



EDUCATION IN TENTERDEN

Nothing is recorded in the early history of the town about how the children of those days were educated. One can only assume that the wealthiest families were able to pay for a formal tuition by means of private tutors, and later governesses. However the institution of a Grammar School in the early 16thC is well documented and it is surely a remarkable feat for a small country town to start one. A H Taylor, the 19thC antiquarian, opined that "the actual foundation of the school is obscure", and he quotes an extract from Kilburne's 'Topographie of Kent' as follows, "One Heyman antiently founded the Free-School of this Town and William Marshall, clerke, about the year 1521 gave £10 per annum out of lands in this parish towards the maintenance of the School Master there". Hasted, later in the 18thC, confirmed Kilburne's information and added that "the free school is for teaching the Latin tongue gratis to so many poor children of this parish as the Mayor and Jurats should think proper". Further bequests for the school were made by George Strekenbold in 1525 (20/-) and George ffelyppe in 1546. Despite Hasted's statement above, other records suggest that the Vicar of St Mildreds had the say in who attended the school and what subjects were to be taught. Quite often holders of this office acted as schoolmaster or delegated the position to the Chaplain of Smallhythe. The church's involvement is further strengthened by various records of Archdeacons' 'presentations', namely:

- 1551 "Enquire of the state of the schole and to make certyficat whether they come to the church, behave themselves well and decentlie there or no"
- 1560 "They have a skolemester that doth teach grammar but what grammar they know not"
- 1576 "William Harris who teacheth grammar in our town and one Harry Robinson who teacheth English within our parish but whether either of them was licenced was not known"

A further bequest of £200 in 1702 by John Mantell settled the future of the school although a few years later a lawsuit was required to ensure the payment of interest from the earlier gifts. During the whole of the two centuries, the number of pupils increased and a more diverse range of subjects taught. But towards the end of the 18thC, the number declined considerably and a Mr Buckland who had started up a private school was given the Grammar School salary, provided he taught 6 children Latin to preserve the old foundation. He continued to do so until 1817 when he moved to Sutton Valence, and the Charity Commissioners had to recommend the old school's closure. Later attempts were made to revive it but it became merged with the new National School in Church Road, then known as School Lane, outstanding monies from the old charity being transferred to the new school.

The 18thC saw the appearance of a number of private schools like Mr Buckland's. In 1764, an advertisement in the 'Kentish Post' gave notice "there will be a boarding school opened in Tenterden on Monday 6th August, where will be taught Plainwork, Marking Point, Drawing, Embroidery in Gold & Silver, and Dancing, at the easy price of Half a Guinea Entrance, and Twelve Guineas per year. Whoever pleases to Favour us with their Daughters may depend upon the best usage by their most obedient servants Stephen and Sarah Dewar". In 1792, Samuel and Richard Croughton, staying at Plummer, were sent to Miss Gibbon's school at Clare House (now Westbourne) for four days a week, charged at 4d per week each, plus dinner at 4d per time. Pigot's 1812 Directory mentions two ladies schools, Sarah Blundell's and the Misses Hodges', and two boys' day schools, William Guy's and John Rofe's. 13 years later, Stephen Rofe had a day school at the present 112 High Street, and Henry Landsdell a day and boarding school at the Manor House. Harriet Hodges was now in Miss Gibbon's place at Clare House, and Sarah Walter had a day school, and Sarah Mills a boarding school, both at East Cross. Chapel House, the Unitarian Minister's house was erected in 1769, and a schoolroom added in 1838 (following the founding of a Sunday School). Mr Taylor ran a school there at the end of the 19thC. In 1893, Limes High School for Girls was functioning with Miss Woods as Principal. The school gave "Thorough Education and Home Training. The Course of Study comprises the usual English subjects, French, German, Vocal and instrumental Music, Theory and Harmony, Drawing in all styles, Painting in Oil and Water Colours, Calisthenics, and Dancing. Pupils successfully prepared for the Cambridge Locals, College of Preceptors, The Associated Board of the RAM and RCM, The International, London and Trinity College of Music, The Science and Art Department South Kensington and the Kensington Locals".

Reverting to National Schools, trustees had been appointed as early as 1812 but the building we now know as the Day Centre bears a plaque dating it as 1843, after Virgil Pomfret of Morghew had given the land whereon it stands. In the 19th C there was also a National School in Smallhythe at the top of Summer Hill, but is no longer there today. In 1865, a further National School was erected next to the then-new St Michaels Church. To cater for children from non-conformist families, the British School was built in the Ashford Road in 1845. In 1957 the British School closed and at the same time the school in Church Road moved its 8-11 year-olds to a new Junior School in Recreation Ground Road. The Church Road school building became a separate Infants School (5-7) and in 1973 moved to new premises in Recreation Ground Road.

- 1903 **The Pebbles, Miss Rumsey.** Day and Boarding School. Resident English and Parisian governesses. Religious instruction, English, Advanced Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, French, Drawing, Basic Latin, Physical Drill, Theory of Music, Needlework. Pupils prepared for all Public Examinations.
- 1900 **Beacon Oak High School,** 78 Ashford Road (Abbeyfield). Miss Gawdery and Fraulein Satow Principals. Boarding and Day School. A thorough modern up-to-date education. Preparation for all Public Examinations including scholarships offered by the KCC (open to children of Tenterden). Oxford and Cambridge Locals, second to none.
- 1905 30 High Street. **P Willsher.** Good solid commercial education.
- 1910 High Street. **Misses B & K Blackman** (Certificated Cambridge and South Kensington) Day and Boarding School for Girls and Preparatory Class for Boys. Assisted by trained teachers and a resident French mistress. Organised games. Private lessons given.
- 1914 **Asheton School, St Michaels Grange.** H F F Varley MRST FCS FRGS Boarding School for boys aged 6 to 18. Vice-Principal, T Moffat Thompson. Trained teacher. Assisted by large and qualified staff of resident masters. Fully equipped with good science laboratories. Common Entrance class. A small class for matriculation. Other examinations. A commercial class. Recent entrance scholarships gained for St Pauls. Successes in Common Entrance for Charterhouse, Eton, Rossall, Tonbridge, Uppingham.
- 1918
- 1914 **Gatesdene,** 1 Elmfield. Had been at Thanet previously. Principal, Miss E Bowers. Vice-Principal -1918 Miss F Bowers. A high class home boarding school for girls. Assisted by staff of qualified resident and visiting mistresses. House mistress Miss R F Crump. The work follows from the syllabuses set for Oxford and Cambridge Local examinations. Pupils are prepared for the examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and Royal College of Music, the Royal Drawing Society and the London Institute for the Advancement of Plain Needlework. All games and open-air pursuits encouraged and PT is a prominent feature of school life. Great attention given to the general health and happiness of pupils. A limited number of day pupils taken. The school outgrew its accommodation and No 3 Elmfield became the annexe in which all classroom lessons were used mainly for music, dancing, meals, dormitories, etc. Eventually Miss E Bowers became the sole Principal and a preparatory class for boys was started. The school closed circa 1931.
- 1918 **Penderel,** 37 Ashford Road, next to Chapel House. Opened for boys (initially under 8) and girls (any age). Miss L M McCowan Hall Headmistress until 1949, then succeeded by Major and Mrs Morton, Miss A Singleton, and finally Mr John Putnam. Closed about 1970.
- 1930 **Petergate Preparatory School.** M E B Cork (Cantab) Headmaster. A sound education for boarders and day boys. Small classes. Individual attention. Fully qualified staff. Cricket, football, miniature golf course, Carpentry, Riding. The School moved to Petham House, near Canterbury, and closed in 1932.
- 1946 **Westcliff,** 23 Ashford Road. Run by the Wellard family until its closure in late 1957.

Other schools for which detailed information is not available were run by Miss Bennett at Berwyn, Elmfield; Mr G House at 2 Oaks Road in the 1920s; and the Fullerton family at Heronden, a small preparatory school for a few years in the early 1960s.

All the private schools closed prior to 1939 (except where otherwise stated) and the town's education as from 1970 depended on state schools. In 1937, thoughts were given to providing a Central School for approximately 480 children from Tenterden and the surrounding parishes, the building to be located in the Appledore Road until war intervened. However in 1947, Lady Drury, the owner of Homewood, sold the mansion to the KEC, rather than have it developed as a hotel or nursing home, Alderman Mrs Adams being the leading proponent of the scheme. The school, for children of 11 years and over, was started in 1949, initially as a secondary school, but in the 1970s it became a comprehensive. The area proposed for the pre-war Central school was then used for cricket, football and athletics.