

A view of the school through the arched gateway.

## The first teachers, the early curriculum and attendance problems

**T**HE first teachers in the new Ickleford school of 1848 were Mr. Joseph Drake Lockwood and his wife, who was the infants' school mistress. Their joint salary was £80 a year with rent-free accommodation in the house, which was also a perquisite of the assistant teacher, who was paid £20 a year.

In 1856 John Rolt Nixon, with a second-class certificate, was appointed to the mastership of the upper school with a salary of £86/10/- a year. His wife, Eleanor, assisted in the school twice a week in the afternoons to teach the girls to sew and knit, but she was unpaid. Miss Sarah Howe, who was not certificated, was in charge of the infants' school and was paid a salary of £25 a year, with rent-free accommodation at the school house. There was also an assistant teacher in the infants' school, thirty years of age, who was paid 4/- a week.

These teachers were assisted by pupil teachers, who were often called apprentices as they were usually older pupils appointed for five years while they were between thirteen and eighteen years of age. They not only had to help the older qualified teachers, but had to pass an examination at the end of each year. The teacher under whose charge the pupil teacher was placed received a fixed annual increment rising from £5 for one pupil teacher to £9 for

two in return for the training he gave. Long, weary hours were spent both before and after the normal school day in coaching them. In 1878 Miss E. Briden, a pupil teacher, was obliged to attend for her lessons from 7.45 to 8.50 a.m. instead of from 5.30 to 6.30 p.m. Being an articulated pupil teacher of the third year, she had to take the usual examination before an inspector, who reported that she had passed

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Photographs by W. Whistance

fairly. Her discipline, however, had evidently caused the master of the upper school some anxiety, for he wrote in the log book a few months earlier: "E. Briden took the whole school for singing . . . but does not improve in her management of them as much as I should wish. She is not sufficiently firm in exacting that obedience necessary to keep up the order of the school."

Monitors and monitresses were also employed at paltry salaries of 1/- to 2/- a week. By this time they no longer did all the teaching to small groups under the close supervision of the master or mistress as Joseph Lancaster had recommended in the first National schools.

The inspectors had reported long ago that this form of monitorial teaching caused too much drill and produced very little individual work. Now the monitor rarely took a whole class on their own and that only happened when one of the older teachers was absent. Their work was mainly to give general assistance to the teachers in charge—to give out the slates, pencils, books, paper and other materials; to ring the school bell, to supervise the movements in and out of the classroom; and to watch the class while the teacher took a small group around the high desk or blackboard.

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In 1858 a government inquiry reports that teachers in the schools were often untrained and uneducated, that the lessons were very poor, particularly in the infant schools, which were little more than nurseries, and that an insufficient number of children were attending school.

In 1862 Mr. Robert Lowe introduced his revised code for education, which improved the standards of work in the schools but made things very difficult for the teachers. His scheme was payment by results. From that time the government grants depended on the regular attendance of the children and their success in passing individual examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic. Every year an inspector visited the school to give the children an examination. For every pass in each subject the Government paid 2/8, and so a child who passed in all three subjects earned eight shillings for his or her school. There was also a grant of 4/- for every child who had attended fairly regularly. This meant that a good child could earn 12/- altogether.

In 1869 the inspector reported that the school was not as efficient as it ought to be. The mistress, he stated, should have

When the revised code of education was introduced in 1862 the payment-by-results scheme meant that government grants depended on the regular attendance of children and their success in passing examinations in the three Rs. Ickleford school, like many others, often felt the strain of the new scheme.

er assistance, and two-tenths was deducted from the annual grant because of the defects in instruction and discipline. In 1898, however, he reported that the next grant was deserved.

The grants made a big difference to the schools. A good grant meant that the managers had more money to spend on school books, school apparatus, school building and the building itself. It could even affect the salaries of the teachers themselves, and in 1896 at Ickleford they were obliged to accept reduced salaries because the managers could not find the money. It is not surprising that it was hard work being ready for the visit of the inspector, and much pressure was brought to bear on the children in order to try to obtain the most desirable results. A variety of methods were employed, some harsh and some gentle, but detentions and homework were common practice. The managers, of course, were keenly interested also, and paid frequent visits to the school to check the registers for attendance and to examine the children. The rector and his wife were the chief visitors, but the other managers called, often with their friends, to ascertain the children's progress not only in the three Rs but in the other main subjects: needlework and singing. Prizes were given to successful children and sometimes tea parties were held as an additional reward. In 1871 a treat was given by Mrs. Alder, but only for those who had attended more than 200 times.

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It is possible to give a full account of the inspectors' visit on May 4, 1877. During the preceding weeks the master in charge of the mixed school had been vigorously preparing the children in reading, dictation, grammar, arithmetic and geography. Day after day he reported that he had been obliged to keep them in for being late, for talking, or for inattention to work. On the day of the inspection, by the Rev. C. J. Robinson and Mr. W. Baldry, there were 100 of the school managers present also. Of the fifty-three infants who attended that morning only forty-two qualified for the end-of-year grant, and of the eighty-one older children only sixty-eight qualified. Only twenty-seven children in the mixed school were qualified by age to be entered for the examination, but only sixty-two were presented to the inspectors. Among these

sixty-two candidates there were fifty-three passes in reading, twenty-nine in writing, and a mere eleven in arithmetic. One child, Emily Newbury, who was ten years old, was still in the lowest class (four) and was examined for standard one ability. She passed in reading and writing but failed in arithmetic. There were seven other children in class four examined under standard one who were nine years old. No wonder that no one liked payment by results. There was one small compensation—a holiday in the afternoon.

#### THE CURRICULUM

INCIDENTAL but quite frequent references in the log books indicate that the daily routine of school life was hard and tedious at first, and there are many reports of inattention, laziness, disobedience, bad language and truancy.

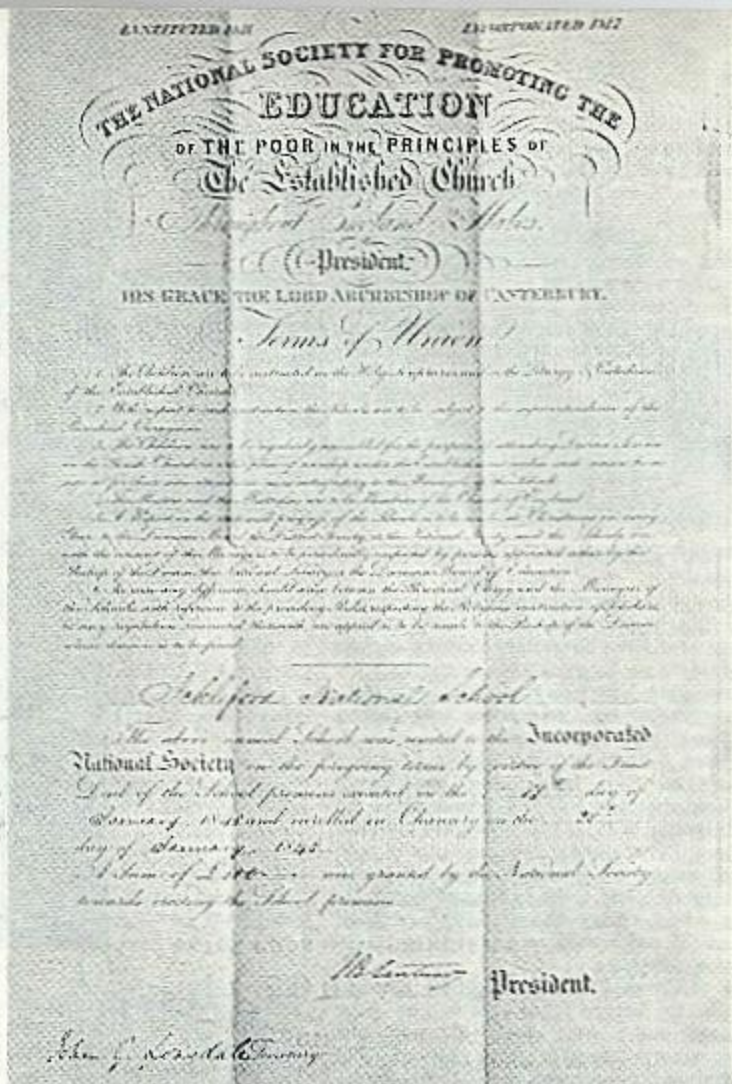
In 1867 the head commented that the first class was more attentive to reading when standing in a line than when sitting. The arithmetic done on slates was also found to be better if worked in the classroom than in the desks.

It is doubtful if all the cases of corporal

punishment were entered in the log books, but in 1868 we read of a boy who was punished for showing a "very naughty temper." We are told that he was sent home, where his parents also punished him.

Most of the time during the school day was devoted to the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, and the system of payment by results often caused undue pressure both in and out of school hours. Homework was quite common.

The only attempt to widen the children's education was by means of an incongruous list of object lessons, which were later divided into those relating to natural history and those describing common objects. This was a class lesson followed by writing and questions, which was conducted in such a rigid manner that as late as 1898 an inspector requested that the oral answers of the children should always be given in "complete sentences." Other lessons were recitation, spelling and drill.



The document which was drawn up for registration and affiliation of the school with the National Society.

At least an hour a day was given to needlework, the materials for which were purchased by the rector or his wife. The little girls made pinafores and the boys did knitting.

Not until the Education Act of 1870 was an attempt made to introduce additional subjects in the curriculum, and these were confined to history stories and geographical definitions. At Ickleford the progress in this direction was evidently very slow, for in 1873 we read that although there were 106 passes for grants of 4/- per head in the three Rs there were only four pupils who obtained passes in geography at the lower grant amount of 3/- per head.

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On subsequent visits the government inspectors often made suggestions as to how "the somewhat restricted routine" might be improved. In 1891 they recommended some elementary drawing, and in 1911 some handwork was introduced for the girls, who previously had only been required to learn to sew and knit. During World War I more radical changes took place. "Development on those sides that call for more initiative and intelligence from the children" was requested by the inspector in 1914. More practical exercises in arithmetic, using the large plot of land adjoining the school for gardening and other subjects, more and better books for a school library and a greater variety of school materials were all pointers to the things to come.

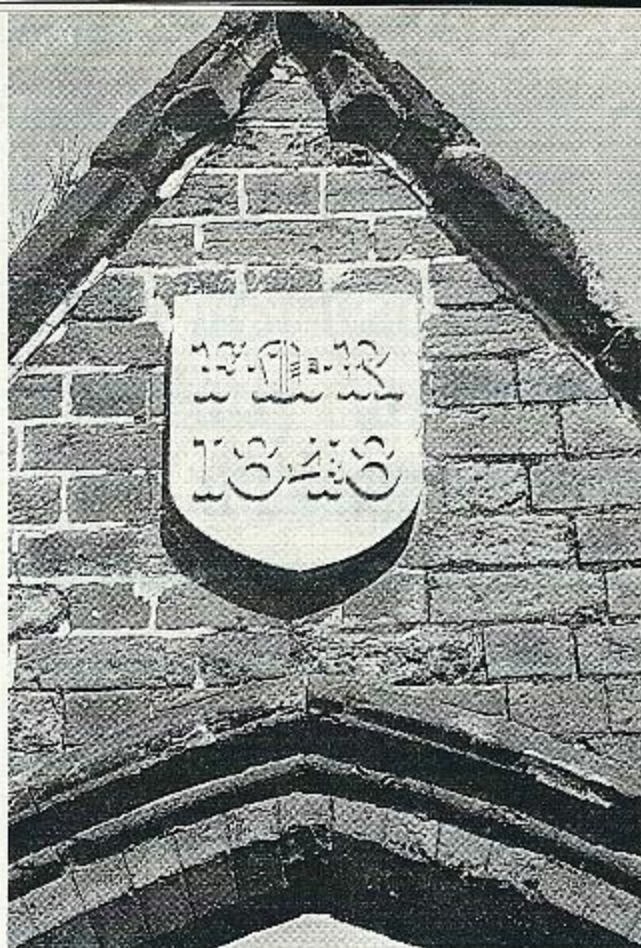
Much was soon achieved. It was reported that the garden plots were in very good order and a good variety of crops were grown. A comprehensive list of wild flowers was compiled in 1932, comprising some 450 species. The mechanical form of drill expanded into organized games and physical training, and in 1939 arrangements were made for the older pupils to have swimming lessons in the private open-air pool beside the River Hiz at Hyde mill.

#### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE 1870 ACT

**D**ESPITE the ruthlessness of Lowe's revised code it became clear that many children attended no school at all and that a large proportion of the existing schools were inefficient. The Education Act of 1870 became the greatest landmark in the history of education because the school boards it established were empowered not only to levy rates to maintain schools but to compel school attendance for all children between the ages of five and twelve years. Ickleford, in common with other voluntary schools, was required to return an account of conditions at the school, and from this it was concluded by the Government that no deficiency existed as suitable accommodation was provided for 150 boys, girls and infants.

In such an agricultural area there was not much enthusiasm for education, how-

A close-up view of the plaque mounted over the gateway. F.D.R. stands for the Hon. Frederick Dudley Ryder, the principal benefactor of the school.



ever. It was generally considered that the children needed little learning, as nearly all of them would be working on the land and the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic were sufficient. Indeed, by-laws existed to enable the brightest children to pass an examination in the three Rs in order to work on the land at the tender age of eleven years. In fact, most children left school at the age of twelve, and few went beyond standard four.

School attendance was extremely poor by present-day standards. There were many reasons for this. First and foremost were the numerous calls for child labour on the land. The summer holiday was known as the harvest vacation, and there are frequent entries in the log books that children were absent on account of harvesting, gleaning, potato picking or weeding. In 1871 we are told of William Crawley, who returned to school after an absence of three months as he had been at work in the fields.

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Inclement weather conditions, such as snow, frost or heavy rain, were also the cause of many absences when clothing and food were often quite inadequate for good health. Outbreaks of infectious diseases were common, and there are many references to whooping cough, diphtheria, ringworm, eczema, and simply "the

itch." In 1876 the head reported that the school was closed for five weeks owing to the prevalence of scarlet fever. Sometimes the children were kept at home to help to augment the meagre family incomes, and in 1872 three children stayed away to assist with the plaiting.

The head teachers and the school managers employed a variety of means to overcome the deficiencies in attendance, which affected the amount of the school grant. On some occasions the head did not mark the registers, as the small number in attendance would lower the average for the year. More often the managers resorted to the inducements of rewards and holidays. Half-holidays were taken so that those who had attended more than 200 times could attend the special treats given by the lord of the manor or the rector. Book prizes for regular attendance were awarded annually, and sometimes during the winter months just for a month's perfect attendance. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the county council introduced the award of a gold watch to every child who achieved five years' perfect attendance, and this was not discontinued until 1915. The managers were often disturbed, and complained about this problem, and such was their disquiet that in 1883 they even suggested that a portion of the school fees might be returned to the parents of the children who had a good record of attendance. ❖