

WHETSTONE SCHOOLS 1809 – 1969

The following are mostly direct extracts from the Head Teachers' reports of various Whetstone schools and reports from HM Inspectors of Schools (HMI):

- 1809 Friern Barnet School was in a large room in the Almshouses. The teacher was Mrs Earp, a widow, who lived in one of the houses. At first, she was paid £10 a year for teaching Reading and Needlework. This was later increased by £4 because she taught Arithmetic as well.
- 1830 Mrs Bush newly appointed - wages £15 per year.
- 1833 St John's School, Whetstone, was established "to clothe and educate the poor".
- 1835 Mrs Bush salary reduced to £12.
- 1856 Mr & Miss Lockwood appointed – combined salary £80 plus house.
- 1859 Infants' School (newly opened), Miss Head (teacher) plus her 13-year-old sister (as monitor), combined salary £30 plus house and coal.
- 1863 Mary Scott aged 10 left school today to keep house for her uncle whose wife died lately.

July. A thin school today owing to parents being out haymaking and fruit picking being required to mind the babies and take out dinners.

The girls give very unintelligent answers to any questions that require thought.

The Vicar came, he complained about restlessness, want of attention, talking, disorder and confusion in the classroom.

The girls have one pinafore each, supplied by the school, which they take home on Friday and are supposed to bring back clean on Monday. This is seldom done because:

- i) this is an inconvenient time
- ii) ii) the parents are so poor that many mothers work on a Saturday
- iii) during the winter months there is much illness
- iv) Monday is the proper washing day and many mothers object to washing and ironing on a different day

- 1868 HMI Report. Girls – the paperwork should be much more accurate and advanced. The Arithmetic is defective, and the Dictation Grant is reduced.
- 1869 Mr Piston (Head Master of Boys' School) £80 plus house, coal and gas.
- 1870 Very cold, deep snow lying on the ground. Many girls absent, particularly from the Colney Hatch end.

September 7. Barnet Stock Fair, only 11 pupils present.

Rebellion among the girls. 10 expelled for "persistent humming and insolence." Following a meeting between their parents and the Vicar, 8 girls readmitted.

- 1872 Mrs Morris presented a new frock to Lydia Sharp (aged 14), she having brought a note from her mistress to say that she had conducted herself well for over 12 months in her situation.
- 1873 Admitted H Lea from Ada Cottages aged eleven and a half. She cannot tell words of two letters and cannot count.
- 1875 First Assistant Teacher Mr Townsend £57 a year.

Received a dozen new slates, the first since the school opened in 1854.

All teachers' salaries increased by £10.

1877 Girls. The girls are gentle and well behaved, and the teaching is conscientious. Now that there is more room it would be advisable that the girls may have occasional use of the classroom.

1878 School closed for seven weeks from September – scarlet fever in master's house.

Girls School – Misses Green, Dearberg, Morris and Cressall (young ladies of the neighbourhood) take Reading and Needlework during the week.

1880 Susan Emmerton sent home because her school pence was owing, and her mother would not send it.

1883 Maria Howes (aged 13) to assist in the Infants for a shilling a week.

1884 Through the kindness of Mrs Miles, soup will be made in the kitchen next to the school twice a week during the winter months and the children can have a slice of bread as well, thus providing good nourishing meal for a penny.

A Ladies Committee has been formed, several of whom take lessons in the school, hearing Reading and helping with Needlework. Many seven-year olds do not know their letters.

July. School broke up early for summer holidays – Scarlet fever.

September Admitted Lewis X aged 13 – he does not know his letters.

The Inspectors report - the children had a vacant mind; the teacher is approaching idiocy.

All Saints' Infants. The attainments are generally satisfactory, and the work is agreeably varied. Just attention must be paid to discipline, which is only fair.

1885 Miss Goodwillis has worked a very remarkable improvement here, not only in the number of passes, but in the whole tone and intelligence. Needlework is fairly done and seems likely to go on well, but the Upper Girls have rather broken down in English. The want of a classroom is rather noticeable. (*At that time the children were taught in the school hall.*)

All the boys attended well, but the little girls stay away in the wet weather, only 9 today out of 64.

Boys' School. The condition of the building is sound, and the attainments are satisfactory, but Arithmetic is weak and in the III, IV and VI standards are inaccurate, and the Composition is good. Class work in English may have a good mark, though Parsing is not very bright. Geography is generally satisfactory. Some new desks are wanted.

Rev Miles to give weekly Religious Instruction.

Regulations for Corporal Punishment – Boxing of ears, pulling of ears and striking of pupils on the head is strictly forbidden. The attention of the master is particularly drawn to this point.

New Girls' mistress Miss Goodwillis paid £60 plus £10 in lieu of house.

St James' Boys' School size of rooms – two rooms to seat 45 boys 35 feet x 15 feet x 16 feet high. Small room to seat 32.

All Saints' Girls: 'The want of a classroom is rather noticeable.'

1886 School prizes – nice frock for the girls, trousers, shirts and stockings for the boys.

Her Majesty's Inspector Mr Willis has given to teach Geography, but only to Standard IV.

July – poor attendance because the boys are all working in the fields.

Three girls have left for service.

Two new desks have arrived, and a cupboard to store books in, which was sorely needed.

I would like to see an improvement in the discipline which is to free and easy.

Some of the children have stayed at home on account of the danger from the large numbers of cattle going to Barnet Fair.

Blackhorse Lane outside is being dug up to lay sewerage pipes. The soft clay sticks to the children, and the teachers have to spend half an hour at the beginning of school scraping shoes and socks.

1887 Frances Gibson is to be excused needlework because of her bad eyesight, and her parents cannot afford spectacles.

A map of England has been supplied to help with the teaching of Geography.

HMI: 'I was in hope of finding the Girls able to use a classroom'.

December 24. The attendance this week is very low, many boys staying away to avoid paying their school pence.

Mr Miles has given the school a stove, but it is only to be lit when it is really cold.

1888 Report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate "I saw 18 boys and girls of school age in Whetstone today on my way from the station. They should have been in school".

Girls. The work in Arithmetic is still very weak, nearly half could not get a single sum right. Boys. The boys generally are very unintelligent, so come out well in Spelling and poorly in Composition.

A great number of girls went to Hatfield House for a Sunday School treat.

1889 Jan. On account of the increase in the Boys' School, the Girls have been obliged to give up their classroom.

St James average attendance 134 in 2 classes.

Head teacher wrote: "It is difficult to ascertain the merits of each individual boy."

Received a washstand and jug. The girls may bring their own knitting if they like.

19 July. After a Short Service at All Saints' Church, the Girls were marched into their new schoolroom.

Boys. The school is very well taught and conducted.

Second Assistant Master to be paid £50 a year.

Jessica Pitson aged 13 has become a monitoress, with a view to becoming a pupil teacher.

1890 8 boys played truant in order to skate.

New Reading Books are required as 'The World' does not include the new British possessions in Africa.

During the holidays the school has been recoloured, a small porch built at the back door and some pictures hung up in the schoolroom.

On Monday afternoon, the circus almost emptied the school.

October 24 Florence H sent home in order to fetch her school money and has not returned yet. new box of chalk and 12

1891 Received a new box of chalk and 12 slates.

March. Heavy snow, only 14 girls present.

All drawings are to be of uniform size, 11 inches by 7 inches and the boy's name always to be written in the top righthand corner.

31 August. No school fees taken today as Free Education Act comes into force on September 1.

During the holidays a curtain has been put up to separate the Infants from the Girls in the schoolroom.

Girls school 64 on roll, average attendance 33. "It is very difficult to teach when the girls are absent do often." Girls' School – 'The ventilation in the Babies' room is defective. A partition would undoubtedly be effective'.

Infants' School HMI Report: 'I see no reason for using the porch as a classroom'.

31 August. No school fees taken today as Free Education Act comes into force on September 1st.

1892 Girls. The school is the better for the change of teachers and I hope it will continue to make progress. Reading has improved. Spelling and Arithmetic will

want more care and intelligence. Power of expression will be better for conversation lessons. Classwork shows little improvement. The Needlework exercises were moderate.

Infants. The first class, both upper and lower divisions have done well and show fair intelligence. Number is rather low.

The Boys did not give a favourable impression either as to their intelligence or of their interest in the work.

1893 School holiday for Royal Wedding.

Infant School 103 on roll. Staff – Mrs Pitson (Cert teacher), Ellen Ryman (aged 14 pupil teacher), and Sarah Pitson (aged 12) monitor.

Boys' A good teacher would be a great advantage to the school.

Grant (average pupils 134 pupils in roll) – Principal Grant 12s 6d, Discipline 1s 6d, Singing 1s 0d, Geography 1s 0d. Total Grant £120. 12s 0d. Discretion Grant £10. 10s 0d. Total £130. 13s 0d.

1894 April. Another wet morning, only 30 out of 138 came. So many have poor footwear.

School closed for 2 weeks by Order of Medical Officer of Health – measles. When we reopened 82 children were absent, so we closed again.

The Government Grant is £75 per year, the remaining funds are to be raised by the managers. This is for a school of 112 pupils.

Little intelligence was found in the Boys' setting down of sums. `

1895 Very little interest appears to be taken by the parents in Education. Their object appears to get the children to 13 years of age and leave school as soon as possible.

The children chose Letty Barlow as the best little girl in the school. She was given a Bible as a prize.

Boys. The work in English shows a great deal of stupidity.

1896 Boys School. I am without a teacher, and that wretched partition makes the work very difficult as I am unable to be in two rooms at the same time.

I, George Collier, took charge of the school today (26 August). The discipline has been very unsatisfactory – stone throwing, disobedience, laughing, playing about and talking have been rife. Twice pistol caps have been fired in the classroom.

Playground graveled and rolled, drain and soak away dug in lowest corner.

Following the change of Headmaster, there are many signs of recent improvement. Overall assessment Good.

1897 School Curriculum (Girls School) Needlework, Reading, Handwriting, Composition (once a week), Arithmetic, Object lessons, History (Stds IV to VIII),

Geography (Std IV), Recitation, Drill (10 mins daily). Weekly temperance lectures.

Composition teaching method – teacher reads a story twice; the children then reproduce it.

HMI Report: 'The room is not suited to the present numbers.' (97 on roll).

The room is very cold until the fire gets going.

Mr Breed, gardener to Mr Ing of The Hollies, Oakleigh Park, will take weekly gardening lessons with the older boys.

1898 Hilda Bartram and Bertie Matthews are both absent with diphtheria. (Later) Hilda Bartram has died. Many parents will not send their children to school because of the diphtheria.

Infant School hours – 9 till 12, 1.30 till 4.30.

The Managers supplied the girls with new slates, the first since the school opened in 1884.

Boys. The teaching is intelligent and thorough. The boys are bright and ready, evidently happy in their school life.

1899 Records showing the progress of each pupil should be kept.

School closed for the annual Whetstone Fete.

1900 Fresh supply of ink! This was welcome as we had run out several weeks ago and had to return to slates.

Mr Townsend and I spent the whole evening redecorating the classroom walls. This is the first time they have been painted since the school opened in 1854.

Half-holiday – Relief of Ladysmith.

This is an admirable village school, taught with enthusiasm, skill and much success. The boys are thoroughly interested in their work and show that they are trained in self-control and esprit de corps.

New Infants' Mistress Miss Brooks £50.

Another terrific snowstorm. The snow has buried the school fence and gates.
1901 Jan 23. I have this morning addressed the boys on the melancholy news of the death of Queen Victoria.

Began to use McDougal's National Arithmetic books throughout the school. Girls received Holborn Readers, Geography of Europe (3 dozen), 6 dozen pen holders, drawing copies, drawing books.

Boys received 1 pair dumb bells for Drill.

1902 It is so cold that the Girls are allowed to have a Marching lesson instead of Singing.

HMI Report: 'The warming of the room must be more efficient.'

Standard II will go into the playground for Marching and Tables, as they seem unable to learn without saying them out loud, which disturbs the other children. Monitor goes with them.

Half-holiday – Peace in south Africa.

Boys. This school has made a remarkable improvement. Grant increased!
1903 Prize winner Jessie Blackborow.

New Infant Mistress Miss Brooks £75.
1904 Received Gelatine copying apparatus.

Admitted 13 infants from Colonel Puget's school.

June. During the alterations, we will be working in the Parish Room. Partitions have been fixed. 1 Headteacher's desk, 1 teacher's desk received, accommodation now for 110, 89 on roll. There is great improvement resulting from the partitioning.

The roll is to be restricted to 120 in 3 classes.
1905 First mention of school closure for Empire Day. The children walked in procession behind a Union Jack.

The boys went into the playground to observe the eclipse of the sun. They all had a smoked glass.

Head Teacher's report: The object lesson which I saw Mr X give was severely criticised. No notes were prepared, though I had requested a week before this be done. I recommend that he be dismissed.

Winifred Goodship (aged 15) appointed pupil teacher at £15 a year.
1906 So many cars go to and from the Golf Course that I am worried about the danger to children. I have asked for a streetlight.

1907 Globe received from Philip and Tacey.

22 pairs of scissors sharpened, first time since school was opened in 1884. Specimen sets of weights and measures on loan for two weeks.

School closed for Finchley Carnival.

Excellent progress is being made.

1908 The oldest Girls are to go to Garfield Road School for Cookery once a week.

1909 The arrangement is to be -

1910 This little school is doing very nicely. The schemes show great care and consideration, the boys are well behaved and responsive.

1914 Albert Goody aged 8 came to school late, drenched with rain, without boots or stockings, with legs and feet covered with mud.

1917 Zeppelin air raid warning.

1919 Funeral of Arthur Lawman run over by a tractor. He was a nice little boy.

1920 Flushing toilets installed at St James' School and master's house.

1924 Head teacher wrote: "Today I received 7 tons of coal, 3 tons of coke and 800 bundles of firewood and spent most of Saturday and Sunday stacking it."

Boys. The work in the Upper Class, taught by Mr Yeaxlee deserves special mention. Tone and discipline leave nothing to be desired.

1925 At St James' the bell tower formerly surmounting the roof has been dismantled as the timber id decayed. The bell has been rehung on the east wall.

1927 Empire Day medals given to G Smith, A Wray, R Gaylor, T Powell, L Oerkins, / Jarman and L Osborne.

A Public Lending Library, open on Tuesday evenings, housed in a cupboard in the Boys' school, will be attended by the Headmaster.

1929 Free school milk is to be provided.

1932 Miss LeRoy Assistant Teacher £180 less ten per cent (because she is a woman).

1934 The Girls are to go into the Small Hall twice a week for Dancing and Eurythmics.

1935 Mr Culverhouse Assistant Teacher £288.

1936 First Boys' school sports day on Railway Clearing House grounds.

We have 3 women teachers with no proper lavatory, a note is to be sent to the Managers.

Foundation stone for extension to Boys' school laid by Father Hall.

The wasteful heating apparatus in the Girls' School is to be replaced.

1937 St James' School for Boys allowed 200 pupils.

May. Received 180 copies of the Middlesex County Council Coronation book

May 10. Coronation holiday.

Electric light installed.

1939 Sep 1. St James' School closed, staff on duty at Tottenham assisting with the London evacuation scheme.

Sep 4. St James' School closed until further notice.

Oct 4 St James' School. Classrooms which have been protected with sandbags may be used as shelters for 40-50 pupils. Part time attendance, one hour per day.

St James' School. Mr Carson, a teacher, seconded to full time ARP service.

St James' School. Dec 3. 3 air raid shelters completed in field.

St James's School. School reopened full time.

1940 St James's School. Jan 3. Shelter drill – time to shelters three minutes.

June. National Savings Week.

St James' School Head Teacher wrote – "I have purchased some sets of board games for use in the shelters.

St James's School. Aug 27. School closed – unexploded bomb on Golf Course. Received instructions that if a warning goes on after midnight, school is not to reopen until 10.30.

St James' School. Sep. Daily air raid warnings – e.g. Sep 16 warning 2.03, All Clear 6.00pm.

St James' School. Nov 18. School closed because used as an Emergency reception shelter for people from Orange Tree district, where there is an unexploded mine.

1941 St James' School. Jan 21. Gunfire was heard locally. Three incendiary bombs fell on the school – 1 three feet from the wall of Room A, 1 four feet from the porch in the main entrance, 1 just by the tree in the playground. The ARP wardens came to check all the children's gas masks for correct fitting.

May. War Weapons Week.

St James' School. Oct. The teachers doing Fire Watch Duty have been supplied with steel helmets.

1942 July. School meals kitchen opened at Oakleigh Infants' School. Meals are sent in containers.

Mrs Saxton absent with permission as her husband is on embarkation leave.

1943 St James' School. The school walls have been made unsafe by the vibration from the ant-aircraft guns at Sweets Nursery and need to be repaired.

Dig for Victory Week. We have reopened the school garden. Prize winners: G Arnold, E Beeston, W Grisebrook, D King, P Polfreman, G Thomas. Essay prizes: R Browne, A Helsdon, B Walker.

June. Children warned about butterfly bombs.

1944 Meals still served in classrooms. Mrs Bartram and Mrs Swayne work as washers-up in the server.

June 16. Flying bombs – Alert 9.46, All Clear 11.15, Alert 1.05, All Clear 1.15, Alert 1.55, All Clear 2.45.

June 25. A flying bomb exploded on the North Middlesex Golf Course. The walls of the new building are bulging. The Top Class boys and I swept up the broken glass and workmen boarded up the windows.

St James' School. Aug. Many boys evacuated. Roll down from 181 to 92.

Oct 13. Serious incident in Russell Gardens. Many absent.

School telephones installed. Boys School number is HIL 7228.

National pay scales for teachers introduced.

- 1945 May 8. VE Day. School closed to celebrate the end of the War.
- May 25. Electricity meter in the shelters read and disconnected.
- 1946 St James' School Parents Association formed.
- 1947 School closed for the Royal Wedding.
- 1948 June. First Residential trip. Miss Leroy and Mr Grout went with 29 boys to St Mary's Bay Journey Centre, for two weeks.
- 1950 First use of Standardised tests at 11+.
- 1951 There are now 218 infants in Oakleigh Infants School and 91 juniors over at Queenswell. The dining hall gets very crowded and we have two sittings.
- July. Queenswell School separated from Oakleigh Infants.
- Oct. Oakleigh Infants and Queenswell Schools temporarily combined.
- Playground of Infants resurfaced, and school gardens laid out.
- 1952 Oakleigh Infants' School. The school needs a hall, doors to the playground, a reduction in the number of school meals. "It is a happy community and the thoughtful way it is conducted is greatly to the credit of the Headteacher and her staff."
- December. Workmen began underpinning the south west end of Oakleigh Infants School.
- 1954 Girls Dept. Miss Sowter is going into hospital today, no supply staff are available, so some children have been sent over to the infants.
- These children won prizes for Road Safety paintings. - Felicity Carmody and Kathleen Davis aged 6, Phoebe Smethers and Gillian Rhodes aged 5.
- Empire Day. The children all wore their uniforms – Brownies, Cubs, Bluebirds etc and walked round behind the flag.
- Infants Harvest Festival. All things bright and beautiful, the fields and vales, See here are the red apples. The farmer has laid out the corn.
- HMI Report: "The severe deficiencies in the Boys' School noted in the report of 1933 are still present."
- Oakleigh Infants – radio and electric gramophone have arrived. 'The new hall echoes so badly that it is impossible to use it for wet weather play.'
- 1955 HMI has suggested that the children should make their own Wordbooks for their own spellings. The lower three classes are to do less copying and more free composition and number games. The children are to be allowed to write their own little sentences.
- A workman is fitting the shelves ordered and delivered four years ago. He says that he has not got the right screws. Four days later he completed the task.
- 1956 Boys' old building – electric light installed to replace gas.

Sept. HMI were horrified that the school is so formal. We suggest much shorter lesson periods, more group work and the children should have more direct experience.

- 1958 Oakleigh Infant School Sports Day prize winners – M Tugwood, J Smalley, K Chivers, M Carter, J Dupre, C Robinson, C Callahan, R Lumo, D Rothenberg, A Campbell, J Conway, J Revell, D Edgar, L Guy, D Williamson, D Bradley, R Churchdah, R Spoor, R Wilson, C Collett and L Rupley.
- 1959 Empire Day now called Commonwealth Day.
- 1960 A Cuisenaire demonstration was held for the Infant teachers.

Out of 132 infants on roll, we have 38 absent with Chicken Pox, 9 Mumps, 2 Whooping Cough, 1 Measles.

The boiler is furred up – the temperature is 49.

Raymond, who is habitually late in the morning owing to his laziness, will be kept in at playtime every time he is late.

Infants School leavers – 23 to St James, 22 All Saints, 5 Queenswell, 2 Holly Park, 2 out of district.

- 1962 Improvements to Girls' school – hot water in wash basins, lighting, windows enlarged, drinking fountain in playground.
- 1963 First recorded visit of a Theatre group to the school.

Oakleigh Infants. The coke ordered over three months ago has still not arrived. The caretaker is having to carry seven cwts by wheelbarrow each week. All the children's toilets are frozen in spite of having boiling water and anti-freeze poured down them. We might have to close the school if things don't get better soon.

Snow has started coming through the roof. Temperature 41. Hoar frost inside the roof of the school.

All Saints' Parents and Friends formed.

- 1965 All schools are to have a whole day's holiday to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Magna Carta.

All Saints Girls School – two-week trip to Scandinavia.

The school boilers burst during the night. The office sent 4 Calor gas heaters, 3 of which were defective.

Mr Hall of the Borough Architects' Department came to discuss the removal of the Air Raid shelters.

- 1968 Class1 parents came to Assembly today. The pattern is to continue.

First cruise abroad – Mr & Mrs Hicks took 16 boys to Norway and Holland.

July 17 – First Open Evening for parents.

The Spinney is to be cleared of rubbish.

September. A group of parents came in on Thursday afternoons to help in the classrooms. This has proved highly successful.

The air raid shelters have been removed.

1969 Oakleigh Infants. Oil fired boilers fitted.

Discussion with parents over choice of uniforms for the new school. Blue chosen and decide to retain All Saints' badge in scarlet and white.