

# Victoria County History of Gloucestershire, Volume 14

## Old Sodbury: Social History

### Education

In 1818 Old Sodbury had three dame schools, which 32 children attended, and a recently established Sunday school that catered for 50 boys and 60 girls.<sup>1</sup> The incumbent noted that the children of the poor lacked sufficient means of education in the parish and that many of them attended the Baptist school in Chipping Sodbury.<sup>2</sup> In 1833 there were three day schools in the parish, which 24 males and 18 females attended at their parents' expense; two of these schools, containing 28 children, had started in 1830. Attendance at the Sunday school, which was supported by the vicar and principal inhabitants, had dropped by 1833 to 20 boys and 16 girls.<sup>3</sup> By 1838, however, about 70 children attended the Sunday school by subscription, the boys meeting in the vestry, the girls in a small room in a cottage some hundred yards from the church.<sup>4</sup> At this date the parish also had a dame school and a Sunday school at the Baptist chapel, which was built in 1835.<sup>5</sup>

An application was made to the National Society in 1838 to build a mixed school for 50 boys and 50 girls, the children to be limited to 8 years of age, and 2d. a week charged for their tuition.<sup>6</sup> The building, which had a single schoolroom, was erected on land to the south-east of the parish church; the site was donated by W.H.H. Hartley, lord of the manor.<sup>7</sup> After an inspector's report of 1867 criticised the school premises, in 1869 the building was demolished and a new schoolroom was built to the east of the former site on the opposite side of Church Lane; the land was once again provided by W.H.H. Hartley.<sup>8</sup> The new school opened in September 1869 and an evening school began in the following month.<sup>9</sup> The average attendance of the National school in 1870 was 56, and in 1871 its staff consisted of a certificated master, a pupil teacher and a monitor.<sup>10</sup> An inspector's report of the same year noted that some parents wished for their children to be educated in Chipping Sodbury, with its school being much closer to their homes. Following this, in 1873 a proposal for Old Sodbury to become a contributory educational district for Chipping Sodbury was rejected, although provision was made for 12 local children to attend school in Chipping Sodbury.<sup>11</sup>

The school reported in 1898 that its numbers had been much increased by an influx of the children of the navvies who were building the local railway line.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, an extra teaching assistant was recruited and the contractors of the railway line erected a temporary wooden teaching room on the school's north wall; by this date

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<sup>1</sup> *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), i. 312, 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), i. 312.

<sup>3</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract*, 326.

<sup>4</sup> TNA, ED 103/138/36, 207-8.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, ED 103/138/36, 207, 211; site visit, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> TNA, ED 103/138/36, 211.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, ED 103/138/36, 208, 211; GA, D 6822/18.

<sup>8</sup> GA, D 6822/18; GA, P 302/SC/1.

<sup>9</sup> GA, D 6822/18.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, ED 103/112/40, 759; GA, D 6822/18.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939.

## Victoria County History of Gloucestershire, Volume 14 Old Sodbury: Social History

the main schoolroom had been divided into two.<sup>13</sup> Average attendance was 105 in 1900 and remained at just over 100 until 1902, after when it fluctuated between 69 and 98 until 1911. At over 100 again between 1912 and 1915, it thereafter oscillated between 64 and 91 until 1929, when it was 70.<sup>14</sup> The windows in the main school building were replaced in 1906 and the roof of the temporary room was overhauled around the same time; the windows in the latter were replaced in 1908.<sup>15</sup> However, in 1907 the school had been ordered to remove the temporary room on the grounds that it was unsuitable for teaching and blocked out the light in the main building.<sup>16</sup> A new schoolroom was built in 1911 on the site of the temporary room and improvements were also made to the toilets and the playground; the work was funded in part from a grant from the National Society.<sup>17</sup>

In 1929 the curriculum, in addition to the three Rs, included history, geography, poetry, singing and art, although the latter was taught only to boys.<sup>18</sup> Average attendances fluctuated between 59 and 84 between 1930 and 1938, and from 1948 children aged 13 and over attended Chipping Sodbury Church of England school.<sup>19</sup> There were 51 children on roll in 1953 and management of the school was transferred to the Gloucester Diocesan Council of Education in 1954.<sup>20</sup> A temporary classroom was built in 1966 to accommodate pupils relocated from Tormarton.<sup>21</sup> Fear of the school's closure during the 1980s prompted a successful local campaign to ensure its survival,<sup>22</sup> and there were 95 pupils in 2015.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939; GA, D 6822/18.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, ED 161/5849.

<sup>15</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939.

<sup>16</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, ED 21/5939; GA, P 302/SC/1.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, ED 21/28905.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, ED 161/5849.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, ED 161/5849.

<sup>21</sup> *The three Sodburys: an introduction*, 286.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.oldsodbury-pri.s-gloucs.sch.uk/our-community/history-about-our-school> (accessed 11 August 2016).

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/109175?tab=absence-and-pupil-population> (accessed 29 July 2016).