

CHAPTER V.

Religious Bodies – Education of the poor – Curriculum – Education Acts – School Boards – School's Assistant & Teachers – National Days & Holidays – Health & Hygiene – Sports day – School milk – Doctor and Nurse visit – Education Act – Playtime – Scholarship – Lessons for Life – Country ways – Help at home – Work.

Village schools in the eighteen hundreds had their teaching practice based upon learning by rote... in classrooms holding a number of other age groups. In most schools, there was only one large room, which was cold, damp and dusty. Religious bodies... mainly the Anglican National Society established in 1811, controlled the institutions. Church schools greatly outnumbered voluntary organization. All schooling required fees supplemented by donations and government grants.

'The Education of the Poor', such as it was, was ministered by the church – by the Church of England's National Society. At this time, there was no Government provision or legal requirement. The provision of a school was dependant upon patronage and beneficence of the Rector of Chard Church... plus, bequests and subscriptions. Only five years before A Parliamentary Act banned the use of child labour although it did carry on for a few more years.

In 1837, Victoria came to the throne one year after the Union workhouse was built on the Crewkerne Road. A further two years saw 243 people sheltered there from the town and borough. Out-relief was a fund raised to help the unemployed... that year a sum of seventeen hundred pounds was allocated for that cause.

The start of the century had seen harvests ruined by bad weather and the lead up to the coronation was to see little improvement. William IV had been on the throne for seven years... now it was the chance to turn round the economy. Victoria was eighteen and she was made of stern stuff. One the continent 1830 was a year of revolution. England was up in arms serious rioting broke out. Farm machinery was smashed, ricks set on fire and fists were raised. The rain in 1828 had been the worst in living memory and agricultural prices dropped. During the next ten years farmers' begged form a reduction in their rent – a few had to sell up and move away to the town. The lord of the manor in a number of estates gave land over to the community for allotments. It was a bad time for all particularly for the already poor. There was much unemployment for neither farmers nor workshops were taking on labour. The poorhouse in the town had to turn people away. The Mayor of Chard called a meeting where he put it to the assembled parishioners that the severe weather was creating hardship. It was decided to make donations and a collection was immediately taken – which raised £60. The plan was to purchase coal, bacon and peas and share those out to six hundred poor persons.

The social gap was widening as the inefficient and uneconomic farmer sold up and the wealthy tenant and lord increased their holding. Landowners had benefited from the purchase of low price land.

The industrialisation of manufacturing brought to a head the scandal of child labour. By 1844, the employment of any child below the age of eight in the textile industry was banned. Between eight and thirteen, the child had to attend school for three hours a day. Many parents evaded the restrictions where they could. Textile workers opposed the raising of the minimum working age of half-timers.

Lace schools were set up to teach children to read. The commissioners later tested the children to find out what had been learnt. The results proved that although the children could read the majority could not write.

The Union workhouse was still a necessary. Inmates were issued with a hammock although it would appear that these were not in a very good condition. An issue of string gave some comfort to repair the netting and to ensure the hammock hung properly. Two rugs made by previous inmates were all that were allowed for each person. There were complaints about not being able to wash and the violent disturbances resulted in two months hard labour, in the House of Correction.

It was the large acreage now of the thrusting landowners that allowed them to survive the hard times after the act of enclosure. Once again, the Pouletts gained most. By 1865 horse-powered threshing machines had been installed, improved land drainage continued, whilst fields redesigned both assisted hay farming to reach its peak by the end of the century.

In 1866 J B Gifford, who owned and founded a lace manufacturing business at Forton - then moved to Holyrood Mill forming Gifford Fox & Company, was approached to finance and provide premises for a Co-op. This he did with the additional loan of £15. This proved to be a very successful enterprise although it did not stay at the mill but moved to Fore Street under the title of Chard Industrial & Provident Society.

The shop's staff was in the main local people. To them came Thomas Dolling as a twelve-year-old errand boy in the year 1879. He was a Chard Board pupil who was not only accomplished at schoolwork but also diligent in the shop. Within twenty years, he had risen to become the head of the Co-op. For the next forty years he stayed and directed the operation taking it to great heights.

Tatworth boasted the building and consecration of a daughter-church to St Mary's of Chard. This became the Mission Chapel of Tatworth in September 1851, *[at that time, still considered a hamlet]*. When built it was consecrated by the Bishop of Jamaica – the foundation stone being laid three months before, in June, with much approbation.. The chapel built on a quarter of an acre of land donated by the lord of the manor, Earl Poulett together with the necessary stone and fifty pounds towards the total cost of one thousand and forty pounds... All previous churchgoers from Tatworth attended St Mary's Church, Chard, which was short of seating for the poor – even as far back as 1827. Years later a gallery had been erected but the church still lacked accommodation. Those worshippers attended St Margaret's *Chapel of Ease* in South Chard.

Tatworth village school was built in 1872 in the same Early English style as the church - built some twenty years before... together, gave the village a new status – Tatworth was now recognised as a separate community from Chard – became a parish in its own right... Thirty-percent of the population was aged fourteen or less and it was deemed highly desirable to have a local school. The new school was built of local flint stone with brick quoins around the windows and doors. Two gable ends faced the road separated by two lean-to aisles and a front porch. Two sets of steps mount the pavement to arched wooden doors, which led into cloakrooms. Topping the whole was a bell tower, whose ringing bell called the children.

The pupils were mainly from homes who's parents worked at the mill or creamery - they all knew each other or knew of each other. – It was that sort of village school. Very few lived at a distance and most walked or rode a bike. Living opposite, the picture of the school was taken from an upstairs bedroom of Rosalie Cottage, gave the Collins children an even greater sense of belonging, not just to the school but to the community as well.

When the school day was over all the children came out in succession - the youngest first, making the otherwise deserted road alive with their shouts and calls. It was a happy place remembered fondly. They were all oddly dressed especially the younger ones. Their chatter was joyful if rather quaint not in the least embarrassed by their local patois. The boys in their caps and the girl's hair tied up in ribbons skipping along in their pinafores. The majority would come from poor homes but that does not explain how they were brought up. The village was in the main a god-fearing place, its inhabitants Low Church ridged in behaviour and set in their ways.

The boys and girls who lived at the other side of the village - near the railway station or Chardstock, used lane, path and short cut to reach home. Along the way they could usually find some stick or special find to show-off with... betting each other that theirs the greater find, and couldn't be bettered. It was the boys who liked to find a stick to make a bow or make-pretend sword, catapult or pipe. The girls, who kept well away from the nettles and briars, were the authority on what could be eaten safely or which leaf would make the better print. They chatted and giggled, keeping to their own little group, as they weaved their way past the cowpats refusing to take notice of the boys... by now, carving their name on the beech tree.

Their past-times, games, hobbies and interests are little different from those played generations ago. The boys kick a ball or tin and the girls skip, play catch or hopscotch – the same the world over. The differences are those that are forced upon them by local authority or government edict. Their clothes less tattered these days, fashions changed too, but childish behaviour remains the same... The bullies demand subservience and the meek consideration, the confident were heard, and the shy tried to hide. That, after all, was the way of the world!

The village was lucky having the mill and creamery, with all their ancillary trades, giving training and employment to its inhabitants. The Chard Road station and sidings, gave employers the means to import labour and transport goods. Both the warehousing sheds and ironmongers provided all those ancillary pieces of equipment necessary to support both these firms engineering shops.

Ten years before the school was built, education standards were linked to 'student results' – under the Revised Code. There was an annual examination, an attendance record level, religious instruction and needlework for the girls. Specific subject grants for grammar, history and geography were brought into being in five years later in 1867, which raised the number of subjects - giving a broader curriculum; these subject became 'class' subjects eight years later. Shortly before, a number of other subjects were included: Latin, mathematics, science, modern languages and domestic economy – cookery and gardening. By the turn of the century, the curriculum as we know it was in general use and not long afterwards, 'payment by results' ended.

Child labour under eight was forbidden, six years later the employment of children on farms was not allowed [in a group less than ten] even though eight-year-old children could be employed if they had attended school 250 times during the preceding year. However, all the laws passed to regulate labour were widely evaded.

The Elementary Education Act of 1870-73 compelled Chard authorities to ensure that there was adequate provision... to establish a Chard Board School. The cost of the board was met by local taxation. Church Aided Schools had to rely upon voluntary donations topped up by donations from the local gentry. The Board Schools provide national elementary education for over two million children. There was made a universal curriculum, which had to be followed. Secondary education did not have the same encompassing system until the School Boards tried to instil order. Eventually the Education Act of 1902 ensured the basis of all public education and lasted until the Education Act brought into being by Rab Butler in 1944.

My mother, started school at the age of four, in 1912. Academic standards in the Board Schools still did not rise sufficiently even after the 1902 Act set out targets levels of Standards I and II. Standard I required an ability to read from textbook including words of more than one syllable. Dictation, writing down a few common words in a neat hand, the ability to add up and subtract not more than four figures, and the recitation of the multiplication table up to six. Many children did not reach even this low minimum standard and it is unfortunate that teachers resorted to harsh methods to improve their standards.

Village schools, at the turn of the twentieth century, laid great emphasis on the principles of Christian religion, morals, reading, writing and the casting of accounts with beads. Some pupils went on to grammar schools. Girls were accepted into the village school but not allowed into the grammar. The grammar school curriculum consisted of Latin grammar and literature, history and geography - to some degree, and a little Greek... The scriptures were essential so too arithmetic-mental and addition. Diction and manners, given special regard along with National heroes. Marching, some games and physical exercises considered fitting in short measure. Boys attended six-days of the week and church on Sundays.

Those parishioners who valued education – the ability to read and write and reckon, were usually those who could afford to do without their child's labour, for as long as was necessary. Those folk were tradesmen, yeoman farmers and lesser gentry. When the School Boards were put in place it was to those citizens – those unable to afford individual lessons by tutors and public schools, they were planning for.

The School's Inspectors - noticed in both town and country, the bad treatment of schoolchildren. The nation's children were from this time forward going to be educated. The 'payment, of teachers, by results' had disappeared by the time Elsie went to school. Although the children in Tatworth had the benefit of an education in a new school, operating a regulated curriculum they still lacked the cultural benefits available to town children. Eight years before, the Board of Education defined elementary education as 'forming and strengthening the character of children, and developing their intelligence', assisting boys and girls to, 'fit themselves for the work of life'. Girls were expected to be self-sacrificing, domesticated and moral... boys, hard working, loyal and brave, both extolled as, 'Children of the Empire. The Nation was proud of itself believing that there was, 'further noble deeds to be done', the Empire was supported throughout the country.

Heads of rural schools not only maintained discipline within the school but were sometimes expected to control the behaviour of their charges outside as well. In many outlying hamlets, sending older children to school was looked on as wasteful labour.

When Elsie went to school in 1912, children were being given cocoa or some other warm drink for a 1d during the midday break. The local nurse still discovered 'dirty heads' during a school inspection, teachers were always taking care that when children scratched they were inspected for lice or flea bites. Inferior meals at home caused some of the children to be undernourished. Giving free school meals afforded the school the opportunity to instil good manners and proper eating habits – to eat properly with a knife and fork. A full-time dentist travelled from school to school checking the children's teeth. He carried out inspections whilst the children were sent out to play. Cheap spectacles were obtainable free of charge and instruction given about the correct way to clean one's teeth. The health of the nation's children had become a national issue and initiatives started to improve the general state of health and other child welfare matters. The Rowntree Foundation highlighted the 'serious physical deterioration amongst the poorer section of the community in their 1901 publication. The First World War evened out the vast difference between children health in good and bad areas, by government inspection.

Every day began the same for all children. At the turn of the twentieth century, most working-class families expected their children to contribute to the running of the household. Tasks were learnt by following their parents round the home helping as they went. The boys took on the heavier work whilst the girls helped with the sewing and food preparation... water had to be bought from the stream... each day had its routine of household chores. All this work had to be done before going to school... It was expected that Elsie and her sisters helped their mother look after the chickens, fetch the eggs, and clean them out. The washing had to be mangled, hung out, turned, and then ironed when dry. The vegetable gathered from the garden washed and put away for the next

meal. There was a half-time system at the mill; children over the age of ten could work limited hours, whilst receiving their education. This continued until after the First World War.

After the war, the troops were dismissed and returned home. They might have been informed by letter that the village had changed or they might have seen for themselves a few of these changes when they were sent home on leave. However, it was a different thing altogether when they had to face the changes day after day. Younger people were not content to put up with things that had gone on for centuries. They wanted to sample the so-called good living to be found in the towns and cities. Women too had seen for themselves their sex working on the land and others had gone to work in factories. The industrial age had started the decline. The First World War had carried the momentum further shattering the old ways. Things were never to be the same again. It was not just the working class that had to adapt. The upper classes, particularly the large landowners lost their sons who were going to take over. Working arrangements at the mill continued, but not for long...!

Children still worked at the mill crawling under the looms, with bare feet to stop slipping, to retrieve the ends of broken threads. These ends had to be instantly repaired in very hot and damp conditions to quickly get the gliding jennies back into action again. They felt proud they were contributing to the family's income as they felt the sixpence in their pockets. The children of farm workers also turned their hands to the work in the fields. Picking up stones, weeding the crops and collecting potatoes. No child of the poor was allowed to get away from, 'working for their keep'.

The bell on the roof tolled at 9am. It seemed very loud and the pigeons scattered at its sound... the noisiness of the children greeting friends subsided and the running around stilled... lines were formed outside the door and all waited for the teacher to admit them. No talking was allowed and each child allotted a seat - after the girls put on their pinnies. Any late comer received a black mark and this was entered in the term report. The roll was called when attendants were ticked off in red. All the Collins children went to this school - there was no escaping either the building of its influence - it was built opposite Rosalie Cottage!

Prayers and Hymns started the day - always the well-known favourites learnt by heart... as the scholastic subjects were reinforced by repeating them in rhyme - intoned in a singsong fashion. It was an unchanging ritual going back generations. Classes started at nine o'clock and lasted until three thirty every day; these went on until she was fourteen. The school hall divided by a large curtain, which did not reach the top of the pitched roof, one side for the younger children and the other side for the older ones. The sun's rays, finding a gap in the curtain, penetrating the dusty haze, created a spectrum on the opposite wall as they passed through the glass ... normally drawn back for morning assembly and special occasions.

A trained certificated male assistant teacher received £100 per year; his female colleague received £10 less. Teacher training colleges insisted upon a strict religious calling for their student intake - they must be free from all faults. It was about moral ascendancy over literary knowledge. It was not always the case that properly trained teachers filled the vacancies. Acting teachers, who were usually the brightest girls in their final year, were preferred - heads considered that they understood their jobs better and had an empathy with their charges. Elementary teachers were, 'uncultivated and imperfectly educated', commented one Chief Inspector. It was not unusual for the local squire or magistrate to require schoolteachers to attend Sunday school, play the piano, and organize out of school educational trips without payment...

The first and second year children followed the seasons with calendar records noting when the first snowdrop showed itself, when the first cuckoo called, and the first swallow flew. The class would be given the task of drawing these and the best ones displayed on the wall.

All the younger children and newcomers used slates and squeaky slate pencils and approved lessons like English and arithmetic checked by the local authority. Scripture was compulsory for all and once a week the vicar would come to talk about moral behaviour - told in the form of a story.

Country children were taught to observe and appreciate the countryside and local history sometimes by a village elder. When the class was considered capable, they were given lead pencils and told to copy letters of the alphabet and words from cardboard specimens. The next stage, after obtaining the correct standard - exercise books with faint green lines were passed out, was to copy off the blackboard simple sentences, this carried them to the next stage, linking sentences together to make a paragraph.

After the two years, the class graduated to the use of pen and ink. Every day the ink monitor would pass out the filled china inkwells placing them in the drilled holes at the top of each desk. It was found difficult to control the ink at first or even to make the pen work at all. The nibs had to be clean and the points not splayed out or crossed - by too much pressure - when a new one issued. Blots and smudges appeared as if by magic. Sleeves and hair sometimes got in the way. But these hurdles were soon overcome and the class settled down to perfect their copper plate writing - less pressure on the pen for up strokes and a firmer pressure on the way down. There was always a controversy whether strokes down should follow directly on top of those going up instead of making a loop.

It was considered important by school authorities that 'drill' superseded random gymnastics. The class was told to march swinging their arms forward with the opposite leg - in military fashion. All the arm and leg movements were to be done in correct order - following an accepted pattern - so that each exercise known in advance. Every muscle had an approved exercise and running strictly regulated. If the day were particularly cold then marching, swinging the arms, hopping and coordinated exercise - the class all following round and round folding and unfolding like a snake. There was never enough space for games and no equipment if there were.

Once a year there was sports day when all the classes did their exercises before their parents. There were three-legged races, egg and spoon and sack races, throwing the beanbag and catching the ball. All the children had to bring an enamel mug to school so that lemonade could be served out. There were iced and currant buns provided by the school authorities. Prizes won and achievements recognised usually in the form of a book.

Music lessons consisted of practising singing the National Anthem, the national songs of each country making up Britain, popular patriotic songs and folk songs. This involved much practice, which was taught using the tonic sol-fah system using a tuning fork to start on the right note.

The whole school marched into the playground to salute the flag and sing all the songs practised.... on Trafalgar Day - with an emphasis on why it was so important to have a navy to protect the country and its trade. After the First World War, Armistice Day was observed when once again the whole school assembled to salute the flag and observe the two minutes silence with the flag at half-mast.

National and Saint Days celebrated - Flying the Union Jack and the flag of St George a prerequisite for all organizations and groups. Empire Day considered the most important national event next to the King's birthday. Patriotic songs sang and tales of daring do - exploration, discovery and invention, read aloud and cheered. All these national events were celebrated during the Sunday church service following on from the school.

My mother and her class were taken for country walks where the names of plants and trees were written down and the local wild-life pointed out. Collections of grasses, leaves, butterflies and other insects mounted and named. Records of when certain things happened throughout the year were copied down and older children made their own sketchbooks, which were initialled and coloured up. Prizes were presented in the hall at the end of each year, these were mainly books.

There were three teachers taking different groups called standards. Infants were taught to knit dishcloths and to patch holes and darn. Elementary dressmaking, buttonhole stitching and pleating was also taught. Reading was considered especially important and frequently checked by the School

Inspector. The quality of writing using correct English neatly formed Geography, History and Nature Study, Needlework, Cooking and Gardening.

Most pupils had long hair, plaits or ponytails [on leaving school hair was 'put up' either in a bun or braids round the head or draped either side below the ears]. Where possible in large families most of the clothes would be hand-me-downs. If these were not available, they were purchased at 'bring and buy sales' or made by mother except shoes and hats. Generally, the dresses were of checked gingham, knitted socks and cotton knickers. Winter wear usually navy skirt attached to a bodice, with hand-knitted jumper, knee high socks, brown lace-up shoes, knitted woollen vest, a liberty bodice buttoned down the front and an assortment of other buttons to hold up suspenders and knickers. In extremely cold weather, fleecy knickers were worn with a pocket for a handkerchief.

Nothing was ever wasted in the clothing line. Discarded clothes cut down, shortened, taken up, patched, darned or cut into squares for rag rugs. Worn sheets turned side to middle or made into pillowcases. Worn pillowcases became handkerchiefs, liners or tea towels. There was no end to the amount of make do and mend necessary to look after a large family. All families had a rag bag the contents useful for repairs or making up patchwork quilts and mats.

The only outside building was the coal shed and a row of lavatories in the playground. They contained a wooden seat over a bucket that was emptied each week by the school caretaker, who also provided the torn-up newspapers on a string!

There were lessons on Health & Hygiene – the importance of washing hair emphasised as was brushing teeth, cutting nails and what was good to eat. The importance of bathing; the girls were taught how to look after babies. However, there were no lessons on sex. Girls were instructed on how to look after and run a home and this was linked to sewing - the make-up of curtains and covers. Boys were instructed how to dig, why to dig and how to plant out vegetables and run a greenhouse.

There were talks on how to avoid common ailments by a local nurse who cautioned about practising old country remedies, dispelling superstitions, and tales of false beliefs - especially about the menstruation period. Some children smelled strongly and no one wanted to share a desk with them... much of the nurse's talk was trying to make children aware without spelling out the truth. Children sometimes wore underwear all the year through.

There was neither school milk nor lunches – sandwiches were eaten at the lunch break... there was always water from the tap in the playground. The eldest children did not finish until three-forty-five to give the infants and their mother's time to clear the front entrance. Those children who had an elder brother or sister to take them home had to wait inside.

The rooms were well lit because there were such large windows set into the gable ends. In winter, it was always cold due to the high ceilings. Two large round stoves heated both ends of the room – however much the stoves were stoked it was never sufficient to heat the corners. The floor was bare boards, which gave off clouds of dust whenever there was any movement particularly when there was the morning assembly and for the dancing class.

Infants were taught to knit with two needles and then four. Darning, using a wooden mushroom, how to turn, hem and take-up and gather in, how to sew on buttons, make floor cloths and cover buttons and taught fraying out – removing each separate thread from a patch of material and un-picking – unravelling an old woollen garment, were methods used to provide material to make-up new. Sewing bags made and each girl's initials graced the sides – these were end of first term tests and used by the teachers to keep one class quiet whilst the other in the room carried on with their reading and writing. Material was supplied by the council – always-white cotton. From this articles of clothing were made, pillowcases and nighties. Patterns had to be traced suitable for the child's size. There was a communal box of thimbles, needles and thread. Embroidery with coloured wool made simple samplers.

A school inspector of the day noted that a number of children had died through diphtheria. The winter always brought the usual bout of illnesses, whooping cough, mumps, chicken pox, scarlatina, diphtheria, scarlet fever, colds and influenza. The Schools Medical Officer had to be notified especially an outbreak. These problems affected the standard of education. Special lessons were arranged for children to catch up with lost lessons. Regular attendances by the Doctor and Nurse to inspect for medical examination and general cleanliness. Doctors Fawsus, Cosh and Daniel came from Chard surgeries, as did Sheppard, Weaver & Geelie the dentists.

If there were, any problems the parents were visited to check that action had been taken... Heads were examined by the Nurse, for nits and general health. Proper clothing and shoes for winter wear identified, reported and logged. There were no aspirins or cold remedies. Antibiotics not long discovered. Infections spread by contact. In the early twenties, there was a national epidemic of mumps and illness.

The senior classes had to fill in nature notebooks mostly by personal observation, making sketches and writing explanatory notes. It was encouraged that everyone should be observant and knows what to look for when each season arrived.

Poetry was used to promote a good memory. Popular writers of the day discussed and passages read out. On Speech Days, prizes would be distributed for every subject. As with national songs, poems and noted authors - these works committed to heart - to the extent that they could be remembered all through one's life.

In rural areas, in the early twentieth century, most children left school at twelve, to start work. The Education Act of 1918 raised the age to fourteen. The School's Inspector noted, 'that arithmetic was not a strong subject but that the discipline was good and the children attentive to their lessons'.

In the early afternoons before the youngest children pored out of the main school doors shouting and screaming their mothers did the shopping and made courtesy calls pushing their coach-built, second-hand, much used prams, containing the latest addition. It was a time relished by the mothers knowing their peaceful existence about to be extinguished. They remembered their time in the same school sometimes even the same teachers. The layout of the schoolrooms recalled - the smells and sounds the same. There were brothers, sisters, cousins and even more distant relations, mingling with friends made many years before all doing the same lessons in the same manner.

After school my mother roamed the woods and fields with her sisters and brothers in search of birds' nests and 'fruits of the hedge' to take home and present to their mother which might stop her complaining about their torn clothes. She was strict which was necessary considering that at thirty-seven she had eleven children to look after. Her life was a constant endeavour to make ends meet. Gentle, devoted and strong willed, worshipping respectability and constancy.

The children played hide-and-seek and Red Indians leaping the streams, climbing the trees, collecting bluebells in the wood and constructing bows and arrows. Mum would be wearing her pinny and hair in ribbons, her brothers, corduroy knee breeches and a jersey. They would search the hedges for suitable sticks to make into pipes, whistles, catapults and peashooters, spud and pop guns, bows and arrows, lances, swords and daggers. The vibrating blade of grass - held between thumbs, made a whistling noise when air blown through... Owl hoots, produced in the same way, but without the grass... betting each other, they could whistle louder or longer. Children still trundled their hoops, bowled marbles - tip-cat'd and skipped; drew hop-sotch chalk lines, spun tops and constructed 'cats cradle'... Girls played their singing game - joined hands and skipped... here we go gathering 'Nuts in May'; Jenny Jones visited, Orange and Lemons chopped off heads and What's the time Mr Wolf - tempted giant paces... The Big Ship Sails and The Farmer wants a Wife gave everyone a chance. Throwing a ball against the school wall, clapping hands, whilst spinning

round, sevens or swapping marbles or cigarette cards all games played at school. Conkers were strung in the autumn and daisies threaded in spring.

All the children in the village went to Sunday school, whose numbers had been built up since the chapel had been, erected thus enabling a choir of boys and young men to be formed - the Morning Service, followed on after the school. The choir was used, as a means of teaching basic music to the children - would make them keener to continue attending. Occasionally there would be special services for a christening, saint's day or Mothering Sunday. The annual Empire Day was celebrated using paper hats previously painted in the Union Jack colours. Patriotic songs were sung - stories of daring-do - Cecil Rhodes and Captain Cook, atlases perused for its pink areas and places of British influence. It was a day for rejoicing and celebration, greatly looked forward-to.

The organist who doubled as the choirmaster religiously stuck to the few Hymns, Ancient and Modern, which were well known and practiced. It was a way of ensuring that there would not be any embarrassing silences of mumbled verses. The church brought together all the various elements of the population cementing the community together. Whether the day wet or fine, the music of the choir gave the stark interior a softer touch.

In the winter, the cold seemed to be far more intense. Clothing was not so efficient at keeping the cold out and often children had chapped hands and legs. Some cried, when their hands started to thaw out, whilst standing round the coke brazier. Many of the children reached school having to stumble over rutted ground and frozen field still wearing ordinary shoes worn by much use - usually from being passed on from older brothers and sisters. Sometimes the soles would be so thin that studs and blakies would not hold in to the leather. Fortunately, the Collins children lived opposite the school did not suffer these setbacks. This was about the only positive aspect to having the school so near.

My mother told us that her reading was done mostly in bed by the light of a candle. During the evening, before going to bed, time would be filled by knitting in front of the fire, resting her feet on the logs set before the fire. Her sisters would embroider, make spills - rolling up strips of newspaper, make dolls' clothes and Christmas presents: kettle or iron holders, gloves, pin-cushions, handkerchief sachets, lavender bags, padded coat hangers, peg bags and tray cloths - many of these would be crocheted or contain crocheted borders. French knitting, using a cotton reel with looped wool over pins, made a long cord that could be tacked in the round to make mats. A useful present could be made from sewing mothballs in red silk... providing leaves, cut out of thick felt, to represent holly, a hanging loop of platted wool would ward off moths in the wardrobe.

Dishcloths were knitted from heavy cotton yarn, face flannels from old cut down towels, old dresses made aprons, rag rugs, patchwork quilts and sacking doormats. Cardboard cutouts were decorated with coloured paper stuck on with flour paste to make theatre sets were some of the pastimes, which contributed towards passing long winter evenings.

Her brothers designer poker work using red hot skewers spliced onto a wooden handle, cut jig saws out of thin picture pasted boards and interlaced wooden spills to make mats.

Along with the harvest revels, Christmas Day and Boxing Day were the other two great occasions for the whole family. Both these were holidays celebrated by everyone, although the animals still had to be looked after. Holly and mistletoe - the only decorations, were draped across the tops of pictures and laid across the ceiling beams. Carols were sung, everyone singing one verse on their own, party games enjoyed and simple presents unwrapped. The children went to church three times on Christmas Day and on each occasion; they enjoyed a special meal the highlight of the day's events all served with parsnip wine for the elders. The church choir did the rounds and the children knocked on doors after singing a carol. Neither New Years Eve or the next day were marked by celebration, it was back to work with a vengeance.

Amongst the children who left school in the twenties there were few who went on to higher education. Some of the girls took up nursing or teaching - the only two positions which required training for girls. Those who were to become pupil-teachers could stay on at school to teach the youngest children and pick up some of the skills necessary for teaching. Trainee nurses might be taken on in hospitals if they were near enough. Both positions were underpaid receiving less than the lowest paid worker. Women teachers, and nurses in training, could not get married, having to leave if they did so.

As a bright thirteen year old from a lower-middle class family, residing in the country – father perhaps a self employed artisan with a flourishing business employing others; the track to become a teacher would be as a class monitor to an uncertificated teacher, teaching the first induction class of about fifty children. If he proved capable, he would be offered a formal indenture - as a pupil-teacher. The first hour of every day was put aside for instruction... you would be also expected to take an annual examination for each of the five year apprenticeship course when you then proceeded to a teacher training college - to take a two-year course. After 1903, the starting age for apprenticeship was sixteen paid £2 per annum. Their title was pupil-teacher in a four-year course. It is clear that a national scheme was still a long way off. The observance of one scheme rather than another depended on the local authority - whether it was at a board school or attached to a religious body.

There were no unions or tribunals working arrangements were strictly adhered to. Pupil Teachers had to attend county classes twice a week This continued until the Second World War had been underway for a couple of years. Then the emergency of all out war made such rules irrelevant. The training for both skills took until the pupil was eighteen - then earning about £1.16p per month One pound usually went back home to mother and the rest on lodging and keep, leaving very little left; then a college course undertaken for full training.

The County Council paid any travelling expenses – this was the only grant. Books had to be bought and college fees had to be paid – by the parents. An oath had to be taken by Pupil Teachers that they would not work out of the county for two years after qualifying. It also meant that the now trained teacher could not get married until after that period had been completed.

Some children were bright enough to sit for a scholarship examination when eleven – and then go to a grammar school. However, there were so few places that extra cramming had to be contemplated. School uniform, books, sports equipment and satchel all had to be bought, and the fares paid for train or bus. It was quite impossible for workers children to think of such treatment.

If the child was to go into ‘trade’, he had to think of an apprenticeship. There were no such schemes for girls until the late seventies. An employer had to be found to take on a lad and there were many who wanted the chance. Most trades took five years - to become full trained, others took seven. The parents had to pay the employer a fee for the privilege - which might be several hundred pounds. The often meant that the boy had to leave the village and find lodgings. At the end of his apprenticeship, he would have his ‘papers’ stating that he was full qualified. He was then likely to be taken on as an ‘improver’ at the lowest paid rate, for at least the first three months; by which time the employer would be in a better place to judge whether to take on the worker. If taken on, it would take several years to be accepted as a fully trained worker, then, and only then, would he receive the ‘going’ rate for the job.

An alternative was to work on a farm – as a ‘lad’, to pick up the skills of a land worker - this maybe, looking after animals, helping repair walls, ditches and fences. Alternatively, as a carrier’s boy, delivering. Other employment could be found working for the local estate – park, garden or ‘in house’. Girls usually stayed at home under the watchful eye of mother – perhaps making lace, straw dollies or making garments. What is interesting is that women were more adventurous than men and that of those women it was the younger who opted for urban life – more often than not, to life in-

service. It is clear from census figures that economic and social developments since the latter part of the nineteenth century have confirmed that women were attracted to town life... It only needed the stimulus of a shortage of men in the work place to attract women from the home. Each of the wars in the twentieth century has contributed to this trend. By the time the First World War was over women had seen a complete change in social cohesion. This was the start to the breaking up of class structures. The numbers of men killed and maimed, particularly the officer classes, was felt by the gentry who were looking forward to getting back to pre-war standards. Inheritance taxes completed the breakdown...