

## Acknowledgements

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## Acknowledgements for Illustrated Material

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Many illustrations, as indicated in the captions, come from the collections of the late Mrs Mary Wade Bishop, a manager during the latter years of the school, and the late Miss Rhoda Euston, headmistress from 1938-64.

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**Foreword**  
**by Duncan Ferns**  
**author of *Buckland 1000-2000***

After writing the book of the Buckland's village history for the 2000 millennium celebration, I am pleased to have received a small but steady stream of interesting correspondence. This has ranged from the identification of names of people in photographs within the book, to a range of 'help' requests from genealogists with descendants coming from Buckland.

The most interesting note, however, came from the co-author of this book, Jenny Euston. Jenny offered several photographs of Buckland School from the collection of her aunt, Miss Rhoda Euston, headmistress of the school from 1938 to 1964. I was also aware of an album of photographs compiled by the late Mary Wade Bishop, who was a manager of the school from 1979 to 1981. Together these resources were a great illustrative base for further work, and I posted a question in the Parish Magazine asking if anyone would be interested in such a challenge. I was delighted when Jim Docking, who takes an active part in village life, came forward. His career was in education, with a PhD in developmental psychology and an MA that included a thesis on the history of Church of England schools of Coventry.

An introduction was made between Jenny and Jim. Since then, the two of them have devoted many hours to researching the extensive records of the school, held largely by the Surrey History Centre at Woking. Jim has also interviewed many past pupils, building into the story their reminiscences of the school and its teachers. Jenny has been continually spurred on by understanding the story of how her aunt was perceived as a headmistress, and how she contributed to village life. However, she has also taken a much wider interest in the school records, far beyond her initial genealogical curiosity. Jim has focussed on the key events and interesting facts that best summarise the development of the school and the events that lead to its closure. The book is truly a joint work, with Jim concentrating on the early (1822-1910) and later (1964-1981) years, and Jenny focussing on the 'middle period' from 1910 to 1964. Jenny and Jim gave a talk of their work-in-progress to a packed Buckland Reading Room (our village hall) in May 2006. This provided yet more links and feedback for them to incorporate into this book.

In Buckland today, many of our residents can choose and afford private education. They commonly travel to schools up to ten miles away, and attend boarding schools across the country. The Acorns, our most local infant school, is in the adjoining village of Betchworth, but caters for only about half the children of the village. Although

founded as a school for the children of poor parents, Buckland village school eventually became a true community school, whose pupils were both the lesser privileged children of agricultural labourers and servants and the most privileged children from the largest manor houses. In many ways it was more green and sustainable than today's situation, and a major focus of the village community. The school was closed over 25 years ago due to falling roll numbers, when the government agenda was focussing on economies of scale. Life is cyclical, and with the latest government agenda directed towards sustainability, minimising car journeys and promoting rural communities; how long before we can re-open our school?!

This was a book that needed writing to make accessible the records, memories and heritage of our village school. Jenny and Jim have succeeded not only in giving the reader this understanding, but also of making a very good read that I think you will find difficult to put down.

*Duncan Ferns  
Yewdells, Buckland*

# Preface

Buckland School – variously known as the National School, Buckland Church of England School and St Mary’s Church of England School – was located in a Surrey village between Dorking and Reigate from 1822 until 1981. It had a long and varied history, yet in June 1955, it could be only sparsely represented in a local exhibition on the history of education in south Surrey. Visitors had to be content with just a few photographs and some items lent by the former headmistress because no school records earlier than 1921 could be located. This publication hopes to address that deficiency, for today it is possible to find a good deal of documentation about the village school, and we have endeavoured to make use of just about everything available.

How did we become interested in finding out about the history of the school? Largely because one thing led to another. Sometimes it can just happen that one sets out to look for one thing and in so doing finds something else that turns out to be even more interesting; and that’s just what happened to one of us, Jenny, as she was researching her family history. She wanted to know whether her aunt, Rhoda Euston, had kept a record of what it was like to teach in Buckland during the years of the Second World War when she was headmistress there. Jenny had come across a head teacher’s account of air raids over Bristol in a log book of a school in Filton, which set her wondering if any log books for Buckland School could still be in existence. Thanks to the internet, she came across Duncan Ferns’ book on the history of Buckland, and through him discovered that there was not only one log book but three, spanning more than fifty years and held in safe keeping at the Surrey History Centre.

Her aunt’s log book turned out to be a good read, but there was another prize waiting to be opened and that was the log book of her aunt’s predecessor, Mrs. Florence Coulson. From the moment Jenny started to turn the pages she realised that here was something special – a writer who completely disregarded the rules and regulations about how log book entries should have been written, a writer who was going to tell *her* story of life in a village school in her own way and in her own style. At times, when Mrs. Coulson was at the end of her tether, worn out by her battles with the vicar, the caretaker and the managers, the log becomes more of a personal diary and a means of venting her frustrations. Almost certainly she was a difficult lady to work with but for most of her teaching career her working conditions were extremely uncomfortable. If she took to the whisky bottle (as a former pupil records) after a day of being cold, cramped and confined, well, no one could really blame her. But this was only one aspect of the log. Woven into it are delightful accounts of lessons and pupils, celebrations and rituals that bring a past age back to life again.

In his foreword to this book, Duncan Ferns has explained how Jim came to join Jenny in researching the school history. The circumstances clearly called for a division of labour, so Jim decided to concentrate on the periods before and after Mrs Coulson and Miss Euston, though he also looked at the managers' minutes that complement the log books. As always in this kind of project, the evidence was not conveniently located in one place. Some of it – the Trust Deed, parish and church minutes, parish magazines, documents on the selling of the school and, most valuably, a collection of papers preserved by the late Mrs Mary Wade Bishop when she was a manager of the school from the late 1970s until the school's closure – were available in local parish records. Financial and legal correspondence with central government offices, together with some inspectors' reports, were found at the National Archives in Kew. Files kept in the Church of England Record Office contained more legal documents, press cuttings relating to the school's closure, and a good deal of correspondence going back to the 1880s between the school managers and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, which founded the original school. The most useful records, however, were kept by the Surrey History Centre in Woking. In addition to the head teachers' log books, the archives included managers' minute books, a map showing the location of the original building, an account book recording income and expenditure between 1855 and 1880, an admissions register dating from 1865, a punishment book going back to 1913, a report on the state of the building by the county surveyor in 1905, various press cuttings and information contained in census returns.

Histories of schools are more than a chronology of events. They give some insight into how adults have changed their educational and social expectations of children over the years, how the curriculum has evolved, how teaching styles have altered, and how school staff and management have struggled against the odds to keep an institution a thriving concern. As in literature, they also tell you about tensions in human relationships – particularly between people at different levels of authority – and how the various players endeavoured to resolve their differences. They also illustrate how structural and economic considerations frequently take precedence over educational criteria when decisions are made about children's educational opportunities. We hope that this publication helps the reader to gain more understanding of the struggles that have taken place within the education system and how school staff, managers, parents, and local authorities have negotiated to provide the conditions in which young children can best be educated.

At the dedication and opening of the re-furbished and extended school in May 1958, the Bishop of Southwark, the Right Reverend B. F. Simpson, spoke of the importance of village church schools, referring to them as 'priceless acquisitions of English life'. Parents, too, he said, had a part to play and needed to take an interest in their school: 'Watch it and care for it', he advised. There is plenty of evidence that Buckland School was regarded by the local community as 'priceless' and that that the parents did 'watch it and care for it'. It is therefore to all those managers, school staff, parents and others that fought so hard to keep the school open that we would like to dedicate this book.

*Jim Docking and Jenny Euston  
August 2006*