

The Old Day School 1899-1905

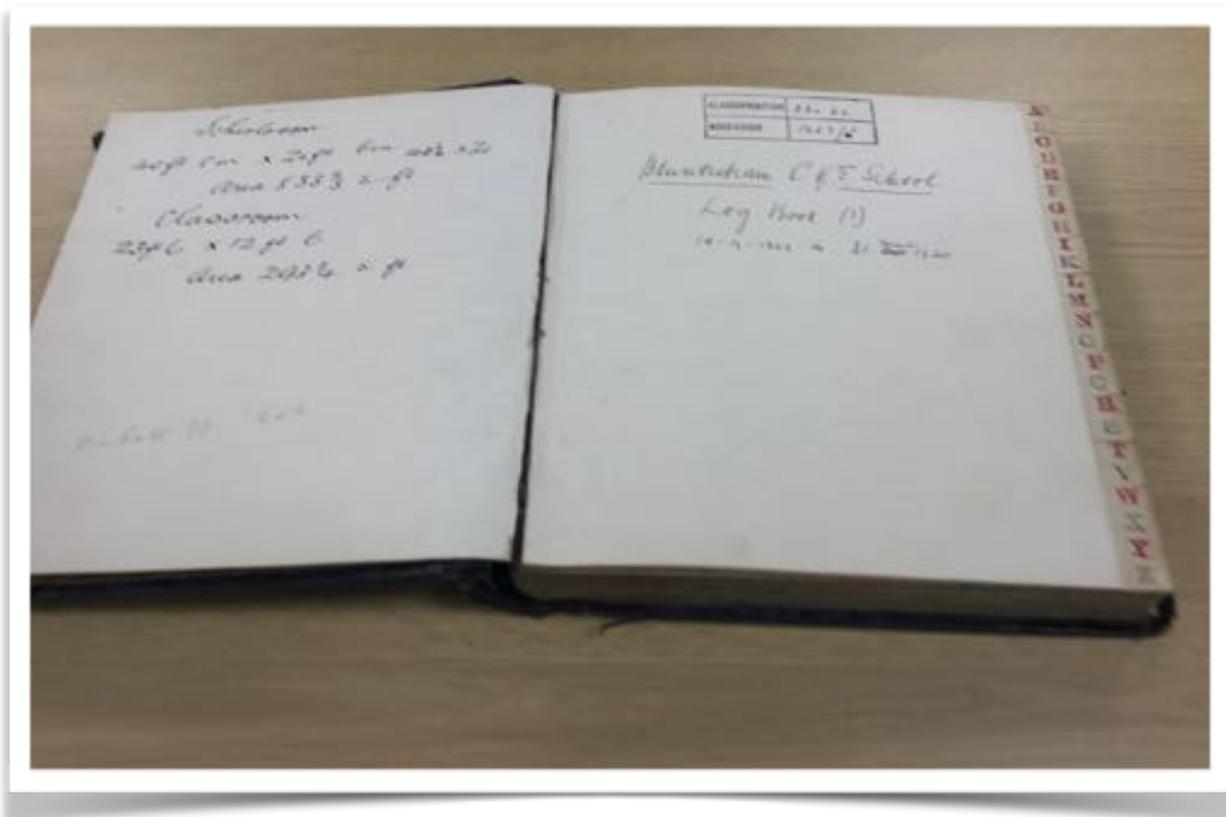
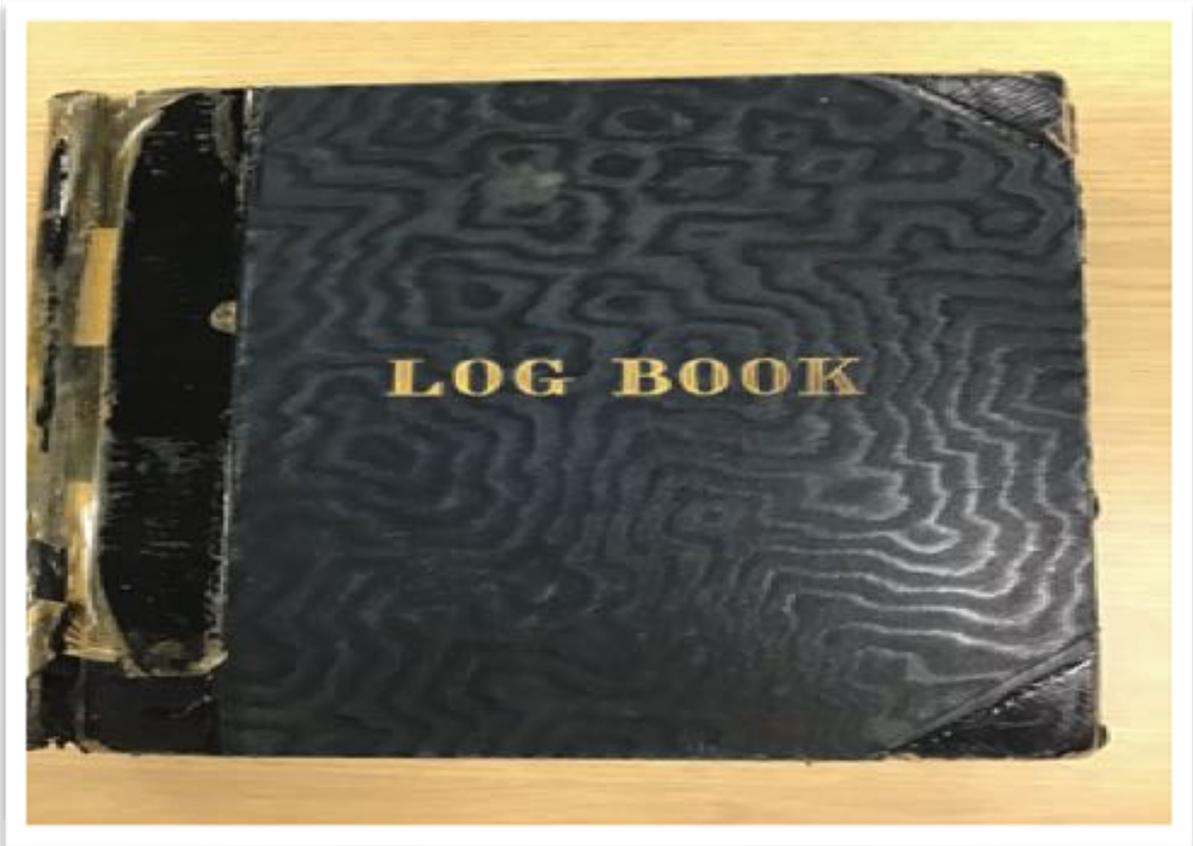
Elaine Gebbie 2019

I started looking at the history of what we now call The Old Day School by referring to the school log book, started in 1899 by the headmaster, Edward James Duggins who had taken over the headship in June of that year. He was 33, had a wife, Alice, who also taught at the school when her health permitted, and four children. They were Herbert, Violet, Cyril and Leslie.

A new code of regulations in 1872 stated that 'The Principal Teacher must make at least once a week in the Log Book an entry which will specify ordinary progress and other facets concerning the school or its teachers.....' Mr Duggins felt it necessary to make entries more than once a week!!

Initially, I decided to concentrate on these first years of his headship because it would appear that it was during this period that he was really having to work extremely hard to make his mark on the school against a background of ever changing legislation. I hope that by splitting the information I have uncovered into bite sized sections I can give just a flavour of the life of those who crossed the threshold of the school during this time.





1 - Background

To put into perspective some of his comments and concerns I think it would be helpful to have a brief idea of the national attempts to provide basic elementary schooling for all children, regardless of class.

I'm sure that everyone is aware that, up until the last few decades of the 19th century, education was generally the privilege of children from wealthier families. Poorer children might have been able to attend charity schools, Sunday schools or Ragged Schools [set up for six half days per week to provide free basic education for orphans or very poor children.] Many children, however, were completely untouched by any form of education.

In the early part of the 19th century, philanthropists were concerned to provide schools for the poor as a way of improving their lot in life, decreasing crime and instilling religious principles. This led to the establishment of 'voluntary schools.'

These, for the greater part, were established by the churches. In 1833 the government began to offer grants to these schools. Eventually the grants would be tied to a system of regular annual inspections and average attendances.

Bluntisham School was built in 1843 and came under the guardianship of the rector, Reverend Tillard and the churchwardens. It was originally called Bluntisham National School. National schools were founded by The National Society for Promoting Religious Education, a C of E body in England and Wales.

By the time Mr Duggins became headmaster there had been several parliamentary acts whose aim was to provide systematic elementary educational provision for all.

The first education act of 1870 saw the introduction of Board Schools i.e those which were managed by boards of locally elected individuals and which would be funded from the local rates. These were formed in areas where the churches couldn't establish their own schools and were to be non-denominational. The Church schools had much tighter budgets, especially after school fees were abolished.

We can understand therefore why Mr Duggins was so determined to improve average attendance. More 'backsides on benches' meant more cash.

By 1899 school attendance had become compulsory, school fees [what were known as 'the school pence'] had finally been abolished and the leaving age had been raised to 12 [providing that a certain academic standard had been reached.]

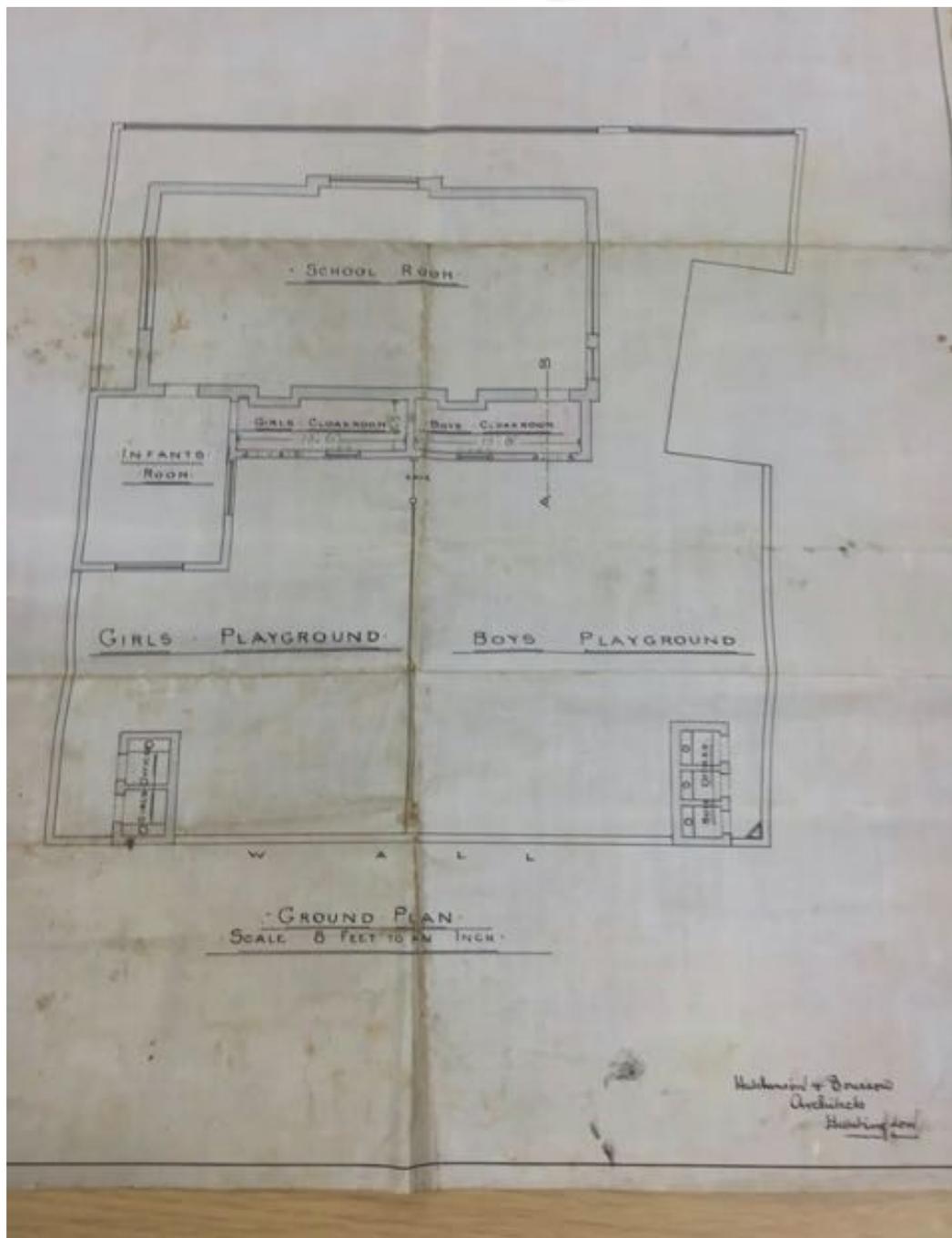
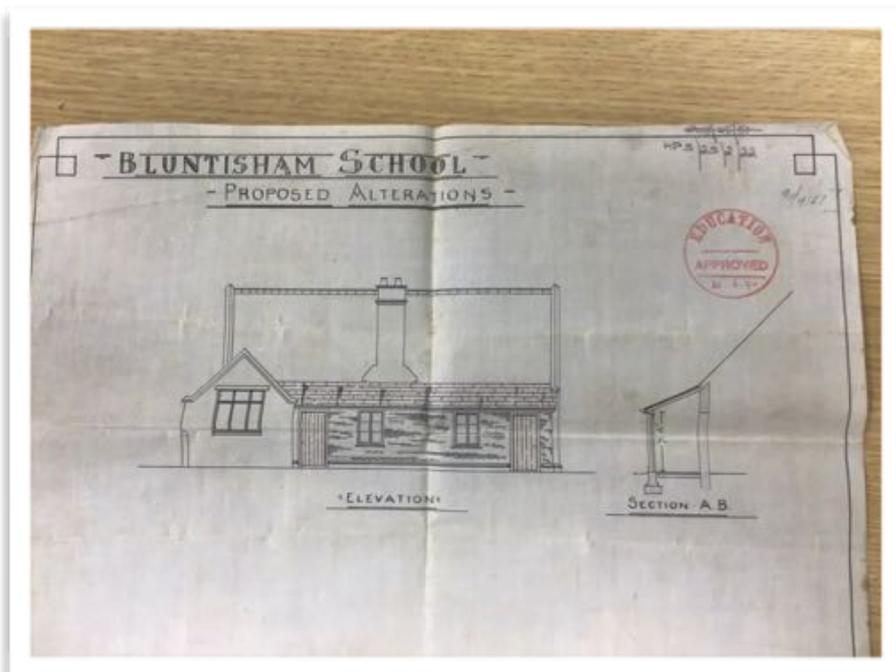
It is also important to know that in 1873 The Agricultural Children Act was passed. It stated that it would become unlawful for a child under the age of 8 to be employed in any form of agricultural work [unless their parent was the employer.]

If a child was 8 to 10 years of age they could be employed during term time providing they had made 250 school attendances in the year prior to starting the work [a certificate had to be obtained.] Between the ages of 10 and 12, only 150 attendances were necessary. They still had to have reached a certain educational standard however.

Mr Duggins had to do much counting up as, by 1899, certain families, and employers, were definitely not sticking to the letter of the law. We shall hear more of them a little later.

2 – The building

The following plans outline improvement work done in 1894 so the layout, presumably, was how it would have been when Mr Duggins took over 5 years later. A new cloakroom block was being created, at the back of the school.

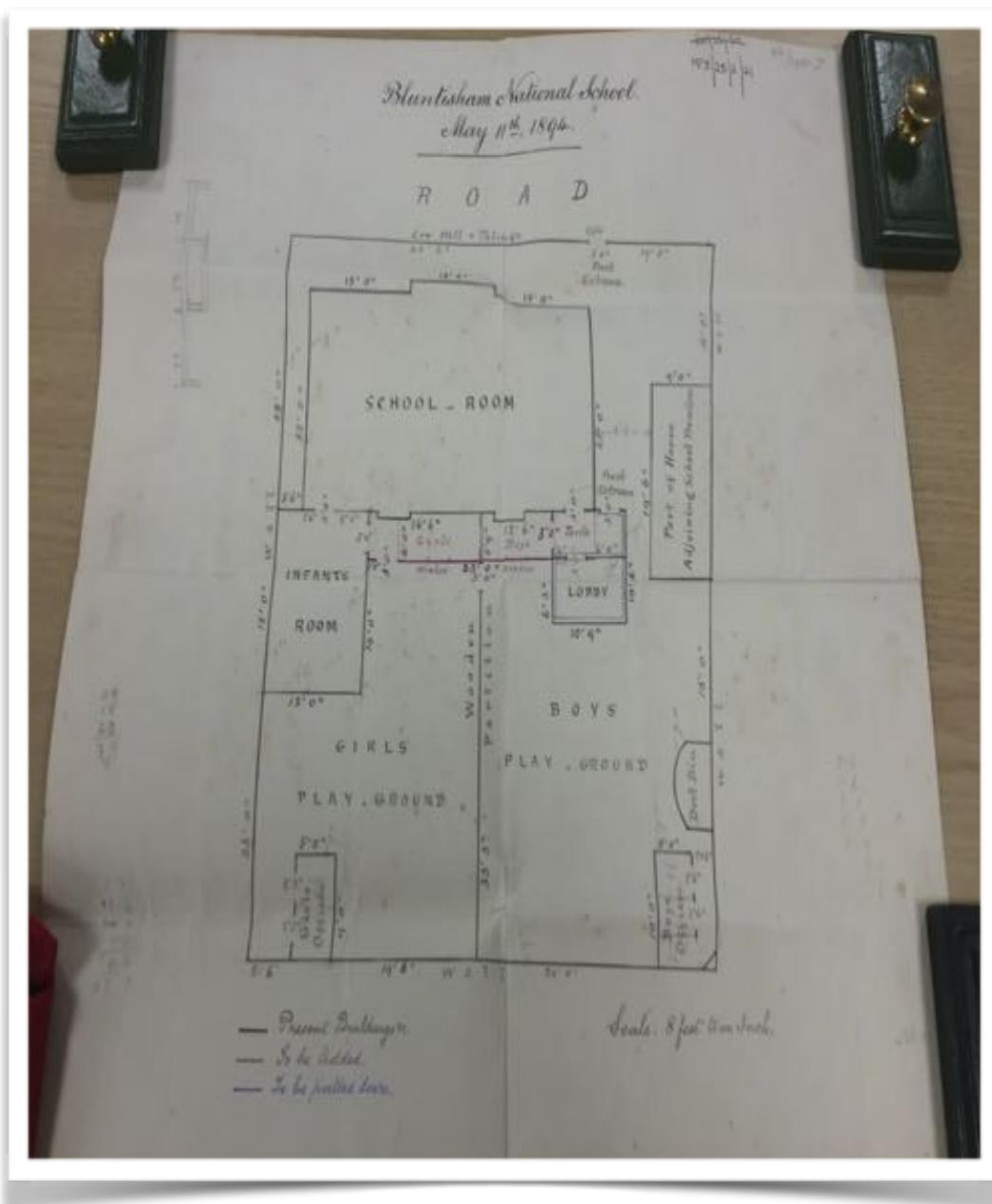


I think this plan is fairly self explanatory. If you find the small print a little difficult to make out, the two blocks at the end of the playground are the delicately named boys' and girls' 'Offices.'

I don't know what the surface of the playground was initially but, in April 1902, gravel had been spread over both playgrounds 'to improve them.'

We know that both classrooms were heated by stoves. The infants' room was heated first when the colder season started, the Standard children had to wait a little longer. Once the heating was well under way there were regular deliveries of coal and coke. This was normally 6cwt coke and 4cwt of coal. [A cwt [hundredweight] is approximately 51 kg.] A delivery of this size seemed to last a couple of months. Also, there were regular deliveries of bundlewood. I assume this was kindling.

When the stoves were working properly I'm sure everything was very cosy but they certainly caused many problems.



1st January 1901

Could not call children in school this morning until 9.30 as the room was so full of smoke. Went to call upon 2 managers to draw their attention to the matter.

2nd January 1901

The smoke is again causing the work to be of rather an unpleasant nature.

Everything was fine the day later but the Head's satisfaction was short lived.

7th January 1901

No fire in the big room when I got to school this morning. The children in consequence have been unable to concentrate their attention upon their lessons for though I lit the fire myself it took a long time for the room to get warm and being a very frosty morning the cold was noticed.

However, when they worked they seemed to be highly efficient:

10th November 1902

Sent for Rector to look at some slight damage being done by heat of stove to floor boards. He is going to have the stove placed on a stone slab.

19th November 1902

Classroom stove now stands on bricks and so is safe.

I haven't been able to glean a lot of information about the layout of the rooms but in October 1899 the Infants received their new desks. An HMI report the following year made this comment:

Infants' Class

The enlargement of the room and substitution of desks for the old and inconvenient gallery are great improvements.

I'm assuming that the gallery was the system of tiered rows with fixed benches which allowed all the children to see the teacher and, perhaps more importantly, allowed the teacher to see them!

Even though this system was no longer in use in the Infants' Room they must have had a similar set up in the main room because it was commented upon in 1904 in a further report by HMI.

In fact, the inspectors made several comments upon the state and upkeep of the building. Mr Duggins recorded the following when he'd received the latest report:

24th February 1902

In the classroom a new grate was needed and steps should be taken to secure roof ventilation as in the summertime evidently something of the sort was absolutely necessary. I drew the Rector's attention to the matter above and thus ends my responsibility.

I should imagine Mr Duggins was well aware of how hot the rooms got because much earlier he'd commented:

20th July 1900

No drill taken today in Big Room: heat too great. Chn spend it in the air.

I know what he means but it does conjure up a lovely image!

Maybe nothing got done because:

18th March 1903

HMI enquired what had been done since October re ventilation.

It would have been particularly important that the work was done because that year all voluntary schools came under the control of the local county council so they would have wanted it to be pretty ship shape.

3 – School Organisation

It is very difficult to be precise in describing how schools were organised because they were many and varied and, in some cases, depending upon how they were managed and by whom, the regulations for one type of school may not have applied to another. As more amendments were made to Education Acts the organisation began to be more standardised.

Generally speaking late 19th century elementary schools comprised an infant section [normally for the 5 to 7 year age group] and then a division for the Standard children. [What we might think of as the junior department.]

The Standards were the different stages through which a pupil would have to progress before leaving at the age of 12 [or not as the case may be.] We can see, in a further section, that the pupils in Bluntisham school ranged from much younger to much older. We know that there was a kindergarten group in 1901 as there was a sale of their work [baskets, mats and cards] for which they raised 3 shillings and twopence. [About £17.00 now.]

It was quite usual for a younger child to be promoted to the next Standard because they had performed satisfactorily in their tests or, conversely, for an older pupil to be held back because they had failed to pass their tests. This certainly happened at our village school.

4th March 1901

Promote 1st Class Infants as they are mostly fit and also to prevent overcrowding in the infant room.

6th January 1902

Re-admit W.Tagg from Earith School. He is nearly 14 and only in 4th Standard.

If a child made progress in line with his or her age then the Standards would be approximately as follows.

Standard I would be age 7, Standard II age 8 and so on until Standard VI which would be age 12.

The **most** important standard however was what was known as the Exemption Standard. This varied from region to region. For Bluntisham School it was Standard IV- age 10.

Achieving this Standard satisfactorily meant that a child, in the early days of compulsory education, could leave school at the age of 10 and be employed. With the raising of the leaving age the threshold moved to 12. Again, initially, provided that the requisite attendances had been made then a child would not have to have passed the exemption stage test to be granted a certificate which allowed them to work. This was known as 'The Dunce's Certificate.'

By 1880 this sensitively named certificate was only available for children of 13 or over but even then they had to attend school half time for a further year.

By the turn of the 20th century the Standard testing system was finally abandoned except for a few special purposes such as examining candidates for labour certificates.

4th May 1904

Sent off the names of those who wished to be examined for Labour Certificate on Saturday May 21st at St Ives.

On the next page you can see the necessary criteria for passing the Standard tests. Although issued in 1872 I suspect it hadn't changed any by the end of the 19th century as Mr Duggins certainly seems to use it as a guide for testing his pupils on a regular monthly basis

We see several references in the Log Book to children not having passed the Exemption Standard and who therefore should not have been taking time out of school to work.

It had been thought for a long time that the concentration upon the 3 Rs was exceedingly restrictive and, while the 'payment by results' system was in operation, it meant that the pupils were being taught only what they needed to know to pass the tests. Payment by results officially ended in 1897 to be replaced by funding based upon average attendance.

Eventually a wider range of subjects was introduced into the curriculum. More information as to what the pupils at Bluntisham School were being taught can be found in a further section.

The Six Standards of Education contained in The Revised Code of Regulations 1872

Standard I

- Reading One of the narratives next in order after monosyllables in an elementary reading book used in the school.
- Writing Copy in manuscript character a line of print, and write from dictation a few common words.
- Arithmetic Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures and the multiplication table to multiplication by six.

Standard II

- Reading A short paragraph from an elementary reading book
- Writing A sentence from the same book, slowly read once, and then dictated in single words.
- Arithmetic The multiplication table, and any simple rule as far as short division (inclusive.)

Standard III

- Reading A short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.
- Writing A sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book.
- Arithmetic Long division and compound rules (Money.)

Standard IV

- Reading A few lines of poetry or prose, at the choice of the inspector.
- Writing A sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book, such as is used in the first class of the school.
- Arithmetic Compound rules (common weights and measures.)

Standard V

- Reading A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative.
- Writing Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.
- Arithmetic Practice and bills of parcels.

Standard VI

Reading	To read with fluency and expression.
Writing	A short theme or letter, or an easy paraphrase.
Arithmetic	Proportion and fractions (vulgar and decimal.)

4 – The Staff

Because class sizes could be very large and teachers were in short supply headteachers would often use monitors.

Very often these would be 'pupil teachers' who needed to be at least 13 and able to prove their own academic abilities. They would continue to receive lessons to further their own learning, sometimes before the school day started, before assisting the class teacher. If they persevered for 5 years they would be recognised as teachers [uncertificated.] They were then able to take the Queen's Scholarship exam which, if they passed, would allow them to go to training college to study for their Teacher's Certificate.

If they chose not to go to College, merely passing the scholarship exam qualified them as an uncertificated teacher under Article 50 of the New Education Code of 1890. The only reason that I'm going into such detail is because Mr Duggins refers to advertising for an Art. 50 and an Art. 68.

Art. 68s were assistant teachers whose only qualifications needed to be that they were female, over 18 and vaccinated!!!!

I'm not certain if some of the monitors he mentions were pupil teachers, although some of them were referred to as young. He does mention some of them receiving their pay cheque, and pupil teachers were paid.

Apart from Mr Duggins I have found no mention of any other certificated teacher being a regular part of the staff although the Rector, The Reverend Henry Sayers, who visited the school regularly for many reasons had been a headmaster in two schools before he moved to Bluntisham and certainly put his teaching experience to good use. Mrs Duggins was an assistant teacher but not, as far as I am aware, certificated. Initially, therefore, he also had to rely upon monitors to assist himself and his wife.

MONITORS

We hear of several young ladies who acted as monitors during Mr Duggins' first five years.

The first one of whom we hear but learn very little is Alice Phillips. She may very well have been a 'village lass' as an Alice Phillips appears in the 1891 and 1901 census returns. Her date of birth is estimated to be 1886 so we can only guess her age when Mr Duggins took over. She left in October 1899. Mr Duggins, therefore, had to find extra help from within the school until a replacement could be found.

October 23rd 1899

Am working the Standards now by help of upper standard children, the Rector being, as yet, unable to find a successor to Alice Phillips who left Friday afternoon.

She was replaced by Ethel Hunt a month later. To say that Mr Duggins was not impressed is an understatement. Apart from the fact that she took off a lot of time due to ill health he had the following to say:

December 5th 1899

The new monitress seems of very little use more especially as the lower group are so backward.

The following year, upon finding himself having to teach five different classes for one reason or another, he wrote:

March 9th 1900

The monitress, being young and not interesting herself in Teaching makes it all the more trying. An effort to find a better teacher is being made.

She eventually left and was replaced by the delightfully named Lottie Doo. She was a St Ives girl about whom we learn very little so I'm assuming that she passed muster. Looking at the census forms she must have been 16 or 17. She appears to have travelled in by train. She left in March 1901 and initially, because a replacement wasn't found immediately, Mr Duggins had to use a stop gap once more.

March 11th 1901

Begin to use a girl from Standard VI for teaching as Lottie Doo left on Friday afternoon

A replacement was found in Annie Stimson, from Sutton, who started a couple of months later. She spent 3 years at the school and, after a few initial misgivings on the part of Mr Duggins, appears to have been quite effective which was just as well as a Miss Ethel Rose Mary Norris started in October 1901 and when, two months later, the Head tested the few children to whom she taught 'sums' he was somewhat disappointed. Only two of the children got any sums correct at all [and this was only one each!] Obviously, her discipline left a lot to be desired as well as he stated:

December 19th 1901

She fails to keep anything approaching order.

In the following May he had to take Standards I and II himself for 2 weeks as no progress at all had been made in Arithmetic and Spelling.

Good old Annie Stimson however, working with Standard III, had achieved excellent results in teaching long division, and addition of shillings and pence. As a reward she had to help out Miss Norris as well!

I had originally assumed that Miss Norris was very young and that she found working with lively children quite difficult but I found her in the 1901 and 1911 census returns. She had moved with her parents to the village and would have been almost 20 when she started her work at the school.

Maybe she improved with time because she was eventually formally recognised as an Art 68. [Well, she did fulfil the criteria!]

Both these monitors left in March 1904 leaving Mr Duggins up the proverbial creek. He had already advertised for a new teacher [an Art 50] in 'The Schoolmaster' to teach the lower division but had had no response so found himself somewhat short staffed.

The day after the monitors' departure he asked Mr Cyril Godfrey, one of the school's managers, if Violet Duggins, his daughter, could be employed as a monitor to replace Annie Stimson. It was 12th May before permission was finally given for her to start as a temporary monitor, and afterwards as a probationer. She would have been almost 13 years old when she started on 24th May.

ASSISTANT TEACHERS

Eventually a Miss Palmer accepted the post advertised in The Schoolmaster. She was to be paid £52 per annum. [I think that's about £5,500 now.] She started work in July of 1904. Mr Duggins obviously thought highly of her.

August 5th 1904

I leave the school in charge of Miss Palmer [after play] to attend the funeral of N Feary, late a manager of this school.

He left her in charge on other occasions too so he obviously trusted her. She isn't completely above criticism, however, as he commented :

November 2nd 1904

Miss Palmer takes the sewing from today. She, however, had not looked at the timetable, for her girls were ready for play more than five minutes before their time. I informed her that the time must be made up as I had not given the signal for clearing.

On the 1st November a Miss McDonald, previously from a girls' school in Derbyshire, had started duties in the Infant department. Mr Duggins didn't seem to think highly of her either.

November 22nd 1904

Miss McDonald does not as yet seem to tackle her reading lessons at all, especially the second class infants. Ten minutes have now been spent on 'The Jug.'

November 28th 1904

Miss McDonald took from 10.20 to 10.35 to start First Class in their writing lesson work so that left only 10 minutes for 2nd Class Reading. I have offered her a monitor, time after time, to help her but she does not ask for one. The 2nd Class is backward enough already.

As usual, when really important issues occurred, The Rector was informed.

December 12th 1904

I acquainted him with the fact that it has taken her one month to teach the 2nd class in her group 2 pages from their Reader and that only indifferently done.

To cut a long story short Miss McDonald admitted that she was unfit to teach infants and wanted to return to teaching Standard children at the earliest opportunity.

January 13th 1905

Miss McDonald leaves, not having completed her 3rd month.

[He doesn't follow it with 'Yee Har' but I bet he'd like to have done!]

On the same day Miss Ada Kightley started work. She had come from Cogenhoe Infants' Council School and appears to have made a good impression from the start.

January 20th 1905

I have every reason for thinking that the new infant teacher will give every satisfaction. She completes her first week this afternoon.

Unfortunately, the trusty Miss Palmer left in February of 1905.

February 28th 1905

I am very sorry to have to record that the Assistant Teacher who has had charge of the lower part of the school since July 1904 leaves today. Miss Palmer has worked hard with her group and the children have well responded to her thoughtful teaching.

She was replaced by a Miss Newland who started on May 1st

I wonder if Mr Duggins didn't have unreasonable expectations of his new staff, for only a week or so after she started he wrote of her:

May 9th 1905

Have given Miss Newland several points for her consideration during the week, with a view to work proceeding more smoothly than it has done the few days she has been here.

This rapid changeover of staff in the latter part of 1904 and early 1905 appears to have been as a result of a somewhat unimpressive HMI report in June 1904. Mr Duggins was presented with it and had to copy it into the Log Book. It read:

June 27th 1904

Report of HMI

Mixed School. The school may be considered efficient but great improvement will be looked for next year [especially in the lower classes] in both discipline and instruction if any but the lower grant is to be then recommended. The gallery should be removed and replaced by suitable desks.

Infant class – very considerable improvement will be expected in this class next year in the methods of teaching Reading and Number, if it is to be considered efficient.

The staff should be at once strengthened so as to meet the requirements of ART 73 of the code of 1903 which are not at present satisfied.

The use of the word 'efficient' isn't damning with faint praise. If a school was judged efficient then grant money was forthcoming! I haven't been able to find out, as yet, what Art 73 was but I suspect that it was really the bit about the grant being cut if things didn't improve which prompted vigorous recruitment. Did it work?

It seems so because in the following year another report was written:

March 27th 1905

HMI reports “Decided improvement has been effected in all divisions of the school during the past year.”

I don't know if this was just an interim report but that's all that was entered into the Log Book.

THE CLEANERS

I can't leave off talking about the staff without mentioning the cleaners. Early on in his tenure Mr Duggins had to comment:

October 8th 1900

I sent a message to the school cleaner to light a fire in the Infant Room this morning but when I came it had not been done but as it would have been too cold for the infants without one I had it seen to.

October 18th

Again no fire in the Infants' Room notwithstanding a message was sent to the school cleaner to light one there. Called and reported the case to the Rector who will see into it at once.

October 19th

Fire in the class-room all right this morning.

I wonder what the Rector said to her!

Success appears to have been short lived however as in November of 1900 and January of 1901 there was a repeat of this. There were other problems too;

February 11th 1902

Mr Archer, Insp of nuisances called and complained of the state of the boys' offices. The urinal coming in for strong disapproval. He requested me to inform the managers.

If the managers requested action of the cleaner it didn't appear to have had any effect.

February 24th 1902

Before H.M.I left he stated that the boys' urinal and 'offices' needed more attention- the urinal not being large enough and the closets to be cleaner.

In the November and December of that year there were further complaints as to the fires not being lit in the classrooms. The New Year didn't seem to start well either.

January 8th 1903

The big room this morning was in the most filthy condition when I got here. This is often the case now. No attempt was made to sweep under the desks. The school cleaner is too old to do the work for she states she cannot lift the desks already mentioned.

Eventually a replacement cleaner was found **but:**

November 10th 1903

Begin to use lamps of an evening so send a message to the new school cleaner to trim them now and again.

November 11th 1903

School cleaner replies 'The lamps are nothing to do with them' - I at once report the matter to our Chairman + Correspondent so that he can see to it in order that the work of the school is not interfered with. Visited by Rector.

SALARY

You may wonder how much Mr Duggins was paid. Well, not particularly handsomely.

March 21st 1902

Sent a letter to the Managers applying for an increase of salary pointing out that that received by me is far below the average – I am in receipt of £85 per an.

That would equate to approximately £9,000 nowadays.

He tells us that in 1903 he was receiving £110 per annum. Apparently, this remained unchanged until 1917 when, again, he had to ask for a pay rise. He was then awarded £125 and £162 from April 1918 followed by automatic increases of £8 per annum until he reached £190. He was however provided with a house, rent free.

His salary in 1903 would have been approximately £11,600.00 today and the same salary in 1917 would be worth approximately £6,600.00 today. No wonder he wanted a raise!!

5 - Visitors

Mr Duggins notes down various visitors in the Log Book, some of whom were more welcome than others I suspect. I think it might be helpful to categorise them.

The Managers

Voluntary schools were run by a committee of managers. In the case of National Schools this committee was led by the rector or vicar who, in addition to concerning himself with the day to day running of the school, also had the responsibility for teaching Scripture.

The Rev. Sayers, therefore, was a constant visitor. He came in to check the registers and attest to their accuracy and he dealt with any 'thorny issues' which Mr Duggins handed to him. He brought in sweets for the children when the average attendance for the week reached 80 and, as well as teaching RE, he also helped with other subjects when Mr Duggins was short staffed.

We also hear of other managers: Mr Cyril Godfrey and Miss A M Tebbutt. Mr C P Tebbutt Esq also came in to check on the attendance figures of a particular lad following the Harvest Holiday [October 1900.]

Officialdom

Other extremely regular visitors were the attendance officers. We hear of a Mr Feary who appeared to be the Senior Attendance Officer and a Mr A Bartlett who was a sub-Inspector. They were in school regularly, looking at the registers and consulting Mr Duggins as to who the die hard absentees were. They would then '**take names**' and take the matter further. [Not that it seemed to do a great deal of good initially!]

As well as visits by HMI, the Diocesan Inspector called to assess the progress of the children in their religious instruction. He always seemed to go away highly satisfied.

The school was also visited by a Dr Barnardo's doctor and a Sister Alice who was a Dr Barnardo's inspector.

Dr Barnardo had opened his first home for boys in 1870 and, three years later, a home for girls. Although he is best known for his homes, he firmly believed that, ideally, a child should grow up in a family setting so, as early as 1887, he introduced the practice of 'boarding out' children to host families – an early form of fostering. By 1905 more than 4,000 children were boarded out. Several children, boys and girls, found their way to Bluntisham and their wellbeing was monitored by the Dr Barnardo's representatives.

In October 1900 a Mr Goodyear called and left a report that the ridge tiles needed attention before bad weather set in. Whether it was the same tiles that were causing grief I can't be sure of but I strongly suspect that the bad weather did set in before they were repaired!

28th January 1901

I notice that the wind has caused several tiles [which were loose already] to fall.

As we've already heard, in 1902, a Mr Archer with the delightful title of Inspector of Nuisances [no, not the children this time!] checked the building and found himself unimpressed by the state of the boys' urinal.

17th July 1901

Visited this school. Art 84.

T E Harding

A green blind is sadly needed for the large window of the Infants' Room.

Miscellaneous Visitors

Mrs Sayers was a regular visitor although her main role seems to have been to inspect the girls' needlework which was sold from time to time, apparently to swell the coffers.

Mrs James Godfrey is mentioned when she visited to bring apples for the children as a reward for good attendance.

7th April 1900

This afternoon an interesting demonstration of Kindergarten work and Varied Occupations was given by Mr Geo Curtis showing how to make fancy articles out of drapers' boxes, cutting designs out of paper etc etc. The children took a lively interest in the whole affair.

22nd January 1901

Mr Frank Adkins from U.K Band of Hope gave an interesting address with illustrations to children of the Big Room from 11-11.30.

The Band of Hope was, of course, a temperance movement, the aim of which was to try to educate young children about the evils of alcohol.

7th June 1901

A rather interesting visit was paid the school this morning by Mr Wheaton of Cleveland – US – a former pupil of this school.

Mr Duggins doesn't say if this gentleman spoke to the children. One would like to think so.

6 - Attendance

Apart from the fact that Mr Duggins appeared to find the idea of children being employed illegally, reprehensible he also wanted to increase average attendances for financial reasons as previously stated.

As a result the Log Book pages are full of references to numbers, absences for many and varied reasons and visits from the Senior Attendance Officer who came to take names so that he could chase up parents and employers who were breaking the law. In this section I shall try to narrow down those occasions noted in the Log Book which mark significant successes [and failures from time to time.]

As now, the registers were taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Numbers were not necessarily the same on both occasions. Children would 'lose their mark' if they arrived late. I think a small leeway was given.

18th September 1899 [the very first entry in this new Log Book]

Following the Harvest Holiday only 38 were present in the morning and 41 in the afternoon.

From then until November numbers increased so that on :

7th November 1899

67 [a.m] and 74 [p.m] was noted

Although this seems to be a sign of gradual progress the number of children on roll was actually 94 on 2nd of October!

Numbers were swelled at the beginning of November with the arrival of 6 new boys from Dr Barnando's.

17th November 1899

Because figures reached 80 the Rector left money to buy sweets as a slight encouragement for regular attendance. Did it work?

1st December 1899

Average 85.2 Presumably a record! By now, Mr Duggins must have been feeling that he was making progress. It wasn't to last, however.

January 1st 1900

We meet today after a fortnight's holiday. 54 present.

A Mr Bartlett, a Sub-Inspector makes it quite clear at whose doorstep blame should be laid for low numbers:

5th January 1900

Attendance is still far from satisfactory. If effective measures are not taken by Local Authorities to check illegal employment it would be well to make representation to the Education Department.

It would be wrong to blame illegal employment as the sole reason for absenteeism. As will be seen on a separate page, illness and poor weather took their toll as well.

Suffice it to say that Mr Duggins was much exercised by trying to increase numbers but, by using a mixture of encouragement for the children [[more sweets from the Rector, attendance prizes and a Standard 'banner' for the group with the best average attendance, as well as extra playtime] and by written warnings to parents [normally to the mother!] he began to see slow but gradual progress.

April 1st 1901

We begin our new school year today. I find from the yearly returns that

last year

the average for the year was 72.2 67.6

Infts “ “ “ “ “ 31.4 28.1

Upper Dvn “ “ “ “ 40.7 39.4

At about the same time a further inspection had taken place and this was the report issued:

1st May 1901

Government Report April 1901

Mixed School. The Master works energetically and the attainments continue to improve although the deplorable irregularity of some of the children is a serious hindrance to progress. The strongest possible representation should be made to the School Attendance Committee concerning this, and every effort should be made to remedy such a serious defect.

October 4th 1901

A record breaking 105 children are on roll and an average 89.2 were present but several families still need investigation.

In January of 1902 Mr Duggins raised the bar for attendance rewards. Sweets could no longer be given until the average reached 93. Whether the children regarded this as a challenge I don't know but:

14th January 1902

100 ch'n present a.m and p.m. The Rector came with special sweets and extra play was given.

13th February 1902

108 [out of 114 on roll] were present

It really looked as if Mr Duggins was beginning to get the upper hand because in April of 1902 the following report was sent by HMI which had to be copied into the Log Book.

In September of the same year, however attendance was down again, to 57 on the first day back following the Harvest Holiday and notices were sent to the parents of absentees.

School Report 1901-2

Apr 26th 1902

Mixed School The improved attendance in this school is very gratifying and the general attainments are now very good although the lower classes still need careful attention"

Infants Class "much of the Infants work is now very well done, the Reading of the elder children being decidedly creditable"

E R M Norris is recognised under Art 68 of the Code, and A E Duggins is continued under that Article

Staff Edward J Duggins C.M.
Alice E Duggins }
Ethel R M Norris } Art 68.5
and Annie Stimson "Monitor"

[Signed
M. Sayers
Corresponding Manager

The Log Book continues in this way on a weekly basis but the following may give an idea of the effect that sporadic attendance was having on the progress of certain children.

In May 1904 the pupils comprised:

12 children between 3 and 5 years of age 33 Infants

74 children between 5 and 12 73 Mixed

20 children between 12 and 15 [they presumably hadn't reached the required standard to be allowed to leave.]

This might go a long way to explaining why the HMI report in June of that year was so lukewarm. Teaching such a large number of children of such a wide age and ability range in only two rooms must have taxed even the most dedicated and skilled teacher.

I don't feel that there is any virtue in quoting more attendance figures and statistics ad infinitum. Suffice it to say that it was 'work in progress.' More information on reasons for absence and those families and employers who disregarded the rules re employing children illegally can be found on further pages.

7 – Reasons for Absence

Employment

Not all the children were employed illegally. Some were given leave of absence because of their age and the fact that they had received the necessary certificates to allow them to work.

Those that shouldn't have been working were involved in a variety of tasks and were often absent for long periods of time.

30th October 1899

Stanley Smith returns to school he having been absent for a period of 4 months. Tom Carter returns after 3 weeks absence. He has been picking potatoes and helping otherwise at farm work though he is a St Ives boy and only 9 yrs of age.

20th November 1899

Alfd Chapman makes his first attendance since I've been in charge.

[afternoon] Annie Hudson returns to school. The first time since May 5th. She is 12 years of age but has not passed Std IV – the exemption standard.

30th July 1900

Willie Abbott again returns to school. He has made 6 attendances in 3 weeks.

Jno Ward returns to school. He has also been absent 3 weeks.

Both of these are instances of illegal employment.

Walter Hawkes still away [another.]

Also, parents working at harvest time had a knock on effect

25th May 1900

5 children leave this week to return to Dr Barnardo's Home in London. This together with the fact that gooseberry pulling is in full swing accounts for the drop of 11 in average for the week.

26th June 1900

Latecoming is again becoming a nuisance. In most of the cases it's through the mother being engaged in the fruit pulling occupation hence the difficulty to prevent same.

12th July 1899

Many children are leaving now at 11.45 to take parents' dinners to the fields.

[I'm having to assume that morning school ended at 12 noon and that Mr Duggins must have reluctantly sanctioned this early finishing.]

Illness

We hear of a variety of illnesses from which the children suffer:

12th May 1902

[Monday] A few more cases of measles have been made known to me this morning.

There are now 8 cases measles

2 Scarlet Fever

1 Consumption

6 others

thus accounting for the absence of 17 besides those now at work for agricultural purposes.

Throw into that mix, at other times of year, diphtheria, whooping cough, influenza and ringworm and one begins to understand why being vaccinated was an essential for staff! What was quite eye opening was the following:

13th November 1905

We close today by order of the Medical Officer of Health. Measles is now very prevalent in the village.

The school was closed for a fortnight but when it re-opened:

27th November 1905

Meet only 6 children in the playground at 10 minutes to 9. Await a fresh order to close so these are sent home.

He got his order, and a further one on December 11th, closing the school until December 27th.

If this seems overly cautious to us it's worth noting that, in 1908, 50,000 children were killed by measles! In the same year whooping cough accounted for 40,000 deaths and diphtheria 100,000.

Weather

5th December 1899

A wet day to-day which probably accounts for the numbers 75 + 67

The weather in the February of 1900 was particularly severe with snowstorms and heavy downpours of rain which either restricted numbers or forced the school to close.

Unofficial Days

24th October 1900

Notified the Rector that 76 children were present which was the highest number since the holiday. On Monday aftn only 59 [Colne Feast.]

28th May 1902

Beldam's Horse sale accounted for only 66 present.

8- High Days and Holidays

Unlike today, the school year started at the beginning of April.

Throughout the year there were the usual holidays for Easter, Whitsuntide, Christmas and, of course, the all important Harvest Holiday, the dates of which varied from year to year. [Presumably depending upon the readiness of the crops.]

Occasional days were given and it would appear that the decision to close the school could be given at very short notice. On July 27th 1900 it was decided that the school would break up the following Friday for the Harvest Holiday.

There were also those occasions which weren't official holidays but which were taken by the villagers anyway! Among these were:

The Temperance Fête [afternoon.]

The Baptist Sunday School Treat [held in the afternoon.]

The Church Sunday School Treat

A river trip held by The Band of Hope

Colne Feast [although Bluntisham Village Feast warranted three whole official days!] Eventually days off were awarded for Colne Feast as well.

Occasional days

We hear of the school being closed during one afternoon each year for the collection of tithes.

[Originally, tithes represented a tenth of the produce of local farmers, be it crops, wool, wood etc. They were taken as a tax for the upkeep of the Church and clergy and would be made in kind. In 1836 payment started to be made in cash and by 1936 the system was abolished altogether, other ways of raising money being found.]

On October 5th 1900 the school was used as a polling station for the General Election.

In August 1902 Mr Duggins had been given leave to attend a Summer course of lectures in Cambridge so this necessitated closing the school for a day.

The Village Flower show also warranted an afternoon off.

Possibly, however, the most joyful news that the children received was that in 1902 an extra week's holiday following Easter had been granted as the 'Cesspools had been emptied and done away with. The new urinal and playground drains partly relaid.'

No doubt, equally joyous was the decision to grant a half day on the afternoon of January 16th 1903 as there 'was plenty of ice for the children to want to skate on.' It was to be a reward for good attendance.

The Log Book makes no mention, during this period, of national events. For example, there is no reference to the death of Queen Victoria or the accession of Edward VII. However:

2nd June 1902

Rector called and gave children half holiday this afternoon to celebrate 'Peace.'

This, presumably, was to mark the ending of the second Boer War a few days earlier.

On the afternoon of the 22nd May 1905 the school was closed on account Of Empire Day.

What has been noticeable is the fact that the school opened for business on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day following the Christmas holiday. They had their two weeks and that was that.

9 – The Names – An Introduction

Before I start to discuss the village families who created headaches for Mr Duggins I thought it might be useful to have an idea of the lives that these folks might have lived by looking at the social conditions at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the majority of the families, Dad was employed in agriculture in one capacity or another [normally described in the census documents as an 'ordinary agricultural labourer' which presumably was to distinguish their occupation from a more specialised task on the land] so I started to have a look at the pay that they would probably have received, how it would compare with that received by other manual workers and whether this would have been a living wage.

From what I've been able to discover, the average weekly wages for ordinary agricultural workers were as set out below.

Year	Weekly Wage	Purchasing Power Today
1899	14s 4d	£79.28
1900	14s 10d	£78.86
1901	14s 11d	£79.55
1902	14s 11½d	£79.98
1903	14s 11½d	£79.11
1904	14s 11½d	£79.37
1905	15s 0d	£79.11

These would have been cash wages. They would not include extra payments for piece work, hay and corn harvests, overtime or the value of allowances in kind.

The next question is were these generous wages? Having looked at comparative lists of annual wages between various trades and professions throughout the 19th century I think it is safe to say that agricultural labourers were the least well paid of all manual workers.

How much would these people need to have a basic but comfortable existence?

In 1901 a study was carried out by a man a man called Seebohm Rowntree. He wanted to ascertain what should be the very minimum wage that a family of two adults and two

children, where the man worked at a moderate level of activity, should be in order to maintain a basic and healthy existence.

He did this by having a team of investigators visit the homes of very many of the poorer families in York.

His findings led him to state that a family of a man, a woman and two children needed earnings of 18 shillings and 10 pence to allow them to lead this basic existence. [A long way from the 14s 11d earned by agricultural workers.] He stated that they needed enough money to pay for:

- Basic food to provide sufficient energy and protein for moderate physical work, including the ingredients for home-baked bread.

- Rent and rates

- Fuel and light

- Basic clothing

That was it! No extras.

Interestingly, in 1913, Mr Rowntree was asked to repeat the exercise looking at rural families. His findings were reported in a book called 'How the Labourer Lives. A Study of the Rural Problem.' It makes for sober reading.

I hope that this information helps put into perspective the kind of life which might have been led by our Bluntisham families bearing in mind that work in the fields would have been classed as more than moderate exercise and that the number of children that were born into any of the families mentioned certainly exceeds two. I know that it's unwise to assume anything from scant information but perhaps having the extra income brought in by their working children stopped them from having to enter the workhouse.

As to the employers named in the next part of this article as illegally employing the pupils during term time: they should all have been well aware of the rules as, in time honoured fashion, a copy of the Agricultural Children Act should have been affixed to the door of the principal church in the parish!!

There were, however, 'Get out of Jail Free cards' available. If the employer or his agent genuinely believed the child to be either over 12 years of age or to have the certificates to say that they had made the requisite number of attendances and had achieved Standard IV because that's what they'd been told by the parents then they would be exonerated and the parent would be for the high jump.

If they knowingly broke the law however they could be fined a maximum of £5.00 [about £435.00 today.] The parent could be fined a maximum of £1.00 [about £87.00]

If a parent or anyone forged a certificate the penalty was a maximum of 3 months in prison with or without hard labour.

10 – The Names

As already mentioned, the School Attendance officers were regular visitors to the school and took the names of 'repeat offenders.' In some cases a stern warning from the 'powers that be' seemed to be enough to bring the children back to school but, sadly, there were those families who appeared to be completely unfazed by these approaches from officialdom. Indeed, some of them found themselves facing the magistrates.

I found it helpful to note down, in the following chart, those who Mr Duggins felt were of sufficient concern to mention in the Log Book and it makes it a little easier to see who the regular absentees were. Not all of them were necessarily illegally employed. There may have been other reasons for their absence. The direct quotes which come later in this chapter should give a clearer picture as to the attempts to improve the situation.

1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905
Tom Carter	Gerty Tabbutt	Walter Hawkes	Harold Abbott	Gerty Tabbutt	George Leach	Dorothy Benton
Alf Chapman	John Abbott	Gerty Tabbutt	Archie Fox	Daisy Hodge	J Wells	
Annie Hudson	Harold Abbott	Harold Abbott	Walter Hawkes	George Leach	Gerty Tabbutt	
	Willie Abbott	Herbert Merryweather	John Ward	Gerty Tabbutt	David Hudson	
	Jno Ward	Archie Fox		May White	Peter Chapman	
	Walter Hawkes	Dorothy Benton		Sidney Abbott	Sid Johnson	
	George Leach			Herbert Gibbs	Arthur White	
					P Conquest	
					Herbert Gibbs	

Before I start to quote from the Log Book I would like to give some information about the families of the children whose names appear most frequently in the chart. I looked at the census forms for 1891, 1901 and 1911. Although two of these forms are outside the time scale upon which I've been concentrating they still provide useful extra information as to what might have been the family circumstances.

The Abbotts

There were two Abbot families living in Bluntisham. Harold [born in the second quarter of 1889] and Willie [born in the last quarter of 1891] were brothers who lived in Wood End with

Mum, Dad, two more children and a lodger called Christmas Day [This latter piece of info is not in the least bit relevant but I just loved the name. I don't know if he did!]

In the 1901 census Dad is listed as a horse keeper and, interestingly, Harold, at the age of 11 is listed as a worker- a ploughboy nonetheless - **not** as a scholar!

Having said that, there is mention of Harold being given leave to work in May 1899, presumably by the School Attendance Committee.

The other two Abbott boys mentioned, Sidney and John were brothers who lived in East End. This is what we now call East Street. They lived with Mum, Dad and two sisters.

John was the elder, being born in 1887 and Sidney in 1891. Dad was a gardener's labourer at The Gardens in Mill Lane.

The Leaches

This family also lived in Wood End. In 1901 George was the eldest of five children. He's listed as being 8 years old. Mum had just had another baby, which was less than a month old. She'd had another child by 1911. In fact she had seven children all told but one didn't survive. Dad was an 'ordinary agricultural labourer.'

The Hawkes'

This was another Wood End family. They started off living in Little London [an area down on the main road where the bus shelter is now] when Dad was working as a labourer on the railway. They then moved to Wood End where, in the 1901 census, Dad is listed as an ordinary agricultural labourer. Walter was born in 1890 and, at the time, was the second of 6 children. Mum went on to have more children. She'd had 11 in total but one hadn't survived.

The Tabbutts

I've left this family until last because, of all the children who get mentioned in the Log Book, Gerty Tabbutt breaks the record. Her name crops up constantly but never in connection with being employed locally. She was born in 1890 and, by the time we meet her, she was living at home with her Mum, Dad and older sister. Mrs Tabbutt had had 9 children in total, 6 of whom were still alive, but 4 had obviously fled the nest. In 1901 Gertie's parents were 52. Dad was a road labourer and they too lived in Wood End.

The reason I've mentioned how many children had been born, what Dad's occupation was etc. is to try to understand if there might have been severe economic hardship which might have made it imperative to send the children to work instead of attending school.

Anyway, to return to the Log Book. Mr Duggins, the Managers and the School Attendance Officers all communicated tirelessly with parents [normally the mother] to get them to make sure that their children attended school regularly. Sometimes it was met with success but not always!

9th February 1900

Have sent during the past week Notices to some of the Regular Offenders Mrs Tabbutt included. Her answer was "Gerty has a very bad foot." Gerty has made 109 out of a possible 283 attendances. These paltry excuses seem to satisfy those concerned. She was seen sliding the evening the answer was written hence my reason for saying 'paltry.'

[Gerty did return to school in fact but was discovered in March of the same year to be suffering from ringworm and was told to go home and not come back until she was cured!] It must have been an acute case of ringworm because we hear nothing more of her until a year later.

4th March 1901

Re-admit Gertrude Tabbutt this morning.

13th July 1900

Have sent a postcard to the Attendance Officer telling him that Walter Hawkes who should be at school is working for Mr Beldam, Farmer of this village and asking him to move in the matter if possible.

I have sent notices to Mrs Hawkes but they are completely ignored.

In fact Walter was still away at the end of July that year and appears to have again been working the following year.

At the same time Mr Beldam was also employing Willie Abbott who would have been 8.

22nd May 1901

Mr Feary, School Attendance Officer, called and took several names including Wr Hawkes who is employed by a magistrate.

This was somewhat ironic considering the following:

5th June 1901

Mr Feary called with a paper for me to fill in the attendances of Walter Hawkes for April and May. His father has to appear Monday before the bench at St Ives.

11th June 1901

[Tuesday] Walter Hawkes returns today after being employed illegally by Mr C P Tebbutt since May 1st 1901.

Mr Hawkes' appearance before the magistrates may not have been sufficient to improve the situation because the following April Walter's attendance figures were still being requested.

Mr Hawkes wasn't the only one to appear before the magistrates. In June 1901 Gerty decided she'd had enough of school and absented herself because she alleged that Mr Duggins had made her stand in front of the class for the whole morning. He denied this, saying that she had been made to stand in front of the class but for about 20 minutes.

A month later Mr Feary called again and took Gerty's name, and a fortnight later:

31st July 1901

Mr Feary [S. Att. O] called for me to fill up absences of Gert Tabbutt. Her case comes before the magistrates Monday Aug 12th.

I don't know the outcome of the hearing but, suffice it to say that Gerty kept the Attendance Officer busy for the next few years and to give an idea as to why they were so concerned Mr Duggins has the following to say:

15th July 1904

The Attendances of G Tabbutt have been asked for by S.A.O

1897 – 371

1898 – 156

1899 -259

1900 – 160 *Left Nov 1901 Retd November 18th 1902*

1901 - 36

1902 – 71

1903 – 120

1904 – 58

Further information was requested a few days later but, irritatingly I could find no further information as to what transpired as a result of these investigations. Neither have I been able to find out what she was doing during these absences or what academic standard she'd managed to achieve.

We do know the names of some of the pupils who didn't make the grade:

21st November 1901

Have seen the S.A.O's brother and asked him to report

H. Abbott

Ar. Fox all failed to pass Exemption IV last evening

H. Merryweather

17th December 1901

S.A.O informed me that H.Merryweather is 14 on Dec 31st/01, that Mr Abbott had been 'warned' and then asked for the attendances of Archie Fox which I gave to him Mar 31st '97 = '01.

Archie's figures were chased up twice more the following year.

Another pupil who gave cause for concern was George Leach. He also had failed to make the grade and had been employed illegally.

8th October 1900

Mr Feary, Attendance Officer, called and took several names notably the Leach family, one of them having made only 33 attendances in 6 mths.

He seems to disappear from view for a while but in early 1903 his name is taken again along with others [including Gerty's!] as a case needing attention.

6th January 1904

School Attendance Officer called and took the name of George Leach who is working for Mr Hodge.

13th April 1904

Have written to Mr Tom Smith, farmer in the parish, calling his attention to the fact that Geo Leach has not made the necessary 250 attendances for to be employed also the S.A.O informing him of such illegal employment.

14th April 1904

Have written to G.D. Day Esq. Clerk Attendance Committee as Mr Smith still employs the lad Leach.

15th April 1904

Reply from G.D.Day Esq. States a warning has been sent to Mr T Smith. S.A.O called yesterday.

2nd June 1904

Geo Leach who failed in 2 subjects made 148 attendances last year and 189 the year before. Jno Wells who also failed in 2 subjects made 139 last year and 273 the year before.

A young lad called Herbert Gibbs was also giving cause for concern. We don't find out why but he was only 7 when he's first mentioned as being one of 15 names taken in September of 1903. A week or so later he's the only one whose attendance remained unsatisfactory and in May the following year Mr Duggins has to fill in a paper concerning Herbert.

11th May 1904

Mrs Gibbs has been fined 5/- [about £26.00 today]

We learn no more except that his name was taken again in November of that year.

11 - Lessons

As I stated previously, initially emphasis was put on the 3R's [reading, writing and arithmetic.] In Church Schools religious education was, naturally, of great importance. Attainment in this subject was examined not by HMI but by a Diocesan Inspector.

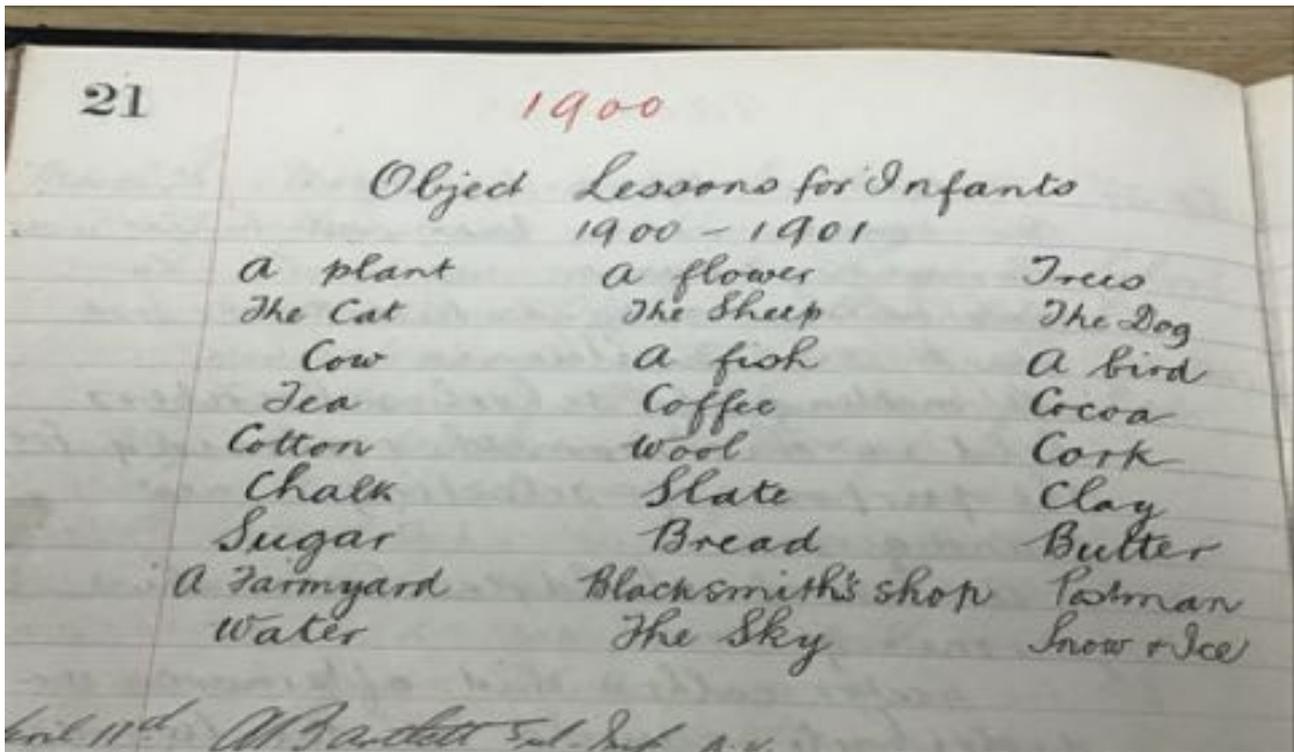
In 1875 the curriculum could include 'class subjects' such as grammar, geography, history and plain needlework. This latter earned extra funding and so became an obligatory subject [for girls primarily] along with the 3 Rs. It too was inspected.

Object Lessons

Object Lessons were a bit like Science Lessons. Children would be introduced to different specimens and objects and would explore what they were made from, what they were used for, how they worked etc.

A book called 'Object Lessons and How to give them' written by an educationalist called George Ricks explained:

“The primary purpose of lessons on common objects and natural phenomena is to cultivate the senses, to train to habits of attention, intelligent observation and accurate comparison, and so to lead up to the higher processes of the mind – reason and judgement.”



8th March 1900

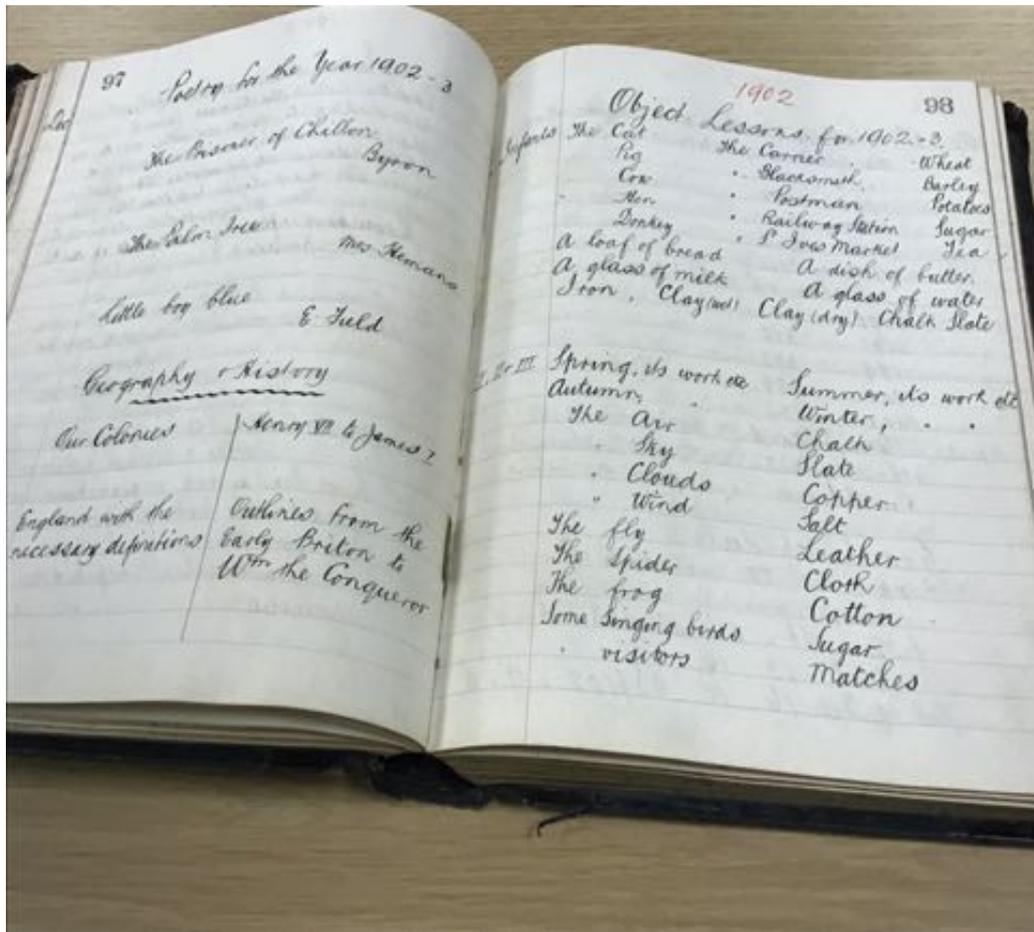
Great interest was shewn in the Obj: Lesson this afternoon. I procured some oysters and brought 2 for the inspection of the scholars.

Drill

Drill was the Victorian term for P.E. It involved a series of formal exercises such as marching on the spot, arm swinging, trunk bending, skipping etc. It was thought to help children follow instructions, improve co-ordination and health thus preparing them for work and military service. Lessons might have been taken in the classroom, with the exercises done by the side of the desk or, possibly, in the playground. We know from a comment on a previous page that Mr Duggins certainly did Drill inside and on one occasion the Rector brought in his harmonium to provide music to accompany the exercises.

Other Lessons

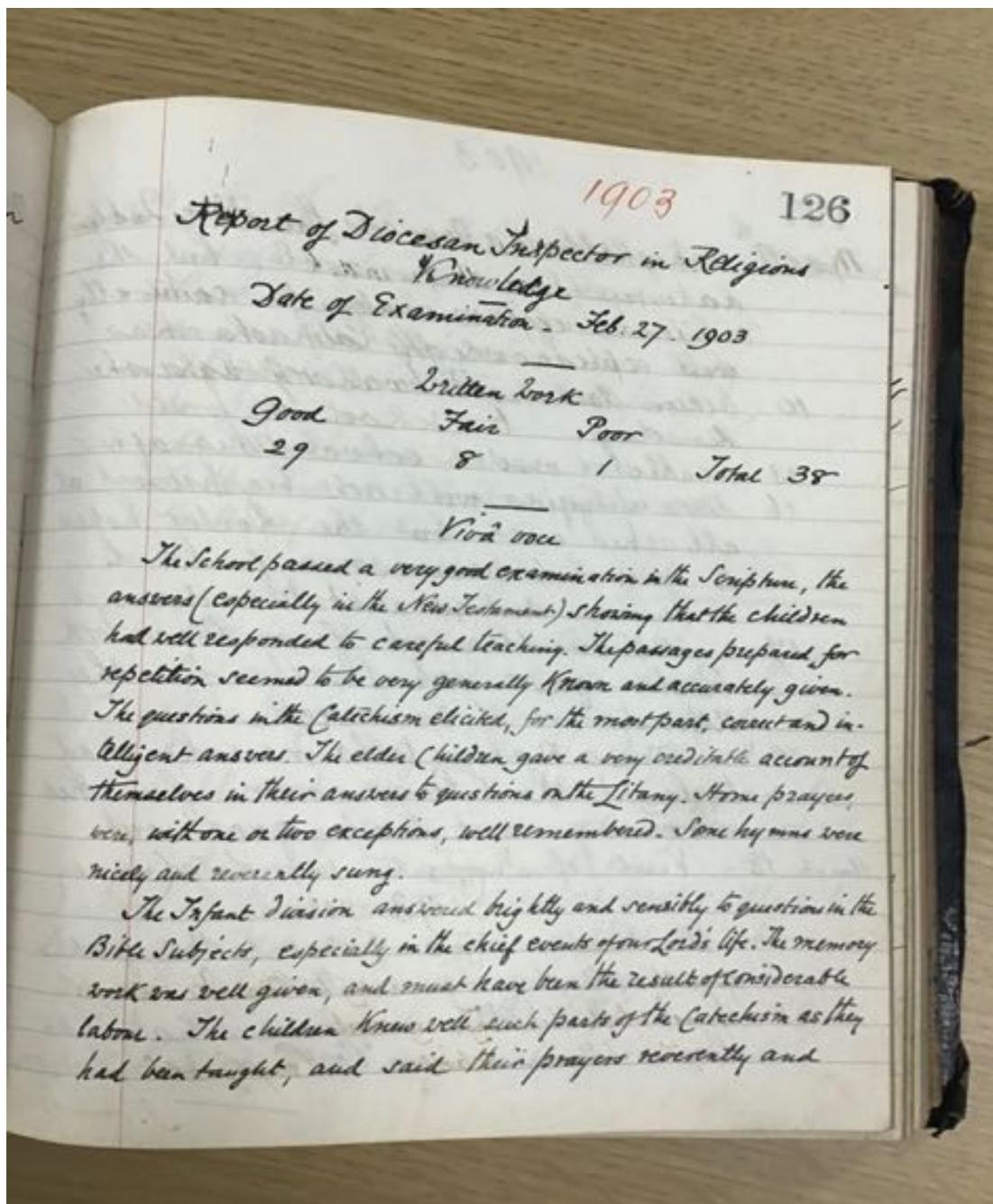
I'll let the following pages give an idea of the syllabus beyond the 3Rs.



If you're interested you can look up 'The Prisoner of Chillon' and The Palm Tree.' I wonder if they inspired a love for poetry in the hearts of our village children?

Scripture

Religious Education teaching was the responsibility of the Rector. He gave catechism lessons as well as those on a Prayer Book subject, The Old Testament, The Litany and Holy Baptism. Parents could request exemption from certain subjects.



After the examination a report was entered into the Log Book, and the rating achieved published in the Parish Magazine for all to see.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,

30 April, 1879.

SIR,

As the time is at hand when the provisions of the Code as to the examination of Needlework in Public Elementary Schools will take effect, I am directed to offer some suggestions for your guidance in this particular.

1. The children should be arranged for the examination, according to their ability in this branch of their work, in "Divisions" and "Stages" following the order shown in Schedule III. As each child should be presented in the highest "Stage" of which she is able to do the necessary work (Rules 1 and 4), it is evident that these "Stages" will not usually correspond with the "Standards" (Article 28). You will often find it useful to require that the change of organisation from ordinary classes to Needlework "Stages" should be made during your inspection and in your presence. This will afford you an opportunity of estimating the discipline of a school from a special point of view, and will also enable you to see at a glance how far the children are familiar with and interested in their separate organisation for needlework.

2. Care must be taken to ensure that a fair proportion of children is presented in the Upper Stages, as the work of these becomes imperative (Rule 5). In several districts children of nine years of age are already being presented in work equivalent to that of the 4th Stage; my Lords therefore trust that if your district is not yet in a position to produce similar results, you will lose no time in urging on the managers and teachers the importance of realising them.

3. You will have observed that Rule 6 recommends, though it does not positively require, that infant-boys should be taught according to its provisions. This is being done by some of your inspectors with excellent effect, and my Lords wish you to take every opportunity of encouraging the practice. It is found that boys so taught quickly improve in general handiness and precision.

4. When (as is frequently the case) children over seven are retained in an infant school, a correspondingly larger proportion of the whole number of scholars should be presented in the "Upper Division;" the children over seven should, as a rule, show greater proficiency in the work of that Division, and those parts of it which had previously been optional should then, for girls at all events, cease to be so regarded.

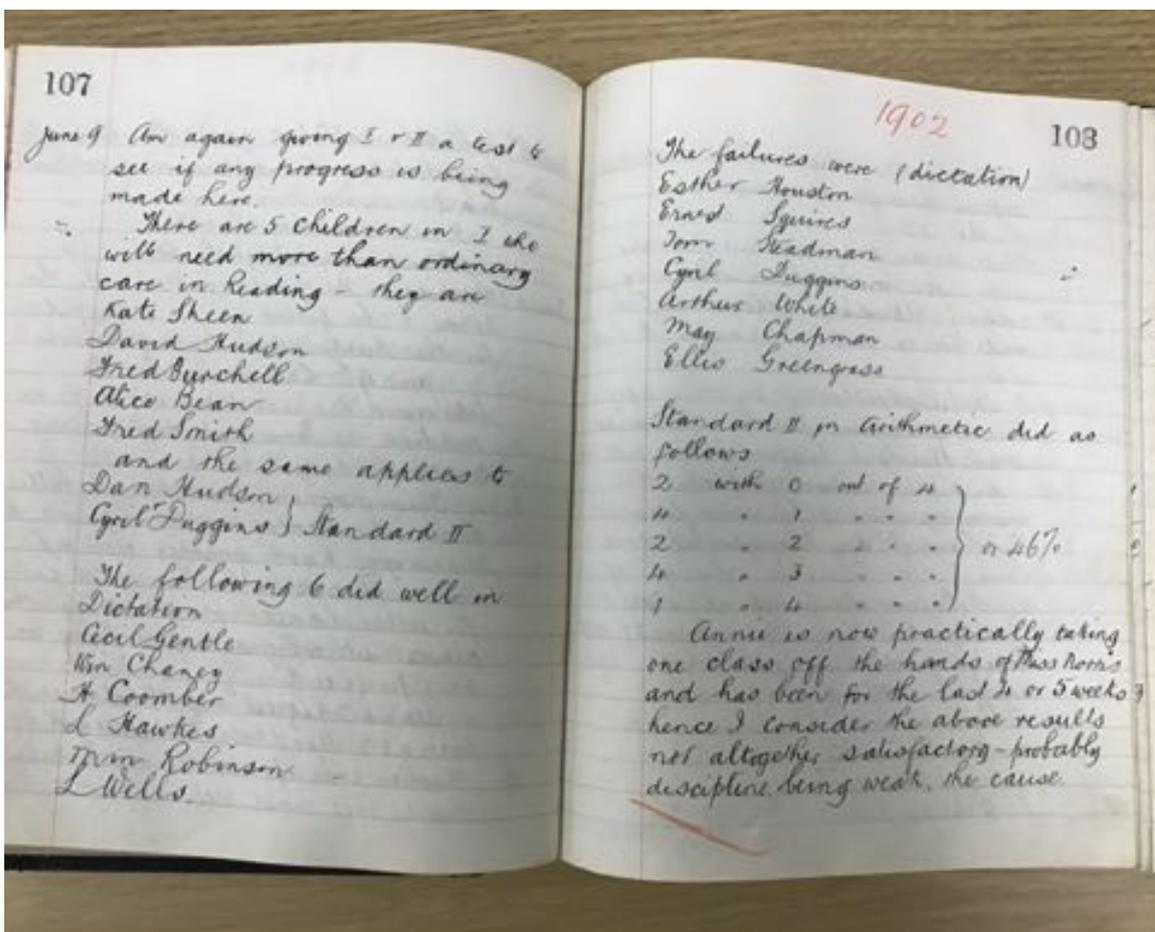
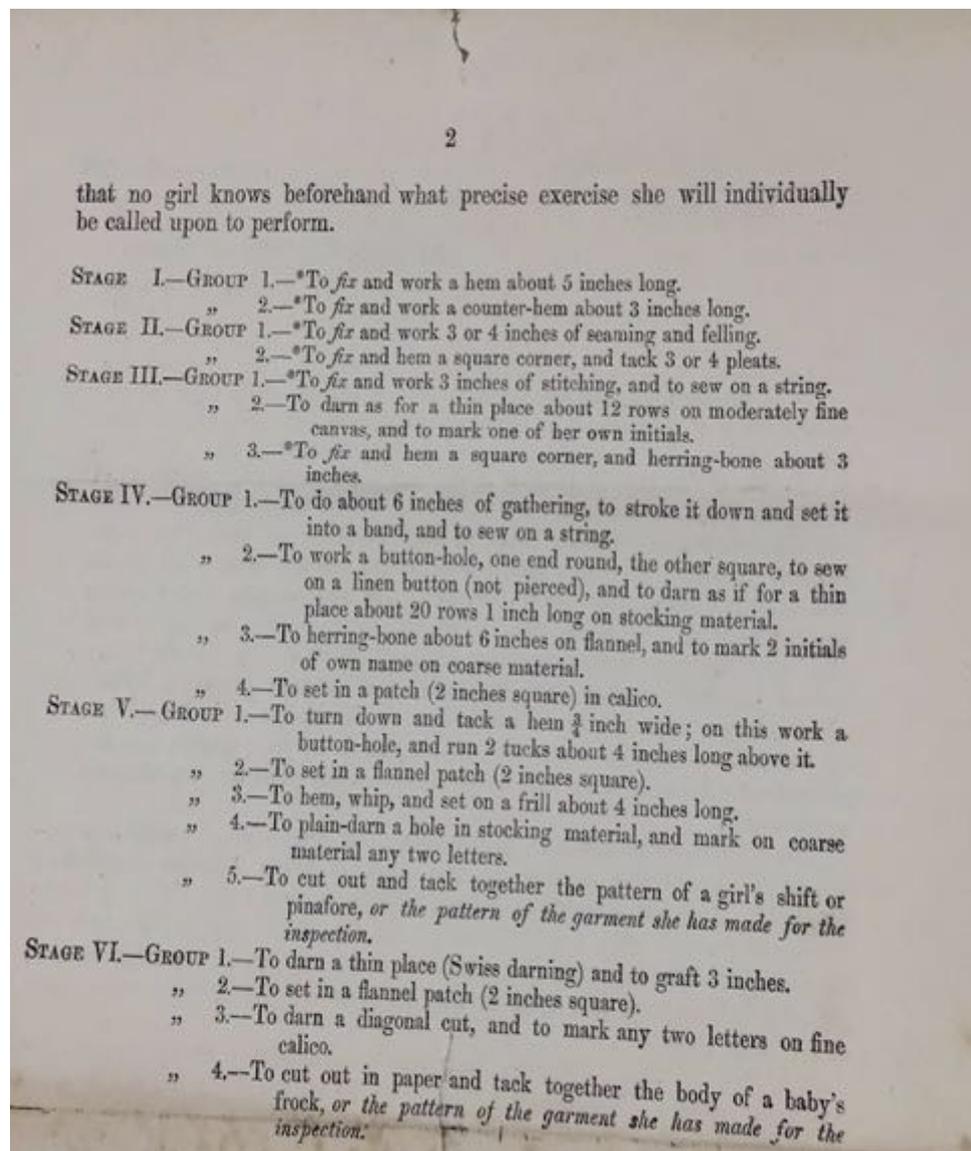
5. My Lords think that from 45 to 60 minutes should be devoted to these needlework exercises. Whether the examination should or should not be simultaneous throughout the school must be left to your discretion. If you decide upon setting all the children to work at once, you can employ your own time in examining the specimen garments produced, in verifying registers, hearing pupil-teachers read and repeat, &c.; and in mixed schools in the examination of the boys in their corresponding subject under Article 19, c. 1; provided always, that such employment does not unduly interfere with the due supervision of the Needlework Examination by yourself or your assistant.

6. It would scarcely be possible, even in an hour's examination, to test each girl in every part of the work taught in each Stage (especially in the Upper Stages); you will probably find it convenient to subdivide each stage or division into two or more groups, to each of which distinct kinds of work should be assigned.

The following examples are put forth suggestively; but it must be left to your discretion to adopt them, whether wholly or in part, according to the special circumstances of each case. You should, however, be careful

The documents on this page and the next contain guidance as to what HMI should look for when examining the girls' needlework. Although dated 1879 I think that it would still be relevant and in use 20 years later as it has been preserved so well amongst other papers.

Looking at this list I think I understand why Mrs Sayers was constantly in school checking the work in progress!



Mr Duggins administered a monthly exam to check the progress of the Standard children. He then made a brief report in the Log Book.

You'll notice that his own son is causing concern.

The equipment needed for these lessons came from a variety of sources whether it was educational suppliers or from other miscellaneous sources.

14th December 1900

Parcel of books received from Messrs J & J Coleman of Norwich for distribution among the scholars.

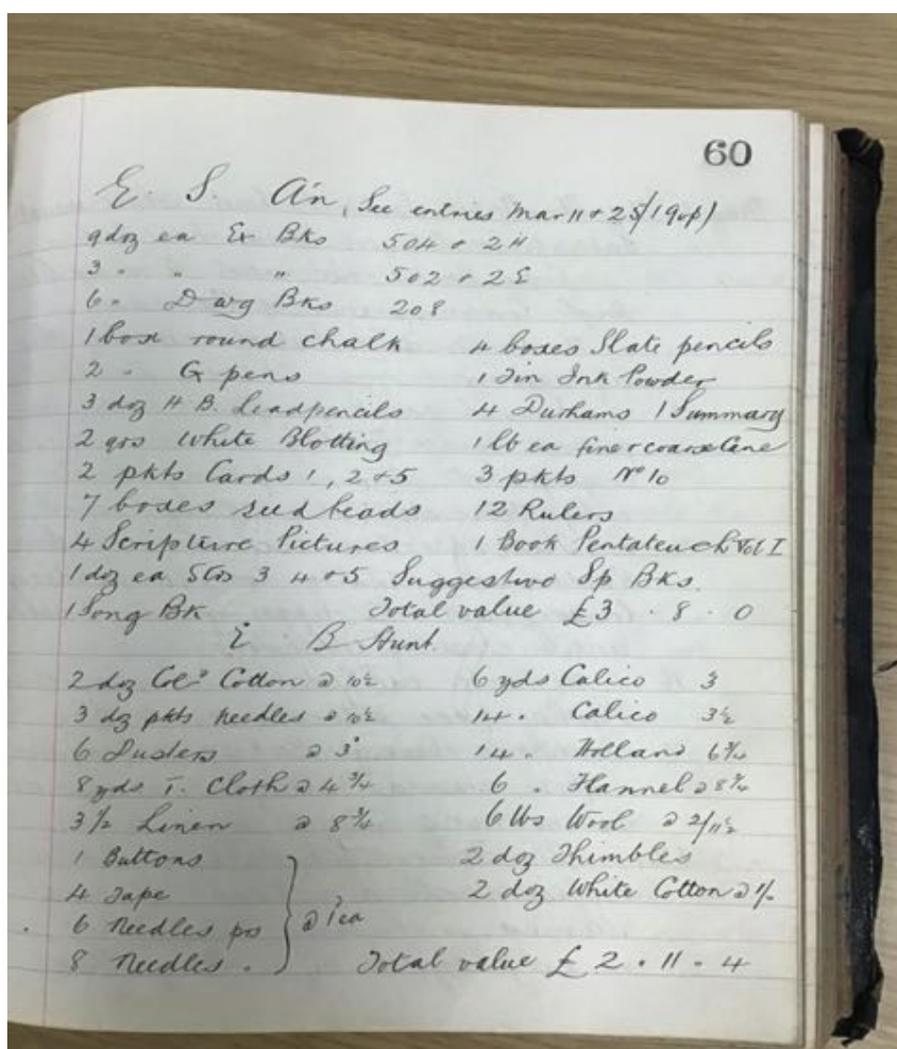
10th May 1901

Copybooks received today from High Commissioner of Canada.

6th January 1902

Received 2 doz dictionaries from Dr Mazawattee, Tower Hill, London for use of 1st Class [free.]

I don't think that there was a Dr Mazawattee as such but the Mazawattee Tea Company in Tower Hill well understood the need for promoting the business [including delivery wagons pulled by zebras!] I would imagine that sending out books to schools was part of these promotions.



The total cost for both orders would be approximately £634.00 today.

We always think of slates as being used by very young children but in March 1903 Mr Duggins mentions 9 slates being ordered for some of the children in Standard III.

12- Behaviour and Punishments

I am sure that the image of discipline in 19th century schools consists of the cane, the Dunce's Chair etc etc. However, I get no feeling from reading the Log Book that that was the case with the village school. Every school had to keep a punishment book and, from time to time, Mr Duggins mentions one and the fact that it was inspected by The Rev. Sayers but I have no idea of its whereabouts. However, he makes enough reference to some of the sanctions he uses.

12th March 1900

Had occasion to punish Herbert Merryweather to-day for continued disobedience. He was also insolent. I detained him after school and spoke to him rather seriously whereupon he gave me a promise to amend. Hm!!

We know that he stood Gerty Tabbutt in front of the whole class but generally speaking his main sanction seemed to be keeping in the children at playtime or detaining them after school.

25th March 1902

I kept Standards I and II behind for 15minutes this aftn: as they have been noisy of late.

27th November 1902

I kept the Standard Children behind until 4.20 this afternoon as the noise made by I and II when moving at change of lessons has been growing worse and thought a little desk drill for the lot might have a beneficial effect. I had spoken frequently to the Teachers of the same but no abatement was noticeable and consequently I had to resort to the above as a mild redress.

Standards I and II didn't seem to be cowed however because they lost their playtime again at a later date, with Mr Duggins still laying the blame at the doorstep of the teachers who couldn't control them.

We do know, however, that corporal punishment was used:

10th August 1903

K Underwood refused to hold up her hand to receive punishment at first instance. Needed several raps to encourage her to do so. Barnardo's child, whose foster parents complain of her naughtiness.

1st November 1904

Circumstances have arisen which compel me to ask all the staff to refer any cases requiring corporal punishment to me.

The next entry has me a little baffled.

7th April 1905

Owing to the heavy fall of snow during the night the attendance is low -66. All the children who got the black mark this afternoon received one stripe as they were so late as nearly to lose their mark altogether.

If I'm interpreting it correctly I bet the pupils who battled the frightful weather conditions to get to school in the afternoon, albeit arriving late, would far rather have lost their mark than receive 'a stripe.'

There are several references to vandalism. In May of 1901 several panes of glass had been put in some of the windows. I'm not sure how the ones they were replacing became damaged but, if his later comments are anything to go by I suspect that they may have been a very tempting target over the years.

27th April 1903

Rector visited school this afternoon. I called his attention to the fact that several windows have recently been broken in front of the school. The damage has been done after school hours.

18th May 1903

(Monday) On coming to school this morning I see 2 more panes of glass are broken in the front window.

There were two further incidents a couple of months later.

There were also a couple of escape attempts. [Probably to avoid poetry lessons!]

29th July 1901

Rector brought in 3 boys who he found at Railway Station – about to go to St Ives.

4th February 1904

A boy left the playground this aftn during playtime without permission hence his mark cancelled. (v: pun Bk.)

Other than these few references I haven't been able to find anything which makes Mr Duggins appear to be overly strict. He certainly doesn't appear to be Bluntisham's answer to Wackford Squeers!

13 - What became of them All?

Stopping my research in 1905 didn't rid me of the desire to find out what became of some of the people I felt I'd got to know a little, especially the ones who'd caused headaches for Mr Duggins. What happened to Mr Duggins for that matter?

A quick flick through the subsequent years' pages in the Log Book didn't reveal a tremendous amount. He certainly stayed as Headmaster until at least 1920. His handwriting becomes a little less strong and confident and in the very back of the book he has put the details of his pension reference number leading me to think that he was on the verge of retirement. He would have been 54.

The Rector moved on in 1917. He went to Christchurch out in Fenland and stayed there until his death in 1928. Apparently his daughter, Dorothy, preferred Bluntisham. I think she missed the Alpine landscape because she is reputed to have said, "Christchurch is the last place God made and when He'd finished He found He'd forgotten the staircase."

The Census forms have given some idea of what happened to the pupils who caused him most concern:

Harold Abbott

Harold was living in March in 1911. He became an engine cleaner on the railway. In 1914 he married a young lady called Ellen Simmons and in 1939 is listed as an engine driver. He died in 1948.

Walter Hawkes

In 1911 Walter is listed as living in Great Abington. His dad had returned to the railways and was employed as a platelayer. Walter married a young lady called Lizzie Perry and in 1939 is listed as living in Saffron Walden, employed as a horseman on a farm. He died in 1972.

Gertie Tabbutt

In 1939 Gertie was still living in the Engine & Tender pub in Wood End where her mum is listed as the licensee. Gertie appears to have remained unmarried and I believe she, in turn, became the landlady of the pub. She died in 1976.

Archie Fox, George Leach and Herbert Gibbs

I have put these three young men together because they all enlisted during the 1914 –18 war and none of them survived.

George and Archie both died in 1917 and are buried in St Mary's churchyard. Their names can be seen on the village war memorial as well. Archie had died of pneumonia and I'm unsure about George but he was awarded the British War Medal and The Victory Medal so he had seen action.

Herbert's name appears on the Colne War Memorial. He was shot by a sniper in 1915, only a few months after enlisting, and was buried with full military honours in France.

I'll let Mr Duggins have the last word. On the next page is a note he made on the very back page of the Log Book. I wonder what memories were dredged up as he added each name to the list.

Old Boys
Dead

W. Johnson

Ch Abbott

Alb Abbott

Herb Gibbs

Tom Allgood

Geo Leach

Ar Fod

Gus Fod

~~Al~~ Phillips

Ed Chapman

Fk Allgood

E Ward

P- of War

Alb^t Johnson

Jno Neal

Cyril Duggins