

## **School Records**

Before trying to find documentary sources for the history of a particular school, its teachers and pupils, it is sensible to find out what research has already been done, and what is available in a published form.

### **Societies**

Most historical societies publish articles on the history of schooling, but there is one society dedicated to this subject:

The History of Education Society - founded in 1967 to further the study of the history of education. It publishes a Bulletin twice a year and a Journal quarterly.

### **Websites**

The best web site on the history of education is 'the history of education and childhood' by Nijmegen University in the Netherlands. It aims on a world-wide coverage and has links to a wide variety of subjects covered by other sites, including on-line text-books and articles from journals.

The National Archives has research guides available on its website.

Catalogues of school records kept in some County Record Offices, including Devon, can be found on the Access to Archives web site (A2A).

### **Books**

#### **General Educational Topics**

*Materials for the Local and Regional Study of Schooling, 1700-1900'* by W.B. Stephens and R.W.Unwin, British Records Association, Archives and the User No.7

*The Growth of British Education and its Records*, by Colin R. Chapman, Lochin Publishing

#### **Devon**

*Historical Notes on Devon Schools*, by Robert Bovett, Devon County Council

*Devon Village Schools in the nineteenth century*, by Roger R. Sellman, David and Charles

Many schools have published school histories as part of centenary celebrations, and these can be found in Devon's local studies libraries, in the three Record Offices and among school archives. From the pupil's point of view, reminiscences of schooldays can be found in many published autobiographies.

### **Contemporary Sources**

Directories, both national and local, published advertisements for private schools. In the gazetteer section of a directory, board schools, and later, council schools, are listed under each parish or town. Basic details such as the teacher's name and numbers of pupils are usually given. Devon Heritage Centre has a selection of directories on the search-room library shelves, but larger collections are held in the Westcountry Studies Library, North Devon Local Studies Centre, Plymouth Local and Naval Studies Library and other local studies libraries in the county.

Newspapers also published advertisements for private schools. They may also carry articles on the opening of a school, the retirement of a teacher or a special celebration. For a list of historic Devon newspapers and where they are held, see the on-line Devon Newspaper Bibliography.

Charity Commissioners reports contain brief histories of charity schools, stating who founded them and when, and how the charity is administered.

Marriage registers dated from 1754 are often used to work out levels of literacy in a parish because both bride and groom were asked to sign. This method is flawed in that children were taught to read before they could write, and also it is not known how frequently people made their marks when in fact they were quite able to sign their names.

### **The National Archives**

Sources relating to education are listed on The National Archives web site. The National Archives also holds the 1851 Education Census. This was taken in a similar way to the Religious Census and consisted of a set of questions about schools in each district and pupil numbers. It is not possible to identify individual schools, but it gives a good idea of the numbers of children receiving some kind of education.

### **Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter**

Catalogues of records relating to schools have been copied from the main series and filed together in alphabetical order of school. For the most part, these are records of schools now administered by Devon County Council. The subject index in the search-room at Devon Heritage Centre has a large section on education, which includes any reference to any type of schooling mentioned in our catalogues.

### **Other Record Offices in Devon**

For information on any similar indexes held at North Devon Record Office and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, contact the offices directly.

## **History of Education and Schools**

### **16<sup>th</sup> Century to Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

#### **Education Before the Reformation**

Before Henry VIII's break from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, efforts to provide learning had usually been associated in some way with the Church. Cathedrals, large churches, chantry chapels, Benedictine monasteries, colleges of priests, town burgesses, religious hospitals and religious guilds all supported grammar and song schools. Wealthy benefactors – for example, members of the Royal family, those linked to the Church, like Bishops and wealthy London-based merchants also founded schools. Two famous schools of this type which still survive today, but which were originally founded before the Reformation, are Winchester School at Winchester, Hampshire, founded by Bishop William of Wykeham (1394), and Eton, near Windsor, founded by Henry VI (1441).

In Devon, it is known that there were schools in some of the large towns. The ecclesiastical College founded in Ottery St Mary in 1337 included eight choir boys and a master of grammar, for whom accommodation was provided within the College. In Totnes, the vicar is known to have been keeping a grammar school and a song school in 1509. It is thought that Barnstaple had a grammar school kept either by a chantry priest in the parish church or in the ancient detached chapel of St Anne's which stands in the parish churchyard.

Among schools outside Devon founded before the Reformation were Kings School, Canterbury (founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century); King's School, Ely (c. 1100); Carlisle Grammar (1264); Southwell Grammar and Song School (c.1320); Hull Grammar (pre 1347); Durham School (1414); City of London School (1442); Loughborough Grammar (c. 1495); Crewkerne School, Somerset (1499), and Manchester Grammar (1515).

Many of these schools were designed to educate boys and young men employed by the various religious foundations themselves, but the sons of noblemen, gentry, merchants etc., could also often attend these schools as private, fee-paying pupils. Grammar schools taught Latin grammar, and song schools also taught boys how to sing and chant. On a smaller scale, some parish priests boarded boys and hired a teacher for them, and private schoolmasters in towns rented rooms and taught a group of boys. Noblemen and gentry sometimes hired a chaplain or tutor for their sons at home. Teaching was all in Latin, learned as a spoken and written language and used for most official and professional purposes. English became the vernacular language in place of French, by the end of the 14th century. Unlike today, students of all ages shared the same classroom.

Pupils had to pay fees and be supported when living away from home, so they could scarcely have been poor. They were sons of noblemen, gentlemen, officials, freeholders and well-off tradesmen. They were intended for the university, the priesthood, or for indentured apprenticeships which required a knowledge of Latin and of reading and writing – e.g. scribes, stationers, copyists, apothecaries etc. Founders of schools sometimes also founded university colleges at Oxford or Cambridge, and pupils educated at the founders' schools were sent on to his university college afterwards.

#### **Sources:**

Any surviving records of pre-Reformation monastic or chantry foundations are generally found in The National Archives. Deeds relating to these sorts of school were supposed to be enrolled in Chancery and if so, are recorded in the Close Rolls from 1204. Printed or typescript copies or translations may be available in published histories or in manuscript form. There is a topographical index to trust deeds in the PRO Reading Room.

If a school still survives as a public or private, fee-paying school for example, it is likely to have its own archive at the school, and often these schools have their own web-sites.

#### **Education After the Reformation**

After the break with the Roman Catholic Church, universities and schools were used to promote Protestant beliefs. The Church was subordinated to the sovereign, who was its head, and the power of the Church diminished. Education became more secular, and less oriented towards the needs of the church. There was an increase in the need for education due to the invention of printing and the rise of books on new topics; the increase in the number of families entering the gentry and the landed classes; the growth in population.

#### **Changes in Schools**

Abbeys, nunneries and monasteries were closed under Henry VIII. Under Henry VIII's son Edward VI, suppression of the chantries, religious guilds and colleges of priests put the schools they supported in jeopardy. Thus, many chantry, nunnery, song and almonry grammar schools closed when the foundations supporting them were dissolved and their lands were confiscated. Under the Chantries Act of 1547, schools forming an obligatory (and not a voluntary) part of these foundations were supposed to be preserved. Unfortunately, the lands supporting them were often sold off by the near bankrupt government, and many chantry schools continued with a set allowance for a schoolmaster which was worth less and less over time due to inflation.

Some boys' schools did manage to continue, supported by rents on former monastic lands, or by town authorities who took them over from the church bodies. Unfortunately girls' educational institutions – which had been in nunneries - completely disappeared, and for a couple of centuries there was no provision for girls' education in schools outside the family home. There is some indication that private schoolmistresses taught girls from gentry families, and daughters of wealthy families were sometimes taught by a chaplain or tutor who lived.

Under the Church of England most of the cathedrals were compelled to maintain a grammar school with a master, usher and a specified number of "foundation scholars". Hence the schools once run at the monastic Cathedrals were re-founded, and became known as the King's Schools, and grammar schools also had to be founded or continued at the new Cathedrals created under Henry VIII. Examples of the latter type include Bristol Grammar and Westminster School (which was the old almonry school of Westminster Abbey, re-founded by Queen Elizabeth I in 1560).

From 1552, towns which had lost their schools petitioned the government for a grant of some of the confiscated church property, to support their own grammar schools. They were often known as King Edward VI Grammar Schools and many were comparatively well off with their own lands.

In Devon, King Edward VI Grammar School was founded at Totnes.

Some towns were not granted land but were licensed to buy land to found a new school, or preserve an existing one, and these schools were founded and supported by the local burgesses of the Borough, by wealthy merchants or by aristocrats interested in education.

The foundation of these new schools was part of a large increase in private charity in response to the loss of religious charitable institutions. All social groups able to afford it - including local clergy - contributed, to increase educational opportunity, but the greatest benefactors were wealthy London merchants. They were involved partly for reasons of status and prestige, but were interested in giving local boys opportunities and also in providing better qualified apprentices. They founded many of the grammar schools for the better off boys in provincial towns – their native towns – by endowing the school with a gift of land or an annual rent charge on land, and sometimes a school building and a schoolmaster's house. Grammar school pupils were awarded university scholarships linked to a specific college – these too were endowed by wealthy merchants and gentlemen.

In Devon, for example, Ashburton Grammar School was founded in 1606, during the reign of James I, by William Werring Esquire, and was endowed with land, which before the dissolution of the monasteries had belonged to the Charity of St Lawrence. In 1599, towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, Peter Blundell, a wealthy merchant clothier of Tiverton, left £2400 to found a grammar school there (Blundell's School). He also left £2000 to establish 5 university scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge for pupils of his school. Bideford also had a grammar school founded at about this time.

Such benefactors also founded petty schools for the children of the poor (charity schools) and such schools were sometimes linked to charities which paid for apprenticeships for poor boys and girls.

### **Education Under the Puritans**

Many of the school founders of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were fervent Protestants who leaned towards Puritan beliefs. Therefore they were concerned with spreading literacy and reading of the Bible, and promoted the puritan capitalistic ethic – thrift, hard work, self-improvement etc. During the upheavals of the 1640s and 1650s when the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established church hierarchy was swept away, educational ideas were endlessly debated and ideas of radical reform circulated as never before. These ideas included a compulsory, free, (nearly) universal state-run system, with education

extended to everybody via graded schools – elementary English schools in all villages, grammar schools in larger towns, and state-supported colleges or universities in greater towns and cities to break the monopoly of Oxford and Cambridge. New types of practical subject matter was to be taught, and Latin grammar was not to be the dominant subject. It was to be replaced with mathematical and scientific studies, and teaching was no longer to be by rote learning.

However, under the Commonwealth, action lagged far behind reformers' plans and ideas, and in the disruption of the Civil War and new government, education suffered. Socially and academically little changed in education at this time.

### **Education After the Restoration of 1660**

Action fuelled by revenge and self-preservation followed the Restoration of 1660 and efforts were made to rid church, government and educational institutions of dissident puritans. The 1662 Act of Uniformity applied to all clergy, university dons, schoolmasters and tutors. The 1665 Five Mile Act made it illegal for non-conformist (dissenting) ministers from coming within 5 miles of a corporate town.

Schoolmasters had to have a bishop's licence, and there were penalties imposed for teaching without one. To obtain a licence, a schoolmaster needed testimonials and nomination papers. He had to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, the Book of Common Prayer and the 39 Articles. Non-conformists were not allowed to teach in any public or private school. They were excluded from the universities and those occupations requiring a university education, and barred from public office and politics. 150 dons and schoolmasters are estimated to have been evicted as dissenters after 1660, and this persecution split communities. The resulting division of society into church and chapel deeply affected the history of education thereafter.

### **Education and Dissenters**

Between 1660 and 1689 some dissenting preachers and schoolmasters defied the law and opened schools to train theological candidates and non-conformist schoolchildren. These non-conformist academies combined the roles of grammar school and university – see the sheet on Dissenting Academies. The Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, followed by the Act of Toleration in 1689 granted Protestant non-conformists greater freedom of worship, and the penalties against teaching became unworkable. The chief enemies of dissent remained the Anglican clergy and 'squirearchy', but non-licensed dissenting schools and academies operated more openly, and more of them were founded. Finally, in 1779 the Dissenting Schoolmasters Relief Act legalised the existing situation. In this year the Quakers founded Ackworth School.

The chief sources of information about the spread and number of schools in Restoration England are the Bishops' Subscription Books which were kept from 1662. They show schools of all kinds were widespread, though female teachers, and schoolmasters who did not subscribe, are missing from these records.

### **Educating the Poorer Classes**

Large numbers of endowed parish schools to educate the poor opened in this period, under the supervision of the parish vestry or trustees/feoffees. The village schoolteacher was often also parish clerk, or a husbandman with a holding in the parish. Charity schools financed by subscription and managed by committees of Anglican or dissenting subscribers opened in London from 1685. After 1699 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) took up this idea to spread charity schools throughout England. They started adult reading classes in 1700. From the 1690s the decline in apprenticeships in humbler trades led to the establishment in London and large towns of workhouses with industrial schools attached to them to train pauper children.

Private-venture schools ranged from 'English' schools and 'common' schools in towns - some of which were hardly different from middle-class academies - down to lowly dame schools. Dame schools were run by an old woman who looked after the village children in her parlour and taught them to read, knit and sew for whatever their parents could afford to pay each week. They were the precursors to nurseries or infant schools.

### **Education for the Middle and Upper Classes**

Endowed grammar schools thrived for about a century after the Restoration. However, private schools or academies mainly in or around London started increasing in popularity, and many boys were sent to these schools instead. In the households of the nobility and gentry, private tutors were now commonly employed. They were often young men straight from university. Education in private academies and at home was influenced by the ideas of John Locke – *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1693.

The first naval academy was founded at Portsmouth in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the first army academy at Woolwich.

### **Education in the Later 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a depression in the public and endowed sectors of education, with falling numbers at universities, Inns of Court and grammar schools. Private academies offered alternative types of education – vocational and 'useful' - more suited to the employment of the time, as did dissenting academies. Universities which stuck with the classics became much more like finishing schools for gentlemen, who did not have to work for a living.

### **Changing Attitudes to Education**

The propertied classes and the Established Church (Church of England) shared the view that a minimal education which instilled social obedience was preferable for the poor. Many rural parishes deep in the country had no regular school. Private enterprise schools were often short-lived.

The years between 1760 and 1830 were ones of great social change, and this meant they were also a turning point for educational views. The provision of education for the masses and the reform of old endowed schools were persistent public issues.

From the 1780s towns began to grow due to industrialization, especially in the Midlands, West Riding and Lancashire. The population grew from 6 million to nearly 9 million in the half century before 1800. In the countryside, the role of the farm labourer also changed in this period leading to rural rebellion and unrest.

New ideas about the right of all to an education emerged. The Sunday Schools movement started in the 1780s, and led the way for weekday schools using the 'monitorial system'.

### **Dissenting Academies**

Some of these started as illegal institutions and were humble private academies with one tutor. The teaching was intended to be of a similar standing to universities, and eventually they became more rigorous in their academic teaching than Oxford or Cambridge. Most boys commenced there between 15 and 17 years of age.

They concentrated on teaching more practical subjects such as mathematics, experimental science, languages, geography etc., with some emphasis on a training suitable for business or industry rather than classical academic subjects, though classics, philosophy and theology were also taught. After the Toleration Act of 1689 they increased in number around the country. They became public institutions

financed by subscribers and managed by trustees. However, by the end of the 18th century they were dying out or becoming theological colleges for non-conformist ministers.

### **Examples of such academies were:**

Daventry, Northamptonshire where scientist Joseph Priestley was educated.

Warrington Academy, founded 1757 by a predominantly Presbyterian body. Those who studied for 3 years went into business; those who stayed 5 years could go into the dissenting ministry, the law, medicine or the army. Frenchman Jean Paul Marat and Joseph Priestley were tutors there. It closed in 1783.

Baptist Academy, Bristol, founded 1720

Hoxton Academy, in London

Newport Pagnell Academy (Congregational), founded 1783

Newington Green, attended by Daniel Defoe

Cradock's Academy, attended by Edmund Calamy

Homerton College, Cambridge, founded 1695

Manchester Academy, founded 1786 and its successors

There are not a lot of printed registers for pupils at dissenting academies. There are published lists of pupils at Homerton College, Manchester Academy, Newport Pagnell Academy, and Warrington Academy, which are included in books and articles about them.

### **References**

*Birth of Modern Education: the contribution of the Dissenting Academies, 1600-1800*, Ashley J.W. Smith, Independent Press (1954)

*Registers of Denominational Higher Education: Non-Conformists*, article by John Titford, in Family Tree Magazine, Feb (1999) Includes the names of various references and lists of students.

*Dissenting Academies in England: Their Rise and Progress and their Place Among the Educational Systems of the Country*, Irene Parker, publ 1914, (reprinted 1969), New York.

*Yorkshire United Independent Collage, Two Hundred Years of Training for the Christian Ministry by the Congregational Churches of Yorkshire*, K.W. Wadsworth (1954). Includes an Introduction on "The Rise of Dissenting Academies".

### **Grammar Schools**

Between 1560 and 1640 the grammar schools expanded to teach more pupils than ever again, until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when schooling became compulsory.

The biggest schools like Merchant Taylors and Shrewsbury consisted of about 300 boys, and Eton had 113 pupils in 1613. In London the three top grammar schools were Westminster, Merchant Taylors and St Pauls (founded 1509).

Grammar schools in provincial towns taught 100-150 boys, while small country grammar schools only taught about 20-30 boys.

There was usually one schoolmaster aided by an usher. Most schools drew pupils from the immediate neighbourhood. . They were the sons of yeoman farmers, substantial husbandmen, merchants, and prosperous tradesmen, and those living beyond riding or walking distance would have to board with the master, or with kinfolk or other families in the town.

After the Restoration in 1660, grammar schools apparently flourished as much as before. The most eminent grammar school was Westminster. Pupils included 13 future Bishops, Locke and Wren.

Grammar schools continued to send boys to the universities, and supplied the local communities with apprentices to the professions or trades - attorneys, booksellers, stationers, apothecaries etc.

However, some poorly-endowed grammar schools or those in areas where Latin and the Classics were not wanted, were sinking ('decaying') to the level of English or petty schools. Others were facing competition from private grammar schools taught by clergymen in their houses, from town academies, and private tutors, for example. In general grammar schools remained committed to the old classical curriculum and taught little else. Exceptions were at Rochester and Christ's Hospital School, which introduced mathematics and navigation.

Young boys of 7 or 8 were also sent to the grammar school to learn to read and write if there was no other petty school in the area. Most grammar schools still occupied only one room and the staff consisted of a master and an usher. Some schools suffered in sub-standard accommodation.

Grammar schools began to decline in the 1680s, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw falling student numbers and few new foundations. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century continued the trend. Pupil numbers at Bedford School fell from 26 in 1718 to 3 in 1739 and 10 thirty years later. At Chigwell School in Essex the school was in financial difficulties in 1712 due to the depreciating value of the Rectory which was its endowment. In 1840 pupil numbers fell to just one! Bristol Grammar was empty for 18 years from 1829. Many Cornish grammar schools were closed by 1818, when Nicholas Carlisle carried out a survey. Thirty or forty pupils was a reasonable size; Bideford Grammar had 35 pupils in 1833.

In addition to the limitations imposed by a traditional classics education, there was a fall in the income of yeoman and tenant farmers, and they were less inclined to send their sons to school for long periods. The church was a less attractive career for those other than gentry, and grammar school students from non-gentry backgrounds who went into the church, were likely to end up with mere curacies or poorer livings. Schoolmasters with falling incomes curacies in addition to teaching, introduced modern subjects like accounts and arithmetic, or tried to attract boarders from outside the area as private pupils, which constituted a change of role.

Despite these problems, relatively poor boys who won one of the grammar school's 'closed scholarships' were still able to get a university education, and become upwardly mobile. And some grammar schools continued to do well, or revived their fortunes, often because of a popular headmaster.

Later reforms of grammar schools, especially their establishment as boarding schools, made them largely middle-class establishments. An Act of 1840 allowed them to revise their curricula, but clashes occurred between Governors and headmasters over this. Fees were introduced for non-classical subjects offered, e.g. languages, and the earlier broad social basis of the grammar schools was lost.

Some grammar schools moved up to join the top-ranking schools at this time. The demarcation between public and grammar schools at the time was not entirely clear, but it did depend on status and social composition.

### **Charity Schools**

This is a term covering a wide range of schools, but all of them were originally set up to provide free education for the poor. Usually a wealthy person who wanted to benefit his home town and create a memorial to himself, would leave money in his will to be invested by trustees and the profits used to finance a school. The subjects taught and the number of pupils to benefit would be specified in the will. Often pupils would be provided with clothing or some kind of uniform. Some of these schools also took paying pupils, and have now become private schools, taking a few scholarship children. Other charity



schools merged with parish schools when the National School movement began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, or later, with Board Schools.

### **Blue Coat Schools**

These are named after the distinctive uniforms of the pupils. The oldest one was Christ's Hospital in London. It was founded in 1553 by Edward VI as a school for poor children, and was later rebuilt in the 1820s. Its system of education was censured in 1854 and reforms were made. The school was moved to Horsham in Surrey in 1890's and is now a co-ed boarding school. It holds details of pupils dating back to 1563.

Exeter had its own Blue Coat School, known as the St John's Hospital School, which stood by the East Gate. This area was blitzed in 1942 and the school records were destroyed.

The statue of the Blue Coat boy now stands in Princesshay on the site of the school.

There are a small number of records in other collections relating to the school, and reports of the school can be found in the Exeter Flying Post newspaper, held on microfilm in Devon Heritage Centre's newspaper collection.

### **Relevant printed sources in Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter:**

*Endowed Schools Acts: scheme for the management of St. John's hospital...and of certain other charities and endowments, Exeter*, William Pollard (1876)

*St. John's Hospital School, Exeter, Old Boys' Society: memorial year 1957* [Exeter : The Society, 1957]

### **Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK)**

This was an Anglican organisation, begun in 1699, to encourage the foundation of parish charity schools. From 1704 the Society published annual accounts which listed the schools connected with the SPCK and gave brief details of them. The archives of the Society, including minute books and correspondence, date back to its origin in 1698 and are now kept at the University of Cambridge.

The Manuscripts Department holds all non-printed materials, including the following:

- Minutes, including various Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Annual and monthly reports
- Accounts books
- Legacies and grants
- Correspondence, mostly in the 18th century, as later correspondence has unfortunately been destroyed
- District committees
- Foreign missions and bishoprics
- Charity schools

### **Ragged Schools**

The Ragged School Union began in 1844 to provide free education for the very poorest children. The 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury was the first president and the Union was renamed the Shaftesbury Society in memory of him in 1914. The Union published annual reports from 1844, and also a magazine (with various titles) from 1848. The Shaftesbury Society holds unpublished records including minute books of Annual General Meetings from 1844.

Exeter had two ragged schools, one in Rack Street and one in Blackboy Road.

For a list of the records of Rack Street School held in Devon Heritage Centre, previously called Devon Record Office, search the catalogues of school records on the [Access to Archives](#) website.

## **The British and Foreign School Society**

### **The Society's Beginnings**

This Society was one of the two most important voluntary organisations in the development of elementary schooling for all classes in the 19th century. It was formed originally in 1808 as The Society for Promoting the Lancasterian System for the Education of the Poor, or The Royal Lancasterian Society, and was supported by a number of prominent evangelical and non-conformist Christians. The above-named Society aimed to carry on the work of Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker who had set up a school for poor children in Southwark in 1798. He was a progressive educator but always ended in financial trouble. He had developed a method of schooling which relied on the use of monitors – older children who had been taught or 'drilled' by the school master, and who then passed on their knowledge to younger pupils.

The above-named Society became the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) in 1814. Its purported aim was to set up schools and teacher training institutions on non-sectarian, non-denominational grounds. In reality, most British Schools were founded by non-conformists and had a link to a local non-conformist denomination. In many communities the founders of British Schools came into conflict with the National School Society, which was set up in opposition in 1811 to found Church of England Schools. British and National Schools appeared in competition all over the country – with the National School Society by far the larger of the two organisations. Local committees – many of their members being local non-conformist tradesmen and manufacturers – raised subscriptions, set up simple school buildings, and obtained teachers and equipment supplies from the London headquarters of the Society. The Society also established schools overseas and provided staff and support. From 1833, the government provided grants to build new British Schools as long as the local supporters of the British and Foreign School Society raised matching funds, and records of these grants and building projects for some schools are found in the Public Record Office.

### **The Monitorial System**

This was an economical system developed by Lancaster for schools where pupils could not all afford to pay fees, and where there was therefore a shortage of teachers. It enabled many poor children to have at least a small amount of education without great expense, and this monitorial system of teaching dominated popular education for over 50 years. It was practised in large and small schools, in National Schools as well, and it even spread to the lower (elementary) classes of endowed schools, grammar schools and public schools like Charterhouse.

School was conducted in single large classrooms, in which the schoolmaster could keep the whole school under scrutiny. Groups of about ten children were instructed by their monitors, often using cards hung on the wall, and there were rows of benches at which all pupils could sit for writing drill on slates. General monitors supervised the overall work in the different subjects, as well as the general discipline. In a well-organised school, monitors might be 10 or 11 years old, and were taught out of hours by the master. Their role was to teach the subject matter, to recommend pupils for promotion and to keep order. The schoolwork consisted of reading, writing and arithmetic in the boys' schools and also needlework in the girls' schools. Reading was from the Bible or from other religious texts. The whole process was regulated by a series of rewards – money, books, merit tickets and medals - and punishments – forfeit of rewards, wearing a dunce's cap, confinement in a closet, and was seen as a course of moral training.

The main criticism of the system was that monitors who were often too young, as well as untrained and unqualified, were set to teach children not much younger than themselves under only nominal supervision by one master. There was no formal teacher-training available at the time.

## Teacher Training

Eventually, the Society founded and sponsored teacher-training colleges. After the government took over the main responsibility for schools from 1870, The BFSS continued its teacher-training role. These institutions have now merged with other colleges or have closed. The Borough Road Teacher Training College at Southwark (now known as Isleworth) existed in the early 1840s. It merged with the West London Institute of Higher Education in 1976, and this in turn became part of Brunel University in 1995. This is where the British and Foreign School Society Archives Centre is found.

## Printed References

*The Records of the British and Foreign School Society, Local Historian*, vol. 16, G.F. Bartle, (1984) pp. 204-206. [Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter].

*Journal of Educational Administration and History*, July 1980

*History of Education*, October 1981

Appendix 4, *Historical Notes on Devon Schools*, Devon County Council, R Bovett (1989) – this volume includes a list of the 64 British or non-conformist schools in Devon with dates of foundation and closure [copies are held in Devon Heritage Centre search-room library]

## Websites

[www.bfss.org.uk](http://www.bfss.org.uk) Website of the British and Foreign School Society

[www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk)

## Finding Records

### Local school-based records:

The records deposited by individual schools are listed in the schools catalogues in the Devon Heritage Centre searchroom. Records of North Devon schools are held at North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple, and those for the Plymouth and West Devon area are held at Plymouth and West Devon Record Office.

For the names of British Schools, consult the list of the British/non-conformist schools in Devon, in Appendix 4 of *Historical Notes on Devon Schools* by Bovett [see above].

### Centralised records:

British and Foreign School Society Archives Centre, Brunel University, Borough Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 5DU.

The The British & Foreign School Society website has a searchable on-line catalogue.

The Archives Centre also produces a printed guide/prospectus, and a copy of the 1985 edition is found in our schools catalogues on the Devon Heritage Centre search-room shelves.

A description of the records is also found in the article in *Local Historian* mentioned above.

The National Archives at Kew, London also holds the 1816 survey of elementary schools, trust deeds, applications for government building grants and preliminary statements for schools awarded grants for building from 1833.

## Industrial Schools

### Introduction

Voluntary reformatories for young people had been opened by the Philanthropic Society and by private founders in the early 19th century. However juvenile delinquency was viewed with such increasing concern that in the 1840s, a Select Committee of the House of Lords was set up, and this resulted in two Youth Offenders' Acts of 1854. The Act required the Home Office to certify certain recognised

institutions, which came to be known as Certified Reformatories and Certified Industrial Schools. Boys and girls aged under 16 who had spent time in gaol could be transferred there. Uncertified Industrial Schools for neglected or destitute children were also opened. These specifically juvenile institutions replaced prison terms for many young offenders, and gave boys and girls a basic education plus a trade. There were also several reformatory ship schools or industrial training ships certified in the late 1850s, although they became shore-based in the 20th century.

The 1857 Industrial Schools Act was aimed at making better provision for the care and education of vagrant, destitute and disorderly children who, it was thought, were in danger of becoming criminals. This Act, and following Acts in 1860-61, enabled magistrates to commit certain young offenders directly to the Industrial Schools, without a prior spell in a gaol or a house of correction. There were 30 Industrial Schools in England by December 1865. The Act also made provision for the children's religious persuasion in the choice of a school. Denominational (non-Church of England) Industrial Schools also existed after 1866, including some for Catholic children, and these were supported by local rates. The Education Act led after 1876 to the founding of industrial day schools and truant schools. By the beginning of the First World War, there were 208 schools for juvenile delinquents, and 132 of these were residential industrial schools. In 1933, the industrial schools which were still in existence became known as Approved Schools.

### **Devon and Exeter Boys' Industrial School**

The Industrial School in Devon was known as the Devon & Exeter Boys' Industrial School, and in 1866 its manager was Reverend F. A. Savile, of Barley House, Exeter. The court decided to which Industrial School a child was sent, and in many cases the school chosen was far away from the child's home town or county. Many of the boys sent to Devon and Exeter Boys' Industrial School were from outside the county, including some from Southampton and Winchester in Hampshire, and a reasonable proportion from Maidstone and Gravesend in Kent. A number of the boys also came from Plymouth. Once sentenced, a boy usually had to stay until he had reached 16 years of age. However, the Government did allow suitable boys to join the army or work in the mines at the age of 14.

Devon Heritage Centre holds the surviving records of Devon and Exeter Boys' Industrial School - admission and discharge registers, minute books and superintendents' books - in collection 4517. However, like hospital, prison and mental asylum records, the records of industrial schools are regarded as containing sensitive personal information, and are therefore subject to a 100 year closure period from the date of the latest entry.

The earliest discharge register held at Devon Heritage Centre for the Devon and Exeter Boys' Industrial School includes entries for boys admitted between 1873 and 1888, and was compiled by the superintendent of the school. The original register contains detailed information on the background, reasons for admission and progress of each boy, both before and after his discharge, including details from letters and personal visits, which sometimes continued for some years after the boy left the school. Entries include information added up to 1891, and because this is more than 100 years ago, this register is available for research.

Devon Family History Society volunteers have compiled and published an index to the names of boys found in this discharge register, and this index is available for sale from the Society. If you find a relevant entry in the index, you should consult the original discharge register yourself at Devon Heritage Centre, or request that our Research Service transcribe the relevant information for you, as the register almost always includes a great deal of information about the life of each boy.

### **Girls' Industrial School, Exeter**

The Girls' Industrial School in Exeter was founded in 1861, and was located in Bartholomew Street, Exeter. It was known as the Exeter Girls' Industrial School and Servants' Home, and its address in

1878 was given as 42 Bartholomew Street West. By 1893, it had moved to Blenheim House, at 32 Bartholomew Street East. The aim of the institution was to train girls as domestic servants. It accepted neglected and destitute children or others requiring instruction, and taught them the rudiments of household work as well as "habits of order and obedience". Young girls who had "lost their situations through incompetence" were among those accepted into the school.

The age of admission was between 13 and 16, but girls under 13, and others from outside the City of Exeter, were admitted if paid for at a rate of £10 a year and if they had their clothes supplied. The school was managed by a committee of six ladies who met on the first Saturday of each month. The cost of running the school was estimated as £300 in 1878. Mrs Lucy Martyn was the matron in charge.

During 1882 there were 36 girls living in at the school, which was supported by payment subscriptions and donations, as well as money received for needlework and washing done by the girls. In 1892 there were only 18 girls at the school.

No records relating to the school or its inmates have been deposited at Devon Heritage Centre. Basic information about the school can be found in trade directories for Devon. Exeter newspapers also contain reports about the meetings of the committee and the work at the school.

### **Devon and Cornwall Industrial School for Girls, Plymouth**

Located at 1 and 2 Marina Place, Mutley, Plymouth Devon, this was a Certified Industrial School which took up to 40 girls committed under the Industrial Schools Act. It does not appear in White's Directory of Devonshire, 1878-79.

In 1893, it was entirely dependent on voluntary contributions, and was managed by an executive committee of 25 persons, which was also responsible for The Friendless Girls' Help Association and Free Servants' Registry, and a Refuge Home, both in Regent Street. The Matron of the industrial school was Mrs Jane Bacon. To enquire whether any records survive, contact Plymouth and West Devon Record Office.

### **Industrial School Training Ships**

**Mount Edgcombe, at Saltash, near Plymouth** - Used as a training ship between 1877 and 1920, it held 250 boys. Publications: *An Anchorage for Orphans*, Michael Ware, pub. Western Morning News (16 March 1974)

For information about publications relating to training ships in Plymouth, contact the Plymouth Local and Naval Studies Library.

For information about any surviving records held locally, contact Plymouth and West Devon Record Office.

For more information on the way in which industrial schools operated, you may study the Inspectors' Annual Reports, dating from 1857 onwards, and the Royal Commission of 1884. Both are available in The National Archives, Kew, London. Annual Reports can also be found in Parliamentary Papers, which are often available on microfilm in large public and university libraries in Britain. Exeter and Plymouth newspapers also contain reports on their local industrial schools.

## Reformatory Schools

### Introduction

Voluntary reformatories for young people had been opened by the Philanthropic Society and by private founders in the early 19th century. However juvenile delinquency was viewed with such increasing concern that in the 1840s, a Select Committee of the House of Lords was set up, and this resulted in the passing of two Youth Offenders' Acts in 1854. The Acts required the Home Office to certify certain recognised institutions, which came to be known as Certified Reformatories and Certified Industrial Schools. Reformatories were classified differently from Industrial Schools, as reformatory schools were for actual offenders, while industrial schools were designed for neglected and destitute children, and those in danger of falling into crime. By 1888, there were 46 reformatory schools in England and 10 in Scotland.

### Devon and Exeter Female Reformatory School, Exeter

Devon and Exeter Female Reformatory School was an institution for the industrial training of juvenile offenders – that is, for girls up to the age of 16 years, who had been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment. They spent a short time in an adult prison, followed by a period of up to 5 years in Devon and Exeter Reformatory, which was a certified Reformatory School. The order for detention was made by the Court, and the maximum limit for a Reformatory School was the age of nineteen.

Devon & Exeter Reformatory and Refuge for Girls was certified on 26th June 1858, and was situated in Polsloe Road, Exeter. The premises also housed a refuge for discharged prisoners which had moved in 1858 from Lawn Lodge, Sidwell Street, Exeter. The first Honorary Secretary was William Townsend Esquire, of Friar's Walk, Exeter. The Female Reformatory was a residential school, where clothing, food and lodging were supplied whilst the girls were given training. In reality, punishment was also an essential part of a very strict regime, which included hard labour.

In 1927, the institution became known as the Devon and Exeter Girls' Training School, and on moving in January 1960, it was renamed Farrington House School, after its new premises.

Records of the Devon and Exeter Reformatory and Refuge for Girls held at Devon Heritage Centre are subject to a 100-year closure from the date of the most recent entry.

As at January 2006, those records which contain entries dated no later than January 1906 are open for public consultation. They are found in collections 3899F/ and 3899F add 3/.

The following are some of the records relating to the Devon & Exeter Female Reformatory and Refuge which are open to public access. There are also earlier records relating to the management of the Refuge for Discharged Prisoners, from its inception in 1835. For a full list of our holdings, see the catalogue lists in the search-room.

### Records containing references to inmates

- 3899F/R1/1 - Case Book, 1850-1861 - this volume relates to inmates in the Devon and Exeter Refuge for Discharged Prisoners (women only) which in 1858 moved to new premises and became combined with the new Devon and Exeter Girls' Reformatory School in 1858. [Devon Family History Society](#) volunteers are planning to compile an index to the names of persons found in this case book, and when completed, this index will be available for sale from the Society.
- 3899F add 3/1/ESA/1 - Register of girls detained, 1859-1868, categorized according to county or place of origin. The register is a monthly return book, adapted for use as a rough register. It records name; admission no.; age (in some cases); where convicted; length of sentence; dates of admission and discharge. Not all entries are complete. [Devon Family History Society](#) volunteers are currently compiling an index to the names of girls found both in this register and

in the papers ESA/2-35, following. This index will be available for sale from the Society when completed.

- 3899F add 3/1/ESA/2-35 - Papers for some girls admitted between 1859 and 1873. Includes copy warrants for imprisonment, committal and detention orders, medical certificates, applications for admission.
- 3899F/R2/1 to 4 - Four volumes of accounts, 1859-1891, from the Devon and Exeter Girls' Reformatory School. These are "accounts of maintenance of juvenile offenders" and have yearly lists of names of girls in the reformatory for which money was paid in support, by local authorities inside and outside the county, and by parents in some cases. The accounts are a more complete listing of the girls who were confined in the reformatory than the other records which we have, but they give much less detail.
- 3899F/M1/2 (1 volume) - Minute book with printed reports of the Devon and Exeter Girls' Reformatory School, but which also includes a list of inmates with their dates of discharge, for 1862-1880.

### **Management and administration records**

- 3899F/A1/1 (1 volume) - Benefaction and subscription lists with printed accounts of opening in 1858, and notices of meetings, advertisements, correspondence and other material, 1858-1869, pasted into the volume.
- 3899F/M2/1-2 - Directors' monthly meeting and minute books, 1858-1888
- 3899F/M2/5-7 - House Committee minute books, 1859-1888
- 3899F/Z2/1-2 - Matron's Journals, 1858-1882, with gap between 1860 and 1868
- 3899F/Z2/6 - Visitors' inspection book, 1858-1860
- 3899F add 3/ESM/1 - Small account book for food and other supplies, 1847
- 3899F add 3/ESM/2 - House rules and regulations, a printed leaflet listing duties of the warders and cook, and rules for inmates, to be read on their admission
- 3899F add 3/ESM/4 - Devon Girls' Reformatory : Schoolmistress's Regulations and Duties, Polsloe Road, Exeter, 24th June 1896

### **Devon and Exeter Reformatory School for Boys**

The Devon and Exeter Reformatory Farm School for Boys was founded in 1855, and began its life at premises at Brampford Wood, in the parish of Brampford Speke, just north of Exeter. The Honorary Secretary was Dyer Knott, Esq, who was based at The Castle, Exeter. It admitted boys under 14 years of age, who had been convicted of a crime and sentenced to a term of detention, in accordance with the Youthful Offenders' Act. The reformatory was supported by subscriptions and a Government allowance of 5 shillings per week for each boy in 1857.

The inmates were employed in garden and farm work, under the supervision of the superintendent, who was assisted by a bailiff. Part of each day was spent in the reformatory school-room.

The reformatory school later moved to premises at Whipton. In 1955, it became part of the new Northbrook House School at the Whipton site.

Records of the Devon and Exeter Reformatory for Boys held at Devon Heritage Centre are subject to a 100-year closure from the date of the most recent entry.

The following records relating to inmates at this reformatory are open for public access:  
5880F/ (unlisted collection) - Includes admission register for Devon and Exeter Reformatory, Brampford Wood, covering 1876 to 1894. [Devon Family History Society](#) volunteers are compiling a published index to the names of boys found in this register, and when completed, this index will be available for sale from the Society.

4449F/R1/1 - Admission register for Devon and Exeter Reformatory, Brampford Wood. Contains entries no. 372-519, covering 1894 to 1905.

4449F/R1/1 - Register of discharges, apparently for Devon and Exeter Reformatory, Brampford Wood. Covers the years 1889 to 1905.

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