

Elementary education in the 19th century was said to be for the 'labouring poor', and at least from the 17th century some effort had been made to improve their lot. In 1818 most schools were either charity schools or endowed by wealthy landowners, and National Schools, linked to the Church of England, were set up in some areas. Mary Caroline Hunt opened such a school in Church Street, Wadenhoe, in 1839, and in the 1841 census Joseph Chew is listed as schoolmaster. The only reference to the payment of any fees was in September 1874, when the Log Book states: 'School fees raised on Monday to 2 pence for the two eldest in each family - the rest to come free'.



Fig. 1

The following account is based on the School Log Books and Attendance Register<sup>1</sup>, held in Northamptonshire Record Office and containing a wealth of fascinating detail, until just before the School closed in 1955. Log Books had been made compulsory in 1862, for schools receiving grants. Wadenhoe became such a school, and the Log Book was started on 2 January 1865. Some of the government regulations which affected school management are given in Table 1.

The site contained 359 square yards, 278 square yards being playground. The school was built of grey stone, had six windows and a slate roof, with the date 1839 on a medallion over the porch (Fig. 1)

## The school building

Outside the porch hung the school bell, activated by a chain inside. The indentation in the wall to accommodate this can still be seen on the south side of the porch. At some stage after 1892 gravel was spread both at the front of the school and over the playground at the rear.

The bottom windows of the classroom were much as they are today except that the lower panes were opaque and children could just glimpse the great stacks of corn in the stackyard opposite. George Moisey, a pupil in the 1920s, wrote<sup>2</sup>: ‘Threshing time’ was awaited with glee by the boys. The ‘threshing tackle’, consisting of a steam engine to drive the ‘Drum’ which performed the operation, and the ‘Elevator’ to convey the spent straw to the stacks, was a perennial fascination. The filled sacks of corn were quickly removed to Mr Childs’ big barn prior to being ground at a later date. Some of this was done at Wadenhoe Mill. These were the days of unguarded machinery and once the massive belt flew off and cut open a boy’s head. Thereafter this area was out of bounds.’

**Table 1:  
Education Acts  
affecting Wadenhoe  
schooling**

1876: Universal compulsory school attendance introduced.

1902: School boards were abolished. Control of both elementary and secondary education given to the committees of the county and borough councils.

1918: School leaving age raised to 14 (optionally 15).

1920: The introduction of the Burnham pension and salary scales for teachers improved the status of the teaching profession.

1944: School leaving age raised to 15, from 1947. This did not affect Wadenhoe as it became a Junior School in 1928 taking children up to the age of 11 years.

There was just one room (29.3 x 17 ft) approved for 50 pupils even though in February 1870 there were 64 on the school register. Only half the classroom was boarded, the other half being brick, and HM Inspector advised that strips of planking or matting ought to be provided under the desks. This had been done by 1869. When there were two teachers the classroom was divided by two white screens separating the infants and the older children.

Gas lighting was probably introduced in 1868 as Chancellor George Ward Hunt visited the school in that year to see where the gas meter should be placed. By 1924 the school was lit by three oil lamps, as gas was no longer available. Electricity was installed in 1931. Originally there was just one coal fire but a second was added early in the 20th century.

The small porch was used as a cloakroom and it was not until after the First World War that a cold water tap was installed. To obtain water the tap handle had to be pressed forward, and the spring holding

it was so strong that it took two boys to hold it open. In 1937 the Log Book records that individual hand towels were in use, and that the children had to bring a clean one each week. The lavatories, then known as 'privies', although the Inspectors called them 'offices', were outside at the back of the building. They were back-to-back with two holes in one and one in the other, and were earth closets. In the early years Inspectors spoke of them as being offensive. An interesting comment in 1891, 'The walls of the boys' office should be kept free from writing', indicates that some things don't change. In December 1898 a £15 aid grant was received to repair the 'office'.

The school employed a cleaner, the first mention of one in the Log Book being on 1 November 1919 when Mrs A. Briggs had her pay increased from £4.4s to £6.6s per annum. Mrs Briggs died on 18 July 1923 from heart failure, and the children 'took flowers to school to make a wreath and Owen Shaw made a very nice cross'. Mrs Briggs' daughter Nellie was appointed in her place and according to the Log Book remained for over ten years, her pay being increased on 11 January 1929 from £6.6s to £10 per annum - whether she started at a lower rate than her mother or whether the remuneration was static for all those years is not revealed. On 15 November 1932 the Log Book entry read: 'Education Committee will pay Insurance for the cleaner for the months of November, December, January, February, May, June and July'. By 1947 Mrs Brown from the Green was being paid £21.

In 1865 the Capital Grant was 12 shillings per child per year, plus 4 shillings for regular attendance. However, the threat existed of grants being cut if the standard of education was considered by HM Inspectors to be inadequate. In August 1866 the year's grant was reduced by half because Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic were not satisfactory (although Religious Instruction was very good). A year later a summary of the Inspector's report stated that 'this school labours under disadvantages of irregular attendance and parental apathy...'. There was no criticism of the mistress but the grant was reduced by one-tenth. In 1868 it was again reduced by three-tenths and in 1869 by two-tenths. In 1890 payment by results was fortunately discredited.

Aid grants were approved under the Voluntary Schools Act and such grants are mentioned as being awarded twice: on 21 December 1897 £7 was awarded for restoring the school fence and for other repairs and on 5 December 1898 £15 for repairing the lavatories. Between 1899 and 1902 an Aid Grant of £15 per year was received from the Board of Education.

The school managers were key figures in the community, and included the local parson, who was usually also the School Correspondent. The two clergy most respected at Wadenhoe were the Rev. J.E. Newby, Rector from 1894 to 1931, and the Rev. B.H. Dawson, Rector from 1931 until the school closed in 1955.

Managers had to complete an annual account of the income and expenditure, a list of the teaching staff and their salaries, the average

## **Grant-aid**

## **School managers**

pupil attendance, and details of other activities on the premises. In 1903 these were given as Sunday School, Lectures and Entertainments and ‘for all purposes required by the Local Government Act 1894’. In 1924 it was recorded that the School Room was no longer being used as a recreation hall, as one had been erected at the foot of the Church Hill.

## The school mistresses

An example of the teachers’ salaries is given in Table 2.

**Table 2:**  
Teachers’ salaries in the period before the introduction of the Burnham scale (1920)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Salary</i>
1902/03	Miss Brittle	£50 per annum+ Govt grant=£81
1916	Miss Jones	£65 per annum+Govt grant
1918	Miss Jones	£84 per annum
1919	Miss Jones	£135 per annum
1921	Miss Jones	£162 per annum
<i>Date</i>	<i>Assistant</i>	<i>Salary</i>
1902/03	Miss Neal <sup>a</sup>	£10 per annum
1916	Miss Childs <sup>b</sup>	£32 per annum+£2.10s war bonus
1918	Miss Childs	£49.8s per annum
1919	Miss Childs	£75 per annum
1921	Miss Childs	£100 per annum
<sup>a</sup> Monitress.		
<sup>b</sup> Supplementary Teacher.		

Mary Oughton, a Certified Teacher, was in charge from 1865 until January 1870, when Eliza E. Alcock, an uncertified teacher, took over. From 1846 a teacher training programme had been available for applicants as young as 13 years. Each served an apprenticeship of five years in a school as a pupil teacher. At the end of each year the pupil teachers took an examination, conducted by an HM Inspector, and if successful received a Government grant which ranged from £1 to £20 per year.

The School Inspector’s Report for the year ending 30 June 1870 states: ‘The improvement effected in tone and discipline gives hope that in time the school will reach a respectable standard of efficiency... A monitress might be employed with great advantage... New desks and benches are wanted.’ The following year the comment was: ‘The improved efficiency of the school does credit to the present mistress who will shortly receive her certificate.’

On 28 August 1873 Miss Annie Brittle (*Fig. 2*) was appointed School Mistress. She had a 1st Class certificate and stayed as Head Teacher until May 1912. She then became a School Manager, a position she held until her death in 1923. Miss Brittle was a highly respected teacher and during her tenure standards improved considerably. In 1880 Edith Porter was appointed Monitress and taught

the lower Standards. Mary Oliver took her place in January 1882.

Fourteen-year-old Edith Neal came as a Monitress in October 1901, but was replaced in May 1907 by Miss May Childs, a local girl living in Mill House and sister of Reginald Childs, one of the School Governors. After a week's training in Rushden in May 1909, Miss Childs was recognised as a Supplementary Teacher. George Moisey remembered her as a very gentle person but nevertheless not averse to using the cane, as he found to his cost after scribbling over the blank pages of his 'drawing' book.



*Fig. 2:*  
Miss Brittle at the back door  
of the School House, early  
1900s

After Miss Brittle's retirement in May 1912, Emergency and Supply teachers taught for a few weeks, and on 2 August 1912 the Managers appointed Miss Flack, a trained Certificated Mistress. The appointment was agreed by the County Council, but in 1915, after two years of poor results, Miss Flack left. HM Inspectors wrote of poor English and Arithmetic and disappointing oral work to the extent of bringing the school 'to the verge of inefficiency'.

Miss Ellen Jones commenced as Head Teacher on 1 November 1915 and by 1916 all classes were said to be improving. A red-haired Welsh woman, with a temperament to match, she could wield the cane more effectively than Miss Childs. However, the children still managed to play her up. George Moisey writes<sup>2</sup>: 'During the summer Miss Jones would occasionally put a notice outside the door stating that the school was in the Church Field doing 'nature study'. When the time came to return some of the boys were usually missing and eventually found in the bullrushes, of which there were many, catching butterflies.'

Miss Jones enlivened the school curriculum by writing several plays which were performed by the children, including 'Thrift' in 1938, a National Savings Play in 1939 for which she was congratulated by a Miss Ashton Jones and friend, and 'Grandfather's Birthday' also in

in 1939. The school was also adept at singing - due to a great extent to the efforts of the young and very musical George Ward Hunt, who was presented with a piece of music by the children in appreciation of his services from 1924 to 1927 when he left the village to live in Brailsford with his newly remarried mother, Mrs Bolney Brown. The children took part in the Church Choir, being rewarded each year with a Choir outing, the first recorded in 1928 to Leicester. In later years they visited the Austin Motor Works and Cadbury's, the Houses of Parliament, Skegness and London Zoo.



Fig. 3:  
Wadenhoe School children,  
1911 with Miss Brittle and  
Miss Childs

During an Inspection in September 1921 the Head Mistress was advised 'to work towards making the children capable of independent work even though a curtailment of the syllabus might be necessary'. Miss Jones evidently knew how to cope with the School Inspectors. Again, George Moisey<sup>2</sup>: 'I remember an incident when a School Inspector was questioning the class. Miss Jones, no doubt not wishing her pupils to appear 'dumb', was standing some distance behind the Inspector mouthing the correct answers to his questions. The boy concerned still could not 'catch on' and startled the Inspector by aiming at Miss Jones a very incredulous 'What?'. Miss Jones, or 'Sally' as she was known by her charges, was too smart for him and by the time he turned round was merely smiling innocently at them both.' Violet Mills tells the story of their tying a length of string to the School House letterbox and hiding in the stackyard to rattle the knocker until Miss Jones came to the door, when they would pull the string and slam it shut, and of bringing mice into the schoolroom.

On 30 September 1922, because of a decrease in the average attendance, the decision was made to reduce staff numbers. Miss Childs' post as assistant teacher terminated on that day, causing much sorrow to her infant class. Miss Childs subsequently married a Mr Tomlinson and lived in the Mill House, occasionally helping out at the school. On 5 April 1928 Wadenhoe became a Junior School and five children between the ages of 11 and 14 left to attend Aldwinckle

Ellen Jones retired in July 1950. On behalf of the County Primary Education Committee, Mr Churchill, the Chief Education Officer, wrote to express their appreciation ‘of your inspiring and long continued service’. Miss Brice, who was near retiring age and had a heart complaint, took over but resigned in April 1955.



*Fig. 4: Wadenhoe School, 1928. Back row: Ernie Spencer; unknown; Arthur March; middle row: Herbert Wagstaffe; Billy Briggs; unknown; Evelyn Letts; Annie March; Kitty Freeman; Joan Hankins; Aubrey Baker; George Lewis; front row: Rene Briggs; Phyllis Brown; Eileen Morehen; May Morehen; Mary Mills; Reggie Curtis; John Mills*

The Rector was very involved in the school, visiting at least once a week to give Religious Instruction but occasionally helping out with other lessons. The children would also go to Wadenhoe Church every Wednesday. Reading the Log Books one gets the impression of a constant flow of visitors, possibly a welcome distraction for the children, although some might have been intimidated at the presence of these ‘important’ people - including the Ward Hunt family, Lord Lilford, Admiral Sir Michael and Lady Culme-Seymour, and Mrs and Miss MacQueen, who in November 1921 asked for a list of names to start a Girl Guide group. ‘Upper class’ ladies would examine the children’s needlework and listen to them reading or singing; likewise the gentlemen might check on their school work and perhaps give a lesson. In such circumstances planned lessons by the teacher would be seriously disrupted. Mrs Newby, wife of the Rector for the first 30 years of this century wrote<sup>3</sup>: ‘We were all interested in the children and the doings of the little school. I am speaking, of course, of 30 years ago now. It was the centre of attraction in the life of the village, and a general custom amongst us was to take our friends there and show them round. Miss ‘Dogood’ expected it and so did the little ones. They were

## School visitors

were all so charmingly at their ease, too. The boys might rub their inky fingers furtively under the desks, and some of the girls would pat and tweak their hair into position, as girls have done ever since the world began. But there were no further signs of preparation.'

## **School attendance**

From the beginning attendance figures fluctuated wildly and it seems there was little or no commitment to education, presumably because the children were destined to become farm labourers or to 'go into service'. One hundred per cent attendance was rare, and only once, on 25 January 1916, does the Log Book record the presentation of medals to two children - Mackenzie and Annie Briggs - for 'two years perfect attendance'.

On 2 January 1865, 23 children were present and numbers had risen to 36 by September of that year. In January 1870, when Miss Alcock became the Mistress, there were 43 children on the Register. A day later the number was 55 and by February there were 64 names, the highest recorded figure. Pilton children came to the school and, until their school opened in May 1873, so did those from Aldwinckle.

Ages for entry and leaving were not clarified until February 1919 when it was ruled that 'No child who becomes of school age (4) during a term can be compelled to attend school until the beginning of the following term, no child who attains the age of exemption may leave school until the end of term in which the age (14) is attained.' However, children were admitted at an early age throughout the school's history. During the months of October-December 1866 no less than three children were accepted whose age was noted as 'three years next birthday'. A uniform school year, ending on 1 August, was adopted by the Education Committee in 1920. Until then Wadenhoe School summer holidays were dictated by the harvest.

Children visiting the village to stay with grandparents or friends would often join in the lessons if the school was not closed for the holidays. One young child who visited from London in the early years of the century remembers few differences between herself and the local children despite the great difference in backgrounds - she wore sandals whereas they wore boots, and had pinafores long after London children. However, in other matters the village children were more advanced than her; she introduced the Wadenhoe youngsters to 'Schoolgirls Own'; they introduced her to film stars, at least by name, such as Pearl White. Perhaps some village child had a more worldly relation in Kettering!

School photographs from 1870 to 1952 are reproduced in *Figs 3-7 and 10*, and there is a fascinating family link in the pictures on the following page. Lottie Wilson (later Morehen, circled in *Fig. 5*), was the mother of Doris Morehen (later Chapman, circled in *Figs 6 and 7*).

In autumn 1940 there was an influx of 23 evacuees, mostly from Walthamstowe in the East End of London, and between then and 1945 there was a total of 45, all lodged in the smaller cottages such as those on the Green for periods of 14 months to two and a half years. Sixteen children went home to London for longer or shorter stays, but returned



Fig. 5:  
Wadenhoe School 1870



Fig. 6:  
Wadenhoe School  
May Day 1919



Fig. 7:  
Wadenhoe School 1920  
Miss Jones at back

to Wadenhoe to be readmitted to the school for a few months to two years. Attendance figures always referred to 'natives' and 'evacuees'. The war-time reminiscences of one child, Alan Wilson - not one of the main group of evacuees - are given in *Chapter 7*. Another child, Irene Keen, here earlier than most evacuees at the time of the 'Phoney War', and again not one of the Walthamstowe evacuees, had such happy memories of her stay in Wadenhoe that she wished in later life to make her permanent home here. Her memories are also in *Chapter 7*.

Strangely, despite the fact that some of their fathers must have been killed, there was no mention of war in the Log Book during the years of the First World War, other than extra blackberry picking on two half-days in 1917, when a total of 377 lb were collected 'for HM Forces', and five half-days in 1918, and a note that the War Memorial was erected in November 1919 'at the crossroads'. In 1917 several children were 'banking for War Savings Certificates'. The war seems to have passed the school by, although on Remembrance Day 1924 the children kept the Minute's Silence at the War Memorial. Even in the Second World War, comments were mainly confined to the numbers of evacuees. Blackberry picking was again de rigueur - in 1941 the children were paid 3d/lb and the fruit was made into jam at Wadenhoe House by the Women's Institute. Rose-hips were also gathered. In 1942 the children had gas-masks fitted.

## **Absence from school**

Chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diphtheria, mumps and influenza were common illnesses and would sometimes lead to the school being closed for a week or two or even longer. Ringworm was very contagious; one girl was absent for eight months before being 'clear'. Large families meant that infections spread quickly. Colds were commonplace. There is no mention of any school medical inspections until March 1923 when both the Doctor and District Nurse visited the school. The District Nurse probably visited periodically but no further mention was made of either Doctor or Dentist until 8 November 1928, when there was a medical inspection with parents attending. Absences from causes other than illness are given in *Table 3*.

## **Holidays**

Apart from Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays, the children were always given the day off for Royal Occasions such as Coronations, Jubilees and Royal and important local Funerals, and from 13 to 23 October 1865 and subsequent years the school closed for the Aldwinckle Feast. Other special breaks included:

**11 July 1865:** A day's rest because of the previous hard day's work when an HM Inspector called!

**28 September 1866:** The school wanted by the Clothing Club.

**2 June 1871:** Half-day holiday for the opening of the Recreation ground.

**3 August 1909:** Half-day holiday and general holiday for the village for sports, luncheon and tea given by the Squire, George Ward Hunt.

**8 August 1919:** An extra week's holiday for peace celebrations.

**20 July 1938:** Outing to Taylors Bell Foundry and Players Factory. (The Church bells had just been recast and extended to a peal of six; George Ward Hunt was then working for Players.)

<i>Reason for absence</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Harvest	Until 1 August 1920 Wadenhoe School's summer holidays coincided with the Harvest. The Education Committee then decreed that the year would end on 1st August
Potato picking	
Crow scaring	Mostly the older boys
Beating	For shoots
Children going to work with parents	
Leaf raking	Often the children kept house whilst their parents did the raking
Cowslip picking	
Blackberry gathering	
Picking up acorns	
Thrapston races	
Village cricket match	
Boys watching sheep-washing in Mill pond	
Meeting of Hounds 16 March 1870; at Lilford attended by the Prince of Wales	
The weather:	Snow or even rain. Children from the outlying Lodges didn't have suitable footwear or clothing. During the Second World War, Miss MacQueen provided wellingtons for these children
Protest	From 26 January to 9 February 1954 two children were kept away from school 'as a protest against certain principles of school management, per letter from the mother'.

**Table 3:**  
Absences from school other than for illness

## The May Queen

May Day was one of the most important days in the school calendar, and an early photograph (*Fig. 8*) shows that considerable trouble was taken in the preparations, with much dressing up. It was celebrated each year until the school closed, but it is only in the later years that the name of the May Queen is mentioned in the Log Books: Melba Briggs in 1940, Violet Brown in 1944, Dorothy Mills in 1945 and Melba's sister Marjorie ('a very pretty May Queen') in 1946 followed by sister Nina in 1947. The May Queen seems to have been the oldest girl in the school, or chosen by the Head Teacher. Mabel Sculthorp remembers: 'I was a butterfly once. We danced on the gravel in front of the school to the tune of 'Come Lasses and Lads' - I was terrified that I would spoil the pattern of the ribbons'. The children would proceed around the village, carrying garlands of flowers wrapped around hoops made by Mrs March. They would call at every house to be given a few pennies, and in the afternoon were given tea by Miss Jones. (In the latter days it seems that the parents had to produce the teas.) Children also came from Lilford School to join in the festivities, and the performance was repeated at the annual Pilton Fete.

*Fig. 8:*  
May Day in about 1900,  
with Rose Morehen as May  
Queen



The May Day celebrations continued in similar fashion throughout the half-century. In 1940 the Log Book records: 'Mrs March made the garland again. The children sang May songs around Wadenhoe and Pilton and were warmly received. They had tea in the Reading Room with old scholars from Aldwinckle and budding scholars, under five. The teacher took several for a walk to look for birds nests, before tea. After tea they played games and danced around the Maypole until 7 p.m.'

Ted Briggs (*Fig. 9*), a farm worker at Mill Farm, lived all his life (1903-77) in Wadenhoe and became unofficial 'Keeper of the Village Lore'. He described May Day in an interview with another Wadenhoe resident, Trevor Hold<sup>4</sup>:

**TH:** *Can you tell me about the May Day celebrations when you were a boy? What was the garland like?*

**TB:** It was made of two wooden hoops, tied at top and bottom, and hung on a pole. In the centre they used to put a baby doll. It was decorated with all the flowers that were in season, wild flowers and garden flowers: primroses, cowslips, gillyflowers, daffodils - any they could get hold of.

**TH:** *Who carried the garland:*

**TB:** The two eldest girls in the village. Two of the biggest boys used to carry it from one village to another. Another girl was the Queen. She used to go in front of the garland and carry the money-box.

**TH:** *When did it take place?*

**TB:** On the first day of May or nearest school-day after it. They used to take all the flowers for the garland to the Olivers' house (No. 24 Pilton Lane - Mr Oliver was blacksmith to the Lilford Estate).

**TH:** *What time did you set off - very early?*

**TB:** No - about the same time as they go to school, about nine o'clock. They'd go round Wadenhoe, go round Pilton, Lilford and come back through Achurch and across the meadows if it were dry. But only the bigger ones. The infants would only go round Wadenhoe.

**TH:** *What time did you finish?*

**TB:** Between one and two.

**TH:** *What songs did you sing?*

**TB:** 'Remember us poor mayers all', 'Hail, all hail the merry month of May', 'Suppose a little cowslip should hang its golden head', 'We'll hasten to the woods away', 'Come, lasses and lads'. Sometimes we were asked to sing 'The minstrel boy' or something like that - 'Do you know so-and-so?'

**TH:** *Can you remember the words of the May-song?*

**TB** (*sings*):

1. Re-mem-ber us poor May-ers all For  
here we be-gin ... To lead our lives in  
right-eous-ness For fear we die in sin. ...



*Fig. 9*

A branch of May we brought you here,  
Before your door it stands.  
It is but a sprout, but's well spread out  
By the work of our Lord's hands.

Give me a pint of your good cream  
Or a mug of your brown beer,  
For who may know where we may be  
merry another year.

And now my story's about done,  
No longer can I stay,  
God bless you all both great and small,  
We wish you a joyful May!

**TB:** I en't got a very good voice - a bit husky!

**TH:** *That was the main song?*

**TB:** That was the easiest to remember!

**TH:** *It's 'Auld Lang Syne' isn't it - the tune?*

**TB:** What, that 'Remember us poor mayers all'? B'ent the same as 'Auld Lang Syne'.

**TH:** *Did the schoolteacher have any part in the activities or was it completely run by the Olivers?*

**TB:** The Olivers organised the May Garland but the schoolteacher, Miss Jones, would practise the songs before May Day came round.

**TH:** *After the procession, what happened?*

**TB:** When they'd done the round, they were off for the rest of the day. In the evening they would get all the money counted and shared out according to their ages. Them's who went on the longest journey had the most.

**TH:** *Can you remember how much you used to get? Was it a lot?*

**TB:** If you got two shillings [each] it was as much as you got.

**TH:** *That wasn't bad in those days, was it?*

**TB:** No, not for about 40 [children].

**TH:** *What did you spend it on?*

**TB:** On sweets...

## Lessons

Scripture lessons appear to have dominated the early years, this being a Church of England school, and not surprisingly HM Inspector found the examination results very satisfactory. Progress in Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic, and especially the last, was poor for the first few years. From the 1930s the Log Books do not mention any particular syllabus or lessons apart from Scripture. There was an annual Scripture report as a result of the Diocese of Peterborough Inspection of Religious Knowledge. Throughout the history of Wadenhoe schooling Scripture is one area where the children excelled. The same would not be said of children today! As there was a sale of school needlework every December one can assume that the girls achieved creditable results in this subject. In view of frequent school absences, plus the fact that quite a few children were admitted at different times throughout the year, the lack of progress in the core subjects is not surprising. It must have been difficult for the children to receive much, if any, individual help to cover the areas they had missed.

<b>Standards I-V</b>	Chambers Standard Reading Books
<b>Standard I</b>	Constable's English Reading Book
<b>Standards V &amp; VI</b>	Constable's English Reading Books and Abbott's Reader
<b>Standards II-VI</b>	Nelson's Geographical Reading Book; National Society's Historical Reading Book
<i>Poetry for repetition</i>	
<b>Standards I &amp; II</b>	The Village Blacksmith, by Longfellow
<b>Standards III &amp; IV</b>	The Deserted Village, by Goldsmith
<b>Standards V &amp; VI</b>	The Lady of the Lake, by Scott; We are Seven, by Wordsworth

**Table 4:**  
**Reading books in use in 1883**

In 1883 class subjects to be taught were Grammar, Geography and Needlework. *Table 4* lists the reading books in use at that time. Subjects for 1884 and 1885 were not very different. In November 1884 a present was given to each child who passed in two or three subjects at the Government Examination, also to all the infants. 'The Lady of the Lake' and 'The Village Blacksmith' continued to be set books in the next few years - it has to be remembered that books were in short supply and had to be paid for, although between 1899 and 1902 an Aid Grant of £15 per year was received from the Board of Education.

From 1890 and for some years after there were Object Lessons for the Infant Class. These varied from year to year. Thus in 1891 the list was: Tea, Coffee, Sugar, Cotton, Leather, Rain, The Cow, Farmyard Butter, Potato, Different Kinds of Paper, The Hands and Face, A

Thunderstorm, The Sky, The Seasons, The Cat, The Robin, The Mouse, The Clock, A Railway Station, A Blacksmith's Shop, How to Light a Fire, A Candle, Things for Writing With. No further explanation is recorded. The syllabus of work for Miss Brittle's last year - 1912 - developed to some extent. English, Reading, Geography and Arithmetic (written and mental), Drawing, Recitation, Needlework, Drill and Singing were taught to the older scholars, whilst the Infants appear to have been well drilled in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, and also did Drill, Games, Knitting and Hemming. Satisfactory results were achieved. The syllabus for the year ending 31 October 1918, under Miss Jones, demanded more from the pupils (*Table 5*). In 1919 Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury' was introduced and this poetry book was used nationally well into the 1940s. Arthur Mee's 'Children's Newspaper' was another publication made available. In 1928 reference is made in the Log Books to a traveller calling with works by Thomas Hardy, and to broadcast lessons in 1934, particularly Music, Nature Study and History.

**Table 5:**  
**The syllabus for the**  
**year ending 31 October**  
**1918**

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Compositions</b>	On current events, local events, description of surroundings, parts of stories. Correlation of history, geography and rural science
<b>Arithmetic</b>	Practical demonstration of weights and measures, decimals and fractions. Practical methods for finding areas of schoolroom, playground, etc.
<b>Needlework</b>	More useful items to be produced
<b>Geography and History</b>	To form the habit of mind which asks for reasons
<b>Rural science</b>	

Swimming was included in the curriculum of the 1920s. Annie Witten remembers Mrs Daisy Ward Hunt taking the children in her car to Lilford and teaching them to swim, with a belt fixed to a pole. Natural history walks, especially in the Church Field, were considered important throughout the school's existence, and were popular. In March 1939 a report from the RSPB Bird and Tree County Challenge Competition, Northants, which the children obviously enjoyed entering each year, wrote of Wadenhoe 'sending in excellent work from children under 12' and that 'their papers are particularly attractive and creditable owing to the bright and interesting style of writing and the amount of thoroughly first-hand knowledge gained'. Medals were given to Jean Briggs for her essay on the Chaffinch and Mary Bell, on Oak. In 1940 Jean Briggs was awarded five shillings for her essay 'Wagtail'.

Becky Hold, in a school project done in 1978<sup>5</sup>, wrote: ‘The older children sat on folding chairs, two at a desk with a top which opened and used pen and ink. The infants on the other hand sat six to a bench at long desks with slates and chalk, colours being permitted for art lessons. School would start each day at 9 a.m. with registration, followed by hymns, prayers, and Bible study 9.15 to 10 a.m. There were morning and afternoon breaks, and lunch from 12 noon to 1.30 p.m. The games played were mostly singing games, ‘Ring a ring a roses’, ‘Poor Mary sits a weeping’. No ball games were allowed because of the windows. They used skipping ropes and also played ‘Oranges and lemons’ and Tig. The boys had the front playground and the girls had the back - the older girls had to play with the three-year-olds.’

Each year children of the required age had to go to Aldwinckle to take the examination to assess their aptitude for further schooling. On 25 March 1924 Stanley Morehen and Tom Lewis sat the exam, but the Log Books contain no mention of the result. In the same year Marjorie Morehen was awarded a free Scholarship to the Domestic Economy School and left Wadenhoe School on 23 December. Two years later Joyce Hankins gained a scholarship to Wellingborough High School. Another girl also passed the same exam, but did not win a scholarship so stayed on at Wadenhoe because her family could not afford the fees. Others took the examination but failed. In January 1935 three girls were withheld from the Scholarship exam as they were physically unfit.

## Annual Scholarship examinations

**14 June 1926:** The school gained 83% for Folk Dancing at the Lilford competition.

## Other successes

**21 November 1927:** George Moisey made a balloon which ascended when filled with hot air.

**4 December 1934:** ‘Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary’, written by the children, was counted among the good tunes by the BBC.

**11 November 1937:** Violet Head (now Woodbridge, the Postmistress) won a writing prize.

**24 March 1939:** Geoffrey Bullimore won the Daily Herald Handwriting Prize.

**24 April 1936:** Pupils attended the music competition in Oundle and achieved some success.

In November 1866 three youngsters were dismissed because of their parents’ interference. Children were punished for behaving badly in Church as well as for quarrelling, fighting in the road, swearing, being late for school, truancy and for stealing and lying. In May 1869 one of the older lads was flogged for impertinence, the cane being used for the more serious offences.

## Behaviour and punishment

During Miss Brittle's period as Head Mistress (1873-1912) behaviour improved considerably - she is remembered as being very strict - as did the standard of work. She was a formidable and revered woman. Mrs M. Newby, the Rector's wife in 1930, published an article in the Northampton County Magazine<sup>3</sup> entitled 'The Village School'. Some of her remarks do not seem to match the reality of a school in what is generally described now as having been at that time a 'poor, rough village'. She wrote: '... A small trim woman stood at the teacher's desk - a woman with large intrepid eyes, level black brows and a bright smile. She did not strike you as small - she looked so supremely capable and forceful. In the old days, some 50 to 60 children occupied the little room, yet it never seemed crowded. With so much light pouring in from the six windows and the perfect order maintained, an illusion of space was created. The children were healthy specimens, almost without exception, well in body and mind, and gave little trouble on the whole.

'Wadenhoe has turned out some goodly giants in its time - strapping young fellows, who did splendid work on the land. In this little school they had received their early training at the hands of a woman and without much aid from the stick. True, Miss 'Dogood' occasionally waved it around as a warning, but seldom did it descend heavily upon any one of them. She corrected on different lines. She chastised them morally so to speak. Delinquents were made to stand on a form before the assembled multitude for a certain length of time. If small and very obstreperous, she would place them, 'weather permitting' (for it could only be a summer penalty) behind the high nursery fenders that guarded the fireplaces at either end of the room. The effect in both cases was salutary but painless.

'Whatever might be said for or against her methods, the fact remained that Wadenhoe School ranked high in the matter of discipline. It still maintains its reputation. In the Education Department, too, it was well thought of in the old days and held its own among other schools. And now, in spite of depleted numbers, new requirements and a higher standard of work, it gallantly keeps pace with the rest.'

However, there were two serious episodes early on in the century involving a Monitress who had come to help with the Infants. Several untruthful accusations, and also threats, had been made against her. To put a stop to it, the culprit (after a threatening note from his mother) was dismissed. The Monitress moved to Oundle Infants School for a week or two, but returned and the boy was readmitted to the Infants class. Soon after he fortunately left the village. Later the same Monitress was left in charge on a Tuesday morning for ten minutes. She had occasion to reprimand a nine year old whereupon his sister (12 years) called out to her and enquired if she wanted her head spanking.

## **The school closure**

At the beginning of the 1950s numbers at the School were low (*Fig.10*), and in 1955, when it closed, only six remained. These were moved to the school at Aldwinckle. Of the six, Anthony Attewell and Arthur Chapman, who both started at Wadenhoe School on 20 April 1953, and also Tony's elder brother Robert, gained scholarships and went on to Wellingborough Grammar School.

Perhaps the final comment should be left to Miss Brice, the teacher from 1950 to 1955. She wrote in the Log book that Wadenhoe was a very happy village to teach in and spoke of the parents as being very co-operative, and the Rector, the Rev. B.H. Dawson, the essence of kindness.



*Fig 10 :*  
The School children in 1952.  
from back to front:  
Ann Williams, Michael  
Briggs, John Briggs, Barry  
Williams, Ruth Mears,  
Bob Attewell, Val Mears,  
Jackie Harmell,  
Leo Harmell, Peter Briggs.

- 1 *School Log Books and Admissions Register (1865-1955).*  
Northants Public Record Office.
- 2 Moisey, George (1981) *Memories of Wadenhoe School.*  
*Wadenhoe & Pilton News*, No. 2, p.17-19.
- 3 Newby, M. (1930) *The Village School.*  
*The Northampton County Magazine*, 3, p.91-93.
- 4 Hold, T. (1984) *Interview with Ted Briggs.*  
*Wadenhoe & Pilton News* , No. 6, p. 6-8
- 5 Hold, B. (1978) *Wadenhoe.* Project for Oundle Middle School.

## References

