

## CHAPTER 3

# Mrs Florence Coulson, 1910 – 1938

In July 1910, Miss Florence Keal was appointed as head teacher but was unable to take up her appointment in September because of serious illness. Miss Ward, an assistant teacher who herself was new to the school, was placed in charge for the first six weeks of term. Once *in situ*, however, Miss Keal, soon to become Mrs Florence Coulson, remained at Buckland for 28 years, longer than any one else in the post before or afterwards.

Although the managers had arranged for some building works to be undertaken ‘to put the school house in order for the new head teacher’, it was not until after Christmas that Miss Keal moved in, having meanwhile paid the caretaker an extra shilling a week to keep the premises aired and warm. When she did take up residence, it was as an under-tenant of a Mr Bowyer – a lodging arrangement that the managers reportedly considered ‘at some length’ and consented to only as long as the headmistress remained single.

It is a sign of the times that when, two years later, Miss Keal wanted to marry, she had to write to the managers to ask their permission. In November 1912, they passed a resolution ‘that consent be given to Miss Keal’s marriage and to her remaining Head Teacher for the present’, implying that the arrangement might only be temporary. The couple were married before Christmas, deciding not to live in the school house but at Old Way House in Old Road, a short walking distance from the school.

Although at that time head teachers were not members of the managing body, the new headmistress was routinely invited to the quarterly managers’ meetings where each time she would submit a report. From the start, she showed herself to be a determined young teacher with a clear vision of how she wanted to develop the school, and this meant making regular requests to the managers for classroom resources, requests which often had considerable financial implications. There was also the maintenance of the school building itself to consider, the leaking roof being a major problem and very costly to repair.

On first meeting the managers in October 1910, she asked for an additional infants teacher plus a piano and some extra furniture. The managers agreed to all this, but at their meeting in November regretted ‘the hasty and informal appointment of Miss Arnold’ as infants mistress. Apparently, they had forgotten to ask the applicant whether she was a member of the Church of England and, on learning she was a non-

conformist, wrote to the bishop and the National Society asking for advice. Although the National Society assured the managers that such an appointment was in order under the 1902 Education Act, the managers decided, without waiting for the bishop's reply, that the unfortunate Miss Arnold would have to leave because of the terms of the Trust Deed of 1861. They did manage to persuade the Education Committee to transfer her to another school but, meanwhile, insisted that only the headmistress or Miss Ward could take the infants for religious instruction. When in 1913 another vacancy arose, one of the two applicants was turned down on the grounds that she was non-conformist.

By this time the Education Committee, who was paying the teachers' salaries, took the opportunity to block a replacement appointment, maintaining that the school needed only two members of staff. The managers were furious and were supported by Mr Haig Brown, HM inspector, who insisted that three teachers were necessary 'for the proper working of the school', now catering for 60 or so pupils. In the end, the Education Committee decided to back down, and Miss Lily Packham was engaged as the new infants mistress on a month's trial from September 1911. The following January, the post was made permanent, though Miss Packham stayed for only two years.

Another example of the way the young headmistress did not hesitate to make her authority felt concerned the disposal of sewage, which she said was unsatisfactory. At this point she must have had a winning way, since the managers in February 1911 agreed that 'a barrow be provided and that the sewage should go to Mr Champion's premises', although this arrangement lasted for only three years. Unfortunately, however, the matter of the sewage, its location, its odour and the problem of its disposal would trouble Mrs Coulson throughout her teaching career and, in the future when she no longer appeared to have a winning way, bring her into serious conflict with the school managers.

There were also problems with the heating of the school, and in 1914 gas-fired radiators were installed; but a dispute ensued over who should pay the gas bill, the Education Committee insisting it should be the managers even though the committee had previously funded the cost of the coal. In any case this innovation was short lived since the radiators provided insufficient heat and, according to the head, rendered 'the air insufferable'. By 1918 they had been removed and the heating of the school would never be resolved during Mrs Coulson's time at the school.

Besides securing an extra teacher, the head also tried to broaden the curriculum by introducing more practical work. In March 1912, the managers agreed to her suggestion of lessons on household management (for girls only) while the boys did gardening. The Education Committee welcomed this development, and when a mother wrote to object to her daughter 'being required to do household work' the managers dismissed the complaint on the grounds that the new course had been approved by the local authority. Three years later, a further attempt to introduce practical areas was greeted with a similar complaint when a mother wanted her daughter, Edith, exempted from the new cookery classes that Mrs Coulson had started in her own kitchen. Again the managers stood their ground, arguing that both the Education Committee and HM inspector had given their approval and pointing out that all other parents were supportive.

In 1917 Mrs Coulson planned to extend the pupils' experience in household tasks by introducing boot repairing, handicrafts and poultry-keeping. She also succeeded in persuading the managers to acquire additional land to enlarge the school garden – a venture that met with a problem since she was regularly asking the managers 'to forbid the neighbour's fowls from molesting her garden'.

Mrs Coulson may have been the headmistress of a small village school with few resources and little in the way of finance to support her initiatives, but it would probably be fair to say that in these early years she believed in education in its broadest sense. For the majority of her pupils, their experience of education at Buckland village school would be the only education they would receive before moving on to employment. To improve her pupils' opportunities, she used her persuasive powers to secure the Education Committee's blessing to run evening classes during the winter months in commercial arithmetic, geography, drawing and English. Begun in 1911, it is not clear whether these were organised on a regular basis; but ten years later when she experienced problems with low attendance, she nevertheless secured the Committee's agreement to continue the classes with just eight students.

In these early years, as Miss Keal, she soon gained recognition for being a good head teacher. According to an Education Committee memorandum dated July 1911, 'when Miss Keal took over the school, it was in backward condition owing to the long illness of the previous head teacher'. Merely a year into her position as head, the managers agreed to raise her salary 'for diligence and efficiency in her duties'. The brief notes on inspections in the minute book suggest that inspectors were also pleased with the impact Miss Keal was making, as a full surviving report from HM inspector in 1914 confirms:

The general efficiency of the School is well maintained under the energetic control of the Head Mistress. The children's behaviour and their disposition to their work are quite satisfactory. They learn to express themselves reasonably well both orally and in writing, and their arithmetic is neat and accurate. The Head Mistress gives instruction in gardening to the elder boys and in practical housework to the elder girls.

Such praise would not always be so. In time the older Mrs Coulson would fall out of favour with the managers and in her last years at the school she battled with many difficulties. How much this was the consequence of her own sometimes challenging behaviour and how much to do with a clash of personalities will probably never be known.

In March 1920, Francis Henry Beaumont, who was one of the signatories of the 1861 Trust Deed, resigned from the managing body at the age of 86 because of failing eyesight, but he lived another nine years. Mrs Coulson thought most highly of him, and when he died she felt that she had lost 'a real and true friend of twenty years'.

What follows now is a record of life at Buckland School taken almost entirely from the school log books and the detailed entries of Mrs Florence Coulson and her successor Miss Rhoda Euston. From these records we have a fascinating glimpse into the years

1921 – 1964 and an insight into the story of the school from the head teacher’s point of view.

## LOG BOOK 1

### January 1921 – July 1938

From 1862 until the 1980s it was compulsory for the head teacher of a government-financed school to keep a log book, and the regulations as to the keeping and recording of these school records were printed at the front of the book. They included the following: ‘Every school must have a diary or log book which should be a bare record of the events which constitute the history of the school.’

The type of book and the nature of the contents were also strictly laid down. The book itself had to be ‘stoutly bound and have no less than 300 ruled pages’. This obviously made good sense as one book might cover ten to thirty years depending on the length and number of entries. The entries were to include ‘details of new books, apparatus, courses of instruction, any plan or lessons approved by the Board, visits of managers, absence, illness, failure of duty by any staff, and circumstances affecting the school’. The head teacher was not permitted to express any opinions but merely to make ‘statements of fact’. The log book was to be kept by the head teacher and the only people permitted to write in it were the head, managers who checked the register, or the replacement for the head in the case of illness. School closures had to be entered along with a record of the pupils’ attendance and any deviations from the normal routine of the school.



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It is extremely fortunate that three log books for Buckland Church of England School can be found in safe keeping at the Surrey History Centre in Woking. The first was kept entirely by the head teacher, Mrs Florence Coulson, and ends in 1937 just one year before her retirement. The second runs from 1937 until 1960 and, apart from the first year, was the record of Miss Rhoda Euston’s time as headmistress of the school. The final log book, which records Miss Euston’s last years before her retirement in 1964, continues until 1981 when the school closed. This log is not openly available until 2011 under the 30 year rule, although in order for a complete history of the school to be written, permission was given to read it as long as nothing critical was stated about a named individual. The fate of the previous log books is something of a mystery, especially that of Mrs Coulson’s early years at the school from her appointment in 1910 until 1921, but the most likely guess is that they were destroyed. This was certainly the conclusion that Miss Euston came to when the matter was raised in 1980. In a letter to Mary Wade Bishop, her friend and a manager, she wrote: ‘When I was first appointed to the school I was told that on her retirement my predecessor had the earlier books burned, for reasons which will appear obvious when reading some of the material contained in her entries in one of the books retained in the care of the County

Archivist.' Miss Euston, quite clearly found some of Mrs Coulson's entries to be highly inappropriate and would certainly not make the same 'mistake'. The managers' minutes, however, from 1903-1933 are included in the Buckland School collection at Woking as well as the Admission Register from 1865 until 1952. In addition to this there are a number of other archives such as correspondence with regard to financial accounts and a Punishment Book from 1938 –1964.

Whilst today the Admission Register and Punishment Book are both very useful sources for family historians, the log books provide researchers and readers with a unique snapshot of life in a village school in those days. Of course the entries are only as interesting as the chronicler made them and it must be remembered that the records were supposed to be entirely factual and impersonal. But those who stuck firmly to the regulations probably left, on the whole, rather dull records. Mrs Florence Coulson was no such lady. When reading her log book one has the impression that she knew exactly what she was doing and knew the book would be read in later years; she was therefore very careful when naming people or mentioning particular occasions to include more details than might have seemed necessary at the time. She also expressed opinions and made her feelings about certain people, especially those she disliked, amply clear. In this respect her log book is extremely controversial because it is her record, and her record alone of what took place, and is therefore a highly subjective account, the very opposite of what it should have been.

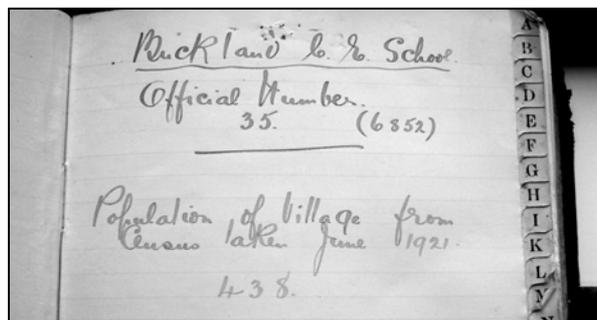
She is also something of an enigma. She comes across in the log book as a caring, intelligent, thoughtful teacher, concerned above all for the welfare of her pupils and delighting in their successes. Whatever may have been said or written about her during her 'rule' and after, she scarcely recorded an unkind word about any of her pupils. In fact there is an enormous amount of praise both for the academic children who passed scholarships to grammar schools as well as for those who had worthy and very necessary jobs as plumbers, gardeners, builders or dressmakers. More than once she commented on how much she loved her job, that it was a 'labour of love' and that her time at Buckland School was a very happy one. A particular pleasure for her was when a former pupil popped into the school, often long after he or she had left, and they talked together about the old times and old friends.

But were there two Mrs Coulsons – the person she thought she was, and who is portrayed in the log book, and the other Mrs Coulson who was difficult to work with, tactless, authoritarian and who clearly could not get on with the new rector or most of the school managers? She certainly lacked diplomacy and had a habit of telling or rather 'ordering' people what to do, and because of this she definitely made enemies. On the other hand there were times when her working conditions, even for those days and bearing in mind that everyone was hardier and more accustomed to the cold than we are today, were totally unacceptable. Who would want to teach in a classroom in January when there is no heating? Who could make a lesson interesting, magical, or stimulating with the stench of sewage wafting in through the classroom window or smoke from afternoon bonfires? She declared that poor working conditions affected the children's ability to learn, and who now would disagree with her? The cold gave her rheumatism, lack of light affected her eyesight, and a failure to feel supported by the

school managers without doubt made her crabby and uncooperative, especially in her later years when she was nearing retirement.

In the end, we have to make up our own minds about Mrs Coulson. But there is one thing about which we should be in no doubt, and that is to recognise the remarkable record she left of life in a village school over a period of nearly twenty years. She may not have used the log book exactly as it was originally intended, because she did much more than record just 'bare facts'. Through her writing she brought occasions to life so that we can smile now at the sight of the butcher's boy, Herbert Woodhams, cheekily and deliberately whistling loudly outside the classroom window, whilst the girls almost certainly giggled and Mrs Coulson grew red and angry; and just as easily we can picture the children assembled solemnly on the Green, as the flag, a wreath of laurel and bunches of flowers were placed on the war memorial on Armistice Day 1932.

In January 1921, when she opened up the new log book with its sturdy cover and 500 as yet untouched pages the official number of pupils on the register at Buckland School was 35 and the population of the village was 438.



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## 1921

*'The head teacher is to be highly commended.'*

Mrs Coulson's first entry on 10 January 1921 records the recent and very positive report on the school made by W.R. Adams, the diocesan inspector.

The work of the lower group has been very thorough. Children have a wide range of knowledge, which they are ready to turn to good spiritual and practical account. Their readiness of expression is most marked. In the upper group the work has been more difficult as the class as a whole is relatively of weaker mental ability.

The children have a very good grasp of the essentials of Christian faith and practice, as well as sound knowledge of the facts of the lessons. The successful work of the head teacher is to be highly commended.

The managers' minutes also report that HM inspectors had paid 'several visits' and that their reports had been 'very satisfactory'. She must have been very pleased with these reports, which were to be very different from the one made by the inspector in two

years' time. Perhaps Mr Adams was more concerned with the children's spiritual welfare and less with the three Rs, but he also seemed to be aware of the range of ability within the class and took that into account without assuming that all the children could perform to the same level.

One can't help wondering anyway if the general health of her pupils in 1921 would take up far more of Mrs Coulson's time and energy than the academic timetable. Her problems began in February when she had to summon the medical officer to examine a sudden outbreak of spots. According to the nurse, six children had scabies and six had impetigo. As a consequence of this, the school was disinfected and then closed for two weeks to enable the parents to cure the infection. No sooner were the children back than one case of diphtheria was reported, followed by six more throughout the year. At Easter Joe and April Wallis were sent to the Isolation Hospital, which prompted yet again another week's closure in an attempt to control the outbreak. As if this was not enough, the O'Rourke family were excluded for some considerable time on account of a 'mystery illness' that turned out to be scarlet fever, and the sanitary inspector had to visit to see if there were any further traces of that illness by taking swabs. When a new pupil, who joined the school in September, was found to be suffering from tuberculosis, it was stated that she had been admitted in error and could therefore not attend until cured, and her name was duly removed from the register. The problems continued, and on 30 December the managers ordered the school to be disinfected because of the epidemic, which had reduced attendance from 90 to 70 per cent.

A new teacher, Miss Ball, joined the school in April and was soon put to the test the following month when she had to take charge for four weeks, the head teacher having fallen ill very suddenly. Mrs Coulson was admitted to a nursing home to be 'medically' examined because she was suffering from 'internal troubles'. Nevertheless she did her best to stay in charge, giving instructions to Miss Ball 'as to the best way of carrying on'.

But it was not all bad news. The boys got on with their gardening despite variable weather, the younger children dug potatoes in the allotment and cabbages were planted in October, Miss Ball took her class on a nature walk, in September the head accompanied the older children to a lecture on India in the Reading room and on 1 July Mr and Mrs Beaumont, the village squire and his wife, celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. To mark this very special occasion, all the children wrote letters of congratulation whilst the guides and brownies took gifts of roses. Mrs Beaumont responded by giving the children a treat at the 'court' at 3.30 on the 12 July. There were academic successes too. In May four scholarship candidates took their exams, and as a result Ronald Earnshaw gained a free studentship to Reigate Grammar School, 'the fourth success gained by the school in the past four years' and Reigna Holman was awarded a free place at Dorking High School, 'the second success this year'. Unfortunately, however, the girl returned to Buckland in November but no explanation was given for this. Lastly, Ivy Tucker received a grant from the United Services Fund in November 'and will shortly leave Buckland for Dorking High School'.

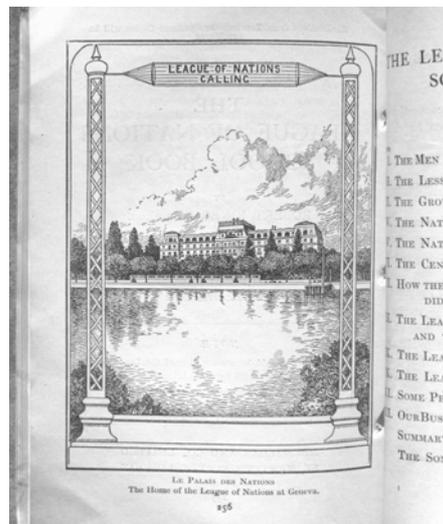
One has the impression that Mrs Coulson was very proud of these successes though she did not say so in so many words.

## 1922

*'Whilst Cyril Wallis was pulling up the blackboard he accidentally struck the head teacher with the corner of it, causing considerable pain.'*

At the start of this year the head's main concern was with the organisation and teaching of the two classes and the best way to overcome the problems of mixed age groups and mixed abilities when there were only two teachers in the school. Mrs Coulson decided that for mornings only the brightest children in Standard I would join the Lower Division and be taught by her, whilst the youngest children and a 'few backward ones' would be with Miss Ball. This new arrangement appeared to work quite well but relied for its success on the First Class working independently for a lot of the time so that the head could devote most of her attention to the Lower Division. In February she complained that so many children were away that it was difficult to teach new work, so she was just concentrating on the three Rs. One boy, with obvious difficulties, was transferred to a school for the 'mentally deficient' in Cambridge, but was immediately replaced by a girl with very considerable learning difficulties: 'According to the doctor's report she may improve when one of the glands in the throat develops.' In the meantime the head teacher 'is asked if she will teach her good habits and hard work'. It seems that there was really very little insight and not much provision in those days as regards the teaching of children who had special needs.

Nevertheless an effort was made to broaden the curriculum and perhaps provide the older children with more interesting work, although one wonders if there was also a need simply to keep them well occupied. In needlework, glove-making was introduced as part of their 'handwork', and this was wholeheartedly approved of by the managers. In fact a Mr Coles went on to suggest that the teaching of 'netting' would also be useful, 'especially to boys likely to work in gardening'. However, not everything Mrs Coulson taught met with the managers' approval. The minutes for that year criticised the lessons she had given on the League of Nations because, in the managers' opinion, it was undesirable to bring subjects of political controversy into the classroom. She was definitely on safer ground when three girls presented work they had made for the Camden Town Welfare Centre which included 'six nightgowns, five pairs of knickers with bodices, five knitted vests and one pair of small socks', and no one objected to her looking into the possibility of girls attending cookery classes outside the school.



This was the first year that Buckland entered the Leith Hill Choral Competition and the school had some success: third in three of the competitions and a certificate. The head expressed her delight. It was a 'splendid experience and the school is eager to do better next year. The principal faults were tone quality of the singing.' Dancing and

'dramatisation' were also on the curriculum, and in July the children had a chance to perform before the school managers, as well as Miss Venning, Miss Le Couleur (the director of physical culture) and, of course, their parents, who were immensely pleased with the display. As far as the head was concerned, the only misfortune was that the HMIs 'were not able to be present' and therefore missed seeing such good work. Just to put icing on the cake there was 'perfect attendance this week. The first time this year.' A letter of congratulation was received some time later from the Attendance Committee to the effect that Buckland had made the highest attendance in the district during the summer term.

The state of the classrooms was also a matter of concern and at a meeting with the managers in March the condition of the infant room was discussed: plaster had been falling from the ceiling and the west wall was 'critical'. As a result it was decided that the walls of both rooms would be thoroughly cleaned and distempered during the Easter holiday. When she returned after the break, Mrs Coulson expressed her delight: 'The decoration was most satisfactory.'

Just before the holidays, however, she was the victim of an unfortunate accident: 'Whilst Cyril Wallis was pulling up the blackboard he accidentally struck the head teacher in the neck with the corner of it, causing considerable pain.' A week later she was still suffering and had to consult the doctor. In general, though, everyone's health was better that year apart from some cases of whooping cough. Walter Adams from the diocese wrote another glowing report whereas the HMI, on her visit, managed to come up with two not very imaginative subjects for the children to write on: 'My School and Armistice Day', and 'A Stitch in Time Saves Nine'. She also recommended that all the children in the Lower Division should write in ink, which drew the following somewhat terse comment from the head: 'which they will all do now'.

Scarlet fever may have kept the O'Rourke family away from school last year but Mary O'Rourke still left for Dorking High School in the September. The only sad event was in February when 'Mr Thorpe, who for so many years was associated with Buckland, was buried in February at Betchworth. Scholars past and present sent flowers.'

## 1923

*'The children presented a handsome leather pursebag to Miss Ball.'*

The school opened on 8 January but closed again twice during that month. On the 16 January it was for the funeral of Mrs Beaumont, the squire's wife, who had lived in Buckland for fifty years and taken a great interest in the school. Then by 23 January eighteen children were already absent through illness, fifteen having gone down with measles. Closure was the best option.

Staffing that year became something of a problem with a number of changes after the departure of Miss Ball who left because she was emigrating to Canada. Most of the parents were present to see the children give her 'a handsome leather pursebag' as well

as a silver mirror from 'the men of the club' and a leather writing case from Mrs Sanders. Another teacher, a Miss Doris Holdforth, was appointed but did not take up the post because she could not accept an alteration in her job description from 'supplementary' to 'supply' teacher. As a consequence, a number of supply teachers came and went, until the arrival of Miss Booker in November as a supplementary teacher, though she resigned the following September. Things can't have been very easy.

The cookery lessons started and disappointingly stopped. It is not hard to imagine the headmistress's frustration when, on taking the girls to their cookery class in Reigate, the teacher, Miss Jones, failed to arrive so there was no class. There is one reference in the log book to a lesson in May but in June she wrote – probably gritting her teeth: 'The Cookery class won't be held until after the summer holiday in consequence of the resignation of the teacher.' One wonders what prompted that resignation.

In March the school organised an exhibition of the children's work in needlework, writing and composition, singing and recitation which was put on 'for the mothers'. Fathers, presumably, were not meant to be interested in that sort of thing.

The ancient custom of 'beating the bounds' (a medieval practice whereby villagers walked round the parish boundaries to confirm their location for future generations) was revived in May. Empire Day was celebrated on the 31<sup>st</sup> and parents and residents attended: 'The rector addressed the children after all had listened to the gramophone record of the King's and Queen's Empire speeches. The children sang and recited patriotic songs and poetry.' In June they performed a little play in the garden of Buckland Lodge and Miss Le Couleur, the county director of physical culture, 'came expressly to see the dancing.' In July they prepared a musical play to be performed on Prize Day and the children wrote the programme. The diocesan inspector, not unsurprisingly, reported that the children showed 'animation and creditable resourcefulness. The school is bright, happy and efficient.'

If this had been the only report Mrs Coulson would have been a very happy lady. But what did she make of the HMI's report following the visit and inspection in March? She wrote it out word for word, but she must have been disappointed with many of the conclusions. The inspector, R. H. Charles, arrived on 16 March and gave an arithmetic lesson, or rather (as it now seems) his lesson was more of a test to find out what the children could or could not do, for example 'divide 1 ton 3cwts by 190; 18 eggs at 2/2d'. According to Mrs Coulson, in geography and history the children were examined on the following:

Geography: Say all you can about Manchester, Dartmoor, Portsmouth, London Bridge.

History: Say all you can about a good king; a bad king; a king who was killed.

In English the written compositions were: Write to a friend who left Buckland for Canada a year ago or What I hope to be when I grow up.

The inspector's report read as follows:

### *Mixed and Infants*

This school (no. on books 38) is taught in two classes, the lower numbering 16, the upper 22. The syllabus is broad and interesting. The work itself however is of an uneven merit and some weaknesses appeared when tested. Of the Elementary subjects Reading is the most successful. This reaches a good level, particularly in the lower class.

In written composition the advance made through the school is somewhat disappointing. The work done by the top group at this visit was only moderately good.

In Arithmetic considerable weakness was found above the Infants' Class. In this subject only eight children in the school appear to be classified above Standard III. The children were examined both in their syllabus and on easier work and they did badly. Many failed to work correctly quite easy sums (e.g. a bill in shillings and pence, a simple addition, a simple division of money)

In Geography and History they answered questions with fair success.

The syllabus included some practical activities – e.g. Gardening, Handwork of various kinds. The Needlework (for which more than the usual amount of time is assigned) includes crotchet and decorative stitchery. The Needlework itself is good in scope and execution. The girls however were not able to explain the diagrams in their notebooks and knew very little about the materials they use. [Perhaps he did not ask the right questions.]

No gardening instructions and no Handwork teaching was seen at this visit. The children's notebooks (gardening) might well contain more notes made from their actual work, rather than from gardening text books.

The teaching of Drawing needs some attention throughout the school. The boys' drawing is poor. Their books show little real progress: their work in this subject, to which they give twice as much time as the girls, is inferior to that of the girls.

In the Infants' Class the methods of teaching Drawing need some reconsideration.

The children are friendly and well mannered and show themselves ready to be interested. They are now well prepared in many ways in the Infants' class and their work above this class may be expected to show a more marked advance from stage to stage and to reach in some directions a higher level.

Mrs Coulson would carry on regardless.

## 1924

*'The children have especially studied India, Burma and Australia and will be visiting these countries.'*

All through this period schools had to keep a careful record of weekly attendances, and the records were regularly scrutinised. Consequently there are frequent references to them throughout the log book. When the school reopened on 7 January, all 37 children were present, but this was short lived as during the next two months almost everyone had a cold or the flu, including the head and Miss Booker. At the end of what was then the school year – April – a record was made of those children who had the highest attendance. The school had actually opened 421 times and just one child, Barbara

Potter, had managed to make the full attendance. The following eighteen children, however, had made over 400 attendances.

Gladys Potter	420
Fred Ferris	417
Joy Ferris	416
Annie Matthews	416
Kathleen Woodhams	412
Reigna Holman	410
Lesley Morris	410
Tim O'Rourke	410
Lily Woodhams	410
Roland O'Rourke	409
Cyril Wallis	408
Peggy Wallis	408
Arthur Branch	407
Dolly Sadler	405
Charlie Truelove	403
Audrey Morris	401
Marion Rowe	400
Harold Lawrence	400

Miss Booker appears to have had a successful time at the school but was unable to continue beyond October as she lived some distance from the school and found the journey too difficult. A Miss Kathleen Sanders came as a supply until Miss Eely took over on 10 November. Again this year the head seems to have done her best to provide an imaginative curriculum and she practised a 'learning through experience' approach to teaching. In January the children were taken to look at the church to study its structure and then they wrote about what they had seen. Fifteen of the older children were taken to see the new printing machines at the *Surrey Mirror* works and a special lesson was given on Caxton and his printing press. Another trip was to the Wembley Exhibition: 'The children have specially studied India, Burma, and Australia and will visit these countries (at the Exhibition) and then write up an account of their visit.' Also in geography there were 'lantern lectures' during which the head planned to show pictures of the Strait Settlements. Needlework continued to be an important subject on the curriculum, and six girls attended an exhibition of needlework in Woodhatch. The school contributed the following garments:

- 6 shirting overalls
- 1 flannel coat
- 1 flannel stays
- 1 calico petticoat
- 5 pairs flannel knickers
- 13 pairs calico knickers
- 5 shirting bands
- 5 decorative stitchery bands
- 3 plain bibs



3 pairs babies' boots (crotchet)  
4 pairs red cotton boots (knitted)  
1 woollen coat (crotchet)  
1 woollen bonnet  
1 woollen bag  
1 pair woollen garters

In May there was the customary Empire Day address during which patriotic songs were sung and the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* was rehearsed. Harold Lawrence passed the written exam for a free studentship at the grammar school and eighteen prizes were won by the children at the local flower show.

As ever, the managers noted that the state of the school building was troublesome, and at the end of the year the roof had to be repaired at a cost of £7 0s 9d. To meet further expenses, a voluntary rate of 1d (to be increased to 2d or 3d if necessary) was requested to provide funds for re-plastering the ceiling in the main classroom.

On reading the log book, one has the impression that during this period Buckland School was a vibrant and happy institution. But was Mrs Coulson beginning to feel her years? Certainly she was having trouble with her eyesight because in October she commented on an error she made in the register as a consequence of failing to wear her spectacles. She remarked that her 'vision of late is slightly defective'. A couple of weeks later she was struck by a football and experienced 'some pain in the region of the stomach'. Being a teacher, it seems, could be quite a hazardous occupation.

## 1925

*'I do not consider it safe for children to be in a room where plaster  
in the ceiling is damp.'*

When the school reopened after Christmas, Mrs Coulson once again decided to rearrange the timetable. Miss Eely would take the upper school so that she herself could teach the infants, her intention being to 'try to improve accents'. But there were far more tiresome problems than the children's poor speech in store for her. This year, yet again, there would be staffing problems, as well as trials with a leaking roof, and a boy in 'a very dirty condition'.

One of the difficulties for her, as a head, was that no sooner had a young, reliable teacher taken up an appointment to teach the infants than the young lady left and a string of temporary teachers came in her wake. Miss Eely remained until June when Miss Sanders, who had previously proved very helpful, came for a brief spell on supply, followed by Miss Gibson, and it was not until November that a probationary teacher was appointed. Unfortunately the children in her charge proved to be a handful, so much so, according to Mrs Coulson, that 'she could not teach and maintain discipline at the same time'. As a result the head had to come to her rescue and take over more and more of the teaching, which she could only achieve by giving 'the upper classes a lot of private study'. Matters went from bad to worse and, according to the

managers' minutes for December, Mrs Coulson was unable to give her customary report at their meeting because she had been so busy trying to make up for this teacher's incompetence. On 23 December the teacher left, her period of probation having expired. Unsurprisingly Mrs Coulson was ill during most of the Christmas holidays, more than likely suffering from stress.

Or perhaps she was beginning to feel the cold and the damp? Certainly in January she suffered from 'acute rheumatism' and in February the classroom must have been decidedly uncomfortable. The roof, in spite of repairs, leaked badly and there were pools of water on the floor. The head concluded that it was unsafe to teach the children in that room especially as there had been a fall of plaster during the night. Mr Sanders came to look at the ceiling, and in due course surveyors visited and reported on the roof. There are no further references to this matter that year in the log book, but it appears from the managers' minutes that some minor repairs were made to the roof and holes in the playground were dealt with.

Little was made of it in the log book at this time, but an event took place which appears to have had considerable significance for Mrs Coulson in the years that were to follow. Samuel Wetherfield, the rector, left Buckland and a new rector, Herbert Walter Dunk, took his place. By March he had also been appointed chairman of the managers.

Although the school nurse visited fairly frequently, on day-to-day matters a head of a school was as much a social worker or welfare officer as a teacher, and it was no different at Buckland. The dentist came in September to check on the teeth of the six, seven, eight, twelve and thirteen year-olds, and as a result of this numerous children had appointments at the dental clinic. Another child, whose home circumstances were probably chaotic, continued to attend school in a very dirty condition. A letter was sent to his sister requesting that the child should have a bath. 'A very rude letter was the reply.' This was followed by a verbal reply from the head to the effect that 'Johnny' could not attend unless he washed daily, and if not his case would be reported to the NSPCC. Nothing changed and the school nurse reported that he was in a very poor state.

Life was not all bleak, however. Seventeen children were taken to the Limestone Works before writing up an account of their visit, the 'gardening boys' laid out a new garden, and a gardening competition was held: Cyril Wallis gained first prize, Ted Hawkins the second and Jim O'Rourke came third. Meanwhile Billy O'Rourke, who was not supposed to leave school until the end of the summer term, gained an apprenticeship in April with a builder so long as he attended evening classes during winter months. Following a visit from Miss Le Couleur, it was suggested that swimming lessons could now be part of the school curriculum and would take place for boys and girls at Reigate baths, though this had to be at the expense of lessons in gardening. In July the girls accompanied the head to the annual industrial show 'wearing the raffia hats they have made, which they have trimmed with much taste', and Cyril Wallis and Harold Lawrence both went on a trip to London to see Westminster Abbey as well as to the Old Vic for a performance of *A Merchant of Venice*.

Finally, at their meeting in December, the managers considered what to do with the school house since neither the head nor any teacher wanted to live there. They decided that Mr Collins could live there as caretaker and be paid 1d per week for his work.

## 1926

*'Until something has been done to ensure absolute safety the room will not be used and lessons given in the porch.'*

Finding money to repair the school building was a recurring problem. Each year a voluntary rate was levied, and in April 1926 a sinking fund was set up to pay for extraordinary expenditure and National Savings Certificates were purchased accordingly. But despite that, there was never enough money in the kitty and Mrs Coulson, it seems, would always have a struggle to get anything done in the way of maintenance or repairs to the building. In April more plaster fell from the roof on to a very unfortunate Annie Matthews. Although she was not injured in any way she had had a fright and her head ached. The head declared it was not safe to sit in the room, and from then on lessons would take place in the porch. A week later the new rector lent a hand by probing the plaster and knocking out 'some loose bits'. Mrs Coulson was extremely dissatisfied especially when once again the roof was deemed to be safe.

There were also more battles with naughty children and the occasional irate parent on the rampage. But it seems that Mrs Coulson was not a lady to be intimidated and could always hold her ground when it came to confrontations with parents. Roland O'Rourke had to be placed under her beady eye in the 'big room' because his tiresome behaviour was upsetting the infants. More than likely he had had enough of endless supply teachers and knew how to torment those who were inexperienced. Two sisters had been excluded on 14 May on account of their hair which was very 'unclean', and in July, the mother, having again been informed that the problem continued, 'entered the school without invitation and used abusive language, calling the head teacher 'a liar and a lying humbug'. She was ordered out of the school 'but she refused to leave until she had finished her harangue'. Three weeks later one of the sisters was found searching the pockets of other girls' coats and another was seen stealing pennies, whilst the boy 'also took small things from the infant room'. When they returned after the summer holidays Mrs Coulson muttered: 'This family gives much trouble. The boy especially is so dirty at times that he has to sit by himself. This parent and children are giving a great deal of trouble.' Quite what happened next is not recorded except that in October there is the following comment: 'The family have removed from the parish.'

A new teacher, Miss Horton, whom the head considered an asset, was now in charge of the younger children and would remain at the school for two years.

In May there was a vicious measles epidemic, and by the end of that month out of thirty-eight children only eight were marked present. As a consequence the school was closed for two weeks until the outbreak abated. Since gardening was now no longer on

the curriculum, when Mr Gummer, an inspector, visited, the head suggested that he recommended that some kind of handicraft be taught in its place.

In April the O'Rourke children transferred to Holmesdale School, as did Harold Lawrence, 'the top boy in the school', and Mrs Coulson received 'a very nice letter of thanks' from his mother. Mandie Smith won a certificate from the *Daily Graphic* for good work in a competition, and Dolly Sadler left for Dorking High School in September: 'She has been here for seven years and has an excellent record.' On Prize Day there were the usual recitations as well as a performance by the older children of a scene from *King John* called *Arthur and Hubert* (two characters in the play); and when the head took five children to see Sir Alan Cobham lecture at the Royal Albert Hall, they occupied the box 'next to that belonging to the Prince of Wales'.

## 1927

*'The fire came out of the front of the stove and scorched the head teacher's arms, eyelashes and hair.'*

When reading the log book, the impression Mrs Coulson gives of herself is that of a very caring teacher who was concerned equally for the welfare of the children as for their education. She was aware, for example, that some of the children had a considerable walk to get to school, and this was made particularly hard for them when the weather was wet or cold. By mid-January the weather had turned very cold and there had been a heavy snow fall. Nevertheless attendance was good 'in spite of the fact that several children live one and a half miles from school. Four infants aged five have come this distance.'

On 1 April, Mr Beaumont, the aged squire and former manager of the school, was ninety-three. In spite of his advancing years he continued to take an interest in the school and its welfare. Empire Day on 24 May was celebrated with the usual enthusiasm, and the children took part in a pageant entitled *Britannia and Her People*. Anybody who was anybody was present, and 'a lady who wished to remain anonymous gave the children a beautiful iced cake inscribed Empire day, 1927'. Arthur Branch was awarded a technical scholarship, Alfred Claydon, a former pupil, passed London Matriculation in July, and Eric Evans also gained a place at grammar school.

At the start of the new term in September, Mrs Coulson was full of enthusiasm: 'The head is teaching Geography this term entirely by *Journeys*, the children of the upper school being taken together. The History will be stories with special reference to social conditions supplemented by much reading.' This sounded promising. But ever since the departure of Miss Booker there had been problems with staffing. Perhaps Mrs Coulson was not the easiest person to work with. Perhaps many young teachers simply did not want to work in such a small school. Perhaps having to teach classes of such a mixed age range and ability was too challenging for many. Whatever the case, no one seemed to stay for long. By the end of October the head remarked that 'the work of the Infant School is not so satisfactory as it should be'. Miss Horton, who had joined the school in

January 1926, was now showing signs of stress and she seemed 'unable to do the work', even though the managers' minutes for the previous year had noted that she was 'doing well'. There may have been an unhappy confrontation because on 1 November she handed in her resignation although she agreed to stay until the end of the month, giving as her reason for leaving the fact that the distance from home was 'too trying in winter'. A further difficulty in such a small school was that if one or both of the teachers were absent it was not easy to find a replacement at short notice. At one point in the year Mrs Coulson wrote in the log that 'Ethel Truelove, one of the late scholars, has come to look after the infants', and Barbara Potter, a current pupil, acted as a monitress.

As always Mrs Coulson's attention was drawn to the state of the buildings and how the classrooms might be improved for the children. In March she succeeded in getting the managers to agree to clean the exterior of the building and to redecorate the walls, and this was duly accomplished in the Easter holidays. But something else happened which may have been the start of Mrs Coulson's frosty relationship with the rector and his sister.

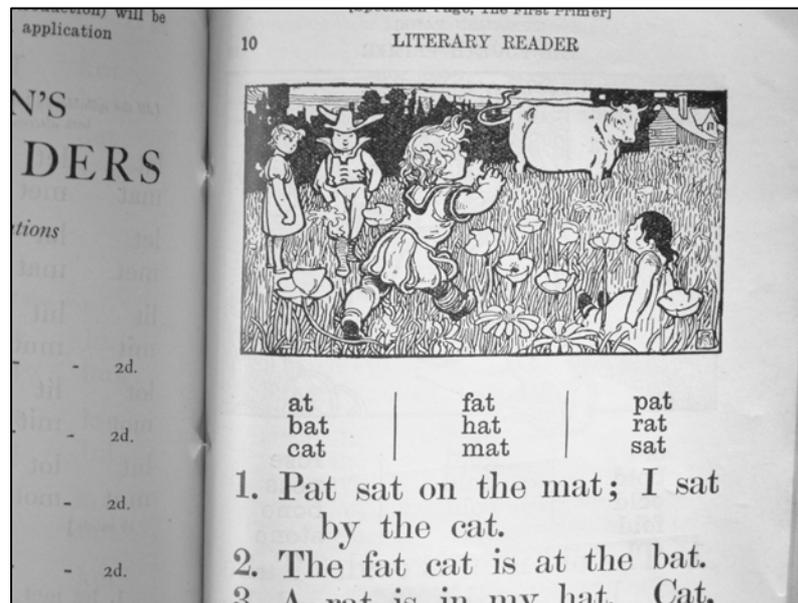
It began with the resignation of Mr Collins, the caretaker, who had been living in the school house. A note in the managers' minute book records an agreement made on 3 November 1927 that the rector's sister, Miss Dunk, who was the district nurse, could live in the school house and act as 'the resident caretaker to the house'. She would be paid 1d a week, but could be removed 'at the will and pleasure of the managers at any time'. It should also be pointed out that the chairman of this meeting was none other than the rector, who was Miss Dunk's brother. During the meeting it was decided that extensive alterations would be made to the house and the work was carried out at considerable expense. The bathroom was connected to the main drainage system used by the school and a new bath, lavatory, hot water system and kitchen range were installed for £100, which the managers had to borrow from the National Society, a loan that was not repaid until 1933. The rector explained in the parish magazine that 'the time was opportune now to bring the house up to the standard that might be expected in a school house', even though it was not at present needed by the head teacher.

It is not difficult to imagine what Mrs Coulson thought of all this extravagance. Almost certainly she would have wanted the money to have been spent on the school building, not for the benefit of the district nurse. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that she pointed out in September that something needed to be done about the teachers' lavatory. 'The one in the school garden,' she declared, 'should be put in order.'

Trouble was brewing. The head could not get on with the stove and she certainly could not get on with her school caretaker. At the end of November, in a final attempt to make the wood burn properly, Mrs Coulson rather rashly added paraffin. 'This resulted in what might have been a serious accident. The fire came out of the front of the stove and scorched the head teacher's arms, eyelashes and hair. It was quite a shock but she hopes there will be no after effects.' Well, maybe not, but one can just imagine how the children gasped and giggled at the sight and the tales they told their parents when they went home.

Four days later the head complained of insufficient heating and further difficulties with the caretaker. The animosity continued into the next week and she remarked that the caretaker had been 'extremely rude and insulting'. The matter was then taken to the managers whereupon she promised to carry out instructions 'without discussion' and Mrs Coulson was asked to keep a record of matters regarding the stove. This she did most diligently; for example '28 November: fire not burnt through – room cold'. It was the same again on 2 December, and this time when the head sent for the caretaker she refused to come and instead 'sent over fat for the head teacher to put on the fire'. By the end of December Mrs Coulson was almost certainly on a short fuse. 'The children are suffering from colds and swollen glands.' This time she summoned the caretaker by letter; she arrived 'very much grumbling' and told the head teacher she should 'do it herself', (presumably a reference to stoking the fire). She then complained of 'insufficient salary' and was so rude that the head 'sent her out'.

The year ended and it was surely to everyone's benefit that the school closed at noon the next day because it was so dark: 'The children live too far away and cannot get home in the light.'



**1928**

*'Miss Owden has completed six weeks work with which the head teacher is very much pleased. It is a great relief and help to again have a competent Junior teacher – the work of the whole school will improve in consequence.'*

With the appointment of Miss K. Owden on 10 January, the infants and Standard I were now in good hands and Mrs Coulson could perhaps begin to relax and breathe a sigh of relief. The same, however, could not be said of her relationship with the caretaker, which continued to grow even more frosty. It was winter and the school was cold – 47 degrees Fahrenheit in the Upper School on 23 January. A week later the head spoke to

her about the low temperature in the big room but it had little effect and she was 'extremely rude in manner and speech'. The caretaker certainly seemed determined to be uncooperative, but was Mrs Coulson also at fault, lacking in both diplomacy and tact? Certainly her dictatorial manner could have been part of the problem, since she was prone to giving 'orders' instead of making requests. Whatever the case she decided the next best action was to write a letter:

I cannot go along any further without calling attention to your recent conduct. When giving orders or mentioning to you the low temperatures which have been frequent of late, you have been considerably and noticeably rude in your remarks and manner. The discipline and efficiency of the school are involved. I cannot allow this state of things to go on. I must make a report to the managers.

However, to give you one more chance, I will put off doing this for the present. I hope you will take this letter as a warning, and behave yourself in such a way that it may not be necessary to trouble the managers again. I am writing this solely in your interest.

So that was that, for the time being, though the problem was not over yet. In fact it had scarcely begun.

Fortunately other entries in the log book for that year are much more positive and there were things to celebrate. Annie Matthews was awarded a certificate by the Health Week Committee for her essay on 'How Cleanliness helps you along the Road of Life', and before long the weather grew warmer, the days lengthened and Mrs Coulson could forget all about the stove. Just like every other year, the spotty children were sent home until they were no longer spotty, in June there was a mumps epidemic, and then it was Harvest Thanksgiving and perhaps one of Mrs Coulson's favourite times: 'The children will bring autumn flowers, creepers, berries, etc. wherewith to decorate the schoolroom. Also fruit and vegetables which will afterwards be sent to the local hospital. Lessons and talks will be given on all that is brought and much general knowledge will be acquired by the children.' Enjoyment, ritual, celebration, learning and giving, all rolled into one.

In preparation for the Armistice celebrations in November, the boys were duly sent off to cut the grass around the war memorial, Miss Owden had an accident on her bicycle and injured her knee, and there was a film on missionary work in Africa – *From Capetown to Mombassa*. Prize Giving took place on 13 December and everyone was happy. 'The head teacher thanked the parents for their kindly cooperation and Miss Owden for her devoted and loyal work.'

Lastly there was the Christmas party given by Mrs Sanders and, of course, a Christmas tree. A good time was had by all and, 'every child received a present'.

1929

*'The headmistress has lost a real and true friend of twenty years standing.'*

Another January, another new year and another new term, and what was first thing on Mrs Coulson's mind? Well, of course, it was that old stove. It was playing up yet again, for three days belching smoke out into the school room so that everyone had to pick up their work and relocate to the infant room. But she certainly was not going to take this inconvenience quietly and complained so vociferously that Mrs Sanders, the kind lady over in the big house, got to hear about it and decided to do something:

Mrs Sanders is very much concerned about the comfort and health of the teachers and children and kindly offered to allow the use of her dining room for the teaching of the Upper School until a new stove is procured. This morning she sent a man to see what could be done to the old stove and a fire has been lighted. The room, however, is not sufficiently warmed up.

Mrs Robert Sanders was the daughter of Francis Henry Beaumont and very sadly, on 21 January, Francis Beaumont died. In response to his death, Mrs Coulson wrote the following eulogy, and on reading her words one has the feeling that she was aware of the importance of the log book she was keeping and its place in the history of the village:

Today the village has heard with regret of the death of Mr F. H. Beaumont who would have celebrated his 95th birthday had he lived until April 1. Mr Beaumont was the squire and belonged to some of the most distinguished families in England and France. He was very kindly and took a great interest in the school, of which he was the founder.

For some years he had remained in his room but his interest in the village and school remained to the end. The head teacher has lost a real and true friend of twenty years standing and will greatly miss him and the many happy hours spent with him.

A few days later she took time off school in order to find out about arrangements on the day of the funeral, and she also referred to an account she had written of Mr Beaumont's life for the local paper.

By March everything was 'going most satisfactorily'. Many children were showing marked improvements, and quite possibly Miss Owden had something to do with this. Twelve children joined the Brownies 7<sup>th</sup> Reigate and Mrs Coulson commented that she was 'in sympathy with this splendid movement'. The new school year began officially in April and the excellent attendance figures for the previous year were published, the following three pupils gaining a special mention: E. Muggeridge, E. Wright and E. Cheal. Success was always noted and not just the names of the most academic pupils. Whether they were plumbers or bricklayers, gardeners or dressmakers, Mrs Coulson recorded their achievements. This year it was the turn again of Arthur Branch who had now left technical school to become an assistant plumber.

Whilst recognising the importance of the three Rs, the head also valued outings as a means of widening and enriching the children's experience. It was all very well talking about something or reading about it in a book but there was really nothing better than seeing the thing first hand. This seemed to be her philosophy: 'The head teacher has been talking about looms and, as the children had never seen a real one, she's taking them to Miss Collier's (next door) to see her loom.' Twenty-four children were also taken to a full dress rehearsal of the Aldershot Military Tattoo in June, and on another day the 'children memorised a little play called *The Children of the Year* which they acted in the garden'. But the most important outing of the year was the annual seaside trip to Worthing in July:

It was a glorious time. The weather was ideal and the children were on the beach practically the whole day. They very greatly enjoyed bathing and paddling. About twenty-nine parents also came so that two motor coaches were hired. This was the most enjoyable seaside treat the children have ever had. Expenses for the tea were paid for by Mrs Sanders.

The log book, as has been previously mentioned, reveals a caring teacher and when, in October, Johnny (the boy who had previously given her cause for concern) had to go out of school to have his eyes tested it was Mrs Coulson who went with him: 'His people are unable to go with him and on two previous occasions he has lost the chance of examination. He can do no work until he has new glasses.' Her thoughts and actions also spread to others less fortunate than the Buckland children, especially in December: 'Through the kindly interest of Miss Threllfall, a friend of the head teacher, the children are writing letters once a month to some girls in a home in Leeds. These girls have no friends and never receive birthday or Christmas presents. The first letters are being sent today.'

In November it rained heavily. The roof leaked and the classroom was very damp. In December the rain was torrential, the weather stormy and the children had to squelch through flooded fields to get to school. But a miracle occurred. The roof was finally mended.

## 1930

*'When discussing the matter of the smell with the rector he said that the head teacher was not straight and did not speak the truth.'*

If Mrs Coulson were alive today and someone asked her if there was anything she could remember about 1930, she'd probably pause a moment and then say, '1930. Let me think. Now wasn't that the year when Mrs Robert Sanders died? In April, wasn't it?'

'Yes, that's right. You mentioned her quite a lot in the log book. What was so special about her?'

‘I think it was her kindness, the way she always thought of the children, like paying for the tea when there was an outing. And then just a month before she died, when she was desperately ill, she sent three cases of oranges over to the school. That was forty-eight oranges, one for every child and a few left over. In those days an orange was a very special treat. She was a lovely lady.’

‘And is there anything else you remember about that year?’

‘Well, that was a sad time. It’s strange how things come in twos and threes. I think death must have been rather on my mind just then because an old scholar, Willie Widden, who gained a scholarship in 1919, died of appendicitis in the same week as Mrs Sanders. He was only twenty-two. And Doris Matthews, was another. Eight years old and she’d been a pupil at the school. So sad. I remember them all.’

‘But there was something else that year, wasn’t there, Mrs Coulson? Something that really upset you. Can you remember what that was?’

‘Are you referring, by any chance to the matter of the smell, that appalling smell that came from the neighbourhood of the cess pool? In 1930, that’s when it started. Didn’t finish then, though. How could I ever forget that?’

‘I am indeed.’

So what was all that about and why did it take up so much space in the log book?

It was first mentioned in March when Miss Owden reported a bad smell from outside. A few days later Mr Sanders came to see ‘from whence the nuisance emanated’. What he found was that sewage had overflowed from the cottages on the Green into the ditch in the field at the back of the school. So this was reported to the sanitary inspector. Meanwhile Miss Owden and the head both did their own little bit of detective work and investigated the field themselves. They concluded that the smell was ‘very bad indeed’. A promise came from the sanitary inspector that a man would be sent to disinfect the ditch.

At this point it seemed as though the matter might be resolved, though one wonders now quite how a quantity of disinfectant in a ditch would actually get to the source of the problem. Perhaps Mrs Coulson had similar concerns because shortly afterwards she had a very heated conversation with the rector, who was also the chairman of the school managers. Part of the conversation she recorded for posterity:

When discussing the matter of the smell with the rector he said that the head teacher was not straight and did not speak the truth.

The head teacher replied that she was one of the straightest people on earth.

He answered, ‘In your own opinion.’

The head teacher replied, ‘In the opinion of the whole Parish.’ The head teacher saw that she would not be insulted and refused to discuss the matter further.

These were strong words for a log book and not the kind of record one would expect to read, although they certainly add interest now. Not surprisingly the managers objected to Mrs Coulson's 'very frank entries'. Three days later, however, she felt that the matter was not being taken seriously because the chairman, or 'correspondent' as she was now to call him (a role the rector also assumed), had still done nothing to sort out the problem as this entry of 21 March indicates:

This morning the Head Teacher again rang up the sanitary inspector to ascertain if he had been notified by the Correspondent. The reply was again in the negative, so the Head Teacher asked the sanitary inspector if he would visit the school, and inspect the ditch complained of. The Head Teacher thinks that the following should be recorded – when on 16 inst. the Correspondent was reminded that this was a very urgent question relating to the health of the children and the teachers, and that the head teacher had asked him to notify the authorities, he replied that he would not be driven or told what to do by her.

By the end of March, Miss Owden noted that the bad smell was now inside the schoolroom in the dinner hour: 'It comes in, in puffs on the wind.' So another letter was written to the sanitary inspector to that effect, but with the additional comment that 'there have been serious cases of infection among the children and teachers, which may well be connected with this'.

In spite of these letters, however, no real action was taken to eliminate the smell, and in May Mrs Newsom, one of the parents, also complained of 'the offensive smell coming from the ditch'. The county medical officer was informed. But what good did that do? Not a lot, apparently, because in September the smell was even worse and the 'children had to be removed from the building as it became so awful'. Mrs Coulson declared that the school should be closed and, as no one gave her the go ahead, she resolved the matter temporarily by taking everyone off on a nature walk. There were, without doubt, great mutterings. Nevertheless the problem continued, right through to the following January. In October yet another letter, stressing the need for action, was written to the Correspondent: 'Will you please inform the managers that the smell of the sewage from the rear of the school is again very bad this morning. ...This is an urgent matter.'

But the reply was far from satisfactory:

In reference to the smell to which your letter of today's date alludes, the managers have had the opinion of three specific authorities as to the likelihood of this being injurious to the health of the children. These authorities agree that it will not be so and therefore no concern is necessary on this ground. The managers, however, understand that such a smell can be unpleasant. You are therefore instructed to have the necessary windows closed immediately a trace is detected. Its prevalence has proved to be intermittent and consequent on the direction of the wind and it is therefore unlikely that the windows need to be closed for any length of time. Every effort should be made to prevent the attention of the children being drawn to it. The managers will not favour the children being allowed to give too open expression to the prevalence of a smell without this being checked by yourself or your assistant. Such lack of correction was particularly noticeable to me during my visit on 15 September.

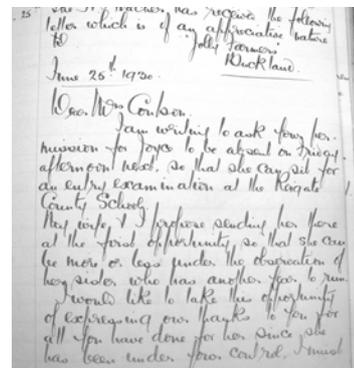
Mrs Coulson must have been seething. So, closing the windows was the answer? Telling the children to ignore a smell, or pretend it wasn't there: how realistic was that? ('Billy, take your hands away from your nose this instant. Mary, there is absolutely no need to pull faces. Charlie, I've told you before, and I'll tell you again, I do *not* want to hear comments like that.')

Of course Mrs Newsom, the parent who had complained of the smell, somehow got to read the letter because the log book states that on 10 November 'Mrs Newsom was so dissatisfied with the reply from the managers' that she decided to write to the authorities in Kingston. For once parent power proved to be fairly effective because the reply came from the Authority that the matter would receive immediate attention. That should have been the end of the story except, of course, it wasn't. In fact, it was never properly dealt with until after Mrs Coulson's retirement.

Was it sheer frustration that her complaints seemed to be ignored which made Mrs Coulson devote so much time to this particular 'nuisance'? Or was it a symptom of other professional difficulties that had now arisen and would come to a crisis the following year? Certainly her relationship with the rector had reached an all time low and not many of the managers appeared to be on her side either, apart from Mr Sanders. In the past, when the school managers held their regular meetings, Mrs Coulson had always attended, but now she was no longer invited but was asked instead to submit a written report. There appeared to be two factions: Mrs Coulson (with her list of complaints), on the one side, and the managers on the other.

Unfortunately this breakdown in communication between the head and the managers rather overshadowed other significant and far pleasanter events in the school year. There was, for example, considerable excitement in February at the arrival of a Horlicks malted milk cabinet which provided hot drinks for the children in the dinner hour. The parents were particularly pleased 'as many of the children live a long way from school and have breakfast early'. Then in March there was a splendid outing to London by Skylark coach. All the famous sights were seen including the window out of which Charles I stepped out onto the scaffold. In April Barbara Potter left for an apprenticeship with a very good dressmaking firm in Reigate. Alfred Weatherly, who had attended the school eighteen years previously, paid Mrs Coulson a visit in September: 'He is a gardener at Hastings in the employment of Mr Downey late of the Yellow House, Buckland.' In the summer Joyce Stammers passed the scholarship to Reigate County School and her mother wrote a very appreciative letter which was carefully copied into the log book:

I would like to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to you for all you have done. ... I must say that the progress Joyce has made is very fine. It is undoubtedly due to the untiring personal attention you give to the children at your school and should stand her in good stead for her future studies.



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There was one other very important occasion that year and it took place on 3 October. It remains for Mrs Coulson to describe it in her own words:

Today the head teacher, Mrs Coulson, has completed twenty years teaching in the school. She came on 3 October, 1910. Her life has been a most happy one and she possesses many valued friends amongst old scholars, parents and residents in the village.

Upon her arrival at school this morning she was greeted with cheers by the children and presented by them with beautiful flowers with which they afterwards decorated the schoolroom.

The head teacher also received very charming letters from the children and congratulations from many parents and Miss Owden. The day will be marked by an extension of time for organised games this afternoon.

## 1931

*'At the same time it should be said that a teacher with exceptional knowledge, eagerness for study and power of presentation would find the syllabus stimulating and suggestive, even if a good deal were left undone at the end of the year. It has been compiled by a resourceful mind.'*

It could be said that Mrs Coulson rather overdid it the previous year with such lengthy entries. Either 1931 was not such an eventful year or she decided to cut down on the writing because, apart from two reports, there is much less detail. Once again there was the smell from the ditch (in January), her eyes playing up (in February), a measles epidemic (in May) and a number of pupils mentioned for their achievements. William Marshall was presented with a silver cup for boxing at the Market Hall in Redhill; Beryl Greenfield, 'after being here for two years for the purpose of obtaining good groundwork', left for the County School in September and Edgar Cheal for the National School in Reigate 'to be with some of his Sunday school friends'; and finally Barbara Potter received a prize of a 'nice dictionary' for an anti-litter essay she had written on 'How can we prevent our beautiful country from being spoilt by litter?'

An HMI visited in June and the report this time made a number of favourable comments, although Mrs Coulson quite possibly bristled at one of the conclusions, 'The syllabus for the older children needs more systematic planning', but at least her intervention some years previously 'to improve accents' appeared to have paid off: 'Throughout the school the children are friendly and responsive and *their speech is good.*'

In November her Scripture syllabus was scrutinised by Canon Maplesden and found to be 'attractive' though far too challenging for the average teacher: 'The syllabus presupposes on the part of the teacher a much wider knowledge of general history than ordinary elementary teachers possess.' On the other hand, the diocesan inspector very much approved of the comprehensive syllabus, and praised it for 'embodying ideas I have advocated from time to time and relating the Bible teaching to History and Life'.

His only concern was that of underachieving boys: 'Special attention might be given to the problem of how best to stimulate them.'

Meanwhile Mrs Coulson was doing her best to stimulate everyone with her history lessons, history being a subject which held a special interest for her. She was giving, she said, 'a brief outline of the causes of the war and the pluck of little Belgium'; though another lesson on 'Poppies and their Uses' might have proved even more fascinating.

But something else was going on that year which almost certainly distracted her from her work. Did she know what was being discussed at a meeting of the school managers on 9 April 1931? Did she know that the question of her dismissal was on the agenda? She did have one supporter, however, in Mr Sanders, but he was not able to attend the meeting. Instead he wrote to the managers to the effect that their complaints were 'unsustainable and indeed frivolous', and he went on to applaud Mrs Coulson's efficiency as a teacher 'both in secular education and in Scripture teaching'. In a reply to a letter from the rector he also wrote: 'To suggest that the school as a church school is worse than useless is an extraordinary statement for you as a rector to make. ... You should bear in mind that the powers of the school managers are of limited character and must not be exceeded.'

It was also established from the diocesan schools association secretary that the head's dismissal could only be upheld on grounds connected with religious instruction and that this might be unwise because she was approaching retirement anyway. The managers' main grounds for complaint seemed to concern not only her teaching of religious instruction but the fact that she left child monitors in charge of classes, delayed in answering letters and sent Miss Owden out on errands.

As yet the managers had insufficient evidence and could not dismiss her. The thorn in their flesh would still be there in 1932.

## 1932

*'When the Correspondent visited the school on February 12 to consult about a piece of ground for a seed bed, he stated during conversation that the head teacher had written him an anonymous letter.'*

The school managers might well have been professionals in their own fields but they were not educational practitioners, and one has the feeling that they thought the teacher's job was to get on and educate the children in spite of everything. So dilapidated ceilings were merely an inconvenience, objectionable smells could be ignored and cold classrooms need not affect either the quality of the teaching or the quality of the learning. But of course these things did matter. All the time Mrs Coulson was worrying about the state of the building or aching with cold, she was not thinking creatively or constructively about her job. To make matters worse, she and the rector were barely able to exchange a civil word, and one feels she was losing heart and was

less enthusiastic about her teaching and the children. In January this was not surprising. By the time she got to school in the morning the stove had still not heated up the classroom and she was perished: 'On Monday the temperature was only 46 and 44 in the two rooms.' By 1 February, unsurprisingly, seventeen children were absent with colds and influenza. The managers' minutes, however, for 13 January record 'Gas stove now installed and working properly', but this was certainly not the head's view. More low temperatures were noted and Mrs Coulson continued to keep a record and to complain: 'On 29 January the head teacher told the caretaker that the fires and heating were not satisfactory and the matter has not improved as the records show. Many children have colds and last week twenty were absent. Moreover the work of the school is very much hindered when the upper classes have to be taken to the infant room for warmth.'

The following week it snowed and even the nurse took a copy of the temperatures. Then by mid-February things were rather better: 'The caretaker is cleaning out the stove in the morning instead of the evening and finds that this is the secret of getting a warm room.' However, when Mr Sanders came to see about the condition of the stove, Mrs Coulson made a tactical error. She declared that there was 'no need for a new stove at this juncture. But next year it could be considered.'

She would rue the day that she had not requested an immediate replacement.

Once more the entries for this year are extremely detailed, though much is concerned with Mrs Coulson's private wars and less with the pupils and the school curriculum. Nevertheless in February the managers were notified that there was room for six boys from Buckland to attend the Woodwork Centre in Dorking from 9.45 – 12.00. This move pleased the head as it was something she had been requesting for several years and she wanted the boys to take full advantage. In March a load of earth arrived for the school garden which the boys spread out and made ready for seed planting. In April she refers again to 'Johnny' who left school 'at the end of last term'. The head teacher and the school nurse did their utmost to procure his admission to the new special school for 'mental defectives' but found that he was above the age laid down by the regulations. 'The head teacher will continue to interest herself in the boy.'

Cyril Dolley gained an entrance to the Naval Training School in Greenwich, and in August Mrs Coulson attended the wedding of Herbert Dean, a former pupil who had gained a free scholarship to Reigate Grammar School, matriculated at the age of sixteen and then gone to work at Barclays Bank in Reigate. 'He has been promoted to a Brighton branch and is getting married before leaving to take up his new work.' There was an enjoyable outing to the Agricultural Show at Guildford in May, and Mr Sanders generously gave 30 shillings to defray the expenses. 'Mr Sanders helps to increase the happiness of the children and teachers by his kindly encouragement and sympathy.' (The word 'sympathy' here is very revealing.) The new soil that had been delivered in March proved to have been very beneficial since there was a bumper harvest of vegetables in September. The 'gardeners' dug up the following: shallots 11lbs, potatoes 1 cwt 94 lbs, beet 18lbs, turnips 44lbs, and onions 13lbs.

That was the good news. Now for the bad news. Miss Owden had been having trouble with a particular pupil who had damaged woodwork to the rear of the school and had therefore been kept in during the dinner hour. He was, however, cleverly avoiding his punishment by going home for lunch and not returning to school until 1.15. 'This boy resents correction. He requires more attention than the whole school. The head teacher is seeing the parent on the matter.' A few days later a meeting with the boy's parents took place, after which Mrs Coulson wrote: 'This boy is not amenable to discipline, and the usual methods of control in the school have been without effect. The parents know the difficult nature of this boy as they tell the head teacher that he is rebellious against home discipline. Mr – is reluctant to remove him from the school and has given his assurance to support the head in maintaining authority over his son. But unless he improves he will have to be removed.' So far so good, except that two days later a very determined and angry mother arrived at the school, which prompted the head to remark: 'During the conversation Mrs – made many untrue statements about the teachers of the school.' She said she would apply for her son to be transferred to another school, which is exactly what happened. Sighs of relief all round.

Then there was Mrs Coulson's continuing feud with the rector which was growing increasingly unpleasant. In March, just before the new soil arrived for the school garden, the head wrote in the log book: 'The correspondent visited the school to consult the head teacher about a piece of ground for a seed bed. He stated during the conversation that she had written him an anonymous letter. He refused to produce the letter when asked to do so.' What all that was to do with is not clear except that two weeks later Mrs Coulson noted the following: 'Last month the correspondent inspected the log book in the dinner hour in the absence of the head teacher and without her knowledge, and he did not record in the log book that he had done this. The head teacher asked for a date and time to be given but he replied that the managers would not consider that necessary.'

Something was going on and it would appear that Mrs Coulson was being scrutinised rather closely. The managers were still looking for evidence of serious misconduct that would provide them with reasonable grounds for her dismissal. On 9 April, Mrs Dumas, one of the school managers, called in at the school at 12.20, which would have been during the lunch hour. The head was not present at the time and Mrs Dumas claimed she had come to see the children having their dinner. This may or may not have been true. But what seems more likely is that she had been asked to make an impromptu inspection since it was reported in the managers' minutes of 17 April that child monitors had been left in charge of classes. Mrs Coulson claimed that this had occurred for no longer than ten minutes. It was nevertheless pointed out to her that this practice must cease unless there were exceptional circumstances. A further unannounced visit by Mrs Dumas on 21 June was enough to make the head even more furious as is evident by her entry in the log book:

Mrs Dumas visited this morning. Without reference to the teachers in charge she went round the classes. The head teacher said later that she was always pleased to see managers in school but that it was usual for managers to refer to the head teacher if they desired to speak to children or see work. Mrs Dumas said that the children did not stand up and say 'Good morning' when she entered. The head

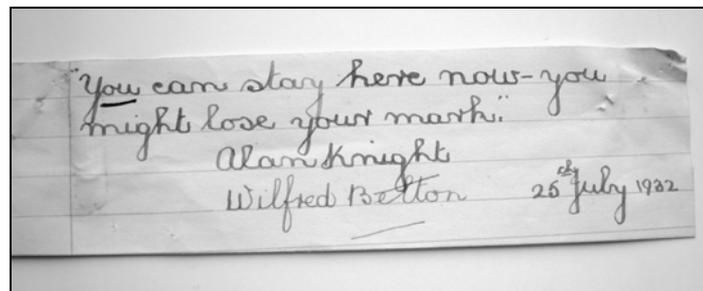
teacher stated that the children always courteously replied when visitors greeted them, but otherwise they went on with their work.

Perhaps the managers realised that they had rather overstepped the mark at this point because, strangely, only three days later there was a temporary ‘truce’ between the rector and the head. It occurred when the school leavers attended a service at Southwark Cathedral in June and were accompanied by the head, Miss Owden and the rector. For a brief moment it seems that an effort was being made to ‘get on’. ‘Prior to the departure of the children he very kindly provided tea for the party before leaving. The expedition to London was arranged by the rector who very kindly paid the expenses of both children and staff. The head teacher very much appreciates the cooperation of the rector. She was much pleased by his interest and kindness.’

She may have been trying to build bridges at this point with the rector, and he with her, or perhaps she had had a warning and felt she must change her tone because all of a sudden phrases such as ‘very kindly’ and the words ‘appreciation’ and ‘cooperation’ are used. But, sadly, this truce only lasted a month and all we have is Mrs Coulson’s version of what ensued:

*25 July*

The head teacher sent a note by a boy to the Correspondent at 2 p.m. today before the registers were closed. As the boy did not return the head teacher sent another boy asking for his immediate return, or his mark would have to be cancelled. The boy reported that the Correspondent said, ‘You can stay here now. You might lose your mark.’ As neither returned the head teacher herself went to the Correspondent’s house to ask for the boys. The Correspondent refused to let them come ‘until it suited him’ and the boys did not return until 2.30.



"You can stay here now - you  
might lose your mark."  
Alan Knight  
Wilfred Bolton 25 July 1932

*26 July*

The head teacher has been advised in writing that children should not be employed in carrying notes or messages during school hours, whether before or after the closing of the registers except in the case of actual urgency.

What exactly was going on here? What were the rector’s reasons for acting as he did and why did Mrs Coulson get rapped on the knuckles? One thing is certain, however – it was a very good thing that it was the end of term.

In 1932, when everyone returned on 29 August, the structure of the school year had changed. Until that time the official school year began in April and ran through until

the following March and there were no half term breaks in the autumn and spring terms. Mrs Coulson noted some of the main details: 'The Committee have decided that from August 1932 the Education Year shall be the period between the first day of the autumn term of one year and the last day of the summer term of the preceding year so that the school year may be the same for elementary as for secondary and other schools. Children may be transferred at the commencement of any term, but if such transfers are made twice a year they will be on the first day of the summer term and on the third Monday of February ... .'

At this point it is also worth noting that the school received rising numbers of pupils between 1929 and 1933. According to the minutes, the numbers on roll increased from 30 in December 1928 to 46 the following June and 53 by October 1932. At their meeting on 17 April 1932, the managers noted that the infants' room was now overcrowded, so much so that some had to be taught in the main room. The problem seemed to relate to the headmistress admitting pupils from Reigate, and the managers resolved that 'under no circumstances' could more children be admitted from outside the parish until the managers considered it justified.

In a very short time, however, they would be fretting about falling rolls.

During the summer break some general maintenance had been carried out on the school building: locks had been mended, desks overhauled, the ceiling repaired as well as a wall in the infants' room. But almost immediately Miss Owden was called away on account of her father being gravely ill. So Florence Reece and Elsie Wright were chosen as monitors 'to help with the little people', and on 5 September a Miss Shrimpton came to take over Miss Owden's class for a week. When she left to return to college she received a glowing report from Mrs Coulson: 'Her work has been most satisfactory. She is a promising teacher and a good disciplinarian, with a kindly disposition, and she was greatly liked by the head teacher and the children.' Praise indeed.

In October the rector's sister, who lived in the school house, also fell ill and again Mrs Coulson appears to have made an effort to be cooperative. 'In consequence of the very grave illness in the school house the head teacher will not follow the timetable this afternoon but has given the children work of a quiet nature so that no disturbing sounds shall reach the invalid. Also for this reason there is no break for play.'

And then on 11 November, it was Armistice Day and Mrs Coulson felt moved to write a particularly long entry. But there is a certain irony here in that the 'Peace' of which she spoke remained as elusive as ever between the two foremost representatives in the village of both school and church.

When the children assembled the National Anthem was sung, followed by the school hymn and prayers for the Country, King and Peace. The whole school then placed the flag, a wreath of laurel and bunches of flowers on the War Memorial where the head teacher reminded the children that PEACE means no quarrelling at home, if we are really sincere in wishing for world peace. She also spoke of friendly thoughts and friendly deeds, of comradeship sincere and true and kindness in all we do so that we may be a happy, friendly family. At 10.40

the school attended the special service held in the church and round the War Memorial afterwards.

The head teacher dislikes publicity given to occasions such as this, but allowed the Scouts and Guides to be photographed at the War Memorial as the photographer had reserved a plate.

Just before the end of term, in December, Mrs Coulson pointed out that the children were set for their written work 'to write a prayer for the unemployed. The prayers constructed were distinctly good and revealed in the case of individuals considerable sense and insight.' But would the rector have approved or was *this* just another example of 'worse than useless' teaching for a church school?

On 21 December the term ended and four children aged fourteen left. 'The head teacher received letters of thanks and appreciation from their parents.'

## 1933

*'The head teacher accepted the Correspondent's offer of oil stoves (2) to supply extra warmth.'*

Well, it does not take much imagination to predict what the main topic would be for the first entries of the new year. A change of subject would be welcome and one would have thought that by now something could have been done about the heating in the school so that Mrs Coulson would be encouraged to sing to another tune. Sing, or cry or grumble, because of course there would always be something wrong, but the saga of the stove seemed to have no ending. Term started and the stove quite clearly had not been lit well enough in advance because it was so cold you could put your hands on it and there was no warm water. Two days later, however, the rooms had warmed up to a magnificent 56 and 60 degrees. But true to form this did not last, and by 23 January the head had once again written to the managers asking if something could be done with regard to the heating. She suggested a gas or electric stove. 'This morning it is very cold and frosty, 46 in the centre room and 38/43 in the other rooms. The children are wearing their coats until the room becomes warmer. ... This afternoon the head teacher and children are perished with cold. No windows can be opened and the ventilation is the reverse of good.'

The following day a Mrs Strover complained to the head that the schoolroom was not sufficiently warm for the children to sit in. She said she would write to the managers. In the meantime the head had accepted the correspondent's offer of two oil stoves to supply some extra warmth. Mr Sanders and his son also visited and suggested that a gas stove could be fixed and attached. Eventually the room warmed up, but at a cost to everyone's health it would seem:

*26 January*

At 3.30 although the room has been warmed by the addition of the oil stove the atmosphere has been very unpleasant, caused by the fumes which affect the head

and throat. Dr Campbell and the nurse visited. He is reporting to the committee at Kingston on the insufficient heating in the school.

*27 January*

The gas has been lit in the main room but turned off at 10 a.m. as the mix of fumes from the oil stove and gas were most unpleasant and Miss Owden complained of feeling unwell. The Nurse visited in the afternoon and remarked that the fumes in the main room were most unhealthy.

Then on 10 February there is a very strange and unexpected entry: 'The correspondent has asked for the log book to be in his possession from Friday afternoon till Monday. No reason assigned.'

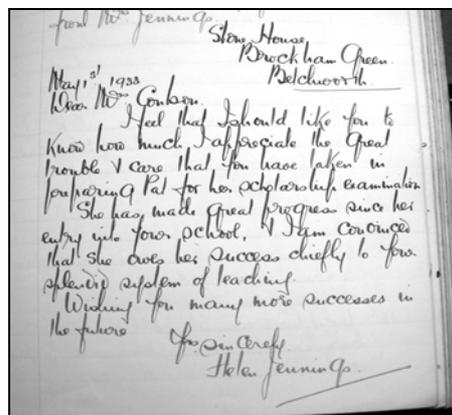
Whatever that implied, and it certainly implied something of considerable significance, it would not stop Mrs Coulson from having the last word:

*15 February*

Mrs Dumas visited and enquired about the heating and was of the opinion that 44 degrees was not too low for children to work in. The head teacher pointed out that anything under 50 degrees was not favourable.

And then, just like all the other years, the weather grew warmer, nothing was done, and the problem appeared to go away until, of course, the next bout of cold weather. Mrs Coulson could once again focus on the much more rewarding and positive aspects of teaching. For example, in March Sir Arthur Glyn visited in order to take two boys to see Westminster Abbey, followed by a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at The Old Vic. 'William Marshall won the Boxing Championship, Reigate Association: 4st 7lb – 5st, under 14, for the whole of Surrey.' Fifteen children that year had made over 400 attendances out of 414 and the number of pupils on the books was 50.

Gladys Woodhams left for domestic service in April, Alan Knights went on to a technical school and Pat Jennings passed the second part of the scholarship. Her mother wrote 'a charming letter of thanks and appreciation', saying: 'I am convinced that she owes her success chiefly to your splendid system of teaching.'



Pat Jennings  
Stone House,  
Rockham Green,  
Belchworth.

May 1<sup>st</sup> 1933  
Miss M. Coulson.

I feel that I should like you to know how much I appreciate the great trouble & care that you have taken in preparing Pat for her scholastic examination. She has made great progress since her entry into your school, & I am convinced that she owes her success chiefly to your splendid system of teaching. Wishing for many more successes in the future.

Yours sincerely  
Pat Jennings.

© Surrey History Service

Charlie Page left for Holmesdale School in Reigate to be with more children of a similar age. 'Although sorry to lose Charlie the head teacher is pleased for the transfer.' A short while later Charlie's mother also wrote a lovely letter to Mrs Coulson thanking her for her 'patience with Charlie through the trying time after his illness, and to say that I really appreciate all that you've done for Charlie'.

But whilst Mrs Coulson was carefully noting down everything good and bad in the log book the managers were also writing up their minutes. Their version of certain events, some of which Mrs Coulson did not record, tell a very different story. On 4 January, they complained that she had failed to send them her report. Then on 2 May they decided to send her a letter reprimanding her for delays in replying to correspondence and also for being absent for three days in February without notifying them. Moreover, they would bring this matter to the attention of Surrey Education Committee. On 5 July, they received various reports from Mrs Coulson, including explanations for staff absences, but decided again to write to her, this time objecting to Miss Owden being sent on two errands to Betchworth School. On 24 October, the minutes report a telephone call from the Divisional Office announcing that she would be absent 'the following afternoon' so as to attend a wedding. The managers were not happy and decided to write, warning her that the application for leave of absence should have been made earlier and that they would treat the present case as one of absence without leave.

The caretaker, Mrs Smith, resigned in October and on the 7 November Mrs Dumas made another of her unofficial visits for the purpose of checking up on Mrs Coulson, or so it would seem: 'Mrs Dumas visited the school in the morning and without reference to the head went round the class and spoke to the children and looked at their work. The head teacher reminded her that it was usual to refer to the teacher in charge and that she must do this.'

Indeed she should.

There was definitely a problem, but it also seems that the managers were acting in a very high-handed manner, and their tactics were guaranteed not to bring about a resolution. By the end of November the weather was once again cold and the classroom was full of fumes from the stove. And, just to add insult to injury, bonfires were being lit in the school house garden, as deliberate harassment perhaps? 'The smoke from them comes into the school and is most unpleasant.'

At last it was the end of term, but this year even the Christmas party on 20 December had its difficult moments:

During the day the head teacher had the unpleasant duty of asking Mrs K not to be present at the party. Mrs K is suffering from TB and the note was written in the interests of the children and all present. The head teacher had been privately informed that the illness is actively infectious and it was because of this knowledge that the head teacher wrote a kindly note.

A lady who was sympathetic but who quite agreed with what the head teacher had considered right to do, sent Mrs K an iced cake, but it was not received in the spirit which prompted the gift. Mrs K returned the cake this morning and she has kept her child from school.

## 1934

*'The Chairman finally agreed that the stove was worn out but said that if a new one were put in the head teacher would continue to complain.'*

The chairman was right, of course. Mrs Coulson was an expert at finding faults. But for much of the time she seems to have been entirely justified. Her working conditions were extremely unsatisfactory and no one was willing to take responsibility for improving them. The trouble was that the school building required considerable maintenance and there was insufficient money to make the necessary repairs. In addition to this, when work was done it was poorly carried out.

There were caretaking problems too, as well as a dodgy roof and the stove which, true to form, would not give out sufficient heat. On 15 January plaster fell from the ceiling. A Mr Cummins came to see it and said that the broken plaster left up was dangerous. A few days later Mrs Coulson wrote: 'At 10 a.m. a tearing noise was heard in the ceiling of the main room at the east end. The plaster under the ridge tiles is damp and appears likely to give way.' The children were moved to the west end of the room but when the correspondent came to inspect he suggested that the noise was that of a falling tile. 'It definitely was not so,' said Mrs Coulson. Another letter was written to the chairman asking for Mr Cummins to come and test the plaster at the west end. He did, and a large piece fell during the process so this was repaired.

On 24 January the temperature in the big room was 44 degrees, it felt very cold and there was 16 degrees of frost. Mrs Coulson spent most of the morning trying to get the fire to burn. On 2 February nasty fumes from the gas radiator caused headaches and husky throats, and the head declared that the big room was so cold 'it is not fit for anyone to sit in. The chairman does not seem to want to take responsibility for the heating.' Two weeks later the caretaker did not light the stove because she said she had run out of wood. Mrs Coulson seemed to be near the end of her tether: 'If children are not warm and comfortable they cannot properly receive instruction.'

If no one agreed with her in 1934, they would surely agree with her today, and Health and Safety would be up in arms about the danger of the fumes from the heaters. She might have been a thorn in the side of the school managers but she was certainly not a stupid woman.

Unfortunately the caretaker continued to be uncooperative. 'The caretaker states that she will not do any work connected with the school that is outside the building and this would include washing down the latrines.' She left soon after making this statement and a temporary caretaker was employed in September. Some improvements, however, were made in the summer holidays. According to the parish magazine, an 'up-to-date sanitary system' was installed to replace the old earth system, thanks to Mr Sanders who had borne the cost of the work. From their own funds, the managers had spent £25 on re-conditioning the playground, improving the heating and redecorating the main classroom. At the same time, the managers were having to face the fact that, before

long, the roof would need to be renewed, for which a voluntary rate of 1d had been levied. This work was eventually completed in 1937.

Other more uplifting events in the school calendar were as follows: a trip to *Iolanthe* at Dorking Halls; Elsie Wright commenced work at Ethel Matthews as an apprentice; Arthur Branch, a former scholar, 'kindly gave eight nice books to the school library'. On the 26 September the upper classes went with Miss Collier to her house 'to listen to the launching of the 534' (the Queen Mary), and the vegetable garden flourished: 'From 56 sets, 2cwts 2lbs of potatoes were dug up.' Lastly, on 30 November, the school was closed for the royal wedding.



**Empire Day, 1934**

**Mrs Coulson circled, with Brenda Attwalters (now Mrs Mitchell) to her left and Gordon Street above her; Miss Owden is opposite Mrs Coulson on left; Vi Cook (now Mrs Welfare) is on the row below. (Vi Welfare collection)**

## 1935

*'Mrs Ede is getting the school clean by degrees. She is interested and has assured the head teacher that it will be a pleasure to keep the school as it should be kept.'*

It was the 7 January and already there was a problem with one small boy. Apparently he objected to wearing his coat in the playground and was therefore brought before the headmistress, at which point he proceeded to kick, scratch and bite. In an attempt to deal with him he was placed on the floor 'where he threw himself against the desks and was quite unable to control himself'. His mother was sent for and on arrival reported that her son was under the doctor and suffering from a condition called acidosis 'He often has fits of this kind and he scratches and bites his brothers and sisters.' So Mrs Coulson decided to exclude the child 'until she knows more of the case'.

Following this there were numerous entries that year concerning the filthy state of the classrooms owing to the unsatisfactory work of the replacement caretaker. This situation began in January and continued until June when Mrs Ede took on the job. It would appear from a letter from the managers that it was extremely difficult to find any caretaker who would do the work:

*23 January*

The managers have very carefully considered your complaints in connection with caretaking and cleaning of the school. They fully recognise there is cause for dissatisfaction, but they hope that in view of the difficulty in obtaining a substitute you will try to make the best of matters for the present and assist the caretaker with your advice.

But the situation did not improve and Mrs Coulson made endless negative reports:

*18 March*

The ledges are covered with dust and black cobwebs hang from the windows. The stove has not been cleaned during the weekend. The caretaker is incapable of keeping the school clean in addition to being careless and indifferent.

*21/22 March*

The wastepaper baskets are still with yesterday's waste in them and cigarette ash is left all over the place. The wastepaper basket outside the front door has not been emptied all week.

*2 April*

The schoolrooms have not been swept. So much has already been written about the continued unsatisfactory way in which the caretaker does her work, the head teacher is tired of making observations.

*17 April*

The caretaker should be at the school when it closes at 3.30 or 4.00. The head teacher has told the caretaker of this rule repeatedly but she ignores it. On the last occasion she remarked 'It is a lie', and this in the presence of Miss Owden. The head teacher thinks the managers should know this.

*29 April*

According to the caretaker the reason she does not come to the school in time to see the head teacher before closure is because the Chairman has told her she need not do so, but that she may come when she likes.

Well, well, well. Who is telling the truth here and just what is going on? From the entries in the log book what happened next is not entirely clear but it seems that Mrs Coulson found a substitute caretaker herself, a lady she approved of because, following the appointment of Mrs Ede on 26 June, there were no more complaints. (And Mrs Ede would go on looking after the school for twenty years until 1955, when she retired.)

The problem during these last few years of Mrs Coulson's teaching career is that she became obsessed, rightly or wrongly, with matters that were not directly to do with class teaching, although they did, of course, have a way of affecting the quality of teaching that went on in the school. Consequently, during these years there is very little

in the log that gives us further insight into the content of the lessons and the activities of the pupils. But she did mention that on 29 March there had been 100 per cent attendance all week which was for the first time in two years. In June the children took part in a fancy dress parade at the fete in aid of Waifs and Strays at Hartsfield House in Betchworth. (The Waifs and Strays Society, since re-named the Children's Society, was founded in 1881 to set up Church of England homes for abandoned children. It seems that Hartsfield was one such home.) Prizes went to Freda Ledger as a Belisha Beacon, Jean Brown as an English Lady, Lesley Palmer as An Ancient Briton and Harry Grantham as a Bandmaster. A model of HMS Repulse passed through the village on 9 July, and because of an outbreak of scarlet fever in October the children were advised not to attend guides, brownies, choir or Sunday school. The president of the WI also wrote to the head asking her to tell the children not to go to the sale of gifts in the Reading Room because of the epidemic, whereas the rector objected to them missing choir and Sunday school.

The one event that Mrs Coulson always recorded was the anniversary of her arrival at the school. On October 3, 1935 she had been at Buckland for twenty-five years and, in spite of everything, she declared that it had been 'a labour of love'. She gave a tea party to commemorate the occasion:

Many parents and friends came in to tea, and a very happy gathering it was. Mrs Dean, a parent of children who were in the school many years ago, recalled many interesting happenings in the days when the head teacher first came to the school.

## 1936

*'Three times this week the Butcher's boy, Herbert Woodhams has stood outside the school window and has whistled very loudly for quite a long time.'*

The log book must have been in Mrs Coulson's possession for most of the time during 1936, even at the weekends maybe, because the entries for that year were particularly lengthy. She complained rather less, although her dispute with the managers over the condition and safety of the roof continued, and she was still being harassed by the rector's sister who persisted in lighting bonfires even though she had been asked not to. But other events in the school year also preoccupied her which made for a broader picture of school life.

When the school opened in January the roof leaked, and there was water all over the floor, mopped up obligingly by Mrs Ede. The king died on the 20 January; Mr Sanders addressed the school, and all the children stood in silence with bowed heads. Then, two days later, seventeen children of the upper school were taken by the head to listen to the proclamation of King Edward on the wireless in Miss Collier's drawing room. The 28 January was a national day of mourning.

In March, J. Crouch left for the National School, there was one case of diphtheria and the nurse visited to examine the children's throats. At the beginning of April the head noted that 'the children are having one third of a pint of milk each morning supplied under the direction of the Milk Board'. Although not absent that often through ill health, Mrs Coulson was unwell during the Easter Holidays with something 'resembling influenza which affected the throat and voice', and she missed the first week of term. 'Miss Owden was in charge of the school (at her wish) and managed excellently.' Empire Day was celebrated on 22 May, and this time Mrs Coulson chose to mention the names of a number of those who were present apart from the children. It was almost as if she were recognising the log book for what it would become in later years: a chronicle of some of the aspects of Buckland village life, as seen through the eyes of the head teacher:

At the invitation of the head teacher many parents and residents of the village attended, amongst them being: Mr Robert Sanders, Miss Smith, Mrs Jeffreys, Miss Mary Collier, Mrs Baker, The Misses Clark, Mr Coulson, Mr Eyre Malcham, Monsieur Desbaillets (a friend of Mrs Coulson) and Mrs Cowper. Mr Sanders was the only manager present. Mr Trillon, Mr Clifton, Mrs Dumas wrote to say that they were unable to be present and expressing regret. After the head teacher addressed the children Mr Robert Sanders congratulated the head and Miss Owden and the children on the delightful display and spoke of the importance of the day and of the British Empire. He also presented each child with an iced bun upon which was written 'Empire Day'. These buns were kindly given by Mr Charles Sanders. The photos of the children were taken by Monsieur Desbaillets.

At the end of May there were many more bonfires, much to the irritation of Mrs Coulson, and it is difficult not to conclude that they were lit with the intention of causing annoyance since they could easily have been lit later in the afternoon. 'Although she has been informed by the managers that bonfires are not to be lighted in the school house garden she continues to ignore these instructions. A bonfire is burning there this morning and is evil smelling.' (The word 'evil' is particularly emotive.)

In the circumstances the head must have been glad to have a reason for not being on the school premises and was not in a hurry to return: 'The head teacher has taken eighteen children to the exhibition of drawings by children of all countries at the Windmill Gallery, Reigate. As there was time to spare before returning to school she took the children to the caves, so that they might see where the Barons drew up the Magna Carta.'

June and July were busy months. Dorothy Luff' injured her finger rather badly when a door banged and she was sent home 'as the child was ill through shock'. There were two visits from former pupils: Barbara Potter came one afternoon, and on another occasion Albert Parrott: 'At the age of fifteen he joined up and went to war. He gave his age as eighteen to the authorities. He was wounded in the chest but is in good health and lives an outdoor life in Northamptonshire. The head teacher found it very delightful to talk over old times and old friends.'

It was His Majesty's birthday on 23 June. There were cheers for the king 'and each child was allowed to wear a rose to mark the occasion'. The next day the girls went to a country dance party at Ewell on the invitation of Sir Arthur Glynn, and on 25 July Jean Brown won a prize for a poster she had drawn for the Anti-Litter League. Mrs Douglas and Miss Evans came to present her with a 'beautiful book', *Famous Stories of Five Centuries*.

Mrs Coulson was pleased with the behaviour of the pupils generally: 'The nice spirit and discipline of the children was shown this morning when the head teacher and Miss Owden were delayed by a storm. The children came into their classes and were standing quietly to receive the head when she arrived at 9.06am. Two older girls brought in the little people.'

On 15 July Mr T.H.O. Phillips, the assistant county inspector, visited in the afternoon and gave a talk on flints which had been found in Buckland sandpits. 'The children were very interested. He left some good specimens of flints for the school.' The day before term ended the schoolroom was made ready for repairs which were to be made to the roof during the holidays. Two pupils would be leaving: Violet Cook for St Matthews, Redhill, and John Mitchell for the National School, Reigate.

When the term ended on 29 July, Mrs Coulson was well satisfied. 'The girls will not attend the Cookery classes until further notice from the County Council. Three boys will attend the Woodwork classes. Miss Dee, in writing about the Cookery class said, "I do love having your girls – I always say they are among the nicest I have ever had – such a pleasure to teach".'

During the summer holidays the school roof was entirely retiled – but was Mrs Coulson satisfied, was she delighted that at last repairs had been made and that this winter everyone would be dry, though not necessarily warm? Of course she wasn't! Maybe she had popped in during August to check on the work being done, maybe her 'experienced' and critical eye was quick to spot faults because in the log book she wrote: 'The contractor agrees with the head teacher [not 'The head teacher agrees with the contractor'] in his opinion that the plaster inside the schoolroom is unsafe. The head teacher has notified the managers through the chairman. The children are in the garden this afternoon.'

A very sharp response came by letter from the rector: 'If the managers had considered that the ceiling was in an unsafe condition they would not have allowed the children to reassemble. They will hope that no such suggestion will be imparted to the children. I understand from the contractor whom I have just seen that he had no reason or intention of having you understand that it was unsafe.'

But she was not going to accept this as a satisfactory answer. She wrote again to inform the managers that the children would be taught in the playground until they decided what should be done in the matter. Her strategy appeared to work because on September 1<sup>st</sup> she wrote: 'On arrival at school this morning the head teacher finds that the parts of the ceiling *considered unsafe by the contractor* have been repaired.'

So all was well ... so long as the weather stayed dry. In November, however, there was torrential rain which came through the roof making a pool of water on the floor. She immediately wrote to the chairman asking for someone to come and see it. He replied, 'There is no answer.' She again requested that he should come and again his response was, 'No answer.' However, Mr Stephen Clifton, another manager, came in his place. Nothing happened immediately except that there were torrential storms of wind and rain during the night of 13 December. Parts of the school room floor were covered in water and Mrs Coulson declared: 'The room is not really fit for the children or teachers to work in. She has notified Mr Clifton as the chairman on the last occasion declined to give an answer when asked to do so.' The following day the manager and the foreman of the tile company visited to see the condition of the roof. 'The headmistress was present and a report was made.'

It seems that the matter was finally put right in February 1937 following another visit by the tiler. More plaster had fallen from the roof which Mrs Coulson considered a timely warning 'as there is a definite crack', and it was decided that the whole structure would be tested by a builder when the school was redecorated at Easter.

It wasn't just the roof that annoyed Mrs Coulson in September. A certain impudent boy by the name of Herbert Woodhams also got her back up. This is the entry in full for 17 September:

Three times this week the Butcher's boy, Herbert Woodhams, has stood outside the school window and has whistled very loudly for quite a long time. The head teacher asked him not to do so. He was very impudent and said he should do as he liked. The head teacher has seen his employer and the boy has been reproved. He quite understands that the police will be notified if he persists in annoying.

Just imagine the situation a few days later: 'Policeman, arrest that boy ... for whistling!'

On the positive side the gardeners had another successful harvest and gathered in 24lbs of shallots, 30lbs of onions and 1cwt 40lbs of potatoes. In October Miss Sylvia Clark gave twelve dolls for the children to dress in the handwork class and promised to see the work when it was finished. In fact on 11 December, a day when special lessons were given on account of the abdication of King Edward, 'the Misses Clark visited and gave two books to the girls who had dressed their dolls the best'. There was another out-of-school trip towards the end of the month when twenty children were taken to the sandpit 'where Mr Phillips gave a lesson on the Stone Age'.

In the last week of September the children were asked to work especially quietly on account of illness in the school house, and on 13 October Mrs Coulson wrote that 'the invalid (the rector's mother) passed away on Friday evening'. She also added the following: 'During the last part of this illness the children kept quiet in order not to disturb, and their endeavours are much appreciated by the family. The head teacher was out of school for one hour to attend the funeral.' In addition to this Pamela Tudgay was diagnosed as having scarlet fever and as a result of this her sister was excluded from

the school on the advice of the doctor. Two weeks later Peter Mitchell also had the illness.

The year ended with the traditional Christmas party and again Mrs Coulson made a very full report:

Those present were Mrs Clay, Miss Collier, the Misses Clark, Miss Gilman; Mrs Baker and Miss Smith expressed regret at not coming owing to the nearness of Christmas. The kind friends in the village who made it possible for the children to have a party were: Mrs Tritton, Mrs Clay, Mrs Temperley, Mrs Crow, Mrs Charles Sanders, Miss Smith, Mrs Clifton, Mrs Stockton. Mrs Tudgay and Mrs Hammond sent cakes. The head teacher invited all the little people of the village not of school age but who will come to Buckland School in due course.

An invitation was sent to the Managers but the head teacher received no replies. Mrs Tritton and Mr Clifton kindly sent contributions to help with expenses.

So, the managers did not attend ... but the show was still running, thanks to the generosity of the parents and friends of the village school.

## 1937

*'During these happy years 427 children have been taught personally by the head teacher and she is still in touch with a great number of them.'*

This was to be Mrs Coulson's next to last year at the school and, perhaps, because she knew she was near retirement, the entries are again very detailed. January began with thirteen children going to the Dorking Operatic Society production of *Tom Jones*. Then at the end of the month she had a confrontation with a boy pupil which had further repercussions: 'J.S. continues to be very insubordinate and refuses to answer when spoken to. He is therefore sent out of the class until he apologises and becomes more amenable to discipline.'

On 27 January she wrote to his parents recommending that he transferred to another school since they had objected to corporal punishment being used as a means of correction. However, it would seem that the managers were not happy and had begun to question the number of older boys who had recently transferred to other schools. (The number of pupils on roll had dropped.) She must have had a letter from them because on 5 February she sent the following report to the managers:

In reply to the request for a list of recent transfers of children to other schools, I herewith send a list from the summer holidays. 1936: V. Cook, J. Mitchell, G. Street, J.S.

I have never discouraged parents from sending their children over ten to a school where the classes are larger than here, because in my opinion the request for a transfer is a sensible one.

Senior children profit by the opportunity of emulation, team work and sports so very necessary to the life of young people and this the parents recognise. Also as laid down in the Managers' Handbook I have no power to refuse the first application for a transfer. I should like to point out that the only case in the enclosed list presenting any exceptional feature is that of J.S. Insubordination and lack of support from the parents, who refused to allow corporal punishment after all other means had been tried, made it impossible to teach this boy who finally for four days refused to speak. Had he not applied for a transfer it might have been necessary to ask the managers to secure his removal to another school. The application from the parents, I am glad to say, rendered this unnecessary.

During the next two years re-organization will take place. In the meantime many parents wish to give their children the opportunity of attending a larger school in which they would receive the advantages that a Central School would provide, pending the establishment of a Central School in the District.

Bearing in mind that numbers had already fallen, the managers were almost certainly concerned about the impact that local authority reorganisation of education in village schools would have on Buckland since it would deprive the school of children above 11 years. But Mrs Coulson's reply was very reasonable and there is no doubt that although the school had a lot to offer, and may well have suited certain children, for the vast majority it was better for them to transfer to a larger school after the age of eleven. Classes for woodwork and cookery would be on site and there would be proper facilities for PE and gymnastics, as well as the opportunity of mixing with many more children of their own age.

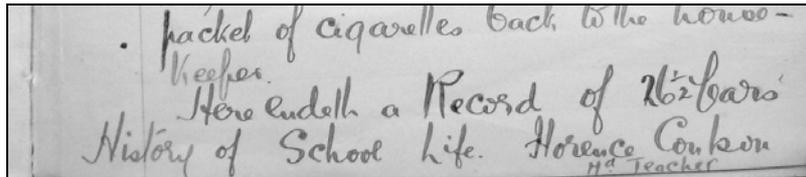
March turned out to be a good month for attendance. On 19 March the whole school made perfect attendance all week, which the head considered 'a great achievement'. About this time preparations were beginning to be made for the King's Coronation. 'A beautiful Union Jack was received this week from the committee for the Coronation', and on 9 April a new flag staff was erected. Nine essays on 'Why I should like to see the Coronation Procession' were also entered for a competition arranged by the *Daily Sketch*. On 11 May the school closed for the Coronation festivities, and during the holidays the head took a number of children to see the illuminations. 'The Managers presented the children in the village with a Bible and Prayer Book as a souvenir of the Coronation instead of a mug.'

A number of pupils were referred to throughout the year: 'The head teacher has obtained a very nice situation for Gladys Wright. She is being trained for a children's nurse; Jean Brown has left school as she is fourteen; Joy Tudgay has been granted a transfer and has gone to St Matthews School; Violet Cook (who still lives in the village and, as Mrs Welfare, was among the interviewees for this book) and Muriel Mills have obtained posts in the Book Keeping department of Adams Stores, Reigate; Freda Page has gone to Marjory's, a first class dress shop in Reigate.'

In June she was very concerned about the welfare of one of her pupils: 'The head teacher has reported to Mr P that his boy Frank is overworked and that six miles per day, two of which have been walked in the hottest part of the day, are too many especially when sufficient time is not allowed. The parent promises that the boy should

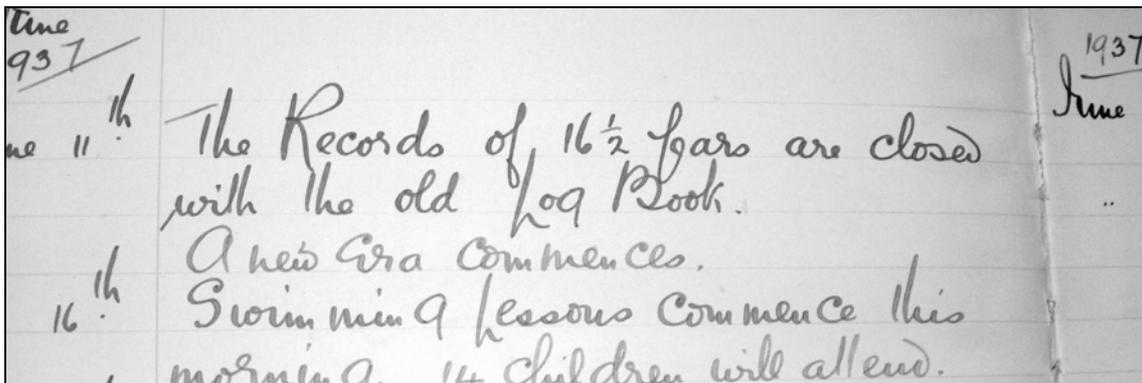
bring his dinner to school with his brothers. The head teacher finds that today the boy had to travel two miles in the heat to take a packet of cigarettes back to the housekeeper.'

It is exactly at this point that the log book ends. Mrs Coulson had filled up all 503 pages. She might have had it taken away from her at one point, but it will remain for ever 'her book':



*'Here endeth a Record of 26½ years History of School life.  
Florence Coulson Hd. Teacher.'*

The brand new log book was begun on 11 June, but she knew that she would scarcely create a single ripple in this one: 'The records of 16½ years are closed with the old log book. A new era commences.'



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Ernest Powell this time was the first pupil to be mentioned. He had been stung by a wasp on the thumb and was taken to Surrey Hospital: 'The boy appears quite ill in consequence.'

The school closed for the summer holidays, and when it reopened on 30 August it had been redecorated, painted on the outside, colour washed inside and the ceiling reboarded in places where necessary. But Mrs Coulson, true to form, could not simply sit back for a moment and be pleased about what was done. No, she had to find a fault somewhere and she did: 'The floor boards are weak in places. The head teacher is calling the attention of the managers to this.' One can imagine the managers screaming furiously, 'Give us a break!'

Things were happening in the school house too. Repairs were being made and there was endless loud banging making it impossible to teach or concentrate. Mrs Coulson

complained, of course, especially when the bonfire was lit, but no one took any notice. The workmen could not stop and she would have to put up with it. Then there was the anniversary on 4 October of her arrival at the school, a date she never forgot, but this time tinged with a mixture of nostalgia and what some might consider ‘vanity’:

During these happy years 427 children have been taught personally by the head teacher and she is still in touch with a great number of them. She is very proud of the successful achievements of some of the scholars, many of whom by their own efforts have attained good positions, and this made possible by the education and character training they received in school.

Well, the managers were not going to say it, so she might as well.

Then, in October, there was some very good news as far as Mrs Coulson was concerned: ‘The new rector, the Reverend A. H. Sanders, will be instituted by the Bishop of Southwark and inducted by Canon Godwin.’

Now he had either been well primed and was determined to start on a good footing with this difficult lady, or she had decided to be more amenable, or they simply just got on, because the comments made by the head are now very different in tone and are extremely positive. For a start, the rector was visiting the school:

*12 November*

The rector came to make the acquaintance of the Doctor and the Nurse.

*26 November*

The rector came on Wednesday morning and gave a Scripture lesson to the upper school.

[Later entry.] The rector, who has taught every week in the school, came to wish the children and teachers a happy holiday.

The term ended on 22 December, which was a rather special day for Mrs Coulson: ‘The children presented the head teacher with a bouquet of flowers and congratulations on her Silver Wedding Anniversary.’

## 1938

*‘The headmistress is shortly retiring after twenty-eight years service as head of this school. The children owe much to her personal influence.’*

For the first time for many years there were no complaints during January and February either about the roof or about the heating of the schoolroom. Instead she referred to the Prize Distribution Day which was on 28 January. Prizes were presented by the rector who was accompanied by Mrs Sanders:

The Managers very kindly gave six prizes. (They were unable to be present but they sent letters of apology.) The rector congratulated the children and teachers

upon the successful work done in the school and upon the happy conditions and atmosphere of the school generally.

Things were changing and people were on the move. In February it was recommended that Bob Palmer transfer to the National School in Reigate 'to be under a master', and the two Packham boys transferred some months later. On 28 June the school house was vacated and on 5 July Mrs Coulson received a full report from the HMI, Mr R. Heath, who had inspected the school in June:

The headmistress is shortly retiring after twenty-eight years service as head of this school. The children owe much to her personal influence. The school is very small, with only 32 children on the books, and it cannot offer as much mental stimulus and breadth of activity to the older children as a larger school would. But there is a very pleasant tone and the children make reasonable progress and are responsive and friendly. The Support Teacher in charge of Infants does sound work and prepares the children well for the headmistress's class.

#### Premises

1. These are sound structurally but the larger room is badly lit and the smaller room used by the Infants very small though large enough for present numbers.
2. The boys' urinal has no roof over it. The other offices are satisfactory.
3. The boys have to hang their coats in an open lobby into which rain drives in bad weather. The second of these defects could be remedied but it does not appear that money would be usefully spent on the first.

A new head teacher was appointed by the managers on 13 July: 'She is Miss Euston and comes from the Central School, Carshalton.' A week later the new head made a visit to the school and Mrs Coulson busied herself clearing out all the old books from cupboards in preparation for her successor. Various people called on 29 July to say goodbye: Mr Gunton, the county inspector, Mr Phillips and Miss Le Couleur.

Mrs Coulson's very last day at Buckland School was on the 5 September, and her final entry in the log book, written perhaps that evening when she was no longer the head teacher, was rather less detailed than usual and slightly subdued in tone.

This has been Mrs Coulson's last day at school. She has been head teacher for twenty-eight years. The Prize Distribution was held in the afternoon.

Mr Hay Brown, Director of Education, presented the prizes and in a speech referred to the work and the devotion of Mrs Coulson to the school.

Later Mr Clifton, on behalf of the managers, presented Mrs Coulson with a silver hot water jug (suitably inscribed) and a cheque. About sixty friendly parents were present to wish Mrs Coulson all the best of health and happiness in her retirement.

The rector also was most kind in the congratulatory speech which he made.

How interesting that she should make that final statement and use the word 'kind' when referring to the rector. Maybe she felt that in times past she had not always been treated with kindness by those in authority over her.

They, perhaps, would tell a different story.

## Afterword

There are those who, to this day, may still remember Mrs Coulson and say kind words about her. Others, unfortunately, may not.

Peter Mitchell, a pupil from 1935 to 1942, remembers her as ‘forbidding’ and ‘a bit of a battleaxe’ who frequently used the cane: ‘You had to mind your ps and qs.’ In contrast, he found Miss Owden ‘very nice’. Mrs Vi Welfare, a pupil from 1928 to 1936, remembers her as a very strict and demanding person – ‘a tartar’. She used to wear a wig and never took her hat off in the classroom – until, that is, the day it got caught on a protuberance, revealing a bald head to the astonished class! The boys tittered, and were caned for their ‘disrespectful’ behaviour. During needlework lessons, the girls were made to do all Mrs Coulson’s sewing and darning, and she also took produce that the children had grown in the school garden. Mrs Welfare also remembers how her brother got all his sums right one day, and quite genuinely so, but Mrs Coulson could not believe it and caned him for ‘lying’. When George V died, she made the girls wear black ribbons in their hair and the boys black armbands.

Mrs Brenda Mitchell, a pupil from 1928 to 1937, says that Mrs Coulson would ‘never help you’, in contrast to her successor, Miss Euston, who was ‘helpful, lovely – she explained things’. She also recalls how her sister was made to clean Mrs Coulson’s house in Old Road every day, thus missing long periods of lesson time. She also remembers her penchant for whisky, which she used to share with visitors, and the piles of whisky bottles in the kitchen.

These are just a few memories, but enough to give a further glimpse into the character of Mrs Coulson, and one wonders where the truth lies. Was she the teacher she thought she was, or was she indeed a battleaxe and tartar?

Perhaps she was a bit of everything.

## CHAPTER 4

### Miss Rhoda Alice Euston, 1938-64



When Miss Rhoda Euston succeeded as headmistress of Buckland School on 6 September 1938, things were about to change. Some of these changes happened simply because there was a new and much younger teacher in charge whilst other changes were the consequence of events completely outside her control, events that would affect the lives of everyone.

## LOG BOOK 2

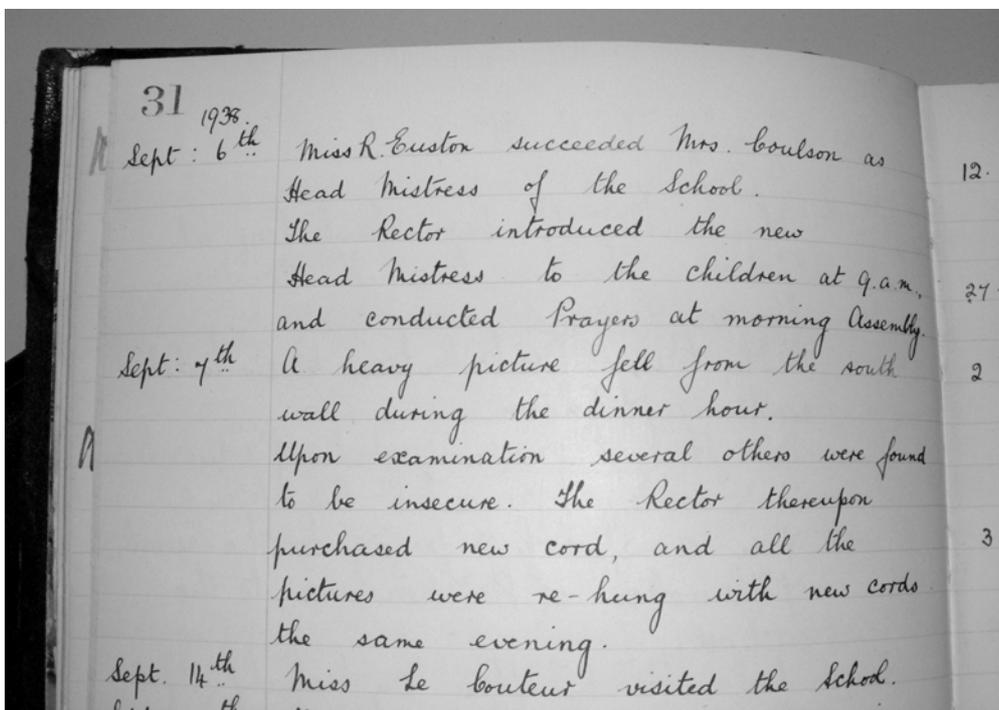
### September 1938 – April 1964

The log book continues to be a record of matters relating to the school and its management, but Miss Euston kept closely to the regulations regarding entries and, unlike Mrs Coulson, did not express opinions or ‘use’ it as an opportunity to give her version of events. From the very beginning she appears to have had an excellent rapport with the rector as well as with the managers, and almost as soon as she joined the school some repairs were made to the building and a new stove (tortoise) was installed, which made her life easier and more comfortable. On the other hand, in no time at all, she found herself trying to teach and run a school when war had broken out and

everyone's life was disrupted one way and another. But she seems to have coped magnificently and taken it in her stride.

Miss Euston was very different from Mrs Coulson. She obviously enjoyed her job and the position she held in the village, but she was also a 'committee person'. She liked to be involved in all kinds of educational groups and meetings that took her outside the school and beyond the village. Name the committee and it seems as though Miss Euston had something to do with it. Inevitably, this took her out of school on many a morning or afternoon and it was then left to the second mistress, for many years Miss Owden, to take over or to dismiss the pupils at the end of the day. Nowhere is it stated how Miss Owden felt about this, but suffice it to say that, after a while, having scarcely ever been away, she began to be absent for considerable periods. Maybe her health was deteriorating, or maybe she was feeling stressed and was not entirely happy at being left so often in charge. Whatever the case, she removed herself to another school in 1950, and no special mention was made in the log book of her departure, which is regrettable after she had given so many years of loyal service.

The war years are well documented and illustrate to readers today just to how great an extent the day-to-day life of the school was affected, whether through the sudden influx of many new pupils or the total disruption of the curriculum because of air raids or 'drill'. But what is missing from Miss Euston's records are the delightful details about pupils that Mrs Coulson was so good at including, as well as her memorable little narratives about the school day, disgruntled cleaners, and of course her struggles with the stove. This second log book is more 'correct', but it makes for less controversial reading.



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## September 1938

*'It was pleasing to find how well the school is settling down under its new headmistress who has already won the cooperation of the children.'*

At 9 a.m. on 6 September 1938 the rector, Mr A. H. Sanders, introduced Miss Euston to the children at the morning assembly. The following day a heavy picture fell from the south wall during the dinner hour, though fortunately no one was hurt. By the end of the day the rector had purchased new cord, replaced what was broken and, what is more, re-hung all the other pictures with new cord. It was a promising start! Either Miss Euston had read the earlier log book and was therefore 'aware' of Mrs Coulson's previous difficulties, or the managers, and more especially the rector, were determined to make sure that both 'school' and 'church' would work well together. Indeed, by October a brand new stove had been installed in the head teacher's classroom, glass in the large windows had been repaired and new cords attached. Nevertheless Miss Euston pointed out that the blackboards, with their sharp corners (such as the one that had fallen on Mrs Coulson a long time ago) 'are in such a worn condition that the metal frames project at the corners in a manner which may prove dangerous. The children have been warned of this and asked to be especially careful when passing near the boards.' Interestingly, too, a Mr Dennis, medical officer for the county, 'examined the drainage at the school and reported a smell emanating from the vicinity of the school garden'.

Well at least this vindicated Mrs Coulson and proved she was not making up stories but had indeed been 'speaking the truth'.

When the diocesan inspector made his annual report he found everything very satisfactory: 'It was pleasing to find how well the school is settling down under its new headmistress, who understands the problems and needs of its type, and who has already won the cooperation of the children.'

On 21 December it was the end of term Christmas party; Mrs Coulson kindly provided a Christmas tree and, 'after a happy party school broke up for the holidays'.

## 1939

*'The school was unable to open because of the declaration of war.  
The premises were kept open for the reception of evacuees.'*

One of the earliest entries for this year was on 8 February and yet again concerned the ditch and the smell: 'Mr Ingham came to see the garden and gave advice in connection with its replanting. He recommended that the ditch on the north side be filled in if it served no specific purpose, or if it did he suggested that pipes should be placed to take away water. The smell which was then rising from the ditch would be *detrimental* to children working in or sitting for lessons in the garden.'

‘Detrimental’? Wasn’t this rather strong language, bearing in mind that Mrs Coulson had been told that three authorities had declared it not injurious to the health of the children? Suddenly there seems to be a dramatic shift of opinion.

But something else was happening that was much more serious than a bad smell. From now on the life of the school would be different, and the curriculum and day-to-day organisation would take second place to the necessary preparations that had to be made for an imminent war. A great deal of time would now be taken up with fire drills and practice with gas masks which were not always the right size for each child and required considerable adjustment. A Mr Watkins, ARP warden, visited the school for this purpose. On 20 July, ‘the children practised fire and gas mask drill. Each of these was rehearsed twice during the day. Fire drill can be accomplished and the children assembled on the Green, the roll having been called, in 3 minutes. Gas masks can be put on and children back in their places in 2 minutes.’

The following day a letter was circulated to parents and children describing ‘the steps to be taken by parents and teachers for promoting the safety of the children should war break out’.

At the end of that month three children were absent with whooping cough, and on 2 August everything was packed away for the summer holidays and the classrooms cleared in preparation for the letting of the school to the Hammersmith Brownies. The new school year was scheduled to begin on 4 September. But it was not to be, and the local children would now find many new faces in the village: ‘The school was unable to open because of the declaration of war. The premises were kept open for the reception of evacuees.’

A week later the Buckland children were back in school but under a very changed regime. There were now ninety evacuated children on roll, the majority of them coming from schools under the London County Council. Teaching had to operate in two shifts: seniors and juniors under Miss Euston and staff, and infants under Miss J. E. Mungeam, the head of the LCC school (St Philips), and her staff. Both the school building and Buckland Court would be used for teaching and a provisional timetable was drawn up. Fortunately, the weather was excellent, perfect for nature walks, whilst the lawns of the ‘Court’ were well used for PT and Games. Religious instruction took place three times weekly in the church by kind permission of the rector and the Church Council. But no sooner had things got under way than new arrangements had to be made ‘with the removal of the LCC contingent from Shagbrook’. The number of children on roll now dropped to 43, of whom 31 were from the LCC. It was decided that the Buckland children would occupy the school building for the first week in the afternoon and the Parish Room in the mornings, and the following week the order would be reversed. By the end of October Miss Euston declared: ‘The new arrangements are working satisfactorily though conditions in the Parish Room are difficult owing to lack of storage, nowhere for wet clothes, the coldness of the Billiard Room and lack of light and space. Many of the chairs in the Parish Room are in a fragile condition but have to be used. The trenches on the Green have filled with water to a considerable depth and the sides are giving way. As they are at present they constitute a real danger.’

Winter was approaching and the days grew shorter and darker. 'From 4 December until the end of term the afternoon session will finish at 3.05 p.m. to enable children living at a distance to reach home before sunset and to enable the caretaker to complete her duties by the time of the blackout.' Prize Giving was on 19 December (prizes were presented by Mrs Tritton), and in the afternoon a Christmas party was given to the combined LCC and Buckland School children. 'Entertainment was provided by Mr Hawkins and the two schools amused each other with national dances and a sketch. Each child received a small present and a bag of sweets.'

In December, also, Miss Euston received the following very appreciative letter from Mr Frederick W. E. Ringrose, the father of one of the evacuees: 'Shirley has returned home with her mother. Sincere thanks to you and your staff for all you have done and are doing in this great national effort for the children's education in the future, and that the time may not be long before peace is with us again.'

## 1940

*'At the request of the government the Whitsun holiday is cancelled because of the National Emergency and all the schools throughout the country have reassembled.'*

The new year began with freezing weather and frozen toilets. It was no better inside the classrooms either as the school was out of coal and the delivery did not arrive until 23 January. Temperatures in the two rooms were as low as 36 degrees. On two of the days the children were sent home at 10.30 for the rest of the day since there was no water and no sanitation owing to the severity of the weather, and by the end of the month just twelve children were actually in school. There must have been feelings of great relief when the thaw came at last in February.

Other happenings apart from the war were few. There were two outings from school, the first a trip to Reigate cinema to see *Treasure Island*, and the second a concert at Dorking County School for Girls in April. When Peter Champion had to be taken home by the head after falling backwards over the top of a chair, the air raid warden, who just happened to be around, was left in charge of the class! In July the drains were once again smelling badly and a number of children including teachers had sore throats.

The remainder of the entries dwell on concerns for the safety of the children and what would happen in the event of air raids.

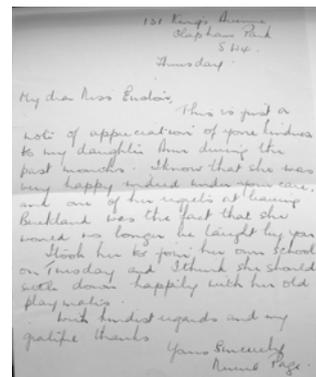
By May there was a national emergency and the Whitsun holiday was cancelled. Meanwhile arrangements were made for parties of children to be given shelter 'at the houses and cottages around the Green in the event of the school building becoming unsafe. The children have practised evacuating the school and can reach the shelter in adjoining houses in 3 minutes.' It was also suggested that the cloakroom should be made into a shelter, and with the help of the rector covers were made for windows whilst existing blinds in the cloakrooms were put into good working order. Peter

Mitchell, a pupil at the time, remembers this and how the children were dispersed to various houses in the village on the grounds that 'should a bomb drop, not all the pupils would be killed'.

The summer holidays brought a brief respite: four weeks holiday for the children and just two weeks for the staff. When everyone reassembled in August, thirty-nine children were present, and from then on until November both the school timetable and attendance were severely disrupted because of the frequent air raids and the enormous amount of time spent in the air raid shelter. On 4 October the children were convoyed home at intervals by parents, and the Betchworth children were taken home by Miss Euston. Ensuring the children's safety was vital, and a circular letter was sent to parents setting out proposals for getting the children home during air raids. Not surprisingly, many children who went home at lunch times did not return for afternoon school.

So many additional children to the school created problems, and in a memorandum to Surrey Education Committee Miss Euston complained that 'Miss Mungeam does not control the children properly and that they treat the school premises with disrespect: I am really ashamed of the present appearance of the school, both outside and in.' Nevertheless, some of the evacuee children genuinely benefited from their time in Buckland and were sad to leave as this letter from a grateful parent proves:

My dear Miss Euston,  
This is just a note of appreciation of your kindness to my daughter Ann during the past months. I know that she was very happy indeed under your care, and one of her regrets at leaving Buckland was the fact that she would no longer be taught by you....  
Muriel Page.



## 1941

*'The school wireless set has arrived.'*

Frozen toilets, burst pipes – just another typical January at Buckland School. Then there were dodgy floorboards, accidents because of dodgy floorboards and accidents, well, just because children do have accidents, some more than others. In January Peter Mitchell fell in the playground while playing football, and then in March the same unfortunate pupil was 'struck and knocked down by a delivery van belonging to Swan Dairies while leaving the Green to enter the playground for the afternoon session at 1.25. He apparently ran backwards into the van and was struck behind the ear by the handle of the door. The van failed to stop and report the accident. The nurse visited and took the boy home where Dr Hallam would visit.' Fortunately Peter recovered and a week later was back in school.

Then there was the ‘problem’ of the older boys and the question of their transfer to a larger school. In January the grandmother of Keith Woodhams came to discuss this matter with the head and it was decided he would be better placed at Reigate National School and could be entered at Easter. Two older children that year were successful in the common entrance exams: Kathleen Turner won a scholarship to the Greycoat School, and in March Colin Champion passed the preliminary exam for a county scholarship. (He moved on to Reigate Grammar the following year.) On the other hand not everyone was a model pupil. Indeed, Miss Euston found herself having to visit shopkeepers in Buckland in connection with a number of cases of pilfering which involved her junior pupils, and as a consequence it was suggested that the shops should be placed ‘out of bounds’ unless the children were on legitimate business for their parents. Other places were also to be treated with caution for reasons of danger. In July the local supervisor of police visited the school to warn the children to keep away from the Brockham and Boxhill pits and to go swimming in the river only when in the company of adults.



**Buckland Village Shop**

Lessons were still being affected by the need for regular drills, although on the whole things were generally quieter. In February the school took delivery of a Majestic portable battery wireless set, which would soon be put to good use (for the afternoon broadcast on Empire Day, for example). Costing £7 10s, it had been bought with the proceeds of two entertainments given by the children as well as money collected by them from various other activities. The balance of £1 8s 6d was contributed by the managers. In the same month, Mrs Coulson presented the school with ‘a very nice football’.

It was during 1941 that the Education Authority started to think about the feasibility of providing a midday meal for the children on the premises. At Buckland this was not easy since there was little in the way of facilities and no staffing. Undeterred, however, Miss Euston sent out a questionnaire in February to find out (a) whether parents would support a canteen for school dinners, and (b) whether they would be prepared to help prepare meals and wash up. The next day she recorded the replies: ‘Thirteen families, accounting for twenty-five children, support a canteen, and ten families, accounting for fourteen children, did not. Only four mothers offered to give help.’ This information was forwarded to the chief education officer.

Work also began on finally sorting out the school drainage problems. The rector took the initiative and ordered the drains to be cleaned and washed out. In fact he insisted that this should be done three times a year because there appeared to be a defect in the laying of the drains. Would this at last bring an end to the bad odours?

The remaining entries for the year concerned the war and its effect on school routine. No more knitting of bonnets and garters, but instead ‘comforts for the Royal

Engineers', and in the meantime the school was requisitioned for use as a rest centre in case of emergencies. There was a lot of activity in the building in August when workman took over the infants' room for the purpose of installing rings, pipes, etc., but inclement weather prevented them from getting on outside. On 24 October Miss Euston was forced to take everyone into the playground in the afternoon as there was so much noise from carpenters and workmen erecting blackout material that teaching was impossible.

## 1942

*'Mr Burgess, the Divisional Organiser from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, came to discuss the possibility of starting a school Rabbit and Poultry Club.'*

In one way or another almost every entry for 1942 had something to do with the war. This especially applied to lessons: art lessons, the wireless broadcasts, gardening – everything was affected. Posters were designed by the children in February for 'Warships Week', there were daily 'health talks' on the radio, potatoes were planted in the school garden, and lessons on 'safety first' were given by a constable from Dorking constabulary. A circular from the chief education officer also warned children 'against trespassing or playing around the water storage tanks, and against picking up or otherwise interfering with dangerous objects found lying about which were likely to contain explosives'. Then in June came the idea of having a rabbit and poultry club. This met with Miss Euston's approval, and she promptly took steps to obtain housing, food and stock. Timber for the hen house came from Redhill, and the senior boys cut grass from Heswall Grange to be dried and stored for feeding the rabbits in the wintertime. Mr Burgess also came to the school to talk to the children about rabbit keeping.

The summer holidays, which appear to have been earlier that year, brought little respite for either Miss Euston or Miss Owden. For the first fortnight the school would be open and the head would be in charge for one week and Miss Owden the other. Activities such as drama, dancing, gardening and care of school livestock would be provided, and milk distributed to those who required it. In the event, no child stayed all day but came for milk, to collect National Savings and to tend and feed the rabbits. On 17 July, fifteen children participated in drama work in the rectory garden and dancing in the playground.

But it seems highly likely that Miss Owden was beginning to feel the strain because she was absent for most of September right through to 19 October; and a Mrs Gungell came to assist with the infants in her absence. The month ended with considerable aerial activity and the children had to spend time sheltering under their desks. This continued into December as there was 'much gun-fire in the vicinity'.

The county inspector's report on 21 December 1942 was positive and noted how both boys and girls were taught needlework: 'Boys do elementary stitches, learn to sew

buttons, etc., also knitting.’ He also saw lessons in handiwork when the pupils were engaged in rug-making, puppetry and stick-painting. He reported ‘a good standard throughout. ... the school appears progressive’.

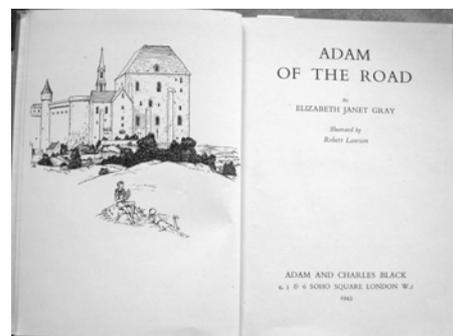
## 1943

*‘The Canadians, billeting in the district, contributed a cinema show and chocolates to be taken home. An extremely happy time was had by everyone.’*

In January it was Miss Euston’s turn to have trouble with the stove. ‘Owing to excessive smoke and fumes coming from the heating apparatus the children and staff were not able to enter the building until 10.20.’ But fortunately the problem did not persist. A number of children were absent anyway having been excluded because of scabies. In August there was an outbreak of impetigo, but diphtheria, fortunately, was no longer a serious problem as all but four children had been immunised. Numbers on roll were also affected by alerts and further aerial activity because children went home and simply did not return for the rest of the day. As for others, it was the perfect excuse for being late. Time too was taken up with more practice in dispersing the children in the event of an aerial attack. The barrier was removed from the playground and path leading to the girls’ offices to enable the children to disperse quickly. Miss Euston also pointed out that the blast walls in front of the school entrance got in the way as the children had to pass in single file.

The HMI, Mr Heath, inspected the school in February and was pleased: ‘The children are benefiting from the modern attitude adopted in basic instruction’, and ‘a supplementary teacher renders loyal support. ... Miss Euston’s work is consistently good over a wide field of interesting activities.’ On 24 May, Empire Day, the headmistress received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer ‘expressing thanks for the children’s gift to the country of £3 5s 0d made from a small auction arranged by the children as part of the Wings for Victory effort’. In August there were rehearsals of recitation and drama in connection with the Overseas Afternoon organised by the church. Older girls, in the autumn term, were once again able to attend domestic classes at the Dorking Technical Institute, and it looked as though the idea of a school canteen was about to become a reality. Equipment arrived in November, and in December the county architect and Miss Dixon ‘visited to see what alterations would be necessary in order to get the place ready for the canteen’.

In December the days were dark, the lighting was bad and Miss Euston was forced to spend time reading to the children as other work was quite impossible. But sitting there in the quietness and the half light, listening to a story unfold, the children could be carried away to a safer world of mystery, adventure and enchantment where no enemy planes flew overhead or bombs fell.



## 1944

*'The head teacher has reported the fall of a considerable portion of the ceiling of the front bedroom of the school house and various cracks in the walls as a result of the night's aerial activity.'*

During the first six months of 1944, life was relatively peaceful and everyone could concentrate again on schoolwork. Miss Euston heard the infants recite and also marked their 'efforts' in written composition. In May the time-table was devoted to 'dramatic' work: singing, poetry and eurhythmics all in preparation for 'Salute the Soldier Week'; and then on 17 May parents were invited to the school to view their children's work.

But did they take a look at the rabbits? War or no war, the rabbits were doing very well, so well in fact that a number of children visited the market in order to dispose of some of them, an occasion euphemistically referred to as an 'opportunity for an educational visit'.

The impression one gains of Miss Euston is that she was a well respected and good teacher, but one who had a very firm, no-nonsense approach to the children. In November one boy definitely overstepped the mark. He had played about, wasted time and answered the head teacher rudely. He then threw his books on the floor and ran off home. Unfortunately for him, he had a sister in the school who duly went home that afternoon with a note about his bad behaviour. He returned the next day bearing a letter from his mother who, it appears, was entirely supportive of Miss Euston because he did not escape his punishment. 'The head teacher caned him and he was told to finish what he had begun yesterday.'

On 9 June 1944 Miss Euston's father died, and she returned to school after one week of compassionate leave. It was around this time that the bombing in the neighbourhood became particularly severe. 'At 9.30 the first attack by glider bombs began in this area. Children took refuge in the school classroom. They have been told to stay at home if an alert was on and if they had already set out to go back home – or come to school – whichever was nearer.' This continued all through June, and on 4 July everyone was feeling severely shaken. 'One bomb was shot down not far away and the children were taken to the shelter where they remained calm.'

The following day Miss Euston wrote to her brother and described in more detail much of what happened:

From Saturday last, Surrey schools began evacuating. During the week Coulsdon and Purley are going, and at the moment we are on the boarder-line of the evacuation area which extends from Leatherhead, Epsom and Walton on the one side, east of Redhill and then joining up with London south of the Thames. The reception area is the South Midlands and the whole of Wales. The homeless in Mitcham and Sutton on Monday was 1700 and 1300 respectively and these are having to be found homes within Surrey, near to people's work.

My school at the moment is busy evacuating itself, and I can't imagine that I'm going to be left here indefinitely with four and sometimes six children. In addition to which I am blitzed out of my bedroom! Fortunately I was sleeping downstairs or I should have been completely hors de combat, if not worse. The mess has been cleared up, but the War Damage people are leaving it as it is, as the landing and the staircase ceiling is likely to descend when we get another bomb in the right spot.

I will let you know what happens next week, when officially the holidays were going to begin. So far they have not been cancelled for us. If you are writing to Mum please don't tell her that the house has been damaged as she is none too well and has enough worries already. The North and Scotland seem to be the only really safe areas. Our chances are, however, as good in one place as another. It is no good skeltering about unless you have to go with your particular job. I imagine I may be put on the Surrey unattached staff. That will be my choice if I am offered one.....

Rhoda.

In fact Miss Euston was never relocated and remained as headmistress of Buckland School for the remainder of the war years.

## 1945

*'8-9 May V.E. Day and Victory holiday.'*

Miss Euston made a decision early on in 1945. Traditionally a number of children from Buckland School had always sat scholarship exams in the spring as an opportunity for gaining free places to the grammar and high schools. She wanted to ensure that Buckland continued to have a reputation for success in this field, and a good way of helping the children was to be actively involved with the actual exam process. She therefore decided in March to become an assessor for the entrance exams, and that year four pupils were entered for the exam. From now on she would begin to be very involved in meetings and discussions throughout the county on many different subjects. At the end of the month she was off to a meeting on sex instruction given by the wife of the Bishop of Woolwich to mothers in Buckland. Then in April she attended a domestic science course organised by Surrey Education Committee.

The County Council also appointed the headmistress as a member of the new Divisional Executive Education Committee, and the parish magazine for April records: 'This is indeed an honour, and shows how highly Miss Euston is thought of by the powers that be.'

The 8-9 May were two days everyone would remember for the whole of their lives – Victory Day and Victory Holiday. The war in Europe was over.

Swimming lessons began on 15 May at Reigate baths and continued until the last lesson of the season at the end of September. 'Ten scholars have received instruction

and two boys and two girls are now able to swim.’ Cookery classes for the girls continued but this time at ‘the new Cookery Centre at Reigate’, and in August once again there was an outing to Worthing paid for by the residents of the village and organised by, well, none other than Mrs Coulson. For the senior children there was also a visit to the Odeon Cinema in Redhill to see *Henry V*. Transport was provided by the chairman and Mr Tritton.

During that year, apparently, Miss Owden was rather bothered about her salary since over a considerable period of time she had had difficulty in estimating what the sum amounted to, particularly as the amounts varied with every cheque and no statement was included. Miss Euston attempted to help her with this. Added to this Miss Owden’s health was not as good as it used to be, and from 5 November until 17 December she was absent. One of the problems appeared to be rheumatism, and one cannot help wondering if the long hours of teaching in a cold damp classroom were beginning to take their toll. The fact that both she and Mrs Coulson suffered from the same discomfort leads one to think this.

One other little story throws light on to the good-natured side of Miss Euston’s character. A certain Tony Saunders came to school late one day in June and was so tired that he was ‘incapable of benefiting from any instruction, so that the head teacher sent him home to his mother with a request that he might be put to bed again’. He returned in the afternoon ‘much recovered after a morning in bed’.

## 1946

*‘The school dinner service commenced.’*



### c. 1946 (Rhoda Euston collection)

Left picture - top row from left Molly Bourne, Ted Saunders, ?, Peggy Dumbrell, Ronald Dumbrell, Frank Packham; middle row Gerald Bishop, ?, ?, ?, Jennifer Francis; bottom row Vera Packham, ?, Alan Finch, ?, Eileen Mitchell. Right picture (four identified) – top row 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> from left Molly Bourne and Ted Saunders, with Frank Packham at end on right; 2<sup>nd</sup> row from right Vera Packham and Eileen Mitchell (Names as remembered by Mrs Welfare)

There had been rather a long gap between the proposal for a school meals’ service and its actual implementation, but the war would have been largely responsible for this. There was little point in making structural alterations when the school building itself was at risk of being damaged. Besides, in 1944 there was concern about the cost, especially as the drainage system had to be adapted to accommodate the canteen

requirements. But in December 1945, Miss Euston was finally informed that canteen meals would be served from January onwards. Indeed on 14 January 'sixteen children partook of the meal, which was a good one. Canteen helpers and washers up are Mrs Lucas and Mrs L Saunders. They are employed for 1½ hours each per day. Their wages are 8/- a week for 52 weeks and they are entitled to a free meal which has to be taken in their own time.'

They were also expected to take it in turns to supervise the children over lunch, although Miss Euston planned to be present at meal times each day until a regular routine had been established. There was also a visit from Miss Taylor, the cook/caterer from the Dorking depot, to see how things were being managed.

That year there was one other addition to the staff: Mrs J. Cobbald began her duties as a clerical assistant and school helper.

The hostilities in Europe had ceased the previous year and in June all hostilities were over. 'Before closing school for the Whitsun Holiday the Chairman of the Managers presented each scholar with a card bearing the King's message to the children on the occasion of Victory Day. The importance of the day had been emphasised in morning school assembly by the use of appropriate prayers and hymns. Throughout the day the flag was flown. A Victory Outing is being organised for the children.' And it was. On 27 June the school was closed for the day and everyone – staff, children and parents – went to Worthing.

Also in June the senior children presented the play of Robin Hood, *All on a Summer's Day*, for the entertainment of parishioners attending a garden fête in aid of the Ridgeway Homes for the Aged in Reigate, and on 5 July the play was photographed in Mrs Bissett's garden.



School Play, 1946 (Rhoda Euston collection)



**School Play, 1946 (Rhoda Euston collection)**

The diocesan inspector had visited the school in May, and in July part of his report was published in the parish magazine. He noted that the class sizes were small but he considered this a distinct advantage for the children who were being taught 'to think and work individually. Their readiness to respond and co-operate is in consequence most pleasing. The tone, the way the children are handled and their attitude, remain as admirable as ever.'

Prize Giving was at the end of the month and the children were kept busy arranging flowers, decorating the stage, setting out the scenery, shifting furniture and arranging the seating. There were many parents and guests: 'Captain Prince, Mr Spreckley, Miss S. Clarke, Col. Sanders and Mrs Sanders, Mrs C. Donald, Mrs Ewen, Lady Read and many others.' The children entertained the visitors with songs and poems they had learnt whilst the senior children and infants each presented a play.

When the school returned in September, the number of children on roll was getting dangerously low and this was probably because, under the 1944 Education Act, the school was converted from one of a full range of children up to age 14 to a primary school for infants and juniors. In order to provide Miss Owden with a class, the head decided to allow Standard II to continue in the infants, of whom there were only two.

Today there are many things we take for granted, like increasing the central heating when the weather is bitterly cold and switching on an electric light when we need to see more clearly. But life has not always been like that and we forget how, in the past, poor light disabled people from working properly or caused eye strain. In Buckland the situation was made even worse when necessary repairs were not dealt with promptly. 'A considerable time has been lost this week, and deviations from the time-table have been unavoidable because of delay in repairs to the gas lighting in the senior classroom. On wet days the light available has been insufficient for either scholars or teacher to read or write. It is now three weeks since the head teacher applied to have work done.'

Three days after logging this complaint, the lamps were attended to, although even after that the light was described by Miss Euston as being 'very poor'. But that was not all: the carol concert had to be cancelled 'owing to the bad state of the roads'.

Miss Euston would have had every reason to have felt a bit fed up.

## 1947

*'A public enquiry was held at 7 p.m. in the schoolroom into the proposal for closing the school.'*

And fed up she was, too, in January except that she would not have been the only one. The problem was the icy weather and the added nuisance of the lamps still not functioning correctly. 'The lamps in the senior classroom, although said to be repaired by workmen, who attended the premises on 18 and 20 January, are still not able to be lighted and extinguished automatically. At considerable risk of an accident, the boys have to climb up to apply matches.'

Two weeks later they were repaired and the lighting was improved. Nevertheless, Miss Euston was still grumbling about them again in December because not boys but the caretaker was having to clamber up a ladder so as to light them, as the parts were so worn that they still would not light automatically. Fortunately for everyone the days of these old gas lamps were numbered and electricity would be installed the following year. But just to add insult to injury she had had to write to the Divisional Office on 7 December concerning economies in the consumption of electricity and gas in schools. Her letter pointed out 'that no further economy could be effected until the lobby window had been uncovered and the blast walls removed.'

It was cold. So cold that everything froze up again and there was no water and no toilet facilities. There was nothing for it but to close the school from 30 January until 3 February, when the long-suffering canteen ladies had to arrive early simply to cope with the piles of washing up that had accumulated and which needed to be ready once again in time for the midday meal. Then on 24 February dinners were cancelled once again as there was no running water in the school. The severe winter was a real problem and what is more it was affecting everyone's health. Miss Owden was ill for two weeks in January and absent again with laryngitis in February. Miss Euston was ill at the same time, so in order to keep the school open the headmaster of Brockham School was in charge for a week.

You could say that 1947 was something of a 'royal' year because on 27 April it was Princess Elizabeth's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, followed in November by her marriage to Lt. Philip Mountbatten. This, of course, occasioned a day's holiday for everyone so that the children could enjoy this very special day.

Official closures for significant events were one thing. The permanent closure of Buckland village school was quite another matter and, following the Education Act of 1944 (the Butler Act), it could become a very real possibility. Consequently a significant gathering of parishioners, the chairman of the school managers, church wardens, representatives of the Parish Council and members of the WI met in the schoolroom on 28 October to discuss the implications of the Act and the effects of reorganisation. 'The proposals were outlined and then open to questions and discussion. It was agreed that it was a useful and interesting exchange of ideas.'

An earlier meeting of the Parochial Church Council on 22 September 1947 records in the minutes a resolution to Surrey County Council that was passed unanimously:

It is hereby resolved that this meeting of the Parochial Church Council of Buckland desires to place on record its protest against any suggestion of closing Buckland Church School, and feels that it is of vital importance that the school should continue to serve the community as a church school. We believe that the close connection between the Church and the School is of real benefit, not only to both parties, but also to the community as a whole. We affirm that the sound teaching the children receive in the Church's faith is of real and lasting benefit to them and is a very important factor in enabling them to grow up as worshipping members of the Church and good citizens of our realm.

It was this resolution that led to the county calling a public meeting, which was well attended and where strong opposition was expressed. In October, the rector wrote a long and emotional article in the *Buckland Church Chronicle*, lamenting the threat of closure. His main argument was on religious grounds. He argued that with the present economic and moral crises afflicting the world 'we must surely do everything within our power to build up the forces that make for uprightness, of which the preservation of Buckland School as a Church School is an important one in our own village life'.

The following February, to his and everyone's great relief, he learned that the school was not to be closed. Soon after, however, when the school needed to raise funds for repairs, he pointed out that the pressure that residents had brought to bear on the county 'means a measure of responsibility for the upkeep of the school'.

## 1948

*'Electric light has been installed.'*

In March Miss Euston got her wish: the blast walls were removed and the big window was unbricked. This would certainly improve the lighting in the school. Not as much, however, as the installation of electricity which took place during the holidays at the end of August. But when the new term started the job had not been properly finished, or at least not to the head teacher's satisfaction. 'Electric light has been installed but has not yet been connected to the mains. The lamps are too high and in the wrong place and the point is not where it should be.' (Had Miss Euston metamorphosed into a Mrs Coulson, by any chance?) Two weeks later she was off to the Divisional Office in person to find out about the lights which had still not been connected as there was now, of course, no lighting at all in the school. While she was there she also expressed her concern about the boys attending the woodwork centre in Dorking as well as wanting to know why the county RE syllabus had not been delivered.

On the 28 September the electricity was finally connected and Miss Euston had light.

The diocesan report in May was highly complimentary:

The lower group has had several new children and is by far the largest now. This is advantageous for the future of the school. Both groups have once more received admirable instruction and the facilities for individual attention that small classes provide are made full use of. The tone remains as good as ever.

H. L. Hargreaves.

June was summery and time for the grass to be cut in the field for the second time. It was now intended that this space should be used for games, although Miss Euston pointed out that 'a considerable amount of cutting and rolling is still necessary before the field is in good condition for PT or cricket'.



c. 1948 (Rhoda Euston collection)

In July she began administering a series of intelligence tests to grade the children according to the ministry requirements for the keeping of individual record cards, and in the same month the county architect sent a contractor to report on the condition of the trees on the playground bank. Miss Euston had been concerned because 'some fair sized branches had fallen into the playground and upon the bank during recent gales'. This was dealt with in October, and the tree fellers worked all day whilst the children stayed inside as it was too dangerous in the playground and too wet to go on the field.

Few other events for that year were mentioned, except that in October the county inspector paid a visit. He reported that 'the school seems to contain a cross-section of local children from squire's son to children of labourers. ... The school always seems quietly efficient and busy about something. When visitors arrive, the top class automatically settles down to individual work in a most sensible and praiseworthy manner. ... Miss Euston controls the school well and manages various sections of her class in group work and as much activity as possible.' He also remarked that Miss Owden is 'eager to do the right thing', but he suggested that she enrolled in some training courses and visited other schools.

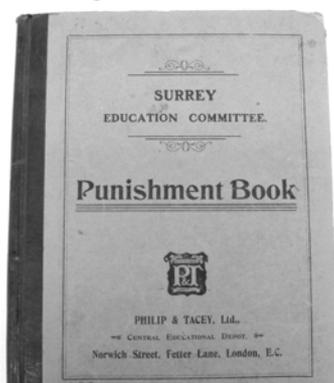
1949

*'The school can again be complimented on being one of the best of its type.'*

Eighteen brand new chairs were delivered to the school in February and Miss Euston sounded very satisfied: 'The accommodation in the large classroom has been completed.' A Miss B. H. Webb also joined the staff that month as a teacher supernumerary and would spend the first week observing teaching methods. The following month she assumed the entire charge of the infant department for a short period whilst Miss Owden went to Frenches Road Infant School to 'gain fresh experience and to see modern methods of infant teaching'. Miss Webb then left for training college and a Mrs M. Leggett joined the staff until Miss Owden's return at the end of April. However Miss Owden was granted leave of absence once again in July to attend another course on infant method in Redhill. Round about this time, too, Miss Euston attended an interview for a headship at another school but was not appointed. Perhaps both she and Miss Owden were beginning to feel they wanted either promotion or simply a change.

Once again the report of the diocesan inspector was glowing. Miss Euston seemed to be doing everything right. Even her entries in the log book were 'right', just as they should be in fact. But during these post war years, until her retirement, she did not feel it necessary to record many details about her pupils except in exceptional circumstances. There was, of course, no requirement for her to do that: all she needed to record were 'bare facts' – and she obeyed the rules to the letter. But in after years this lack of detail makes for much less interesting reading and it is harder to recreate the 'feel' of the school or to make the pupils come to life. If there were any scandal or any confrontations with infuriated parents, she did not record such goings on in the log. (Was she, for example, ever called 'a liar' and 'a lying humbug' as was Mrs Coulson?) We will never know.

Now it could be left to the end, or omitted completely, but perhaps at this point something should be said about the Punishment Book. This was the book that officially



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recorded the names of the children who were caned and the reason for the caning. It was begun by Mrs Coulson in 1913 and continued until Miss Euston's retirement in 1964. Both teachers used the cane, and whilst today most people consider that it was a barbarous form of punishment, it has to be remembered that in those days in many schools 'caning' was the accepted way of controlling unruly pupils when all other methods or sanctions had failed. What the punishment book proves, of course, is that in a large number of cases it simply did not work, unless certain pupils enjoyed the punishment so much that they wanted to come back for more! Certainly the same old names keep cropping up as do the same names from one generation to another and the same families. Generally speaking the nature of the punishment took the form of two strokes, on the hand, rising

occasionally to four, though one infant aged eight, received the strokes to his 'seat'. The reasons for the punishment were roughly what one might expect: 'unfair fighting', 'inciting others to fight', 'cheating', 'climbing on the roof of the offices against orders', 'indecent talk', 'irreverent behaviour in school service', 'absconding from school', 'tiresome beyond words', insulting behaviour in the street to members of staff', 'misbehaving in the absence of the head teacher'. In addition to these, 'laziness', 'inattention' and 'disobedience' crop up very frequently, but one cannot help wondering why an unfortunate child had the cane for 'constantly losing his place'. On four different occasions this pupil was caned, but that still did not stop him from gaining a scholarship at eleven or, more surprisingly, from remaining 'friends' with Mrs Coulson in later years. In fact it is perhaps reassuring to note that not all those who won scholarships, and whose names were on the Honours Board that used to hang in the schoolroom, had a totally unblemished record! Some of them certainly did not escape the punishment book. But did they, in later years, ever remark to a wayward child, 'Well, the cane never did *me* any harm'? Or did they rail against it and against those 'teachers' who resorted to it?

Wickland SCHOOL. Mixed DEPT.				Mrs C. Coulson Head Teacher.					
Date	Name of Offender	Age	Class or Year	Offence	Nature of Punishment	Date of Punishment	By whom inflicted	Initials of Responsible Teacher	Examined by Managers
Received Feb. 1913.									
Old book mislaid.									
Apr. 4	Edward Parrott	10	4	Constant laziness	2 Strokes on hand	Apr. 11	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Apr. 6	George Burle	9	3	Disobedience to the teacher	2	Apr. 16	J. Coulson	J.C.	EN 24/13
June 5	Robertson Fred	10	4	Talking & laziness	2	June 5	J. Coulson	J.C.	
June 6	Edward Edward	10	4	Going home without permission	2	June 6	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Sept.	Honnor Geo.	11	1		2	Sept.	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Sept.	Maile A. Mrs.	13	1		2		J. Coulson	J.C.	
Apr. 6	Matthew Keale	12	2	Plagiarism	2	Apr. 6	J. Coulson	J.C.	
June 5	Woodham Harry	10	4	Reported by Miss Packham	4	June 5	J. Coulson	J.C.	
June 17	Cox Olive	10	1	laziness	1	June 17	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Sept. 5	Judd Eric	9	2	Subversive	2	Sept. 5	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Nov. 4	Robertson Edward	11	2	Plagiarism when teacher was out	2	Nov. 4	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Feb. 17	Rowlinson Fred	10	1	Reported by Miss Beale	1	Feb. 17	J. Coulson	J.C.	
Apr. 15	Munnell Jack	13	2	late	2	Apr. 15	J. Coulson	J.C.	
	Smith Debra	8	2		2				
	Smith Maurice	13	2		2				
May 13	Lilly Cecil	11	4	Disrespect to Miss Lewis	4	May 13			
June 11	Widdie Alfred	12	1	Plagiarism	1	June 11			
	Woodham Willie	9	1		1				

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Certainly Alan Finch (1939-47) remembers being on the receiving end: 'I never got on with Miss Euston – I was always getting the cane. I got it for beating up Adrian Sanders!' In contrast, he found Miss Owden 'a lovely woman, good with children. You could get away with murder with her, but Miss Euston ... well'. Peter Mitchell (1935-42), Alan's cousin, also remembers that she 'used the cane a lot and was very strict'. But, he adds, she was 'also very fair. I learnt a lot from her, and left the school numerate and literate.' John Morris (1950-61) is of the same opinion: 'Miss Euston was Victorian, very strict. She used the cane a lot, but she was also a good teacher. She tended to pick out the best and push them on – though she usually favoured the children of better-off parents to get them into grammar school.'

And Adrian Sanders? Today he remembers Miss Euston as ‘rather a tartar’ whereas on his twenty first birthday, perhaps because the ‘tartar’ was within earshot, he had sweeter memories ‘and remembered with pleasure that in his childhood he was a regular pupil of Miss Euston at Buckland School’.



**c. 1949 (Sheila Barnes collection)**

Back row, from left: Tony Saunders, Jack Lucas, Ronald Dumbrell, Alan Finch, Jean Luff, (unknown), Raydene Crittall; Seated, from left: Shirley Marshall, John Rayner, Peter Woodhams, Jean Lucas, Carol Clarke, Michael Hayles, Brian Gibbs, Sheila Barnes



**Unknown, c. 1946**



**Adrian Sanders**



**Michael Hayles**



**Lynda Morgan**



**Unknown**



**Sheila Barnes**

**Buckland School children, c. 1946 – 1952  
(Rhoda Euston collection, except Sheila Barnes – her own collection)**

## 1950 –1952

*‘Miss Owden, at her own request, has been transferred temporarily.’  
‘The Chairman of the Managers conducted morning assembly for the last time.’*

A new year and a new decade had begun, bringing with it many changes and brighter days. But where was Miss Owden, and what were her reasons for leaving Buckland? She had served the school faithfully for twenty-two years and it seems a serious omission that there was no proper acknowledgement of her departure recorded in the log book. It is as if she just slipped away unnoticed: ‘10 January: Miss Quigley will be a temporary member of staff for this term and will be in charge of infants and Standard I. Miss Owden, at her own request, has been transferred temporarily to the staff at Frenches Road School, Redhill.’ In fact Miss Quigley stayed until July, the end of the school year, when she officially retired from teaching, and Miss Owden never returned.

In June road safety drill was practised weekly, and in the same month Carol Clarke learnt that she had been awarded a place at Reigate County School for Girls. When the new school year began in September, Mrs M. Williams was appointed to complete her training as a qualified teacher and ‘Mrs J. Cobbald resumed her duties as school helper after a period of leave of absence’. A considerable amount of work was also carried out on the building during the holidays: ‘Reflooring of Infant Room, renewal of windows in Dormer, windows on south wall, sweeping of gutters and repair of drain pipes, sweeping rafters in main room and sundry minor repairs.’

The following January something worrying happened. There was an ‘intruder’ in the school playground, and Miss Euston felt compelled to write a fairly detailed entry, probably because she was somewhat concerned:

A man entered the school playground just before 9.00 a.m. without knowledge of the head and withdrew one of the boys from the cloakroom and interrogated and admonished him. The head intercepted him and she told him he was not allowed on the premises unless he wished to see the head teacher, and also that he had no right to interfere with any other person’s child. At this point the chairman of the managers turned up and the matter was referred to him. The man’s complaint had nothing to do with the school.

Staffing of the infant department continued to be a difficulty, just as it had been many years ago for Mrs Coulson before the arrival of Miss Owden, and many supply teachers came and went. But in spite of the lack of a permanent infant teacher, the school seemed to be a model of good practice, and students visited frequently to gain experience and witness good teaching methods. ‘Mr Williams and Mr Briggs, students at the Institute of Education, spent two days observing methods and teaching, and in studying organisation, curriculum and syllabuses. They will eventually be going into the Colonial Education Services.’

Two important people, who had been associated with the school for many years, said farewell in 1951. On 8 September, the chairman of the managers, the Reverend A. H. W. Sanders, who had introduced Miss Euston to the school on her first day in 1938,

conducted morning assembly for the last time and everyone wished him success and happiness in his new appointment as vicar of St Barnabas, Sutton. Another to leave, after having been a devoted school manager for very many years, was Miss S. Clarke, who paid her final visit to the school on 15 November.

It was during this year that the managers applied for Aided status, making the school more securely a Church of England establishment, and they secured the backing of the Parish Council. The school would now be responsible for the fabric and most external repairs, but the Parochial Church Council also promised that, in the event of a problem over maintaining the building, they 'will do all in their power to provide the necessary sum'. Early the next year, the school was granted Aided status.

## 1952 – 1954

*'During the day's festivities in Buckland the children were each presented with a souvenir coronation mug.'*

In 1952 and 1953 the number of children attending the school had now risen to a very healthy 46 and 43. But there was still no permanent infant teacher. Miss Shrimpton, who had taken charge in September of the previous year, was transferred to Frenches Road School, Reigate in December 1951 and Mrs D. Blackmore took her place in January 1952. There is no indication in the log as to how Miss Euston felt about this situation or indeed why it existed, but the constant staffing changes must have made life very trying at times for everyone involved.

Money was still short, but nevertheless some effort was being made to look after the school building and to improve its appearance. The contractors J. Lynch and Son of Betchworth took charge of this during the summer holidays. 'The work of painting the exterior of the school is completed, but repairs to the steeple have not yet commenced. New windows have been inserted in both the infant room and the school room. The latticed lights in a worn out condition have been removed. The school house has been redecorated throughout and new glass put into three windows. Minor repairs are still incomplete.' The following January (1953) a new 'Cozy' stove was also installed in the infant room, and in March 1953 work began on draining and levelling the southern boundary of the school field.

All this impressed the diocesan inspector, who this time declared: 'It was a very great pleasure for me to visit this village school. I found it very much alive, and I am sure that its influence in the community is great. The school buildings are brightly decorated and the atmosphere is most definitely homely.' The contractors might have done a good job, but someone did not sweep up carefully enough afterwards because a rather unlucky Robert Speen was 'severely cut on the wrist by glass left in the playground'.

Two other pupils were mentioned that year: Anthony Denison, for gaining a scholarship to Christ's Hospital, Horsham, and Sandra Russ, who attended the Albert Hall in November to present HRH the Duchess of Gloucester with a purse as a gift on

behalf of the Buckland children. Another success was Alan Banham who gained a place at Reigate Grammar School the following year.

In July, Mrs J. Bullen presented the school with a picture, painted by herself, entitled *Queen Philippa pleads for the Burghers of Calais*. Philippa, the tender-hearted Belgian wife of Edward III (1327-77), is noted for persuading her husband to spare the lives of the six burghers of Calais whom he was about to execute as an example to the townspeople. ‘The subject was chosen by the school children from among others concerning famous women in English history.’

The most memorable event, however, was the Coronation, bringing with it an excuse for all kinds of celebrations, parties and fun. The 2 June 1953, the day of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, was a holiday. ‘During the day’s festivities in Buckland the children were each presented with a souvenir coronation mug. Tea parties, sports and fancy dress parades were provided for the children’s enjoyment and entertainment.’ Two days later, when everyone was back in school, there was a special assembly during which the children were given Coronation prayer books as a gift on behalf of the school managers. Then in December a commemorative tree was planted. ‘Parents, Managers and Friends were invited to the school during the afternoon on the occasion of planting a Coronation commemoration tree in the school field. The tree planting was performed by Mrs P. Daniell (school manager). A very large number of people attended and later enjoyed a concert of songs, carols and recitations given by the children.’ Finally there was the outing to the cinema. On 17 December, ‘senior children, accompanied by Mrs D. Blackmore, went to a special showing of the film *The Conquest of Everest* at the Dorking cinema’.



**1953: Coronation**

(Vi Welfare collection)



**Shirley Welfare: Fancy Dress  
1<sup>st</sup> prize**



**1953: Cricket team (Rhoda Euston collection)**

Back row, from left: Ernie Luff, John Taylor, Robin Dennison (?), Dave Marshall,  
Tony Morgan, (?) Osmond, (unknown)

Middle row: (unknown), (unknown), Tom Vahy, Michael Izzard (?)

Front row: (unknown), Bill Burrows  
(names as remembered by Tony Morgan)

There was one sad occasion in December. ‘The headmistress, accompanied by the Chairman of the Managers and Mr Spreckley, attended the funeral of Miss S. Clarke at Dorking Cemetery. Miss Clarke was, until recently, one of the school managers.’

## 1954 – 1955

*‘Mrs H. Ede completed twenty years service as school caretaker and retired from this date.’*

You can say what you like about Mrs Coulson but it was she who sorted out the caretaking difficulties twenty years ago. No one else would do anything and the school was in a filthy state until she found Mrs Ede, that is, who set about getting the place ‘clean by degrees’. And so she continued: sweeping, scrubbing, mopping, dusting and putting things away for another twenty years until her retirement on 28 January 1955. The farewell party and presentation did not take place until March, but when it did it turned out to be quite a ceremony. ‘Many parishioners, together with the school managers and staff, attended last evening’s presentation ceremony. The older scholars were present and gave a little dramatic account to honour the occasion. Mrs F. Coulson was present and contributed a testimony of appreciation of Mrs Ede’s services to the school as also did the present headmistress and the chairman of the school managers.’

Mr C. Coombs was appointed the new caretaker on 30 January. Later, in October, Mrs B. Earl began her duties as a school helper following the resignation of Mrs Keyes.

Another person, who could claim perhaps to have had the longest association of all with the school, was Mr Frank Sanders. He was one of the very first pupils on the school roll (that is, the school on the Green) and until his retirement had been responsible for all the minor repairs to the fabric of the school. Regretfully, on 23 March, Miss Euston left the school at 11.15 to attend his funeral.

In April the diocesan inspector visited to make his annual report and once again was most impressed. 'I came away as I did last year with a most happy impression of this school. The opening act of worship was quite admirable and I cannot remember a psalm (the Nicholson Psalter) being better sung in any school. It was a real experience of worship.'

A regular and pleasing 'event' from now on was school sports day, held in the afternoon in July. 'The rector and Mr Spreckley helped the headmistress with the recording and several mothers assisted at the tea party which followed. Everyone agreed the afternoon was a very happy one.' Another occasion of some significance took place in June at the Priory County Secondary School in Reigate. It was an exhibition on the history of education in the southern division of Surrey, but unfortunately 'there being no school records earlier than 1921 available, or apparently in existence, the school was represented only by a few photographs and items lent by Mrs Coulson, the former headmistress'.

Perhaps this current 'story of the school' will go some way to redress that omission and will ensure that Buckland School is not forgotten and has its little place in the community of Buckland as well as in the history of education in Surrey.

## 1956

*'The children are unavoidably in the track of the homing bees. Four children and a groundsman were stung.'*

Changes of staff were still the order of the day. Mrs. R. Earl resigned as a school helper and Mrs. F. M. Jepp took up a temporary appointment until Mrs. A. L. Coward accepted a permanent post in December 1956. Mrs. D. Blackmore, who had been at the school since 1952, was also made a permanent member of the school teaching staff from January 1957. She had been complimented on her teaching of religious instruction when the diocesan inspector visited the school in March: 'Mrs Blackmore, with great ability, presents the Bible stories in such a way that the children's interest is stimulated and retained. Throughout her teaching there is a simple but marked practical application which her young children have been quick to appreciate.' The inspector was right. Steve Cox, a pupil at the time, remembers her as his first teacher in the infants. She was 'a very nice lady and I have happy memories of her'.

The month of February was bitterly cold, the pipes burst in the toilets and there was no water available. But the severe spell did not last for ever and in May the days grew warmer and sunnier and the bees began to buzz, yes buzz, very close to the school, so close that it became a serious problem and Miss Euston had to exercise her diplomacy. '16 May 1956: The headmistress visited the keeper of the bees and requested her help in protecting the children from the attacks of the bees from her hives which are placed right up to the boundary fence and facing directly towards the playing field and playground. The children are thus unavoidably in the track of the homing bees. Four children and a groundsman were stung. On 15 May five children were stung in ten minutes.'

Potentially dangerous bee stings were one thing, potentially dangerous roads were an even greater concern. There was no such person employed as a school 'lollipop lady' to see the children safely across the main road, and from time to time there were accidents. As long ago as 1928, when the traffic would almost certainly have been lighter, it was recorded in the managers' minutes that the traffic on the new main road was 'a source of grave danger to the children' and the managers were asked to arrange for the children to be supervised whilst crossing the road. They then wrote to the county asking for urgent steps to be taken, but it does not appear that anything was done apart from giving the children lessons from time to time in 'road safety'. On 9 October 1956 one of the infants, aged five years, was struck by a car 'whilst crossing the road to school in the vicinity of the church. As his mother could not accompany him to Redhill County Hospital the headmistress did so. After treatment she took him home to his mother.'

It was most fortunate that it turned out to be not a very serious accident.

Then there was the problem, not that uncommon these days, of parents failing to collect their child at the correct time, probably because of emergencies or lack of 'after school' child care. 'A boy was left at the school until 6.15 p.m. and his mother could not be found. Eventually the boy's brother arrived on a bicycle. The mother was later interviewed about this and there appeared to have been a misunderstanding, but this was not supported by the relatives. This is the third time the child has been left at the school beyond a reasonable time.'

There is no record of this happening again.

## 1957

*'The headmistress had recommended back in 1945 that more space was needed in the infant classroom, so that modern methods of teaching might be combined with traditional methods.'*

As Miss Euston pointed out, over ten years ago she felt that something needed to be done about the cramped and uncomfortable working conditions in the school, and

finally she was to get her wish. On 11 January the builders arrived to begin work on the reconstruction of the school buildings. It was an ambitious project which would take more than a year to complete, but everyone would benefit from larger, brighter classrooms and modern facilities. In spite of the wet weather the foundations were completed at the beginning of February, and at the end of the month 'the inscribed foundation stone of the original school building was removed and relaid in a new position facing the main gateway to the premises'.

All this was going to cost a great deal of money and a school building appeal fund was launched in April involving the whole parish. The target was £1,000 to be raised in a period 'no longer than five years'. Money came in from a variety of sources, and in May the school was closed to enable the older children to go 'a-maying' in aid of the appeal fund. 'They assembled at school at 9.30 and at 10.15 the May Queen was



crowned in a simple ceremony on the village green. May songs were sung to the audience, after which the children set out, accompanied by the headmistress, to parade the village. The festival ended and the children returned to school for dismissal to their homes at 5 p.m.'

**May Queen ceremony  
(Rhoda Euston collection)**

The £1,000 was to be raised towards the total amount of £6,943. Within a few weeks, £160 had been received; by June the sum was over £460 (which the rector noted included 97 bricks purchased at 2s. 6d. each) of which £45 (worth £76.10s with tax concessions) was given by covenant rather than a one-off sum. By July Miss Euston noted that the appeal fund had reached the grand sum of £700, although the minutes of the Parochial Church Council declared the amount to be 'over £500', to which the National Society added 20 per cent. Everyone had helped, including the children, who had given a performance of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to an audience of parents and friends, and a silver collection had been taken. A dance, held in Betchworth village hall, raised another £25.

The roof was completed in June, and by the end of September the children were able to move into the new classroom. There were hiccups of course, but mostly only involving the heating system: the Sadia water heaters filled the boys' wash room with water vapour overnight and there was excessive condensation in the kitchen, but these minor snags were soon put right.

## 1958

*'17 May: Ceremony of the dedication and opening of the enlarged and modernised school.'*

At the start of the year there were forty-four children on roll. The contractors were now mainly occupied outside the building seeing to external painting and, later in the year, laying out a new playground. Following an inspection of the drainage system, it was discovered that sewage from the school house was entering the old school drains because they had not been sealed off. This time the headmistress did not have to complain or urge for the matter to be dealt with. Instead 'the headmistress was told that the matter would receive early and effective attention to safeguard health'.

Yet again there were staffing changes: Mrs Blackmore resigned her post at Easter, although she returned later that year until she was succeeded by Miss N. Moody, and Mrs M. Hudson was appointed temporarily. Mr Coombs, the caretaker, retired in November and a Mr C. P. Wilcox took over and his wife also assisted with the cleaning.

The new enlarged school, with places for fifty children, was finally completed at a cost of £6,000 of which £1,000 had been raised by the people of Buckland. It could now boast a new classroom for the infants, a kitchen for school meals, a staff room, a proper lavatory and cloakroom accommodation for children and staff, as well as gas-fired central heating. The old stove at the front of the classroom, cursed by Mrs Coulson on so many occasions, was now a thing of the past, and in its place were radiators and constant hot water. According to the newspaper report in the *Surrey Mirror*, the new infants' room was now self-contained and replaced one just 16ft square 'in which it is difficult to believe that in former years as many as 27 children and their teacher have been huddled'. The new classroom was lit on three sides by large windows extending practically the full height of the room. So from now on there would be no more strained eyes as teachers struggled to read in the half light, neither here nor in the junior classroom where three new windows had been installed in the front wall overlooking the village green. This was something to be proud of.

It was noted in the newspaper report, though not in the log book, that the county had paid for the new playground at the back of the school on a field purchased by the authority eleven years ago (a matter which was to cause dispute when the school closed). 'A handsome oak lectern to carry the church-size Bible presented to the school by the late Dr Alan Parsons' was also a gift from the county. The managers gave a cross and candlesticks for the service table, while some former pupils presented liturgically covered table covers and Bible markers which they had made. Clive Gibbs, an old boy, 'renovated the teacher's desk, giving it a new look'.

The dedication and opening of the new building (architect Mr Dudley Joel) took place on Saturday 17 May 1958 at 3 p.m., and the service, held in the church, was led by the Right Reverend B. F. Simpson, Lord Bishop of Southwark. After the last hymn had been sung, a procession left the church by way of the village green to the school, where

the bishop blessed the new building and dedicated it ‘to the glory of God for the education of his children’. He spoke of the importance of schools like Buckland and of their place in the community, referring to them as ‘priceless acquisitions of English life’. But he also pointed out that such schools needed to be kept up-to-date and that those conditions which prevented teachers from using modern methods needed to be removed ‘along with the ill effects of poor lighting and ventilation’. (How Mrs Coulson would have agreed!) Parents, too, had a part to play and needed to take an interest in their little school: ‘Watch it and care for it’. He praised both Miss Euston and Mrs Coulson for their wonderful work in the school, and referred to Miss Euston as ‘an educationist whose vision and activity are not just bounded by the village classroom’ but involved her in much work within the county.



**The new enlarged school  
(Mary Wade Bishop and Rhoda Euston collections)**

After the dedication, tea was served on the village green and the school was, of course, open for inspection. A very large number of people attended this occasion, and Miss Euston carefully noted in the log book all those who had had connections with the school over the years, amongst whom were two former teachers, Miss K. Owden and Mrs D. Blackmore. The refreshments were served by ‘waitresses’ who were a mixture of both past and present pupils, namely Miss R. Finch, Mrs J. Giles, Mrs B. White, Miss P. Worssell, Miss S. Barnes, Miss J. Wren, Miss J. Lucas, Catherine Hope Jones, Sandra Russ, Diana Saunders, Jane Edwards, Jennifer Francis and Elizabeth McLeod.



The Concert (Mary Wade Bishop collection)

## 1959

*'Goalposts have been erected on the village green, courtesy of Colonel Sanders.'*

Just what were Miss Euston's thoughts on a wild and windy morning in January? Did she reflect on all that money spent on the school building only to have the same old problems, just like Mrs Coulson? Perhaps she did. But the difference now was that she did not have to refer everything to the chairman of the managers before the matter could be sorted out. After a particularly stormy night, the caretaker informed her at 8.15 on 22 January that 'a considerable portion of the ceiling at the west end of the main classroom had fallen as a result of the previous night's gales and the plasterboard was giving way over other areas of the ceiling'. On this occasion there was no need for the head to stage a 'walk out' to make her point. She simply decided that it would be too dangerous to use the room in that condition, and that was that. Over the weekend the builders made the necessary repairs to ensure the safety of the roof and the matter was dealt with.

At the very end of the month there were three cases of scarlet fever, in March Mrs Blackmore again took charge of the infants and on 28 May the Reverend G. A. Westrup left to become the rector of Charlwood. To mark the occasion he was presented with a Bible 'for his personal use', and the headmistress thanked him for the interest he had taken in the school during the past seven years.

In the summer term, there were further troubles with nasty smells, echoing experiences of Mrs Coulson's time, as well as a boggy field. The managers' minutes in June refer to a 'smell from sewage blown back up pipes' which 'enters the school building by means of the wash basin pipes and especially through the drinking fountain drainage pipes'. The girls' wash room and the infants' entrance 'had become very foul at these times,

this in spite of copious washing down with disinfectant'. Meanwhile Miss Euston also complained in June of the 'almost perpetual boggy condition of the school field'. An infant had fallen over there, 'and her entire clothing had to be washed and dried before the child could go home'. Although the drainage system was overhauled, flooding continued to be a problem.

Prize Giving was on 21 July 1959, and this time a presentation was made on behalf of the Schoolmaster Publishing Company to Rhys Williams, who had won first prize in a children's book reviewing competition that had been run by *The Schoolmaster* journal earlier in the year during Children's National Book Week. Six thousand entries had been received, and Rhys won his prize in the 10-12 age group and was awarded five guineas worth of books 'chosen by himself' as well as three guineas worth for the school library. Even better, perhaps, was the added bonus of 'a half holiday (for everyone) to mark the occasion'.



On 16 September 'the boys played football for the first time this season' on the village green. However, according to the managers' minutes, some residents had objected to the new goal posts on the green, although Colonel Sanders and the Parish Council had agreed to their erection.

Finally, at the November meeting of the managers, Miss Euston complained of 'the laboriousness of keeping the new floors in good condition without the mechanical aid of a polisher'. It had evidently taken the cleaner four hours to polish the infants' classroom and cloakroom. The managers obligingly agreed to buy an electric polisher, though it subsequently emerged that the cost would have to be met from school funds since the county refused to pay for it.

## 1960 - 61

*'The Inspector gave a short address and stressed the peculiar advantages of a small country school, especially in the matter of quiet and peaceful working conditions for the children.'*

It was during this period that there were problems in finding a new caretaker following the resignation of Mr C. Dolman in March through ill health, for, in spite of the post being advertised in the *Surrey Mirror*, no one applied for the position. Miss Euston therefore found herself carrying out the caretaker's duties in the morning whilst Mr Dolman kindly agreed to tidy up in the afternoons. In the summer, however, there was a brief respite when a temporary caretaker took over until September, but in October the head was obliged to ask the pupils themselves to help out. 'There has been no caretaker or cleaner for three weeks so the junior children had to be allotted cleaning duties so that the building is reasonably tidy.' A new caretaker finally arrived in 1961 but he too left after only one year.

In February, the managers agreed to a request from Miss Euston to change the name of the school from Buckland Church of England Primary School to St Mary's Church of England School. This would bring the school into line with other church schools in Surrey which had been granted a more individual style of identification. The new title was used from July after county approval.

In the autumn, the flagstaff collapsed whilst being hoisted on Commonwealth Day, and a nasty accident was only just avoided. Referring to this incident, the managers' minutes record that, since the pole was rotten beyond repair, they would agree to pay for a new one. Steve Cox (1959-64) still remembers 'raising the flag and hanging the Union Jack properly'. But he also thought that Miss Euston 'wasn't interested in sport. I can't remember using the green for football in school time, but we did after school unofficially.'

Education in the 1960s continued to encourage greater consultation with parents, particularly over the children's transfer from primary to secondary school. 'In December a number of parents visited the school to discuss with the headmistress their wishes concerning the type of secondary education they desired for their eleven-year-olds in 1961: Grammar or other. They then signed a statement provided by the Chief Education Officer to that effect and the statements were attached to pupil record cards. If children wished to sit the Common Entrance Exam then they could be entered.'

The parents were also invited to the school to meet the new infant teacher, Miss B. Farrington, who was soon to marry and become Mrs Small.

There seem to have been few significant events in 1961, and the school year ended in July with reports being despatched to parents concerning their children's progress. There was also the annual prize giving and speech day, after which the children showed their parents round the school whilst the managers had tea in the staff room.

## 1962

*'The school celebrated its centenary. ... All the children were photographed and each would be given a photo as a memento of the great occasion.'*

The two main events of this year appear to be Miss Euston's pilgrimage to the Holy Land during the Easter period in the company of a number of Surrey teachers and, of course, the celebration of one hundred years in the history of the school on the Green. But whereas Mrs Coulson would no doubt have given a graphic description had she made a trip to the Holy Land, and regardless of whether or not the entry in the log book was appropriate, the only comment from Miss Euston concerned the details of the arrangements during her brief leave of absence, when Mrs Small was to be in charge.

The School Centenary took place on 18 May 1962, and began with a service which was conducted by the Reverend G. A. Westrup, the previous rector. The church was packed, and the congregation included various representatives from educational circles,

members of local and county organisations and committees, staff past and present, parents, scholars and former scholars. A reception and tea party was held on the village green, after which the guests visited the school to see displays of the children's work, and many photographs were taken.



**School Centenary, 1962: Class 1 (Rhoda Euston collection)**



**School Centenary, 1962: Class 2 with Mrs Maynard (Mary Wade Bishop collection)**



**School Centenary, 1962 (Rhoda Euston collection)**

Back row, from left: Provost, All Souls College Oxford; Canon G.A.Westrup, Rector of Buckland; Colonel Terence Sanders; Robert Beloe (Director of Education, Surrey); Canon Tyrell;  
Seated, from left: Rhoda Euston; ?; Florence Coulson

In June two parents, Dr. and Mrs Williams, made a delightful gift to the school which pleased the headmistress, drawing from her the following comment: ‘Dr. Williams and Mrs Williams have presented a cedar wood garden seat, primarily for the use of staff when supervising in the playground. The gift was to mark the centenary and the parents’ appreciation of the education given to their three children who have now passed through the primary stage and have gone to grammar schools.’

The school year ended with a performance of *Hansel and Gretel*, which was attended by a large audience of managers, parents, scholars and ‘friends from the village’.

## 1963 - 1964

*‘April 1964: This is to be the Headmistress’s last day at the school.’*

The winter of 1963 was an exceptional one. The weather was bitterly cold, and icy blizzards brought the country almost to a standstill. But the most remarkable fact was the length of time the snow lay on the ground. This point is well illustrated by the entry for 6 March, which reads as follows: ‘The playground is clear of snow for the *first time this term*, and the children were able to enjoy outdoor play and activities for the first time this term.’

In March, the managers approved a design for a school shield at a cost of five guineas. Steve Cox, a pupil at the time, today recalls the new emblem being put up in the school hall. Its design was subsequently used for a blazer badge. That same month there was also the customary visit from a diocesan inspector and, of course, the customary glowing report: ‘The children knew a good deal about Baptism and the Eucharist and

were familiar with the parish church. ... It was a joy to visit this admirably conducted little school, the beautiful setting of which is matched by the happy, friendly atmosphere.'

Changes in staffing were becoming imminent. At the close of the school year, Mrs B. Small resigned 'on becoming a mother' and two part-time teachers took over her post. Then on 26 November the candidates for the headship visited the school house. 'All six are men', noted Miss Euston, perhaps with a hint of regret. Some days later the interviews took place, and on 12 December Mr Steele was appointed.

There were few problems that year, although there may have been some dissatisfaction with the quality of the school dinners. It depends on what one can read into Miss Euston's report:

*16 October*

The Caterer reported on the large quantities of waste food returned to the kitchen. The contributory causes were:

1. the large number of children with small appetites
2. illness – causing nausea and lack of appetite
3. the large proportion of carbohydrates making up the first and second course.

In other words, too much stodge!

Finally this year, Miss Euston retired, and a number of events marked the occasion prior to the day itself. On 25 March, the chairman of the managers and some parents came to the school at 2.30 to make a presentation to the headmistress. This was followed by a reception in the Reading Room, during which the chairman of the managers spoke of the contribution she had made over the last twenty-two years and presented her with a cheque and a 'handsome wing-backed chair'. In her reply, Miss Euston thanked the donors of gifts, 'the managers and parents who have supported her, and the staff and children who have helped and encouraged her over the years'.

Her final entry in the log book was made on 10 April 1964: 'This is to be the headmistress's last day at the school. She hands it over to Mr L. Steele with regret that the time has come to do so, but with confidence that he will make the children happy and carry the school from strength to strength.'

What she did not know at the time, but may possibly have feared, was that the days of many a small village school were numbered, and St Mary's Church of England School was no exception. It would continue to flourish, but could not escape closure in 1981.

Unlike Mrs Coulson, Miss Euston did not stay on in the village but retired to St Columb Minor in Cornwall from where, at a distance, she still kept in touch with Buckland, and with her close friends from the school.

Clive Gibbs (1943-51) still remembers her with affection, not least because she gave him and his wife a teapot for their wedding present in 1958. He remembers also how she used to read stories to the children, particularly *The Wind in the Willows*, after

which they had to make a drawing of the scene, such as Toad at a picnic on the riverbank. Sheila Barnes also has fond memories of her time as a pupil at the school from the age of five until she left at thirteen. Miss Euston, she said, 'was quite a disciplinarian' but a good teacher. She remembers a number of events: catching the bus from Betchworth and then walking home across the fields in the afternoon; the production of *Robin Hood*; Christmas parties in the Reading Room; listening to readings of *Swallows and Amazons* and *Treasure Island*; Twinkle, Miss Euston's cat, who lost two house points for knocking over the hyacinths on her desk; a visit to the teacher's house and taking her lilies of the valley for her birthday in May. Some years later Sheila married Colin Overall, who had also been a pupil at Buckland, and Miss Euston came to their wedding.

She died in Cornwall in 1987, and it seems fitting here to include as her memorial, or epitaph, extracts from the tribute to her, written by another former pupil, Catherine Hope-Jones, in the September edition of the parish magazine:

**MISS EUSTON  
BUCKLAND VILLAGE SCHOOL  
A TRIBUTE**



Rhoda Alice Euston (1903–1987), Headmistress of St Mary the Virgin Buckland C. of E. Primary School, died peacefully in Cornwall last month. Since her retirement she had lived a full life at St Columb Minor, relishing the magnificent coastline and landscape, and ancient history of the county. For many years she was an active member of the Cornwall Historical Society. With typical enthusiasm in her 81st year, she introduced us to the wilds of Bedruggan steps and insisted on scaling the cliff sides to enjoy the drifts of pink thrift in full bloom – a memorable but alarming occasion when accompanied by a good Cornish breeze. She is buried in full view of the Atlantic, high above her parish church in the village cemetery – a fitting resting place. Those who visited her in her gleaming, colourful and delightful cottage will have been struck by the resemblance of her domestic arrangements to those in the School House, Buckland. She developed a garden full of horticultural interest and provided the perfect background for her two feline companions.

But it is as a dedicated and born teacher that Miss Euston will be remembered. At any time her kind are rare indeed. She was totally committed to the education and welfare of those in her

charge. She believed in the value of a village school at the heart of the community where the effort, the successes and failures were set against the perspective of Christian values – John Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrims Progress’ I recall was favourite study material. She influenced without rival all of us who had the great good fortune to have been taught by her. It is remarkable to remember just how she worked. Once children were able to read and were promoted from the infant classroom up to the ‘big room’, housing all juniors in an age range spanning five years, classes like spelling were conducted in the following manner. Methodically and in increasing order of difficulty, Miss Euston would list five words to be attempted by each successive year group, sitting en bloc. She probably repeated this twenty times for an average test – a task requiring great concentration. How we loved her reading to us. She used tales like ‘Swallows and Amazons’ and ‘The Adventures of Dr. Doolittle’ as a vehicle for her own imagination, and she would create such a vivid atmosphere and sense of place that it was with surprise and as an adult that I realised she had only travelled abroad twice – once to Holland and, again, briefly to Paris. Remembering too her responsibility was for our entire education from P.E., Mathematics, History, English, Music, even Latin in the days of the full range school, and also the production of the end of term play or entertainment, her resourcefulness and energy must have been constantly at full stretch. Her excellent work was noted in a typical inspector’s report; ‘The school can again be complimented on being one of the best of its type, and in developing the individual knowledge and power for thought and appreciation of all its variously aged and talented pupils in a very natural and effective manner.’ Figures also speak for themselves: well over thirty pupils during Miss Euston’s time gained Common Entrance Awards to Grammar schools. In a wider capacity her skills led her to being chairman of the Divisional Schools Meals Committee and a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and she also served for a time as a representative of the National Union of Teachers in the area.

... Undoubtedly her formidable intellect could have led her to a career far beyond Buckland, but she was content and at her happiest serving this place, and so many of us who will always remember her thankfully, so well.

*Catherine Carter  
17 August 1987*

## Buckland School Honours Board

Although the honours boards denoting children who had gained entrance scholarships to grammar or selective schools were discontinued in primary schools after the 1944 Education Act, both Mrs Coulson and Miss Euston wrote out the list of pupils who had gained awards at the back of each log book. These are given below, but a few names appear to have been accidentally omitted.

Mrs Coulson wrote: 'Copies of names inscribed on the old Honours Board which used to hang in the schoolroom'.

Name	School	Year
Christopher Ryal	Reigate Grammar	1908
Herbert Dean	Reigate Grammar	1918
William Widden	Reigate Grammar	1919
Elsie Potter	Girls' Grammar Redhill	1920
Ronald Earnshaw	Reigate Grammar	1921
Reigna (Regina?) Holman	Dorking High	1921
Alfred Claydon	Reigate Grammar	1922
Dorothy Sadler	Dorking High	1926
Arthur Branch	Junior Technical School, Redhill	1927

Miss Euston entered the following: 'Children who have gained Common Entrance to Grammar School since September 1939 from Buckland School.'

Kathleen Turner	Greycoat Hospital School, London	1941
Colin Champion	Reigate Grammar	1942
Ivor Jones	Christ Hospital, Horsham	1944
Molly Bourn (Brown?)	Reigate Grammar	1944
Joyce Mitchell	Reigate Grammar	1945
Peter Champion	Reigate Grammar	1946
Helen Ronald	Croydon High	1946
Valerie Woodhams	Reigate Grammar	1946
Marion Goldings	Reigate Grammar	1949
Anthony Dennison	Christ Hospital, Horsham	1952
Robin Dennison	Christ Hospital, Horsham	1953
Carol Clarke	Reigate Grammar	1954
Geoffrey Atkinson	Reigate Grammar	1955
Alan Banham	Reigate Grammar	1955
Sandra Russ	Dorking Grammar	1955
John Bishop	Reigate Grammar	1956
Catherine Hope-Jones	Dorking Grammar	1956
Nicholas Atkinson	Reigate Grammar	1958
Elizabeth McLeod	Reigate Grammar	1958
Barry Morgan	Reigate Grammar	1958
Brian Everitt	Reigate Grammar	1958
Gerald Rhys Williams	Reigate Grammar	1959
Adrian Robert Jones	Purley Grammar	1960
Robert Frederick Russ	Reigate Grammar	1961
Stephen Maxwell Wilson	Whitgift, Croydon	1961
Charles Hugh Bishop	Reigate Grammar	1961
Robert McLeod	Reigate Grammar	1962
Roderick Earnshaw	Dorking Grammar	1962
Rhiannon Williams	Reigate Grammar	1962
Philip Julian Wilson	Whitgift, Croydon	1963