

**A Short History
of Benington School**

1872-1972

A SHORT HISTORY OF BENINGTON SCHOOL

The following are a few extracts from the School Log Books looking back over the past century. They have been chosen because it is felt that they show how much school life has changed in the past 100 years and yet, in others ways, how little we have changed.

Some of the entries are amusing, although I doubt if that was the intention when they were written, and many show how hard life must have been by today's standards.

I am sure you will find them interesting and if you are an old pupil of the school, I hope the memories stirred will be happy ones.

- 1872 Bennington National School. Building completed.
- 1873 *Jan 6th* Miss Amelia Davis admitted 72 children. During the ensuing week 6 more children started.
- May 14th* HM Inspector paid his first visit to the School.
- 1875 Number on roll - 98.
- 1877 *June 1st* IIMI Report includes "There is useful work in this school. No talking, however, should be allowed in the classes."
- 1878 *Feb* Attendance registers 101.
- 1880 *Aug 6th* A holiday given today for the Children's School Feast.
- 1881 *Dec* Told the children the amount of school pence they are to bring on Monday, the Managers having made some alteration in the payment.
- 1882 *Jan 9th* Mrs --- and Mrs --- came to complain of being unable to pay 6d per week school money.
- Jan 16th* Sent two children home not having brought the right amount of money to school.
- May 22nd* 103 children on roll.
- 1884 *June* Attendance - 119.
- July 11th* Half holiday for Bennington Fair Day. Rector visited and most kindly gave each child in attendance on that day a piece of money to spend at the Fair.
- 1885 *April 6th* Poor attendance probably caused by the fact that today is Easter Monday and an almost general holiday is observed.

- 1885 *April 20th* Regular attendance tickets to be issued weekly with a small prize given to the holder of a dozen tickets.
- April 29th* The scholars who had attended night school were examined.
- May 8th* Children were rather noisy and were detained until 4.30 pm as a punishment.
- May 11th* Admitted --- aged three years. 132 on roll.
- Dec 11th* Rector distributed Soup tickets to the children of poor parents.
- 1886 *April 29th* Took extra singing lesson today preparing children for a concert tonight.
- June 10th* --- aged 12 years has been absent for six weeks. His father thinks him old enough to leave.
- 1887 *June 21st* Today being the day set apart for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's accession, no school was held.
- 1888 *March 5th* Received today a large package of new and beautiful books, bought with the proceeds of the Christmas Concert and intended as the foundation of a 'Children's Library' (30 books).
- Nov 2nd* Attendance this week has been the best recorded since the school was built. (Average 111.9.) Distributed sweets in both Infants and Mixed Schools as a memento of the event. Number on register 129.
- Nov 21st* Girls given extra sewing afternoon in order to help with the garments for the Christmas Tree.
- 1889 *Feb 11th* School closed because heavy snow made travelling on roads and
-14th across fields out of the question.

- 1889 *July 31st* The children, arranged in two groups, were photographed today.
- 1890 *Nov 7th* The wind being so very blustery today it was found necessary to let out the fires, the smoke, soot and even ashes being blown out of the grates.
- Dec 2nd* The Rector very kindly sent down some soup and a piece of bread for each child this dinner-time. (This happened several times during this winter.)
- 1891 *April 30th* 130 on roll.
- 1893 *Jan 2nd* The family of ---, having been admitted to the Workhouse, had their names removed from the Register.
- 1894 *Jan 8th* "The frost is most severe, even the ink in the cupboard being frozen." 116 on roll.
- April 2nd* Letter sent to Inspector of Nuisances complaining of nuisance at the school caused by a pigsty placed against the wall.
- July 20th* Parallel Bars finished this week and gravel put round bars, Giant's Stride and swings.
- 1895 *May 20th* 140 on roll.
- Oct 25th* Attendance fearfully low. Acorns, walnuts and chestnuts the attraction.
- 1896 *Jan 29th* The Rector kindly gave a Magic Lantern to children with regular attendance. The slides exhibited were of Windsor Castle and neighbourhood and some mechanical comics.
- April 17th* The school entrance has been altered. It and part of the playground have been excavated, levelled and well-gravelled.

- 1896 June** Under a new ruling it is no longer necessary to receive a Labour Certificate if leaving school after the school leaving age.
- 1897 June 18th** Two days holiday in connection with Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.
- 1898 Sep** 134 on roll.
- Nov** New door to infants room and lobby extension.
- 1899 March 2nd** Six children recited Merchant of Venice on Monday last to the rest of the class, each taking the part of a character. They managed it fairly well. A second set will be tried, probably next Monday.
- March 17th** Absentees report sent to Mr Peck (Attendance Officer). It contained no less than 33 names of children who need sharp looking up.
- April** 142 on roll.
- Nov 3rd** On Thursday afternoon it was so dull and the light so bad that the lads could scarcely see to draw. Moisture was trickling down the wall.
- 1900 March 1st** Word was brought that General Buller had relieved Ladysmith. Half holiday given and the Master and Rector played football with the boys in the afternoon in the Rector's meadow.
- July 2nd** Older Scholars room is now crowded being filled quite up to its accommodation. Our desks will not seat more than 78. As floor space is limited the formation of ring classes is difficult.
- July 25th** Schoolroom thermometer read 87 1/2 F with every door and window open.

- 1900 *Oct 22nd* Military Physical Exercises. Boys will try this year 'With Arms'. Girls Musical Drill to be tried this year without Wands.
- 1903 *Oct 7th* Drill taken as an experiment from 2.55-3.25 pm. Sometimes between 3.25 and 3.55 pm a number of spectators with young children gather and I find it always distracts attention. Probably if taken earlier in the afternoon we shall escape it.
- Nov 19th* Boys had been seen smoking. Wrote notes to parents pointing out the grave evil and necessity of stopping it.
- 1904 As from May of this year a half holiday was given once a month providing attendances had been over 90%.
- Dec 21st* The Clothing Club money was disbursed in the usual manner, viz each scholar received a ticket for his deposit and interest. £25 15s 2d belonging to the Penny Bank was paid away and £5 15s 4d transferred to the Post Office Savings Bank. Less has been withdrawn this year and more deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank.
- 1905 *Feb 15th* Breathing exercises were taken in school. I might here mention that we devote five minutes most mornings to this important branch of our work.
- March 2nd* The Attendance Officer called today but there were no cases of poor attendance to report (over the first few years of the School's life the Attendance Officer had a busy time chasing up poor attenders and some cases were taken to court).
- May 15th* Girls started a course of cookery lessons in the Parochial Hall. Two lessons weekly.
- May 24th* Empire Day. Half holiday after lessons about the growth of the Empire.

- 1905 *June 2nd* The School Library. During the Winter Session 315 books have been lent to regular scholars. The scholars have well appreciated the loan of the books and I consider the library an important factor in the educational work of the school.
- Dec 11th* Social Clubs. During the year about £38 has been paid into the Penny Bank and Clothing Club. Interest will be added in each case. The Clothing Club members receive additional sums in accordance with a scale which is based upon regularity of attendance. These Clubs are valuable parts of our school work, fostering as they do both thrift and regularity of attendance.
- 1906 *Nov 30th* --- will receive a medal for 4 years perfect attendance.
- 1907 *March 23rd* In future school will be described as Bennington Church of England School.
- Dec 6th* Today received 5 new dual desks. The school is now complete and has a modern appearance. Compared with the old long type desk these new ones are a decided advantage.
- 1908 *Feb 14th* A 'Paper-Chase' was organised for the boys and they much enjoyed a 10 to 12 mile run. 110 on roll in May.
- 1909 *Feb 17th* The children of the first class are much interested in letters received from children in the public school at Napance, Ontario, Canada. Replies have been written during Composition lessons this week.
- April 7th* Reports for Easter Term were given out this afternoon.
- July 22nd* Cycle accident involving a girl from the school and Unqualified Assistant.
- Oct 29th* --- (3 children) were absent yesterday. They had to appear before the Stevenage Magistrates on a charge of stealing apples.

- 1909 Dec 22nd** Two girls received silver watches for making 5 years perfect attendance. (Over the next few years there were several such presentations made.)
- 1910**
- May 20th** Being the day of the King's Funeral (King Edward VII) the school was closed.
- June 17th** Two 1st class girls absent this afternoon and from notes sent by their mothers I gather that they are illegally employed - picking up tennis balls!
- June 30th** The end of the school year. At the suggestion of the Local Authority the Managers have decided to change the Education Year. It will now terminate at the Summer Holidays.
- 1911 March 20th** Lesson given to the whole school on the Census.
- Sep 12th** During the holiday the gallery has been removed from the Infants Room and new dual desks supplied. New curtains have also been fitted in the school room.
- Sep 22nd** During the week a flagstaff has been erected in the playground and a flag has been presented to the school by Mrs Hargreaves.
- Nov 10th** School gardening starts for boys 11 years of age and over.
- 1912 April 17th** Children brought pieces of glass and candles today and during playtime smoked the glass. At 10.50 am they marched into the playground for a short lesson on the solar eclipse.
- May 24th** Empire Day. The older children gave an Empire Dialogue, the Union Jack was run up and saluted. 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the King' were sung and a half holiday allowed in the afternoon.

- 1912 *Oct 4th* The flag was flown all day today for perfect attendance.
- 1913 *Jun 20th* Six apple and six pear trees received from the County Council for the school garden. They were planted today.
- Nov 4th* Headmaster gave a Lantern Lesson to about 60 senior scholars and parents on 'Enemies of the Gardener' in the evening. (This was first of several lantern 'lessons' on different topics.)
- 1914 *Sep 8th* Owing to the disorganisation of the Railways consequent on the mobilization of the Army immediately following the outbreak of war, many people postponed their holidays with the result that several children are still away from home.
- Dec 18th* Prize distribution was concluded with the singing of a verse of each of the French, Belgian, Russian, Japanese and British National Anthems.
- 1915 *March 14th* 67 on roll.
- 1916 *Jan 11th* During the holiday I have made arrangements for the girls to make a number of flannel vests and shirts, also socks, mittens and mufflers for the Red Cross. The local committee has supplied 12 lb wool and 40 yards of flannel for the purpose.
- May* Children under 5 years of age were no longer admitted to school.
- June 22nd* A balloon descended in a meadow near the school at 1 pm. A number of children naturally ran off to see it. The balloon was packed by about 1.45 pm; the children then fell into line in the meadow and I marched them back to school.
- July 10th* Today being the usual Bennington Fair Day a half holiday was given although there was no fair held.

- 1916 *Nov 15th* During the dinner hour today I supplied the children staying at school for dinner with a large bowl of soup each, charging them 1d. I have been much distressed to find that many of these children are not properly fed, owing partly to the mothers being out at work and partly to the extremely high cost of living. The only food brought for the midday meal by the majority of the children consists of bread, spread not at all liberally with margarine. Careful enquiries have also shown me that a hot meal is a very rare thing indeed with most of them, and meat in any form even rarer. I propose to prepare soup on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays charging 1d for about 1 pint during the winter months.
- 1917 *May 2nd* During the winter months soup, hot vegetables and puddings have been provided for a total of over 900 children. The total cost has been approximately £7 10s, towards which the children have contributed about £3 10s. The balance has been made up by donations from local gentlemen.
- July* For some time I have observed that some of the children appear very tired and sleepy. Many are still out playing at 10'clock, even infants. The older children often stay up to watch the searchlights which, at the present time, do not appear til about 11'clock.
- 1917 *Oct 20th* About 18 cwt of chestnuts hve been collected by the scholars and sent to the Ministry of Munitions.
- Nov 16th* 25 cwt of acorns have been collected by the children in response to the request from the Admiralty.
- 1918 *Jan 16th* The coal supply for the school is very low indeed and owing to the state of roads (heavy snow) it is impossible for the carts to get through with fresh supplies ordered since June last.
- March 8th* 63 on books.

- 1918** *May 16th* A School Rabbit Club has been started with the idea of encouraging Food Production amongst the children themselves and then parents. A first lesson on Food production - Rabbits' will be given tomorrow.
- Sep 20th* 706 lb (6 cwt, 1 quarter, 6 lb) blackberries have been despatched
- Oct 3rd to the jam factory at Hitchin under the Government Scheme.
- Nov 12th* Half holiday given in afternoon to celebrate the signing of the Armistice.
- 1919** *Jan 10th* 56 on roll.
- May 2nd* This has been a very wet week. On one day many children had to be carried through the water to school.
- Nov 11th* I read the King's Proclamation just before 11 o'clock and we stood in silence to remember 'Our glorious Dead'.
- 1920** *Feb 3rd* I took the opportunity to talk to the whole school on dirt and disease. I found only about eight children who owned toothbrushes.
- Feb 20th* Received today the following items from the Parish Clerk to exhibit in school: 3 German Rifles, 1 helmet, 1 signalling pistol and 1 bayonet.
- Nov 5th* Local policeman called to see me this morning about boys whistling on their way home.
- Nov 23rd* Temperature in classroom at 9 am 34 F. Number on roll 68.
- 1921** *Feb 25th* Mr A Kitchener, a Government Surveyor in West Africa, an old boy of this school, called this morning and gave the top classes an interesting talk on that part of Africa.

- 1921 *June 17th* A Bott Esq has kindly promised the use of his motor car to drive the candidates for Scholarships at Hitchin.
- 1922 *Jan 25th* Extremely cold. Temperature at 11 am 32 F in main room.
- April 24th* The new sewer has been completed, tanks, cisterns and taps supplied and a constant supply of water laid on.
- May 1st* Window fixed in north end of roof and a stove and radiators
-5th installed.
- June 1st* Took boys to garden and demonstrated how to hive a swarm of bees.
- Nov 27th* Made cocoa for the children remaining to dinner. Many children bring only Bread and Margarine and on enquiry several said that they had had bread and margarine for breakfast.
- 1923 *Aug 3rd* During the holiday I have collected donations from the Managers and friends to buy --- a bicycle in order that he might take advantage of his scholarship to Stevenage Grammar School.
- 1924 *April 15th* Mr Overton presented with a Morris chair and fountain pen.
"This ends my mastership here. I cannot leave without putting on record my appreciation of the loyalty shown by my teachers and pupils. I have not met more lovable children. Many are from homes where poverty is known, many are mentally dull, but all are lovable."
- July 14th* Today 17 children of the upper section visited the Exhibition at Wembley accompanied by Head Teacher and two other adults. The party proceeded by char-a-banc and the journey proved of great interest to the children most of whom saw a tram car for the first time. Visits were paid to the chief colonial buildings and the free cinemas showing films of the activities in the colonies were of more than passing interest as this was the first occasion on which many of the party had ever seen a film.

- 1924 *Sep 30th* Today received first wireless lesson.
- 1925 *Jan 28th* There has been a gradual increase in the habit of running from the playground into the road and I have spoken to the whole school on its dangers. I have also requested Rector to write to County Council re erection of 'School' signs.
- Sep* Number on roll 53.
- 1926 *May 14th* At the N & E Herts Musical Festival the children were successful in being awarded the 1st prize for sight singing and 1st prize and banner for the test song. This is extremely satisfactory and is the outcome of very hard work on the part of the children.
- 1927 *Jan 10th* House system introduced. Children divided into two houses: Grenville and Raleigh for purposes of work and play. 71 on roll.
- During this summer/autumn small groups of senior children visited various farms in the district to watch different farming processes such as steam ploughing, etc.
- 1928 *Aug 1st* Half holiday for village fete. A tent was provided for the school exhibition of work, specimens of painting, pencil drawing, crayon writing, essays, map work, designs, cane work, woodwork, raffia work, needlework, leather work were exhibited. The children gave a display of country and maypole dancing and the school sports were held after tea.
- Oct 5th* A class for woodwork to be held at Walkern on Tuesday afternoons 1.30-4.00 pm has been definitely arranged. Eight boys are to attend and are to go down on the bus and return by bus.
- 1929 *April 30th* As a result of the examination held by the BBC at the end of last term three pupils have won awards and Richard Pearman's name was broadcast on April 26th. The class heard this interesting event. He will go to Savoy Hill on May 25th to receive his prize.

- 1929 *May 23rd* Tennis started with girls.
- 1931 90 on roll.
- 1932 *Jun 19th* Commenced giving 'Virol' to children from 28 lb tin.
- 1934 *Oct 25th* When the caretaker came this morning she reported that all the school doors were found open although all were safely locked last night. On entering the school I detected the smell of tobacco smoke. Nothing appeared to have been disturbed and nothing was missing. The local Constable was informed and looked round the school.
- Oct 29th* The New Government and Milk Marketing Board Milk for Schoolchildren scheme was introduced into the school. A halfpenny is charged for 1/3 pt of milk. 29 children availed themselves at morning break.
- Nov 19th* 62 bottles of milk sold. A system was started today whereby families having more than two children in the school received mid-morning milk for all children upon payment for the milk for only two children. The balance is to be made up from the Poor Fund of the Village at the suggestion of the Rector.
- Dec 11th* Owing to failing light this afternoon and also on afternoons of 5th, 7th and 10th it was necessary to abandon the set timetable. This afternoon at 3.45 pm the children's faces were hardly visible to the teacher.
- 1935 *April* 64 on roll.
- July 22nd* Today only 4 bottles of milk ordered.
- July* Children completed a survey of Benington village. It was exhibited at the Education Conference at Oxford.

- 1936 Jan 28th** School dismissed 11.55 am to enable certain children to go home and change into Scout and Guide uniforms for this afternoon's service on the occasion of the funeral of late King George V (died 20th). Children assembled at 1.15 pm and until 2.30 the ceremony of the Royal Funeral at Windsor was heard by wireless. A memorial service held at 3 pm at church was attended by all the children.
- March 19th** Today the school and school house water systems have been disconnected from the tanks at the back of the school and connected to the Rural District Council's water main.
- Oct 6th** Two boys have had bicycles lent to them by Council to enable them to travel to and from school more conveniently.
- 1937 Sep** 47 on roll.
- 1938 April 26th** Owing to serious fall in numbers recently the staff has been reduced to Headmaster and one uncertificated mistress. 48 on roll.
- May 15th** R A Sinfield, former pupil and native of the village, still resident here, played for England against Australia in the Test Match at Trent Bridge.
- Nov 1st** At 2 pm I find that the school boiler has burst. Apart from a small oil stove there was no heating in school until 21st November. Some floorboards replaced.
- 1939 April 5th** Schools Evacuation Officer visited the school in the afternoon and discussed site of proposed ARP trenches for the school.
- July 24th** The school dentist examined all children present. 30 children to have treatment.

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- 1939 *Sep 4th* Hostilities between Britain and Germany broke out on 3rd September and a considerable number of London children have been billeted in the village. Acting on orders from Education Office, the school was not re-opened today (after Summer holiday) as was originally intended.
- Sep 11th* On books 70 children of which 48 are Benington children, 14 are children who are evacuated under the LCC scheme and 8 are children who should have been evacuated but have come to stay with friends or relatives in the village. This morning we were advised what was to be done about putting up 1" wire netting inside the school windows.
- Nov 20th* This afternoon Dr Wigfield visited and immunised 19 children for diptheria, in connection with the CC scheme for Diptheria immunisation.
- 1940 *Jan* On roll 56 - 6 evacuees.
- Aug 21st* We all went gleaning in another of Mr Pearman's fields this afternoon. People in the village are grateful for the ears of wheat as they cannot buy wheat from the farmers who are not allowed to sell their crops.
- Sep 10th* Nurse visited and examined all the Hastings evacuee children who at present are having lessons in the Parochial Hall (with their own teachers).
- Sep 27th* This morning I took the Senior Children to the Police House to see a parachute which had been attached to a land mine. The latter exploded near the road at the other end of the village on Thursday night.
- Nov 27th* Nurse brought 1/2 tin malt for the children.

- 1940 *Dec 3rd* Miss Barnes visited to discuss the new Communal Feeding Club to be opened for the School Children.
- Dec 10th* HMI visited School this afternoon. After a visit to the Parochial Hall he suggested that we might conveniently combine the two schools - our Infants going there to be taught by two Infant teachers and one teacher to bring their Junior children up here to teach them.
- Dec 24th* School wired for electricity by the NorthMet.
- 1941 *Jan 8th* Electric light used in school for the first time.
- Feb 12th* This morning we started our School Dinner Club at the Parochial Hall. 27 dinners were served - 26 children and teacher in charge.

LIST OF HEADTEACHERS

1873-1881	Miss Amelia Davis
1881-1883	Miss H E Temple
1883-1884	Mrs A Taylor
1884-1885	Mr W L Gower
1885-1889	Mr S H Hutchinson
1889-1893	Mr H S Sebborn
1893-1904	Mr F Iine
1904-1908	Mr H Harrison
1908-1910	Mr F A Fisher
1910-1918	Mr F A Hollis
1918-1919	Mrs E R Hollis (Acting Head)
1919-1924	Mr R J Overton
1924-1926	Mr E H Clymo
1926-1931	Mr A Kingsley Wood
1932-1939	Mr E M Cooper
1939-1942	Mrs V Cooper
1942-1947	Miss M R Hitchcock
1948-1969	Mr J Thomas
1969-1970	Mr A Barton (Acting Head)
1970-1972	Mr P R Field