

Schooling at Bourton

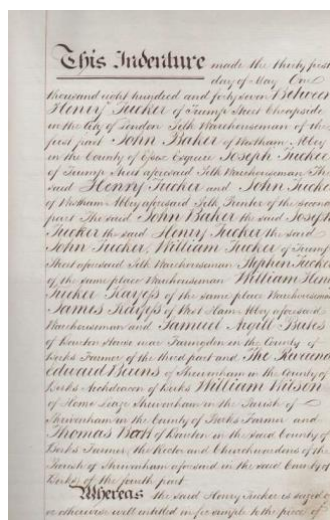
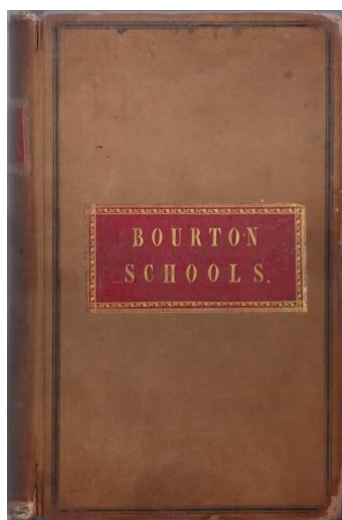
Researched & collated by Neil B. Maw

The first recorded instance of Bourton children being taught elementary skills, and in particular religious knowledge, was surprisingly early in the year 1717. The research carried out by Edith Jeacock in the 1970s refer to a school being built at the West end of Shrivenham for the children of Shrivenham, Watchfield and Bourton. (See SHS Listing No N394 for further information).

The first school building to be erected at the village of Bourton clearly bears the date of 1842. (Below - photo from 1905 courtesy Paul Williams). The cost of the building was provided by the local Tucker family who were successful Silk Merchants. (See SHS Listing N147 for further information).



The Shrivenham Heritage Society Archive (SHS) contains a leather-bound book that belonged to the Trustees of Bourton School. (See SHS Listing No N770). Those that made up the trust were predominantly members of the Tucker family, but there were others mentioned in the Indenture that was the legal instrument that formed it. However, the Indenture is dated 1847, five years after the school was built. The cover of the book, the first page and the little map showing the location of the school are shown below.



The first page of the Indenture includes the name of the Rev. Edward Berens who was the Vicar of Shrivenham and had been since 1803. Berens was a wealthy and generous man and had played a major part in providing schools for the poor children of Shrivenham, Watchfield and Longcott. It would make perfect sense that he would have encouraged the Tuckers to do the same for Bourton, and very likely helped and advised on running the same. A newspaper article announced the completion of the school building 'in which it is proposed to combine and carry

out the National and Infant system of Education.' It also noted that *'The promoters and benefactors of this delightful undertaking are Joseph and Henry Tucker Esqs, in co-operation with their sister, Mrs Mary Baker, all of whom were formerly youthful inhabitants of that place (Bourton) but have till latterly been for many years absent.'* (Reading Mercury 17th June 1843)

The first meeting of the Trustees took place on 30th December 1847 at 30 Gresham Street, London. The Tucker's ran a very successful business of all aspects of silk, from importing the raw material, making the silk, turning it into items of clothing, printing on the items etc. Their company was called Baker, Tuckers & Co, and their London office address was at Gresham Street. From the 1820s when they first entered the business, the Tucker brothers, through their various individual involvement had amassed a huge amount of wealth. A separate study has been made of the Tuckers which is available as a listing on the Shrivenham Heritage Society's online catalogue number N147. At the first meeting, Henry Tucker updated that he had received the first half yearly dividend on £3000 of three percent consols vested in the name of the Trustees, and that he had obtained from the Commissioners of Taxes a return of the Income Tax charged thereon, and deducted by the Bank of England, and that future dividends would be paid free from any such deductions. It was agreed that Henry Tucker would be the Treasurer of the Bourton Schools.

It is not yet clear just how the school operated in the early years from 1842 until the legal formation of the Trust in 1847, but a Trust had already been formed. At a Trustees meeting held on 15th December 1858 it was proposed that, *'the Programme of the order of teaching as settled by the Trustees at the opening of the school in 1842 and still adhered to, be entered on the Minutes: -'*

Programme of Teaching

Monday Morning

Singing, Prayer and Texts

Scripture Lesson $\frac{3}{4}$ hour

Reading Lesson $\frac{3}{4}$ hour

Writing in Copy Books & Grammar

Monday Afternoon

Reading, Geography

Cyphering, Writing to dictation

Tuesday Morning

Prayer & Scripture Lessons, Reading

Writing in Copy books

Tuesday Afternoon

Reading, Object Lesson, Cyphering

Writing on Slates

Wednesday Morning

Prayer & Scripture Lessons, Reading

Writing in Copy books, Cyphering

Wednesday Afternoon

Reading, Geography

Cyphering & Writing on Slates

Thursday Morning

Prayer & Scripture Lessons

Reading, Writing in Copy books, Grammar

Thursday Afternoon

Reading, Natural History Lessons

Writing on Slates, Cyphering

Friday Morning

Prayer & Scripture Lessons

Reading, Writing in Copy Books, Cyphering

Friday Afternoon

Church Catechison, Geography

Writing on Slates, Cyphering & Tables

There were repairs that were needed to the school premises by 1849 and it is noted in the Trustees Minutes that the cost amounted to £152, a considerable sum. Most of it was paid by donations from the Trustees and partly by funds of the charity.

By 1851, such was the good reputation of Bourton School that parents from Shrivenham and surrounding villages were making applications for their children. The Trustees asked for advice for fear of breaching the rules of their deed and their status as a non-taxable charity. The advice was that provided all Bourton children were catered for first, then children may be enrolled from the neighbourhood but must be approved by the Trustees on an individual basis.

For reasons that are not explained by the Minutes, the Trustees agreed in February 1853 to request that Mr & Mrs Munday, as Master & Mistress of the school, resign their posts. This led to Mr Munday refusing to do so and he appeared before a meeting of the Trustees at London. Eventually the Munday's

left on 29th September (traditional Michaelmas), but nothing was written as to what led to their departure. The very next day, Mr John King and his daughter Mary Ann King were appointed as Master and Mistress of Bourton School at a salary of £75 per annum with Coals. But because Miss King had not passed through any of the usual training schools, she was placed under training in the Home & Colonial School for three months.

At a Trustees meeting in August 1855 a report from Mr W.R. Baxter of the British & Foreign School Society was read out which was well received with comments such as, *'These schools (children & infants) are in excellent order and the children are very clean, neat and well behaved.'* In November 1856 Mr & Miss King were noted as *'Continue to discharge their duties in a satisfactory manner.'* It was also reported that a system to act as an incentive to the children to learn was working well when the Treasurer reported that *'The value of the weekly payments of the children was returned to them in various prizes consisting chiefly of articles of clothing.'* Then in September 1858 another report was received from Mr Charles Fox Vardy of the British & Foreign School Society, who wrote, *'This is a good village school, the average attendance at which is about 60. There were 68 present at the time of my visit. The teacher Mr John King and his daughter Mary Ann King regret the irregular attendance of many of the children and the early age at which most of them leave, circumstances which combine to render their general instruction necessarily more elementary and limited than it might otherwise be. I heard about 30 of the older children read a chapter of the New Testament and afterwards questioned them particularly thereon and upon scripture history and geography in general was surprised and pleased with the extensive and accurate acquaintance therewith indicated by their ready and correct replies. The generally neat appearance and orderly conduct was very gratifying.'*

But this seemingly idyllic state of the school's affairs was not to last as it encountered a period of religious intolerance. The Rev. Edward Berens had

undoubtedly been a good friend and mentor to the Trustees and children of Bourton School. But sadly, he passed away in April 1859 at the Vicarage in Shrivenham that he had built from new at his own cost in 1805. (See SHS Listing No N361 for further information). The new Vicar of Shrivenham was George Murray and it was he who would start what would be two years of trouble for Bourton School.

The Rev. George Murray upon taking up his new Living turned his attention immediately to Bourton. In a letter dated 26th December 1859, himself, Churchwardens John Wilson and John Allaway wrote to the managers of Bourton School. They also described themselves as Trustees and Visitors of Bourton School. They quote that the religious teachings of the children should be in accordance with the teaching of the Church of England as by law established. They further stated that they were of the opinion that those rules had been violated by the Master & Mistress of the school, and that they were constant attendants at a place of worship in the hamlet of Bourton which is not in communion with the Church of England. (Page 18. N770).

The church to which they were referring was the Baptist Church built by Henry Tucker in 1851. At that time there was no episcopal church in Bourton meaning that anyone wanting to attend a CofE church would have a two mile walk to Shrivenham. But could it be more than co-incidence that the Foundation Stone for the new church of St James, Bourton was laid in August 1859? (See SHS Listing No N719). Clearly, there was religious turmoil in general as the same was happening in the village of Watchfield.

George Murray further asserted that, *'When the Master is left to his own discretion, he and the Mistress systematically forsake the services of the CofE and attend the dissenting meeting house (Baptist Chapel).'*

The Trustees were not happy with the attack on their school and teaching staff. They wrote their reply and sent it through their solicitors to George Murray saying that *'As the religious education of the children has been hitherto carried on in strict accordance with the Deed of Trust and as the Master & Mistress are members of the CofE, (our solicitors) are directed to reply to the Visitors that the Trustees do not feel themselves called upon to make any alteration whatever, and that in the opinion of the Trustees, the Vicar and Churchwardens of Shrivenham are Visitors and not Trustees of the Bourton School.'*

Not satisfied with the reply he received from the Trustees, George Murray escalated the situation by writing to the Charity Commission in London to make further allegations (P20 N770 Jan 1860). *'My senior Curate who lives at Bourton (John Allaway) informs me that the average number of children brought by the schoolmaster on Sunday morning to the Parish Church is four or five and that the schoolmaster's son takes other children educated in the school to the Anabaptist Chapel, that on the second Sunday of every month the whole school is taken to the Anabaptist Chapel and there catechises by the dissenting minister.'*

The Master of Bourton School, John King, was invited by the Trustees to reply to the allegations which he did in a very clear and concise manner. Among his many points he stated, *"My desire has always been to live in love and unity with all Christian denominations without giving offence to any and to do my duty faithfully towards all men."* He further stated, *"I think the reports of the Inspectors who have visited my school, and those Trustees who have witnessed examinations of the children, can testify that they have been well and carefully taught according to the principles of the CofE, but those persons who have presented that highly exaggerated statement have never visited the school and I cannot but think it is presented in a misguided and persecuting spirit, and I trust you will be enabled to see it as such."*

John King added more information when he explained that *'The school has always been open to Inspectors, Clergy and Visitors. The Rev C.B. Calley, Curate to the late Vicar (Edward Berens) regularly visited the school once a week from 26th October 1853 until the Rev. H. Suckling was appointed in 1858, when he was introduced to me by Mr Calley as the future visitor.'* It was Rev. Suckling who was to cause even more trouble. (Page 24. N770).

The Trustees replied via their solicitors to the Charity Commissioners and again they backed their Master, John King and his daughter fully. They also stated the fact that *"The total number of children in the school is 72 (on average) about 45 of whom are children of dissenters, who but for this school would not be brought under the teaching in accordance with the tenets and principles of the CofE."*

But the Charity Commissioners wanted an answer to the, *'every second Sunday'* allegation made earlier which they felt had not been answered. Headmaster John King replied that the allegation wasn't even partly true and that he has no say or power of where parents take their children on a Sunday.

And just when it seemed to be settling down, the Rev. Suckling decided upon a course of either complete stupidity or worse, intentional mischief making. It was brought to the attention of the Trustees that Rev. Suckling had been giving out leaflets, calling them prizes to the children at the school. The leaflets contained pictures and writing in French that were Catholic messages as an invocation to the Virgin Mary. Henry Tucker was appalled and angry and immediately wrote to the Rev. Suckling. He also sent a copy of the same letter to the South-eastern Gazette complaining about the *'Popish leaflets.'* (Published 5th June 1860). The Vicar claimed he gave out the leaflets inadvertently for their pictorial merit and that

the writing in French could not possibly be understood by poor ignorant children. (Page 40. N770).

On 1st February 1861, John King wrote to the Trustees complaining about the behaviour of Rev. Suckling. *"One of the dissenter's children had not got a prayer book, but the others had theirs with them. He then ordered the girl to get one, but he spoke to her in such a manner that she began crying. He then turned to me and said what a ridiculous shame it was that I had not given her a book. I told him I had no authority to make presents of the books belonging to the school, as they were to be used in the school."*

Suckling said, *"You teach them like parrots and teach them lies, as they have not been baptised and you are teaching them as if they had (the fact is, some of the Primitive Methodists have their children baptised by their Minister which Mr Suckling calls no baptism) but over these things I have no control."* (Page 53. N770). Miss King (the Mistress) said, *"Sir, I think you are come in a very unchristian spirit on the Sabbath day."* He said, *"You ignorant young woman. It is not the Sabbath"* and then pointed to me with his finger and said, *"children don't you pay any respect whatever to that man, nor take any notice of what he says to you, as he is a dissenter,"* and then went to one of the boys who is rather deaf and patted him on his shoulder and told him a second time over. I said to him, *"Mr Suckling if you call that Christianity, I am ashamed of the name, but this is how you have treated me all along, you told the children on St Thomas' Day that I was a dissenter and could not teach them what day it was."*

It's pleasing to note that at the end of all this the Trustees backed their Master and Mistress completely. But as the decade ended nine years later, the government would at last take responsibility with the formation of the Education Department and all teachers had to be qualified according to the government system. Therefore, at the Trustees meeting of February 1869, it was proposed that Mr & Miss King be invited to tender their resignations. (Page 69. N770). In a letter

written by Henry Tucker from Bourton House on 22nd April 1869 to the Secretary of the Education Department he described the school as, '*Entirely distinct from the Shrivenham National School and that annual inspection is desired by the Trustees with a view to engage a certified Master or Mistress and a Pupil Teacher, the present Master & Mistress having tendered their resignations.*'

In August 1869 the Trustees wrote that Miss Annie Hulat (formerly of Broadway) had been appointed as Acting Teacher at a salary of £45 per annum and nominated Miss Bessie Taylor as a candidate for Pupil Teacher subject to examination. (Page 66. N770).

The Trustees received a letter from the Education Department informing them that Bourton School had been inspected on 5th July 1870 and that Bessie Taylor had been taken on as Pupil Teacher for four years as from 11th October 1870. They also noted that it had been decided to raise the admission price paid by each pupil from ½ penny per week to 1 penny. (Page 67. N770).

At a school inspection carried out in July 1871 it noted that, "*The examination proved the school to be well and carefully conducted, the Arithmetic, Writing and Spelling are very fair especially in the 1st & 2nd standard, and the Reading (though wanting intelligence) is tolerably correct. The infants are very well taught and in good order.*"

Entries made in the large leather-bound trustees Book (SHS N770) finishes at 15th January 1875. Henry Tucker died suddenly on the 17th January and it must be assumed to be the cause of the book being discontinued. A newspaper article that reported the death of Henry Tucker also triggered a response from the Trustees of the school. (Clip below from Swindon Advertiser 22nd February 1875.) Unfortunately, there is a gap after this whereby we have no documentation concerning the running of

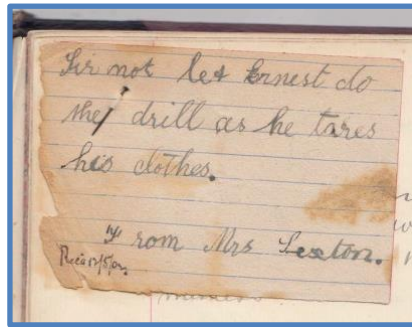
the school. It is highly likely that a logbook exists for the period and hopefully it may be discovered so that it can be included with this general history.

BOURTON.

We are requested to state, in reference to a paragraph in our paper of the 1st February, relating to Bourton Schools, that the said Schools are and always have been, by the terms of the deed of endowment, under the sole management and control of the trustees, (members of the Tucker family, of whom Mr. Joseph Tucker is senior trustee), and will be continued by them in the same manner as during the many past years. The vicar of Shrivenham is the visitor for the time being.

The 1902 Education Act abolished the School Boards and created Local Education Authorities. We can only assume that it was at this point that the Trustees relinquished their control of Bourton school. Logbook number one bears this out as it begins in February of that year.

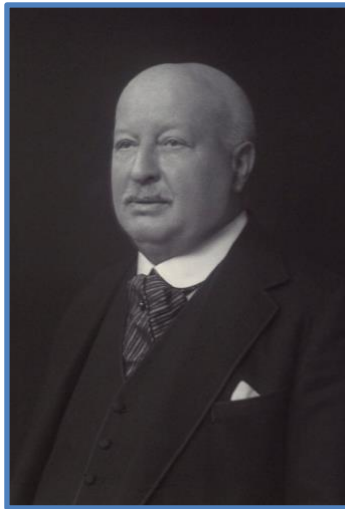
It was noted on 7th February 1902 that the weather was severe, presumably with cold, and the 29 children were unable to drill in the yard. J. Bates is probably the headmaster and the Vicar. The '*Drill*' is mentioned regularly and seemed to be a system of physical exercise to warm the children up. But some parents were not happy with it, as Ernest Lexton's Mother pointed out. (Below. Note still pinned in the logbook from 1902).



There is an interesting entry for 5th March 1902 when Dr A.P. Macnamara of Shrivenham, (see below) personally wrote in the Log that Edgar Townsend *'is under my professional care and unable to attend school.'* And on the 11th of March he personally signed him back in again as fit to attend. (See SHS N983 & N593 for more information). This was to satisfy the legal requirement that all children must attend school.



The era of the Tuckers at Bourton ended with the sale of the estate in 1894. It was purchased by Sir Cyril Kendall Butler. He took an interest in the school and he wrote in the log dated 1st April 1902, '*Visited. Good attendance. Present at Arithmetic. Children seemed bright and interested.*' Signed Cyril Butler. He also visited the school on 18th April and saw, '*The Drill.*' He was an official Inspector of the school as he regularly wrote reports in the Logbook. (Sir Cyril below courtesy NPG 166284).



There was a Measles outbreak in the village in the Autumn of 1902. Noted on 3rd October, '*Measles continue to spread, several families suffering now and parents will not allow their children to attend school for fear of catching the infection.*' And Dr Macnamara added his certification to the log confirming that there had been an epidemic but not severe enough to close the school. But it got worse and by the 8th October Dr Macnamara had to revise his recommendation that the school be closed for several weeks.

Copy of Dr. Macnamara's certificate re the epidemic of Measles.

Normanby Cottage.
Shrewtonham.
Berks.

I hereby certify that there has been no at present an Epidemic of Measles in the village of Bourton. While not severe enough to recommend the closing of the school, yet it is the cause of rendering the attendance of the school very low.

(Signed) A. P. Macnamara.
B.A. M.B.

8th October 1902.

Staff at end of 1902

Head:	J. Bates
Teacher:	John Phillips
Teacher:	A. Phillips

At the end of the term just before the Christmas break, the Butlers started what was to become an annual event whereby they visited the school and gave out Oranges and Chocolate to the pupils.

New Staff 1905

30 th June	Miss Edith Bown
10 th Nov	Miss Winnifred Heaten

Although there is nothing specifically written about the general spirit of the pupils and teachers, the impression is that generally, Bourton school was a happy place to be even though academically it was a little wanting. A report by the official inspector in 1905 stated, *'The children are orderly and industrious and the more mechanical part of the work is very fair on the whole. But the teaching is dull and uninspiring. Arithmetic, although fairly good so far as it consists of working by rule is not sufficiently used to develop intelligence and principles are not understood. There is little educative value in the object and geography lessons and the passages chosen for recitation in the upper class are not of sufficient merit. Complete syllabuses should be drawn out ready for the beginning of the school year.'* And the condition of the school itself was also in need of attention when the Inspector noted that, *"Some good pictures for the wall are much to be desired. Blinds are needed for the window of the infants room and some of the doors need attention."*

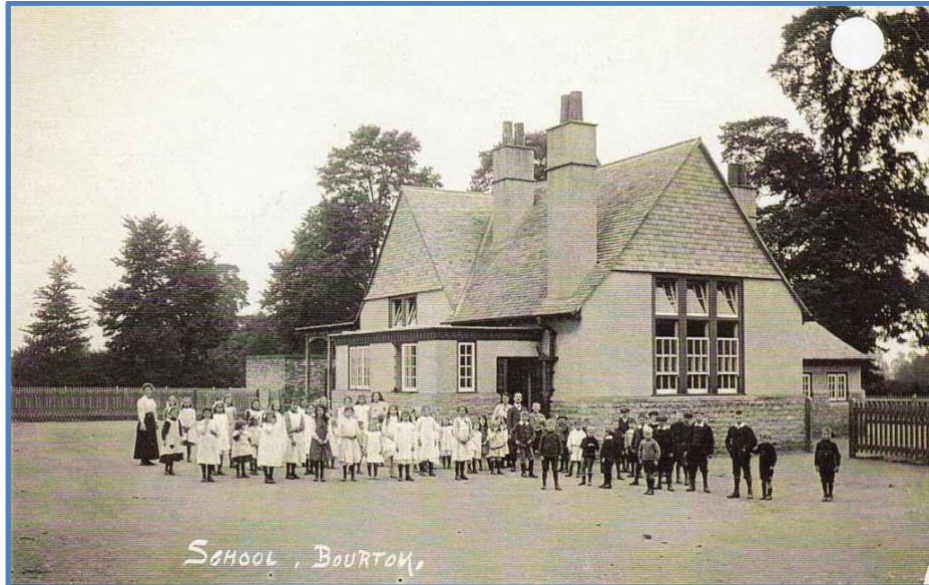
A new school at Bourton was being built in 1906. The location was down the hill in Steppingstone Lane and on 12th October of that year, Sir Cyril Butler informed the headmaster that the Bishop of Oxford would open it in the middle of December. However, it didn't go to plan and was delayed until the 9th April 1907. The log records that Lady Butler declared the school open and the Vicar, J.G. Day gave an address to the children. (See photo below ex RMCS Library).

Staff at Autumn 1907

Alice Louisa la Thrope

John Phillips

Miss Winnifred Heaten



The normal practice for schools at this time was to close for the month of August. This was in line with the historical tradition of allowing the older children to help with the harvest. Bourton was still very much an agricultural village and most of the children were from farming families.

Staff changes of 1909

22 nd June	A.B. Crowsley from Abingdon
28 th June	Mr Richard Johns, Head of Compton CofE Temp
6 th Sept	Ida M. Harriss Temp Head
20 th Oct	Lucy E. Hinton took charge of the school

Lucy Hinton seemed to have decided that more discipline and organisation was required at the school. Consequently, she exerted her authority when she wrote, *"Scarcely any needlework materials in the school, commenced teaching elder girls to cut out simple garment patterns."* A few days later she wrote, *"Noticed on Friday last, that a large fire was burning in the infant's room. This was unnecessary. I found later that the fire had been lighted by the infants (Supplementary) teacher. I therefore told her to ask my consent before lighting the fire. Today the same teacher again lit the fire on her own responsibility. Have told her that this must not occur again."* And concerning outside activities she wrote, *"After careful consideration, I have decided to discontinue Hockey in the school yard on account of the somewhat dangerous character of the game."*

Punishments meted out to children was severe by comparison with today. Supply teacher Richard Johns wrote in the log on the 6th July 1909, *"Upon resuming duty today I have found it necessary to administer sharp punishment to Reginald Loder for gross insolence and insubordination to the mistress in charge on Monday 5th July."* (Reginald was aged 12). The punishment book showed that he was dealt 6 strokes on the back. The punishment book records that the majority of corporal punishment involved a stripe from a cane on the hands.

At the beginning of 1910 the numbers of pupils had risen considerably to 56. However, the general health of the pupils at the time meant that it was rare to have the full number of children present. Epidemics were quite common, especially during the winter months with illnesses such as measles, mumps, chickenpox, influenza and whooping cough. Sometimes, the rate of infections was so high that the school would have to be closed completely. Such an occasion happened on 29th November 1910 when the School Medical Officer, Dr. Taylor, due to an outbreak of measles, directed that the school be closed until 2nd January.

After the death of King Edward VII in May 1910, his son acceded to the throne as King George V. As his Coronation date approached, the Vicar of Bourton, Rev. J. Bates, instead of his regular religious class, talked to the pupils about the new King. Sir Cyril and Lady Butler of Bourton House invited all the children to their house ahead of the Coronation and gave them all cups and saucers that were suitably engraved to mark the occasion.

Staff changes in 1911

March	Miss Grace Winchester
March	Miss Florence Ingram
Both above stayed only a few months	
October	Miss Margaret Burnell
October	Miss Mary Jones

The Head Teacher was still Lucy Hinton and she continued to exude her efficiency skills when a report by a government inspector stated, "*The Head Teacher, however, exercises very effective control, and its present condition, as regards both discipline and attainments, is very creditable. Good methods of teaching are employed, lessons are carefully prepared and skilfully given, and the children as rule, respond readily and willingly.*" And some of that control was with the use of the cane when in September 1913, after due consultation with correspondents (i.e. the Vicar, Sir Cyril Butler etc) she decided to use corporal punishment for persistent laziness. It was noted that, "*There is a small number of children with whom other methods of dealing seem unavailing, and the Head Teacher has made her resolution in the interests of the children themselves, as well as the school generally.*" And the

After the summer break of 1912, the school log reported a happy occasion when it was recorded that, *“School re-opened after summer holidays but will be closed tomorrow on account of the excursion to Weymouth, which the School Seaside Club will join. The members of this club (25 in number) are pupils in this school, who have deposited small sums from time to time, till they have sufficient to pay the excursion fare and to cover, or almost cover, the cost of necessary meals. The amount collected in the village for Empire Day Festivities left a margin which will fill in deficiencies. Many of the club members have never seen a bigger sheet of water than the Wilts and Berks Canal, and one great aim in forming the club was to help the teaching of Geography and kindred subjects.”* It must have been an exciting trip for them.

The old school building up the top of the hill at Bourton continued to be used by the school. For the boys it was used as a workshop for woodwork and for the girls for cookery. There is also a note that suggests adults could also make use of the same classes and is often referred to as the Carpentry Centre and Cookery Centre.

Staff changes in 1913/14

December 1913	Miss M. Cadmore replaces Miss Jones
28 th Feb 1914	Head Lucy Hinton leaves
2 nd March	William R. David new Head
26 th March	Miss Emily Louisa Purchase begins
1 st May	Mary Louise Ratcliffe begins

At the 13th February 1914 there were 63 children on the school books. Discipline was still being tested and was more hands-on than today, but behaviour of parents was probably still similar to today. William David recorded in the log that on the 8th May 1914, *"Mr Ponting, father of one of the children entered the playground this morning before 9 o'clock and abused with obscene language, a child Nora Hibberd, regarding a matter between his child and the girl Hibberd. Went to see Ponting and requested an apology which was given."* But on the 8th of June that year the log recorded that, *"Nora Hibberd was given one stroke on the hand for arriving a few mins late for afternoon session. Girl had previously been warned for lateness. As soon as the punishment was given the girl run from school to her home. She was accordingly marked absent. She didn't come back to school until 25/6 and then was given one stroke on the left hand."* A similar occurrence happened on 18th of November that year when the Head Teacher wrote, *"Miss Cadmore reported to me at 11 o'clock that she had chastised Bertie Paget across her knee for disobedience during recreation. Mr Paget visited the school at 1.20pm and complained that Bertie had three marks across his bottom, made by Miss Cadmore with a cane. I promised to see Miss Cadmore. Mr Paget stated he intended to link the correspondent upon the matter and in the meantime to keep Bertie from school. The boy is away this afternoon."* Reflecting the poor sanitation of the time it was common to see a note in the log such as 17th December 1914, *"Nurse Anderson paid a surprise visit to the school. Ada Reynolds being found Verminous, was excluded for 5 days,"*

It should be noted at this point that the conflict known as the First World War had begun in August of this particular year. It probably accounts for the various changes of staff that took place over the next three years. We will record them here for historical accuracy and for assistance to ancestry researchers.

Staff changes from 1915

1 st March	Miss Mary Daisy James began
13 th April	Miss Daisy Bowles began her 2 weeks
15 th June	Miss Enid Maud Davies began
6 th Sept	Mrs Evelyn Alder replaces Miss Cadmore
December	Miss B.A. Pidgeon began
19 th April 1916	William David leaves
8 th May	Ms J. Shepherd took charge of school
4 th June 1917	Miss Amy Beasant began
There were 52 pupils at the school in the summer of 1916	

It was a government led initiative to help the war effort and a good piece of common sense to encourage countryside-based schools to pick blackberries in the autumn. The hedgerows were packed with them and it would have been folly not to have accepted this free gift from mother nature. Consequently, there were forays noted in the school logbook for September and October 1918. But unfortunately, it didn't prevent an outbreak and deadly epidemic of a particularly virulent strain of an influenza virus that affected the whole country. It was bad enough for the school to be closed for four weeks and sadly two pupils were lost to it, John Day and Herbert Milddenhall. But in amongst the gloom of 1918 there was some good news, and in particular, the end of the First World War with the Armistice of November. It's interesting to note that just before Christmas

that year, Lady Butler called at the school to deliver Oranges and Chocolate, still maintaining the tradition she started a decade earlier. It must also have been a cheerful time with the end of the war.

Staff changes 1919/20	
3 rd Nov 1919	Miss M. Barr replaced Miss Pidgeon
3 rd May 1920	Miss W. Cox replaced Amy Beasant
22 nd June	Rev. C. Ewbank replaced Rev. J. Fletcher as Vicar of Bourton
Autumn 1921	Miss N. Drew replaced Miss Cox

The Diocesan Inspector's Report of 20th October 1920

It is always a pleasure to visit this school as it is evident that there is the mutual understanding and confidence between teacher and children that makes for good influence and renders the teaching given, fruitful in results.

I was very pleased with the way in which the infants are being taught. The papers of the elder children were above the average and showed that careful instruction had been given.

Bishop's Prize went to Jessie Payne

Certificate to Olive Hatherall

Commended to Victor Heath

Middle Groups

Highly commended went to Ernest Tyler

Signed Walter Boldero – Diocesan Inspector

On the 27th April 1921, there was a half day holiday given to the school in order that the Choir Boys, the Girl Guides and the Mistress could attend the wedding of Miss Daphne Kendall-Butler the daughter of Sir Cyril and Lady Kendall-Butler at St James's Church, Bourton. It was described as an '*Auspicious Day*' and thoroughly enjoyed by all. (For a more detailed account see SHS Listing No N480).

In the Spring of the following year another epidemic of bad coughs swept the school and at one point there were only 29 children present out of a total of 48. It became so bad that the medical officer directed that the school be closed. It opened again a month later on the 24th April with 43 pupils in attendance. But the year didn't get any better when a spell of Scarlet Fever swept the school in the Autumn. During that time, on 19th October 1922, Miss Ford from Bucklebury School commenced her duties as a Supplementary teacher for the infants. However, her duties were short lived as the Scarlet Fever epidemic continued on to the point when on the 27th October a message was received to close the school at once by order of the Medical Officer. The illnesses and general sickness among the local population as a whole was rife until the end of January the following year.

In April it was noted that Miss N. Drew was unlikely to return to school for some time as she had been suffering from heart problems and in May of that year, she resigned on the advice from her doctor. Later the same month Miss Mildred E. Farmer commenced duties as a Supplementary Assistant on a one-month trial basis. She stayed with the school until September 1925 when she resigned and was succeeded by Miss Hilda Poole who had been a Supplementary Teacher at Hatford school.

The information contained within the school logbook suggests that the pupils were given time off to visit Shrivenham Fete in 1919. One would imagine that this was likely to be the Fete re-starting again after the war had ended. The entries record that pupils were going to Shrivenham Fete annually in July up to 1925. On the 28th July 1926 there is no reference to Shrivenham but instead the first mention of 'Bourton Flower Show' and added that some of the pupils have entries in the show from the school garden. The show is then referred to on an annual basis.

The report made by government inspector Mr A.F. Page after his visit of 14th September 1927, is delightful to read.

'This little school situated in one of the most remote parts of the county may be regarded in many ways as a model village school. The premises which are about 20 years old are generously designed, well-built and well kept. It has often been noticed how a good school building seems to influence the school children; at Bourton they come to school clean and well dressed and their behaviour both in school and in the playground is excellent. The staff consists of three women teachers who work very conscientiously and do their best to keep up to date. Although two of them are supplementary teachers they are all doing excellent work. In a school where there is much good work the English composition is perhaps the best subject, the writing, spelling and general expression of the children's ideas being very good. A point which was also noticed was that there is no backward section in the school – the work of nearly all the children is up to the average or above it. A school garden is included in the site, and this subject is successfully taken by one of the assistants. Manual instruction and domestic instruction are also provided in the village a short distance away from the school. On the whole the school appears to be doing satisfactorily most of the things which can be expected of a country elementary school.'

Staff in September 1927

J. Shepherd. Head Teacher

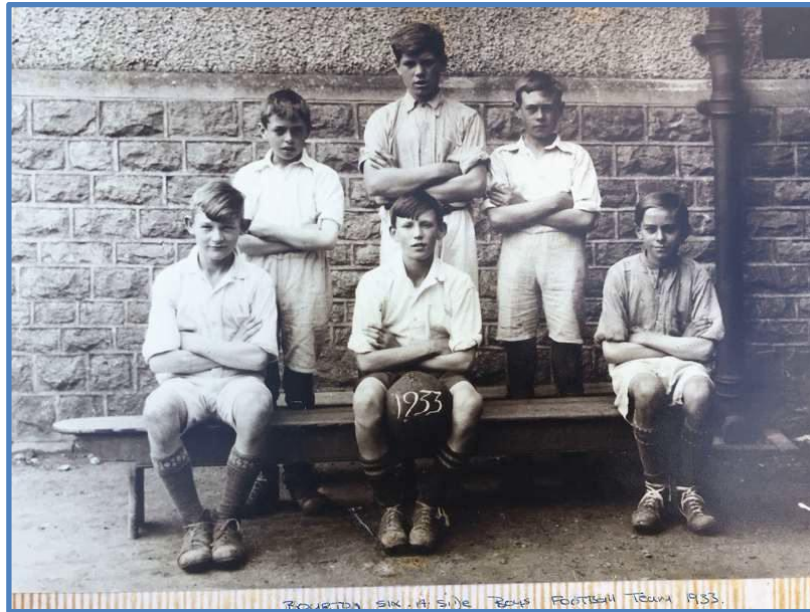
M.E. Barr - Supplementary teacher in charge of Lower Division

H.M. Poole - Supplementary teacher in charge of Infants

At the beginning of March 1928, School Correspondent, Colonel D.H. Ames checked the school registers one last time as he was leaving the neighbourhood. The new Correspondent was Sir Cyril Kendall-Butler of Bourton House. In early January 1930, Miss M. Barr left the school to be married, and on 3rd of March Miss Sarah E. Williams, Supplementary Teacher for the lower standard commenced her duties. And to confuse things, an entry noted that Mr Slade introduced a Miss Williams as the new Domestic Teacher. But Miss S. Williams only stayed until December of the following year when she left to get married. Miss N. Bowler commenced duties on the 11th January 1932, had several bouts of illness and then left to get married at the end of September 1933. It was around this time that the old school building at the top of the hill was used for classes for the older children, Domestic cooking for the girls and Carpentry for the boys. The classes were also open for local adults to join in. In June 1932, a D.J. Rendell took temporary charge of the school whilst Mrs J. Shepherd was away. She returned on the 25th July the same year. On the 2nd October 1933, Miss L.M. Elliott

commenced working as a Supplementary Teacher on a one month trial. She was made permanent on the 30th of October the same month.

There were some keen footballers among the boys of the school and we have a picture of a six-side from 1933 (below). Sadly, we do not have their names.



The report made by the Inspector Mr J.B. Reynish after two inspections carried out on the 18th April and 1st May 1934, was on the whole complimentary. The teaching staff were

Staff at May 1934

J. Shepherd Head Mistress

L. M. Elliott Supplementary in charge of Lower Division

H.M. Poole Do Infants

Sir Cyril Kendall Butler of Bourton House died on the 22nd June 1936. He and his wife were benefactors of the school and Sir Cyril was a Correspondent and would regularly check the school registers as was required by law. Consequently, there was a note in the school logbook on the 25th June whereby the school was closed in afternoon to allow staff and children to attend his funeral service at the church.

Upon the death of King George V the school had been closed as a mark of respect and was duly entered in the school logbook on the 28th January 1936. The school was closed again and noted on the 11th May of the same year for the Coronation of King George VI in order that everyone could join in with the celebrations.

By this time, much was being done with dentistry and children were being invited to attend government appointed dental clinics to have their teeth checked. One such clinic was noted in the school logbook as being held on the 3rd November 1937 in the '*Long Room*.' This particular building was erected by Henry Tucker and is located within the grounds of Bourton House, and forms one of the walls that guides the road around the sharp corner by the village Cross. What was the '*Long Room*' and used for many village functions in the past, now forms part of the buildings of Pinewood School. (see below - photo courtesy Neil B. Maw).



Another dark episode in British history was beginning at the end of the decade – World War 2. We don't know if it was related but there were major staff changes as the year 1939 progressed. On 30th June Miss Elliott resigned her duties owing to her marriage, and on the same day Mrs Shepherd gave up charge of the school. Three days later E. Diana Blakiston B.A., C.M. took over as Head Mistress. The school re-opened after the summer break, but owing to the outbreak of war, with the resultant evacuation of children from towns to rural areas, the re-opening of school after the holidays was postponed from September 5th to the 12th. The entry in the school log continued, *'The Board of Education have decided that the evacuees and their teachers shall share the rural schools with us, and we have been instructed to occupy the school premises from 8.50am to 12.30 pm daily, while the evacuees should attend school from 1pm to 4.30 pm daily. There are five 'private' evacuees who attend morning school with our own children. We have drawn up a temporary timetable.'*

On the 12th September 1939, Mrs E. Roberts took the place of Miss Elliott as Supplementary teacher. Miss Sidney from East Ham came to run the school whilst Mrs Roberts had been called away to attend to her sister who was unwell. Mrs Roberts didn't return until 9th November. It's not noted why Mrs Blakiston disappeared but a log entry recorded that she returned to her duties on 21st February 1940.

Plans had been made for the possibility of an air raid and an entry dated 9th June 1940 stated, Mr Cooper of The Forge, fixed some wire netting which was supplied by the Education Authority on the windows & doors of the infant's classroom. It had been decided that the pupils should assemble in the infant's room. The following year the school log noted that the school managers had presented them

with a *'lovely wireless set the "Wembley." We are looking forward to listening in to the school's programme.'*

At the end of 1940 there were 71 children on the school register, 47 local children and 24 evacuees. In that month there was great difficulty in getting enough milk for the children. The Head Mistress noted that she had asked farmers, Mr Arkell, Mr Willis and Mr Kent whether they could supply milk, but they were finding it impossible to do so owing to the shortage of animal feed.

At the end of November 1940 Mrs Roberts resigned as teacher and it wasn't until the beginning of the following year that Miss Fraser of Lambourne came to fill the gap for the time being. It turned out that her stay would be a considerably long one as she didn't leave until June 1943. In April the following year Mrs Blakiston gave up her charge of the school and she was replaced by Kathleen Eve Collins on the 1st May 1944.

On the 8th January 1945, it was stated that the, *'School re-opened by me Tom Knowles BA, Trained Certified Teacher as supply head teacher. Miss Collins is away on sick leave. Attendance rather low on account of colds and cold weather.'* Tom was there until March 16th when Miss Collins returned. The end of 1945 came without a single mention in the logbook that the war had also come to an end. It's very likely that was because everyone was so pleased to see the back of it.

Kathleen Collins left the school as Head on the 22nd July 1948 and her place was taken by Gwenllian M. Worwood at the start of the new term on the 8th September 1948. It was this year that the supplying of school dinners was about to come to fruition. An entry in the log in October noted that *'A supply of utensils arrived in the lunch hour for the School Dinners that was checked and the invoice signed. All these utensils have been put in the Dinner Room on Bourton Hill.'* The old school building was still very much in use. The serving of school dinners started on 1st December

and the log noted that, *'the children walk up to the old school dinner room in the dinner hour under supervision.'* However, this arrangement didn't last long as one year later the log noted that in early November 1949, *'school canteen closes today and Mrs Warren's services no longer required as Cook. School dinners are brought now from Wantage Cooking Depot and the meals are being eaten in school instead of at the old school on Bourton Hill.'*

The year 1949 was a year of several goodbyes. On 17th June an entry in the logbook stated, *'David Kibble leaves this school today. On Tues next, June 21st he will sail from Tilbury with his parents in the "Orcaades" for Australia, where his father will work on a fruit farm some miles outside Adelaide.'* And in early November, *'Rev. Ainscow called this morning to take his farewell of staff and pupils of this school. He wished us all God speed and we in turn sang him one of our favourite tunes before saying cheerio for himself, Mrs Ainscow and his son. Rev. Ainscow preached his farewell sermon yesterday, Remembrance Sunday and leaves Bourton later in the week. His new address will be Abbots Kerswell Vicarage, Newton Abbot, S. Devon.'* The new Vicar Rev. Saunders arrived later in 1950.

The national news of importance in 1952 was the death of King George VI and the children lowered their Union Jack to half-mast. They also listened on the radio to the proclamation of the new Queen Elizabeth II from St James' Palace, London. They also listened to the radio coverage of the late King.

The school trip that year was Windsor Castle and also a trip on the River Thames to Runnymede where the signing of the Magna Charter took place. There is a considerable description in the logbook entry of what they saw that day. Other trips that year included a visit to the Swindon Advertiser newspaper printing works in Old Town, Swindon, and also a trip to St Mary's at Wantage to see the Native Paintings and Sculpture from the Missionary School at Cyrene in Southern Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe).

There were lots of activities going on in May 1953 ahead of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth in June. They held their own service at the Cross Tree (see below - photo 1910 courtesy Paul Williams) and had Tea in the Long Room. All the children were given Coronation Mugs as a memento of the occasion.



On the 9th July 1954, an entry in logbook recorded the departure of an American girl called Martha (Marty) Burrough, who had been at the school since February 1953. The school managers gave Marty a book of English Village Life, added to this was six views of Bourton - the photos taken by Mr Major when he was Station Master at Shrivenham.

At the beginning of November 1955, the Vicar who was the correspondent of the managers, reported that he had received notice from Miss Poole who wished to leave at the end of that month. She had suffered some ill-health over the previous two years, but she got married and was at that point known as Mrs Telling. Her

sister, Mrs Roberts, had been helping out at the school. Temporary duties were given by Miss Harrop as a Supplementary Teacher in the infant's room, and the entry noted that she will be with the school until Easter 1956 when she would join her family in Singapore. She actually left at the end of 1955. It was agreed that Mrs Telling could teach part-time until a replacement for her could be found. At a school party held in February 1956, the Vicar referred to Mrs Telling's 30year service to the children of Bourton and presented her with a cheque from the managers.

In September 1956 the school welcomed Mrs Edith Jeacock who was to be the new infant's teacher. She was highly qualified as a teacher and had been Deputy Headmistress at a grammar school in Liverpool for many years. But she only stayed until the end of 1959.

At the end of 1958 workmen began preparations for a new block to be added to the school building with the foundations being laid in the playground. The work continued in to 1959 but then for some reason was stalled. In April of that year Mrs Worwood noted that very little work had been done, but in July added that *"The new block can now be used."* It was quite a novelty and a few days later an entry stated that, *"The children were shown around the new block and shown how to use flush lavatories and where to hang clothes."* But at this point the numbers of pupils attending was only 14.

After being interviewed by Mrs Worwood, Mrs Crossley started to work on a part-time basis in June 1960, teaching the lower group, but she left at the end of that year.

On the 6th September 1961, at the start of the Autumn term, Mrs J. Willis from Longcott joined the staff, an unqualified teacher, who took over the infants section. The following month Mr J. Saunders retired as School Attendance Officer

and Mr Smith from Ealing took over. He was out and about around the neighbourhood and towns, and if he saw children not in school during school hours, he would question them as to why.

The beginning of 1963 came the winter known as big freeze. In the log was written, *'The beginning of this year was the great blizzard, with huge amounts of snow. The village of Bourton was cut off by the sheer size and depth of the snow drifts. Tractors were the only vehicles that could move. The big freeze continued through January. The head noted that there was a strong NE gale blowing straight for the entrance door of the school, so she asked local farmers for help in supplying a tarpaulin to put over the wooden door to stop the draught. Eventually, the freeze persisting and pipes freezing up, the school was closed.'*

1964 was a year of much change within the schooling system and it was in February there appeared the first mention of the exam known as the 11plus. The idea was that it would give a true indication of how bright an 11year-old child was, and the result of the exam would determine whether he or she should go on to Grammar or Secondary schooling. There was no warning given to parents or pupils, it was simply a matter of sitting down and do it. The new system of schooling was not popular with many parents and complaints were received by the managers of Bourton school. It was decided that an open day would be held and all parents invited to be given explanations on the new ways of teaching.

The Head Mistress Mrs Worwood noted in the log on 24th February 1965 that she had been invited to the new school at Faringdon (actually built two years earlier) called Tollington Secondary. It was to be the official opening by Sir John Hunt of Mount Everest climbing fame and was a solemn occasion with all pupils warned to be on best behaviour by the headmaster Mr Davies. The school buildings are still there today but it is now classed as a Community College.

On the 9th March 1965 Mrs Worwood had the ill fortune to be attacked by dogs near Shrivenham Railway Station. Her injuries were considerable and she was unable to attend her duties at school until after the Easter break. Whilst she was absent permission was received from Reading for Mrs Eileen Jessey B.A. to take over the duties of headmistress until Mrs Worwood's return. Her bad luck continued the following year when in October she was knocked down in Swindon by a car and taken to the Princess Margaret Hospital. She sustained extensive bruising and had to remain at home for some time. The county supply teacher from Ashbury, Mrs Lugg took over whilst she recovered. Early in 1967, Gwen Worwood obtained leave of absence to attend the Swindon Courts of Justice to see a Mr Hazell plead guilty of careless driving and was fined £20 and his licence endorsed.

The technology of the time had advanced considerably to the point where in April 1965, the school administration was informed that a telephone would be installed shortly, but that it would be on a shared-line basis with the Rev. Oddie at the Vicarage. Also, in June 1967 the village of Bourton was connected to the main sewer system and the school was connected up.

During the summer holidays that year, work was done to remove the old toilet block, build a new coal shed and also the re-surfacing of the playground. At the beginning of the Autumn term Mrs Willis informed the Head that she would be leaving on the 1st October and on the 4th of that month, Mrs Kemp from Hinton Parva took up her duties as a trained infant teacher. She stayed until the summer break of 1966 and was replaced by Mrs Bond, also a qualified teacher

At the end of 1967, Gwen Worwood left the school after being head for just under 20 years. Early in the new year the new Head, B.J. Martin took charge on the 9th January. The Vicar introduced the new Head and also another teacher called Mrs G. Hazell. But the very next day, the school was closed on account of bad

weather, insufficient heating and the mobile canteen was unable to get through. By the 15th of January it was open again and Mrs O'Brien, Headmistress of Longcott School, sent her assistant over to Bourton to help with the paperwork which appeared to be in a mess. The new Head noted in the log, *'Everything was left in such confusion that in spite of Mrs Hazell and myself visiting the school several times during the holidays, sometimes with members of our families assisting us, we were unable to do much except sort out some of the equipment and make a desiring list.'* At this point there were 9 infants and 24 juniors attending the school.

Notes in the log that were entered the following year about the conditions at the school, about it the building being drafty and difficult to heat and keep warm; that combined with the low numbers attending, must have played an important role in its eventual closure. But the education continued as normal with two school trips in the summer of 1968 to Cirencester and Chedworth Roman Villa, then in June to Bourton-on-the-Water and the Model Village. An open evening for parents in July of that year continued with many comments on the progressive methods of teaching used during the previous two terms.

In 1969, Miss Lancaster, the school meals organiser, mentioned that with 17 pupils attending meals, that she was entitled to an assistant, so Miss Woodward commenced her duties on 27th January that year. On the teaching staff side, Miss Nixon a qualified supply teacher from Watchfield commenced duties. A log entry noted that Miss Hazell had resigned and was working out her notice at Faringdon Infants School, and Miss Nixon would remain until June and she duly left on the 20th. The Clerical Assistant, Mrs Gleave, resigned in March 1970 and was replaced a month later by Mrs Povey.

The Head and others from Bourton were invited to Longcott to attend the opening of their new school but it was clear that the talk among the Bourton staff must have been one of probable closure soon. In March 1970, the Head noted in

the log that, *"I have heard from the Froebel Institute that I have been offered a place on the London University Diploma in Primary Education course beginning Sept 1970 on condition that I am granted secondment."* But the following month the Head wrote in the log that the application for secondment had been refused.

The first note in the logbook of school closure was dated 5th November 1970, when at a Managers Meeting the possibility of the school being closed the following summer was mooted. There was also the decision of whether the children should attend Ashbury or Shrivenham school after closure. A meeting of the parents would be arranged to discuss and decide. On the 7th December 1970 such a meeting was held, whereby the managers and most of the parents attended, who voted 9 – 4 in favour of the discontinuance of Bourton school and to send the children to Shrivenham. The last entry in the Logbook was dated 18th December 1970, and ended with the words -

'We closed for the Christmas holidays this pm. The children took their own service.'

So ended just under 130 years of schooling at Bourton.

ROYAL COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE

EDUCATION ACTS, 1944 to 1968

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 (3) of the Education Act, 1944, that the Berkshire County Council being the Local Education Authority propose to:—

CEASE TO MAINTAIN BOURTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL (AIDED)

situated in the Parish of Bourton in the County of Berkshire.

The Managers or Governors of any Voluntary School affected by the proposal, or any ten or more local government electors for the area and any local education authority concerned, may submit objections to the proposal by a letter addressed to the Permanent Under Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, Curzon Street, London, W.1, which should reach him within two months after the date of the first publication of this notice.

(Signed) E. R. DAVIES,
Clerk of the County Council of the Administrative County of Berkshire,
Shire Hall, Reading.

Dated 1st April 1971.

The above proclamation was issued on the 1st April 1971 that in effect meant that the school would no longer be supported and maintained by the Education Authority. In advance of the imminent closure, Mr Ronald Friend, Headmaster of Shrivenham school visited Bourton School to meet the children on 6th July 1971. He arranged for them and their parents to visit Shrivenham school and meet the teachers. When Shrivenham school re-opened after the summer break that year on 7th September, the 17 Bourton pupils were transferred.