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A B S T R A C T

This work is confined to a study of the work of the agencies involved with elementary education in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn: The Runcorn School Board, the Board of Guardians, the Rural School Boards and the Voluntary Bodies.

The study of the Runcorn School Board gives a detailed account of the elections of the Board, the appointment of officers, the supply of accommodation, the work of the schools and an analysis of the problems of attendance.

A special problem was that of the Canal Boat Children and a chapter is devoted to a description of their social and economic background and the efforts made to educate them.

The Chapter on the work of the Board of Guardians deals in detail with the work of the School Attendance Committee, the appointment and work of the School Attendance Officers and an account of the work of the Local Committees is included. The section on the payment of school fees shows how this was organised, but is principally concerned with the efforts of the Guardians to avoid the payment of school fees for children attending the voluntary schools in Runcorn.

As little material on the work of the Rural School Board survives the work of each Board is described in so far as material is available, and there is a short account of two schools.

The Chapter on the Voluntary Bodies includes an account of efforts made by the Churches to keep their schools, and a description of the effects of the policy of economy. Studies of schools are included.

The conclusion gives a general survey of the work in the area and makes comparisons at regional and national levels.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN THE POOR LAW UNION
OF RUNCORN FROM 1870 to 1903

by

Florence M. Martin

A Thesis presented for the Degree of
Master of Education of the University of Durham, 1970

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The Poor Law Union of Runcorn was an area in the north of Cheshire. In the year 1870 the area included rich farmland, Frodsham, a small market town, several small villages, and the industrial town of Runcorn, which was situated on the southern shore of the river Mersey where the Bridgewater Canal and the Old Quay Navigation united with the river, about eighteen miles above Liverpool.¹

The foundations of the industrial development of Runcorn had already been laid. Its position at the junction of the canals with the river Mersey and its proximity and easy access to the manufacturing districts of the Midlands, the Lancashire coalfields and the Cheshire salt works, made it an important port, and the opening of the London and North Western Railway, in 1869, was a further aid to its development.²

The following account of the industrial situation of the town during the years 1871-81 was included in a series of "Historical Sketches of Runcorn" which were published in the Warrington Guardian in the year 1884:³

"By its extensive docks, quays and warehouses supplied with the most recent mechanical appliances for safety and dispatch Runcorn has obtained a fair share of commerce by sea and canal, and though not noticed in detail the numerous coal, salt and carrying firms are an important part of the town's commercial stature. Its industries comprise the manufacture of the various alkalis and acids, the making of soap, the smelting of lead, silver refining, copper extraction, the making of steam engines, gas plant and well-sinking apparatus, tanning, the extraction and distilling of glycerine."

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1. White's Cheshire Directory - 1860.
 2. Warrington Guardian - 21.5.1884.
 3. Ibid.

In this area there was a strong, long established, nonconformist population. In the town of Runcorn there was, in addition to two Church of England Churches, a Wesleyan Methodist Church, erected in 1847 with accommodation for 800 persons, an Independent Chapel erected in 1835, a Catholic Chapel opened for Divine Service in 1846, a Primitive Methodist Chapel erected in 1838, a Calvinistic Methodist Chapel built in 1818, a Babtist Chapel erected in 1845 and a Welsh Presbyterian Chapel. The villages of Halton, Helsby, Norley and the town of Frodsham, had each two Wesleyan Chapels, while the village of Kingsley and Newtown had three and Manley had one, Stockton Heath had an Independent Chapel and a Baptist Chapel which had at one time belonged to the Methodists.

The area therefore provided variety, both in the industrial background of the children and in their denominational allegiance.

In the year 1870, when the Elementary Education Act was passed, the area was relatively well provided with schools. The aim of the Act was "to complete the present voluntary system, to fill up the gaps." To fill up the gaps the country was divided into school districts which were boroughs and in the country area, parishes. Where the provision was found to be "sufficient, efficient and suitable" the district was left alone, but if provision of accommodation was necessary and the Voluntary agency failed to provide it, School Boards were formed and were given the power to raise a rate to finance their work. As a result of the survey by the Education Department four School Boards were set up in the Runcorn Union - Runcorn School Board, Dutton School Board, Daresbury School Board and the Whitley United District School Board.

CHAPTER 1.

THE RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

As the population in Runcorn was 12,066¹ the School Board required to have seven members.² An attempt was made to avoid the expense of a contest on an agreed denominational basis. It was assumed that the Roman Catholics, though only a small minority, would have one seat. The Church of England claimed, that as it supplied by far the greatest number of school places, it should have three representatives, but the Nonconformists claimed that as they were stronger numerically, they should have four.³ Efforts to arrange a compromise failed and a contest was inevitable. On 2nd January 1875 the names of eight candidates, three Church of England, four Dissenters and one Roman Catholic, were sent to the Clerk of the Runcorn Board of Guardians, who was the Returning Officer.⁴ Though the policies of the parties were in many respects identical as both were supporters of the Voluntary Schools, the election of the School Board gave rise to feelings of intense bitterness between the Church of England and the Dissenters. To quote one press report:

"The speeches of some of the Candidates contained allusions to the merits and de-merits of the opponents; and personal feelings having been introduced into the contest, much animosity has been occasioned in the town."⁵

It was an energetic campaign. Canvassers for each party went from house to house, crowded meetings were held "and in many cases were characterised by much excitement. Handbills of a controversial character were issued daily and their contents read with avidity."⁶

1. Census 1871.

2. Boards with a population of fewer than 5,000 had 5 members.
 " " " " " " " 15,000 had 7 members.
 " " " " " " " 40,000 had 9 members.

3. Runcorn Examiner - 9.1.1875.

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

The question of Religious Education and the cost of the School Board were the main issues. The Church of England Party refuted the Nonconformist charge that if it were elected, it would exclude the Bible from the schools, while the Nonconformists denied a similar charge made by the Church Party, one candidate stated publicly that if he were elected:

"he would not countenance the reading of the Bible as a text book, but he would advocate a chapter being read at the opening and closing of the school."

The Nonconformists, in their election meetings, explained why it was imperative that they should have four members on the School Board:

"They had no intention of interfering with the existing schools and indeed they had no power to do so, but if the Church Party were in the majority, money paid out of the rates would be used in the furtherance of the schools of a denomination which was completely at variance with the spirit and intention of the Elementary Education Act."

They pledged that they would not spend a single needless penny in the erection of school buildings, and Mr. Simpson, Manager of the Wesleyan Schools, assured the ratepayers that if he were elected, contrary to the allegation of the Church party, he would take good care that he could not be charged with having recklessly spent a "single farthing of their money."

The Nonconformists justified their refusal to collaborate with the Church Party to avoid the necessity of a School Board, and in so doing save the ratepayers money because of their belief that:

"the establishment of a School Board would be one of the best things that ever happened for Runcorn, because it would be the means of forcing the nine hundred children who were running about the streets to attend the present schools."¹

1. The number of children not at school was 223. See page 94.

The campaign culminated in the election on Friday, 8th January 1875. As expected it was a lively election, the excitement being sustained until the results were declared that night at 8.0 p.m. The town was divided into four districts, in each of which was a separate polling booth, but this was not sufficient "the various booths were inconveniently crowded, more especially in the dinner hour and in some cases the voters had to leave without expressing their recently acquired privilege." This delay was also caused by "so many illiterate voters unable to record their votes" and many of those who succeeded in doing so were compelled to wait for several hours." The polls were opened at half past eight o'clock and "from and after that hour, the streets were crowded with an excited throng. The excitement was somewhat intensified by the rushing about of cabs and other vehicles carrying the voters to the various booths." In contrast to the embittered feelings aroused at the pre-election meetings, the proceedings were conducted "with the greatest good humour and marked sobriety." The booths were closed at 4.30 p.m. and at 8.00 p.m. the results were declared by the Returning Officer "in the presence of an immense crowd". It was a victory for the Nonconformists, all four being elected. The three Church of England candidates were also returned but the Roman Catholic candidate came at the bottom of the poll. The results were as follows: ¹

1. Runcorn Examiner - 16.1.1875.

James Pritchard, coal and salt merchant	1,551	Presbyterian
John Barclay, Clerk in Holy Orders	1,383	} Church of England
Richard Lea, Postmaster	1,358	
Peter Briscoe, Grocer	1,253	
John Simpson, coal and salt merchant	1,218	} Wesleyans
Timothy Simister, Tonnage Clerk	1,139	
John Brookes, Quarry proprietor	1,073	Congregationalist
William Harlwood, Grocer	1,012	Roman Catholic

The opening meeting of the Board was held in the Runcorn Improvement Commissioner's Office on 28th January, 1875.¹ The first business was the election of a chairman for the ensuing three years. It was a foregone conclusion that a Nonconformist would hold that position and Mr. John Simpson, a prominent member of the Wesleyan Church, who was a manager of the Wesleyan Schools and who was also actively connected with the Wesleyan Sunday schools since 1838² when he first became a teacher there, was the obvious choice, but Canon Barclay, who took the initiative made the unexpected proposal that Mr. James Pritchard be elected. His reason for doing so could not be disputed, it was only logical that as the ratepayers had placed Mr. Pritchard head of the poll "on that ground alone they were bound to elect him". Mr. Pritchard was a young man who had no experience of Elementary schools but, said Canon Barclay "that in his opinion was in his favour, as he would be able honestly and impartially to carry out the Act without being hampered with any ideas connected with the past management of schools!"³ Canon Barclay said he was not personally acquainted with him but from what he had heard of him, he possessed good sense, good temper and an amount of tact which was

1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 28.1.1875.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 5.9.1874.

3. Ibid - 30.1.1875.

necessary for the proper discharge of his duties as the Chairman of that Board."¹

The Wesleyans moved an amendment on the grounds that they should have as chairman a man of some experience of the working of school and proposed Mr. Simpson; Mr. Pritchard seconded this proposal and declined nomination on account of his inexperience, and the fact that the number of votes recorded in his favour was no proof of his ability to be chairman. The amendment was carried and Mr. Simpson was elected Chairman. A nonconformist was elected Vice-Chairman and for the appointment the Church party abstained from voting.² The Nonconformists were now firmly in control.

This inaugural meeting of the Board showed clearly that rift created by the election campaign was still wide. Canon Barclay expressed the hope that "any ill feeling which might have been engendered during the election, if not already subsided, would soon die away and that the hard things which had been said and done would be forgotten", but Mr. Simpson in his remarks when he took the Chair said "he did not wish to refer to the past as things had been said which could not be forgotten, and therefore could not be forgiven."³ It was an inauspicious start but the members of this, the first school board, were public spirited men whose interest in the welfare of the children of Runcorn was greater than any denominational rivalry, and within a couple of months they had settled down and were working harmoniously together.

In 1878, a contest was initiated as the Roman Catholics were determined to have a seat on the Board. On this occasion it was a quiet

1. Runcorn Examiner - 30.1.1875.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid - 30.1.1875.

peaceful election. The suspicions and fears which both parties had prior to the first election had been dispelled. The Wesleyans had not transferred their schools and had no intention of doing so. The members of the Board had been working together for three years, they now worked as a team. The policy of the members, many of whom were School Managers, was identical, not to injure the Voluntary Schools, and to keep down the rates. There were no inflammatory speeches. The usual electoral literature was distributed and the Roman Catholics gained their coveted place. They came second in the poll, obviously through the exercise of the cumulative vote. The Church party were now in the majority, the Board consisted of four members of the Church Party and three Nonconformists¹ and the former continued to hold this ascendancy until 1901. Canon Barclay, Vicar of Runcorn who was placed at the top of the poll, was unanimously elected Chairman and Mr. Simpson became Vice Chairman², a position in which he was happy to serve as he was afflicted with deafness, and when relinquishing his position as Chairman he expressed his appreciation of the Board's patience with his disability. Canon Barclay remained Chairman until his death in 1886³ and Mr. Simpson was Vice Chairman until 1883 when he did not stand for re-election to the Board.⁴ In 1886, Mr. James Pritchard replaced Canon Barclay and served in this capacity until 1898.⁵ Such was the harmony of the Board that although the Church Party was in the majority, a Nonconformist was unanimously elected to the position of Chairman for twelve years.

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.1.1878.
 2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 9.1.1878.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 28.4.1886.
 4. Ibid - 4.12.1883.
 5. Ibid - 13.1.1899.

Under these circumstances it was not surprising that there was no election for twelve years. The ratepayers were satisfied, until the Greenway Road Schools were opened the maximum rate was 2.5d in the £1, and the building and maintenance of these schools raised the rate during this decade to a maximum of only 4.5d in the £1 in the years 1886 and 1887.¹ The Churches were satisfied, where finance permitted, they provided the additional accommodation required. As each triennial election approached machinery for the avoidance of a contest was put into action and the main parties (Nonconformist and Church Party) held separate meetings to nominate members for the new Board. Serving members were always nominated unless they expressed a desire not to serve again. Each party nominated many more candidates than they had any intention of entering for the contest. Before the date for handing the nominations to the Returning Officer, a meeting of candidates and their supporters was called by the Chairman of the retiring Board "for the purpose of coming to an agreement and so avoiding a contest." At these meetings candidates from all parties expressed their opinions about the policy of the Board and as the discussion proceeded, candidates expressed their willingness to withdraw, to avoid a contest. If there seemed to be a danger of an election, the members of the party whose nominees showed reluctance to withdraw (and this was inevitably the Nonconformists), retired to another room, discussed the matter in private and on returning to the main body produced the number of candidates. When a vacancy occurred during the triennial period of service the place was filled by the party in whose ranks the vacancy occurred.²

1. Appendix - p.379.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 1.1.1881.

Though an election was not held for a period of twelve years, doubts were expressed as early as 1881¹ as to the desirability of denominational representation. Two candidates at these pre-election meetings (a Church of England and a Nonconformist) felt strongly that the "Education Act was never meant to be contracted out of by compromise, being entered into, between the principal members of the leading denominations,"² but these two candidates in spite of their strong views, withdrew their nominations to avoid a contest and a cost to the ratepayers of an election.² A press comment is illuminating and clearly indicates the fundamental reason why the members of the Board worked so harmoniously and why so many contests were avoided:

"Runcorn is a place where denominational pride is very strong and those who believe in such an election being conducted on purely non-sectarian lines are not very strong numerically when compared with those who are of the opposite opinion."³

In 1883, the protest was stronger and two independent candidates were nominated. They expressed the opinion that the "ratepayers either by contest or some other way should have full voice in the election of its members." They objected to the way the Board had been "parcelled out in a family way amongst the different churches and chapels." A member of the Wesleyan party admitted that conducting elections on denominational lines was not in harmony with the Act at all but "still such was the fact they had to face and if they had an election it would be on a denominational basis and the result would be an amount of bitterness that it was desirable to avoid. It would be a denominational election; they knew that the result would be as it had been for the past three years."⁴ That member of the

1. Runcorn Examiner - 1.1.1881.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. Ibid - 29.12.1883.

Wesleyan Church knew full well the strong denominational feelings of all parties; in this election a member of the Methodist Church refused to withdraw, by doing so there would have been only one Wesleyan on the Board. It was ironical that it was Mr. Handley, the Independent candidate who opposed denominational representation, who withdrew in order to avoid a contest.¹

His withdrawal merely postponed his membership of the Board as he replaced Mr. Thomas Norman who died in 1885.² The way in which the Board conducted its business impressed the Independent member, Mr. Handley, so much that at the pre-election meeting in 1886, he paid tribute to the integrity of the Board when he said that "since he had been a member of the Board he had not seen any denominational leanings."³ He praised efforts of the Board to improve attendance, saying "that the Runcorn School Board had formerly about the worst attendance in the kingdom but it had been increased recently from as little as 60% to 80% on the average." He expressed his willingness for the denominations to provide the accommodation which would probably be required before long and this would "save the pockets of the ratepayers."⁴

While denominational representation was not an issue in the 1886 election the question of the proportions of denominational representation was raised by a Nonconformist. It was suggested that the proportions should be two Church of England, two Wesleyans, one Roman Catholic and two others.⁵ The members of the Church of England were adamant in their rejection of the proposal. They claimed that as

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 29.12.1883.
 2. Ibid - 5.3.1885.
 3. Ibid - 25.12.1886.
 4. Ibid
 5. Ibid

the Church of England was providing the greatest number of school places there should be three representatives of the Church of England on the Board. The fundamental but unexpressed objection was undoubtedly that the suggested proportional representation would entail the loss of control of the Board by the Church Party.

The Nonconformists did not press the matter, though they considered that they were entitled to a larger representation they were willing "to avoid the expense of a contest as there was no burning issue to decide." This was certainly true. At a pre-election meeting a prominent member of the Wesleyan Church suggested the lines on which the School Board should Act; he said:

"In the first place, that Board schools should be made as efficient as possible; next that they should not be competing schools against any denominational schools, that they should not reduce the fees in the Board schools so as to compete unfairly with the existing schools. The Board should consider it just as much their duty after carrying out the two points he had moved to do anything that was possible to make the sectarian schools a success. If any applications should be made by managers of sectarian schools for increased accommodation that it should be allowed to be done as this would be a saving to the ratepayers."¹

This statement met with the general approval of all those present. It indicated that the Wesleyans were just as anxious as the Church Party to protect the Voluntary Schools.

Denominational representation, however, did not remain unchallenged. In 1869 a meeting of ratepayers was arranged which was chaired by F. J. Norman and here opinions were forcibly expressed. The Chairman said

1. Runcorn Examiner - 25.12.1886.

that for many years the election had been in the hands of the denominations:

"There had been one or two gentlemen from this Chapel or from that Church and they had arranged exactly who should be made members of the School Board. The ratepayers had nothing to do with it except pay the rates. The stand they took was that those who paid the piper had a perfect right to choose the tune. School managers and men pledged up to the hilt in favour of denominational schools were hardly the men to represent the ratepayers. It seemed to him that high fees and the rest of it might be modified if the ratepayers were to take the matter in hand."

Two candidates stood as Independents, Mr. S. Taylor and Mr. J. Hewitt. Mr. Hewitt came from Newcastle-on-Tyne. He accused the School Board for not having organised science classes (which were in fact, outside the scope of the School Board). He advocated free education, but this should be provided through the exchequer and not through the local rates. He said that the "classes of our universities ought to be wide open without exception in order that men might get the education which the state offered to give."¹ His policies were those of a visionary and were far ahead of the thinking of the Runcorn School Board and made a welcome change from the time-worn and now too familiar speeches advocating denominational representation, and keeping down the rates. At the usual meeting convened by the Chairman of the retiring Board to avoid a contest, the unity of policy which existed between the members, whatever their religious conviction, was manifest.

The Chairman, a Nonconformist, on behalf of the Board, declared that their policies were successful, and that as their policy had been

1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.12.1889.

challenged and there was no principle at issue at the present time, "it was for them to consider, supposing a contest was forced, how to be able to justify themselves before the ratepayers."¹ The Independent candidates would not withdraw, neither would the nominated members of the School Board. Their desire to keep denominational control was stronger than their desire to keep down the rates by avoiding a contest. The policies advocated by the Independents did not imply keeping down the rates - quite the reverse. The ratepayers were obviously quite satisfied.

There was little interest in the election, there was only a 50% poll, but for those who did vote, the policies of the Independents obviously made an appeal as they were placed at the top of the poll. Mr. J. J. Howitt was a member for a short time only, as he left Runcorn in October 1891², while he was on the Board he was an interested and active member.

A contest was avoided in 1892³ and again in 1895.⁴ The Independent member, Mr. Taylor, on each occasion was satisfied to let the Board remain as it was. The question of having two additional members of the Board arose as the population of Runcorn, which was 20,050, now justified this.⁵ It was agreed at the pre-election meeting that the Church Party should have one of the additional members, and the other would represent the nonconformists or Progressives. The harmony between the parties was such, that it was further agreed, that if a contest could not be avoided, for the two additional seats both parties would unite in securing the return of the nominee of the other party⁶, but the two additional members were not elected till 1898.⁷

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.12.1889.
 2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 27.10.1891.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 24.12.1892.
 4. Ibid - 30.11.1895.
 5. Census 1891.
 6. Runcorn Examiner - 30.11.1895.
 7. Runcorn Examiner - 2.12.1898.

The application was too late.¹ This was the last occasion on which there was a compromise.

As the 1898 triennial election approached, Canon Maitland Wood, Vicar of Runcorn, wrote in his Parish magazine:

"all who wish to maintain the friendly condition of things under which school affairs are managed in this town, where ruinous competition between voluntary and Board schools is non-existent, should be wide awake and take good care that a new era of school warfare is not inaugurated by restless spirits."²

In 1895, the Wesleyan schools had been transferred to the School Board.³ The members of the Nonconformist party now on the Board were those who had, in previous elections, opposed denominational representation and though the Progressives, as the Nonconformists now called themselves, pledged in their campaign:

1. "Not to harass the Denominational schools"
2. "To see that Board Schools should have fair play"
3. "To secure for each child free education and sound Bible teaching without any attempt to violate sectarian convictions."⁴

The Church Party were afraid, in spite of these pledges, that the traditional policy of Voluntary and Board Schools working side by side would come to an end, and the unequal struggle between them would begin.

The Church Party made a determined effort to retain the control of the Board. They called themselves the Ratepayers Party and they declared that their policy was to maintain both Board and Voluntary Schools in an efficient state. The Board and Voluntary schools should

1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 7.1.1896.
2. Runcorn Examiner - 4.11.1898.
3. See chapter 3, page 51.
4. Runcorn Examiner . - 25.11.1898.

"grow up side by side with one another."¹ They emphasised that if they were returned, "they would do nothing but what was in the best interests of the child life of the country"² and they reminded the electorate that although on the School Board they had had a majority who were favourable to Voluntary schools," they had never used that majority for furthering anything that was inconsistent."³ The Party's slogan "Down with the rates" was a constant reminder to the electorate of their emphasis on economy. They promised that they would keep the rates down and pointed to the extravagances of the London School Board where Progressives were in control.⁴

It was not a bitter campaign; the traditionally good relationships between the parties, which had for so long been a feature of the Board, extended to the contest and while each side fought on the merits of its policy, personalities did not enter into it as had happened in the election of 1875. Meetings were held, the town was flooded with literature and canvassers were active for both sides. There was a heavy poll, 22,004 out of a possible 30,735 votes being recorded. The policy "Down with the Rates" won a sweeping victory for the Church Party which gained the first four and the sixth place in the poll.⁵ The new Board now had nine seats, five being held by the Church party.

The outcome was a shattering blow for the Progressives who, too late, realised that their campaign had not had enough vigour. To add to their discomfiture, the Church party abandoned their usual practice of re-electing Mr. James Pritchard (Nonconformist) Chairman, a position

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 25.11.1898.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid
 4. Ibid
 5. Ibid - 2.12.1898.

he held since 1886, and elected instead members of the Church party to the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Canon Maitland Wood, Vicar of Runcorn was elected chairman.¹ It was a logical choice, if the place on the poll had been the criterion on which the Chairman was elected, but this departure from tradition created bad feeling amongst the Progressives, for the first time in the history of the Board it was divided by party allegiance. When the committees were being appointed, Mr. Handley (Progressive) refused to serve on the Finance Committee, saying that the party which said they would reduce the rates should do so.² The Church party was now completely responsible for the financial policy and for keeping their promise to the electorate.

The bitterness lasted throughout the period of office. Canon Wood, in an election speech in 1901 said that "the Progressives had given them (the Church Party) a bad time for the last three years."³

The last election of the Runcorn School Board in December, 1901 had an unhappy resemblance to the first. It was fought with the same intensity of bitterness, and attacks on personalities, and in a similar blaze of publicity. Press reports of meetings were detailed, and numerous letters on the issue were published. The members of the Progressive Party, who in so many previous elections, had declared themselves satisfied with the School Board, and compromised to avoid a contest and the subsequent cost to the ratepayers, were now determined to get control. The crushing defeat in the 1896 election and the loss of the position of Chairman and Vice-Chairman stripped

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 13.1.1899.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid - 22.11.1901.

them of all power. They felt particularly incensed by the departure from the usual practice of having a Nonconformist chairman and that Mr. James Pritchard, who had been in the Chair for twelve years had to vacate it. In the light of the current political climate, they considered it imperative that the control of education should be firmly in their hands. They accused the Tory Government of being in sympathy with the Church party. The Bill of 1896 had foreshadowed the demise of the School Boards, and the Voluntary Schools Act 1897 had given support to Denominational Schools. The new Education Bill was impending. The Progressives were afraid that the control of Education would now slip into the hands of the Denominationalists. At a meeting of the Progressives, F. J. Norman, leader of the Party, openly expressed this fear when he said:

"It was suggested that this election was altogether unnecessary, that next year important changes in connection with educational affairs should be introduced and that, therefore, things might remain as they were. He arrived at a different conclusion. Within the past few years very determined efforts had been made by the Clerical party to control the School Boards. Where they had succeeded in some cases they had come near to a violation of the Cowper-Temple Clause. It was of vital importance that the School Boards should be held by independent men so that when changes took place they might see no retrograde movement was made, and above all, prevent that sectarianism that had been such a baleful influence on an educational policy up to the present time. He earnestly asked, in view of this traditional stage on which they were about to enter, the Clerical party would adopt a higher and nobler platform, drop the sordid question of "down with the rates" rather endorse Mr. Punch's nobler appeal -

'Come open your purse, let the least in the nation
Be trained in the use of his hand and his eye;
Fling open your schools, for in them is salvation
By them is the country to live or to die.'

The present Government appeared to be completely under the heel of the Clerical Party. Every regulation, every reference had to be suited to their interest, or it was withdrawn or stamped out. That noble Englishman, John Bright, speaking on clericalism and education said:

"I am surprised that churchmen themselves do not see that nothing tends more to impede the progress of liberty, nothing is more fatal to the independence of spirit in the public than to add to the powers of the clergy in the matters of education,"

He continued:

"The danger was that in the coming re-arrangement, the success that had crowned their efforts during the last two or three years would make them more ambitious than ever, and that their demands would mean the practical monopoly of the education machinery of the country . . . no power living could make him (Mr. Norman) believe that a great nation like this, when it realised the importance of education and realised that it could only be properly educated when emancipated from the trammels of sectarianism, would fail to rise to the occasion and bring itself in to line with the other civilised countries of the world."¹

The Progressives were now well organised. They held numerous meetings addressed by outside speakers, two of these were addressed by Sir J. Brunner. The Wesleyans now completely abandoned their support of the Voluntary Schools. An article in the local Wesleyan Circuit magazine called on all Methodists to work "in every honourable way to secure their election."² They were violently antagonistic to

1. Runcorn Examiner - 22.11.1901.
2. Ibid - 8.11.1901.

the Church Party and attacked them on every issue, they lost no opportunity to discredit them in the eyes of the ratepayers.

The purely local implications were abandoned. On the national level the necessity for an educational system which was comparable with other European nations was advocated:

"They were far behind in their Educational system. They went forward into the new century with the foreigner who had the light elastic step of the mentally equipped, while the Britisher was going forward with the dull, heavy tread of the half-educated."

The Church was held responsible for this - "they had had a divided nation and the education was backward because of the ecclesiastical ascendancy." F. J. Norman described the church as "the evil influence that was corrupting their educational system."¹ The Progressives did not promise to keep down the rates, instead they declared that:

"Expenditure on Education was one of the most useful expenditure for it equipped them to fight the great industrial war."²

This was relevant for Runcorn with the growing importance of its expanding industries.

At local level, the Progressives reverted to the familiar theme and accused the Church Party of wanting to dominate the Board in order to keep their own schools alive for propagandism. They also accused them of failing to keep their election promises of 1898.³ Their slogan "Down with the rates" now rebounded against them. The financial statements concerning the cost of the Board, which had been the responsibility of the Church Party, were queried, and Canon Wood was obliged to admit that his statements as to the cost of the transfer of the Wesleyan schools to the ratepayers were exaggerated.⁴

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 1.11.1901.
 2. Ibid - 15.11.1901.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 22.11.1901.
 4. Ibid

The statement that the rate was the same for 1898 and 1901 was queried.¹ The Church Party claimed that it remained the same at 9d. in the £1 and the Progressives that it had risen by $\frac{1}{4}$ d.² (The many statements of both parties here are confused and have not been clarified in the School Board Minutes)

The Progressives' belief in Religious Education was emphasised. They wanted a National system of education on broad Bible principles. They considered that the Sunday Schools should deal with denominational teaching. But they realised that the population was traditionally religious and in reply to the allegation by the Church Party, that the Board School education was godless, at a meeting on 29th November 1901, boys from the Runcorn Board School were asked to step on the platform and repeat the formula taught "so that every ratepayer could see for himself that religious instruction was given."³

"The boys then, amidst a burst of applause, trooped on to the platform and sang in excellent style the stirring hymn entitled "Fight the Good Fight". They afterwards went through the religious formula of the Board school, closing with the Lord's Prayer. A Biblical reading was given, special attention being given to the biography and the life of Jesus Christ and his parables."⁴

This proof of religious teaching was greeted with applause. The people of Runcorn were strongly in favour of religious education in schools and the Progressives knew this.

The Church Party's campaign, while vigorous, had none of the vision or positive educational policy of the Progressives. Their desire to prevent competition between the Board and Voluntary

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 22.11.1901.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid - 29.11.1901.
 4. Ibid - 15.11.1901.

schools of which most of them were managers limited their horizons. In previous elections the Church of England and Roman Catholics ran their campaigns independently. It was a foregone conclusion that the Roman Catholic member would be elected so there was no necessity for the intense pre-election activities of the other parties, but the anxiety of both the Roman Catholic and Church of England members about the outcome of the election and their determination that the Church Party should retain control led to a combined effort in this election. Mr. Imison, a Churchman and a member of the retiring School Board, was chairman at a meeting in favour of the Catholic candidate, while Father Chambers spoke at one of the meetings held by the Church of England.¹

The Church Party were, however, clearly on the defensive and spent much of the time at their meetings replying to the accusations of the Progressives and justifying their policy. To prove their interest in education and in particular the education of the working man's child, they drew attention to the impressive record of the Church in establishing schools in almost every village throughout the land. They claimed that many people would have had no education but for the active interest of the Church.² But once again the main issue was that of finance. Their policy for efficiency and economy was stressed. Canon Wood, retiring Chairman, said the town was well supplied with schools at present and that they would give their strongest opposition to erecting more schools because it could only be done by increased expense. One churchman said he would not depreciate the value of education but they should not overlook the cost of it. Working men

1. Runcorn Examiner - 15.11.1901.

2. Ibid

at the present time had a difficulty in making both ends meet, consequently economy should be practised. The electorate were also reminded that if they followed the Progressive policy and brought the Voluntary Schools under the School Board system, it would mean an increase on the rates of a least 1s.0d. Such a course would mean a rate of 1s.9d. instead of 9d.¹

In the election speeches of the parties some interesting views were expressed on education which, to some extent, illustrated political attitudes of the parties. One speaker representing the Church Party deprecated educating persons for positions they were not likely to occupy which was a needless waste of time and the public money², a view which illustrated the strength of the class system and the social immobility of the period. The Roman Catholic tradition of the indivisability of secular and religious education, and the broader aim of education was expressed by Father Chambers:

"Education in order to be thorough must be accompanied with religion. The good formation of a child's character was necessary to make him a good citizen. This could not be formed with mere secular knowledge."³

The Progressive utilitarian views with the indication of the policy of equal opportunity was expressed by Mr. Posnett, Chairman of the Urban District Council:

"The assets of a country were intelligence and brains which should be cultivated to the best of their ability"

and

"The poor has as much right to develop brains as the rich man"

and again

"Education equipped people to fight in the great industrial war."

1. Runcorn Examiner - 15.11.1901.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid

Polling took place on 26th November 1901, the result being a victory for the Progressives who gained five of the nine available seats. The following extract from the Runcorn Examiner gives a vivid description of the final School Board election in Runcorn¹:

"The later stages of the School Board Election, like the former, have been full of the most intense interest. As at the previous election three years ago the rallying cries of the Clerical party were "Down with the Rates" and "the best education with efficiency and economy." To this the Progressives replied with the trite sentence - "Truth, justice and an equal chance for every child." Perhaps the slums of Runcorn have never been so well visited as they have been during the last fortnight. On both sides there has been an army of canvassers in which the ladies of the town have played by no means an unimportant part. On both sides they stood shoulder to shoulder with their brothers and had it not been for their heroic exertions the organisations of the two parties could never have coped with the electorate. So keen have been the respective canvassers, that the voters during the last few days were wearied of their assiduous attentions and it has been stated that many abstained from voting owing to the continued pressure exerted first by one set of canvassers and then the other. The printers, too, have had an exceptionally busy time of it. Hand bills by the score each with some new argument, cunningly put, have been published from the committee rooms of the opponents and the entire collection forms an interesting and even somewhat instructive anthology of local educational literature. No sooner has some new vein of thought been struck by one side and made to glisten before the eyes of the ratepayer than the reply has been speedily forthcoming which has dulled the sparkle of wit or damaged the value of the argument. The town literally has been flooded with hand-bills and between the babble of conflicting opinions and the repeated calls of the canvasser it is little wonder that the already perplexed elector has been well-nigh distracted. Old Runcorn inhabitants assert that there

1. Runcorn Examiner - 29.11.1901.

has never been an election fought with such vigour and tenacity and that there has been far more interest displayed than in any previous election whether Parliamentary or Municipal." - - - - -

"At an early hour the workers were sent out to 'compel the wanderers to come in out of the byways' to record their votes and by 9.30 a very fair number had been recorded. Polling was slack everywhere in the morning and afternoon but from 12.0 to 1.noon and after 5.30 there was a steady stream of electors which kept everyone concerned at high pressure. All day there was a very large concourse of people outside the various committee rooms but towards 7 p.m. at all the booths there were dense masses of people who occasionally cheered their partizans. Traps, carriages etc., were all requisitioned to fetch up the laggard voter and towards the close one or two exciting incidents were witnessed. To the credit of both parties, keen and bitter though the contest has been, there was an utter absence of anything approaching ill humour or friction. Both sets of workers regarded each other as honourable opponents and absolutely nothing of a rowdy character or unpleasant nature occurred during the whole of the day. So well, indeed, was order maintained that the police had actually reason to complain that there was nothing for them to do. At 8 p.m. the poll was declared duly closed in all the wards, the ballot boxes being afterwards conveyed to the Town Hall, where they were counted on Thursday morning."

"The following was the result:

F. J. Norman	3,079	P
Canon Wood	2,004	V
Father Chambers	2,583	V
W. Handley	2,526	P
J. Pritchard	2,418	P
S. Taylor	2,317	P
J. Littler	2,284	V
E. Imison	2,277	V
R. Posnett	2,154	P
W. Cunningham	2,137	V

P = Progressive

V = Voluntaryists or Church Party

This, the last School Board, held office for only eighteen months. On the 1st July 1903 the 1902 Education Act came into force. The members of the School Board continued their work for education as members of the Administrative Sub-Committee for the Urban District of Runcorn.¹

The Runcorn School Board was notable for its unity and the harmonious relationship which existed between its members, irrespective of creed. When elected the members identified themselves with the Board and denominational prejudices were subjugated to the educational needs of the population. Until 1898, with a few exceptions, members voted not as a party but individually. Undoubtedly, the parties had identical aims - to keep down the rates while making education as cheap and as efficient as possible and that Board Schools should exist side by side with denominational schools and should not compete with them, but the Board in all its dealings was fair. Mr. Handley in 1886, an Independent, said that since he had been a member he had not seen denominational leanings and in 1892 and 1895 when contests were avoided, the Independent members who had been critical and suspicious of decominational representation expressed themselves satisfied with the way the Board was run.

That the Board acted on principle was demonstrated in 1891 when, in spite of the fear of the harm that abolition of fees in Board schools may do the denominational schools, they expressed the opinion that the Board schools should be free and the vote for this in August was unanimous.

1. Chester Record Office. Cheshire L.E.A. Minutes of the Administrative Sub-Committee for the Runcorn Urban District - 25.6.1903.

The break in the late nineties was due to two causes:

1. The Nonconformists or Progressives as they were now called were the original Independent members who were always critical of denominational representation. There were now no voluntary Nonconformist schools, the Wesleyan schools had been transferred in 1895 and the Church party was afraid that if the Progressives gained control in spite of election promises the Board Schools would compete with Voluntary Schools, hence the Church Party's slogan - "Down with the Rates" in 1898, and their policy of economy and efficiency and when elected as a majority, they dominated the Board as they had never been done before and this aroused feelings of bitterness.
2. As the election of 1901 approached, politics became a force to be reckoned with. The Progressives were Liberals and were suspicious of the policy of the Tory Government. This was clearly evident in the election speeches of 1901.

The part played by the Roman Catholics is interesting. Until the 1901 election, the Roman Catholic member held the balance of power. Relationships were friendly and the member voted according to his conscience, ignoring party or denominational considerations, but in 1898, the Roman Catholic member identified himself closely with the Church Party and for the first time joined forces with them in their campaign.

CHAPTER II

THE OFFICERS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

In accordance with Section 35 of the Elementary Education Act 1870 school boards were empowered to appoint a Clerk and Treasurer and other necessary officers. This was a duty which the Runcorn School Board performed infrequently. There were few changes of Officers during the period. Parr's Banking Company (Ltd.) was appointed treasurer.¹ Only three Clerks served during the School Board era. The first School Attendance Officer remained with the Board during its existence and his assistant, appointed in 1886 likewise remained in the service of the Board.

I. The Clerk to the Runcorn School Board

At the first meeting of the Runcorn School Board it was decided "That the Clerk be a layman" and Mr. F. Rigby was appointed at a salary of £50 per annum.² The time to be spent on the work was not stipulated nor was there any official schedule of duties prescribed.

After three years had elapsed Mr. Rigby decided that the time he was spending on the work merited an increase in salary and in support of his claim produced statistics of salaries of Clerks of towns similar in population to Runcorn.³ In his application he stated:

"It would be impossible for me to attempt to explain to the Board how much time I have devoted to their services in correspondence in carrying out the Education Acts as to bye-laws etc., and to what extent periodically I am engaged upon their business . . . I may perhaps be permitted to state that not a little of my time has been occupied in preparing reports, which have involved considerable trouble in compiling, and I may mention those prepared on the first census, the second census,

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 8.1.1875.
 2. School Board Minutes - 8.1.1875.
 3. Runcorn Guardian - 6.7.1878.

and on the proceedings of the Board during the first three years of their existence.

The accounts of the Board, although they do not deal with large sums, require by reason of the intricate system of the Local Government Board, the greatest care in keeping as well as constant supervision. Upon this subject I can with confidence refer to the reports of the Government Auditors which have been from time to time laid before the Board. Finally although many of the office details relating to the regular attendance of children at school are committed to the Visitor, (of whom I have always had pleasure in speaking in the highest terms) it is simply right to add that the responsibility of his work rests with me, and that I consider it a part of my duty to supervise it."¹

Though the Chairman confirmed the statement as to the efficiency of the keeping of accounts by stating that:

"Mr. Dalby, the Government Auditor, had expressed the opinion that no accounts were so correct and gave him so little trouble as those of the Runcorn School Board"

the Board was not convinced that an increase of salary on the grounds of the volume of work involved could be considered, but they appreciated his efficiency and in view of this he was offered an additional sum of £10 per annum.² His salary remained at £60 per annum until his resignation in 1887.

The replacement of Mr. Rigby created an embarrassing situation for the Board and aroused party feeling. Two applicants were considered, Mr. William Handley, a nonconformist member of the Board and Mr. G. Moss a churchman. Mr. Handley resigned his seat to become eligible for the post and this reduced the Nonconformist representation on the Board to two members.³ In order that the appointment should not be made by a depleted Board it was decided to defer the appointment until the new

1. Runcorn Guardian - 6.7.1878.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

member was elected.¹ A special meeting was held for this purpose and whether by accident or design none of the members of the Church Party attended.² There was no quorum and the vacancy remained unfilled. The Board was therefore still incomplete for the meeting called to appoint the Clerk. The Nonconformists accused the Church Party of deliberately absenting themselves from the special meeting, and pressed for an appointment of the member of the Board before that of the Clerk. This was rejected on a legal technicality. The Clerk ruled that the discussion was irregular, as the meeting was called to appoint a Clerk, and they had no right to refer to the appointment of a member. The Nonconformists accepted the legal position but feelings ran so high that they withdrew from the meeting in protest. The appointment was now in the hands of the Church Party, and was given to Mr. G. Moss, at a salary of £60 per annum.³ He remained in the service of the Board until his death in 1898.⁴

Mr. Moss was a businessman. He took a personal interest in the work of the schools. A tribute by Her Majesty's Assistant Inspector, Mr. Ballance, at a prize distribution at Victoria Road Evening School, recalled this interest "as he looked around the room he missed one genial face, which had been very dear to him. He meant Mr. Moss, (the late Clerk of the Runcorn School Board) who was a gentleman he had met on similar occasions very often. He liked Mr. Moss because he considered he was always enthusiastically interested in that work and he always seemed to him to have a sympathetic word for everyone engaged in it."⁵

The School Board regarded the appointment in 1898 as a most important one. The work had expanded and the Board "was not responsible for the education of more than half the children of the town."⁶

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1. Runcorn Examiner. - 16.4.1887.
 2. It is not possible from the existing evidence to judge whether the non-attendance of the members of the Church Party was deliberate.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 16.4.1887.
 4. Ibid - 29.4.1898.
 5. Ibid - 7.10.1898.
 6. Ibid - 8.7.1898.

Advertisements were inserted in three local newspapers¹, and the schedule of duties was available for consultation at School Board Offices.² Four candidates were interviewed. The final selection lay between two local men, Mr. Crosby, a Wesleyan who had been headmaster of the Brunswick Schools before they were transferred to the Board, and amalgamated with the Victoria Road Schools, and Mr. J.W.Lightburn "a man of considerable position in the town,"³ who had been a headmaster and who had the additional qualification of being an accountant.⁴ "He was a man of considerable position in the town," Although two Nonconformist members strongly supported Mr. Crosby, they did not make this a party issue and Mr. Lightburn was appointed at a salary of £100 per annum.⁵

Like his predecessors he was interested in the work of the schools, and attended prize distributions and social occasions. He remained with the Board until the 1902 Education Act came into force in the area on 1st July 1903 when he became Clerk to the Administrative Sub-Committee for the Urban District of Runcorn. His salary was raised to £150 per annum - £100 was paid for his duties in connection with Elementary Education and £50 for those connected with Higher Education.⁶

He was not only an efficient Clerk, he was obviously also a considerate and courteous one in his dealings with the teachers, as the following letter indicates⁷:

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1. School Board Minutes - 14.6.1898.
 2. See appendix p.381.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 8.7.1898.
 4. Kelly's Directory of Cheshire 1892, p.410.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 8.7.1898.
 6. Cheshire L.E.A. Minutes of the Administrative Sub-Committee for the Urban District of Runcorn - 24.11.1903.
 7. Letter in School Log Book of Runcorn National Girls' School.

Town Hall,
Runcorn.

19 August 1899

Dear Madam,

I beg to forward a Refusal Register which I hope you will kindly keep posted.

The labour will be trifling but I would not ask to add in the slightest degree to your already onerous duties if the necessity was not great.

One of the uses of this register may be gathered from the following:

Persons summoned before the Justices for not sending the children under their care regularly to school very frequently plead that the Teachers of the various schools had refused to admit the children in question.

The evidence of the Refusal Register will be conclusive in these cases if it be apparent they have been carefully kept.

I am

Yours very truly

J. W. Lightburn,
Clerk.

Miss Sewell,
Parish Schools,
Runcorn.

As the period of administration by the School Board drew to a close the members felt that some record of their appreciation of his work should be made and they unanimously recommended that the following reference should be entered in the minutes:

"The Runcorn School Board desire to place on record the appreciation of the value of Mr. Lightburn's work since he became the Clerk five years ago. His life long experience of educational administration together with his shrewd far-seeing business qualities have made his tenure of office remarkable in many ways, especially for the better attendances

of children which had resulted in considerable educational and financial benefit to all concerned. They also desire to record that it was their intention to make substantial addition to his salary had they remained in office but as the Education Act of 1902 had transferred this however, to the County Council, they with confidence recommend its re-adjustment to their successors who will reap the fruit of his experience and knowledge of educational work with the locality. There has been no change in Mr. Lightburn's salary since his appointment, although the work has very considerably increased."¹

1. Runcorn Guardian - 3.4.1903.

11. THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICERS.

When the bye-laws were passed by the Education Department, the School Board instructed the Clerk to make enquiries from Boards of places with a population similar to Runcorn, about the salaries and conditions of their officers.¹

The post was advertised in August, immediately after the formal approval of the bye-laws by the Education Department had been received.² There were thirteen applications. Two candidates were interviewed and Mr. Thomas Bowyer was the unanimous choice of the Board. His appointment dated from 1st September, 1875. His salary was £70 per annum and his whole time was to be "at the disposal of the Board."³ Office hours were 8.30a.m. to 10.0a.m. and 4.0p.m. to 5.30p.m. Mondays to Fridays and on Saturdays 8.30a.m. to 12noon.⁴

The importance which the Board attached to the work of an efficient officer is evident, when, after a year's experience of the work, the visitor realised that it involved much more than he had anticipated, and he applied for an increase in salary.⁵ The Board unanimously agreed to raise it from £70 to £90 per annum, and in their letter advising him of this they expressed their appreciation of his work by stating "they had every reason to feel perfectly satisfied with his past behaviour and were fully aware of the extra duties he had been called upon to perform."⁶

1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.5.1875.
2. Ibid - 20.8.1875.
3. Ibid - 1.9.1875.
4. Ibid - 29.9.1876
In July 1882 these were changed to 8.0a.m. - 10.0a.m. and 3.0p.m. to 5.0p.m. Mondays to Fridays. Saturdays were unchanged.
5. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 29.9.1876.
6. Ibid - 1.8.1877.

His request for uniform was granted in 1877. A tunic, two pairs of trousers and a hat were to be provided annually, and a coat biennially.¹ The first issue cost £8.

He applied again for an increase of salary in 1880 and it was increased to £100 per annum.²

Since 1875 the numbers of children on rolls had increased. In February there were 2516 on the registers, and in November 1882 there were 2898. This entailed not only increased visiting, but also extra office work, and in November 1882 Mr. Bowyer applied for an assistant.³ Samuel Inglefield was appointed in 1883,⁴ "to assist the visitor in his indoor and outdoor work for five hours each day," at a salary of 10s.0d. per week.⁵

It was not a satisfactory appointment. The salary was too low to attract men with the necessary qualifications, and Samuel Inglefield possessed neither the personality nor the education to deal with the work.

By 1886 the work had increased to such an extent that a second full time visitor was necessary. The Board realised that they would have to pay a reasonable salary to get the right type of applicant.⁶ Inglefield was informed by the School Attendance Committee that they had decided to employ a second full-time visitor and that "he would be required to have a good knowledge of spelling and composition."⁷ Inglefield remained in the service of the Board, he was appointed caretaker of the Greenway Road Schools.

George Howard was appointed assistant visitor on a permanent basis at £70 per annum.⁸ This had risen to £90 in 1903 when the salary of the

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 1.8.1877.
 2. Ibid -27.10.1886.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 4.11.1882.
 4. Ibid - 13.1.1883.
 5. Ibid - 4.11.1882.
 6. Runcorn School Board Attendance Committee Minutes - 19.3.1886.
 7. Ibid - 3.4.1886.
 8. Ibid -5.5.1886.

Head Visitor was £105.¹

The duties of the Officers were onerous and required both intelligence and responsibility. It was Mr. Bowyer who, in August, 1876, had two conferences with the Clerk of the Liverpool School Board on the system adopted there for compelling the attendance of children at school,² and it was as a result of his report that the system in force in Liverpool was adopted. This system threw the full responsibility for attendance on the Visitor. It was he who visited the defaulting parents, kept the records, and finally took the cases before the magistrates. The amount of work involved, and the efficiency with which it was enacted, was evident when the system was reviewed in 1882 when Mr. Bowyer applied for an assistant.

The Chairman commented that "the arrangements of the Board were very different from those of any Board of which he had any knowledge. He found that it was customary for the Clerk to do all the office work, and to take the prosecutions. The Clerk or assistants did a greater portion of the work which the Runcorn Board's Visitor did, and so, far as his information went the visitors did not do any of this work at all." When Mr. Bowyer was asked to speak he said "he was engaged three hours a day in office work. The recording of his visiting occupied him one hour a day. If he did not keep the books as he did, he should be much wanting in evidence in conducting prosecutions and cases would fall through," but the strongest proof of the efficiency of the system lay in the results which were put before the meeting since the Board was formed:

207 cases had been taken under the Bye-laws.

43 under Section 11 Elementary Education Act, 1876.

25 " " 12 " " " "

Chester Record Office:

1. C.C.E. 2/3 County of Chester - Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools-School Attendance Committees, School Boards & Teaching Staff. 1903
2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 29.10.1876.

only seven of these cases had been lost; not because the Board failed to prove the cases, but the magistrates took too lenient a view."

It was these statistics which decided the issue; the results could not be denied, and the vice-chairman who initiated the discussion said:

"he had no change of system to recommend himself, and fancied that most of the members of the Board would be of the opinion that the arrangements were very satisfactory so far as the work they did, and he very much questioned whether they could improve upon them. The ratepayers would be much better satisfied when they saw how matters were arranged."¹

The work in connection with the attendance of children at school was only part of the Visitor's duties. In order to keep the position of accommodation under review a census was taken on four occasions during the lifetime of the Board.

The first was taken in March, 1875, by the Clerk, for which he received a fee of £25,² but this duty was incorporated into the work of the Visitor. Before any steps were taken to enforce children to go to school the Board directed Mr. Bowyer to take a census. It was an arduous process requiring patience and persistence, each house was visited and the clerk reported to the Board:

"The Visitor had not done his work in a perfunctory manner, but had stuck to his work thoroughly, although he had been treated rather roughly as far as language was concerned."³

A census was taken in 1881 to ascertain the sufficiency of accommodation⁴, and the last was taken in 1888 to find out what the normal population of children was before the expected influx of those whose parents worked on the Manchester Ship Canal.⁵

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 9.12.1882.
 2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.3.1875.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 6.11.1875.
 4. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 9.3.1881.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 8.9.1888.

The duties of the School Attendance Officers also included making reports on the sanitary conditions of the Private Adventure Schools where fees did not exceed 9d per week; and in 1887 they were appointed Inquiry Officers by the Board of Guardians: these appointments were terminated in 1894.¹

The officers visited the schools frequently; as soon as a child absented himself the parents were visited. With the growth in numbers attending school, the volume of work increased. The proportionally higher number of warning notices issued indicated a demand for a higher percentage of attendance.² The number of children on rolls in 1902 was 431 greater than in 1887, the percentage of attendance had risen by ten percent but the number of "warning notices" had more than doubled.³

The difficulties with which the officers had to deal are described in the section on Attendance, but in spite of these, with the support of the Board and the teachers, they persisted in their efforts and gradually wore down the resistance to attendance at school of all but a small hard core of "incorrigibles".

1. See p.217.

2. See Appendix 385.

3. Ibid.

PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION BY THE RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD

According to the estimate of the Education Department in its survey of accommodation, there was a deficiency in the School District of Runcorn of 160 places.¹ The initial recommendation of the Department that accommodation should be provided in the Heath Road and Newtown areas, and its subsequent insistence on this, delayed the erection of a Board School until 1886.

After its election the Board was anxious to provide accommodation and wasted no time in tackling this question. At their meeting in March, the Clerk was asked to carry out a census. As this was outside his duties he was paid a fee of £25.² The operation was concluded swiftly. A house to house visitation was made by "six trusty enumerators" and in his report the Clerk said he could confidently recommend that the statistics were accurate. The statistics revealed that there was an excess of 66 places.³ The Department of Education accepted the decision of the Board that there was no need to provide accommodation.

The Board was now, in effect, a School Attendance Committee. When the School Attendance Officer was appointed in September, his first assignment was to take another Educational Census, the purpose of which

1. Appendix p. 380

2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.3.1875.

3. Ibid - 7.4.1875.

was to find out the number of children who were not attending school. This census showed that there was a deficiency of 75 in accommodation.¹ The deficiency² led the Board in their January meeting to discuss the possibility of providing or renting further accommodation, but they eventually decided that the discussion was premature.³

During the year 1876, as a result of the operation of the bye-laws, there was an increase in average attendance.⁴

	1875	1876
January		
February		1648
March		1690
April		1545
May	1439	-
June	-	1632
July	1285	1495
August	1454.2	1535.5
September	1619.2	1719.7
October	1650	1727
November	1532	1627
December	1509	1637.9

In December, 1876, the Board once more began to plan for increased accommodation.⁵ Contrary to the initial suggestion of the Department for increased accommodation at Mill Brow and New Town, they considered that a Central School for 400 children was the solution. Several sites for a Central School were considered and one was reserved off Greenway Road at a cost of 4/- per square yard, pending the approval of the Education Department.⁶

In May, 1877, the plans were forwarded to the Department, which

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.11.1875.
 2. The Clerk explained this deficiency by pointing out that the first census had taken two days while the Visitor took some weeks.
 3. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.1.1876.
 4. Statistics compiled from the Runcorn School Board Minutes.
 5. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 6.12.1876.
 6. Ibid - 7.2.1877.

opposed the scheme. The site itself was large enough but the drainage was not satisfactory.¹ The major issue however, was not the site. "My Lords" did not agree with the Board that a Central School was the solution and stated that Runcorn required two schools - one at Mill Brow and the other at Newtown, as the population of Mill Brow was at an inconvenient distance from the proposed site.²

This was the start of a battle between the School Board and the Education Department concerning the supply of accommodation. The School Board was convinced that a central site was required and was determined that their recommendations should be upheld.

In November, 1877, the Department asked the Board to furnish the numbers of the 400 children, for whom accommodation was required, who lived in the Newtown and Mill Brow district. The Clerk was instructed to state in his reply:

"the number of houses in each of the two districts; the number built since the last Educational Census, and the number now in the course of erection."³

The Department considered that the statistics supplied supported their proposal and on the 21st November, the following reply was sent to the Board:

"Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of 8th and 10th inst., which have been referred to Her Majesty's Inspector. After careful consideration My Lords agree with H.M. Inspector in considering that, upon the statistics supplied by your Board, provision should be made at Mill Brow for about 180 children, and at Newtown for about 220, the latter school being built as to be easily enlarged if necessary."⁴

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.5.1877.
 2. Ibid - 28.9.1877.
 3. Ibid - 7.11.1877.
 4. Ibid - 26.11.1877.

It was a difficult situation for the Board, but it cleverly avoided either facing the issue or admitting defeat. It was fortuitous for them that this letter was considered on 26th November 1877, the penultimate meeting of the existing Board. This was a legitimate excuse to postpone the inevitable confrontation. The Board voted unanimously :

"That as much as the term for which the present members of the School Board were elected expire on 8th January next, no steps be taken at present to carry out the recommendations of the Education Department."¹

The new Board, identical in policy and containing only two new members, considered the question again in February, 1878, and informed the Department that:

1. "No more convenient site can be found than the site now selected."
2. "That it would be desirable to secure land for three or at least two departments."
3. That a mixed school should be erected in such a manner that it can be converted into a department for boys and a second department contiguous thereto."²

In their communication in March, 1878, the Department were willing to allow the Board to build a school to accommodate 220 children for the Newtown area on the proposed site, but wished to know what the plans of the Board were for Mill Brow. The Board was adamant. They once again emphasised that the Greenway Road site was the one most convenient for both Mill Brow and Newtown and asked for their inspector to confer with them.³

Her Majesty's Inspector E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley met the Board in ⁴

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 26.11.1877.
 2. Ibid - 6.2.1878.
 3. Ibid - 6.3.1878.
 4. Ibid - 3.4.1878.

March. In his report he agreed with the ruling of the Department that the site would probably do for Newtown but not for Mill Brow, and that the Board should be prepared to build eventually at Mill Brow for that quarter.

The report was sent to the School Board for observations. It was considered and the Clerk was instructed to write to the Education Department stated:

"that unless My Lords require accommodation for all the children who ought to attend school, there is in the opinion of the Board no present necessity to provide further school accommodation at either Mill Brow or Newtown, inasmuch as the average attendance for the past month amounts to 1,718 only, while the recognised Public Elementary School accommodation (including the Ragged School, Mill Brow) provides for 2,299 children."¹

A reply from the Department read:

"I am directed to state that under the circumstances, My Lords will not at present call on your Board to provide any additional Public Elementary school accommodation in your district. Their Lordships, however, reserve to themselves the right to call for such accommodation whenever need for it may be shown to exist."²

The battle was over; neither side gave way. The Education Department withdrew gracefully but left the Board in no doubt as to who held the ultimate sanction.

The Board, however, was soon forced to provide accommodation for the Mill Brow area. As a result of a complaint by the School Board Visitor in February, 1876,³ on the inefficiency and overcrowding of the Ragged School and of the reception of children whose parents were able to afford the fees of a Public Elementary School the Board invited⁴

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 6.3.1878.
 2. Ibid - 1.5.1878.
 3. Ibid - 2.2.1876.
 4. Ibid - 5.2.1876.

the Rev. W. Preston (Manager) to discuss the problem at their meeting in May 1876. The following suggestions were made by Canon Barclay to which Mr. Preston agreed:

1. "That means should be adopted to prevent overcrowding."
11. "That effort should be made to improve the general efficiency of the school."
111. "That a register of attendance should be supplied and correctly kept."
- 1V. "That the fees should be raised."¹

The Parish of Holy Trinity was poor. The struggle to support two school was too much, and the Rev. W. Preston was unable to implement the suggestions agreed in 1876 in connection with the Ragged School. In 1878 it was declared "inefficient" by the magistrates. The school Board could no longer turn a blind eye to the existing conditions. They were sympathetic but felt that they must take action. The Elementary Education Act 1870 exempted children from attending school only if they were receiving efficient instruction in some other manner.²

The Rev. W. Preston was asked to carry out the terms to which he had agreed in 1876. He was unable to do so.³ He had no alternative but to transfer the school. In January 1879 he offered to sell the school for the sum of £600, but in April 1879 he accepted the offer of £500 for the school and adjacent property in his possession.⁴

The school was opened on 29th March 1880 as a Board School with accommodation for 60 girls, and 30 infants. A loan for £737.18s.6d. was obtained from the Public Works Loan Commissioners which covered purchase and enlargement.

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.2.1876.
 2. Ibid - 4.12.1878.
 3. Ibid - 11.1.1879.
 4. Ibid - 16.4.1879

In April 1880 the Department of Education again began to press for a school in the Newtown area and in a communication dated 28th July 1880, they stated that Her Majesty's Inspector had recommended that it was necessary in order to relieve the pressure on the National and Trinity schools, to provide accommodation for 100 boys and 100 girls on or near the site proposed in 1878 (i.e. in the Newtown area). The reply from the Board was curt. The Clerk was instructed to write to the Department stating that:

"the Board are fully alive to the necessity of providing further school accommodation for boys and girls, and that they will avail themselves at the first opportunity to secure a suitable site for a school."¹

The Education Department were obviously impatient with the Board and were determined to galvanise them into action. In September the Education Department asked them to submit plans, as soon as the site had been secured. As there was no further communication the Department wrote again in November and asked for the submission of plans for the proposed site, and got the reply that negotiations were being entered into for the purchase of a site in Albert Street for the erection of a new Board School.² Meanwhile, at their meeting in December 1880, the Board expressed grave doubts about the wisdom of the distribution of accommodation suggested by the Department. They still felt strongly that "a Central School would meet all requirements." The suggestion of the Department would entail a very large expenditure which would be a burden to the ratepayers. Not unnaturally their feelings of irritation at the interference of the Department in local affairs was expressed in the opinion that "members of the Board knew far better what was needed for the town than did the Inspectors of the

1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 4.8.1880.

2. Ibid - 10.11.1880.

Education Department, who were comparative strangers to the place."¹

A Sites Committee was appointed in January, 1881, to consider the merits of the various sites, and while enquiries were being made it was decided to take a census to find out the number of children in Runcorn under 13 years of age.² The results were available in March. In April, the Board informed the Department that:

"a Central School was much needed and is a better scheme than providing accommodation at Newtown and Mill Brow."³

The statistics showed a deficiency of 506 places.⁴ But the Board did not analyse these nor relate them to the accommodation available. If they had done so they would have realised that to build a Central School for 500 boys and girls, would, at that point in time, be a disaster. In effect, the findings of the census supported the recommendations of the Department as to the siting of the accommodation. The greatest increases in child population being in the Mill Brow district (258), in the Duke's Field district (581) and the Newtown (141).⁵

A Central School would have either syphoned off children from the Voluntary Schools, which the Board were trying to protect, or it would have been half empty and would have been an embarrassment to the Board and a burden to the ratepayers. The Department however, realised the fallacy in the Board's reasoning and pointed this out very clearly in their reply to the request for sanction for a Central School:

"From the Education Dept.

20th May 1881.

Sir,

Adverting to your letter of the 11th inst., I am directed to state that My Lords observe that taking into account the children in your district between 7 and 13 there are 1955 boys and girls. From this

1. Runcorn Guardian - 4.12.1880.

2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 12.1.1881.

3. Ibid - 6.4.1881.

4. Ibid - 9.3.1881 $\frac{1}{2}$

5. Ibid - 9.3.1881.

total may be deducted one seventh for children of the higher classes (279) and from the remainder may be deducted one eighth for absentees(209). These deductions leave a total of 1467 boys and girls requiring accommodation in Elementary Schools.

The number of places at present available for boys and girls appears to be as follows :-

National Schools	398
Wesleyan "	644
Trinity "	408
R.C. "	95
Mill. Brow	60
	<hr/>
	1605
	<hr/>

These figures would appear to show a surplus of places for children to the extent of 138. With regard to the Infants of whom a large portion are too young to come under the bye-laws it is to be observed that the Infant Depts. of existing schools are not full.

H.M. Inspector also reports that the distances in Runcorn are not so considerable as to create difficulty in the way of any one particular locality.

Under these circumstances My Lords are not able to understand why your Board should propose to build for anything like 600 children.

I have etc.,

P. Cummin. "

It was an assessment which was justified and one which was to the advantage of the Board. It left the door open for further negotiation, but the Board, who realised that the plan for a Central School was doomed, closed it firmly. The Clerk was directed to state in reply that:

"the Board have received "Their Lordships" letter with great satisfaction and are pleased to find that it will not be necessary

to proceed with the tasks of providing further school accommodation at present."¹

The question of accommodation did not arise again until 1884. At a School Board meeting in January, the Clerk pointed out that although there was no deficiency in overall provision, there was a surplus of accommodation for infants and a deficiency for girls. This deficiency was more apparent than real, although there were "in round figures" two hundred more girls on the rolls than there was certified accommodation, the average attendance showed there was still a small surplus. This position affected the admissions of schools where undesirable children were unwelcome. The Master could legitimately exclude a child on the grounds that the school was overcrowded. The Board reported that this was indeed happening. A parent complained when summoned to attend before the School Attendance Committee he had tried to get his girl into every school in Runcorn without success - obviously no-one wanted her. The Board decided that the Department should be informed that there was a deficiency of accommodation in the district for girls, and accommodation was required for 260 more.²

In April, 1884, the Board began once more to consider the necessity to build a school. There was a shortage of accommodation for girls. Mill Brow Girls' and Infant Schools were overflowing, and children were being turned away. An influx of Canal Boat children was expected as a result of the Canal Boats Act of 1884, though the Board considered the maximum allowance should be for 200 school children as many boats registered in Runcorn never returned there. The Board decided that:

"it was expedient to provide accommodation for 200 girls, 200 first standard mixed and 200 boys, and once again they recommended a Central School for this purpose. They also

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 1.6.1881.
 2. Runcorn Examiner - 12.1.1884.

accepted the suggestion of H.M.I. that Mill Brow should become an infants' school.¹

This time the Department approved the plan of the site, and accepted the recommendation for a Central School but "My Lords" queried the necessity for such a large school.²

Having considered the explanation of the Board the Department recommended that a mixed Junior School for 200 or 250 boys and a school for 200 girls should be provided, and endorsed the suggestion that Mill Brow should become an Infant School. The Board decided to accept the advice of the Department, and it was proposed to build a school for 450 children only.³

The building went ahead and on the 2nd January, 1886, Greenway Road School opened without any formal ceremony. One hundred and four children presented themselves in the Infant Department and eighty in the Girls' School. A brief article in the press describing the school reported:

"The new building is admirably situated in the centre of a populous district and is of easy access. The design of the exterior is very pleasing. The accommodation consists of two large rooms, the lower one for boys and girls (mixed) and the upper one for girls. In the former there are desks for about 130 children and four classrooms, each capable of holding 32 scholars. In the upper storey there is room for 90 girls with three classrooms providing 104 places."⁴

The organisation which embodied a girls and mixed school did not prove satisfactory, and an opportunity for reviewing the situation presented itself when the Head Teacher resigned in 1887. After being open for 21 months there were only 170 boys and 49 girls in attendance in the mixed School. There was therefore, surplus accommodation

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.4.1884.
 2. Ibid - 5.7.1884.
 3. Ibid - 27.9.1884
 4. Ibid - 9.1.1886.

and the Board considered that this was likely to happen so long as it remained a Standard 1 school, as the children who had been examined and passed in Standard 1 had to leave and go to other schools.

In considering the future of the Standard 1 School, the Board, with one exception, examined proposals on their merits as members of the Board, and not as watch-dogs of the denominational schools. It was suggested that there should be a boys' and girls' school which would put the Board schools on the same footing as the denominational schools. Mr. Beckett (Wesleyan), objected to this plan, as he felt that the denominational schools would suffer, and proposed that one of the rooms should be turned into an infant classroom to hold 60 infants. The present staff would be able to teach standards 1 and 11 and standard 111 could go to other schools. He estimated that the revenue from this would be £47. It was admitted that this would be financially attractive to the ratepayers, but the plan for a boys' and girls' school would have advantages for the children and it was decided to ask Her Majesty's Inspector E.M.K.Sneyd Kynnersley to meet the Board to discuss the matter, as this would be quicker than dealing with the Department of Education.¹

A special meeting was held on 26th September at which Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K.Sneyd Kynnersley was present. After a full discussion it was decided that a master should be appointed, that standard 1 girls would be removed to the girls' school, the present mixed school would be converted into a boys' school for standard 1, 11, and 111 and such higher standards in the future as the Board from time to time would direct.²

Additional accommodation was not provided until the year 1898.

In 1888 it was decided to take a census while the population was

1. Runcorn Examiner - 10.9.1887.

2. Ibid - 8.10.1887.

normal, as work at Runcorn on the Manchester Ship Canal was due to start in the near future and it was anticipated that there would be an influx of workers and their families.¹ The census revealed a deficiency of accommodation for 409 seats for children between the ages of 3 and 13. But if the required accommodation were estimated using the average attendance as the criterion, there was ample.²

The Roman Catholic School was enlarged in 1889 to hold 224 children (124 boys and girls mixed and 100 infants),³ and until 1892 the position remained satisfactory. Work on the Manchester Ship Canal began in this year and there was an abnormal rise in the school population. The shortage of places for girls was acute. There were 44 more in average attendance than the certified accommodation and there were 26 who were unable to obtain admission to any school.⁴ Provision for 70 girls was necessary. Greenway Road School was overcrowded,⁵ Newtown Infants' School was full and there were 5 or 6 children in the area who could not gain admittance.⁶ The lack of space in this area was alleviated temporarily by the addition of a classroom in Newtown Infants' School.⁷

In November a Committee appointed by the Board, considered the shortage of accommodation for girls and recommended that in view of the present floating population, the accommodation should be of a temporary nature.⁸ This, however, did not materialise.

In 1893 the shortage of places for girls increased to 100; twenty girls could not gain admission and in addition there was a shortage of places for boys and infants. At the meeting of the School Accommodation Committee, in November, the position was examined. The Newtown Infants' School, which had been enlarged, had now only room for 5 infants,

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 8.19.1888.
 2. Ibid - 8.12.1888.
 3. Ibid - 8.6.1889.
 4. Ibid - 5.3.1892.
 5. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 13.9.1892.
 6. Runcorn Examiner - 9.4.1892.
 7. Chester Record Office. C.C.E.2/3. County of Chester. ~~Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees and Teaching Staff. 1903.~~ Report upon Structural and Sanitary Conditions of School Buildings
 8. Runcorn Examiner - 1.11.1893.

and in Mill Brow there was room for 2. The National School could take 35 infants and Trinity 56, but the distance from Mill Brow and Newtown made these schools inaccessible for infants. Greenway Road Boys' School had 38 in excess of their accommodation. The lack of accommodation was serious, and further provision by the Board was discussed, but a decision was deferred.¹

Work on the Manchester Ship Canal was completed in 1893, and in January the question was again discussed.² Doubts were expressed about the necessity for additional accommodation as the Board considered there might be a decrease in numbers due to the exodus of families who were engaged on the Canal work.³ It was, however, decided to submit plans for enlarging Greenway Road Girls' School which would entail an outlay of £450. These were returned for alteration, and at the February meeting the Board considered that the alterations which the Department of Education required were not worth carrying out. They would involve an expenditure of £600 for the sake of accommodating 60 children and the matter was deferred.⁴

Their decision was, to some extent, influenced by the advance information that the managers of the Wesleyan Schools intended to transfer their schools to the Board and this would involve considerable expense.

At the next meeting in March, 1894, the proposal which had been received was considered. The Managers hoped to transfer the schools after the inspection in July, 1894.⁵ Negotiations were not so simple as at first envisaged. The Wesleyan schools consisted of Brunswick Street Boys' and Granville Street Girls' and Infants' Schools. The

1. Runcorn Examiner - 11.11.1893.

2. Ibid - 6.1.1894.

3. This was an assumption which proved correct. There was a steady decrease in the numbers on Roll for some years after 1893, (see appendix). In January, 1894, there were 123 children less on the registers than there were in January 1893.

4. Runcorn Examiner - 10.2.1894.

5. Ibid - 10.3.1894.

managers wished to keep the Brunswick Street school building for their own use and to sell the Granville Street school to the Board for the sum of £1,186, but it appeared that the school building had been built with the aid of a building grant from the Government, never repaid, and that it was in trust for education. The managers were obliged accordingly by law, if they ceased to carry on the school, to choose between a nominal sum as purchase money from the Board, and leaving the building disused.¹ The managers did not wish to accept either of these alternatives, and the Board were naturally sympathetic. Negotiations were protracted and the managers of the schools agreed to carry them on for another year until 1st July, 1895, in hope of a favourable solution.² An ingenious way out of the difficulty was found. The Board offered to pay the sum of £450 for that part of the premises not in the educational trust. The managers accepted the price and handed over the whole, the Trust part having become useless to them.³ Brunswick Street school was rented from 1st July, 1895 for one year - "and after the expiration of such year to be determined by three months notice in writing at any date on either side."⁴

Having acquired the Wesleyan Schools, the Board no longer exhibited their former desire to provide or extend accommodation. When the application for the transfer was considered, the chairman expressed his regret that:

"the Managers should have come to such a determination and should have resolved to discontinue the educational work which they had so successfully conducted for many years."

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1. Runcorn Guardian - 30.11.1901.
 2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.6.1894.
 3. Runcorn Guardian - 30.11.1901.
 4. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 16.5.1894.

"The obligation was thrown upon them (the School Board) by the closing of the schools, of providing instruction for about 700 children and thus the responsibility of the members would be in that degree increased." ¹

This comment, made by a member who stood at the elections as an Independent candidate, conveyed no enthusiasm for the extension of the School Board's commitments. The responsibility of the Board would now be more than doubled - this implied an undesirable rise in the rates.

<u>Accommodation before 1895</u>		<u>Accommodation after 1895</u>	
Mill Brow	124	Mill Brow	124
Greenway Road Schools	450	{ Greenway Road Schools 450 Victoria Road Wesleyan Schools	784
	<u>574</u>		<u>1358</u>

The Board hoped to make the schools self-supporting by adopting the following scale of fees: ²

<u>Brunswick Street Boys'</u>		<u>Granville Street Girls'</u>	
Std. 1, 11, 111	1d. per week.	Std. 1, 11, 111	1d. per week
" 1V & V	2d. " "	" 1V, V, V1	2d. " "
" V1 & V11	3d. " "	Granville Street Infants	Free.

It was estimated that the charge would bring in £100 per annum ³

but the scheme was doomed to failure. A petition was sent to the Education Department, signed by about 60 parents, who demanded free education. In accordance with the Elementary Education Act 1891 the Board had no alternative but to supply it, so head teachers were instructed that free education should be given to all who made application for it. ⁴ It was only to be expected that the revenue from fees would decrease and in February 1896, the Board made the schools free. ⁵

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 10.3.1894.
 2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 11.6.1895.
 3. Runcorn Guardian - 8.2.1896.
 4. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.12.1895.
 5. School Management Committee Minutes of the Runcorn School Board Minutes - 28.1.1896.

Meanwhile the plans for the extension of the Greenway Road Girls' Schools remained in abeyance.¹ The situation had now changed and it was necessary to provide a replacement for the Brunswick Boys' and Granville Street Girls' Schools. When negotiations for the transfer of the schools had been successfully completed, the Board reluctantly began to consider what form the provision should take; plans for a Junior School in Victoria Road were examined² but in July 1896 these were abandoned and it was decided to enlarge the existing schools in Greenway Road.³

The Board moved slowly; they obviously hoped to postpone the expense for a new building for as long as possible and were quite content to pay the rent for the Wesleyan Schools - this was more economical. The National Schools had been enlarged in 1895⁴ and the numbers on rolls in the town were decreasing.⁵ There was no shortage of accommodation.

Plans for enlargement were sent to the Department of Education and these were returned twice for alterations. They were eventually reported approved in March, 1897.⁶ Progress remained slow. The Department of Education referred the matter to Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K.Sneyd Kynnersley and asked for his observations. The following is his reply:⁷

"The Board are very slow in building their new school for which plans were approved on February 8th 1897. In March I complained they were doing nothing and on May 1 1897 they had not begun foundations. Now on May 28th they "hope to send up a plan and estimate." I think they want a little gentle pressure as they will go on using the old Wesleyan Schools

1. The name of the Greenway Road schools was changed to Victoria Road Schools in February 1896.

2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 11.6.1895.

3. Ibid - 7.9.1896.

4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1916. 1.10.1895.

5. Appendix p. 385. Statistics of attendance.

6. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 2.3.1897.

7. P.R.O. Ed. 21/1913

for an indefinite time. Perhaps you will tell them that the Granville Street School has been condemned as unfit for school purposes and that My Lords have not received any plan of the alteration proposed. That Her Majesty's Inspector will be instructed to report after his visit in July and that My Lords will consider the circumstances before paying the Annual Grant.

E.M.K.
8.6.97."

In June the plans were finally approved and sanction was given for application for a loan of £4733.15s.0d. to meet the cost.¹ The extensions were completed in June 1898. There was now accommodation for 824 children in the Victoria Road Schools. The children from Brunswick Street Boys' and Granville Street Girls' Schools were transferred with the staff to the Victoria Road Schools.² Alterations began on the Granville Street Infant School in August 1899, the cost of the work and furnishings was £1810.

This provision did not remain adequate for long. In the Annual Report of the Board of Education on the Victoria Road and Granville Street Schools the following passage occurred:

"The School accommodation is at present insufficient for the average attendance, this should at once be remedied or the grant next year will be endangered."³

Plans for enlargement of the Victoria Road Schools were submitted to the Board of Education in December, 1902,⁴ but these were not satisfactory, the schools had already reached the limit of size sanctioned by the Board of Education and they suggested that "if a further increase in accommodation for children in the school district is necessary plans for a separate Junior Department should be submitted."⁵

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 15.9.1897.
 2. School Management Committee of the Runcorn School Board Minutes - 14.6.1898.
 3. Ibid - 20.1.1903.
 4. Ibid - 23.12.1902.
 5. Ibid - 17.2.1903.

Consideration of this suggestion was deferred - the Board knew that the end of their term of office was in sight.

1.

GREENWAY ROAD GIRLS' SCHOOL¹
VICTORIA ROAD GIRLS' SCHOOL.

113 Girls were admitted on the first day² and by the end of the month there were 146³ on the roll. There was a staff of two,⁴ a mistress who was certificated and an assistant; by March two candidates were also on the staff. As it was built in a central position to absorb the increased population of children anticipated in the efficient working of the Canal Boats Act 1884 and to relieve the already overcrowding in the existing schools it was inevitable that in the early years the Greenway Road Schools would provide accommodation for all those who were refused permission in the voluntary schools ostensibly because of overcrowding, but too often these were the irregular and neglected children.

Statistics of attendance illustrate the extreme irregularity in attendance during the first two years. The highest percentage recorded in the School Log Book during the first year (1886) was 75 for the week ending 19th November. The lowest percentage, 34.6 was recorded for the week ending 9th April. In the year 1887 the highest recorded weekly percentage was 75.4 for the week ending 25th March and the lowest 50% for the week ending 9th September.

The following statistics of the percentage of attendance published in the Runcorn Examiner for the months of June, October and November, 1886, and for the month of June, 1887, show how unfavourably the Greenway Road Schools compared with the existing Voluntary Schools(girls).⁵

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1. The name of the Greenway Road Boys' and Girls' Schools were changed to Victoria Road Boys' and Girls' School in 1896 - Runcorn School Board Minutes - 28.1.1896.
 2. School Log - 11.1.1886.
 3. Ibid - 25.1.1886
 4. Ibid - 11.1.1886.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 10.12.1886.

	Published in Runcorn Examiner - 4.12.1886		Published in Runcorn Examiner - July 1887	
	November 1886	October 1886	June 1887	June 1886
Greenway Road Mixed	71%	69%	60%	58%
Greenway Road Girls'	68%	67%	65%	62%
National Girls'	82%	81%	80%	81%
Trinity Girls'	82%	83%	74%	78%
Wesleyan Girls'	79%	78%	75%	63%

Standards of attainment were equally low.

Permission from Her Majesty's Inspector was granted to reduce the reading requirements of Standard two by half and of upper standards by one third.¹

In spite of these obstacles the work showed progress. The first annual report stated that the school made a "fair beginning".² In 1887 Her Majesty's Inspector reported that :

"The Girls' School has made creditable progress during the year. It is now in good order, and on the whole does well in the elementary subjects."

The grant received was 17s.3d. per head.³

The mistress left on 20th July, 1888 and if she had made little impact on attendance she had undoubtedly raised the standard of work. The report for the year ended 30th June, 1888, stated:

"The Elementary Subjects are well taught on the whole. . . order good, and the grant awarded was 18s. 10d."⁴

Miss Kilburn took up duty on 13th August, 1888. Her task was two fold: she had to raise the standard of work which although it was showing steady improvement there were still many failures in the examinations and "a good many bare passes".⁵ To achieve this she

1. School Log - 14.5.1886.

2. Ibid

3. Runcorn Examiner - 20.9.1887.

4. Ibid - 11.8.1888.

5. School Log - 13.8.1888.

realised that she had to solve the problem of attendance. Both of these she tackled vigorously and systematically. In October 1888 she had a consultation with the School Attendance Officer¹ and as a result the average attendance rose by 13% in one week.²

A system of giving prizes and entertainments for regular attendance was adopted by both schools (boys' and girls'). The entertainment took the form of Magic Lantern Shows during the winter, and in November, 1888 the first concert was organised by the teachers to raise money to purchase the lantern. The following is the report of the concert given in the Runcorn Examiner :

"CONCERT AT RUNCORN BOARD SCHOOL - A concert, promoted by the teachers of the Runcorn Board Schools, was given in Greenway Road School on Monday evening. The teachers being desirous of maintaining and, if possible, improving the present admirable average attendance of the children at school, and of giving the scholars a deeper interest in their work, have conceived the idea of providing, at stated periods, entertainments to those scholars who are credited with the virtues of regularity and good conduct. The love of the young mind for spectacular display is well-known, and as the Chairman of the concert (Mr. Pritchard) observed it is the ambition of the teachers to procure a suitable magic lantern by means of which to amuse and instruct the little people under their care. The object of Monday evening's concert was to secure the sum necessary to attain this end, and it is pleasing to record that a numerous audience lent their support. A capital programme had been arranged, but in consequence of the absence of Mr. Lamb, of Liverpool, considerable alterations had to be made. Miss Simkin and Miss C. Taylor contributed the first item, in the duet "What are the

1. School Log - 12.10.1888.

2. As no further account of attendances have been noted in the log book it is not possible to say how permanent this improvement was. It is perhaps some indication that there were no further comments on irregularity.

wild waves saying", and then Miss Williams of Liverpool rendered a song not mentioned on the programme. Later, the same lady sang "What would you do, love". Miss Taylor, in whom Runcorn possesses a rising vocalist of much ability, gave a charming interpretation of "Ora Pro Nobis" to which her full, sweet and expressive voice was well suited. "Tit for Tat" was given by Miss Lord of Widnes, who might have achieved greater success had she exhibited more confidence in her own powers. Miss Simkin is always listened to with pleasure, and on the present occasion she delighted the company with her capital vocalisation of "Angus Macdonald", the skilfully played accompaniment adding highly to the effect. Mr. Williams is an acquisition to local musical circles, and his bright, clear, tenor voice was heard to great advantage in the songs, "Anita" and "Yes, Let me Like a Soldier Fall". For his rendering of the latter song, Mr. Williams was awarded the only encore of the evening, a fact which must be ascribed rather to the lack of appreciation, than to the discriminating criticism of the audience. The re-appearance of Miss Nellie Handley at our local concerts must be noted with pleasure. She sang "Till the Dawning of the Day", with her customary artistic method and power of expression. The trio "Memory" was rendered by Miss Simkin, Miss Taylor and Mr. Williams in good style. Two enjoyable items were the trio (piano, violin and 'cello) "Gipsy Rondo" by Mrs. Kay and Messrs Kay and Simkin and the pianoforte duet by Mrs. Kay and Mr. Wynne Humphreys. The concert concluded with the National Anthem. Mr. Wynne Humphreys was an able and efficient accompanist."¹

The rise in the standard of work was not spectacular. The school had an abnormal number of ignorant children. In December 1888 application was made to Her Majesty's Inspector that an exceptional syllabus of instruction be adopted for these children who, not knowing

1. Runcorn Examiner - 10.11.1888.

anything have been admitted to school.¹

Her Majesty's Inspector approved the following:

Reading : "To read a short paragraph from "First Infant Primer.""

Writing : "To copy a short sentence from the black-board and to write from dictation not more than six easy words taken from the Primer - the words to commence with capital letters."

Arithmetic : "Numeration and notation of hundreds."

"Addition of tens of three lines."

"Subtraction without borrowings."

"Multiplication table to four times twelve."

These children were taught separately in a class called "The Primer Class."

The admission of such children was not confined to the early years.

Entries into the School Log Book show that they continued to arrive e.g.

January 21st, 1889. - "Admitted Eliza and May Beckenham who have lived in the hilly district near Cardiff and have never been to school. Put them in the Primer class."

7th March 1890. - "Admitted a girl 8 years old, who has never been to school before."

The condition of the boat children aroused comment in 1891:

21st January, 1891. - "Standard 1 is in a very backward condition, there being an unusual number of boat children in this class."

1st July, 1899. - "It is found necessary to have a division lower than Standard 1, some children being entirely ignorant; there are also a number of boat children whose irregular attendance prevents them making any real progress."

The low standard of those admitted from infant schools was commented on annually:

1. School Log - 14.12.1888.

- 8th August 1889 - "Eighteen girls were admitted, eight of whom did not know their letters."
- 26th August, 1889. - "Examined those admitted in Standard 1. Found a great number of them could not write at all and did not know the alphabet or the sound of any letters. Eight had been a short time in private schools and one to no school."
- 1st July, 1898. - "It will be necessary to have Standard 0 in this school, owing to the number of boat children admitted."
- 12th July, 1901. - "Had to form a class below Standard 1 for children who know nothing."

The entry in 1902 suggests an acceptance of the inevitable. "It is impossible to avoid having an 0 class in this school, so many of the young children admitted being perfectly ignorant of letters and figures alike."¹

In spite of the abnormal intake of these poor children, the reports on Greenway Road Girls' became first rate, the school earning such comments as :

"Instruction is very satisfactory and on intelligent lines," an observation made by Her Majesty's Inspector in the School Log Book March 1897.² The school was fortunate in having an energetic and enlightened headmistress, who guided her staff along progressive lines, and who stressed the need for meaningful work, and for understanding. Needlework was purposeful and relevant to the daily lives of the children. Under the direction and guidance of the teacher the girls made their own muslin summer dresses.³ Numerous articles were made to sell at the bazaar which the children held in aid of the prize fund.⁴

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1. School Log - 10.10.02.
 2. Ibid - 26.3.1897.
 3. Ibid - 15.5.1903.
 4. Ibid - 1.2.1901.

The school had a "museum" and a well disposed grocer supplied samples of goods and food stuffs.¹

As early as 1889 a library was in existence. Books were purchased from the proceeds of bazaars held by the school and contributions of books were made by the girls themselves. The boys' and girls' schools joined forces and contributed to a school magazine which in 1889 was produced monthly.² The drudgery of dictation was relieved by "Spelling Bees."³

Children entered for Essay Competitions which followed lectures on "Dangers of Alcohol" by outside speakers⁴ and in 1903 they were writing what was called "Picture Essays" but which were in effect a forerunner of what modern jargon describes as "Topic Work". The children chose a subject, worked on it individually for a week during their own time and finally wrote and illustrated the information without notes. This was demanding work but it aroused tremendous interest.⁵

Discovery methods crept into the teaching of "Nature Study". "Plants were grown and observations made",⁶ and visual aids were used in the teaching of Geography. An entry in the log book states a lesson on geography of Scotland "was illustrated by means of beautiful photographic scenes".⁷

Incentives to work were also created by special prizes, given by various gentlemen interested in the work, which were awarded on results of examinations, while the opportunity to enter for County Council Scholarships gave hope to the poor but more ambitious pupils.⁸

1. School Log - 9.12.1898.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 12.3.1889.

3. School Log - 8.5.1896.

4. Ibid - 28.2.1893.

5. Ibid - 14.2.1903.

6. Ibid - 7.2.1903.

7. Ibid - 11.12.1896.

8. There is no evidence that any of the girls were awarded scholarships.

2.

THE MIXED SCHOOL

The special problem of this school was that being a Standard 1 school it received many children who were completely ignorant and therefore, unable to do the work prescribed by the Code for that Standard. An attempt was made to reduce this problem by sending at least some of these children to Mill Brow Infant School which many of them had, in fact, been attending as infants; entries in the Mill Brow School Log Book note instances of this:

- 13.9.1886 - "Readmitted Mary Probin, attended Greenway Road School on Monday, sent back here on Tuesday as unfit for Standard 1."
- 22.11.1886 - "One girl re-admitted by order of the Board as being unfit for Standard 1 School."
- 24.11.1886 - "One boy 10 year ordered to attend this school after attending Greenway Road Standard 1 school since midsummer being only fit to be taught with infants."

Her Majesty's Inspector put an end to this practice in a minute dated 22.11.1886 which was to be copied into the School Log Book of the Mixed School, which stated:

"In the Greenway Road mixed school all children over seven must be admitted, ignorance is no excuse for refusal to admit. The school was originally intended for the benefit of the canal boat children, who have hitherto been neglected at home and have been coldly received - or even refused at other schools in the town. Any children admitted in an entirely ignorant state should be noted in the Log Book and should be placed in the Primer Class. If on the day of inspection they have not made sufficient progress to enable them to be presented in the first standard they should be entered in the exceptional schedule with reasons for their backward condition."¹

Though the grant earned in the annual inspection in 1887 was 10s.5d.

1. Greenway Road Girls' School Log Book - 22.11.1886.

per head Her Majesty's Inspector paid tribute to the work which had been done. The report stated:

"The Junior School has made great progress. The children are in good order, and do very well in writing and arithmetic. Reading is less satisfactory. Needlework excellent. Grammar good."¹

The existence of the school was brief. The organisation as a Standard 1 school was not a success. The school had been open over eighteen months and there was still a surplus of accommodation.² An opportunity to revise the organisation came when the Mistress resigned. In September 1887, the Board met Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, to discuss the future of the school. As a result of this conference at the meeting in October, 1887, it was proposed that :

"A master be appointed in place of Miss Hutchinson, and that Standard 1 girls be removed to the Girls' School; and that the present mixed school be converted into a Boys' school for Standard one, two and three, and such higher Standards in the future as the Board from time to time shall direct."

Opposition to the motion was expressed by Mr. Beckett a Wesleyan, as he considered that if the Board adopted the resolution "they would certainly have to encroach upon the domains of the denominational schools in order to keep up a regular attendance at Greenway Road Schools, and they were sure to do that, because of the difference in the fees at that school, compared with the fees at other schools. Besides, the ratepayers would be put to more expense by the additional stationery that would be required in higher standards", and added that "the expense of having a master at £120 per year, etc., would be greater than keeping on the school in its present form with the addition of an infant class, which, he argued, was needed in the district where the school was situated".

1. Runcorn Examiner - 28.9.1887.

3. Ibid - 26.9.1887.

The remaining members of the Board felt that his fears regarding the effect on the denominational schools would prove groundless. The original motion was carried and it was decided to advertise for a master at the rate of £120 per annum.¹

1. Runcorn Examiner - 8.10.1887.

3.

GREENWAY ROAD BOYS' SCHOOLVictoria Road Boys' School

The appointment of the headmaster of this school was clearly one in which local and religious issues were involved.

There were 361 candidates for the post one of whom (Mr. Moulton) was a local man. A short list of seven were interviewed. The local man "according to his testimonial respecting ability and educational requirements was decidedly inferior" to the six men interviewed. This was not denied by any member of the Board, yet the final selection lay between the least well qualified and the best. Mr. Moulton was a native of Runcorn and the son of a ratepayer. He had been a pupil teacher for five years in Brunswick Wesleyan School, he passed in second division both entering and leaving Westminster College, and when his training was complete, he returned to the school where he had been a pupil teacher. As a teacher he had a good record "he had taken personal supervision of three upper standards, five six and seven, which passed very well indeed, he also had charge of pupil teachers for nearly twelve months and all these teachers had done very well under his tuition." His rival came from Gloucester. He had had five years training as a pupil teacher, two years at Battersea Training College, he was a Queen's Exhibitioner, had passed in the first division when he entered and in the first division when he left, and had since then been an assistant teacher at a school in which the "excellent" merit grant had been received in four successive years. He had passed the matriculation examination of the University of London in the first division and had also passed the intermediate examination for the B.A. degree. He had a full certificate for Art, Music and Chemistry.

In their support for the local candidate the Non-conformists revealed extreme parochialism and religious bias. The only justification which they could give for their support was that he was known in the town

and was a successful teacher. His proposer, Mr. Beckett, who represented the Wesleyan Church on the School Board, agreed that Mr. Moulton's qualifications were far inferior to the six others interviewed and stated "that if they were to appoint a master to a college he would have no hesitation whatever in supporting one of these candidates, but it did not follow that because a man was a learned man and had obtained high honours, he was the best man to take charge of such a school as the Greenway Road Board Schools were at the present time."

The Church Party's policy was to elect the best candidate irrespective of religious or political considerations. Their selection was on the basis of academic qualifications and the record of the candidate, and for this reason supported the candidate from Gloucester. The discussion at the meeting when the appointment was made was lively, and there were some heated exchanges, but the Church Party knew that the result was a foregone conclusion. There were only five of the seven members present, and three of these were Non-conformists. Mr. Moulton was appointed at a salary of £120 per year.¹

The Church Party were so dissatisfied with the way in which this appointment was made that at a subsequent meeting they declined to take any responsibility for the appointment of staff for the school.²

Mr. Moulton justified his appointment. He became head of the newly established Boys' school on 13th January, 1888,³ and at the annual inspection in 1889 it earned the "Excellent Merit Grant". The observation of Her Majesty's Inspector was :

"Boys' in very good order and pass an excellent examination on the whole."⁴

Reports in this vein continued and the Principal Grant of 14s.0d. was

1. Runcorn Examiner - 19.11.1987.
2. Ibid
3. Greenway Road Girls' School Log Book - 13.1.1888.
4. Runcorn Examiner - 11.8.1888.

awarded annually after 1890.

Prizes were given for attendance and good work, the money for these was raised by the staff of both schools who organised concerts and lantern shows. Entertainment in the form of Magic Lantern Shows were given to the boys and girls of the schools during the winter months to encourage good attendance. The following is an account of one of them:

Greenway Road Board Schools

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress illustrated with Magic Lantern.

"Slides formed the chief feature of entertainment given to scholars attending these schools on Friday evening. At intervals during the entertainment the hearty singing of a large number of sacred songs, words of which were thrown on the sheet, rendered the evening more enjoyable. The amusing story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin was next illustrated. This part of the programme was a source of intense enjoyment to the juvenile audience and the frequent outbursts of laughter and applause fully testified to this fact. A very pleasant entertainment concluded with the singing of "Abide with me" followed by the National Anthem."¹

A mixed bag, and one which indicated that the religious training of the children was not neglected.

As the annual reports indicate, the standard of work was excellent and the performance of the pupils in the Cheshire County Council Scholarship examinations confirmed the favourable comments of Her Majesty's Inspector. Between the years 1894 and 1902 a total of seventeen scholarships were won by the School. In the year 1902 thirty-six scholarships were given by the County Council, three of these were awarded to pupils in Victoria Road Boys' School.²

While this was an excellent school it was kept strictly within the limits of the Code. Algebra, which was included in the curriculum in

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 23.1.1892.
 2. Runcorn Guardian - 31.5.1902.

1895, was examined under the Code.¹

The school was a product typical of a good hardworking, conscientious headmaster.

1. Runcorn Examiner - 31.8.1895.

4.

MILL BROW BOARD SCHOOL

Mill Brow School was originally erected in 1853 as a Ragged School and belonged to the parish of Holy Trinity.¹ In 1870 it was not under Government Inspection but the Department of Education in 1872 included it in its calculations for accommodation, and recommended that it would be enlarged to hold 100 children.² In 1873 it was overcrowded, there were 120 children attending it and it was without a certificated teacher,³ As the parish was unable to support two schools, Mill Brow was transferred to the Board in 1879 and after alterations was opened as a Board school on 29th March, 1880, with accommodation for sixty girls and thirty infants. The fees charged were girls 3d per week and infants 2d.⁴

The accommodation consisted of one room 47' 5" long by 17' 5" broad,⁵ with a lobby 13' long by 4' broad. The equipment consisted of:⁶

One desk for the mistress	£5.10.0.
One desk for Pupil teacher	£2.15.5.
Hat and coat pegs	12.6.
	<hr/>
	£8.17.11.

This was meagre provision, but it was in line with the policy of economy to which the Board clung firmly throughout its existence.

The Girls were taught in the classroom, and the infants in the lobby with a gallery which occupied most of the space. There were no desks or benches and there was no room for them.⁷ The children had to hold their slates during the writing lesson, and rested them on their knees to form tables during the varied occupations.⁸

1. Chester Record Office: County of Chester. Department of Education Act 1902. Report upon the Structural and Sanitary Condition of School Buildings. 1903

2. Appendix p. 380

3. Files of National Society - Holy Trinity Controlled C.E. School.

4. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 13.3.1880.

5. P.R.O. ED.21/1915. 8.9.1879.

6. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.3.1880.

7. School Log Book - 15.8.1883

8. Ibid - 9.1.1896.

A description of the classroom added in 1882 is given in the annual report of Her Majesty's Inspector in 1884:

"The room is cheerless and must be cold in Winter, hardly any attempt has been made to furnish suitable apparatus for infant teaching. The room is a lavatory, and has a cloakroom and a passage, and part of it has a stone floor!"¹

As a result of this report the premises were improved, but in 1885 Her Majesty's Inspector reported that although:

"the premises have been considerably improved they are still far from satisfactory."²

The school building was patched up intermittently but was never raised to even a satisfactory sanitary standard. In "The Report upon Structural and Sanitary Conditions of School Buildings" made by the County of Chester upon Elementary Schools, ^{in 1903} the "General Remarks" on Mill Brow are:

"This is an old building erected in 1853. The Classroom is too narrow and the light is spoiled by an entrance from the street, which appears unnecessary, as access can be had through the playground. There is no access to cloakroom from classroom. The latrines in their present condition are most objectionable and the covered porch between the cloakroom entrance and latrines conveys the smell into the School Room".

In 1910, His Majesty's Inspector Howard in his report on the school stated :

"This is a most unsatisfactory school and one apparently not worthy of improvement. The offices are old, dark, of peculiar pattern, insanitary, and too near the school. There are too many steps about.

The cloakroom is a passage and is insufficient in size. The

1. School Log Book - 29.8.1884.

2. Ibid - 24.8.1885.

"main room and the classroom are insufficiently lighted and unheated and the heating could easily be improved. The classroom is used as a babies room and is altogether unsuited for its purpose. It is a dingy place, is too small, and is a passageway from the principal entrance to the main room.

The playground is not large enough for the number of children in average attendance.

As the school is situated in the area for which provision is required I recommended that the numbers attending Mill Brow be added to the deficiency and that this school be closed in the near future."¹

This substandard building was, until the year 1896, frequently overcrowded. Within two weeks after the school was opened 91 children were admitted.² The numbers grew rapidly and in one week in August an average attendance of 91 was recorded.³ From then until 1882 there are many records of severe overcrowding.⁴ An entry in the log book in September, 1881, reads:

"Mr. Rigby, Clerk to the School Board, visited the school this morning. . . and said I must reduce the attendance as the yearly average was not to exceed 90. Present this afternoon 134."⁵

A classroom was added in 1882.⁶ The official accommodation was now 124. This reduced the congestion temporarily but the numbers on the registers continued to rise. The highest number on roll recorded was 180.⁷ As there were daily attendances of 173 on 3rd July, 1883, and 165 on 25th June, 1883, and an average attendance of 155.4 for the week ended 7.6.1883 was noted in the log book, it is likely that the numbers on the register were over 200.

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1. P.R.O. Ed21/1915 - 30.5.1910.
 2. School Log Book - 29.4.1880.
 3. Ibid - 27.8.1880
 4. See Appendix p.391.
 5. School Log Book - 20.1.1882.
 6. Ibid - 20.1.1882.
 7. Ibid - 4.5.1883.

The opening of Greenway Road in 1886 when the girls were transferred from Mill Brow, which became an Infants and Standard 1 school, reduced the number on roll to 110, but once again the numbers began to build up, and from 1889 serious overcrowding was a recurring feature until 1896 when Her Majesty's Inspector observed:

"the classroom is greatly overcrowded. . . Dimensions 18' 2" x 12' 8", this gives accommodation at 8 sq.ft. for 28 children and there are 48 present this afternoon. This endangers the whole grant due to the school on June 30th."¹

Irregular attendance was a characteristic of this school throughout the period. The percentage of attendance for the week ending 9.4.1880 - the end of its second week as a Board School - was 63%.

The annual percentage for the last years of the School Board era were:-²

	<u>Rolls</u>	<u>Average attendance.</u>	<u>%</u>
1900	146	112	76.2
1901	145	111	76.55
1902	160	117	73.1
1903	145	104	71.1

Attendance fluctuated from day to day and week to week. The following table shows how wide the range of attendance was in the early years, even in periods free from infectious diseases and unfavourable weather.³

<u>1880</u> Average attendance for week ending - 9th April	-	57
	16th April	- 51
	23rd April	- 61
	30th April	- 68
	7th May	- 53
	14th May	- 52
	28th May	- 58
	3rd June	- 53
	11th June	- 57

1. School Log Book - 10.6.1896.
2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1915 undated
3. Compiled from School Log Book.

1880 Average attendance for week ending -	18th June	-	69
	25th June	-	65
	9th July	-	82
	15th July	-	76
1883 Average attendance for week ending -	27th April	-	128
	4th May	-	141
	10th May	-	127
	29th May	-	148

Any excuse was sufficient to merit absence from school even as late as 1901 when compulsory education was in operation in Runcorn for 25 years. The exodus from school in search of excitement was still common, an entry in the log book 15.7.1901 reads:

"attendance very small this afternoon torpedo boats passing up the canal."¹

The remarks:

"very many scholars absent this afternoon on account of some sensation in the town"

was just as applicable in 1901 as it was in 1884.²

While the average attendance at the infant schools was considerably lower than the total average in the town, Mill Brow was usually amongst those infant schools having the lowest.

The table below shows the position of Mill Brow in relation to the average attendance of the infant schools in Runcorn:³

	1886		Month of	RE. 5/02	RE. Sept. 1902
	August	September	May 1902	April 1902.	Av. for year 1901.
Mill Brow	64%	69%	84	84	77.9%
Wesleyan Infants	58%	72%	Girls 88	88	82.9%
Trinity "	74%	76%	89	89	82.2%
R. Catholic Mixed	57%	65%	82	82	82.1%
Newtown Mission	76%	77%	85	85	77%

1. School Log Book - 15.7.1901.

2. Ibid - 10.4.1884.

3. Statistics compiled from press reports in the Runcorn Examiner.

The children who attended Mill Brow were on the whole the neglected, backward and very poor. During the severe winter of 1881 the average attendance dropped from 101 for the week ending 29th October,¹ to 63 for the week ending 20th January, 1881. The parents could not afford to pay the fees.² Twenty-eight of the children had reached such a level of destitution that they were given dinners by the Relief Committee.³

The remark by Her Majesty's Inspector in the Annual Report for 1885:

"the children are for the most part neat and clean"

suggests that the standard of cleanliness in former years was such that this was an improvement worthy of comment.⁴

For many years the admission of ignorance and neglected children was noted in the school log book:

- 10.3.1884. "Admitted one girl almost ten years of age who does not know two letters of the alphabet."
- 3.11.1884. "Two Linfords admitted, very neglected children paid for by the Board."
- 21.8.1885. "Several new scholars admitted this week over age of infants who are ignorant even of their letters."
- 21.9.1885. "Admitted three girls one of whom, eight years of age, does not know a letter.
Left Trinity school because she was charged 6d instead of the ordinary fee."
- 19.12.1886. "Admitted one girl nine years last month who appears not to have attended any school at all before, so ignorant of the simplest elements of reading and writing."
- 4.3.1887. "Boy ten years admitted, placed among the babies, not having been to school before."
- 24.10.1890. "Have admitted several children this week in a most backward condition."

1. School Log Book - 29.10.1880.
 2. Ibid - 20.1.1881.
 3. Ibid - 27.1.1881.
 4. Ibid - 24.8.1885.

Discipline was difficult, comments on the laxity of this were made in the early examination reports:

- 13.10.1882. "Two changes of teachers have somewhat interfered with the progress of the school, and Miss Wilton has not yet had time to establish firm discipline to make the teaching efficient."
- 13.8.1883. "The school is chiefly attended by children of a low class and is entitled to some allowance for the special difficulties of the case. But lax discipline forfeits all such claims."

It was not until 1886 that the phrase "The order is good" appeared.¹ To teach children of this type in an overcrowded substandard building presented an almost impossible task and required first class teachers, and it is not surprising that the sojourn of the first two mistresses was so short.²

Fanny Elsby took up duty on the 29th March, 1880, the day on which the school opened as a Board School. The magnitude of her achievement in these early weeks deserves admiration.

Within the first week she admitted 65 children,³ by the end of the second she had not only admitted a total of 91 girls and infants but examined them.⁴ The backward state of these children is evident by the fact that of these only 14 could read and only four more knew their letters.

She continued to admit children and during the last week in April, the average attendance reached 68.⁵ During this period she had no help and it was not until 5th May that a monitor was appointed at the rate of 2s. per week.⁶ The numbers continued to rise and in January 1881 she had a staff of three monitors. In spite of difficulties she did achieve

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1. School Log Book - 20.1.1886.
 2. F. Elsby 29th March 1880 - July 1881.
E. Speed 22nd August, 1881 - 31st May 1882.
 3. School Log Book - 2.4.1880.
 4. Ibid - 9.4.1880.
 5. Ibid - 30.4.1880.
 6. School Board Minutes - 5.5.1880.

some success and was given credit for her efforts in the annual report, which was as follows:

Runcorn Mill Brow Board School, Cheshire.

"This school seems to have drawn in a considerable number of backward and neglected children, and much time has been required to teach them the rudiments. There still remains a good deal to be done; the infants and some of the first standard are still backward, the rest do tolerably well up to the standard attempted. The discipline is rather lax; little impression will be made on this class of children until they have been taught to sit still."¹

The standard of work remained low in spite of the efforts of the Mistress, M.E. Wilton, who was appointed in 1882. After 1886 it deteriorated; the school became an infant school with a small Standard 1. Miss Wilton, who was accustomed to teach older children, had not had any experience with infants and was unable to adapt herself to her new work. Her Majesty's Inspector in the annual report received in August, 1886, commented:

"there are hardly any of the characteristics of an Infant's School in the teaching and management, and the school is not made attractive. . . . Allowing for the special difficulties of the year the school may, perhaps, be classed as fair, but the result is a poor return for an expenditure of nearly £3 a head on the average attendance."²

This report drew from the School Board a warning that if there were not "a marked improvement in the 1887 examination she must relinquish her post."³ The report for 1887 was little better and Miss Wilton left on 22nd December, 1887.⁴

The arrival of Miss Kennan marked the beginning of a period of

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1. School Log Book - 19.10.1881.
 2. Ibid - 23.8.1886.
 3. School Management Committee Minutes - 8.9.1886.
 4. School Log Book - 22.12.1887.

steady improvement. Within six months Her Majesty's Inspector reported :

"The school has made good progress under Miss Kennan. The children are suitably taught and there seems every prospect of satisfactory results."¹

The forecast was correct, Miss Kennan was a competent and energetic teacher. The condition of the building had not improved, nor had the quality of the children admitted. On October 19th she entered the following observation in the Log Book:

"Have admitted a great number of children during the last month, some of them in such a backward condition that I have been obliged to put them in a lower class than their age demanded."²

It was only two years later that the comment in the report of the examination was:

"The school is now doing exceedingly well."³

In 1891 the report stated:

"This school has passed a remarkably good examination. Order well maintained⁴" and the highest grant of 17s per head was earned.⁵

Miss Kennan left in 1891 but she was succeeded by equally competent teachers. In 1892 it was :

"an excellent school."⁶

These favourable reports continued and the highest grant was awarded annually.

1. School Log Book - 13.8.1888.
2. Ibid - 19.10.1888.
3. Ibid - 1.9.1890.
4. Ibid - 18.8.1891.
5. Ibid - 29.8.1891.
6. Ibid - 22.8.1892.

5.

THE EVENING SCHOOL

The Newcastle Commission 1867, while accepting the position that the majority of children left school and went to work at the age of ten or eleven, recognised that their brief period at school was inadequate and proposed that children of eleven, who were working, should attend evening schools which "would serve to compensate the scantiness of instruction given in day schools by giving more advanced instruction to an older class of scholars".¹

As evidence submitted to the Commissioners suggested that evening schools appeared to be "a most effective and popular means of education" the Commissioners recommended that "the attention of the Committee of Council be directed to the importance of organising them (evening schools) more perfectly and extending them more widely than at present."²

The value of the compensatory function of evening schools was recognised in the Revised Code 1862 by the inclusion of grants for schools on a similar though smaller scale than those given to day schools.³

Regret was expressed in the reports to the Commissioners that the master of a day school was prevented from teaching in a night school⁴ and the general consensus of opinion was that it was essential "that night schools should be organised under paid and trained masters."⁵ In the interests of the schools this restriction was removed by the Revised Code.

These measures stimulated the growth of evening schools but this growth was stifled by the policy of the Education Department following the Elementary Education Act 1870 in its insistence that evening schools

1. English Education 1789-1902. J.W.Adamson, p.221.

2. Newcastle Commission Vol. 1. p.547.

3, Appendix p.406.

4. Newcastle Commission Vol. 111 p.502.

5. Ibid Vol. 111 p.227.

supported by the rates must be elementary schools and under the terms of the 1870 Act the definition of an elementary school was "a school or department of a school at which elementary education is the principal part of the education there given" therefore reading, writing and arithmetic were the essential elements of an elementary school. Hence the work of the evening schools was confined mainly to instruction in the 3 R's.

The curriculum was extended in the Code of 1882 by the inclusion of an additional subjects but the choice and number taken were hidebound by restrictions¹ and to earn a grant examinations in the 3 Rs. was a pre-requisite. A drastic reduction in attendance was the result of this policy.²

As a result of the evidence given concerning evening schools the Cross Commission in its final report stated:

"Upon the whole we are decidedly of the opinion that the evening school system should be thoroughly revised; that special schedules of standards and subjects should be allowed, suited to the needs of the locality; that the local managers should be encouraged to submit such schedules to the Department for approval; that any such provision as that embodied in the present Code, which requires all schedules to pass in the three elementary subjects, should cease to be enforced, and that no superior limit of age should be imposed on the scholars. While we believe that the success of evening schools will largely depend upon great freedom being given to the managers and teachers of such schools, the Department should take ample security for their educational efficiency. If this were done, a larger proportion of the grant might be freed, and this made to depend on the results of individual examination."³

1. See Appendix p. 408

2. Ibid p. 410

3. Royal Commission (Cross) Elementary Education Acts. Final Report 1888. p. 164.

These recommendations were followed by the Code (1890) Act¹ and the Code of 1893, which removed the restriction of an age limit and the compulsion of scholars to take "the elementary subjects."

The greater freedom to develop a curriculum suitable to the needs of the scholars and the removal of the restriction of age, led to a rapid growth in evening schools and their incursions into the fields of technical and commercial education.

It was the freedom from restriction which made the idea of an evening school attractive to the School Board.² At a meeting of the School Management Committee in May 1890 the Clerk gave the members particulars of the New Code and drew their attention to Article 106b(v) which read:

"No (evening) school may be presented for examination in the special subjects alone or in less than three elementary subjects, unless such scholar at the time of presentation produces a certificate that having been a scholar in a Public Elementary School, he has passed Standard V in the elementary subjects."³

1. Section 1 Education Code (1890) Act.

It shall not be required as a condition of a parliamentary grant to an evening school that elementary education shall be the principal part of the education there given, and so much of the definition of the term "elementary school" in section three of the Elementary Education Act 1870, as requires that elementary education shall be the principal part of the education given in an elementary school shall not apply to evening schools.

2. It is probable that the two evening schools in Runcorn, one in connection with the Parish Church National School and the other in connection with the Holy Trinity Boys' National School became *extinct* before 1870 as there was no entry concerning either of these schools in the log books after 1869.

3. Runcorn Examiner - 10.8.1890.

The Committee saw in this an opportunity to provide an evening school which would meet the needs of the community and in making their recommendation to the Board, pointed out the advantages of such a school:

"This would afford an opportunity for scholars who have not attained a high standard in the day schools to continue their education and those scholars who have passed the 5th standard could either proceed to the 6th or 7th standards, or confine themselves to specific subjects such as algebra, Euclid, French, chemistry, book-keeping, shorthand etc."¹

It was decided to open an "Elementary School at Greenway Road Board School in the last week of September if sufficient number of pupils presented themselves".²

The following advertisement was inserted in the Runcorn Examiner on 20th September, 1890:

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD

AN EVENING SCHOOL

Under the enlarged provisions of the New Code, will be commenced at the Greenway Road Board Schools, Monday, September 29th at 7.0p.m. Subjects of Instruction Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar Standards 111 to V11. Specific subjects Algebra, Euclid, Mensuration, French, Chemistry, Shorthand.

N.B. Pupils who have passed standard V in an elementary school may confine themselves to specific subjects.

Headmaster Mr. J.F.Moulton

specifically qualified teachers of French, Chemistry and Shorthand will be engaged, if classes of sufficient numbers can be formed. Further arrangements as to nights and school hours, fees, etc., will be made when the school is opened.

It is particularly requested that all intending students be present on the opening night or send in their names in order that the School Board may at once decide what provision to make for the future.

G. Moss.

School Board Office,
Runcorn. 10th September, 1890.

Clerk to the Board.

1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.7.1890.

2. School Management Committee Minutes - 27.8.1890.

It was an ambitious programme for a start and while there was not a demand for the full range of specific subjects, algebra, mensuration and shorthand were taught during the first year.¹

The attendance at the first meeting was encouraging - "Thirty-seven boys and young men presented themselves as pupils, twenty-eight of these wished to learn the elementary subjects and at least twenty were anxious for shorthand."² The first classes were obviously a success, as the clerk reported that since the first meeting the numbers had increased and that there was now between seventy and eighty pupils in attendance.

A shorthand teacher was appointed at a fee of 10/- per week lesson.³ The headmaster was paid the sum of 6/- per evening and his three assistants at the rate of 3/6d.⁴ The fees for the classes were as follows:⁵

Standard subjects	- 4d. per week
Standard Subjects and shorthand	- 6d. per week
Shorthand alone	- 4d. per week

The fees were reduced to 3d. per week, or 3/- in advance per quarter in 1894. The report of Her Majesty's Inspector on the first annual examination of the Evening School was favourable:

"The school has made a good beginning and is conducted with vigour and intelligence."

The parliamentary grant covered the cost of the evening expenses.

It was a successful year both academically and financially.

A class for girls was started in September 1893. The headmistress of Greenway Road Girls' School was in charge. Her remuneration was at the rate of 5/- per night, her two assistants were each given 3/-. The subjects of instruction - Domestic Economy, Arithmetic (Bills of parcels, practice, household accounts), sewing and cutting out - were relevant to

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 6.6.1891.
 2. Ibid - 11.10.1890.
 3. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 7.10.1890.
 4. Ibid - 4.11.1890.
 5. Ibid - 7.10.1890.

the role they were expected to fill as housewives.¹ The fees were 3d per week or 2/6 per quarter paid in advance.²

While one function of the evening school was remedial in that it compensated for the defects of previous education, there was the provision for those who could not read nor write. The value of education was beginning to be appreciated even amongst the illiterate. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the work and reputation of the evening school was the suggestion from some of these men that a class should be formed so that they could learn to read and write and do arithmetic.³ A special class for men was formed in 1899.⁴ The pupils in these classes worked in separate rooms entirely apart from the younger pupils. The opportunities provided by the classes were appreciated. During the year 1901-1902 there was an average of 23 men and the 10 women who were admitted attended "fairly well". None dropped out.⁵

The quality of the work throughout the decade, as revealed in Her Majesty's Inspector's Annual Reports was high:

Runcorn Examiner 7.7.1894. Boys' School. "The Boys' Department continued to do excellent work and was conducted with marked zeal, energy and intelligence."

Girls' School. "A promising start."

Runcorn Examiner 28.9.1895. Boys' School. "This is a distinctly excellent evening school, the work throughout reflects the greatest credit on Mr. Moulton and his staff."

Girls' School. "This school is doing good steady work, all the subjects are well taught."

1. Runcorn Examiner - 23.9.1893.

2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.10.1893.

3. Runcorn Examiner - 28.10.1898.

4. Ibid - 29.9.1899.

5. Ibid - 10.10.1892.

Runcorn Examiner 12.10.1900. Boys' School "The school continues to do remarkably good work."

Girls' School "The usual good standard of work has been maintained."

The numbers admitted remained fairly steady,¹ and the Board confined its curriculum to work under the Code and for examinations under the Union of the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes. The first entrants for the examinations under the Union of the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes were presented in 1893 when thirty-nine pupils were examined in English and Arithmetic,² but by 1902 a specifically Commercial training was being given to boys. The subjects taken were arithmetic, book-keeping, commercial correspondence and handwriting. Girls entered for sick-nurse, arithmetic and handwriting.³

The statistics issued in the annual report of the School Board for the year 1897-1898 indicated that the main function of the school was to compensate for the inadequacy of the early education. Of the total number admitted, 81.9% took the examination in reading and writing under the Code, but the number of passes in the additional subjects and the results of the examinations of the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes reflect the growing demand for a more advanced type of education.

An interesting feature of the results of the examination under the Code is the high percentage of pupils who qualified to earn grants in reading and writing which indicated a low "drop out" rate from the classes during the year.

The high percentage of those pupils who were admitted and who paid for and successfully terminated the course, was a tribute to the quality of the work of the school and the interest which it engendered,

1. Appendix p. 384.

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2. Runcorn Examiner - 22.4.1893.

3. Ibid - 10.10.1902.

and this was largely due to the interest of the teachers who displayed the same energy and enthusiasm for the work in these classes as they did in the day schools and who in the first year were so concerned that the classes should be a success, that they contributed a night's pay to buy books for a "spelling bee", ¹ and at the end of the year gave two prizes for attendance.² Variety was given to the work by "spelling bee" competitions for which book prizes were given,³ and magic lantern shows which took place after the classes were over.

The School Board supported the teachers. Prizes for success in examinations and good attendance were awarded annually. The first allocation was the sum of £5⁴ but this varied from year to year. The annual prize distribution was an event, members of the School Board were present and Her Majesty's Assistant Inspector Mr. Ballance was a frequent guest, speeches were made, entertainment in some form was provided and the proceedings made headlines in the local press.

With the expansion of Evening Schools following the Code (1890) Act there was a corresponding expansion in the number and variety of subjects offered and a consequent overlapping of the work done in the Science and Art and Technical Instruction classes. The wording of Section 1 Code(1890) Act was obscure:⁵

Professor E.Eaglesham expressed the opinion that by the abolition of compulsory instruction in the 3 Rs in evening schools, the "Education Department intended by this Act merely to ensure that School Board should have the power, in running their evening schools, of using both grant and rates to teach any combination of subjects mentioned in the Code. The evening schools certainly would remain elementary

1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.2.1891.
2. Ibid - 6.6.1891.
3. Ibid - 19.12.1891.
4. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.2.1891.
5. See p.81

in the sense of keeping within regulations of the Education Department. Provided they did so, they could teach any subjects from German to Navigation or Dairy Work, as these were in the Code."¹

But a widely accepted interpretation of the Code (1890) Act, was that a school board could legally use the rates to give any type of education outside the Code. This interpretation led to increasing duplication of the work of the Evening Continuation Schools not only with that of the Science and Art Classes but also with the Technical Instruction Classes, e.g. Manchester Evening Classes taught Cookery, Dressmaking, Laundrywork, Millinery, Needlework, Sicknursing, Hygiene and Domestic Economy, many of which were "technological."² The question of overlap in courses in Chemistry and Drawing was for some years a cause of friction between the Runcorn Technical Instruction Committee and the School Board. This arose because of a failure of the Technical Instruction Committee to appreciate the difference in content and level of difficulty between the course offered by the respective classes. Commenting on this misunderstanding in his speech at a prize distribution at the evening school in October, 1901, Mr. F.J.Norman, a member of the School Board, defined clearly the function and place of the evening school in the educational system of the town. "The Continuation Class gave only a most rudimentary education and there was no pupil attending the Board School for advanced instruction. The evening schools too, served as a feeder to the Technical Institute. When a pupil had progressed in any particular subject he was strongly advised to go to the Institute." He ended by saying "If their educational friends would clearly grip the situation they would not

1. Quoted from "From School Board to Local Authority" p.57. E.Eaglesham.

2. Ibid. p.161.

hear much about overlapping."¹

The Runcorn School Board was not ambitious in its aims for the evening school. Throughout the decade its major contribution was in the provision of compensatory education and the Board expressed no desire to provide advanced courses. Though the Technical Instruction Committee saw the evening classes as a rival, there does not seem to be any foundation for their fears. The Board envisaged the classes as an intermediate step between the elementary school and the technical school,² and within these limits the school did good work.

In accordance with the Cockerton Act 1901 the School Board received a communication from the County Council to the effect that "as the Runcorn School Board had during the past two months immediately preceding 31st July 1901, maintained from the School Board Fund classes for which the School Fund was not lawfully applicable, it was agreed that the Board carry on the classes for one year from the date mentioned, the cost to come out of its fund in order to maintain the same scale of operations as in the previous year."³

The legality of providing education for adults in the evening school was a point which had not occurred to the Board. Until 1893 attendance of students up to the age of twenty-one was recognised for a parliamentary grant and the Code of 1893 abolished the age of restriction entirely. Up till 1895 the school was self supporting and in 1895 the cost to the ratepayers was one thirtieth of one penny.⁴

The ages of the pupils attending the classes were not revealed but in 1897 "an advanced Commercial class was started for junior clerks."⁵ It seems likely that in terms of age these could not be classed as

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 4.10.1901.
 2. Ibid - 27.10.1899.
 3. Ibid 4.10.1901
 4. Runcorn Examiner - 28.9.1895.
 5. Ibid - 7.10.1898.

children, but in 1899 there was undisputed proof of the illegal use of rates for the education of adults when the classes for adults were started. In view of the fact that these were illegal the approval by Her Majesty's Assistant Inspector is interesting. In the report for the school in 1900 he made special reference to the adult class.

"The newly formed mens' classes are a most pleasing and encouraging feature"

and in his speech at the prize distribution he referred to the:

"mens' class which had given great pleasure." ¹

The introduction of Mr. Ballance as the speaker on the occasion of the prize giving in 1900 makes it obvious that he was well known and well disposed to the Board. The Chairman said:

"There was no greater friend to that evening school than Mr. Ballance. It was he who encouraged the Board and the teachers to commence the evening school and he had later a deep considerate interest in it. Hundreds who had passed through that school during the past years were greatly indebted to Mr. Ballance for help and encouragement."

It was clear from his reports "that it was second to none"² that Mr. Ballance thought highly of the school and took a personal interest in it and also that he was on friendly terms with the Board.

Under these circumstances it seems strange that if he had any suspicion that the School Board was acting illegally, even if his duty were confined to the condition of payment of parliamentary grants and did not extend to the legality of the use of rates which was the defence of the Board of Education for permitting the education of adults in evening schools, that he did not at least advise the Board on this point. It seems evident that he was not any better informed than the Board.

1. Luncorn Examiner - 12.10.1990.

2. Ibid 12.10.1900

The County Council made no difficulties for the School Board which carried on as in the years previous to 1901.

The Board was unrepentant. The Chairman, at a prize giving ceremony in 1902¹ stated that:

"personally he would not mind going down to posterity as having committed an illegal act when it was fraught with such tremendous good as came from these evening schools."

1. Runcorn Examiner 10.10.1902.

CHAPTER IVSCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN THE RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT

Though the School Board was formed because of a deficiency of accommodation, its main function was that of a school attendance committee until Mill Brow Ragged School was opened as a Board School in the year 1880; until 1886, however, when the Greenway Road Schools were opened, the major part of its work was still concerned with attendance. In spite of the increasing scope of the work, from its formation until the end of the era in 1903, the School Board pursued a vigorous policy, not only to get the children into the schools and to attend regularly but also, by means of their bye-laws, to extend to the legally permitted limits the period during which attendance at school was compulsory.

I. The Bye-Laws

The first School Board made the arrangements for compulsory school attendance a priority. At the adjourned first meeting of the newly elected Board, the Clerk was instructed to obtain copies of bye-laws from various towns "similar in population and Educational requirement to Runcorn"¹; a committee was formed to consider these² and on the 3rd March 1875 the bye-laws recommended by the committee were approved by the Board. In spite of the desire for action it was not until 20th August 1875 that the formalities were completed and "the Bye-laws as approved by Her Majesty were laid upon the table."³ The standard of exemption was the fifth and the conditions for part time attendance were that a child of not less than ten, necessarily at work, would not be required to attend school more than ten hours per week.⁴

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 4.2.1875.
 2. Ibid - 17.2.1875.
 3. Ibid - 20.8.1875.
 4. Ibid - 7.4.1875.

The fifth standard remained the standard for exemption until 1889 when it was proposed that the standard for total exemption should be raised to the sixth and the standard for partial exemption should be the fourth.¹

The majority of teachers were in favour of the proposal and the Board, with the exception of the Chairman, strongly supported it. The Chairman opposed it on humanitarian grounds. He said that the raising of the standard of exemption to the sixth would render it obligatory for parents to keep their children a year longer in school, and that this would cause hardship to widows with children who required extra money, and also to parents who made use of girls at home. The validity of this statement is supported by statistics which show a lower percentage of attendance of girls than boys during the period. It was, however, pointed out that most children passed the fifth standard about eleven years of age and that the powers which the Board had to grant half-time certificates could be used to mitigate any hardship. This clarification of the position was sufficient to allay the fears of the Chairman and the motion was passed unanimously.

In making this alteration in the Bye-laws the Board, in effect, raised the minimum school leaving age to approximately twelve years, and was therefore well in advance of the requirements of the Elementary Education Act 1893 which raised the minimum age for exemption from school, whether total or partial, to eleven years instead of ten.²

1. Runcorn Examiner - 9.3.1889.

2. There were only five other authorities in the county of Cheshire where the standard of exemption was the sixth in 1896 - The Municipal Boroughs of Chester, Crewe and Hyde which were under School Attendance Committee. The Urban Sanitary District of Bredbury and Romily - under a School Attendance Committee and Church Coppenhall School Board which was a suburb of Crewe. (Public Education in Cheshire in 1896 by Sir John Brunner Bart.M.P. and J. Lawrence Hammond). *pg 6*

This Act had therefore no effect on Runcorn as the industries did not employ half timers.¹

The Elementary Education Act of 1899 raised the age of exemption to twelve years of age and part-time exemption from twelve to fourteen years, except that in agricultural districts children might, under certain conditions, still claim half-time exemption at eleven.² A Committee was appointed in December 1900, to revise the bye-laws³ and again the Board kept ahead of the legislation, the clause for exemption and partial exemption read:

- (a) "A child between twelve and fourteen years of age shall not be required to attend school if such a child has received a certificate from one of His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools that it has reached the seventh standard prescribed by the Code for the time being."
- (b) "A child between 13 and 14 years of age shown to the satisfaction of the Local Authority to be beneficially employed shall not be required to attend school if such child has obtained a certificate that it has made 350 attendances after five years of age in not more than two schools during each year for five years whether consecutive or not."

There were no objections on this occasion when it was pointed out by the Chairman of the Board that these bye-laws practically assured the attendance of children at school until they were fourteen years of age.⁴

1. Half-time work in factories was not one of Runcorn's problems as the industries were not of the kind where children could be employed.

2. See chapter VI p.173

3. Runcorn Examiner - 6.12.1900.

4. Ibid - 4.4.1901.

II. The Problems of Attendance

In its efforts to promote regular attendance the policy of the Board was constructive and enlightened. The members believed in persuasion and education, rather than compulsion, and this was made clear from the start. The Visitor was to be the instrument by which this policy was to be implemented - "he should visit and revisit the parents and induce them by a fair and persuasive means, to send their children to school" - and to summon the parents was the last thing they should do.¹

When the Clerk presented the first report to the Board made by the School Attendance Officer in December 1875, there were 223 children within the age of compulsory attendance established by the bye-laws, who were not at any school. Some of the excuses for irregularity were "want of means", "running errands", "helping mother", "sent back from Parish Schools", "no room", "on the boat with mother".² Implied in these were negligence of parents, poverty, shortage of accommodation, and the problem of the canal boat children.

These were the immediate difficulties with which the School Board had to contend: with the continuing operation of the bye-laws further obstacles emerged, the refusal of schools to admit children, the Private Adventure Schools which became a refuge for those who wished to evade the law, and finally there were the traditional patterns of absenteeism which persisted in spite of all efforts to eradicate them.

1. Runcorn Examiner - 4.12.1875.

2. Ibid

(a) Poverty

A description of some of the parents who appeared before the School Board in May 1878 because of the irregularity of attendance of their children at schools, as "miserable objects of poverty and destitution"¹ and an account of the first application for remission of fees in 1875, illustrate the extreme poverty which existed amongst at least a section of the population with whom the Board had to work. The application was made by a woman at the School Board meeting on 6th October 1875, who had been deserted by her husband. Her son had been earning 5/- per week until prevented by the Factory Inspector because he could neither read nor write. The woman had now an average of 6/8d per week to keep them both.² For people so poor as this regular attendance of their children at school was not a priority, and remission of fees a negligible incentive.

Not only were there these cases of extreme poverty, but the extent of poverty, perhaps not quite so extreme, but still very serious, can be surmised by the remark of Canon Barclay that "the Board might shut up shop" if they granted remission of fees to a man who said he could not afford to pay 10d per week to keep his children at school as he was earning only £1 per week, out of which he had to pay 4/6d per week rent, and keep his wife and four children.³ The Board considered only one dimension, that of income, and did not adopt a poverty scale. This policy must of necessity have caused great hardship where families were large.

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1. Runcorn Guardian - 4.5.1878.
 2. School Board Minutes - 6.10.1875.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 4.12.1875.

Life was a struggle for these parents when employed, but when unemployed, and this usually happened in December, January or February, they had neither the money for fees nor the clothes necessary to send their children to school.

The following statistics show the effects on attendance of severe weather, which caused a high level of unemployment¹:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>%</u>
1878	October	68.3	1880	May	71
	November	63.9		June	65
	December	59.2		July	71
1879	January	57	1881	January	56
	March	66.2		February	68
	May	66.8		April	70
1890	June	85	1894	August	81
	July	83		November	84.1
	September	80.6	1895	January	80.3)
1891	January	76		February	79)
	February	83.9		March	82.6
	March	83.6		April	83.2

The winters of 1878-79 and 1895 were particularly severe, yet the drop in the percentage of 1878-79 was considerably more than that in 1895. The report of the School Visitor for December 1878 stated:

"The cold and unfavourable weather which prevailed during the past month had tended to reduce the average attendance considerably, many parents being afraid to expose their children to it, and many had complained of their want, of means and inability to provide sufficient food and clothing in which to send their children decently to school in consequence of being entirely out of employment or only working half time."²

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1. Compiled from Runcorn School Board and School Attendance Committee's Minutes.
 2. Runcorn Guardian - 4.1.1879.

In order to alleviate the suffering of the poor, a Relief Committee was set up in December, and the needy were given provisions and coal. Wealthy citizens made individual contributions - a butcher made soup on Mondays and Fridays, and others gave bread. The Runcorn branch of the Mersey Missions to Seamen took care of the Canal Boat Children and provided meals of bread and "most excellent soup."¹ This was not enough, however. At the beginning of February 1879 it was reported that many of the children attending the elementary schools were destitute of food. Though the money in the Relief Fund was exhausted it was decided to feed the children and raise the money later. The cost was estimated at 1½d per head. A soup kitchen was opened and Mr. Bowyer, from the School Board, volunteered to superintend the kitchen, and an employee from the Runcorn Commissioners was the cook. Tickets were distributed at the schools, and the children took these to the Centre where they were provided with a hot meal of bread and soup. Two hundred and fifty meals were served on the first day, and it was estimated that there would be an increase in numbers when the scheme became more widely known.² In January 1879, there were 2,626 children on the rolls in the schools in Runcorn.³ Approximately ten percent were not getting enough to eat during this period of unemployment.

The winter of 1895 was even worse than that of 1879. Large numbers of men were unemployed due to a combination of circumstances. There was a severe trade depression and extreme weather conditions which had brought the shipping trade at the port almost to a standstill.

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 29.1.1879.
 2. Ibid - 5.2.1879.
 3. Runcorn Guardian - 5.2.1879.

Runcorn in fact was "icebound in every direction."¹ The plight of the children was similar to that of 1879. In the National Schools, where "some of the children come to school without any breakfast and some without shoes to their feet," the privations were probably no worse than those of others in the town. On one morning there were 113 in the school who had come without breakfast.²

The National schools appealed for donations and each day, until the emergency was over, provided over one hundred breakfasts consisting of cocoa, bread, marmalade and treacle.³ Greenway Road Schools followed suit and provided a daily average of seventy children with breakfasts for at least a month. The headmistress of the Girls' School organised the raising of funds and an appeal was made for donations. Amongst those who contributed individually was Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, who gave a lecture on "A Holiday in Switzerland", which was illustrated by "limelight views" from photographs taken by himself during his holiday in Switzerland; the proceeds of this were in aid of the Breakfast Fund.⁴

An examination of the statistics is interesting. The years 1878-79, 1881, 1891 and 1895 were abnormally severe winters. In 1878-79 there was a decrease of approximately 10% below the more normal months of October and March. In 1881 the drop was approximately 12%, taking February and April as the normal months. In 1890 a drop of approximately 7%, taking July 1890, February and March, 1891, and in 1895 a drop of about 4.5% but the drop in attendance is not immediately obvious as it was in previous years.

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 16.2.1895.
 2. Ibid - 19.1.1895.
 3. Ibid - 19.1.1895.
 4. Ibid - 2.3.1895.

The percentage of attendance for the year 1891 was 80.3, the percentage for January, 1891, was approximately 4 points below the annual percentage. The percentage for 1895 was 81 and that for February 1895 was 79, only 2% below annual percentage.¹

From reports of the conditions it is obvious that poverty was just as rife in 1895 as it was in 1879. Owing to the trade depression in 1895 the unemployment figure was probably higher than in 1879, yet the drop in attendance had declined considerably.

Though the Education Act 1891 made no difference to attendance in Runcorn, in circumstances such as these it may have been a contributory factor, but this cannot be stated categorically as more breakfasts were being served in the National Schools, which were not free, than in the Greenway Road Schools which were free.

The two more likely causes were the provision of good breakfasts on the premises, and probably the fact that the public were accepting the position that attendance at school was becoming the normal pattern of life.

(b) Refusal of Admission by Schools

While the Board endeavoured to get children to attend school, they had also to cope with the difficulties caused by refusal of admission by the schools. Two problems emerged here:

1. The schools were unwilling to admit backward and irregular attenders,
2. The non payment of fees by children and the charging of double fees by schools.

The problem concerning fees kept recurring in different forms until 1896. The Board of Guardians paid the fees of indigent children but the line between these and the very poor was very thin. The cases

1. Appendix p. 385.

quoted on page 95 illustrates how thin this line was. The labourer had exactly the same amount to spend on each member of the family as the widow.

In times of temporary unemployment or when men were working only half-time due to severe weather conditions, parents found it impossible to pay school fees. Though in such circumstances applications were made to the Guardians, the crisis was often over and life had returned to normal before the cases were dealt with. In the meantime the children remained at home.

Exclusion of children from school was not a satisfactory solution for the school, nevertheless it was the only way to ensure that fees were paid, as the school could not legally claim back payment.¹

The differences of scales of fees in the various schools created difficulties when there was shortage of accommodation. In 1883 eight women appeared before the Board to complain that their children had been refused admission into the schools because of lack of accommodation and they objected to paying the higher rate charged at the Wesleyan Schools where there was room for them.²

Charging double fees for irregular attendance had been a practice in Trinity Boys and Girls Schools since 1882. On two occasions the master of Trinity Boys School was reported to the Education Department by the School Board. The first in February 1884, when the Department forwarded the correspondence from the Managers of Holy Trinity School to the Board, which indicated that the facts were incorrect and no action was taken.³ Less than two years later the problem again arose.

1. Runcorn Examiner - 17.1.1885.

2. This was the ruling of a magistrate in a case brought by the School Board against the parents of a boy who spent a week at the Wesleyan School without paying fees. He returned a fortnight later with his fee for the present week but this was claimed as payment for the previous week and he was refused admission until he brought the fee for the present week. The mother refused to pay this and was supported by the magistrate.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 10.11.1883.

3. Ibid - 7.2.1884.

At the December meeting of the School Attendance Committee several boat people attended and stated:

"That they and their families went periodically away from home. On return some who attended Trinity School were sent there and they were told they would have to be subjected to double fees".

The Board considered it a serious matter as - "it was not one case alone but many" - and decided to write once again to the Education Department.¹

The evidence on this occasion was irrefutable, but the Department did not wish to become involved in a dispute between the Board and one of the Voluntary Schools. In the reply to the Board they stated that the Department had asked the Managers of Holy Trinity to rescind the resolution passed in 1882 and also pointed out that:

"a scheme has been successfully worked in several voluntary schools of raising the general fee by some very small amount and then of returning the extra sum to regular scholars"

and the Department suggested that the managers of the schools in Runcorn might consider this scheme and hoped that the:

"Managers will also endeavour to make such general arrangements as will secure more harmony among the different schools, and also more efficient co-operation with the School Board, of which body the Managers in several instances appear to be themselves members."²

But this practice continued in Holy Trinity, and it was not until 1892 that it was discontinued. At a meeting of the School Attendance

1. Runcorn Examiner - 10.1.1885.
2. Ibid - 7.3.1885.

Committee in March 1892, several parents pleaded that their children had been sent home for extra fees because they had attended badly and, rather than pay, they had kept their children at home. In view of the fact that this practice was still in operation, in spite of the request of the Education Department, in 1885, the feeling of the Board was very strong, and it was proposed to write once again to the Department to ask for guidance, but more moderate counsel prevailed and it was decided to write to the Correspondent of the Managers of the school instead.¹

A reply from the Rev. Dr. Preston, gave the reasons for charging extra fees, and stated that as the Board considered the system of charging double fees at Trinity School:

"an obstacle in the way of exercising the Board's powers, the Managers have therefore resolved to discontinue the practice of charging extra fees, relying for the future upon your Attendance Committee to deal with irregular scholars."²

A compromise with the responsibility firmly, but very politely, placed on the shoulders of the School Attendance Committee.

For the last time the problem of non-payment of fees arose in 1895, this time in one of the Board's own schools. An entry in the School Attendance Committee Minutes of 26th November 1893, recorded falling off in attendance due to:

"sickness amongst infants and to the absence of many children from the new Board Schools owing to difficulties about school fees."

The Wesleyan Schools had been transferred to the Board on 1st July 1895

1. Runcorn Examiner - 9.4.1892.
2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.5.1892.

and it was decided that a reduced scale of fees should be paid by the scholars.¹ While the parents were willing to pay higher fees when the school belonged to their Church, they were not prepared to pay fees when it belonged to the School Board, and the other Board Schools were free. Sixty parents sent a petition to the Department of Education stating that they desired their children to have free education. The Board had no alternative at their meeting in December 1895; a resolution was passed that:

"The Head Teachers be instructed to grant free places to all scholars who make application at Granville Street Girls' and Brunswick Street Boys' Schools."²

The number of parents who applied for free places is not disclosed but three months later the Board resolved:

"That the accumulated arrears of fees at Granville Street School (£5.16s.11d.) and at Brunswick Street School (£10.9s.3d.) be remitted and that in future all scholars be admitted to those schools without payment of fees."³

Non payment of fees was usually a genuine reason for refusal of admission but it was used by one school at least to get rid not only of irregular, but also backward children.

At a Board meeting, when the problem of attendance was being discussed, Mr. Simpson, vice-chairman and a manager himself said:

"We have reason to believe that it is a common practice at Trinity Schools to get without irregular, dull and backward children by raising the fees and other means. We (the Managers of the Wesleyan Schools) are not anxious to receive these children in our schools, but we have at present upwards of twenty boys of this class admitted

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1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 11.6.1895.
 2. Ibid - 3.12.1895.
 3. Ibid - 28.1.1896.

during the last year, all of whom were got rid of at Trinity in this way."¹

While the worst evils of payment by results were abolished by the Code of 1890, which changed the system of payments of grants for older scholars,² the higher grant still depended on performance in examination. The size of the grant earned was particularly important for the voluntary schools, but in Runcorn, where the policy of the Board was to provide education at the minimum expense to the ratepayers, the members were also keenly interested in the financial aspects of the examinations.

As a result of this system of payment of grants, ignorant and neglected children who most required education, were often refused admission. A complaint was made to the Board by the parent of a boat child who had been attending Holy Trinity School and on his return from a "voyage" was refused admission, the knowledge of his alphabet was somewhat imperfect.³ But this practice was not confined to Holy Trinity. The dilemma of a parent was discussed at a Board meeting in February 1885. The father's statement was read:

"He went to Trinity School in December, then I took him away because Mr. Ellis would not let him go to the closet, then I took him next to Brunswick School. They asked him to spell and said he'd have to go back to Trinity. The same day I took him to the National. The Master asked him where he had been going - I said Trinity - the Master said as Mr. Annett had marked his name off he would have to mark it on again. I took him back to Trinity with 6d and Mr. Annett refused to have him."⁴

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.2.1885.
 2. See appendix p.413.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 7.4.1894.
 4. Ibid - 7.2.1885.

Refusal of admission because of irregularity and ignorance was not confined to the Voluntary Schools. An entry in the Log Book of Mill Brow School reads:

"sent away six girls for irregular attendance."¹

The mistress of Greenway Road Mixed School refused to admit two children aged 8 and 11 years on the grounds that "they did not know the alphabet and that no grant would be paid for their attendance."²

As late as 1901 the School Management Committee of Victoria Road Boys' School was asked to investigate a complaint that the Headmaster, Mr. Moulton, had refused to admit a boy, the implication was that he was an undesirable.³

The Greenway Road Schools, when built, received the most backward and neglected children in the town and, because they were Board Schools could not refuse to admit any child. By 1901 the school was flourishing, examination results were excellent, and there was keen competition between the Board and Voluntary Schools. Mr. Moulton no longer wanted difficult children.

While results in the early years were important because of financial considerations, by the end of the century a new dimension was added - that of prestige. It was therefore, perhaps, not surprising that the backward and neglected children were those whom no school admitted willingly. This was a side effect which the advocates of the policy of payment by results had not envisaged.

1. Mill Brow School Log Book - 10.10.1881.
2. Runcorn Examiner - 4.12.1886.
3. Ibid - 12.7.1901.

(c) Private Adventure Schools

Under the 1870 Elementary Education Act exemption from attendance at an elementary school was allowed, provided the child was under efficient instruction. In October 1875, the Clerk of the School Board read a Minute from the Department of Education which required information in respect of the number, efficiency, amount of accommodation, number of attendances and sanitary conditions of the Private Adventure Schools of Runcorn.¹

The Visitor, Mr. Bowyer, acquired the information and his report was presented at the November meeting of the Board:

"In all there are thirteen Private Adventure Schools in the district. Of these six do not come within the meaning of Elementary Schools² and are in a satisfactory sanitary state. Of the remaining seven all are good as far as their sanitary condition is concerned, with the exception of one in Poole Lane. The proprietors are not certified teachers and the education is suitable for infants only. At the latter class of schools, 110 children are educated and at the former, 190, with accommodation for 246."³

The report was considered, and the Clerk was instructed to inform the Department:

"that the Adventure Schools of the District are sufficient to meet the educational wants of the children attending them."

This report implied that the schools were efficient, and therefore the children attending them were exempt from the bye-laws.

1. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 6.10.1875.
2. These were schools where the fees exceeded 9d per week.
3. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 3.11.1875.

The Board, at this stage, could not foresee that these schools would in the future become a safe refuge for children whose parents wished to escape from the pressure of the Board for regular attendance.

The School Board had no authority over the children attending Private Adventure Schools unless proof could be submitted that they were - "not under efficient instruction" - but only the magistrates had the power to examine them.

The squalor of one of these schools is described in the Visitor's Report for January 1884:

"The Adventure School kept by Mrs. Ainsworth in Suffolk Street, Duke's Field, is being crowded to excess. There is now on the register thirty-eight children, principally girls, varying from 7 - 13 years of age."

On 23rd January he visited this school and found 28 children all crowded together in one small room eleven feet square. There were no desks in the room and very few seats. He had several times spoken to the teacher about overcrowding, but still she persisted in admitting more scholars. The register of attendance was not reliable, as he had several times called and found children attending whose names had not been on the register. He further stated that she had a family of five children, all residing in the same house.¹

Parents knew there was no effective check on these schools and often when challenged about the attendance of their children, stated they were going to Private Adventure Schools, when they were in fact not attending any school. Commenting on a fall in numbers in Greenway Road School the School Attendance Officer said:

1. Runcorn Examiner - 9.2.1884.

"A number of children had been stated to have gone to the Private Adventure Schools, but, in a good number of cases it had been found that the children were not in attendance in these schools, and were therefore presumably wandering about the streets."

The Board was unable to solve the problem and the numbers attending these schools seemed to remain fairly steady.¹ See table:

Highest and Lowest numbers attending Private Adventure Schools² until the year 1883 when records ceased.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Highest numbers on Register</u>	<u>Lowest number on Register</u>
1878	123	79
1879	74	63
1880	76	57
1881	68	52
1882	75	61
1883	76	46

In 1898 the number of schools was reduced to three, indicating a possible number of 60 to 70 children in attendance.³

In the early years the schools' co-operated with the Board and allowed their officer to have a copy of the register. In 1886 however, this co-operation was beginning to decline and the School Attendance Officer reported that four out of five schools gave him a copy of their registers - "but the fifth positively refused to allow them a copy."⁴

By 1892 all communication between the Board and the schools seems to have broken down. Speaking of the work of the School Attendance Committee at a meeting of the School Board, Dr. Gastaldi

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 6.11.1886.
 2. Compiled from statistics published in Runcorn Examiner and Runcorn School Board Minutes.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 28.10.1898.
 4. Ibid - 6.11.1886.

(Chairman of the Committee) said:

"during the past year they had great difficulty with the so called Private Schools . . . They found through the agency of their officers, that many did not attend them who were stated to be doing so . . . It was merely a subterfuge to evade the Board."

In the discussion which followed, the feeling was so strong that it was resolved to confer with other Boards on the subject and endeavour to act in concert in drawing up a memorial to the Education Department.¹

Though the number of schools in 1898 was reduced to three, they continued to refuse to give any information about the children.²

The Board felt increasingly irritated and frustrated. Here was a hard core of parents who defied them and flouted the bye-laws with impunity and they could do nothing about it.

(d) Patterns of Absenteeism

There were certain patterns of absenteeism which persisted throughout the period. Attendance was low on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings. An entry in the Mill Brow Log Book reads:

"Kept in until 4.45 p.m. all girls absent on Friday afternoon and Monday morning."³

In 1888 Dr. Gastaldi drew the Board's attention to this weekly pattern⁴ but the tradition was too deeply rooted to be broken for it was still a matter of concern in 1895 when he again complained that the Board had not taken proper steps to stop it. He implied that this

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 10.12.1892.
 2. Ibid - 28.10.1898.
 3. Mill Brow School Log Book - 4.2.1884.
 4. Runcorn Examiner - 5.5.1888.

absenteeism was considerable in his statement that:

"if this evil could be remedied there would be a great increase in the average attendance."¹

A holiday in one school in the town was celebrated by children attending others. On 19th February 1886 Trinity School had a half holiday and the entry in the Mill Brow Log Book was:

"Low attendance in the afternoon on account of Trinity School having a half holiday"

and again an entry in the same Log Book on 18th December 1887 read:

"poor attendance, the children of Trinity Infants' School having two days holiday."

It was a tradition that the visit of the circus should decimate attendance. In July 1877 the School Attendance Officer stated in his report that the circus in the town decreased the average attendance.² There was a similar comment in the Log Book of Greenway Road Girls' School³ and the attraction of the circus was as strong as ever when on the 8th April 1891, the children in Mill Brow School were given a holiday - "on account of a circus visiting the town which caused us to have insufficient number of children to open the school."⁴

The various Sunday School excursions which took place annually were a source of worry to the teachers, as they took place about the time of the examinations and the children not only took the day off to go to the excursions, but also took a day or two after the event. This problem was solved in 1900 when the various churches arranged to have their excursions during the summer vacation.⁵

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.10.1895.
 2. Ibid - 7.7.1877.
 3. Greenway Road Girls' School. School Log Book - 20.5.1887.
 4. Mill Brow School Log Book.
 5. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 20.6.1900.

Indeed any unusual event was an opportunity to escape from school. An entry in Mill Brow School Log Book on 30th April 1890 reads:

"Gave children half holiday on account of poor attendance caused by the marriage of Miss Taylor."

Illness was a factor which depressed attendance, particularly that of measles and scarlet fever. These often lingered for months and often attendance was so low that the schools were closed.

Extracts from the Log Book of Mill Brow School illustrate the severity of these outbreaks:

- 1.5.1891. "Average attendance 121. Very poor for this time of year. Influenza and scarlet fever. This sickness is a great drawback to the children and to the school generally."
- 27.11.1891. "The attendance has been exceedingly poor notwithstanding all efforts for its improvement measles and the severe weather being the cause of much absence."
- 10.6.1895. "75 children present, measles. About 30 cases having been brought by parents before marking of registers."
- 12.6.1895. "Closed School. Order of Medical Officer Dr. McDougall."
- 8.7.1895. "School re-opened, 84 children present."
- 2.11.1900. "Attendance very low, sickness, many cases of measles. During the week the percentage fell as low as 64."
- 9.11.1900. "Percentage 68.6"
- 19.11.1900. "School closed one month, measles."

The attendance of the sexes had a distinct pattern. Boys maintained a consistent lead of approximately seven percent over the girls. The education of girls was not deemed to be important and they were useful in the house.

Table illustrating the percentage of boys and girls for year ending 30th September:¹

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
1891	84.7	77.6
1892	86.4	79
1893	86.6	79
1895	86.4	79.6

1. Compiled from annual reports of the Runcorn School Board published in the Runcorn Examiner.

III. The Effect of the Elementary Education Act 1891 on Attendance

Under the provisions of the Act of 1891, parents could demand free education for their children. A grant of 10s.0d. a year, equal to 40 weeks at threepence per week, was to be given for each child over three and under fifteen years of age, in average attendance at any public elementary school, the managers of which were willing to receive the same and in which the fees were in accordance with the conditions of the Act. Schools where the average fee was less than 10s.0d. per head, were to become free if the grant was accepted but a small fee could still be charged where the fee was more than three pence, to compensate for the loss in revenue - e.g. A school where the fee was 4d per week could charge 1d per week if the fee grant was accepted. Under Section V of the Act parents had the right to claim free education in Board Schools from 1st September 1892.

In July 1891, when the Bill was still before Parliament, the financial implications were considered by the Board. The average rate of fees paid by each child in Greenway Road School was 11s.8½d. The fee grant of 10s.0d. per child would show a loss of 1s.8½d. - a total loss of £38.7s.6d. At Mill Brow, the average rate of fees received for each child was 8s.9d. Acceptance of the fee grant would mean a gain of 1s.3d. amounting to £7. This left a loss of about £30 which the Board could recover by charging ½d per week if the fee grant was accepted. The Board considered that the collection of such a small fee was not worth the trouble it would cause the teachers, and they also felt that the ratepayers would prefer to pay the small sum of £30 so that the schools would be free. The Chairman gave notice that at the next meeting he would propose that the fee grant would be accepted and the schools should be free.¹

1. Runcorn Examiner - 11.7.1891.

The denominational schools, with the exception of the Roman Catholic schools and the infant schools, did not find it possible to free their schools and because of their financial situation found it necessary to charge a small fee.¹

In spite of the fact that this was a School Board with a strong interest in the welfare of the denominational schools, the decision to make the Board Schools free was unanimous and the proposal was seconded by Canon Maitland Wood.

Free education was heralded in the Board Schools by the children having a holiday on the 31st August, but the Act made little impact on the attendance in Runcorn. On the 1st September 1891, there were 410 children present in the Board Schools out of a total of 500, a percentage of 82. (The average percentage for these Schools ranged from 80% to 85%) There was no rush at the Board Schools for admission; presumably those parents whose children attended the voluntary schools still charging fees, were prepared to pay for the privilege of attending the school of their choice.²

Table of monthly statistics available for year 1891, compiled from the School Attendance Committee Minutes:

January	76%
February	83.9%
March	83.9%
April	81.3%
May	76.4%
June	84%
September	84.3%
October	83.9%
November	82.4%

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 29.8.1891.
 2. Ibid - 6.9.1891.

An examination of these statistics does not show any effect on attendance. There is no significant difference between the percentage of attendance for June and September and the percentage for October is only equal to the month of February and March, which are the two months following severe weather conditions and widespread unemployment.

YEARLY PERCENTAGE OF ATTENDANCES

1888	81%	1st July - 31st December	1893	82.2%
1889	81%		1894	83%
1891	80.2%	year ending Sept. 1891.	1895	81%
1892	81.9%		1896	82%
			1897	82%

(The percentage for the year 1890-91 was depressed owing to a percentage of 76 in January and of 76.4 in May 1891. Note also the percentage for 1895 was depressed for the same reason)

The yearly statistics of percentage of attendance reinforce the conclusion arrived at from an examination of those available for nine months in 1891. that there was no improvement in attendance nor increased demand for free education as a result of the Act of 1891.¹ Percentage of attendance improved slowly, almost imperceptibly, throughout the years ending in 1903 and this was due to the painstaking and conscientious work of the Board.

1. A similar comment was made on the effect of the Elementary Education Act 1891 on the attendance of children attending elementary schools in London was made by David Rubinstein in his book - "School Attendance in London" 1870-1904, p.89.

IV. Summary

The average attendance during the years 1876 and 1877, while fluctuating, shows a definite increase and during 1877 the records in existence show a monthly percentage in the seventies.¹ This increase in attendance was undoubtedly due to the operation of the bye-laws and to the energetic efforts of the Board. But the hard core of "incorrigibles" soon began to emerge. In spite of the reluctance to use compulsion, in September 1876 the Board was forced to prosecute a man whose two children had been absent from school for almost a whole year. The solicitings and the warnings of the Board had been disregarded.²

The improvement of the first two years was not sustained; the statistics available show that it was not until September 1879 that a percentage of over 70 was again recorded. Mr. Bowyer, the School Visitor, was assiduous in his duties and his reports occasionally reflect his feelings of frustration. The difficulty he experienced and the time he spent in operating the policy of "Moral Suasion" is illustrated in his report for September 1877, when he stated:

"During the past three months the street arab classes have been very irregular in their attendance and it will again be necessary to take out summonses to compel their regular attendance . . . From the list I bring under your notice you will see at a glance where I have used every effort to induce parents to send them to school."³

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1. See appendix p.387.
 2. Runcorn Examiner - 29.9.1876.
 3. Ibid - 13.10.1877.

The Street Arabs were undoubtedly a very tough section of the population and it is not surprising that the early efforts to get them to school met with little success. This class of people not only allowed their children to run about the streets during school hours, but also to sleep out at night.¹

After almost four years or so of trying to persuade neglectful and indifferent parents to send their children to school with little success (the percentage of attendance was still under 70), the Visitor expressed his feelings of frustration with the policy of the Board when he wrote in his report for 1879:

"if a little more severity were used the children would be more regular in their attendance."²

By September 1879 the work of interviewing parents was taking up a considerable amount of the Board's time. Dr. Gastaldi expressed his feelings of irritation on "sitting for 1½ hours testing the cases of parents who were charged with not sending their children to school, so that the meeting which was announced for 10.30 did not really commence until 12.0 clock." He suggested that an Attendance Committee be appointed which might meet fortnightly and if this had any extreme cases to deal with they might relegate these to the Board. This suggestion was not fully adopted. It was decided that a Committee consisting of not less than two members of the Board should meet at the School Board Office on the third Wednesday in each month to consider cases of irregular and non-attendance, and to make a report to the Board at their monthly meetings.³

1. Runcorn Guardian - 2.10.1878.

2. Ibid - 10.5.1879.

3. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 26.9.1879.

It was obvious by 1886 that the present organisation and efforts of the Board were not providing the desired results. The percentage of attendance was still in the seventies.¹ The interval between each meeting was too long. In 1886, the suggestion which Dr. Gastaldi made in 1879 was adopted, and a School Attendance Committee with permanent membership was appointed. The first meeting was held on 19th March 1886. This Committee met twice each month and its powers were extended to deal with all matters concerned with attendance, including remission of fees and the salaries and duties of the officers.² Its reports were presented at the monthly meeting of the Board for their information and approval.

During the first few years progress was slow.³ In 1887 prosecutions were almost entirely suspended because of the refusal of the Guardians to pay fees;⁴ but the frequency of the meetings began to show results and in 1888 the prosecution of increasing numbers of parents brought the percentage, for the first time, up to eighty one. Progress was slow but steady, but there continued to be that hard core of resistant parents. In moving the adoption of the Annual Report of the School Attendance Committee for 1896, Dr. Gastaldi said:

"it was nearly always the same parents with whom they had to deal. They seemed to have set themselves to act contrary to the law and the Board scarcely knew what to do with them. Moral Suasion had at all times been put into practice but to some of them it was nothing."⁵

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1. See appendix p.385.
 2. Runcorn School Attendance Committee Minutes - 19.3.1886.
 3. See appendix p.387.
 4. Note the number of prosecutions in the year 1887. p.385.
 5. Runcorn Guardian - 10.10.1896.

But the steady application of the bye-laws obviously wore down the resistance of the majority of the incorrigibles, as the attendance for the year 1902 was 86.7¹, a percentage of 2.5 higher than the national average; but for the insoluble problem of the Canal Boat Children it would have been 88%. After years of effort the Board at last began to see the fruits of its labours.

A report by the N.U.T. in 1891 on School Attendance in England and Wales, based upon information collected through the local associations in connection with the Union, was submitted to the Education Department on 23rd October 1891. In the accompanying letter the Acting Secretary of the Union in referring to the report remarked:

"it will be observed that, apart from the hindrances to regular attendance caused by negligence and indifference of parents, a considerable number of Local Authorities perform their duties very imperfectly, and that many of the magistrates are reluctant to enforce the law respecting school attendance."²

While the obstacles of parental neglect were a major cause of irregular attendance in Runcorn, the School Board could not be included in the category of local authorities "who performed their duties very imperfectly". In 1882, Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M. Sneyd Kynnersley in his report to the Education Department wrote:

"Runcorn School Board, which has been in operation for eight years, makes an average of seventy. In a town of 12,000 people and small extent one would expect better results. But I know from personal inquiry and observation that the Board and its officers take great pains to secure regular attendance."³

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1. Appendix p.385.
 2. P.R.O. Ed.40/11 - 23.10.1891.
 3. H.M.I. Sneyd Kynnersley's General Report for the year 1882. Report of the Committee of Council 1882-1883, p.368.

The percentage of attendance in 1902 proved that these efforts were sustained.

Neither could the Runcorn Magistrates be accused of being "reluctant to enforce the law respecting school attendance." Throughout the period they supported the School Board.¹ Cases which were dismissed were for legal, not humanitarian reasons, and these were comparatively few. The usual fine was 5/- with costs, but when fines of 20s.0d. were permitted in School Attendance Act 1899, the full range of fines were used, though the more usual was 5s.0d. with costs.

The Clerk of the School Board said of the magistrates in 1884:

"There were fewer obstacles placed in the way of educational work in Runcorn than in any other place."²

This could also have been said with equal truth in 1902.

The success of the Board in dealing with the problem of attendance was primarily due to their own efforts, at all times their policy was vigorous and they employed two well paid official officers to carry out their work. But they were supported by the teachers of both their own and the Voluntary schools, who raised money in various ways to provide prizes for attendance. The magistrates played their part by imposing the required penalties. The Board failed to cope with the Canal Boat Children but with the exception of Birmingham, these people defied the law throughout the country. If Runcorn had to cope with the Canal Boat Children it did not have to deal with half time pupils (the number of these was negligible). It was also probably that the success of the work of the Board was also due to the size of the town where the influence of those concerned with education was strong.

1. See appendix p.386.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 9.2.1884.

CHAPTER V

THE CANAL BOAT CHILDREN

Runcorn was amongst the places in the United Kingdom where the greatest number of canal boats were registered and this created the problem of the education of the Canal Boat Children - a problem which the School Board failed to solve. The first legislation concerning the education of Canal Boat Children was passed in the year 1877, though the number of these gradually decreased, children continued to live on boats and the problem of their education remained. The Education Act 1944 made the reduction of this problem a possibility, as it enabled local education authorities to set up hostels for children of special classes. Thus local education authorities could, under the powers conferred by the Act, provide hostels for Canal Boat Children, and the Birmingham Local Education Authority was one which did so. It provided a hostel at Erdington where twenty-nine children could be accommodated during term time.¹

Prior to 1877 the pressure to enforce attendance at school did not affect children living on boats, as they were not identified with any specific place of residence. The Canal Boats Act 1877 provided for the registration and regulation of canal boats used as dwellings. It was designed to control and thereby improve the conditions on the boats used as dwellings, by enforcing the registration of such boats, by controlling the number and sex of people allowed to occupy a boat, by compelling the Sanitary Authority to take steps to prevent the spread of infectious disease, and finally by making the inspection of these boats possible. It also defined the place of residence for the purpose of the

1. The New Law of Education, p.179. M.M.Wells & P.S.Taylor.

Elementary Education Acts 1870, 1873 and 1876 as the place where the boat was registered. This Act merely defined the place of residence but Section 6 of the Canal Boats Act 1884 ruled:

"The Education Department shall every year report to Parliament as to the manner in which the Elementary Education Acts 1870 and 1873, 1876 and 1880, are enforced with respect to children in Canal boats, and shall for that purpose direct Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools to communicate with the School Boards and School Attendance Committees in their districts."

Reports from individual Boards and School Attendance Committees and observations of J. Brydone Esq., Her Majesty's Chief Inspector under the Canal Boats Acts submitted to the Education Department, and later reports submitted to the Board of Education, demonstrated the difficulties of the enforcement of the Elementary Education Acts and byelaws on the Canal Boat population.

The nomadic existence of the children precluded attendance at one school for any appreciable length of time. The sojourn of boats at a port of call ranged from about twelve hours to about two days, only long enough to discharge and load. Even if parents were anxious to send their children to school there were problems. Many teachers in schools near canals refused to receive the children for part of the week:

"because it interferes with the percentage of attendance and affects registers."¹

These children were also backward and as the grant depended on attendance and results until the Code of 1890 when the system of payment was changed² neither managers nor teachers wanted them. Fees had to be paid at each

1. Observations on the Working of the Schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-84. Report of the Committee of Council 1887-1888, p.115.

2. Appendix p.413, 414.

school until 1891 and this caused considerable discontent. If a child made an attendance at three different schools in a week there would be fees payable to the extent of 6d or 9d and this boatmen could not afford.¹ The boatmen also objected to paying fees for a full week when only part of the attendance could be made, e.g. if a boat reached a place on Thursday afternoon and left on the following Tuesday and the master wished to send his children to school on Friday and Monday, he would have to pay 3d each week for each child.² Hence it was more expensive to keep boat children at school than those living ashore.

The overriding difficulty was, of course, the attitude of the majority of the parents who saw no reason why their children should have any better conditions or education than themselves. J. Brydone, in his annual report on the working of the Canal Boats Act for the year 1886, gives this account of a conversation with a boatman whom he admonished for not sending his son to school:³

"The man replied, 'If the lad grows up as good as his father he will do', adding, 'I never had any schooling nor do I see what good it does them; it only makes them above their work.' I put it to him, if he was in want of a boy to go with him on a boat, and two boys equally suitable so far as the work was concerned offered themselves, whether he would not engage the one that could read and write so as to help him with his cargo notes, toll tickets etc. His reply was 'No', he would prefer the one who could neither read nor write as lads that had a bit of learning 'put it on so'. Such is a specimen of the raw material one has to work upon."

and this attitude did not change throughout the years.

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1. Observation on the working of the schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1888-1889, p.111.
 2. Observation on the working of the schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1887-1888, p.115.
 3. Observations by J. Brydone Esq., on the working of the schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1886-1887, p.113.

An extract taken from the Annual Report for the year ending 31st March 1908, of the N.S.P.C.C. Northwich and mid-Cheshire Branch reads:

"We find that parents are, for the most part, perfectly callous about the danger to life and limb and regarding the lack of education, arguing that they themselves grew up under the same conditions. One or two women have been found who say they wish women were not allowed to travel or live on boats."¹

It was difficult to bring these people to justice; because of their nomadic existence a considerable period often elapsed before school visitors could make contact with the parents to issue a summons; when eventually they did manage to do so several months could pass before the parent could finally be brought before the magistrates.²

These were the fundamental problems involved in getting the children into school.

The definition of the place of residence as the place where the boat was registered created insuperable difficulties for authorities who conscientiously tried to enforce the Elementary Education Acts. It did not follow that boats belonged to the place where they were registered. Boats belonging to Salford, Manchester and Winsford, were reported as being registered in Runcorn.³ The Clerk of the Wolverhampton Board, in his annual report on the working of the Acts, stated that there was a very large number of Canal boats registered in Wolverhampton, many of which did not trade in the district at all, some were plying in the neighbourhood of Bristol.⁴ A letter from the Clerk of the Chester School

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1. Canal Boat Children, p.15. Robert J. Parr.
 2. Observations on the working of the schemes for the Education of children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1887-1888, p.115.
 3. Runcorn School Board Minutes 2.11.1881.
 4. Report of the Committee of Council 1886-1887, p.114. Observations by J. Brydone Esq., on the working of the schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1884.

Attendance Committee in reply to notices about children on two boats registered there, but met with in Birmingham, illustrates the extreme difficulty of keeping in contact with these children:

"I am directed by my Committee to inform you that there are 357 Canal boats registered at Chester, nearly the whole of them belonging to the Shropshire Union Railways and Canal Company, which ply between Ellesmere Port, the Potteries, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and North Wales, and do not stay at Chester; they are here one moment and gone the next, and are not seen again for a considerable time, as they pass through at all hours of the night and day.

When children are sent to school (after notice from the Committee), they are sent to schools at Ellesmere Port, the Potteries, or other destinations of the boats, where it is impossible to watch their attendances, and see that they continue to attend school. At the present time the parents of children living on board the canal boats 'Osprey', 'Lapwing', 'Cyprus' and 'Charley' have been served with notices to send their children to school, but up to the present the certificate of attendance at school has not been returned and we have not been able to meet with the boats since." ¹

Some authorities evaded the issue by asserting that they had no responsibility for children who lived on boats not registered to a place in the district.

The following are the reports given on the working of the Canal Boats Act, of a few areas which interpreted the Act in this way ²:

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1. Observations by J. Brydone Esq., on the Working of the Schemes for the Education of Children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1886-1887, p.113.
 2. P.R.O. Ed11/1

Hull - 14.6.1887.

"The Canal Boat Act is of little avail so far as Hull is concerned, as the great bulk of the boats are not registered in Hull."

York - 4.7.1887

"No steps taken by Local Authorities where Canals exist as the Boats are not registered in the district."

Huddersfield - 4.7.1887.

"As there are no canal boats registered in the Huddersfield area the Board have no jurisdiction over the children on canal boats passing through Huddersfield."

Southwark (London) - 4.5.1893

The Superintendent stated "he has no authority over boats registered elsewhere and beyond occasional visits to the Registration Authority and the Docks, nothing has been done."

Other authorities did what they could.

Birmingham was outstanding in its work with boat children. The Clerk, Mr. G. B. Davis, was interested in the welfare of these children and he was supported by the School Board. In 1888 an officer was appointed in conjunction with the Urban Sanitary Authority to look after the education of the children travelling with the boats registered with the authority. Pass books were given to the children in which attendances at all schools were recorded, and the Board could thus check on the attendance during their absence from Birmingham. No charge was made for attendance at a school attached to the Boatman's Bethel in Birmingham, and attendance at this was encouraging.¹ But Birmingham also looked after the population on all boats, notices were sent regarding children of

1. Observations on the working of the schemes for the Education of children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1884. Report of Committee of Council 1888-1889, p.111.

school age seen passing through the district.¹ This, however, did not meet with much success, as boats were very often not calling at their place of registration.

An experiment was tried in Wolverhampton where the Rev. H. P. Stokes, Vicar of St. James' Parish, took a great interest in canal people:

"Mr. Stokes took a house near one of the canals which runs through his parish, secured a matron and offered to board boating children and see that they were educated at the National Schools. Charge 3/- a week (with reduction for two or more of the same family). No parents sent their children, at present this house is closed."²

Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. P. Turnbull, suggested that as "boating people are slow to make any change", more time should have been allowed before pronouncing on Mr. Stokes' experiment. However, the failure of this experiment convinced the Wolverhampton School Board that the only way to secure the attendance of boat children was to make it illegal for children of school age to dwell on boats.³ They not only memorialised the Education Department on this problem but urged other School Boards to do so also. The Runcorn School Board supported them by sending a memorial to the Education Department to this effect, and no action was taken.⁴ In despair the Wolverhampton School Board instructed the School Attendance Officers, in the ordinary course of their duty, to watch for the arrival of boats, and to immediately serve a notice requiring the attendance at school of all children of school age resident in boats.⁵

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1. Observations on the working of the scheme for the Education of children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1884. Report of Committee of Council 1887-1888, p.114.
 2. P.R.O. ED11/1 Report of H.M.I. W.P.Turnbull, No.6673 - 11.7.1887.
 3. P.R.O. ED11/1 Report of the Wolverhampton School Board, No.8352 14.7.1891.
 4. Runcorn School Board School Attendance Committee - 27.8.1889.
 5. P.R.O. ED11/1 Report of Wolverhampton School Board, No.8352 12.8.1891.

There were only eight boats registered in Bradford but the visitor had not found any child living on them. The work here was almost exclusively with boats registered outside the area. The canal Wharfe was visited by the School Attendance Officer at least once a week, and sometimes more often, and all the boats were examined. If the officer found any children, he took the registered number of the boat and wrote to the place where the boat was registered, getting the number of the boat and Captain's name, and the names and age of the children, requesting the Clerk of the School Board or School Attendance Committee to pay attention to the case.¹ Runcorn treated children in canal boats "precisely as if living in town, the parents being compelled to send them to an elementary school in Runcorn." Once the name of a child was on the school register it could not be lost sight of, as the Board's Officers kept duplicate registers and the number of attendances was copied every week. The report of the Chief Inspector continued:

"Seeing that this authority took 20 cases before the magistrates and brought 108 cases before the School Attendance Committee in one year, there is very good evidence that they do their part in carrying out the law."²

While some School Boards found a loophole in the Canal Boats Act 1877 which allowed them to evade the trouble involved in its execution, some boatmen too were quick to find a way of escaping from zealous authorities. The officer appointed by Birmingham found that when the Master of the boat wished to avoid the operation of the Educational Clauses of the Canal Boats Acts, he often arranged to work two boats, sometimes under the same owner, but one of the boats registered with a different authority.

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1. ED 11/1 P.R.O. Report of Bradford School Board 1.8.87.
 2. Observations on the working of the schemes for the Education of children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1895-1896, p.165.

He transferred the children into this boat to avoid coming under the authority of the Birmingham School Board. Other boatmen, when the Inspector exercised pressure, changed altogether into boats registered elsewhere, and in instances where the master was the owner of the boat he went to the length of having his boat re-registered at another place.¹ No doubt preliminary enquiries were made regarding the vigilance of the School Board in the area where the boat was re-registered.

The Clause whereby a School Attendance Committee could give a Certificate authorising attendance at some more convenient place, was also subject to abuse. Robert Parr, Director of the N.S.P.C.C. stated:

"I have known parents to have more than one and assure the School Attendance Officer in Sandbach that the children were attending school in Runcorn and then equally convince the School Attendance Officer at Runcorn that the children were being taught at Sandbach. In this way I have known a boy to reach the age of thirteen without ever having been inside a school and to be a perfect young savage."²

The Runcorn School Board first experienced the problem of the non-attendance of Canal Boat Children in December 1875, when it was reported by the visitor at the Board meeting, that one of the many excuses offered for non-attendance was "on the boat with mother". The problem was reckoned to be insoluble by Canon Barclay, who remarked:

"They could do nothing with boat children in regard to compelling attendance at school, they were perfectly hopeless."³

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1. Observations of the working of the schemes for the Education of children under the Canal Boats Acts 1877 and 1884. Report of the Committee of Council 1888-9 p.111.
 2. Canal Boat Children, p.10. Robert Parr.
 3. Runcorn Examiner 4.12.1875.

No-one actually knew how many boats belonged to or were based or passed through Runcorn in 1878. In 1879, when the Runcorn Commissioners were discussing the implications of the Canal Boats Act 1877, it was reckoned that about 600 boats would be registered there.¹ George Smith, in his book 'Our Canal Population' described this "Floating Population" as:

"the most uncared for, forgotten, neglected, drunken, ignorant, and degraded human beings in this our boasted land of civilisation, and such as are not to be met with on the face of the whole earth taking all things into account². . . . ninety five percent cannot read and write, ninety percent are drunkards; swearing, blasphemy, and oaths are their common conversation. Not more than two percent are members of the Christian Church; sixty percent are unmarried, but living as husbands and wives."³

These people formed a social group which was almost completely segregated from the rest of society. It was a group which clung to tradition. When the children grew up the boys in the families usually became boatmen. The girls usually married bargees and continued to cook potatoes over the stove in the caboose, to take their turn at the helm, to smoke short pipes, and to swear at the man on the towing path as their mothers had done before.⁴ The canal boat population could "be rightly compared to floating gypsies, a sort of race of human beings apart from the rest of the world."⁵

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1. Runcorn Guardian 5.3.1879.
 2. Our Canal Population, p.117 - George Smith
 3. Ibid, p.119.
 4. Ibid, p.4.
 5. Our Canal Population, p.96. - George Smith

A description of the living conditions of these people in a speech by George Smith in 1874, in which it was reported that he said:

"He saw a boat the other day, in the cabin of which there were only 202 cubic feet of space, and living in it were a man, his wife, and six children, one of the girls being 16 years of age, one 14, a youth of 10 He asked the woman how she and her husband and the children slept. She showed him a table in front of the fire, and said that three children slept on that, two lay under the bed where the parents slept, and two in a little cupboard above. The height of the cabin was only about five feet."¹

Some families spent their lives on boats. Others had homes and a description of these has been given by a special correspondent of the Standard on a visit to some of the cottages in Runcorn:

"The accommodation provided was decent and fairly good and generally consisted of two rooms and a wash house."

For this a rent of 3/6d per week was paid. The boat people used these only when anchored at Runcorn. During the 'voyages' they were locked up and the families lived and worked on the boats.²

Evidence given by the representatives of the Bridgewater Navigation Company before the Royal Commission of the Factory and Workshops Act, at their sitting at Hanley as to the condition of "our floating population", gives a picture which was representative of the conditions of the boat people in Runcorn. "The Company", they said, "possessed broad and narrow boats."³ Each narrow boat was taken charge of by two

1. Our Canal Population, p.33 - George Smith

2. Warrington Guardian 12.9.1877.

3. "The ordinary 'narrow boat' is about 70 feet long and 5 feet 7 inches wide at the bilge. . . the great majority possess an aft cabin only. Such cabin is commonly 9 feet long and 5 feet high and slightly over 6 feet in its greatest width. A bed place is constructed athwart the cabin and so is 6 feet long. It is 3 feet 6 inches wide. The air space of the cabin is less than 270 cubic feet." Canal Boat Children, p.19 - Robert Parr.

men or a man and his wife. The aggregate weekly amount paid for the working of one of the narrow boats was £2.3s.0d. The average wage of one man was about 23/- per week. The same wages were paid on other canals. The wages on broad boats would average from 27/- to 32/- per week. On the broad boats it was the practice of the men to take their wives and children with them. As a rule the boatmen and their families did not reside permanently on the broad boats. Most of them had separate homes and their journeys were short. But with regard to the narrow boats, it was a common practice in the Navigation for the men's families to live on board. One half of the men and their wives and children lived permanently on board the boats which were constantly at work, except in times of frost. When the boats were unable to work in consequence of frost, the people still remained on them . . . A man would work a boat with the assistance of his wife and children. Children were employed at work driving the horses etc., when they were seven or eight years of age. As a rule, these children received no education at all. The morals of the people employed by the company were, on the whole, no worse than those of many people not in connection with boats. That, however, could not be said with respect to the boatmen who worked with boats of their own. Such boats were not overlooked as those belonging to the Company were. A man who had a boat of his own could earn £4 per week but out of that he had to keep his horse. After all expenses were paid he was little better off than the ordinary boatman . . . The morality of the boatmen themselves, however, would bear a fair comparison with the morality of people in the back slums of Manchester and Liverpool . . . A fair average of the persons who occupied the cabins of the boats would be a man, his wife, and two or three children. . . When a boy attained the age of eight or nine years he generally left his parents and went to work for another boatman, while the younger members

of the family were employed in driving the horses or steering their parents boats. The Company had as many as four or five persons in one boat . . . One half of the men never had a home at all. There were probably some of them who had never slept in a house. They did not seem to care about it. Their trips lasted, as a rule, for about ten days. In the opinion of a boatman who gave evidence - "the habits of the boatmen of today were not a very great improvement on those of the boatmen of the last generation. There was quite as much drinking going on and the children who lived on the boats must be contaminated by the conduct of their parents."¹

The evidence spotlights barbaric treatment of children, their almost total lack of education and the low morals and evil influence of the parents. Over thirty years after this enquiry the Annual Report of the N.S.P.C.C. for the Northwich and mid-Cheshire Branch for the year ending 31st March 1908, gave a report on a special study of children who travelled on canals in that area which is adjacent to Runcorn. The findings showed that treatment of children had not changed. Young children were "constantly exposed to inclement weather and to the risk of accident." Children worked at dangerous occupations and large numbers were growing up with little or no education. Their parents displayed an unusual lack of feeling for their children; they had no desire to mitigate the hardships. Conditions were no worse than when they were young. This had been their way of life and they were content and did not wish for change.²

1. Quoted from the Warrington Guardian 17.7.1875.

2. Canal Boat Children, p.15 - Robert J. Parr.

An indication of the weakness of the bond between these people and their offspring was the common habit of lending children from boat to boat or giving them away altogether. In 1875, a newspaper correspondent came across an instance of this on a visit to Runcorn and gave the following account:

"I walked on to the canal bank at Runcorn and jumped on to the first barge alongside the wharf. Its cabin accommodation was very bad indeed. There was a woman on board and I asked her how many children she had. 'One of her own and one given to her.' 'Given to you' I said, 'What do you mean?' 'Well this ere lad,' said the woman, of a lad about twelve years of age, 'he was gin to me.'" ¹

This practice continued throughout the years. In 1897 the N.S.P.C.C. reported a similar case. A man was warned three times about his treatment of two boys - after the third warning the man left the district. In 1903 the N.S.P.C.C. received complaints that two boys were being ill-treated on a canal boat and were being made to work all day and night. The Society's Inspector found that the boys were not the sons of the boatman employing them. The Inspector found their father who proved to be the man who had been warned in 1897, but now said he was not responsible for them, because he had transferred them to the custody of the boatman four years ago, and had signed papers to renounce all control of them. These papers were two printed forms of wills and they stated that:

"I William so-and-so give and bequeath my son Fred so-and-so and in order to make the transaction fully legal money to the value of 2/6d changed hands."

1. Warrington Guardian 12.9.1877.

The following letter from the boys' father to the boatman to whom he had given his sons illustrated the total lack of feeling of the father for his sons:

Letter to the Boatman - Dec. 21.

"Tell . . . Northwich cruelty man is after you about Fred not going to school and being ill-treated he has been to me today about it and Runcorn cruelty man was with him.

The Northwich cruelty man say you have him for as slave you had better let me have him as soon as you can and I will go with you to them to stop them from going to law. The are wactting you might and day the tould me not write to you the wants cath you the hage been watching the boats the told me has you have him up at half past tow in the morning and the want me to fatch him away or else you and me will be in trouble the say that paper is no use at all the that has to go before the magistrate you must send me word what day will be at runcorn and I will meet you the are going to compell me to have him back again and send him to school."¹

It was this population, resistant to change, which throughout the years following 1877 successfully evaded many of the laws designed to help them, that the Runcorn School Board had to try to force into school as a result of the clauses concerning the education of the children which were incorporated in the Canal Boats Act of 1877. During the years when the children were under the jurisdiction of the Board, they found that the education of these children could not be isolated from their social and economic conditions and the deep rooted traditions of their parents.

1. Canal Boat Children, p.11 & 12. - Robert J. Parr.

The Canal Boats Act was first discussed at a meeting of the Board in July 1878, when the Clerk drew attention to the implications which it had for the Board. The responsibility of the School Board as a result of the Act, were obvious. The enforcement of the attendance at school of these children and probably the provision of accommodation.

The Board did not realise the importance of Runcorn as a place for registration of boats, nor did they appreciate the magnitude of the task before them. When the Clerk, at the meeting, drew the members attention to the implication of the Acts, one member only made a comment on the section. He optimistically, but without evidence, said that the population on board the boats was decreasing year by year, and that as the Anderton and North Staffordshire Companies owned the greater portion of the boats which plied upon the canal and would be most affected by the Act, they would very likely be registered there.¹ He did not realise that boats from as far away as Manchester and Salford were registered in Runcorn,² and in that year, 1878, there were approximately 600 boats registered in Runcorn.³ But if the Board did not take the problem seriously, Mr. Bowyer, the school visitor, did. On 2nd September 1879, he made a report on his work among the boat families. He found that there were about 65 families with 130 children who had homes in the school district and their families were registered as belonging to Runcorn. Sixty-two of these children were on the rolls of the various schools but they frequently went on the boats with their parents. He served notices on 42 of the families and 24 complied with them when at

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1. Runcorn Guardian 6.7.1878.
 2. School Board Minutes 2.11.1881.
 3. Runcorn Examiner 5.3.1879.

Runcorn - "but they take their children with them on the boats" he said. His enquiries led him to believe that there were many families on the boats without any homes, who were registered as belonging to Runcorn and were therefore subject to the bye-laws under the Elementary Education Acts. In order to obtain accurate statistics he said it would be necessary to take a census of all the boats registered as belonging to the district.¹

The problems revealed in this report were those which were to remain with the Board throughout its existence. These were:

- I Children who lived on the boats which were registered in Runcorn and were therefore subject to the bye-laws.
The enforcement of attendance at school of these was practically impossible.
- II Children who had homes in the School District but who lived and worked on the boats during their 'voyages'.

It was difficult, but not impossible, to deal with these. They could at least be identified and brought before the justices and forced to go to school when living in their homes. The Board did not take any positive action, they were content to let the children who lived on the boats remain in ignorance, but Mr. Bowyer continued his efforts and between 1878 and 1885 secured 80 convictions.²

There was, however, one member of the Board who felt a concern for these unfortunate children. In November 1881, Mr. Simpson, the vice-chairman, brought up the question of the scores of boat children growing up without education. He realised the difficulties involved

1. Runcorn Examiner 18.10.1879.

2. Runcorn Examiner 4.4.1885.

in getting them to attend school but he reminded the Board of their responsibility and queried whether they were doing their duty to the public under the Elementary Education Act 1870. He said he had often regretted that the Board had allowed such a length of time to elapse since the Act came into operation without making any special effort to see that the children attended school, and he felt that they should not be allowed to grow up as they were doing. His remarks met with a lukewarm reception. Canon Barclay justified the policy of non-interference by pointing out that there wasn't much point in looking after them when there was no place for them to go. Another member said he did not think that the Board would be able to provide accommodation for all the children connected with the boats, as they included vessels belonging to Manchester, Northwich and Winsford, but Canon Barclay, in a somewhat contradictory statement, expressed the feeling that there could not be many children on the boats as the Act controlled the number who lived on each vessel. It was at this juncture that the members revealed not only their knowledge but also their connivance of the measures taken by the boat people to avoid the law, and amongst those present were members of the body which employed the Canal Boat Inspectors - the Improvement Commissioners. Canon Barclay's remark was greeted with laughter and Mr. Norman added to the general amusement by recounting that he had heard of cases where the people, in order to avoid the inspector, had told their children to join the vessels just outside the boundaries of the Runcorn Township.

In spite of this lack of concern by the Board, Mr. Simpson insisted that it was the Board's duty to see that the children attended school and the parents duty - "to provide the means" - and this, while a hardship to some, would involve getting somewhere to live on shore

It was finally resolved that the School Board Visitor should ascertain the number of boats registered at Runcorn; the number of people living upon them; and how many of them had houses in the town.¹

This information was available for the December meeting and for the first time the magnitude of the problem became apparent.

There were 757 boats registered in Runcorn with accommodation for 3,108 persons above the age of twelve years. In the case of boats built after the 30th June 1878, three children under the age of twelve years might be reckoned.

The Clerk remarked that if they reckoned on two children for each boat it would give 1,500 children to be provided for. The difficulty in getting accurate statistics lay in the fact that although 757 boats were registered in Runcorn they may not necessarily belong there, or be based there.

Again the matter was discussed, and once again the Board refrained from taking any action. "As a result of their deliberations it appeared to be considered that the question really resolved itself upon the School Board Officer." The responsibility was placed firmly on the shoulders of Mr. Bowyer.¹

In accordance with the 1884 Canal Boats Act, Her Majesty's Inspectors were required to make an annual report on the working of the Act in their areas and what actions were being taken by the School Boards and School Attendance Committees to educate these children. A letter from Mr. E. M. K. Sneyd-Kynnersley, Her Majesty's Inspector, was read at the April meeting about the education of the children, to which the Board replied that the School Board visitor was dealing with them.²

1. Runcorn Examiner 10.12.1881.

2. Runcorn Examiner 4.4.1885.

When in 1887, Mr. Sneyd-Kynnersley wrote saying that he was directed by the Department to enquire what steps the Board had taken to carry out the Elementary Education Act with special reference to the Canal Boat Children under the Canal Boats Act 1884. The Chairman, Mr. Pritchard, plaintively observed - "That the visitors had been getting the boat children into school as well as they could." Again the difficulty of dealing with these people who, although their boats were registered in Runcorn, had no habitation there, was expressed,¹ and this fact was reinforced by the annual report under the Canal Boats Act published in the Runcorn Examiner in January 1886. It admitted that the boats on which families lived "could set the Acts at defiance to a great extent and treat them with contempt." It continued:

"There was no doubt that at times much overcrowding existed amongst them and education was entirely neglected."

The Inspector expressed the opinion:

"that further powers were required to allow of more prompt action being taken for offences by this class and to render it imperative that the education of the children should be attended to."²

From 1889 onwards the Board became increasingly aware of the irregularity of the attendance of boat children. Their efforts and the efficiency of their officers were showing results. The percentage of attendance for 1889 was 81 but this was depressed by the abysmally low percentage by Canal Boat Children. The percentage of attendance

1. 10 September 1887. Runcorn Examiner

2. Runcorn Examiner 9.1.1886.

for Greenway Road Boys' School for August 1889 was lowered by 4% - due principally to the non-attendance of boat children who had been taken away during the holidays and had not returned.¹

In 1892 the School Attendance Committee decided that a tougher policy must be adopted and recommended that printed notices be distributed to boat people, informing them that in future the Board would not accept as a reasonable excuse the plea that children were taken away on boats, but would insist on the regular attendance at school of all children.²

In 1896, Dr. Gastaldi drew attention to their ignorance and attendance:

"They had children of 12 or 13 years who could not read nor write because there was no proper provision made for their education. If something could not be done they would be brought up in darkness and ignorance, and if some step could be taken which would force the children into school it would be a good accomplishment."

It was made clear to him that the hands of the School Board were tied, the Chairman explained that fresh legislation was required to prevent the children going on board and until that was done they could not have proper control over them. The Board had no alternative but to let the matter drop.³ The irregular attendance of the boat children was a constant source of irritation at the end of the century. The School Board had had a long struggle to achieve in the year 1898 a percentage of 84.5 but this did not show the real achievement in terms of the normal population. The Clerk pointed out that:

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1. Runcorn Examiner 7.9.1889.
 2. Runcorn Examiner 9.4.1892.
 3. Runcorn Guardian 11.7.1896.

"the boat children made a considerable difference to their average attendance, some of these children did not make an average of three attendances a week."

There were he said, 98 boat children on the boats. He proposed that in order to show the percentage made by the normal child population, he would in future, separate the attendance of the boat children from that of the ~~the~~ other children in the tables of average attendance.¹ Again the report for the year ended 1899, published in February 1900, showed that if the attendance of the 101 boat children on Rolls were excluded from the calculations, the percentage of attendance would be two points higher. The report also included the information that the number of Canal Boats registered at Runcorn was greater than at any place in the United Kingdom.²

The percentage of attendance for 1901 was 85.98. If the attendances of boat children were abstracted, the percentage would have been 88% - a figure approximately six percent above the national figure.³

Father Chambers probably expressed the feelings of frustration of the Board when he said - "It was unfair that Runcorn should be saddled with so many boat children."⁴

The growing sensitivity to the depressive effects of this block of very irregular attenders was obvious in the Final Annual Report on School Attendance by the School Board, which drew attention to the fact that:

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1. Runcorn Examiner 10.2.1899.
 2. Runcorn Examiner 9.2.1900.
 3. The percentage for England and Wales for the year 1901 was 82.17.
 4. Runcorn Examiner 31.1.1902.

"a greater number (1037) of canal boats is registered at Runcorn than at any place in the United Kingdom, and the attendances of the children belonging to these boats are under the supervision and enter into the returns of the Runcorn School Board. The percentage of attendance for the year (including boat children) is 86.7 exceeding that of last year, which was the highest previously recorded."

The report also gave statistics showing steady improvement in attendance since 1897 when it was 82%. In 1902 it was 86.7%. The percentage of attendance of Canal Boat Children in 1899, was 25.7%, in 1903 it was 33.3%¹. An improvement certainly, but the statistics show clearly how limited was the success of the School Board in dealing with them.

As a result of observations made on the appalling conditions and treatment of Canal Boat Children in the Annual Reports of the N.S.P.C.C. for the Northwich and mid-Cheshire Division, it was decided to make a wider survey, as these observations were made on the same canal, mostly at the same place and also the boats were all of the same type.

The Inspector was delegated to carry out the investigation.

Observations of boats were made on the following canals at the places mentioned:

North Stafford Canal at Middlewich.

Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook and Brooklands.

North Stafford Canal at Barnton, Anderton, Marbury,
Marston, Lawton, Kidsgrove, Harecastle and Runcorn.

Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Wigan.

1. Runcorn Examiner 20.3.1903.

Shropshire Union Canal at Barbridge, Stoke, Etruria and Chester.

Warwick and Birmingham Canal at Birmingham.

Birmingham and Worcester Canal at Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

Huddersfield Narrow Canal at Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge.

The following canals were also visited:

- * Lancaster Canal at Preston.
- * Rochdale Canal at Rochdale.
- * Rochdale and Huddersfield Canal at Huddersfield.
- * Nottingham and Trent Canal at Nottingham.
- I Nottingham and Grantham Canal at Nottingham.
- I Erewash Canal at Nottingham.

Most of the points for observation were selected either because of the existence of locks (where the Inspector was able to see the children and interrogate the parents during the delay), or because of the proximity of a junction with another canal or a river, which would ensure the passage of a large number of boats.

The investigation showed that on the 96 boats observed by the Inspector, he found 167 children - 83 boys and 84 girls. They were of the following ages:

* On these canals only large boats were seen, and they contained no children.

I On these canals no boats were seen.

	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Under 6 months	1	5
From 6 months to 11 months	5	5
1 year	2	8
2 years	6	2
3 "	4	5
4 "	8	8
5 "	7	4
6 "	3	7
7 "	3	5
8 "	3	8
9 "	4	6
10 "	7	3
11 "	3	3
12 "	10	3
13 "	6	5
14 "	6	3
15 "	1	2
16 "	4	2
	—	—
	83	84
	—	—
	52 school age	47 school age

There were ninety-nine children of school age. Of these, thirty-five were NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AT ALL. Others were said to be attending when it was possible; but this must be very seldom. The Inspector's means of questioning the children were very poor, but he discovered eighteen who could not read.

Fifty-six children were found to be working and were engaged as follows:

Driving the Horse:

Boys: 1 of 9 years; 2 of 10 years; 1 of 11 years;
 6 of 12 years; 3 of 13 years; 3 of 14 years;
 1 of 15 years; 1 of 16 years. Total 18.

Girls: 2 of 8 years; 1 of 9 years; 2 of 11 years;
 1 of 12 years; 2 of 14 years. Total 8.

Opening and Shutting Lock Gates:

Boys: 1 of 7 years; 1 of 9 years; 2 of 11 years;
 2 of 12 years; 1 of 13 years; 1 of 14 years.
 Total 8.

Girls: 1 of 12 years; 1 of 13 years; 1 of 15 years.
 Total 3.

Steering of Boat:

Boys: 1 of 10 years; 2 of 13 years. Total 3.

Girls: 1 of 10 years; 1 of 13 years; 1 of 15 years;
 1 of 16 years. Total 4.

Otherwise Working the Boat:

Boys: 2 of 9 years; 3 of 10 years; 1 of 12 years;
 1 of 14 years. Total 7.

Girls: 1 of 9 years; 1 of 10 years; 2 of 13 years;
 1 of 14 years. Total 5.

One boy of thirteen, driving the horse, was going to work all through the night. One of twelve had been four years on the boat driving the horse. There were sixteen children under the age of 12 months, and in several cases one of these was being carried in the woman's arms while she steered the boat, exposed to any weather that prevailed. At the time of observation, the weather varied from bitter east wind to rain and sleet.

There were 99 children of school age. Of these 35 were not attending school.¹

These findings reinforce the evidence of the statistics of attendance of the boat children in Runcorn for 1899-1902, that the Education Acts were a failure.

The members of the Runcorn School Board had no illusions about boat people. They were men who were natives of Runcorn and who were in close contact with the lives of the people of the town. They knew that the labour of the children was of much greater value financially to the boat people than their education. From the first they realised how impossible it would be to get them to attend school. The remark by Canon Barclay in 1875 that:

"they could do nothing with boat children in regard to compelling attendance at school, they were perfectly hopeless."²

was not the remark of a man impatient of their short-comings, but those of a man who was devoting his life to the service of Runcorn in so many ways. Members of the Board, with one or two exceptions, were not concerned with the welfare of the children, they felt their responsibility was to carry out the Acts regarding this population and to provide sufficient accommodation, which they did.

While the Canal Boats Acts legislated for attendance at school, they did not provide conditions where it would be possible for the Board to carry out its function. The School Attendance Officer could more easily deal with the families who had homes ashore, but even over these the Board had little control, as most of them went on the boats on "voyages".

1. Canal Boat Children, pp.16, 17 - 22. Robert J. Parr.

2. Runcorn Examiner 4.12.1875.

The percentage of attendance of Canal Boat Children was 33%.
This in a district in which the Board took a pride in its achievement
in this sphere, indicated that only legislation which prevented
children of school age living on boats would get them to school.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORK OF THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS

The Poor Law Commission appointed by Lord Brougham in 1832 to report on the working of the existing Poor Law system published its General Report in March 1834. The Commissioners recommended:

"the appointment of a Central Board to control the administration of the Poor Law, with such Assistant Commissioners as may be found requisite that the Commissioners be empowered and directed to frame and enforce regulations for the government of workhouses, and as to the nature and amount of relief to be given, and the labour to be exacted from them, and that such regulations shall, as far as may be practical, be uniform throughout the county . . . That the Central Board be empowered to cause any number of parishes which they may think convenient to be incorporated for the purpose of workhouse management, and for providing new workhouses where necessary . . . To settle the general qualifications which shall be necessary to candidates for paid offices connected with the relief of the poor . . . and to remove any paid officers whom they think unfit for their situations . . . That, except^{as} to medical attendance, all relief whatever to able bodied persons^{or} to their families, otherwise than in well regulated workhouses, shall be declared unlawful and shall cease."¹

The recommendations of the Commissioners were incorporated in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which established a new Government Department under three salaried Commissioners with a Secretary, none of whom could sit in Parliament. The Commissioners were empowered to appoint Assistant Commissioners and a clerical staff, and to issue

1. Quoted from 'A History of Local Government' - H.B.Smellie, pp.26 & 27

mandatory rules, orders and regulations to the Poor Law Authorities.

Parishes were grouped in Unions¹ and Boards of Guardians were elected to administer the affairs of the new Unions.

The Commissioners envisaged these "well regulated workhouses" as separate buildings, under separate management, where appropriate provision would be made for the class it contained. The Report considered that at least four classes were necessary:

- "1. the aged and really impotent
2. the children
3. the able-bodied females
4. the able-bodied males."

This recommendation was not implemented and a single building containing all ages and kinds of paupers continued to be the general pattern.

Neither was the recommendation "that all relief whatever to able bodied persons and their families, otherwise than in well-regulated workhouses . . . shall be declared unlawful," ever fully implemented; the Commissioners were empowered only to "regulate" such relief at such dates and in such ways as they might deem fit. Because of the difficulties which would arise from social or from public opinion, the Poor Law Commissioners refrained from attempting the complete abolition of Outdoor Relief.

The newly elected Guardians were therefore responsible for two classes of pauper children, those resident in the workhouses and those receiving Outdoor Relief. For those resident in the workhouses the Guardians assumed educational responsibility. The Commissioners were fully aware of the importance of education as a means "of eradicating the germs of pauperism from the rising generation, and as the best

1. For the convenience of those who would attend the meetings, County and Borough boundaries were disregarded and parishes were grouped which within a radius of approximately ten miles were centred on a market town.

protection for the institution of society,"¹ hence in the first Orders and Regulations issued by them in 1835 for the management of a Workhouse "provision for the appointment of a schoolmaster and a schoolmistress, who were to instruct boys and girls for three of the working hours at least every day, in reading, writing² and in the principles of Christian religion, and such other instruction was to be given as might train them to habits of usefulness, industry and virtue."³ These orders, were, however, merely tentative and only applied in particular cases. Difficulties in obtaining suitably qualified teachers prevented at first, any rapid improvement in the education of the children but the grant by Parliament of £15,000 in 1846, towards the payment of teachers' salaries enabled the Guardians to appoint more efficient staff, and to provide teachers in institutions where formerly there were none, and the appointment of inspectors for workhouse schools which were under the control of the ^{Council for} Committee of Education⁴ resulted in an improvement in the standard of efficiency of the schools.

With the expansion in the growth of the Voluntary Schools, the financial as well as the social advantages of sending children, who spent their lives in the confined area and atmosphere of the workhouse, to these schools, became apparent, and from the sixties this practice became more general. In 1861 only thirty Unions followed it⁵ but in 1897 the number of Unions where this was not the practice was reduced to eighty.⁶

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1. 'Children under the Poor Law' - W. Chance. p.6.
 2. The General Order of 1847 added arithmetic to the subjects to be taught and such instruction as might fit the children for service was also included in this training.
 3. 'Children under the Poor Law' - W. Chance. p.4.
 4. Withdrawn in 1863.
 5. 'Children under the Poor Law' - W. Chance. p.38.
 6. English Poor Law History - S. & B. Webb. p.271. Vol.I part II.

While the Guardians provided fully for the education of the children in their care, no such provision was made for children on Outdoor Relief. The responsibility for these extended only to the actual payment of relief. With the passing of Denison's Act in 1855, it became possible for Guardians to pay the school fees of children whose parents were on Outdoor Relief, but the Act was permissive and few Guardians enforced it. It was not until 1873 that provision was made for the Education of such children. In that year attendance at school became, in effect, compulsory for all children whose parents were on Outdoor Relief. Section three of the Elementary Education Act 1873 stipulated, that Boards of Guardians should make it a condition, that elementary education in reading, writing and arithmetic should be provided for children between five and ~~thirteen~~ thirteen years of age (unless there was some reasonable excuse) and under this section they were empowered to pay the fees for children attending a public elementary school, but this payment was limited to one farthing for each attendance. S. and B. Webb, in their work "English Poor Law History" commented:

"This statute was not very cordially received either by the Poor Law Inspectors or the Poor Law Guardians and we do not find that much was done to get it enforced."¹

This lack of enthusiasm for an expansion of the area of their responsibility was but a foretaste of the attitude of many Boards of Guardians to the duty imposed upon them by the Elementary Education Act 1876.

The Elementary Education Act of 1876 extended the areas of responsibility of the Board of Guardians to the payment of school fees for poor children and for the attendance at school of all children living outside a School Board District.

1. English Poor Law History - S. & B. Webb, Vol.I part II, p.251.

The 25th Clause of the Elementary Education Act 1870 empowered the School Board to remit fees of poor children in their own schools and to pay for those attending Voluntary Schools. While the implications of this were not appreciated by the radicals during the debate on the Bill, when the Act became law it soon became apparent that this Clause could operate to provide a source of income from the rates for denominational schools, and this was in fact the practice in areas where School Boards had a denominational bias. To mention but a few the Salford School Board built no schools in the early years but paid the fees for about 10 percent of the children at denominational schools; Manchester not only paid the fees for poor children but appointed a special inspector to supervise the denominational schools which received this income¹, and Liverpool, like Runcorn, provided accommodation only when voluntary effort could no longer do so. On the other hand some School Boards which opposed the voluntary principle remitted the fees of children attending their own schools, but refused to pay for those attending denominational schools. It was as a result of the prolonged and bitter controversy concerning this Clause that it was repealed by the 10th Clause of the Elementary Education Act 1876 which transferred the responsibility of the payment of school fees for poor children attending Voluntary Schools from the School Boards to the Board of Guardians.

The introduction of compulsory attendance under the 1870 Act was permissive. School Boards were empowered to make bye-laws and appoint School Attendance Officers, and Magistrates to impose a fine not greater than 5s.0d. for non-compliance with the bye-laws.

1. Church and State in English Education - M. Cruikshank. p.42.

This legislation did not extend outside the School Board Districts as there was no existing body which had any power to administer the Act outside those areas. To include this large population it was therefore necessary to amend the legislation. Under Clause 7 of the Elementary Education Act 1876 the duty of enforcing attendance was given to existing bodies - the board of guardians in parishes, and councils in boroughs, who were to appoint School Attendance Committees for the purpose. While the responsibility of the guardians for provision of instruction was gradually diminishing the Elementary Education Act 1876 created a greatly expanded role and one which many boards of guardians resented and neglected.

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THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE

The School Attendance Committee for the Runcorn Union was appointed on 24th April, 1877. It consisted of twelve members, eight of whom were elected Guardians and four were ex officio members.¹ The first meeting of the Committee was held in the Board Room at the Workhouse, Dutton, on 8th May, 1877, when the full complement of elected Guardians was present. Canon Barclay, who was already involved with the problems of attendance as member of the Runcorn School Board, was elected Chairman, and the Clerk of the Union (who was a 'law clerk') was appointed clerk of the committee at a salary of £35 per annum.² The first business was to inform the population of the meaning and terms of the Act in accordance with Section 7 of the Elementary Education Act 1876, which stipulated that the School Attendance Committee:

"shall as soon as may be, publish the provisions of this Act within their jurisdiction in such a manner as they think best calculated for making these provisions known,"

and 50 placards were ordered for posting throughout the district and 2,000 handbills for general distribution.

In accordance with Section 28 of the Elementary Education Act 1876, Article 4 of the General Order of the Local Government Board, 14th April, 1877, which provided for the appointment of School Attendance Officers, was next discussed, and it was recommended that the Relieving Officers of the Union should be appointed School Attendance Officers for Townships under the committee in their respective districts, Frodsham,

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1. Under Section 7 of the Elementary Education Act 1876, a School Attendance Committee should consist of not less than six, nor more than twelve members of the council or guardians appointing the committee. In a committee appointed by the guardians, one third at least should be ex-officio guardians, if there were any, or if there were a sufficient number of these.
 2. There was no increase in the Clerk's salary throughout the period.

Runcorn and Budworth. Subject to the approval of the Local Government Board, the amount of salary paid would be deferred for a year so that the committee could "ascertain the actual amount of work which will be required from the said officers, and fix the remuneration accordingly."¹ The Relieving Officers accepted the offer and the terms and in accordance with the General Order (amending) of the Local Government Board which provided for the appointment of School Attendance Officers for a limited period only, these appointments were made annually.²

The preliminary organisation was efficient. Arrangements were made for the School Attendance Officers to prepare a Census Register of children in their respective districts between the ages of five and fourteen and the following circular letter was sent to managers of the certified efficient schools in the district:³

"Runcorn Union

Frodsham, 26th June, 1877.

Elementary Education Act 1876

I beg to inform you that a School Attendance Committee has been appointed by the Guardians of this Union under section 7 of the "Elementary Education Act 1876" (39 and 40 Vic. cap. 79) to enforce the provisions in the said Act respecting the Education and Employment of Children.

The said Committee have accordingly caused copies of the enclosed notice containing an abstract of the provisions of the said act to be posted throughout the District and have also appointed Mr. _____ as School Attendance Officer for Townships under the jurisdiction of the said Committee in the _____ Relief District "To make inquiries as to cases of employment of children, contrary to the provisions of the

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 8.5.1877.
 2. Ibid - 19.6.1877.
 3. Ibid - 3.7.1877.

said Act and as to the non-attendance of children at School and also as to cases of children who may be liable to be sent to certified Industrial Schools under the said Act or the Industrial Schools Act 1866."

I am instructed by the said Committee to request you to furnish me at your earliest convenience with an estimate of the number of Certificates of Age, School Attendance, and Proficiency, or Child's School Books combining these three Certificates, which you are likely to require this year under Regulations from the Education Department dated 9th February last.

I am,

Your obedient servant

(signed) H. Linaker

Clerk to the School Attendance
Committee."

In order to enable the School Attendance Officer to complete the census of children in the district,¹ teachers were instructed to prepare a return of children for the information of the Committee and for this they were paid "the sum of 2/- for the first 20 entries and 1d each for the remainder of entries."² As this was a return required by the Committee for their own information, payment was made by the Guardians. The Education Department was consulted as to whether they had any objection to this arrangement; they expressed the opinion that the payment was legitimate, but made it clear that "no similar payment for any forms required by the Education Department should be made by the Guardians."³

This extraordinary payment created a precedent, and when the teachers were required to supply the Annual Returns of School Attendance

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 18.12.1877.
 2. Ibid - 11.9.1877
 3. P.R.O. ED 6/5. Internal Memorandum undated.

under the regulations of the Education Department, a number applied for some remuneration for preparing these returns.¹ The Local Government Board, in reply to a further enquiry by the School Attendance Committee stated :

"The Board consider that as the Regulations of the Education Department impose upon the teachers the preparation of those returns, such teachers cannot be paid by the School Attendance Committee for the work. The Board are further of the opinion that the Guardians could not lawfully make such a payment out of the common fund of the Union."²

When the stipulated year had elapsed, the remuneration for each officer was fixed at £12.10s.0d. per annum.³ This was an arbitrary decision which, considering that detailed reports of the year's work had been submitted to the committee by two officers,⁴ showed a complete lack of appreciation of or interest in the work involved or of the division of labour. The School Attendance Officer for Budworth estimated in his report on 9th April, 1878,⁵ "that five days per fortnight were necessary to carry out the work successfully in his area." A rate of approximately 2/- per working day provided little incentive to do the work thoroughly.

This unequal division of work was not allowed to pass without comment. The School Attendance Officers for Budworth and Frodsham reacted immediately. Both, in their letters, copies of which they sent to the Local Government Board, stated that the sum was totally inadequate. The School Attendance Officer for Budworth said that the sum "would hardly cover travelling and wear and tear" and asked the

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 12.3.1878.

2. Ibid - 4.6.1878.

3. Ibid - 9.4.1878.

4. See page 163 & 166

5. See page 166.

committee to reconsider the decision. The School Attendance Officer for Frodsham asked to be relieved of his duties. He said:

"Now that I have had some experience of the work I feel sure that I cannot fulfil the appointment satisfactorily, having due regard to the efficient discharge of my duties as Relieving Officer."

Both pointed out the discrepancies between the work in their district and that of Runcorn where the salary was the same and the following statistics were submitted to the committee for consideration:

Name of School Attendance District	Number of Townships	Area in Statute Acres	Population in 1871	No. of Certified Scholars
Runcorn	2	2,216	2,981	5
Frodsham	11	14,349	6,765	11
Budworth	9	11,099	4,753	11

The School Attendance Committee reconsidered the scales and recommended that the following revised salaries for the Districts should be submitted to the Guardians with the recommendation that they should be made in retrospect from 22nd May 1877:

Frodsham	-	£22.10s.0d.
Budworth	-	£22.10s.0d.
Runcorn	-	£12.10s.0d.

In January 1884, there was ^areorganisation of the School Attendance Officers' Districts, the most significant change being that the Runcorn District was divided into two - Weston and Halton. A School Attendance Officer was appointed for each at a salary of £10 per annum.³ The area and population of every Township in each School Attendance District was as follows :

1. The number of schools actually visited by the Budworth Officer was 13. Two schools outside his district had so many children attending them who resided in his area that he visited them once each fortnight.
2. A belated request for more salary was made in June, 1878 by the School Attendance Officer for Runcorn, but this was refused.
3. Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee Minutes - 5.2.1884.

	<u>Area in Acres</u>	<u>Population</u>
Halton District	4461	1619
Weston "	1543	1877
Frodsham "	15723	7302
Budworth	10473	4398
	<hr/> 32200 <hr/>	<hr/> 15196 <hr/>

The salaries of the Budworth and Frodsham School Attendance Officers remained static until 1884 when they again applied for an increase. As a result of the complaints by the Education Department, the officer for Frodsham experimented with a more elaborate system of doing his work, which improved the attendance considerably, but as he stated in his letter of application :

"labour has increased so much that I have had to pay for some assistance besides working unreasonably long hours myself. I have been looking over my ratebook and find that since the middle of September last, I have made over 1300 distinct enquiries at the homes of irregular or absentee children and this is only a portion of the work. As to the remuneration, when travelling and other expenses necessarily incurred in connection with the work are paid, I have only about £7 for the year's work."

He concluded by saying that he did not wish to inconvenience the committee but he would prefer not to have the appointment again. However, if the committee wished him to continue, he would be prepared to consider what a proposal they would make.

The application for more Salary from the School Attendance Officer for Budworth was outspoken, but was a fair comment on the committee.

He said :

"I beg most respectfully to state my intention not to undertake the duties of School Attendance Officer for the Budworth District after Lady Day next, at any rate for the remuneration given. In making this statement I have no desire to embarrass the committee, in fact it is not necessary to remind you that I have never sought the appointment, and from the first I have felt the committee could not have a just estimate

of the work which has to be done, the time required to be devoted to it, and the distance which has to be travelled, else I feel confident no-one could be expected to honestly and efficiently discharge the duties for the present salary, and surely if the work be worth doing at all it will be the truest economy to have it well done if on no higher grounds than the "Grant" being now calculated on the average attendance, it is quite possible the District may lose on this head a larger sum than the salary."¹

As a result of these applications the salary for the Frodsham District was raised to £35 and for Budworth to £30.²

In September 1891, the School Attendance Officers for Frodsham, Budworth and Weston, resigned. They were asked to continue in office until after Christmas, this gave the committee time to consider a revision of their salaries and in January, 1892, the committee offered to increase the salaries for Frodsham and Budworth Districts to £50 per annum and to £25 for Weston, on the understanding that the officers would resign the office of Inquiry Officer or if the Local Government Board should consider that the office of Inquiry Officer could not be disposed of then such salaries would be for the duties of both offices.³ This offer was not accepted by the School Attendance Officers and on 26th January, 1892, the School Attendance Committee accepted the resignations which the officers tendered on 8th September 1891 and the posts were ordered to be advertised at salaries which were being paid to the previous officers.⁴ Thus ended the amalgamation of duties of Relieving Officer with that of School Attendance Officer.

During the next decade there were several applications for increases

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| 1. Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee Minutes | - 5.2.1884. |
| 2. Ibid | - 5.2.1884. |
| 3. Ibid | - 12.1.1892. |
| 4. Ibid | - 12.1.1892. |

in salaries and a few concessions were made. In 1903 the salaries being paid to the officers in their districts were¹:

Frodsham	-	£35
Budworth	-	£35
Halton	-	£15
Weston	-	£15.

1. Chester Record Office C.C.E.2/3. County of Chester - Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards & Teaching Staff 1903.

Note for previous SectionReport of Thomas Riley - School Attendance Officer for the
Frodsham District.Frodsham April 4th 1878.To the School Attendance Committee
of the Runcorn Union.

Gentlemen,

As my term of appointment as School Attendance Officer for the Frodsham district is now at an end, I beg herewith to furnish you with a short outline of the work done by me during the last nine months, first stating that the district comprises 11 Townships with an area of 14,349 Statute Acres, a population as enumerated at the Census of 1871 of 6,765 persons and 11 certified schools.

Distributing pamphlets supplied by the Committee to employees of labour and parents in the District and explaining the same where needful.

Visiting all the certified schools in the District periodically in accordance with instructions from the Committee dated September 14th 1877, and afterwards the parents of those children who were reported as either absent or irregular, and informing such as were found to have no sufficient excuse within the meaning of the act of the necessity of a more regular attendance.

Making inquiries from time to time as to the non attendance of children at school, and where any were found the parents informed that unless the children were sent to school the cases would be reported to the Committee.

Visiting the non-Certified schools in the District; 5 in number, and reporting upon them as to the average number of children in attendance and the cubical contents of such schools. Three of these schools have since been discontinued.

Taking a Census of children between the ages of 5 and 14 in the

Townships of Frodsham, Clifton and the greater part of Frodsham Lordship.

Taking legal proceedings in one case by directions of the Committee causing one journey to Northwich and one to the Petty Sessions at Oakmere.

Finally I give on the other side returns from each certified school for the week ending March 16th 1878 together with the corresponding week in last year from which it will be seen that the average attendance has increased to the extent of 123. Considering that no legal proceedings had been taken up to the date of these returns I consider the results to be satisfactory,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) Thomas Riley.

Name of School.	Average Attendance 16th March 1878	Average Attendance 16th March 1877	Increase
Overton Endowed	124.6	99.8	24.8
Frodsham Girls	89	63.5	25.5
Frodsham Infants	101.5	73	28.5
Fivecrosses Infants	44	33	11
Helsby Mixed	58	56.5	1.5
Helsby Infants	37.1	35.1	2
Alvanley Mixed	69.7	65.2	4.5
Manley Mised	55.5	53.5	2
Kingsley Boys & Girls	77	57	20
Kingsley Infants	50	49	1
Norley Mixed	82.7	79.6	3.1
	789.1	665.2	123.9

Report of William R. de Prez - School Attendance Officer for the Budworth District.

Budworth District.

Statement of work done as School Attendance Officer.

Date of appointment May, 1877. District comprises the Townships of Antrobus, Appleton, Bartington, Budworth, Crowley, Norton, Seven Oaks, Stretton and Walton Inferior.

Area in Acres 11.099.

1st Procuring and furnishing list of all certified schools available for the district with the addresses of managers thereof.

2nd Delivering 900 copies of Provisions of the Act (or thereabouts) at the various houses in the District.

3rd Collecting Returns of pupils from the various schools and paying accounts for same as ordered - special journey.

4th Taking the Census of the District, now all but completed.

5th Visiting all the non-certified schools in the District taking cubical contents and furnishing reports thereon. Number of schools so visited four - revisiting from time to time and copying names of pupils.

6th From time to time comparing the Returns from the various schools with the Census Registers to see that all who are of school age are attending.

7th Visiting all the Certified Schools as Antrobus 2, Arley 2, Appleton Thorn 1, Budworth, 2, Little Leigh 1, Stockton Heath 3, Stretton 2, at least twice monthly, taking names of irregulars from the registers - visiting such parties at their houses etc., etc.

I estimate that 5 days per fortnight are absolutely necessary to carry out this work successfully, in my District there is so much travelling to be done. Carrying out the various orders of the Committee, preparing reports, general correspondence with the Clerk and other parties and attending the various meetings of the Committee etc., etc.

(Signed) William R. de Prez.

School Attendance Officer.

1 (b)

THE BYE-LAWS

The limitation imposed by Section 21 of the Elementary Education Act of 1876 that a School Attendance Committee for a Union could only make bye-laws at the request of a parish "but not otherwise" caused considerable difficulty and School Attendance Committees throughout the country complained of their inability to enforce attendance on those parishes which had not applied for bye-laws because of the difficulty of proving "habitual neglect" before a careless parent could be dealt with under Section 11 of the Elementary Education Act 1876; many School Attendance Committees therefore expressed a wish to pass bye-laws for parishes under their jurisdiction without receiving a requisition from each parish.¹ The Elementary Education Act of 1880 eliminated this problem, it not only gave the School Attendance Committee for a Union the power to make bye-laws without the requisition of a parish but it made it the duty of every local authority which had not already made bye-laws to do so.

When the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee was established the Township of Weston was the only one to make a request for Bye-laws; it was not surprising that it was Weston which took this step. Canon Barclay was manager of the Church of England School at Weston and it was probably due to his influence that Action was taken so soon. At a meeting of the School Attendance Committee held on the 23rd October 1877, the Clerk produced the following:

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1879 - 1880, p. xxxi

- I. "A requisition from the Ratepayers of the Township of Weston under 39 and 40 Vict. Cap.79 Section 22 requesting a Public Meeting of the said Ratepayers to be convened for the purpose of passing a resolution requesting the committee to make the bye-laws as to the attendance of children at the schools in the said Township."
- II. "Notice convening the said meeting."
- III. "A certificate signed by John Barclay, Chairman, that the meeting above referred to was held in the Church of England School Room Weston on the 12th inst. when the resolution requesting this committee to make bye-laws respecting the attendance of children at schools in the Township of Weston aforesaid under Section 74 of the Elementary Education Act 1870 was passed."

The Committee considered the various forms of bye-laws and decided to adopt the bye-laws adopted by Banburgh, Norfolk, for the Township of Weston.¹

The clause for the standard of exemption stated:

- a. "A child between ten and thirteen years of age shall not be required to attend school if said child has received a certificate from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors' of Schools that it has reached the fourth standard prescribed by the Code of 1876."
- b. "A child between ten and thirteen years of age shown to the satisfaction of the Local Authority to be beneficially and necessarily employed shall not be required to attend school for more than 150 attendances in each year if such a child has received a certificate from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors' of Schools that it has reached the third standard prescribed by the Code of 1876."²

1. Minutes of the Runcoirn Union School Attendance Committee - 23.10.1877.
2. Ibid - 20.11.1877.

These Bye-laws were considered satisfactory by the Education Department¹ and formal approval was given to them in May 1878.²

Until 1880 Weston was the only Township under the jurisdiction of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee which had adopted bye-laws.

In the second Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 1879, the Clerk to the School Attendance Committee drew attention to the irregularity of children in the Frodsham area which he said was:

"a fact which may fairly be considered by the ratepayers of the Townships of Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship, as showing the necessity of adopting bye-laws and pointed out the advantages of taking this step."

If Bye-laws were adopted it would simplify the proceedings before the magistrates, for this reason:

"that instead of obtaining a school attendance order and afterwards summoning for non-compliance therewith, it would only be necessary to summon the parent for violation of the bye-laws, and would thus save the School Attendance Officer one journey to Oakmere, which is outside the District of this Committee and further, bye-laws would be advantageous, inasmuch as some of the parents treat the School Attendance Order as a preliminary step only, whereas if a fine was inflicted under the bye-laws it would doubtless have the desired effect."³

It was not necessary for Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship to take this action. Following the passing of Mundella's Act (1880) the School Attendance Committee, at a meeting in October 1880, adopted bye-laws for the Union which were identical with those already made for Weston.⁴

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 15.1.1878.
 2. Ibid - 7.5.1878.
 3. Ibid - 9.3.1880.
 4. Ibid - 5.10.1880.

The formalities involved in getting final approval took four months, and it was not until the beginning of March that they came into operation.¹

Though the Elementary Education Act of 1893 raised the minimum age for exemption from school to eleven years, in spite of pressure, it was not until the year 1896 that the School Attendance Committee altered its Bye-laws and raised the standard of exemption from the fourth to the fifth standard, and the standard of half time exemption from the third to the fourth for the whole Union.

Pressure to raise the standard of exemption began as early as 1891. In January the Honorary Secretary of the Frodsham Rural Deanery wrote to the School Attendance Committee to inform him that a meeting of the Church Schools Committee held on 1st December 1890, the following resolution was passed:

"That the Attendance Committee of the Runcorn Union be requested to raise the limit of compulsory attendance in rural districts from the fourth to the fifth standard, the present limit being an injustice both to teachers and children."

He asked that this resolution should be brought before the Committee.

The reply to this was "that the Committee could not make any alteration in the Bye-laws by raising the limit of compulsory attendance."²

After an inspection at Weston Church School, Her Majesty's Inspector E. M. K. Sneyd Kynnersley, wrote:

"I find that by your Bye-laws children are still able to leave school, having finished their education at the age of ten and many attend only half time when they have passed standard three, which they may do with ease at the

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 28.6.1881.

2. Ibid - 26.1.1891.

age of nine. Would it not be better to raise the standard of exemption? In Wirral, Birkenhead and Chester the exemption standard is the fifth. In Runcorn under the School Board the sixth is, I believe, the standard."¹

This brought a swift reaction from the Committee but not the expected one. The Bye-laws from Weston only were amended; the standard of exemption raised from fourth to fifth standard and for part time exemption from third to fourth standard.²

In the following year, 1892, Robert Davies the School Correspondent for the Stockton Heath Schools, requested that the standard of exemption should be raised. The first letter was not acknowledged and the reply to the second written on 26th October 1892 stated:

"That the matter had been deferred on account of there being no member of the School Attendance Committee from the Appleton District present when his first communication was read." The matter was deferred once again as the member from Appleton was not present at the November meeting either.³ The matter was once more deferred at the December meeting as the member for Appleton was not present for the third successive month and the clerk was directed to write to both members and request their attendance at the next meeting of the committee for the purpose of considering the application made by Mr. Robert Davies."⁴

One turned up, the request was considered and it was resolved:

"that the committee see no reason for altering the standard of exemption from the fourth to the fifth in the Township of Appleton."⁵

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 8.9.1891.
 2. Ibid - 3.11.1891.
 3. Ibid - 1.11.1892.
 4. Ibid - 13.12.1892.
 5. Ibid - 27.12.1892.

Halton was no more successful in its efforts to raise the standard of exemption. In August 1893 the desirability of such action was discussed and "after some consideration the matter was deferred until a further meeting."¹

The matter was raised again the following month at the request of the Rev. G. D. Wray, a member of the School Attendance Parochial Committee, and it was decided to refer the matter to the Halton School Attendance Parochial Committee for consideration.²

In October the School Attendance Officer from the Halton District reported that:

"the Halton School Attendance Committee wished the standard of exemption to be raised from the fourth to the fifth standard but there being no copy of a resolution produced it was resolved that the consideration of the matter be deferred until the next meeting."³

No further delaying tactics could be found and at the meeting on 31st October the Committee resolved:

"that the standard be not raised."⁴

The matter was not raised again until November 1895 when the proposal to raise the standard was passed unanimously, at the same meeting a member gave notice that at the next meeting he would move:

"that the standard of exemption be raised throughout the district of the School Attendance Committee from the fourth to the fifth and that the standard of half time exemption from the third to the fourth and that the Bye-laws be altered accordingly."⁵

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 8.8.1893.
 2. Ibid - 5.9.1893.
 3. Ibid - 3.10.1893.
 4. Ibid - 31.10.1893.
 5. Ibid - 26.11.1895.

The amended Bye-laws came into effect in September 1896.¹

Following the Attendance Act of 1899 the Bye-laws were again amended in 1900. The age of compulsory attendance was raised to fourteen, the standard of exemption was raised from the fifth to the sixth standard but the standard for part time exemption remained at the fourth or three hundred attendances in not more than two schools in each year for five preceding years whether consecutive or not.

The special Bye-laws for children to be employed in agriculture was included (62 and 63 Vict. C.13) :

"The parents of any child may at any time after such child is 11 years of age and has passed the fourth standard, give notice to the Local Authority that such child is to be employed in agriculture. The minimum age for exemption from School attendance for such child shall be thirteen. Such child while between the ages of eleven and thirteen shall attend school 250 times in the year, namely - 40 attendances between the first day of June and 31st day of July next ensuing and 210 attendances between the first day of October and the 31st day of March next ensuing.

Any such child, as soon as it shall have made the number of attendances required for any one of the periods above mentioned shall when employed in agriculture be exempt from future obligation to attend school until the next succeeding period above mentioned.

A certificate from the Head Teacher of a school that such child has made the attendances required by this Bye-law required with the production of the labour certificate, shall be sufficient evidence to justify the employment in agriculture of such child."²

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 5.9.1896.
 2. Ibid - 20.11.1900.

In March 1901, the new Bye-laws were published. Large posters were displayed in the schools and 5,000 copies were printed in leaflet form and were distributed by the School Attendance Officers.¹

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 22.3.1901.

1 (c) THE WORK OF THE LOCAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEES

Under Section 32 of the Elementary Education Act 1876, provision was made for the appointments of local committees as follows:

"A School Attendance Committee may, if they think fit, appoint different local committees for different parishes or other areas in their district for the purpose of giving the School Attendance Committee such aid and information in the execution of this Act as may be required by the committee appointing them, but any such local committee shall not have power to make any byelaws or take any proceeding before a court of summary jurisdiction under this Act.

A local committee may consist of not less than three persons, being, as the School Attendance Committee appointing them think fit either wholly members of the council, guardians, or authority by whom that School Attendance Committee were appointed, or partly such members and partly other persons."

Five Local School Attendance Committees were formed in the Runcorn Union:

Weston	- 4th June 1878
Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship	- 26th June 1883
Halton	- 22nd January 1884
Appleton	- 30th April 1895
Kingsley and Norley	- 9th June 1896

The Local Committees of Weston and Frodsham form an interesting contrast. Weston with its initial enthusiasm and in later years its period of complete lack of interest and responsibility and Frodsham sustaining a vigorous policy with enthusiasm and efficiency.

The Local School Attendance Committee for the Township of Weston

A resolution to appoint a committee for the Township of Weston was approved by the School Attendance Committee in October 1877¹, but the formal recognition of the Committee was deferred until the sanction of the Education Department had been obtained for the proposed bye-laws for the Township.² This was received in May 1878 and the Committee was officially appointed in June.³

In 1884 the Committee for Weston was dissolved and the Townships of Clifton and Weston were amalgamated to form one Committee on which representatives from both Townships served.

Tributes to the work of this Local Committee were paid in the Annual Reports of 1885 and 1887 of the School Attendance Committees of the Union and in 1892 the Annual Report stated:

"The Local Committees for Frodsham, Frodsham Lordship and Halton have individually assisted the Committee by the time and attention which they have given to investigating local cases."⁴

The Local Committee for Weston was not included. The reason for this omission became obvious a year later in June 1893, when, at a meeting of the School Attendance Committee it was pointed out that:

"owing to the non-attendance of members at the meetings of the School Committee for Weston the work of such Committee was very unsatisfactory"

and it was ordered that

"the Clerk write to each member of the Committee and point out that the duties of the Committee are almost as important as those of a member of a School Board and should be punctually attended to."⁵

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 23.10.1877.
 2. Ibid - 20.11.1877.
 3. Ibid - 4.6.1878.
 4. Ibid - 23.3.1892.
 5. Ibid - 13.6.1893.

This communication had no effect, for in October the problem of the Committee was again discussed and the Clerk of the School Attendance Committee was asked to communicate with the Chairman of the Local Attendance Committee and point out:

"that in the opinion of this Committee the non-attendance of the members of his Committee at the monthly meetings is culpable and a cause of great injustice to the parents who are summoned to attend before the Committee, as many as thirty having been reported as in attendance and no quorum to deal with their cases and to ask him to take such steps as will lead to a better 'dispatch' of this important business."¹

This lack of co-operation persisted and in October 1894 the School Attendance Officer for the District reported to the School Attendance Committee that the members of the Weston Parochial Committee did not attend the meetings convened by him. At the meeting a member gave notice that at the next meeting of the Committee he would move that the Weston School Attendance Committee should be dissolved.²

The situation must have been resolved without recourse to such action as there is no record that the Committee was dissolved. The next reference to the Weston Committee was in January 1895 when the members were appointed in the normal course of events.³

The Local School Attendance Committee of Frodsham

This Committee was formed because of the appalling irregularity in the Frodsham Schools. In 1881 a special report on this was made by Her Majesty's Inspector and the Education Department wrote to the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee requesting information about the steps

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 31.10.1893.
 2. Ibid - 2.10.1894.
 3. Ibid - 22.1.1895.

which had been taken to enforce the byelaws and the number and results of summonses issued.¹

Two years later the attendance was no better and on 5th June 1883 the Rev. H. B. Blogg wrote to the School Attendance Committee calling their attention to the attendance for the district and stated that the percentage for the year for the Girls' School was 59 and for the Infants' School 68. He concluded by saying:

"I need not remind the Attendance Committee that this is a matter which greatly concerns the interest of any school but on behalf of the Managers of the Frodsham National Schools I would earnestly request them to take such steps as may effectively remedy the present unsatisfactory state of things."²

The Rev. H. B. Blogg himself took the initiative and on 18th June once again wrote to the Committee enclosing a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the Managers of the Frodsham National Schools on 12th June 1883 which recommended that the School Attendance Committee at Dutton should appoint a School Attendance Committee "which should sit in Frodsham and hear cases of persons belonging to the Lordship and Township of Frodsham." The names of the proposed Committee were also submitted. The Union School Attendance Committee appointed the Committee as recommended and the clerk was directed to convene the first meeting.³ The Frodsham Committee was progressive and efficient. It dealt competently with the problems of attendance and following its appointment complaints about attendance at the schools ceased. The members were also concerned about the general level of education, and in 1891 they requested that the standard for

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 31.5.1881.
 2. Ibid - 26.6.1883.
 3. Ibid - 26.6.1883.

exemption should be raised from the fourth to the fifth.¹ The Committee began to issue annual reports in 1900, and the extent of its efficiency and attention to detail are obvious in the statistics issued in these.² The co-operation of the Magistrates with this committee is notable. The reports indicate that the members combined authority with responsibility recommending that only a small percentage of cases should be taken to court; these were sifted carefully and out of the 29 cases reported to the Magistrates, noted in the Annual Reports 1900 - 1902 there were 26 convictions, in one case a fine of 7s.6d. was imposed.

The report issued in 1901 gives an indication of the measure of success achieved by the Committee which states:

" although the population of the school district has only increased 15.5 per cent during the last 20 years the average attendance at these schools has during the same period increased 80 per cent. Also, that in the same time the average attendance per cent of the population has increased from 10.4 per cent to 16.4 per cent."³

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 26.1.1891.
 2. An interesting inclusion in these statistics is the respective attendance of fathers and mother before the Committee.
 3. See appendix p.397.

1 (a) EXPRESSIONS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WORK OF THE
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE

Throughout the period the Department of Education complained about the irregularity of attendance in the Union of Runcorn. Its attention was directed to the School Attendance Committee by a special report made on the Frodsham Schools by Her Majesty's Inspector, as a result of which the Department wrote to the Committee in May 1881 and requested to be informed of the steps taken to enforce the bye-laws and of the number of summonses issued under them and with what result.¹ Within two weeks the following report, in which the committee showed that there was no apparent neglect, was submitted to the Department, which accepted it without further comment²:

Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee³

E. A. W. Cheshire 14042

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 21st ultimo complaining of the irregularity of attendance in the Frodsham Schools and inquiring what steps the Committee had taken to enforce the bye-laws and what number of summonses had been issued under them and with what result.

I am directed to inform you that the bye-laws were received from the Education Department on the 14th January last and they were only reported to the School Attendance Committee at the next ordinary meeting held on the 8th February 1881 and they were ordered to be published in placard form and copies furnished in pamphlets to the School Attendance Officers. (Specimen of the printed copies of Bye-laws both placard and pamphlet are enclosed herewith) These preliminaries occupied

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 31.5.1881.
 2. Ibid - 28.6.1881.
 3. Ibid - 28.6.1881.

the month of February and the operation of the Bye-laws only therefore took effect during two months of the school year ending April 1881.

The Committee have since held five meetings and in addition to formal warnings have ordered legal proceedings to be taken as under, viz:

For non compliance with School Attendance Orders -	12
For violation of Bye-laws	- <u>32</u>
	<u>44 children</u>

The above proceedings are pending in many cases as the Petty Sessions are held monthly in the Rural District of the Committee including the Townships of Frodsham and Frodsham Lordship.

The School Attendance Officer of the Frodsham District during the year ended 31st December 1880 reported 174 cases to the Committee for investigation and issued warnings to 44 parents in respect of 81 children.

He also obtained School Attendance Orders for 6 children and secured convictions against 9 parents in respect of 19 children for non compliance with School Attendance Orders. In the same District Committal Orders were issued against 5 parents for non payment of fines and in two cases the parents went to prison in default.

I am further directed to enclose a copy of Report made by Mr. Riley, School Attendance Officer of the Frodsham District in reference to the complaint made by Her Majesty's Inspector respecting the Frodsham Schools.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant

(Signed) W. H. Linaker

To
The Secretary,
Education Department,
Whitehall, S.W.

Two years later in June 1883, Her Majesty's Inspector again reported the unsatisfactory attendance to the Education Department. The Department referred the letter to the School Attendance Committee and on this occasion asked for detailed information on the work of the Committee and its officers and ended the communication with a threat to declare the authority in default.¹ The following is the letter received by the Committee²:

Education Department,
8th June 1883

13275
Runcorn Union S.A.C.
E. A. W. Cheshire.

Sir,

Their Lordships have received from Her Majesty's Inspector the following special report:

"Two years ago I complained of the inefficiency of the School Attendance Committee especially in the sub district of Frodsham.

The attendance this year has been even worse at the Frodsham schools. In the other schools in the sub district it is little better than at Frodsham.

	On Books	Average Attendance	Percent
<u>Helsby</u>			
Mixed Boys & Girls and Infant & Standard I	72	50	69
	90	56	62
<u>Alvanley</u>			
Mixed and Infant	72	52	72

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 20.8.1883.
2. Section 27 Elementary Act 1876.
If the Education Department were not satisfied that a School Board or School Attendance Committee were fulfilling their duty it could declare that authority in default; where the authority in default was a School Attendance Committee the Education Department could appoint persons for a specified period not exceeding two years to perform the duty of the defaulting committee and could from time to time change such persons. The persons appointed would perform the duties and have the powers of the defaulting committee but would not be subject to any control on the part of the council or guardians who appointed the defaulting committee. All expenses and remuneration (if any) would be paid by the authority who appointed the defaulting committee.

	On Books	Average Attendance	Percent
<u>Frodsham</u>			
Boys	182	121	66
Girls	186	117	63
Infants & Standard I	140	83	59
<u>Five Crosses</u>			
Infants & Standard I	84	48	57

In addition to this Report the Inspector has furnished the Department with the subjoined list of some of the worst cases in illustration of his complaint.

Their Lordships desire to have before them information showing -

1. What practical steps have been taken by your Committee since the Department called their attention to this same question two years ago.
2. What number of Attendance Officers they have had at work since that time.
3. Whether these Officers give their whole time to the work of the School Attendance Committee and what pay they receive.
4. What number of cases have been brought before the Magistrates during the last twelve months and with what results in each case.

As your Committee are no doubt aware cases have not infrequently recurred where the Education Department have been forced to declare a Local Authority in default for failing to perform the duty laid upon them by statute.

My Lords hope that the Committee for the Union of Runcorn will not oblige them to adopt a similar course. The Department would be glad of an early reply.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) P. Cumin

H. Linaker Esq.,
Clerk to the School Attendance Committee,
of Runcorn Union,
Frodsham,
Preston Brook, Cheshire.

The School Attendance Officer was once again asked for his observations on the communication and he produced statistics to show that the percentages were not so low as those given by the Department. He showed that the average attendance per cent for the year, according to his method of calculation for¹:

- I Frodsham Infant School was 68 not 59
- II Five Crosses Infant School was 73 not 57
- III Helsby Infant School was 75 not 62
- IV Manley Mixed School was 67 not 60

He also stated:

"With regard to the action taken generally for enforcing regular attendance, I have to state that since last year I have taken out 50 summonses, 34 of these have been for children attending the Frodsham Schools, 6 for Clifton, 6 for Helsby, 3 for Kingsley and 1 for Manley. One of these cases was withdrawn, the remainder were convicted."²

While this report appeared once again to absolve the Officer and the Committee from the charge of neglect, it did not hoodwink the Education Department. Their irritation and the view that the Committee and its Officer were both lax and inefficient were expressed in the following letter and left the Committee in no doubt as to the consequence if some more positive action were not taken to produce better results.³

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1. In calculating the rate per cent of attendance the School Attendance Officer took the average number on the Books during the year and the average attendance.
 2. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 26.6.1883.
 3. Ibid - 21.8.1883.

Education Department

26th July 1883.

17134
83Runcorn Union School Attendance
Committee,E. A. W.
Cheshire 14042.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th ultimo which has been referred to Her Majesty's Inspector.

The percentage of the average attendance upon the number on the books in the majority of the schools mentioned, falls below the general percentage (viz. 70) achieved in the schools of England and Wales.

Mr. Riley's letter seeks to extenuate the neglect suggested by the 39 cases which the managers of Frodsham school allege upon the ground that some of the children in question were over 13 years of age, and that others had been on the registers during only part of the school year.

I am directed to point out that it is part of the duty of your Committee to enforce the attendance of children between 13 and 14 years of age if Section XI of the Elementary Education Act of 1876 is applicable to them.

I have also to point out that the Attendance Officer ought to know what children are altogether absent from school and should make enquiry at their homes and that his attention should be given quite as much as bringing such children under instruction as to securing the regular attendance of those whose names are borne on the registers.

It rests with your Committee to determine what kind of means (i.e. number of Attendance Officers, amount of their salaries, supply of periodical lists of absentee or irregular children by managers etc.) will be most effective for putting the statute in force.

It may be a matter for their consideration whether the time at Mr. Riley's disposal and the amount of his salary are adequate to the proper discharge of his business as Attendance Officer.

Their Lordships cannot consider that the actual results shown by the attendance are satisfactory. They desire me to draw special attention of your Committee to the fact that nine of the names (viz. James Ainsworth, John Parker, Thomas Brown, John Jackson, Arthur Ellis, Peter Andrews, Thomas Hulse, William Egerton and Albert Caldwell) mentioned by Her Majesty's Inspector in the list of the most glaring cases of irregularity at Frodsham Boys' School in 1883, occur also in the list which he sent up in 1881, further that of these nine boys seven have not advanced beyond the 1st standard.

As it appears, however, that a local committee has now been appointed in Frodsham, their Lordships will postpone any proceedings under the statute until 31st October next.

Returns showing the average attendance and the number on the books for the two months then ended in the Frodsham Boys and Girls Schools, in the Helsby School and the Alvanley School, must be forwarded to this office.

My Lords will judge whether your Committee have performed their duty in such a manner as to warrant the Education Department in taking no action under section 27 of the Elementary Education Act 1876.

I have the honour to be Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) P. Cumin

After the formation of the Local School Attendance Committee for Frodsham and the adoption of a more elaborate system of doing the work by the School Attendance Office, the attendance improved¹ and the Department were not obliged to carry out their threat. This threat was forgotten by 1891 when the attention of the Department was again drawn to the laxity of the Committee. As they had not even taken the trouble to acknowledge the receipt of a communication about the attendance at the Weston Schools, Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. Sneyd Kynnersley sent the following report to the Education Department:

"At the inspection of Weston Church of England School on June 18th I noticed the absence of six or seven children whose names were on the Examination Schedule and on enquiry it appeared that they were playing truant.

On further inquiry I ascertained that the School Attendance Officer for the District of Weston in the Runcorn Union had never visited the school since the present Master took charge, a period of seven months.

I wrote within a day or two of the Inspection to the Clerk of the Runcorn Union calling the attention of the Guardians to the condition of this sub-district. But I have not yet received even an acknowledgment of the receipt of my letter and as a month has elapsed I am compelled to call the attention of the Education Department to the state of the School Attendance here.

I may add that I have ascertained that my letter has been received.

It appears that the hamlet of Clifton which forms part of the sub-district is within the School District of Halton, and the authorities of Halton Grammar School report that the Attendance Officer has not called during the past twelve months."

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 5.2.1884.

The reaction of the Committee to this report displayed a lack of concern for the education of the children, and for the way in which the Officer performed his duties.

The Committee justified this neglect by informing the Education Department:

"that under the General Order of the Local Government Board of the 14th April 1877 Article 12, it does not appear to be any part of the School Attendance Officer's duty to visit the schools in his district."¹

This reply led the Education Department to contact the Local Government Board regarding the duty of School Attendance Officers to visit schools in the districts. The position was clarified and in November 1891 the Department informed the Committee that the Local Government Board considered that it would be a "lawful order" within the meaning of Article 12 No.4 of the General Order of 14th April 1877 for the School Attendance Committee:

"to direct the Officer to visit the schools in their district for any sufficient reason connected with attendance there"

and added

"Their Lordships presume, therefore, that your Committee will now give directions to their Attendance Officers to make such visits to the schools in the Union as are necessary in order to promote their enquiries into the attendance of children, and without which, Their Lordships do not think that the Committee can properly fulfil their statutory duty."²

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 8.9.1891.
 2. P.R.O. Ed.6/5 2.12.1891.

A letter of complaint by the Department of Education in June 1896, concerning three boys who had left school without passing the standard of exemption concluded:

"constant complaints are made about the irregular attendance in the Union and that in this particular school the percentage of attendance above the Infants Class is only 77.7%

and drew from the Attendance Committee still another reason why the Officers neglected to do their duty. The Clerk was instructed to inform the Secretary of the Education Department that the Committee often hesitate about instructing their Officer to take proceedings against parents residing within the jurisdiction of the Oakmere Petty Session, knowing that however bad the attendance of the child may have been, he will have the greatest difficulty in receiving a conviction. That he has to travel a distance of 66 miles and that he frequently informs the Committee his cases are adjourned for a month in order, as the Justices say, to "see if the child will attend better", not for a moment taking into account that the parent has already broken the Law by neglecting to send the child to school. That at the adjourned hearing the same thing has occurred again and so it has gone on, necessitating in some cases his attendance three times and his travelling over a distance of upwards of 40 miles and in the end a fine of 2/6d including costs has been imposed, leaving the School Attendance Committee to pay the balance of the costs. That in fact Justices, instead of supporting the School Attendance Committee, seem to treat them as acting arbitrarily in sending the cases before them at all. That the Committee therefore respectively submit that under such circumstances it is absolutely impossible to secure a good percentage of attendance.¹

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 9.6.1896.

This was probably a genuine difficulty but this was the first time the Committee made any reference to it. The Department, following up the report made, commented:

"If a prosecution by the School Attendance Committee under the bye-laws, or under the Elementary Education Act 1876, is dismissed by the Justices where the circumstances do not warrant such dismissal, or if in any case they improperly administer the Education Acts, their Lordships would be glad to receive full particulars of any such maladministration with a view to their making an application to the Home Secretary in order that it take the necessary steps in the matter, should such a course appear to Their Lordships, on a consideration of the circumstances, to be desirable."¹

There were no cases reported to the Department. As late as June 1902 a list of irregular attenders at Antrobus School was submitted to the Committee for their consideration by Her Majesty's Inspector.² Mr. Sneyd Kynnersley had not relaxed his vigilance on this lax and indifferent Committee.

The Education Department was the body which was most persistent in making complaints about the negligence of the Committee but it did not act in isolation. The Committee were also recipients of expressions of dissatisfaction, particularly after 1890, from teachers and managers and even from their own Local Committee at Halton.

In 1877 the Attendance Officers were instructed to visit the schools at least once a month.³ The implication that one visit each month would be sufficient did not reflect any serious concern for the work, and their denial in 1891 that visiting schools was not part of the work of the Officer indicated a continued lack of interest.⁴

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 4.8.1896.
 2. Ibid - 3.6.1903.
 3. Ibid - 11.7.1877.
 4. See page 188

Within the Union the pattern varied, the officer for Budworth, in his first annual report in 1878, stated that he visited the schools at least twice monthly,¹ others however did not pay even one visit, and the infrequency of visits by some Officers was the cause of much dissatisfaction.

At Halton, in 1891, the Officer did not call for twelve months² and the Master of Grappenhall School in 1897, complained that at his best the School Attendance Officer visited once each month but in the instance about which he was complaining a period of seven weeks had elapsed since his visit.³ The plight of the Weston Schools is evident from the following letter from the Master of the National School Weston Point⁴:

National School,
Weston Point,
Runcorn.

Dear Sir,

I wish to know whether you would be so good as to do something for me in the matter of attendance connected with the above school.

I have only had one visit since January 1891. Seven months of this school year have elapsed and I have not had one single visit during that time. I believe the schools in Weston are in an equally unfortunate condition, our attendance has gone so bad lately that something must be done. If I cannot get any redress from the Committee, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools has promised to write to the Local Government Board for me. My action in complaining is fully endorsed by the Managers of this School, who are willing to testify that at least for six years no work worth mentioning has been done. All the work has been done by the school staff."

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1. Minutes of Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 9.4.1878.
 2. Ibid - 8.9.1891.
 3. Ibid - 26.10.1897.
 4. Ibid - 23.2.1892.

Little was done about these complaints. In Halton the Committee tried to evade the issue.¹ Grappenhall School was more fortunate, the Officer was instructed to call each fortnight.² The Master of Weston Point was informed that the Committee would not take any action as a new appointment was being made.³

But dissatisfaction was not only expressed with the work of the Attendance Officers, the reluctance of the Committee itself to deal with cases referred to it was a source of irritation. The Headmaster of Grappenhall School stated:

"There appears to be a growing tendency among the children here to leave school at the age of twelve. Labour certificates or any other are never troubled about. Annie so and so left when she was twelve to go to work, or stay at home as the case may be, and so may my girl. This is the way the parents reason. When I bring such cases before the Officer he says the Committee will take no action and therefore ignores them."⁴

The Local Committee at Halton lost patience with the Board in 1898 and sent the following letter signed by the chairman and members of the committee:

Halton Hill,
Runcorn.

Dear Sir,

We beg to express our disapprobation that the School Attendance Committee at Dutton at their meeting on September 27th recinded an order made by the School Attendance Committee at Halton at their meeting on September 26th with reference to the ease

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1. See page 188, 187.
 2. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 25.11.1897.
 3. Ibid - 23.2.1892.
 4. Ibid - 26.10.1897.

of Thomas William Knowles. This is not the first occasion that the Committee at Dutton has acted in this manner to the Committee at Halton. If the Local Committee at Halton with all the facts of the cases before them at first hand are to have their unanimous decisions quashed by the Committee at Dutton whose knowledge of the facts of the cases can only be second hand it is obvious that it is a waste of time for a Committee to sit at Halton.

The case in question was a long standing flagrant case of open defiance and evasion of the law and the lad will not be 13 until November 13th." ¹

In 1901 the Board of Education asked the Committee for its observations on a report by the School Attendance Officer, requested by them, concerning the attendance at Helsby National School and stated:

"in the twenty cases mentioned by him (the School Attendance Officer) as having been reported for irregularity of attendance your Committee have taken no action in the matter."

The Committee in reply said that the parents satisfactorily explained the irregularity complained of. ²

While the Managers, teachers and Education Department complained about the inefficiency of the School Attendance Committee, the Committee and its officers complained about the difficulties which the leniency of the Magistrates placed in the way of their efforts to enforce the Attendance Acts.

The Magistrates at Oakmere and Daresbury were particularly obstructive. ³ As early as 1880 the School Attendance Officer reported

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 25.10.1898.
 2. Ibid - 19.11.1901.
 3. See pages 189 & 194

the negligence of the Magistrates' Clerk. Attendance Orders obtained on the 29th June and 31st August had not been served on the parents by the middle of October. A parent who failed to appear in Court and who was fined 5/- had not been asked for the money, and the police were not notified to take steps to enforce the penalty. The Officer added that the parent may even be unaware that any fine was inflicted.¹

The inevitability of the outcome of cases at Daresbury was expressed by the Officer in his monthly report in 1895:

"I regret my inability to be present to report on the cases heard at Daresbury Petty Sessions on October 29th which were as usual all adjourned until November 26th to give defendants another chance. My cases were as follows -

<u>Name of Child</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Std.</u>	<u>Attendance for Month</u>				
A	10	3	$\frac{0}{10}$	$\frac{0}{10}$	$\frac{0}{10}$	$\frac{0}{10}$	$\frac{0}{40}$
B	9	3	$\frac{3}{10}$	$\frac{1}{10}$	$\frac{1}{10}$	$\frac{4}{10}$	$\frac{9}{40}$
C	11	4	$\frac{5}{10}$	$\frac{5}{10}$	$\frac{10}{10}$	$\frac{5}{10}$	$\frac{15}{40}$

2

The above cases are fully deserving of conviction, especially as the parents admitted they had without excuse kept the children at home and went to the Sessions fully expecting to be fined. I have done all I could in pressing the summonses."³

As late as 1902 a fine of 1s.0d. and costs was imposed on a parent whose son aged 13.4 years was absent 153 out of a total of 313 sessions by the Daresbury Magistrate.⁴

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1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 19.10.1880.
 2. Probably an error in transcription - the $\frac{10}{10}$ was probably $\frac{0}{10}$
 3. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 11.11.1895.
 4. Ibid - 3.6.1902.

The School Attendance Committee admitted that they were reluctant to bring cases before the Magistrates. All too frequently cases brought before them were adjourned from one session to the next, to see if the children's attendance would improve. This necessitated the Attendance Officer travelling a distance of six or seven miles on each occasion. When eventually an improvement was reported the Guardians had to pay the costs.¹

The Committee took the line of least resistance. They did not try to cope with the problem. They did not accept the offer of help from the Education Department which suggested that if flagrant cases of abuse were reported to them they would deal with the problem. It was much more comfortable to keep out of trouble by doing nothing.

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 26.8.1895.

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C O N C L U S I O N

The School Attendance Committee was an administrative body and as such performed its duties in the letter rather than the spirit of the law. It performed its administrative functions efficiently. It was of paramount importance that the system should be as cheap as possible and the estimated rate of $\frac{1}{3}$ of a penny in the £ in 1902 denoted success in this aspect of its work.¹

The importance which the Committee attached to the work can be compared with that of the Runcorn School Board where there were only 400 (approximately) more children on the registers in 1901. The School Board District of Runcorn, which was a small compact area, had two full time officers costing £195 per annum, while the School Attendance Committee employed four part-time officers costing £100 in a scattered area. While there was little significant difference between the percentage of attendance achieved by each body in 1901 the School Board had to deal with the insoluble problem of the Canal Boat Children which reduced its percentage about two points.

The relative strengths of the drive for increased attendance is obvious in the difference in the number of warning notices issued to parents and the number of prosecutions. The School Board did not have the problem of indifferent and unco-operative magistrates which obstructed to some extent the work of the Committee, but the energy with which the School Board tackled the problem of school fees with

1. Minutes of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee - 11.3.1902.

the Guardians was a contrast to the line of least resistance which the School Attendance Committee took in dealing with the Magistrates and the permissive and tolerant attitude to 'early leavers'.

The School Attendance Committee had no real interest in its role as part of the Education system. It not only lacked initiative but tended to retard progress. The standard of exemption in spite of requests, was only raised to correspond with the age of exemption as specified by the Education Acts.

The special problems with which the Committee had to deal were those common to agricultural areas and concerned the absence of children for work on the farms and children leaving school at the age of exemption rather than at the standard age of exemption, but the ever recurring complaints by the Managers, teachers and the Education Department indicated no serious effort to solve the problem.

The leadership of the Runcorn Union came from the teachers, managers and Local School Attendance Committees. It was the Local School Attendance Committees who were really concerned about attendance and therefore education. It was the Managers and teachers who provided incentives in the way of prizes and excursions but it was the powerful Education Department which was the most powerful influence of all; through its inspection it kept a close watch on the Committee and ensured that it performed its functions.

2.

THE PAYMENT OF SCHOOL FEES

The swift reaction by parents who were receiving Outdoor Relief when the Runcorn School Board was formed in 1875 indicated that the Board of Guardians had done nothing to enforce the Elementary Education Act of 1873. The first meeting of the Runcorn School Board was on 28th January, 1875, and at a meeting of the Board of Guardians on 4th February, 1875 there was "a large number of applications for an increase in the amount of outdoor relief", to compensate for the loss incurred by the operations of the compulsory clause in the Elementary Education Act 1870. The Board of Guardians investigated the claims and an allowance was made of 3d per child¹ who was ascertained to be attending school under the provisions of the 1870 Act.²

The Guardians did not query their responsibility for the virtual payment of fees when the first requests for assistance were made, but a more typical attitude became evident in the following October when they queried whose responsibility it was to pay the fees of pauper children in an area like Runcorn, where there was a School Board.³

The situation was explained and it was accepted that it was indeed the duty of the Guardians to pay them.

The Board of Guardians resented the obligation to pay the fees of indigent children imposed by the Elementary Education Act 1876, and while there is no evidence that they refused to pay the fees of these children in the Voluntary Schools in the rural area, they tried, without success throughout the period to evade this responsibility for children living within the School Board District of Runcorn.

1. This was in excess of the sum permitted to be paid under Section 3 of the Elementary Education Act, 1873. See p.152.

2. Runcorn Examiner - 6.2.1875.

3. Ibid - 16.10.1875.

Following the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1876, the new system for the payment of fees was explained at a meeting of the Board of Guardians in June, 1877, and it was proposed that Inquiry Officers should be appointed to receive applications for payment of fees for non-pauper children and that as the Relieving Officers were familiar with this type of work it was suggested that they should be appointed Inquiry Officers for the districts in which they worked as Relieving Officers. In making this proposal it was stressed that the Relieving Officers, if appointed, "would remember that in the Act it distinctly declared that the payment of fees is not considered relief in the ordinary sense, and that they should meet all applicants with equal kindness".

The necessity for the appointment of Inquiry Officers was not appreciated by the Guardians - they considered that the ratepayers were already "burdened enough with taxes and rates". It was also thought that people in the country "would rather pay fees than pauperise themselves" and the opinion was expressed that the people in Runcorn earned good wages and should have no need to apply. For these reasons an amendment was carried - "That at present the Guardians do not consider it necessary to appoint Inquiry Officers".¹

The School Board, who had now no power to pay the fees of indigent children in Voluntary Schools realised the repercussions which this decision would have, and the matter was raised a month later at a meeting of the Board of Guardians by a Guardian who was also a member of the School Board. The Guardians realised the implications of their resolution, and though there were a few who opposed the proposition, ostensibly because of the cost to the rates, but fundamentally because of a dislike of the School Board, the overwhelming majority supported

1. Runcorn Examiner - 9.6.1877.

the motion that Inquiry Officers should be appointed for the whole Union.¹

The Guardians now had two distinct types of children for whom they were obliged to pay fees, and a "School Fees Committee" was appointed to consider the method of payment for both groups. In March 1878, the Committee made its recommendations. It was suggested that the system already in operation for pauper children should continue for the present.² The parents kept the Attendance Cards which were examined by the Relieving Officer on his visits and fees were paid on examination of the card. This practice had worked fairly well and there seemed to be no reason to disturb it, but when the system was in operation for a longer period it broke down.

The temptation of the parents and children to tamper with Attendance Cards was too great and because of the great distress caused to the parents when their relief was stopped by reason of the falsification of these cards, the Guardians adopted a more foolproof system. The Relieving Officers were asked to give the School Attendance Officer cards of all the children, whose parents were in receipt of parish relief, to take to the masters or mistresses of the schools with the request that they should not allow the cards to pass into the possession either of the children or of their parents, in order to ensure the correct marking and safe custody of the cards. The Relieving Officers would call each week at the schools and examine the children's cards.³

A different system was recommended and adopted for the payment of fees for non-pauper children. It was recommended that:

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.7.1877.
 2. Ibid - 2.3.1878.
 3. Ibid - 21.6.1879.

1. "The fees for non-pauper children be paid to the School Manager once in each quarter through the Inquiry Officers."
11. "The school teachers be furnished with a School Attendance Card for each child for whom the fees are paid by the Guardians, such card to be filled up by the teacher and given to the Inquiry Officer three weeks before the end of each quarter."
111. "The School Attendance Cards be submitted at their quarterly or other meetings and that they decide upon the continuance or otherwise of the payment of school fees." ¹

The machinery for the payment of fees was now available but difficulties were experienced in the early years. Parents objected to making applications to the Guardians on account of the pauperising effect it had on them. ²

The first major controversy in the Runcorn School Board District about the payment of fees took place in 1881. This was not as a result of any negligence on the part of the Guardians as a body, but as a result of the non-co-operation of their Inquiry Officer, Mr. Wright. This was not surprising; a remark by Canon Barclay, Chairman of the School Board, ³ revealed that they too had their troubles with him when he said -

"We, the Guardians of the poor have had many rows with him." ⁴

Parents who attended before the Runcorn School Board Attendance Committee to explain the irregular or non-attendance of their children, complained that the Inquiry Officer at Runcorn would not listen to the applications and told them they must attend at Dutton (the Workhouse) which was approximately seven miles away. ⁵ Others complained that

1. Runcorn Examiner - 2.3.1878.

2. Runcorn Guardian - 7.6.1879.

3. Canon Barclay was also Chairman of the Board of Guardians.

4. Runcorn Examiner - 5.11.1881.

5. Ibid - 22.10.1881.

payments of fees had been stopped. Enquiries revealed that payments had been stopped because parents receiving them ought to have made fresh application.¹ Many of these parents were illiterate and the Inquiry Officer had not taken the trouble to help them by telling them what to do. This was in character, as Canon Barclay remarked-

"Mr. Wright's fault is he won't explain to people."²

The Runcorn School Board wrote to the Guardians concerning the difficulties which had arisen and drew their attention to six cases where parents had been unable to obtain payment of fees though they had been advised to apply for these by the Board itself.³ In his letter the Clerk said -

"it will be of great convenience for this Board if an arrangement could be made with the Guardians so that the latter might order the payment of school fees in all cases where the School Board certifies that full enquiries have been made and the parents are fit and proper persons to be assisted."⁴

The Guardians did not approve of the proposal that they should automatically pay fees on the recommendation of the School Board. They felt that this would involve delegating their powers to the School Board, which they did not wish to do. They also felt that their Inquiry Officer, because of his position, had a far better opportunity of obtaining accurate information about the applicants, and a member pointed out that there had been several cases where he had obtained information which was different from that of the School Board. Members also felt that the standards of exemption by the School Board

1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.11.1881.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid - 8.10.1881.

4. Ibid

for payment of fees may not be stringent enough as cases had been sent to the Guardians on the recommendations of the School Board, where the fathers of the children were earning 22/- and 24/- per week.

The Guardians denied the charge that the parents had to go to Dutton to apply for payment of fees¹ and stated clearly that the normal routine followed was:

The School Board sent a list of cases which their visitor had had inquired into to the Relieving Officer, and he brought them before the Board.²

Mr. Wright, when interrogated about not reported cases, admitted that he did not report all cases to the Board, as he found that many people were well able to pay their own fees, and he did not trouble the Board if the cases were withdrawn. He was told that in future he must bring all cases before the Board so that they could decide on the merits of each case.³

The matter was settled to the satisfaction of both sides in November 1881, when Canon Barclay, the Chairman of the School Board and one other member, met the Relief Supervision Committee of the Board of Guardians.⁴ It was arranged that the School Board should give a list of those parents recommended to the Inquiry Officer who would consider the applications and would present the cases to the Guardians for approval.⁵

Trouble about the payment of fees, between the Runcorn School Board and the Board of Guardians, again cropped up in 1887. The Guardians were equally as careful of their expenditure as the School

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1. This was obviously an unauthorised directive by the Inquiry Officer.
 2. Runcorn Examiner - 8.10.1881.
 3. Ibid
 4. School Board Minutes - 2.11.1881. (Runcorn)
 5. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.4.1882.
 6. Runcorn Examiner - 21.5.1887.

Board and when the Greenway Road schools were opened, they were not long in recognising an opportunity to evade the financial responsibility involved in the payment of an Inquiry Officer, and to relieve themselves of the trouble of this administration.

Prior to the building of the Board Schools, the Relieving Officer made inquiry into all cases where application was made for the payment of fees. Since the Board Schools were built there was accommodation for both boys and girls and infants, and the Guardians considered that as the Board had now accommodation of its own, their officers could make the necessary inquiries and children requiring this help could be placed in their own school, where their fees would be remitted.

This plan was ingenious in its simplicity but it ignored two fundamental issues - the right of the parent to send his child to the school of his choice, and the legal obligation of the Board of Guardians to pay the fees of indigent children where such fees were not remitted by the School Boards.¹ It also ignored the position that the Board schools could not, in that year, admit boys above standard 1. All those above this standard had to attend the Voluntary schools which charged fees.² In contravention of the agreement made in 1881 the Guardians instructed their Inquiry Officer early in 1887, not to consider applications for fees any longer for children in the Runcorn School Board District. A report of an unofficial discussion which took place earlier in the year, about the problem, between two members of the School Board and the Clerk of the Union was given to the members of the Board at a meeting in June. The members said they had pointed out to the Clerk that the instructions to the Relieving Officer seriously impeded the work of the Board and the education of the children, furthermore it was emphasised that:

1. Runcorn Examiner - 21.5.1887.

2. Ibid - 7.5.1887.

"the duty was one which the law alloted to the Inquiry Officer and one which the School Board would not undertake to do." ¹

A member of the Guardians was also approached who said he would bring the matter up at the next meeting, ² but the matter lay in abeyance and in May the School Visitor presented a report ³ to the School Board in which he stated that -

"through the action of the school fees Inquiry Officer of the Board of Guardians (Mr.Ward), in refusing the payment of fees to indigent persons, considerable difficulty had been caused both to the parents of children, who should attend Voluntary schools, and to the visitors. Applications for fees were constantly being made to the visitors, who were unable to pay fees through poverty, and through the action of the Inquiry Officer, the fees in a great many cases were unpaid and children were even refused admission to school, and at any rate attended irregularly." ⁴

The School Board decided at this point that the matter should be brought to a head and the Clerk was instructed to write to the Clerk of the Guardians to ask him to bring the matter before the Board. ⁵

At the meeting of the Guardians, following the receipt of this communication, the discussion revolved around the question of who should make the inquiries. ⁶ The duty of the Relieving Officer was clarified. The Guardians realised it was his duty to pay the fees and bring the cases before the Board and support the claim for these but they denied that it was his duty to make the enquiries. The Guardians ignored

1. Runcorn Examiner - 11.6.1887.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid - 7.5.1887.

4. A member pointed out that this was true in two or three cases. In some instances however, teachers had allowed children to attend school without fees. They had taken pity on the children and admitted them.

5. Runcorn Examiner - 7.5.1887.

6. Ibid - 28.5.1887.

the arrangements of 1881. The Clerk of the Board stated that it was the duty of the Runcorn School Board to make these and that if the Relieving Officers were asked to do so he would apply for an increase in salary.

Finance was the fundamental issue. It was at length decided to evade the issue by sending a reply to the School Board reminding them that a deputation from the School Board was asked two months ago to submit a scheme and this had not been done.

The members of the Board, who had made this informal contact, denied the allegation, but the School Board, in the interests of all concerned, were desirous of coming to a satisfactory arrangement as soon as possible and while they felt that the Guardians had treated them with "scant courtesy" and that "this was not the way for one public body to treat another,"¹ they were men who preferred to pursue a policy of peaceful negotiation and they saw in the latter a possibility of an amicable settlement. The matter was placed in the hands of the Board's School Attendance Committee to devise some scheme and submit it for approval to the Board.² The Guardians, also in favour of a settlement, appointed a committee to meet a committee of the School Board.³ The solution they arrived at was similar to that proposed by the School Board in 1881. The meeting took place in July and it was suggested that :

"the Runcorn School Board Attendance Officers should be appointed the Inquiry Officers to the Guardians at a nominal salary and that a committee of the Runcorn School Board should deal with the fees. A list of the cases of this committee should be brought each month by Ward, the

1. Runcorn Examiner - 25.6.1887.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. - 25.6.1887.

Relieving Officer, and passed by the Guardians, and entered in the books and charged to the Runcorn Township."

This solution met with the approval of the Guardians. It had not only a financial advantage for them but it also removed the stigma attached for parents in need of going to the Guardians for help.¹

In August the Board of Guardians formally appointed the two Runcorn School Attendance Officers, Inquiry Officer for the Township of Runcorn, at a salary of £5 each for their respective districts.²

The Guardians were not slow to examine the implications of the Free Education Act. At their meeting on 18th July, although the Act had not yet been passed, Dr. Gastaldi, also a member of the School Board, asked if schools which did not accept free education, would continue to receive school fees for poor children. In the opinion of one of the members, the position was clear. The Board only paid 3d per head, and the Free Education grant was 3d per head, so the Guardians would not pay fees if the Act were passed.³ This was a very simple solution.

When the Act came into force, the question arose again as to the employment of Inquiry Officers. The Board, which was always opposed to the payment of fees and which at any opportunity made a determined effort to evade this responsibility, now moved swiftly. The Relieving Officers ceased to pay any more school fees and the Clerk to the Guardians wrote to the Local Government Board to ask what should be done with regard to the Inquiry Officers :

"for if the Board paid no fees they required no Inquiry Officers."⁴

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 23.7.1887.
 2. Ibid - 20.8.1887.
 3. Ibid - 18.7.1891.
 4. Ibid - 10.10.1891.

The Local ~~Government~~ Board, however, in their reply, asked -

"how the Guardians proposed to deal with cases in which applications might be made by parents who select schools for the attendance of their children at which a fee was charged."¹

This reply should have made the position quite clear to the Guardians. For a time the resentment lay dormant and they continued to pay fees but in 1893 the Board, led by Mr. Brandreth, tried without success, every device to avoid this responsibility.

In February 1893, in reply to a query about the obligation of Voluntary Schools which charged fees, to admit children without payment, the Education Department wrote on 28th January and pointed out that -

"the Managers of Public Elementary Schools which are entitled under the Elementary Education Act 1891 to continue to charge fees, are under no obligation to admit any children without payment of fees. On the other hand the Guardians are entitled under Section 5 of the Elementary Education Act, 1891, to represent to the Department that there is an insufficient amount of public elementary school accommodation without the payment of fees for children over three and under fifteen years of age, for whom such Guardians have been paying fees, and for whom they desire free school accommodation, and the Education Department have power to direct such deficiency of free school accommodation to be supplied by the ratepayers and in a manner provided by that section."

The Guardians agreed that this communication made it quite plain that it was the Board's responsibility to pay the fees of children attending the school of their choice even if such a school charged fees. The Local Government Inspector, who was present at the meeting, further emphasised the Board's position by saying :

1. Runcorn Examiner - 5.12.1891.

"you have powers to make the ratepayers provide accommodation, but you have no power to make parents send their children there."¹

But the Guardians, still determined to cease the payment of fees, now found another means of evasion. Section 5 of the Elementary Education Act 1891, gave them a loophole and they wrote to the School Board and stated that :

"it appeared to the Board that there was an insufficient amount of public school accommodation without payment of fees for children over three and under fifteen years of age"

and requested that the Board would :

"take steps to supply the deficiency."

The Clerk of the School Board was instructed to write to the Guardians and refer them to the tenth section of the Elementary Education Act 1876;

"which directed the Guardians to pay the fees of children who were unable to pay by reason of poverty, and that this payment did not deprive the parents of any right or privilege, or subject them to any disability or disqualification, nor should the payment be made on the condition that the child attend any public elementary school, other than such as might be directed by the parents, nor refuse to pay the fees because the child attended or did not attend any particular elementary school"

and to add that:

"in the opinion of the School Board it was not necessary to make any further provision for free schooling."²

When this reply was received from the School Board, a letter was sent to the Managers of the Schools in Runcorn, asking them to provide

1. Runcorn Examiner - 11.2.1893.

2. Ibid - 6.5.1893.

free places for those children who could not afford to pay fees. As replies were not received in time to be considered at the June meeting of the Board, Mr. Brandreth, the militant and powerful leader of the Board, declared:

"if no answer came to hand he would object to the passing of any further accounts for school fees."¹

His obsession with the financial implications were obvious when he deplored the fact that because of a few managers of denominational schools in Runcorn, they had to continue the services of an Inquiry Officer and pay him a salary of £5. His smouldering resentment was also evident when he drew the Board's attention to the fact that:

"the year before the appointment of School Inquiry Officers the fees paid amounted to £17.1s.8d. but afterwards up to 1891, the fees and salaries came to £85.18s.10d."²

The implication being that the Inquiry Officers and the committees concerned with the payment of fees were extravagant. He made no allowance for the increased numbers attending school, nor for the improved attendance which were the underlying reasons for the increased financial outlay.³ But the Guardians were not interested in education, their sole aim was to cut adrift from any involvement in this sphere.

As the Volunatry Schools could not be compelled to accept non fee paying children, at a meeting held in June, 1893, Mr. Brandreth resorted to the methods of compulsion, and suggested that the children should be compelled to attend a school which provided free places and justified this by stating that as the Guardians paid for the children they stood in place of parents and that therefore they could demand free education for them. The term "parents" in this

1. School Fees at Runcorn averaged 2/- per week.
2. Runcorn Examiner - 3.6.1893.
3. Appendix p. 385

instance was given a liberal but inadmissible interpretation to suit the purposes of the Guardians. The status of the children concerned was also misinterpreted - they were not paupers and therefore not subject to the control of the Guardians.

Mr. Brandreth proposed that "the childrens' names be sent up to the Education Department and that the Board demand free education for them". This aroused misgivings on the part of some members who realised that these children were being denied their legal right to go to the school of their choice and that this was the act of a dictator. An amendment was moved that:

"the Managers of the schools should be written to asking them to provide free places for the children in charge of the Board."

This was carried by the narrow majority - nine votes to eight.¹

The storm broke at the July meeting of Runcorn School Board.²

The following letter was read from the Clerk of the Board of Guardians:

"At a meeting of the Board yesterday, I was directed to write and inform you that the Guardians require that free school places be provided for all children whose parents are unable or unwilling to pay school fees."

The tone of the letter irritated the Board, also the fact that the arrangements made in 1887 about the procedure for application for the payment of fees had been scrapped without consultation of the School Board. The elected Runcorn Guardians, who formed the committee to approve the applications, were no longer trusted to do this work, and the School Attendance Officer, in his capacity as Inquiry Officer, was ordered to attend the meeting of the Guardians at Dutton and lay before them the application for fees. The intention of this change in procedure was to make the working of the system impossible for the

1. Runcorn Examiner - 17.6.1893.

2. Ibid - 1.7.1893.

School Board.¹

A member of the School Board (Mr. Imison) cast aside the usual restraint exercised by members of the School Board in his denunciation of the Board of Guardians. The following is an extract from a report of his in the Runcorn Examiner:

"The fact of the matter was the Guardians did not seem to understand their duties; they did not seem to recognise that the poor had certain rights. The object of the Guardians instructions to Bowyer was to make it impossible to work according to the present arrangement. That was the avowed object of Mr. Brandreth, the mover of the resolution. He was pleased to see that there were two honourably manly protests from members of the School Board (Messrs. Handley and Taylor) against dragging the poor people to Dutton, and Mr. Taylor appealed to Mr. Brandreth to withdraw his motion and allow the Runcorn Guardians to continue to deal with the school fees in the same way as at present. But Mr. Brandreth seemed to be a sort of dictator and in effect said the Runcorn Guardians had lost the confidence of the Board, and avowed his object of stopping the payment of fees. The only schools which were free were the Board Schools and the Catholic School, and the Guardians said if parents selected a school where fees had to be paid, the Guardians would decline to pay the fees. Now it was one of the primary rights of a man to select and direct the education of his own child, secured to him by Act of Parliament, and the effect of the policy of these gentlemen at Dutton would be to deprive parents of that right. He questioned if there was one Guardian who knew how many children there were, whose fees were paid from the rates. There were no answers. There were 54 children having fees paid for them. Thirteen of these

1. The first resolution was that the parents themselves must go to Dutton.

children were the offspring of widows, and charwomen; three boatmen, and nine labourers, and one tradesman. They received nothing from the Guardians but these fees and were in no sense paupers. The whole amount of the fees at the last audit was £2.17s.9d. for the quarter ending March, 1893, and these fees were not spread over the whole Union; Runcorn absolutely paid every penny; consequently the Union as a whole had nothing whatever to do with paying towards them. The Union paid its share of the expenses of the Inquiry Officer, whose salary was £5. Runcorn township was over a fourth of the rateable value of the Union; therefore, that left £3.15s. for the rest of the Union to pay; and the particular part which Mr. Brandreth represented would pay 3s.6d. towards the amount; an infinitesimal portion of a penny in the pound. The Guardians appeared to be taking a rise out of Runcorn. With seven Guardians Runcorn seemed to be in a worse position than when they had five. Mr. Brandreth showed his confidence in Runcorn Guardians by taking Runcorn matters out of their hands. At one time the Runcorn Guardians were considered capable of inquiring into relief cases; they had now to go to Dutton. Lost their confidence. At one time the Runcorn Guardians were considered good enough to inquire into fees; now applications must go to Dutton. Lost their confidence. And this had taken place at the dictation of Mr. Brandreth, and he was astonished that the Runcorn Guardians contented themselves with a mere protest, and that the resolution was carried unanimously. He considered this action of the Guardians one of the most offensive forms of tyranny that any authority could try to bring about. They were attempting by illegal action to rob poor parents of the right of control over their own children, and of saying how and where they shall be educated. He looked upon it as a mean contemptible shabby attempt by the Board of Guardians to evade their responsibilities. It was as clear as daylight

that where the parent was not able to pay the fees demanded at the school at which it was attending, it was the duty of the Guardians to pay the fees, and the Guardians ought to consider it a privilege to assist such parents. There was far more money wasted by Guardians than this trifling charge for fees, but the average guardian's mind always did seem to be microscopic. There was a mighty fuss some years ago about some potatoes that a certain pony ate; now and again there was a mighty fuss over £3.15s. spread over a Union of over £200,000 rateable value. If the Guardians would attend to their own duty and leave the Runcorn School Board to attend to education, which it was perfectly competent to do, it would be better for themselves and for the interest of the ratepayers."

At the conclusion of the meeting the Clerk to the School Board was asked to reply to the Guardians and refer them to Section 5 of the Elementary Education Act 1891. To the vocal approval of the members of the Board the Clerk was instructed, in defiance of the Orders of the Board of Guardians respecting the new system of application for payment of fees, to call the elected Runcorn Guardians together in the usual manner and submit the applications.¹

The support for the plain speaking by Mr. Imison at the Board meeting, given in a comment by the Runcorn Examiner which was Liberal in its politics and strongly opposed to the voluntary system, is perhaps some measure of the justice of the remarks.

The comment reads:

"Mr. Imison's reply to the Runcorn Board of Guardians on the school fee question, made at the meeting of the School Board on Tuesday is well worth reading. It was getting time that someone spoke out. There is only one idea the Guardians have

1. Runcorn Examiner - 8.7.1893.

clearly fixed, and that is their objections to paying school fees, under a Free Education Act, but from the resolutions and speeches made they had no knowledge of how to accomplish what they desired. It was clearly shown at the School Board on Tuesday that the parents have the choice of school and that the Guardians must pay the fees of such as are unable to do so. This is an issue that the Guardians cannot evade.

Mr. Brandreth and his friends had evidently realised this when they proposed that the unfortunate people should be dragged to Dutton Workhouse to make applications for fees, and then finding this would raise a storm of indignation decided that the Inquiry Officer should be put to that trouble, and the power of granting fees taken out of the hands of the Guardians. It is unworthy of a public body to indulge in a system of harass like this, and the Guardians of the township are to be congratulated upon determining to combine to deal with applications for school fees as usual. If the law is bad the Union Authority ought to seek to have it amended in a proper and dignified manner".¹

In the meantime the Guardians wrote to the Education Department stating that they required 49 free places in the township of Runcorn in denominational schools. The Department, in their reply said:

"I am again to point out that the law does not give a right to free education in Public Elementary Schools which are entitled under the Elementary Education Act, 1891, to continue to charge fees. I am therefore to inquire whether the Guardians wish to represent to the Department that there is an insufficient amount of public elementary school accommodation without payment of fees for these 49 children, and I am also to inquire whether the Guardians have applied to the Holy Trinity Church of England School (at which there appears to be a considerable number of free places) for admission of these children without payment of fees."²

1. Runcorn Examiner - 8.7.1893.

2. Ibid - 2.9.1893.

As a result of the information received in this letter the Guardians, irrespective of the rights of the parents, decided to apply to Holy Trinity School to find free places for the children.¹ Trinity Managers were helpful and in their reply pointed out that only the Infant Departments and Standard 1 in the girls and boys departments were free and that in so far as the 49 children referred to in their letter comply with these conditions, the managers would be glad to render the Board all the assistance in their power.²

The controversy dragged on. In the October meeting of the Guardians when Mr. Brandreth objected to the accounts with respect to the payment of school fees he repeated his now familiar theme:

"The School Board of Runcorn ought to provide free education for all these children. The Guardians had no right to pay these fees. If parents had the right to send their children where they liked, let them send them and pay for them and not call upon the Guardians to pay for them."

While this was still the feeling of the Board one member pointed out that:

"the Board had been informed that they must pay for them and he failed to see that there was any value in continuing the discussion."

At this meeting some semblance of moderation began to appear. The resolution that the Inquiry Officer for Runcorn be required to attend before the Guardians at their ordinary meeting whenever applications have been made to him for payment of fees, and lay before them his school fees application and report book, and take orders thereon was rescinded and it was decided that a committee consisting of the Runcorn Guardians and four Guardians from outside the Runcorn Township should form a committee to consider the application for school fees and recommend them to the

1. Runcorn Examiner - 2.9.1893.

2. Ibid - 7.10.1893.

Board for payment.¹ As the Guardians had no alternative but to pay the fees, they proceeded to sever all connection with the School Board and decided to dispose with the services of the Board's School Attendance Officer as Inquiry Officer.

In spite of a protest from the School Board that people who applied to the Relieving Officer felt that it was a stigma, the Guardians went ahead.²

Mr. Bowyer, the School Attendance Officer, was dismissed in May, 1894, and the Relieving Officer for Runcorn was appointed to do the work of Inquiry Officer.³

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 21.10.1893.
 2. Ibid - 24.2.1894.
 3. Ibid - 19.5.1894.

CHAPTER VII

THE RURAL SCHOOL BOARDS

The policy of the Voluntary Agencies in the rural area of the Union of Runcorn was to enlarge or build additional accommodation in districts where this already existed to prevent the establishment of a school board, and the inevitable competition between Board and Voluntary School within a small area. But in those areas where the voluntary bodies were not already providing accommodation no effort was made to provide this. The Rural School Board filled the gaps already existing in 1870, and after the year 1877, when the Aston U.D. School Board was formed, the Voluntary Agencies kept pace with the demand for accommodation, and no school boards were formed after this date.

1. THE DARESBUURY SCHOOL BOARD

The Daresbury School Board had an untroubled and peaceful period of office. Its administration was efficient. The appointment of F. Rigby, who was also Clerk to the Runcorn School Board, ensured that the initial legal problems would present no difficulty and when he resigned in 1888¹ his successor, Charles Linaker, Clerk to the Dutton and Aston School Boards, was also experienced in this work.

The Board was elected on 18.5.1875.² to provide accommodation for 70 children at Preston-on-the-Hill³ and for 205 at Daresbury.⁴

In Daresbury there was already in existence the Old Grammar School which was not under Government inspection but nevertheless was an excellent school⁵ in charge of a qualified teacher. Though the accommodation was not sufficient, the Board purchased the building and the site for the sum of £220.⁶ They retained the services of the Master and enlarged the premises by the addition of a classroom and an Infant School Room.⁷

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1. Daresbury School Log Book - 28.2.1888.
 2. Report of Committee of Council - 1878-1879. p.4.
 3. P.R.O. Ed.21/1737 - 9.7.1875.
 4. Ibid - 4.4.1876.
 5. H.M.I. E.M.K. Sneyd Kymnersley's General Report for 1878. Report of Committee of Council 1878-1879.
 6. P.R.O. Ed.21/1737 - 14.6.1876.
 7. Ibid. Internal Memorandum - 9.7.1875.

Temporary accommodation was also available in Preston Brook. About 50 yards outside the School Board District there was a large boat belonging to the Bridgewater Trustees which had been converted into a school "at great cost in 1857" and erected in a field near the Bridgewater Canal.¹ The Board anticipated the possibility of this Boat school providing temporary accommodation until their own school was built and they approached the Education Department for sanction for transfer.

The proposal met with approval. The Department pointed out that as the school was outside the District it could not be transferred under Section 23, but their Lordships thought it possible, as a temporary expedient, for the Board to take the school over under Section 19.²

Negotiations with the Bridgewater Trustees proceeded slowly - it was one year before they were complete and the Department was informed that the:

"Board has entered into an agreement to take over the Boat School at Preston Brook, until such time as the Board School at Preston-on-the-Hill new building shall be ready to occupy."³

The building programme of the Board was complete in 1879 when an Infant School in Hatton with accommodation for 58⁴ was completed and one in Moore for 107.⁵ The total cost of provision of accommodation amounted to £3313.1.0.

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1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1737 - 9.7.1875.
 2. Ibid - 30.7.1875.
 3. Ibid - 10.8.1876.
 4. Chester Record Office C.C.E.2/3 - County of Chester Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff 1903.
 5. Ibid

The electorate displayed a healthy interest in the policy of the Board and while the elections for which information is available caused "no bitter passions" and created no ill feelings, nevertheless the members nominated indicated a desire for participation by the public.¹

The members of the Board worked harmoniously together - they were united on a policy of economy and efficiency. Though a section of the population was Nonconformist,² denominationalism and the question of Religious Instruction did not create a problem.³ In the early years the Board were unanimous in their decision that Religious Instruction should be taught in the schools and in 1878 it was ordered that The Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments should be taught.⁴

Permission was granted in 1890 to the Rev.T.Whitley, chairman of the Board, to give Religious Instruction in Daresbury School - "provided that no definite Church directive was adopted."⁵

It was obvious, however, that the Board, while supporting the teaching of Religious Instruction, was not interested in how conscientiously this was given or how much time was allotted to it, and it was not until John Cooper, former Master of Daresbury School, elected to the Board in 1890, when visiting the schools - "was horrified to find that only half-an-hour per week was given to religious education."⁶

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1. 1887 Contest avoided by withdrawal of 2 nominees. Runcorn Examiner.
1890 12 persons nominated for 7 vacancies. Warrington Guardian 4.6.1890.
1893 Ibid
1896 No evidence.
1899 9 contestants for 7 seats. Warrington Guardian 3.5.1890.
1902 No evidence.
 2. Frequent references are made in the School Log Book to attendance of children at Chapel Treats.
 3. With the exception of the years 1893-1896 and 1902 and 1903, the Vicar was chairman of the Board.
 4. School Log Book - 10.10.1878.
 5. Warrington Guardian - 7.7.1889.
 6. Ibid - 4.10.1890.

In the discussion at a subsequent meeting Mr. Cooper showed clearly that the parents in Daresbury school did not take advantage of the Conscience Clause when he stated:

"I have had Roman Catholics in the school, but not a word about the matter."¹

The decision was unanimous that:

"The teachers be asked to give scripture lessons a definite place on the timetable, and to prepare fresh timetables for the approval of the Inspector."²

The policy of economy was rigorously applied to every aspect of education. The ever present fear of an increase of the rates dictated every issue. A discussion in 1891 on the efficiency of a private school and the responsibility of the Board for the quality of education which the pupils attending it received, ended abruptly, when the Clerk reminded the Board that:

"If the school was closed, this Board would have to put up another school, and that would mean an increase in the rates."³

The long term consequences of the inadequate payment of teachers was not envisaged in 1891 when the mistress of Moore Infant School asked for an increase of salary and a member declared that:

"the Board was not particular about the teachers remaining with them for any lengthened period, as they wished to work the schools as cheaply as possible, together with efficiency."

The position of the Board might be explained:

"that plenty of good mistresses could be obtained for the money paid to her. This being only an infant school, the Board did not see their way to increase beyond a certain amount."⁴

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1. Warrington Guardian - 4.11.1890.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid - 5.12.1891.
 4. Ibid - 10.10.1891.

In 1898, however, it became apparent that "they were losing teachers because they said they did not get sufficient money"¹ and also that they found difficulty in replacing them as the salary was so unattractive. To replace one mistress the Board had to spend £5 on advertisements.²

The salary of the Master of Daresbury school depended to a large extent on payment by results. In 1890 it was £45 fixed one third grant and one third pence. In 1902 his basic salary was £55, the remainder was received in the form of emoluments which amounted to £106. His house rent was valued at £14 and he was paid the sum of £13.0.0. for cleaning the school and £1 for supplying firewood. The remainder depended on average attendance and the amount of grant earned.³

Expenditure on the school furniture and maintenance of the building was cut to a minimum. The threat in the report of Her Majesty's Inspector in 1891 - "that unless suitable desks were provided for the first class of infants, it would not be again possible to recommend the higher fixed grant" caused the Board to reckon the cost and when it was realised that by default the cost of the desks would be lost in one year the recommendations were carried out immediately.⁴

No such threat was incorporated in the report in 1898 when Her Majesty's Inspector commented:

"The division of the main room by a screen as suggested by Her Majesty's Inspector on his last visit would greatly assist the teaching and should be done as soon as possible."⁵

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1. Warrington Guardian - 12.2.1898.
 2. Ibid
 3. Chester Record Office C.C.E.2/3 - County of Chester Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff 1903.
 4. Warrington Guardian - 30.10.1891.
 5. Ibid - 3.12.1898.

Consequently no action was taken. In 1900 Her Majesty's Inspector commented:

"This is a good and useful school. It would be conducted with much greater ease if the principal room were divided by a movable screen; it is very difficult to teach three classes in one room."¹

Again no action was taken. The report of 1901 followed up the previous year's comment by adding:

"Few schools of this size are now without a screen to diminish the noise that must necessarily arise from the presence of several classes in one room. The floor is in a very bad state."²

Still no action.

The report of 1902 stated with greater urgency:

"The screen as recommended by Her Majesty's Inspector in his last report should be fixed as soon as possible."³

Though a member of the Board in 1898 admitted that he was perfectly astonished when he visited the school to understand how children could learn anything with all the noise going on in the main room and though the Board was fully in agreement that the conditions were conducive to a breakdown in discipline⁴, the screens were never supplied. It was estimated that two screens would be necessary and the cost would be £15 each.⁵ This was too much for the Board to spend without compulsion.

While expenditure was carefully controlled within the limits defined by economy, the Board was concerned for the welfare of the children and the good of their schools. A suggestion was made in 1890

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1. School Log Book - 10.9.1900.
 2. Ibid - 3.8.1901.
 3. Ibid - 4.2.1902.
 4. Warrington Guardian - 3.12.1898.
 5. Ibid - 7.1.1899.

that if a Committee of Ladies were appointed to visit the schools to inspect the sewing - "it would be encouraging to the teachers and scholars."¹ This proposal was carefully considered and the discussion revealed an insight into the problems which could arise. One member put the proposition clearly into focus when he said:

"The real point was - What was best for the children? If it was not best for the children, and there was any chance of improper use being made, he should say, 'Don't have the Committee'. If it was a means of encouraging the mistresses and children, then he said 'By all means have it, and let the Board make the rules as regards the time of visit'".²

The members of the Board decided that under proper safeguards a Committee would be valuable but felt that the teachers should be consulted.³ The replies from the teachers were favourable and a Committee of Ladies was appointed "to visit the schools of the Board during sewing lessons."⁴

The physical welfare of the children was not forgotten, some walked a distance of a mile and a half to school. In March 1891 a proposal was made that an oven should be provided to enable the children to warm or cook their dinners - "as it was necessary for them to have a good dinner every day." A Committee was appointed to make recommendations,⁵ and in April it was decided to install a small cooking range for the purpose during the autumn.⁶

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1. Warrington Guardian - 6.9.1890.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid
 4. Ibid - 4.10.1900.
 5. Ibid - 7.3.1891.
 6. Ibid - 4.4.1891.

A T T E N D A N C E

As a measure of economy an Attendance Officer was not appointed until 1891.¹ Prior to this the Master performed the duties in an unofficial capacity. Notes were sent to parents of absentees and when large numbers were absent a more active policy was pursued, as entries in the Log Book indicate:

- 27.6.1879. "About 30 scholars away with measles. I am going round though to night to some of them to pass my opinion as to whether they are really measles or a common nettle rash."
- 19.6.1885. "Friday a very poor attendance; heard of a great many running about who are marked sick - gave half holiday and went round to see them.

The pupils also helped:

- 15.11.1887. "On Tuesday many boys were sent out with lists of absentees to Moore, Hatton and Preston Brooke, to ascertain the cause of absenteeism in every case.

Lists or irregulars were sent to the Clerk of the Board and all co-operated. Entries in the Daresbury School Log Book indicate the active part which the members played:

- 29.6.1877. "Sent a list of irregulars to Mr. Dutton of Moore and Mr. Salt of Preston Brook as they promised to look them up."
- 9.4.1886. "The Rev. Thos. Whitley kindly offered to look up any who are irregular. "

A later comment noted with appreciation:

- 23.4.1886. "The Rev. T. Whitley has taken a lively interest in looking up the children who are habitually absent. "

1. Warrington Guardian - 7.11.1891.

While the Board was concerned about attendance it was reluctant to bring parents before the Magistrates. Its ideas as to the amount of education desirable reflected the culture of the area and the social thinking of the era. The Board was composed of men representing various occupations, but their opinions were those of the population which they represented, that the education of the children in their school should be utilitarian and that they should not have too much of it. The feeling that children in an agricultural area like Daresbury ought not to be compelled to remain at school after they had passed the fourth standard was felt so strongly that in 1891 the Education Department was asked to sanction an alteration of the bye-laws which would reduce the standard of total exemption from the fifth to the fourth standard. This proposal was rejected by the Department.¹

As a result of the education of girls it was difficult to get servants:²

"The great ruin of young women for making good servants was giving them too much education. After they had passed the sixth standard they were no good for servants."³

This was the opinion of parents as well as of the members of the Board.

While the more prosperous section of the community was deprived of its servants the operation of the bye-laws was a potential though obviously not effective bar to the supply of labour by older children.

Comments in the School Log Book on the poor attendance of older pupils were an ever recurring theme:

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1. Warrington Guardian -7.2.1891.
 2. Ibid 7.5.1892.
 3. Ibid

- 11.4.1890. "Attendance again worse this week especially standards V and VI. Fine weather finds them employed at potato picking."
- 16.9.1891. "The attendance in the upper standards is very irregular just now owing probably to harvesting operations."¹
- 13.5.1902. "Forwarded the attendance of May Davidson, aged 13 years, to Mr. S. Tomlinson, Runcorn School Attendance Officer, at his request. The girl has made 22 attendances since 3rd February out of a possible 109."

This reluctance to prosecute encouraged parents to ignore the law and warnings from the Board without follow-up led to increasing neglect.

Visits from the members of the Board had little effect on persistent irregulars; during a discussion about a family who were constantly absent from school the Clerk stated he had frequently called when driving past the house and "they were profuse in their promises to send the children, but they did not come for all that."²

The impatience with this kid-glove policy is reflected in comments in the School Log Book:

- 26.3.1888. "School Board meeting, again I called their attention to the unsatisfactory state of attendance."
- 6.7.1888. "Attendance still most unsatisfactory although the Board instructed the Clerk to write to all negligent parents. This having been done but to no purpose."

1. Entry by Her Majesty's Inspector W. Ballance.

2. Warrington Guardian - 2.5.1891.

7.3.1890. "Board Meeting - sent in a long list of irregulars chiefly those of upper standards who at this season of the year are useful for potato planting. Many of them have been reported regularly for months."

The first record of a summons was noted in 1889:

"Cecil Johnston, a boy working in Standard V was today summoned before the Magistrates at the Sessions Room, Daresbury, for irregular attendance at school - Fined five shillings costs. This is the first case proceeded against since I took charge of the school and it is hoped that the fine may have a beneficial effect."¹

While direct compulsion to attend was minimal, many incentives were provided. Each year the Governors of the Daresbury Endowment Fund, three of whom represented the School Board, awarded prizes for good attendance.²

With the appointment of a new Master in 1886, an even more vigorous drive was made to improve attendance. The new Master felt that a more frequent recognition of good attendance would produce better results and at his request the Governors of the Daresbury Endowment Fund allocated £3 for the purchase of Certificates of Merit for good attendance to be awarded every quarter for full attendance.³ This period was reduced to one month in 1889.⁴ Within the school itself techniques involving punishment and reward were used. Children who were absent during the week, except through illness, were asked to do homework the following week.⁵ Those who were present every time

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1. School Log Book - 25.6.1889.
 2. Ibid - 23.10.1880.
 3. Ibid - 13.12.1887.
 4. Ibid - 28.10.1899.
 5. Ibid - 21.1.1887.

the school was open during each month had their names placed on the "Perfect Attendance List" where it remained during the month following.¹

Twenty minutes extra play were given each Monday to the class having the highest percentage, provided this was not less than 90%.²

The combined efforts of the school and the Board undoubtedly were effective with the exception of the "incorrigibles". The available statistics show that Daresbury school had a remarkably good attendance for the year 1891. The national percentage for the year 1890-91 was 82.17. The monthly percentage published in that year for Daresbury school exceeded this by approximately 8% during months, when in a rural area especially, attendance would tend to be at its lowest. It was not surprising that when the appointment of a School Attendance Officer was discussed in 1891, the Board felt that such an appointment was unnecessary.³

The fact that the Daresbury School Board had no Attendance Officer came to the knowledge of the Education Department when the Master of Dutton Board school complained about the non-attendance of two children from the Daresbury School Board District, one of whom was absent from the Government examination. Following this complaint and the disclosure by the Clerk of the Dutton School Board in correspondence with the Department of Education, that Daresbury School Board had no Attendance Officer, the Education Department communicated with the Daresbury School Board and asked:

- "1. What standard a certain boy had passed, and what steps had been taken by the Board to prosecute for his irregular attendance, and not being present at the inspection of Dutton school?
11. Had the School Board an Attendance Officer whose duty it was to see that such children were sent regularly to school?

1. School Log Book, 11.2.1887.

2. School Log Book, 28.9.87.

3. Warrington Guardian - 6.9.1891.

111. What means did the Board take to see that children began to attend school after they were five years of age?

IV. Warnings should be followed by prosecution in proper cases."¹

The discussion by the Board of this communication led to the conclusion that it would be a pity to throw away money upon a School Attendance Officer in such a small district, as the attendance was excellent. Consequently no action was taken.²

This decision, which was conveyed to the Department of Education, brought a prompt directive to the effect that the Board should -

"appoint a School Attendance Officer in compliance with the statute."³

The Board resented the order - they felt strongly that an Officer was not necessary -

"for a country district the attendance was exceptionally good,"⁴ and the Clerk was instructed by a member to say to the Department -

"that as we have adopted the Free Education Act we don't feel that the services of an Attendance Officer are necessary, especially as a better attendance is expected in the future."⁵

The Department insisted, and an Officer was appointed in November, 1891.⁶

The opinion that the Free Education Act would improve attendance was an optimistic but not illogical premise. While the statistics available are few, those on record do not substantiate this. The attendance in the infant schools did not show any appreciable difference until June 1897, and that of Daresbury declined after 1892. The highest recorded percentages for Daresbury school were in 1891.⁷

1. Warrington Guardian - 8.8.1891.

2. Ibid - 8.8.1891.

3. Ibid - 5.9.1891.

4. Ibid - 5.9.1891.

5. Ibid - 5.9.1891.

6. Ibid - 7.11.1891.

7. See appendix 393

The Master of Daresbury in 1888 wrote in the School Log Book -
 "Again I called their (The School Board's) attention to the unsatisfactory state of attendance, and suggested the service of an Attendance Officer."¹

The hope that such an appointment would reduce his problem was a vain one. In fact his difficulties increased. Prior to the appointment the members, though reluctant to take legal action, visited the defaulting parents and while there were some who did not respond, the decline in the percentages which were published after the appointment of the Officer, suggests that this personal contact with the members of the Board prevented to some extent an extension of the problem. Though visits by the Board members ceased, the system of incentives was extended. In 1895 a school half-holiday was given on the last Friday of each month to pupils attending Daresbury school, if the average monthly percentage was 80,² and in 1899 this was extended to all schools in the District.³

The Officer who was appointed was inefficient and indolent. He was poorly paid. The sum of £10 to look after four schools was small and the service which he gave in return was correspondingly mediocre.⁴ He neither visited the schools nor the parents systematically. Two years after his appointment, in January 1894, an entry in the Daresbury School Log Book indicates the frustration of the Master:

19.1.1894. "The attendance is slightly better but far from what it might be. The reports to the Attendance Officer seem to do no good whatever."

In February 1894, the Board was obliged to request him to -

"call more regularly upon the scholars reported for irregularity and to visit the school oftener."⁵

1. Daresbury School Log Book - 23.3.1888.

2. Ibid. - 6.8.1895.

3. Warrington Guardian - 3.11.1900.

4. Chester Record Office, CCE 2/3 County of Chester, Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.

5. Daresbury School Log Book - 13.2.1894.

This request was followed by the comment -

"Visit from Attendance Officer, first time for months." ¹

Constant pressure had to be exercised by the Master and entries in the Daresbury School Log Book indicate that this struggle continued throughout the period of the School Board's existence:

27.8.1895. Attendance Officer called in school, asked him to call upon every child reported.

19.11.1897. School Attendance Officer called and he admitted that all the cases reported last week had not been visited by him.

19.10.1900. Visit from Attendance Officer - pointed out to him that the attendance at the present time was far from what it ought to be.

In 1902 the comment by Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K.Sneyd-Kynnersley that:

"The attendance is deplorable"

with an extract from two of the registers to support his statement² resulted in a request from the Board to be more meticulous in visiting the irregulars.

The note in the School Log Book indicated that the visits produced results:

20.6.1902. "Visit from Attendance Officer - called his attention to several cases of greatly improved attendance during the last two weeks, owing to his having looked them up more particularly during the last two weeks."

In spite of a plea from the Master in 1896, to the Board-

"to be a little more strict upon a few parents who habitually keep their children from school"³

the policy of avoidance of legal action continued, with the inevitable

1. Daresbury School Log Book - 13.2.1894.

2. Ibid - 3.6.1902.

3. Ibid - 7.1.1896.

result that defaulting parents treated the warnings of the Board with contempt. The following sequence of entries in the Log Book illustrate the reluctance of the Board to prosecute and the inevitable result:

- 2.12.1897. "The Board decided to summon 4 girls 'unless they attend school at once.'"
- 6.12.1897. "Not one of the above girls present at school as demanded by the Board."
- 17.1.1898. "Not one of the girls the Board decided to summons on December 2nd has yet returned to school."
- 10.2.1898. "Two girls reported on December 2nd have not attended. It was decided again by the Board 'that unless both girls be at school on Monday morning next a summons be at once taken out against the parents.'"
- 22.2.1898. "Beatrice Henshall (one of the girls) brought before the magistrates today. Decision was postponed in order to see whether she attended regularly until she was 13 years of age."

While there are no statistics of annual percentages of attendances available, a study of those published monthly gives an indication of the general trend. The pattern for Daresbury School is unusual and interesting. The remarkably high percentages of attendances recorded in the year 1891 were followed by an obvious decline which resulted in a percentage of approximately 83 for the year ending 31st December, 1902¹.

That this fall in attendance roughly coincided with the appointment of the School Attendance Officer suggests that it was the influence which members of the Board had with all, but the inevitable hard core of resistant parents, which contributed to this regularity. When this

1. Chester Record Office C.C.E.2/3 - County of Chester, Statement of Voluntary & Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards & Teaching Staff, 1903.

personal contact was withdrawn and was replaced by the services of an uninterested and inefficient officer the attitude of the parents reflected the attitude of the officer.

The attendance of the infant schools is also interesting. The monthly statistics published indicate a reversal of the National pattern in which the percentage of attendance of infants was considerably lower than that for pupils between the ages of 5 and 13. From the year 1897 onwards with the exception of 10 months during which it is obvious that there were severe epidemics the attendance in the infants schools was normally more regular than that of Daresbury which was mixed. The monthly statistics suggest an appreciably higher percentage than that attained nationally.

DARESBUURY SCHOOL

"The school was founded by Richard Riden of Preston in the year 1600, who gave the sum of £10, to the intent that an honest and able schoolmaster should for ever be kept to teach grammar for the good of the children resident in the townships comprising the Chapelry. Other persons appear to have given the sum of £160 which in 1739 was laid out in the purchase of land in Newton. In 1819 these lands were exchanged for others belonging to General Heron, and the school property now consists of 6 ac. 2 R. 4 P. of land (Cheshire measure), with a house, garden and cottage, the yearly value of which is stated to be £52. Besides the rent arising from the above premises the Master receives the sum of £3.7s.0d. paid out of the poor rates, and 4s.6d. as the interest of £5 bequeathed by J. Hinton. There is a commodius school-room and a house for the Master, which are repaired by the chapelry."¹

In his General Report for the year 1878-79, Her Majesty's Inspector E.M.K.Sneyd Kynnersley, commented:

"Daresbury has taken over the National School, which maintains its excellent character under its new name."²

In 1876 there were a hundred children on the Register and the staff consisted of a Master, a Sewing Mistress, and a Pupil Teacher. The school was fortunate in having a stable staff. There were only two masters during the period. The first, John Cooper, who was retained when the old Grammar School was transferred to the Board, remained until 1886. Extracts from the annual reports are evidence of the quality of his work.

1. White's Cheshire Directory, 1860. p.995.

2. Report of Committee of Council - 1878-79. p.611.

School Log Book

10.7.1877. "The discipline is very good and the school is making satisfactory progress in all respects."

30.6.1878. "The school is in a thoroughly efficient state in all respects."

27.8.1883. "This school always does well."

John Cooper resigned in 1886 but he did not cease to take an active interest in education. In 1890¹ he was elected to the Daresbury School Board and in 1902 he became chairman.²

His successor maintained the high standards of work which he initiated.

The Annual Reports continued to comment favourably on the work. In 1890 the "Excellent Merit" Grant was awarded.³ The grant per head for average attendance in 1903 was 22/-⁴ and the number of rolls was 242.⁵

1. Warrington Guardian - 4.6.1890.
2. There is no record of John Cooper's appointment but he was reported as being chairman of the Board in the Warrington Guardian 8.11.1902.
3. School Log Book - 11.8.1890.
4. Ibid - 31.8.1903.
5. Chester Record Office CCE 2/3, County of Chester. Statement of Voluntary & Board Schools, School Boards & Teaching Staff 1903.

THE INFANT SCHOOLS.

The only surviving information about the work of the three Infant schools, Hatton, Moore and Preston-on-the-Hill, during the School Board era, is that which was published in the press, and this was meagre.

The schools were interesting only because of the high monthly percentages of attendance recorded.¹

The reports for the year 1901 are dull, but suggest that the schools were doing reasonable good work.²

Hatton - "The order and instruction are quite satisfactory."

Moore - "The school as usualy is depleted by an epidemic. The children present are being well taught and are in good order."

Preston-on-the-Hill.

"Continues to be very creditable."

1. See appendix, page 393.

2. Warrington Guardian - 3.8.1901.

2. THE ASTON (U.D.) SCHOOL BOARD

Though this School Board was formed ostensibly because of the inability of the managers of the Aston school to maintain it because of lack of funds, a remark in the files of the Department of Education states that the transfer "was not for want of funds but to get money out of three railways and two canals running through the parish."¹ While there is no direct evidence to prove that the motive for transfer was to maintain a voluntary school from the rates, the circumstantial evidence supports this view.

At a Vestry Meeting in July, 1867, land was offered for a site for a school by Captain C.A.C.Talbot, but it was not until 1st September, 1871 that the land was conveyed in Trust to the Vicar and Church-Wardens of Aston Church, and on 11th March, 1872 Aston school was opened. It was built by subscriptions and without a grant from any source.² Considering the haste with which the final stage was completed it seems likely that the school was built initially to avoid the formation of a School Board.

In spite of the fact that no financial assistance was required to build the school, in 1876 the managers alleged that they were experiencing great difficulty in providing funds to maintain it.³ Additional expenditure was essential during the year 1877 on reconstruction of the closets and yard which had been recommended by Her Majesty's Inspector. The managers felt that they could not meet this expense and on 3rd February, 1877, a resolution was passed that steps should be taken to form a School Board District.⁴

"In visiting Country schools which have been transferred to Boards I almost always see the same well-known faces still; there is no sign

1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1667. 3.2.1877.

2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1667) undated.

3. Ibid)

4. Ibid

apparent of any break of continuity in the management; the clergyman or leading lay manager occupies, as far as a stranger can judge, the same position with respect to teachers and scholars as he did before."

This was an observation made by Her Majesty's Inspector Mr. Warburton on the country schools in the county of Hampshire.¹ It might equally well have been made about the Aston U.D. School Board.

The Board, which consisted of five members, was elected on 2nd June 1877.² The Vicar of Aston Church was elected Chairman³ and Charles E. Linaker, who was appointed clerk, was the Secretary to the Managers of Aston School.⁴

A legal technicality prevented the transfer from proceeding smoothly. Before the school was transferred, the recommendations of Her Majesty's Inspector were carried out, and the work was completed in April 1877.⁵ In addition to the required reconstruction which cost £58.0s.0d. "the interior and exterior of the school classrooms and school house" were painted at a cost of £20.0s.0d.⁶ As a condition of the transfer the Managers stipulated that this debt should be paid by the School Board. The Board, naturally, strongly supported this condition and included it in their terms for transfer and informed the Department that the only terms upon which the managers would consent to the proposed transfer, were those contained in the draft agreement which provided for the payment of the debt, as this money was spent on reconstruction recommended by Her Majesty's Inspector and concluded the communication by saying - "I trust that the Department will consent to

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1876/77, p.627.

2. Ibid 1878/9 p.4.

3. Runcorn Examiner - 22.9.1877.

4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1667 - 9.8.1877.

5. Ibid - 11.8.1877.

6. Ibid - 11.8.1877.

the terms of the proposed transfer as in the event of the said arrangement not being carried out the present school will be closed after the 1st September next, in consequence of the inability of the Managers thereof to provide the necessary funds for its maintenance which will necessitate the erection by this Board of a new school under the previous Education Acts."¹ The Education Department stood firm. The Managers did not carry out their threat and in September the Board changed its tactics, and the following letter was sent to the Department in September:

Clerks Office,
Frodsham,

Aston School.

18th September, 1877.

Proposed Transfer of Aston School.

"Sir,

At a meeting of this Board held on the 15th inst., your letter dated 31 ulto was read when, after some discussion, it was resolved unanimously that the 'Clerk again write to the Education Department explaining that although the debt of £78.12s.10d. which the Board proposed to discharge is not secured by any legal Instrument upon the school premises the Board consider that they are acting in an equitable manner consenting to the proposed arrangements, inasmuch as their outlay would have been absolutely necessary if the said school premises had been transferred in their former condition' and I was instructed to express the hope that your Department will not withhold their sanction to the proposed arrangemtn as set out in draft form 96L.'

I beg to inform you that an adjourned meeting of the Board will be held on the 22nd inst."²

The Department, however, remained firm, and in reply stated that "My Lords" could not make any exception to the rules.³ In spite of the managers' financial difficulties they "found means from a private source of paying off the debt of £78.12s.10d." and the transfer

1.P.R.O. Ed.21/1667. 28.8.1877.

2. Ibid 18.9.1877.

3. Ibid 18.9.1877.

proceeded smoothly.¹ A description of the composition of the Board in 1880 was given by Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, in a report to the Department of Education concerning the school -

"The Board includes the tenant of Aston Hall, two tenant farmers of Aston Hall, the foreman manager of Aston, and an aged incumbent, very deaf, and quite useless. The whole managed by a clerk named Linaker, son of the agent of Aston Hall Estate.²

This close association of the Board with the Aston Hall Estate diminished and it became more representative of the District as a whole. By 1883 the chairmanship of the Board had passed from the "aged incumbent" who was reported at a prize giving at Aston Board School as being vice-chairman.³ In 1892 the Board included the Vicar, a carpenter, a Barrister-at-Law, a land agent, an agent, and two farmers. The chairman was the Barrister,⁴ who held the position until his resignation in 1898 when he was succeeded not by the Vicar but by Mr. W. Lowe,⁵ a farmer.

Though the Board represented several levels of social class because of their regional background their policy was identical and they worked in harmony. Their policy of stringent economy and the obvious leniency in the application of the bye-laws met with the approval of the electorate and there was little interest in the elections. If a contest ever did take place there is no press report of it. The reverse was in fact the case. On two occasions there were reports of the failure to nominate a sufficient number of members. In 1889, when the Board was entitled to have seven members, only two were elected,⁶ and the remaining five were elected in accordance with

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1. P.R.O. Ed21./1667 - 1.10.1877 .
 2. Ibid - 9.12.1880.
 3. Runcorn Examiner - 28.7.1883.
 4. Warrington Guardian - 14.5.92
 5. Ibid
 6. Runcorn Examiner - 25.8.1889.

Rule 6 of the Second Schedule to the Elementary Education Act 1870¹ to fill up the vacancies caused by the failure to elect the full number of members. In 1892 this contingency was avoided by the members nominating each other,² but in 1895 only five of the seven members were nominated and the remaining two were elected under Section 6 Elementary Education Act 1870.³

The leniency of the Board regarding attendance is evident from the very few surviving statistics.⁴ The approximate percentage for the year 1902 was 81 which was two percent lower than the national average of 83.15%.⁵ The members were undoubtedly well disposed towards the policy of regular attendance. Bye-laws were passed in 1878 and a School Attendance Officer was appointed.⁷ In 1883 the members decided to present prizes to all children who had made 90% attendance during the year and prizes were also given for class work.⁸ Incentives did not, however, solve the problem, and the available statistics suggest that like many rural School Boards and School Attendance Committees there was little serious effort to enforce the law.

Stringent measures of economy kept the rates down to approximately 3d in the pound.⁹ The monitress, in 1899, was paid £2.12s.0d. per annum.¹⁰ The salaries of the teachers, however, were comparable with national and local scales. The Master of the school which had 113 scholars on

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1. Rule 6, Second Schedule to the Elementary Education Act, 1870.
"If an insufficient number of members are elected, or if, in the case of no members being elected, some of the retiring members are and some are not willing to serve, the school board, so far as it is constituted, shall elect a person to fill each vacancy."
 2. Warrington Guardian - 17.5.1892.
 3. Ibid - 18.5.1895.
 4. See appendix p.409
 5. Report of the Board of Education 1902-3, p.24.
 6. Report of Committee of Council, 1878-79, p.336.
 7. Runcorn Guardian - 23.11.1878.
 8. Runcorn Examiner - 28.7.1883.
 9. A rate of 1½d in the pound was levied for the half year ending Lady Day, 1903 - Warrington Guardian 13.9.1902.
 10. Warrington Guardian - 8.11.1899.

the registers¹ received a basic salary of £110 but emoluments which included the sum of £6 per year for cleaning the school raised the total value of the salary to £128. He was therefore among the 41.8% of the certificated masters who were principals of schools receiving salaries between £100 and £150 per annum.² His two assistants, who were qualified under Art.50, received £50 per annum, which was consistent with the payment for this qualifications throughout the Union and comparable with the national scale for Assistant Certificated Mistresses, 76.2% of whom received between £50 and £100 per annum.³

The result of this policy of economy was evident in the physical condition of the school in 1902. The overall assessment of the Report by the County of Chester on the Structural and Sanitary conditions of school buildings could only be described as fair.

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1. Chester Record Office - C.C.E. 2/3. Chester County. Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.
 2. Report of the Board of Education 1902-1903 p.31.
 3. Ibid.

3. THE DUTTON SCHOOL BOARD

This was a small rural School Board.¹ The area covered by the Board consisted almost entirely of scattered farms and private dwellings and comprised the Township of Dutton only, which in 1871 had a population of 461.²

The School Board was formed on 23rd October, 1874.³ The election caused little excitement, an item in the local press announced briefly:

"The Township of Dutton, in the Runcorn Union, has just been called upon by the Education Department to elect a School Board, and the following gentlemen have been appointed without resorting to a contest."

The Rev. G. Willett, Mr. R. Bebbington, Mr. R. Wright, Mr. J. Campkin and Mr. Massey.

The date of the first meeting has not yet been fixed, but the Clerk to the Runcorn Board of Guardians who is the Returning Officer, has obtained permission of that Board for the first meeting of the newly elected authority to be held at the Workhouse."⁴

The newly elected Board was anxious to build the school as soon as possible and the plans were approved by the Education Department on 26th June, 1875,⁵ but it was not until 1877 that the site was acquired. The whole of the Township of Dutton belonged to the Aston Estate, hence any site must of necessity be purchased from there, but the owner was a minor and the estate was in Chancery. Repeated applications, extending over eighteen months were made to the Trustees, both through the Receiver and through the Trustees solicitor, to sell

1. The Board was reported to be in receipt of a small population grant of £10 in 1898 - Warrington Guardian, 5.10.1898.
2. P.R.O. Ed 21/1751 - 19.10.1876.
3. Report of Committee of Council 1874-75. p. ~~xxxiv~~
4. Runcorn Examiner - 31.10.1874. This is the only press report of an election during the period, whether a contest ever did take place is obscure. The only surviving records of the Board and its school are those reported in the press and in the P.R.O. Ed.21/1751.
5. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751 - 18.8.1877.

the land, but without success, and no other site was offered.¹

The Board had no alternative but to acquire the site under Section 20 Elementary Education Act 1870, and the Education Department was informed of the situation. The correspondence was referred to Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. Smith, who made the following report:

"The site is the best and it will be quite necessary to put S.20 in force - every foot of land in the township belongs to one individual who is a minor. The "Receiver" and the Trustees are willing to sell, at a price agreed to by the Board - but the Court of Chancery has refused to move in the matter and says that the law must take its course. The "Receiver" who practically manages the estate regrets this as an unnecessary expense, but thinks there is no other course open. He will offer no opposition."²

The Board gave notice for the compulsory purchase of the land required for the site of the proposed school but this was ultimately avoided as "arrangements were made with the Receiver in Chancery³ of the Aston Estate to take the land by agreement," and the school and house for the master was built in 1877.⁴ Her Majesty's Inspector's reports on the school were satisfactory. In 1895 it obtained the Principal Grant of 14/- and a grant of 22/- on average attendance,⁵ and in subsequent years such phrases as:

"On the whole the school is doing very well - - - The Department have again sanctioned the omission of the Annual Inspection due in June, 1899."⁶

"The School continues to do very well in the elementary subjects,"⁷ were incorporated in the report.

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1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751 - 27th 10.1876.
 2. Ibid - 10.11.1870.
 3. Ibid - 18.8.1877.
 4. Chester Record Office - County of Chester : Report on Structural and Sanitary Conditions of schools.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 14.9.1895.
 6. Warrington Guardian - 5.11.1898.
 7. Ibid - 22.8.1900.

Interested members of the community gave subscriptions to provide an annual treat for the children¹ and the School Board gave prizes for "diligence and attendance"² though their requirements for attendance were not ambitious. Standard IV remained the standard for total exemption until 1898 when it was raised to Standard V.³

The few records available show that in the latter years of the period the percentage of attendance was high:⁴

Warrington Guardian	20.12.1890	- 71.8%
	10.5.1899	- 85.4% for month of April
	13.11.1901	- 90.4% for month of October
	8.2.1902	- 91% for month of January

The percentage for the year 1902 based on the number on the Register on 31st December, 1902 and the average attendance for the year ending May 31st 1902 was approximately 88%. As there was a hard core of children from the workhouse who would make a full attendance except in cases of illness the percentage was probably inflated to a considerable degree, and it is not possible to evaluate the work of the Board in this aspect of their work.

The keynote was economy. It was as a result of this policy that the master's house and the school was without a supply of drinking water - this had to be obtained from a farm 200 yards away. When the school was being built "a well was sunk, at a considerable depth, in search of water and this had to be abandoned. The Board constructed a large soft-water cistern for the supply of the master's house - - - they further entered into arrangements with the adjoining farmer for a supply of drinking water at a payment of 10/- per annum." The children attending the school fetched the water for their own use and

1.Warrington Guardian - 12.7.1893.

2.Runcorn Examiner - 27.12.1890.

3.Warrington Guardian - 5.10.1898.

4.There were 28 children in attendance in 1899. (Runcorn Examiner - 20.1.1899).

this was kept in a large earthenware jar.¹ Two thirds of these children had to walk a considerable distance to school, "two miles or more in many cases."²

This state of affairs continued without comment until 1893 when the Annual Report included the observation -

"Provision should be made for supplying drinking water to the children."³

No steps were taken by the Board and in 1895 Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, reported the failure of the Board to take action, to the Education Department.⁴ Enquiries made by the Education Department elicited the following reply from the Board:

"A very large sum of money was spent in trying to get a supply when the school premises were first started - this was an utter failure - and it would certainly cost over £100 to sink a well sufficiently deep to meet with water on the school premises and if successful in all probability the pump would be so hard to work that it would certainly be entirely out of the power of the children to get water.

The Board will have every desire to make the school premises as convenient and suitable as possible, but I feel equally sure that they will be puzzled how to provide water on the premises at anything like a reasonable cost."⁵

The Department of Education could not force the Board to provide water on the premises but it would ensure that the supply used was fit for human consumption.⁶ The well from which the drinking water was obtained was in the middle of the farmyard with "shippons" (cowsheds) on one side. Her Majesty's Inspector E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley remarked:

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1. Ed.21/1751 - 10.8.1895.
 2. Ibid - 27.6.1895.
 3. Warrington Guardian - 12.7.1893.
 4. Ed.21/1751 - 21.6.1895.
 5. Ibid - 27.6.1895.
 6. Ibid - 21.6.1895.

"I do not think that the situation is well chosen, but no doubt the Board are satisfied of the purity of the water."¹

The Department asked for a report from the Medical Officer of Health "as to the sufficiency of the existing arrangements from a sanitary point of view" and stated that they would then consider the question further.²

The County Analyst reported that it was "good water and fit for domestic use" and he added "the supply is adequate if proper provision is made for seeing that sufficient fresh quantity is carried daily to school."³ No further action was taken by either body and the Board was spared the outlay of over £100.⁴

At this time the Board was also endeavouring to avoid the provision of increased accommodation suggested by the Department. As the average attendance had never exceeded sixty, the number for which the school was built, the Board sent a plea to the Department not to insist on this and justified their reluctance to increase their financial outlay on the grounds that "it would be considered a great hardship if additional school accommodation should now have to be provided, which would be a serious charge upon the rate-payers which they could ill afford during the present depression in agriculture."⁵

The Board felt that additional accommodation would inevitably lead to additional teaching staff which, under the present conditions, the Board considered adequate "as proved by the excellent report given by Her Majesty's Inspector for the past year."⁶

The observations by Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley

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1. P.R.O. Ed. 21/1751.- 21.9.1895.
 2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751 - 9.10.1895.
 3. Ibid 13.5.1896.
 4. Ibid 21.9.1895.
 5. Ibid 9.9.1895.
 6. Ibid 9.9.1895.

on this request were sympathetic - he stated that the cost of building in those remote places was high and the burden of farms in Chancery was very heavy and suggested "that the Department might agree not to press at the moment for an enlargement" but he emphasised that the Department should make it clear to the Board that although they would not press for an enlargement, the condition of the infant class which had suffered most as a result of overcrowding, was an important factor in estimating the Principal Grant.¹

The question of additional accommodation did not remain dormant for long and the problem of finance was once more a major issue. The Workhouse was situated in the parish of Dutton and the Board of Guardians had hitherto taken responsibility for the education of the children. While the general policy of the Guardians throughout the country was to send the children to Elementary Schools, the Runcorn Union was conservative in its outlook and moved slowly. Of the 40 Unions in the district of the Local Government Boards Inspector in 1896 there were only four Workhouse Schools and Runcorn had one of them.²

An opportunity for change came in 1896 when a vacancy occurred for a mistress for the girls.³ During the discussion of the appointment a member proposed that the girls should no longer be confined to the Institution for education, but should be sent to Dutton Board School. The evidence of the effects of outside contacts could be seen in the Northwich Workhouse where the children had a much better appearance than those in Runcorn "who had the stamp of pauperism upon them." The superior appearance of the children in the Northwich Workhouse he attributed to their happy surroundings, "and most of all to the fact that they were sent to an outside school, both boys and girls, and

1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751. 21.9.1895.

2. Runcorn Guardian - 8.8.1896.

3. Ibid - 16.5.1896.

had no distinctive dress so that they could be distinguished from the children of other parents."¹ The Board was ready for the change and unanimously agreed to the proposal; one member in support said that "for many years he had watched the children in the house and had looked upon them as young pauper prisoners. He should like to see them side by side with children of outside parents in the same parish school. . . He looked forward with pleasure to the day when the boys and girls should run along the lanes to school, the same as the offspring of non-pauper parents."² The suggestion referred to the girls only as the boys had a master in the workhouse.

This change of policy was to be considered by a small committee which was appointed to consider the whole question of the education of the girls.³ The report of the Committee was adopted -

"that an industrial trainer be obtained for the girls, and that it be intimated to the Dutton School Board that the Guardians proposed to send the workhouse children to the school,"⁴

and a sub-committee was appointed to meet the Clerk of the School Board to explain that it was the wish of the Board of Guardians to send the girls to Dutton Board School at once and the boys later.⁵

Though the Guardians were slow to adopt a new policy, when they decided to change, their attitude was enlightened and humane. It was stressed that "the children would be under exactly the same conditions as any other children that lived in Dutton." It was proposed to liberate the children "from any peculiar treatment they might have had in the house, and to make them in every respect similar to children going to school from private houses." The children would not be

1. Runcorn Guardian - 16.5.1896.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. Ibid - 30.5.1896.

5. Ibid

dressed as pauper children, they would be free to go to school unaccompanied. The function of the industrial trainer was clearly defined. She was to have responsibility for the management of the children in the house.¹

While this fundamental change in the education of the children was decided within the space of two weeks, over two^{years}/elapsed before it was implemented.

The admission of children to Elementary schools created the problem of accommodation. Where numbers were small and existing accommodation sufficient, this problem did not arise, but when large numbers of children were involved the cost would be considerable. The following extract from a letter published in the Times on 2nd March, 1897, gives some indication of the extent of the financial burden which the policy placed on small school Boards and Voluntary School Managers:

To the Editor of the Times:

"Sir,

. . . . The East Preston Union Workhouse stands in one of my parishes and ten years ago we accepted the children, for whose education the guardians were responsible, as scholars at our parish school. The board paid extra fees, and the loss to the school was inconsiderable, as the number of children was then small.

When the Free Education Act came into force the payment of fees ceased while the number of workhouse children largely increased, and we had for their benefit both to enlarge the school at a cost of £300 and engage an additional teacher. . . at the present moment we have to raise a further £250 for a separate infants' school."

A.M. Deane. ²

1. Runcorn Guardian - 30.5.1896.

2. Quoted from "Children under the Poor Law" - W.H.Chance, M.A. p.176-177.

The immediate problem for the Dutton School Board was lack of accommodation, and arising from this came the question of provision.

The School Board discussed the proposal of the Guardians and its implications, and the position was made clear to them in the letter which was sent on 8th June, 1896, by the clerk:

"Your letters of the 13th and 27th ult., were read at a meeting of the Dutton School Board on Saturday last, when, after discussing the proposal of the Guardians in all its bearings, the following resolution was unanimously passed on the motion of the vice-chairman, the Rev. L.D.Lyon Bennett, seconded by Mr. Fowles - "that while fully sympathising with the proposals to send the children from the Workhouse to outside schools, and believing that such a course would greatly benefit the children, the Board school is limited to an average attendance of 60; that at the present time the average attendance is 57, and that therefore there is not available accommodation for the children from the Workhouse. I was further directed to state that before the children could be admitted it would be necessary to provide additional accommodation and teaching staff, and that the cost of this should be borne by the Guardians in accordance with Clause 24 of the Bill now before Parliament¹ which runs as follows: 'The Guardians of any Union may contribute towards such of the expenses of providing, enlarging and maintaining any public elementary school as were certified by the Education Department to have been incurred wholly or partly in respect of scholars taught at the school, who are either resident in the Workhouse or in any institution to which they have been sent by the Guardians from a workhouse, or boarded out by the Guardians.'"²

The Guardians were sympathetic with the financial problems facing the School Board but felt that as they had contributed for twenty years towards the upkeep of children at Dutton school they should have prior claim to the existing accommodation.³

1. Sir John Gorst's Education Bill of 1896.

2. Runcorn Guardian - 13.6.1896.

3. Ibid

They did not, however, make an issue of this, it was felt that they "ought not to come in conflict with the Dutton School Board, but should try and effect an amicable arrangement."¹ Willingness to contribute towards the cost incurred in extending the building and increasing the teaching staff, when the Bill became law was expressed, and in the meantime arrangements were made for the interim period.

This Bill, however, was not passed and the whole question had to be reconsidered. The Clerk wrote to the Local Government Board to explain their difficulty and to ask if under the circumstances the Guardians could contribute towards the cost of the required extensions, but a reply from the Local Government Board, dated 1st July, 1896, made it clear "that in the present state of law the Guardians of the Union had no authority to make a payment as suggested, to the funds of the Dutton School Board."² In the meantime the Master of the Workhouse had found that only 12 children required education and it was suggested that four should go to Preston Brook Infant School which was in the Daresbury United District School Board District and eight should go to Dutton.³ The Daresbury Board agreed to the proposal without hesitation.⁴ The number was negligible and there was no problem of increased staffing or accommodation. The Dutton School Board refused.⁵ The situation in Dutton, however, was different, even though the number eligible to attend the school had been reduced to three, in September it would have increased the average attendance above the prescribed limit of accommodation. During the previous year the Education Department had not insisted on their suggested extensions being built because the

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1. Runcorn Guardian - 13.6.1896.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid - 27.10.1896.
 4. Ibid - 11.7.1896.
 5. Ibid - 19.9.1896.

average attendance had not reached sixty, and "the Board had experienced hard work to keep the average attendance to that, so as to be prevented from enlarging the school."¹

While the Guardians were sympathetic with the desire for economy, their attitude stiffened at the School Board's refusal to accept the children and it was decided to follow two courses of action. The question was to be referred to the Education Department and the children were to be sent to Dutton school to see how the School Board would react.² The children were sent back from the school³ and the Education Department in reply to the enquiry whether the school Board could be compelled to admit the children⁴ replied - "that it would appear from the last returns in their Lordships' possession that there was no vacant accommodation at the school of the Dutton School Board. So long as there was not room in the school for the children, their Lordships would not consider their exclusion unreasonable under Article 78 of the Code."⁵

A visit in person by the Clerk to the Education Department and to the Local Government Board made the position quite clear. The Education Department declared that they had no power to compel a School Board to receive children unless there was room, and the Local Government Board said in reply to his enquiry - "whether anything could be done to enable the Guardians to contribute anything to the enlargement of Dutton School" - that there was no law which would enable them to do so.⁶

The Board of Guardians who performed their duties in other spheres of education so perfunctorily,⁷ were in this instance genuinely interested in the welfare of the children in their care even to the extent of

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1. Runcorn Guardian - 19.9.1896.
 2. Ibid - 17.10.1896.
 3. Ibid - 31.10.1896.
 4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751.
 5. Runcorn Guardian - 27.11.96.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Chapter VI, page 149.. 1896.

spending a considerable sum of money in order that "they should have the social influences surrounding other children,"¹ and it was with regret that in spite of their desire to help the School Board to enlarge their school and so provide the children with social contacts and experience, they had to return to "the old system of education."²

Within two years, however, the extension was provided without cost to the ratepayers. The problem was solved through the good offices of Sir John Brunner, Liberal M.P. for the Northwich Division of Cheshire, who, in December 1896, offered the sum of £250 "for the purpose of increasing the accommodation of the Board Schools to provide for the admission of the children from the Workhouse."³

The School Board acted quickly. In February 1897 plans for the extension were approved by the Department of Education subject to certain alterations⁴ and on the 16th May, 1898, the new classroom built at Sir John Brunner's expense was opened,⁵ and the total child population of the Workhouse was admitted to Dutton School.

But the provision of accommodation solved only half the problem. The question of who should maintain these children financially soon arose. A direct result of the enlargement of the school was the appointment of an extra assistant mistress which cost £40 per annum.⁶ The School Board felt they could not justify an increase of rates on the small district of Dutton to provide education for children who came from all parts of the Union and the members suggested that a reasonable charge should be made in respect of each child admitted from the Workhouse. At an extraordinary meeting of the Board, held in July,

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1. Runcorn Guardian - 31.10.1896.
 2. Ibid - 27.11.1896.
 3. Ibid - 12.12.1896.
 4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751 - 11.2.1897.
 5. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751 - 26.7.1898.
 6. Warrington Guardian - 27.7.1898.

1898, it was decided that the Clerk should write to the Education Department to apply for permission to charge school fees for all children not belonging to the school district, in effect children sent by the Guardians of the Union.¹

In response to an inquiry from the Department about the proposed charge it was estimated "that the sum of 6d. per child, in addition to the free grant would meet the deficiency of the Board, by the appointment of additional teachers, etc."² The Education Department sanctioned the charge under section 4(1) of the Elementary Education Act 1891³ but stipulated that if the fee produced "more than a fair share of the expenses of the maintenance of the school the Department may modify the terms of their consent."⁴ While the Guardians considered the charge excessive some at least were reassured by the explanation given for the charge, and the proposer of the motion that the fee should be paid, remarked that "the arrangement enabled them to get over a difficulty."⁵

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1. Warrington Guardian - 27.7.1898.
 2. Ibid - 5.10.1898.
 3. Section 4(1) of Elementary Education Act, 1891: "Notwithstanding anything herein-before contained, the Education Department if they are satisfied that sufficient public school accommodation, without payment of fees, has been provided for a school district, and that the charge of school fees or the increase of school fees for children over three and under fifteen years of age in any particular school receiving the fee grant is required owing to a change of population in the district, or will be for the educational benefit of the district, or any part of the district, may from time to time approve such charge or increase of fees in that school, provided that the ordinary fee for such children shall not exceed sixpence a week."
 4. Warrington Guardian - 7.1.1899.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 20.1.1899.

It was, however, an uneasy peace, in the following year the Guardians raised the question of this payment. The School Board were firm and made the position quite clear in their letter, written by the Clerk, which stated:

"I received directions to inform you that the Board cannot see their way to alter the existing arrangements with the Guardians of the Runcorn Union for payment of school fees in respect of Workhouse children. I send by this post the balance sheet for this year."¹

This communication finally closed the door on any further attempts by the Guardians to evade their responsibilities. The policy of economy pursued so successfully in dealings with the Board of Guardians and the Department of Education, was extended to the salaries of their employees. The School Attendance Officer was paid £5 per annum² and the monitor got £2.12s.0d.³ To some extent the headmaster's salary incorporated the policy of payment by results. His basic salary was £70 per year and the remainder depended upon emoluments which in 1902 included a free house valued at £18 per annum, "Grants on the basis of the last school year" £58.18s.0d. The sum of £4 for cleaning⁴ and for taking care of the lawn the remuneration was £1. The salary therefore fluctuated in relation to the grant received, which in turn depended on average attendance and the efficiency of the school.

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 22.6.1900.
 2. Chester Record Office. CCE.2/3. County of Chester. Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.
 3. Warrington Guardian - 22.8.1900.
 4. Chester Record Office. CCE 2/3. County of Chester. Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.

The salary and emoluments were fixed in 1885¹ and the scales remained unchanged during the remaining period of the School Board era. While the Board was economical it was not parsimonious, the salary of the Master compared very favourably with that of Masters in charge of schools in the Union of comparable size.²

The Clerk was paid £25 per annum³ which was in line with the amount paid by the other rural boards in the Union. The cost of education was small both for the ratepayers and for the children. In 1878 a fee of 2d.⁴ was fixed and in 1891 the school became free.⁵ The charge on the ratepayers was equally low. The maximum charge up to the year 1894 was 5d,⁶ and for the year 1902 it was approximately 4d.⁷

Throughout the years the Board functioned quietly and efficiently. While it pursued a firm policy it maintained good relationships with the Education Department and with the Board of Guardians. The absence of press reports of elections, if there were any, indicate the satisfaction of the ratepayers that the Board were providing "sound, cheap, elementary education."

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1. Chester Record Office. CCE.2/3. County of Chester Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.
 2. See table page. 375 - 378
 3. Chester Record Office. CCE.2/3. County of Chester Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.
 4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1751. 4.1.1878.
 5. Runcorn Examiner - 12.9.1891.
 6. The maximum charge up to the year 1894 was 5d, and for the year 1902 it was approximately 4d.
 7. Warrington Guardian - 6.9.1902.

4. THE WHITLEY U. D. SCHOOL BOARD

The Whitley U.D. School Board was formed without a contest¹ for the United Districts of Whitley Superior and Whitley Inferior on 3rd May, 1873.² This was a small country district with a population of five hundred and fifty.³ Accommodation was required for one hundred and twenty children.⁴

The ratepayers welcomed the proposal to form a School Board and their feelings were so strong that when Mr. Joseph Cliffe, who realised the financial implications this would have for such a small area, finally opposed the proposal at one of the meetings held to discuss the formation of a Board he could not find a seconder.⁵ There was however, a swift and radical change of opinion when the arrangements for the erection of the school got under way and the ratepayers began to count the cost which they would have to bear of building and maintaining it. In an effort to avoid this expenditure a memorial was presented to the Board "unanimously signed by the ratepayers of the district" which requested them to "discontinue their function as a School Board as the memorialists were of the opinion that the area of the district was not at all suitable for the requirements of a School Board." They suggested that the existing school accommodation might with alterations, be made sufficient for the requirements of the district.⁶

The petition achieved nothing. The Board considered that as the ratepayers "had not availed themselves of the opportunity given them to provide school accommodation before the district was finally created" it was now too late to have second thoughts and "the memorial was ordered to lie on the table."⁷

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1. Warrington Guardian - 6.5.1876.
 2. Report of Committee of Council 1874-75. p.xxxiv
 3. Census 1871.
 4. Warrington Guardian - 6.5.1876.
 5. Ibid - 19.7.1873.
 6. Ibid - 19.7.1873.
 7. Ibid - 19.7.1873.

During its period of office the first Board failed to gain the confidence of the ratepayers. It was high-handed and authoritarian and made no effort to consider the views of those whom it represented.

The erection of the school caused resentment. The ratepayers considered the Board to be extravagant, they believed that a cheaper site could have been obtained and they disagreed with the plans for the master's house as they felt that "a house such as was proposed would be an encumbrance, as the salary to be paid to the teacher would not be sufficient to enable him to reside in a house of a size proposed to be built."¹ A petition incorporating these views was presented to the Board without effect.

But the cost of the site was not the only cause for complaint - its position on a piece of land on the opposite side of the road to the burial ground of the Society of Friends² met with general disapproval and in August 1873 two memorials were presented which objected to the choice. The ratepayers objected on the grounds that because of its proximity to the graveyard the water supply may be contaminated and the Society of Friends "feared that the presence of a school would lead to the desecration of the burial ground."³ Three medical certificates accompanied the memorials which showed that "percolation of animal matter would take place from the graveyard, as the site was only seven yards distant."⁴

The question of contamination caused considerable discussion. The report of the architect rejected this possibility. The question was referred to the Department which was asked to "deal with the matter if they thought a case had been made and for their interference" but

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1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1987. 10.6.1879.
 2. Warrington Guardian - 26.7.1873.
 3. Ibid - 9.8.1873.
 4. Ibid - 9.8.1873.

the Board also stated in the letter that they were of the opinion "that the proposed site was the best they could obtain under the circumstances."¹ The water was analysed and the result was conveyed by the Clerk in the following letter:

87 Knutsford Road,
Warrington.
11th March, 1873.

Whitley

"I am instructed by the above Board to inform you that they have got the analysis of the water taken from the proposed site for the new school.

The Board, not seeking to incur further expense after the somewhat unfavourable opinion of Professor Vocker have determined to leave the question of the suitability of the proposed site to be dealt with by you as the matter now stands. They have, however, instructed me to say emphatically that they consider the proposed site the one most suitable they can obtain for their school and should the Department determine to withdraw their sanction to the site they fear that besides placing the Board in an embarrassing position, they will be unable to obtain a site free from objections of one kind or another. The Board propose to do away with objections against the water supply by filtering it before being used."²

The Clerk further stated that if the Department objected to this suggestion it was proposed "that a sufficient supply could be made available by collecting the rain water in a proper tank, as is the case in some of the schools in the immediate neighbourhood, and they believe that this would perhaps, be the best method of obtaining water."³

1. Warrington Guardian - 9.8.1873.

2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1987. 11.11.1873.

3. Ibid.

The Board realised they were in a difficult position. They hoped that the Department would respond to their appeal and solve the problem by supporting the proposal to filter the water; by so doing the Department would take the responsibility for an unpopular decision; at the same time they made it clear that whatever the decision of the Department may be, they were determined to keep the site.

The Department evaded the issue to replying that the choice of the site was the responsibility of the Board.¹ The pre-determined plans were put into operation, and the school and the master's house were built in 1874,² at a cost of £1,441.³

The house was let to a private tenant but the school stood empty.⁴ No steps were taken to open it.⁵ When the triennial election took place the tenant had left and the house also was empty. These empty buildings were the only visible result of the first School Board. The invisible result was the antagonism created against the existence of a School Board and the second election was fought on the issue as to whether the buildings erected should be used for educational purposes or not.⁶

The election was hotly contested, there were eight candidates for five seats, only three voters in the two parishes did not vote.⁷ The result proved "that there was a very strong feeling against the infliction of a School Board upon the township."⁸

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1. P.R.O. Ed. 21/1987. 11.11.1873.
 2. Chester Record Office. County of Chester : Report upon the structural and sanitary conditions of School Buildings.
 3. P.R.O. Ed. 21/1987
 4. Mr. Smith's General Report for the year 1876. Report of the Committee of Council 1876-77 p.572.
 5. There is no information available as to the reason why the school was not opened.
 6. Runcorn Guardian - 6.5.1876.
 7. Runcorn Examiner - 6.5.1876.
 8. Runcorn Guardian - 6.5.1876.

Only two members of the members of the first Board were re-elected - Joseph Cliffe, the first chairman, a popular member of the community who was opposed to the existence of a School Board, came head of the poll with 111 votes. The Vicar did not stand for re-election so the new Board was composed entirely of laity. Farmers predominated - there were three. Of the remaining two, one was a joiner and builder and the other, Henry Neild, who was elected chairman, a position which he was to hold continuously until 1903, was a merchant.

The newly elected members were opposed to the existence of a School Board for that District, but as they could not abolish it they took positive action to remedy the deficiencies of their predecessors. Their first action was to dismiss the Clerk, who was not "working harmoniously with them" and "considerable expense was being incurred in addition to the payment of his salary", consequently they decided "that as efficient a servant could be obtained at much less cost to the Board."¹

A teacher was appointed and the school was opened on 22nd January, 1877.² As the school was now a fait accompli the Board was conscious of their responsibility and took an interest in the children. The concern which Henry Neild showed for the 27 years of his Chairmanship of the Board was similar, if not identical, with that of a good manager. His "basket of nuts and gingerbread" which was first sent in January, 1878, when the school re-opened after the Christmas vacation, became a tradition.³ Entries in the School Log Book are indicative of his unflinching interest in the children.

1. P.R.O. Ed. 21/1987. 13.6.1897.

2. School Log Book. 22.1.1877.

3. Ibid 8.1.1878.

- 4.10.1882. "H. Neild, Esq., visited the school and looked over the children's home-lesson work."
- 3.11.1884. "H. Neild Esq., visited the school to see if the attendance was improving."
- 4.6.1889. "Alderman Neild visited the School and met the Inspector."
- 26.2.1896. "H. Neild Esq., J.P., brought some oranges for the children."
- 17.9.1900. "H. Neild, Esq., brought a hamper of apples."
- 2.5.1901. "H. Neild Esq., gave all the children an orange."

This thought for the children was not confined to the Chairman.

W.H. Fletcher, a member of the Board in 1891,¹ who was still on the Board in 1903² and who in the election was described as a gentleman, was generous in his provision of "treats" for the school children.³

- 13.5.1887. "Mr. Fletcher sent his niece to invite the children belonging to the school, who did not go to the Church or Chapel Sunday Schools, to a treat on Whit Monday in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee."
- 5.9.1892. "Miss Owen called this morning to invite all the scholars, assistant and myself, to have tea at Mr. Fletcher's on Thursday."
- 4.7.1901. "Mr. Fletcher is giving the children (Chapel Sunday School) a tea party."
- 8.9.1893. "Half-holiday - going to W. Fletcher's Esq., to a treat."

The Vicar was also a frequent visitor.

- 9.4.1877. "Rev. Hindcliffe paid his usual visit."

Interested members of the community visited the school.

- 11.6.1877. "Mrs. Jones came and took the 1st Class for reading."
- 31.1.1878. "Mrs. Haddock, Mrs. Neild, the Misses Law and Haddock came to school and looked at the children's work and heard them sing."

1. Runcorn Examiner - 2.8.1891.
 2. Runcorn Guardian - 4.7.1903.
 3. Extracts from School Log Book.

- 15.11.1878. "Mrs. Smallwood sent an easy chair for the lame boy, George Barnett."
- 21.9.1882. Mrs. Smallwood sent a workbox to be given to the best writer among the girls and a book for the boys.
- 2.3.1894. "Mrs. Fletcher brought some books for the children."
- 19.12.1895. "Mr. John Wilkinson sent a basket of apples to be given to the children."

While the Board and the community were concerned for the welfare of the children and some individuals gave generously of their time and money, the Board itself exercised the most stringent economy in the management of the school, and were reluctant to spend money unless forced to do so. In pursuance of this policy there was no consideration for the personal comfort of the children nor for maintenance of the building. It was Her Majesty's Inspector who first drew attention to the plight of the teachers and children during the winter months in a remark in the Log Book when he wrote :

"The main room is very cold. A thermometer should be provided and the temperature recorded in the Log Book."¹

A record of the temperatures gave some indication of the misery which both children and teachers must have endured.²

School Log Book, 1896.

December 1st.	42° at 10.0a.m.	48° at 3.0p.m.
December 2nd.	48° at 11.50a.m.	52° at 3.0p.m.
December 3rd.	50° at 10.0a.m.	55°
December 21st	40° at 11.0a.m.	45°
December 22nd	40° at 11.0a.m.	46°
January 25th	38° at 11.0a.m.	40°

Though members of the Board visited the school and must have been aware of the conditions, no action was taken, and when Her Majesty's Inspector again visited the school in April, 1898, he wrote :

1. School Log Book - 11.11.1896.

"Nothing has been done to improve the heating of the main room. Very frequently from November 1897 to the end of March, 1898, the temperature at 9.0a.m. ranged between 39° and 48°. "1

This comment was again ignored. The following December Her Majesty's Inspector, W. Reep, obviously determined to improve the conditions, wrote in a more positive vein:

"Nothing has yet been done to improve the heating. It should have been attended to before the winter weather came on."2

This resulted in immediate action. The heating was attended to during the Christmas vacation, but work was unsatisfactory and conditions were little better. In December 1899, Her Majesty's Inspector wrote:

"The infant's room will be too cold in winter without the use of the open fire. This morning the weather is fairly mild but the room is not comfortably warm."3

The Board, in an effort to avoid being accused of ignoring the advice of Her Majesty's Inspector, provided a fire for two weeks and this produced a final outburst in 1900 when an entry in the Log Book reads:

"The infant's classroom cannot be properly warmed in cold weather unless the open fireplace is used in addition to the hot water pipes. This was pointed out in the last report, but except for one fortnight in December no attention has been paid, and the recorded temperature on many days in February was deplorable - - - attention must be paid to Her Majesty's Inspector's remarks and the warming of the infant's room."4

After this entry observations on the heating ceased. The cause of the trouble was false economy. The boiler was too small to heat the rooms properly.⁵ This reluctance to spend money, unless where

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1. School Log Book - 7.4.1898.
 2. Ibid - 5.12.1898.
 3. Ibid - 4.12.1899.
 4. Ibid - 17.9.1900.
 5. Chester Record Office - County of Chester: Report upon the structural and sanitary condition of School Buildings.

absolutely necessary, was also evident in the state of repair in the

"Report of the structural and sanitary condition of School Buildings"

in 1903.

External Repair - "Brickwork in bad repair, especially round base of buildings and yard walls. Painting and repair wanted. Steps are worn and loose and tile roof to latrines are badly broken, and some tiles on school roof broken. Repair to eaves, gutters and ventilation gratings broken."

Internal Repair - "The floor boards are worn down to nailheads, especially at entrances. Hearthstone is cracked and brickwork round stove pipe wants repair. Other work is in fair order. Decorations recently done."

There was perhaps some justification for this rigorous financial economy and control of spending. In spite of this stringent policy the Education Rate for Whitley U.D. Board until the records published in the Minutes of the Committee of Council ceased in 1894-95 was the highest in the Union.¹

The view expressed by the ratepayers in 1873 that Whitley U.D. was not suitable for a School Board District proved to be correct. Though the expenditure of the Whitley School Board was usually the lowest in the Union the cost on the Rates was the highest.² In 1894-95 the rate levied was 8d in the pound, twice as much as the School Board District of Runcorn. Before the school was opened in 1877 the rate was 3d in the pound. In 1893-94 an expenditure of £225.1s.0d. produced a rate in Whitley School Board District of 7d, whilst in Dutton an expenditure of £244.8s.3d. required only a rate of 3d.

1. Appendix P. 379

2. Ibid.

The Education Rate was a heavy burden on a small farming community and this discrepancy in the levy in Whitley in comparison with the surrounding areas, no doubt was the cause of much dissatisfaction.¹ It was probably because of this that the triennial elections were so keenly contested in contrast with the other rural Boards in the Union.

The press report of the election of 1891 revealed strained relations between the candidates and dissatisfaction with the composition of the Board.

"There were seven candidates in the field and feeling ran high as to their respective merits. It was charged to the discredit of the members of the old Board that they had no young children, and canvassing was keenly and extensively indulged in by the whole of the candidates. The excitement of the contest was added to by the strained relations that exist between several of the gentlemen concerned and by the fact that legal proceedings for slander were threatened- - - There are 120 votes in the district and 96 polled, and there were only four spoiled papers."²

In 1894 six men were nominated for the five vacancies³ and in 1900 there were eight. This election "excited considerable interest" and "the poll was considered a heavy one, about five-sixths of the electorate recording their votes."⁴

The outstanding personality on the Whitley School Board was Henry Neild, who had the longest service and who was Chairman continuously since he was elected a member in 1876⁵ until 1st July 1903, when the County Council assumed responsibility under the 1902

1. Appendix p.379

2. Runcorn Examiner - 2.5.91.

3. Warrington Guardian - 4.4.1894.

4. Ibid - 4.8.1900

5. Ibid - 6.5.1876

Education Act. His service to the School Board was not less than the interest which he took in the school; during the twenty-seven years of his Chairmanship he attended 332 meetings.¹

The last meeting of the Board on 30th June, 1903 was an historic occasion. The members made a special effort to attend -

"Mr. Neild had that day travelled over 100 miles to be present at the meeting, and special efforts to attend had also been made by the other members, Mr. Rumney having journeyed from London and Mr. Barker from Derby."²

One member, Mr. Mountfield, who was present at that last meeting was also present at the first.³

1. Runcorn Guardian - 4.7.1903.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

WHITLEY SCHOOL

The first mistress of the school, Thoiza Allen, was an outstanding teacher, and until she resigned to get married in July, 1881¹ her reports were excellent. The first, in July, 1878 stated²:

"Miss Allen has made an excellent beginning in this new school. The children are being thoroughly well grounded in the elementary work."

In the General Report on his district in 1878 Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K.Sneyd Kynnersley Esq., confirmed this observation when he wrote :

"Whitley is doing good work in a scattered district."³

The good work continued and in 1879 the report was even better:

"This small school is in excellent order, and the results of the examinations are very creditable. Spelling is weaker than other subjects. The Geography of the second and third classes is good, Needlework good, singing in harmony good."⁴

The freshness of her approach to her work and the departure from the excessive drill in the elementary subjects so characteristic of the period, are evident in the remarks in the Log Book which read :

"Took the children to Lower Whitley to see a panorama,"⁵

and her teaching of singing in harmony mentioned in the report.

That reports of this quality could be given in spite of the irregularity of attendance was a remarkable achievement. A school Attendance Officer was not appointed until 1880. An entry in the School Log Book remarked cryptically -

"Very good attendance indeed as there has been an officer appointed."⁶

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1. School Log Book - 8.7.1881.
 2. Ibid - 5.8.1878.
 3. Mr. Kynnersley's General Report for the Chester District. Report of Committee of Council 1878-79 p.611.
 4. School Log Book - 25.8.1879.
 5. Ibid - 26.5.1879.
 6. Ibid - 23.2.1880.

The School Attendance Officer obviously failed to take advantage of the initial impact of his appointment, for in 1882 Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, in the report on his district, stated that the Whitley School Board made an average of 58%.¹

When Thérza Allen left to get married in 1881, the school experienced a series of changes of staff and the reports deteriorated, but under Janet Jones, who was appointed in 1884² and who remained until she retired on 31st March, 1925,³ it soon recovered. Reports contained such phrases as:

"The School passes a good examination, the order is very good. Arithmetic is unusually good for a country school."⁴

"With the exception of spelling and arithmetic in the upper standard, which are rather weak, the school passes a thoroughly good examination in the elementary subjects. English good. Needlework excellent. Order good. The work of the first class is particularly good."⁵

In 1897 the higher grant was recommended and in 1898 the grant was paid without examination.⁶ The report in 1903 is a tribute to the work of the headmistress and her assistant who worked in such discomfort:

"The school is going on very satisfactorily. The teaching has been creditably effective and discipline is well maintained. The infant class is doing well both as regards discipline and instruction."⁷

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1. Mr. Sneyd Kynnersley's General Report for 1882. Report of the Committee of Council 1882-1883, p.369.
 2. School Log Book - 7.1.84.
 3. Ibid - 31.3.1925.
 4. Ibid - 8.8.1887.
 5. Ibid - 23.7.1891.
 6. Ibid - 7.9.1898.
 7. School Log Book - 31.8.1903.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS

The Voluntary Schools in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn fall into three categories, those in the School Board District of Runcorn, those in the county town of Frodsham, and the rural schools which were situated in the small villages or open country.

THE VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS IN THE SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT OF RUNCORN(a) THE WESLEYAN SCHOOLS

These schools attracted not only members of the Wesleyan Church but also many members of other nonconformist bodies. Few records are available for the schools but those which do exist suggest that the Brunswick Street Boys' School did good work. The report for the year 1877 was cautious but promising¹:

"This school supplies a want in the thickly populated and poor neighbourhood in which it is held. A Master who seems to be careful and zealous teaches the children, who are fairly ordered, and satisfactorily instructed, considering the short time he has been here and that he has no help."

Ten years later, in 1887, the press reported that the Brunswick Street Boys' "had earned an excellent merit grant."²

The financial burden of maintaining the schools and of meeting the additional expense required to bring the cloakrooms up to standard, were in part responsible for the decision of the Managers, in 1894³, to transfer the schools to the School Board.

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1. Runcorn Examiner - 15.12.1877.
 2. " " - 17.9.1887.
 3. P.R.O. Ed.21/1913 - 17.2.1894.

(b)

ST. EDWARD'S ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

In 1870 this school had accommodation for 162 pupils in a building which was originally a Roman Catholic Church.¹ The addition of a classroom in 1889,² increased the accommodation to 224.³ In 1902, with 275⁴ children on the registers, the school was overcrowded and plans were being prepared for a new infant school.⁶

Little evidence of the school survives - a report of Her Majesty's Inspector, in 1902, stated that "the mixed school was 'now doing very good work' and that the infants do very well on the whole."⁶

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1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1917. 12.8.1889.
 2. Ibid 12.5.1889.
 3. Chester Record Office. CCE.2/3. Chester County. Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff, 1903.
 4. Ibid
 5. P.R.O. ED.21/1917. 19.6.1902.
 6. Ibid 30.6.1902.

(c)

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

The Church of England schools were attached to the Parish Church and Holy Trinity Church. Holy Trinity Church drew its congregation from the poorer area of Runcorn. It maintained one group of schools, Holy Trinity National Boys, Girls and Infants Schools. The Parish Church had under its control the Runcorn National Boys, Girls and Infants schools, as well as St. Michael's Infants School, commonly known as Newtown Mission School.

HOLY TRINITY NATIONAL SCHOOLS

It was largely because of the efforts of the Vicar of the Parish, the Rev. W. Preston, that these schools were not transferred to the School Board. The poverty of the Church and his determination to maintain the schools are apparent in an appeal for help to the National Society in 1873:

"I have a large school with some 600 and a ragged school with some 120. The Government have come down on me to do what I find a great difficulty in accomplishing, but I can see my way to get over this if I can secure help to keep the schools going.

Mine is a very poor parish. We had wealthy friends but they have left or died off and I have a population of above 4,000 of the working class. For the schools' support I must raise at least £100 per annum but it is a great burden, and if help does not come to the rescue I fear our schools must go. The Nonconformist element predominate and they would have all their own to go on the Board . . . In fact we are so poor that I can't see how to purchase desks which the Inspector has twice told us to get and has warned us to have them ere he again comes around."¹

The struggle to retain the schools was not completely successful. The financial burden of raising the Ragged School to a state of efficiency was too great and it was transferred to the School Board in 1879.²

But the following application, in 1880, to the National Society for a building grant reveals the magnitude of his achievement in spite of difficulties involving both staff and management:

1. Files of National Society - 19.12.1873.

2. See page 42.

"I have at present well attended and well taught day schools to educate some 600 children. Within the last year these schools have risen from a condition that was truly sad to a most satisfactory state. They were harassed with a debt of £300 incurred solely through poverty, and nearly all the Managers withdrew, leaving me to fight as best I could. At one time I all but handed them over to the School Board. I, however, refrained, and by a tremendous effort got rid of the debt and also of the whole staff of antiquated teachers. I got first class new teachers and also got together a good managing committee, and now things go well. But we are still poor . . . Will your Society kindly give us some help, and we will do what we can for ourselves. We have a Board School and a Wesleyan to compete with.

According to our scheme the school will be vastly improved. We shall be able to augment our numbers and open a middle class school¹, in connection with our Boys Department."²

The struggle continued, no further increase in accommodation could be contemplated. The income from the grant earned by the schools and the subscriptions from the members of the Church, were insufficient to maintain them. An application for a grant towards repairs, in 1889, presents a depressing picture of the financial position and of the condition of the schools:

"For a considerable time my schools have been in debt. The buildings are sadly in want of ordinary repair. The walls want painting, The gutters renewing and other things need looking to. My Parish is a poor one. The population is chiefly working class (5,000). It is as much as we can do to pay our small church expenses."³

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1. The comment by H.M.I. in his report for the year 1883 entered in the School Log Book on 2nd July 1883 "that the double classification caused by the introduction of boys paying higher fees and receiving separate instruction is of doubtful advantage," indicates that this plan was adopted though this is the only reference to the scheme.
 2. Files of National Society - 15.11.1880.
 3. Ibid - 4.2.1889.

This acute poverty not only affected the schools, it also affected the management of the schools. In accordance with the Trust Deed, the eight non-official members of the Management should be "subscribers in the current year to the amount of 20/- at least to the school, and that any vacancy amongst the members shall be filled up by subscribers to the amount of 10/- per annum at the least."

As a result of this financial qualification, great difficulty was experienced in getting people to act as Managers, and in 1889 the Vicar appealed to the Charity Commissioners to reduce the amount of the subscription to be paid by Managers. Upon consideration of the circumstances the Charity Commissioners, with the approval of the National Society, reduced the amount to be paid to the school by the Managers to 10/6 per annum and that of the subscribers to 5/- per annum.¹

The effect of the impoverished state of the school finances was manifest in the staffing of the schools. Prior to 1891 the staff was numerically adequate but with the schools in debt, repairs urgently required, and the erection of closets and cloakrooms a necessity², staffing became a secondary consideration; it was not only kept to a minimum but new appointments were delayed. Throughout the decade 1890-1899, the position in the Boys' schools and Girls' schools was serious and the effects of this policy on the school and the teachers are recorded in the Boys' School Log Book where the instruction that personal opinions should not be recorded was little regarded.

The first of many complaints appeared in January 1891 when the school³ was staffed by the Headmaster, an assistant and a monitress.

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1. Files of National Society - 4.2.1889.
 2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1914 1.4.1895 & 27.4.1895.
 3. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 12.1.1891.

When he had worked for two weeks without hope of replacements, the Master poured out his troubles in the Log Book:

"Glad this miserably wretched week is ended. Owing to the inadequate staff - and there is no effort to increase it inasmuch as two advertisements only have appeared since Mr. Hibbert's resignation was received on the 12th ult., it is utterly impossible to do any solid work, the children are consequently paying fees for what we can't supply them with, they see our position and take every advantage possible. To keep up a semblance of discipline, punishments are frequent and occasionally very severe. It will take a number of weeks to make up for the time lost through inadequate staff since August even if the Managers see their way to be generous enough to give an excess of staff till next exam.

Time-table departed from daily-in every class one lesson has lapsed each day -

In school till 12.30 and 5 - 5.15 every day. I haven't been able to leave till 1.0 clock and 5.45 - 6 because individual work is impossible during the time devoted to school work and examinations have to be done after hours."¹

During the year staffing remained a problem, there were frequent changes and on the 23rd December the last entry in the Log Book reads:

23.12.1891. "Broke up at noon today for the Christmas Holidays. Really glad to have a little relief from the long hours and worry occasioned in this naturally difficult school by inadequate staff."

1. As there were 219 children on the register on 30th June 1891, it can be assumed that at this time there were over 200 on the registers.

But the difficulty remained, in February 1892 he wrote:

"Still they allow us to go on with our inadequate staff to the injury of the school, the crippling of their funds, the worry of the teachers and the certain prospect of an indifferent or greatly modified Report from Her Majesty's Inspector." ¹

A few days later the Master accepted the inevitable:

School Log Book

26.2.1892. "Time-table still departed from - apparently as far off as ever in having adequate staff. The subject now seems a dead letter."

Such acute shortage of staff was not a permanent feature but in 1897 the problem arose once more when Article 73 of the Code came into force on 18th October.² According to the requirements of the Article the school was under-staffed. A half-hearted attempt was made to increase the staff and this was unsuccessful.³ In his Report in June 1898, Her Majesty's Inspector drew the attention of the Managers to the staffing situation:

"The staff of this department should be at once strengthened as it is not sufficient to meet the requirements laid down in Article 73 with regard to school years beginning after the 30th September 1897."⁴

The return to school after the summer vacation with the staff still under strength provoked an outburst from the Headmaster:

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1. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 19.2.1892
 2. Ibid - 1.10.1897.
 3. Ibid - 22.8.1898.
 4. Ibid - 30.6.1898.

School Log Book

22.8.1898. "It is now 9 months since the Managers were requested to engage a trained Certificated Master to relieve the Head Teacher of the responsibility of three standards in addition to the supervision of the school - The Headmaster has seen two advertisements (trained omitted) for such a teacher, the Managers evidently feel that they have discharged their responsibility as nothing has since been said or done. The disposition of the staff and the numbers on the register to each teacher is as follows:

Headmaster - Standards V, VI, VII - 69 children
19 in excess of Government Limit.

M. Coe - Standard IV - 42 children
18 below Government Limit.

Miss Williams - Standard III - 61 children
11 in excess of Government Limit.

Miss Arnett - Standard II - 62 children
32 in excess of Government Limit.

Mrs. Kilcross - Standard I - 90 children
30 in excess of Government Limit."

The attendance was regular. In 1897 percentages of ninety-two were recorded.¹ The inevitable result of these conditions was a loss of staff. Mrs. Kilcross complained of the size of her class "and of the utter inefficiency of the assistance allotted to her."² The Headmaster, aware of the difficulty, wrote in the Log Book:

"Her complaint is perfectly justifiable and reasonable; the attendance has ranged from 95-98 throughout the week. Besides being responsible for the work of the class Mrs. Kilcross has to give eleven lessons a week to the whole of the standard; owing to the utter incompetence of the only help available."³

1. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 25.10.1897.

2. Ibid - 10.9.1898.

3. Ibid - 29.10.1898.

One month later Mrs. Kilcross left and went to the "Board School" and the Master was out of school - "Health 'run down'. The result of having to neglect meals in order to keep pace with the supervision and examination of work."¹

These obvious results of overwork due to economy did not change the policy of the Managers. The school was now grossly understaffed but the Managers replaced the permanent member of staff by temporary appointments which was much cheaper. The first of these, Mrs. Tonks, owing to her age, could not see well and her hearing was "not as keen as it was."² She complained of the size of her class and left, ostensibly "because the neglect of her business was causing her some anxiety."³ Her successor, Miss Fisher also had not taught for some time and had not taught in a senior department.⁴ By the end of the decade the necessary additions and repairs were complete. The school was also probably getting financial help as a result of the Voluntary Schools Act and more money was available. The Managers now turned their attention to the improvement of the staff.

In 1900 the staffing situation was satisfactory.⁵ An additional Certificated teacher was appointed⁶ and in 1903 the staffing of the Mixed School⁷ was comparable with the other schools in the area.⁸

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1. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 18th-31st October 1898.
 2. Ibid - 24.10.1898.
 3. Ibid - 24.10.1898.
 4. Ibid - 11.11.1898.
 5. Ibid - 30.1.1900.
 6. Ibid -
 7. The Boys' and Girls' Schools were amalgamated in 1896.
 8. See appendix p.375.

HOLY TRINITY NATIONAL BOYS' SCHOOL

In 1870 the report of Her Majesty's Inspector on the examination of the Boys' School, at which 191 boys were present, contained the comment:

"The state of this school does much credit to Mr. Lightburn."¹
 With the influx of an unusually large number of children in 1875 due to the erroneous belief in the compulsory powers of the newly elected School Board², the reports deteriorated to such an extent that in 1879 the Head Teachers were given notice to attend a meeting of the Managers where they were informed:

"That it had been decided to reduce on salaries by taking from the Grant £50 in addition to the portion already claimed by the Committee."³

This action had the desired effect, both Head Teachers resigned.⁴
 J. W. Lightburn left the Boys' School on 9th May 1879⁵ and Thos. N. Annett, Trained (Chelsea St. Marks) Certificated (2nd class) took charge of the Boys' School.⁶

The Report of the examination of 1879 reveals the extent of the inefficiency of all three departments:

Boys' School -

"Scandalous neglect for ten months has reduced these schools to a miserable state. The late teachers are primarily responsible for this, but the Managers should not have allowed the school to go to ruin under their eyes. Mr. Annett has practically to begin afresh in this Department. The order is creditable to him.

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1. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 23.8.1870.
 2. Ibid - 15.1.1875.
 3. Holy Trinity National Girls' School Log Book - 8.1.1879.
 4. Ibid - 14.1.1879.
 5. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 9.5.1879.
 6. Ibid - 12.5.1879.

"My Lords regret to be compelled to order a deduction of one tenth to be made from the Grant for faults of instruction in the case of each of the three departments.

Her Majesty's Inspector's Report on the school is most unsatisfactory.

A. Kilcross)
A. Wells) Failure " 1

In terms of examination results Thomas Annett was undoubtedly an outstanding success. This was the era of Payment by Results, the period when the maintenance of the Voluntary Schools depended entirely on the Government Grant, the School pence and voluntary contribution, which was raised by various methods; by annual subscriptions, collections at special Church services, or by bazaars and concerts. The Master was normally paid a basic annual salary which was augmented by a proportion of the grant earned² and in some cases a share of the school pence.³ It was therefore vital that the school pence should be paid, that percentage of examination successes should be high and that attendance should be regular.⁴ But though the Code of 1890⁵ eliminated the worst features of payment by results, the grant still depended to some extent on results and attendance.

Thomas Annett was obviously a highly efficient organiser and teacher. Within a year the boys were in "good order" and the Elementary work was good on the whole.⁶

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1. School Log Book - 30.6.1879.
 2. See page 313.
 3. See page 223.
 4. Appendix p. 412 and 413.
 5. Appendix p. 414.
 6. School Log Book - 30.6.1880.

In 1881 the number of passes was "unusually high."¹

In 1884 the school was in a "highly efficient state."²

The frequent changes of staff in 1891 resulted in the work being "unequal"³, but by 1893 standards had once more risen and the school "passed an excellent examination."⁴ Staffing difficulties again affected the reports, but in 1899 Her Majesty's Inspector stated:

"the school has made a considerable advance. On the whole it is fairly entitled to be placed in the highest class."⁵

The methods by which he achieved these results were certainly, prior to 1890, severe.

On his first day in school he noticed that 94 boys - "15 of whom lost their attendances" - were late and cautioned them against this bad habit and pointed out that it was his custom to punish rather severely for this.⁶ The following day he punished sixty boys for this misdemeanour⁷ and a week later an entry read - "unpunctuality almost cured."⁸ There were no more references to this as a major problem. He also quickly disposed of the two pupil teachers, both of whom were "unable to work multiplication and higher rules of vulgar fractions, whose general knowledge was nil," who were "unreasonably dilatory in their work," who required "constant watching in their daily routine."⁹ After constant pressure Wells decided he was

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| 1. | School Log Book | - | 30.6.1881. |
| 2. | Ibid | - | 30.6.1884. |
| 3. | Ibid | - | 30.6.1891. |
| 4. | Ibid | - | 30.6.1893. |
| 5. | Ibid | - | 30.1.1900. |
| 6. | Ibid | - | 12.5.1879. |
| 7. | Ibid | - | 13.5.1879. |
| 8. | Ibid | - | 20.5.1879. |
| 9. | Ibid | - | 4.8.1879. |

"tired of the profession"¹, and Kilcross was allowed to leave school as he failed to show "sufficient ability for a teacher". Non-payment of fees² was a problem he failed to solve and the payment of double fees created friction between himself and the School Board.³

The struggle with truants lasted for many years, the last recorded entry of punishment for this offence was in 1889.⁴ Several methods were adopted for treatment of truants. At first it was gentle, absentee notes were sent to the parents and these seemed to do "good work in checking truant players,"⁵ but these were effective for a few weeks only, and sterner measures were threatened:

School Log Book

13.6.1879. "Very much annoyed by truant playing . . .
Threatened to punish severely for this
and even to confine truants after hours."

Truanting continued; the Master still strove to find a solution:

School Log Book

19.6.1879. "Find that solitary confinement for a few
hours is much dreaded and that its effects
are salutary in the highest degree."

This did not solve the problem. Another method was tried which involved the co-operation of the parents:

School Log Book

17.2.1880. "Arranged with parents to lock the 'truants'
in school during dinner hour if they would
send dinner to school."

This proved popular as an entry in the Log Book indicated:

1. School Log Book - 17.2.1880.
2. Fees were 4d per week for all except for Standard I and in those families where there were three or more attending school. School Log Book - 10.8.1879.
3. See page 101.
4. School Log Book - 1.10.1889.
5. " " " - 26.5.1879.

School Log Book

30.4.1884. "Charles Clare, Wm. & Jas. Faulkner brought to school after a spell of truant - punished them and carried out parents' request to keep each in during the whole dinner hour. Further undertook to do this regularly the parents undertaking to bring them in the morning and to send dinners. There are now about 12 children whose afternoon's attendance at school is secured in this way, to the satisfaction and release from anxiety on the part of the parents."

Prior to 1890 when the grant depended on results, there was evidence that the children were overworked, particularly the younger ones:

School Log Book

15.9.1879. "In order to put the second division of Standard I on a par with the first section, I have detained that part of the class till 5 p.m. every night for extra reading."

28.4.1884. "Standard I kept in as usual. A few, about 12 of Standard II, also detained this week till 5 for reading."

For some this pressure was too great:

School Log Book

17.9.1888. "The doctor recommended that a boy should be put back into Standard II as 'he feared we were pressing him too hard.'"

8.11.1888. "A grandmother stated "the boy was not strong enough to stand the work of Standard IV.'"

19.3.1899. "The Doctor advised a boy to be sent to a Private School 'where pressure would not be so great.'"

6.5.1889. "Mrs. London called, requested that her boy might not be pressed in school work. He is in Standard I and has been absent nearly a fortnight owing to convulsive fits."

The effects which excessive punishment, over pressure and emphasis on results to the exclusion of all else, had on the school, were reflected in the comments of Her Majesty's Inspector's reports:

School Log Book

- 30.6.1881. "It should be borne in mind that a high percentage of passes, and a large grant, are very rough tests of teaching, and that good education has a higher aim."
- 30.6.1885. "The Elementary work is very accurate in every class, but the style is not so good. In this as in the discipline and general conduct of the school, there is a certain roughness which impairs the character of the school."
- 28.6.1889. "The school has again passed a very successful examination . . . There is no fault to find with the order at the inspection, but in the most important of all respects the school falls short of the highest place. Everything is rough; and there seems to be little or no attempt made to raise the tone and character of the boys. Many schools that make much less show at the inspection are of more real value."

Comments such as these ceased after 1890. The Code no longer placed the emphasis on percentage of passes and entries in the Log Book no longer indicated that undue pressure was being exercised. In the year 1900 the school was awarded the Principal Grant of 14/-.¹

1. School Log Book - 30.1.1900.

HOLY TRINITY NATIONAL GIRLS' SCHOOL

After having the Grant reduced by one-tenth in 1879¹ and two-tenths in 1880², for faults in instruction, the school settled down to a period of stability during which the Government Reports were satisfactory and often good. The life of the school appears to have been uneventful and the entries in the Log Book indicate that difficulties were not abnormal. The policy of the Managers of economy of staff clearly emerges from the few less stereotyped remarks. The overworking of the Pupil Teachers was noted by Her Majesty's Inspector in 1887, when he reminded the Managers that "A Pupil Teacher must not be allowed to serve in school for more than 25 hours."³ The policy of keeping the staff to a minimum was evident from the account of the effects on the work of the Headmistress and children when a Pupil Teacher was absent.

School Log Book

12.2.1892. "Bessie Waterworth, Pupil Teacher, absent from school this week, being dangerously ill and likely to be absent at least for another month or six weeks. This causes me to have about a hundred children to teach in five different standards, with only the assistance of 2 girls each 12 years of age."

15.2.1892. "Annie Sefton taken on as temporary monitress during the illness of Bessie Waterworth."

11.3.1892. "Standard II is going backward, it has now been five weeks without a competent teacher." Annie Sefton left, as she did not like teaching.

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1. School Log Book - 22.8.1879.
 2. Ibid - 1.12.1880.
 3. Ibid - 22.9.1887.

Adequate help was not supplied till April when an ex Pupil Teacher was appointed.¹

In January 1896, the Boys' and Girls' Schools were "merged into a mixed school. The staff made up of the assistants and Pupil Teachers of the two Departments in addition to the Headmaster."²

1. School Log Book - 4.4.1892.

2. Holy Trinity National Boys' School Log Book - 6.1.1896.

RUNCORN NATIONAL BOYS' SCHOOL

The school had a long period of stability, provided by an excellent headmaster, who was followed by one equally able. Albert Jordan, who was appointed in 1869¹ was described by Her Majesty's Inspector, in his report of 1872, as "doing good and useful work."² In 1887 his management of the school was "vigorous and capable,"³ and in 1901, after his resignation, Her Majesty's Inspector opened his report with a final tribute:

"The retirement of the late Master, Mr. Jordan, after so many years of excellent service here is much regretted, but the school well maintains its high character under the new Master."⁴

While the reports were adequate prior to the provision of sufficient accommodation, in 1882 they reflected the difficulties which the school was experiencing; after 1883 however, such reports were characteristic.

School Log Book

- 27.8.1884. "Looking to the solidity and excellence of the elementary work and the good tone of the school high praise may be awarded."
- 24.9.1890. "The boys are in good order and the usefulness of the school cannot be too highly praised."
- 20.4.1898. "Visit under Article 84(b).
An excellent tone pervades this school and the order is exemplary."

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1. School Log Book - 2.8.1869.
 2. Ibid - 29.8.1872.
 3. Ibid - 29.8.1887.
 4. Ibid - 27.9.1901.

The Principal grant of 14/- was awarded annually from 1891 and in 1895 Her Majesty's Inspector recommended that the school should be exempt from inspection in 1896.¹

The curriculum of the school was kept within the limits of the Code. Algebra was presented as a specific subject in 1885, and there were fifty passes², and in 1900 the number had increased to 205.³

The first County Council Scholarship was awarded in 1894⁴ and the subsequent list of awards is impressive.⁵ While the school, in common with all others, suffered from irregular attendance in the years following the introduction of compulsory attendance, the percentage of attendance for the year ending 29th September 1899 was 89.4⁶ and in 1902 the efforts of the headmaster and the staff earned a well deserved tribute from His Majesty's Inspector, W. Ballance, in 1902 when he wrote in the School Log Book:

"A capital attendance, punctual and regular is secured by the exertions of the Headmaster and his staff."⁷

The percentages recorded in the School Log Book at the beginning of the century indicate that in this school the problem of attendance had been solved.

School Log Book

29.3.1901.	"Average attendance for the week - 94.1%
10.5.1901.	"Average attendanfe for the week - 95.2%
27.3.1902.	"Average attendance for the week - 95.9%
	Standard III - 99.8%
14.11.1902.	"Average attendance for the week - 97.4%
27.4.1903.	"Average attendance for the week - 96.7%
	Standard I - 100%

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- School Log Book - 20.9.1895.
 - School Log Book - 12.8.1885.
 - " " " - 31.8.1900.
 - " " " - 25.5.1894.
 - See appendix p.405.
 - Runcorn Examiner - 9.2.1900.
 - School Log Book - 7.3.1902.

The liveliness of the school is evident in the variety of the activities of the children, and these are reflected in the successes recorded in the entries for competitions in "The Scholars Magazine."¹

In a writing composition in 1902, when on the introduction of Vere Foster's Copy Books the pupils entered for "Vere Foster's" Writing Competition, in addition to the awards to individual children "Messrs. Blackie and Son offered libraries of fifty volumes to the best twenty schools in England entering the competition." The National Boys' School was amongst the first twenty.²

These expanding interests were obviously stimulated by a more progressive approach to education which was introduced by a new and younger Master. In 1902 the first educational excursion for senior scholars took place. It was a mammoth programme. The boys, numbering 140, visited St. George's Hall, the Art Gallery and Museum:

"Then the party journeyed to the Docks in two sections, part inspecting the Cunard Liner 'Lucania' and part inspecting the White Star Liner 'Celtic', which is the largest vessel afloat. The afternoon was spent on pleasure on New Brighton sands."³

In the following year an equally exhaustive excursion was made to Chester, but on this occasion there was progression educationally; the Curator of the Museum "Kindly lectured the boys on the exhibits."⁴

The interest in the boys extended beyond the confines of the school - a walking competition was organised by the Master in 1903, for the boys of the first class:

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1. Appendix p.405.
 2. School Log Book - 8.10.1902.
 3. " " " - 17.7.1902.
 4. " " " - 16.7.1903.

"There was an entrance fee of 2d to keep down the number of entries, the total number entered being 23. The walk took place at 6.0 clock over a distance of a little less than 7 miles. . . Only one boy failed to complete the walk, the leader arriving in 1 hour 18½ minutes." ¹

While the work of the school was lively, the Master realised the importance of communication with parents. At the prize distribution in 1902, "each boy received, as last year, his report of progress, my annual letter, and the list of honours gained during the year, which included names of winners of scholarships, successful competitors in Scholars' Magazine Competitions, prize winners in Vere Foster's Copy Book competition, winners of walking competition, prizes for home lessons in higher classes, and lists of regular attenders." ²

This was undoubtedly a sincere attempt to gain the co-operation of parents and to maintain and raise the standards of the school, but there was the added incentive of ensuring that parents were aware of the merits of the school. The highly successful Board Schools were keen competitors.

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1. School Log Book - 30.6.1903.
 2. " " " - 23.7.1903.

RUNCORN NATIONAL GIRLS' SCHOOL

While the Girls' School was not academically so ambitious as the Boys' School, and did not expand the activities or interests of the children outside the scope of the Code, nevertheless it was a worthy counterpart. It was a school which, while there were variations in standards of attainment due to weakness of staff¹ and lack of accommodation², consistently attained at least reasonably satisfactory reports. The report of 1878 - "The discipline is good and the Elementary work is generally satisfactory"³ - gives a general overall picture of the work of the school up to the year 1889. This year marked an upward trend in standards when a grant of 19/1 was earned.⁴ In 1895 the school was in a "highly efficient condition"⁵ and the grant earned was 20/6. The following year the Principal Grant of 14/- was awarded and Her Majesty's Inspector observed:

"This school is going on well - it is carefully organised and classified and the methods of instruction are good!"⁶

This standard was maintained. In 1903 Her Majesty's Inspector stated "the school continues to do exceedingly well."⁷

An outstanding feature was the tone of the school. Frequent observations on this were made in the annual Government Reports:

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|----|-----------------|---|------------|
| 1. | School Log Book | - | 26.8.1884. |
| 2. | " " " | - | 19.4.1888. |
| 3. | " " " | - | 16.8.1878. |
| 4. | " " " | - | 22.8.1889. |
| 5. | " " " | - | 30.8.1895. |
| 6. | " " " | - | 26.8.1896. |
| 7. | " " " | - | 24.7.1903. |

School Log Book.

- 11.9.1874. "The discipline is very good."
- 3.9.1886 "The Girls' School has the great recommendation of good discipline; the tone of the school generally is very good."
- 22.8.1889. "The girls are under good influence and the general tone is thoroughly good."
- 19.9.1890. "The girls are in good order and looking to the difficulty of working in an overcrowded school they show creditable honesty."
- 6.11.1896. "Discipline is distinctly good and the tone of the school admirable."

A tribute by Her Majesty's Inspector to the Mistress, after her death in 1893 was included in the Annual Report of 1893:

"The announcement of the death of the Headmistress will have been received with great sorrow, not only by the Managers, the teaching staff, and the present scholars, but by many hundreds of former pupils who during the past fifteen years have benefitted by her admirable discipline and good influence."

The subsequent comments on the work and discipline of the school indicate that the Managers had selected a fitting successor.

NEWTOWN MISSION SCHOOL

The school was opened on 13th January 1868¹ in a building which was used for a Chapel. Though after 1890 the building was no longer used for this purpose², it continued to be used for meetings.³

The neglect of this school, which belonged to the Parish Church, and the reluctance to provide suitable furniture and accommodation, contrasted strangely with the attitude of the Managers of the National Boys' and Girls' School.

Provision in any form was delayed for as long as possible. Nine years elapsed since the necessity to provide a classroom was first mentioned until it was built. In 1883 Her Majesty's Inspector drew the Manager's attention to the desirability of a classroom for the babies.⁴ In 1884 he repeated the plea - "a classroom is much wanted."⁵ A threat to reduce the grant was made in 1885 unless the accommodation was improved⁶, but in 1887 the classroom was still "much wanted".⁷ It was not until 1892 that it was built.⁸ A comment upon the quality of the provision was made by Her Majesty's Inspector in 1899:

"All the work is hindered by the unfortunate construction of the premises, which have been unskilfully patched with little respect for the rules about light and air. If the Managers would refer to Schedule VII of the Code and would bring the school premises as far as possible to meet the rules therein laid down, they would add greatly to the comfort of both teachers and children."⁹

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1. School Log Book - 13.1.1868.
 2. " " " - 10.1.1890.
 3. " " " - 31.8.1897.
 4. " " " - 22.8.1883.
 5. " " " - 28.8.1884.
 6. " " " - 14.8.1885.
 7. " " " - 11.6.1887.
 8. Chester Record Office Report upon the sanitary and structural conditions of school buildings 1902.
 9. School Log Book - 1889.

Chester County

The work of the school and the comfort of the children were of secondary importance. The equipment was considered in terms of the needs of those using the building after school hours. The desks provided were those which were comfortable for older children and adults. In 1889 Her Majesty's Inspector commented:

"54 children seated at inconveniently high desks are not easily taught."

The following year he again drew attention to the unsuitable furniture:

"The use of the room as a school is sacrificed to its use for meetings, which require a cumbersome platform, and convertible desks which are too high for the infants."²

The Managers took no action.

Reference to the desks was once again made in 1893 and the report concluded that the defects noted "must be remedied as soon as possible."³ Four years later the children were still using "clumsy desks suitable for children of 10 years old and upward." The report contained the threat that:

"If better provision is not made during the current year, the full grant under Article 98(a) of the Code cannot again be recommended . . . suitable desks should at once be provided."⁴

The threat of the loss of the grant presumably proved effective as there was no further mention of this defect, but in 1898 seating accommodation was still unsatisfactory, the babies class had no backs to their seats⁵ and on a visit under Article 84(b) Her Majesty's Inspector wrote:

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1. School Log Book - 21.8.1889.
 2. " " " - 10.9.1890.
 3. " " " - 21.9.1893.
 4. " " " - 31.8.1897.
 5. " " " - 13.8.1888.

"The desk accommodation in the small classroom is insufficient. It would be an improvement to substitute small desks for the existing gallery. The babies class should be divided, it is too large for one teacher; their desks accommodate 42 and there are 62 present this morning."¹

It was not surprising that these poor physical conditions, combined with overcrowding, affected the grant earning capacity of the school and throughout the years there was a close connection between these two factors.

Until the year 1882 the annual reports were unsatisfactory. In that year Her Majesty's Inspector warned the Managers:

"If the attendance is again allowed to exceed 110, the entire grant may be forfeited."²

This was the beginning of a long series of complaints from Her Majesty's Inspector about the existing conditions. In 1883 the necessity for an additional classroom was noted but no action was taken until 1891. The difficulties during these years were too great for the staff to overcome and with the exception of the year 1888³, the lowest variable grant of 2/- was awarded and the grant per head was only 13/-. The effect of the removal of the platform in 1891⁴ was immediate. Her Majesty's Inspector remarked:

"The internal arrangements of the school have been improved and the result of the year's work is more satisfactory."⁵

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1. School Log Book - 22.4.1898.
 2. " " " - 28.8.1882.
 3. " " " - 13.8.1888.
 4. " " " - 7.7.1891.
 5. " " " - 8.8.1891.

The variable grant rose to 4/- and the total grant of 15/- remained unchanged until 1901. During that year extensive reconstruction was carried out and His Majesty's Inspector, satisfied at last with the conditions, gave due credit to the Managers:

"The main room and the babies' classroom have been most skilfully adapted to modern requirements and the gain to the children can hardly be exaggerated."¹

The highest variable grant of 6/- was awarded and the grant per head rose to 17/- and remained at this level.

1. School Log Book - 20.8.1901.

II.

THE VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS IN FRODSHAM

Frodsham was a considerable township with a rateable value of £6,287. The Marquis of Cholmondeley was the Lord of the Manor and was the principal owner. The predominating religious denominations were the Church of England and the Wesleyans. The Wesleyans were a substantial force. They had two churches, the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel which was erected in 1832 and had accommodation for 400, and the Wesleyan Association (Tabernacle) Chapel, erected in 1837 with accommodation for 350.¹

Elementary Education was provided by the Church of England in the Girls' National and Infant Schools and in the Overton Endowed Boys' School.

(a) THE WORK OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS

The issue on the 21st November 1872² of the first notice of a deficiency in accommodation in the Township and Lordship of Frodsham, created a swift reaction from the Trustees of the National Girls' and Infant Schools whose responsibility it was to decide whether it was possible for them to provide such accommodation without recourse to the formation of a School Board. On 13th December 1872, a meeting of the Trustees was held, to which Her Majesty's Inspector, Rev.H.Smith was invited, in order that the problem could be discussed.³

The deficiency was considerable. There existed accommodation for a total of 426 children, but an additional 107 places for Girls and Infants were required in Frodsham, and 60 places for Infants at Overton.⁴ This in effect involved an increase of approximately

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1. White's Cheshire Directory 1860.
 2. P.R.O. Ed.21/1768.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of Frodsham National Schools 13.12.1872.
 4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1768 - undated.

36 percent in the existing accommodation which was provided by the Church of England. The consideration of the financial problems which provision would create obviously dominated the meeting with the Inspector, and it was decided to "adjourn the meeting" until resummoned by the Vicar, "when it should be known whether Parliament would grant powers to secure compulsory attendance of children in districts where there was not a School Board."¹ As compulsory attendance on children outside School Board districts was not enforced, the Trustees took no further action until after the publication of the Final Notice in the local paper on 28th February 1874. The period allowed for voluntary provision expired on 28th August 1874.²

The Trustees realised that a decision could no longer be postponed, and at their meeting held in March, decided that the first step to be taken was to call a meeting of the ratepayers to consider how the necessary funds were to be raised.³ The meeting took place on 7th April 1874; it was well attended⁴ and it was decided "that a voluntary rate should be levied to provide the amount required," and in accordance with a suggestion of the Trustees it was carried "that four persons be nominated, two by the Ratepayers of the Parish and two by those of the Lordship of Frodsham, to join the existing Trustees of the National Girls' and Infants Schools, to form a Committee of Management of the Schools." Rules for retirement and re-election of the Ratepayers were also discussed, and it was resolved, "that one of the Lordship and one of the Township Managers go out of office each

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1. Minutes of Trustees of Frodsham National Schools 13.12.1872.
 2. P.R.O. Ed21/1768 - undated.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of the Girls' National School 24.3.1874.
 4. Warrington Guardian - 11.7.1874.

year and new ones be elected at a Ratepayers meeting, those going out being eligible for re-election."¹ Following this resolution, the ratepayers representatives were nominated. While it was undoubtedly the wish of the ratepayers to avoid the expense of a School Board, the Trustees felt that the financial wisdom of the decision should be made quite clear, and that more precise information than that given at the Public Meeting should be made available; it was therefore decided at the next meeting of the Trustees that a "short circular containing information respecting the voluntary rate as compared with the cost of a School Board be drawn up by Mr. Cotton (Vicar) and Mr. Edwards (the newly elected Ratepayer) and 1,000 copies printed and circulated."² Included in the information given in the circular was an assurance that "if sufficient money be not raised voluntarily to obviate the necessity, all subscriptions will be returned." It was also resolved that "after a short interval enquiry be made what sum will probably be raised by a voluntary rate."³

The necessary information was available early in June. In response to the circulars and letters, "Many landlords had promised to pay a 6d rate for their property, and the Marquess of Cholmondeley had promised a 3d rate."⁴ This offer by the Marquess was disconcerting as he was the principal owner.⁵ The Trustees felt that his offer had placed them in a dilemma. It was agreed that the delicacy of the situation should be conveyed to the Marquess and it was resolved that "the Vicar be requested to write to the Marquess of Cholmondeley, stating that it

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of Frodsham National Schools - 7.11.1885.
 2. Ibid - 21.4.1874.
 3. Ibid - 21.4.1874.
 4. Ibid - 8.6.1874.
 5. White's Cheshire Directory 1860.

is the general opinion that it will be difficult to collect a 6d. rate from the Tenants unless the Landlords pay an equal sum." In the event of a "favourable reply" from the Marquess, it was resolved that:

"Mr. H. Tiley be authorised to collect a 6d rate from Landlords and from tenants and that he be allowed for doing so 2¹/₂ percent on the amount he collected."¹

The Marquess of Cholmondeley evidently gave the desired reply and a sum amounting to over £600 was collected,² and the wheels for the required provision were set in motion.

Plans were drawn up for the enlargement of the National Girls' and Infant Schools, and enquiries were made for the purchase of land for the Infant School at Overton.³ The Trustees found it difficult to obtain land at a reasonable price and for this reason were unable to provide the necessary accommodation within the stipulated period;⁴ a plea for an extension was made to Her Majesty's Inspector who in a communication to the Education Department in support of the application, confirmed that the Trustees had experienced unusual difficulties in the purchase of land for both schools, and stated that nothing "now hinders the school from being rapidly proceeded with" and to strengthen the case for an extension added that "all the parish is said to be against a School Board."⁵ The request was granted, and the work went ahead. By August, 1875, the enlargement of the National Girls' and Infant Schools was complete and the schools were in "full working order."⁶

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 5.6.1874.
 2. Files of National Society Frodsham National Girls' School - 26.9.1876.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of Frodsham National Schools - 29.6.1874.
 4. Ibid.
 5. P.R.O. Ed.21/1768. 26.9.184.
 6. Ibid - 2.8.1875.

The land for the Five Crosses Infant School was eventually acquired. As this was provided by public subscription it was vested in "the Vicar and Church Wardens" with the proviso that "it be made over to the Ratepayers in the event of a School Board being made compulsory."¹ Five Crosses Infant School was opened on 1st November 1875 and was described by Her Majesty's Inspector as a "very suitable, cheerful building."²

Although there was a considerable number of Wesleyans in Frodsham, the Church of England was in control of the schools.

Relationships until the year 1890, between the Church of England and the Wesleyans, appear to have been cordial. In 1888 the Trustees of the Five Crosses Wesleyan Chapel gave the use of a classroom while the new classroom at the Five Crosses Infant School was being built.³ During the year 1890, however, it became clear that the Wesleyans were dissatisfied with their representation on the Management Committee of the Schools and that in the passage of time a misconception had grown of the legal composition of the Trustees and of the status of the ratepayers on that body. The strength of their feelings became evident at the quarterly meeting of the Frodsham Wesleyan Circuit held at Frodsham on 22nd December 1890, when it was resolved to send the following communication to the Trustees:

"The attention of the Frodsham Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting having been called to the anomalous position of nonconformists in the Frodsham District in the matter of Elementary Education, and it having been stated that their

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 30.9.1874.
 2. School Log Book - 29.5.1876.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 16.2.1889.

case had been fully met in Frodsham by the Managers of the Church of England Schools, having nominated and appointed four nonconformists to sit on the Committee of Managers, it having, however, transpired that nonconformists can only be members by courtesy, and can have no legal status on such committee, this meeting hereby entirely repudiates such representation, and declares that Wesleyans absolutely decline to be represented on such Committee." ¹

This communication elicited no official response from the Trustees and it was ordered to lie on the table. But the feelings of discontent mounted; the non-operation of the Conscience Clause was added to the existing complaints. It is obvious that the Conscience Clause had not previously been an issue in Frodsham, and that the Wesleyans had hitherto accepted denominational teaching certainly without any official objection, but when denominational feelings were aroused, denominational teaching became an additional source of irritation and an objection to it was included in a resolution passed by the United Methodist Free Church at a meeting held on 12th April 1891 which read:

"That the members of this Church respectfully protest against the present management of the Public Day Schools in Frodsham - especially against the forcing of Spiritual teaching upon the children of nonconformist parents, and the refusal on the part of the present Board of Management to allow a place on the Board to the representative appointed by the nonconformist bodies - and that this protest be sent to the Vicar and the members of the present Board."

1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 12.2.1891.

The following reply, from the Chairman of the Managers left no room for doubt about the position of nonconformists in the schools, and about the legality of nonconformist representation:

Dear Sir,

It is a pity that those who are responsible for this resolution did not ascertain the facts of the case before committing themselves to such a protest. It contains only two statements both of which are incorrect.

1. The children of Nonconformist parents do not have what this document describes as Episcopal teaching forced on them, for you must surely be aware that parents can avail themselves of the Conscience Clause, and remove their children from any religious instruction to which they may object.
2. The present Board of Management has no power 'to allow a place upon' the Board to the representatives appointed by the Nonconformist bodies, but ever since I have been here - more than eleven years - and long before I came to Frodsham, there have been representatives of the ratepayers on the Committee of the National Schools, and they have been Nonconformists. The co-operation of these representatives of the ratepayers has been welcomed by the other members of the Board of Management, and, as a matter of course, their position and voting power have been equal to that of any other member." ¹

While this ended the controversy there are indications that a rift had been created between the denominations, which was still open a year later. At a meeting of Feoffees of the Boys' School at Overton, when alternative accommodation during the rebuilding period was being considered, it was decided to see the Trustees of the Wesleyan Sunday School at Five Crosses "and to ascertain from them if they would kindly

1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 9.5.1891.

allow the Boys' School to be carried on in their premises."¹ There was no reference to the reply to this request at a subsequent meeting, when it was decided to "erect a temporary wooden building at a cost of £40 - that price to include merely the hire of the materials and the putting up and taking down of the same."²

A letter of complaint that politics were introduced into the curriculum which probably emanated from a Nonconformist source, was received and forwarded, by a former manager, to the Trustees of the Girls' National School. The sender, who remained anonymous, wrote:

"I would like to know if your attention has been drawn to the fact that politics are now a part of the work that the mistresses of the Girls' School have to perform, as the following cases will show. I have two daughters who have been taking lessons therein. The first lesson was on the Parnell Divorce Suit, rather an inappropriate subject for girls of twelve and thirteen years of age. The case was read by the girls from the Liverpool Evening Echo and commented on by the teacher - not by any means favourable to the late Mr. Parnell. The second lesson was given about four weeks ago, and the subject Home Rule for Ireland, wherein the same lady teacher was giving her views somewhat as follows:

After having explained to the class that previous to the Union in 1800 (I believe) the Irish people were continually murdering their fellow creatures, she went on to say that such scenes would undoubtedly occur again should Mr. Gladstone succeed in passing a Home Rule Bill, and that Mr. Gladstone has threatened to put an end to the House of Lords should they try to stop the passing of such a measure. Sir, I presume this teaching is intended to further the Tory cause,

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1. Minutes of Foeffees of Overton Endowed Boys' School - 6.2.1892.
 2. Ibid - 19.3.1892.

as children take everything the teacher tells as gospel truth, and no doubt carry the news home to parents who don't know as much as the children re politics, as a number of them cannot or do not read newspapers.

I would like to ask if such teaching finds a place in the Code put forth by Her Majesty's Inspector, and also if it is not high time we had the schools under proper control, as I am afraid the present managers are not likely to put an end to such training."¹

In subsequent years feelings obviously calmed down, no further objections by the parents to the work of the schools, was recorded. There is no reference to the withdrawal of the Nonconformists from Religious Instruction. The only one who appears to have objected to the breach of the Conscience Clause was Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. Ballance², who on a visit in December 1895 wrote in the Log Book of the Boys' School:

"I visited the school at 11.35 and found standard I engaged in Religious Instruction. By the time-table they should have been doing secular work."³

In common with all Voluntary School Managers, the Frodsham Managers had of necessity to exercise stringent economy. How successful they were in this was evident in 1898 when their application for Aid Grant was refused. But the refusal of this grant revealed that this economy was partly achieved by the low salaries paid to the teachers and moreover that in this respect the teachers in the Frodsham schools compared unfavourably with those in the surrounding areas.

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 6.11.1892.
 2. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' School - 2.11.1895.
 3. An explanation demanded by the Education Department revealed that - "The teacher of Standard I was engaged at the time of Mr. Ballance's visit in writing sums on the blackboard, and that, with the purpose of keeping the children in order while she did so, she bade them repeat a sentence of the catechism."
(Extract from letter sent to Education Department 2.10.1895.)

Following the passing of the Voluntary Schools Act in 1897¹ the Frodsham National Girls' and Infant Schools² were enrolled in the Chester Diocesan Association and it was decided that they should be returned as "necessitous" on the grounds that they depended partly on Voluntary Contribution.³ An application for Aid Grant to the Ruri Decanal Schools Advisory Committee received the reply:

"The application for Aid Grant was considered at a meeting of the above named Committee held yesterday at Runcorn. It is my duty as Secretary to write to you considering the application which was made. The Committee felt that they should be willing to consider the case of the schools if the Managers enlarged the salaries of their teachers."⁴

In a personal approach later, to Canon Wood, the Secretary of the Committee, it was pointed out to him "that the National Schools of Frodsham could hardly be regarded as necessitous because their deficit at the end of the school year 30th April 1898, was only about £6 and there was the grant from the Education Department still to come in." Canon Wood also pointed out that the ratio of salaries paid to the teachers was lower than in other schools, and that it appeared that the whole cost of education in these schools was £2.3s.3d. of which only £1.2s.4d. was expended for payment of teachers.⁵ One at least of these - the most outstanding - left to go to a school where a higher salary was offered and though the reasons for changes of the

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1. The Voluntary Schools Act abolished the 17s.6d. limit on grants. Schools were excepted from payment of rates. An aid grant of 5s.0d. per head was paid through the Association of Voluntary Schools.
 2. As the Boys' School was Endowed it was returned as not necessitous.
 3. Minutes of Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 23.5.1898.
 4. Ibid - 11.6.1898.
 5. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 25.6.1898.

remainder are not recorded, it can only be assumed that, as they were all reasonably successful teachers, they were able to find posts which were better paid and where more adequate and better qualified staff were employed. On four occasions the payment of the grant to Five Crosses Infant School was refused. The first in 1880 when the Mistress was not qualified.¹ The following year no Government Grant was allowed for a period of four months during which an unqualified teacher was employed.²

The staffing of the school was kept to the minimum allowed by the regulations, and this, on two occasions, resulted in the loss of grant. In the year 1889 there was a deduction of £3 from the grant as the staff of the school was insufficient.³ The number was adequate but not the quality. The Pupil Teacher failed her examination and thereby rendered the staffing insufficient; this happened again in 1893 when the sum of £11.10s.0d. was deducted.⁴ This policy of economy in payment of staff had obvious repercussions in the schools.

The succession of teachers of poor quality in the Girls' National School was probably the result of the low salary and unattractive conditions. The salary of the Mistress of the Girls' National School in 1875 was £60 per annum along with "one third of the excess of pence over £20 with a part share of house and coal."⁵ This house and coal⁶ she was obliged to share with the Mistress of the Infant School who received £60 per annum but no share of the school pence.⁷ The Mistress of the Five Crosses received in 1880 a salary of £45 per annum and one

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1. Minutes of Trustees of Frodsham National Schools - 3.6.1880.
 2. Ibid - 25.3.1881.
 3. Ibid - 1.8.1889.
 4. Ibid - 11.7.1893.
 5. Ibid - 10.8.1878.
 6. After a request from the Mistress, the teachers were no longer required to live in the house- one of the rooms was used as a Cookery Room.
 7. Minutes of Trustees of Frodsham National Schools - 10.5.1875.

third of the Government Grant, it being required of her that she sit with the Sunday School children at Church one Sunday in three, and teach in the Sunday School when called upon."¹ It was probably due to the low salary that the Five Crosses Infant School experienced frequent changes of teachers. During the period 1875 to 1903 there were 13 Headmistresses.²

The Managers leaned heavily on the services of their pupil teachers; when the Pupil Teacher Centre was opened in Runcorn in 1901, an invitation for the Frodsham Pupil Teachers to attend received the reply that it would be impossible to send the Pupil Teachers to a Central Class at Runcorn because the work of the school could not be carried out if so many teachers were absent.³ The overworking of the Pupil Teachers in 1890 was remarked upon by Her Majesty's Inspector in 1890, when he concluded his report with the comment:

"Your attention is requested to paragraph 18 of the Circular on Registration. A Pupil Teacher must not be allowed to serve in school more than twenty five hours a week, as specified in Paragraph I of the Memorandum of Agreement."⁴

Though the salaries paid to the Assistants and Pupil Teachers were, in 1902, in line with those of similar status in the area, the frequent changes in the Boys' School at Overton, where there were three Head Teachers during the years 1898 to 1903, suggests that better paid posts were available elsewhere.

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 3.6.1880.
 2. Compiled from the Log Book of Five Crosses Infant School.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 13.9.1901.
 4. Frodsham National Girls' School Log Book - 27.6.1890.

While financial reward for the teachers was not generous, the managers undoubtedly took a deep interest in the schools. In 1874 ladies who were interested in the schools were invited to form a committee "for their general superintendence and management."¹ One outstanding personality on this Committee, who was also a Trustee, was Miss Ashley, who until she died in 1899, gave devoted service to the schools.

The responsibility for the improvement of the abysmal attendance in 1883, was not left entirely to the recently formed School Attendance Committee.² The Managers co-operated and a system of prizes was adopted on the following scale:

- (a) That every child making 90 per cent of possible attendances in a quarter be given at the end of the quarter a ticket representing the sum of three pence, which sum together with any others that the child may have deserved in other quarters should be spent in the purchase of a book as a prize at the end of the year.
- (b) That to those who make 95 per cent of possible attendances a ticket representing the sum of six-pence be given after the same manner.
- (c) That to those who make all possible attendances for a whole year the half fees for the year be returned. ³

This scheme was highly successful and in 1884 the sum of £15 was distributed to pupils in the Girls' and Infants' Schools.⁴ Continuation of the scheme on this scale did not appear to be necessary. The School

1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 23.12.1874.
 2. See page 175
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 28.5.1883.
 4. Ibid - 10.8.1884.

Attendance Committee was active and efficient, and such entries in 1888 appeared in the School Log:

13.1.1888. "Opened school Jan.9th after two weeks holidays - the numbers were very good."

27.1.1888. "Attendance Average - 160."

10.2.1888. "Attendance very good."

The existing scheme was modified and the prize for 100 per cent attendance was reduced from 6/- to 4/-.¹ Two years later, in 1890, prizes for regular attendance were given in books and not in money.²

The favourable comments in the School Log Book commented:

6.2.1891. "Attendance good average 1972."

4.9.1891. "Attendance good reaching 90 per cent."

and in 1891 the Managers decided to discontinue prizes for attendance.

1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 2.8.1888.

2. Ibid - 17.5.1890.

(b)

FRODSHAM NATIONAL GIRLS' SCHOOL

Her Majesty's Inspector's Report for the year 1866 stated:

"The girls are very cheerful, orderly and intelligent. The Religious Knowledge and Elementary Instruction are decidedly good. The girls understand what they read very well and repeat poetry with spirit and expression. A wider range of General Knowledge may safely be taken so far as time will allow."¹

Thirty years were to pass before a report of this nature was again received by the school.

After the examination the Mistress left and the reports of the school deteriorated to some extent but in 1869 the girls were still "respectful and well behaved,"² but the teaching was "not so good." In 1870, however, a more satisfactory report was obtained. The girls had "improved in general intelligence" but were still "a little too shy in answering."³ The year 1870 marked the beginning of a new era. An era in which at least two Mistresses were dismissed. The school was declared inefficient and the "well behaved" girls of 1860 were replaced in the next decade by girls who were "talkative and noisy."⁴

The appointment of Jane Kermode, who took charge of the school in May 1870, marked the beginning of this era.⁵ Within two years Her Majesty's Inspector commented in the Annual Report - "The general standard of attainment is low."⁶ The following year it seemed difficult

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1. School Log Book ^{5.4.} -/1866
 2. Ibid - 26.5.1869.
 3. Ibid - 19.5.1870.
 4. Ibid - 15.9.1876.
 5. Ibid - 2.5.1870.
 6. Ibid - 1.6.1872.

for Her Majesty's Inspector to find any point on which to make a favourable comment and concluded with the sentence:

"Better results in writing and arithmetic will be required to secure an undiminished grant to the Girls' School next year."¹

The threatened reduction of grant became a reality at the next examination, when one tenth was deducted "for defects of instruction."² Jane Kermode resigned in December 1874³ and a permanent appointment was not made until July 1875.⁴ Entries in the School Log Book bear witness to the difficulties with which M. Lloyd, the newly appointed teacher, had to cope. Initially it was discipline.

19.7.1875. "New teacher takes over."
 21.7.1875. "Girls more orderly today."
 28.7.1875. "The girls a little more orderly, more quick."
 22.9.1876. "Children have been rather tiresom at their lessons."

Throughout the period during which she taught at the school there were ever recurrent entries in the Log Book concerning the indolence of the Pupil Teacher:

25.10.1875. "E. Riley's lessons unsatisfactorily done."
 10.11.1876. "E. Riley's lessons very unsatisfactorily done all week."
 28.9.1877. "E. Riley's lessons unsatisfactorily done this week, spoken to her but seems to have no effect."

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1. School Log Book - 13.6.1873.
 2. Ibid - 28.5.1874.
 3. Ibid - 17.12.1874.
 4. Ibid - 19.7.1875.

Irregularity of attendance was the most frequent cause of complaint:

- 1.10.1875. "Attendance very irregular, many of the girls at home all week to gather fruit."
 27.10.1876. "A poor school this week owing to the fair being held."
 18.5.1877. "A miserable attendance all week, the children being kept to clean down for Whit week."

M. Lloyd left the school at the end of 1877 and while some progress was made, the reports on the Annual Inspection for the year ending 30th April 1878 made it clear that the standard of the school was still very low:

"The present Mistress has been in charge only a few months - she will have much to do to bring the school into a satisfactory condition." ¹

Miss Walmsley was no more successful in raising the standard of the work than her predecessor. Extracts from the reports of the Annual Examinations reveal an unevenness in the work which was never assessed as more than "very creditable."

- 23.6.1869. "The school has made creditable progress in many ways during the year."
 19.7.1880. "Work only fair."
 15.6.1881. "The Elementary work is fairly satisfactory."
 4.8.1882. "The Girls Department is in excellent order and has passed a very creditable examination."
 8.8.1883. "More than one third of the school is in the first standard. The girls attend most irregularly and their work is often bad. Several were absent from the Inspection without any excuse. Whether this arises from insubordination on the part of the girls or from defiance of the law on the part of the parents, it is to

the interest of the Managers to see that it does not go unpunished. Above the first standard the work is fairly good."

It was during these years that the irregularity of attendance assumed such proportions that the School Attendance Committee was formed¹ and that the back log of unpaid fees was so great that rigorous measures were taken by the Trustees to ensure that such a heavy debt would not be allowed to accumulate again.² The problem of the payment of school fees in the Girls' School reached a climax in 1882. An indication that the Mistress was experiencing difficulties was evident from entries in the Log Book:

20.5.1881. "Sent three girls home for coming three weeks in succession without their school fees."

17.6.1881. "Sent two girls home for their wages on Tuesday."

but the few entries gave no indication as to the extent of the growth of this practice.

The infrequency of entries obviously indicated that little, if anything was being done to extract the fees from the pupils. So great was the deficit in January, 1882, that the Treasurer and one other Trustee was requested "to enquire as to the cause of it."³

The extent of the evasion which existed is evident from the entries following the instruction to send the pupils home for fees:

27.1.1882. "I sent eleven girls home for their school pence by order of the Committee; only 5 out of the eleven returned, these came without their pence; I sent them home again."

30.1.1882. "Monday morning, 40 girls in school without pence. Sent home four of the worst payers. Monday afternoon - six girls sent home."

1. See page 175.

2. See page 320.

3. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Schools - 24.1.1882.

- 1.2.1882. "Wednesday morning - Martha and Susannah Dimelow returned without school pence, sent them home again."
S.A. Pace came to school after three weeks absence without school pence. Sent her home."
- 3.2.1882. "Five children out of the number sent home, now returned with school pence."
- 10.2.1882. "Twenty-one children in school without money."
- 17.2.1882. "Sent five girls home for money."

The Managers, however, not only made the necessary enquiry as to the cause of the decrease in school fees, which revealed that "the decrease had arisen from the Mistress allowing credit,"¹ but they also took immediate and positive action, and at the next meeting of the Committee were able to report:

"that in consequence of their enquiry the sums owing had been paid, as much as £20.8s.4d. being received within ten days."²

To avoid any further lapses the Trustees, at that meeting, passed the following regulations:

- I "That at the beginning of the new school year, notice be given by the Managers that in future no credit will be allowed, and that all quarterly and other (except parochial) school payments shall be made in advance. That the registers should be examined quarterly by the Correspondent and the Treasurer.
- II "That the Correspondent have a weekly return of attendances of children, furnished him by the Mistress of the school."³

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 11.3.1882.
2. Ibid - 11.3.1882.
3. Ibid - 11.3.1882.

These regulations did not completely eradicate evasion but the problem was considerably reduced. In 1889 the arrears reported at the quarterly meeting, held on 10th May, amounted to £1.1s.4d., the arrears for the Girls' School were 15s.8d.

The Free Education Act which the Trustees accepted in 1891 resolved the problem completely.¹ The report of the year 1883 is interesting. Her Majesty's Inspector suggested two possible causes for absenteeism from the annual examination, either of which was possible. The suggestion that this arose from defiance of the law by the parents was, however, the least likely. The formation of the Local School Attendance Committee on 26th June 1883 probably created considerable ill-feeling amongst the parents, but these were the same parents whose boys attended the Boys' School and while the Annual Report of the examination, held about the same time, contained the comment - "The attendance at this school is exceptionally bad" - there was no suggestion of deliberate withdrawal from examination.²

The most probable cause of the absenteeism was the "insubordination" on the part of the girls, which indicated a break down in relationships between the pupils, their parents and the teacher. Though entries in the Log Book gave no indication of trouble with parents, there were undoubtedly some who were dissatisfied with her work. Three parents complained, in 1881, about the teaching of writing and sewing in the school.³ The strong measures adopted in the collection of fees, no doubt caused resentment against the enforcement of these but this was transitory and in itself was not sufficient to cause any major reaction. This insubordination was probably the culmination of over four years of repressive discipline.

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1. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' School - 28.11.1892.
 2. ~~Frodsham National Girls'~~ ^{Overton Endowed Boys'} School Log Book - 1.8.1883.
 3. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 23.3.1881.

The comment in the report of 1879 gave an indication that the treatment of the children was abnormally severe:

"The discipline is sufficiently firm, it might be more gentle; the girls are rough and require an example." ¹

That this rough discipline continued, is implied in the report of 1884 after Miss Walmsley left: ²

"The girls too are improved in appearance and the discipline is maintained without roughness." ³

Miss Heath, appointed in January 1884⁴, was in charge of the school until October 1895, when she was dismissed.⁵ A feature of this period was the many references to improved attendance which was evidence of the efficiency of the Local School Attendance Committee:

School Log Book

- 29.4.1887. "Attendance very good, there being 175, 174 present some days out of 188 on the books."
- 7.9.1888. "Attendance steady, average 170."
- 4.9.1891. "Attendance good, reaching 90 per cent."
- 19.5.1893. "102 girls made 95 per cent and upwards of attendances from 8th March to 30th April 1893."
- 24.6.1895. "Attendance good, 208 present out of 209."
- 3.9.1895. "Attendance good, all children present."

With the increasing number attending the school there appeared comments on the backwardness of the children:

- 6.5.1887. "There are four or five children to be put in the exceptional schedule, some through body defects, the rest are deficient in intellect."

1. School Log Book - 23.6.1879.
2. Miss Walmsley resigned in December 1883. (School Log 21.12.1883)
3. School Log Book - 1.6.1884.
4. School Log Book - 18.1.1884.
5. School Log Book - 31.10.1895.

- 2.12.1887. "Standard I. There are 20 in the said standard who can only tell little words, much hard work is required to pull them up to the required standard."
- 15.6.1888. "Sent by request of the Vicar four girls into the Infant Department until they can read words of three letters."

Until the year 1888, the work of the school, while not attaining a standard which could be classed as "good", nevertheless was satisfactory and earned such reports from Her Majesty's Inspector as:

School Log Book

- 9.8.1884. - "The School is in a much more promising state. . . . On the whole, looking at the progress made, the result may be called "good", partly in confident expectation of further advance."
- 9.7.1885. "There is a great improvement in the Elementary work."
- 2.7.1886. "On the whole the school is doing very well."
- 28.6.1887. "The Elementary work is generally good."

The report of the Government Examination of 1888 gives a description of the conditions and difficulties with which the Mistress had to contend and marked the onset of a deterioration of work which culminated in her dismissal in 1895.

Her Majesty's Inspector's Report

18th May 1888 - Frodsham National School (Chester)

Girls' School. "This is a large school attended chiefly by girls of the poorest class, with an unusually large proportion of children either physically or mentally disqualified from hard work. For such a school two adult teachers and one young pupil teacher form an insufficient teaching staff, and it is not surprising that the failures are numerous. The reading is good

in the first class, but it falls greatly off when the first standard is reached. The paper work is very fairly neat, but spelling, composition and arithmetic are generally poor, especially in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh standards. The lower grant for English is barely earned; the failures in grammar are numerous. The full grant for needlework is recommended with some hesitation."

M. J. J. has passed well.

G. Andrews)
H. Hill) Failures

Miss Teare will receive her certificate in due course."

Allowances for the standard of attainment in 1888 were made by Her Majesty's Inspector in consideration of the numerical weakness of the staff. In 1895 this situation no longer obtained, the staffing was numerically adequate, improvements had been carried out to the school, and there was now no excuse for poor performance standards. The report of 1895 was trenchant in its criticism of the quality of the work:

Her Majesty's Inspector's Report

12th July - Frodsham National School (Chester)

Girls' School. "The girls are always in excellent order; but they very seldom do well. They read and write well and their paper work is neat, but the composition of the fifth standard is worth little and the sixth standard does not do well in this subject. Arithmetic does not reach even a fair average in any class: even the first standard fails badly: the second standard does tolerably; the problems are badly done or not attempted. The third standard is very weak; the first class is weak. This is a poor result for a school with a fairly good teaching staff.

The needlework is well done, but the girls work slowly. English is satisfactory on the whole; the fourth standard is a weak class. The attention of the Managers is called to the recent circular on the supervision of the Pupil Teachers' lessons. The failures in this school are discreditable. The buildings have again been greatly improved." ¹

At their quarterly meeting in July 1895² the Managers considered the report and passed the following resolution.

"That Miss Heath be asked to send in a notification of her intention to resign the post of Headmistress of the Girls' School, at the end of three months, from the 31st inst., and that in event of her not doing so, three months notice be given her of the termination of her engagement."

Under the circumstances a surprising procedure followed. On some occasions the Mistresses of the Infant School were appointed from the Certificated staff of the Girls' School. But this was a large school with 212 girls on the books;³ while the ultimate responsibility for its condition was that of the Headmistress, the work of every member of the staff received adverse comment in the report, yet there is no evidence that any discussion took place as to the advisability of advertising for a new Mistress, the resolution that "Miss Teare, Assistant Mistress, be appointed to succeed Miss Heath as Headmistress at a salary of £95 a year" followed immediately after the resolution asking Miss Heath to resign.⁴

Within a year the Managers were to regret the appointment. The report of the Inspector in the year 1896 was worse than that for 1895, and the school was declared "inefficient."⁵

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1. Minutes of Trustees of Frodsham National Schools - 29.7.1895.
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid
 4. Ibid
 5. School Log Book - 17.7.1896.

In accordance with the request in the report that the Managers should "state as soon as possible what steps they propose to take with a view of securing the efficiency of the school."¹ The Chairman informed the Education Department in a letter dated 9th July 1896, that:

"the Managers have arranged to have the school examined at the end of September and that if the result of that examination be unfavourable, the engagement of the Head-mistress, Miss Teare, will terminate on 18th October."

Miss Teare was also informed of this resolution. The school was examined at the end of September and the following communication was received from Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. W. Ballance:

13 Church Road,
Hoylake,
Birkenhead.

10th October 1896

Rev. & Dear Sir,

I enclose with this my notes of the Examination of your Girls' School and trust that they will be found helpful.² I spoke to each of the teachers in turn before leaving and showed them the weak spots in their work etc. I think the outlook is hopeful - your teachers undoubtedly work with great zeal, though not always a zeal with discretion, and I see no reasons why in the future your school should not do well.

Sincerely yours,

W. Ballance

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The optimism was not justified. The suggestions of Mr. Ballance bore but little fruit. In 1897 the Annual Report opened with the statement:

1. School Log Book - 17.7.1896.
2. See Appendix p.401.
3. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Schools - 7.11.1896.

"The school escapes a second declaration of inefficiency, but with little margin."

and ended:

"it is evident that the work is beyond the strength of the teachers." ¹

At the School Managers' meeting held in August 1897, the resolution was passed:

"That in the interest of the Girls' School, a change of Headmistress was necessary and that consequently Miss Teare should 'receive three months notice of the termination of her engagement.'" ²

Miss Teare, however, felt that this was an injustice and sent the following reply to the Chairman's communication of her dismissal by the Managers:

The Rock,
Frodsham.

12th August 1897

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 9th inst., to hand. As it is not the usual custom to dismiss teachers without giving them the opportunity to defend themselves or explain matters, I cannot accept the notice of dismissal sent me until such an opportunity has been afforded me. I shall feel obliged if you will kindly arrange a meeting at which I can meet the Managers.

Yours respectfully,

Amy A. Teare

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1. Frodsham National Girls' School Log Book - 27.8.1897.
 2. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 7.8.1897.

The Chairman's reply was curt and final:

Frodsham Vicarage,

August 12th 1897.

Dear Miss Teare,

There is no necessity for calling such a meeting as proposed in your letter which I have just received, for the reports of Her Majesty's Inspector of the Girls' School for the last two years more than justify the Managers' in terminating your engagement.

Yours truly,

Henry B. Blogg¹

The dismissal of Amy Teare ended the dismal succession of bad and mediocre reports which for so many years recurred with unfailing regularity. In November 1897, Mary E. Roberts took charge.² The Report of Her Majesty's Inspector, in 1898, ended:

"Miss Roberts is entitled to much praise for her work under serious disadvantages."³

and in 1899 the school was in a "thoroughly satisfactory condition", both in discipline and instruction were very good.⁴

In 1900 the school was doing "very good and useful work."⁵

In 1901 Mary Roberts resigned. The Report of Her Majesty's Inspector, written in the Log Book on the day she left, was a tribute to her achievement.

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 7.9.1897.
 2. School Log Book - 10.11.1897.
 3. " " " - 2.7.1898.
 4. " " " - 3.11.1899.
 5. " " " - 7.8.1900.

"Miss Roberts has done most valuable work in this school and leaves it in a high state of efficiency."¹

Her successor carried on the good work. During a visit under Article 84(a) Her Majesty's Inspector wrote:

"The school is going on well, both discipline and instruction are distinctly satisfactory."²

1. School Log Book - 19.7.1901.

2. " " " - 5.11.1902.

(c)

FRODSHAM NATIONAL INFANTS' SCHOOL

It seems probable that the absence of comment on the Infant school in the Minutes of the School Managers Committee from 1870 to 1889 indicates that the work there was unspectacular but fairly satisfactory, and that neither teachers nor pupils created any problems. The report of the Government Examination in 1889 was possibly characteristic of those received in previous years,¹ "This school does very well in some parts."

In 1891, however, the long period of obscurity came to an end when the school received the following report:

"The school now relieved of the 1st standard has had two trained certificated teachers and two pupil teachers, one in her fourth year, for an average of 132 children, this is a staff sufficient to produce good results.

The school has been divided into three large classes with the first and second containing many children unfit for the work of their class. This points to a division into four classes for which the staff is sufficient.

The work is often very fair but seldom good. The second class does not attempt sums on slates. The needlework is very good, singing is harsh, order good, object lessons fairly satisfactory."²

The reaction of the Managers to this report was to ask the Mistress to send in her resignation.³ A new Mistress was appointed but the report of the following year was no better. The children did not attend to their teacher. The work of the first and second classes was fair "on the whole" but "of the 54 babies in the classroom 27 do nothing and there are not even benches for them to sit down on."⁴

1. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Schools - 1.8.1889.

2. Ibid - 8¹/₈.1891.

3. Ibid - 8.8.1891.

4. Ibid - 6.8.1892.

The Mistress was summoned to attend the Managers meeting to discuss the report and to suggest ways in which she could make improvement.¹ Doubtless she suggested that it would be a help if all the children had benches to sit on. Next year Her Majesty's Inspector, in concluding his report said:

"the children are well in hand, and for the first time they are comfortably seated."²

The school got a satisfactory report in 1894³ and the Mistress resigned.⁴

The Mistress of Five Crosses Infant school, which was smaller⁵ was appointed Mistress and the school again receded into obscurity except for the annual reports. The standard of the work continued to improve. In 1896 Her Majesty's Inspector reported:

"The school is now doing well."⁶

and in 1899:

"The children are in excellent order⁷ and have passed a very good examination."⁸

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 6.8.1892.
 2. Ibid - 11.7.1893.
 3. Ibid - 15.9.1894.
 4. Ibid - 17.11.1894.
 5. Five Crosses had 80 on the books. Church Street Infants had 128.
 6. Minutes of the Trustees of the Frodsham National Schools - 17.11.1894.
 7. Ibid - 18.7.1896.
 8. Ibid - 10.11.1899.

(d) OVERTON ENDOWED CHURCH OF ENGLAND BOYS' SCHOOL

While this school did ^{not} consistently sustain a high level of efficiency, the lapses were few and were due, mainly, to over-crowding and poor physical conditions caused by building operations. Though a counterpart of the Girls' National School, it was also a contrast. It encountered the same difficulties but with the exception of attendance, none of these got out of hand.

As in the girls' school, frequent remarks on poor attendance appeared:

School Log
 6.4.1877. "A poor school, boys engaged in field work."
 7.9.1878. "Boys irregular (getting blackberries)."
 4.4.1884. "Many boys away (potato dropping)."
 11.3.1881. "Troubled with boys truanting."

The deficiency in the payment of school fees also featured in the minutes of the Feoffees but this did not ever reach such proportions as to cause disquiet and the arrears were cancelled.¹

There were occasional references to noisy boys:²

School Log
 31.5.1878. "The boys are rather noisy."
 28.6.1879. "There is a great improvement in the discipline which is now good."
 4.8.1882. "The discipline has fallen off. The boys are not quiet and some are inclined to copy."
 28.6.1887. "The discipline is fair only."
 15.6.1888. "The discipline is much improved."

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1. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Church of England Schools. Arrears of school fees cancelled ~~£~~3.16.6. School fees cancelled £1.17s.9d.
 2. Extracts from Her Majesty's Inspector's Reports.

Discipline here was not a major problem and the teachers were always able to cope when physical conditions improved.

In contrast to the succession of mediocre Mistresses in charge of the Girls' School, until 1896, the Overton *Endowed* School enjoyed a continuous period of stability until 1898 when its outstanding Headmaster, John Pollard, resigned.¹ John Pollard was a man of integrity "and very highly respected in the parish."²

The practical demonstration of the trust which the Feoffees placed in him was the deliberate omission of their duty to test and sign the registers. An almost apologetic directive in the Annual Report, was made by Her Majesty's Inspector to the Managers to test and sign the registers, the wording of which suggests that the matter had been discussed:

"The Managers should supervise and test the registers from time to time; if this is to be neglected on account of the confidence felt in the Master, it would soon become impossible to enforce it in the schools in the parish."³

The respect and appreciation which the Managers continued to hold for him was again evident when on his resignation he was appointed a Feoffee, and after his death, that his long service should not be forgotten, a tablet in his memory was placed in the new classroom which was opened in 1901.

An interdepartmental memorandum in 1870 described the Frodsham Endowed School as "One of the best in Cheshire."⁴ Her Majesty's Inspector's reports of the period support this assessment:

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1. School Log Book - 30.6.1888.
 2. " " " - 23.11.1900.
 3. " " " - 5.7.1885.
 4. P.R.O. Ed.21/1768 undated

School Log Book

- 23.5.1865. "This continues to be in all respects a thoroughly satisfactory and efficient school."
- 29.4.1867. "This school continues to be excellent in all parts of discipline and instructions."

Contrary to the general comments on the work in the schools during this period that, as a result of the Revised Code, teaching had become a mechanical grind in preparation for examinations, the Master of this school, though he restricted the curriculum to the Elementary subjects and to the requirements of the Code, did not abandon the fundamental principles of good teaching. Comments in the Log Book suggest that the school was an establishment where there was co-operation between teachers and pupils and where initiative and independent thinking were encouraged:

School Log Book

- 24.5.1863. "A memorial signed by the first class was presented to the Master praying that Whit week might be a holiday. (Granted but deducted from midsummer holidays)
- 12.4.1872. "During the last few weeks one third of my boys have been engaged in field work."

This intelligent teaching received recognition in the Inspector's reports:

School Log Book

1869. "The teaching and discipline are alike good. The intelligence of the boys is cultivated with much success, and many of their answers displayed considerable thought."
- 28.7.1873. "The school is taught with great thoroughness and care. Its condition, both as regards discipline and general efficiency, does much credit to Mr. Pollard."
- 27.4.1876. "The school continues to be taught with great care and understanding."

While the operation of the Attendance Act of 1876 on the regularity of attendance was ineffective in the Frodsham area, it doubtless increased the numbers on the registers and the entry in 1880 - "over 180 present during the week"¹ - suggests that the numbers on the registers far exceeded the accommodation and were probably over two hundred. The increase in numbers without a corresponding increase in accommodation in staffing began to effect the quality of the work, and in 1878 Her Majesty's Inspector stated - "This school is carefully and conscientiously taught and conducted and the results are fair." He added - "the defects of the school chiefly arise from the numerical weakness of the teaching staff. Two teachers for six classes is a scant provision; more desks are wanted."² This comment did not produce any material help, and in spite of these difficulties the school, in 1881, was reported to be in "a very satisfactory condition."³ Again Her Majesty's Inspector drew the attention of the Managers to the unsatisfactory state of the premises in his comment - "The premises are poor; a school of this size requires at least one classroom."⁴

Poor attendance, poor conditions, inadequate staffing, eventually lowered the performance to the extent that in 1883 Her Majesty's Inspector wrote - "Better work next year will be expected to secure full grant."⁵ In this year, however, a new classroom was added⁶ and the staff was strengthened.⁷ The effect of improved conditions and staffing was evident in 1885, when the Annual Report opened with the statement:

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1. School Log Book - 5.11.1880.
 2. " " " - 25.7.1878.
 3. " " " - 17.6.1881.
 4. " " " - 17.6.1881.
 5. " " " - 1.8.1883.
 6. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Church of England School - 13.3.1901.
 7. Staff in 1883 - (School Log Book 1.8.1883) Headmaster First Class; Second Master 2nd Division; One ex Pupil Teacher; One Pupil Teacher Second Year; One candidate.

"The school has greatly improved and the Managers have now the satisfaction of seeing a return for their trouble and heavy expenditure. . . the elementary work is good."¹

With a further increase in staff, in 1887,² the school once more attained its traditionally high standards, and in the year 1888 gained the "Excellent Merit Grant".³ In spite of the fact that the school was £100 in debt,⁴ the Feofees expressed their appreciation of this achievement by giving a gratuity of £5 to the teachers which was apportioned according to status; they omitted any remuneration for the Headmaster.⁵ This gesture was repeated the following year when the sum of £4.10s.0d. was distributed.⁶

The year 1890 was notable for two events, the addition of Standard 1 boys who previously attended the Church Street Infant School,⁷ and for the dismissal of a teacher, not for inefficiency, but "on account of his gross carelessness in repeatedly visiting a known fever patient."⁸

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1. School Log Book - 2.7.1885.
 2. Staff in 1887, ^{S. Log} p.147 - Head Teacher, 3 Assistant Teachers, 2 Pupil Teachers.
 3. Minutes of the Feofees of the Overton Endowed Church of England School - 2.7.1888.
 4. Ibid
 5. Ibid
 6. Ibid - 1.8.1889.
 7. The boys in Standard 1 were transferred from Five Crosses to this school in 1901 (S. Log. 13.5.1901)
 8. A meeting of the Managers of the Girls' School, on the same date, 15th November, 1890, it was resolved "That Miss Brunnell be informed that the Managers, while allowing her the full salary for last quarter, seriously considered the question of withholding it altogether because of her indiscretion in having intercourse with persons connected with the schools during the time of her convalescence."

During the year 1892 the conditions must have been well nigh unbearable. When the school was being rebuilt, the children were accommodated in a wooden hut which was erected temporarily at a cost of £40.¹ The new buildings were opened on 30th November 1892, by the Lord Bishop of Chester², but the interruption and the conditions under which the children worked led to the lowering of standards to such a degree that it was not until the year 1895, when an additional number of staff was appointed, that there were signs of recovery.

The Annual Report of 1894 resulted in a request from the Feoffees that the Master be informed that they were not satisfied with the report and:

"that they wish him to give them at their next meeting, an account of the work of the school, and in particular that of the fourth standard. Also that they desire Mr. Pollard to warn the teacher of the fourth standard that if the aforementioned does not show improvement in that standard, the Feoffees will dispose with his services."³

The report on the results of the fourth standard was submitted at the following meeting and Mr. Pollard, who obviously felt that these low standards were a reflection of his inability in his advancing years, to raise the level of the work from the depths to which it had descended during the erection of the new buildings, requested the Chairman of the Feoffees to ask them to appoint an Assistant Master as a substitute for himself, to whom he offered to give £80 or £90 a year of his salary, or, if the Feoffees thought it not advisable for him to do this, he was willing to resign the post of the Headmaster of the school.⁴

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1. School Log Book, p.173.
 2. " " " - 30.11.1892.
 3. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Church of England School - 15.9.1894.
 4. Ibid - 17.11.1894.

The Feoffees decided that the Chairman and Treasurer of the school should see Mr. Pollard and that they should "have authority to deal with the matter."¹

Perhaps the greatest tribute which the Feoffees paid to Mr. Pollard was at the following meeting, when the Chairman reported that Mr. Pollard had not resigned but that he had - "on the recommendation of Her Majesty's Inspector, appointed Mr. Laurence Margerison of the British School Rock Ferry, in his place at a salary of £90 a year," they increased his salary to £115 per annum.²

The appointment of Laurence Margerison fully justified Her Majesty's Inspector's recommendation. With the exception of the addition of a teacher re-engaged under Article 68, the numbers and qualifications of the staff in 1896 were practically the same as those in 1894, but in 1896 the school was doing "exceedingly well"³ and a note in the Log Book, in 1898, recorded that the school had received the Principal Grant of 14/-.⁴

Mr. Pollard resigned on 30th June 1898. His last entry read:

"I this day resign the charge of this school, having held it for 44 years."⁵

Though Headmasters changed, in subsequent years the school maintained its standards. Of the four candidates entered for the County Council Scholarship in 1899, one was 27th on the list and obtained a scholarship, and two "were placed in the first class, being 63rd and 87th respectively, 422 candidates sat for the examination."⁶

1. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Church of England School - 17.11.1894.
2. Ibid - 9.2.1895.
3. School Log Book - 19.6.1896.
4. " " " - 5.7.1898.
5. " " " - 30.6.1898.
6. " " " - 5.6.1899.

The last recorded report, in 1903, reads:

"The school is in good order, the work goes on very well."¹

The work in the school throughout the period was confined to subjects prescribed by the Code. Algebra, a specific subject was examined under the Code and comments on the efficiency of the teacher were noted in the reports of Her Majesty's Inspector:

School Log Book

12.6.1899 "Algebra very good."
 16.7.1899. "Algebra good and intelligent."
 24.6.1896. "Algebra fair."
 19.7.1888. "Algebra Good."
 7.5.1884. "Algebra is unusually well done."

Entries in the School Log Book in 1902 indicated that at least on some occasions a more interesting and practical approach to the work was being introduced:

31.1.1902. "As the attendance during the past month was very satisfactory the Master asked W. Collinson Esq., of Overton to come across and let the boys hear his gramophone. After the principle of the instrument had been explained twelve items were heard and highly appreciated by the teachers and scholars."
 14.2.1902. "On Thursday afternoon the Master gave the boys in Standards V, VI and VII a lesson on the electric bell. All the boys stayed after 4.0 clock to try the bell, and to examine for themselves the push, the battery and the bell."
 28.2.1902. "On Thursday afternoon the Master showed boys in the upper classes an excellent specimen of an electric cable, drawing sketch on blackboard and explaining construction and reasons for employment of the different substances used."

1. School Log Book - 20.11.1903.

III.

THE RURAL VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS

Though the early Log Books of all the rural schools in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn are not in existence, sufficient remain to give a general picture of the schools and their management. With the exception of the Weston Wesleyan School¹, all belonged to the Church of England and a characteristic of each was the personal interest of the Vicar. His visits were frequent, and his participation in the teaching of Religious Instruction was an accepted pattern of the life of the school. Such comments in the Log Book as:

"The Vicar continued to open the school regularly,"²

and

"The Rev. S. Bagnall visited the school this morning and took the children in one of the chapters of the Bible, Genesis VI."³

were commonplace. But the Vicar's help often extended beyond the field of Religious Instruction:

Halton Grammar School Log Book

9.5.1879. "The Vicar assisted this afternoon at the weekly examination."

29.8.1879. "I was too unwell to be in school on Tuesday and Wednesday. The Vicar kindly assisted the Pupil Teacher during part of my absence."

Antrobus and Seven Oaks Log Book

17.5.1876. "Rev. Geo. Eaton visited the school and heard IV and V standards read."

1. There are few surviving records of the Weston Wesleyan Schools.
2. Antrobus and Seven Oaks School Log Book - 22.8.1884.
3. Weston Point School Log Book - 4.2.1875.

An entry in the Norley School Log Book records at least one occasion when the Vicar assisted in the administration of punishment:

5.12.1900. "Five boys punished in school this dinner hour by the Rev. C. R. Nunn for impertinence and throwing stones at squirrels and trespassing. Vicar again visited at 4 p.m. Conducted the closing prayers and after entreating the boys to show kindness to dumb creatures, exacted a promise for amendment in future."

Active participation in the work of the school was not confined to the Vicar. The Vicar's wife and other interested ladies frequently relieved the pressure of large numbers by helping with the sewing or hearing children read. A long record of service by the wife of a Vicar was that of Mrs. Tanner who from 1880¹ until 1894² supervised the sewing in Antrobus and Seven Oaks school.

The visits of ladies and this form of help had practically disappeared by the end of the century, though the custom lingered on in some schools where there was a strong link between a particularly interested family such as there was between the Brooke family and Halton schools, where Lady Brooke was still hearing reading in Halton Girls' School in 1900.³

In these rural schools when denominational instruction was given so thoroughly and where a service in church was frequently substituted for a lesson in Religious Instruction, a proportion of the children were undoubtedly nonconformists. Yet there is no record of the withdrawal of children for either the period allotted to Religious Instruction or attendance at Church services. The 'Conscience Clause'

1. Antrobus and Seven Oaks Log Book - 23.8.1880.
2. Ibid - 20.7.1894.
3. Halton Girls' School Log Book - 29.8.1900.

was not an issue - entries in the School Log Book which record and comment on the constant movement between the Wesleyan and Church of England Schools in Weston indicated that Religious Instruction was not a consideration in the choice of school by many parents, material advantages were much more important issues.

Weston Point School Log Book

- 10.9.1875. "Admitted a boy called Lunt this week from Weston Wesleyan School but think he is only a straggler as this is not his first appearance at different times."
- 17.9.1875. "Find was correct in my surmises about Lunt - Mr. Lane, Weston having offered to allow him to return to Weston for half fees which he did. This is not the first instance of children being bribed to leave here and attend the Chapel School.
- 20.4.1891. "William Darlington asked permission to attend this school. He states that he has attended both Church and Wesleyan School at Weston . . . He has no reasonable excuse for leaving."
- 20.4.1877. "Mary Yarwood brought word that now she would have to pay 2d per week she was going to Weston School."
- 31.3.1876. "Rev. S. Bagnall called and asked about the Mills absence from school. Explained the only reason I knew for their being away. They have also, it appears, left the Sunday School for what cause I know not but conjecture that there are more attractions in the Wesleyan School in the way of prizes and trips."

Weston Church of England School Log Book

- 30.8.1889. "Sarah Whitehead absent since July 12th. She was sent for her school fee after the holidays and is still in arrears. The Attendance Officer visited yesterday to say she has gone to the Wesleyan School."

10.1.1876. "Two children gone to the Wesleyan School as they had not obtained prizes at the Christmas Examination."

West Point Church of England School Log Book

7.10.1881. "I am told that Mrs. Clarke of the Weaver Hotel has sent her two girls to the Weston Wesleyan School because she received a warning from the Attendance Officer of their irregular attendance at this school. This is the fashion here when people can't do as they like with the school."

A feature of some of the Voluntary Schools was the examination by Mr. Cox, the "Organising Master to the Educational Council of the Diocese of Chester."¹ A fee for his services was required, consequently his employment depended upon the strength of the finances and the necessity and desire to raise or maintain the standard of the secular work in the school. Halton Boys' Grammar School was one in which he was employed to maintain the existing high standard.

In Norley National School, which was declared inefficient² in 1897, he was a frequent visitor, as a sample of entries in the School Log Book indicate:

School Log Book

1.5.1901. "Visit by Mr. Cox."
 9.10.1901. "Mr. Cox attended today."
 19.12.1901. "Mr. Cox visited and examined the school."
 21.2.1901. "Mr. Cox visited and examined the school."

Finance was an ever present source of worry. The grant earned at the annual examination was of major importance to Voluntary Schools. The anxiety of the Manager and the efforts which the Master made to secure attendance of all pupils is evident from the following extract from the Log Book of Weston Point School in 1876:

1. Norley School Log Book - 29.2.1901.
 2. " " " " - 8.5.1899.

- June 23rd "Sent to enquire whether two or three of the children who have made up their attendance in this school but have now left, would attend at the examination and in all cases received a satisfactory reply."
- June 30th "End of school year. Ask the Rev. S. Bagnall to write to the Government Inspector asking whether the examination was to be held on Friday 7th or Monday 10th July as it specified Friday the 10th on Inspector's note of advice respecting Examination."
- July 7th "Every child with the exception of Elizabeth Cowley, who had not returned from Northwich, was present today. Several came from Northwich and others who had left school were present but the Inspector not coming the children were all warned to attend on Monday as the Inspector would surely be here then. Had to pay Bonelle for leaving his work and he must return by train on Monday evening at the latest. Had the Schedule called over so that there might not be any doubt as to the numbers present. Rev. S. Bagnall called during the week and also several times on the Friday."
- July 14th "Rev. S. Bagnall called several times during the day making enquiries whether the Inspector had been. Sent up to Weston School but could get no word only that the Inspector was to examine Holy Trinity Schools Runcorn tomorrow so will send there. Every one of the children whose names were on the Schedule were present without exception waiting on from hour to hour."
- July 11th "Received word that the Inspection was to be on Friday 14th at 10 in the morning. Was a clerical error putting 10th instead of 14th."

- July 12th "Word brought that Weston School children were to have an excursion to Overton Hills on Friday. This will keep three of those qualified for examination away as they are now attending there. Send a telegram to Winnington Park Chemical Works to Mr. Francis Bonnell to allow Henry to come over to attend the examination but his grandmother doubts his being able to come having been here all day Friday and Monday."
- July 13th "Two of those who were going to the Weston excursion are now going to attend which is very considerate on the part of their parents. Expect that nearly the whole will be present which is much to be desired. The Rev. S. Bagnall has called every day this week and is anxious that no pain may be spared that all may be present."
- July 14th "Government Examination today. Four absentees Henry Bonnell's master refused to allow him to attend as he had already been at school on two occasions for the exam and there had been none. Ellen and Ann Savage were at Meir School Treat and William Tatlock had to go for the doctor. Broke up today for 2 weeks holiday."

The overriding consideration for the need to economise was reflected in the numerous instances of overcrowding, of which the following entries in the School Log Books are but a sample:

Weston School Log Book

- 19.9.1893. "The classroom for infants is small and inconvenient, it has accommodation for only 21 and the average for the year seems to be 30."

Halton Grammar School Log Book

- 2.8.1880. "The school is much overcrowded and the work has necessarily suffered a little."

Stretton Girls School Log Book

"The infants room is much overcrowded."

Weston Point School Log Book

"Infants' Class - the room holds only 46, and there are 72 on the books with an average of 49."

The enlargement or erection of buildings was deferred for as long as possible but the necessary work was eventually carried out. The alternative was the election of a School Board or the reduction of the grant, a penalty which was imposed on the Managers of Stockton Heath Girls' School, in 1886, because of their reluctance to improve the premises in spite of a "considerable balance in hand."¹

Economy measures also affected the quality and staffing of the schools. The phrase "The staff of the school should at once be strengthened" appeared with unflinching regularity during the period. A contributory factor to the weakness in quality of the staff was the employment of pupil teachers whose low academic standards were reflected in their examination results. The pupil teachers who passed "well" were rare, most passed "fairly", and many failed. These results were not surprising. The long hours of work in the classroom which the Memorandum of Agreement limited to twenty five each week, were but a part of the pupil teachers commitments. In addition instruction for their examinations was given by the head teacher. The times of this varied. In Halton Girls' School they had an early start - a comment on a visit by the Vicar at 8.23 a.m. read:

"found pupil teacher receiving instruction from the head mistress."²

But in its counterpart, the Boys' Grammar School, it was still earlier. In 1878 the pupil teacher there received instruction from 8.0 a.m. - 9.0 a.m.

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1. Stockton Heath Infant School Log Book - 13.8.1886.
 2. Halton Girls' School Log Book - 1.10.1896.

In the Stockton Heath schools in 1876, the arrangements for the instruction of pupil teachers were:¹

Boys	4 - 5 p.m. in school
Girls	6 - 7.30 p.m. in Mistress' House
Infants	7.55 - 8.55 a.m. in school

The pupil teachers day ended with preparation for lessons the next day.

Poor physical conditions, weakness and numerical insufficiency of staff led inevitably to low standards of work in schools. Weston Point Mixed School suffered a reduction of grant in the years 1876, 1880, 1882. Norley was declared inefficient in 1899 and Antrobus and Seven Oaks in 1896 and 1897. The record was held by Weston C.E. where there was a reduction of the grant in 1879, 1882, 1883, 1884 and 1885.² By 1903, however, all schools where records are still in existence, were efficient and some had reached a high standard of efficiency long before then.³

A school with an unblemished record, from the year 1879, was Stockton Heath Girls' School. In 1887⁴ and in 1890⁵ it was awarded the highest merit grant of 3/-. In 1891, the Principal Grant of 14/- was awarded and with the exception of the years 1893, 1894 and 1895, this sum continued to be paid until 1900.

Though records of the grant received were not entered after the year 1900, the final report in 1903⁴ - "the school is going on very well. Both instruction and discipline are thoroughly satisfactory" - indicates that the high standards were maintained.

This consistently high standard of work was achieved in spite of difficulties. In 1885 Her Majesty's Inspector reported that the

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1. School Managers' Minutes for the Stockton Heath Schools - 2.5.1876.
 2. Halton Grammar School Log Book - 24.3.1878.
 3. Details of the grant earned have not been entered in all School Log Books but where these have been noted Weston Point C.E. earned the Principal Grant of 14/- in 1893; Halton Girls' School in 1891; Halton Grammar School in 1896 and Stockton Heath Boys' School in 1892.
 4. Stockton Heath Girls' School Log Book - 22.7.1887.
 5. Ibid - 15.8.1890.

premises required to be improved¹ but it was not until 1887 that the classroom was enlarged.²

In 1898 Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd Kynnersley, reported that "the premises are generally bad."³ In 1900 the classroom was "severely overcrowded,"⁴ and in 1901 Her Majesty's Inspector commented:

"The school continues to do well in spite of the difficulties of crowded and ill-constructed premises."⁵

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1. Stockton Heath Girls' School Log Book - 14.8.1884.
 2. Ibid - 22.7.1887.
 3. Ibid - 24.5.1898.
 4. Ibid - 15.11.1900.
 5. Ibid - 12.8.1901.

IV

VOLUNTARY EFFORT

In 1902 when provision of accommodation by Voluntary bodies was reduced to approximately 55% at the National level¹, the Voluntary bodies in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn were still providing approximately 76% of the accommodation.² In the School Board District of Runcorn, in 1902, 64% of the accommodation belonged to Voluntary schools. The Roman Catholic Church increased its provision for 162 children to 224, an increase of approximately 25%. The Managers of Holy Trinity Church increased theirs from 543 in 1870 to 631 in 1881³, but could not extend further because of financial difficulties. The Wesleyans, who decided in 1894 to transfer their schools, did so partly for financial reasons. Though the maintenance of schools with accommodation for 784 children was a heavy financial burden⁴, the decisive factor in the transfer to the School Board was probably due to the firm statement of policy in 1891 by the Methodist Education Committee that "the primary objective of the Methodist policy is the establishment of school boards everywhere."⁵

The Parish Church almost doubled its provision between 1870 and 1903. In 1870 the Boys' and Girls' National School and Newtown Mission School had accommodation for 710 children. On 31st December 1902 there was accommodation for 1365.⁶ In this year it was therefore providing more accommodation than the School Board which had accommodation for 1233 children in 1903.

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1. Estimated from statistics published in the Report of the Board of Education 1902/1903 p21
 2. Appendix p.374.
 3. Files of National Society - 5.12.1881.
 4. Ed.21/1913 - 17.2.1894.
 5. Quoted from Church and State in English Education, p.60. M.Cruikshank.
 6. Chester Record Office C,C.E.2/3. County of Chester Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff 1903.

Support for the Voluntary Schools in Frodsham was outstanding. In 1870 there was accommodation for 426 pupils; in December 1902 for 809. Thus in the space of thirty years when there was a decline nationally of Voluntary provision, in Frodsham it was approximately doubled. The avoidance of the cost of a School Board made a strong appeal to the ratepayers, many of whom were wealthy landowners. The cost of a School Board was the keynote of the appeal for a Voluntary rate in 1874¹ and that this fear of expense still lingered in 1883, is evident from the following extract from a letter written by Lord Cholmondeley, in response to an appeal for a donation towards the provision of a classroom for the National Girls' School, in 1883:

"Rev. Dear Sir,

I am quite aware that when sufficient accommodation is not furnished it may ultimately lead to the establishment of a School Board, which would prove a heavy burden to the ratepayers of the Parish, whether landlords or occupiers. I shall therefore, for the sake of my tenants in the parish, be ready to help in raising the amount of £150, by a contribution of £30. I trust in such a parish as Frodsham there will be no difficulty in raising the necessary amount."²

In addition to the fear of a School Board there was a universal desire in Frodsham that education should be under the aegis of the Voluntary bodies, and this was not the feeling of the Church of England alone. The Wesleyans, aware in 1877 of the need for future additional accommodation, hoped that it would be possible for them to establish an Infant School³ and enquired if the Education Department would "be prepared" to sanction the establishment of an Elementary School

1. See page 304.

2. Minutes of Trustees of National Girls' Schools - 23.6.1883.

3. P.R.O. Ed.21/1768 - 13.11.1877.

and stated further:

"the premises proposed to be used are not now in use, but have been used for Sunday School purposes, the premises are in good repair, well lighted and will make suitable premises for an Infant School."¹

While money necessary for the day to day upkeep of the school was raised by school concerts², special Church services and contributions from a list of subscribers³, the major maintenance and provision of accommodation was largely financed by donations.

The donations of one Manager, Mr. E. A. Wright, were remarkably generous and those of another, Mr. Hayes, deserve mention. A deficit in the accounts, in 1877, of the National Schools was reduced by the spontaneous offer of three Managers. Mr. Wright and Mr. Hayes each promised to contribute the sum of £50 and a third offered £20 on condition that the balance was raised.⁴ In the year 1889, Mr. Wright and Mr. Hayes again donated the sum of £50 each towards the cost of carrying out improvements to the Overton Endowed Boys' School.⁵ The outstanding contribution of the period was from Mr. Wright, in 1883, when additional accommodation was required for the National Girls' School, he made an offer that if one classroom was erected he would contribute £100, but if two were erected he would increase his offer to £150.⁶

The universal support given to the schools was evident in the year 1892, when the Overton Endowed Boys' School was rebuilt.

Recorded lists of donations in the Minutes of the meetings of the

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1. There is no record of a reply to this letter but a Wesleyan School was not opened.
 2. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Girls' School - 13.5.1899.
 3. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' School - 2.8.1888.
 4. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Girls' School - 1.6.1877.
 5. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' School - 16.5.1889.
 6. Minutes of the Trustees of the National Girls' Schools - 12.6.1883.

Feoffees, show the scale of the generosity of the wealthier members of the population¹ which amounted to £490 but the raising of the sum of £500 from a Bazaar which lasted for three days². indicates a concerted effort which must have included the work of many who were unable to give much in any other way.

Following the opening of an additional classroom at the Boys' School on the 29th January 1902, the cost of which (£200) was raised before the opening ceremony³, His Majesty's Inspector began his report on the school in 1902 with:

"The Managers are unwearied in their determination to improve the school buildings of the parish."⁴

This was a well earned tribute to the work and leadership of the Managers but it was equally applicable to the people of Frodsham who so liberally supported them.

The achievement of the rural area in preserving the Voluntary Schools was no less than that of Runcorn or Frodsham. While the Weston Wesleyan School, which was built in 1873 by Thomas Hazlehurst at a cost of £950,⁵ was the only Voluntary School to be built during the School Board era, strenuous efforts were made, not only to bring the existing accommodation up to the standards required by the operation of the Elementary Education Act 1870, but also to maintain, extend and comply with the increasing demands of the Education Department for improvement.

1. See Appendix p.404.

2. Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' C.E.School - 6.2.1892.

3. Overton Boys' School Log Book - 29.1.1902.

4. Ibid - 1.7.1902.

5. Runcorn Examiner - 12.7.1873.

Initially, the money required was in some districts raised by voluntary contribution, or a voluntary rate. The inhabitants of Antrobus and Seven Oaks improved the existing premises and supply of equipment and built a classroom for 43 children by Voluntary subscription.¹ An entry on the fly leaf of the Antrobus and Seven Oaks School Log Book reads:

September 1873. "New School built by Voluntary Rate of sixpence in the pound."

The Vicar of Frodsham, the Rev, W. Cotton, a fanatical opponent of School Boards, who was correspondent of the Helsby and Kingsley and Newtown National Schools, added on his own responsibility an infant school which held 80 children, to the existing Helsby School:

"on condition that the Tenant Farmers who would have to pay for a Board School would guarantee a voluntary yearly subscription to be raised amongst themselves equivalent to a 3d rate."²

Accommodation for seventy boys was required at Kingsley and Newtown National School, the people "strongly opposed to the establishment of a School Board in so small a district,"³ agreed to pay a voluntary rate."⁴

On two occasions the Stockton Heath Schools were saved from being transferred to a School Board by the generosity of those who supported the Voluntary Schools. In the year 1880 the schools required to be enlarged and repairs to the existing premises were urgently needed, but there was a "deficiency in the Treasurers Balance against the school"⁵, a sum of £540 was required. At a meeting of the School

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1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1658 - 17.2.1873.
 2. Files of National Society for Kingsley & Newtown National Schools - 14.7.1874.
 3. P.R.O. Ed.21/1818 - 5.11.1873.
 4. Ibid - 16.1.1874.
 5. Stockton Heath School Managers' Minutes - 6.11.1880.

Managers in November, several Managers promised to contribute liberally towards making up the necessary amount¹ and it was decided to write to the landowners and "others interested in the property in the district, soliciting subscriptions towards a Fund for the purpose of enlarging the schools and carrying out the necessary and urgent repairs and also towards the working expenses of the schools."² In November 1881 donations amounting to £499.14.7. had been received towards the fund.³

Two years later there were further financial difficulties. At a meeting in October 1883 the Managers decided that they could no longer maintain the schools and informed the Education Department of this decision.⁴ The prospect of the formation of a School Board obviously caused consternation not only in the parishes concerned⁵ but also in the adjoining parish of Stretton. The debt was cleared off by a donation and annual subscriptions were promised for the upkeep of the schools. In view of the strong feelings of the people against the formation of a School Board and the financial support which they were willing to give to maintain the Voluntary Schools, the Managers at their meeting in November, decided that they could carry on.⁶ The Education Department was informed of this decision and in reply to a letter from the Department asking them to show evidence of their ability to support the schools, sent the following reply⁷:

Stockton Heath Vicarage,
Warrington,

December 20th 1883.

Sir,

In answer to your letter received this morning, I have the honour to lay before you the following evidence of the ability of the Managers to carry on the Voluntary Schools of the Parish of Stockton Heath. The deficit that the Managers

-
1. Appendix 403.
 2. Stockton Heath School Managers Minutes - 11.12.1880.
 3. Ibid - 26.11.1881.
 4. Ibid - 20.10.1883.
 5. The parishes referred to are civil parishes.
 6. Ibid - 11.11.1883.
 7. P.R.O. Ed.21/1940 - 20.12.1883.

were unable to meet amounted to about £80 per annum. Since giving notice to the Education Department of their consequent inability to provide for the Education of the children in this Parish, all outstanding liabilities have been met by a donation of £100 to the schools, and in order to ensure the financial working of the schools in the future the following annual subscriptions have been provided:

Mr.G.Egerton Warburton, J.P.	£10. 0. 0.
Mr.R.Davies	£10. 0. 0.
Mr. I. Marson, J.P.	£10. 0. 0.
Mr. I. C. Parr, J.P.	£ 5. 0. 0.
Mr. B. R. Rawson	£ 2. 0. 0.
Mr. H. T. Lyon, J.P.	£10. 0. 0.
Mr. I. Tinsley	£10. 0. 0.
Mr. L. Wright	£ 5. 0. 0.
Mr. Naylor	£ 2. 0. 0.

In addition to these promised subscriptions the Director of the Wilderspool Brewery Company Limited, have undertaken to give annually pound for pound as much as is subscribed for this purpose from all other sources. In addition to these promises the Annual School Sermons have never realised less than £28 and it may now be possible even to do without these. One reason for the strong feeling manifested upon the subject is that Canon Dodd, Vicar of Stretton, has his school close to the boundary of this township of Appleton providing for the southerly portion, and if Board Schools were established for the district of Appleton and Lower Walton he and his friends who support his schools are of opinion that his schools would suffer. So strong is this feeling, that if a School Board were established it would be in the face of a public opposition, and would not be continued if the district has power to discontinue it.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Rev.) T. Sinclair Tofts.

The Education Department considered that this letter afforded "satisfactory evidence" that the schools could be efficiently maintained and did not press for the formation of a School Board.¹

In spite of the financial difficulties of maintaining the schools, in 1902 the Voluntary Bodies in the Union of Runcorn excluding those in the School Board District of Runcorn were providing approximately 83% of the accommodation.

1. P.R.O. Ed.21/1940 - 20.12.1883.

CHAPTER IX

C O N C L U S I O N

The area is interesting, not because of the conclusions and generalisations which can be made, but for the variety which it offered in the schools and in the bodies concerned with education, the School Boards, the Voluntary Bodies and the Board of Guardians, and also because it reflected the difficulties and problems at a Regional and National level. In the Runcorn School Board District each school had a different flavour. The National Boys and Girls Schools, with their financial stability but not unlimited resources, maintained a good standard of work throughout the years with little apparent pressure to obtain results. They were the bulwark of the Church of England and limited the expansion of the School Board. Holy Trinity National Schools were poor, their existence depended on examination results and average attendance. Good results and good attendance were achieved but throughout the period, particularly before 1890, the school reflected the anxiety and pressure to earn its keep and the struggles of the poverty stricken school were obvious in its staffing and equipment. The Victoria Road schools (formerly Greenway Road Schools) young and vigorous, building up and achieving a good reputation in competition with the Voluntary schools and in the process, experiencing and overcoming all the difficulties of a school, which, in the early years received only the poorest and most backward children, and those whom no other school wanted. The Newtown Mission Schools and the Mill Brow Board School, both of which had poor physical conditions and a poor type of pupil, were a distinct contrast. Newtown Mission School, the product of poverty and neglect which did not earn a grant of 17/- until 1901 but Mill Brow overcame the initial difficulties associated with its tradition as a ragged school and the higher grant was awarded annually after the year 1891.

Though there were but four schools in Frodsham this individuality was also evident. The Overton Endowed Boys Grammar School was the only one in the Union where the Master could employ and pay his own substitute, who when he was appointed, was, in effect, an additional member of staff. The school, in spite of extreme difficulty due to lack of accommodation, reflected the stability and standards of its headmaster, who invariably restored the standards which had fallen as a result of poor conditions, until, because of age, he had to admit that the struggle was too much and he employed a younger man to assist him. In contrast was the National Girls School with its dismal record of poor teachers and low standards until 1899. The National Infants School anonymous in its obscurity except for its brief period of notoriety when the Mistress was dismissed, and finally the Five Crosses Infant School, which in spite of the variety created by having thirteend headmistresses in twenty-eight years, consistently did good work.

Though a complete record of the rural voluntary schools is not available, those records which are in existence, show that there was no less variety in these schools and the sample provides interesting contrasts. The inefficiency of Norley and the mediocrity of Antrobus and Seven Oaks contrasted with the good work of Stockton Heath and the Halton schools. The competition for pupils which continued between the Church of England schools and the Wesleyan school was a situation peculiar to the Weston schools.

The Weston Local School Attendance Committee was notable for its inefficiency and contrasted with the vigorous and highly efficient committee in Frodsham.

The School Boards in the area, too, provided variety; a variety in range from that of the single Parish of Dutton and Daresbury, the united Districts of Aston and Whitley and that of the larger Board in

Runcorn, with its more sophisticated organisation which included a School Attendance Committee and a School Management Committee as a permanent feature.

Though the rural School Board had a common policy of economy and were located within a small compact area, yet each Board had its own identity. Aston School Board, in the early years at any rate, had all the ingredients of the Management Committee of a Voluntary School and was the only Board which was not called upon to deal with any problem which excited the interest of the press. Dutton; a parish so small that the School Board was in receipt of the small population grant, avoided an increase in the provision of accommodation, and therefore an increase in the rates by keeping down the average attendance, had a period of publicity when it had to cope with the problem of the admission of the workhouse children without incurring additional expense. The Board was a clever negotiator; it was firm in its dealings with the Department of Education and with the Board of Guardians, and, at the same time, maintained good relationships with both. Whitley U.D. School Board wrestled throughout the years with a higher rate than its immediate neighbours and was distinctive for its lively elections. Daresbury was the only Board which tried to economise by doing without the services of a School Attendance Officer and was notable for its consideration for the physical welfare of the children by the provision of facilities for heating up the children's mid-day meals.

Though there were but four Rural School Boards in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn, many of the characteristics of Rural School Boards which excited comment by Her Majesty's Inspectors, are applicable to them, either individually, or collectively.

The initial problems concerning the selection and acquisition of

sites which arose in the Whitley and Dutton Boards, were obviously a major problem in the counties of Devon and Cornwall and were so troublesome as to be included in the General Report for the year 1876 by Her Majesty's Inspector, H.F.Codd, Esq., when he commented :

"One of the most difficult parts of my duty is to meet these country boards from time to time, as I am called upon to do, to discuss the question of the most suitable site for a school, and to observe how they are torn asunder by selfish considerations. One wants to have the school as near as possible to some outlying farmhouse in which, or the occupant of which, he is interested; another perhaps, owns a patch of land which he is anxious to dispose of at a remunerative figure; another is jealous of the parson, and does not want the school to be too near the Church, and so on, anything but the convenience of the largest number of children.

Sometimes the difficulty arises from the unwillingness of the squire, who owns probably the bulk of the land, to part with the suitable site, and then the pecuniary terrors of compulsory purchase are set up as a bogey before these little Boards." ¹

A tribute was paid to the Rural School Boards by Mr. Currey in his General Report for 1875, for the County of Northampton when he stated :

"In parishes where the School Boards have had to supply new schools the work has been done in a satisfactory and businesslike manner, even where the lack of education and educational experience among the members of the Board might have warranted some fear of failure." ²

was equally applicable to the School Boards in the Union where available records do not reveal any difficulties encountered in the construction or any deficiencies in the completed buildings.

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1876/77, p. 455.
2. Report of the Committee of Council 1875/76, p. 288.

A close parallel to the composition and possibly the method of Election of the Aston United District School Board is described by Roger Sellman in "Devon Village Schools" -

"One of the first village School Boards to be set up in the county was at Holbeton, where the Managers of the existing National School formed a closed obligarchy of parson and landowners. They so controlled the village that they were able to call a ratepayers meeting and get themselves constituted a School Board without even the formality of a poll, since no-one else had the temerity to stand." ¹

Other School Boards, like Daresbury, while not dominated by a powerful Church party as Aston U.D. School Board, was, nevertheless recognised the Vicar as a leader and an observation to this effect was made by Mr. Warburton in his General Report for 1876 on the County of Hampshire:

"In my country parishes it seems to be tacitly assumed everywhere (with perhaps one doubtful exception) that if the clergyman will undertake the superintendence of the school which provides public education for the parish, he is the fit and proper person to do it." ²

The difficulty which Aston School Board experienced in getting candidates to stand for election in the later years, was experienced in the Rural School Boards of Hampshire as early as 1876:

"when new elections are taking place for small country boards, I hear a great deal said of the difficulty of finding persons of position and intelligence willing to come forward for election"

observed Mr. Warburton. ³

Reports upon the interest taken by the Rural School Boards in their

1. Devon Village Schools in the Nineteenth Century. Roger R. Sellman. p.57
2. Report of the Committee of Council 1876/77, p.627.
3. Mr. Warburton's General Report for 1876 on the County of Hampshire, Report of Committee of Council 1876/77, p.627.

schools was conflicting. In the General Report of 1876 on the County of Durham, by Her Majesty's Inspector, H.E.Oakley stated :

"Their (the School Boards) schools have been well built, well equipped with school apparatus, and the salaries being generally good most of the teachers are much above average. The weak part is the management, for I seldom hear of Board schools being visited at all. The Clerk, if a solicitor, usually regards the business from a legal point of view, and is not apt to take any personal interest in the schools. It is time that the accounts are satisfactorily kept, and at the committee meetings various points connected with the welfare of the schools are carefully considered, but there are no personal relations between the Boards and their teachers and scholars. The priceless tie of sympathy is nearly always."¹

But in the same year, in a report by Mr. Arlington on portions of Kent and Sussex, the position was similar to that obtaining in the Runcorn Union School Boards:

"The greatest interest has been shown by the members of the Boards in the welfare of their schools which I have visited. There is at present no sign that the teachers in them are more likely to suffer from want of encouragement than those in Voluntary Schools."²

The inactivity of the first School Board for Whitley, which built a school and did not open it, was not an isolated incident, an equally unfortunate episode was reported by Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd-Kynnersley about the School Board of Hope in Flint, where a Board was formed in March, 1871, and was dissolved in 1874.

"During that period of three years it was found that no less than £100 had been expended, for which there was nothing to show but a small piece of land, about half an acre in extent,

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1876/77, p. 524.

2. Ibid. p.396.

sold by the succeeding board for 80L. The total sum expended by the first Board was therefore £620, the only evidence of which was the plan of the school, and the architect was said to have claimed this."¹

Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. Currey wrote:

"Still the institution of School Boards is not popular. The expense of election and working are considerable. Where separate School Boards are formed in contiguous parishes, there seems to be a great waste of moral and material power which would be avoided if a number of parishes could be grouped into one educational union. The parish, in short, is too small a unit to carry on educational government with economy. It seems almost superfluous to repeat what has been so often said, that the parish is in many cases such a small body that it can hardly furnish five members competent to form a board."²

Twenty-five years later a criticism of the small units of administration in country districts was again included in his report for the year 1900, when he said:

"Owing to the fact that each parish or school board district is an independent unit, country education as a whole suffers from isolation and want of organisation . . . Before country education can be organised into a better system it seems necessary that some form of association and control spread over large areas, must be called into existence - an association which, however, should not supersede local management or stifle local interest."³

The choice of the Parish as a unit for a School Board District in rural areas showed a lack of vision. It was undoubtedly an administratively simple unit but it was obvious that the framers of the Act had not considered and had no conception of the difficulties which the selection of such a small unit would have in the future, this was

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1876/77, p.571.

2. Report of the Committee of Council 1875/76, p. 288.

3. Report of Board of Education, 1900/01, p.21.

apparent at a later stage in the debate, when the question of cost was discussed.

The parish was chosen for its easy administration in connection with the levy of rates. In the debate in Parliament on Clause 33 of the Education Bill (Formation by Education Department of United Districts), Forster, in his reply to an amendment, said that he was aware that there were difficulties in taking the small parish as a unit when he said:

"They might originally have taken the union instead of the parish as a unit, but there were such difficulties in the way that the idea was abandoned, and it was then found that small parishes also presented some obstacles to a smoothly and efficiently working measure. Therefore, they took power to unite parishes to any extent which might seem necessary."

As the debate proceeded it became clear that some members felt that even a United District may not be a sufficiently large unit. Sir John Pakington expressed the opinion "that the successful working of the Bill would depend a good deal on the nature of the district, and his fear was that in many cases these would be too small, though he quite agreed that the parish was better than the union for the purpose of rating." Another member moved an amendment which, in his opinion, would tend to secure the independence both of the ratepayers and of the School Boards in small districts, that

"the Education Department shall (except in the case of populous parishes containing not less than 7,000 inhabitants) cause a united school district to be formed by the grouping of parishes, such school district to contain in the aggregate not less than 7,000 inhabitants, and upon such union to be formed for such united district."

"Mr. Forster objected to the clause on the ground that it would unduly fetter the discretion of the Education Department, which was sure to be desirous of making the districts as big as possible."¹

1. National Education Union - Verbatim Report of the Debate in Parliament during the progress of the Elementary Education Bill 1870 p.387.

The amendment was withdrawn and in consequence such small districts as Dutton, Daresbury, Aston and Whitley, with all their inherent weaknesses and problems, came into existence all over the country.

During this period, attendance was a national problem, and the problems associated with this small area were a reflection of those experienced on a National scale. In the presentation of the Education Bill to Parliament, Forster said it was the aim:

"to bring elementary education within the reach of every English home, age, and within the reach of those children who had not homes."

The scope of the Elementary Education Act 1870, was limited to the provision of accommodation for those who could get themselves to school and to "permissive compulsion" of attendance by the School Board, but by the end of the century it was administratively possible to have educational provision for any type of child. The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act 1893, made education authorities responsible for providing education for blind children from the age of 5 to 16 years and for deaf children from 7 to 16 years. The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899, gave local education authorities the power to provide education for mentally defective, physically defective and epileptic children from the age of 7 to 16 years. As a result of these Acts, there was in the year 1908 - 1909 provision in special schools for 17,610 children¹. in England and Wales, but in Runcorn there was no provision for these children. Following the Act of 1893, blind children were sent to schools for the blind outside the district by the School Board which paid a proportion of their fees.²

1. The Health of the School Child, p.20. H.M.S.O.

2. Runcorn School Board Minutes - 5.6.1894.

The Attendance Acts of 1876, 1880, 1893 and 1899 not only attempted to enforce attendance at school but to prolong the period of education.

Her Majesty's Inspector, E.M.K. Sneyd-Kynnersley, in his General Report on the Chester District in 1882, wrote :

"It is easy to build schools, it is not so easy to get the children to schools."¹

The population exhibited a marked resistance to regular attendance, and a percentage of 83.15 for England and Wales for the year 1902 showed how limited that success was. The parents and children in the Poor Law Union of Runcorn were no more desirous of education than those in the country in general, the conformity with and the deviation from the natural pattern of attendance, can be measured against the findings of the Report on Attendance issued by the National Union of Teachers in the year 1891.

Some of the obstacles to regular attendance listed in that report were - negligence, indifference, indolence and thriftlessness of parents, poverty, epidemics, inability to pay fees, inclement weather and Private and Dame Schools. In addition, in country areas, farm work, which changed its pattern according to the season, was a reason for absence of a large number of children.² All of these excuses recurred with monotonous regularity in the Log Books of many schools of the area throughout the year.

A summary of evidence of very great leniency of the magistrates stated :

"Everywhere there is evidence of very great leniency with which the Magistracy deals with irregularity of school attendance.

This is shown by a flat refusal to convict . . ."

An accusation which could have been levelled at the Daresbury Magistrates but not those of Frodsham or Runcorn. The appointment of part-time

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1882/83, p.367.

2. Ed. 10/11 National Union of Teachers Report on School Attendance in England and Wales.

School Attendance Officers, which was the practice of the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee, was in line with the general pattern. Out of 144 Rural Associations who replied to the question asked by the National Union of Teachers if School Attendance Officers were otherwise engaged, 132 said "Yes".¹

The findings of the Report on the "Constitution and Character of the Local Authority" showed that, as in the Runcorn Union, the authorities in the urban districts, whether they were School Boards or School Attendance Committees appointed by the Town Council, were much more active than those in rural areas. School Attendance Committees in the rural areas met with severe criticism. One return said:

"The teachers are absolutely unanimous in denouncing the indifference, not to say disgraceful way in which the Attendance Committees do their work,"

and the Report continued -

"Several returns show that the School Attendance Committees in some instances exist only in name."

The following extract will explain the circumstances under which these Committees act:

"As a matter of fact the meetings of the Committee are held while the fortnightly meetings of the Guardians are in actual progress. Volunteers are asked to examine the School Attendance Officers' books in the adjoining room. The last meeting of which I have definite information, consisted of a retired publican and a small shop-keeper - both guardians, but not members of the Attendance Committee."²

The Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee was a direct contrast to this picture. It was a properly constituted body with efficient administration so far as the conduct of the business of such a committee was concerned, but it reflected the general attitude of such committees, in that it had

1. Ed.10/11 National Union of Teachers Report on School Attendance in England and Wales.

2. P.R.O. Ed. 10/11 National Union of Teachers Report on School Attendance in England and Wales.

no serious concern for its educational function which was the enforcement of regular attendance. The comment of Her Majesty's Inspector, Mr. in his General Report for 1885 for the West Central Division of England:

"A School Attendance Committee has this inherent defect that it is selected by and out of a body of men elected for the very different purpose of administering the Poor Law." ¹

was undoubtedly the fundamental reason for the lack of enthusiasm for this work which had been thrust upon the Runcorn Union School Attendance Committee.

Miscalculations and deficiencies of the Elementary Education Act 1870 clearly emerge in the study of this area, the cost to the ratepayers which Forster estimated would be no more than 3d. in the pound, was challenged in the debate on the Bill. Statistics were produced to show that the cost in one small parish with a population of 300 and a rateable value of £2,000 would be 7½d, whilst in a larger parish with a population of 600 and a rateable value of £4,000 it would be 6d.² While a rate of 1/- in the pound was estimated for such a parish as St. George-in-the-East in London.³ These were more accurate forecasts but they too underestimated the cost. In the year 1902, 61.1% of the boroughs and 48.3% of the parishes in England had an Education rate of 9d or over in the pound, and the average rate for England for the year 1901-1902 was 12.4d.⁴ Even in the Runcorn Union where costs were kept to a minimum, the rate varied in the year 1902 from approximately 4d in the pound in Aston to 9d in Runcorn and Whitley in 1894 was 8d. All of these exceeded the estimated 3d in the pound.

The effect which the 1870 Act had on the Voluntary Schools was unforeseen and undesired. In his introduction of the Bill to Parliament

1. Report of the Committee of Council 1885-86, p.249.

2. National Education Union - A Verbatim Report of the Debate in Parliament during the progress of the Elementary Education Bill 1870.

3. Ibid

4. See appendix p.407.

Forster said:

"We must take care not to destroy in building up - not to destroy the existing system in introducing a new one."

The appointment of the Cross Commission in the year 1886 was partly a result of the severe financial difficulties which the Voluntary Schools were experiencing in their efforts to survive in the face of competition from the School Boards and the Voluntary Schools Act of 1897 was a rescue operation. In spite of the fact that the Runcorn Union was a wealthy part of Cheshire where there was strong financial support for the Voluntary Schools, stringent economy was of necessity an integral part of their policy and this was reflected in the staffing of the schools which was inferior to that of the Board Schools and in the deferring of the provision of additional accommodation or necessary repairs often until the reduction of the grant was threatened.

The 1870 Act was an Elementary Education Act and as such limited its horizons to elementary education. The framers of the Act considered one dimension only, that of the necessity to provide accommodation; it is not surprising that in the climate of opinion of 1870 they did not realise and could not visualise the impact which this Act would have on the children and on the schools. With the influx of children as a result of the operation first of the bye-laws for compulsory attendance and later the Attendance Acts which gradually raised the school leaving age, bright pupils were staying on longer in schools and therefore required a more advanced level of work. Progressive School Boards like Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, London, etc., made incursion into Secondary Education by the entry of pupils in the upper standards of the elementary schools for examination under the Science and Art Department, which led eventually to the establishment of higher grade schools. Runcorn Union was not a progressive area and though the standard of elementary education in the schools in 1902 was, in so far as records are available, generally thoroughly satisfactory, no school attempted to exceed the limits of the

Code.

Whilst the inability to foresee the need for secondary education can be understood in an era of social immobility, it is difficult to understand the omission of the provision of adequately trained teachers. The state provided the schools but it was left to the Voluntary Bodies to provide the teachers.

In his introduction to Parliament of the 1902 Education Bill, Balfour referred to this defect in the 1870 Act when he said:

"Any child who wishes to become a teacher gets made a pupil teacher, and when he has reached that status half his time goes to teaching and the other half . . . to learning . . . What is the result? . . . I find that 36% . . . have never got through the examination for the certificate and that 55% of the existing teachers have never been to a Training College of any sort. . . We spend £18,000,000 a year on Elementary Education. Can anybody believe that under the system I have described we get the best results. . . for so vast an expenditure?"¹

This serious defect was obvious in the Runcorn Union where only approximately 40% of the staff was certificated and this percentage included teachers who were certificated but not trained. There were undoubtedly many who were in this category particularly those who were in charge of infant schools.²

Though this was a very small area where within its organisation and schools there was such variety and individuality, it is possible to note some general characteristics. All the School Boards were efficiently administered. The Runcorn School Boards had three efficient clerks during the period of its existence. F. Rigby, Clerk to the Runcorn School Board was also Clerk to the Darésbury School Board until 1888,³ when he was succeeded by Charles Linaker a landagent and surveyor, who

1. Quoted from Educational Documents : J. Stewart McClure, p. 151.

2. This percentage is based on the number of staff in the school including pupil teachers, but excluding monitors.

3. Daresbury School Log Book - 28.2.1888.

had been Clerk to the Dutton and Aston School Boards. His professional status indicated his ability to do the work and his negotiations with the Board of Guardians, concerning the admission of the workhouse children, were proof of this ability. He was a man who was genuinely interested in education; in addition to his work as Clerk of the School Boards, he was a member of the School Management Committee of the Frodsham Schools.¹

This was an area which, prior to the Elementary Education Act 1870, was well supplied with long established voluntary schools and the members of the School Boards and the community adopted the practice, associated with the voluntary schools, of the close personal interest in the welfare of the schools and the children in them. H. Neild, chairman of the Whitley Urban District School Board and members of the community were constant visitors to the school and the Ladies Committee, specially formed by the Daresbury School Board, to give assistance and encouragement to the teachers and pupils at Daresbury School. All schools had their prizes for attendance and good work and their annual "treats". The Runcorn Board Schools received as much personal attention as their counterparts, the Voluntary Schools, and their activities were reported in detail in the press.

Though the number of Boards is small and though there were a number of outstandingly good Voluntary Schools, like the Parish schools in Runcorn, there was less variation in the standard of the Board Schools. None, in so far as evidence is available, had had a reduction of a grant and by the year 1890 all² were in a thoroughly satisfactory state of efficiency. The standards of the Voluntary Schools throughout the period was patchy and a loss of grant for defects in instruction, an insufficient staff or accommodation was all too common; as late as

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1. Minutes of the Trustees of the National School Frodsham 2.12.1891.
 2. There is no evidence of the state of efficiency for this year for Aston School.

1902 two of the Voluntary Schools, Antrobus and Seven Oaks and Norley were no more than satisfactory. In 1902 the salaries paid to the various grades of staff in both Board and Voluntary schools, were similar, but salaries paid to Head Teachers varied considerably. No generalisation can be made about the relative overall pattern which applied to salaries in either Board or Voluntary schools. The Board Schools, however, had a distinct advantage in the quality of staff which were employed. Of the eighteen teachers employed who were qualified under Article 68, only one was employed in a Board School.

The Conscience Clause, the cause of so many inflammatory speeches on the platform, was not an issue in this community, which had a substantial nonconformist element. There are no references to trouble in the School Log Books with the exception of the episode reported by a parent in the Frodsham Girls' School, the only comments on this question were those written by Her Majesty's Inspector. Whether there was an overflow of denominational and religious instruction in times allotted for secular instruction and whether all the children went off to Church together, is not revealed.

The policy of economy was common to all bodies concerned with education - The Voluntary Bodies, The School Board and the Board of Guardians. Following the Elementary Education Act 1870, the initial provision of accommodation was generally achieved without undue delay, but in this area it was mainly due to the vigilance of the Education Department with its power of financial sanctions that the supply and quality of accommodation was sustained and that the staffing in the schools reached at least the minimum requirements.

APPENDICES

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION IN THE POOR LAW UNION OF RUNCORN ON31st DECEMBER, 1902.

Total Accommodation provided by School Boards	=	1995
Accommodation provided by Runcorn School Board	=	1233
" " " Rural School Boards	=	762
 Total Accommodation provided by Voluntary Bodies	=	6488
Accommodation provided by the Voluntary Bodies		
" " in Runcorn	=	2220
" " in Frodsham	=	809
" " by Runcorn Parish Church	=	1365

APPENDIX

SALARIES AND STAFFING OF SCHOOLS IN THE POOR LAW UNION OF
RUNCORN FOR THE YEAD ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1902.

1. Voluntary Schools.(a) RUNCORNNumber and particulars of staff.

School	Salary of Head Teacher	No.on Reg.	Cert- ific- ated	Art 50	Art 68	P.T.	Ex. P.T.	Candid- ate.
Runcorn National Boys	220.0.0	467	5	3	-	3	-	1
" Girls	150.0.0	414	5	1	-	2	1	1
" Infants	105.0.0.	321	2	2	-	3	2	1
St.Michaels C.E. Inf.	90.0.0.	256	2	1	1	2	1	-
Holy Trinity Mixed	229.18.0	428	5	1	2	1	-	1
" " Infants	103.18.9	181	1	1	2	1	-	1
St.Edwards R.C.(Mixed)	85.0.0	182	2	-	1	-	-	1
" Infants	75.0.0	93	1	-	1	-	-	1
			12	9	7	12	4	7

(b) FRODSHAM

Frodsham Nat.Girls	101.0.0.	269	2	1	2	2	1	
Five Crosses Infants	77.10.0	102	1	-	-	2	1	
Overton Endowed	145.10.0	266	1	2	1	2	1	
			4	3	3	6	3	

APPENDIX

(c) RURAL AREANumber and particulars of staff.

School	Salary of Head Teacher	No. on Reg.	Cert- ific- ated.	Art 50	Art 68	P.T.	Ex. P.T.	Candid- ate
Alvanley (mixed)	142.0.0.	99	1	-	1	1	-	-
Antrobus and Seven Oaks	90.0.0	76	1	-	1	1	-	-
Appleton Thorn National	82.16.8	75	1	-	1	-	-	1
Great Budworth	145.0.0	179	1	2	1	-	-	-
Grappenhall National	160.0.0	147	1	2	-	-	-	-
Halton Mixed Grammar School	127.0.0	120	1	1	1	-	-	-
Halton Parochial Junior School	65.0.0	75	1	-	1	-	-	-
Halton Infants	65.0.0	82	1	-	1	-	-	1
Helsby National	186.16.0	179	2	-	-	2	1	-
Helsby National Infants	80.0.0	130	1	1	1	-	-	1
Kingsley & Norton National	184.4.5	204	2	1	1	-	-	1
Manley C.E. (man & wife)	146.0.0	83	2	-	-	-	-	-
Norley C.E. (man & wife)	145.0.0	149	1	2	-	-	-	2
Stockton Heath Boys'	199.10.0	250	2	-	-	1	2	-
Stockton Heath Girls'	100.0.0	233	1	-	1	-	3	1
Stockton Heath Infants'	85.0.0	248	2	-	3	-	-	1
Stretton C.E.	97.0.0	97	2	-	1	1	-	-

APPENDIX

(c) RURAL AREA (continued)Number and particulars of staff.

School	Salary of Head Teacher	No. on Reg.	Cert- ific- ated.	Art 50	Art 68	P.T.	Ex. P.T.	Candid- ate.
Thelwall National.	116.0.0	90	1	1	-	-	-	-
Weston C.E.	145.0.0	187	1	2	-	2	-	2
Weston Park C.E.	157.11.11.	158	1	-	1	1	-	-
Weston Park C.E. Infants	60.0.0	118	1	-	1	-	-	-
Wesleyan Day Sch.	130.0.0	114	1	1	1	2	-	-
			28	13	17	11	6	10

APPENDIX

2. Board Schools - 31st December 1902

School	Total Salary of Head includes emoluments	Number & particulars of Staff						
		No.on Register	Certif- icated	Art 50	Art 68	Ex PT	Cand- PT idate	
Aston	128.16.0.	113	1	2				
Daresbury	189.6.8.	242	3			3		
Halton	55. 0. 0.	31	1					
Moore	55. 0. 0.	36	1					
Preston-on- the Hill	55. 0. 0.	26		1				
Dutton	151. 0. 0.	111	1	1		1		
Whitley	95.10. 0.	75	1			1		
Grenville St. Infants	102. 0. 0.	174	2	1		2	2	
Mill Brow	80. 0. 0.	130	1	2		2	1	
Victoria Rd.Boys	250. 0. 0.	505	6	5		1	2	
Victoria Rd. Girls	150. 0. 0.	474	7	2	1	3		
			24	14	1	13	2	5

RATE PER POUND LEVIED IN THE SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICTS IN THE RUNCORN UNION.COMPILED FROM REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL.

	Aston U.D.	Daresbury	Dutton	Runcorn	Whitley U.D.
1875				1.97	
1876		2.5	1.32	1.25	3
1877		3.5	4	1.5	3
1878	3	3.5	3	2.22	7
1879	4	3.5	4	1.4	3
1880	3	3.5	5	1.25	3
1881	3	4	4	2.50	6.5
1882	2	3.5	4	2	3.1
1883	2	3.5	4.5	2	5.5
1884	2.5	3.5	4	1.5	5.5
1885	2	3.5	4	2	6
1886	2	3.5	3.5	4.5	5.5
1887	2	3.5	4	4.5	5.5
1888	2.25	4	4	3.5	5.5
1889	2.	4.	3.5	3.5	6
1890	2.5	3.25	3	4.25	6
1891	3	3.25	5.5	4.25	7.5
1892	3	3.25	5	4	7
1893	3	3.25	3	4.25	7
1894	2.5	4	3.5	4	8

APPENDIX

PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATIONELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT, 1870 - SECTION IX

Schedule I

<u>Name and Description</u>	<u>Situation</u>	<u>No. of children accommodated</u>			
		Boys	Girls	Infants	Total
National School	Church Street	168	170	272	610
Roman Catholic School	Windmill St.		162		162
Trinity Church of England School	Pool Lane	201	123	210	543
Wesleyan Boys' School	Brunswick St.	352	-	-	352
Wesleyan Girls' and Infants' School	Granville St.	-	252	180	432
Newtown Mission School	Shaw Street	-	-	100	<u>100</u>
	Total:				<u>2,199</u>

Schedule II

<u>Amount and description of accommodation required</u>	<u>Situation</u>	<u>Particulars</u>
A school for 60 children	At or near Newtown Mission School	The accommodation required for 100 children in Heath Road may be supplied by an enlargement of the Ragged School.
A school for 100 children	Heath Road	

Education Department, 12th day of May, 1874
Notice No. 12,088. Union of Runcorn.

F. R. SANDFORD,
Secretary

Extract from Final Notice as to the Public School accommodation
required for the School District of Runcorn published in the
Runcorn Guardian - 23rd May 1874.

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD
SCHEDULE OF CLERK'S DUTIES

- 1st. To attend all Meetings of the Board to keep punctually Minutes of the proceedings at every meeting and to enter the said Minutes in a Book to be termed the Minute Book. To enter from time to time at proper dates in the Minute Book a statement of pecuniary transactions of the Board and to submit the Minutes so entered to the presiding Chairman at the succeeding Meeting for signature.
- 2nd. To attend all Committee Meetings of the Board including School Management Committee School Attendance Committee and other Committees that may be hereafter appointed by the Board and to keep punctually the Minutes of the proceedings and to enter the same in the Minute Books of the respective Committees.
- 3rd. To peruse and conduct the correspondence of the Board and Committees according to their directions and to preserve the same as well as all orders documents and letters addressed to the Board and received by him as their clerk together with all copies of letters and all letter books and documents belonging to the Board or entrusted to him by them and to make all necessary copies thereof.
- 4th. To keep punctually all the Books of the Board financial or otherwise together with books or abstract statements relative to the maintenance of the Board Schools and to enter at proper times and keep written up all pecuniary transactions of the Board in their account books.
- 5th. To communicate to the several persons appointed by the Board or acting under their directions all orders and directions of the Board and so far as may be to give the instructions requisite for the prompt and correct execution of all such orders and directions and to report to the Board any neglect or failure therein which may come to his knowledge.

- 6th. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to superintend the work of the School Board Visitors and give such instructions as may be deemed necessary in the performance of their duties and to lay before the Board from time to time statements showing the probable number of children of School age numbers in attendance, probable number of non-attenders and other information relative to the duties of the Visitors to enable the Board to efficiently administer the requirements of the Education Acts to prepare any other statistical information found necessary by the Board and to attend the Police Court during the hearing of cases against negligent parents.
- 7th. The Clerk shall visit the Board's Offices daily and be in attendance at the said Office for at least two hours on each day of the week. The hours to be fixed at the discretion of the Board.
- 8th. To periodically visit the Board's Day and Evening Schools check the attendances, note the regularity and punctuality of the work and report as to the efficiency or otherwise that may have been noted in any Officials of the Board.
- 9th. To observe and execute all lawful orders and directions of the Board and to perform such duties as may be assigned by the said Board.

RESOLVED: That the Salary of the future Clerk be at the rate of One Hundred Pounds (£100) per annum as at present.

Jas. Pritchard
Chairman

APPENDIX

RUNCRON SCHOOL BOARD EVENING SCHOOLReport for the Year 1898.¹

<u>No. of Pupils admitted</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
	110	106	216
<u>Average attendance</u>	66	62	128

Number of Pupils qualified to earn grants

	<u>Boys Dept.</u>	<u>Girls Dept.</u>
Reading and Writing	89	88
Arithmetic	83	46
Geography	45	-
History	23	-
Algebra	33	-
Mensuration	21	-
Elementary Physics	26	-
Elementary Chemistry	48	-
Elementary French	17	26
Needlework	-	73
Nursing & Hygiene	-	69
Science	-	106

Numbers for all subjects taken in the examinations of the Union of
the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes

	<u>Examined</u>	<u>Passed</u>
Runcorn Examiner 12.7.1893.	39	26
" " 25.5.1894.	111	88
" " 27.10.1898.	149	106
" " 27.10.1899.	118	106
" " 12.10.1900.		27
" " 14.10.1901.		24
" " 10.10.1902.	95	84

1. Runcorn Examiner - 7.10.1898.

APPENDIX

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD EVENING SCHOOL.STATISTICS COMPILED FROM REPORTS PUBLISHED IN
THE RUNCORN EXAMINER

Annual Report for year ending	No. of times opened		Number Admitted		Average Attendance	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1891	-	-	150	-	59	-
1892	61	-	-	-	54	-
1893	-	-	100	86	-	-
1894	-	-	-	-	-	-
1895	-	-	-	-	-	-
1896	-	-	-	-	-	-
1897	-	-	-	-	-	-
1898	68	49	110	106	66	62
1899	-	-	90	80	46	44
1900	62	44	85	31	52	30
1901	64	46	106	59	66	35
1902*	65	47	107	54	67	33

* Average attendance for men 1901-1902 = 23

Number of women admitted = 10

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD

	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902
Warnings Notices		2102	3022	5158		284.9	3577	394.8	3992	4009	4226	4357	4144	4292	-	4415	4437
Parents before S.A. Committee		287	493	558		689	691	486	526	552	559	577	774	755	-	779	746
Prosecutions		32	131	122		125	176	128	122	98	69	81	73	136	-	171	69
No. on Rolls		3150	3230	3330		344.8	3611	3696	3536	3440	3420	3375	3364	3362	-	3463	3581
Av. Attendance		2284	2409	2602	2685	2766	2958	3038	3038	2787	2821	2766	2844	2855	-	2975	3106
%		74	76	81	81	80.2	81.9	82.3	83	81	82.5	82	84.5	84.9	-	85.98	86.7

Statistics of Attendance extracted from Annual Reports of the School Board
published in the Runcorn Examiner

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD

Table compiled from the Minutes of the School Attendance Committee,
showing number of parents prosecuted, number fined and the amount

<u>Date</u>	<u>Prosecuted No. of Parents</u>	<u>No. Fined</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1.11.1898	10	7 2	5/- 10/-	
24.1.1899.	11	11	5/-	
7.2.1899.	5	5	5/-	One withdrawn
7.3.1899.	19	13 4	5/- 10/-	Parent left town One from boats - no record
21.3.1899.	7	1 4	20/- 5/-	2 cases from boats withdrawn
2.5.1899.	7	7	5/-	
13.6.1899.	19	16	5/-	3 did not pay fine
12.9.1899.	18	10 2	5/- 10/-	No record of remaining six
24.10.1899.	19	10 5	5/- 10/-	no record of remaining four
10.1.1900.	2	1 1	5/- 10/-	
9.10.1900.	23	15 2 1 1	5/- 10/- 15/- 20/-	No record of remaining four

RUNCORN SCHOOL BOARD

Monthly percentages of attendance for the School Board District compiled
from the Runcorn Examiner

Year	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1886
January	-	-	57	68.1	56	61	71	-
February	-	68	-	-	-	66	-	-
March	-	-	66.2	-	68	66	76	-
April	-	-	-	71	70	-	-	-
May	62	64.3	66.88	65	70	75	61	-
June	65.9	60.9	68.5	71	-	73	62	70
July	71	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
August	65.9	63.3	65.9	-	-	-	-	66
September	70	-	71	-	-	63	46	66
October	71.05	68.3	70	-	63	-	49	79
November	70.3	63.9	-	-	68	71	53	-
December	67.3	59.2	-	-	65	79	-	-

No figures published for 1884 and 1885

RUNCORN UNION SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE STATISTICS COMPILED FROM
THE ANNUAL REPORTS GIVEN IN THE MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE

Report for year ended 31st Dec.	No. of Meetings	No. of Cases Investigated	Warnings Issued to parents for irregular or non-attendance	No. of children involved	No. of parents fined	Cost to Rate-payers	Highest av. att. during one week	Highest no. on the Rolls	Highest % for one week	Av. No. Books on	Av. Att.	Av. %
1879	14	470	151	186	11		2385	3011	79.2			
1880	14	397	147	227	15	1d	2331	2928	79.6			
1881	13	459	165	245	56	1d	2324	2437	79.6			
1882	11	312	147	188	37	1d	2502	2975	79.1			
1883	12	810	255	377	87	1d	2610	3023	84.7			
1884	14	471	207	281	39	1d	2537	2941	86.3			
1885	12	395	168	215	33	1d	2371	2718	86.2			
1886	12	339	136	183	23					2476	1932	78
1887	10	271	130	172	24					2867	2286	79.87
1889	14	308	127	162	33					2987	2396	80.2
1890	10	353	148	223	25					2979	2380	79.9
1891	13	298	74	96	46					3047	2465	80.8
1892	13	295	155	138	19					3217	2610	81.1
1901	13		237		15					3053	3595	84.9

A P P E N D I X

Statistics concerning the Registration, Examination and Population of Canal Boats in Runcorn compiled from Reports published in the Runcorn Examiner.

Year	No. of Boats registered in Runcorn	New Registrations	Boats Examined	No. of Men	No. of Women	No. of Children
1891	903	8	306	429	126	126
1893	940	20	304	480	130	151
1894	963	21	303	493	128	133
1895	977	11	308	480	130	151
1899	1006	3	305	504	113	107
1900	1011	5	300	472	125	142
1901	1023	12	301	447	144	157

Ages and numbers of children on Canal Boats in 1900

Age in years	Babies	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Number of Children	33	12	23	13	8	7	6	10	6	5	7	8	4

PERCENTAGES OF ATTENDANCE IN GREENWAY ROAD GIRLS' SCHOOL COMPILED
FROM THE SCHOOL LOG BOOK

February 1886.

Week Ending 8th 70%
 15th 72%
 22nd 68%

February 1887

Week Ending 17th 74%
 25th 73%

January 1888

Week Ending 13th 64%

May 1886

Week Ending 7th 61.8%
 21st 68.1%
 28th 65.1%

March 1887

Week Ending 4th 75%
 11th 74.3%
 25th 75.4%

March 1888

Week Ending 23rd 70%

April 1886

Week Ending 9th 34.6%
 16th 53.1%
 30th 48.8%

September 1887

Week Ending 9th 50%
 16th 56%
 23rd 56.8%
 30th 59.4%

April 1888

Week Ending 10th 70.4%

November 1886.

Week Ending 5th 57.7%
 12th 70.3%
 19th 75%
 25th 72%

October 1887

Week Ending 7th 52.4%
 57.9%
 57.7%
 59.7%

May 1888

Week Ending 11th 70.5%

July 1888

Week Ending 6th 71%

October 1888

Week Ending 5th 67%
 12th 80%
 19th 78%
 20th 82%

TABLE SHOWING SAMPLES OF OVERCROWDING.IN MILL BROW SCHOOL. *

1880 - December 1881. Accommodation for 90 children.
 1st January 1882-1903. Accommodation for 124 children.

1880

Average for week ending August	27th	-	91
	September 17th	-	95
	September 24th	-	103
	October 29th	-	101

1881

Average for week ending June	24th	-	113
	September 2nd	-	124
	September 9th	-	132
	September 12th	-	134

1883

Average for week ending May	4th	-	141
	May 10th	-	127
	June 7th	-	155.4

1884

Average for week ending February	9th	-	143
	February 15th	-	143.8
	February 22nd	-	145.
	November	-	132.2

1885

Average for week ending May	15th	-	139
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1890

Average for week ending April	25th	-	134.5
	April 30th	-	128.7
	June 27th	-	140
	July 4th	-	136.5

1891.

Average for week ending May 29th - 132
 June 12th - 138

1892

Average for week ending January 29th - 130
 February 26th - 134.6

Samples of excessive numbers present:

30th October 1883	-	145	children present.	
25th June 1885	-	165	"	"
3rd July 1885	-	173	"	"
14th July 1890	-	165	"	"
25th July 1892	-	168	"	"

*Compiled from Mill Brow School Log Book.

MONTHLY PERCENTAGES OF ATTENDANCE OF DARESBURY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICTCOMPILED FROM THE WARRINGTON GUARDIAN.

	5.7.90.	7.2.91.	4.4.91.	6.6.91.	30.10.91
Daresbury Board School	88%	90%	88%	90%	90%
Moore Infant School	82	83	78	80	77
Hatton " "	93	88	79	84	87
Preston Brook " "	78.4	82.5	80	87	89.6
	5.12.91	7.5.92.	4.6.92.	3.9.92.	3.6.93
Daresbury Board School	90%	84%	90%	86.6%	86%
Moore Infant School	84	73.4	-	85	69
Hatton " "	80	78	-	88	90
Preston Brook " "	-	89	92	-	77
	8.9.94.	6.7.95.	7.4.97.	5.6.97.	7.6.98.
Daresbury Board School	88%	89%	84%	88%	83%
Moore Infant School	-	87.3	82	84	70
Hatton " "	-	65	-	98	-
Preston Brook " "	-	-	86	90	88
	6.5.99.	3.6.99.	9.9.99.	4.11.99.	6.1.1900
Daresbury Board School	86%	84%	83%	84%	77%
Moore Infant School	89	89.5	92.5	94	84.7
Hatton " "	90	94.6	87.5	80.4	87.6
Preston Brook " "	90	87	86	90	-
	3.3.199	7.4.1900	8.9.1900	3.11.1900	8.6.1901
Daresbury Board School	68%	85%	81%	79%	87%
Moore Infant School	65	89	93	88	91.4
Hatton " "	77.7	94	96.1	92.8	91.5
Preston Brook " "	50	78	90	83	90

	8.11.1902	7.2.1903	7.3.1903	9.5.1903
Daresbury Board School	78%	86%	87%	87%
Moore Infant School	89%	91.6	-	88.9
Hatton " "	77.4	65.9	81.6	87
Preston Brooke " "	82	87	91	95

CHAIRMEN OF DARESBURY SCHOOL BOARD

1875)	
1878)	
1881)	Rev. Geo. Heron
1884)	
1887)	
1890)	Rev. T. Whitley
1893		Mr. P. Tickle
1896)	
1899)	Rev. H. T. Clarke
1902		Mr. J. Cooper

REPORT OF THE FRODSHAM LOCAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th April 1900

The Committee held 12 meetings, the attendance of the members being as follows:

Mr. E. G. Steward	12	Mr. O. E.	7
Mr. J. Movelly Williams	10	Mr. W. Davies	7
Mr. J. W. Rothwell	9	Mr. J. G.	1
Attendance Officer	12	Hon. Secretary	12

The Committee investigated 256 cases of irregularity or non-attendance. Of this number 120 were directed to be warned, 8 were summoned under the Bye-laws, all being convicted and fined 5s.0d. including costs. One person was summoned twice in respect of the same child for non-compliance with School Attendance Order and fined 5s.0d. for each offence.

The attendance at the different schools was as follows:

	<u>Average</u> <u>No. on</u> <u>registers</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>Attendance</u>	<u>Average No.</u> <u>of absentees</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>of</u> <u>attendance</u>
Overton Boys'	260	229	31	88
Frodsham Girls'	248	211	37	85
Frodsham Infants	180	147	33	81.5
Five Crosses Infants	<u>90</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>83.3</u>
Totals	<u>778</u>	<u>662</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>85</u>

Compared with the previous years the above figures indicate an increase of 23 on the registers, an increase of 7 on the average attendance. An increase of 16 on the average number of absentees and a decrease of 1.75 on the percentage of attendance.

According to the annual return issued by the Education Department the percentage of attendance in England and Wales for the year ended 31st August 1899 was 81.8.

REPORT OF THE FRODSHAM LOCAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCECOMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th April 1901

The Committee held 10 meetings and investigated 158 cases of irregularity or non-attendance.

In response to the notices issued by the Attendance Officer requiring the parents to attend before the Committee, the Fathers* appeared in 11 cases, the Mothers in 80 cases, other persons or letters of explanation in 33 cases, and in the remaining 34 cases no one appeared.

By direction of the Committee 72 were warned; 11 were summoned under the Bye-laws with the result that 9 were convicted and fined 5s.0d. each; costs included; the other two cases were in the first instance adjourned and afterwards, in consequence of an improved attendance, dismissed.

Tables are appended giving the particulars of attendance at the four Certified Efficient Schools, and for the purpose of comparison the figures for the two preceding years are also given. An examination of them will show that, with the exception of the Boys' School, there is a decrease in the percentage of attendance; the Girls' School to the extent of 2 per cent, the Frodsham Infants $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and the Five Crosses Infants $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The decrease in the percentage of attendance is accounted for partly by an increased number of children on the Registers under five years of age, and partly by the severity of the weather, and sickness.

It is worthy of note that although the population of the School District has only increased 15.5 per cent during the last 20 years the average attendance at these schools has during the same period increased 80 per cent, also that in the same time the average attendance per cent of the population has increased from 10.4 per cent to 16.4 per cent.

TABLE I - showing the attendance collectively

<u>Year ended</u>	<u>Average on Registers</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>	<u>Average Absentees</u>	<u>Attendance percent</u>
30th April 1899	755	655	100	86.75
30th April 1900	778	662	116	85
30th April 1901	811	678	133	83.6

TABLE II - showing the attendance at each school separately

<u>BOYS'</u>				
<u>Year ended</u>	<u>Average on registers</u>	<u>Average Attendances</u>	<u>Average Absentees</u>	<u>Attendance per cent</u>
30th April 1899	260	228	32	87.6
" 1900	260	229	31	88
" 1901	261	229	32	87.7

<u>GIRLS'</u>				
30th April 1899	222	194	28	87.3
" 1900	248	211	37	85
" 1901	270	230	40	85

<u>INFANTS' FRODSHAM</u>				
30th April 1899	183	155	28	84.7
" 1900	180	147	33	81.5
" 1901	191	147	44	76

<u>INFANTS' FIVE CROSSES</u>				
30th April 1899	90	78	12	86.6
" 1900	90	75	15	83.3
" 1901	89	72	17	80

REPORT OF THE FRODSHAM LOCAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th April 1902

The Committee held 11 meetings and investigated 196 cases. In response to notices issued by the Attendance Officer requiring parents to attend before the Committee, the Fathers appeared in five cases, the Mothers in ninety-three cases, other persons or letters of explanation in 46 cases, and the remaining 52 cases no one appeared. By direction of the Committee 79 were warned, 10 were summoned under the Bye-laws, with the result that 9 were convicted, 7 being fined 5s.0d. each including costs and the other two 7s.6d. each, one case was dismissed. All the fines have been paid.

Statement showing the particulars of attendances at all the
Public Elementary Schools in the District:

<u>Children of the age if five years and upwards</u>	<u>Average No. on registers</u>	<u>Average Daily Attendance</u>	<u>Average Daily per cent</u>
Frodsham Girls'	266	236	81.2
Frodsham Infants'	138	217	86.3
Five Crosses Infants'	57.5	119	85.5
Overton Boys'	<u>266</u>	<u>49.5</u>	<u>88.7</u>
	727.5	621.5	85.4
 <u>Children under the age of five years</u>			
Frodsham Infants'	60	40	67
Five Crosses Infants'	<u>34.5</u>	<u>21.5</u>	<u>62</u>
Totals at all ages	<u>822</u>	<u>683</u>	<u>83</u>

SPECIAL REPORT BY HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTOR W. BALLANCE ON FRODSHAMNATIONAL GIRLS' SCHOOL.

Frodsham Nat. Girls' School.

Exd. 22.9.96.

Stan. 1 & 111 These Standards promise to do much better work. There is, however, a tendency to copy, and this can best be prevented by the Teachers keeping a sharp eye over their classes during the working of the exercises & for that time minding nothing else.

Standard 11.

This is by far the weakest spot of the School & should receive Miss Teare's particular attention.

The classification is faulty - such children as L. Ainsworth, L. Fletcher, A. Smith, B. Shaw, for the present at least, should not be doing St. 11 work at all.

I should suggest:-

- (a) That the stan. be divided into two sections.
- (b) That the Head-Mistress herself take the Lower Section for the Elementary Subjects beginning (no matter how low the standard is) just where the children can take up the work & follow the teaching. It is useless to give a child that would stumble over an Infant School Primer a Second Standard book to read. It would be better to let it go through that Primer first, & then one two or more First Stan. Books.

Stan. *V - V1

Grammar is here the weakest point & again classification is at fault. I would suggest that English be taken at the same time in St.1V - V1 & some of the girls at present so totally ignorant of even the parts of speech in St.V might be transferred for this subject to St.1V. Miss Teare should then map out the course of lessons to be given and herself inspect & criticise the notes for the same. Parsing should follow, not precede such lessons.

Some Arithmetic books should be at once obtained - The girls do not work a sufficient number of exercises to become accurate - Cards should only be used as occasional tests.

Spelling generally. Test pieces in Dictation, without previous preparation should only occasionally be given.

W. Ballance.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE YEARS 1880 and 1881 TO THE BUILDING FUND AND UPKEEP
OF THE STOCKTON HEATH SCHOOLS.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE SCHOOL MANAGERS

Mr. Robert Davies	-	£25
Mr. John Crosfield	-	£25
Mr. Joseph Maxfield	-	£20
Rev. Richard Greenall	-	£10
Mr. James Tinsley	-	£25
Mr. James Williett	-	£10
Mr. T. D. Dawn.	-	£10

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Mr. James Marson		
Donation	-	£25
Annual Subscription of	-	£10
		towards the working expenses of the schools.
Mr. Peter Whitley	-	£100
Donation		
Sir Gilbert Greenall,	-	£100
Bart.		
Mr. Warburton of Arley	-	£20
Mr. Woods		
Donation	-	£10
Annual Subscription	-	£3.3s.0d.

OVERTON ENDOWED BOYS' SCHOOLLIST OF DONATIONS TO THE BUILDING FUND IN 1892¹

	£
The Marquis of Cholmondeley	100
The Misses Wright	100
Miss Heron	50
Mrs. Garratt	50
Christ Church, Oxford	25
Mr. S. Woodhouse	25
Dr. Weaver	25
The Vicar	20
Mr. H. Talbot	5
The Hon. Mrs. Lascelles	30
Messrs. Greenall Whitley & Co.	20
The Misses Grassfield	10
Mr. J. Higson	10
Mr. S. Smith	10
Miss Simpson	5
Mr. H. E. Heywood	5
	<hr/> 5
	<hr/> £490

1. Compiled from Minutes of the Feoffees of the Overton Endowed Boys' School

SCHOLARSHIPS AND PRIZES AWARDED TO PUPILS IN THE NATIONAL BOYS' SCHOOL.RUNCORN.

- 22.8.1899. Seven boys competed for scholarships at the Runcorn Technical Institute. Six of them were successful.
- 14.7.1902. Science and Art Scholarships tenable at the Technical Institute and worth £36 each.
 Number of scholarships offered - 4
 Number of competitors - 21
 Candidates sat from National Boys' and Girls' Schools, Victoria Road Boys' and Girls' and First Year Students at Technical Insitute. All four scholarships were gained by Runcorn National Boys' School.
- 23.9.1902 Scholars Magazine for July, 1902, Writing Competition. First Prize and one certificate.
- 22.10.1902 Scholars Magazine competition - Rules on One Certificate.
- 27.11.1902 Scholars Magazine competition - meaning of nautical terms contained in "Poor Jack."
 One Certificate.
- 30.1.1903 Competition in Scholars Magazine December 1902.
 2nd Prize 1 Certificate for specimen arithmetic papers.
 One Certificate for original Christmas card.
- 26.3.1903 Local Science and Art Scholarships.
 4 Scholarships, one reserved for a girl.
 Competitions for Victoria Road Boys' and Girls' Departments and National Boys' and Girls' Departments.
 32 competitions.
 3 scholarships open for boys awarded to National Boys' School.
 Value £9 First Year. £12 Second Year. £15 Third Year.
- 22.5.1903 Competition in Scholars Magazine, April 1903 - 'A Letter about your school.'
 First Prize and a number highly commended.
- 8.6.1903 Three County Council Scholarships.
- 23.6.1903 Scholars Magazine - 'Painting a Flower Competition.'
 Second Prize.

APPENDIX

REVISED CODE

Payment of Grants for Day and Evening Schools.

Day Schools

4s.0d. per scholar in average attendance
at morning and afternoon sessions.

8s.0d. per scholar for pass in reading,
writing and arithmetic.
Subject to attendance of more than
200 sessions.
Forfeiture of 2s.8d. for failure in
each subject.

Evening Schools

2s.6d. per scholar in average attendance.

5s.0d. per scholar for passes in reading,
writing and arithmetic.
Subject to attendance at more than
24 meetings.
Forfeiture of 1s.8d. for failure in
each subject.

ENGLANDAVERAGE RATE PER £ ON THE RATEABLE VALUE
OF THE DISTRICTS

	<u>1901-2</u>
	d
London	14.7
Boroughs	11.7
Parishes	<u>10.7</u>
Total average rate	<u>12.4</u>

Extracted from the Report of the Board of Education

Percentage of Boroughs and Parishes which paid Rates from under 1d in the £ to not exceeding 3/6

<u>Product of Rate equivalent to a Rate per £ on the Rateable Value of the District</u>	<u>Boroughs</u>	<u>Parishes</u>
	1902	1902
Of under 1d	1.7	2.8
Of 1d and under 2d	5.	1.2
Of 2d and under 3d	0.6	2.8
Of 3d and under 6d	14.7	18.5
Of 6d and under 9d	16.9	26.4
Of 9d and under 1s	25.8	22.
Of 1s and under 1s.3d	19.6	13.
Of 1s.3d and under 1s.6d	9.5	6.8
Of 1s.6d and under 2s	5.1	5.2
Of 2s and over, not exceeding 3s.6d	1.1	1.3

Extracted from the Report of the Board of Education 1902-1903 p.38 & 39

CODE 1882

EVENING SCHOOLS

RESTRICTIONS IN CHOICE AND NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

- (iv) No scholar may be presented for examination in the additional subjects alone.
- (v) No scholar may be presented for examination in more than two of the additional subjects.
- (vi) No scholar may be presented for examination in any subject in which he has been examined within a year by the Department of Science and Art.
- (vii) Scholars presented for examination in the 3rd or 4th Standard, if they take one additional subject must take English; if they take two the second subject must be either geography or elementary science.
- (viii) Scholars presented in the 5th or any higher Standard are unrestricted in their choice of additional subjects.

APPENDIX

ASTON BOARD SCHOOL

Statistics of Attendance

November 1890	80%	Published in the Warrington Guardian	2.12.90.
October 1892	80.2%	" " " "	9.11.1892.
April 1901	86%	" " " "	8.5.1901.
November 1901	84%	" " " "	14.12.1901.

Number on Register 31st December 1902	-	113
Average Attendance for year ending 31st May 1902	-	82
Approximate attendance for year 1902	-	81% ¹

1. Chester Record Office C.C.E.2/3 County of Chester Education Act 1902. Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff 1903.

APPENDIX

Table showing attendance at Evening Continuation Schools
 compiled from Reports of the Committee of Council and
from the Board of Education

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>	<u>Number on Registers</u>
1870	73,375	
1874	48,690	
1876	49,858	
1882	33,151	
1885	24,233	
1888	26,089	
1890	43,347	
1891	51,974	
1892	65,561	
1894	115,530	
1897	179,600	358,628
1898		435,600
1899		474,563
1901		527,729

APPENDIX

SALARY OF CLERKS TO RURAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Aston	£25 per annum	1.
Daresbury	£25 " "	
Dutton	£25 " "	
Whitley	£20 " "	

1. Compiled from the Statement of Voluntary and Board Schools, School Attendance Committees, School Boards and Teaching Staff 1903. County of Chester. Chester Record Office.

APPENDIXCHANGES IN CODE FOR BASIC GRANTS PAID TO SCHOOLS
AFTER 18751875 - Older Scholars

- A. (1) 4/- for attendance.
(2) 1/- If singing were satisfactorily taught.
(3) 1/- for discipline and organisation.
- B. Subject to age, examination and attendance
3/- for passing in reading.
3/- for passing in writing.
3/- for passing in arithmetic.
- C. Grants for class subjects

Infants

- (a) 10/- for Infants taught as a separate Department.
- (b) 8/- if instructed by the Principal Teacher, suitable to their age, and in a manner not to interfere with the instruction of the older children.

APPENDIXCODE 1882Older Scholars

- (a) Fixed grant 4/6
- (b) Merit Grant 1/-, 2/- and 3/-
- (c) Grant for Needlework 1/-
- (d) Grant for singing 1/- by ~~note~~. 6d. by ear.
- (e) Grant on examination in the elementary subjects determined by the percentage of passes in the examination at the rate of 1d for every unit of percentage.
- (f) Additional grants for class and specific subjects.

Infants

- I 9/- if taught as a separate department under a Certificated teacher of their own.
- II 7/- if taught as a class.
- III Merit grant of 2/-, 4/- or 6/-
Additional grants for Needlework or singing.

APPENDIXCODE 1890Older Scholars

- I Principal Grant of 12/6 or 14/-
- II Grant for Discipline and Organisation 1/- or 1/6
- III Grant for Needlework 1/-
- IV Grant for singing, 1/- by note 6d by ear.
Additional Grants for class and specific subjects.

Infants

- I Grant of 9/- if taught as a separate department under a Certificated teacher.
7/- if these conditions were not satisfied.
- II Variable grant of 2/-, 4/- or 6/-.
Additional grants for singing and needlework.

APPENDIX

CODE 1900

Older Scholars

Principal Grant 22/- or 21/-

Additional Grants for subjects such as cookery,
laundry, cottage gardening etc.

Infants

Grant of 17/- or 16/- for average attendance.

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Minutes of the Managers of the Stockton Heath Schools.	

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Daresbury
Frodsham National Boys and Girls.

Five Crosses National Infants.
Greenway Road Girls
Overton Endowed Boys.

Halton Grammar.

Halton Parochial Junior.
Mill Brow
Norley.

Holy Trinity National Boys and Girls.

Runcorn National Boys and Girls.

St. Michael's (Newtown Mission) Infants.

Stockton Heath Boys Girls and Infants.

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Ed. 21/1768. Frodsham National Schools.
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Ed. 21/1914. Holy Trinity National Schools.
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