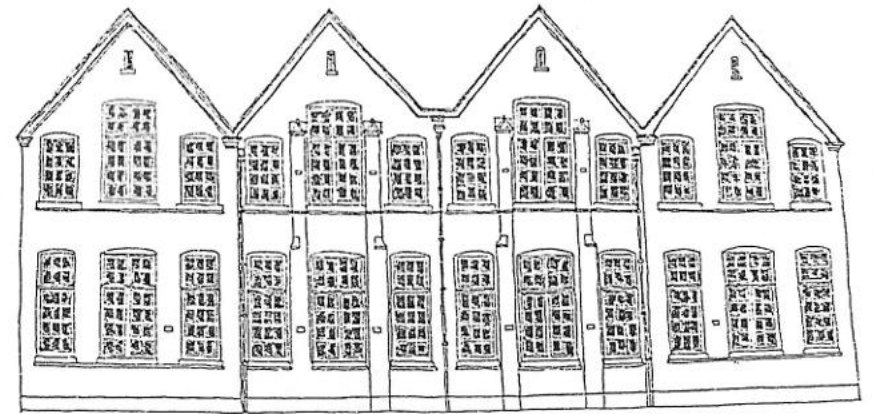


The Early Years
of Musters Road
Infant School
1902-1966



INTRODUCTION

I have attempted to write an account of the early years of the school, and decided to finish at 1966 for two reasons.

Firstly that was the year that Miss Stratford's reign ended. She had been the Head Teacher for over 30 years and so her retirement obviously marked the end of an era.

Secondly, by 1966, the school was organized in a way that we would easily recognize now. Of course there have been many changes since the sixties. For example there were more children in school than there are now and they stayed until the age of eight instead of transferring to South County at the age of seven. But on the whole, the school was established much as we know it today.

The school's surroundings are now quite different from when it was first built. It was then situated behind the original Musters Road Board School (where the Health Centre now stands) and was sandwiched between it and the railway line. It has outlived them both. The building itself is much as it was nearly ninety years ago, except for having had a toilet block added at one end. Other indoor toilets and sinks have been incorporated at various times. The last of the outside toilets were demolished only a few years ago.

The material used to compile this history is contained in the school log books. Those for the years 1902-1945 are housed at the Nottingham Archives Office. There are also some photographs and memorabilia and a few attendance registers. I used Sheila Leeds' chapter on Education in "Aspects of West Bridgford's History" for a few of the early dates.

When I first thought about producing this booklet to mark the school's 90th birthday, I intended to include some of the recollections of past pupils. I haven't managed that, but I hope that this will provide a stimulus to encourage ex-pupils to write down their earliest memories of school.

It is amazing the different details that leave an impression on young minds. In "Aspects of West Bridgford's History" an ex-pupil of Muster's Road School in the thirties gives a very precise description of the gas lighting arrangements in the school.

Some time in the future I hope we will be able to produce a collection of memories of the school through the years.

Let's start now, even though it takes until the school's 100th birthday to complete it.

Wendy Wain
1992

1902-1915

Head Teachers of the Infant Department

Miss E.M.Allen	1902-1906
Miss B.G.Platts	1906-1907
Miss Edith Kirsop	1908-1911
Miss Ethel Budd	1912(Jan-Sep)
Miss Annie K.Selby	1912-1914
Miss Edith Kirsop	1914-1915

The original Musters Road Board School was opened in 1895 and catered for children from 5-13 years.

At this time the number of houses in West Bridgford was growing rapidly and the school soon became over-crowded. Trent Boulevard School opened in 1899 to serve the Lady Bay area, but this was still not enough.

On May 1st 1902 George Road School (as Musters Road Junior Mixed and Infant School was known in its early years) was officially opened by Lord Belper and on August 25th the children entered the new building.

Initially the building was administered as two separate schools with two head teachers. The Juniors were upstairs and the Infants on the ground floor. However, from 1906-1911 one head teacher managed both departments, often under very difficult circumstances.

When the school opened there were 176 children in the four classes of the Infant Department.

By May 15th 1904, Miss Allen writes in the Log Book "There are 267 on the books, seventy of whom are in my own class - with these numbers I find it almost impossible to supervise the work of the other classes."

Four days later she reports "Have been examining the work of the school this week. In consequence of this Miss Frear has taken charge of Class I and II in the mornings and it has not been possible to follow the Time Table strictly as she has an average attendance of 120.

The work of the classes has been very well done but I find it rather uneven. This is owing to so many of the children attending irregularly during the winter months, especially in the lower classes."

During these early years some of the children would have to walk quite long distances to school and home again for lunch. There was a two-hour lunch period to allow for this. The school day was from 9.00-12.15 and 2.15-4.15, except during the darkest days of winter. On November 25th 1904 Miss Allen writes "The children will assemble at 2pm instead of 2.15 so that they can stop work at 3.55 and so start home a little earlier. As it takes so long to dress the little ones properly, it is often late before they

leave school"

The Inspector's Report for that year remarks that "The instruction is careful but----there should be more brightness and more individual work in several subjects. Needlework should be improved." Not easily done with 60-70 per class.

In 1905 the Education Committee decided that no more children under five were to be admitted. Class IV was often referred to as the Babies' Class, but unfortunately there is no mention of the age of these "Babies".

The upstairs hall was converted into two extra classrooms in 1909 so that the whole building could accommodate 530 children. But still the numbers rose. In the Autumn of 1910, 38 children were transferred to Trent Boulevard School to ease the over-crowding.

The school was inspected in June 1911 by J.E.Hales Esq.H.M.I. "During the past educational year this school has been conducted under increasing difficulties. Under a single headmistress there are now 628 children in eleven classes (one in the Hall) with a twelfth class in another classroom across the playground.

The mistress may be depended on for energetic and valuable supervision, but it is impossible for her to keep adequately in touch with a school of these dimensions.

There is a good deal of weakness in the Infants' division---There are 242 children taught by four teachers.

The enlargement of Trent Boulevard School (the Junior School opened in 1912) will of course add considerably to the school accommodation in West Bridgford and will render possible a re-organization of this school. In any case a single Head Teacher cannot remain in charge of anything like the number now attending here."

In January 1912 Miss Budd was appointed to take over the Infant Department. She was transferred from Trent Boulevard School.

The problem with numbers continued.

In the Autumn of 1912 a visiting Inspector was reported to have "Noticed the two classes in the Hall".

In April 1914 the Head Teacher, Miss Selby, and three other teachers transferred to the newly-opened Exchange Road School (South County School, known for many years as South Council School). Miss Kirsop moved downstairs from the Junior Department to become Head of the Infant School for the second time.

Although the classes were so large at this time, there was also constant worry about attendance percentages. This was because schools were funded according to the numbers of children attending school rather than by the number on Roll. Members of the Board of Managers made very frequent visits to inspect registers and sign them as being correct.

Because of this pre-occupation with attendance numbers, the subject of the weather looms large in the pages of the Log Book.

A badly timed thunderstorm over the lunch hour could ruin the attendance figures for that week.

Childhood illnesses, especially measles, scarlet fever and diphtheria were much feared, life-threatening and sometimes left a child's health permanently impaired. On March 10th 1905 only 69 of the 260 Infant children were present and the school closed for three weeks. The same thing happened in 1910 and during the Christmas holidays of 1908-1909 Winnie Price died of diphtheria.

1914 started badly. There were epidemics of measles, scarlet fever and chickenpox. The school was closed on January 22nd and did not re-open again until March 2nd. A closure of this length could make a bad dent in the budget for the following year. The rules on funding were amended in 1924, so that closure for health reasons did not affect the school's budget.

The school holidays were shorter than they are now, but there were more "occasional" holidays and there was a more casual attitude to regular school attendance. During the Summer months there is much talk in the Log Book of children being "Out of town" with their families.

In October 1903 school was closed for two days "to enable the teachers to take part in the Teachers Charities Bazaar" and there was a whole week's holiday for the coronation of Edward VII.

Goose Fair always closed school for two days and there were half days for Empire Day and Shrove Tuesday.

One afternoon each June there was no school, because of the Wesleyan and Congregational Sunday School outings and in May 1905 a holiday was given "on account of the Bath and West Show and the Test Cricket Match"

With the opening of the school on Exchange Road in 1914, life should have become much easier for George Road School. But it was not to be. War was looming. Many male staff joined the army. Teachers were scarce. The Deputy Head was sent on supply to Granby for six weeks until she was recalled to take charge at George Road because Miss Kirsop was ill.

On March 14th 1915 "The morning session was concluded shortly after 11.30, owing to the fact that large numbers of troops were passing through Bridgford".

On the 23rd "The Director of Education and two other gentlemen (presumably from the War Office) visited the school this morning" the Log Book reports.

Three days later school closed for Easter and "to allow for the transference of stock to Exchange Road School, previous to this school being taken over by the military authorities". The building became a military hospital for four and a half years.

1915-1919

Head Teacher: Miss Annie Selby

From April until November 1915 the two Head Teachers worked at Exchange Road, the children of each school working mornings one week and afternoons the next. There were staff shortages and lack of space. The tension shows through in the Log Book. "Time Tables have to be somewhat spoilt, which I think a pity, to enable Miss Selby's staff to be free to take members of her school on nature rambles of longer than one hour" writes Miss Kirsop.

In November, Miss Kirsop took over Musters Road (senior) School, when Mr Burton joined the army. Miss Selby took charge of "Musters Road Junior Mixed and Infant Department in addition to the South Council School. Both schools are working the double shift system".

In February 1916 there was a Zeppelin raid on Bridgford, but other than that life seems to have settled into a routine. A terrible wind and snow storm on March 28th meant that only 41 children were present and the school closed for part of May due to a measles epidemic.

On May 24th there was no school but the children from all the Bridgford schools assembled at the Boots' Ground to celebrate Empire Day.

By the Spring of 1917 school had to be closed on a few occasions because of lack of coal.

Even through these hard times annual inspections took place. On 19th March 1917 the Religious Instruction Inspector reported "At the opening of this school today, I was gratified by the tasteful quality of the singing and the reverent deportment of the children at prayers, no congregation of adults could be more decorous. In all sections, from the babies upward, warm interest was shown in scripture stories which were well understood. Clearly the teachers are kind, capable, diligent and most tactful."

The children contributed to the war effort. They gave a matinee performance to raise funds for the Patriotic Fair and in February 1918 the managers gave a holiday "as each of the War Savings Associations of the West Bridgford schools has subscribed over £1000

In January 1918 school had to be closed for three days so that the teachers could help with the registration for tea and butter.

In July of that year there is the first mention of the great influenza epidemic. It closed the school for a month and when school did re-open on December 9th Miss Selby writes "Some children are still absent with influenza and whooping cough and the parents of others are nervous to send the children at present"

However, by the Spring of 1919 there was a happier atmosphere. The Inspector of Instruction in Nature Study "witnessed a pretty little nature play which was acted with great spirit" and at the beginning of May attendance was poor "these two days owing to a circus in the city."

In July there was a Peace Sports Day held at Boots' Ground and three extra days were added to the Summer holidays as a celebration of peace.

Mr Burton returned safely from the war and was appointed Head of South Council School. Miss Selby moved to Trent Boulevard Juniors and Infants and Miss Kirsop returned to Musters Road Infants School for the third time.

1919-1934

Head Teacher: Miss Ethel Kirsop

At the end of 1919 South Council and Musters Road Schools were reorganized so that Musters Road School provided accommodation for Infants and younger Junior children who then moved on to South Council School. During these years the new school year started on April 1st. A special class was formed for "dull and backward" children.

In 1922 H.M. Inspector noted that four of the seven teachers had been at the school for less than one year. And, of course, some of them would be unqualified. He listed the chief points on which he thought attention should be focused:-

1. The necessity of raising the attainments of the lowest sections of the classes.
2. The importance of planning so that the lessons called for an independent effort and real thought from all members of the classes.
3. The advisability of making the special handiwork for the boys more attractive and progressive.

During this period hygiene and health care began to play a more prominent role in schools.

There had been one isolated mention of hygiene in the Log Book in 1903, when an entry reports:-

"Although copy books and drawing books have been used in school for over a year the slates have been occasionally used eg. where a class has been without a teacher. H.M. Inspector objected to this from a sanitary point of view. The slates will therefore be placed in the storeroom." (Did they spit on them, one wonders?)

Hair inspection began in 1919 and the following year Nurse Pearson examined all the children's throats at a time when there were two cases of diphtheria in the school.

Measles was still the disease which caused the most disruption to school life. It closed the school for most of February 1920, but after that year, school seemed to carry on through epidemics even though attendance was down to 42%, as in 1929, when there were

cases of measles, whooping cough, mumps, chicken pox and scarlet fever. The caretaker was asked to spray all rooms with disinfectant morning and afternoon.

In March 1933 Dennis Halls was found to have attended school while suffering from chickenpox. "The caretaker is washing all desks, seats etc with disinfectant. We have excluded his playmate and desk companion and are doing everything possible to prevent the disease spreading".

In 1932 the children were offered dental treatment. One hundred and eleven children paid one shilling each to be treated at Bridgford Hall. One child was given treatment free of charge. Soon after this, regular medical and dental checks began.

The milk scheme for schools started in October 1934. Nearly 300 children had school milk for the first time at the cost of 1/2d per bottle.

During the inter-war years the school participated in the life of West Bridgford and took part in inter-school competitions. The children attended the laying of the foundation stone of the war memorial and sang songs at the celebration of the opening of Bridgford Hall and Park in 1923.

On Empire Day each year they joined other Bridgford schools in the Hall Grounds to sing patriotic songs and perform folk dances. Boys and girls took part in folk dancing competitions each year, which included sword dances and singing games. Children won prizes for essay competitions and the Infant Choir won certificates at music festivals.

Armistice Day was marked each November with a solemn service. There was two minutes' silence followed by suitable hymns and a duet "O Valient Hearts" sung by two members of staff.

Accidents happened at school from time to time. "Dennis Halls pushed a small piece of chalk up his nose", requiring hospital treatment. John Penn swallowed a marble, but nature took its course in that case. "Mr Earnshaw's bus was backed on to Leonard Wing's foot" which resulted in three broken bones.

Although measles no longer closed the school, the weather still could. All roads in Bridgford were reported to be flooded on May 24th 1932. Seventy five children out of 380 arrived at school but were sent home. The school's heating chamber was flooded but not the school itself.

At the beginning of the school year in 1930 the school was organized as follows:-

Upstairs	Standard 11	56	
	Standard 1A	56	
	Standard 1B	48	
Downstairs	Special Class	27	
	First Infants	60	
	Second Infants	60	
	(Reception) Third Infants	29	TOTAL: 336

The remaining three upstairs classrooms were lent out to the Senior School across the playground. By the end of that school

year there were 434 on Roll and there was a class in the Hall once more.

In 1933 Miss Kirsop's health began to deteriorate. In April she was granted two months' leave of absence owing to "Mental Fatigue and General Debility". She returned in June. In October she again started two months' sick leave and this time did not return. An acting Head was appointed until Miss Shatford took up her duties as Head on 1st February 1935.

It seems a pity that there is no place in a school Log Book for a note from the Chairman of Governors or Education Officer to mark the end of a Head's term of office.

Miss Kirsop had seen Musters Road through many hard times since 1908, as well as taking over the Senior School during the war years. She surely deserved a few words of praise and gratitude. Let us hope that her health improved and that she enjoyed a happy retirement.

1935-1966

Head Teacher: Miss Edith Shatford

Miss Shatford and electricity arrived at Musters Road School at about the same time. The school began to look brighter. Miss Shatford had "modern" ideas about display, plants and flowers, pets and visual aids. There was a play area in the hall with a house corner, a slide and a see-saw. A school motto was introduced "Work well and play well"; and Miss Shatford made sure that visitors understood the importance of play in the education of young children.

On Saturday May 29th 1937 just after the coronation of George VI there was a school outing by train to London, which must have seemed quite an adventure at that time. 94 children from the top classes with 25 adults visited London Zoo, toured the coronation route by bus, where the decorations were still in place, and finished the day at Peter Pan's statue in Kensington Gardens.

Between 1935 and 1939 there were several changes in the organization of West Bridgford schools. There was a general move towards educating children with those of their own age. Until then there had been a tendency to move children up to another class only when they had reached a certain standard. It was also decided to close the "special class" and place these children with their peers. (This class did re-appear at a later date)

The new secondary school opened on Loughborough Road in 1938. Because of this, the Musters Road senior school no longer needed the three upstairs classrooms that they had used for some years and at the beginning of 1939 Musters Road became a school for Infant children only, although this was interpreted as being children under eight years of age on August 1st. There were 349 children in the school at that time. Three of the Assistant teachers were qualified and four Uncertificated.

In 1939 school life was disrupted once again by the threat of war. In July a meeting of parents was held to discuss the plans made by the Nottinghamshire Education Committee for the safety of children in the event of a National Emergency. By the end of the Summer holidays workmen were busy in the playground, completing the air-raid shelters. School was closed on September 1st. On the day after war was declared (September 4th), Miss Shatford writes "The staff is to meet here at 9am daily until school re-opens or until each member is engaged on some work of national importance" Later she reports: "After gaining some instructions from the W.V.S. office in the city, I was able to propose to the staff an opening for voluntary service of a temporary nature. In consequence of this Miss Madin, Miss M. Thomas and I were enrolled in the W.V.S. and gave voluntary aid in the harvest fields until school re-opened. Miss J. Kirk was already engaged in the communication department A.R.P. and Miss Milner was assisting in the work connected with evacuated children in the Burton Joyce area."

On September 20th, 54 children who lived within a five minute walk from school were allowed to return (The air-raid shelters were only big enough to hold the children from the senior school) After more shelters were built a system of half-time attendance was started and by the following summer shelters had been erected on Rectory Road and school was functioning full-time. There was only a one week summer closure in the summer of 1940 and staff took another week on a rota basis.

The first school-time air alert took place on September 14th 1940 during the lunch hour, when half a dozen children and the dinner children went into the shelters (This is the first mention of children staying on the premises at lunchtime). During January and February 1941 there were four day-time alerts and in February volunteers were called for from staff to do fire-fighting duties one night a week. (All except one, who had a nervous relative at home, volunteered)

On the night of May 8th-9th 1941 there was a heavy air-raid on Nottingham. 62 bombs fell on the Bridgford area, killing many, including two children from Musters Road school; Kathleen White and Charles Gooch. Eight members of the Gooch family died at 24 Loughborough Road.

The school doctor carried out a nutrition survey in 1941 and the following year the school meals service began. "73 children had their mid-day meal here, the food arriving from the kitchen at East Leake".

At the beginning of 1942 workmen carried out alterations to the building "in order that, in case of emergency, the block may be used as a cleansing station".

Miss Shatford's work as a Head Teacher was highly respected. In 1943 the Director of Education wrote to her:-
"On Saturday last I reported to the Committee on the very superlative standard of work I had observed in your school. The Committee members examined the portfolio of photographs, which I return here, with real interest and I was instructed by the Committee to write and express to you and your staff their grateful appreciation of the outstanding work your school is

performing."

In July 1944 the school was closed for a few days, so that it could be used as an evacuee-receiving centre and for billeting purposes.

As there were already 50 children in each class, 77 evacuees were registered for school but were not admitted until after the four week summer break, when the art and handicraft rooms were converted temporarily into classrooms.

The end of the war with Germany was celebrated on the 8th and 9th of May with a two day holiday, followed by Thanksgiving Week, including a service in Bridgford Park for all the schools.

The main purpose of the Thanksgiving Week seems to have been to collect money for National Savings. The extract below is from a war savings magazine:-

"FUTURE ISLAND" is the place in the picture —it looks too good to be true, doesn't it? with its new house, new school and new church—and the hill of achievement reminds us that it is too good to be true unless we bend every effort to accomplish this purpose in the years ahead.

This model placed in the middle of a blue sea was planned to help the children of Musters Road Infants' School, WEST BRIDGFORD, understand the meaning of their Thanksgiving Week. In the foreground are rows of different-coloured stepping stones (one row of 10 for each class),

each stone representing an investment of £10, making the target per class £100. At the beginning of the Week each class was given a small inscribed Union Jack to move to the island in £10 places.

The basket of strange-looking fruits must have excited plenty of curiosity among the children, most of them probably too young to remember anything so prehistoric as a banana.

"Save for Future Happiness" was the school's slogan, and the model evidently got its message across to the little minds, for the total raised during the Week was £5,377 5s. 4d.



After the war, numbers began to rise dramatically once more. They reached their peak in the early fifties when there were 586 children on Roll. As well as ten classes in school, there were four overflow classes in the local church halls.

Jesse Gray and Edwalton schools opened in the fifties and as the post-war "bulge" moved on to secondary schools numbers returned to a more manageable level.

Schools were still not completely staffed by qualified teachers. As recently as 1952 Miss Shatford complains that someone "with no teaching experience at all (except the teaching of horse and pony riding) and awaiting admission to training college next year has been sent to fill the vacancy at Patrick Road Wesleyan Chapel School Room" This was a class for Reception children.

The collection of photographs at the Archives Office gives glimpses of school life during the years of Miss Shatford's headship.

The children were taught road safety with model Belisha beacons and practised their road drill with the help of tricycles and some rather splendid pedal cars.

The Harvest Festival photographs are also impressive. The food collected in 1936 was taken to Bosworth Road Infant School in the Meadows "to be distributed amongst poor children". In later years it went to Nazareth House.

In Miss Shatford's time Musters Road School was known for its interest in "Rural Studies" and this included keeping pets at school. Over the years there were cats, rabbits (including Molly Cottontail and her eight babies), mice, tortoises, stick insects, a cold and a tropical aquarium and an observation bee-hive. The children were enrolled as junior members of the R.S.P.C.A.

The part of the Log Book that springs to life more than any other is the description of the Christmas parties. Santa Claus arrived with Mother Goose. She wore a Welsh hat and an apron and carried a broom and a bunch of balloons.

There was always a complicated story to build up the tension before they arrived - sometimes involving a telegram. On one occasion the entire school went down to Musters Road to form a guard of honour when Santa and Mother Goose alighted from a Bridgford bus. At other times they came in a van topped by a wooden roof and chimney complete with T.V. aerial, or appeared along the top of the air-raid shelters.

In 1963 Miss Shatford writes "Led by Santa Claus and Mother Goose we frolicked through our afternoon's programme of singing, stories, Fancy Dress Parade, surprises and a jolly entertainment. Carols round the candle-lit tree made a happy ending."

Miss Shatford seemed anxious to preserve the innocence and magical quality of childhood. A recent visitor to school inquired whether it was still necessary to believe in fairies to belong to Musters Road School. Apparently the assembled school was frequently asked: "Do you believe in fairies?" The reply to which had to be:- "YES EMPHATICALLY!"

Although this all sounds rather jolly, Miss Shatford is also remembered as a strict disciplinarian. There were large black and yellow S's on the stairs to remind the children of the rule of

silence, and woe betide any child who did not possess a handkerchief - in the leg of one's knickers in the case of girls. Miss Shatford's mental arithmetic sessions remain vivid memories for many - mature men and women quake at the thought of them.

In the early sixties Miss Shatford was made an M.B.E. and shortly before she retired in 1966 she transferred the school pets to Edwalton School. I do not know whether Edwalton had already established a tradition for caring for animals in school or whether the influx from Musters Road provided the basis for a collection, which has been developed ever since.

Miss Shatford certainly remains a powerful memory in the minds of a whole generation of West Bridgfordians. If that includes you or someone you know, please consider writing down those early memories of school - however brief. Such memories could make a valuable contribution to a booklet which is to be prepared in celebration of the long history of Musters Road Infants School.

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