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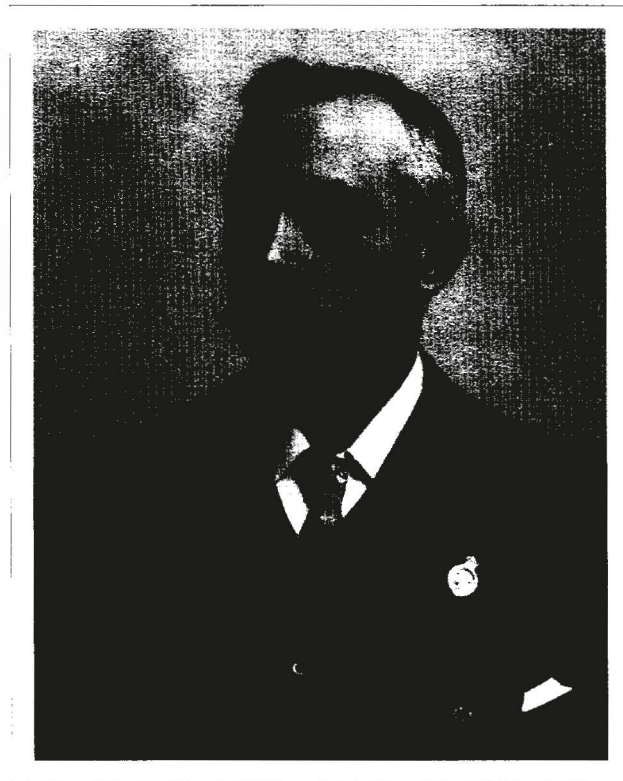
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Mr A J "Skip" Austin. Schoolmaster. 1920-1955



W Beesley, "Gaffer Beesley", Schoolmaster 1884-1920

A HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES IN MILFORD-ON-SEA, 1660 - 1948

by Jeremy Greenwood

(This is a shortened version of Dr Greenwood's paper. A copy of the full version, with sources, is in the Milford Historical Record Society's Archives and is also available in the Hampshire Record Office and the British Library)

INTRODUCTION

Today we take it for granted that we will receive some sort of schooling up to the age of 16 or beyond. Yet this is a very modern approach; the attitudes of previous generations towards educating the poorer classes were distinctly mixed. Many considered it was unwise to teach poor people anything as it would give them ideas "above their station" and the pages of the Hampshire Repository are full of discussions along these lines. However, it was generally agreed that some, strictly limited, elementary education did make them better servants!

For even the wealthy classes, comprehensive education was unlikely. The few that went to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (at the age of about 14) received only a very limited schooling in the classics. These facilities were only open to members of the Church of England; non-Anglicans had to look elsewhere. Many went to the University of Leiden for medical education or to the Scottish universities with their excellence in mathematics and engineering.

EARLY SCHOOLING FACILITIES

One of the normal activities - and sources of income - for a vicar, or the parish clerk, was teaching children, traditionally in the church porch. Most early schools were run by clergymen like the Reverend Anthony Davidson, officially Curate of Milford and Hordle, but who also ran an academy in Lymington from 1784. It was only a basic literacy that the early systems set out to provide; the sons of the wealthy of the region went to Eton, Dorchester or Winchester. The clergy themselves educated their own children, whereas the sons of the military, in the course of their parents' peregrinations, attended many different schools. The children of Charles St Barbe, in the early 19th Century, went to small establishments run by clergymen in places as diverse as Mitcham in Surrey and Le Havre in Normandy.

The first reference to schooling in Milford is contained in the parish register for 11th October 1686 which records " Elizabeth Williamson alias Benney, daughter of Mr (blank) the school master baptised". The Milford register also records the baptisms of children of "Mr Henry Lane, schoolmaster in 1719 and 1722".

The 18th Century parish of Milford was not wealthy, nor did it have any dominant landowners. But nor was it poor, as this was the last heyday of the salt industry before the movement of Hurst Spit and the Cheshire mines drove it out of existence by the middle of the 19th Century. As well as farming (the dominant occupation) there were opportunities for employment in fishing, smuggling, and supplying the navy at Portsmouth. There was also significant trade with Newfoundland until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Consequently, the parish charities had surplus money and a proposal was made in 1730 by the Vicar, Mr Milbourne, that the income from the Penny Charity should be used to maintain a school for teaching poor children reading, writing and arithmetic, for which the Curate would be employed. This was resisted by many as they saw it (correctly) as an attempt by the Vicar to obtain a subsidy for the Curate whom he was required to employ at his own expense. The case went to the Court of Chancery and the investigations therein provide a valuable light on the parish of that time.

One witness stated that there were "no schools in Milford except two kept by women to teach children to read and work only" adding that lately one had been established by a Roman Catholic to teach children reading, writing and arithmetic. He went on to say "the inhabitants were generally so illiterate that many, who had good estates and are in good circumstances in the world, cannot write their names". This view was endorsed by Thomas Godwin, one of the local gentry, who stated "the only schools are kept by one Lane, a notorious sott, and William Mathews, a reputed Papist, those of the better sort and of great circumstances in the parish are people so illiterate that they are obliged to go to Thomas Thorn, the Vestry Clerk, to read any writing or letter that they happen to have come to them."

These schools were probably held in the homes of those mentioned. The impetus towards education was provided by various religious bodies, which were endeavouring to ensure that more people could read the Bible and, to this end, at first promoted Sunday Schools. This day was chosen as it did not interfere with the working week. The most common schools, therefore, were Sunday Schools where children could go if they were not working, and where they could learn to read the Bible. Schooling there was sporadic and its primary function perceived as being to fit people for their place in the social order.

Towards the end of the 18th Century a number of societies were formed to ameliorate the conditions of the poor by various schemes. One of these was the Society for the Betterment of the Poor, under the patronage of the Queen and many aristocratic ladies, founded around 1787. This inspired the Reverend William Gilpin to establish a school for poor children in Boldre in 1791. In 1805 a booklet describing the practical management of the Milford school sets the tone. "Two clergymen contribute to the support of the school in the house of Mrs Doyley who had two mistresses to help her in teaching the 50 girls and the 12 boys who attended the school from the ages of 4 - 12. The religious instruction they received was as follows:- the scriptures are taught and explained to them; Mrs Doyley permits no other book to be read in school, being anxious to make them well acquainted with the scriptures. A new gown was provided every year to each girl while boys and girls were provided with wool to knit stockings for themselves. Needlework was a central part of the instruction provided. But, as the children were of the lowest order, Mrs Doyley does not admit of any fine work, writing, or anything above their station lest she should injure both them and the public by preventing them getting their livelihood in the station wherein they had been placed by providence and thus deprive the community of that class of people who are of such essential consequence to the welfare of the country at large".

There was, however, an increasing realisation that there was a profound lack of educational facilities for the poor, particularly in the light of the technological changes of the Napoleonic War period. This was not philanthropic but brought about by a shortage of appropriately qualified workers. A Parliamentary Report of 1818 provided a damning account of the lack of educational facilities. Hordle had none at all and Milford was described as having "two schools on the national plan - one supported by voluntary contributions amounting to £40 per annum and having 27 scholars, the other maintained by Admiral Cornwallis consisting of 40 girls who are clothed." There was also one school kept by Dissenters (Baptists) containing 30 children supported by contribution. At this time, Milford had 89 poor out of a stated population of 693.

A later Parliamentary Report of 1835 records an explosive increase in the educational facilities of the area. Boldre now had 11 schools, Hordle 3 (the latter all having started since 1818) and Milford 5. The Milford schools were described as "one whereof, a national school, contains 46 boys and is supported by subscription and has a lending library attached; another contains 49 males and 33 females and is supported by Baptists; in the other three schools are 15 males and 20 females whose instruction is partly paid

for by the Vicar and partly by parents”.

The strong Baptist influence is interesting. There was a noticeable Baptist church in Lymington from 1693 but it was not until 1816 that the Baptists founded their own chapel in Milford. Their first Minister was James H Evans in an “under-room” of Thomas Rickman’s at Lymore Common. Previously James Evans had been the Anglican Curate in Milford but had become an Evangelical preacher after the death of his son and was sacked by the Vicar. He had antagonised the local gentry, especially Admiral Cornwallis who refused to attend Milford Church as a result. A Baptist chapel was built later the same year and was used as a Sunday school as well.

STATE ADMINISTRATION

These earlier educational initiatives were essentially private, local and very often religious. Primary education was provided by Dame schools or Common Day schools for those who could afford the fees and Charity schools for those who could not. Private and endowed schools catered for such secondary education as there was. State involvement in education began only in 1833 when annual sums began to be voted by Parliament for the erection of school houses for poor children.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 (Forster Act) was a turning point when it was recognised that the state owed a duty to provide education to all. The act required locally elected school boards to provide elementary schools known as Board schools, where existing facilities were inadequate. Provision was made for the transfer of voluntary schools to Board school control. The 1870 Act created a dual system: part Board schools, non-denominational and supported by government grants, rates and fees; part denominational schools without rate aid but with government grants, fees, subscriptions and endowments.

The Act is usually heralded as being the start of a new dawn in English education as it made elementary education compulsory. However, the adult literacy figure (defined as being able to sign one’s name) had risen substantially by this date. Nationally, between 1837 and 1875, the percentage of persons signing by mark fell from 40.8% to 20.2%. The figure for Hampshire is available for 1850 and shows a decline in illiteracy during the following 25 years from 30.7% to 11.5%. As the figures were worse in the towns of Portsmouth and Southampton, rural areas like Milford would have seen an even better improvement.

Local educational authorities (LEA) were created by the Education Act of

1902. The LEA assumed the duties of the school boards and Board schools became Council schools. The provision of secondary education became compulsory with the implementation of the Education Act of 1918.

THE MILFORD SCHOOLS

In Milford, a parish school for boys was established by 1818, supported mainly by subscription with additional income from a collection at an annual sermon. The pupils paid a charge of a penny per week. The premises at 114 High Street were rented from Mrs Hillier. In 1841, John King, a local builder, was commissioned to build a new school. The plan shows a single storey room 15ft by 30ft with a tiled roof and two windows and a contiguous outhouse containing a coal store and privies. This was on the same site in the High Street and survived until 1968. It was paid for by Mrs Whitby. The inscription stone is incorporated into the new cottage built on the site of the previous one. Then, in 1851, the West family (Mrs Whitby's only surviving child, Theresa, having married the fortune hunter Frederick West) gave the present site in Lymington Road to the Vicar and Church Wardens to build a school. This building was completed in 1852 by John King (again, even though the new church he had erected at Hordle had collapsed) and was paid for by Mrs Whitby's estate. A house for the teachers was also built, as part of the premises, and occupied in 1891 by William Beesley, his family and servant. Like other schoolmasters, he occupied the post for many years; he had replaced the long serving William Frecknall in 1884 and was not himself succeeded until 1920 by A.J. (Skip) Austin who served until 1955.

Later reminiscences of the National School give a good picture of how it operated - from the pupil's view. The fees were 1 penny a week per child except for the eldest member of the family who paid 2 pence and the tradesmen's children who paid 6 pence. The infants were taught by two girls from the senior room as there was then only a schoolmaster for the larger room. The schoolmistress taught needlework to girls in the afternoon. The three R's were taught as well as a smattering of history, spelling and geography. Each week two girls from the 5th and 6th standards were deputed to sweep the rooms and light the fires. The only official cleaning happened once a year during the harvest holiday when a man scrubbed the premises and distempered them every third or fourth year.

During the 1880's, there were various appeals for funds for the school to avoid the appointment of a school board and the consequent levying of a rate. Mrs West continued to subscribe generously, as her mother had done, until 1882 when there was yet another dispute between the gentry and the Vicar of Milford. Under the 1891 Free Education Act, a grant was accepted



National School, Milford-on-Sea, 1841-1856
"Belmont", 114 High Street, was built on the site, extended in 2002 and renamed "Riverside"



Milford-on-Sea Primary School, Lymington Road, c1930

but the following Government inspection severely criticised the building and a new school room was built by subscription, yet again. In 1897 the school was closed as being unsanitary, so by another Deed of Gift, William Cornwallis-West gave a piece of land for a water closet. Occasional severe weather has always been a feature of the area and on 14th November 1899, gales blew off part of the school roof. The 20th Century saw further improvements when the school was again enlarged in 1905, while further major repairs were necessary in 1923 and 1926.

OTHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The 19th Century saw the appearance of various private educational establishments, reflecting the development of Milford as a superior resort and the building of several large houses on the cliff. One of the latter, Ellaland in Kivernell Road, became a Preparatory School for boys run by the Reverend R. Matson. In 1891 he had Edward Nelson to help him teach 14 male boarders aged 10 - 17, who came from London and the South East. However, in 1892 there was an outbreak in the school of typhoid emanating from their private well (there was no public water supply then) which had a disastrous effect on the reputation of the school. Kelly's Directory of 1885 also notes Paul and Mann's Preparatory Establishment for HMS Britannia at Kivernells, Whitby Road, run by Horace Mann BA, (then aged only 22). He lived there with his parents, but the number of boarders (2) was exceeded by the number of servants. However, it was still in existence as a school in the 1920s. The same census gives Branksome, Whitby Road as a school (subsequently The Cedars nursing home, now houses, No. 20 A, B, C, D). This was a semi-detached house built by Rashleys, the east part being occupied by one of the Rashleys and the west part by Miss Hawkins, the sister-in-law of H. Rashley. She set up a school for girls there and later the whole house was occupied by it though only three boarders are noted in the 1891 Census. The largest private school in the area at this time was Arnwood School, in Everton. The house is well-known, as it has been considered the Arnwood House that features in Captain Marriott's classic book "Children of the New Forest". In Hordle, in 1891, Mary Ann Banks with the aid of five governesses, taught 38 female pupils from 5 to 17. In 1911 this still existed under Mrs Mary Manson, but appears to have closed down on the outbreak of war.

Then there was an unusual school at Hurst Castle, established at the end of the 19th Century in the most northerly of the married quarters cottages. A corporal from the garrison was appointed as principal teacher and was

assisted by one of the women residents who was a sewing mistress. The recollections of Henry Overton, son of the landlord of the Castle Inn, provides details of the arrangement around 1900. Due to a dispute between Mr Overton and the military authorities, the school was forced to close in 1905 and the children on the Spit had to undertake the long journey to the National School in Milford. They were transported by boat to Keyhaven and walked the rest of the way.

It was quite normal for wealthy families to send their sons to be tutored with the families of the more intellectual clergy. For example, the Reverend Lewis Campbell, the collaborator of Jowett, in his edition of Plato's Republic, and at that time Vicar of Milford, was the tutor chosen for Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, fifth Marquis of Lansdowne, in about 1850. In order that he should be suitably prepared for Oxford, he was removed from Eton and its distractions in his final year and sent to Milford. Afterwards, he went to Christ Church.

There were no local newspapers in the area in the early 19th Century, only the regional Hampshire ones, of which the Hampshire Chronicle seems to have circulated most widely. However, knowledge was disseminated by way of the Penny Magazine. As Cobden said in 1852 "a penny newspaper press which would do more to educate the millions than all the schoolmasters in the land." The first local newspaper, Lymington Chronicle and General Advertiser for the South West of England, appeared in 1857. Previously the only newspaper in the village had been the Salisbury and Winchester Journal, rather than the Hampshire Chronicle, which was apparently not favoured in the village.

TWO WORLD WARS

War time activities (1914 - 18) in which local children were involved, included things like knitting clothing for the troops, and collecting medicinal herbs. School dinners were introduced whereby every child at school got "a sufficient and quite nice dinner for 2 pence".

During World War Two, Milford was a restricted zone and so did not have very many evacuees though some 25 came in July 1941 to join the 51 existing pupils at the school and thus over-crowding it. Many children from Southampton went to New Milton where the new Ashley Senior School was ideally placed to accommodate them. Ironically, New Milton suffered more bomb damage than Milford with the centre of the town receiving several hits and causing numerous casualties.

Between the wars, guides and directories of the 20s and 30s note private schools at Ellaland (now demolished) the last of which, from 1928 onwards, was run by Miss Aukland and her sister as a Prep school for girls. The school closed on the proprietor's retirement in 1930s. Blackthorns, Shorefield Crescent, Rookcliffe Park Girls School, Kivernell Road, Langho, Sharvells Road, Shelly Hurst, Sharvells Road and Woodhaven are also mentioned. From 1928 - 1939 Major H.A. Shaw was a teacher at the army crammer at Harlington in Barnes Lane; the house was requisitioned on the out-break of war, a fate terminating the existence of several other local schools.

The Reverend E. Whately-Smith had long wished to have his own school. After a career in other schools, culminating in his partnership at Winton House, a large Prep school at Winchester, he was able to purchase Hordle House in 1926. It was opened as a Prep school for boys in September that year with 24 pupils. By 1932 there were 65 boys - all boarders. In July 1940 the evacuation of the school was ordered due to the possibility of invasion landings in the area; the school was moved to Underley Hall, near Kirby Lonsdale, Westmorland. Shortly before the end of the war the school moved back to Hordle. It's founder survived until 1963 and in 1971 a Trust was formed to run the school. It amalgamated with Walhampton School in 1996, and moved to the latter's location.



School Group c.1930-35

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Offence</u>	<u>Punishment</u>
30-3-44	Matthias, David	Playing in class	2 strokes
30-3-44	Adams, Billy	Tearing pages from books	1 stroke
30-3-44	Jones, Tony	do.	1 stroke
9-6-44	Smith, Kenneth	Striking small boy	2 strokes
13-7-44	Adams, Billy	Breaking through hedge	2 strokes
18-7-44	Grace, George	Playing truant	2 strokes
19-7-44	Smith, Kenneth	" "	2 strokes
19-7-44	Bailey, David	Grimacing when corrected	2 strokes
23-10-44	Adams, Billy	hooves in entering classroom	1 stroke
20-11-44	Adams, Billy	Insolence to teacher	2 strokes
23-1-45	Orme, Dennis	Continuous playing during lesson	2 strokes
15-2-45	Smith, Kenneth	Insolence	2 strokes
16-3-45	Whitlock, Tony	Talking persistently	2 strokes
21-6-45	Adams, Billy	Playing during class time	2 strokes
12-7-45	Smith, Kenneth	Playing in class	2 strokes
8-11-45	Whitlock, Tony	Taking away sweets from smaller children	2 strokes
8-1-45	Smith, Kenneth	do. do.	2 strokes
5-3-46	Sp rake, Roy	Disobedience	2 strokes
8-3-46	Crouch, John	misuse of office	2 strokes

Mar 2 1946

An extract from Milford School's Punishment Book (Courtesy of Milford-on-Sea Primary School)