

VICTORIAN SCHOOLDAYS



STAFFORDSHIRE
STUDY BOOK 13

VICTORIAN SCHOOL DAYS

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The cover shows a school group with staff in the 1880's. The school is thought to be in the Boney Hay area.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This book is compiled from the log books of various Staffordshire schools in Victorian days. Extensive quotations from a few log books have been reproduced rather than more selective extracts from a large number in order to give a better idea of ordinary school days. The log book of Eccleshall National School is reproduced as it stands and those for Smallthorne and Market Street Board Schools with the omission of routine entries about teachers' absence, visits from members of the School Board, figures for attendance etc. In all three instances a number of selected entries from earlier or later years have been added to the main extract.

The school log book was the official school diary kept by the head teacher. It came into being as a result of the Revised Code, 1862, in which the Government laid down regulations by which a government grant could be earned by a school. Grants were to be paid partly on attendance and partly on the ability of pupils to pass annual tests in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. These tests, at six standards intended for pupils aged 6 years and upwards, were administered by Her Majesty's Inspectors on an annual visit to each school. Colourful certificates like that on page 45 encouraged pupils to pass the tests. Every school that sought a government grant had to keep a log book.

What was recorded in a log book was the subject of regulations. The head teacher had to make an entry in it at least once a week which specified "ordinary progress and other facts concerning the school or its teachers which may require to be referred to at a future time or may otherwise deserve to be recorded". Many head teachers made daily entries.

Entries were to be brief and record only essential facts like attendance, teachers' absences, and variations from the approved timetable for the school day. No reflections or opinions of a general character were to be included. In practice most head teachers were roused to record incidents at greater length from time to time and a few habitually wrote more fully than they were required to do. The three schools from whose log books the extracts on pages 5-30, 31-44 and 46-62 are reproduced all had head teachers of this kind. At Eccleshall the Headmaster's style changes after H.M.I.'s annual visit when he "began to keep the log book on a new method suggested by H.M.I."- after that entries are much briefer.

In the 1860's education was dominated by the Church, most schools had been built with help from one of the Religious Societies. Such was the National School at Eccleshall - National refers to its affiliation to the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (i.e. the Church of England).

Eccleshall was a small market town notable for having a residence for the Bishop of Lichfield. A grammar school had been started in the seventeenth century, a charity school in the eighteenth century and a national school in the nineteenth century. All had strong support from the Church. The first national school served a wide area - for Eccleshall was a very large parish. John Lonsdale, Bishop of Lichfield, replaced that school with three new buildings at Croxton (1854), Offley Hay (1860) and Eccleshall (1862). At Eccleshall there were boys' and girls'-with-infants' schools on the same site. The log book extracts (pages 5 to 30) begin soon after the new boys' school was opened. The plan of the school (pages 26-7) is taken from the application for a building grant made to the National Society.

The second log book from which extracts are reproduced in a contrast in every way. The Education Act of 1870 had brought in elected School Boards able to levy rates and make education compulsory in areas where the Church had been unable to supply all school needs. In the Norton-in-the-Moors area there were church schools but not enough places in them

for all children. This did not matter as long as school was not compulsory. School Boards could make going to school compulsory if they so wished, church schools could not. In 1876 a new Education Act made schooling compulsory for all children aged 5 to 14 but those over the age of 10 could leave if they reached a given standard in the annual tests given by H.M.I. or had attended at least 250 half days a year for five years. Children below the age of ten could not be employed.

In the same year, 1876, Norton-in-the-Moors School Board was formed to build new schools in the area. A boys' school at Smallthorne was opened on 3rd July 1876 and a girls' school a month later. Education was compulsory but not free as school pence had to be brought each week by every child. The schools opened in temporary premises and the present buildings, Smallthorne Middle School in 1981, were opened in 1878.

Smallthorne was a mining community north-east of the Potteries. There was a good deal of poverty at all times but whenever work was short families became desperately poor. The log book extracts on pages 46 to 52 show something of the Boys' School during its early years. There are only one or two entries each week in this log book unlike that for the National School at Eccleshall in which the Headmaster wrote almost every day. Notice that by the late 1870's it was possible to earn Government grants for subjects other than the 3R's. By the end of the 1870's Smallthorne, like many other schools, had begun to widen its curriculum to take advantage of additional grants available for older pupils.

No early plan of the school survives but the first large scale O.S. map for the area after the school was built gives some idea of the school plan and the locality in which it had been built.

The third log book from which extracts are reproduced is that for Market Street Infants Board School built by the Fenton School Board. This school, begun as Mount Tabor Infants' School, became Market Street when it moved to new premises which included both boys' and girls' schools. These buildings are shown in the drawing on page 52. In 1981 the building was occupied by Glebe First School while a new school was built.

The area served by the school had several pot banks and most of those who lived near the school worked in the pottery industry. A number of families in the area lived in continual poverty and these children were often given aid by those who were a little better off. The school had begun to use kindergarten methods of teaching infants. In this it was helped by changes in regulations before the date of the extracts reproduced. After 1891 school boards had been able to make education free and this had been done at Fenton. In 1895 H.M.I. were allowed to discontinue annual visits and standard tests in favour of occasional visits without tests provided they were certain the school was in good order. Market Street Infants Board School was one of those chosen and had no more annual tests of its older pupils.

School timetables had to be approved by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors but few have survived. The only two dated before 1900 known for Staffordshire schools are reproduced on pages 53 and 54.

In 1885 a new Headmaster was appointed at Oakamoor Mills Schools. He entered in unusual detail the work done in school. The extracts on pages 55 to 56 reproduce some of the tests he gave to pupils soon after he took up his appointment. Those on pages 56 and 58 are part of a lengthy syllabus of work for 1896-7. Changes between the work described here and that referred to in the earlier log books should be noted.

SMALLTHORNE BOARD SCHOOL (BOYS')
LOG BOOK JULY 1876 - SEPTEMBER 1888

From July 1876 to April 1879 rather more than half the entries are reproduced. The rest record visitors, the weekly routine of examinations, minor absences etc. There are no entries for many dates. A small number of additional entries dating between May 1879 and September 1888 have also been reproduced as these add to the information given in the earlier extracts.

1876

- July 3rd The school was opened for the first time as an Elementary Day School. 24 boys admitted. Messrs. Oulsman, Lewis, Wood and Wilkinson visited the school.
- July 10th Admitted 12 boys: majority of whom were very backward.
- July 17th Mr. Wood visited the school. Two pupil teachers - Albert Ernest Bent and Samuel George Wood commenced duties. 17 admitted.
- August 1st 81 boys present in the afternoon: the highest number in attendance since the school opened.
- August 6th 3 admissions. Nearly half the school absent in consequence of Stoke Wakes, and a Sunday School Treat in the neighbourhood. Mr. Wood visited the school.
- August 10th No school. General holiday throughout the Potteries.
- August 11th Average attendance though the present week lower than the previous week owing to the attraction of "Stoke Wakes". The attendance generally has so far been very irregular.
- August 16th Gave a "first" Geography Lesson. 3 boys only, out of a class of 30, showed evidence of previous instruction in this subject.
- August 24th Rev. H. Kelsall, Vicar of Smallthorne, visited the school.
- August 28th Only 35 boys were in attendance this morning, on account of Smallthorne Wakes. Half holiday in the afternoon.
- Sept 8th The "average" has this week increased to 92, an advance of 28 upon the previous week. 2 boys have left during the week; 1 of whom had only attended 3 half-days; the reason given for his removal was that he played Truant when sent to this school.
- Sept 11th Prepared a list of Books, Material etc., required for School purposes, and forwarded it to Mr. Wood, Clerk of the Board. 6 boys admitted.
- Sept 18th 7 boys admitted.
Rather scanty attendance; caused chiefly by the wet weather.
- Sept 25th 8 boys admitted.
Copy books supplied to all boys above the First Standard. Mr. Wood visited the school.
- October 5th William Hodgkiss, who had previously been selected by the Board, commenced work at school as a pupil teacher.
- October 10th Sent a note the Board, drawing their attention to the arrangements respecting half timers: Some of the scholars attending half time are very backward, and the impression among the parents is that when a boy reaches the age of 10 years he is qualified to attend school as a half timer. The Bye Laws of the Board state that no

boy may become a half timer until he has reached the Third Standard, but this is either unknown to the parents, or quietly ignored.

- October 30th 3 admissions. Many boys were absent on account of illness.
- November 2nd Supplied the Bye Law Office with a list of irregular boys.
Half holiday in afternoon.
- November 6th The Chairman of the School Board (Mr. Oulsman) and Mr. Lewis visited the school.
Gave a lesson to the upper classes on Gunpowder Plot.
7 boys admitted.
- November 21st During the dinner hour a disagreement arose between the boys attending this school and those attending the Catholic School in the same street.
The school not being furnished with a playground, the boys have to assemble in the street. To prevent a repetition of the disturbance, I visited the Catholic School, and also cautioned our own lads.
- November 24th Attendance this week has been more satisfactory, the majority of absentees are those boys, who, although unable to pass Standard I, are sent by their parents to work as Half Timers.
- December 4th Mr. Wood visited the school. Mrs. Duncalf brought her son Thomas, who for the last 2 or 3 days has been playing truant.
- December 21st Mr. Wood visited the school. Christmas holidays commenced.
- 1877
- January 8th School re-opened after a fortnight's holiday. 14 boys admitted. The attendance is very fair.
- January 9th Mr. Wood visited.
- January 15th 7 admissions.
- January 19th An unpleasant circumstance occurred today. A cap belonging to one of the scholars was lost, and subsequently found in a drawer at the house of a boy named George Randles. This is the first case of the kind which has occurred since the school was opened.
- January 26th Examination on paper of all boys above Standard I. The results in Arithmetic were fair, but the Spelling in Standard II was unsatisfactory.
- February 24th Mr. Wood brought the timetable which had been submitted for the Inspector's approval.
- February 28th Mrs. Taylor (of Bradley) who has 2 children attending this school complained that one of the boys had been punished by a pupil teacher. On enquiring into the matter, I found that nothing of the kind had taken place.
- March 27th Examination of Standard II and III in Arithmetic and Dictation.
- April 3rd School re-opened after 2 days holiday. Easter week being looked upon as a general holiday, the average attendance has been less than that of previous weeks.
- April 12th 2 of the pupil teachers - A. Kent and G. Wood were 45 minutes late. The home lessons were very unsatisfactory.
- April 13th A. Kent came 10 minutes after school had been opened this afternoon.
- April 19th G. Wood, pupil teacher, absent from school, having sprained his ankle.

- April 25th Examination of Standard II, III and IV in Arithmetic and Dictation. The Arithmetic papers of Standard II were very discouraging.
- May 4th R. Heath Esq., Inspector, visited the school.
- May 28th School re-opened after the Whitsuntide holiday: attendance small.
- June 5th Mr. Wood visited the school. Examination of each class in Arithmetic and Writing.
- June 20th Charles Frost, a boy living in the Croft, was detected wearing a cap which had been taken from the school. On his mother promising to look after him, he was allowed to re-enter his class.
- June 21st Notice received that the first Government Examination of the scholars would be held on July 12th.
- June 22nd Albert Kent (who has been in charge of Standard II) removed to Standard I.
- July 3rd The pupil teachers' examination took place last Saturday (June 30) in the Parish Church Schools, Leek.
- July 6th Owing to the attractions of "Burslem Wakes", the attendance at the commencement of the week was less than that of previous weeks: a slight improvement took place on Wednesday and following days.
The usual instruction as to the Management and work of the classes given to the pupil teachers'.
- July 11th The last lesson on the timetable for this afternoon was not taken, the time being occupied in putting each boy in his place for the examination tomorrow.
I find that the entries in the Summary for last year would have been more intelligible if reversed: e.g. the lowest class has been considered as the "first," and so with the others; this year I have taken the "first" as the highest.
- July 12th First examination of the school by H.M. Inspector, H.R. Rice Wiggin, Esq., and two Assistant Inspectors - Messrs. Beech and Parkes.
As many of those examined received no instruction whatever previous to their admission here, and only about a dozen of those qualified for presentation had been examined before, the results this year will probably be below the average.
Another hindrance to the success of the school is the irregular attendance; and another disadvantage under which the school has laboured is found in the fact that 2 out of the 3 pupil teachers have never been engaged in school work before this year.
A half holiday given in the afternoon.
- July 17th Mr. Wood visited the school. Re-arranged the classes, and placed Albert Kent in charge of the (new) Second Standard, George Wood in charge of the (new) Third Standard, and William Hodgkiss in charge of Standard I.
- July 23rd Results of examination received from H.M. Inspector.
66 passed in Reading.
62 passed in Writing.
59 passed in Arithmetic.
The entry on my parchment is as follows :-
The discipline is good, and the school has otherwise made a creditable start under Mr. Nation.

- August 3rd School broke up for a fortnight.
- August 20th School re-opened. Attendance bad on account of the wet weather.
- August 24th Walter Duncalf, a boy in Standard II, punished for dishonesty.
- August 27th The attendance this morning was worse than that of the previous week, only 77 boys being present. Half holiday in the afternoon
- August 28th Another half holiday in consequence of the school treat. Mr. Wood and Mr. Lewis visited the school.
- August 29th After repeated cautions, Albert Kent one of the pupil teachers again violated a rule of the school which prohibits pupil teachers inflicting corporal punishment.
3 cases came under my notice within half an hour.
- August 30th Report of H.M. Inspector received. The following is a copy :-
"Boys' School. Considering that the school has only been open a year, it has made on the whole a fair start. The first standard is very backward, but the three upper standards read fairly, though with deficient intelligence, write fairly, and do their work neatly, and have passed pretty fairly in Arithmetic. Of Grammar and Geography, not much knowledge was shown. The Singing deserves great praise.
The staff is inadequate to the due working of a new school like this. So large and backward a first standard requires the services of an Assistant Master.
The premises are quite unsuitable for a school."

Richard Nation - Certificated teacher of the Second Class.

Albert E. Kent - Pupil teacher of the Third Year.

George S. Wood - Pupil teacher of the First Year.

William Hodgkiss - Pupil teacher of the First Year.

George Wood.

Clerk to Norton School Board.

- September 6th The Chairman of the Board, (T.M. Oulsman Esq.,) visited the school with Mr. Wood.
- October 3rd Attendance very bad; probably caused by the prevalence of Scarlet Fever throughout the neighbourhood.
- October 12th The want of another pupil teacher has been much felt this week. The 1st Standard - comprising 60 boys has been under the care of the Senior Pupil Teacher.
The Second Standard, which is quite as large as the First, has received my attention specially. The next class, that is the Third Standard - numbering about 30 - is in charge of the Second pupil teacher.
One other class remains; this includes boys in the Fourth and Fifth Standards, numbering about 15 in average attendance. The youngest pupil teacher has charge of this class, as it has been found impossible for him to manage a large class like that of Standard II.
Although he is working wholly under my supervision, the parents of some of the boys have expressed their dissatisfaction and yesterday afternoon, on enquiring after an absent scholar, the answer was given that he would not be sent to school again as long as the pupil teacher remained in charge of the class.

- November 2nd Mrs. Read complained of the treatment her son had received from one of the pupil teachers while I was giving a lesson in the classroom.
I sent an application for a pupil teacher to the Board.
- November 12th Complaint received from Mrs. Walker respecting the treatment of her son Leonard by one of the pupil teachers - S.G. Wood.
- December 3rd Joseph Howle withdrawn from school on account of alleged punishment by a pupil teacher.
- December 12th Thomas Wright withdrawn on account of his teacher punishing him. The teacher (A. Kent) has been repeatedly cautioned about this practice.
- December 20th The school broke up for a fortnight's holiday.
- 1878
- January 7th School re-opened: Poor attendance.
- January 15th Examined Standards III and IV in Arithmetic and Spelling.
- January 16th Examined Standard I: found the Reading very backward.
- January 18th Much difficulty is experienced in working with the present staff. Another pupil teacher is required to assist in the lower Standards.
- February 12th Mr. Wood visited the school.
Attendance very low - examination of Standard II in Dictation and Arithmetic.
Results very discouraging.
- February 22nd A half of the second morning change (10.55 to 11.40) occupied in singing.
The attendance throughout the week has been "bad". On Monday morning more than a half of the school was absent.
- March 8th Owing to a severe cold, I have been obliged to leave the work of the school almost entirely in the hands of the pupil teachers throughout the week.
- March 11th The second lesson for the third class (Standard II) in the afternoon has been changed, and Geography and Grammar given instead, alternately.
- April 18th School broke up for the Easter holiday.
- April 26th Attendance "low" Easter week. Albert Kent absent on Tuesday (April 23rd) through illness.
- May 17th A "Specimen" lesson given to the pupil teachers on "Money".
- May 24th Attendance - a little below that of last week: several children have been sent back for the school fee.
Examination of the Upper Standards.
- May 31st Lesson to pupil teachers on the "Sheep": repeated to Standard I this afternoon. 5 cases of "truant-playing" occurred this week.
- June 7th Called the attention of the Board to the large amount owing for "school money": most of the parents plead poverty as an excuse. Ordinary progress during the week.
Next week being Whitsun week, the school broke up for the customary holiday.
- July 5th Special lessons given by the teachers :-
A. Kent to Standard II on "Coffee".
G. Wood to Standard I on "the sheep".
Attendance greatly interfered with by "Burslem Wakes".

- July 19th Lesson given to Standards III, IV and V on "How to write a Letter".
Lesson by A. Kent to Standard II on "Gold".
Lesson by G. Wood to Standard I, on the "Bear".
Attendance still very unsatisfactory.
- July 23rd Holiday yesterday; the room required for a Sunday school treat.
- August 2nd Mr. Wood visited the school. "Broke up" this morning for a fortnight's holiday.
- August 19th School re-opened. Albert Kent absent.
- August 20th Albert Kent absent. The small staff makes the work of carrying on the school with one pupil teacher absent exceedingly difficult.
- September 11th Notice received that the Annual Inspection would take place on October 10th. Mr. Wood visited.
- September 27th Mr. Wood visited.
Mrs. Martin complained of her son, Edward, being punished by a pupil teacher.
- September 30th The pupil teachers' examination was held last Saturday at Cross Street School, Tunstall.
- October 4th *Visited school-time 11 a.m.*
Scholars present 120
Order good.
Thos. Mayer Oulsman.
- October 4th R. Heath Esq., visited the school.
- October 11th Standards II - V examined in Geography and Grammar by Messrs. Beech and Parkes.
- October 23rd Mrs. Martin withdrew her 3 children from school, because 2 of them were punished for disorderly conduct during my temporary absence.
- October 24th Attendance - small - owing to the rain.
- November 19th The home lessons of 2 of the pupil teachers (Wood and Hodgkiss) were not done satisfactorily this morning.
3 admissions yesterday, and 1 this morning.
- November 26th Report received from the Education Department.
The following is a copy of the part relating to the Boys' School.
"The school continues in good discipline, and the singing again deserves praise, but except as regards the Geography of the Second Standard, which is now very fair, and the handwriting of the first, fourth, and fifth standards, which is good, there is little, if any, improvement in the attainments. I have to repeat my remarks of last year that an Assistant Master should be appointed to take charge of the First Standard. The pupil teacher to whom this standard has been instructed is quite unequal to the charge of so large a class. Special attention should be directed to the development of the boys' intelligence, as regards both Reading and Arithmetic".

George Wood
Clerk to the Board.

November 26th Staff.

Richard Nation.
Certificated Teacher of the Second Class.

Albert E. Kent.
Pupil Teacher of the Fourth Year.

Samuel George Wood.
Pupil Teacher of the Second Year.

William Hodgkiss.
Pupil Teacher of the Second Year.

George Wood.

November 28th Mr. Wood visited the school, and presented Thomas Jones with the Honour Certificate awarded by the Education Department. This is the first Certificate of Honour gained in Smallthorne.

December 20th School broke up for the Christmas Holidays.

1879

January 31st George Wood absent on account of illness yesterday and today. Examined Standard I: Several boys, lately admitted, are unable to "tell" the letters of the alphabet.

March 7th The usual weekly examination of Standards III, IV and V was held this morning. Ordinary progress.

March 10th Mr. J.J. Bullock commenced his duties as Assistant Master. The senior pupil teacher, Albert E. Kent, was transferred to the Milton Boy's School. The transfer of this teacher prevents a division of Standard I. This class numbers from 60 to 80 boys. 20 or 30 of whom require the special attention of a good teacher in order to be prepared for the Government Examination. The first Drawing Examination at this school was held this morning under the superintendence of the following members of the Board :- Mr. J.H. Deane, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Willatt, and Mr. G. Wood (Clerk). Holiday in the afternoon.

April 1st Mr. G. Wood visited the school and called the Register of each class and found same correct.

George Wood.

May 1st Applied to the Board for a Monitor who would be able to take the upper part of Standard I while the Assistant Master - Mr. Bullock - is devoting more special attention to the most backward boys.

May 2nd Instead of History, Singing was taken for the second lesson this afternoon. Taught a new piece - "Never Forget the Dear Ones."

May 5th Mr. Heath, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Wood visited the school, and gave instructions for a Monitor to be appointed to Standard I.

May 6th Henry Jones: (a boy from the Fifth Standard) commenced as a Monitor.

May 9th Collective lesson on "Lead" to upper standards. Ordinary routine.

- June 8th 'Drawing List' received from the Science and Art Departments.
7 boys were marked as Excellent.
21 boys were marked as Good.
48 gave satisfactory evidence of having been taught Drawing.
In the second grade - One pupil teacher (S.G. Wood) obtained "Excellent" and A.E. Kent - "Good".
- June 26th A number of girls from the Wesleyan School came up to practice singing with the boys.
- July 11th Gave a lesson on "Peter the Great" to Standard IV and V.
- July 23rd Had considerable trouble with a boy named Perry - an habitual truant player.
- August 14th Alfred Perry (who had been punished and kept in for truant playing) escaped from school by getting out of the window during the dinner hour.
- August 22nd 5 of the members of the School Board visited the school in order to ascertain what apparatus was required.
- September 12th Ordinary routine throughout the week. Examined the boys lately admitted to the school, and found that very many of them knew nothing about the Tables, and some were unacquainted with the letters of the alphabet.
- September 15th Mr. R. Heath, Junior (Chairman of the School Board), Mr. T.M. Oulsman, and Mr. G. Wood visited the school, gave a short address to the scholars, and distributed the prizes won at the last Drawing examination.
- October 20th Messrs. Parkes and Beech, (Assistants to H.M.I.), examined the school in the "Standard" work. Half holiday in afternoon.
- October 22nd Mr. Parkes again visited the school; heard the Singing, and examined Child's books, and Registers.
- October 30th S. Holmes Esq., H.M.I. visited the school for Annual Inspection. Half holiday in the afternoon.
- November 7th During this week, classes have been re-arranged. Mr. Bullock has commenced work with the 3rd Standard. S.G. Wood with 1st Standard. W. Hodgkiss with 4th Standard.
- November 21st Slight alteration of lessons after 4 p.m. this week. The girls were brought over to this school to commence practising for the Christmas concerts.

1880

- January 5th Henry Jones, the paid Monitor, absent - his father attended school in the course of the morning and complained that the salary was not sufficient as he was in very poor circumstances
- January 26th Schoolroom and classrooms not sufficiently heated - every teacher troubled with a cold in consequence.
- January 30th Thomas Rhead, a boy in Third Standard, taken to the Police Station for stealing 2 reading books from school. The theft was discovered through the boy offering one of the books in pledge in the village.
- February 3rd The case referred to in the last entry heard today at Burslem: this necessitated my absence from school during the morning. The boy was ordered to receive 6 strokes and pay 5 shillings and costs.
- February 20th The last half hour of each afternoon this week has been given

- February 20th cont/: to Drawing , the other lessons have all been taken in their regular order, but each curtailed 10 minutes.
- February 23rd John Cornwall, a boy in 6th Standard, commenced duty as paid Monitor.
- March 19th Examined Standard I.
Many of these boys are very backward - some have just learned their letters, and others are still unable to say them. It will be almost impossible for these to pass Standard I at the next examination.
- March 25th Announced holiday for tomorrow (Good Friday) and Easter Monday.
- March 30th Attendance lower than usual, as the other schools in the village are closed for the whole of the week.
- July 15th 4 boys (Moores, Howle, and 2 Mountfords) punished for playing truant.
- August 16th Commenced school at 9 a.m. instead of 9.30.
Many of the boys are required to take dinner, and have to leave school at 12 o'clock. This causes them to miss a portion of the morning's lesson and we have therefore decided to open school at 9 o'clock every morning.
Lessons taken according to timetable order, but each lesson begins half an hour earlier than it did before.
- September 10th Gave old Reading books (which had some of the pages torn out), to the worst readers in Standards I, II and III.
- October 15th Mr. J.J. Bullock, who has been Assistant Master at this school for the last 18 months, left in order to commence duties as Head Master at the Milton Board School.
Half holiday this afternoon.
- October 22nd With only 2 pupil teachers and 1 monitor - the work has not been a very great pleasure.
- November 4th Left school at 3.30 to attend a meeting of the School Board and make application for an additional pupil teacher.
Last week 251 boys were in actual attendance - this week - 248.
- 1881
- February 7th Weather very severe. Small attendance. The attendance was partly interfered with by an explosion at the Whitfield Colliery - 1½ miles distant. Under these circumstances school was closed in the afternoon.
- April 7th S.G. Wood absent from "class". Supplied Mr. Wood with a list of the school-fees in arrear: and pointed out those which are wholly irrecoverable.
When the School Board was first formed in this district the children were allowed to remain at school even if they had not brought their school-fees.
This soon caused an accumulation of arrears which have remained on the books until today.
- April 22nd The attendance for several weeks has been most unsatisfactory, the difference between the number on the Registers and the number regularly attending being unusually large.
A table is given below showing the numbers on the Registers, and the average attendance for the last 8 weeks.

April 22nd
cont/:

	On Register	Average Attendance	
March 4	278	183	i.e.= 95 absent every time school was open.
March 11	276	188	" 88 " " " " "
March 18	280	184	" 96 " " " " " "
March 25	274	196	" 78 " " " " " "
April 1	276	192	" 84 " " " " " "
April 8	276	190	" 86 " " " " " "
April 15	277	188	" 89 " " " " " "
April 22	282	187	" 95 " " " " " "

May 26th

Yesterday and today the attendance has been interfered with owing to a report having been circulated in the village that two black doctors (sent by Mr. Gladstone) were coming to the school to vaccinate the children. On arriving at school in the afternoon, I found not more than one-sixth of the boys in attendance. About eighty or one hundred women were assembled outside the schools, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the imaginary blacks. Under the circumstances no school was held in the afternoon.

July 25th

Miss Duncan, the mistress of the Girls' School, examined Standards II - VI in this school, while I did the same in hers. The First Standard work was very satisfactory, considering how backward the majority of the boys were at the commencement of our school year.

August 26th

This afternoon I punished one of the Fourth Standard boys (Simeon Martin) for neglecting his Home lessons. About half an hour after returning to his class, he was permitted to go in the yard, and took advantage of this to run home. As this was not the first time that difficulty had arisen, through his conduct, I sent a note to his parents urging them to find another school for him to attend. I may say here that more complaints have been made by this boy's mother, than by any three of the other parents taken together. On two previous occasions the boy has been removed from this school on account of some fancied grievance.

August 30th

Mr. Martin - father of the boy referred to in the last entry, called upon me, and requested that the boy might be allowed to resume his place. He expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the progress of the boy, and seemed to think that Mrs. Martin was too indulgent.

September 6th

Teachers exchanged classes and conducted an examination. I examined Standard II and found Dictation and Arithmetic weak. The only reason I can assign for it is the great disadvantage under which the class was placed at the beginning of the year, when it had to be left in the care of a pupil teacher who was unable to manage a large class. At that time I was obliged to teach Standards III, V and VI.

- September 6th cont/: The 5th and 6th, comprised 43 boys, and the 3rd nearly 50 boys. Mr. Dean, since taking charge of the class has attended very regularly and diligently to his duties, and seems to spare no pains in order that his class may improve.
- September 20th Mrs. Martin, the mother of the boy referred to in the entry for August 26th, brought her boy, Simeon, to school this afternoon, and complained that he had not been allowed to leave school early on the previous morning. I had refused him permission, because he had been attending so irregularly. She became very abusive, and I requested her to leave and take her faultless boy with her.
- December 1st Gave a lesson on "The Sheep", as a model for the pupil teachers'
- 1882
- February 3rd During the week special attention has been given to the home lessons of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Standards. For some time there has been considerable difficulty in getting some boys to attend to the home work; many have to take dinner and thus expect to escape. By means of a little "Lecturing", and also a little extra "Caning"; there is a great improvement: which will, I hope, be maintained.
- February 8th Found the school room full of gas this morning, one of the girls employed to assist the cleaner having allowed it to escape.
- April 4th On coming to school this morning at 8 a.m. I found the desks in the greatest confusion. They had been used in the play hall on the previous night, and, as it appears to be no one's duty to see them put back in their proper places, whenever a Concert or other meeting is held and the desks are required, there is a.m. hour's labourer's work to be done before we can commence our lessons.
- July 7th During the week, S.G. Wood and W. Hodgkiss, have been taking the 'Scholarship Examination at Saltley College. An old pupil teacher from this school (A.E. Kent) now home from college for his holiday kindly offered his services for the week and has been of great help to me.
- October 13th For the last 4 or 5 weeks many of the scholars have been absent with Scarlet Fever which is very prevalent in the village. One doctor informs me he has 40 cases in Smallthorne alone.
- 1883
- June 1st The continuation of the miners' strike interferes with school work. I am losing some of my best boys owing to their parents having obtained employment in other districts.
- June 29th The school is suffering very much just now on account of the miners' strike. The majority of the inhabitants of the village are employed in the pits and iron works of the neighbourhood, and at present work is at a stand-still. The attendance is lower than it has been for a long time and many of the people are removing from the village to obtain work elsewhere. 2 boys belonging to one family have this week gone to America, and 2 others have removed to Kidsgrove.
- August 20th This week is known in Smallthorne as the Wakes Week, and school consequently loses a great deal of its charm as long as the travelling showmen favour the village with their presence.

September 28th Our school year closes today: the attendance this week has been very good - the average being 202 out of 243 on the books. The work during the year has seemed unusually difficult - our staff being weaker than it was last year. The Board endeavoured, by repeated advertisements, to obtain the services of a "Transfer Pupil Teacher" but could not succeed. I have no fault to find with the way the teachers have attended to their work; but the pupil teachers, not having had much experience, are scarcely equal to the task of managing such large classes as we are obliged to place under them.

Staff

Mr. Nation aided by an ex pupil teacher and 2 pupil teachers in their second year.

1884

March 19th Received the following letter from the Clerk of the Board :-

Norton-in-the-Moors,
March 18th 1884

Dear Sir,

The following is a copy of two resolutions passed at the last Board meeting :-

A letter from Mr. Nation having been read requesting a change of holidays - resolved - that no change be made in the holidays, but that they stand as under :-

Two weeks at Christmas: Shrove Tuesday - halfday: Good Friday - whole day: Easter Monday - half day: Norton Wakes - 2 half days: Burslem Wakes - one half day (Monday): Whitsuntide - one week: Stoke Wakes - two weeks. Resolved that before the long holidays the schools break up at mid-day.

Resolved that notice be given to the teachers stating that they are required to adhere strictly to the school hours as defined by the timetables.

Yours truly,

Empson Alcock.

August 20th On coming to school this morning to take the pupil teachers' lessons (between 6 and 7 a.m.) I found that someone had broken in during the night. The front door was left open, and the fastening broken off. Every cupboard and drawer had been burst open and eight shillings of the school money taken. One of the registers (No.8) belonging to the First Standard had been wilfully torn and two 'quarters' completely spoiled. Other premises in the neighbourhood were also visited. There is not the slightest clue to the thieves.

October 15th On Monday and yesterday Mr. Nash, my brother (pupil teacher), and myself were absent from school having to appear as witnesses at the Quarter Sessions against the two men charged with breaking into the schools on August 20th. One was sent to prison for six, and the other for fifteen months.

1885

April 20th Found two large panes of glass broken this morning: On Saturdays and Sundays boys climb over the walls and gate and use the

- April 20th
cont/: playground. Nearly the whole of the damage done to the school premises is committed between Friday evening and Monday morning. I think much of this might be prevented if the caretaker lived within sight of the schools.
- September 29th A boy in the Second Standard - (Joseph Dawson)-has been spending money rather freely the last two days. Knowing his parents were not in circumstances which would allow of this being done, I made enquiries, and discovered that the money had been stolen. This is the first case that has come to my knowledge for a long time; although many of the boys are rough, and come from wretched homes, I have found them to be thoroughly honest, and one or two proofs of this have occurred lately and afforded me much pleasure.
- October 23rd Under the Bye-laws of the Norton School Board, a boy is allowed to leave school when he has passed the Fourth Standard: no compulsion is brought to bear upon those who have passed that Standard, so that boys in V, VI, VII may attend school or stop away - just as the parents please. There appears to be no hope of any improvement until the Fifth is the Standard for total exemption from attendance at school.
- December 23rd School closed this morning for the Xmas holidays. During the last four weeks the last half hour each afternoon has been devoted to the preparation of pieces for a Concert which takes place this evening. The object of the Concert is to raise funds to provide for a school treat in the Summer. Certificates will be distributed to those scholars in the Upper Standards who have passed in the 3 R's at the recent examination.

1886

- January 29th Mr. Robinson and Mr. Kirkland visited. I drew their attention to the muddy condition of the playground. The thin layer of asphalt put down when the schools were erected has worn off in several places and brought to the surface a very soft clay, which in wet weather causes the schoolrooms to become very dirty.
- February 12th On Wednesday, February 10th, a deviation was made from the timetable. Singing was taken in Standards I - IV by the Assistants, at 4 o'clock so that the pupil teachers and monitors could take the Physiology lesson given to Standards V - VII. There has been a marked improvement in the punctuality this week very few boys have been marked late. We have again been inconvenienced by the want of water: boys who remain at school during the dinner hour have not been able to wash themselves. The recent frosts have caused several of the pipes to burst, and, although every effort has been made, we have not yet been able to get a man to repair them.
- June 4th The average for the week is only 198 - the lowest this quarter. Tuesday was a very wet day, and the number present in the morning only reached 163. I find great difficulty now in getting in the school pence: many men in the village are out of work; and it is impossible for the parents to send the money under these circumstances.

1887

- May 13th Two boys in this class - Levi Boulton and Samuel Swann-have very bad eyes and cannot possibly get their work done.

