

The History of Stambridge County Primary School

1877-1977

Stambridge School



Centenary

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STAMBRIDGE SCHOOL, 1877 – 1977

"Now we must educate our masters" said the Secretary for Education, Mr. Robert Lowe, in the House of Commons, after the passing of the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1867 giving working men the vote. In due course, but by the efforts of a new Secretary, Mr. E.M. Forster, the Education Act of 1870 became law and local authorities were required to build schools in parishes where none were available.

At the time, for those Stambridge children who were prepared to undertake the journey, there were in Rochford Dame Schools or the National & British Schools, these latter being organised by the church and chapel authorities. Not many children from the village attended the Rochford ecclesiastical school; indeed, a census taken a few years before 1870 indicated that less than half a dozen pupils came from Stambridge. The churches had to finance their schools from voluntary contributions supported only sometimes by a state grant, but the cost of providing a church school proved too prohibitive for the Stambridge religious authorities. However, in order to keep in line with the government decree the prospect of building a school eventually had to be faced and a local Board of Education was set up. This consisted of seven representatives headed by the rector, the Reverend Penny, who used money raised by local rates together with a government grant - equal to the amount already raised - to build and maintain a school for Stambridge children. Thus, in 1877, the same year that the telephone was first put into commercial operation, the Great & Little Stambridge Board School opened its doors to 48 pupils. The telephone was not installed in the school until 66 years later, but any delays in sound communication were almost compensated for by the celerity of the postal service. In 1877, for instance, the Post Office warned people that "Christmas cards should not be sent later than December 24th".

On May 7th in that year, Mrs. S. Bade "a certificated teacher of the 2nd class" with Ada Thorne and Ada Whittingham, as monitors, to assist her, tried to set "a proper number of classes" in the new school room, 43' 9" long by 18' wide, but unsuccessfully as she did not have "sufficient forms". Monitors were recruited from the children themselves, usually being the ablest in the top class. The children would be divided into standards, those under seven years of age being in a separate infants' class. These standards ranged in number from 1 to VI and were decreed by Articles in a Code drawn up by "My Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Education." To qualify for a government grant the school had to satisfy Her Majesty's Inspectors annually that the children presented in their standards were proficient in the Reading, Writing and Arithmetic pertaining to them. Except for Religious Knowledge and Singing, those were the only subjects on the curriculum, at least in the initial years of the School's existence, and the knowledge the children gained was, therefore, very limited.

The receipt of the government grant was vital to the school's existence and was paid according to the individual child's annual attendance and attainments. The total amount that could be gained by each pupil was 15/- (75p). But should any child not make the required 200 morning and afternoon attendances or fail to satisfy the inspectors in the standard in which he was presented, a proportion of this amount would be deducted. The grant could also be drastically reduced for such things as poor discipline or inadequate premises. It also had to be matched by the amount raised from the education rate and "school pence". In order to earn this "payment by results", therefore, it was essential that the children were taught competently, but Stambridge School faced difficulties common to most of the village schools in the country in being powerless to find able teachers prepared to take on a difficult job for a very low salary, sometimes little more than £30 a year. Their only help was from youngsters who themselves wished to become teachers. To achieve this they started at around 11 years of age as "monitors" in charge of a small group and under the direction of an older "pupil teacher" i.e. one apprenticed at 13 to the school master or mistress. The pupil teachers would work under the supervision of the head and be taught their lessons for an hour at least, either before 9 o'clock or when school had finished, At the annual inspection they would be examined by

Her Majesty's Inspectors after the school children had been tested and sent home. Schools were specially built as one-room structures so that all the classes could be overseen by the Head teacher who would then be able to direct the efforts of the helpers personally, besides being responsible for her own classes.

Attendance at school was intended, by law, to be compulsory, but there were many difficulties in enforcing this. There were, too, local regulations drawn up by the Board, allowing officially approved absences even for ten year olds. The history of a school is best researched from its Log book, which is kept by the head teacher in accordance with government regulations and contains notes regarding day to day occurrences. In the log kept by the succession of Stambridge mistresses and masters can be traced the development of the school from its beginning in 1877. The 48 children who presented themselves on that first day were soon augmented so that on 28 May there were 62 on roll and Mrs. Eade reported that a new bell had been installed (the tower for it is still visible) and they would be called by it to morning school at 10 minutes to nine and to the afternoon sessions at 10 minutes to two/ Not that they always obeyed the summons, for the mistress records poor attendance as a constant problem. The children's ages were from 5 to 13 and their parents had to pay weekly "pence" which for the week ending 22 February, 1878 did not total as much as 10s. (50p) though by then the roll had increased to 72 and the fees averaged about 2d (1p) a week per child/ If a youngster did not attend on the first day of the school week, usually Monday, it meant almost invariably a full week's absence as the parents considered they were paying unnecessarily for the time missed if their child reported for school later in the same week. Though the leaving age in the 70's was 11 - provided that the leaver had made the statutory number of attendances and reached a proficiency equal to that required from Standard IV in the basic subjects - children could be given official leave of absence to go to seasonal work such as harvesting, potato setting and lifting, pea picking and wheat gleaning. Most who worked on such projects did not bother to seek permission, but just stayed away from school, Though the government had decreed that schooling was compulsory and that fines for non-attendances could be imposed by local education boards, the latter usually were composed of the farmers and employers, who were very ready to condone truancy if it meant that their labour problems were thereby solved. There were, certainly some prosecutions of Stambridge parents in these days, but they were very rare when one considers the extremely bad attendance due to unauthorised absence as distinct from illness. There were many unavoidable causes of absence. The difficulty in getting to school because of the state of the roads in inclement weather; the frequency of infectious and very serious disease. Measles was very common, as it is now, but diphtheria, scarlet fever, ringworm, typhoid etc., are constantly mentioned in the school Log as laying low the children, sometimes completely closing the school for several weeks. There are too, many entries in the Log mentioning deaths of pupils, usually the younger ones being the sufferer.

The first academic examination of the Stambridge children occurred in 1878, just over a year after the school had opened and was conducted by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors as required by law. The two gentlemen's names, Mr. Helper and Mr. Finch, appear also in the Logs of neighbouring schools in the Rochford Hundred district and the results of their examination decided the financial status of the schools for the ensuing year. They usually arrived to commence their work at 9.30 am on the fateful day having given some weeks notice of their intention. They started by very carefully scrutinising the registers and verifying that they corresponded with the number of children in attendance and then worked through the standards as drawn up by the Head teacher on the official schedule of presentation. The inspection would be watched by the Managers as this was required by the Government's Code of Rules. The younger children were the first to be examined, reading individually from their primers a sentence containing words of three letters only and then writing on slates from dictation the letters of the alphabet. The arithmetic which followed tested the addition and subtraction of figures up to ten and this completed the inspection for the seven year olds. Great emphasis was placed on good discipline and the instructions issued by "My Lords of the Committee" in London to their inspectors on how to carry out an inspection said, "Make the children stand carefully and steadily to a chalk line. All fidgeting and ugly little habits,

all lounging, slovenly ways of standing and sitting should be checked with the most scrupulous care. The utmost attention should be paid to the mode of holding books, slates and pencils; to the manner of rising up and sitting down, to all postures and movements of the children in the class." All the children used slates carefully ruled daily by the teachers, paper was not regularly used, at least in Stambridge School, until 1894. When all the classes had been examined the children were dismissed and the inspectors worked out the amount of grant the school had earned. The anxiety of the head during this time must have been excruciating because her livelihood might depend on the children's achievements. Sometimes this anxiety was prolonged for weeks, or even months, especially if there was not a good relationship established between the head and the inspectors, the latter with-holding their calculations in order to keep the former, in suspense.

The first report for Stambridge School was fairly favourable "an excellent beginning has been made here. The instruction has been careful and intelligent". However, the inspectors were not satisfied with the accommodation provided for the infants and recommended they should sit in a gallery. This was a method of infant teaching very popular with the inspectorate, their thinking being that a gallery would allow the teacher to control the younger children better by confining' them and so obviating their natural tendency to move about; they could be more easily observed, too. Other criticisms regretted the erratic ruling of the children's slates and, almost as a matter of course, the irregularity of attendance. By early 1879 "the managers had installed a gallery and it is to be hoped that it performed its function for Mrs. Eade now had a school of around. 100 children with one assistant and two monitors to help her cope. She had plenty of adult visitors, too, to distract her attention, for she notes constantly in the Log that the managers were frequent callers, usually bringing with them their wives, children (especially daughters) and "company". Once a month a board meeting was held in the school room and on this day school had to start and finish early to provide the accommodations.

The spring of 1879 took its toll of the children's health. Not only was ringworm prevalent, but severe colds as well and those who attended coughed so much that Mrs. Eade wrote, "It is almost impossible to make audible the Scripture lesson this morning as the children have such violent coughs. Many away ill with coughs and colds". On 19th May she was "obliged to give up the oral lesson ... finding it impossible to make the children hear; almost the whole of them had a bad cough." The government inspectors came again in June. Their report was "fair", but they were critical of the infants' new gallery which they thought was "too high". The grant earned was £60/15/- so that the standards must have passed reasonably well. Handwriting was criticised and the ruling of the slates blamed, but an excuse could well have been overcrowding as there were usually not enough forms to seat comfortably the children in attendance, irregular though this was - and it was certainly irregular! On 30 July 1880, only 11 children were present because of the pouring rain and many were away at the beginning of August because "reaping has begun and they are assisting their parents in the fields". Some children, too, were allowed to attend only half-time as they were adjudged to be "beneficially and necessarily at work" by the terms of the Education Act. In January 1881, "a very boisterous wind" preceded snow which "fell fast and became so blinding that the parents were obliged to fetch their children home. None could come in the afternoon as the snow had accumulated above the school wall". The next day, despite the depth of snow and the state of the roads, 7 children struggled to school.

A new rector, Rev. G. Keightley, took over at the end of 1879 and a new headmistress 1 September 1881. The latter was Mrs. Lily Jago, unqualified teacher, who immediately wrote a severe condemnation of her predecessor's work, unprofessional conduct that would have been actionable had there been in operation the present day libel laws, Mrs. Jago, whose husband accompanied her to the village and the school house, was a strong disciplinarian, who noted on 10 November, "Several first class girls have been caned for ill using a boy who had sent a child out of the class to be punished while he was teaching". Obviously she, too, had to use children as assistants and to reckon with the unruly behaviour that ensued. Mr. Jago himself helped his wife in the schoolroom, but his efforts did

not please the inspectors in June 1882 and he was not given the certificate he hoped for. Mrs. Jago received hers in 1883 and was also given a very detailed syllabus by Her Majesty's Inspectors. Among the subjects to be studied by the Infants were the "morals" of Thrift, Honesty, Cleanliness, Truthfulness, Duty to the Aged and, peculiarly, "Beverages". They were to know about "A Voyage, A Journey by Train (despite the railway at Rochford being six years in the future) and Dinner". The older children had to learn more than 100 lines of Sir Walter Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel", while Standard III (usually the 9 and 10 year olds) were to memorise a poem entitled "Receipt for a Racht" (whatever that was). This setting of subjects outside the three R's was an indication of the wider scope of syllabus "Their Lordships" were now allowing. Geography for instance, had been added to the curriculum, albeit in a very restricted form, the subject being taught orally without the availability of maps, globes or text books. All the children, 100 or so, were still receiving instruction in one room and the inspectors in 1884 ruled that the infants, although they had their gallery, should be separated by a partition from the main stream.

Mr. & Mrs. Jago, after a very successful career at Stambridge, left to go to Canewdon school in October, 1884 and were succeeded by Mrs. Eliza Hoskins. Before they left Mrs. Jago wrote a very comprehensive survey of the children's attainments in all branches of their studies, extolling their abilities, but the new mistress would have none of it. Her first entry in the Log says she "found, (the children's) knowledge very imperfect. there are no timetables as they have been taken away by the former mistress." Mrs. Jago was thus hoist with her own petar. Mrs. Hoskins also complained of staff insufficiency as for over 100 children "I have only a monitor to assist". The vicar and his family continued their frequent visits, but on 14 January, 1885 his reverence was in a very angry mood when he came for "he whipped two boys for misdemeanours and bad language towards himself and daughters while out of school". The ladies of the management committee usually came on more mundane matters, sometimes bringing mending and darning for the older girls to do as part of their needlework lessons which were now added to the timetable. The Inspector's report for Mrs. Hoskins' first year was very laudatory especially as her only help was a monitress. This young lady's efforts could not have been very contributory for though she became an apprenticed teacher in 1885, despite her mistress's attempts to train her she proved a sad disappointment and the Log entries contain many references to her lack of ability or memory. Her lessons are described by her mentor as "imperfect, she doesn't know them" and though in January 1886 she had complete charge of the school owing to "the mistress's absence because of an increase in family" the later Log entries continue derogatory. She remained "weak in her subjects; dull at her work" until in July she was given six month's notice having passed "an unsatisfactory examination" at the annual inspection despite the school having "passed a very good examination." So Mrs. Hoskins was left with no alternative but to bring in her unqualified husband to help for other monitresses employed at 5/- (25p) a week, despite their daily tuition from 8 to 9 am proved as inept.

Mrs. Hoskins resigned in 1890 and was succeeded by Mrs. Bowey who encountered difficulties almost immediately. She found the boys especially unruly, their behaviour while outside the school on one occasion even attracting the attention of Her Majesty's Inspector "who was passing at the time". (What terribly bad luck!) To Mrs. Bowey's acute embarrassment he brought them into school for punishment. His subsequent report after the annual inspection was a very poor one and especially mentioned was the children's "habit of whispering and murmuring which requires to be more strictly checked".

The school subjects taken by the children during this latter Victorian period continued to be supplemented. The older girls commenced attending cookery lessons weekly at a centre in Rochford in 1891 while drawing was taken by the boys. This subject attracted a special monetary grant and, therefore, was inspected annually, at the school, by a government official. Poor Mrs. Bowey continued to receive bad reports, which perforce, she had to record for posterity to read. Such sentences as "the children are unobservant and inanimate and are not trained to think . . .

English is poor . . . needlework deteriorates towards the top of the school" must have been very difficult for her to write and it is no surprise to read of her resignation in 1893.

When Mrs. Hobby took over as mistress that year she found the children so crowded - there were 110 on roll - that "it is difficult to maintain order and there is a great deal of whispering all over the classes", She managed to enliven the teaching by using counters, kindergarten bricks and stick laying materials". Paper - instead of slates - was introduced for the older children and the infants at last given their own room by means of a partition. Their gallery, which had been so important a need fourteen years ago was now declared obsolete and partially removed leaving only a platform (taken away in 1943) so that they could more easily do "marching exercises". Staff shortages continued into 1894 when so acute did they become that "Miss Sewell, a girl living with Mistress who has had a little experience in teaching" was called upon to assist. Mrs. Hobby's own ill-health on occasion caused her absence and then the school, now of 115 children, was run by two very young, inexperienced ladies.

Religious education in state schools was compulsory but non-sectarian. It was not among the subjects examined by Her Majesty's Inspectors if the Diocesan authorities were requested by the local managers to send their own inspectors. Stambidge, though not a church school, did present itself for diocesan inspection, however, probably because of the strong influence of the rector, and this meant that the curriculum was further broadened. The children could opt out of this religious education by means of a conscience clause in the Education Act, but most were presented annually to two visiting clergy for examination and usually gave a good account of themselves, earning in the subsequent report such remarks as "they did excellently", The Revd. Keightley, rector and chairman of the school board of management, must have been proud of the school situated in such close proximity to his church and under his daily pastoral care, for on 14. August, 1894 he brought the Bishop of St. Albans to visit it.

Despite the fact that Miss Sewell, the new assistant, lived with Mrs. Hobby, had been called in to help at a difficult time and had eventually been officially appointed to the staff under Article 68 of the Code of Regulations for Teachers (this said that the person concerned should be healthy and over 18 years of age) relations between them became strained and the Mistress began to record criticism of her one-time protegee. On 2 November 1894 she wrote "I have had occasion to complain to A. Sewell about the noise in her class chiefly caused through her loud voice in speaking to the children" and a few weeks later "A. Sewell still very noisy with her class" so that, not surprisingly, on 28 June 1895 the young lady resigned. One wonders about the atmosphere at home and in the schoolroom between the two women and whether it was only Miss Sewell's loud voice that caused the break.

Changes were taking place academically in the school during the last years of the 19th Century. More books and apparatus were being used and geography was a recognised subject. The annual inspection by the representatives of "My Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council" continued to be held but it no longer consisted of an individual test for each child presented; instead, each class was examined as a whole. The capitation grant too, was raised and fixed by relating it solely to the average number of children in attendance, though the total amount could still be reduced if the inspectors so decreed. Specialist subjects, however, such as Cookery and Drawing, were still individually assessed for grant. The levy of weekly school pence was retained, but payment could more easily be waived in the case of a poor family; it was not finally abolished nationally until the next century. Prizes for good work and attendance were introduced in 1895 and their distribution by the Rector took place at the end of the summer term when on the first occasion 31 children were rewarded - almost a third of the children on the school roll. Unfortunately, the government inspection that year resulted in a highly critical report, "Many of the children still evince little interest in what they learn and the boys are wanting in loyalty to their teachers". What did the H.M.I.'s notice to prompt the latter remark? The roll was still climbing (it reached 118), but absenteeism, official and freelance, kept the average attendance down. The Board of Managers showed a remarkable tolerance towards the youngsters working rather than schooling and was always awarding them leave to go "potato-ing", (sometimes

referred to as "potatearing"), gleaning and rook scaring, even after a long harvest holiday. Thus, on 2nd November, 1894 Mrs. Hobby noted that a number of boys from Standard III had returned to school "having been absent since before the summer holiday. The progress of work is much hindered by the irregularity of many of the scholars and as each standard for Drawing needs a separate lesson each time, it seems almost impossible to divide the time in such a manner as to get through what ought to be done." This sort of thing, together with disruptions caused by weather and staff absences seems to have given the Mistress a very thin time and her almost foreseeable resignation occurred at the end of the year.

It was the end of an era as for the first time in the history of the school a trained and certificated male teacher became Head. On his arrival Mr. W. Vickers, who was accompanied by his wife, the new assistant mistress, immediately recorded his dissatisfaction with what he found. "The school throughout is very backward". In order to encourage good attendance he rewarded the class with the best weekly average 15 minutes extra play on Friday afternoons. He soon showed himself to be a strict disciplinarian. "Punished S.A. with two other boys for playing round corner in yard after bell had rung, having been warned several times previously. S.A. was sulky afterwards and caned more severely". His punishment later of Samson S. brought "insolent and threatening conduct from his mother. I have excluded her children from the school until she makes an apology". Whether she did is not made known. Mr. Vickers, however, showed his enlightened attitude to teaching methods by acquiring from Fry's (the chocolate manufacturers) specimens of the cocoa bean and illustrations of the firm's manufacturing processes, besides a button making information sheet from Harrison and Smith. He introduced the use of copy books instead of pieces of paper and placed a thermometer in each of the two schoolrooms. At the annual examination in 1897 the inspectors were very pleased with the school work and showed their faith in its continued success by waiving the need for an examination the following year; an unprecedented occurrence for Stambidge. As the Boys' Drawing Examination yielded the mark "Excellent" (they had five hours weekly to prepare for it) a half holiday was given in celebration. After less than two years Mr. and Mrs. Vickers "concluded their duties" giving no reason. There had, however, been some differences with the Managers hinted at in the Log. One entry there reads that the Board had granted "a further extension of a fortnight to eight children who have already been away for a month in addition to the usual holiday of five weeks. In consequence of this it is impossible to proceed with the work of Standard 17 in a satisfactory manner" and later "the Chairman gave Mrs. B. (at the board meeting she attended in person) permission to keep her boy from school for three weeks. He has only attended 7 times since the holiday". As the Board members had access to the Log some friction over such entries must have been caused.

The new headmaster had also attended Carmathen College. Like Mr. Vickers, Mr. Giles was accompanied by his wife, who became chief assistant. The school staff now totalled three, with only the Head trained and certificated. He, too, attempted to boost the attendance, but this time by awarding a banner to the best class. "Small privileges (unspecified) are attached to the honour of holding the banner". He allowed "a baby, Charles P. just over two years to come to school so that its elder brothers could come and not stay away to look after it". The weather had its vagaries during Mr. Giles reign, too, for it was so cold on Midsummer Day in 1898 that he "lighted fires to make things a little more cheerful" though by 7 September he was writing that he "found the heat very trying". In January, 1899, just about a year after his appointment, he quarrelled violently with the Reverend Keightley, still Chairman of the Board, over the caning of six year old Zillah who had been "very troublesome and careless with her work in Mrs. Giles' class." Because of the punishment, during and after which the little girl had not cried, "Zillah's father came after school to shout and threaten the Master for a considerable time". The father must have complained to the Chairman for the latter came next day to enquire into the matter and then "loudly stated that such punishments would not be allowed in future." Mr. Giles was particularly incensed because the Rector had not taken his word over the facts of the incident, but had asked Mrs. Giles behind her husband's back to substantiate them. The rift between employer and employee was exacerbated a few weeks later when the Revd. Keightley visited to examine the registers and record

the fact in the Log, as required by law. Next to his entry the Headmaster wrote "This is the first time the Registers have been checked, School year 1898-99". Obviously the situation had reached boiling point and in three weeks the Giles "gave up".

They were followed on 1 May, 1899 by Mr. & Mrs. Clarke. The new Head in his turn was highly critical of the children's educational attainments. "The whole school seems to me to be suffering from neglect" he wrote. "I find them very bad indeed in their Reading . . . many children (in the lower school) scarcely know how to make capitals . . . boys in Standard I seem to be mentally deficient as far as their work is concerned." Harsh criticism of a school that had earned such golden opinions as those expressed by Her Majesty's Inspectors only a year or so before, but perhaps Mr. Clarke thought such scathing remarks would please his new employers, though this may be an unjust comment for there are living in the district old pupils of Mr. Clarke who remember him as having a very likeable, kindly personality. The school roll in May, 1899 was 93, but this number was soon increased by five. Among the newcomers was an infant named Unique Golden Carne Baldry, another girl returned "after an absence of two years with eczema" and Aaron B. came back after being six months absent without excuse. During 1900, absences were the despair of the Headmaster and so excessive were they in October of that year that he gave up the struggle to carry on and closed the school for three weeks for potato lifting. The Board continued to aggravate the situation by constantly granting extended holidays to the child workers, despite the school's necessity to qualify for a government grant by a fixed attendance figure for all on the roll. The mothers of the children concerned would petition the management committee members, usually composed of employers with a vested interest in cheap labour, and almost invariably succeeded in obtaining school exemption certificates for their offspring. Official and unofficial absence was so rife at times among the older children that it was rare to find a better annual average attendance by them than 30%. There must have been a great temptation to falsify the registers but these were regularly examined and thus had to be scrupulously marked, even a late arrival by 15 minutes being not recorded as present for the session. No alterations were allowed and unrectified mistakes drew upon the Head a reduction in grant as well as a severe reprimand. Indeed, so sacrosanct were the registers that when on one occasion the Stambridge Standard I register fell apart "through faulty stitching" this was recorded in the Log. The fact that "the Mistress has repaired the Register" was important enough to be entered in it a day later.

Under the Clarkes the school did very well although the number of children attending declined by 1901 to 70. They established a school library - an unusual venture for the time-and probably because of its reference books, Charlotte Turner won a bronze medal presented by Lord Stratherna to children of the U.K. for the best essays on the geography of the Dominion of Canada, In the same year, 1901, Her Majesty's Inspectors gave a good report; Harry Puller won a Minor County Scholarship and left to attend Southend Technical School - the first mention of any Stambridge children advancing to higher education, though, this is probably because, being a rural area, the opportunities for doing so were very limited. An excellent relationship had developed with the Board, the members of which, on their frequent visits to the school, made fulsome remarks in the Log. It must have been with some regret, therefore, that Mr. Clarke recorded the Board's last meeting in September, 1903, and the first meeting of the Managers, appointed by the Essex County Council, the next month. By the Balfour Education Act of 1902 no longer was the school the child of the locality; it was now the responsibility of a County Education Committee administered by an executive based in Chelmsford to whom all decisions had to be referred by the local committee now appointed rather than elected.

The information about the school only obtainable previously from the Log now begins to be augmented by the minutes kept by the visiting Clerk to the Managers. From the latter such details as the salaries of those who worked at the school become available. Thus, the minutes for the meeting of October, 1903 state that the caretaker's yearly wage was resolved to be £8/9/-; the first assistant teacher's salary £40 and the Head's £100 (from which he

paid £12 rent for the school house). This salary was not approved later by the County Committee who thought it too large, but the Managers urged Mr. Clarke's "excellent work and record of service". When, however, his salary was discussed the next year, a discordant note was struck. Though agreeing to a small increase (allowed for by the new national "scales" system) the Managers resolved that their secretary interview Mr. Clarke and "Draw his attention to the want of politeness on the part of some of the children when leaving the school and express their desire that this aspect of school life should have his careful attention".

In June, 1906 the official name of the premises became "The Great Stambridge Council School, No. 162" and by then the attendance figures, with a roll of 105 were very much better, probably due to the advance in medical knowledge as well as the greater diligence of the attendance officer. Of some help, too, was the institution of "A Challenge Shield for School Attendance, Rochford District East". Fifteen schools competed for this shield and Mr. Clarke recorded proudly on 6 March, 1907, that at a ceremony presided over by Reverend P.R. Burnside, who also spoke "a few well chosen words", Stambridge was "the first school to receive it". In fact, so good did the attendance become that when the percentage for a week dropped to 97.5 it was described in the Log as "not so good". Despite all these efforts, however, some children still escaped the net of compulsory education, for on 13 September, 1907, there is mention of a boy of 12 years being admitted and that he had "never been to school before". This was the official leaving age and "payment by results" had now given way to financial grants based upon the number of children on roll. His Majesty's Inspectors still visited and made reports on the general work, but individual children were no longer assessed. The Inspector's functions were made more advisory and Mr. Clarke mentions of two who spent a whole afternoon with him, "their remarks were very helpful and gave me much encouragement". They still had to approve the syllabuses and time-table and their official signatures needed to be obtained before these could be put into operation. The Inspectors were concerned about the inadequate size of the premises and almost, it seems, in defiance of Mr. Clarke's efforts to maintain good attendance figures wrote to the Board on 28 August, 1907, "the average attendance of the Mixed Department of the school (i.e. children other than infants) must not be allowed to exceed 68, the number for which this Department is recognised, or a deduction may be made from the Annual Grant next year. On referring to Form 9, I find that the average attendance for the past year was 70 . . . (you) will take the necessary steps to ensure that the average attendance is kept within the limits of the recognised accommodation". This when the number on roll was 85 of which number Mr. Clarke was striving to average 95%+ weekly in order to win the cherished shield.

Besides the government inspection which, though still a formidable occasion, was no longer financially crucial, scripture inspections, now carried out by the Essex Education Authority, continued to occur. Their report for 1908, like most previous Diocesan ones, was very favourable, especially for the younger children, the Inspectors remarking that in Standard I "the examination was all that could be desired. All knew the Commandments save one and long passages of Holy Writ were correctly quoted." High praise, indeed! The school Managers, their wives, families and friends, kept up their visits to the school and in March, 1909, four ladies called to examine the darning, awarding three prizes donated by Mrs. H. Rankin. Arrangements for the care of the children's health were now much more thorough and medical inspections were regularly held. Intended to help, too, were frequent talks by a visitor from the Health Authorities. These talks covered a wide spectrum of advice, including the themes "Clean Bodies", "Things to be done in case of Fits of Different Kinds" and "Sick Nursing". To encourage fitness an official Physical Training syllabus had been issued on a national basis and Mr. Clarke's deficient knowledge of it was ascertained "by H.M.I.s who commented on it in their report for 1909. This report was rather deprecating, suggesting better use of reference books, the need for arithmetic text books and preferred "real objects" rather than "flat copies" for boys' drawing. The infants' "marching drill" was considered passe and games were suggested instead of it - to be taken in the playground in suitable weather. The partition between the Infants' class and the main school was made of thin slats and designed to roll up, so that the teachers of the older children must have viewed the idea of infants playing

games indoors with some concern. It was also suggested to the Headmaster that his infants teacher should visit other schools and the lady duly spent a week "attending London Road Infants School, Southend-on-Sea for the purpose of improving her Scholastic Status by means of observing the methods in a good Infants School".

By 1910, the number of children on roll was 102 and the schoolroom, for some years made less roomy by the substitution of desks for forms, must have been very crowded, though the children's appearance in it prompted one of the Managers, Mr. H. Rankin, to write in the Log for 2 February that they "looked clean and tidy". The committee attempted to ease the accommodation problem by sending those youngsters who lived near there to "the new school at Sutton" but it was with seeming regret that Mr. Clarke wrote, "Eight of my scholars have left, moving to Sutton School".

The Log entry for 20 May reads "The Funeral Day of King Edward VII 1841-1910. School was opened at the wish of the County Education Committee for a short session this morning at which a brief Epitome of the Life of the late King Edward VII was given. Special lesson deduced was the feature of the late Monarch as a "Peacemaker". Yet his Mother's long reign ended without a remark of any kind being entered!. The 24 May saw the institution of an annual "Empire Day" when the morning was taken up with imperial talks and songs were sung, concluding with the National Anthem". In following years the celebration involved much more activity; a flagstaff having been presented, the children did flag drill and the rector gave an address to them and their invited parents.

When His Majesty's Inspectors came on 12 May, Mr. Clarke wrote, "We had an excellent attendance and a very happy day. Quite a bright day in the School Year." If they gave an impression of bonhomie while at the school the inspectors' report did not reflect it, "To be really successful, it will be necessary to make the teaching more systematic. The lessons should have more point and a definite aim . . . the children in Standards I and II should be taught to speak and read clearly ... inattention in the class (is) due to the fact that the lessons do not sufficiently interest the scholars . . . the examination results in Arithmetic, Writing and Composition in this class were unsatisfactory." They went on to criticise the school's hygienic standards, the inadequate accommodation, the poor lighting, the low heating level, the lack of ventilation in the cloakroom and the draught in the main school-room. The Managers met on 21 July, a fortnight after receipt of the report and "discussed it at some length", indignantly repudiating most of the criticism concerning the premises. The hygienic inadequacy of the "offices" especially, however, surely merited criticism, for these were nothing more than privy pits and an earth urinal. As regards the consequences of the report's education comments, suffice it to say that the two assistants gave notice and Mr. Clarke's engagement terminated at the end of February, 1912. Whatever the reason for this he is remembered affectionately by those of his ex-pupils still living. One of them, Mr. H. Barker, describes him as being a little man who was kind and gentle. Only once did he know him to have lost his temper and that was when some boys, not from his school, attending Sunday School, insulted his wife - a much taller person - by calling her "Long Hannah". Such conduct amounted to lèse majesty for although she was not a teacher she was required by her husband to be treated by the children with proper respect, in common with all the village big wigs; hats doffed by the boys and curtsies dropped by the girls whenever she was encountered. So irate was Mr. Clarke on this occasion that he left the school house and interrupted the Sunday School lesson to cane the children responsible for the crime. Those of his day school pupils who were present were astonished to see their usually placid Headmaster in such a rage and they were reminded of "Old Jago" some years previously, who favoured the method, it was said, of preventing misdemeanours by giving anticipatory punishment.

The new Head was Mr. Jenner. The Reverend Burnside, who attended his first assembly, wrote in the Log, "Visited school and heard the new master give a very helpful address to the children before commencing his new duty". A promising start. One of Mr. Jenner's first written comments refers to "Labour Certificates", these were issued after written and oral examination by His Majesty's Inspector to children who had reached the age of 12, had made the

required minimum number of attendances and were to be gainfully employed. His wife, though not a qualified teacher, at first occasionally helped in the classroom when staff absences occurred, later in 1913 being employed full time at a yearly salary of £55. The Rector wrote his appreciation of the Master again on 30 May, 1912, "Visited School. I notice a marked improvement in the discipline of the school". The first Scripture examination under the new regime did not elicit as much praise from the two reverend gentlemen who conducted it, "The knowledge shown (in Standards 1 and II) was vague . . . the children do not seem as bright as in other schools."

By 1913 screens for dividing the classes in the main room had been installed and the Managers had recommended the purchase of a piano. Mr. Jenner, a keen gardener, arranged with his Chairman of Managers, Reverend Burnside, for the older boys to cultivate a piece of land placed at their disposal by another member of the Management Body, Mr. H. Rankin. Organised games with newly purchased football and basket-ball accessories were commenced, the venue for these activities being some distance from school as the present school playing field was not acquired until after the Second World War.

The first half of the year 1914 saw Mr. Jenner's plans for the success of his school thwarted by illness. Whooping cough, mumps, scarlet fever and especially diphtheria prevailed, and other absences caused by the atrocious weather meant that sometimes less than 50% of the 80 children now on roll were in attendance. The last government report had been very laudatory, mentioning particularly "the enthusiastic Head Teacher". When the Great War came it seemed to make very little impact on the life of the school, to judge from the Log. Mention is made of it in the Scripture report for 1915, "The children were under a disadvantage for the examination in that a German airship had been over the village and the children had been up all night." Incidentally, this same report lavished much praise on the work of Mrs. Jenner "The infants in this School are exceptionally fortunate in their Teacher. Seldom has it been my lot to witness such happy relations between Teacher and class. I had cherished serious doubts as to the advisability of examining the Infant Classes at all until I came to this School." Warlike activity was again mentioned by the Head on 8 October, 1915, when he was away from school for part of the afternoon "attending a meeting re the formation of a Cadet Corps" and on 28 March the next year he attended Warley Barracks "to go before the Army Medical Board." Before his call up, however, the School collected 155 eggs for "wounded soldiers at the 'Glen' Auxiliary Hospital, Southend and at the 24 May Empire Day celebrations he gave an address to the children and they sang appropriate songs. The flag was saluted and 'God Save the King' rendered by the whole School; three cheers were afterwards given for the village lads serving their King and Country."

Mr. Jenner's departure to the war almost precipitated the school's complete closure. Authoritative circles in Chelmsford had discussed this as a probability, but the local Management Committee were strongly of the opinion "that the School should be kept open and the services of a temporary woman Head should be obtained if possible." Even the Scripture examiner lent his support to this view, writing "I think it will be very unfortunate for all concerned if this School should be closed or even the elder children dispersed to other schools." As he left civilian life Mr. Jenner's reputation in it was indeed very well established.

While the Head was doing his bit Mrs. E. Johnson took temporary charge. Under her guidance the School continued to flourish despite an unpleasant epidemic of measles in March 1917 when, with 86 children on the books, only 32 were fit enough to attend school and it was closed for a month. Ordinary absenteeism continued to be rife, again sometimes with official approval, of which Mrs. Johnson was not always in favour, "Sixteen children absent the whole week (5th - 9th November, 1917) besides the boys who are absent on beneficial employment. It would appear as if some of these children might be in attendance again by now, several of them having been absent for two months." One boy had been absent, employee for more than a year. Mrs. Johnson had a little difficulty with the warrior Headmaster's wife who had left the school when her husband did but had come back to take the Infants in March 1917, for on 20 November that year she wrote, "Had occasion to speak to the Infants about

changing the lessons on timetable; she, however, continued with the wrong lesson." Whether the tension engendered by this incident caused Mrs. Johnson's resignation a few-weeks later is not apparent, but Mrs. Edith May took over from her at the beginning of February, 1918.

Mrs. May's stay was short and is notable in the school Log for the entry on February 4th, the day she arrived, "There is a leakage in the hot water pipe or radiator and the school bell will not ring." She finished her tour of duty a month later and after an interregnum by the assistant mistress, Mrs. J. Merson, Mrs. Stebbing took charge for a seemingly uneventful eight months. She did, however, write one cryptic note, "Sept. 27th. Four children have been allowed to go blackberrying for Government purposes." After Mr. Jenner's return from service with H.M. Forces in January, 1919, the school population rose rapidly to over 100 helped by the raising of the leaving age to 14, and there was no more talk of permanent closure. With the reins firmly in his hands again he concentrated much of his attention on the school garden which was regularly visited by the Horticultural Adviser to the County Council who "expressed himself delighted with (its) splendid condition". He instituted inter-school football and cricket matches, the first of the former with Canewdon School on 10 March, 1920. In July of that year he started educational visits to places of interest and took "twenty 'first class' children to London, visiting among other places the Zoo, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament". A very full itinerary, indeed! A school concert on 19 November was "very successful in all ways" and realised £8.10.3d, these proceeds being "devoted to a school treat and sports fund". School sport was becoming something of general interest now and in March, 1921 the School was closed "by order of the Director of Education to allow the staff to attend a meeting, convened at Rochford, to inaugurate a sports association for the Rochford Hundred". The teachers of the district decided to hold an athletics meeting in June and this became an established annual event.

The good opinion held of the School by the Managers was expressed by their Chairman, Mr. H. Rankin, when he wrote in the Log personally, "Visited the school, found the children looking bright and happy, everything in good order, was shown some very satisfactory work by the Senior Boys." The girls in turn had their share of praise, this time from the Chairman's wife, who thought their darning good enough to present three prizes for it. However, despite this, when Mr. Jenner asked permission "to dispose of the harmonium (a piano had been acquired) for a sum of about £6 and place the money towards the purchase of a desk for himself" the Managers resolved, in the Clerk's words, "to recommend that the harmonium should be sold, but that the Head Teacher's desk should not be purchased just at the present ... the time not (being) opportune for incurring expense." The pupils were also bringing honour to the school in the shape of scholarships to the High School, Southend, and by representing Rochford Hundred schools in the County Sports. When His Majesty's Inspectors recommenced their examining visits in 1922, their report was very enthusiastically favourable. "This is a well conducted school in which earnest, thoughtful work is done" and they went on to praise all aspects of the school's activities. An appreciative letter from the Director of Education for Essex followed. The work done in the school gardens continued to merit the acclaim of the County Horticultural Inspector and in April, 1924 he spoke of "the theoretical work taken by the boys and their collection of local weeds. Before departure he congratulated all on the splendid work performed." The written report that followed in May was even more encouraging. The garden's "well kept appearance and the fertile state of the soil are at once suggestive of correct methods of cultivation. In most able fashion do we find the garden work correlated with that of the classroom . . . It is clear that considerable pains are taken to develop and widen the interests of the children." With laudatory comments also vouchsafed by the cookery instructress about the girls, Stambridge School had good reason to be proud of its reputation in educational circles.

It must have been with sincere regret that the pupils and parents saw the departure in September, 1925 of Mr. Jenner to take up another post, with his wife, at Thaxted. Before he left, however, he saw completed the building of the new "offices" at the back of the school, for which he had consistently fought over the years, constantly calling the attention of all available authority to the "nuisance and offensive smell" engendered by the old ones. The village had no need to be apprehensive about his going, however, for Mr. G. Radford, the new Headmaster from Southend, soon showed his high professional ability. All those activities initiated by his predecessor were continued; football, cricket and athletics matches with neighbouring schools, concerts, clubs, school visits and the garden. The roll continued to increase and the monthly attendance shield to be won. Indeed, with the number of pupils at 112 the average attendance continued high enough for the shield to stay in the school for eight consecutive months ending February, 1926. With the roll so high it became obvious that the premises would have to be enlarged and in 1927, a new classroom and corridor were added. Despite the efforts made to retain the attendance shield there were the inevitable epidemics and it is rather surprising to read that during one of them in May, 1926, "Dr. Lorraine visited and excluded (17 children) for fourteen days as they have not had measles." On 17 May, 48 children were absent suffering from, or excluded by, this disease and because influenza similarly affected the attendance at the beginning of 1927, the School Medical Officer certified that the returns demanded under the Code for Grant purposes for four weeks during the educational year were "reasonably to be attributed to the prevalence of epidemic illness amongst the scholars" and were omitted in calculating the yearly average. Despite these setbacks, success attended the school's scholarship and sport and during 1927 places were won at Southend High School and "The Rayleigh Challenge Cup" at the district sports (a new trophy awarded for the highest total points for Schools with under 200 on roll). The same year the government report was lavish with its praise, "The Headmaster is both energetic and resourceful . . . the outlook is decidedly promising. An active spirit of work exists . . . and the children are responsive and industrious. The Infants are handled in a sympathetic and capable manner and are receiving a sound training." Such a eulogy brought in its turn a letter of appreciation from the Director of Education for Essex and Mr. Radford successfully applied for the Headship of a larger school in Laindon, having completed when he left for it in April, 1928, less than three years of a career that undoubtedly made considerable impact on the lives of the Stambridge children.

The new Headmaster, Mr. P. Riches came from Clacton and stayed at Stambridge - though he eschewed the School House - until 1942, the longest serving period for a Master or Mistress since the school first opened. He continued to earn the high praise awarded to his predecessors for the work done in the school and garden, but during his tenure the numbers of children began to decline and although the school had required the new extension erected in 1927, when there were up to 112 on roll, the premises must have seemed comparatively empty in 1931 when this number totalled only 71. The unaccustomed space resulting, however, did allow the cookery lessons, taken so assiduously by the older girls during the previous decade (in 1928 they had attended the Memorial Hall for six weeks, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each week - definitely a sandwich course!) and dropped in later years, to be started again, this time in the school itself. Girls from Paglesham and Canewdon schools came to attend the sessions on Friday afternoons. Any help the menus received from the school garden must have been considerably reduced by an event in March, 1933 when the Head recorded that it "had been considerably damaged by the lambs from the neighbourhood field. The whole of the broccoli and a newly planted herbaceous border have been completely eaten off."

An epidemic of scarlet fever hit the district in the summer of 1933 and the school was badly affected. The disease became prevalent just before the main holiday when six children were absent with it and by the time the school reopened, this number had risen to ten. All through the autumn the children were in danger and on 10 November a tragic entry was made in the Log. "Notified of the death of one of our girls in the hospital - scarlet fever." That afternoon only 32 children reported for school; in Mr. Riches' opinion, "Many parents have kept their children away as a protest against the nonfumigation of the school by the Sanitary Authorities." The next day the Medical Officer of Health visited, examined all the children who were there and closed the school for a fortnight. When it reopened on 27 November, "Dr. McDonald, M.O.H. visited the school this morning", Mr. Riches wrote, "He examined all children but found nothing suspicious".

By 1935, "reorganisation" was being discussed and acted on in the Rochford Hundred Schools. This was the scheme, outlined in the Government's Hadow Report of 1931, "to build specially designed "Senior Schools" at strategic centres and to send to them children who had reached the age of eleven, if necessary by coach. By spring 1937 the Stambridge roll had dropped to 56 and despite the good reports still being written about its work by County Advisers and His Majesty's Inspectors, the axe fell on the older children in June, when they were transferred to the newly built Senior School in Rocheway, Rochford, leaving only 29 pupils at their old school, now newly equipped with electric lighting. With the travellers went their current reading books; Pickwick Paper, King Solomon's Mines, Kidnapped, Westward Ho! and The Talisman among them. The loss of the older children meant that the cultivation of the school garden could no longer continue and it must have been with nostalgic memories and a heavy heart that Mr. Riches discussed its future with the County Horticultural Adviser. A Junior Nature Study Centre was suggested by the Managers, but the pride of the last three Head Teachers ended its career "by being sown, with grass seed.

The educational reorganisation, though it chopped in half the Stambridge School population, did nothing to damage the high opinion expressed by visiting Inspectors, who wrote in their report for 1939, ". . . the teaching is as conscientious as heretofore and the children are as alert and interested . . . a real effort has been made to cope with the changed conditions and, relatively small though the number of pupils in attendance now is, in no sense does the present course compare unfavourably with that formerly provided. Indeed, in some respects it reveals a definite growth and increased strength. In other words, the reorganisation has amply justified itself . . . the acceleration in the rate of progress made by the pupils as they proceed from group to group in the junior division is a marked feature . . . the infant training is spirited and well informed." Later in the same year, 1939, the number on roll was boosted, for in September the 29 locals were joined in their lessons by 34 children and their teachers from London areas, evacuated because of the Second World War. That number was not long sustained for despite a talk from the Chairman of the Managers, Mr. H. Rankin, soon after they arrived in Stambridge, on "Country Life" and how to employ their time usefully, the evacuees drifted back home and by the end of the year only 5 were left in the village. Evacuation in reverse seemingly occurred when the German air assault began that summer for the Senior School in Rochford closed (it was very close indeed to the R.A.F. airfield) and the older Stambridge children returned to their original school. During the Battle of Britain in 1940 attendance and school work were badly affected. Air raid warnings were a daily feature and Mr. Riches reported to the Managers at their meeting on 12 September "Nine children only are in attendance at the school, the others are being withheld as the parents feel proper air raid protection has not been provided." To "be fair to the authorities, there was a public shelter near the school where the children could be taken and from the frequency of the raids during the autumn term and the following spring term, 1941, most of their school times must have been spent in it. Fortunately, life became more placid during the summer.

The future of the school now became a question of much concern, as, despite the presence of the senior children, there were only 49 on roll. Male chauvinism appeared to be shown by the Managers, who raised the question, at their meeting on 15 February, 1941, "as to the necessity for retaining the services of a Head Master, in view of the

small number of children now in attendance." (They thought a Head Mistress would be sufficient.) It was, therefore, "resolved that the County Committee be informed that the Managers consider that arrangements should be made for Mr. P.G. Riches to be released from his present post and transferred to a larger school in the County . . . as an alternative that arrangements should be made for the amalgamation of this and the Paglesham Council School . . . the Managers visualise the closing of the Paglesham Council School and the accommodation of all the children at the Stambridge Council School." The County Committee opted for the former course, but Mr. Riches was reluctant to leave, refusing the offer of the Headship of Manningtree School the following May. The Managers persisted and again recommended his transfer and finally at the end of October, 1942, the Headmaster left for Barling School. At least it was reasonably close at hand and he had persuaded the Committee to let him take the gardening tools with him.

Mr. Riches was succeeded by Miss L. Jeffrey, whose main concerns initially were war-centred, air raid alarms, gas masks, unexploded bombs and fire precautions figuring largely among her first Log entries. Praise for her management of the school was soon forthcoming, both from the Inspectorate and the Managers, for on 13 April, 1943, a Board of Education official visited the school and "expressed herself pleased with what she saw" while in July the Managers congratulated her "on the satisfactory behaviour and general conduct of the School." She instituted "Open Day" that summer, an occasion when parents and friends visited the school, by invitation, to see the children's work. She also made the first arrangements for carrying out the government's policy for the supply of school meals. Milk had been made available to the pupils for some time, "but on the 18th October, 1943 the school meals service started at Stambridge with 51 diners supplied with hot food sent in containers from Rochford Senior School to which the older children were due to return on its reopening in July. The dinners cost each child 1s. 6d. weekly or 4d. daily (7½p or 1½p) and the numbers needed had daily to be notified to the supplying canteen. To do this efficiently a telephone was needed and the instrument was duly connected, in the words of the Managers "in order that the Head Mistress could notify the Head Teacher at Rochford Senior School every morning as to the number of dinners required", some 66 years after the telephone service had first gone public.

By now matters of war only occasionally cropped up. The Air Raid Warden sometimes came to inspect the respirators; the school railings were taken away "for defence purposes" and the Infants' Mistress was absent on 37 March, 1944 for two days "owing to shock following the news that her son had been posted 'missing'" - there was a happy outcome to this event, however, for the teacher, in May of the next year, was given three days leave "to visit her son prisoner-of-war from Germany"). Other than these events the school life continued placidly. The number on roll began to rise gradually and reached 60 by the summer term of 1944; the County Organiser for Physical Training visited regularly and was impressed enough by the children's performance in the subject to feature them in a demonstration to a group of teachers at Rayleigh Secondary School; a mobile cinema from the Visual and Aural Aids Department at Chelmsford paid, periodic visits to show educational films and a wireless was installed in January, 1945. The end of the war seemed to be in sight, and as it seemed, in anticipation, the school was redecorated in the same month. The actual end in May was celebrated with three days holiday and a Victory Party to which the parents and Managers were invited.

As the school routine settled down to its normal peace time character there was no more talk of closure or amalgamation with Paglesham, the Head's and Manager's attention being more concentrated on enlarging the school's area by the acquisition of adjoining land. This was eventually negotiated so that the school can now boast a splendid sports field immediately adjacent on which the District Small Schools' Sports meetings regularly take place. Old times seemed to be repeating themselves early. In 1947 when work was brought to a standstill by the severe weather which lasted over a week; on one day only two children arrived in school, the highest number for the rest of the crisis being nine. Bad weather conditions persisted for almost all of the spring term and before it finished

Miss Jeffery took up residence in the School House probably very relieved to be able to do so and avoid an onerous journey to and from work. The school house had been vacated by the school cleaner some years previously, but extensive improvements were needed, each item of which had to be discussed, approved, tendered for and discussed again. So long was the process that at one time the Clerk to the Council "intimated the possibility of requisitioning the property". With the summer term school journeys started again, Prittlewell Priory and Maldon being the first of the local places of interest visited; later in the following year Stambridge Hall, Ekco's works, Priory Park and St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell were all seen. The school was now well and thriving despite the vicissitudes occasioned by war and weather.

That children should see for themselves at first hand obviously played a very important part in Miss Jeffery's educational philosophy, for the varied places they VISITED make very interesting reading and their journeyings impressed a visiting H.M.I. who also "expressed herself pleased with the liveliness of the children." On one occasion the girls entertained a party of pupils from Wentworth High School, taking them to visit a farm in the neighbourhood. An "Old Scholars' Club" was founded and parents made welcome at an evening party when "about 38 guests were present and a jolly time was had by all." Unfortunately, most of the Log entries for 1951 and 1952 reflect the general acute scarcity of teachers, this situation persisting for many years. Because of staff illness and no supply personnel to "fill in", on many occasions the school was carried on with only one teacher present, a formidable task with more than 50 children in attendance. It meant a vicious circle of crises as teachers, in trying to cope, in turn suffered from tension and strain allowing the easy onset of illness. Despite all this, the academic proficiency attained by the children can be measured by the number of grammar school places regularly obtained, often amounting 40% of the children eligible to sit the entrance examination. The attractive summer end of term "Open Days" continued to command attention, the number of visitors to them obviously exceeding in quantity the parents.

Clerical help became available in 1953 for small schools with more than 50 pupils (large schools had been blessed for some time) and Miss Jeffery must have felt relieved to pass on some of the administrative chores which, because she was a full time teacher, of necessity followed the day's work. Due to the seemingly constant teaching staff illnesses, the clerical assistant often found herself doubling as teacher, unqualified though she was, for supply teachers were almost impossible to find. Almost all the children stayed for the mid-day meal, described by an official visitor "a well supervised and civilised occasion", but mid-day assistants - those ladies employed to watch over the children at lunch time - had their illnesses and absences, too, and these made extra loads for the hard pressed staff. Despite everything, however, after a very comprehensive general inspection in 1955, the school received a report described by the Chairman of the Managers as "splendid". Miss Jeffery was referred to in it as "a vigorous and enlightened teacher" achieving "sound standards of work . . . the children have been taught to be self reliant and courteous and are lively and responsive in their lessons." They must certainly have lived up to their "lively" image for the entertainment they gave in July at the village Memorial Hall attracted an audience of over 200 people - a remarkable achievement when the comparatively small number of children attending the school is considered.

By 1956 the school roll had reached 70 and a "middle school" teacher was appointed. The staff had no place other than a classroom to which to retire at break times and this situation was rectified in 1958 by making a room from a walled-in part of the school corridor. Difficulties caused by staff absences continued incessantly and in January, 1959, the Headmistress gave notice of her retirement at the end of term. Despite all that had happened during her sixteen years of service to Stambridge she was still able to write before she left that she had been "very happy" and there is little doubt that if hard work brings happiness then Miss Jeffery had enjoyed much of it.

The tradition of a male Head returned with the appointment of Mr. H. Page, now with a roll of 80 pupils. He decided early in his first term to form a Parent Teacher Association and 43 parents attended the inaugural meeting. A social evening for them quickly followed and many similar pleasurable events for both parents and children, all arranged

by the newly formed P.T.A. Committee. The more serious aims of the Association were represented on evenings when explanations of teaching methods used for Mathematics and Reading were given either by the school staff or visiting speakers. The modern age had now arrived in earnest. Memories of the war and its educational deprivations were receding as equipment enabling the children to learn in a more progressive manner was acquired. The obsolete iron desks with fixed seats were replaced by tables and chairs; the reference books already on loan from the County Library were augmented by some hundreds more; a television set was installed, a tape recorder and duplicator acquired. An incident that Mr. Page must have been very happy to record occurred in December 1959 when a gentleman from Chelmsford called to inspect the site for flush sanitation. The School had started life with open pits advancing via buckets to a cesspool. These arrangements in turn had caused noxious offence and there had been fought battles by successive Head Teachers to achieve an acceptable standard of hygiene. The water borne sanitation finally arrived in April, 1961, when the special appointment was made of a "Pump House Maintenance Attendant" to look after the innovation. The adjacent playing field of 2 acres, so often discussed in past years, finally became a reality for the ground was purchased, seeded with grass and in use by the summer of the same year and though swimming at Stambridge School itself, with its small population seemed too ambitious a project, arrangements were formulated with neighbouring schools to build a shared pool at the Secondary School in Rochford. A school uniform was designed and by 23 September, Mr. Page was able to report "most children now wear it;" obviously they were very proud to be identified with their exciting school.

By 1964, there were 94 children attending the school and overcrowding was again a problem only partially alleviated by taking into use the Memorial Hall for morning sessions. So concerned was the Headmaster and his Management Committee about the problem that they wrote to the local Member of Parliament to ask his help in its solution. A relocatable classroom was eventually to be sited in the school playground, but long before its arrival, some years later, Mr. Page had resigned in order to take up a post as tutor at a Teacher Training College in the New Hebrides having passed at Stambridge "five pleasant years".

For a term after Mr. Page's departure, Miss J. Hillican, of the County unattached staff, was in charge of the School. The situation which confronted her when she arrived must have seemed parlous for there were no permanent teachers to assist her and the school day had to be skilfully arranged to fit the convenience of the morning and afternoon part-time help she was sent. Despite all difficulties, the School continued to function happily. Visits to places of interest went on, P.T.A. meetings were held and to mark the end of what was undoubtedly an arduous term, she arranged a Carol Service at the Church and a concert at the Memorial Hall, the latter attracting an audience of 200 people. It must have been however, a great relief to hand over in January, 1965 to the newly appointed Headmaster, Mr. K. Ancock.

Unhappily, the staffing situation was still not satisfactorily resolved and part-time teaching had perforce to continue. The position was aggravated by the inexorable rise in the school roll which by now had topped the 100 mark. To make matters worse accommodation was still restricted, for the new classroom had not materialised and the Memorial Hall was still being used. As in the past, despite all difficulties, the School continued to flourish and the activities too became even more varied. Visits laid on for the children to Rankin's farm must have been very popular, but theatre journeys to London to see performances of such operas as *La Boheme*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Die Fledermaus* and *The Magic Flute*, to name just a few, undoubtedly made a powerful impression on the children and whetted their appetite for similar such cultural inspiration in later life. A different but just as exciting time was enjoyed by those who attended the first school camp in August, 1969. The parents' close contact with School and teachers was maintained, not only by lectures arranged for them on educational subjects and teaching methods but at social and joint theatre visits to London. Of special interest, too, was an event that occurred in May, 1967 when old pupils were invited to the school on its 90th anniversary. Their photographs were

taken, they were entertained to tea (the main feature of which was a huge iced cake) and they all signed their names in a special commemorative booklet now in the schools keeping.

The swimming pool, for which so much effort had been expended, was finally built - at the new Rochford School called Doggetts - and became available for the Stambridge children, whose parents had so generously contributed. By hard, unremitting work and all kinds of fund raising schemes £5,000 had been raised by the contributory schools and a magnificent pool built, the Stambridge children making their first plunge on 21 April, 1970. That year, too, saw the departure of Mr. Ancock to a new school in Thundersley and his place at Stambridge taken over by the present Headmistress, Miss M. Templeman. On arriving for her first term at the beginning of 1971 she immediately reported the school as being hardly habitable because of the failure of the heating system and the cold weather. Even with this cool introduction the new Head showed that under her guidance Stambridge School would not only continue its great traditions but extend even further its educational interest. The theatre visits, the dramatic work so keenly witnessed by the villagers and friends of the school in the Memorial Hall, the school journeys to places of interest, both near and far afield, still take place. Especially encouraging is the parents' whole hearted response to the activities the school organises. The first school fete Miss Templeman arranged featured, among its attractions, a steam engine, Caledonian Dancers and a fancy dress competition, which resulted in £109 being raised for the school funds. This and similarly successful functions have meant that the school has been able to purchase equipment that could not have been afforded using merely the financial grant provided by the local authority.

During my study of its records I have been privileged to visit the school many times and so to appreciate how it has grown in educational stature throughout the years of its existence. From its beginning 100 years ago it has had the good fortune to be administered by teachers with such energy and drive that many, after a comparatively short sojourn, were transferred to what the education authorities considered "more responsible spheres of influence", their quality as teachers having been enhanced by their stay in a school where the children, parents and Managers have played such a stimulating role in its history.

REAT STAMBRIDGE BOARD SCHOOL

STAFF - MAY 1877

Headmistress	Mrs. S.D. Bade
Monitress	Ada Thorne
	Ada Whittingham

STAMBRIDGE COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

STAFF - MAY 1977

Headmistress	Miss M.A. Templeman
Deputy Headmistress	Mrs. J. Manley
Assistant Teachers	Miss A. Jenrick
	Mrs. L. Smith
Accompanist (part-time)	Mrs. P. Trim
Guitar Instructress(part-time)	Mrs. R. Hursey
Secretary	Mrs. J. Russell
Welfare Assistant	Mrs. A. Barton
Cleaner in Charge	Mrs. A. Stranks
Mid-day Supervisors	Mrs. B. Bateman
	Mrs. E. Cooper
Canteen Assistants	Mrs. J. Addley
	Mrs. M. Dowsett
Sanitary Attendan	Mr. J. Stranks

HEAD TEACHERS OF STAMBRIDGE SCHOOL

1877 - 1977

May 1877	-	Sept. 1881	Mrs. S. Eade	
Sept. 1881	-	Oct. 1884	Mrs. L. Jago	
Oct. 1884	-	April 1890	Mrs. E. Hoskins	
April 1890	-	July 1893	Mrs. A. Bowey	
Sept. 1893	-	Oct. 1893	Mrs. E. Wing (Temporary)	
Oct. 1893	-	Jan. 1896	Mrs. E. Hobby	
Feb. 1896	-	Nov. 1897	Mr. W. Vickers	
Nov. 1897	-	April 1899	Mr. J. Giles	
May 1899	-	Feb. 1912	Mr. W. Clarke	
March 1912	-	July 1916	Mr. E. Jenner	
Sept. 1916	-	Jan. 1918	Mrs. E. Johnson	/ War time
Feb. 1918	-	March 1918	Mrs. E. May	/ Temporary
March 1918	-	April 1918	Mrs. J. Merson	/ Head
April 1918	-	Jan. 1919	Mrs. M. Stebbing	/ Teachers
Jan. 1919	-	Sept. 1925	Mr. E. Jenner	
Oct. 1925	-	April 1928	Mr. G. Radford	
May 1928	-	June 1928	Mr. A. Phillips (Temporary)	
June 1928	-	Oct. 1942	Mr. P. Riches	
Nov. 1942	-	Dec. 1942	Miss L Hood (Temporary)	
Jan. 1943	-	April 1959	Miss L. Jeffery	
May 1959	-	July 1959	Miss L. Hood (Temporary)	
Sept. 1959	-	July 1964	Mr. H. Page	
Sept. 1964	-	Dec. 1964	Miss J. Millican (Temporary)	
Jan. 1965	-	July 1970	Mr. K. Ancock	
Sept. 1970	-	Oct. 1970	Mr. J. Harrison (Temporary)	
Nov. 1970	-	Dec. 1970	Mr. A. Brooker (Temporary)	
Jan. 1971			Miss M. Templeman	