

## **History of Alderbury School.**

*Alderbury School, January 1858.*

Three rooms (1) 42 x 20 x 8 1/2 (2) 27 x 20 x 8 1/2 (3) 12 x 20 x 8 1/2. 115 scholars, mixed, under Master (certificated) and sewing mistress who teaches the little ones in an upper room. Three pupil-teachers; desks parallel, floor boarded. Mr Hughes said "The discipline and instruction were very good." - Warburton.

The land on which the school was built was acquired by the Radnor Estate as a result of the Enclosure Award in 1809. Part of the medieval hall-house was extended to form a schoolroom: the rest of the house accommodated the master and his family. An 1838 date stone was subsequently found in the north gable. The archives of the Alderbury Women's Institute contain a statement from the Countess of Radnor, the grandmother of the present earl, that the school began in a converted barn in 1832.

An extension was later added to the north-east corner of the schoolroom so that by the 1850s the school consisted of a large schoolroom, an adjoining classroom, and an upstairs room for infants.

Absenteeism was a problem for rural schools; haymaking, beating for rabbits, potato picking, collecting acorns, child-minding and 'keeping birds from fruit' were all too often responsible for keeping pupils from their lessons. Regular and virulent epidemics of infectious diseases swept through villages and towns. Closure for weeks or even months at a time were frequently reported in the school log books. Measles, mumps, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, diphtheria, and whooping cough were chiefly responsible. In 1842, the three young daughters of the Rev. Newton died at Farley within the space of one week.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century improvements continued to be made, financed by the Earl of Radnor. In 1867 the floor of the upstairs infants' classroom was removed, leaving a gallery. A new classroom was added downstairs. In 1887, the school was improved and enlarged to accommodate more children. In 1890, to the relief of many, the government abandoned the payment-by-results system in favour of a basic grant dependent mainly on regular attendance. By this last decade of the century, elementary education had become free of charge and compulsory for children aged up to 11 (1893) and 12 (1899).

It was not until 1903 that a trust deed was drawn up for Alderbury School although it had been founded by the 3rd Earl of Radnor about half a century earlier, as already described. The deed confirmed that the school was let to the Vicar of Alderbury and his successors for one shilling a year for the education of children and adults of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the Parish of Alderbury. The school took children between the ages of 3 and 13 years and the vicar attended each week to take prayers and rehearse the pupils in the catechism in readiness for the annual diocesan inspection.

In 1909, a new playground was opened and the schoolroom gallery was removed in 1911.

It was over an issue of financing cloakroom improvements demanded by the County Council in 1929 that Lord Radnor made over the lease of the school to the local authority. So, for a nominal rent, Alderbury National School became a council school.

The school gained a well-deserved reputation for singing, sight-reading of music, and folk dancing. Year after year the pupils won medals, challenge cups and shields at the Wiltshire Music Festivals. It is not known what happened to the shields that once adorned the school walls.

At the beginning of World War II, in September 1939, the school hosted as evacuees the whole of Portsmouth's Lyndhurst Road Junior Boys' School and its teachers, plus some girls. The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel schoolroom was hired until the numbers reduced. Some Portsmouth boys stayed throughout the war.

Among its many reforms the 1944 Education Act made provision for public education to be organised in three progressive stages - primary, secondary, and further education - with separate schools for primary and secondary pupils. From 1947 the leaving age was raised to 15. However, it was not until 22 July 1952 that Alderbury saw the end of its all-age school. From then on, pupils over the age of 11 went to Downton Secondary School or, by selective examination, to a Salisbury Grammar School. Alderbury School became a County Primary School and remained so for the next 40 years. In 1952 the school dinner service started with meals delivered by van.

Around 1972, the school acquired a prefabricated mobile classroom sited at the corner of Folly Lane. With local help and grants, the Parent Teacher Association raised enough money to build an outdoor swimming pool near the mobile classroom, for the use of pupils.

Mr Smith the headmaster recalls: 'Our pool was built during 1979 and I remember the cheer that went up on cup final Saturday when Bobby Stokes scored the goal for Southampton that won the Cup against Manchester United. Transistor radios told the story as we beavered away down a large rectangular hole. Over 20 men of assorted backgrounds gave their help during summer weekends...'

In 1989 the school acquired its first computers as primary schools nationwide came to grips with teaching the new and revolutionary information technology.

A new Alderbury and West Grimstead School was also becoming a reality. The school was scheduled for closure at Christmas 1992. In the last term, visits were arranged to the new building to meet future classmates and staff. However, as the time drew near, mounting excitement was ringed with great sadness at the realisation that, for Alderbury School, an era lasting a century and a half was at an end.

## School logbook (Alderbury)

*Alderbury School Log Books: 1862-1955.*

The log books often provide a fascinating glimpse into everyday life for the village school. Here, we provide a selection of entries, chosen as much for their intriguing look into activities which may now be forgotten, as for their actual content.

**20 February 1863:** `The School rather thinned in the upper classes by boys going beating for rabbits.`

**20 January 1864:** `Magic lantern entertainment in the evening. Nine boys not allowed to come, for their bad conduct towards the girls.`

**26 January 1864:** `The day so cold and dark that the children could not write on, paper but did sums in the morning and singing in the afternoon instead.`

**14 November 1866:** `Lady Folkestone...heard the children sing and carefully inspected the needlework, commending some girls and blaming others. Her Ladyship hoped to see great improvement on her next visit.`

**17 November 1871:** `Mrs Light complained to me that teachers sometimes boxed the boys and girls ears so severely as to give them headaches.`

**5 December 1879:** `Many boys late for school. Several came in after registers were marked. They had been sliding on Mr Fort`s pond. Mr Fort came into school and complained of boys breaking down his hedge.`

**16 June 1884:** `Took advantage of a First Class boy being ill in school from `smoking` to give a lesson to the class on the bad effects of tobacco especially for growing children.`

**December 1902 /January 1903:** `Nine weeks closure due to scarlet fever.`

**20 November 1903:** `No school on Monday afternoon. A drinking fountain opened on the Green.`

**31 July 1912:** `Holiday in the afternoon. Laying of Chapel School foundation stone.`

**26 September 1914:** `Head teacher absent from school in the afternoon. Being instructor of the local ambulance corps, he was required to accompany members to Salisbury to assist in removing wounded soldiers from the station.`

**30 October/ 1 November 1917:** `Outbreak of diphtheria. Two little boys died from the effects.`

**11 November 1919:** `First anniversary of Armistice Day. The King`s wish for two minutes silence at 11 o`clock duly observed by the scholars in the playground, followed by the singing of the national anthem.`

**26 April 1924:** `Lady Folkestone... presented to the school certificates won at the Wiltshire musical competition. Her Ladyship congratulated children on winning the Challenge Shield outright,`

**September 1938:** `Forty children, went to view the excavations at Clarendon Palace.`

**4 September 1939:** `The school remains closed for a week due to the outbreak of war`

**8 December 1941:** `...an old pupil and a survivor from the Ark Royal came into school at 3.15 pm to tell the children of his experiences during the past three years. The children presented him with 17s 0d to replace his personal belongings. Have also sent £2. 5s. 0d. to the British Red Cross for parcels for two old scholars who are prisoners of war in Germany.`

**10 and 19 September 1952:** `The chief meals organiser visited and said that... 18-20 table-top desks would be supplied to replace 18 very decrepit `tip-up` type old desks... I have blocked up about 20 `tip-up` iron standard desks so that dinners won't suddenly disappear!`

**22 July 1955:** `An historic day in the life of the school as it sees its last day as an all-age school. We attended Church for a very inspiring end of term service with farewell for Canon Clayton.

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### **School logbook (West Grimstead)**

As with Alderbury School, the Log Book gives a view of life very different from today. In the 1800`s needlework was viewed as the most important skill for girls to learn. Being a church school the rector and his wife visited the school most days. Absenteeism was very high because of the distance children had to walk to school and the lack of adequate wet weather clothing. Also the children spent a lot of time working at home or in the fields, often the reasons given were - harvesting, bird-keeping, potato planting, pig keeping, acorn picking, fruit picking, gleaning and carrying dinners to the hayfields! Illness was commonplace and far more severe than today - scarlet fever, diphtheria, impetigo, measles, mumps, whooping cough and chicken pox: families had to be placed in quarantine. The school was closed on many occasions when the mistress was ill.

**1878 Nov.** `Admission refused to a girl from Alderbury School who gave a false reason for leaving that school.`

**1878 March 7** `Admitted Mary Bundy to the infant class; being under three she is to remain on condition that she does not disturb the school.`

**1880 Sept 17** `Mistress had to cane five girls for idleness and inattention to their needlework.`

**1891 Aug 7** `Flower show in Longford Park, children given a holiday as they were all going to the Park.`

**1897 Feb 5** `Ethelred and George Penney have gone to Alderbury School; their father thinking they need the control of a master.`

**1901 Apr 25** `The Managers have dismissed G.G. aged 13 years, for repeated acts of disobedience and general bad conduct and insubordination.`

**1902 June 27** `School closed owing to King`s illness.`

**1905 March 8** `School Inspection - more cupboard accommodation is needed. A teacher`s desk would also be a great convenience.`

**1934 Inspector`s report.** `Allowing for the difficult teaching conditions due to the fact that the infants and all the standards occupy a single room, this is a very good Village School.`

**1938 Jan 21** `School milk under Milk Marketing Board. `Milk in schools` scheme commenced this morning`.

**1945 Mar** `Nurse visited and looked at heads (18 present).`

**1947:** `Re-open school. Received £1.17s.6d for collection of 150lbs of rose hips.