

The entry in the school Log Book by Head Master Mr Alfred Meek for 28th day of April, 1873 reads; “opened the new schools this morning at 9 o'clock. The Rector read the prayers. Captain Hereford visited with the Rector later in the morning. Usual routine”.

Before then there was a small school in the grounds of the churchyard. This had been opened in 1821 but could only accommodate up to 45 pupils so the youngest children were sent to an infants school up at Checkley.

The new school was built on the opposite side of the road and was designed for up to 150 pupils from infants through to secondary school leaving age – the original plans are on display in the school today – have a look and see how you think they might have squeezed 150 pupils into just the hall and what we today call Arrow class on the front. The toilets were outside and boys and girls had their own entrances and playgrounds.

The cost of running the small school in 1868 came to £95 and 6 pence! Generous benefactors of the day included Lady Emily Foley, Richard Hereford Esq., Captain and Mrs Hereford, Rev. John Garland and the Reverends Stillingfleet and Weare of Hampton Bishop. The Head master at the time was Mr Smith who was later succeeded by Mr Cryer in January 1870.

In 1888 some of the reasons given for children not attending school included:-

- 1) having no boot as it “was gone to be repaired”
- 2) “my girl has no boots to come to school in. My husband is very ill in bed for some time”
- 3) William Hall from Winsley hill had to stay at home for two days to help make cider
- 4) And unfortunate Elizabeth Wood on October 6th 1888 had to stay at home to help her mother with “having the pig killed!”

In the very early 1900's fairly severe punishments of cuts on the hands or canings, were given out to both girls and boys for rather trivial offences such as trespassing in The Rectory drive, stone throwing, laughing when spoken to, eating in school, showing off temper, throwing girls hat about, being beastly to girls, playing truant or simply, and I quote “being generally troublesome!” Mothers, on occasion, would even request punishments at school

in respect of poor behaviour at home. You may like to look through the punishment book on display in the school for familiar names. Some family names are repeated frequently!

The exams back then were known as standards and examples of poetry, reading and mathematics books from 1898 are on display in school. These belonged to Alfred Davies of The Studies Hampton Bishop. In 1898 it cost Alfred's family 3 pounds 8 shilling and half pence to buy the books and equipment he needed to use at school including pen, rubber, ruler and compass. The school would receive a bonus for each standard a pupil passed.

The school was regularly inspected by the local authority as well as by the church. Pupils were expected to recite prayers, sing hymns and have a good knowledge of the scriptures.

In 1899 when Mr Meek was still Head an additional classroom was added and became what we now call Pentaloe.

A list of children attending school when Mr and Mrs Markham retired in 1921 includes a host of family names that are still familiar to Mordiford today; Tyler, Taysom, Prosser, Davies, Morgan, Barrell, Greenly, Weaver, Griffiths, Gladwin.

In those days it was common for the Head masters wife to also teach in the school and lived in the Masters House attached to it. In 1922, Class 2 taught by Mrs Higgins the new head teachers wife, included 36 children of a wide range of ages. Mr Higgins was head for 21 years. During his time at school they would close for a day for pupils to attend the May Fair in Hereford and also the Hampton Bishop Flower Show. Boys were instructed in gardening in the school allotment which is now the village green whilst the girls practised domestic duties in the Iron Room in Hampton Bishop. The year of 1930 was a profitable one. "Prizes of 4 pound were won by the children" at the show for their vegetables and needlework entries. In 1937 the children in Checkley were rewarded with a school bus to bring them to and from school each day. Up until then the children mostly walked the two and a half miles to school each way!

Children used to have to come to school all through August but they had holidays in September when most families went hop picking. School was often closed if too few children turned up.

This was usually due to fruit or hop picking, sickness, flooding (along the Hampton Bishop Road) or lack of coal and bad weather. The chief school medical officer often closed the school for weeks at a time to prevent spread of disease typically scarlet fever, measles and diphtheria. The nit nurse was a regular visitor.

Mr Holland took over the leadership in 1942 and oversaw the gift of the playing fields to the school by the Hereford Family. He described this achievement as “this is a red letter week. My past 11 years have not been fruitless”. The first school dinners were served in 1943 from the kitchen where Frome class is now. In the same year the original outside toilets became flushing. Up until then they had been emptied by hand each morning and thrown into “the ditch”! In October 1959 Miss Taysom retired on the 40th anniversary of joining the permanent staff at Mordiford not to mention the years she spent there as a pupil and as an apprentice. She was presented with a bouquet and a cheque! This was a common gift of the time donated by grateful parents, staff and generous local benefactors! At one point in her career she had been in charge of 55 infants in one room with only one monitress to help.

In 1972 under the guidance of Headmaster Mr Cooke, Monnow and Wye Class were added along with the new inside toilets – hurrah! More highlights from his headship include the erection of a terrapin classroom in the yard, trips to London, York and lots of PTFA events. Other familiar names in the log include Mrs Morgan and Mrs Fortey, and of course the Hereford and Garland family. Mr Cookes Headship culminated in the schools Centenary celebrations of the “new school”. 123 school children re-created the story of the Mordiford Dragon with a pageant and their very own Dragon through the village followed by a tea at Longworth Hall.

Children from Mordiford and St Mary's Fownhope enjoyed a week at Dolfriog Hall in North Wales along with the head teacher Mr Nightingale, Mrs Hodges (now Mrs Pearson) and Mr Jones from Fownhope. More details from this trip can be re-lived in the display in the school.

Mr Maggs started his 21 years as head in 1979 which was also a time of low numbers on role at Mordiford, economic cuts and the closure of the school kitchens saw the retirement of the dinner

ladies Mrs Strange, Miss Herman and Mrs Holbrook. School took delivery of their first Micro computer in October 1983. It cost £325. Half was paid for by the government and the rest by Larport Farms, The Hereford family and the PTA. On a trip to London in '95 the then prime minister John Major came out of No 10 Downing Street and invited the children in to look around.

Mrs Bourdon- Pierre symbolically became the first permanent female head-teacher in the history of Mordiford School at the beginning of the third millennia. This was the start of another round of building works culminating in the conversion of the redundant kitchen into what we call Frome class today, the addition of Lugg class on the otherside of the new toilet block; the creation of a new smaller kitchen alongside the hall and the moving of the entrance and offices to where you see them today. This was facilitated by moving Dragons Nursery from the old school house to a mobile classroom in the playground where they still are. Mrs Pearson who taught at Mordiford for 37 years will tell us more about the year 2003/2004 when as head she had to oversee the building works. Most of the changes made over the years can be seen on the plans on display in the school.

After nearly 180 years of Headmasters at Mordiford, Mrs Kearns was appointed the third female head-teacher in 2004. After 10 years in the post, whereby the school has grown to its present 157 pupils on role and the achievement of an outstanding OFSTED inspection in 2010, Mrs Kearns is sadly leaving in September to take on the headship of Hampton Dene Primary School. She will be sorely missed by children and their families, staff and governors. The Governors have recently appointed Ms Kerry Finney, current head of Pembridge C of E School, who they are confident will continue to lead Mordiford into a bright future.