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## OPTING OUT IN VICTORIAN LONDON

### A school for the respectable poor, 1849-1870

A new school opened in Central London on 9 April 1849 with sixty pupils, thirty-three boys and twenty-seven girls. Six months later 286 were on the roll, with an average attendance of 120 boys and 90 girls. The school was run by the newly-gathered fellowship of Baptists at Bloomsbury Chapel and from the church's archives, particularly the manuscript Minute Book of the School Committee, it is possible to form a picture of the education a charitably supported school could offer in the years preceding the 1870 Education Act to children for whom Board Schools would cater thereafter.

Government moves to improve education between 1833 and 1843 were resented by Nonconformists who disliked the concept of government grants, feeling these not only favoured Anglican schools but inevitably opened the way for state control. Many Methodists together with an increasing number of Congregationalists and a few Baptists, who were anxious to show themselves principled voluntarists eschewing all state help, chose to set up their own independent schools, opting out of the British and Foreign Schools Society, which they had previously supported as the main alternative to the Anglican National Schools.<sup>1</sup> William Brock, Baptist minister at Norwich, held forth in 1843 on 'The Position and Duty of the English Nonconformists in respect of National Education':

National legislation should confine itself to the guardianship of our persons, and to the protection of our property, leaving every man to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.  
 . . . The State has no business with the education of the child.<sup>2</sup>

Bloomsbury Chapel opened in December 1848, with the large basement originally a schoolroom, used by both Day and Sunday Schools. Both chapel and schools were conceived in the fertile mind of Morton Peto, M.P., the great railway contractor. He installed William Brock as minister and they recruited a schoolmaster, Mr Joseph Austen Meen, at a salary of £100 p.a., plus £20 rent paid by Peto. Mr Meen and his wife Sarah were among the founder members of Bloomsbury six months later, transferring from the church at Shoreditch. A schoolmistress, Miss Cottle, was paid £50 which she judged too low but the Committee deemed adequate under 'ordinary circumstances'. She also joined Bloomsbury, transferring from Wardour Street Chapel.

The Sunday School did not open until 25 March 1849, and was at first run by the same committee as the Day School, with common funds, but they were separated in June 1851. Voluntary finance for the Sunday School was never a problem. The primary aim was instruction from the scriptures in their obligations to God and men. By October 1849 there were 115 boys and 73 girls on the Sunday School books, with seventeen teachers (6-11 children per teacher, compared with 45-65 in the Day School). James Benham, already a deacon, taught the infant class, and his brother, Frederick, was Superintendent. There were also senior bible classes: Mr Meen ran one for older youths and young men in the vestry, while Mr Francis, publisher and editor of the *Athenaeum*, ran another class for older boys, as he had done earlier at Carter Lane. The school met at 9.15 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., and teachers took turns to conduct a service for the younger children during the morning service. The committee subscribed to the West London Auxiliary of the Sunday School Union, which Bloomsbury supported warmly. Another Benham brother, Augustus, remembered as an excellent teacher, became one of the SSU secretaries, and another Bloomsbury teacher, Mr Pask, ran SSU teachers' training courses. Soon Bloomsbury had added two branch Sunday Schools nearby, all well attended, with midweek classes

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in reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. Each Sunday School had a lending library. Good numbers of scholars subsequently joined the church, which particularly reflects the good work done in the senior classes.

Bloomsbury Chapel also supported the local Ragged Schools. These offered free education to destitute children. Boys from the associated Refuge regularly worshipped at Bloomsbury, sitting in the upper gallery. John Hampden Fordham, a barrister who was treasurer of the Ragged School Union, was a Bloomsbury member. While in favour of this work, Bloomsbury members did not always find the Ragged schoolchildren desirable neighbours. James Benham, who contributed as much to the Ragged Schools as he did to the Bloomsbury Day Schools, lamented, in a letter copied in the Day School Minute Book, that these 'rough, uncultivated children' used to assemble near the Bloomsbury School gate to bate the more respectable children entering or leaving. 'Some of our children have been plundered by them, others beaten, others pursued and pelted . . .'.

### POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

The Bloomsbury Day School offered a subsidised basic education to 'children of the respectable poor or of small tradespeople . . . in harmony with the benevolent character of an institution connected with a Christian church'. It had infant, intermediate and, later, senior sections.

The governing body was a committee of fifteen men, elected by the church and chaired by the minister. All prominent members of the church, they were mostly in business locally. In theory the committee met quarterly but in addition members took turns to make regular visits of inspection. A sub-committee of eight ladies managed the girls' section, visiting weekly by rotation and handling petty expenses. All subscribers had the right to visit, but there is little evidence of this privilege being exercised.

The church charged the school £70 p.a. rent, plus £15 for services. This became a vexed issue between school committee and diaconate, although some men were on both. In 1854 the rent was reduced to £35. Pupil's fees (3d per week plus a further 1d per week for each optional extra course) covered five-eighths of the total cost, averaged over the school's life. The balance was made up by subscriptions and donations from church members and friends. In the early years such gifts were higher in relation to pupils' fees. Some church members were genuinely interested in the school, but the majority needed repeated coaxing to maintain support and constant assurance that their help was properly applied. Private application for subscriptions by the secretary of the committee proved more effective in fund-raising than Congregational Collections following a special annual sermon, advertised, as behoved the flag ship of the Baptists in London, in *The Times*.

Who were these 'respectable poor'? In 1855 subscribers were anxious lest 'some of the Parents were in a position to pay for the education of their Children'. Similar suspicions in 1858 made the Committee record the parents' status. They found 'Journeymen or Police 74, Shopmen 8, Tradesmen 26, Schoolmasters, Clerks etc. 13, Foreman 6, Widows 7', and concluded the school was 'well adapted to the wants of the neighbourhood'. In 1868 they noted the jobs of boys who had left during the year. Four had gone into solicitors' offices, three into the Stamp Office at Somerset House, one to the office of the Geographical Society, several had become errand boys or apprentices, and one had died in the Regent's Park ice tragedy. Many of the girls went into domestic service. Church members were encouraged to recruit staff for their homes and businesses from the school.

Periodically the committee felt the need actively to recruit scholars. In 1854 a circular was distributed, mainly about the classes for older boys. In 1863 a

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prospectus was published, and in 1865 five hundred handbills were produced for periodic exhibition in shop windows. In November 1853 Meen suggested charging seniors one shilling a week inclusive, thereby providing for more staff. He believed most parents could bear this; Miss Cottle disagreed, but the committee accepted it. The wider senior curriculum was evidently liked by parents. In 1855 Mr Meen was concerned by a fall in numbers but observed 'that the decrease had taken place in the lower portions of the Schools whilst the number of those paying the higher fees was greater than at any previous time'.

Although the church subsidised the school and provided the governing body, Bloomsbury Baptists were conscientious upholders of 'Voluntaryism' and would not inculcate specifically Baptist principles. Brock observed with pride in the Church Year Book for 1865:

There are no schools like them anywhere about. They are entirely undenominational, no use being made of any catechism, or creed, or Church formulary whatever. No attendance at a particular place of worship on Sundays is insisted on. No reproach is cast, either directly or indirectly, upon the religious opinions or practices to which the children are accustomed when at home. At the same time, the Holy Scriptures are in constant and careful use, whilst prayer is daily offered up for the Divine blessing on all who are concerned

There were a number of schools, mostly Anglican or Roman Catholic, serving a similar class in the immediate, densely populated area. For destitute children there were Ragged Schools to which Bloomsbury Chapel also gave support. The establishment of fine new National Schools in nearby Endell Street in 1862 was seen as 'an additional inducement to support the schools here so that they may not suffer from the proximity of a large school under Government patronage'.

Once Mr M'Cree attempted to give weekly addresses, presumably of an evangelistic nature, but the committee quickly put a stop to this, preferring to trust religious education to the schoolmaster. The committee would doubtless have liked to see all the children become Baptists and chose teachers likely to set a godly example, but would not abuse the role of education even for so high a purpose. Although the school used British and Foreign lesson books, the committee declined to attach it to the Society, and was quite annoyed when the Society's inspector, Henry Althans, turned up unannounced - even though he expressed much pleasure and satisfaction in what he saw.

The annual examinations were held orally in public, in front of parents, committee and friends. The schoolmasters liked to invite neighbouring colleagues to help examine the children, while the committee preferred to keep it an internal affair. In 1861 there was a written examination, drawn up by William Brock. It took Mr Meen from February 1851 to May 1856 to persuade the Committee to let him reward proficiency and good conduct with shilling book prizes.

Absentee figures reflect the prevalence of illness, often prolonged in those days. Epidemics, like measles in 1860, reduced numbers dramatically, as did times of high parental unemployment when the modest fees could not be met. The severe winter of 1854-5 created problems, but the Master was 'careful for the very poorest of the children'. There is no suggestion that children were absent for lack of appropriate clothing - these were the 'respectable poor': by contrast, M'Cree often had to clothe local children before taking them to the Ragged School. The population was mobile too, so relatively few children stayed the full course, the average being two years. Over the twenty-one years, nearly 3000 pupils were taught by a total of

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27 teachers, excluding monitors, at an average total cost of £329 per annum.

The school experimented with co-education in 1854, after Miss Cottle left abruptly. There had been discipline problems and Mr Meen judged that 'the harmony and efficiency of the Schools would be better secured by placing them wholly under his immediate superintendence'. Experience elsewhere had shown that 'classes could be advantageously mixed'. He would, however, need the help of a sewing mistress. The Ladies Committee were happy with this practice and Meen's salary was raised to £130, but after his death in 1861 the sexes were segregated again because 'when the boys and girls were taught in a class together, it was found that the girls were backward in answering questions; and objections were contantly made by the parents to the mixed classes.' After resegregation, the number of girls increased.

School hours were 9 a.m. to 12 noon and 2 to 4.30 p.m., Monday to Friday. There was evidently a three-week Midsummer holiday, for in 1861, when the Mistress had run both sections for some weeks after Mr Meen's sudden death, 'It was arranged that the Boys' School should reassemble after three weeks holiday, and the Girls' after four weeks in order that Miss Pearce might have a longer rest'. She also received a £5 bonus.

### CURRICULUM

The whole school joined in an opening session of 'Singing, Scripture Reading and Prayer', and in two or three singing intervals through the day (the only recreation possible since there was no external playground), while they closed with more singing. For the rest of the time boys and girls were in separate classes within the one hall. Boys studied reading, writing, history, geography, grammar, arithmetic, natural history, natural philosophy (physical science), and mental arithmetic. Girls had needlework instead of the sciences, and only the older girls were expected to cope with mental arithmetic. Optional extras were Drawing, Mathematics and Singing by Note (Hullah's system at first, but this soon gave way to Tonic Solfa). Mr Meen offered a fortnightly chemistry class to older boys. This was quite early for science teaching in such a school, though a little was beginning to be encouraged in schools receiving government grants. Some of the committee members were distinctly suspicious of Mr Meen's enthusiasm for science teaching. By 1855 boys were also taught book-keeping. It seems a broad curriculum for such a school. The range compares well with the 1890 Standard IV (top level of elementary education) requirements - although the level of attainment is not known. Subscribers thought it rather ambitious: they did not intend their charity to educate children beyond their station in life.

Needlework was important for the girls and evoked much concern. In 1851 the Lady Visitors were asked by the committee 'to prohibit forthwith such worsted and fancy work as they deem unsuitable', and the mistress was firmly told to co-operate. By November 1852 the school was able to 'undertake work for friends in the congregation', but close scrutiny was maintained both on quality and to ensure it was good plain sewing. In 1855 the Ladies Committee 'determined to render every assistance in instructing the Monitors in Needlework, the inequality of which is still to be deplored'. The following March things had come to such a pass that 'the work done by the children was so bad that some of the garments sold by the Cheap Clothing Society had been returned to them' - ultimate condemnation! Happily needlework improved under Miss Pearce.

The children enjoyed occasional outings, at first joining the Sunday Schools' annual treat at Regent's Park, Sudbury or Richmond Park. In 1852 Mr Kemp, the School's Treasurer, invited all the day scholars to his grounds at Roehampton, 'where they spent a most merry and joyous afternoon. They had taken their dinner with

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them but were supplied with milk and water and buns for tea'. It took nine vans to carry the 281 children and their teachers the ten miles journey. The children paid 3d each towards this - about a quarter of the total cost.

Other outings were more educational: to the Polytechnic Institution in Regent Street, 'followed by useful lessons on parts of that instructive exhibition', and to the British Museum. In 1862 Charles Gilpin, Quaker M.P. for Northampton, paid for a number to attend the International Exhibition. From 1858 on, about a hundred children regularly took part in Tonic Solfa concerts at the Crystal Palace, Exeter Hall and the Agricultural Hall. Occasional evening lectures were arranged for the scholars, and a Mutual Improvement Society was started in 1858 for the older ones. Two years earlier Mr Meen had begun meetings for former pupils living nearby, as 'he thought it well to look after them as much as possible after they have left school'. He also suggested the annual Parents' Singing Meetings, presumably as a means of keeping in touch.

Bloomsbury concentrated especially on ministry to young men, whether growing up through Day or Sunday Schools, or coming to London to work. Alongside the burgeoning Bible Classes, a Discussion Class was formed in 1855, meeting on Monday evenings. This developed into the Bloomsbury Chapel Young Men's Association, which offered wholesome social life with a little education thrown in. M'Cree describes it as 'a secular society', although Bible studies were regularly on the agenda. Brock ran a more advanced class for interested young men, looking at 'the evidences or interpretations of the Scriptures. Paley's *Horae Paulinae* has been used with much satisfaction'. He taught some New Testament Greek. For youths out at work in their early teens, such activities at church and at the nearby YMCA offered opportunities for further education and personal development as they learned to debate and speak in public.

### STAFF

The staffing of the Bloomsbury school reflects teacher training in its infancy. Mr Meen and Miss Cottle came as experienced teachers. They worked the school by the monitor system, then used by both National and British schools, where the older children, aged ten or eleven, drilled the younger ones in the '3 Rs' (Bloomsbury paid boy monitors 4d to 1/- a week, and girl monitors 1d to 4d. In October 1849 9/- a week was being spent on monitors, which the committee judged too much and reduced to 6/-).

By October 1849, six months after opening the Bloomsbury schools and with numbers rising rapidly, Mr Meen asked for 'An Assistant to enable him to conduct classes in the School Room and Class Room simultaneously, as he is compelled at present to trust more to the Senior Monitor than he thinks expedient.' The committee would not pay for an Assistant, but instead appointed two Pupil Teachers. This was a new approach to teacher training, introduced in 1846, with apprentice teachers, aged 13 to 18, replacing monitors and subsequently completing their training at college. One Pupil Teacher, Alexander Anderson, was duly articled for four years, the other was on probation. After six months they would have articled the latter, but his parents declined the terms. Another youth, Charles Collins, was articled for five years instead. Some monitors were still used, but by 1855 they only cost £2 a quarter. Bloomsbury paid pupil teachers £8, £10, £12, £15 and £20 p.a. progressively.

When Meen was seriously ill in 1852, the committee obtained a supply teacher from the Voluntary Schools Association, but after four days he was found 'ineffective'. 'Subsequently the School was conducted by Anderson and Collins very successfully'. At the end of his apprenticeship Anderson would have liked to become Assistant Teacher but he expected £50 p.a., which the committee thought exorbitant,

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so he went elsewhere. Several boys were tried as pupil teachers before Ebenezer Cole was articulated; sadly he died in 1855. Early in 1854 a temporary assistant master was appointed. When he left after two years, Charles Collins, apprenticeship complete, was appointed Assistant at £25 p.a. The following year, with the committee's approval, he entered Homerton Training College. Other young men and women came and went as teachers, with no more than six operating at any one time.

Relations between the committee and Miss Cottle were often strained. She tried in vain for a rise in 1850, and resented the superstructure of Lady Visitors and the Ladies' Committee. She was often dilatory in handing over scholars' fees, and she complained about the lighting in the subterranean hall.

Meanwhile Sarah Meen was appointed Assistant to Miss Cottle in 1851, at £10 p.a., with a £2 rise annually 'so long as your good conduct and efforts to improve yourself shall seem to the committee to deserve it'. In 1854 her father sent her to a Normal School (teachers' training college) and the committee suggested that Miss Cottle ought to be able to work the school with monitors, but eventually appointed an unqualified Assistant, Anne Baker, aged 15½. Soon after Miss Cottle resigned and was succeeded by Sarah Meen at £30 p.a.

Mr Meen had given general satisfaction up till then, but now he began to have disagreements with the committee. This may reflect a change of Secretary. There were problems over expulsions, and subscribers were not happy with the 1855 examinations, complaining that:

The higher branches of Education were pushed too far, whilst too little attention was given to needlework, and domestic matters in general. But, it was thought, so long as the Evangelical Principles were so well taught as they had been, and Mr Meen continued Master, no change could well be made.

Mr Meen was known to be considering a post in Jamaica and 'it was thought, should he do so, our difficulties in a great measure would be removed'. The committee was disappointed when he relinquished this idea. Miss Baker was grudgingly granted her £2 increment in 1855, in the hope that 'the increase of salary will act as a stimulus to greater diligence than had hitherto characterized her services', but she soon left on grounds of ill health, as did her successor. Meanwhile Miss Meen was judged not to 'possess the necessary amount of tact and energy to fill her post efficiently' and was sacked in March 1856 because, in the judgement of the Ladies Committee, although amiable and cooperative, she was poor at needlework and 'her want of energy and authority disqualifies her, in their opinion, for filling her present position'. The Ladies recommended as mistress Elizabeth Pearce, trained at the 'Borough School' (the British and Foreign Society's Borough Road training college). She was pious and of proven efficiency, but 'her services would not be obtained for less than £40 p.a.'. This the committee felt able to pay, raising it to £50 a year later to mark their satisfaction. Early in 1868 Miss Pearce was offered 'a very good situation in another school', but was willing to stay at Bloomsbury for less than she could command elsewhere if she could have some rise. The committee decided to increase salaries generally.

Mr Meen died suddenly in April 1861; the committee gave his widow two months salary, plus £80 raised specially. Then they had to find a new Master. Mr Lawrence was suggested by a neighbouring minister. He had taught in Kent for eight years and in another chapel school in central London for sixteen. 'A very intimate friend of Mr Meen's', he had helped examine Bloomsbury children in the past. Several committee members visited his school and were impressed by what they saw and the glowing testimonial from that chapel's minister. He was appointed on

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13 May at £120 p.a. and took up duties on 24 June. He brought his assistant, Mr Gams, with him and asked for a Junior Assistant to take charge of the youngest boys. The committee agreed to this and left Mr Lawrence to choose him, in marked contrast to their attitude when Mr Meen had asked for more staff in days when school numbers were higher. They increased Mr Lawrence's salary to £130 in 1865. Mr Gams was paid £40, and junior assistants £14 to £16. In the Girls' School Mary Wood was appointed assistant and Clara Symons junior assistant, succeeded fifteen months later by Anna Coe, previously a scholar. When Miss Pearce resigned to marry in 1866, Miss Wood was promoted, on condition she spent the intervening three months 'in close study of those branches in which she is not efficient', the committee paying for a supply teacher in her absence. Anna Coe also moved up and Lottie Coe became junior assistant.

### PREMISES AND EQUIPMENT

The subterranean schoolroom was a hall 16m x 10m x 3.5m high, without any proper partitions. Early nineteenth-century National Schools allowed six square feet per child,<sup>3</sup> on which basis Bloomsbury could accommodate 287 children. The number on the books reached 366 (in November 1852) but average attendance was 283. Even so they would have been quite tightly packed, and there was no scope for any playground or exercise yard. The basement schoolroom was entered 'by a circuitous passage under the pavements . . . about two feet wide, like a passage in a coal mine and almost as dark'.<sup>4</sup> Within the main hall there were raised galleries for infants. In January 1850 Meen sought a partition 'to promote the quiet and order of both Schools' and suggested that a Washing Place for the occasional use of children was 'much needed'. A curtain partition was provided but soon abandoned as lighting and ventilation were too poor. Silvered reflectors at the windows were recommended to help lighting and proved effective, except that the committee could only afford four of the eight required.

Initially Morton Peto had provided desks, forms and 'fittings' and his brother-in-law, Mr Kemp, books and maps. Thereafter essential equipment was bought by the committee, while friends might give other desirable items. In 1852 two movable platforms were made for the teachers. Green baize, costing 37 shillings, was bought to cover desks for needlework. Basic equipment, like cupboards, demanded weighty consideration from the committee. There was no budgeting for books and slates. Teachers had to coax more from the committee as school numbers rose. Mr Meen formed a Loan Library for pupil teachers, as no local circulating library could provide appropriate books. In 1854 a deacon suggested the 'necessity for Iron Guards to protect the children from accident at the schoolroom stoves' but the sub-committee set to look into this deemed it unnecessary. A fireguard was supplied in 1863, but only for the girls' stove. There were water-closets, under the pavement in front of the chapel; these provoked complaints about drainage in 1862. On enquiry the Secretary found that 'the closets were only flushed once a week, though Mr Russell, the caretaker, had received instructions to flush them every day'.

Individual committee members, all members of the church, often proved generous friends. Mr Ball gave the much needed cupboard in 1853, Mr Robarts and Mr Kemp money for books, and Mr Benham a globe. George Lance, R.A., the distinguished still-life painter, provided books and drawing materials, and once produced some Mahogany Plank 'which might be exchanged with the carpenter for suitable Drawing Boards'. When maps were needed, Mr Thornthwaite helped the boys to make them. In July 1853 Mr Meen attended the meetings on Education at the Mansion House, when the Government offered to provide drawing materials and drawing masters at very reduced prices, and the committee spent £4 on materials.



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Most of the equipment used for science was Mr Meen's own, but the committee bought some chemicals and after Mr Meen's death purchased his equipment for the school at Mr Lawrence's request.

### CLOSURE

By the late 1860s even Dissent recognised that the voluntary system in education was failing the people. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 proved a workable compromise, with Board Schools supplementing voluntary schools. In May 1869 the Bloomsbury School Committee considered transferring the schools to Mr Lawrence, for he and Miss Wood would have liked to continue there, paying a fair rent. In November, however, the committee resolved: 'That in consideration of all the circumstances of the case, - and under the altered aspect of the question of National education: the Committee recommend to the Church the relinquishment of the Day Schools altogether after Midsummer next.'

On 1 April 1870 the church regretfully agreed to close the schools at Christmas.

Mr Lawrence had written sadly to the Secretary two weeks earlier, 'From remarks made to me by various Members of the Church, I do not think the closing of the School will add very much to the prestige of Bloomsbury'. Once the decision was made, numbers quickly dropped off until on 1 July they settled for immediate closure. By then Mr Lawrence and Miss Wood both had posts awaiting them in nearby chapel schools that were to continue.<sup>5</sup> They were given some desks and forms for these schools. Lottie Coe became Infant Schoolmistress at Leytonstone Workhouse Schools, 'an excellent situation for her'.<sup>6</sup> The fate of other teachers is not recorded. The church soon had other uses for the basement hall, for which it may really have been better suited than as a schoolroom. Although previously available for some evening activities, the school furnishings restricted its use.

The church had never found it easy to fund the school adequately and now accepted State education, although with reservations about religious education under the 1870 compromise of simple Bible instruction. It was one thing in a chapel school where parents knew what to expect, but the Church Meeting on 3 May 1872 believed that in state schools:

The use of the Bible must be omitted: not from disrespect, nor from indifference to the Bible, but from the difficulties arising out of a state established and a state supported system of Education, the attendance on whose schools is to be everywhere compulsory and the payment to whose funds is to be compulsory also. With secular instruction it was held that the State might interfere, but with religious instruction it had no concern.

William Brock, now on the verge of retirement, had only slightly modified the views expressed in 1843. In the late twentieth century, when faced with other religions or no religion at all, Baptists have tended to lament the diminution of Christian education in state schools rather than the dominance of the Established Church.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

The impression left is of schoolmasters who were interested in educational developments and wanted to give the children a good general education with an emphasis on religion but who were under some constraint from the committee, mainly representing future employers. *They* wanted dutiful employees, who could perform competently but knew their place and did not expect to compete with those from wealthier families and more expensive schools. They were less enthusiastic about the masters' moves towards secondary education. It was, however, a time when

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an able boy might advance well from such beginnings.

The records which survive leave some significant gaps in the information available, not least in the area of the school's achievements. In 1860 Mr Meen had been pleased to report that a number of the older scholars were 'manifesting much interest in religious matters', some showing 'real earnest piety'. In 1868 the teachers were cheered by visits from former scholars, 'many of whom are filling useful and responsible situations. . . The religious instruction given in the Schools has borne and is still bearing good fruit'. Most of the pupils would have led unremarkable lives subsequently, but three who did well can be identified.

Henry Jones became a pillar of the Bloomsbury church, which he joined in 1875 and subsequently served as deacon, magazine editor, and long-serving and well-loved Sunday School Superintendent. Clearly he attained a position in life comparable with the men who had served on the School Committee, although church records do not mention his secular occupation.

James Ford became a Baptist minister, attending Rawdon College 1879-82, probably after some years in secular employ, normally encouraged at Bloomsbury for young men with a call to ministry. He held pastorates first at Wakefield and then from 1893-1917 at Bromsgrove, where he took a particular interest in education, serving on the School Board and Urban District Council, as Chairman of Governors of the secondary school, and Chairman of the Higher Education Committee. He became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

More is known of Robert Mitchell,<sup>7</sup> born in 1855, the son of a police detective, who attended a Congregational church. On leaving school, Robert was apprenticed to a shop lamp maker, but also became Honorary Secretary to Quintin Hogg's Boys Institute in 1871. The introduction of technical classes among the various educational and recreational subjects offered there seems to have been Mitchell's inspiration. Mitchell was to be Hogg's close associate at the Regent Street Polytechnic, becoming Director of Education there in 1891. He developed trade classes and also holiday tours. In the First World War Mitchell was made an Honorary Major for training men for the Royal Flying Corps and Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Pensions for rehabilitation work with wounded soldiers. For these services he was awarded a CBE.

These 'old boys' were identified almost by chance - because they returned to Bloomsbury as speakers. Others probably did well in life too. The interest Ford and Mitchell showed in education suggests that they had valued the primary grounding received in the Bloomsbury Chapel Day School.

### NOTES

1. Clyde Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920*, 1977, p.85. By 1853 the Congregational Board had 453 schools and Methodists a substantial number. According to G. W. Rusling, 'Baptists and Education, 1800-1850', Whitley Lectures 1974, unpublished, the Baptist Union still advocated the British Schools, but by 1843 there were 35 Baptist schools, and a further 38 opened soon after.
2. Quoted in C. B. Jewson, *Baptists of Norfolk*, 1957.
3. Information gleaned from special exhibition on education, Livesey Museum, Southwark, 1982.
4. James Ford, writing in the *Bloomsbury Sunday School* magazine in May 1894.
5. Mr Lawrence to Wardour Street and Miss Wood to Whitfield Chapel.
6. Letter from Mrs Sturt, secretary to the Ladies Committee, 20 May 1870, transcribed in back of School Minute Book.
7. Identified as a former scholar in the church magazine, 1902, when he lectured on the Polytechnic's arctic cruise. Kathleen Heasman appears to be wrong in claiming he was a Ragged School boy (*Evangelicals in Action*, 1962, p.121). As a policeman's son, he clearly belonged to the social class for which the Bloomsbury school catered (but it was a charity school in a district well-known for Ragged Schools). See Ethel M. Wood, *Robert Mitchell: A life of service*, 1934.

FAITH BOWERS