No 6

The Chronicle

The Journal of the
Long Wittenham Local History Group

No.6
June 1992

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Cover Illustration: Birinus (centre) receiving blessing for his mission to Britain. 13th Century stained glass, Dorchester Abbey(see article "Bishop Birinus, the Early English Church and the re-conversion of Long Wittenham"

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the authors and researchers of Long Wittenham Local History Group who have worked so hard to provide all the articles for this Chronicle.

Also acknowledgements to Dr. Andrew Sherratt of the Ashmolean Museum for his help with the article on the Wittenham Shield.

Many thanks also to Penelope Anglias for help with the illustrations, including the cover drawing; to Trish Gilbert who typed it all up, and to Linda Francis who, as usual, finalised and co-ordinated the printing.

Richard Parsons
Editor

THE LONG WITTENHAM SHIELD

by

Richard Parsons

In early July 1977, a bronze shield was found in the River Thames near Long Wittenham by a member of the Oxford Sub-Aqua Club, and is now in the Ashmolean Museum.

A visit reveals a circular cast bronze shield with a central hand grip and strap attachments. The handle which would have been made from a leather strap was riveted on with two rivets.

Combat damage on its face shows a diamond shape perforation, the hole exactly matches the tip of a bronze age spearhead. Two other holes can be detected with careful scrutiny. These fainter perforations have been partly repaired and smoothed, but the larger one was never attended to, perhaps because its owner never had the chance.

To date only two such shields have been found (the other is in the British Museum) and Dr. Andrew Sherratt of the Ashmolean dates it to between 1300 - 1200 BC when it would have been manufactured on the continent.

Previously shields would have been made from leather or even wood. This is one of the earliest known cast rather than beaten metal shields, so it would have been made for someone of importance.

It is more probable that it was brought to this country as a gift to someone of equal importance than the shield having been used in this country for the purpose of conquest.

Because the area around Wittenham is part of the Upper Thames Valley which was an important trading centre during that period.

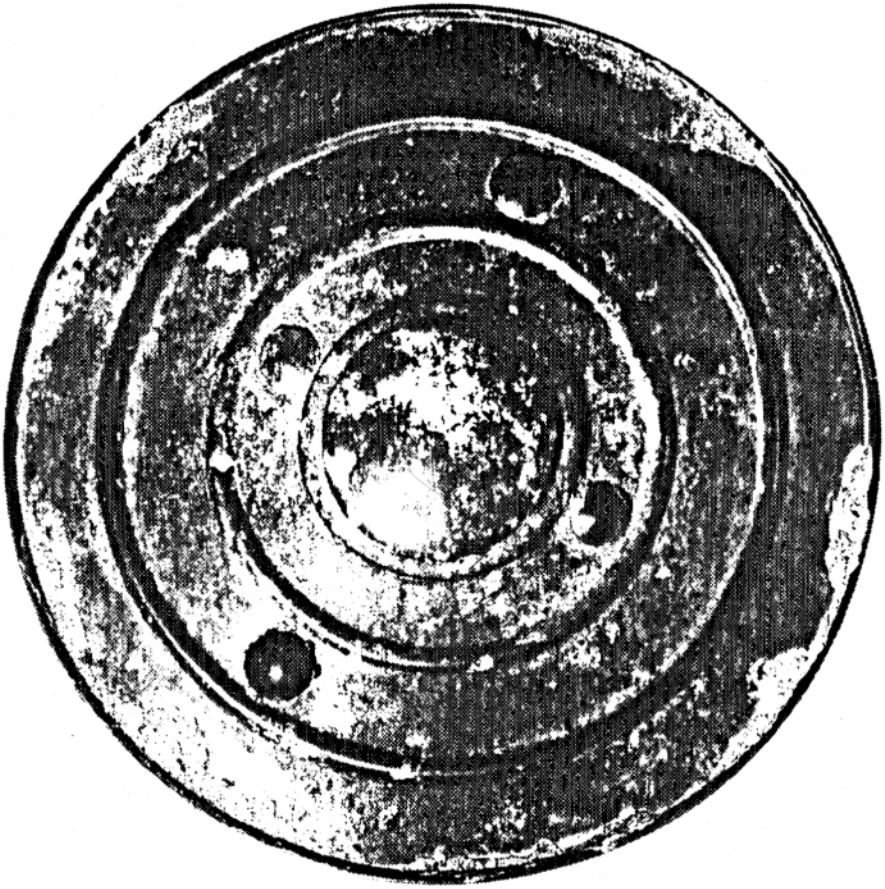


Photo by Dr. Andrew Sherratt, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

BISHOP BIRINUS, THE EARLY ENGLISH CHURCH AND THE RE-CONVERSION OF LONG WITTENHAM

by

Kathleen Jewess

It is impossible to know just when Christianity was first brought to the area now known as Long Wittenham, but it was sometime during the period of Roman occupation. Dorchester was a Roman civitas, and there was a Romano British village on what is now Northfield Farm. Roman remains have been found elsewhere in the parish, in particular a situla (a Liturgical bucket) at the foot of a boy in a mixed Christian and pagan burial field at Saxons Heath: the presence of such an object is held to prove the presence of a Christian community in late Roman times (4th century A.D.). Yet the Christian religion in this part of England was one of the victims of the Anglo-Saxon invasions which recommenced with the withdrawal of the Roman legions, when paganism reasserted its dominance. Therefore when the Bishops of Rome turned their attention to Britannia in the late 6th and early 7th centuries, it was to a dark and heathen land needful of missionaries.

In those days to convert the king or tribal Chieftain was to convert the people. Conversely, the death or defeat of the

leader, if he was not succeeded by one already converted or willing to be baptised, could mean the loss of the area to the old pagan gods. Characteristically, the king would be baptised, and then wholesale baptism of his followers would take place in the nearest river. Pope Gregory sent Bishop Augustine to England in A.D. 596 to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and upon landing at Thanet, Augustine immediately sent an envoy to Aethelberht of Kent, whose dominions stretched up to the Humber, and who was bretwalda, or over king, of the Anglo-Saxons. Aethelberht had a Frankish Christian princess, Bertha, as his wife, and she already celebrated the Christian rites in a little church at Canterbury: therefore he was presumably favourably disposed to the new religion. By July 598 Pope Gregory was celebrating the news that Augustine had baptised "more than 10,000" Anglo-Saxons, and Aethelberht himself was baptised in 601[1]. Therefore, by the time Bishop Birinus arrived thirty years later, there was a substantial Christian kingdom extant in southern England.

Most of what is known about Birinus and his mission comes from Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical History of the English nation), completed in A.D. 731. This is what he relates: 'About this time the West Saxons, who in early days were called the Gewisse, received the faith of Christ during the reign of Cynegils through the preaching of Bishop Birinus. The latter had come to Britain on the advice of Pope Honorius, having promised in the pope's presence that he would scatter the seeds of the holy faith in the remotest regions of England, where no teacher had been before. For

this reason he was consecrated bishop at the pope's command by Asterius, bishop of Genoa. So he came to Britain and visited the race of the Gewisse first of all; finding that they were all completely heathen, he decided that it would be more useful to preach the word there rather than go further in seeking others to evangelize.'

'While he was preaching the gospel in this kingdom, the king himself, after receiving instruction, was cleansed from his sins in the waters of baptism together with all his people. It so happened that at the time Oswald, the saintly and victorious king of the Northumbrians, was present and stood godfather for him. Lovely indeed and well-pleasing to God was their relationship; that same man whose daughter Oswald was later to receive as Dorchester Abbey his wife, that day,

Birinus preaching before Cynegils (seated). 14th C. stained glass in Dorchester Abbey

after his new birth and dedication to God, was received by Oswald as his son. The two kings gave the bishop a city called Dorchester in which to establish his episcopal see. After he had built and dedicated churches and brought many to the Lord by his pious labours, he went to be with the Lord and was buried in the same city.'[2] Bede, then, gives the essence of the story, but it is possible to elaborate it slightly.

Birinus was apparently a Frankish priest from Gaul who asked permission from Pope Honorius to work as a missionary amongst the Anglo-Saxons. The papacy, however, was always careful not to send a bishop to an area already claimed by another, and Birinus had to promise to go into the interior where no other missionary had yet been. Pope Honorius then commanded Asterius, the archbishop of Milan, to consecrate Birinus, although he was as yet without a see. (Asterius lived in Genoa in order to avoid contact with the Lombards of Northern Italy, who were Arian heretics.) Birinus then came to Britain landing at Southampton Water or further west, since the first people he met were the Gewisse (as Bede always called the people of Wessex), ruled over by Cynegils. The Gewisse included the Saxons who had landed at Southampton Water and the Angles who had come down the Icknield Way to the Middle Thames.

Cynegils' power was focussed on the Middle Thames. Dorchester was one of his centres, conveniently situated on roads and rivers and in an area which was relatively thickly populated. Birinus made his way north to the king, who received him kindly: Cynegils was then consolidating his

relations with the bretwalda Oswald, the Christian king of Northumbria, who had been converted by Celtic missionaries. Birinus found ‘the Gewisse most pagan’, with no missionary working there, and he set out to instruct the king. King Oswald, meanwhile, decided that he wanted to marry Cyneburh, the beautiful daughter of Cynegils, and he set out for Wessex. He came to Dorchester to see Cynegils, who had meanwhile continued to receive instruction from Birinus, and stood sponsor for him when Birinus baptised Cynegils in A.D.635, thereafter marrying his daughter. The two kings then granted land to Birinus in Dorchester for the establishment of his episcopal see and cathedral church;[3] tradition has it that the abbey church was built on the site of Cynegils' baptism. That same year Birinus baptised the king's son, Cwichelm, who unfortunately soon died; later on he baptised Cwichelm's son Cuthred.

Birinus, according to Bede, ‘built and dedicated churches and brought many to the Lord by his pious labours’. In addition he would have built up a monkish community at Dorchester as soon as he could; it is possible that he had brought other priests with him from Gaul, as Augustine had done when he had travelled to Kent. It is true that the Latin church required monks to be enclosed - unlike the Celtic church - but dispensation could be granted allowing such monks to go out and preach if required. Presumably this happened during Birinus' lifetime. There would have been language difficulties, since the Frankish language differed

from the West Saxon, but he may have taken interpreters with him to England.

At any rate, he or one of his subordinates at some point came to Long Wittenham. Parish tradition naturally assumes that it was Birinus himself, and that he arrived by boat. Where he supposedly preached is marked by the cross, which tradition dates from the first half of the 7th century; the steps and the pedestal are thought to be original. (The cross was restored in 1853 by Ingram Shipton, at that time a printer in Long Wittenham, who later emigrated to New Zealand). Possibly he encouraged the building of a church but regular church attendance may not have had the high priority it later received. It was only in the ninth century, after the Danish invasions, that bishops aspired to have a church wherever people in the countryside needed one. Whether the first wooden Anglo-Saxon church was built on the suggestion of Birinus, or later, it most likely stood on the site of the present church: the fact that Bronze Age burials were discovered on the site (during building work on the church at the turn of this century) argues for the continuity of the site as the sacred spot of the parish.

Birinus worked in Wessex until his death about A.D. 650. He was buried in Dorchester, but his remains were removed to Winchester in 690. In spite of his work there were many pagan sanctuaries left in Wessex, judging from place name evidence and many pagans left until late in the 7th century. Christianity, in short, struggled in Wessex during its first decades, but the fact that it was a protected religion in Kent

and East Anglia helped to ensure its eventual triumph over paganism.

1. Margaret Deanesly. *The Pre-Conquest Church in England* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1961), pp 41-9.

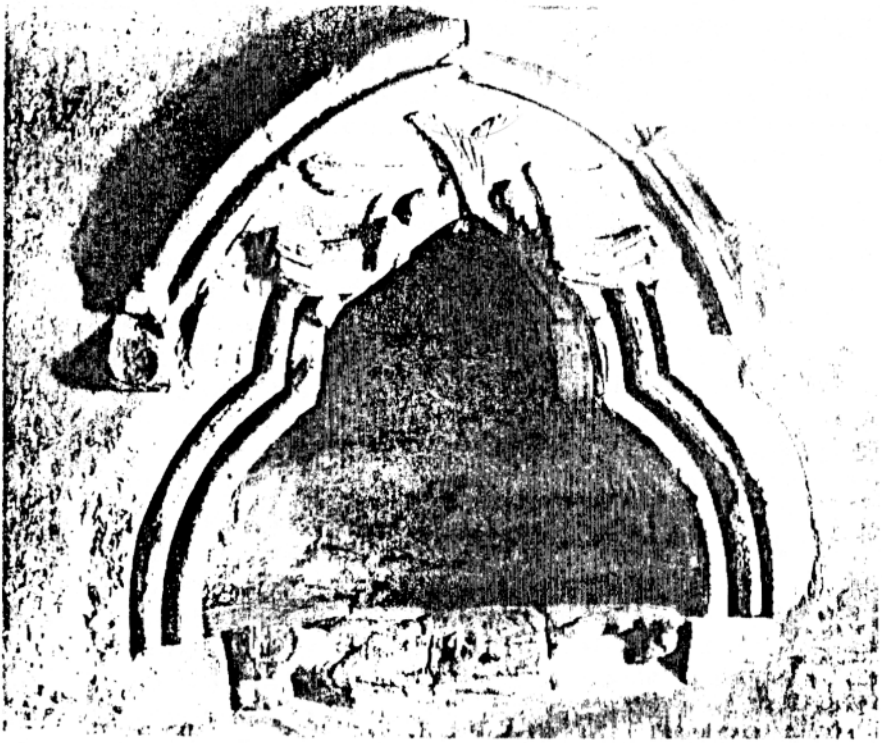
2. Bede, III.7.

3. Jean Cook in *Jean Cook and Trevor Rowley. eds.,Dorchester Through the Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Department of External Studies, 1985) p.34

GILBERT THE RED 1243 - 1295

by Janet Haylett

Gilbert who? You may well ask. Today Gilbert is a remote figure whose connections with Long Wittenham seem tenuous. Tradition has it that the small stone effigy in the south chapel of St. Mary's Church (now used as the vestry) is a memorial to Gilbert. It is also said that the monument is of a cross-legged knight clothed in armour showing that Gilbert was a Crusader.



Effigy of Crusader c. 1295

But is the effigy really Gilbert and if so did he go to the Holy Land all those years ago? And how is Gilbert connected to the village in the first place?

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Although not well known these days, seven hundred years ago Gilbert would have been very well known - he was one of the leading barons of medieval times with immense estates in Southern England and great power and influence in the affairs of state.

Gilbert's family, the Clare family, came to England with William the Conqueror in 1066. Richard, Gilbert's forefather, was the son of Gilbert, Count of Brionne; he took his new title from Clare in Suffolk where William gave him land.

By the early 1200's, careful arrangements of marriages and inheritance settlements allowed Richard's descendants to acquire the earldoms of Gloucester and Hereford. They then added still further to their already considerable estates by buying and exchanging land.

At the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 the Manor of Long Wittenham was held by Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor (see The Chronicle No.2). When she died in 1075 the Manor went to Walter Giffard, the cousin of William the Conqueror. The Giffards ran out of heirs in 1164 and their lands reverted to the Crown. When Richard I needed to raise money for the Third Crusade he sold off the Giffard estates to the then Earl Richard de Clare and his cousin Isabel, wife of William Marshall. In 1272 part of

these Marshall estates, including Long Wittenham, was acquired by the Clares by inheritance.

Arms of the de Clare family

Gilbert was born on 2nd September 1243, son of Richard de Clare and Maud his first wife, and was promptly nicknamed ‘the Red’ because of the fiery colour of his hair. When only nine he was married to Alice de Lusignan, the niece of Henry III. The marriage suited Henry who had long wanted a Clare - Lusignan alliance, but it was not a happy arrangement for Alice and Gilbert. They separated in 1271 and the marriage was finally annulled in 1285.

Gilbert's father, Richard, died in 1262 leaving Gilbert 9th Earl of Clare, 8th Earl of Gloucester, 7th Earl of Hertford and Lord of the Manor of Long Wittenham.

Although only nineteen Gilbert seems to have been not only willing but able to manage his possessions and to join in the turbulent politics of the 1260s. Because of the geographical position of his main estates, now centred on Tewkesbury, he was involved in both English and Welsh politics.

In those days there was also an international dimension to be considered. The Crusade movement had as profound influence on English society over several centuries and many thousands of lords, landowners, merchants and clergymen

took their vows and went to protect the rights of Christendom in the Holy Land.

.....

During his lifetime, Gilbert's father, Richard, had expelled the Welsh rulers from the western valleys of Glamorgan as far as the Rhondda, while leaving the remaining rulers undisturbed. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was the leading contemporary Welsh leader, who was only too willing to exploit the division and dissension between the King and the English barons which had arisen during Henry III's reign. The King's personal style of government and his reliance on foreign advisors displeased many of the barons who felt their own power and influence was thereby diminished. Richard had supported those barons who wanted reform. Following this the young Earl Gilbert fought for Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester and leader of the baronial party.

However, when in June 1265 de Montfort turned to Llywelyn ap Gruffedd for help, he lost much of his support, especially from the Marcher barons who feared the Welsh prince's intentions. Gilbert was one of those who broke with de Montfort and changed sides. He and the young Lord Edward, son of Henry III, and the future King Edward I, led the royalist forces against de Montfort at the battle of Evesham. De Montfort was slain and the baronial cause defeated. The remainder of de Montfort's forces were besieged at Kenilworth Castle and Gilbert played a major part in the negotiations for their surrender.

Gilbert's service to the King at both Evesham and Kenilworth had been very important, yet the King was ungenerous and

did not give Gilbert royal grants in recognition of his support. The King's treatment of the former rebels also seemed unfair to Gilbert. In April 1267 Gilbert the Red marched on London to plead the cause of the defeated and disinherited Lords. Backed by a popular rising, and with the support of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Gilbert secured a better deal whereby the disinherited were able to buy back their confiscated lands on payment of a sum equal to a few years' rent.

Whilst the English barons were squabbling, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd had become ruler of the greater part of modern Wales except for the southern coastal plain. So when the end of the baronial revolt left Llywelyn as the only potential enemy of King Henry III, Llywelyn decided that discretion was the better part of valour and made a formal peace with the King. By the Treaty of Montgomery (1267) he was recognised as “Prince of Wales” and as the feudal lord of the other welsh princes. All native rulers were to hold their lands from him and he alone could speak for them in their dealings with the English Marcher Lords or the King. This may have pleased Llywelyn but it left Gilbert's position ambiguous, especially in Glamorgan where it was not clear whether Gilbert or Llywelyn had authority.

This uncertainty led Gilbert to build Caerphilly Castle to defend his position against Llywelyn. Begun on 11th April 1268, Caerphilly Castle was an ambitious undertaking - it is a huge and impressive stronghold. Its building antagonised Llywelyn and both he and Gilbert prepared for war. The Crown attempted to arbitrate between the two, putting

Bishops in interim charge of the Castle pending a final agreement. Gilbert rallied the support of his fellow barons and also of Edward I who succeeded his father as King when he returned from his Crusade in 1274. It was King Edward who eventually waged war on Llywelyn, driving him from the Marches and much of the rest of Wales. Caerphilly ceased to be a fortress but was useful as the administrative centre of the Clare estates. Further skirmishes with the Welsh led Gilbert to build another castle at Morlais near Merthyr Tydfil. This was taken by a local Welsh ruler in 1294, who was forced to surrender it to the Crown in 1295. Gilbert died in December that year but his descendants continued to fight the local Welsh rulers with fortune going first one way then another over the next few decades.

…....

From the story so far it can be seen that Gilbert felt powerful enough to change his allegiances as circumstances dictated. There was considerable mutual mistrust between Gilbert and the King, first Henry III and then his son, Edward. Yet both needed the other's support and when their interests coincided they could be powerful allies.

Both Henry III and his son, Edward had aspirations to go on a crusade. Henry “took the Cross” three times yet never actually went to the Holy Land. Because of this Edward felt it his duty to go instead and turned to Gilbert for support in the venture.

The Crusade was an important aspect of English history. The English had been enthusiastic pilgrims for centuries and many important clergy and laymen had made the journey to

Jerusalem. The First Crusade started a new form of Christian war in which service to Christ was both military and meritorious.

The seal of Gilbert de Clare

A Crusader was someone who, with the approval of the local priest, swore a vow to go to fight the enemies of the Church in the Holy Land or elsewhere. In public recognition and confirmation of the oath the individual performed the liturgical rite of "taking the Cross" - a sequel to receiving the scrip and staff of the pilgrim. A Crusader wore a cloth cross

on his garments, usually sewn onto his shoulder. Having received the cross the Crusader became, like a pilgrim, immune from various secular liabilities and enjoyed the spiritual privilege of full remission of confessed sins. It was not always easy to distinguish a pilgrimage from a Crusade; not all Crusaders fought and not all who fought were Crusaders. By the thirteenth century personal participation was no longer a necessity; the spiritual benefits of being a Crusader could be bought by payment to redeem the Crusader vows.

The Lord Edward was, however, determined to go in person to the Holy Land. He and Gilbert, together with several other nobles, took the cross at Northampton in June 1268. Edward would set out first to join the Crusade of Louis IX of France, which was to sail from Argues Mortes on the south coast of France in September 1270. Gilbert would join them a few months later. At least, that was the plan.

In the preceeding few years Gilbert and Edward had not been on good terms. Relations between them had blown hot and cold ever since the battle of Evesham. Richard of Cornwall acted as arbitrator between them and in 1268 a concerted and genuine effort at reconciliation between them resulted in their taking the Cross together - a symbol of their mutual goodwill. However, the thaw did not last long. Gilbert's grievances over his demand for compensation for expenses incurred whilst fighting for the King at Evesham were too deep seated.

By 1269 Gilbert lost patience but he was also fearful and suspicious of the intentions of Henry and his son. He even refused to attend parliament in case he was attacked. Edward wanted to go on Louis IX's Crusade but was worried about what Gilbert might do in his absence if he was left behind. Edward was committed to going yet it was essential that Gilbert went too. Gilbert however needed to be sure that Llywelyn ap Gruffedd would not take advantage of his absence. Louis IX tried to help and summoned Gilbert to Paris in February 1270 but failed to reassure him. Richard of Cornwall was called in yet again to arbitrate and he drew up terms. If Edward sailed in September 1270 to the Holy Land, Gilbert was to follow in March 1271. Henry III would pay some of Gilbert's crusading expenses. Neither Gilbert nor Edward was to take advantage of the other's absence to start a war. There were stiff penalties against Gilbert if he did not comply with the terms and he, not surprisingly, found them unacceptable. He needed money for a crusade, the terms did not give him enough and he was in debt, and he did not trust Henry III or Edward.

Richard drew up new terms. The arguing continued. All the time Gilbert was trying to build his castle at Caerphilly. Eventually, in September 1270, the Lord Edward set out on his crusade. But Gilbert did not follow. Gilbert never went on crusade although even as late as November 1270 it would seem he intended to go. But his plans were overtaken by events. By the tine he should have set out he was engaged in war against Llywelyn. However all the penalties which, by the agreed terms he should have suffered - loss of English

castles, fines and excommunication were dropped. Circumstances had changed and retribution was no longer appropriate or necessary.

Gilbert's first wife, Alice, bore him two daughters, Joan and Isabella. Following the annulment of this marriage he married Joan, daughter of Edward I, who had been born at Acre in the Holy Land, in 1272. She bore him a son, Gilbert, and three daughters. Gilbert the Red died in Monmouth in December 1295 aged 52 and was succeeded by the four-year old Gilbert. With his death, without heirs, at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 the male line of the Clares died out. The huge estates were shared between his three sisters. The Clares no longer had the power and influence they had enjoyed during the preceeding two centuries.

So - yes, the cross-legged knight in St. Mary's vestry could be Gilbert the Red. He did have connections with the village as Lord of the Manor. But he was Lord of many Manors and there is no evidence of a special relationship which would account for a memorial chapel here rather than in any of the other twenty-two or more parishes he owned. He is buried in Tewkesbury Abbey having died in Monmouth; nowhere near Long Wittenham.

However the chapel was started in 1295, the year of Gilbert's death. And it would have been expensive to build. Money from outside the village would have been needed. Could this have come from Gilbert's widow, Joan of Acre?

Perhaps Long Wittenham did rise briefly to fame, favoured by the Clares.

As to the status of "Crusader", the position is clearer. Gilbert took the Cross but he did not fulfil his vows.

In a way it is rather disappointing. A clear cut identity for the effigy would be nice and neat and tidy and it would be exciting to

The vast Gloucester estates of the Clare family were centred on Tewkesbury where they were patrons and benefactors of the Benedictine Abbey. Four of the Clare earls are depicted in stained glass in the Abbey church; one may be Gilbert the Red 1243 - 1295.

have a Crusader as part of our heritage. But medieval history raises more questions than it provides answers. At least there is no evidence that the monument is not Gilbert. But at the moment we must be content with possibilities.

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HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

Patricia Lay

Before the eighteenth century education was regarded as the privilege of the rich; if you allowed the lower orders to know too much they would become unbiddable was the general theory. Gradually education became more widespread until it was universal and as we know it today.

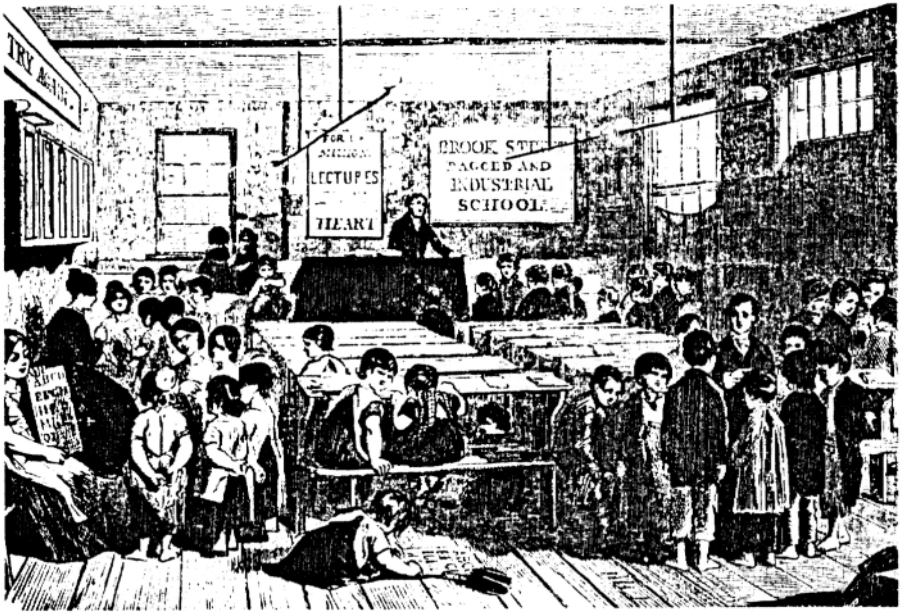
Schooling in the eighteenth century was due to individual enterprise or charity.

A dame school

Private schools were the most numerous but not available to the poor. They ranged from privileged fee-paying schools to the 'Dame' schools. In between were day schools, boarding schools and even night schools. William Cobbett tells that his father was educated at night whilst working as a plough-boy for twopence a day. The dame schools were often run by well meaning but ill-prepared

village ladies and only took children under seven, thus providing a creche whilst mothers were working on the land or at the big house. It must not be thought that all schools were inefficient - many were pioneering systems that would be taken up in the next century. These schools all charged their pupils.

The agencies providing free schools called themselves educational charities. There were parochial, workhouse, industrial and hospital schools; there were endowed grammer schools offering poor boys an education, many of today's Independent schools started in this way. These schools had high ideals, hoping to teach the masses to live pious, upright and sober lives serving their God and their Country.



19th century Ragged and Industrial School

The Church of England organised many schools particularly in the villages which were known as ‘National Schools’. The non-conformists established schools too and these were known as British Schools! Wales had circulatory schools set up with the help of the S.P.C.K. by the Rev. Griffiths Jones. They were run by travelling schoolmasters who stayed a few months and then moved on. The Sunday School movement was started in 1780 by Robert Raikes in poor districts in Gloucester: children were taught to read and know their Bible. The movement spread rapidly - by 1801 in London alone, over 150,000 children were attending.

All these schools were doing their best to provide popular education but the teachers were often poorly educated and despised. Attempts were made as early as 1700 to work out training for teachers but it was not until 1846 that certificated exams were brought in. Even then their wages were largely dependant on the performance of the children at the annual inspection - ‘payment by results’.

Government grants for school buildings were introduced in 1883 and twenty years later capitation allowances were introduced, initially in agricultural areas where schools received four shillings (20p) for boys and three shillings (15p) for girls if they attended at least 176 days during the year. The scheme was extended for all schools by 1862 when the allowance became four shillings for regular attendance plus up to eight shillings (40p) dependant on the child's performance in the 3Rs at the annual inspection. Failure in any subject meant a loss of two shillings and eightpence

(13p). As this payment was up to half the schools income, teachers' salaries could be affected by a bad result.

The Education Act of 1870 provided elementary education for all children. It doubled the state grant to Church of England and Roman Catholic schools and established rates-aided Board schools which were undenominational. The latter were governed by elected school boards who could impose compulsory education on all children in their area.

A village charity school

Villages mostly retained their Voluntary (church-aided) schools; village children's education was patchy because of the need to use them to work on the land especially at Harvest

time and several acts were brought in to try to prohibit young children working. Even then schools shut down as soon as harvest started and September attendance was often poor if harvest was not finished.

The 1891 Elementary Education Act meant free education for all. A government grant of ten shillings (50p) meant that fees could be reduced by that amount or abolished altogether, thus ending the 'payments by results' system. This meant that the annual inspection was less harrowing for all and could be more advisory.

By the turn of the century all children under 12 were in school - though in agricultural areas 11 was acceptable. The 1902 Education Act brought in by Balfour abolished the Board Schools and thus power of the parishes to run their own schools. The supervision of elementary and secondary schools was now in the hands of the County and larger Borough Councils. For the first time secondary education was given financial support. This resulted in its growth and popularity and enabled many more students to consider a University education. The system has been modified and improved (and occasionally nearly wrecked) but is largely the same today.

English Social History - G.M. Trevelyan

History of Elementary Education - C. Burchenough

Notes - Dr K Jewess

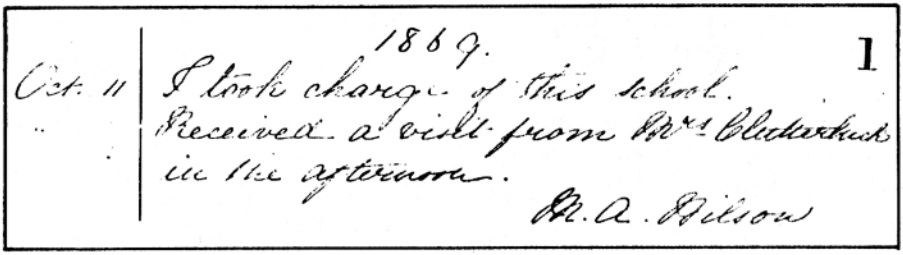
THE SCHOOL DAY

by

Patricia Lay

The school log books give no clue as to the school time-table except an occasional reference to the school closing early during the winter. However we can assume that lessons ran from 9am to noon and from 2pm to 4pm. In winter or if the weather looked like becoming inclement, the dinner break would be shortened and school would close earlier.

Lessons would be reading, writing and arithmetic plus religious instruction and singing and sewing for the girls. In the latter part of the nineteenth century history, geography and art were introduced. All children were taught to read but in some schools only the boys learnt to write. The girls would be given sewing or the Vicarage darning and repairing.



1869. 1

Oct. 11 I took charge of this school.
Received a visit from Mrs Blatherwick
in the afternoon.
M. A. Wilson

The first entry in the school log-book

Long Wittenham log-books start in 1869 with a new headmistress, Miss Wilson. She usually had on her staff one or two assistant mistresses plus a pupil teacher and a monitor

- a girl who had just left school and was paid one shilling a week. There were as many as 120 pupils between the ages of three and eleven or twelve.

The two most feared events of the year were the Annual Inspection by her Majesty's Inspectors and the Diocesan Inspection. The H.M. Inspectors examined each class to see if the children had attained the required standard - on this depended the amount of capitation allowance that the school would receive. The report of 1873 was not good:

> "The mass of the Infants are poorly organised and imperfectly instructed and handled and their Teacher must, if she continues in the profession, study in some good school the art of teaching and handling infants. In the mixed school writing is very good, sums very fair, there is far too much tendency to copy; drill is good and reading rather mumbled, spelling fair."

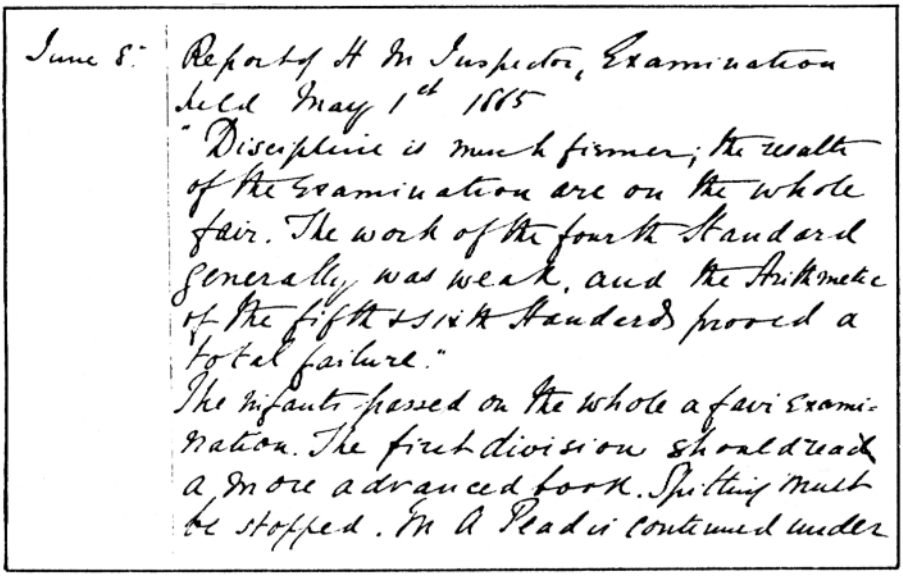
The following year

> "the order and general results are very satisfactory and the infant class work is excellent. Needlework is good. Singing is accurate and pleasing".

The total grant would be £50-16s-8d. After some bad reports in the 1880s the 1885 report read

> "Discipline is much firmer, the results of the examination are on the whole fair. The work of the fourth standard generally was weak and the Arithmetic

of the 5th and 6th standards proved a total failure. The infants passed on the whole a fair exam. The first division should read a more advanced book. Spitting must be stopped. M.A. Read (infants teacher) is continued under Article 84. Presented for examination: 82. Passes in Reading 74, Writing 68, Arithmetic 51."



June 8th Report of H.M. Inspector, Examination held May 1st 1885

"Discipline is much firmer; the walls of the Examination are on the whole fair. The work of the fourth Standard generally was weak, and the Arithmetic of the fifth & sixth Standards proved a total failure."

The infants passed on the whole a fair Examination. The first division should read a more advanced book. Spitting must be stopped. M A Read is continued under

Part of H.M. Inspector's report 1885.

The Diocesan Inspector checked the Religious work of the school. Long Wittenham seemed to be well taught in this respect. The reports were usually good; 1886 is typical:

"The infants and younger children had been carefully taught and were well acquainted with their work. Amongst the elder ones the results were in some respects good, in all very promising and hopeful. Special attention should be paid to the Gospel narrative

and lessons on the Prayer Book should be given. A slight tendency to hastiness in reciting should be checked throughout the school. Prize: Emily Winkfield. Commended: Florence Musgrove, Blanche Winkfield, Emma Lovegrove, Hilda Thame and Rose Belcher."

The schools were told what the children had to learn during the year: e.g. in 1887 the infants had to learn about :-

1. Simple facts in nature: a thunderstorm, sunshine, frost, winter, summer, snow.

2. Animals: cow, cat, pig, mole, camel, hare.

3. Objects: butter, tin, slate, glass, ink, treacle.

4. Common Employment: skating, harvesting, potato gathering, washing, cooking, sewing.

5. Clothing and Food: silk, milk, wool, linen, tea, vegetables.

6. Familiar Scenes: hunting, fishing, joiner, tailor, post office, blacksmith.

One lesson in colour form each week.

The poetry for 1887 was Standards v.,vi.,vii.: The Ancient Mariner, Standard iv. : Mary Queen of Scots. Standard iii. Lord Ullins Daughter, Standard 11.: To the Cuckoo; Standard 1. : Little Jim and the Infants, The Cow.

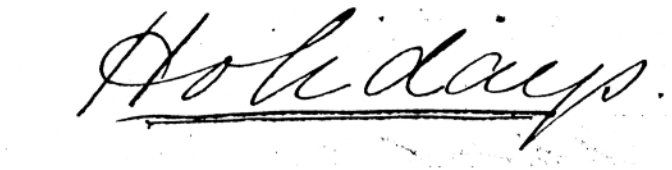
There seems to have been set hours for lessons - the Scripture hour, the reading hour etc. Miss Mawson, who took over from Miss Wilson in 1886, often mentions the changes in the logbook:

> "May 23 Took Standard iv for arithmetic during the reading hour."
>
> "June 4 took 10 minutes from arithmetic time for scriptures."
>
> "Dec 16 First class girls had needlework during scripture hour."

The days sound very regimented.

Reading through the log books makes one realise the enormous influence the Church had in the school. The vicar, the Rev Clutterbuck, or his wife or daughters visited almost every day.

The Vicar gave church instruction and the ladies listened in singing, examined sewing or occasionally helped out with teaching. Material was provided for sewing probably for charity but the girls also did the Vicarage darning. The Clutterbucks supported the school financially and provided many treats. There was always tea and games on Easter Monday, a treat in the Summer and at Christmas.



Holidays were obviously welcomed by all.

There was a long break of about six weeks in the summer because the children would be needed to help with corn and potato harvest.

The children had a weeks holiday at Feast time and at Christmas but only two days over Easter.

There were some discretionary half days such as Ash Wednesday and Ascension day and special requests by the Vicar for good exam results. These must have been welcomed by staff as well as pupils. The Victorian school seems to have been an arduous and nerve-wracking experience for everyone.

LONG WITTENHAM SCHOOL

by Isobel Henderson

The School Today

A school was first mentioned in Long Wittenham records in 1826, when one Robert Terry is listed as "schoolmaster". Unfortunately nothing else is known about education in our village until two years later in 1828 when the President and Scholars of St. John's College in Oxford agreed to grant the sum of £20 towards the erection of a National School. Such schools were for “the education of the Poor according to the Church of England”.

The exact location is uncertain but the school - probably a single room - was opened on February 18th 1833. Marianne Wetman, aged 13, daughter of Richard Wetman, bailiff to W.Maynard, has the distinction of being the first entrant on the register. That first day some 57 children attended, ranging in age from 5 to 13.

In 1853 the government gave special grants for schools in agricultural areas : 4 - 6 shillings per boy and 3 - 5 shillings per girl linked to attendance of at least 176 days per annum. Two years later an application was made for aid towards building “schoolrooms to accommodate 100 children” in Long Wittenham. The estimate for the building of the school was £370 and it was proposed that the pupils pay 2 pence per week.

This magnificent new school was finally opened on its present site in High Street on Wednesday 27th April 1857 by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. The schoolmaster was Mr. Harry Battenbush who remained in charge until 1869.

Attendance in those early days was very much governed by the seasons, the weather and poor health. Children were frequently absent because they were scaring birds, haymaking or harvesting, because it was very wet and roads were impassable or because of epidemics of influenza, measles, scarlet fever etc.

By 1862 the government, in an effort to ensure that money spent on education was being used efficiently, introduced “Payment by Results”. The dreaded annual visit of Her Majesty's Inspectors loomed large on every schoolmaster‘s diary. Schools were paid a total of 12 shillings per child. This was made up of 4 shillings for regular attendance and 8 shillings depending on the child's performance in the examination of the “3 R's” by H.M.I., failure in any subject meant a loss of 2s 8d. The school's financial situation was greatly dependent on a good result as half its annual income

came from the government payment. A bad result meant that teachers salaries could be affected.

Miss Mary Ann Wilson took charge of the school in October 1869 and no doubt worked extremely hard to educate her pupils. However at the annual inspection at the end of her first year, the inspector commented on “the very low state of education in the Parish”.

Frequent visitors to the school were the vicar, the Rev. Clutterbuck, and his family, the former to “catechise” the children, the latter to take singing or look at sewing. Miss Wilson continued at the school until ill-health forced her to resign in 1885.

Miss Lily Lovett took over for a few months until on January 11th 1886 Miss Ann Mawson became headmistress. The inspector that year made allowances for the staff changes in his report

> “.....the attainments are somewhat low. It is with hesitation that any merit grant is awarded this year.”

Unfortunately by the time the next inspection was due, sufficient improvement had not been made and the grant was withheld. Miss Mawson was nevertheless highly respected during her 4 years as headmistress. In the words of the Managers of the time, Rev. Merchant and Mr. Hewett,

> “she was an excellent disciplinarian and a teacher whose energies were entirely devoted to the well-being of those under her charge.”

Miss Edith Smith who had trained at Oxford Training College succeeded her on May 7th 1890. Many children were absent from school due to an influenza epidemic but Miss Smith worked extremely hard to meet the Inspector's standards. However although “the moral training and conduct of the children was very good”, the results of the examination were scarcely satisfactory. An extra classroom was built and alterations were made in 1893 by the local builder, Mr.F.E.Tame, at a cost of £318.

It was to this newly enlarged school that Mr. William Day, lately of Earls Heaton Board School, accompanied by his wife, an assistant teacher, came in June 1894. Standards seem to have improved and by 1896 the inspector is pleased to report that

> “the school has been very kindly and carefully taught and the children have made good progress during the past year”, and “the infant class is vigorously (?) taught with satisfactory results”.

Mr. and Mrs. Day served the school for many years taking Long Wittenham into the 20th century. The Inspector commented on the “carefully conducted school”. The infants continued to have “object lessons” on the sheep, the Horse, the Goat, Iron, Coal etc and the mixed school to learn for recitation lines from “Casabianca”, “Mark Antony's Speech” or the trial scene from the “Merchant of Venice”. Epidemics

of measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough or influenza were commonly noted. Sometimes the school had to be closed by order of the Medical Officer and it was quite common for children to be absent from school for lengthy periods. Such was the case in 1907 when in an effort to prevent spread of scarlet fever, the school was closed for three days to allow for disinfecting. Sadly, after more than 20 years excellent work as Headmaster, Mr. Day died in 1907.

Mr. Alfred Llewellyn Glasson was appointed to take over and would appear to have continued the excellent work of his predecessor despite the inspector's comment that “correct posture at desk work needs more constant attention”. He also noted that the children were: “well behaved and eager to work”, and “that their attainments are very creditable.”

The war affected the lives of many of the pupils and during this time they attended prayers in the church. As winter approached they collected

> “over 4 sacks of potatoes and 2 bushels of onions for Belgian Refugees in Oxford, Wallingford. and Abingdon” and turnips, parsnips, carrots and potatoes for our sailors in the North Sea”.

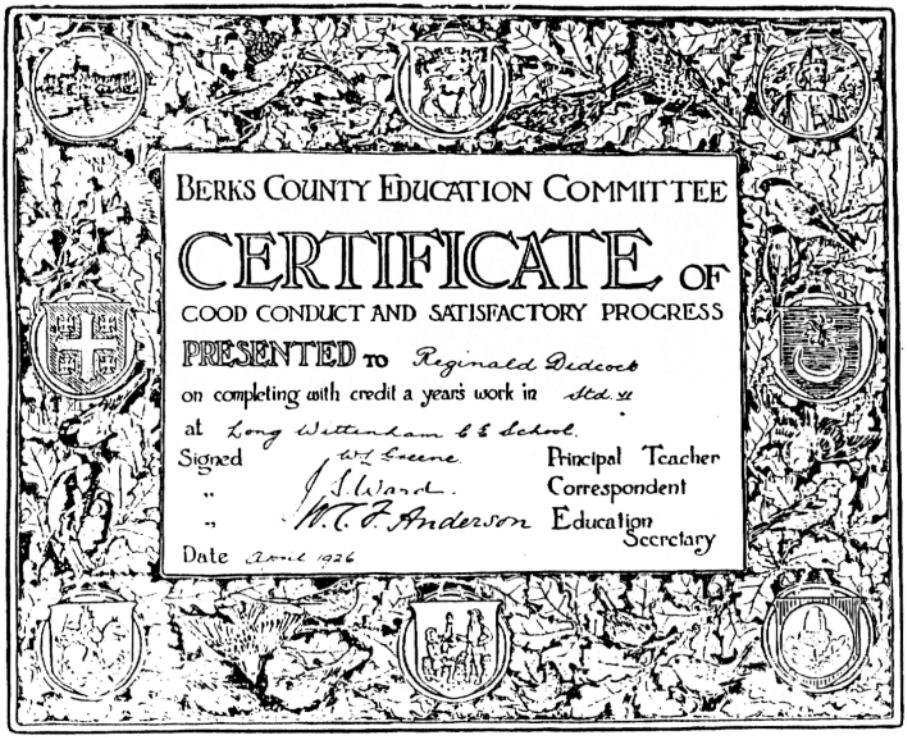
It was customary for Admiral and Mrs. Clutterbuck to pay for a Christmas treat for the children, but this was sacrificed in 1914 so that the money could be spent on “wool and flannel for socks and shirts for our sailors and soldiers.” Mr. Glasson, who had been called up, leaving Mrs.Day in

temporary charge, was appointed to Sutton Courtney school in 1919 not long after he was demobilised.

Mr. Glasson and the pupils of 1920

Mr. Alexander Traice became the new headmaster and had a visit, not long after commencing his duties, from the Inspector of Physical Exercises “to give a demonstration of new methods of head and body bending” - (one wonders if previous methods had been incorrect). Further exercise was instituted in the form of swimming - for the older boys only at first, but later girls were also included. This was held at “the shallow place opposite Mr. I. Hewett's farm”, the bathers being punted across from the Plough Inn landing stage.

The headship of the school was taken over by Mr. Walter Greene in 1921. He was accompanied by his wife who became assistant teacher. As well as being praised for their behaviour and hard work, the children greatly impressed the Inspector with their singing. Each year they took part in the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Musical Festival and in 1923 they won the Challenge Shield beating ten other schools.



BERKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

CERTIFICATE OF

COOD CONDUCT AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

PRESENTED TO Reginald Didcock

on completing with credit a years work in Std. VI

at Long Wittenham C.E. School.

Signed W.J. Greene Principal Teacher

" J.S. Ward Correspondent

" W.C.F. Anderson Education Secretary

Date June 1926

Certificate presented to Reginald Didcock in 1926

The children's horizons were being widened in other ways too. Several lantern, slide shows were organised by Mr.Greene illustrating such divers topics as the Early History

of Canada, the Lake District, and Cocoa growing in West Africa.

By 1930 the number of children in the school had increased to 100 aged from 3 to 14. This included the children from Little Wittenham whose school had closed the previous year, and boys from Appleford who had reached the age of 11+. According to the report, again after school inspection

> "the children are mostly of a good country type - very friendly and easy to control. They do plenty of hard work....."

Obviously the outbreak of war in 1939 had a big effect on everyone in school not least because of the arrival of a number of refugees from London. On 23rd April 1941 two land mines were dropped on the village. Fortunately there was little damage. As part of their contribution to the war effort, 2629 books were collected by the children in the "Books for Forces" drive.

Mr. Greene retired in 1945 after 24 years and Mr. Edward Daynes succeeded him. However ill-health forced him to resign a year later. Thus on 3rd June 1946 Mr. Harold Sutton commenced duty as headmaster, a duty that was to last 31 years until his retirement in 1977.

By 1956 numbers had risen to 110 and overcrowding in the two classrooms forced the authority to make temporary arrangements. This involved using the Village Hall for the infant classes. At this time some pupils remained in the village school until leaving at the age of 15. Only in 1958,

when Wallingford Secondary Modern School was opened, and the older children were bussed there, did numbers reduce to 90. However the Village Hall continued to be used until 1964 when the school was extended to its present size.

Since Mr. Sutton's retirement in 1977 there have been two other head teachers before the present head - Mr. Peter Gill and Mrs. Janet Smart.

Today in 1991 the school has its 14th headteacher since it opened 134 years ago on its present site - Mr. Neil King. There are 86 pupils aged 5 - 11. Television, video, tape recorders and computers have replaced lantern slides, the gramophone and the wireless. Teaching methods may have changed since Marianne Wetmann first sat at her desk on February 18th 1833 - 4 years before Queen Victoria came to the throne but generations of children have played in the same school playground for over a hundred years and benefitted from the happy friendly atmosphere of this small village school.

Source: School Log Books 1869 - 1978