

# Education in Weybridge and Walton-on-Thames 1732-1944

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## CHARITY EDUCATION, 1732-1813

Early in the eighteenth century Weybridge had 'no Papists, no Dissenters, no school, no curate, no lecturer.'<sup>1</sup> The Rector could have added, only a few small houses and the church. There were 106 acres in the common meadow, with seven acres as church land, providing for repair of the church. The remainder of the common land was scrub and heath with no arable common fields. There were two large estates, Portmore and Oatlands. The Portmore estate was owned by Charles Beau Colyear, 2nd Earl of Portmore and descendant of Catherine Sedley and David Colyear. The latter received the title from William of Orange for his war service, and the estate by his marriage. The 9th Earl of Lincoln lived at Oatlands, which he sold to Frederick, Duke of York in 1788. His land linked the parishes of Weybridge and Walton-on-Thames. Estates at Walton were smaller than at Weybridge. Among them were Ashley Park, acquired by Viscount Shannon in 1728, and Burwood Park owned, in 1739, by Thomas Frederick, wealthy London merchant. Mount Felix, overlooking the Thames, was purchased in 1740 by Samuel Dicker, prosperous Jamaican plantation owner. Against local opposition he secured a private Act of Parliament to build a bridge over the river.<sup>2</sup> This was opened in 1750, improving communication and trade and helping to encourage affluent Londoners to move to Walton. These had no roots in the parish so were probably not enthusiastic about supporting the local poor. In Weybridge the wealthy parishioners were mostly retired naval and army officers and charity conscious ladies, including the Duchess of York and the Countess of Portmore. They were in sympathy with the national interest in the new intellectual and social forces attempting to solve the problems of ignorance with Christian teaching. The greatest of the national religious societies for the reformation of manners was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge founded in 1698. Money was collected from charitable donors and used to build and maintain schools and pay for teachers. There were also other people, who did not support the SPCK, but who endowed and founded Charity Schools. The Society issued orders to school masters and mistresses 'to teach the true spelling of words, make them mind their stops and bring them to read slowly and distinctly. That the children be taught to write a fair hand with the grounds of arithmetic and that the girls be taught to knit their stockings and gloves, and to sew, mend their gloves, spin, or any other work used in the places where they like to fit them for Service and Apprenticeship.' The teachers were to 'make it their chief business to instruct the children in the Principles of the

Christian Religion, as professed in the Church of England and laid down in the Church Catechism.' Parents were ordered to 'send their children to school constantly clean, washed and comb'd.' They were warned against 'Mobs and begging for bonfire money' and were asked not to complain to the Master or Mistress if their children were 'chastised for their faults' so that the teachers might not be 'discouraged in the performance of their duty.'<sup>3</sup>

There were Charity Schools at both Walton and Weybridge. The Sir Francis Drake Charity, Walton founded 1634 appears, however, to have lapsed, since in 1910 the Vicar of Walton wrote to the Charity Commission asking for information about it.<sup>4</sup> The Board of Education verified Drake's will, but could find no information in school files or other relevant sources. Weybridge was more fortunate. The foundation of the Elizabeth Hopton school at Weybridge in 1732,<sup>5</sup> was noted in a Vestry minute. 'We whose names are hereto subscribed do as much as in us lies consent that Miss Elizabeth Hopton may enclose a piece of wasteground in Loomepit Lane in the said parish, sufficient whereon to erect a Charity School for the education of poor children.'<sup>6</sup> This school was incorporated into the Parochial School in 1813, so fulfilling the conditions of the will of Charles Hopton whereby after the death of his sister he 'gave to the vicar and churchwardens of the parish of Weybridge £100 towards the support of the Charity School there if any such should then be in the said parish.'<sup>7</sup> This is known as the Charles and Elizabeth Hopton School Charity and 'the annual interest of £5 (which has been since regularly paid by the parish) is applied to the education of 12 poor children, which number a benefaction table in the church records as the number prescribed by the donor.'<sup>8</sup> No teacher's name is recorded until 1793 when the Vestry 'agreed that the children in the workhouse be put to school and Thomas Simmons of the Free School has agreed to take E. Drewett, Wm. Drewett, Charles and Wm. Carr and John Carr for one shilling per week till further notice'. Thomas Simmons was the Parish and Vestry Clerk as well as the schoolmaster from 1793 to 1813. When the Charity School was absorbed into the parochial school in 1813 the Vestry wanted to compensate him so 'in consideration of the long and faithful service of Mr. Thomas Simmons in the offices of Parish and Vestry Clerk and as he is now about to be deprived of the Emoluments of the Parochial School which he has conducted for many years with much credit to himself have unanimously agreed to increase the salary to £50 per annum including therein all the quarterly charges he has hitherto been accustomed to make on the Parish. And as from his advanced age, it is natural for him to wish for some retirement they readily dispense with his further attendance at the publick functions of his office and they are the more willing to do as his son-in-law Mr Stephen Parsons has kindly offered to officiate for him in this capacity gratis.'<sup>9</sup>

Walton Vestry was so absorbed in poor relief that there was no mention of any school. Children were only mentioned if their parents applied to the Vestry for 'clothes so that their sons or daughters may be apprentices.'<sup>10</sup> There seems to have been no Sunday School however, since in 1798 there is a mention of 'altering pews for children.'<sup>11</sup> This reflected the late 18th

century national renewal of interest in education, when the growing population caused overcrowding and crime increased. Children worked at home, on the land or in domestic service for six days of the week and Sunday was the only day free to give them some education. In 1785 the Sunday School Union was founded to give help to those wishing to open Sunday Schools following the pattern set by Robert Raikes in Gloucester.

In Weybridge in 1794 a Sunday School was started in two rooms opposite the church. The children were to attend school always on Sunday at 9 o'clock in the mornings and at 2 o'clock in the afternoon dressed in as decent a manner as their parents can afford.<sup>12</sup> William Hunter taught the boys and his mother the girls. For this they received 5s. Children over six years were admitted to the school and at first there were 67 boys and 34 girls, a large number to teach to read and instruct in catechism and the 'first rudiments of their religion.'<sup>13</sup> The school was financed by subscriptions ranging from Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York's £10 through the Earl of Portmore's two guineas to a Mrs Moloy's 7s 6d. Part of the subscription money was used to alter the gallery in the church for the children. Weybridge subscribers were generous and at the end of 1796 there was a balance. It was voted to be given to those children 'who had been most diligent, in necessary clothing to those in want, or in some useful article to others.'<sup>14</sup> Twenty-three boys received shoes and stockings, and nineteen girls received shawls. At Weybridge, both the Charity and Sunday Schools were successful and the need for more education was not so obvious here as it was in the country as a whole.

### **THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL, 1813-1870**

There was argument about the foundation of day schools. On the one side were those who were afraid of educating the masses and on the other philanthropists and educationalists. With thousands of children to be educated, and few buildings, the only money available came from voluntary subscriptions.

In the struggle for mass education two men devised plans to solve the problem. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster independently discovered that it was possible to teach a number of facts to older children which they could pass on to younger groups. One teacher with these 'monitors' could run a school for hundreds of children with little expense. Unfortunately there was dissension between the followers of the two men. The Church of England supported Bell, the Nonconformists Lancaster, and thus started the rivalry which hampered national education for many years. In 1808 the Royal Lancasterian Society was formed, the name later being changed to the British and Foreign School Society, and these schools were called British Schools. The Church of England in 1811 formed the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church following Dr Bell's plan and these schools became known as National Schools. Some parochial schools adopted the National system before uniting with the Society. That this was so in Walton and Weybridge is shown by the

National Society's records: Walton schools united about 1838 while 'the correspondence file for Weybridge only goes back to 1854.'<sup>15</sup> There was a small British School in Weybridge, but no records are known to have survived.

Both National schools, however, were probably founded in 1813, one year after the Bishop of Winchester circulated a memorandum on the National Society. Even though Walton Vestry approved of the scheme, it was difficult to carry out as the parish lacked the resources to do so. But in October 1812 the Vestry met to consider 'a most gracious intention of His Royal Highness the Duke of York to Patronise and assist in the establishment of a School for the Education of the Infant Poor of the Parishes of Walton and Weybridge in the Knowledge of the Bible etc. according to Dr Bells plan. . . but nothing can be done without exertion on the part of the Parishioners of Walton,'<sup>16</sup> and resolved to accept His Royal Highness's patronage. To complete the work, a committee was formed to carry out the resolutions. The Duke of York was patron, the Vicar chairman, with the local nobility as members. The Rector of Weybridge and four parishioners, two being churchwardens, were also included. There is no further mention of a school in the Vestry minutes until in 1842 the list of parochial constables includes William Glover (schoolmaster). A school did exist, however, as the National Society's Annual Report of 1814 records that, though the National system of education had been adopted by the school it had not been united to the Society. 'A plot of land was legally conveyed for the purpose of a National School in 1827 but no application for aid towards erecting a schoolroom appears to have been made to the Society.'<sup>17</sup> This was probably the house and land given by Mrs Osborne to the school managers.<sup>18</sup> National Society records give the only details of the Walton Parochial School until 1874 when the School log book commences. It is possible that the school managers committee became independent of the Vestry and kept their own minute books.

Weybridge Parochial School records continue from the Sunday School minutes and give 'an account of the proceedings for the establishment of a free school in the Parish of Weybridge in the County of Surrey on the plan of the Reverend Doctor Bell in union with the National and County Central Societies under the Patronage of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York.'<sup>19</sup> The Duke and Duchess took a real interest in the children. When they left the school, the Duchess gave the boys a box of tools and the girls a box of linen. The Duke was also patron of the Weybridge committee which included R. B. Robson, Esq., M.P. who with other members was very interested in the school.

The committee considered a request from Lady Tuite who occupied a house opposite the endowed school. She wished to have the school house removed to some other place and offered to rebuild it at her own expense. The old school was surveyed and the committee decided it would serve its purpose very well and the will of Miss Hopton did not permit the school to be moved. Therefore Lady Tuite received a message saying 'unless her Ladyship will absolutely engage to build a new School House with the rooms of equal size,



Fig. 1 Walton Parochial Schools, 1858. Reproduced by permission of Surrey County Library.

value and convenience as the present and also grant the Parish the same quantity of Land as that on which the school now stands it will not be in their power to accommodate Her Ladyship in this instance.'<sup>20</sup> Her Ladyship accepted the inconvenience in a Christian manner for her name appears on the annual list of school subscribers as donating £5. The scheme continued with regulations drawn up for the conduct of the school. Children were to be taught free of expense except for one shilling per quarter and were to be instructed in the liturgy and catechism of the Established Church; they must attend divine service twice on the Lord's Day. They were to be 'taught to read and write and also the First Four Rules of Arithmetic together with all such useful learning as is suited to their situations, ages and sexes.'<sup>21</sup> Parents were 'requested strictly to enjoin their children to go direct to and from School; to behave respectfully to their teachers; to take care of their Books, Slates, etc. to conduct themselves with reverence during Divine Service, to be kind to one another; and never tell a lie, cheat, steal or swear. . . every child sent to the school is expected to be clean, washed and combed, with his hair cut short, and with his clothes on Sundays at least, well mended.'<sup>22</sup> To remain at school a child had to obey the regulations. The ages ranged from five to twelve years. Subscribers were encouraged to visit the school 'as the good management and success of the institution will greatly depend on frequent inspection.'<sup>23</sup>

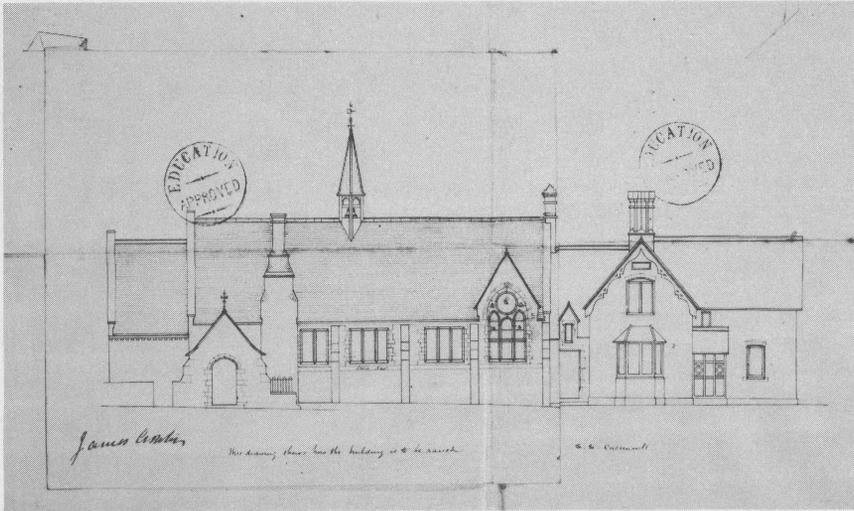


Fig. 2 Drawing showing proposed alterations to Weybridge National School in 1865 from Weybridge Building Grant Plans (264/85/5). By permission of Surrey Record Office.

Subscriptions for the first year totalled £91 16s 6d with donations amounting to £68 15s 0d. The committee decided there was enough money to start the Parochial School with a master whose 'salary is to be seventy five pounds per annum for himself and wife to be paid quarterly. A house to be allotted for their residence rent and tax free; such fixtures as belong to the house to be left whenever Mr Tubb may quit the premises. Twelve months notice being given to Mr Tubb or by him to the Parish, if his quitting is found necessary.'<sup>24</sup> Mr Tubb was allowed to go to London for a fortnight during August 1813, to obtain further instruction from the National Institution, while the children were helping with the harvest. The school was conducted in a manner satisfactory to the employers, as after the first year the committee were 'pleased to express their entire approbation of the abilities and conduct of Mr & Mrs Tubb.'<sup>25</sup> By 1817, 130 children were in the school, children from outside the parish being refused admission. The school continued to do well until 1827 when the Rector, the Rev. Haultain died: subscriptions then fell and Mr Tubb's salary was reduced to £60. The contrast is shown by the following figures:

1826-1827

Subscriptions £62 9s 9d

State of school: Boys 73 }  
 Girls 65 } 138

1840-1841

Subscriptions £45 15s 0d

State of school: Boys 41 }  
 Girls 34 } 75

The drop in subscriptions also reflects the state of the parish. The church was in bad repair and had to be rebuilt in 1848. In 1833 the government allocated £20,000 annually to provide schools for the children released under the Factory Act of that year. The National and British Societies distributed the money to affiliated schools. The Managers of Weybridge school applied for a grant in 1849 when a larger schoolroom was to be built at a cost of £350.

The Walton schools were united to the Society in 1838 with 60 boys and 39 girls attending on weekdays and Sundays and a further 40 boys and 34 girls on Sundays only.

Children of the neighbouring hamlet of Hershams came and threw stones at the windows of Walton school shouting and creating a disturbance, expressing the antagonism between the Dissenters and Anglicans. Hershams was a very poor district with squatters, tinkers and agricultural labourers forming nonconformist groups. In 1820 the Wesleyans held their services and Sunday school at the Fox and Goose public house and the Congregationalists used a building called the Round Chapel. An Anglican church was built in 1841 and a school a year later, but there was trouble over religious education. One headmaster at Hershams was thrown into the village pond because the parents of the school children objected to his Congregationalist religious teaching. It seems strange that he was in a school built and supported by the Anglican church, but perhaps there was confusion as to who was on which side. A plan to enlarge the school in 1868 has 'British School' printed on it, but the written material refers to 'National Schools.'<sup>26</sup> After the railway came to nearby Walton, the first commuters arrived and houses were built for them. Labourers came to work in the market gardens which thrived because the railways took the produce to London markets.

The railway and the break-up of the Oatlands estate after the Duke of York died started the expansion of the Oatlands district. The Earl of Ellesmere leased Oatlands House whilst his mansion was built on St. George's Hill Estate. He founded the Metropolitan Convalescent Institution at Oatlands 'to provide an asylum in the country for the temporary residence of the convalescent and debilitated poor.'<sup>27</sup> The residents disliked the Institution but gladly received £400 towards a chapel which served the parish. A small parochial school was founded in 1862 and the girls sewed for the lady subscribers.

The middle class families moving into the district would not send their children to the parochial school so advertisements for private schools started to appear in the parish magazines. They advertised as being for 'sons of gentlemen' or were 'established for the daughters of gentlemen' and one had a 'KINDERGARTEN for younger pupils conducted on Froebel's System'.<sup>28</sup> Many private schools existed only for their founder's lifetime, and the children were taught in crowded rooms. The state of some private schools and the dissension between the churches made people think that the solution was state-controlled non-denominational education. In 1839 the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell announced the creation by an Order in

Council of a select Committee of the Privy Council to superintend the application of grants. Suggestions for teacher training and types of school buildings were issued as minutes. In 1856 the Committee became the Education Department, with a Vice-President as its representative in the House of Commons. One of these Vice-Presidents was Dr Kay-Shuttleworth, who announced a teacher-training scheme. He introduced the pupil-teacher system whereby a young boy or girl of thirteen entered into a five-year apprenticeship. Some schools which received a favourable report from the inspectors were allowed to train pupil teachers, thereby gaining the head teachers an extra £5 on their salary. At eighteen the pupil teachers sat for the Queen's Scholarship examination and if successful, were allowed £25 exhibitions at a Training College.

In 1857 the headmaster of Weybridge Parochial School had two pupil teachers. The Managers' report for that year noted 'The Committee are happy to report a marked advance in the behaviour and appearance of the children, as well as in general proficiency; and they were gratified to find this advance noted by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools at his annual visit and by the Diocesan Inspector. They are glad to report further that the Master has, during the past year, obtained his certificate from the Privy Council, and that the two pupil teachers that he is training have passed their examination in London and have been bound apprentice to Mr King; which entitles him and them forthwith to a yearly allowance from the Government.'<sup>29</sup> The attendance at the school increased until in 1862 'the Annual Capitation Grant was held back for lack of suitable accommodation.'<sup>30</sup> The next year there was a 'slight decrease in the number of children on the books, being traceable to the opening of a National School in connection with Oatlands Church.'<sup>31</sup> Oatlands School had only 18 children on roll when it opened.

This was the period of 'Payment by results' instituted by Robert Lowe, Vice-President of the Department of Education. A Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of the Duke of Newcastle enquired into the state of education in England, and suggested 'We think that the assistance given by the State to Education should assume the form of a bounty rate paid upon the production of certain results... There is only one way of securing this result which is to institute a searching examination by competent authority of every child in every school to which grants are to be paid... and to make the prospects and positions of the teachers dependent to a considerable extent on the results of this examination.' For about forty years this system sought to ensure efficient teachers and children well drilled in the 3 Rs, but it created a barrier between inspectors and teachers and was the dreaded event of the school year. This is shown in the school log books, which became compulsory in 1862. At Weybridge in 1864 the headmistress was told by the school manager to find another post because her school did not receive the annual grant. In 1866 at Oatlands the headmaster was distressed because the inspector was coming 'on Thursday of Whitsun week.' I fear that is equivalent to reducing the Grant by one half, as we cannot get nearly all the children together.'<sup>32</sup> Every teacher dreaded poor attendance, which affected the grant as much as poor answers to the examiners.

Schools were short of money in spite of government grants and many children were not receiving any education, particularly in the poorer areas of Walton and Hersham. Here, as throughout the country, it was becoming obvious that voluntary effort was not enough.

### **THE STATE TAKES OVER, 1870-1902**

The Education Act of 1870 was a compromise. The object was to complete the present voluntary system, and to fill up gaps, sparing the public money where voluntary effort was proving satisfactory.<sup>33</sup> The gaps were filled by creating school boards, which could levy a rate to maintain the schools under their control, elected by direct ballot of ratepayers. So began the dual system.

In 1870 there were National schools at Walton, Weybridge, Oatlands and Hersham and a British School at Weybridge. There are no surviving records of the British School but the log books of other local schools mention at various dates, children being admitted from the school. In 1899 the headmaster at Weybridge admitted 'several boys from British School, all, and always in a lamentable backward condition.'<sup>34</sup>

In 1901 Weybridge still had a National school and a British school, also a newly founded Catholic elementary school. Walton had four Board Schools controlled by a Board compulsorily formed under Section 10 of the Act. The four Board schools were needed for the growing population of Walton which in 1871 was 5,383 and by 1901 had increased to 10,329. In the same years Weybridge population figures were 2,604 and 5,329.<sup>35</sup>

School Boards were formed where the elementary education was inefficient and unsuitable. Voluntary schools had to show that they could fulfil the conditions of the Act. They were given five months to prove they could do this and the Weybridge managers felt they had no difficulty in complying with the new conditions.<sup>36</sup> The Schools had now been divided into Boys, Girls and Infants under separate head teachers who received very different salaries. The headmaster received £80 per annum and the headmistress £60. The mistress of the infants school received £52 10s for teaching 82 children with the help of two pupil teachers. She gained a gratuity of £5 in 1872 'in consideration of the exceptionally good reports her school had received for the last three years'.<sup>37</sup> Log book entries, such as 'four children are detained this evening for idleness'<sup>38</sup> and 'the lower division was detained for five minutes this evening to stand still'<sup>39</sup> show the rigid discipline of the 19th century.

In 1873 the Parochial School at Oatlands was in difficulties because there were 'no special subjects'<sup>40</sup> and 'marching is fairly impossible in this limited space. Three departments for Boys, Girls and Infants each under a certificated teacher would be preferable to the present arrangement and with such a large and growing population would be fully justified'.<sup>41</sup> The buildings also were criticised for 'the offices are too close to the school-room. There is no water in them, and they are at present in an offensive

condition, especially the one assigned to the Boys. The Classroom is not properly ventilated. Separate playgrounds for Boys and Girls are much to be desired. My Lords hope that the defects in the premises noted by Her Majesty's Inspector will be remedied without delay.'<sup>42</sup> The last sentence was the real sting in the Inspector's report during the period of Payment by Results. If the improvements were not made before the next inspection the grant could be withheld. 'No special subjects' referred to the part of the 1870 Act which recommended that drawing, cookery and gardening be added to the curriculum. Military drill introduced physical activity, with children marching in formation to give them a sense of discipline and prompt obedience to orders. Drill was taken by a local volunteer sergeant. Walton schools had a Sergeant Canning as drill master.<sup>43</sup>

Oatlands school was enlarged in July 1874 to house 201 children. The Trustees were struggling to keep a Church school. They called a public meeting to consider the lack of funds and the suggestion of applying for a School Board. In Oatlands people made special collections after a sermon by the Vicar exhorting them to keep the school Church of England. They tried for four years but by 1878 they had lost and the Reverend Townsend was a candidate in 'the election of a school-board of seven members for this parish of Walton-on-Thames.'<sup>44</sup>

The School Board was elected and the Oatlands headmaster was pleased that Mr Townsend headed the polls. The first meeting of the Board was held in September 1878 and Oatlands and Walton Parochial schools became Board schools on 7 February 1879. Hershman managers held their school until 1 September, 1881. The Church retained the ownership of the building at a peppercorn rent of 5s per annum for a lease of 99 years. There was argument about religious education in all schools taken over by the Walton Board. All the log books have entries 'that the Trustees of the Walton, Hershman and Oatlands Schools having informed the Board that it is their intention to close the school against the Board from 4 p.m. until 10 a.m. The Clerk is hereby instructed to inform the Head Teacher that a uniform time will be observed in all the schools under the Board and they are requested to prepare the time sheets so that Religious and Temperance Lessons be given from 12 to 12.30.'<sup>45</sup>

The 1870 Education Act had a conscience clause allowing parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction at the beginning or end of the school day and no religious education distinctive of any particular denomination could be taught in a grant-aided school. Because of this clause school registers were not closed until after 10 a.m. allowing children to withdraw without losing their attendance mark. This remained in operation until 1944. During this period school governors came into schools checking registers and to make a mistake was calamitous. No teacher dared to alter a register entry, so hidden away at the back of a cupboard was a small bottle of ink-eradicator. The Walton School Board solved their religious teaching difficulties in 1893. They agreed to use the syllabus of the Diocesan Inspectors if the Trustees of the Walton and Hershman Schools allowed the building to be used between 9 and 10 a.m.<sup>46</sup>

1880		
July 26	School opened & closed at usual hours	227
to	Attendance very irregular — On Wed? aft.	
31	Cricket match on the Green, hence then attendance	
	School dismissed for the Harvest	
	Vacation for 3 weeks till 23 Aug <sup>r</sup> 1880.	
Aug 23	School reopened after vacation	
to	Attendance then many children working	
28	in the fields.	
	Reading books to very much wanted —	
	purchase delayed on account of waiting for	
	the transfer of schools to Walton Sch. Board.	
Aug <sup>r</sup> 30	Attendance slightly improved.	
to	Educational Act here appears to be useless	
4 Sept <sup>r</sup>	at present in enforcing regular attendance	
	Slow progress — books to much needed.	
6 Sept <sup>r</sup>	School opened & closed at usual hours	
to	On Thursday afternoon no attendance	
11	calculated — Calculated admitted children at	
	1 <sup>r</sup> each, so that only 23 attended school.	
	15 names removed from registers.	

Fig. 3 Page from Hershams Board School Log Book (Acc. 1033 Pt.).  
By permission of Surrey Record Office.

Religious teaching was not the only problem arising from the 1870 Act. School Boards provided places for children but filling them was difficult and not all Boards used compulsion. Attendance Committees were formed for Board and Voluntary schools in the same area and an Attendance

Officer visited the schools and homes. That this was done in Walton and Weybridge is shown by the log book entry describing how Mr Norfolk, the Attendance Officer brought forms for the purpose of carrying out the education requirements by the 'Attendance Committee'.<sup>47</sup> The log books show the continuous struggle to get regular attendance in the Board Schools. Excuses for absence varied from harvesting and pea-picking, which were reasonably logical in a nursery garden area, to an ice carnival on the Thames and the funeral of a murdered policeman. The master at Hershams had strong feelings about the poor attendance and complained of 'progress retarded by the very irregular attendance. Many children employed Pea-picking, gathering fruit etc. Educational Act a 'Dead Letter' in this locality.'<sup>48</sup> The Sandon Act of 1876 declared it was the duty of every parent to see that his child received adequate instruction in the three Rs and if he failed in his duty, he became liable to certain penalties. Children under ten could not be employed and those between ten and fourteen were to attend school half-time. This was very unsatisfactory as it provided an excuse for missing school altogether. The master at Oatlands complained that 'nearly all the Fifth Standard Boys now come half-time which makes the progress of that standard particularly slow. I do not think they are all justified in coming half-time and I have pointed this out to the attendance officer, but no steps are taken against the parents'.<sup>49</sup> Half-time attendance was cancelled if a child could pass Standard IV at an examination, or had made sufficient attendances every year for five years. The latter was nicknamed the Dunce's Pass. The Mundella Act of 1880 made education compulsory for children between ten and thirteen but exemption at thirteen was obtained by a Labour Certificate. Eligible children in the Walton and Weybridge district went to an examination centre at Weybridge. The examining board used their discretion, for two girls at Oatlands, one of the eldest of ten children and another, whose mother was a widow with seven children were permitted to leave school although not quite fulfilling requirements.<sup>50</sup> A headmaster might be tempted to put forward the name of any troublesome boy. Oatlands evidently had such a boy, since, following an entry referring to the boys who qualify being allowed to leave the master has written 'the BOY whose case this order appears to have been specially made to meet is *not* qualified even under the rule which required 250 attendances for 5 years and he has been refused a certificate.'<sup>51</sup>

Weybridge Church National Schools did not have the bad attendance problems that occurred in the Board Schools. Children stayed away to watch a circus, or a fire brigade competition held in the village. These absences were communal, with the village mentioned often, but there are no log book entries for seasonal work as there are in Walton and Hershams (see Fig. 3).

An entry in the Weybridge National school log book refers to a boy named Fitzgerald being withdrawn to attend the Roman Catholic school. Perhaps his father had come into the district from Ireland to find work and had married a local girl. Irish men and girls were employed as domestic servants in the new Victorian houses, and the men also laboured on roads as the estates were developed. There was a Catholic mission with secular

priests in Weybridge in 1834 and between 1876 and 1898 three Catholic schools were opened. Weybridge, or at least nearby Woburn Park, was served by Dominican priests from 1750. When the estate passed into non-Catholic hands in 1816, the priest moved to a house in Weybridge. At this time there was a wealthy Catholic solicitor, Mr Taylor, living in Heath Road, Weybridge and he built a small chapel in his own grounds for the use of the priest and congregation.

In 1857 the Catholic Poor School Commission was given Parliamentary grants making possible the foundation of Catholic elementary schools. Weybridge did not have such a school until 1881. A larger church had been built for the increasing Catholic congregation and the first chapel became the school. Fifteen children aged four to eleven enrolled on the first day. Children came long distances to attend the school and when train times were altered, afternoon school had to begin at 1.15 p.m. so that they could leave at 3.15 p.m. The school's early years were hard. Teachers did not stay for long and the number of children increased until, in 1884, a new school was built. In that year a government grant was reluctantly allowed. The inspector said 'I have had great hesitation in certifying the school as efficient. . . Improvement in the Infants teaching and in Arithmetic of the school will be looked for next year.'<sup>52</sup>

The children must have been very poor for there are a number of entries in the log book recording gifts of clothing and the poorest went four days to a lady's house and had soup and bread. There is no list of subscribers but the school had visitors who brought books, apparatus and clothes. The children came from Hersham and Walton and probably also from the Italian colony at Chertsey. It is difficult to know how they afforded the train fares unless these were paid by benefactors. The Reverend Manager often visited the school and sometimes helped with the teaching. The teachers were constantly changing. The Inspector's Report for 1888 was very critical, stating 'both the discipline and the work are so unsatisfactory that it is impossible to recommend any Merit Grant. Even the Needlework hardly deserves payment of the Needlework Grant. A better result will be looked for next year or a deduction may be incurred. The needlework must improve greatly if the Grant is to be again allowed.'<sup>53</sup> There were forty-four children on roll when the report of 1889 was so good, that the Reverend Manager rewarded the children with '3 lbs of sweetmeats.'<sup>54</sup> The good reports continued and in 1891 Miss Toft introduced drawing and geography, thereby gaining extra grants. She resigned in 1898. During her seven years the school received good reports. There were 44 children, their ages ranging from four to fourteen; an assistant teacher taught the younger children.

A log book entry for 1899 illustrates the new grouping of children for class subjects supposed to suit their ages and abilities: Infants and Standard 1 listened to Objective Lessons on '1. Clouds, 2. Rain, 3. Dew and other natural Phenomena.'<sup>55</sup> The syllabus was beginning to open out and these were attempts to interest children in the objects around them. The first

outings, the forerunners of educational visits, were beginning and in 1899 St Charles children went to the Crystal Palace. The children from Oatlands Girls Board School also went to the Palace but the Oatlands Boys school had to work for their excursion. They had to pass in 3 Rs in Standard IV and upwards at the government inspection, attend school without missing once in the whole year and gain certificates at the Diocesan Examination. Twenty boys achieved this standard in 1885 and were taken to Southsea where they had a fine day and an enjoyable outing financed by generous parishioners. Many children had never seen the sea before.

The Walton Board schools were overcrowded, with over 200 children on roll in the mixed school and a staff of head teacher, four certificated teachers and two pupil teachers. There were no outings but efforts were made to encourage better attendance such as a 'dissolving views'<sup>56</sup> entertainment on an evening in December for those children with good attendance in October. Football and cricket clubs were formed to encourage older boys to attend regularly. When necessary compulsion was used. The local newspaper<sup>57</sup> reported constant irregular attendance at Walton and Hersham, with parents thinking that 8 attendances each week instead of 10 exempted them from prosecution. They could be fined 5s and those employing a child under ten could be fined 40s. The standard of work was good because at the annual inspection in 1888 the school was given the highest merit grant. Ten years later a boy obtained a scholarship to Tiffins School, Kingston-upon-Thames.

From 1891, the Technical Education Committee of Surrey County Council awarded scholarships to elementary school children of 12 to 14 years. Middle class parents were seeking secondary education for their children. Elementary education was not enough for success in skilled trades and professions.

Before and after the 1870 Act, parents had been paying fees of a few pence weekly. Now it was felt that if education was compulsory, the nation should share the cost. By 1891 parents could demand free education, and most School Boards abolished fees. Walton School Board made their schools free from September 1891. The Oatlands headmaster wrote 'from today forward no school fees will be taken, all children being free, by order of the School Board and in consequence of a recent Parliamentary Enactment.'<sup>58</sup> The headmaster of Weybridge Church of England School also wrote in September 1891 'Free education comes into force today.'<sup>59</sup> St Charles Catholic School continued collecting fees.<sup>60</sup> 'Payment by results' had ended in 1890 and a government grant of 10s per child was paid to all schools. Voluntary schools however still received no help from rates.

Walton and Weybridge were changing. Walton was expanding into a dormitory for London, with market gardens supplying the new housing estates and also selling to the London markets. At this time people were leaving Weybridge. The Oatlands and Portmore estates were being developed and owners of smaller mansions were moving, taking their domestic staff with them. The Church of England Boys schoolmaster and the Infants mistress

both record 'many families leaving neighbourhood through the sale of large estates.'<sup>61</sup> Wealthy newcomers found homes on the luxury estate being developed on St George's Hill, or new villas built on the Portmore Park estate. Their children did not go to the village school. On the other hand the headmaster did not like the families who came 'to inhabit the low-lying new district of cottage property near the Thames. Quite a set of Hooligans have come into the place from various parts. Complaints are becoming more and more numerous as to lawlessness coming to school and returning home. I shall take the most stringent measures to put a stop to the nuisance.'<sup>62</sup> His well-disciplined pupils came from the homes of the village labourers, unskilled workers and domestic workers.

Tradesmen, artisans and members of the lower paid professions sent their children to small private schools or to one of the three most successful independent schools. Boys went to St George's College at Woburn Park, which was once again owned by Catholics. In 1876 Monsignor William Petre (later 12th Baron Petre) opened a day and boarding school for young gentlemen. He enlarged the original 18th century house and built an outdoor swimming pool. In 1884 the estate and school were sold to the Belgian Congregation of the Josephites who needed larger premises for their school founded in Croydon in 1869.<sup>63</sup> There was accommodation for 130 boarders and day boys of any denomination. Girls went to St Maurs Convent, opened in 1898 by a French teaching order, Les Dames de St Maur, founded in Paris in the 17th century. The nuns bought an 18th century mansion in a 12-acre estate in Thames Street, Weybridge.<sup>64</sup> They started a small school teaching in the formal French fashion. During the last decade of the 19th century, English educationalists were trying to improve the rigid school atmosphere.

It may seem strange to end a chapter on 'the State taking over' by reference to a special independent school. However, in the Hall School, third of the three independent schools, there was a teaching revolution led by a pioneer in educational activities. She was Miss E. V. Gilpin, who developed her own highly individual teaching method. When education was rigid and unimaginative she allowed the children to move about and seek information for themselves. She was lively and enthusiastic and enjoyed learning with those she taught. She came to the Weybridge home of Mr and Mrs Michael Sadler as governess to their son. Michael Sadler (later Sir Michael) was a great educationalist. He was Director of Special Enquiries and Reports, Education Department (1895-1903), published eleven volumes of information and made the office a research bureau.<sup>65</sup> His many publications include reports written for local authorities after the 1902 Education Act.<sup>66</sup> He recognized Miss Gilpin's talent and in 1898 encouraged her to start a school. This was known as the Hall School because it was held in the Village Hall. Her teaching was inspired, encouraging child participation long before it appeared in 20th century schools. An inspector's report describes the school as 'a truly Liberal Education. The children are happy, with teachers able to take their share in a very perfect system of education with a Headmistress whose genius and devotion have inspired and sustained the supreme purpose of education'.<sup>67</sup>

**DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL CONTROL, 1902-1918**

Compulsory education in elementary schools required more teachers to cope with extra children. Some parents were already demanding further education for their children. The Technical Instruction Act, 1889 enabled County Councils to levy a penny rate to supply technical or manual instruction. Surrey County Council did not impose the penny rate but used the Whisky Money. This surprising source of revenue came from a tax on spirits. In 1890 the government reduced the number of public houses and proposed to compensate publicans. The proposal was defeated and the money was granted to County Councils to use for technical education. Classes were held at Hersham Village Hall in 1893 in gardening, cookery and carpentry.<sup>68</sup>

Co-ordination of public education led to the appointment of a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Bryce. As a result the Board of Education was established in 1899 with a Minister of Education responsible to Parliament and local administration organised by County and County Borough Councils. This was the basis of the 1902 Balfour Act. County Education Committees, which succeeded the Technical Education Committees, became responsible for the management and buildings of the old Board Schools now Council Schools, and for secular education in the Voluntary Schools. The latter were responsible for the fabric of their buildings and were termed 'non-provided' in consequence.

An additional Council School was built in Walton in 1908. The Boys and Girls Departments of Walton Council School were full and no transfers could be made from the Infants school so a temporary school was opened in Terrace Road. This school was known locally as the 'Tin School' because it was constructed of corrugated iron sheeting. It opened with 116 children and 3 teachers, but by 1910 there were 129 children on roll and the Walton Council School was again so crowded that no transfers could be made. A new room had to be added to the Tin School in 1912 but conditions were dreadful. The playground was not asphalted and in wet weather the water lay in great puddles everywhere. The building was heated by coke stoves which smoked when the wind was in the wrong direction. This temporary school continued however, for 22 years until the new Infants School in Ambleside Avenue was opened in 1931. The Tin School had to be re-opened in January 1934 mainly to accommodate the children of the gypsy colony which was moving into the Field Common district near the school. An extra building was put up in the playground and there were 193 children on the registers. There are no remarks in the log book about how well the children settled in or if there were any difficulties. There are no entries at all, until September 1934, when a gypsy boy swung his satchel at a boy on a bicycle.<sup>69</sup> There was a knife in the bag and the boy received a deep cut on his back. Perhaps it was an isolated incident or maybe an indication of integration problems.

Secondary school subjects such as drawing, cooking and woodwork were being taken in all local Council Schools, except Infants. The first purpose-

built secondary school was the Walton Central School opened in 1915, first of its kind in Surrey. A full-time general secondary education for pupils from eleven to fifteen was to include subjects enabling them to take up commercial or industrial work without additional training. The building was two-storeyed, with facilities for science, woodwork and domestic science as well as arts subjects. By 1920 it was overcrowded and in 1937 a Boys Central School was opened in Ambleside Avenue, with 340 boys on roll. The girls remained in the original building.

Weybridge could have had a Central School in 1920 when the Surrey Education Committee wished to re-organise the schools into Junior, 7-11 years and Senior, over 11. Parents and Governors decided 'it was not necessary as the schools were already good schools, and it was all very well to suggest children being kept at school until 16, but poor parents could ill afford to do so.'<sup>70</sup> There were many private schools in Weybridge and parents with enough money to pay the fees. One school will serve as an example. In 1909, Dorothy and Mary Higgins opened a school in a small Victorian house in Springfield Meadow. Uniforms in private schools were very important to show their superiority over the council school. Miss Higgins' girls wore navy skirts and white blouses and their badge had H.H.S. on it, for Higgins High School. The school, growing too large, moved to a bigger mansion on Monument Hill with another teacher and room for boarders. It again grew and moved to a larger house with tennis courts. It was now Heath House School.

The Local Education Authorities wanted their schools to join in the growing national interest in physical activities. The Council Schools at Walton and Oatlands formed swimming classes, attending the swimming baths from 3 to 4 o'clock.<sup>71</sup> At Walton 'Major Norman called today to arrange lessons in swimming for the older boys.'<sup>72</sup> There were no swimming baths at Walton but old pupils recall that a stretch of the Thames was used for swimming instruction. The Central School headmaster did not want any other subjects to be missed because of organised sports and made the following arrangements: '1. Not more than one drill period a week is to be used by any child for organised sports; 2. None of the other subjects must be displaced by the intrusion of organised games; 3. Class teachers will arrange for the organised sports in their own classes.'<sup>73</sup>

After 1907<sup>74</sup> medical inspection became compulsory. Oatlands records the first inspection in 1909 and Walton in 1911. Standards of hygiene and of cleanliness were poor and a termly visit from the school nurse was essential.

St James' School, Weybridge, kept pace with all the new developments, with an outstanding man as headmaster. The report following an H.M.I. inspection in 1910 not only reflects this, but shows how school activities were expanding. The Inspector was concerned that 'the Headmaster has but recently returned to school after a dangerous illness. . . The progressive condition of the school is largely due to his personality. A most satisfactory feature is the large number of boys who remain in school after the natural leaving

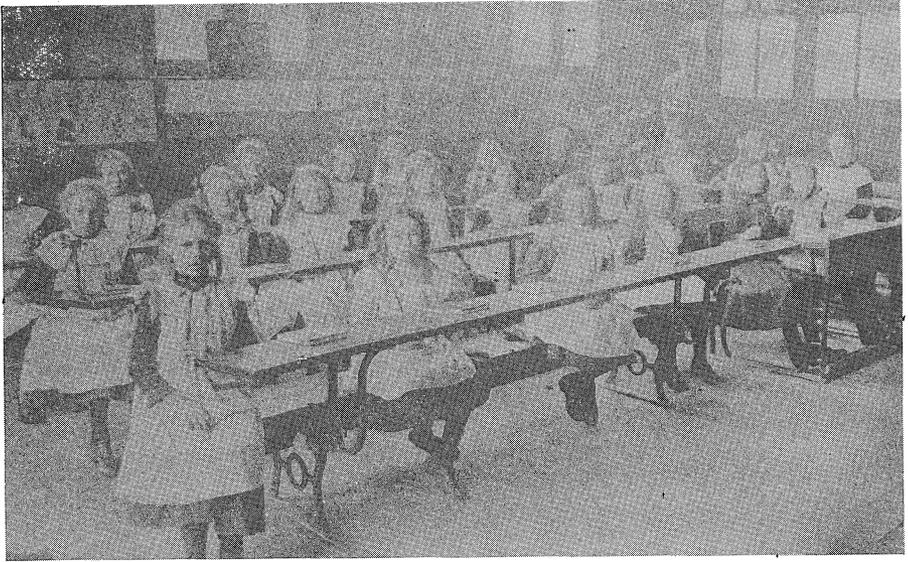


Fig. 4 Oatlands Girls Council School, 1918. From a photograph in the author's possession.

age. The upper class formed by these boys is in the charge of the Headmaster himself. The boys are encouraged to do independent work and they are making very good use of the opportunities afforded them. Generally throughout the school, Geography and Arithmetic are taught by excellent methods. The teachers have taken considerable pains to bring their private reading well in line with the newer methods. The older boys are encouraged to make their own maps of the district and the sketch maps which illustrate specific lessons are of a suitable type. The Historical aspect of the subject has also not been neglected. The literary side of the curriculum received careful attention. There is a school library and the boys are encouraged to read widely both in prose and poetry. . . . Due advantage is taken of the opportunities offered by the neighbourhood in the teaching of Nature Study. The School Museum is very rich in specimens and is kept in excellent order. Special mention must be made of the singing. The Sports Clubs are in a flourishing condition.'<sup>75</sup>

#### FREE FOR ALL, 1918-1944

The First World War halted educational experiments and boys left school at 14 years. At Walton 'many of the upper class boys are leaving to go to work so that the class is now getting small.'<sup>76</sup> Weybridge schools were disturbed by 'repeated occupation of school premises by HM Forces on the march to Pirbright and Aldershot.'<sup>77</sup> When the schools re-assembled, '30 odd Boy

Scouts away on alleged duties connected with the guarding of bridges and points.<sup>178</sup> After a fortnight the scouts returned to school. During October the attendance was 'adversely affected by many absences of Boy Scouts upon various errands in connection with the Flying Corps at Brooklands Aerodrome.'<sup>179</sup> There is no mention of older boys leaving. There were 280 boys grouped into Standards I to Ex VII. The older boys were taught by the headmaster. The drift away from the other schools continued and in January 1915 at Oatlands 'owing to the war and the demand for labour every boy who has reached the age of fourteen since the summer holiday has left school at once.'<sup>180</sup> This exploitation was causing much concern. In 1915 the government set up a departmental committee under the chairmanship of Herbert Lewis, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, to consider provision for the education and instruction of children and young people after the war.

The recommendations and the public conscience led to the Fisher Education Act 1918, under which full-time attendance became compulsory from five to fourteen and fees in elementary schools were abolished. Local Education Authorities were required to provide practical instruction suitable to the ages, abilities and requirements of the children. Walton Central School, a pioneer experimental school, was opened in 1915, that is, prior to the 1918 Education Act. This early establishment was probably due to overcrowding in the contributory schools of Walton, Hersham and Oatlands. The school started with 404 children and by 1918 the number reached 440, with classes of 52 and 57 children. Entry was non-selective and all children over twelve years were transferred from the junior schools, together with those who would be twelve before the next transfer date and any child between nine and eleven likely to profit by promotion. The latter were those destined to obtain scholarships and free places. The Local Education Authority could pay maintenance grants so that able children were not held back by poverty. Children did indeed benefit and scholarships were gained yearly. The list for 1920 is typical. The school gained 11 scholarships: 5 County Junior Technical Scholarships; 1 County Junior Teaching Scholarship; 2 County Junior Scholarships; 3 Tiffins Grammar School Free Place Scholarships.<sup>81</sup> The headmaster copied the grammar or public school style by introducing school uniform and class and school prefects. There was specialist teaching in Arts subjects and domestic science was linked with science and nature study. Being a pioneer school many visitors came to observe, including the Mayor of Kingston-upon-Thames, representatives of Education Committees, and head teachers-elect of new Surrey Central Schools.

The four other schools in Walton needed all the help they could get. They were overcrowded and in need of new buildings. The East Walton Council School still drew most of its children from the gypsy and vagrant encampment in the Field Common area. Ashley Road Junior School had 412 children in a building described as being of a somewhat rambling nature, with no hall or large room in which the school could be assembled. Oatlands was overcrowded and had been re-organised in 1922 into a mixed Junior and

Infants school. The older children went to Walton Central Schools making room for those crowding into the district.

At Weybridge, St Charles Catholic School was a full range mixed school with 100 children and the numbers increasing, but as this was a non-provided school extra accommodation had to be supplied by the voluntary body. The other church school at Weybridge, St. James, continued as three separate departments, Infants, Girls and Boys on the same site, going their own way, endeavouring to keep up with the statutory requirements. Every year there were successes in scholarships and free places to Strodes Grammar School, Egham, and to Woking Grammar School. In 1925 four boys were in the local schools' football team which won the County Shield for Surrey Schools and in 1936 the captain of the school represented Surrey in the Inter-County Athletic Championship Meeting at Margate. The girls gained scholarships and for many years during the 1930s the school choir was successful in singing competitions at Wimbledon and Guildford.

There can be no conclusion in a record of educational development, only looking ahead. Sir Michael Sadler asked in 1929 'to what end and issue... the great forces at work in English education are tending. Is it towards an elaborately comprehensive system of all types of schools representing... every creed and many colours of conviction or is it to some unified monopoly of Education administered by the State?'<sup>82</sup>

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