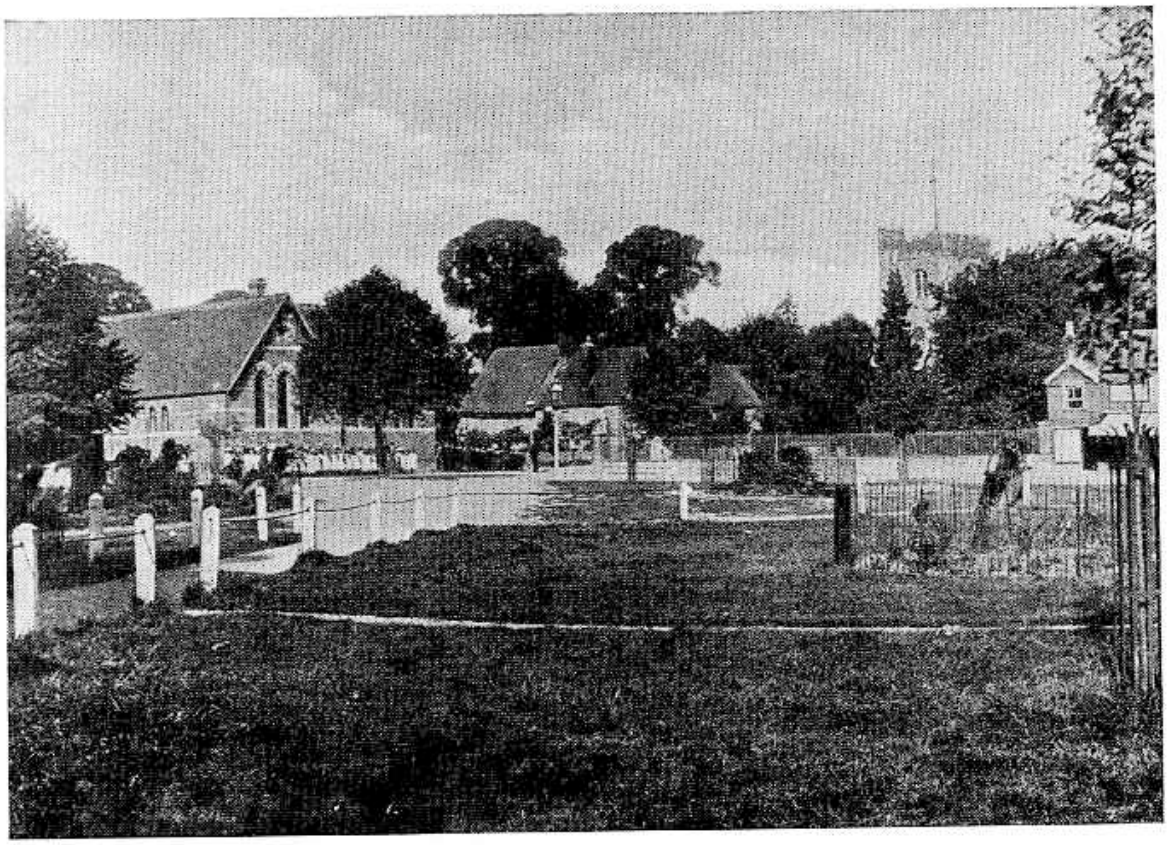
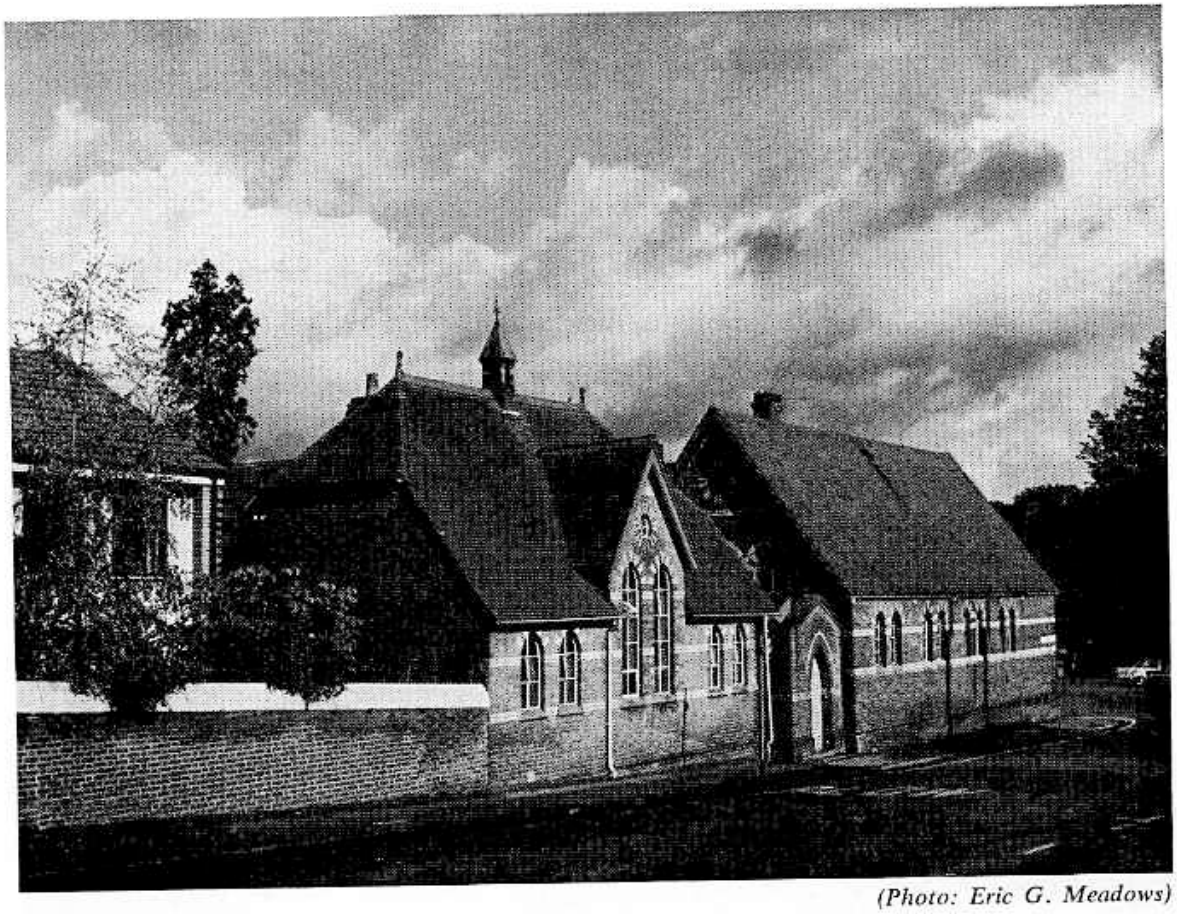
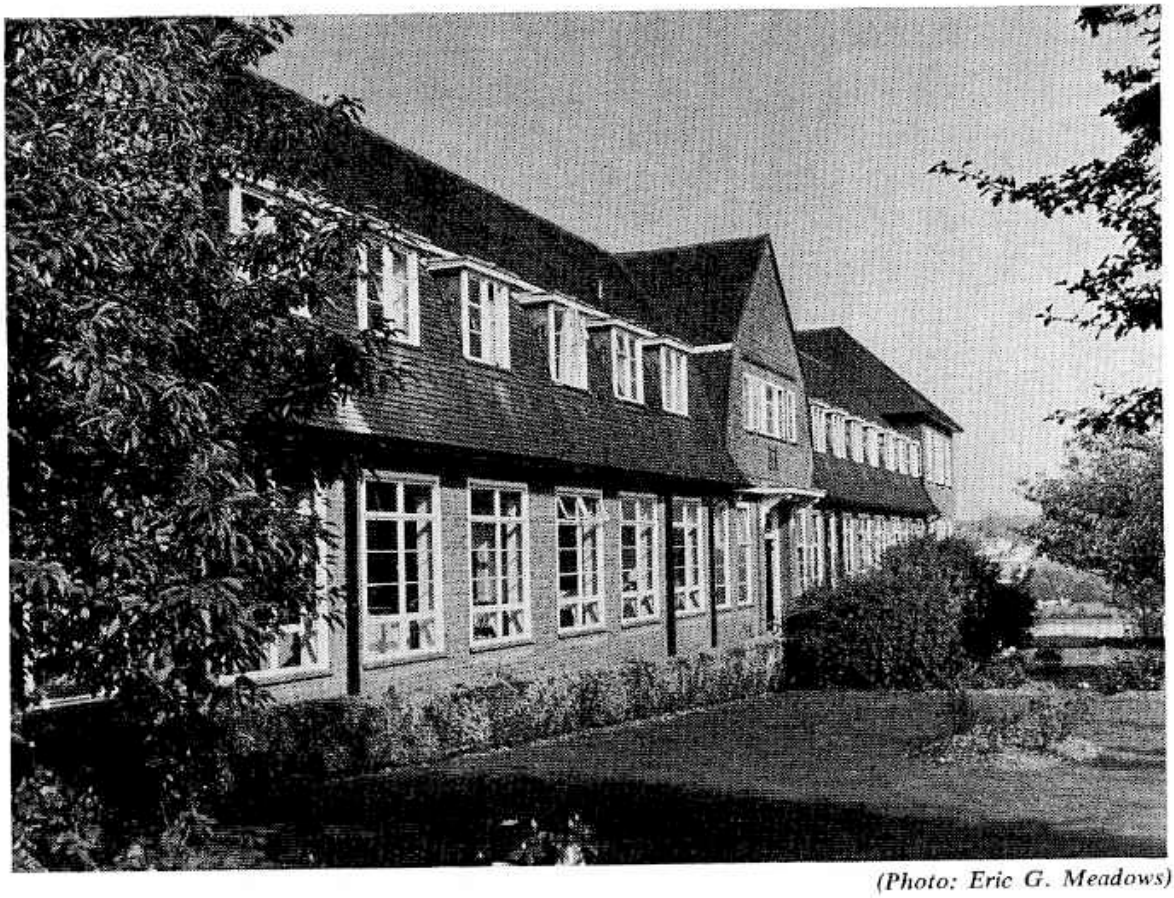


PLATE 31a Harpenden National School



(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 31b St. Nicholas School



(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 32a Manland Secondary School

(Photo: Eric G. Meadows)

PLATE 32b Interior view of one of Harpenden's newest schools, The Lea School

State Education

MUNDELLA ACT AND THE SCHOOL BOARD

During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, from 1870 to 1902, the State played an ever-increasing part in local education. The 1870 Act did not affect Harpenden and Wheathampstead until 1894. But in 1880 the Mundella Act made schooling compulsory up to the age of ten years, and provided for local bye-laws regulating school attendance. Unfortunately it was not until the 1890s, when the payment of school fees was abolished, that these regulations could be enforced. Although the actual attendance at all the schools increased after 1880, partly because of the population increase, it continued to be a problem. A voluntary panel of visitors was formed at the Harpenden National School in 1888 to enquire into reasons for absence. At the British School it appears that the teachers made themselves responsible for enquiring into absences. In 1973 a Harpenden man, in his nineties, remembered Mr. Henshaw calling at his home for this purpose and his father being angered by Mr. Henshaw's bossy and dictatorial manner.

Visits of the school attendance officer are mentioned in the Harpenden British School log book, but not until 1887. Before this date it seems to have been part of the duties of the factory inspector to visit schools when children attended only half-time because they were engaged in plaiting. The attendance officer's job was made somewhat easier after the 1890 Education Act, when two new government grants were paid to schools, both based on average attendance: one replaced the payment by results grant and the other, of ten shillings per child, was paid to encourage schools to abolish school pence. The new government grants led to an 1891 change in local bye-laws concerning education. These now required that 'the parent of every child of not less than 5, nor more than 13 years of age, shall cause such a child to attend school, unless there be a reasonable cause for non-attendance' and that 'the time during which every child shall attend school shall be the whole time for which the school shall be open for the instruction of children'.

The new Education Code, which ended 'payment by results' extended the curriculum to include compulsory drawing for boys and encouraged science, physical exercise and manual work. To introduce these subjects required capital expenditure. The British School buildings, which were now forty years old and filled to capacity, could hardly meet the needs of Harpenden's growing population, so that money for improvement and expansion was needed here too. The formation of a School Board as a solution to the problems of the British School was first discussed in 1892. A School Board was able to levy rates to finance its schools instead of relying on voluntary subscriptions.

Harpenden's School Board had the distinction of being the last one to be formed in Hertfordshire. Elections were held on 26 November 1894, the school having a holiday because of this. Two of the previous managers, Col. Durnford and Mr. Anscombe, were candidates for the Board, but only Col. Durnford was elected. The other six were Captain Lydekker, the Reverend C. Paterson (curate at Harpenden), and Messrs. Sibley (farmer), Gentle (straw plait dealer, large ratepayer and ex-Luton councillor), Williams (War Office clerk) and King (plumber). Col. Durnford was elected chairman and Mr. Eyles was appointed clerk and Mr. Dunkly attendance officer.

A new Education Act, in 1902, made two important changes in the administration of education. For the first time voluntary schools, like the Wheathampstead and Harpenden National Schools, were to receive financial support from the rates. The schools certainly needed this, for they had been having difficulty in raising sufficient money by voluntary contributions. The Act also abolished school boards, transferring their responsibilities to other local authorities.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD NATIONAL SCHOOLS

It appears that when education became compulsory in 1880 the numbers of children attending Wheathampstead school increased immediately but then rose more slowly during the next ten years. During the 1870s the best average attendance for the main school had been 120, but during December 1882 173 children from a roll of 235 attended. Although Sunday school attendance increased during December to qualify for Christmas treats, December was the worst month for day school attendance. Ten years later there were 248 children on the roll, and during December 208 children were present. The infants school attendances rose from seventy in the 1870s to about 100 after 1880. In 1881, as the need for extension to the school building began to be felt, a terrific gale in October brought down the bell turret of the school, damaging the eastern gable. Fortunately no-one was hurt, and Mr. Browning's former assistant took over the repairs and provided sketch plans for a new classroom. The new room (28′6″ × 18′1″) was completed in 1883 at a cost of £500. The school was then supposed to be capable of holding 330 children. By 1887 the infants had had to give up one of their two rooms to the main school, even though the Inspector had disapproved of this arrangement; a new classroom (17′ × 15′) was built in 1888, paid for by a legacy of £500 left by Mr. Drake-Garrard in 1884.

Wheathampstead National School lost money in the form of government grants during the 1870s because of its low standard of work under several different masters. Frederick Coy, an uncertificated master, had been told by the Inspector in 1879 that he would not get his certificate until his school was 'more satisfactory'. He decided that he had had enough either of teaching or of Wheathampstead, because the next Inspector's report, in 1880, shows yet another master

in charge of the school. Charles Tolley, though, must have been a great deal better than his predecessors for the first report from an H.M.I. states: 'Improvement since last year in every respect'. He began teaching the 'Hullah's moveable Doh system' in 1880, which he intended should 'supercede the Fixed Doh at present in use in the school'. Favourable reports continued for some years but in 1891, when the master was Mr. Metcalfe, the H.M.I. reported that 'discipline and tone are very far from satisfactory, want of obedience, diligence, order and a tendency to copy being serious faults' At this time Mr. Metcalfe had a trained assistant and three pupil teachers to help him, and the infants had a mistress in charge with three or four pupil teachers to help her.

Half a term after the H.M.I.'s report on the school under Mr. Metcalfe, a new master, Thomas Clark, comments: 'Standard V know nothing whatsoever about their work. I tried to get from them what they had taken but I have to give up in despair . . . the history syllabus has disappeared and the teachers are perfectly at sea as to what it contained'. He also records his attempts at what was probably a hopeless task: 'I have spent a good bit of time trying to eradicate the 'oi' sound from such words as I, my, try, etc., and the 'ew' from such words as down, now, town, etc. These sounds are decidedly provincial and I think characteristic of Hertfordshire.' He had previously taught in Staffordshire. Thomas Clark seems to have restored the good name of Wheathampstead National School in the 1890s, and then on into the twentieth century. He is still remembered by some of his ex-pupils and appears in the photograph (Plate 27b).

Mr. Clark describes the methods he used to teach English:

1. A simple story was read twice.
2. Scholars were then questioned on the meaning.
3. Each scholar then gave a sentence which was written at his or her dictation on the blackboard until the whole story was completed.
4. Completed sentences were picked out for punctuation.

His delightful sense of humour is revealed in the following description of a truant in 1893: 'Jan. 13th. Some boys are most incomprehensible. Edwin Gibbs for some unaccountable reason played truant on Wednesday and Thursday last week. His tastes being elevated and of an aspiring nature, he on the former day indulged in the sane and inspiring diversion of "slaying mice" at a certain Mr. Mardall's Farm, but during his Goliath excursions he never experienced the sensation of hunger. On Thursday having satiated his thirst for blood, about 6 o'clock he arose and betook himself to Harpenden and remained there till dusk; whether he slew any more Philistines and Canaanites in the shape of mice our knowledge does not permit us to say. At any rate his friends becoming acquainted of his non-attendance at school made diligent search for him but without effect. He eventually "turned up" about 7 o'clock in the evening . . .

his father, a policeman, being at home when "the wanderer returned", provided him with a very warm supper in the shape of a belting. Mrs. Gibbs brought the truant boy to school this morning and informed the master of his boyish freak. Being questioned . . . he was ashamed . . . at the request of his mother, the master refrained from punishing Gibbs beyond a reprimand and a caution.' No doubt he found the slaying of mice a much warmer occupation than sitting in a cold school; in February 1895 the log records that only twenty-six infants were present on one day and that they were 'crying with cold'.

At GUSTARD WOOD at the end of the nineteenth century 'school life was mostly work, free play was for another generation of school children. Children were expected to be quiet, speak when spoken to, and the maxim "children should be seen and not heard" was closely observed. The reciting of "tables", the alphabet — backwards as well as forwards, the order of the books of the Bible, the Kings and Queens of England, the rivers of England, were favourite ways of keeping the children occupied and busy. Once the children had started chanting they would go on and on like clockwork. Arithmetic was not over advanced, enough to get by with in later years. Geography was touched upon, the continents and oceans of the world. Outlines of principal countries, with capital and rivers, were considered sufficient for the most part. Spelling and dictation were daily rituals. The world in general was far removed from the little school. London seemed as remote as the Arctic Circle or India.' (Plate 26b).

The visits by the Inspectors continued to be viewed with apprehension, even after the 1890 Act abolishing payment by results grants; and teachers, especially pupil teachers, and children 'were filled with trepidation for days before the visit. The schoolroom was tidied, books made ready for inspection. When the day arrived the children were subdued, clean and tidy . . . The classroom was carefully decorated with cottage flowers, which they all hoped would be looked upon with favour, even if incorrect answers were not. Dignified and rather pompous, the Inspector looked into cupboards, asked questions, inspected the needlework . . . After what seemed an interminable time the ordeal was over'. However, there were compensations: 'Celebrations to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee took place in Clarence Park, St. Albans. To these celebrations came children from surrounding villages . . . Mountains of food were provided . . . To mark this important event children were each presented with sixpence. A silver sixpence was given to those children over seven years of age, while those younger had six pennies. As most of the children had never had a silver sixpence to call their very own before in their lives, it was a never-to-be-forgotten gift. How sad and disappointed were two small boys who received pennies while their older brothers had silver coins, a disappointment that they remembered all their lives.' [From Amy Coburn's mother's reminiscences, some of which were printed in *Hertfordshire Countryside* in September 1968 Vol. 23 No. 113].

HARPENDEN NATIONAL SCHOOLS

At Harpenden National School the average attendance in 1882 was 149, about three-quarters of the total number on the roll. By 1889 there were 234 children on the roll and some increase in accommodation was required. A piece of land west of the school boundary was acquired on leasehold for ninety years, at a ground rent of £5 per annum so long as the school was conducted under the voluntary system (see p. 241). A new building to accommodate fifty-five infants or forty-five older children was opened in 1889, the cost of £453 being mainly met by subscriptions. The Harpenden National School had a long serving teacher as head; Miss Charlotte Jones had taken over in 1868 and remained there for twenty-five years; she had the help of two pupil teachers and two monitors. When the new system of grants was introduced the National School abolished fees and attracted children from the British School.

In 1885 the school was given a week's holiday at Whitsun as well as the usual Easter holiday. Several years before this they had begun to take the first Monday in August as a full day's holiday: '6.8.80. Had a whole holiday on Monday (2.8.80) it being "Bank Holiday" '. The following day several children are recorded as being absent 'in consequence of the Temperance Meeting'. The Church Sunday School Treat was a regular feature for a day's holiday but there was no holiday for nonconformist Sunday School treats. Since there were nonconformist children in the National School, it is not surprising that in 1885 the log book reported that attendance 'dropped owing to some Chapel Sunday School Treats'.

Occasional half day holidays were given after the H.M.I.'s annual visit or if the school was needed for some other activity, such as a conference of Sunday School teachers held in July 1884. The school had the afternoon off in June 1880 when Miss Charlotte Jones took the pupil teachers 'to St. Albans to see the Exhibition of Needlework by the National Schools in the neighbourhood'. In some years the Foresters' Fête was a half day holiday. There were the usual visitors:

27. 6.73. Mr. Bell brought a gentleman to see the school. A lady heard the little ones sing.

13.11.74. A gentleman from Hockerill visited the school yesterday, Rev. J. L. Bayliff. (Hockerill was a teachers' Training College).

2. 4.75. Samuel Morley, Esq., visited the school on Monday. He is M.P. and member of the London School Board — was pleased with the general cleanliness and order of the children.

24. 9.75. The Rev. James Vaughan who has been a Missionary in India for 20 years gave the children a Lecture instead of their ordinary Scripture Lesson on Wednesday Morning.

Until 1882 all the entries in the logbook are in the hand of the mistress apart from those entered by Canon Vaughan. From 1882 onwards it seems that school managers were expected to visit the school periodically and check the registers and there are many entries such as these:

3.10.82. I have this day verified register of this morning's attendances. E.T.V.

24.10.83. Verified attend. Regr. No. pres: 165 (signed) C. John Creed.

HARPENDEN BRITISH SCHOOLS

At the British School the boys' average attendance had reached 100 by 1870, the maximum the school would hold, but the girls' numbers rose from twenty-six in 1872, to fifty-four in 1876, to eighty-nine in 1889, when the Inspector's report stated that the average attendance had exceeded the accommodation. Even so, this number had increased to over ninety in 1894. The Government's new grant regulations of 1891 required of the managers and teachers 'that all reasonable care is taken in the ordinary management of the school to bring up children in habits of punctuality, of good manners and language, of cleanliness and neatness and also to impress upon the children the importance of cheerful obedience to duty, of consideration and respect for others and of honour and truthfulness in word and act'. The Managers of the British School used these as a basis for drawing up a list of school regulations (see Appendix Fourteen). The aim was to secure regular attendance and Col. Durnford, writing of this in his booklet on the British School, wished 'to impress upon parents that the amounts of both the Government grant and the fee grant are calculated upon the average attendance of the children'. He pointed out how the loss of one unit of average attendance meant (in round numbers) that £1 for boys, 17s. for girls and 14s. for infants on the government grant and 10s. on the fee grant would be lost to the school funds. In any case the new government grant of 10s. per child was not sufficient to allow the British School to abolish school fees, like the National School; the average fees paid by each child were 15s. 7½d. a year. They were reduced by 2d. a week, and all materials except copy and exercise books were to be supplied free. These moves, however, were not sufficient to prevent some children transferring to the National School, as we have seen.

During the whole of the period, in which Wheathampstead had such trouble in obtaining suitable masters, the Harpenden British Boys' School continued its success under John Henshaw. The Mundella Act made little difference to the size of his classes, for the school had reached its maximum number long before 1880. From his arrival in 1861 until his retirement in 1903 he and his school continued to receive glowing reports from the Inspectors. In 1882, for instance, H.M.I. Wix reported: 'The discipline and tone are very good and the

school maintains its high reputation for thorough and excellent work'. Edwin Grey, too, speaks of the school's 'excellent reputation both far and near, so that many of the surrounding farmers sent their sons', a complete reversal of the opinion expressed in the report on 'Social Conditions of Harpenden'! John Henshaw was a strict disciplinarian who had his own special way of teaching the 3 Rs, especially writing, known locally as 'Henshaw's Harpenden Handwriting'.

The girls meanwhile had several changes of mistress: Miss Fleming had been replaced in 1871 by an uncertificated teacher, Margaret Ann Branch. In 1872 the H.M.I. report stated that 'the attainments (were) only pretty fair'. Miss Branch persevered but, although the report had been a little better in 1873, by 1875 the school was reported as 'hardly (being) up to the mark . . . a better report on both the instruction and discipline of the girls' school will be looked for next year, or the grant may be reduced'. Perhaps this comment was unfair. There had been an outbreak of measles in mid-February and with increasing numbers of girls being away Miss Branch wrote in her log: 'I am afraid the examination will be affected by it'. Miss Branch left the school in the summer of 1875, but until Miss Elizabeth Lee took over in January 1876, the girls had to cope with a succession of temporary mistresses and a complete closure of the school during the whole of October. Miss Lee soon pulled the school together again and following the Inspector's report of 1876 which was 'a trying year for the school', he was able to report in 1877: 'The condition of this school has perceptibly improved, the discipline is of good character and the instruction does credit to the mistress and will doubtless gain strength another year'. Miss Lee left in 1881, being replaced by Mrs. Ellen Phillips. She became ill in September 1887 and a temporary mistress was employed until Miss Bradford took over in January 1888; she was followed by Miss Annie Potter in 1892. Miss Lee gave more time to music, teaching the children to sing by notes. Perhaps her pupils were not very musical, or perhaps Ellen Phillips, who took over from Miss Lee, could not sing by note herself, for the idea appears to have been abandoned until Miss Bradford's headship when the Inspector reported that 'a very fair start has been made in teaching singing by note'. From the point of view of the grant it was better to be able to sing by note, for during the period 1882–1890 the singing grant was 6d. by ear and 1s. by note. To assist with the musical development at the British School a new harmonium was given by the ladies of Harpenden in September 1890. Mrs. Phillips also appears to have dropped Domestic Economy from the curriculum, another subject which had been introduced by Miss Lee. The emphasis on needlework, started under Miss Lee at the British School, continued with Mrs. Phillips. Musical drill became part of the curriculum at the Girls' School in 1891, scripture was mentioned for the first time in 1892, and domestic economy was reintroduced to be followed by cookery in 1893.

John Bennet Lawes upheld the financial position of the British School for many years, as well as providing the land for the school buildings. In the first published report (1851) he donated £52 in addition to his annual subscription. Each year up to 1870 he made a donation in order to balance the books; the sums ranged from £7 to £68. In 1871, for the first time, there was a balance in hand. A balance of £38 in 1874 became a deficit of £119 in 1875 with a yearly deficit until the debt, then £180, was paid off by Mrs. Warde in 1887. By the 1890s the school was in financial difficulties again. The cost of staff had increased considerably. At that time Mr. Henshaw received £150 a year, and Miss Potter £80. It was difficult to obtain pupil teachers for the boys' school and so assistant masters had to be employed, costing three times as much.

When the setting up of a School Board was mooted as a solution, the rector, Canon Vaughan, opposed it. In July 1893 he sent a notice to his parishioners pointing out that a School Board would be more expensive and suggesting that they should voluntarily find the sum necessary to keep the British Schools going. However this was not to be. An article in the *Herts Standard* of the 15th June 1894 carried the headline 'British Schools conclude their existence. Harpenden to have School Board'. The article gives an account of a general meeting of the subscribers. The Management Committee of Sir John Bennet Lawes, Mr. Anscombe, Sir J. H. Gilbert, Mr. Hodgson, Col. Durnford, Lady Gilbert and Mr. J. Wright Salisbury, stated that the financial position appeared hopeless because of the continuing rise in working expenses, due to expansion of the curriculum and the requirements of the Education Department and the lack of support by subscribers. The Committee had tried hard to raise the money, for we are told that the Collector had made 438 personal calls and had written 30 letters in four months in an effort to increase subscriptions. The Committee recommended that the British Schools be given up at the end of 1894. It pointed out that there need be no break in education. The school would re-open in January 1895 under the School Board. The school buildings would be lent to the Board, fittings and books given to the Board. The Board would seek a site and erect new premises for at least 500 scholars, cost £5,000 to be met by a Government grant. The Committee's resolution was carried, but five people, including the rector, voted in opposition.

When the British Schools were taken over by the School Board, the Trust under which the buildings were held lapsed and the site and premises reverted to their donor, John Bennet Lawes. However, he undertook to lend the premises to the School Board for five years (or until the Board provided other accommodation) but reserved the right to use the Infants' School as a Sunday School. On 22 December 1894 the British Schools held their final meeting, at which Col. Durnford

gave a general outline of their history and achievements. The furniture, apparatus and staff were transferred to the Board by 8 January 1895. The reorganisation does not appear to have affected the day to day running of the school at all. Miss Potter merely recorded in the logbook that the school reopened under new management. In order to cover the estimated expenditure for the first year, the Board required £650 from the ratepayers of Harpenden. £400 was needed for teachers' salaries alone. The Board continued with school fees for the first year, the children having to pay 1d. or 2d. per week. The main task of the Board initially was to find a site for new buildings. Various sites were offered.

The Board investigated the number of children from different parts of Harpenden attending school, and decided to purchase a plot of just under one acre, situated near Station Road, from Mr. Sparrow for £725. Mr. Anscombe was appointed architect and at one meeting with the Board he was 'directed to see that an unclimbable iron fence was erected in the north and east sides and a wall with spiked railings in front of the building'. This building is now the Further Education Centre and Library in Victoria Road (Plate 28). The building, designed to accommodate 140 boys, 120 girls and 140 infants, was ready for use in January 1897. The girls had a schoolroom of 38ft. 9in. by 22ft., and 16ft. 6in. high, which could accommodate eighty, a classroom 21ft. by 19ft. and 14ft. high for a further forty, and a cookery room of 20ft. by 20ft. The move to the new buildings did not interrupt the routine work of the school at all. Miss Potter appears to have had only one day off to arrange the new school in December 1896. Perhaps all the hard work was done during the Christmas holidays. Anyway the children commenced work in the new schools on 12 January 1897. Col. Durnford visited the schools on that day with Mr. Gentle and Mr. Williams and read prayers.

With the school on a firm financial footing from the £700 brought in by a 6d. rate, it was able to provide good educational facilities. High standards resulted as shown by the H.M.I. reports recorded in the log book kept by the girls' mistress. With their good reputation the schools were soon overcrowded. At the end of 1899 the H.M.I. had noted that the accommodation in the Girls' Department was insufficient for the average attendance. In 1900 the enlargement of the Board School was discussed but the Education Department refused to enlarge the school when there were seventy-six vacancies at the National School. However it did not object to the school making better use of the existing buildings such as using the cooking kitchen as a classroom and making the boardroom into an infants classroom.

Dissatisfaction among the ratepayers was provoked by the Board School having to turn away Harpenden children while some children from outside the parish were attending. This matter was referred to the Board of Education, who suggested a meeting of the local Board

and the National School Managers to settle the admission problems. The meeting took place in November 1901 and it decided among other things that when the Board School was full, the Board could ask that infants from its school should be transferred to the National Mixed Department.

COUNCIL SCHOOLS 1902–14

Under the 1902 Education Act the Hertfordshire County Council became responsible for education in Harpenden and Wheathampstead. Before the Bill became law, Harpenden debated it fiercely. Religious rivalries were aroused, protest meetings held and heated arguments took place in the correspondence columns of local papers. Locally the Bill was opposed for two main reasons: the use of rates to support voluntary schools upset the nonconformists, and, with the abolition of the School Board, the ratepayers lost direct control of their schools. The Bill became the 1902 Education Act in December and with its implementation open opposition in Harpenden began to die down. The Board schools were handed over to the County Council on 30 September 1903. In Wheathampstead the new Education Act resulted in a continuing dispute over the religious education of the nonconformist children. It was the local manifestation of a national campaign by nonconformists against the subsidising of Church of England schools out of the rates. In many rural areas, as at Wheathampstead, Anglican schools were the only ones available, and the nonconformists formed a National Passive Resistance Committee to organise a mass refusal to pay rates; the problem did not arise in the same way in Harpenden because the non-denominational Council School in Victoria Road was available for the nonconformists. In Wheathampstead, however, considerable bitterness was engendered; eventually about seventy children were withdrawn from religious education in the school and went for instruction at the village hall with the nonconformist minister.

Achieving this solution was not easy. In a period, such as our own, when reconciliation between the churches is the norm, it may be salutary to look back at the past bitterness. It cannot have been a pleasant experience for Thomas Clark who was still headmaster and whose log book entries tell us what happened. Neither Canon Davys, the rector, nor the Congregational minister, Mr. Morgan, come out of the conflict very well, though both were devoted and admired figures in their respective congregations. On '26 November 1903 Rev. E. C. Morgan was refused permission to examine the Log Book'. From then until April 1905 Mr. Morgan was visiting the school and writing letters demanding, in effect, to know which children were withdrawn from religious instruction and that they should be permitted to attend the instruction which he had arranged in the Village Hall. On 3 April 1905 he was 'allowed to take some particulars from the timetable'; this was the first concession made.

In December and February 1903–4 Mr. Morgan had interrupted lessons given by 'Rev. Lindsay, the curate, who refused to continue and left the room after an argument'. Mr. Lindsay appears to have become less regular in taking the 'Scripture lesson', from which children began to be withdrawn in July 1904. On 3 October Canon Davys asked for their names. The log book continues: 'Some Roman Catholic children do secular work in Standard I classroom, with parents' agreement. Other children run the streets while lessons take place'. It may have been this situation which prompted Mr. Morgan to arrange for his own classes, but his rather peremptory request that the headmaster inform the children about them was sent, on Canon Davys' instructions, to the managers and they consulted the Board of Education. Mr. Morgan responded immediately; first by writing that 'if my children will not be out at 11.30 I shall be in the School for them . . . As far as waiting for the Managers meeting non-conformists are not represented and cannot expect justice done to them by the so called Managers'; then by meeting the children outside the school and telling them not to attend morning school until they were allowed to leave for religious instruction. All this drama took place on 25 October 1904 and on the next day sixty children were absent. By 7 November seventy children were withdrawn. When Mr. Morgan came to the school on 11 November to ask whether a reply had arrived from the Board of Education, the log book recorded that the headmaster could not give the required information; though 'My assistants had heard about a reply several days ago through the Canon's butler, who is his clerk'. Canon Davys' retaliation, in the face of what seems to have been defeat, came on 23 January 1905: 'Master announced that only "church" children and those who have not been withdrawn from Scripture could belong to the Shoe and Clothing Club in future, by order of the Canon'. But it was not until 21 March in response to yet another letter from Mr. Morgan that 'the Canon announced to the children that they could now be withdrawn from Religious Instruction if their parents sent a note to the Managers'. On 10 April, after the headmaster had sent 'to Canon Davys for instructions', twenty-three children were allowed to go to the Village Hall. On succeeding days more children were withdrawn until on 2 May the last entry in the log book comments that sixty-seven children were withdrawn and that the Scripture Report was excellent!

It may well have been the atmosphere generated by such a conflict which explains why there was such a high turnover of assistant teachers at this time, six names being mentioned between 1894 and 1905. As well as the head and his assistant there was usually an assistant mistress, an ex-pupil teacher named Robert Seabrook and two or three pupil teachers. Sarah Dawes became sewing assistant in 1898, and appears in the photograph (Plate 27b). She is remembered by village residents for her beautiful sewing. The Infants

School also suffered from frequent changes of staff, having six headmistresses between 1898 and 1906, and a succession of pupil and assistant teachers. The number of children on the roll varied between 155 in 1898 and about eighty during 1905. Because of the overcrowding, frequently criticised by the H.M.I., the number of infants at school seems to have been kept below 120 after 1900, presumably by refusing admission to the very young and by pushing seven year olds into the Mixed School as soon as possible. The children, both infants and older pupils, often suffered from cold, damp and smells; trouble with the drains gave rise to smells between 1906 and 1909, and flooding was caused by blocked drains in 1909. The temperature on one day in January 1908 was only 31° F, just below freezing point, and so an oil stove was placed in the main room in addition to the fire. The H.M.I. reports often criticise the ventilation and low temperature, and there is mention of damp and plaster falling from the ceiling. It is not surprising that there are two instances of children having to leave school with 'incurable lung disease' to be found in the log book.

Mr. Henshaw, who had seen Harpenden British School through its few short years as a Board School, remained as headmaster during the transition to Council School. He retired after forty-three years service in December 1903 (Plate 29a). The school remained in Victoria Road until 1939, when a move was made to new buildings at Manland.

Following the 1902 Act the internal organisation of the Council and National schools remained much as it had done before the Act. They continued with their work in seven standards. From a scheme of work for 1904 to 1905, described in the log book of the girls' department of the Harpenden County Council School, it appears that the subjects studied, apart from the 3 Rs, were history, geography, physical training and needlework. Elementary science was taken with the lower standards, but this was replaced by nature study for the upper classes. Additional subjects taken by the older girls were laws of health and cookery, and later on brushwork was added to the list. New cookery and handicraft rooms were added to the Council School in 1908; facilities which were also used by the Church School. The annual inspection continued, but it was no longer the dreaded examination on which the amount of government aid depended. The change in atmosphere of the inspection is apparent in a 1910 report stating that the girls were 'very bright, happy and diligent and much has been done to make the curriculum more varied, interesting and profitable by modelling, games, simple dances and acted scenes from History'.

A feature of the school year in Edwardian times was the celebration of Empire Day, May 24th, when the children were reminded of their duty to their country. In 1910 the programme included the hymns 'My Country, 'tis of thee' and 'Land of my Fathers' sung by

the children; Col. Durnford spoke on the life and work of Robert Clive; and a talk was given 'about the late King Edward VII'. The programme closed with the National Anthem 'and three cheers for George V'. If the weather was fine the ceremony was held out of doors and then the Union Jack was hoisted in the playground; every year bunches of red, white and blue flowers were taken to school by the children. Empire Day was celebrated with gusto at Wheathampstead school until 1939.

The importance of regular attendance continued to be stressed by awarding prizes to those pupils who made perfect attendance. Anyone who completed five or more years unbroken attendance received a silver watch. Perhaps there are local people who still have one of these silver watches among their family treasures. At the Council School there were instances of girls achieving more than nine years' full attendance. One girl received 'a very handsome work basket' from the managers for this, and another was presented with a silver chain to go with her watch. To achieve this distinction was no mean feat when one considers the number of infectious illnesses recorded in the log books. The school leaving age at this time was fourteen, but some children stayed on another two years or more because in 1905 new regulations required potential teachers to remain in full-time secondary education until the age of sixteen. Bursaries were offered to encourage them to remain even longer, before attending training college or being appointed as a student (not pupil) teacher in an elementary school. However, in country areas, where only elementary schools were available, the old pupil teacher system lingered until after the First World War.

Before the 1902 Act there had been no clear distinction in the public system between what we now call primary and secondary education. The 1902 Act enabled Councils to create Secondary Schools, education at which started at eleven and continued long past the compulsory school leaving age. Hertfordshire began to operate a scholarship system and the Council School log book records the names of several girls who won scholarships to the High School at St. Albans, one of the first of these being Frances Grey, daughter of Edwin, who won a scholarship in 1902. She became a teacher and returned to her old school in 1907 as an assistant in the girls' department; after two years there she moved to the infants' department. From 1907 the free place system, whereby all secondary schools receiving money from the State had to give 25% of their places to pupils from elementary schools, was introduced. As there was not a 'grammar' type of school in the area until St. George's became voluntary aided in 1965, a certain number of children have always travelled, at different periods, to Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Luton or St. Albans for their secondary education.

Various welfare schemes were introduced in the years before the First World War. In 1907 the Government made medical inspections

compulsory in elementary schools. From the log of the girls' department of the Council School, it appears that the first medical inspection was made in 1908, when fifteen senior girls were examined by Dr. Frazer. 'Dirty heads' were a problem and persistent offenders were excluded from school; school nurses, or 'Nitty Norahs' as the children called them, supervised this aspect of medical care. From 1906 school meals could be provided by the local authority. Obviously children who lived at some distance from the school brought their own dinners; this is borne out by the logs when for instance in July 1903 seats were provided in the playground for these children. Forms to accommodate dinner children were granted by the County Council in 1914, but whether or not dinners were provided is not made clear. School dinners were provided in Wheathampstead from the mid-1930s; about Harpenden we do not know. On the other hand school milk was available to Harpenden children well before the national scheme was introduced. The Harpenden scheme, which provided milk to school children at 1d. per pint, was started in 1926 by Mr. F. Gingell, manager of Harpenden Dairies and a manager of the Council School. It was not until 1931 that the Ministry of Agriculture launched a campaign to induce children to drink more milk. Under this national scheme, children could buy one-third of a pint of milk for ½d.; did Harpenden mothers protest much at this increase?

FIRST WORLD WAR

The war affected local schools in many ways. One of the more obvious was the shortage of staff, for example woodwork lessons ceased when Mr. Jones, who was in charge of the manual centre, joined up. The shortage of manpower was general, and so special permission was given in some cases, for children under fourteen to leave school and go to work. Extra help was needed on farms and, in 1916 at least, the summer holiday was extended by a week so that children could help with the harvest. The children were advised to practise economies; in May 1917 the girls were given a lesson on the 'Shortage of Bread' and later a cookery demonstration on 'How to save Bread'. The main schools took over garden plots for growing vegetables which were distributed among the children. Times were so hard that the planting of whole seed potatoes was not allowed. The crop was grown from pieces of skin containing an eye. In the autumn of 1918, the Board of Education directed that time should be allowed for blackberry picking and during September the Church School children picked a total of twelve and a half hundredweight! The children were also encouraged to save money, and at the Council School some savings were transferred from the school bank to war certificates.

One aspect of the war which came to light from reading through the log books was the amount of work the children did in school to help the war effort. In October 1914 the girls used their knitting

lessons to make garments for the army, the whole school contributing towards the cost of the wool. By the end of November thirty-six pairs of socks and thirty belts had been made by the first class and these were sent, through Viscountess Hampden of Welwyn, to Hertfordshire soldiers at the Front. During the following winter knitting lessons were devoted to knitting socks and mittens for the Fleet. In January 1917, in response to an urgent appeal for woollens, the girls in the top two classes at the Council School completed eighty helmets and caps in one week! In October 1915 the girls spent their needlework lessons in making items for use in hospitals; triangular bandages, covers for jugs and basins (even the infants could make these), pillow slips, swabs, glass cloths and dusters were among items made by the girls. A Red Cross Guild was formed, the children subscribing weekly to provide the necessary funds for purchasing material, and then the completed items were sent off regularly to the Red Cross Society. During the winter of 1915 the parcels included ninety-six padded splints, and at Christmas the parcel included twenty mens' vests, each with 'a surprise packet of a pocket handkerchief and a packet of sweetmeats'.

In April 1916 the work of the Red Cross Guild was brought to a close 'as time must be devoted to needlework stitches and cutting out'. However, it seems that the local Red Cross could not do without the Guild's help, for parcels of old linen were sent to the school to be made up into requirements for the Napsbury Military Hospital and, of course, the girls did help and continued to do so for the duration of the War. Another serious entry in the log in July 1916 is 'making of shell dressings has been substituted for singing lessons and reading today in the top two classes as these are urgently needed'. Again the girls responded splendidly and by the end of term 480 shell dressings had been made.

The schools made frequent egg collections for wounded soldiers in hospital. During the summer of 1915 the Council School set aside one day a week 'for receiving gifts of kind or money in aid of sick soldiers at home, and fathers belonging to scholars and old school boys, who were now serving their country'. One week the gifts were of garden produce and cakes, which were sent to the local military hospital on the site of Abbeyfield, 28 Milton Road; another week the appeal was for cigarettes and matches for 'old boys now in the trenches', as a result of which nine parcels were sent off to either Egypt or France. Household linen, soap, notepaper, pencils and cigarettes were sent by the Council School children to Napsbury Military Hospital during 1916 and at the end of July twenty wounded soldiers were brought to Harpenden from the hospital where they were entertained by thirty-two of the senior boys and girls. Gifts of flowers, fruit and food were given by children and staff, and afterwards 'The men said they had had a royal time'.

Private Schools

Hardenwick preparatory school for boys was founded in the mid-1890s by Miss M. Sibley in a house on the corner of Wordsworth Road. At first the boys, numbering about twenty, used the playing fields and chapel at St. George's School (see p. 275). In 1898, however, the school moved to a new site off Townsend Road, with three acres of playing fields. In 1909 Miss Sibley sold the school and the new owner leased it to a Mr. Everett, who ran it with an assistant master and mistress and about thirty pupils. Ten years later Mr. H. B. Evington became headmaster and bought the freehold.

By 1923 there were sixty boys and new buildings were constructed. The prospectus for 1929 declares: 'The aim of the school is not only to prepare boys for the Public Schools but also to develop character and keep the boys fit and well, by attention to good feeding, rest and exercise. We try to train boys to be mentally alert, and open-minded, and as they grow older, to develop initiative, self-dependence and a spirit of adventure'. In addition to following the requirements of the Common Entrance examinations for Public Schools, the curriculum included the study of current news and the cultivation of an interest in scientific progress and business life. The fees for all this were thirty-six guineas a term.

Through the Second World War H. B. Evington remained as headmaster, his son, who joined the staff in 1937, being absent on active service. In 1940 a special Summer Term was worked, to keep pupils at a safe distance from air raids. After the war, Mr. J. Evington rejoined the staff, becoming joint head in 1952. His father retired in 1960, at which time there were sixty boarding and some day pupils. In 1966 the school moved to Sandridgebury and later closed.

Aldwickbury school was founded as Lea House in 1937 by Mr. Castle, the first headmaster. There were ten boys and the school was situated on the corner of Ox Lane and Westfield Road. During the war, Mr. Castle was called up and a Mr. Topham was in charge until Mr. Castle and another former master, Mr. Chidell, returned to become partners in running the school. In 1948 the move to Aldwickbury was made. The large country house standing in twenty acres was an ideal site and the school gradually expanded to take 180 boys including forty boarders by 1960, when Mr. Castle died and Mr. Chidell became sole head. In 1969 the ownership was transferred to an Educational Trust controlled by a Board of Governors.

St. Hilda's private school for girls is still in existence. It was founded in about 1890 and occupied a house in Rothamsted Avenue before moving to the present premises in Douglas Road in the early 1900s. It prepared girls for the entrance examinations for the Girls' Public Schools and later for the 11+ examination for Grammar school. **Moreton End** was founded in 1933 in Luton Road, for boys.

There were several other small schools, mainly for girls, which have long since disappeared. At **Bowers House**, in the late nineteenth century, Dr. Spackman's daughter, Alice, who was educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College, started a school which eventually had forty to fifty pupils up to the age of thirteen. The girls usually went on to St. Albans High School at this age. A former pupil recalls that old Mrs. Spackman could be heard walking about the house tapping with her stick. In the appropriate season she would sometimes say, 'Alice, the children may now have five minutes in the raspberries!' and the children were then allowed to pick and eat as many as they liked in the allotted time. When, one day, a girl wrapped up her share of the picking in a rhubarb leaf to take home to her parents, she was reprimanded for greed, a sad misunderstanding.

Two select girls' schools in existence in the 1900s were **Oriel House School**, in Milton Road, and **St. Helena's** at 40 Luton Road. The latter was large enough to have a hockey team; they played against St. Albans High School. Both catered for middle-class girls who would not be following careers, but lived genteelly at home, until marriage claimed them. St. Helena's was known not to admit the daughters of tradesmen, but these outcasts of polite society were permitted to attend **Rivermead School** nearby.

ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLING: ST. DOMINIC'S

Before there was a Roman Catholic school in Harpenden, Roman Catholics were recommended by their priest to send their children to St. Nicholas' School. However, in 1919 the Roman Catholic parish priest, Canon Longstaff, asked some Dominican Sisters to open a small girls' school. The first building to be used was Bowers Cottage, standing where the Abbey National Building Society office now is. When this cottage became too small in 1924, the school moved to the building which is now Harpenden Hall. Day pupils and boarders were taken and numbers continued to increase. In 1931 Harpenden Hall was sold to the Urban District Council and St. Dominic's moved a short distance along Southdown Road, to Welcombe (now the Moat House Hotel) where twelve acres of ground were available. Extensions were built and the school expanded further, accommodating numbers of evacuees during the Second World War.

In 1946 the school was reorganised as a primary school, and shortly afterwards ceased to offer boarding facilities. In 1955, with 260 children on the roll, it was decided to build a new primary school which could have Voluntary Aided status. Some land along Southdown Road was sold for housing, and the proceeds helped towards the considerable cost (£78,000) of the new building. There was no grant for this building from the Local Education Authority as it was not part of the county schools building programme, although there was some contribution from the L.E.A. towards the cost of the canteen and medical room. The new building was opened in September 1964

and the building fund that was started to clear the debt had achieved its objectives by 1971. In 1973 a new Infants school was opened.

Until the 1930s Roman Catholic children in Wheathampstead went to the Anglican school. They were allowed to sit out in a classroom during assembly and scripture lessons, reading their own religious books. Later they went by bus to Harpenden.

ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

The main buildings of St. George's were erected in 1886, for the Reverend R. H. Wix who brought his school from Brampton, for £7,220, and had accommodation for 100 boys. The chapel was added in 1890. In 1904 Mr. Wix retired from teaching to become assistant curate at St. Nicholas' Church. The school buildings were occupied for a short time by the United Services College, from Westward Ho! Devon, but reverted back to become St. George's School again in January 1907, under the Reverend Cecil Grant (Plate 29b). Cecil and Lucy Grant put their ideas on co-education into practice in Keswick, and came to Harpenden after eight years' experience there. 'Co-education is not only practicable . . . but . . . the one and only true method of education . . . the perfect school should be a school of all classes . . . the best way to obtain University Scholarships is to leave the more promising pupils from the age of 15 without class-teaching, training them to rely upon the printed book'. [*St. George's School*, p. 64].

When he opened St. George's in 1907, about two-thirds of the fifty-nine pupils were boarders. Grant and his wife had left Keswick because there was no chapel there, and because he felt he needed 'freedom from the shackles of the Board of Education and the Local Education Authority'. He brought his staff and the boarding pupils with him to Harpenden. Soon the accommodation became too small and Carlton House nearby was purchased and renamed Crosthwaite; this is now the site of a block of flats, Crosthwaite Court. In 1910 Cecil Grant raised money to buy the main school buildings for £14,000. He was very interested in Montessori teaching methods, and was responsible for the setting up of a Montessori school in Harpenden in 1913. Several famous people have visited the school: Dr. Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury, preached there in 1910; Dr. Montessori visited in 1919; and Dr. Albert Schweitzer gave a 'memorable address on his medical mission in Africa, and played Bach on our newly enlarged organ' in 1928.

The school narrowly survived the 'economic blizzard of the late 20s and 30s' with help from parents and generous friends. There was further financial decline through the 1950s and early 1960s, when the State Schools were rapidly improving. In 1965 St. George's became a Voluntary Aided School, providing free places for children of grammar school ability. Currently (1975) the school is to become a five-form entry all-ability school, completely integrated within the State system but retaining boarding places for children in need of this facility.

The Second World War and Developments in the State Education System

It is only possible to describe in outline developments in the last half century, mentioning the building of new State schools but looking more closely at the period of the Second World War. The school system was severely tested then but managed to take important steps forward.

In 1932 a new senior school, situated on the site of the present St. Helens J.M.I. School, was opened in Wheathampstead for children aged eleven to fourteen. The building was rather insubstantial and resembled a 'pre-fabricated' one, but it must have seemed a palace after the frustrations of the little old flint school, overcrowded for two generations. There was a large assembly hall, three classrooms, a science room, staff and cloakrooms and a headmaster's study. A handicraft centre was built nearby in 1935 and opened by the Bishop of St. Albans. From the early 1930s the senior children had travelled to St. Albans for domestic science, metalwork and woodwork lessons, though before the First World War metalwork and woodwork had been done in a building in the church grounds. One of Lord Cavan's daughters used to teach the boys wood carving. The school badge, three wheat ears with a cross superimposed, bore the motto Courtesy, Culture and Courage. The headmaster, Mr. W. J. Housden, was much respected during his thirty years as headmaster at Wheathampstead; he was a keen gardener and worked with the boys in the school garden, where vegetables were grown to add variety to the school meals.

The opening of the Manland Schools which replaced the Victoria Road School, almost coincided with the outbreak of World War II (Plate 32a). A campaign for a new school in Harpenden had been started as far back as 1919, when the three departments (boys, girls and infants) were reorganised into a Senior and Junior Mixed School. In the late 1920s land was bought on Manland Common, but it was not until the spring of 1938 that building finally got under way. By the end of the summer of 1939 the new buildings were complete. With the declaration of war there was a good deal of uncertainty as to whether or not the new schools should open for the autumn term. The managers were worried about the lack of air raid shelter but the County Council did not plan to have shelters and stated that in the event of air attacks, the schools were to be closed.

At the Church School the new head, Lewis Simpkin, found on taking up his duties on 4 September that his school was closed until further notice and that he had to help with the Government Evacuation Scheme. The staff and pupils of three London County Council Schools, the Hugh Myddleton Central School from Clerkenwell, Crondall Street School from Shoreditch, and Medburn School from

Somerstown were sent to Harpenden, and another London school, the Argyle Street School, Kings Cross, was evacuated to Wheathampstead. Arrangements had to be made for the schooling of the London children with that of the local residents.

In Wheathampstead, the Argyle Street School headmaster shared Mr. Housden's study, and for some months half-day schooling took place. Then many of the London children returned home and those that remained were integrated in the ordinary routine of the school. There were difficulties due to the differing standards and habits of the urban and rural children and their teachers, and no doubt there was some degree of resentment and suspicion on both sides. Some lessons took place in air raid shelters in the school playing field.

At Harpenden the evacuees were sent to several centres within the locality, each area having its own billeting officer. While the schooling arrangements were being sorted out, the evacuees reported daily to their area Church Hall. Organised walks were arranged for them; an ex-evacuee remembers tramping in a crocodile across the fields to Redbourn on one of these expeditions, each child carrying his gas mask in its box. Eventually it was proposed that an alternate day system should be worked; the Harpenden children working in school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and the evacuees on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. On 21 September the Harpenden schools opened under this system. Thus it was that the long awaited Manland Schools opened without any form of ceremony. The alternate day system was not a success because of the unpopularity of school on Saturdays.

The plans for coping with the evacuees were frequently changed, but in time a system was evolved making use of all the available Church Halls and the old Victoria Road buildings. When there was a large number of evacuees from one school then that school was kept going as a separate unit. For example, the Medburn School occupied Victoria Road School while the Crondall Street School, which was billeted in north Harpenden, used the Church Hall at Kinsbourne Green. As the numbers of evacuees grew smaller, they were merged in with the local schoolchildren. The Crondall Street children merged with St. Mary's, Kinsbourne Green, and Manland Senior School took in the Hugh Myddleton Central School children and staff. However, enough Medburn children stayed throughout the war for the Victoria Road Schools to be kept open until June 1945. Two hundred and fifty evacuees from Hastings arrived during July 1940. The children were divided between St. Nicholas Church School and the High Street Methodist Church Hall, the two groups working as separate units. By the summer of 1942 the numbers had dwindled to twenty-five, and these children were merged into St. Nicholas School.

During the first winter of the war, there was more concern over heating at St. Nicholas than over Hitler and air raids. January 1940 was extremely cold. The log on 17 January reads 'The intense and

continuous cold which has persisted since school re-opened this term has made it impossible to raise the temperatures of the classrooms above 50°, although fires have been kept in all night and through the weekend'. Imagine the outcry today if classrooms were heated to only 50°! The cold spell was prolonged and in mid-February the headmaster put on record the splendid work of the caretaker, who in trying to keep the school running and free from frozen taps, had been working up to seventy hours a week since the beginning of term. Once during the winter of 1942 and again in 1945 the school had to be closed for a few days because of a shortage of coal; the school was still dependent on coal fires in 1955.

Air raid protection for St. Nicholas School is not mentioned in the log, until the spring of 1940, when two representatives from the County Surveyor's Department visited the school. Towards the end of May the headmaster received notice that 'certain necessary fire-fighting equipment' would be provided for the school. This appears to have been a stirrup pump for each building and these arrived on 20 June. The measures were only just completed in time, for the first air raid (recorded in the log) took place during the early hours of 25 June. The headmaster took the first 'full dress' air raid drill on 19 August, with gas mask drill and community singing. The Manland Schools had been having this sort of drill for some time, and perhaps it had been carried out too realistically for it provoked a letter to the *Harpenden Free Press* from a parent, complaining of the effect it had had upon his highly strung eight year old. At St. Nicholas, an ex-evacuee remembers that the girls' shelter was in a lobby just inside the girls' entrance, which was the one in Rothamsted Avenue, now bricked over. The lobby had had its ceiling reinforced and was sand-bagged. At the Kinsbourne Green school it was more casual. 'They just blew a whistle and we all went outside', we were told, and another ex-pupil remembers scrambling under the table and desks. In the Church School log the time of each warning was recorded and so we can see that the school routine was interrupted almost every day by wailing sirens and visits to the shelters. On 12 September the headmaster wrote in the log 'Attendance rather lower this week because of nightly A.R. alarms since Saturday, lasting from 8 or 9 p.m. to 4 or 5 a.m. The air attacks on North London and the anti-aircraft defence have been both audible and visible, resulting in many children being kept away. Most of those who do attend are sleepy, restless or both, and consequently work is suffering considerably'. Thus Harpenden and Wheathampstead children experienced the Battle of Britain; alerts sometimes lasted hours.

On the afternoon of 3 October 'at about 2.40 p.m. an enemy machine dropped a number of small bombs in Harpenden about ¾ mile from the school'. The headmaster was rather annoyed with the A.R.P. authorities over this because 'no warnings were sounded although the machine circled round for nearly an hour'. There was

further bombing in Harpenden on a night raid on 21 October. Later that month the headmaster received notice that the classroom windows were to be treated with strips of brown adhesive paper two inches wide, as protection against splintering. 'This method is not recommended by the A.R.P. authorities', he complained in the log, 'but *it is all* the County Council are prepared to do, wire netting being unobtainable'. In November 1940 a further ninety-five yards of blackout material was received and made into curtains by the staff so that the caretaker could light the fires during the blackout time on winter mornings. With the extension of 'summer-time' throughout the year, morning school began at 9.30 throughout the winter months.

By the spring of 1941, the interruptions caused by air raid warnings had ceased and school settled down to a normal routine, although difficulties over staff shortages and evacuees continued. Occasionally there was an interesting diversion like the time when troops slept in the school and 'occupied the greater part of the playground during the day. Work was consequently somewhat disorganised. I allowed the C.S.M. to give the older boys a talk on modern infantry weapons — Bren, Thompson and anti-tank guns'. Air raid warnings were not mentioned again in the log except in the summer of 1944, when the entry for 21 July reads: 'Since about a month ago when the enemy began using flying bombs, the children have been taken to the strengthened lobbies and corridors on the sounding of the A.R.W. This fortunately has not meant much dislocation of work until today, when the warning periods have been 8–10 a.m., 10.15 to 11.5 and 12.30 to 2.15 p.m.'

In July 1940 the headmaster of St. Nicholas wrote to the County Council about the possibility of a school canteen. The matter was taken up, though called by the grander name of a Dinner Club. After some delays a new kitchen was built and on 23 January 1941 the Club served its first meals to 125 children, 57 local and 68 evacuees. As in the first war gardening was encouraged. The headmaster received permission to introduce it into the timetable for the older children in February 1941, and he decided that they should devote their energies to raising salad crops for the Dinner Club. Manland School had acquired a three-quarter acre allotment opposite the school in 1940 and this was used for gardening. The children contributed enthusiastically to National Savings campaigns. In 1942 a Warships week was held and a half-day's holiday was given to all Harpenden children in recognition of their effort in saving £3,000. The following year it was a 'Wings for Victory' week and the St. Nicholas School and parents raised over £144 — almost £1 for each child in the school. Another similarity with the First World War was the organised picking of blackberries. St. Nicholas School handed theirs over to their canteen. Rose hips were also collected.

It is to the credit of the authorities that despite the war, regular checks were made on the children's teeth, hair and general health.

An important 'first' occurred on 23 June 1941: 'The first injection of diphtheria immunisation was given to 106 children'. Educational developments also continued. The headmaster attended a meeting to encourage films in schools and there is reference to the use of B.B.C. broadcast lessons. In March 1943 the First Annual Harpenden Schools Festival was held with competitive classes in music, drama and folk dancing. Another important 'first' took place at St. Nicholas School in July 1943 when 'a meeting of parents was held this evening to discuss the formation of a Parent-Teacher Association. Mr. J. H. Newsom, County Education Officer, addressed a large gathering of parents and managers' and then in the truly British manner 'A committee for the P.T.A. was elected'.

It is not without significance that the Act which laid the foundations for all the progress in education during the last third of a century was passed in wartime. We cannot attempt to tell the history of these three decades. There has been a further tremendous expansion of Harpenden's population. Moreover, during the 1950s and early 1960s the birth rate in most Hertfordshire towns, including Harpenden, was rising. These increases have led to the appearance of a large number of new school buildings with their typical modern architecture. Large windows and, often, open-plan interiors give today's primary schoolchildren a very different environment from their predecessors. Only St. Nicholas J.M.I. School (formerly Harpenden National School) is still on the same site as it was a hundred years ago (Plate 31). The original main schoolroom is used as an assembly hall and new modern buildings have been added, although the school will always be a small one, because the site does not allow for much expansion. Wheathampstead children continued to attend the school at Bury Green until 1969, when the new St. Helen's J.M.I. School was opened.

The British schools, after becoming the Board School in Victoria Road, finally evolved into the Manland J.M.I. and Manland Secondary School. Bowling Alley (later St. John's) School was absorbed into the Grove J.M. and Grove Infants' School; and Kinsbourne Green School into Roundwood J.M.I. School.

Many other new schools have been built to meet the demands of the growing population (see Calendar). There is no doubt that the pupils in school today have benefited enormously from the greater understanding of children's development and psychology that the twentieth century has brought. Particularly in the primary schools they are allowed to be themselves, rather than expected to be small versions of adults, wage earners in miniature, as was a common attitude a hundred years ago. However, education is still a controversial topic in Harpenden and Wheathampstead, and the schools, which are living, growing entities, will continue to change, to meet the pressures of society, giving scope to the historians of the future who, we hope, will wish to continue this account!

Appendix TEN

REGULATIONS FOR WHEATHAMPSTEAD SUNDAY SCHOOL

REGULATIONS FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL TO BE SUPPORTED BY AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION AT WHEATHAMPSTEAD, ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 23RD 1800

No children to be admitted under 9 years of age (except such as are able to read) having decent clothing, and being recommended by a subscriber.

A master to be provided for the boys and a mistress for the girls, the former to have a salary of two shillings, the latter a salary of eighteen pence per week.

The children to be provided with Bibles or Testaments, Prayer Books and such religious tracts as shall be approved of by the Minister.

Hours of attendance to be in the forenoon from nine to half past ten o'clock in the winter and from half past eight to ten o'clock in summer and from two to three in the afternoon both Summer and Winter, those who live more than one mile from the Church to be excused attendance in the afternoon in Winter.

A Dinner to be given to the Children on Christmas Day.

Such children who neglect to attend the school at the above mentioned hours and the Church during the time of Divine Service to be publicly reprimanded by the Minister and excluded from the Dinner on Christmas Day and if very irregular in their attendance or behaviour to be expelled (from) the school — their books taken away.

Such rewards as shall be approved of by a majority of subscribers to be given to the most deserving.

The Minister constantly to superintend the instruction of the children, assisted by such of the subscribers as shall be willing to attend.

A fire in the vestry in cold weather.

The children to produce all the books that have been given to them whenever called upon by a subscriber to do so.

A copy of the above regulations with the names of the subscribers to be fixed upon the Church Door. [H.C.R.O.]

Appendix ELEVEN

APPEAL FOR HARPENDEN BRITISH SCHOOL

Harpenden, July 1847

It having been considered that the means at present existing for educating the poorer classes in the Parish are inadequate for the purpose, a meeting was called to consider the practicability of establishing a school, when it was unanimously resolved that a day school on the principles of the British and Foreign Schools Society would be most suitable, as affording the means of instruction to the greatest number of Parishioners; the undersigned were appointed as a Committee to carry out the resolutions of the meeting and you will shortly be called upon by some of its members who will solicit a donation in aid of the Building Fund and an annual subscription, towards the support of the school.

J. B. Lawes	J. Curtis	F. R. Spackman
H. Addington	F. Kingston	J. House

Appendix TWELVE

Code of 1862; by Standards

(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR ANNUAL EXAMINATION

READING

(i) Narrative monosyllables.
(ii) One of the narratives next in order after monosyllables in a reading book used in the school.
(iii) Short paragraph from a reading book used in the school.
(iv) Short paragraph from a more advanced reading book used in the school.
(v) A few lines of poetry from a reading book used in the First Class of the school.
(vi) Short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper or other modern narrative.

WRITING

(i) Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, capital, small and manuscript letters.
(ii) Copy in manuscript character a line of print.
(iii) A sentence from the same paragraph slowly read once and then dictated in single words.
(iv) A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book, but not from the paragraph read.
(v) A sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book used in the First Class of the school.
(vi) Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.

ARITHMETIC

(i) Form on blackboard or slate, from dictation, figures up to 20; name at sight figures up to 20; add and subtract figures up to 10, orally, from examples on the blackboard.
(ii) A sum in simple addition or subtraction, and the multiplication table.
(iii) A sum in any simple rule as far as short division, inclusive.
(iv) A sum in compound rules (money).
(v) A sum in compound rules (common weights and measures).
(vi) A sum in practice or bills of parcels.

PASS STANDARD

Reading intelligible, dictation legible and common words rightly spelt, arithmetic right in method and at least one sum correct.

(b) CHANGING GRANT REQUIREMENTS AND CURRICULUM

1862–71

Three Rs in Standards and Girls' needlework, compulsory.

In 1867 Grant also offered for 'Specific Subjects' — grammar, history, geography, etc.

1871–5

Standard requirements raised one Standard.

Standard VI now 'writing short theme or letter or easy paraphrase; sums in proportion, and vulgar and decimal fractions'; metric system for Standards V and VI.

Specific-subject list widely extended (but irrelevant to rural schools) — grant on individual passes.

Higher Grant rate for Infants if 'taught as separate Department in a room properly constructed and furnished'.

Military drill. Singing — deduction for lack of, 1872; grant for, 1874.

1875–81

Previous 5s. on average attendance now 4s. flat + 1s. 'discipline and organisation'.

Class subjects — grammar, history, geography; maximum two — must be taught to all above Standard I if taught at all; Grant on general proficiency, not individual passes.
Specific - subject list further extended.
Standard V reproduce substance of story read in place of dictation.
Poetry compulsory for Standards IV – VI.
Further class subjects in 1880.
1882–90
Standard VII 'read passage from Shakespeare or Milton, etc., or from a History of England; write theme or letter; work sums in averages, percentages, discount or stocks.
Class subjects now include English (literature and grammar) — compulsory if any taken; and science. Singing Grant 1s. now sub-divided — 6d. by ear, 1s. by note.
1890 CODE
English no longer compulsory if any class subject taken; drawing compulsory for boys unless certified impracticable. Three R examination abolished.
1893
One class subject compulsory; 'varied occupations' recommended for Infants.
1895
Object Lessons compulsory for Standards I – III.
1900
Single principal Grant of 21s. or 22s. on average attendance; examination Grant for Class subjects abolished; specific Grant for practical subjects only.
[From *Devon Village Schools in the Nineteenth Century* by R. R. Sellman]

Appendix THIRTEEN

OBJECT LESSONS FOR 1897

1. An animal.
2. Different kinds of animal.
3. Habits and uses of domestic animals.
4. Habits and uses of wild animals.
5. A fish.
6. Habits and uses of fish.
7. An insect.
8. Different kinds of insects.
9. Habits and uses of insects.
10. A bird.
11. Different kinds of birds.
12. Habits and uses of birds.
13. A vegetable.
14. Different kinds of vegetable.
15. Various uses of vegetables.
16. A flower.
17. Kinds and uses of flowers.
18. Fruits.
19. A mineral.
20. Different kinds of minerals.
21. Various uses of minerals.
22. How different minerals are formed and how obtained.
23. The Railway.
24 The Post Office.

Appendix FOURTEEN

HARPENDEN BRITISH SCHOOL REGULATIONS

Boys' and Girls' School:	Morning	..... 9 a.m. to 12 noon
School hours (Minimum)	Afternoon	... 2 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.
Infants' School	Morning	..... 9.10 a.m. to 12 noon
	Afternoon	... 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

SCHOOL REGULATIONS

1. Scholars are required to be punctual in their attendance. *This is essential* both for the Scholars' own sakes, and for the regular conduct of the School. Scholars may not leave School before the usual hour for dismissal.
2. In accordance with the Bye-Laws, every Scholar is required to attend School *during the whole time* for which the School is open for instruction, including the day of the Annual Inspection.
3. The only recognised excuses for non-attendance are 'sickness or an unavoidable cause', of which information in writing should be sent by the Parent.
4. Every Scholar who is absent without leave, or who is late for School, will be fined one halfpenny which must be paid next morning.
5. Repeated cases of being wilfully absent or late will, in addition to the fine, render a Scholar liable to punishment lessons, detention, or to corporal punishment.
6. Home Lessons and Exercises should be thoroughly prepared.
7. School Fees are due (in advance) weekly for the whole period that a Scholar's name is on the Registers. The fees must be paid punctually every Monday morning.
8. Scholars are required to be neat in dress, and clean in person. They must always be attentive, obedient, and respectful to their Teachers.
9. It is convenient that one month's notice should be given before removing a Scholar from the School.

TO PARENTS

Parents are reminded that the progress of the Scholars depends very much upon the way in which the efforts of the Teachers are seconded by judicious influence at home.

It will be understood by Parents sending their children to the British Schools that they accept the above School Regulations.

By order of the Managers,

EDWd. DURNFORD,
Hon. Secretary, &c.

Harpenden,
13th March, 1891.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD and HARPENDEN

their history is being told in a series of booklets
the first two are

I **The Settlement of Wheathampstead and Harpenden (1973), 30p**

II **New Men and a New Society: the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries (1974), 50p**

III **Church and Chapel (1975), 50p**

Two other booklets published recently by the Harpenden and St. Albans branches of the Workers' Educational Association are:

Harpenden: a picture history (1973), 50p

About Wheathampstead (1974), 50p

All these booklets are still available

In Harpenden they are on sale at

Brading & Harmer, 1 Station Road

Button Bros. Ltd., 48 High Street

Hockadays, 122 High Street

Thorn's, 3 High Street

and at the

Public Library, Vaughan Road

In Wheathampstead they are on sale at

Busby's, Collins Antiques

In St. Albans they are on sale at

The Tourist Information Centre

Alban Books, Catherine Street

Verulamium Museum

£2.00