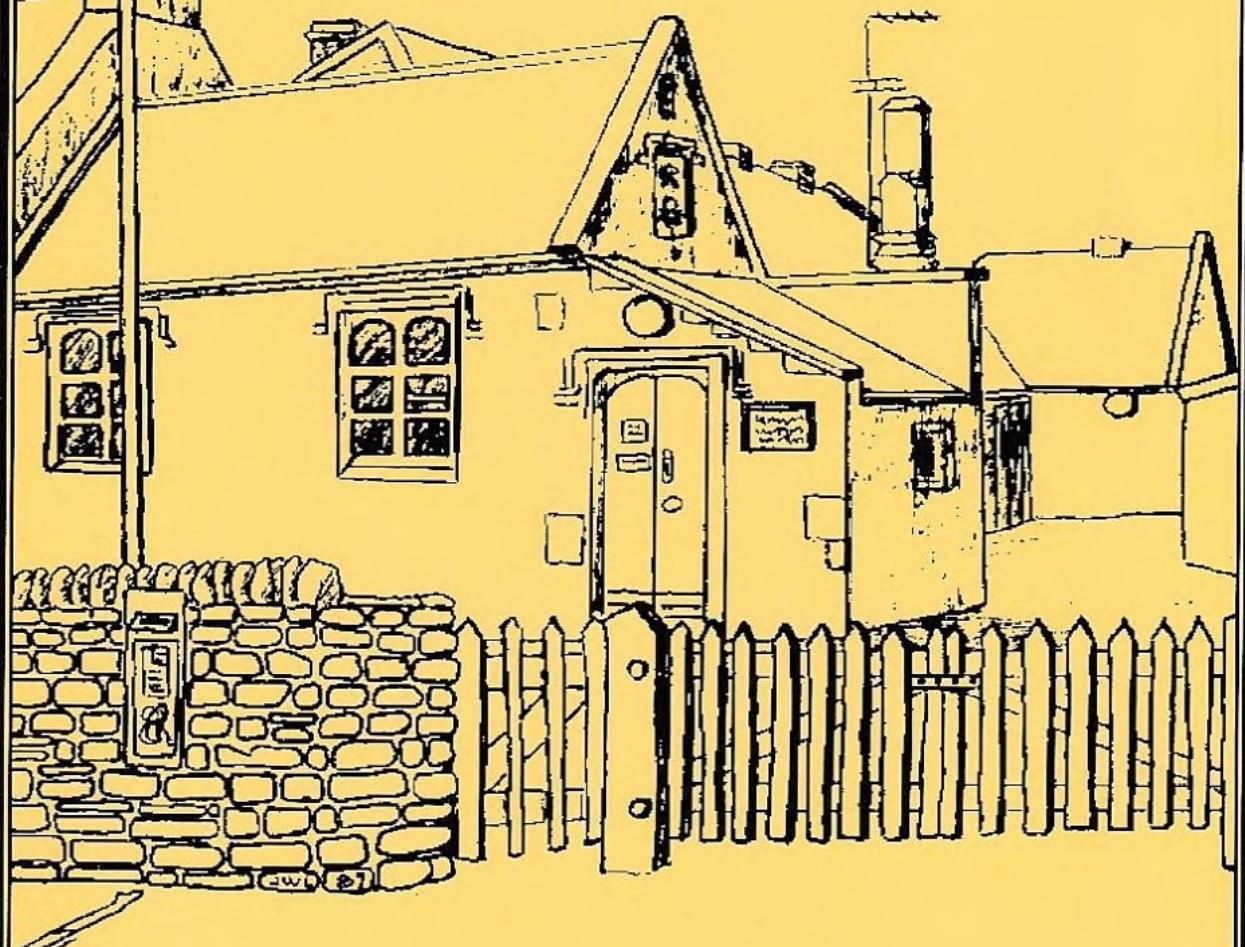


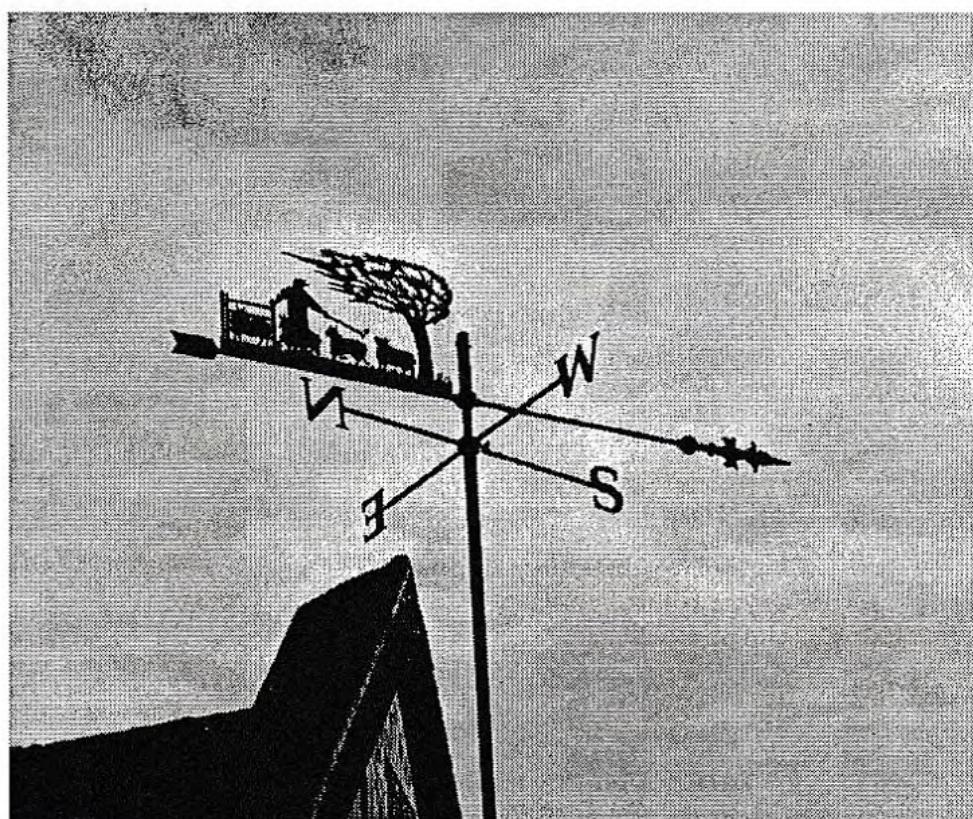
An Oral History Of Education



Atworth History Group

ATWORTH. An Oral History of Education

This little volume is dedicated to the memory of Wilf Greenland, founder member of Atworth History Group and former pupil of Atworth School, in gratitude for his many contributions to the village.



Weather vane designed by Xavier Galesides, 1997.

Atworth School was built in 1828, on land situated between the field known as The Pennings, and the village market place, where sheep were sold.

Atworth. March 2002.
Front Cover - John Lambert

The History Group
Photography - David Webb

Preface

As readers will realise, Atworth History Group has already included a brief account of our two schools in the previous publication, "Atworth. A Little History". This was derived from such sources as school diaries, minutes of Governors' meetings and other written material. What the records claim to have happened and what actually occurred, seen through the eyes of pupils and those who worked at the school, can sometimes be very different. The present account therefore, breaks new ground and attempts to answer the question, "What was it like to be in attendance at Atworth School during the different periods of its existence?" The information has been obtained entirely from those who were there.

There are obvious limitations to an inquiry of this kind. Of these, the chief one is human age. In our searches we have been fortunate in finding a number of senior citizens living in and around the village who were able to give us valuable and often colourful accounts of their school days as they remembered them. Another problem has been locating representative samples of former pupils still living locally, whose ages corresponded to particular periods of the school's existence. Inevitably, therefore, the sizes of our samples have been somewhat variable. Where numbers of possible respondents have been plentiful, as in recent years, we have assumed that when successive interviews produced much the same information, we were getting somewhere near the truth and the sample was large enough.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking most sincerely all those who kindly gave up their time to talk to us. Without their help, this publication would not have been possible. We were particularly fortunate in being able to talk to the former head masters, Mr. Hobday and Mr. Lowes, and we are grateful to them for providing us with much useful background information about the school in their time.



The original schoolroom and headmaster's house built in 1828 by Mr. Robert Blagdon Hale. The plaque on the west wall records the date of its construction and includes the crest of the Hale Family.

Finally, a word concerning the layout of this account. As was pointed out earlier, the span of time we were able to cover by word of mouth is limited and extends no further back than the later years of the headmastership of Mr. H. Inkpen (1898 – 1934). This omits the first 70 years of the school's existence on its present site, also the beginning of organised education in Atworth, which started in 1706. For the sake of completeness and to provide a background for the rest, we felt it necessary to include, as an introduction, a brief reference to the early days, even though they have been covered previously elsewhere (1). With this in mind, we have tried wherever possible, to avoid excessive repetition.

The main account is grouped under the names of successive head teachers (a complete list is included at the back), and ends with the present head teacher, Mrs. D. Wiltshire.

Introduction

As in many of the villages in Britain, the first organised education began early in the 18th century in the form of a Charity School. For Atworth, the benefactor was Mrs. Jane Brown of Cottles who died in 1706. In her will she made an annual bequest to a school in Atworth amounting to some £26 – a considerable sum of money in those days. Details of her charity are summarised on her tombstone in the churchyard of St. Michael's Church and on a plaque, formerly in the church, but now in the Atworth Museum.



Porch of number 98 Church Street, the site of the former entrance to the alleyway, now incorporated in the house that led to the Dame's School.

Following the Brown bequest, the first school in Atworth (known locally as the Dame's School) had premises consisting of a single schoolroom probably built by Jane Brown's family, the Pawletts of Cottles. It was situated at the end of an alleyway, the former entrance to which is marked by the elegant porch of what is now number 98 Church Street.

Little is known about the Dame's School beyond the contents of one report by the Charity Commissioners in 1834, (2) about six years before it closed. This states, "the schoolmistress is appointed by the proprietor of Cottles for the time being. Jane Jones is the present mistress; she teaches all the poor children of the tything English, gratis. She has now about 20, and a few paying scholars besides. The duties are as well discharged as can be expected. Lady Theodosia Hale, the wife of Mr. Hale (owner of Cottles) herself lays out one pound a year, with other voluntary sums, in the purchase of books for the school." About 1840, the school finally closed and the building was converted into a private house by inserting an upper floor. It was eventually demolished in 1960 and nothing now remains.

Meanwhile, the first of the present school buildings had been built by Mr Robert Blagdon Hale in 1828. This is recorded by a plaque on the west wall of the old Schoolroom bearing the date and the crest of the Hale family.

The headmaster and his family were evidently expected to live on the premises in the substantial house adjoining the school building. This tradition continued until 1971.

Largely due to the initiative of Mr. G. P. Fuller of Neston Park, various additions were made to the buildings until they reached their maximum size in 1898 when the school totalled 207 children, many of them infants. The accommodation was later

*Let no perfon remove this ftonē
 Sacred to y Memory of Mrs JANE BROWN Widow
 Daughter of WILLIAM PAWLET of Cottles Efq
 Who out of her Eftate in Cottles
 Gave the perpetual Annual Rents
 Of XXXI pounds viz
 To y Curate of Atford for weekly Catechizing X'
 To y person for teaching poor Children X'
 For buying books for thofe Children 1'
 For Cloathing poor People V'
 For a Scholar in the Vniverfity
 From Marlburgh Schoole V'
 And out of her Lands in Warwickshire
 To the Minifter of Maxftock
 For weekly Catechizing XX'
 She died July 26th AD in 1706 Aged 87*

Inscription - Jane Brown's Tombstone

reassessed in 1910 and the permitted number reduced to 172 (117 mixed boys and girls, and 55 infants). In these early years the totals seem to have been usually well below capacity and fluctuated between 100 and 65. (3)

Exactly when the present school opened is uncertain, but it must have been around 1830. So for about 10 years, there were two schools in Atworth. The first headmaster of whom we have any records was Mr. James Mead Price (1849–77). But there must have been active organisers before him, for we know that in 1846, out of a total parish population of 824, no less than 184 children attended the school (134 boys and girls, and 50 infants).

Of Mr. Price's regime we know little beyond the fact that as numbers increased, there was a need for additional staff. In 1876, an advertisement appeared in the local press for an appropriately certificated teacher, offering a salary of £100 a year together with a house and garden. With the coming of the 1870 Education Act, Atworth became a Board School. Among other things, the Act required that "no religious catechisms or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school." (4) Nevertheless, we find in 1875 a report on a meeting in Atworth when parishioners complained bitterly that children were still being turned away from the school if they had not been baptised in church (5). Moreover, the catechising of pupils in school seems to have continued as actively as ever. The changing educational climate penetrated Atworth slowly!

In 1877, Mr. Price was succeeded by Mr. H. Beck (1877-80). By now, a system of Government Education Inspectors had been established and their biennial reports gave a more precise picture of school activities and achievements. Evidently, standards were regarded as low. Absenteeism seems to have been rife and children were even bribed to attend school regularly – 1 shilling for 300 attendances, and 6 pence for a pass in three subjects. The Inspector's report for July 1880 contains the sinister passage; "My lords will look for marked improvement as the condition of an unreduced (government) grant next year." Payment was strictly by results!

Mr. Beck was succeeded by Mr. F. Noyce (1880 – 85) and at once things began to improve. Thus we are told that whereas the Government Grant to the school in 1880 was £32, in 1881 it was increased to £69 and in 1882 to £77. (6) The Inspector's report of 1882 begins "There is no drawback to the general success of the teaching and discipline." It goes on to extol the standard of the reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic and geography. By 1883, music had been introduced in the form of singing. There was much

emphasis on learning about the local environment, which is hardly surprising since the majority of the boys were likely to work on farms and most girls went into domestic service.

Mr. Noyce retired in 1885 and was replaced by Mr. J. P. Inkpen (1885 – 98), the elder of two remarkable brothers who were destined to transform the school and raise it to the high level of overall attainment that it has maintained ever since. At once, the curriculum became more diverse. Physical education was introduced in 1885, consisting largely of drill in the schoolyard. As an accompaniment to singing, a harmonium was purchased which is still in the school – and working! An organised system of morning and afternoon breaks for play was introduced. The rural environment continued to occupy an important place in the curriculum. Around 1890, we find gardening being started as a major out-of-school activity, also mensuration – the measurement of fields in relation to the spacing of crop plants. This was evidently voted only a qualified success. While the pupils undoubtedly learnt a great deal, those employees of the farmer who were paid on piece rates viewed their enthusiasm for exact measurement with suspicion and some antagonism!

In 1898 Mr. J. P. Inkpen left Atworth School after 13 years to take up a similar appointment as headmaster of Neston School. He was succeeded by his younger brother Mr. H. Inkpen, a man of many accomplishments, which were soon to be reflected in the life of the school. His stay at Atworth was to span 36 years – the longest headmastership in the school's history.

Oral History of the School

Mr. H. Inkpen (1898–1934)

During our enquiries, we were able to locate 15 former pupils living locally who were in the school during the early 1930's or before. All had vivid and enduring memories of both Mr. Inkpen and his wife. The Headmaster seems to have kept in touch with a number of his former students for some years after his retirement and they, have given us much valuable information.

So it is here that our oral history begins. In the early years of the last century, the size of the school seems to have remained fairly constant at about 120 boys and girls, with a variable number of infants. Mr. Inkpen taught the top class and Mrs. Inkpen the infants; there were also two other teachers. School uniform was minimal and not rigorously enforced. The official hat for girls was blue with a yellow band and school badge in front. Their most usual dress was a dark blue gym tunic, white blouse, black stockings and black lace-up boots. The boys seem to have sported an assortment of garments, invariably including shorts. In those days families tended to be large and income low, so little money was available for the purchase of everyday clothes, let alone school uniform.

Compared with today, the school environment must have been harsh and unattractive. In winter, heating was meagre and was provided by a large Robin Hood stove at one end of the big schoolroom. Senior children were responsible for fetching the coal from the shed outside and stoking the boiler. When teaching, Mr. Inkpen would sit at the end of the room in front of the fireguard. The sanitary conditions were crude, to say the least. There was no main drainage and the toilets, situated outside the main building, were cold, dirty and smelly. Children were rationed in the number of times they could leave the room to be "excused" – once per teaching period.

School holidays were one month in the summer, and two weeks at Easter, one week at Whitsun and two weeks at Christmas; also Friday to Monday at half-term.

Discipline was firm but does not seem to have been regarded by the children as oppressive. Mr. Inkpen was a great believer in corporal punishment and boys were beaten on the back (until the dust flew!) fairly regularly for insubordination. The story goes that during lesson time, the headmaster would sit at his desk sharpening the end of his cane with a penknife, getting ready for the next culprit. Mrs. Inkpen, too, was evidently something of a martinet and struck fear into the girls. Her standard punishment for miscreants was to make them pull up their sleeves and then hit them hard on the fleshy part of their arms. During sewing lessons, full use was made of the hand with the metal thimble on it to clout girls over the head. It is said that many a lump was found on children's heads when they returned home. One mistress apparently used to leave the school from time to time to cut hazel sticks from a nearby bush in Bradford Road. These she used unsparingly to keep order in her classes.

The times of lessons were much the same then as they are today. Children invariably walked to school and work began at 9 o'clock. Lunch break was from 12 to 2, and the day ended at 3:30 or 4 o'clock, depending on seniority. No meals were provided in the school but some children who lived far away, brought sandwiches. The majority returned home for lunch. Several lived at Purlpit, so walking to school and back twice a day involved a distance of about 6 miles.

In those days, compulsory education began at 4, but some children joined the school when they were still only 3. At the age of 11, there was the opportunity of taking the so-called March Exam (the equivalent of the 11 plus). If they passed, this permitted them to go on to Fitzmaurice Grammar School, Bradford-on-Avon.

Sadly, of those that succeeded and qualified, comparatively few availed themselves of the opportunity that followed. All too often, poverty precluded the raising of the necessary funds. To supplement a meagre family income, it was essential that children started work as soon as possible.

Before leaving school at the age of 13, all children took the Labour Exam, which provided them with a certificate of attainment. The examination consisted of reading, writing and arithmetic (including money sums). Those that passed had the option of staying on a further year, when the emphasis was on vocational subjects such as sewing and cooking for girls.

Throughout the curriculum, great importance was attached to the memorisation of factual information, particularly things like mathematical tables. Poems and passages from the Bible were frequently learnt by heart. Object lessons were considered important, where the teacher selected an item such as a pebble or a top hat and built up a lesson around it. Mornings were mostly devoted to writing, spelling, reading and arithmetic. Sums were done by completing printed cards and you had to finish one correctly before going on to the next. In the afternoon, other subjects were introduced such as history, geography and singing. The routine for each day was standardised, so everyone knew what to expect.

The day invariably started with assembly, which included a prayer followed by a passage from the Bible and then another prayer. Religious instruction was evidently regarded as important and was the responsibility of the whole school staff. The Rector of the parish visited the school from time to time but took no part in teaching. By the end of their school days, many of the children knew all the parables by heart.

For most of Mr. Inkpen's time, the juniors wrote on slates,

examples of which are in Atworth Museum. They were originally framed with wooden surrounds but most of these had fallen off. The scraping of the chalk pencils on the slate surface was at times almost unbearable. The senior children were allowed to use pencils and pens. Desks were large, heavy wooden structures each accommodating four children, with inkwells arranged between them. A small movement of the desk would cause spillage, whereupon the whole surface was flowing in ink, which had to be mopped up with sheets of blotting paper.

Physical education was a regular event and occurred once a week. It took the form of "drill" and when fine, was performed in the school yard under the direction of Mr. Inkpen. Music, too, was now firmly established, particularly singing, which was accompanied by Mr. or Mrs. Inkpen on the harmonium. It is said that on these occasions the headmaster would come round and bend over you listening to whether you were in tune. He was keen on "cube drawing" to teach perspective and would arrange a series of cubes at different angles and distances. There were also nature walks from time to time.

The school laid great emphasis on practical work as an important part of a child's education, but the fact that some of these activities were related to future vocations was incidental. Employment for both boys and girls on leaving school was taken for granted. In the summer, boys did gardening and in winter, carpentry and handiwork. The girls did sewing, knitting and domestic science. Needlework was dominated by the thimble-clad fingers of Mrs. Inkpen and Miss Burry. Knitting needles were made of metal, which quickly rusted in contact with clammy fingers. Periodically, girls would be sent outside to rub their needles on a stone wall to remove the worst of the rust. In sewing, girls made nightshirts, aprons and white calico knickers. Cooking was taught by an itinerant teacher who came to the school once a week complete with her equipment, including a cooker! This was a

popular subject and an occasion for a general smartening-up, clean pinafores and hands. Some girls came from Shaw and the children were required to provide their own ingredients. At the end of the course there was a prize for the best cook.



The school harmonium. Restored in the late 1900's and still in good working order.

As we saw earlier, in 1893 the Board of Managers agreed to the introduction of a new practical subject – mensuration (measurement), the object being to train children in assessing the size of a piece of land prior to planting. Mr. Inkpen seized on this idea with relish and all boys were required to measure exactly the plots of land used for their school gardens that occupied the area of the present playing fields. The gardens must have been beautifully designed and tended, for in 1911 the school gained the distinction of winning the Bathurst Challenge Shield awarded for the best kept school gardens in Wiltshire.

Government Inspectors descended on the school twice yearly. As we have seen, a good report from them was vital, since this determined the level of State funding for the following year.

On the subject of gardening, Mr. Inkpen and the authorities clearly saw eye to eye. In 1925 the school received a glowing report from the inspectors reproduced in detail elsewhere (1), while the chairman of the Wiltshire Education Committee, when presenting the Bathurst Shield is said to have remarked, "What we want is more Inkpen and less pen and ink."

The visits by inspectors seem to have made little impact on the children. They were required to present their books for inspection and to stand up when an inspector entered the room – "one more step towards the learning of good manners."

A second kind of inspector was the Attendance Officer. He was based locally and the terror of defaulters. A careful record was kept of school attendance and any absences were questioned. If these were frequent, parents were interviewed and an explanation demanded. Unfortunate consequences could follow for the individuals concerned, and when these took place, they were often painful.

Medical inspections were termly; any dental treatment needed being given on the spot. The dentist arrived with his drill, which was set up in an area adjacent to the schoolroom. All could hear the cries of the victims. The District Nurse came periodically to examine heads for lice. If they were present, the individual was given a "blue ticket" which meant further treatment was needed. A doctor also came each term, mainly to measure heights and weights. On the whole, apart from the usual infectious diseases, there appear to have been few interruptions for health reasons. Medical inspections were held in front of the whole school, so on these occasions it was important not to have holes in your clothes!

As we have already noted, the Rector dropped in from time to time, also Mr. Fuller from Neston, and his agent, Mr. Spencer. Visiting speakers were, however, unknown.

An event, for which Mr. Inkpen became noted, was the annual school outing by coach, setting off early in the morning and returning late at night. The first of these was to the Southampton area in 1925 and the last to London in 1933. Details of the latter expedition, as reported in a local newspaper, have been included in a previous publication. (1) Suffice to add that these occasions were planned with great precision and the headmaster invariably covered the proposed route himself in advance to make sure of his timings. Each child received an elaborate itinerary. For the London trip, this included a drawing of the astronomical clock at Hampton Court, a map of the area of the city to be covered, details and time of arrival at the different places of interest, and a list of previous outings. A copy of this remarkable document is in the care of Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, Trowbridge.

Out of school, there were no organised games, the present playing field being occupied by school gardens. Occasionally, the boys were taken to the recreation ground to play football, where there were frequent informal games in both winter and summer. Until the building of the Institute in 1914, the school buildings served as the centre for the social activities of the village. Mr. Inkpen frequently contributed to these activities by giving lantern shows. He had an extensive collection of slides covering a variety of topics, mostly travel; an oil lamp lighted his lantern, which is now in the museum.

Religious activities in Atworth were well established and there was a Sunday School on Sunday afternoons that most children attended. Some of the girls joined "Christian Endeavour" or / and the "Girls Friendly Society".

Occasionally, expeditions to the Bradford-on-Avon swimming pool were organised by the curate and the headmaster as a result of which, many children learnt to swim. There was no pool in the school grounds.

Postscript.

Mr. Inkpen died at Bridport in the county of Dorset, on 27th December 1964 aged 90. Mrs. Inkpen had died some years earlier.

Looking back on life, as it was at Atworth School in the early years of the 20th Century, the dominant factor that shines out above all others is the influence of the headmaster. Mr. Inkpen may have been a strong disciplinarian, but he liked children and understood them, and they responded accordingly. He must have been an excellent teacher, extremely clear in his explanation and setting high standards. He was always prepared to take unending trouble in helping pupils all he could. It is said that he was particularly good with the slower children. Mrs. Inkpen also seems to have made a major contribution to the school and, like her husband, was a strong disciplinarian.

Harry Inkpen was something of a character, and like all characters, he gathered an aura of fable around him. The children's nickname for him was "Gaffer", no doubt deriving from his enthusiasm for horticulture. He liked his pint of beer and was wont to repair to the Foresters Arms every morning at break time. On returning, he would peer through the schoolroom window, and woe betides any child who was misbehaving.

Besides being an expert horticulturist and handyman, he was an accomplished musician (as was Mrs. Inkpen), encouraging music in school and playing the organ in St. Michael's church. Incidentally, he is said to have had the distinction of owning the first car and radio (wireless) in Atworth.

In setting Mr. Inkpen's practical approach in context, it is clear that this aspect of teaching which achieved so much under his guidance, derived from his strong belief that these skills were the kind of attributes that every educated person should possess. They were not, as has been suggested, a form of vocational training – at least not intentionally so. For boys, job prospects were good, with farming as the main pursuit and the saw mills at Melksham as second choice. For girls, the outlook was less bright. Some joined the glove factory at Neston, but for most, service in the large houses round about was the only possibility, other than staying at home to help Mum with the rest of the family.

Mr. S. A. Luen. (1934 –35)

The retirement of Mr. Inkpen in 1934 marked the end of an era for Atworth School. It can be said with some justification that the traditions and standards he introduced raised the school to a new level, which provided a firm foundation for the developments of later years.

A short interregnum of a few weeks followed, during which Mr. M. Manning was in charge, and the newly appointed headmaster took over at the end of September 1934. Mr. Luen had strong family roots in Wales and his first appearance on the Atworth scene was nothing if sensational. On his first meeting with the school, he is said to have brandished a cane in front of the assembled company and ceremoniously broken it, announcing that he would have no more corporal punishment. The effects of this sudden relaxation of discipline are difficult to gauge. There does not appear to have been an outburst of riotous behaviour and for some who were there, it seems to have made little difference.

Mr. Luen's regime lasted less than a year and he left in April 1935. But during that short period he managed to introduce a surprising number of innovations. Like Mr. Inkpen before him, he

was an enthusiast for gardening, but his interests ranged more widely and he was responsible for the introduction of chicken rearing – an aspect of school activities that was to be developed further by his successor. He had a strong sympathy with the natural environment and its educational significance. Nature walks now became a feature of the timetable and these included excursions into different aspects of farming. Thus the children are recorded as having visited the milking parlour at Wormwood Farm. In spring, they picked primroses and violets, which they sent to children in London schools, and received appreciative letters in return.

Various changes also took place with the general school organisation. Free mid-morning milk (a third of a pint per pupil) was introduced, and also a tuck shop where children could buy sweets. Another welcome change was the arrival of new desks. The 4 seaters were removed and replaced by more comfortable 2 seaters, each with two ink-wells and a place for books. Another innovation was a “house” system by which the school was divided into two groups (houses). These were named Cottles and Neston (C and N for short). As means of identification, the girls embroidered C or N on the collars of their blouses. How the boys were identified, if at all, is uncertain. The two houses soon began to assume particular identities. Thus the Cottle-ites became renowned for their athletic prowess while the Neston-ites were regarded as the swatters! The houses provided a basis for competition in sport and this may have been their main purpose. It could be claimed that this marked the beginning of organised games in the school. Netball for girls was started and matches arranged with Neston and Lowbourne schools, which were played on the recreation ground.

Postscript

Viewing Mr. Luen's brief sojourn in retrospect, there is no doubt that change was in the air and much was achieved which proved of lasting value to the regime that was to follow. In the

words of a former pupil "... under Mr. Luen's guidance the school became a more forward - looking place."

Mr. T. W. Hobday (1935-45)

Mr. Hobday arrived for the summer term of 1935. Bunkers were already being dug at Neston and it was clear, even then, that war was a distinct possibility. In the event, the new headmaster was destined to pilot the school through the war years, and school activities need to be viewed against this background. In 1939 two lots of evacuees arrived in Atworth. A Jewish school (Solomon Wolfson School, South Kensington) of about 90 pupils made use alternately, morning and afternoon, of the school buildings and the church hall. The two schools were quite separate and retained their own teachers. A second school of 40 boys also arrived from the London Borough of Hoxton and joined Atworth School. All the evacuees were billeted in the village and soon settled down. In spite of occasional skirmishes, they seem to have accepted one another as part of the village community.

Apart from these upheavals, the impact of the war on the school was relatively slight. Gardening in the form of growing vegetables and hen farming came into its own. Like everything else in Britain, the principal worries were domestic – rationing and Dads away.

Mr. Hobday's view on education, although complementary to those of his predecessors in some respect, differed from the previous regime in others. Like Mr. Inkpen, he was a strong disciplinarian and not averse to corporal punishment. To his credit, it must be added that none of his former pupils have ever suggested that his discipline was anything but fair. If you misbehaved you deserved what you got, was the philosophy of the day. By extension, if you insisted on disobeying the school rules, it was up to you not to be found out!

Mr. Hobday's first priority was to restore school discipline after the laxity of Mr. Luen. This he seems to have achieved remarkably quickly. Later, control was relaxed somewhat once mutual understanding had been achieved. But you could still get beaten even for misdemeanours committed out of school, such as playing hop scotch on the pavement or riding a bicycle round the market place.

An asset enjoyed by the school at the beginning of the Hobday era was the stability of its staff, all of whom had been there for some time. Miss Scott apparently shared the headmaster's view on discipline and is reported to have kept a cricket bat in her desk with which she was wont to assail the miscreants in her classes. The technique she used in wielding it is unfortunately not recorded!

The size of the school at this time was around 100 with 4 teachers, including both Mr. and Mrs. Hobday. The official uniform for boys was a blue cap with the school badge in front and the girls wore blue hats, also with a badge. However, wearing them was not strictly enforced and if you were sufficiently rebellious you could get away without them. There were no school meals and children either brought sandwiches or went home for lunch. Milk was available daily at 2½ pence a week and Horlicks tablets could be bought in the tuck shop. The infant class was made to lie down after lunch on little mats for half an hour each day. If you were not feeling well, you were given a grey pillow, also a Nuttall's mint to suck.

For some at least, school seems to have been an attractive place. The story goes of one small boy aged 3, that he was so enamoured with the idea of school that he would follow the others along each day only to be returned promptly to his home by the authorities. Persistence was rewarded, for having continued to turn up each day; the headmaster eventually invited him to stay – which

he did! The academic side of the school had changed relatively little since Mr. Luen's days, but there was increased emphasis on practical subjects. Mr. Hobday developed the idea of "centres of interest" – practical topics, which he considered of special interest to country children. Today we would probably refer to them as projects. Most had a strong agricultural slant such as poultry-keeping, horticulture (including the use of propagating frames), making a lily pond and a variety of other items based on the local environment (there was even one on Wiltshire place names).

The headmaster had aspirations to develop Atworth School into a rural study centre, and devised detailed plans including a poultry unit, greenhouses, propagating frames and trial plots. The original scheme is in Wiltshire and Swindon's Record Office. At the time, the new thinking based on "centres of interest" caused great excitement among His Majesty's Inspectors, but no doubt owing to the war, little of it ever materialised. Another rural enterprise was bee keeping in which Mr. Hobday was particularly interested. The boys helped with the organisation of the hives and the girls were employed scraping the honey out of the combs. The Fuller Award Foundation Prize for Reliability and Diligence rewarded good work.

All children, both boys and girls, had gardens, which they tended in pairs. A cookery lesson for girls took place at Corsham School once a week, the children being driven there about eight at a time in a taxi belonging to Mr. Herbert Watts. Among other things, they learnt how to bake bread and cakes. At the same time, boys went to the same school to learn carpentry. Country dancing was popular and the school took part in local competitions at Devizes. There was also dancing round the May Pole in the school on May Day. The school produced concerts and plays from time to time. When a stage was required, it was borrowed from the Fuller family at Neston. Attendance from the village was always good.

and the performances frequently ran for three nights. The Atworth Institute, which had opened in 1914 as a workingmen's club and bathhouse, was now reorganised as a hall with a stage. School performances were transferred there on account of the increased space and facilities.

A school library was started and children were allowed to take out one book a week. Another innovation was evening classes, which proved very popular and were attended by senior pupils, parents and others from the village. The courses on offer included academic subjects like mathematics, also such things as embroidery, knitting and "health and beauty". Apart from instruction, evening classes served the important social function of bringing home and school together.

Over the years, public examinations had not changed much and children still took an examination at 11+. A pass entitled them to go to Fitzmaurice Grammar School, Bradford-on-Avon or to Cannings Technical College in Bath. Poverty was still widespread and of those who had the opportunity of further secondary education, many were unable to avail themselves of it because of the extra expense involved. They left school at 14 and got a job to augment the family budget.

As we have seen, there was little organised recreation, but it was just beginning. Much informal cricket and football took place on the recreation ground but not under the auspices of the school. There was a Scout troupe in Atworth organised by the Vicar and meetings were held weekly. The countryside was open and safe, and children frequently went out for walks and picnics lasting a whole day.

Employment on leaving school was virtually certain and children assumed that they would be employed in or near Atworth. In contrast to the pre-war period, during and after the war the range

of possible jobs vastly increased. For girls, secretarial work was to be had in Melksham and elsewhere once they had acquired the necessary skills in shorthand and typing, for which numerous courses were available. The Neston Glove Factory was still a major employer and there were plenty of vacancies as assistants in local shops. In contrast to the Inkpen era, going into service was almost unknown – an interesting outcome of the war years. For boys there was still work on farms, in New Mendip Engineering (later known as Dowty) and in numerous other organisations in Melksham such as Avon Rubber. Unemployment was virtually unknown.

Out of school, one of the casualties of the war years had been the annual expedition, so beloved of Mr. Inkpen. However, the headmaster was not averse to the school attending local functions when they arose. Point-to-point meetings were a great attraction and a reason for many children playing truant so that they could go and watch. Eventually, the school was closed on these occasions.

A less successful attempt at truancy concerned a supposed visit by the Queen to Corsham. Whether this was suddenly cancelled or never intended is uncertain. Permission was said to have been obtained by one boy for the whole of the senior class to go to Corsham for the great occasion. But when the visit failed to materialise, it was discovered that permission to be absent had not, in fact, been granted. A number of very sore behinds was the result!

Mr. Hobday was much involved in the finding of the Roman villa and took classes to see the site on several occasions, when they found coins and other objects. His communications with the British Museum eventually led to later excavations and the original correspondence is still available. He also organised a visit to Chedworth to see the Roman villa there.

Another Hobday enthusiasm was radio. Besides making extensive use of school broadcasts, he gave three talks on BBC Children's Hour with Uncle Mac. He also wrote a play for the BBC based on the Wiltshire fable of the Moonrakers.



The Hale crest - situated on the west wall of the original 19th Century schoolroom, above the head teacher's office.

The regime of Mr. Hobday successfully survived the traumas of the Second World War. After a somewhat difficult start and disruption due to evacuees, standards seem to have eventually returned to their accustomed level. During his time, the school became a more civilised place in which to work. Piped water was introduced from the pumping station at Cottles and the ancient lavatories with buckets were replaced. This was welcomed by all, not least because of the opportunities that the old toilets had presented for pranks involving the insertion of nettle leaves in unexpected places.

Although the academic side was firmly grounded in the 3 R's there was a general broadening of the curriculum, particularly on the practical side. This was regarded as an important part of general education and was in no sense intended as vocational training. Conscious steps were taken to ensure that girls had equal opportunities with boys. As time passed the rigorous authoritarian approach adopted by Mr. Inkpen was gradually relaxed.

Mr. Hobday perpetuated the main features of the previous regime, particularly the emphasis on gardening and other aspects of agriculture and horticulture, which he expanded partly under the influence of wartime conditions. An important innovation was an active parents' association. It had close links with the school and played a major part in fund raising. Another success was evening classes, which served further to bring together the school and parents with other members of the Atworth community. Lastly, the idea of centres of interest was in advance of its time – a foretaste of project work, which we now regard as one of the standard methods of learning.

Mr. J. E. Hunter. (1945-57)

The headmastership of Mr. Hunter followed that of Mr. Hobday and was destined to see the school through the period of reconstruction and change that followed the end of the war. In many ways his aims seem to have been similar to those of his predecessor but he attained them in a rather different way. His pupils regarded Mr. Hunter as a leader and he achieved his success largely by personal example. Discipline was strict but corporal punishment almost unknown. It is said that the only time he ever beat anyone; the victim was his own son! An aspect of his behaviour, which evidently impressed itself on the school, was his informality. In summer he elected to wear an open-necked shirt, sandals and no socks. He has been described as a kindly person of somewhat military appearance. He had a fine singing voice and used to preach regularly at the Independent Chapel. A man of strong religious convictions, he taught religion throughout the school (significantly he later became a Doctor of Divinity and in charge of the Capernwray Missionary Fellowship, Carnforth, Lancashire).

The size of the school remained unchanged at around 100 children and the basic organisation continued as before.

Morning assembly had become a little more like a short church service and now included a hymn, accompanied by Mrs. Hunter on the piano or harmonium. The whole school attended in the large schoolroom, forming up in lines outside and then marching in. The only school uniform seems to have been a badge worn by some children on their jerseys, but there is doubt whether even this survived after a few years. In spite of the abolition of the cane, discipline was quite strict and as a punishment for misdemeanours, senior children were given lines to copy out – regarded as a singular waste of time. Other punishments were detention after school hours and suspensions from popular school pastimes such as football. There were three members of staff, which included Mr. and Mrs. Hunter.

A scheme was started for providing school meals but how long it lasted is uncertain. There was no school kitchen, so hot lunches had to be brought by van from Holt in metal containers. Their edibility seems to have been somewhat variable, one of the most unattractive dishes being barley stew. This has been described as resembling warmed-up frog's spawn (tapioca?) and Mr. Hunter lodged a complaint about it. The meals were served in the lower (infants') classroom and attended mainly by children who lived in places some distance away, such as Hobb's Bottom and Purlpit. Local children either brought sandwiches or went home to lunch, on foot or on the backs of their fathers' bicycles.

The curriculum remained largely unchanged. Mr. Hunter's teaching of RE (Religious Education) laid particular emphasis on Bible stories. But in spite of his religious convictions, there is no evidence that this aspect was overstressed. When they left, every child was presented with a Bible. Music was another strong subject, particularly singing, in which Mrs. Hunter also took part. Several children learned to play musical instruments such as the violin, and there was a small school orchestra that gave concerts. Non-academic children were given opportunities of pursuing

practical interests such as gardening. This brought a complaint from at least one parent that their child was not being taught sufficiently. Practical subjects were mostly taught outside the school. Carpentry for boys and cooking for girls, which took place every Monday at Shurnhold School (later George Ward). Mrs. Hunter taught needlework and seniors went to Corsham School once a week for art. In the summer, there were regular visits for a limited number of children to the swimming baths at Bradford-on-Avon. Gardening still featured as part of the curriculum but only senior children cultivated plots. The school also kept hens; the eggs and garden produce being sold locally.

By now, BBC radio broadcasts for schools had expanded considerably and these were often used, particularly for the more senior children. Nature walks were a feature of afternoons to such places as the Cottles arboretum. The school possessed its own cinema projector and Ministry of Information films were shown from time to time. It also possessed a tape recorder – a great innovation! Physical education classes occurred twice weekly supervised by Mr. Hunter. These consisted largely of drill, but gymnastics had now been introduced which took place indoors and there are vivid memories of jumping over a wooden horse in the big school- room.

There were few visitors to the school. The vicar dropped in from time to time but did not teach. Occasionally, there were visiting lecturers, such as a lady named Gladys Aylward (1902 – 1970). During the occupation of China, Gladys Aylward led 100 children across the mountains to safety to escape the Japanese. Her story was made into a film “The Inn of the Sixth Happiness” starring Ingrid Bergman. In 1948 she returned to England to preach and lecture. She talked about her missionary work in China and made a deep impression on some children. She returned to Taiwan in 1953.

Officialdom from outside made little impact on the school and even the Attendance Officer seems to have been regarded with less awe than previously.

Organised games took place periodically, usually on the recreation ground and often in conjunction with Shaw School. Football and cricket were particularly popular for boys, and the girls mainly played rounders. The rec. (recreation ground) was reached by walking over the adjacent fields (Pennings). With the reduction in gardening, the school fields were used more for recreational purposes, but in the summer, the grass was allowed to grow and eventually cut for hay. Sports Day was an important event at which parents and others turned up: it was invariably held on the recreation ground.

Other outside activities included Sunday Schools at both St. Michael's and the Independent Chapel, which most children attended. Following the restrictions of the war years, facilities for transporting children gradually improved and annual expeditions were instituted once more. Although not on the grand scale of the Inkpen era, these nonetheless covered a wide area including London (the Zoo and Kew gardens), Weymouth and Weston-Super-Mare. There were also flourishing Cub and Brownie packs to which many juniors belonged. Weekly cinema shows took place in the Institute and these were popular occasions – particularly George Formby OBE (1904 – 1983) – known as one of the world's great stars of the Music Hall. A youth Club was also based at the Institute and much used by senior children. Numerous activities were organised by the churches such as outings, nativity plays and the harvest festival, to all of which the school made a considerable contribution.

All those with whom we talked emphasised the freedom that existed for children in those days. Outside school there were

few restrictions and anyone could go where they pleased with complete safety. Thus in 1945, it was possible to roller skate from Atworth turnpike to the Golden Fleece avoiding the many potholes and never meeting a single vehicle!

Postscript

Mr. Hunter's regime at Atworth seems to have been one of calm reconstruction and diversification after the restriction of war. In July 1953, the school became an Infant and Junior School only, the senior children over 11 transferring to Shurnhold, Melksham (now George Ward School) or to Fitzmaurice and Trinity Schools (now St. Laurence School) Bradford-on-Avon. The results of the 11+ examination determined whether children went to a Grammar or a Secondary Modern School.

Life at the school seems to have been happy but the conditions were still hard. The lavatories, although provided with main drainage, were outside the school buildings, while heating in winter depended on a large coke boiler. A regular routine for senior boys was to transport fuel from a dump outside to internal storage in the form of an old bath. Although gardening was on the decline, there was a considerable increase in other practical subjects such as carpentry for boys and cooking for girls. Art and music were also on the increase, thus providing a more balanced and diversified curriculum.

Following the departure of Mr. Hunter, there was a short interim period before the arrival of the new headmaster. The temporary head was Mr. E. H. Champion (April – December 1957) who seems to have presided over the existing routine without significant change. In the words of a contemporary pupil, "business continued as usual."

Mr. C. E. Lowes (1958-82)

Mr. Lowes took up his appointment in January 1958 and soon impressed his personality on the establishment in a quiet, firm and unobtrusive manner. One ex-pupil has referred to him as resembling Chairman Mao with his little red book, on account of his love of quoting from a collection of Norse myths and legends. What seems to have impressed his students most was his enthusiasm and dedication to everything he undertook.

School uniform was introduced and enforced, all children wearing blue jerseys, while boys wore blue and gold striped ties. For them, shorts were still compulsory, even during the winter and this remained a continual bone of contention. Girls wore grey skirts and white blouses. Discipline seems to have been firm but not harsh, while corporal punishment had disappeared. There was much emphasis on trying your hardest. "If you did that and were seen to do so, you were likely to steer clear of trouble." Mrs. Lowes seems to have performed a variety of roles and was popular with the children. One of her most valuable contributions was in helping backward readers, and at least one former student owes much to her timely assistance. She also took part in such things as art and the organisation of a Post Office savings scheme.

The school now provided hot lunches, cooked on the spot for all who elected to have them. For some, their high standard seems to have survived as a lasting memory. Seniors, too, seem to have derived pleasant memories from the responsibilities they were given in serving meals.

The curriculum throughout the school reflected strongly the enthusiasm of the headmaster. These were particularly in mathematics and music. As now, a single teacher taught each class and this provided for great flexibility in the timetable. Thus it is said that on at least one occasion, his class did mathematics non-stop for a whole day! Great importance was placed on such things as mental arithmetic and the learning of tables. Those who were

good at the subject undoubtedly flourished. Indeed, their progress was such that by the time they arrived in their secondary schools, they had already reached a standard in some topics such as logarithms comparable with other students in their third year. A computer was acquired during the later years and senior children were encouraged to write simple programmes. For the less mathematical, all this could be heavy going and some undoubtedly fell by the wayside. If you could not help yourself, the opportunities for salvage seem to have been limited – or so it was widely thought.

Music was also a strong subject both in and out of school. The standard of singing was exceptionally high, accompaniment usually being by piano or harmonium. Recorder groups flourished and a number of children learnt other instruments such as the violin and 'cello. It is said that at one time the school orchestra numbered a total of 17 players, including 14 violins. There were also unlimited opportunities for listening to good music since classical records provided the background after morning assembly and during midday break. More than one former pupil owes a continuing appreciation of Bach, Vivaldi and Beethoven to the introduction they received at school. By contrast, for the non-musical, all this seems to have made little impact and to have provided no more than part of the general school hubbub, which they took for granted.

While the emphasis on some subjects expanded, that on others was reduced. Apart from a short interval, the Vicar, who also taught a little art, gave religious instruction. Natural history seems to have flourished and nature walks took place quite frequently, particularly in the junior classes. There was a nature trail round the school grounds. Art was an important subject and taught throughout the school. An innovation was the introduction of elementary science in the form of circuit boards to teach simple electronics – a subject then in advance of its time for Primary

Schools. Gardening was not considered an academic subject and soon disappeared, as did some other practical subjects such as carpentry. But cooking persisted, and was regarded as suitable for both girls and boys. Another of Mr. Lowes' enthusiasms was for photography. The school possessed a small, well equipped dark room and the subject featured strongly for more senior children, also as an out-of-school activity.

With the decline of gardening, the area used was now available for other purposes and this provided the opportunity for converting it into a playing field. This included an additional section at the east end which had previously housed a chicken run and which added significantly to the total ground available. The new field greatly increased the opportunities for organised games since it was no longer necessary to waste time in walking to the rec. These included football and cricket for boys and netball and rounders for girls. Other outdoor activities were introduced such as country dancing, at which the school excelled, winning numerous competitions.

The annual sports day was transferred from the rec. to the school field. As always, this was the sporting and social event of the year to which all parents turned up, but during the events, they were strictly separated from their children on the other side of the field! Another welcome addition was the swimming pool – a testimony to private enterprise. Those involved with its construction pay tribute to the contributions of the headmaster who, with his accustomed enthusiasm, transformed himself readily into a builder's labourer, starting work before and finishing long after all the other helpers. Its completion provided an important additional facility not only for the use of the school in term-time but also during the summer holidays.

Another popular out-of-school activity, much loved by the headmaster, was chess. This appealed particularly to those with a

more mathematical turn of mind. Instruction in bicycle proficiency was also started and testing introduced – a rapidly growing need in view of the rising volume of traffic on the main roads. For dramatics, the school possessed a stage made of dexion, which could be taken down and stored when not required. Performances consisted of periodic plays, the principal ones being at Christmas time. This was also the occasion for an annual school party – Father Christmas and all!

Visitors to the school seem to have been relatively infrequent. Apart from routine termly medical checks, the Attendance Officer was ever present in the background. His influence seems to have been increasingly benign and he was even prepared, on occasions, to strike a bargain with some of the less academic children. Provided they were not absent from school “too often”, he was prepared to turn a blind eye to their helping Dad on the farm. Members of the Fire Brigade, the Police, and representatives of organisations such as Help the Aged and Dr. Barnado’s gave occasional talks to the school. At least one former pupil still retains vivid memories of a talk about the dangers of playing on railway lines! Outside expeditions seem to have been confined mainly to local places of interest such as Lackham College, and to have extended little further than Bristol Zoo – a regular annual venue.

Through Mr. Lowes, the school had a close association with St. Michael’s Church and frequently provided members of the choir and servers. This led to some amusing incidents. For instance, the story is told of the time when there was a craze for marbles, which the children usually kept in little cloth bags. But on this occasion, the server had put his supply in a trouser pocket, not realising that it had a hole in it. As he stood by the altar there was an intermittent “plop” as a marble landed on the tiled floor. By the end of the service the whole area of the sanctuary was adorned with a spattering of marbles.

Postscript

When asked, "What were the outstanding memories of your schooldays at Atworth?" the predominant response by former pupils was threefold – mathematics, music and food (the lunches were described as "fantastic"). The contemporary school philosophy has been summarised as "try hard, take responsibility and you will be all right".

As the comments of former pupils clearly show, the individual enthusiasms of Mr. Lowes influenced both the organisation of the school and the attitudes of the children. But we can also discern changes of a more general kind. Under his guidance, the gradual broadening of the curriculum, initiated under his predecessor, continued unabated. The introduction of computers and programming, circuit boards for electronics, photography and the learning of a wide range of musical instruments provide evidence of a contemporary outlook.

Another important change with which the regime will be associated was the establishment of the school playing field, and with it, the swimming pool.

One further comment deserves mention since it was referred to by many of the former pupils with whom we talked. This was the feeling of security felt by children at the school: things happened from day to day in a predictable and organised manner. Almost invariably, this was contrasted with the situation that faced them in their secondary schools.

Conclusion.

One of the fascinations of reading and writing about a period of history is attempting to discern patterns of change and the factors concerned in bringing them about. To what extent does the

history of education in Atworth spanning over 300 years, reveal such patterns?

As we pointed out earlier, next to nothing is known about the Dame's School until shortly before its closure in 1840. But the fact that it survived successfully for more than 130 years, indicates that it must have made a genuine, if somewhat restricted contribution to the education of the children of the village.

The early years of the school in its present buildings were obviously fraught with difficulties. Standards were low, as Inspectors' reports indicate. There was even the possibility that the annual Government grant might be reduced in response to inadequate results.

The next 18 years under Mr. Noyce and Mr. J.P.Inkpen, seem to have been a period of sustained recovery during which numbers increased, the curriculum was more diversified and the standards achieved were nearer to those that we find today.

The 36 years of headmastership of Mr. H.Inkpen, which followed, consolidated all that had gone before and were characterised by an emphasis on rural pursuits, particularly horticulture. This is not surprising, bearing in mind that about a sixth of the village population at that time was employed on farms. The role of the school was seen as that of a village institution, closely related to and associated with the life of the community. The Institute, although established in 1914, was essentially a workingmen's club and bathhouse, and only became a hall, as we know it, a good deal later.

The onset of war in 1939 served to strengthen still further the links between school and village. There was even the possibility under Mr. Hobday of the school becoming a rural study centre with increased emphasis on all aspects of local agriculture

and horticulture. Through the post-war period, the situation was gradually changing. The Institute and Church Hall had now become the main centres for activity in the village. The range of employment within easy reach of Atworth had greatly increased and farmers were no longer dominant as the principal employers.

The headmastership of Mr. Lowes corresponded to a period of increasing affluence and with it, greater mobility due to the ownership of cars and motorcycles. Atworth was becoming a commuter community. In the changing circumstances, the relationship between school and village changed too. It was no longer a village school but a school within a village. Its curriculum was contemporary and standards were high - attributes that were attractive not only to residents but to others living well outside the immediate vicinity. An increasing number of parents were now prepared to travel considerable distances to bring their children to school, hence the situation that we found in the 1980's, where a significant proportion of the school came from the area of Box and elsewhere.

In undergoing such a pattern of change, Atworth is by no means unique; a similar story could be told in varying degree of most of the village schools in Britain.

Update

During Mr. Lowes' time at Atworth School, he left the schoolhouse in order to purchase his own home in Bradford-on-Avon. The schoolhouse was leased to tenants. The tenants later purchased the house, and an old chest belonging to past head teachers of the school was discovered in the roof space. The chest eventually found its way into the hands of the History Group and can be viewed in the museum. All its precious contents were listed and placed in the care of the Wiltshire Records Office in Trowbridge in 1999.

Towards the end of Mr. Lowes' career, he inaugurated the Parent/Teacher Association with a view to forming a pressure group for more housing in the village for young families who would send their children to the school and maintain its numbers. Although Mr. Lowes felt it unfair to expect his staff to take part in clubs for the children after school, he encouraged them to attend evening teacher-training courses, and he eventually allowed an after-school Netball Club to be formed.

Mr. B.A. Bourne (1982 – 1988)

The change which took place under the leadership of Mr. Bourne, reflected a difference in style and priorities. Mr. Bourne chose to concentrate on the needs of the individual, rather than the class, whenever the opportunity occurred. His home was in Box Highlands; he arrived at the school before 8am and rarely left before 6pm, taking a huge briefcase full of marking to work at during the evening. Deep snow allowed no exception to the rule, and he donned wellingtons and walked if the road became unusable for cars. He always marked the children's work without the aid of an answer book, and answer books for the school's maths' textbooks had to be ordered after he left. Each child was allowed to develop at his or her own speed. Although his administration workload was a large one, Mr. Bourne taught full time - without assistance, and sent his part-time assistant teacher to work in the other two classes.

He encouraged his staff to realise their full potential, and encouraged them to offer their own particular expertise and enthusiasms to the children. Teachers who wished to involve parents in voluntary help were allowed to do so and helpers were welcomed on a regular basis to assist with reading, needlework, art and netball coaching. The school uniform was no longer rigidly enforced, and children were allowed to wear long trousers if their parents so wished.

Mr. Bourne arranged for the existence of clubs on every night of the week, leading four of the six clubs himself. A Music Club was introduced in the summer term of 1983, and every child in the junior department was encouraged to read music and play the descant recorder. Members from Corsham Band were invited to visit the school each year and give the older children the opportunity to handle and play the band's instruments. Teachers from the band visited the school on a weekly basis, for a nominal fee, to teach the children who wished to progress further. There were no spare classrooms in the school in those days, and lessons from visiting musicians had to take place in the cloakroom area outside the boys' toilets! The Music Club still exists today and continues a proud record of nineteen years of concerts in the school, church, village and church halls and Shell Court. The club has also performed at fêtes in Holt and Great Chalfield.

The Chess Club, which had been introduced by Mr. Lowes, continued for the length of Mr. Bourne's time in office. Swimming lessons were arranged for the older children in Corsham on Thursday evenings. The netball and football teams played regular matches against teams from the surrounding villages. Boys were allowed to join the Netball Club if they so wished, and girls were allowed to play in the football team if their skills warranted it.

Photography as a lesson was dropped, and science came into the curriculum with almost the same emphasis as maths. Projects were introduced and many subjects were linked together and thus made more interesting. Class visits were undertaken yearly, which lasted for up to a week, to places like the Forest of Dean and Swanage. The children were involved in enormous quantities of work in preparation for the trips and in their follow up afterwards. Many children experienced their first visits away from home without their parents.

Miss B. Clarke (Sept. 1988 – March 1989)

Miss Clarke, the school's first female head teacher, had a difficult task in following the popular, and well-loved Mr. Bourne. She acted as temporary head while the governors selected the next head teacher. Hard working and conscientious, she continued to oversee the running of all the clubs and activities begun by Mr. Bourne, including the Football Club, for which she donned old boots and acted as referee. By now, head teachers had to take the responsibility for their school's budget. She did this prudently and managed to store up a tidy sum for the new head to spend to his own liking on his arrival.

Mr. P. Vincent (1989 – Dec. 1995)

Mr. Vincent arrived from an infant school in Swindon and brought innovative ideas during the throes of the introduction of the new National Curriculum. This entailed the attendance at numerous teachers' courses by the staff and a major change in the way that lessons were planned. Certain guidelines were laid down for the time to be spent on each subject and the idea of teaching through projects was modified. Blue sweat shirts were introduced as part of the school uniform.

The greatest change to the buildings in the time of Mr. Vincent was the arrival of a double mobile classroom unit. This was of huge benefit to the school. Up to this point the staff had no staffroom or cloakroom. Female teachers shared a cloakroom with the girls. The new mobile classrooms afforded space for a library, special needs area, technology area, staff room and staff cloakroom. The older children moved from the hall to a classroom of their own and the main hall was freed for assemblies, physical activities and music. A small room, which had been created outside the infant classroom for the medical needs of spina bifida children, was dismantled to create a computer area for the benefit of the two

younger classes. Computers were placed in every classroom. The gas ring, which had been used for the heating of milk for the teachers' coffee, was removed from the infant classroom and tea-making facilities were installed in the new staffroom. The surface of the hall floor was stripped, sanded and stained to make a safe even floor for P.E. activities. Climbing frames and wall bars were installed.

The playground was enlarged by the removal of the old boiler house and cycle sheds. For the first time, infants and juniors were allowed to play together in the large playground.

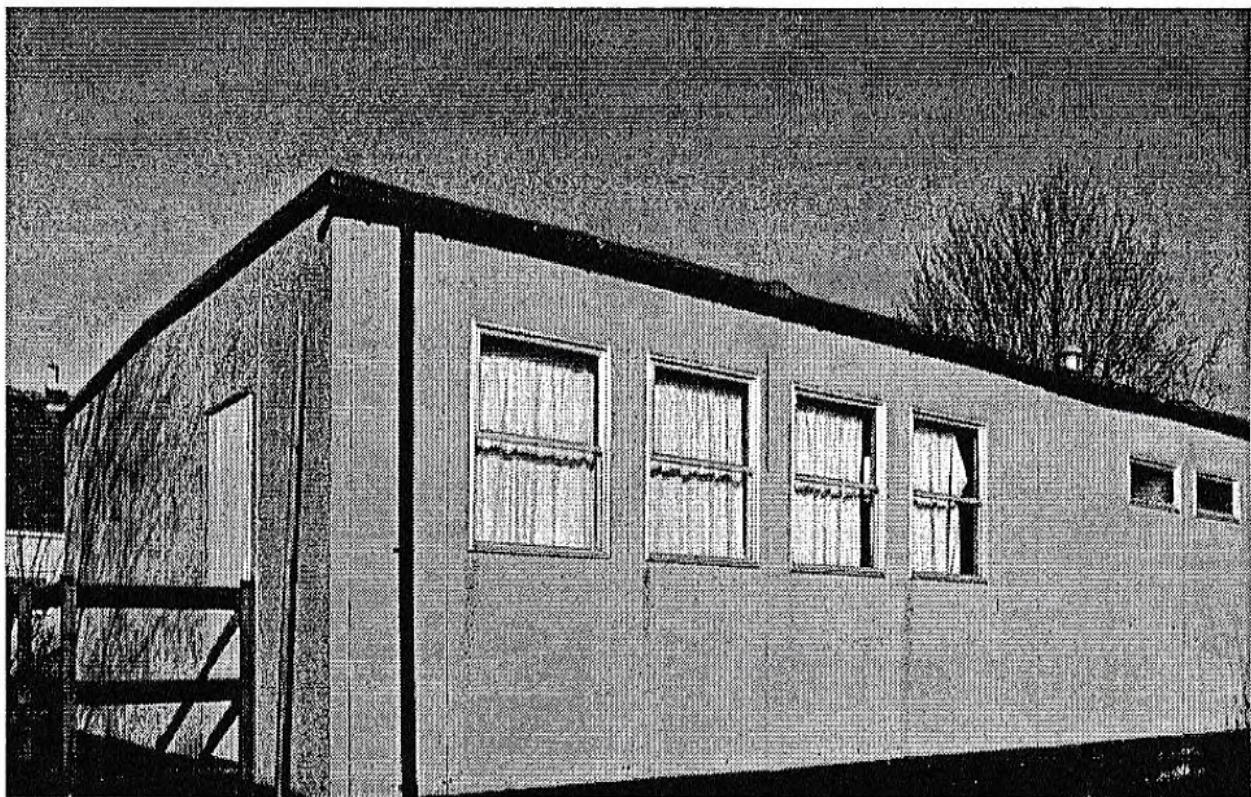
New changing rooms for the swimming pool were erected and although the lessons in Corsham ceased, free use of the pool at Stonar School was arranged, and the whole school became able to enjoy weekly excursions across the fields to Stonar, for swimming lessons every Monday morning.

Professor Dowdeswell created a wild area for the school in the place where chicken runs had once been. The wild flowers and grasses, which the Professor intended to cultivate, failed during the first year, and ground-moving apparatus had to be brought in to remove the entire top soil and the area replanted. He excavated a pond, and provided it with aquatic plants. For the safety of the younger children, a neat wooden fence was placed around it. A bank was created to encourage grass snakes and other wild creatures.

A strange turn of events then took place when Mr. Vincent brought in a pet sheep for the children, complete with its own wooden hut near to the wild area. The sheep's choice of menu did not agree with Professor Dowdeswell's plans for the conservation of wild flowers. So there was much relief in some quarters when the sheep "disappeared".

Mrs. D. Wiltshire (1996 -)

Mrs. Wiltshire was the school's first deputy head and managed this role efficiently until her promotions to acting head teacher and then to head teacher. Under her leadership the school has experienced two general inspections and has fared well. Standard Attainment Tests (SATS) have taken place each year and the school has achieved consistently high results.

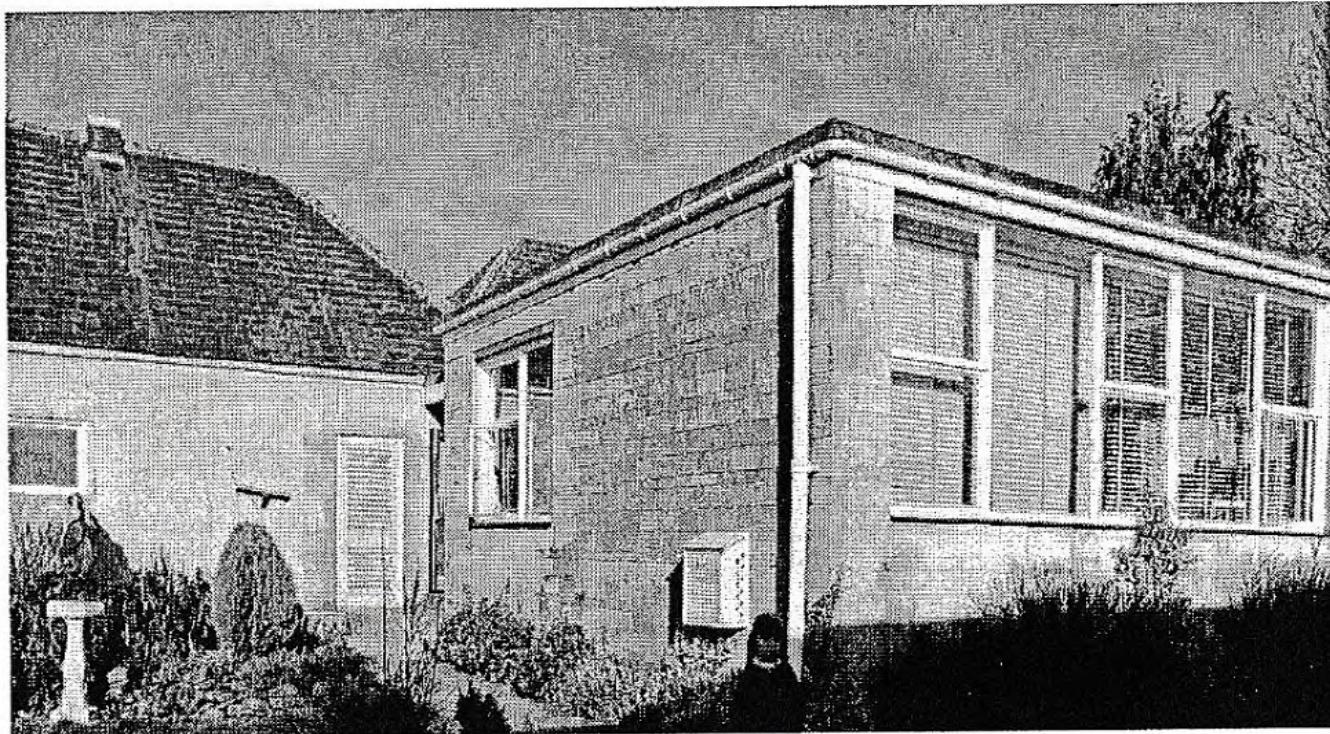


The double mobile houses a classroom, library, toilets, technology area and staff room.

During the millennium year, the classroom computers became connected to the Internet. Also, during this Jubilee year, the school office is being given an administrative link to the County Hall via the Internet. Record keeping has been modernised to the extent that every member of the teaching staff has been issued with a laptop computer.

The head teacher's cloakroom, which formerly was an extension to the school's office, has been transformed into a second office, with a window overlooking the school's main entrance and playground. The last of the picket fencing which was used to divide the extensive school gardens of the past from the children's playgrounds, has been removed.

Over the past two decades, trees have been planted in memory of five of the past governors and teachers. Teachers have donated a sundial and weather vane as leaving gifts and the history of the school is beginning to be recorded in a visible way which future generations will be able to enjoy.



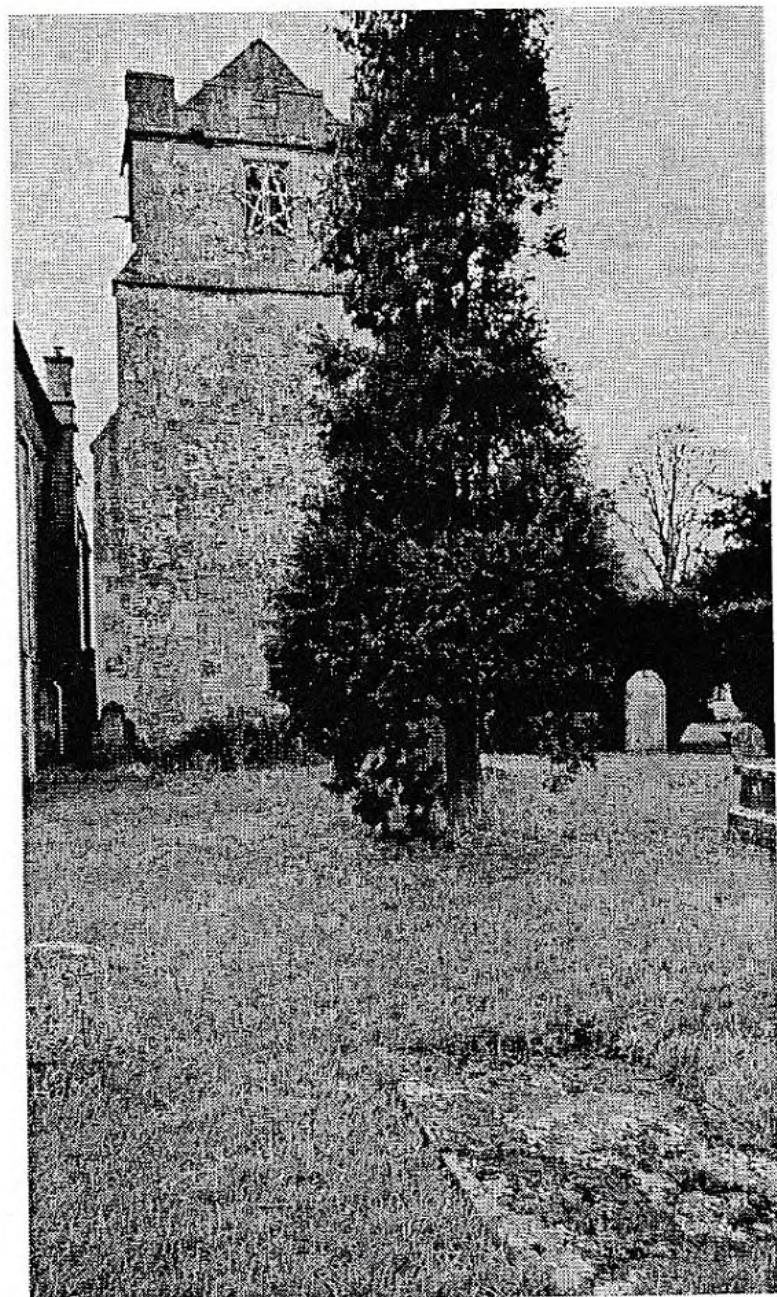
The Lower Juniors' Classroom December 2002

Head Teachers of Atworth School since 1849

1849 - 77	Mr.J.M.Price
1877 - 80	Mr.H.Beck
1880 - 85	Mr. F. Noyce
1885 - 98	Mr.J.P.Inkpen
1898 - 1934	Mr. H.Inkpen
1934 (10 th – 28 th September)	Mr. M. Manning
1934 - 35	Mr. S.A.Luen
1935 - 45	Mr.T.W.Hobday
1945 - 57	Mr. J.E.Hunter
1957 (Apr. to Dec.)	Mr. E.H.Champion
1958 - 82	Mr. C.E.Lowes
1982 - 88	Mr. B.A.Bourne
1988 (Sept. – March 1989)	Miss B.Clarke
1989 – 1995 (Dec.)	Mr. P.L.Vincent
1996 -	Mrs. D. Wiltshire

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1706 tomb of Jane Brown.

The tomb originally lay within the nave of the old church. The old nave was demolished when the new nave was opened in 1932.

Jane Brown was the benefactress of the first organised education in Atworth. Her annual bequest of £26.00 to a school in Atworth, continues to this day.