

DR. R. R. SELLMAN
FOUND DOWN CORNER
WHITESTONE, EXETER
DEVON EX4 2HP
Tel. TEDBURN 293

27th November, 1988

Dear Col. Grimshaw,

I note from the DHS membership list your interest in Ringmore history, and hope this brief note on the school may be of some interest. Unfortunately I have not found the logbook, which would have been much more informative, but the Minute Book of the Erme & Avon School Board is a valuable source, and some other evidence can be found in published reports and County records.

I was once County Inspector of Schools, and became so interested in the history of schools and the 19th century social background that I eventually made a doctorate of it. Now retired and with time on my hands, I welcome any opportunity to mount my hobby horse - no need to reply.

Yours sincerely,

R. R. Sellman

R.R. Sellman

Ask Stan for papers on Schools.

The first qualified mistress Mary Jane 18...

*Mutton &
books on
Down schools*

masters demanded and got a £10 rise, and as a result of their initiative Miss Giles had another £5 - but with the proviso that 'no no future increase at any time to be granted'. But in 1892 the Kingston master got another £10 rise, and Miss Giles another £5. Shortly afterwards she demanded yet another £5, and the Board not surprisingly refused and advertised for a successor. But they got so little response that they bit the bullet and paid to keep her. By this time government grant was more generous, besides a new 10s p.a. per head of average attendance in lieu of fees. In 1899 her salary became £63 (without grant-share), which it was when the County took over the school in 1903. Average attendance was then 82 at Kingston, 35 at Bigbury, but only 22 at Ringmore - for which by contemporary standards the £63 was adequate. She then had, as assistant, a monitress paid £4 p.a.

The Ringmore school finally closed in 1929, as the result of rural depopulation. In 1871 the parish had had 237 inhabitants, but by 1931 this had dropped to 146. The school had had its hour of glory under Miss Turner, and of the reverse under Miss Billing, but otherwise its career was rather a case of no news being good news. There could still be local people who remember Nellie Giles.

R. R. Sellman 1988.

RINGMORE SCHOOL PUPILS
about 1927.

Back row 2nd from right BERTRAM TOMS. Front Row Far left Margaret Triggs (Lock)
4th from left Alice Farley (Mason).

ADVERTISEMENTS cont.

SCITORS -
BUT WHERE
ARE PROBABLY
STUDENTS?

RINGMORE SCHOOL

Mistresses:

Mary Jane Adams 1-12/1875
 Elizabeth Turner 1/1876 - 12/1877
 Edith Billing 1/1878 - 12/1879 (dismissed)
 Elizabeth E. Gay 1/1880 - 9/1881
 Susan Savery Barter (temp.) 9-12/1881
 Elizabeth Ann Lanyon (Mrs Martin) 1/1882 - 12/1889
 Nellie Giles 1/1890 - 1925 (retired)

The 1818 Parliamentary Return showed no school in Ringmore, but that for 1833 gave two, both supported by donations and fees, and each with about 10 boys and 10 girls, established respectively in 1826 and 1833. These would have been cottage 'dame schools', and how long they survived does not appear; but in 1863 a purpose-built Church schoolroom was opened and that year received a £2 grant from the Diocesan Board for books and apparatus. In 1870 it was reported as 290 square feet in area, and with 15 boys and 15 girls. It was not under a certificated teacher, and therefore not qualified for government grant; and the last dame was Mrs Mary Ryder, whom the Erme & Avon School Board (formed in April 1873 for Ringmore, Kingston, and Bigbury) at first kept on as teacher at £10 p.a., having rented the building, for school hours only, from the incumbent for £1 p.a.

But the Board's original idea of keeping on the existing Dames for Infants and erecting a central school for Juniors had to be dropped, since a Board could not legally pay unqualified and unsupervised teachers, and no government grant would be paid for such schools. It was therefore decided to abandon the new central school project, and to keep the existing schools in the three villages, but under certificated and grant-earning teachers. The Ringmore school was leased from the Rector for 99 years at £3 p.a., and £41 spent on enlarging the schoolroom, and each school was appropriately fitted and furnished.

The first qualified mistress, Mary Jane Adams, started in January 1875, and when HMI made his first inspection the following May he noted that 'one sees how much it was needed from the fact that children of 10, 11, 12, 13, and even 14 have been presented in the 1st and 2nd Standards' (normally for children of 7 and 8). The average attendance was then 34.

The Fee Scale adopted by the Board was, per week:

labourers	3-11 1d, over 11 3d
tradesmen	3-5 1d, 5-7 3d, 7-13 4d
farmers	3-5 1d, 5-7 3d, 7-11 6d, over 11 1s (which last exceeded the legal limit of 9d for public elementary schools, and soon had to be dropped)

Miss Adams lasted for only one year; but her successor Elizabeth Turner, in her second Report, received the quite exceptional encomium that: "It is scarcely possible to imagine a more satisfactory state of discipline and attainments than that shown in this little school". With her certificate confirmed and an endorsement to the above effect on her 'Parchment', it is not surprising that she soon left for a better post elsewhere. The next, Edith Billing, was of very different calibre, and after a couple of bad Reports was asked to go, receiving the significant testimonial: "She is a conscientious teacher, but she has not been as successful in her work as the Board could wish. The Board believes she will for the present be more usefully employed in an Infant school, or as a subordinate teacher in a large town school". At a time when Managers were wont to praise bad teachers in the hope of shunting them elsewhere, this was unusually frank.

After this unfortunate let-down the school continued respectably under Elizabeth Gay and Elizabeth Lanyon (who became Mrs Martin). For 1888/9 its income was reported as: Rates £32 18s 2d, Grant £22 1s 11d, Fees £13 0s 9d, making a total of £68 0s 10d for an average attendance of 35, slightly under £2 per head.

Nellie Giles, who like other mistresses here had trained at Truro, took office in January 1890 (at £35 + $\frac{1}{2}$ Grant) and remained until she retired in 1925. After some initial trouble with discipline, she conducted the school with fair efficiency and lack of incident. In 1890 the Kingston and Bigbury

masters demanded and got a £10 rise, and as a result of their initiative Miss Giles had another £5 - but with the proviso that 'no no future increase at any time to be granted'. But in 1892 the Kingston master got another £10 rise, and Miss Giles another £5. Shortly afterwards she demanded yet another £5, and the Board not surprisingly refused and advertised for a successor. But they got so little response that they bit the bullet and paid to keep her. By this time government grant was more generous, besides a new 10s p.a. per head of average attendance in lieu of fees. In 1899 her salary became £63 (without grant-share), which it was when the County took over the school in 1903. Average attendance was then 82 at Kingston, 35 at Bigbury, but only 22 at Ringmore - for which by contemporary standards the £63 was adequate. She then had, as assistant, a monitress paid £4 p.a.

The Ringmore school finally closed in 1929, as the result of rural depopulation. In 1871 the parish had had 237 inhabitants, but by 1931 this had dropped to 146. The school had had its hour of glory under Miss Turner, and of the reverse under Miss Billing, but otherwise its career was rather a case of no news being good news. There could still be local people who remember Nellie Giles.

R. R. Sellman 1988.

RINGMORE SCHOOL

Mistresses:

Mary Jane Adams 1-12/1875

Elizabeth Turner 1/1876 - 12/1877

Edith Billing 1/1878 - 12/1879 (dismissed)

Elizabeth E. Gay 1/1880 - 9/1881

Susan Savery Barter (temp.) 9-12/1881

Elizabeth Ann Lanyon (Mrs Martin) 1/1882 - 12/1889

Nellie Giles 1/1890 - 1925 (retired)

The 1818 Parliamentary Return showed no school in Ringmore, but that for 1833 gave two, both supported by donations and fees, and each with about 10 boys and 10 girls, established respectively in 1826 and 1833. These would have been cottage 'dame schools', and how long they survived does not appear; but in 1863 a purpose-built Church schoolroom was opened and that year received a £2 grant from the Diocesan Board for books and apparatus. In 1870 it was reported as 290 square feet in area, and with 15 boys and 15 girls. It was not under a certificated teacher, and therefore not qualified for government grant; and the last dame was Mrs Mary Ryder, whom the Erme & Avon School Board (formed in April 1873 for Ringmore, Kingston, and Bigbury) at first kept on as teacher at £10 p.a., having rented the building, for school hours only, from the incumbent for £1 p.a.

But the Board's original idea of keeping on the existing Dames for Infants and erecting a central school for Juniors had to be dropped, since a Board could not legally pay unqualified and unsupervised teachers, and no government grant would be paid for such schools. It was therefore decided to abandon the new central school project, and to keep the existing schools in the three villages, but under certificated and grant-earning teachers. The Ringmore school was leased from the Rector for 99 years at £3 p.a., and £41 spent on enlarging the schoolroom, and each school was appropriately fitted and furnished.

The first qualified mistress, Mary Jane Adams, started in January 1875, and when HMI made his first inspection the following May he noted that 'one sees how much it was needed from the fact that children of 10, 11, 12, 13, and even 14 have been presented in the 1st and 2nd Standards' (normally for children of 7 and 8). The average attendance was then 34.

The Fee Scale adopted by the Board was, per week:

labourers 3-11 1d, over 11 3d

tradesmen 3-5 1d, 5-7 3d, 7-13 4d

farmers 3-5 1d, 5-7 3d, 7-11 6d, over 11 1s (which last exceeded the

legal limit of 9d for public elementary schools, and soon had to be dropped)

Miss Adams lasted for only one year; but her successor Elizabeth Turner, in her second Report, received the quite exceptional encomium that: "It is scarcely possible to imagine a more satisfactory state of discipline and attainments than that shown in this little school". With her certificate confirmed and an endorsement to the above effect on her 'Parchment', it is not surprising that she soon left for a better post elsewhere. The next, Edith Billing, was of very different calibre, and after a couple of bad Reports was asked to go, receiving the significant testimonial: "She is a conscientious teacher, but she has not been as successful in her work as the Board could wish. The Board believes she will for the present be more usefully employed in an Infant school, or as a subordinate teacher in a large town school". At a time when Managers were wont to praise bad teachers in the hope of shunting them elsewhere, this was unusually frank.

After this unfortunate let-down the school continued respectably under Elizabeth Gay and Elizabeth Lanyon (who became Mrs Martin). For 1888/9 its income was reported as: Rates £32 18s 2d, Grant £22 1s 11d, Fees £13 0s 9d, making a total of £68 0s 10d for an average attendance of 35, slightly under £2 per head.

Nellie Giles, who like other mistresses here had trained at Truro, took office in January 1890 (at £35 + $\frac{1}{2}$ Grant) and remained until she retired in 1925. After some initial trouble with discipline, she conducted the school with fair efficiency and lack of incident. In 1890 the Kingston and Bigbury

masters demanded and got a £10 rise, and as a result of their initiative Miss Giles had another £5 - but with the proviso that 'no no future increase at any time to be granted'. But in 1892 the Kingston master got another £10 rise, and Miss Giles another £5. Shortly afterwards she demanded yet another £5, and the Board not surprisingly refused and advertised for a successor. But they got so little response that they bit the bullet and paid to keep her. By this time government grant was more generous, besides a new 10s p.a. per head of average attendance in lieu of fees. In 1899 her salary became £63 (without grant-share), which it was when the County took over the school in 1903. Average attendance was then 82 at Kingston, 35 at Bigbury, but only 22 at Ringmore - for which by contemporary standards the £63 was adequate. She then had, as assistant, a mistress paid £4 p.a.

The Ringmore school finally closed in 1929, as the result of rural depopulation. In 1871 the parish had had 237 inhabitants, but by 1931 this had dropped to 146. The school had had its hour of glory under Miss Turner, and of the reverse under Miss Billing, but otherwise its career was rather a case of no news being good news. There could still be local people who remember Nellie Giles.

R.R. Sellman
1988

satisfactory. More evidence is needed of skill, method and energy in the general style of instruction. The writing is below the mark. Grammar is not accurate. The presentation of geography of classes who are either utterly ignorant of the subject, or unable to answer the simplest questions only has the effect of discouraging the children and of furnishing additional evidence of defective teaching. Needlework is rather better, but not yet satisfactory. The attainments of the Infants are still so decidedly below the mark, that, unless improvement takes place, no Grant can be earned next year under article 19 (B/1(a)).

The children are obedient, possessed of very fair natural ability and fully capable of making sound and creditable progress.

The issue of a Certificate to Miss Billing is deferred for a more favourable report.'

By **June 1880** a new teacher, Miss Gay, was in place and some improvement was noted in the next Inspector's Report.

However, other problems became apparent:

Report 1885

'...a urinal must be provided for and used by Boys, and some divisions should be put between the seats in the closets'.

Seven years later, in the **1902 Report**, we read: '...and the seats in the offices should be divided by partitions'.

And a year later, **1903**: 'Proper lavatory accommodation should be provided, the fireplace should be properly guarded and the offices should be better looked after.'

Some teachers record persistent and irksome disciplinary difficulties, largely to do with insubordination and rudeness. In 1898, two of the Triggs children were particularly rebellious and uncooperative over a period of several months. Alice Triggs was noted in the Log as 'a very rude girl' (26.4.1898); 'very rude this afternoon' (12.7.1898); 'A. Triggs went out of school this afternoon and walked home; she had been very rude', and so on. Charlie Triggs manifested his frustrations in a slightly different way: 'C. Triggs would not do as I told him this morning and rolled on the floor' (28.6.1898). Charlie had another roll on 26 October.

From time to time it is noted in the Logs that boys left Ringmore School to go to Bigbury 'to be under the Master'.

The year 1886 yielded a bad Report of the school under Miss Bessie Lanyon's tutelage, and no grant: 'My Lords will expect a better report of the instruction next year' (30.4.1886).

Much of the teaching of these children was done by means of 'object lessons'. In the first decade of the twentieth century some of these 'objects' were as follows: Thrift, Clock-Face, Silver Comparing, Rats and Mice, Clouds, Tallowcandle, Frog, Post Office, Goose, Paraffin, Glue and Gum, the Camel, Gloves.

The twentieth century saw the school beginning to find some approval again:

Report 3.6.1914

'The children of this small school receive a useful training in habits of obedience, neatness and courtesy. They are however not very responsive and, though buoyant enough in the playground, their manner in school is unduly restrained.

The Report made in **1929**, just before the school's closure, was as follows:

'A very small school indeed but there is real life in it. The children were particularly bright and could think for themselves. Their answering was in every way satisfactory and showed that the Religious Instruction is being given on the right lines.

There is an excellent tone in the school, and the children's singing is worthy of special mention.'

(F.W. Moore, Inspector)

At its closure the school had ten pupils.

July 2000

RINGMORE CHURCH SCHOOL

The school in Ringmore was opened in 1863 and closed in 1929. During that time 535 pupils passed through the school.

The School Log is held at the Records Office in Exeter. below is an extract from the Inspector's Report for 1877.

'It is scarcely possible to imagine a more satisfactory state of discipline and attainments than that shown in this little School. The children are particularly clean and well-mannered and did their work with great neatness and accuracy, the writing being especially worthy of praise. Much skill and taste were employed in the decoration, inside and outside of the School. Such a use of flowers, provided it not allowed to interfere with the preparation of more important matters, is to be highly commended, for it causes Children to regard their School as a bright and cheerful place.'

Alas, two years later, in 1879, things were not so good:

'Reading is fairly taught and Arithmetic is slightly better, but the state of the school is not yet satisfactory. More evidence is needed of skill, method and energy in the general style of instruction. The writing is below the mark. Grammar is not accurate. The presentation of geography of classes who are either utterly ignorant of the subject, or unable to answer the simplest questions only has the effect of discouraging the children and of furnishing additional evidence of defective teaching. Needlework is rather better, but not yet satisfactory. The attainments of the infants are still so decidedly below the mark, that, unless improvement takes place, no Grant can be earned next year under article 19 (B/1(a)). The children are obedient, possessed of very fair natural ability and fully capable of making sound and creditable progress.

The Report made in 1929, just before the school's closure, was as follows:

'A very small school indeed but there is real life in it. The children were particularly bright and could think for themselves. Their answering was in every way satisfactory and showed that the Religious Instruction is being given on the right lines. There is an excellent tone in the School, and the children's singing is worthy of special mention.' F.W.Moore, Inspector

NOTES ON RINGMORE SCHOOL LOG BOOKS AND ADMISSIONS REGISTER

535 pupils passed through the school.

Report 1877

'It is scarcely possible to imagine a more satisfactory state of discipline and attainments than that shown in this little School. The children are particularly clean and well-mannered and did their work with great neatness and accuracy, the writing being especially worthy of praise. Much skill and taste were employed in the decoration, inside and outside of the School, such a use of flowers, provided it not allowed to interfere with the preparation of more important matters, is to be highly commended, for it causes Children to regard their School as a bright and cheerful place.'

[At this time the teacher was Miss Elizabeth Anne Turner. Shortly after this report she received her certificate. The Inspector was Francis Farrer]

A year later the report was not so good: 'The style of teaching seems to lack brightness and energy'. No doubt Miss Turner had moved to advance her career. The less able teacher who succeeded her was Miss Edith Billing.

Report 5 July 1879

'Reading is fairly taught and Arithmetic is slightly better, but the state of the school is not yet satisfactory. More evidence is needed of skill, method and energy in the general style of instruction. The writing is below the mark. Grammar is not accurate. The presentation of geography of classes who are either utterly ignorant of the subject, or unable to answer the simplest questions only has the effect of discouraging the children and of furnishing additional evidence of defective teaching. Needlework is rather better, but not yet satisfactory. The attainments of the Infants are still so decidedly below the mark, that, unless improvement takes place, no Grant can be earned next year under article 19 (B/1(a)). The children are obedient, possessed of very fair natural ability and fully capable of making sound and creditable progress.

The issue of a Certificate to Miss Billing is deferred for a more favourable report.'

By June 1880 a new teacher, Miss Gay, was in place and some improvement was noted in the next Inspector's Report.

However, other problems became apparent:

Report 1885

'...a urinal must be provided for and used by Boys, and some divisions should be put between the seats in the closets'. But seven years later, in the 1902 Report we read: '...and the seats in the offices should be divided by partitions'. And a year later, 1903: 'Proper lavatory accommodation should be provided, the fireplace should be properly guarded and the offices should be better looked after.'

There was a common theme to many of the early Reports on the school. Discipline, cleanliness and manners were usually praised, along with the proficiency of the girls in needlework and knitting. But writing, arithmetic and geography were frequently criticised severely and the Infants were generally judged to be 'backward' and ill-taught. This is hardly surprising, since for most of the time one teacher, often an uncertificated novice, had somehow to cope with thirty to forty pupils aged between three and thirteen. It was only by delegating the more able 'senior' pupils to look after and teach the infants that any semblance of order could be maintained and some kind of instruction given.

It was vitally important to keep up attendance numbers because the grant made to the school depended on how many pupils attended. A teacher was obliged to record attendance numbers and name non-attenders in the School Log and the veracity of these records was checked through frequent visits from members of the Board. Many teachers bewailed poor attendance numbers, especially around the times of harvest and potato planting. Attendance

marks could be given only if pupils arrived punctually and many an afternoon attendance mark was lost by Ringmore children arriving late or not at all for afternoon school, having yielded to the delights of an afternoon down at Lower Manor Farm or on Challaborough beach. Perhaps surprisingly, there are numerous Log entries that tell of children being kept at home because of snow or severe winter weather.

Some teachers record persistent and irksome disciplinary difficulties, largely to do with insubordination and rudeness. In 1898, two of the Triggs children were particularly rebellious and uncooperative over a period of several months. Alice Triggs was noted in the Log as 'a very rude girl' (26.4.1898), 'very rude this afternoon' (12.7.1898), 'A.Triggs went out of school this afternoon and walked home; she had been very rude', and so on. Charlie Triggs manifested his frustrations in a slightly different way: 'C.Triggs would not do as I told him this morning and rolled on the floor' (28.6.1898). Charlie had another roll on 26 October.

From time to time it is noted in the Logs that boys left Ringmore School to go to Bigbury 'to be under the Master'.

1886 yielded a bad Report of the school under Miss Bessie Lanyon's tutelage, and no grant: 'My Lords will expect a better report of the instruction next year' (30.4.1886).

Much of the teaching of these children was done by means of 'object lessons'. In the first decade of the C20 some of these 'objects' were as follows: Thrift, Clock-Face, Silver Comparing, Rats and Mice, Clouds, Tallowcandle, Frog, Post Office, Goose, Paraffin, Glue and Gum, the Camel, Gloves.

The twentieth century saw the school beginning to find some approval again:

Report 3.6.1914

'The children of this small school receive a useful training in habits of obedience, neatness and courtesy. They are however not very responsive and, though buoyant enough in the playground, their manner in school is unduly restrained.

and:

Report 21.2.1929 (?)

A very small school indeed but there is real life in it. The children were particularly bright and clean and could think for themselves. Their answering was in every way satisfactory, and showed that the Religious Instruction is being given on the right lines. There is an excellent tone in the school, and the children's singing is worthy of special mention.' (F.W.Moore, Inspector)

There were 10 children in the school when it was closed.

The School Logs reveal how diligent Prebendary Hingeston-Randolph, The Misses Hingeston-Randolph and some of the members of the School Board, notably Mr Farrer, were in visiting the school to inspect the Register and to monitor the progress or otherwise of the pupils.

[Elementary education began early in C19, organized by denominational and philanthropic bodies. It became impossible to raise sufficient money by these means and in 1833 the state began to make annual grants and also to inspect the schools they assisted. In 1870, School Boards, elected locally, were empowered to raise money through the rates for the schools. In 1880 attendance became compulsory. There was a kind of dual system: schools run by the Boards and schools run by the denominations.

1899 Board of Education created

1902 Duties of School Boards taken over by local councils

1918 Fees abolished in Elementary Schools

1918 Compulsory attendance age raised from 11 to 14