

## 20TH CENTURY EDUCATION IN TENTERDEN

At the beginning of the twentieth century education in Tenterden was provided both by the state and privately. There were two state primary schools in Tenterden and one each at St Michaels, Smallhythe and Ebony. In the first half of the 19th century, primary education in England had principally been developed by two great educational organisations. These were the British and Foreign School Society founded in 1808 and the National Society in 1811 for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the established church. Their schools were called respectively British Schools and National Schools. Under the Elementary Education Act of 1870, district school boards were set up over the whole country. By the Education Act of 1902, the running of the state schools became the responsibility of the Kent County Council.

The Tenterden National School or Church School was established in Church Road, formerly School Lane, in 1843 in the building that is now used as the Day Centre. The date 1843 can be found on the building. Tenterden British School, later referred to as the Ashford Road Council School, was opened in 1845 at 57-59 Ashford Road for non-conformist families. Right up to its closure, many locals always referred to it as the 'British School'. Benets Court was developed on the playing fields of this school, which was heated by coke stoves. Children who walked from the surrounding villages were allowed to leave half an hour earlier in the winter to beat the gathering darkness. Those remaining read books or had sketching and clay modelling lessons until the normal time of 4 p.m.

The Boresilsle School opened in 1862 on half an acre of land of the Lower Fields in what is now St Michaels, the rest of it being reserved for the church that was to be dedicated to St Michael. New Housing at St Michaels in the 1950s led inevitably to new school facilities in the 1960s. When the 100th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone was commemorated by a service at the Church at the end of October 1961, it was followed by the dedication of an extension that included a new hall and teaching facilities. The Rev V H Perry, vicar of St Michaels, conducted the service whilst the headmaster, Mr R D Faulkner, read the lesson. The Rev A R Jacobs, vicar of Brookland and diocesan religious education adviser, gave the address and said that new buildings did not make a good school. It was the people in them rather than what the place looked like who decided that.

In 1870 Mrs John Burt who had been teaching small children at her cottage at Pickhill, Smallhythe, needed larger premises. As a result, the vicar of Smallhythe, Rev C T Pizey, called a parish meeting and a school was built at the top of Smallhythe Hill opposite the entrance to Summerhill. It served the community until its closure in 1924 when the children were conveyed to Tenterden by transport provided by Kent County Council. Ebony School, at Reading Street on the road to Appledore and on the extremities of the old Tenterden Borough was built in 1882 and closed in 1922. The small building still stands opposite Ebony Church and shows its date of construction. It was used for church meetings from 1921 to 1948 and hired out for various entertainments, e.g. whist drives, men's clubs meetings, etc. In 1949, according to the church minutes, the Parochial Church Council discussed the school building and decided it was best to dispose of it. It has since been used as a workshop by the Armstrong family.

In 1911 the London County Council introduced Central Schools, providing secondary education with a slight commercial or industrial bias and these became general throughout the country. The nearest one to Tenterden was in Ashford. Between the two World Wars there were always plans to build a Central School in Tenterden to cater for children from Tenterden, High Halden, Rolvenden, Smarden, Stone-in-Oxney, Wittersham, Woodchurch and Headcorn. In 1937, nine acres of land was purchased on the Appledore Road for such a school but war intervened and the proposal was not taken up afterwards.

However, in June 1947 Lady Drury sold her home, Homewood, to Kent Council Education Committee. She was fond of children and her wish was that the house should be used as a school rather than a roadside hotel or nursing home as had been proposed. Alderman Mrs E A Adams and other local residents supported her and she sold the house with its 50 acres for £10,000. With numerous additions, extensions and adaptations (the wartime wooden huts erected by the Army were used as classrooms) Homewood School opened partially in 1948 and fully in April 1949 with pupils of secondary age transferring from the schools around. Mrs Adams became the first Chairman of Governors. To mark Tenterden's Quincentenary of being a Borough, Homewood launched the town's week of celebrations in the summer of 1949 and presented a splendid pageant as 400 pupils enacted in the school grounds 800 years of Tenterden's history. Mr H L Warren (Headmaster 1949-1955) and Mr A Holden, the School's History Master, devised the Pageant.

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. Alderman W C Redman, Kent Education Committee Chairman presided at the official opening of the new buildings, costing about £42,000 and having 200 pupils, on Friday 18 October 1957. The Mayor of Tenterden, Councillor Mrs N D Goldsmith, who said she had watched the school being built since the first brick was laid, extended a warm welcome to the nearly 300 parents and friends present. Ald Redman described the new accommodation as a "landmark in the educational history of Tenterden". Canon L G Appleton (Diocesan Director of Education) responded to the welcome given to the visitors and wished the school great success and happiness in the years ahead. The Rev C S W Marcon, chairman of the managers and vicar of Tenterden, carried out a short service of dedication at which the new headmaster, Mr R T Martin, read the lesson. The Dean of Bocking, the Very Rev H D S Bowen, former vicar of Ashford, then declared the buildings open. As a former chairman of the Ashford Divisional Education Executive he said they had never been allowed to forget how badly Tenterden needed new buildings. The opening ceremony was relayed to classrooms for the benefit of those children unable to be accommodated in the main hall and a tape recording was made of the speeches. Following the singing by the scholars of the new school hymn, for which the music was written by Mr B E Judge, a master, and the words by Mr R T Martin, assisted by members of the staff, a vote of thanks to all concerned with the opening was proposed by Mr I T Emberson (Town Clerk) and seconded by Lt Col W H D Wilson. A Posy of flowers for the Mayor and buttonholes for the Dean of Bocking, Canon Appleton and Alderman Redman were presented by David Weller, Keith Balkham, Daphne Brunger and Helen Sankey, following which tea was served by invitation of the headmaster and staff. In the strenuous days before the opening the headmaster had one comfort – the school had not been seriously affected by the Asian 'flu epidemic which swept the country in the autumn of 1957. The Church Road school building became a separate Infants School (5-7). However, through the co-operation of all concerned, the Junior and Infant Schools were to be managed by a joint body. For the start of the summer term in 1973 the 150 pupils Infant School moved to new purpose built premises in Recreation Ground Road, below the Junior School, and the school buildings in Church Road became the Tenterden Day Centre. The headmistress, Miss Joan Bush, invited back on 21 March 1973 between 1.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. any former pupils as there were still many around who had started and finished their education at the school. Both the Junior and Infant schools are today directly funded and controlled by the Kent Education Authority and follow the National Curriculum. This is a far cry from the subjects considered sufficient to create an educated work force 100 years ago when the three 'Rs' (Writing, Reading and Arithmetic), History, Geography and Scripture were the main subjects with needlework for the girls and possibly some craft for the boys.

Initially a Secondary Modern School, Homewood became a Wide Ability School (ages 11-18) in 1978. [Wide Ability was Kent County Council's name for a Comprehensive School.] In 1992 Homewood opted out of Local Education Authority funding and became a Grant Maintained School, wholly funded by Government, for 1400 pupils. Today, the School is a Foundation School for Performing Arts, controls its own budget, policies and day-to-day running. It is also a Community Education

Centre and has a theatre named after the famous actor, Sir Donald Sinden. The old house remains and is used for administration. Over the years many buildings have been added as the school roll approaches 2000. In May 1968, on a dreadfully wet day, David Frost opened a swimming pool, built by money raised by pupils and parents. His father, the Rev Paradine Frost, was Methodist minister in Tenterden and David was born at Kench Hill Nursing Home at Leigh Green.

Throughout the early part of the 20th century there were always several private schools in the town. Most of them were in private houses; they usually had a fairly short lifetime and only a few pupils. Penderel School, which was in existence for over 60 years, was probably the most successful. The table below, with approximate dates, gives information using Thomson's Almanac on some of these schools.

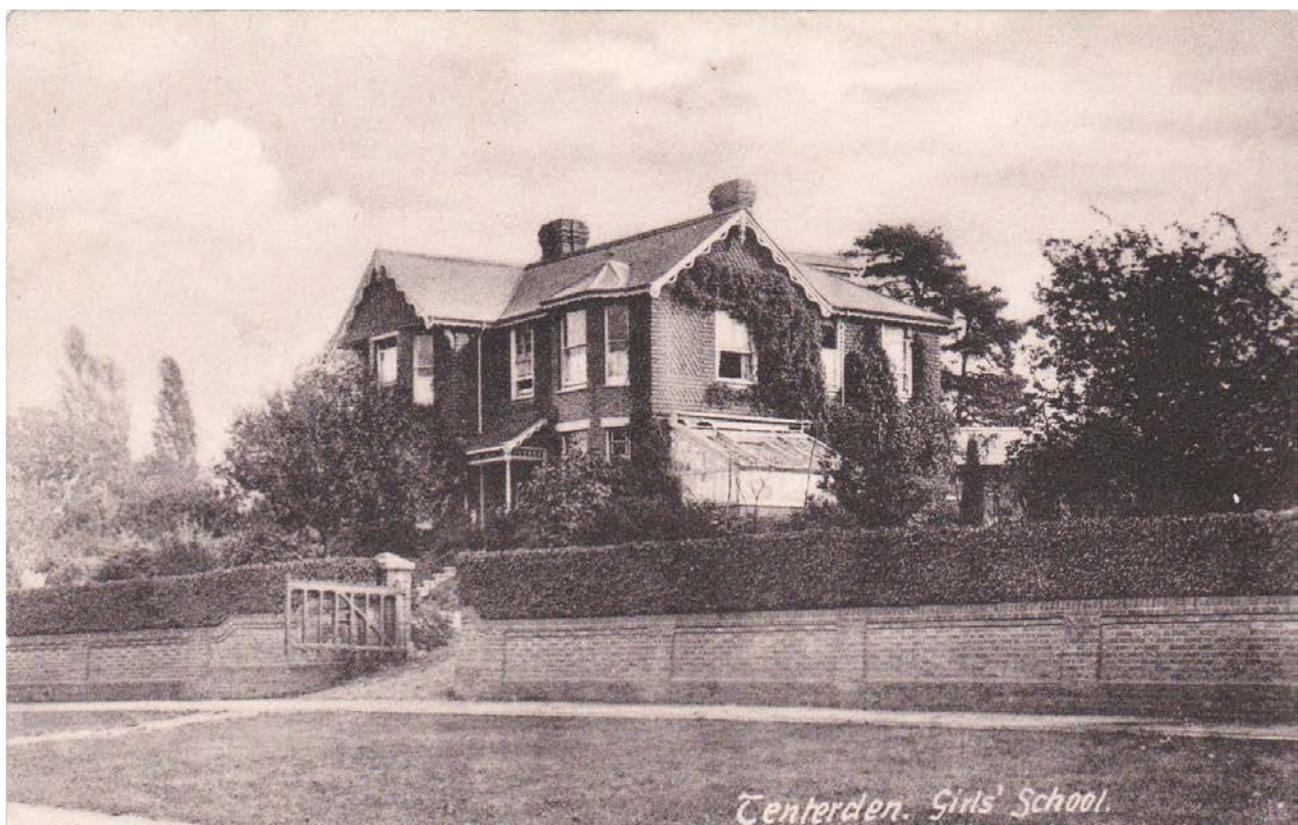
<u>Start</u>	<u>Finish</u>	<u>Name/Head of School</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1897	1909	Miss Rumsey	Spent the first two years in Ashford Road and then moved to the Pebbles. Thomson's Almanac states: 'Boarding and Day School with Miss Rumsey as Headmistress and assisted by Qualified Governesses. Pupils prepared for all Public Examinations'.
1898	1905	Beacon Oak House	Boarding and Day School at 78 Ashford Road. Miss Gawdery and Fraulein Satow were the Principals. Thomson's Almanac states: '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'. It is now an Abbeyfield Home.
1904	1918	Mr P Willsher	School for Boys at 30 High Street, now the Jumper Shop.
1906	1910	Miss Hocking	The school was in Borough Place. Mrs Hocking lived at 3 Borough Place.
1906	1907	F Chapman	Beacon Oak, Ashford Road.
1910	1914	Misses Blackman	Mrs Blackman lived at the Pebbles and it is assumed this was a continuation of Miss Rumsey's school.
1911	1911	Miss Woodcock	Sydney House
1914	1915	Miss (Edith) Bennett	Miss Edith Bennett ran her School at Berwyn, 4 Elmfield, the home of her father E G Bennett. Her father was involved in the omnibus, general carriers, coke and coal merchants business of that name at the west end of Tenterden. She later married Sydney J Winter who ran a ladies' shop at 47 High Street.
1915	1916	Rev T A Butcher	School was at Westcroft, 115 High Street.
1916	1918	Beacon Oak House	School opened on 1 January 1916 with Miss Barton and Miss McCallen in charge.
1917	1931	Gatesdene	Gatesdene was 1 Elmfield. The house was pulled down in 2004 and the site redeveloped with a block of flats. The School, formerly Cliff House came from Thanet during World War I and lasted until about 1931. The School outgrew its accommodation and the house next door (Playden, No 3 Elmfield) was acquired. This became the annexe in which all the classroom lessons were taken while Gatesdene was used mainly for music, dancing, meals and dormitories, etc. In due course Miss

			Ellen Bowers became the sole principal and a preparatory class for boys was started. Thomson's Almanac states: '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'.
1918	1918	Miss M Williams	Eastgate, Woodchurch Road
1918	1930	The Grange/Asheton Grange	Headmaster was H F Varley. Pupils wore distinctive scarlet blazers. Mr Varley purchased The Grange during World War 1, the previous owners being the Diggle family. The school closed in 1930. Thomson's Almanac states: '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'. Afterwards it became a rehabilitation centre for jobless men, followed by a home for retarded children. A German bomb damaged it so severely in 1940, that it was pulled down and replaced by the present smaller house.
1918	1970	Penderel Lodge then Penderel	The School, situated at 37 Ashford Road, next door to Chapel House the former residence of the Unitarian Minister, opened for boys (initially under 8) and girls (any age) in 1918 and carried on until about 1970. Miss Lizzie May McCowan Hall was Headmistress from 1918 until 1949, to be succeeded by Major and Mrs Morton, Miss Singleton and finally the Putnam family.
1926	1927	Mr G House	Mr House ran a school at 2 Oaks Road during the 1920's.
Circa	1930	Petergate	Headmaster Mr M E B Cork. Petersgate (now with an 's') is the house on the right hand side of the Appledore Road situated by the second turning into the Shrubcote Estate. The School moved to Petham House, near Canterbury in 1928 and closed in 1932.
1928			
1929	1929	Limes Hill	School belonged to A B Orcherton
1932	1934	Cavendish	Mrs Hodge at 7 Oaks Road
1946	1957	Westcliff	23 Ashford Road. Run by the Wellard family. Day School for Boys and Girls. Westcliff School, run by the Wellard Family, operated at 23 Ashford Road between about 1946 and December 1957 when the Jenner Family took over the property and opened an Electrical Shop.
1958	1962	Heronden School	Mr A R H Fullerton ran a preparatory school at Heronden. The school roll never exceeded 18.

From 1935 until the mid 1970's, George Lyward ran a community for young people at Finchden Manor. He was awarded the OBE for his work and came to Finchden in 1935 after working with sixth form pupils in public schools who suffered from emotional problems. He realised he had a certain gift for helping these young people and set up Finchden at the request of a number of eminent psychiatrists of the day. At that time it was a unique community in this country. Until his death in 1973, he devoted all his time and energy to running the centre and helped hundreds of young people. His son, Mr John Lyward, took over on his death but financial problems and fire regulations soon forced him to close down. At the time (April 1974) Mr John Lyward said: "There are 22 young people at the manor whose ages ranged from 15 upwards and eight staff. There is no maximum age limit and, contrary to local belief, few parents pay fees. In most cases, social service departments in the areas from which the boys come from pay the fees. He dislikes calling the manor a 'school', the running of the manor was 'hand to mouth' and he finds it very difficult to describe what Finchden Manor is".

During the latter half of the 20th century, nursery and play schools have been established to prepare children for mainstream schooling. Tenterden pre-school, founded in 1965 by Mrs Eileen Lockett, was one of the earliest. It is now called Highbury Hall Playgroup, owned by Mrs Cheryl Newman, and recently celebrated its 40th anniversary in January 2005 with Mrs Lockett cutting the cake.

Jack Gillett  
2005



Beacon Oak House (1898-1905)



Laundry Class at the National School (Church of England) in Church Road – 1922



British School, Ashford Road, playing field



Football Team of the British School, Ashford Road, in 1929, with headmaster Mr F W Berry,  
 Back (left to right) Ted Checksfield, Leo Hukins, Percy Link, Arthur Neale, Leo Bignell  
 Front: George Baker, Ernie Amies, Noel Gibbs, Ken Jarvis, Ron Pearson, Jim Brotherwood



Interior of the British School with pupils (about 1930)



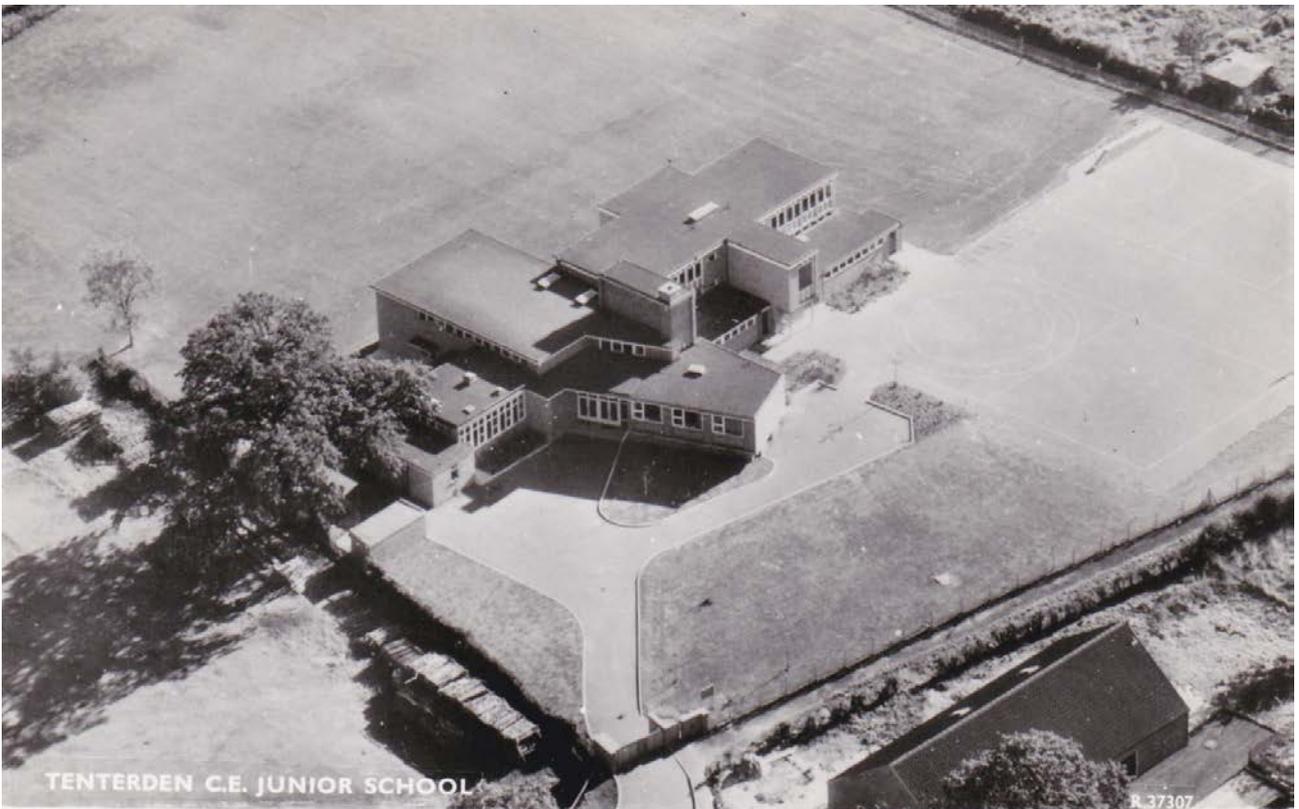
National School, 1920

Standing (L to R) \_\_\_\_ Field, Evelyn Bland (later Hyland), Nora Mercer

Sitting (L to R): Lilian Fuggle (later Jempson), Dorothy Titmus, Doris Williams



Rear of the British School and the playing field



Tenterden Junior School 1960s