

## **Schools**

The following books are helpful to anyone researching the history of education in North Devon:

- *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia*, John Richardson (1974)
- *Education in the West of England, 1066-1548*, Nicholas Orme (1976)
- *All in School: One Hundred Years of Education in Devon*, Devon County Council (1970)
- *Historical Notes on Devon Schools*, Robert Bovett (1989)
- *Education in Devon: A Review of the Past Twenty Years*, Devon County Council (1965)
- *Devon Village Schools in the Nineteenth Century*, R R Sellman (1967)
- *Early Devon Schools*, R R Sellman (1984)
- *A is for Appledore*, Alison Grant (1993)
- *Wear Gifford: A History of Education*, Peter Coad (1988)

## **Elementary and Senior Schools**

Before the late 19th century, education was provided mostly through charitable endowments; some through Parish Schools, set up to teach Christianity and encourage industriousness to selected children from local labouring families; some through new Grammar Schools (originally set up in the Middle Ages to teach Latin to trainee priests). The 18th century also saw the formation of Sunday Schools and schools for the industrial poor founded by The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, again emphasising Christianity, Industry and gratitude to one's social superiors. However, it was only in the early 19th century, with the growth of the Industrial Revolution and the spread of 'radical ideas' among the working classes, that a nationwide interest in working class education for its own sake began to be felt.

The middle classes at first responded by trying to limit the education of the poor and therefore underline their perceived social inferiority. Many Sunday Schools began to open on weekdays, though their curriculum consisted of the Bible, 'useful' tasks and moral tales; and some new Parish Schools were built. As the 19th century progressed, however, the National Society and British Society were formed and began setting up their own Voluntary Schools, respectively Anglican and nonconformist. Despite this and the slow, but steadily growing, interest in a universal education system, the ensuing rivalry between the Church of England and the independent churches for the middle part of the century prevented the passage of any positive legislation in Parliament until 1870. During this period, the spread of education was piecemeal and beset by problems, despite the proliferation of school types: Dame Schools, Ragged Schools, Workhouse Schools, etc..

The deadlock between the Anglicans and the nonconformists did diminish gradually, and in 1870 the Education Act set up School Boards, local authorities specifically responsible for adequate local education provision. Many new Board Schools were built between 1870 and 1900, and the period saw the abolition of school fees, the extension of school curricula, and the introduction of compulsory attendance. Over the same period, many Dame Schools, Ragged Schools and Workhouse Schools closed down, although a large number of Voluntary Schools were opened or enlarged.

The 1902 Education Act placed the bulk of elementary education in the hands of Local Education Authorities. Board Schools became Council Schools, and Voluntary Schools, an increasing burden on central government finance, kept their status but were thenceforth funded from the rates.

At this stage, the bulk of education was still elementary and the leaving age fixed at 14, despite the development of technical-based subjects, female emancipation and the increased emphasis on popular education. In the 1930s, schools were divided into junior and senior departments. At around this time, central government promised grants to senior schools which passed certain criteria, including the adoption of a more technical curriculum. Some Grammar Schools, along with certain others, achieved the required criteria and continued as High Schools. Those senior schools failing to gain the promised grants became Senior, then Secondary Modern and eventually Comprehensive Schools. The more successful of the old Grammar Schools continued as independent Public or Private Schools. The state school leaving age was fixed eventually at 16 in 1972.

The 1944 Education Act replaced Voluntary Schools with Controlled and Aided Schools, according to whether they were fully or partially dependent on Local Education Authority maintenance. At the same time, Council Schools became known as County Primary Schools.

The Education Acts of 1988 and 1993 enabled Aided, Controlled, County Primary and Comprehensive Schools to change by parental ballot to government-financed Grant Maintained Schools, as well as devolving much of the Local Education Authorities' financial responsibilities to the schools themselves.

## **School Records**

### **Records generated by schools**

These include admission registers, records of inspectors' visits, accounts, school magazines and head teachers' log books. The North Devon Record Office holds the papers of many North Devon Board Schools, Parish Schools, Voluntary Schools, Council Schools, County Primary Schools, National and British Schools, etc.. These can be found by checking our subject index under EDUCATION, where they are listed alphabetically by place, the North Devon Record Office's 'List of Collections' or the Access to Archives website at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

### **The records of Local Education Authorities**

The records of the North Devon Divisional Executive for Education (refs. 2844 and 3072) date from around 1944 and include governors' meetings minutes, various committee minutes, newspaper cuttings, lists of school managers and subjects. The Barnstaple Divisional Education Authority collection (ref. 1903) includes Education Committee minutes, accounts and ledgers, c.1858-1943. Both collections contain material from some individual schools, including various secondary schools.

### **Other Local Authority records**

The papers of various North Devon Urban and Rural District Councils, District Councils, Town Councils and Parish Councils may contain references to schools, whether in planning files, committee minutes or charity papers, etc.. The records of local authorities may be traced by using our 'List of Collections' in the public searchroom or on our website, or through the <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> website.

### **Parish records**

Many schools existed as Parish, National, Church of England, Voluntary Schools, etc., and records for these can be found in the papers of relevant parishes. Parish collections may also contain papers concerning charitable bequests to schools, the use of parish poor houses as

schoolrooms and plans for new school buildings. Tithe maps, c.1840, may also show the existence of school buildings. Full lists of parish collections held by the North Devon Record Office are available on the Discovery website.

### **The records of nonconformist churches**

These include chapel trustees' minutes, accounts, etc., which may mention schools run by particular chapels or denominations. Records directly pertaining to schools can include plans of proposed school buildings, attendance registers, accounts and insurance policies. The papers of particular nonconformist churches can be traced using the North Devon Record Office's 'List of Collections' or the Discovery website.

### **Charity records**

The North Devon Record Office's 'List of Collections' gives a list of papers deposited by local charities. These include bequests for the education of poor children, title deeds relating to land endowed for schools, etc..

### **Sunday Schools**

The records of some nonconformist denominations contain Sunday School accounts, catechisms, committee meeting minutes and teachers' minutes. Roll books, stationery catalogues, photographs and lists of prizes can also be found in some privately deposited papers (check the North Devon Record Office subject index under EDUCATION).

### **Other sources**

Trade Directories will list schools and their head teachers for each parish. Local newspapers may give accounts of public meetings and elections accompanying the School Board movement, c.1870, adverts for teaching jobs and school concerts, etc.. Board of Guardians' records (under 'PLU' in the North Devon Record Office lists) should contain references to Workhouse Schools. The local census returns, held at the North Devon Local Studies Centre for 1841-1901, will list the occupations of individuals as school teachers or scholars. Both the North Devon Record Office and Beaford Photographic Archive hold old photographs and prints of a number of local schools. The Beara and Gribble family papers include 19th century exercise books and correspondence from boarding school (refs. B80M/3,5; B262/5/4-10 and B262/37,47 respectively). Other personal papers (see our 'List of Collections') may be found in the North Devon Record Office subject index under EDUCATION. Finally, the Local Studies Centre holds a number of local oral history books, some of which contain individuals' accounts of school life.

### **Further and continuing education**

From the Middle Ages, further education, initially grammar, the classics etc., was provided by the Universities. The 20th century saw the establishment of Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education, fulfilling much the same role as Universities. Many distinctions between them were removed by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act.

The North Devon Record Office holds the minutes of North Devon College, 1946-1970 (ref. 2844/3/12-16), but holds only a few references to Universities, some of these in the form of correspondence from students, as in the Gribble papers (ref. B262/19/2 and 21/1). The Barnstaple Castle Collection contains the minutes and accounts of the Barnstaple Technical, Science and Arts School Committee, c.1891-1904 (ref. BC/Vols. 87,180).

Adult, religious-based education was pioneered by the Quakers in the 18th century, resulting in the early 19th century Adult Education Movement, later the National Adult School Union. At the same time, several Mechanics Institutes were set up to educate manual workers; Working Men's Colleges, connected with the contemporary labour movement, and Night Schools, providing elementary adult education, also came into existence in the 19th century. Today adult education ranges from both non-vocational and vocational training, largely supported by Local Authorities, to the ever-popular Open University courses.

For papers held by the North Devon Record Office concerning further and continuing education, see the North Devon Record Office subject index under EDUCATION: general.

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