

THE BRITISH SCHOOL IN SMART'S LANE

The British School was organised on July 29th 1844. A red brick over the entrance doorway bears the incised inscription GWG 1844, the initials being in all probability those of Mr George William Gould, a prominent supporter.

Of the earlier teachers there is little known. From the Visitors' Book we learn that in November 1846 a Miss Parsons was mistress. According to White's "Gazetteer of Essex", 1848, the mistress at that date was one Elizabeth Mills; and the 1882 edition gives Maria Osborne as the then mistress. Our information concerning this school is derived from three main sources, the Attendance Book, the Visitors' Book, and the Log Book.

Attendance Book.

The Attendance Register covers the period from the foundation of the School until June 1848, and is arranged in alphabetical order of the scholars' names, the 39 original scholars being as under:-

NAME	RESIDENCE	Parent's Occupation	Age
J.S. Barrett	Opposite the "Crown"	Plasterer	7
Wm H. Barrett	Do.	Do.	5
C. Brown	Loughton	Hay binder	6
E. Brown	Do.	Do.	8
E. Cains	York Hill	Gardener	7
G. Cains	Do.	Do.	5
C. Chinnery	Loughton	Plumber	10
J. Chinnery	Do.	Do.	13
J. Clayden	Border's Farm	Widow	10
W. Curle	Loughton	Painter	6
E. Dawkins	England's Lane	Tailor	6
M.A. Dawkins	Do.	Do.	8
M. Dimmock	Smarts Lane	Baker	-
Ann Ellwood	Loughton	Gardener	5
Geo. Ellwood	Do.	Do.	5
F. Foottit	High Beech	Laundress	13
Ht. Forster	York Hill	Carpenter	5
J. Forster	Do.	Do.	10
M. Forster	Do.	Do.	7
E. Fuller	England's Lane	Butcher	12
E. Good	Loughton Hall Lodge	Gardener	7
J. Good	Do.	Do.	12
L. Good	Do.	Do.	10
M. Good	Do.	Do.	14
A. Hayes	High Beech	Gardener	13
A. Hills	Loughton	Carrier	4
B. Judd	Loughton	Carpenter	5
Ann Morris	York Hill	Shoemaker	6

NAME	RESIDENCE	Parent's Occupation	Age
Wm Knibb Morris	Do.	Do.	10
A. Pavitt	High Beech	Labourer	7
A. Sewell	Loughton	Labourer	8
E. Sewell	Do.	Do.	6
W. Sewell	Do.	Do.	10
L. Sharp	Buckhurst Hill	Labourer	4
Thos Stone	Loughton	Farmer	6
S. Wilkerson	Smart's Lane	Labourer	5
C. Willis	Loughton	Shoemaker	4
J. Willis	Do.	Do.	12
T. Willis	Do.	Do.	10

By the end of 1844 there was a total of 52 children admitted to the school.

Visitors'
Book.

The Visitors' Book commences with the opening of the school in 1844. At first, and for over twenty years after the foundation, visitors were frequent, and included examining ministers and teachers, and various interested strangers from London and other districts, some of them from such distant places as Reading, Tring, and Bristol; the most frequently recurring local names are those of members of the Brawn, Gould, Searl and Skerritt families. On July 2, 1860 the school was visited by Mr Samuel Gurney, M.P., of London, and Ellen Buxton and Geoffrey Buxton of Leytonstone; the autographs of the two latter would indicate that they were quite young children.

In February 1865 a new (male) teacher is referred to, but not named.

From November 1865 to July 1869 there is a hiatus, no visitors having signed the book or made observations.

In November 1846 we learn that a Miss Parsons was mistress. In 1855 the "mistress and teachers" are referred to, the latter being, presumably, monitors.

The addresses of local visiting residents are very rarely mentioned, but we learn that, in June 1856, L. Gould resides at Traps Hill Farm; in February 1858 Elizabeth Gould resided at Traps Hill House and A. Hill at Beech House; and in March 1858 Mr G. Gould's address is given as Traps Hill House.

In July 1869 the newly appointed master, Mr H.J. Barnard, turns over a new leaf (indeed, several new leaves) and again visitors record their visits: the most frequent visitors at this period were the Rev. W. and Mrs Bentley, Mrs and Miss Keyes, and Mrs Whitley, the latter two ladies being especially zealous in their visits. With the end of 1874 the entries cease altogether, although the book is not half used.

Log
Book.

The only remaining Log Book, in which, in accordance with the Revised Code of Regulations framed in 1862 by the British and Foreign School Society, Borough Road, London, "the Principal Teacher must daily make the briefest entry which will suffice to specify either ordinary progress, or whatever other fact concerning the School or its Teachers, such as the dates of withdrawals, commencements of duty, cautions, illness, etc, may require to be referred to at a future time, or

may otherwise deserve to be recorded”, begins in 1865, on 22nd May of which year Mr John Brown entered on his duties as schoolmaster, his wife, Mrs Elizabeth Brown, being sewing-mistress.

The Honorary Secretary to the Managers at this time was Mr Charles St Alphonse, who resided at Beech House.

By July 3rd Mr Brown had realised that the children were unpunctual in their attendance so he established a punishment for the offence by keeping in late comers for 20 minutes after school.

The Government Inspector’s (Mr C. Alderson) Report that year was not encouraging; it speaks of lack of discipline and threatens, unless improvement in this direction is evident next year, a reduction of the grant.

During the succeeding two winters it is evident that many absences were caused by bad weather and other causes.

The Government Inspector for 1866 was Mr Matthew Arnold⁽¹⁾, whose Report was more favourable.

On November 5th that year, the entry is made: “Guy Fawkes’ day; only a few absent.”

In 1867 the Inspector (again Mr Matthew Arnold) remarks on the increase in the number of scholars and warns the Managers that “if the present rate of attendance continues neither the actual buildings nor the actual staff will be sufficient.” Apparently, the master and his wife worked the school alone.

On October 10th of this year we have the entry: “Celebration of Rev. S. Brawn’s Jubilee; school closed for the day.” The Rev. Samuel Brawn had been pastor of the Baptist Chapel since 1817.

On November 8th the master complains: “The attendance has been somewhat affected of late by the children staying away from school to gather acorns.”

Christmas of that year seems to have been too much for the worthy Master who was unable, through indisposition, to resume work until a week later than the normal date for reopening school, during which time his ever-useful wife kept school for him.

In 1868 the Government Inspector (Mr Matthew Arnold) comments in his Annual Report, “My Lords have allowed an unreduced grant with hesitation”, and he threatens a reduction next year “unless there is marked improvement.”

During the Spring of 1869 the Rev. Wm Bentley and his wife are frequent visitors to the school; Mr Bentley succeeded in the pastorate of the Baptist Church to the Rev. S. Brawn, who retired in 1868 only to die in the succeeding April 1869 at age 78; and he remained pastor until 1874.

On May 24th 1869 the Inspector (Mr Arnold) has a better Report to make of the school, and comments, “The school has just lost its principal supporter by death⁽²⁾ and the Master is going to leave.”

(1) This was Matthew Arnold, the celebrated poet and critic (1822-1888), who was an Inspector of Schools from 1851 until, in 1883, Mr Gladstone gave him a civil list pension of £250, when he retired from the civil service.

(2) This evidently refers to the death of Mr George Gould of Traps Hill House, who was buried in the Baptist Chapel Yard on May 12th 1869 aged 75.

On June 8th that year we meet with an innovation. The children were given a whole-holiday and were taken to the Zoo.

On July 12th 1869 the school came under a new regime, that of Mr Henry J. Barnard and Mrs Blissett; the former's initial comment on his new scholars is not favourable. He says: "The children are most disorderly. I was thoroughly glad when the day's work was over." Two days later he finds them more tractable, but he "had to speak and act sharply to few today." Evidently a disciplinarian! On the 16th the new Master records the average attendance as being 53 and regards this as "very thin"; and on the 22nd of the same month (July 1869) he notes: "I am told by some that some of the children go donkey driving and helping their parents when an excursion comes down", and he adds his conviction that it will be "a matter of considerable time and persevering, careful work to raise this school to a respectable position." We shall see in the sequel how his efforts were doomed to failure.

The poor man was evidently sincere, and he meant to do his utmost to raise the tone of the school: how discouraged he was, when two parents complained of the lack of progress made by their children and took them away to the rival National School, is evidenced by his pathetic entry in the Log Book on July 29th: "I have been here two weeks and have had no time to do any more than get the school in order and arrange the defective classes."

Other troubles soon came. On August 4th a parent complained to the new master concerning her daughter, "telling untruths about the school rules. The girl persisted in keeping to the lie so I told her mother to take her away—the best thing she could do!"

On August 10th the master is pleased to remark that the order in the school has improved. "I have very little trouble with the elder ones. A look is enough to most" – but not to all it would seem, since on September 23rd it is recorded: "Girls rather unruly this afternoon, kept the elder ones in."

On October 8th 1869 the high average attendance was reached of 68.5, a record.

In December of that year, many of the children were kept away from school on account of much illness "in this Lane in close proximity to the school", the average attendance was only 30 to 35. "Nearly every family has one or two with a complaint", measles, whooping cough, and scarlet fever being prevalent.

So the year 1869 ends, and the new year opens, gloomily. On February 4th 1870 there is a sad entry: "Emily* Jane Forster and Robert Squires two of our little folks have been buried within a month. Little Forster this week", from fever.

By March the crisis of illness was passing, and on April 12th the master is able to record an average attendance of 66.7, and on April 29th a record one of 71.9, as against an average for the previous year of 50.9. In 1870 we note that there were two grades of scholars, paying respectively 6d and 2d weekly.

The new school year opened in May (1870) with much better attendances, the weekly averages being 80.7, 88, 85.1, 89, and 81.2 for the succeeding weeks; and they continued at about 80 right into the following winter.

* The Register of Burials says "Eliza."

Still the Inspector (Matthew Arnold) remained dissatisfied. In his Report of May 1870 he remarks, "My Lords will look for improvement as the condition of an un-reduced Grant another year"—the old threat! At this examination, only 36 children over six, and 11 under six, years of age, were presented out of a total of 98 scholars.

A half-holiday was given each year on or near to 1st June in celebration of the Chapel Anniversary.

Those were pre-Lubbock days, without Bank Holidays; however, in 1870 a half-holiday was given on June 7th as it was Whit Monday: but in 1871 no holiday was granted for Whit Monday.

On June 20th the Master "had occasion to punish two big girls for mis-behaviour",—how, he does not say.

On September 26th we find the entry, "W. Forster and Emeline Elton paid monitors @6d per week. I find I must have a little help in the work", and on November 1st we read, "The Evening Class in this room was opened last week. I have 8 against 45 or so at the National School."

On March 28th 1871 an entry occurs, "2 left for Nat. Sch. as the fees are 1d per week there and 2d here." Throughout the years we note that the competition of the more popular, and probably better endowed, National School is keenly felt by the successive masters.

The annual inspection on May 31st 1871 was conducted by a new Inspector (Mr Nevill Gream), whose Report is favourable; but the Master was not so satisfied, since he records that on the examination day nearly half the children were un-presentable, "a thing which I hope will not occur next time."

In this year, 1871, a paid pupil teacher, Emeline Elton, an old scholar and monitor, was engaged, at the insistent request of the Government Inspector, whose Report in May mentioned that "My Lords cannot recognize unpaid pupil teachers as satisfying Article 32(c)." There are frequent records in the Log Book that she (Emeline Elton) "works very well."

In June 1871 small pox was prevalent in Loughton, but the school work was not interrupted.

During 1871 visitors to the school were few, a fact not displeasing to the Master, who comments, "No visitors to trouble us", and again "Few Visitors, We get on smoothly", but he adds "It would be better to have a few visitors in now and then, the school work would then be known better in the locality."

At the opening of 1872, on school re-assembling after only one week's Xmas holiday, the Master's equanimity was much disturbed by the (to him) unexpected confinement of Mrs Blisset, his sewing-mistress; he complains, "Mrs Blisset gave no notice that she would be indisposed until the last afternoon and I knew of nothing." Another lady, Mrs J. Forster, acted as substitute, however, during her absence.

Throughout, the poor man is worried by absentees: "The parents keep the children away on trivial excuses." He laments, on April 26th 1872, "the Grant will be much lower this year than last - some pounds - that I cannot help." However, this gloomy prophecy was not fulfilled, for the Master has to admit, in the following July, "I find that in proportion to the numbers presented last year we have [this year] passed a better examination."

Whit Monday of 1872 was chosen for the Government Inspection of the school, the Rev. N. Gream being Inspector, and his Report was brief and not unfavourable. As was customary, the afternoon of examination-day was given the children as a half-holiday.

On June 14th of this year we have another opportunity of sympathising with the worthy Master in his many little worries. We find recorded, "Hear that girl Spires will leave. School not good enough for her. Wanted to learn French—for 6d a week. I did not see it." Many of the elder scholars left about this time. "Not enough encouragement to work briskly", comments the master, but whether referring to the children or to himself is left unsaid.

It is evident that time was stolen from instruction by employing some of the boys to clean up the grass in the school yard and to clean windows: this is openly recorded in the Log Book and does not seem to have been regarded as improper.

During the school year which ended on May 1st 1872 no fewer than 84 children left, 11 of these going to the rival Church school!

The summer holidays this year (1872) were curiously delayed until some of the Committee returned from their own holiday! On August 30th the Master had to send a message to the Rev. W. Bentley to ask when the school vacation should commence. He adds, "The children must have one month during the year. It does not matter to me when. I do not particularly wish for one now as the Summer has nearly passed away. If I thought it would do the school harm I would keep from having any till Xmas or so." Two weeks' holiday was granted forthwith.

It is interesting to note that up to this period the summer holidays are usually referred to in the Log Book as "Harvest Holidays." Loughton was still an entirely rural village.

In December 1872 two more children left to go to the National School, their mother being dissatisfied.

During that winter, the attendances are not recorded, but there is evidence that there were many absentees. The Master complains of the "utter want of sympathy with the school by the parents", and mentions that he sends after the absentees and late comers regularly "by papers requiring an answer of some sort."

Although evidently discouraged, the Master tries hard, "I do not intend anyone to think that I am asleep or not fighting for the school." As so many elder children have left, he is constrained to admit a larger number of little ones, and in March 1873 he records that he "cut down 2 forms for the little folks so they should not tumble too far"!

The Report of the Government Inspector in 1873 was unfavourable: it complains of lack of discipline among the children as well as defects in the instruction; and there is the usual threat of a diminution in the Grant "next year" unless improvement is shown.

Frequent complaints seem to have been made by certain of the parents as to the personal uncleanness of some of the school children. In July 1873 we find that gipsy boys from the Forest were admitted as scholars, and the Master observes, "I cannot very well refuse such boys if they are clean."

In March 1874 it is recorded that the school-fees range from 1d to 4d.

Whit Monday of this year was celebrated as a whole-day holiday.

In July 1874 the pupil teacher, Emeline Elton, gave notice to terminate her engagement at Xmas, alleging that the work was too much for her.

The National School treat on July 9th produced a thin attendance: there were many secessions, from whatever cause, from the British School to the National School.

The school was inspected in 1874 by Mr Bartlett (a new Inspector), and his Report, dated 13th November, was scathing. Here it is in full: "This School is deficient throughout, and while making every allowance for irregular attendance there seems to have been a considerable failure on the part of the Teaching Staff in bringing the children to a proper efficiency. The Arithmetic and Dictation are bad, and the Reading indifferent. The Discipline seems to have improved. My Lords have again ordered the Grant to be reduced by one-tenth for defective instruction (Article 32(B)). E. Elton's name has been removed from the Register of Pupil Teachers.

The Master's comment on this Report is equally emphatic: He observes, "the report this year is a rascally one and the Grant abominably low."

At this crisis it is noteworthy that two leaves have been cut out (most improperly!) of the Log Book. There is evidence that they bore writing of some sort, and one is left to guess whether the Master's original comment was even more expressive of his feelings than that given. This adverse Report was the last straw. At the beginning of December, the Master sent in his resignation. He comments in the Log Book, "The school has not prospered during the past two years so a change will be best for it and myself. I have worked hard against bad attendance and bad spirits and dull children as a rule and have been obliged to give in at last"; and on January 8th of the New Year (1875) he writes large across the page, as in jubilation or relief: "Last day of my services here as Master. Henry Barnard."

The impression given by a perusal of the Log Book during Mr Barnard's period of service is that of a man, enthusiastic at the outset, upon whom repeated discouragements (the apathy of parents, the unpunctuality and indiscipline of the children, and the rivalry of the more favoured National School) had their effect in rendering him disheartened and, as time went on, laxer in his methods. He had waged an uphill fight for 5½ years, and none should blame him if, towards the end, and faced with failure, he lost heart and sensibly relaxed his efforts.

With the dawn of 1875 we enter upon the reign of the moderns, for on January 26th of that year our wellknown and respected friend, Mr J.H. Hayward, (still happily with us) entered upon his duties as Master of the school, coming from the Borough Rd college 1871/2. The interregnum from the 8th to the 26th was filled by a Mr C. Crony, a certificated master who came as supply.

Mr Hayward records that he found the school in a miserable state of inefficiency and at a very low ebb. "Children think nothing of coming at 9-40 or 2-15 instead of 9 and 2, and some even walk in at 10, 10-15, 10-30 or 2-30." The average attendance had not been entered in the Log Book for over 2 years, and was now sunk as low as 45, at which approximate figure it remained for some time. In March Mr Hayward records that "two out of 15 passed in a Standard II exam. out of a class of children composed of Standards 3, 4, 5, and 6"!

In the May following his appointment, the Master instituted a new scale of school-fees, viz:- One child 2d per week, two for 4d, all over two in a family for 1d

each. There were 79 children on the books in June 1875, most of whom were under seven years old.

A week's holiday was given this year at Whitsun.

In the following September we have an instance of Mr Hayward's characteristic candour. He left school one afternoon half-an-hour before the proper time and duly records the fact!, adding the remark, "This is the first time I shall have been absent from school for any portion of school time." Truly a faithful servant!

The Inspection that year (1875) was on October 12th, when 29 children were presented for examination. The Inspector's Report was stimulating: it ran "This School is progressing very fairly under the present Teacher who is endeavouring to recover the school from the consequences of the neglect of the late Master."

On October 14th it is recorded that the visit to Loughton of the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London, on the question of the preservation of Epping Forest, was responsible for bad attendances at the school.

During all this time there was no pupil teacher to take the place of Emeline Elton, who had left at the end of 1874.

In February 1876 another loss occurred. The sewing-mistress, Mrs Blissett, was taken seriously ill, and died on the 27th. Several of the visiting ladies undertook to teach the sewing, in turn; until, in June, a new mistress, Miss Gussin, was appointed and assisted with the teaching generally.

In April 1876 a Revised Code was issued, by which it became necessary to give the children instruction in certain extra subjects, as English Literature and Physiology. Accordingly, we read on May 12th that on the previous Friday a half-holiday was given the children "owing to the master having to sit for exam. in Physiology at night."

The summer holidays that year were for only one week and two days!

Still the Master has to complain of many breaches of attendance, and blames the parents. The average attendance for the school-year ending September 1876 was 47.92. a steady rise having occurred through the year; the fees paid during the year amounted to £20.14.10½. The week ending October 13th yielded an average attendance of 63.2, the largest recorded for two years past.

The Annual Inspection this year (1876) elicited from the Inspector the comment, "this school is very fairly conducted. The instruction is imparted with care"; and the Grant amounted to £40.8.0 (£13.3.0 more than in the preceding year), equal to 16/8 per head on the average attendance. The School managers were very pleased, and medals and certificates were awarded to children who passed.

At the beginning of 1877 Miss Gussin, the assistant teacher, was absent through illness for twelve weeks; when she returned in April, she at once gave notice to leave, and so the poor Master had again to lament the extra hard work thrown upon him owing to lack of help.

In 1877 a week's holiday was granted at Whitsun. In the following August a new assistant teacher, Miss W. Parker, was engaged, and proved to be of great help.

The average attendance for that year (1877) shows, in spite of an outbreak of measles in the village, a marked improvement upon the figures for the previous year, being 62.21, while the school-fees totalled £24.15.1 for the year. This reflects most

creditably upon the new Master, especially bearing in mind his lack of assistance during more than seven months. The Inspector's (Arnold) Report on October 18th, whilst not unfavourable, adds the comment, "the master seems to have been over-taxed for want of more teaching power."

At the close of 1877 and beginning of 1878 small-pox again appeared in the immediate vicinity of the School and adversely affected the attendances: the registers were left unmarked in consequence, "the school being virtually closed as far as ordinary attendances are concerned."

On February 4th 1878 Mr J.H. Bell, the appointed Attendance Officer, made his first visit.

Easter in 1878 was celebrated by a full week's holiday. The following Whitsun also yielded a week's vacation, "not" the Master remarks, "because I think they stand in need of any holiday, but because having tried the plan previously of giving only a half-holiday and found nearly all the children take the week I am somewhat obliged to give way." That year only one week's summer vacation was allowed.

In mid-August the assistant teacher resigned. The average attendance for this school-year was 68.7.

The Government Inspection in 1878 was held on October 11th; and the Report of the Inspector (Mr E.A. Helps), whilst calling urgent attention to the need for an assistant, was favourable.

In December a new assistant (Miss E. Petty) took up her duties, but only stayed until the following March, when her mother (Mrs Fanny Petty) took her place.

In April 1879 new desks were ordered for the school, and these, with other apparatus, were installed during May.

At the close of the school-year at the end of September 1879, the average attendances worked out at 71.7 for the year.

On October 22nd the Master records that the past year has been the hardest one he has had, no summer holiday having been given, and the school working-hours having been increased in number: yet the progress in some subjects he considers as far from satisfactory.

The Government Inspector (Mr T.W. Danby) held his annual examination on October 23rd. The Master records in advance his conviction that the children were very dull, "many of them remarkably stupid"; but the Report, when it arrived, proved to be a quite favourable one, the discipline and instruction being regarded as "decidedly creditable to Mr Hayward." Perhaps as a consequence of this Report, the Master's salary was raised on the following December 2nd (1879). In this month, too, some rearrangement of the windows was effected, so as to obtain better light in the schoolroom.

At the end of February 1880 the assistant, Mrs Petty, gave notice to leave; and on April 12th a new assistant, Miss J.F. Warne, began work: but in the following June the Education Department discovered that she was not yet eighteen, and therefore ineligible for the post. She was, however, retained temporarily, until September 1st.

The Summer holiday this year was for 3 weeks.

In the following September (1880) a severe outbreak of scarlet fever in the village caused the school to be closed from September 28th to the following January 3rd, during which period the National School was used as temporary fever hospital, so that no tuition was possible for fully three months. The Government Inspection had to be postponed accordingly.

With the reassembly of the school in the New Year, 1881, the school-fees were raised as follow:- 1 child 3d; 2 children 5d; 3 or more of one family 6d: and a new assistant teacher, Miss Basham, commenced work.

Naturally, the long interval of idleness had thrown back the children alarmingly.

On January 18th of that year (1881) began the memorable snowstorm which blocked roads with deep drifts and put a stop to all traffic, but the school managed to carry on though with very thin attendance. (The National School was closed.)

The new assistant proved to be but a broken reed to the harassed Master; after one week's service she was taken ill, and was absent from January 11th for about one month, during which time her sister took her place on several occasions: and on February 8th a Miss Spires volunteered to act as substitute and was duly appointed.

In March (1881) the Education Department gave a Grant for the previous year's work of £47.9.4 (an average Grant) and dispensed with the usual examination in view of the special circumstances: and on 25th of that month (March 1881), Mr Hayward resigned his post after 6 years and 2 months service.

On March 28th 1881 a new master, Mr Geo. R. Campbell, took up the burden as "supply" from the Boro' Road training college, and on April 25th he was replaced by a permanent master, Mr Arthur William Higgitt.

On June 3rd the school was visited by the Government Inspector (Mr T.W. Danby), whose signed entry in the Log Book is scathing. It reads, "I found the school in discreditable disorder. The dirty and dilapidated condition of the school-room, and the loathsome state of the boys' office are a disgrace to those responsible for the management of the school."

At Whitsun this year (1881) only the Monday was allowed as a holiday, and the summer vacation was for two weeks only.

In August, the Master records that the flooring to the schoolroom was worn so badly that the children's feet occasionally break through. "Since April no less than twelve holes have had to be repaired."

On October 6th 1881 the Annual Inspection was held, the Inspector being again Mr T.W. Danby, whose adverse Report calls serious attention to the need of a separate classroom for the Infants, the grant for whom is withheld as they are "not satisfactorily taught" in existing conditions, and to the necessity of appointing a qualified Assistant Teacher at once: Miss Spires is not recognised as efficient.

As an outcome of this Report, Miss Spires left on December 22nd, and with the New Year was succeeded (on January 3rd 1882) by Miss Elizabeth Barrett.

At the close of February 1882, Mr Higgitt himself left, and on March 1st was replaced by a lady, Miss Alice E. Ball.

By this time (1882) the average attendance had reached 60 or over, except when measles lowered the average.

On October the 12th 1882 the Government Inspection was held. The Report of the Inspector (Mr T.W. Danby) was much better than had been anticipated, indeed it was quite flattering to Miss Ball, and the Grant amounted to £43.17.0.

In the Summer of 1883 the attendances rose to 80. The Government Inspection of 1883, on October 10th, produced a Report, "not so good, in proportion, as last year", but still quite satisfactory.

In the Spring of 1884 the attendances jumped to nearly 100, owing to an influx of new scholars; but the general average was only between 80 and 90 daily during the summer and autumn. 105 children were then on the books.

The Government Inspection on October 13th, again by Mr Danby, produced another favourable Report, complimentary to Miss Ball (who must have been a capable teacher and manager), the Grant amounting to no less than £63.6.6.

During the Spring of 1885 the attendances averaged approximately 90: on one morning in early July there were 111 children present, the highest number yet recorded.

At the close of the school year in September 1885 the Log Book records that the average attendance was 88 and the school-fees for the year £44.1.8.

In 1885 a new Inspector (Mr Geo. French) conducted the Government Inspection on October 12th; his Report praises Miss Ball for what she had been able to do under difficult circumstances to which he refers.

At the end of September 1886 the average attendance is given as 100.3.

On October 13th 1886 Miss Alice E. Ball resigned her position and left on November 19th.

On October 18th the Annual Examination was held, Mr E.M. Field being the Inspector. His Report is very full and critical, especially with regard to the assistant teacher's lack of method.

On November 22nd 1886 temporary charge of the School was taken by Anne Mayell, until, with the New Year, Miss Ada K. True took up the work on January 10th 1887, a task which she was destined to endure for thirty eight years! Miss E. Barrett was still assistant teacher.

On April 1st 1887 the school was transferred from the Committee of Management to the recently elected School Board for Loughton, and on May 23rd the Attendance Officer, just appointed by the new Board, commenced his duties. At this time (May) there were 140 children on the school books.

The last entry in the Log Book announces this appointment, and concludes: "Broke up this morning for the Whitsuntide Holiday – one week."

THE LOUGHTON SCHOOL BOARD

As we have seen from the Log Book, the first School Board for Loughton was elected in 1887, and consisted of 5 members (this number being increased to seven in 1892). The five original members were Messrs P. Lloyd (Chairman), R. Parker, W.J. Cuthbert, J. Chilton and the Rev. W.H. Vivian, with Mr J.H. Tee as their Clerk.

There had previously been two elementary schools in Loughton, viz:-

The National, or Church, School at York Hill.

The British, or Non-conformist, School in Smarts Lane.

Both of these were mixed schools, for boys, girls and infants, and both provided inadequate accommodation, especially for infants: this defect, to which repeatedly the attention of the managers had been called in successive Government Reports, but without avail, brought about at last a compulsory Order of the Education Department to establish a School Board in Loughton.

Looking back upon the state of things disclosed by a perusal of the Log Book of the British School, it is plain to see that the time was ripe, and indeed more than ripe, for elementary instruction in Loughton to be in the hands of a rate-provided authority. Voluntary effort had proved to be altogether inadequate to provide the necessary adjuncts to successful teaching; in the case of the British School at all events, over and over again the Government Reports had called for better accommodation and new apparatus, as well as for additional help in teaching – but without any adequate response. The voluntary committee of management had no sufficient funds to provide these essential requisites, and the instruction was starved in consequence. A better condition of affairs was urgent!

Soon after the first School Board came into power it decided to abandon the unsatisfactory building in Smart's Lane. Land was acquired in Staples Road, and on it new Boys' School, erected from the designs of Mr James Cubitt, architect, of Loughton, was built and opened on October 29th, 1888: the Smart's Lane school was thereupon closed and the children transferred to the other schools.

At the date of the coming into existence of the School Board, in 1887, the numbers of children on the Registers were as follows:-

	York Hill School	Smart's Lane	Total
Boys	103	38	141
Girls	97	41	138
Infants	80	43	123
	280	122	402

Three years later, in 1891, the present Infants' School was added, the girls thus remaining alone in the building of the former National School, henceforth known as the "York Hill Girls' School."

Lastly in 1911, the present Girls' School in Staples Road was built by Essex County Council, and the York Hill School was in its turn abandoned.

Epilogue

The subsequent history of the Smart's Lane school building is as follows:- At the beginning of 1889 it was hired from Mr Chalkley Gould by the authorities of St Mary's Church, at a rental of £15 per annum, for use as a Parish Sunday School and Mothers' Meeting: the opening ceremony took place on January 20th 1889. The expiring Committee of the British School (all of course Non-conformists) very generously donated for the purpose £7.0.6, being a proportion of the cash balance of just over £35 in hand at the time of winding up their affairs, this balance being equally divided between the five Sunday Schools then existing in Loughton. St Mary's church authorities vacated the building in May 1905 when they transferred their parochial organizations to the Club. From about 1907 until the end of 1925 the old school building was used as a Factory for the manufacture of tennis racquets, hockey sticks, etc; the original windows have been enlarged by cutting down the very high window-sills backs.

The York Hill School building has since been acquired by the Shaftesbury Society of London as a holiday-home for boys and girls, and has been rechristened "Ashley Camp House."

Percy Thompson

Postscript 2020: The British School building after 1925.

The old school consisted of the schoolroom itself and the master's house. When the LUDC numbered Smarts Lane soon after it was established in 1900, these premises became Nos 40 and 42-44. [in 1910-1922 the occupiers of the workroom were F A Davis and Co., tennis bat makers]

Freehold ownership was by the executors of Isaac Chalkley Gould, who were also the freeholders of Nos 30 to 38 and 46-50, the occupier of the house being George Perry. The schoolroom, described as "workshops etc." was leased by Warriner and Herd, the Loughton builders. In June 1931, the schoolroom passed into the occupation of the British Transparent Bag Manufacturing Co., also known as the Loughton Bag Manufacturing Co., whose use ceased before the War - they are listed as in Forest Rd in 1938. They had apparently rented space from W&H from the mid-20s on.

The premises were used (as were many small workshops) to make wooden components for the war effort, including for Spitfire wings. The headmaster's house was occupied for many years by the Wades, then Mrs Winifred Clarke, widow of ARP warden William Clarke, who was killed by an unexploded shell outside Loughton Police Station in May 1941.

The old school was occupied post war by a Mr Taylor of Epping, who built a lean-to shed across the front elevation. The business was concerned with shop-fitting. In 1999, an application was made to demolish the school; this was refused after representation by the L&DHS, and in 2000 the school was converted to a rather stylish house.

[seal on first page: County Borough of West Ham - Essex Field Club - Essex Museum Library]

[this transcription of Percy Thompson's typescript
by the Loughton & District Historical Society, 2020;
the original typescript was in a spring-back folder with a
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