

**THE  
DEVELOPMENT  
OF  
A COUNTRY  
SCHOOL**

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BY B. STAFFORD MORSE, M.A.

TO ALL PUPILS  
PAST AND PRESENT OF  
THORNBURY  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

*“The case of historical writers is hard; for if they tell the truth, they provoke man, and if they write what is false, they offend God.”*

MATTHEW PARIS (thirteenth century)

*“Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the life-blood of real civilization. Social history provides one of its best forms. At bottom, I think, the appeal of history is imaginative.”*

G.M. TREVELYAN

## PREFATORY NOTE

ENGLAND is engaged in a great experiment—no less than an attempt to create an educated democracy. Its success and the form it will take no one can foresee but the changes are bound to affect such schools as Thornbury Grammar School. The development of this country school, from its beginning in the sixteenth century to the present day, is the theme of this brief and inadequate chronicle. It attempts to show how in one small rural school, secondary education, gradually changing its content, had been extended from being the privilege of a few to give wider opportunities to more and more children.

My grateful thanks are due to many friends who have helped me with documents and reminiscences of great value. The facts are theirs; the mistakes are mine.

B. STAFFORD MORSE

ALVESTON

*January, 1950*



THE OLD  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

## INTRODUCTION

**THORNBURY** is a small town in Gloucestershire about twelve miles north of Bristol. A medieval manorial borough, whose glories have passed away, it possesses an ancient grammar school the modern buildings of which are a prominent feature on the outskirts of the town. This school whose fortunes we endeavour to trace in the following pages now forms one of the dozen or so secondary grammar schools in the county. It draws its pupils, boys and girls, from a wide area round the town; from Thornbury itself, from the villages and farms, from the almost urban offshoots of Bristol, to enjoy learning, to be taught to be useful citizens and to absorb and transmit traditions valuable to them and to the community in which the school is a living entity. For centuries it was small and limited in scope, but the active intervention of the state in education has enabled it to expand until four hundred pupils can assemble every day to take part, amid rural surroundings, in the numerous and varied activities of a modern grammar school.

# I

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To 1879

THE story opens with an obscure and unusual episode. In May, 1570, the schoolmaster of Thornbury should have appeared before the Gloucester Consistory Court but 'the apparitor asserts that he has run away'—possibly from a sense of guilt. We know nothing more of the errant pedagogue. The charge may have been heresy involving a dereliction of duty, for about that time considerable energy was being displayed by the authorities to see that no undesirable person was engaged in the education of youth, and it was essential that all schoolmasters should hold the bishop's licence to teach. In 1576, for instance, an archiepiscopal visitation was held at Falfield, then in Thornbury parish, to inquire into the behaviour of clergy and schoolmasters. Queen Elizabeth's settlement of religion, not yet twenty years old, was endangered both by Roman Catholic machinations and by growing Puritanism with its leaning towards Presbyterianism and Independency.

Thornbury, however, was not to be deprived of a schoolmaster for in September of the same year (1570), Richard Harbarde of Thornbury 'scholemaster' and Margaret his wife had a lease of a tenement in the borough for six years at a yearly rent of 18s. (Thornbury Town Trust deeds). Richard Harbarde died in 1580 and there is no record of his successor. What was the school at which Harbarde and his anonymous predecessor taught

On 15th October in the year 1606, Robert Stone of Morton conveyed by deed poll to new feoffees a tenement with garden and appurtenances equivalent to a burgage and

a half formerly given by John Jones the elder for a school in the town. Was this the school? It is possible that it was for John Jones the elder, 'of the Parsonage, Thornbury', was mayor of the borough in 1573 and the mention of *the* schoolmaster certainly implies an official position. It cannot be stated with any certainty that John Jones's foundation was in 1570 or earlier but the word 'formerly' must mean that the traditional date (1606) for the school's beginning should be put back to some time in the previous century. What kind of school existed as a result of this benefaction we do not know but on 15th July, 1642, William White, a woollen draper of Thornbury, gave to John Stafford the elder, William Stafford and others, a message in which he dwelt and the orchard and garden belonging thereto containing one half burgage, situate in the High Street in the borough of Thornbury, between the capital message or inn called the 'Swan' on the north side and the lands of Anne Broadstone on the south side and a close of pasture or meadow in the tithing of Kington near the town of Thornbury and by the side of the highway from Thornbury to Bristol, upon trust to allow the profits yearly to a schoolmaster to teach a school in the said borough of Thornbury who should be chosen by the feoffees and vicar of Thornbury—an able scholar, an unmarried graduate of one of the universities of England. If he should marry, cease or depart from Thornbury or misdemean himself as to be thought unfit by the said feoffees and vicar, the feoffees were to make a new choice.

By deed, 16th January, 1647, Wm. Stone, surviving feoffee, conveyed to William Stafford, Geo. Raymond, John Baker and Edwd. Thurston, the said tenement, garden and premises—then in the tenure of Christopher Cann, schoolmaster.

William Edwards of Thornbury and Alveston, by will, 10th June, 1648, gave lands for a school house which he



had begun to build in his lifetime and also gave a library to the school, to be used for and by the schoolmaster. There is no trace of this library. Possibly the headmaster regarded the books as his perquisite, although he was bound to hand over certain of them to his successor. If they were used much by the schoolboys, they probably did not last long. It would be interesting to know their titles. By an indenture, 20th October, 1655 the surviving trustees conveyed to John Stafford and others the newly erected house (presumably the building in Castle Street), and the residue of the premises for the maintenance of a schoolmaster who should freely and without payment teach three poor children of the parish nominated by the trustees and vicar. Edwards left a sum of money derived from the rent of a house for an annual sermon on Whit-Monday in the Parish Church to be given by the schoolmaster 'if he could preach', if not, by some neighbouring minister, such as the mayor of Tbornbury for the time being should appoint. The sermon was still being regularly preached in 1826. The phrase 'if he could preach' means presumably 'if he were licensed to preach'.

The original deeds of these gifts have been lost, but the Charity Commission Reports of 1826 make it clear that both White's and Edwards's gifts were connected with and additions to the original foundation of John Jones.

These men lived in a time of political stress in England. The Civil War broke out in 1642; in 1648 the Army was supreme and was preparing to bring 'Charles Stuart, that man of blood' to trial for treason against the people but William White and William Edwards were as convinced as those of us who lived though 1940 that the stability of English institutions was a thing beyond argument. In fact their endowments suffered neither confiscation nor interference through all the troublous times of the Commonwealth and Restoration.

What were the motives which lay behind these gifts and what objects did the donors hope to achieve? It was the age of the Puritans. The fine system of secondary education which the Middle Ages had produced had gone down in ruins by the spoliation of the later Reformation period. The grammar school had produced scholarly laymen and scholarly priests. As Trevelyan points out, the grammar schools were not the result of the English Reformation; they were its cause. Now these Puritans felt that the Church and religion still required educated leaders, educated in the Scriptures and the tongues in which they were written, with the Classics added thereto, to build up a theocracy, the '*civitas Dei*', the Kingdom of God upon earth.

The schools were not intended for large numbers—'Secondary education for all' was far from being their aim. Their pupils were to be an elite, leading the nation, whether as clergymen or as professional men. The poor for whom these free schools were provided were not the labouring poor but the relatively poor, Sons of small gentry, yeomen and burghers. There is no reason to suppose that the founders of Thornbury differed from others in their motives and objects. In fact the insistence in White's foundation upon a graduate as headmaster is evidence that the school at Thornbury was to be of this type, and not an elementary school.

We have no knowledge of the exact curriculum and working of the school, but it probably followed the fashion of the time. School hours in the seventeenth century are to our modern minds astonishing, though they probably bore much the same relation to those of a labourer as they do to-day. Undoubtedly learning was a far more leisurely business in those days than in ours. The high-pressure teaching of to-day would have been impossible when the usual periods were from six to eleven

in the morning and from one to six in the afternoon in summer and in winter from seven to eleven and from one to five. This meant working in the dark hours and pupils were required to bring their own candles. Vacations were short—about a fortnight at Christmas and another at Easter. ‘Remedies’ (holidays) were scarce. One half-holiday a week seems to have been allowed and of course attendance at church on Sundays and at least one morning in the week was compulsory. At Thornbury up to the re-organization in 1879 the boys attended church on Wednesday mornings.

The curriculum was based upon Latin with Greek later for the older pupils. Reading and writing were not professedly taught in the grammar schools though those necessary tools of learning must somehow have been acquired, since boys usually began their school life at about seven years of age. Boys went up to the universities at a much earlier age than today, about fourteen or fifteen, though as time went on the age of entry was raised.

As the seventeenth century died and with it the ideals of Puritanism, the motives which had kept the schools alive decayed also, and the eighteenth century saw a great decline in the efficiency and influence of the grammar schools. The schoolmaster was usually invested with the school and its endowment much as an incumbent is with his living and in some cases the schoolmaster closed the school and lived on the endowments. This did not happen at Thornbury, however, for in the treasurer’s book for the years 1734 to 1758 there are to be found a few entries recording the changes of headmasters. On 22nd February, 1737/8, the Rev. John Wall, B.A., was appointed ‘scholmaster’ with a ‘sallery’ of six pounds a year together with the ‘schole and scholehouse and garden thereunto belonging, to enter thereon on the 25th March next’. This appointment was approved by the Vicar,

Thos. Willis (he was vicar from 1728 to 1748), 'by virtue of a power vested in me by the will or feoffment of the founder or founders of the Grammar School at Thornbury'. The gentleman apparently did not stay long, for there is a later entry of the appointment by the feoffees of the Grammar School and school lands in Thornbury, 14th October, 1742, of the Rev. Richard Jones, B.A., to be schoolmaster 'and the same to hold and enjoy with all the rents and perquisites to the same belonging as schoolmaster from Lady Day next for so long as he shall think fit, and to begin teaching when he shall think proper'— an excellent arrangement!—' to leave it in as good repair as he shall find it'. This appointment was also approved by Thos. Willis, Vicar. It looks as if the Vicar had the last word in these appointments. Mr. Jones apparently never even began his teaching. He should, in accordance with the Act of Uniformity of 1662, have made a declaration and subscription of his acceptance of the liturgy of the Church of England. But for some reason he 'ran away', the fees were never paid nor the licence made out.

We find under the date 15th January, 1749/8, the entry: 'upon payment of Benjamin Pearce (one of the school tenants) to Mr. Edward Parnall of £4.9.0, I do revoke all claim, right, title or interest to the grammar school of Thornbury, as witness my hand, Richard Jones'.

There is a tombstone in Thornbury churchyard which commemorates 'Samuel Musgrave, late master of the English Free School of this town. He died lamented by his friends and pupils the 3rd day of March 1785, aged 51. The church register gives him as writing master and accopt (accountant). That this tribute was to the master of the Grammar School is proved by a lawyer's bill the following 17th August 'Drawing notice to Mrs. Musgrave to quit the school house and garden 0-4-6'.

This is interesting because in the eighteenth century English schools were not infrequently established, sometimes independently, sometimes in conjunction with grammar schools. This appears to be an example of the latter method. In fact, the Charity Commission Report of 1826 states that ‘the school has never been considered as exclusively a grammar school; the master being expected, together with the classics, to teach the common branches of education’. The curriculum was being enlarged and Latin was ceasing to be the only subject worthy of regard.

About ten years later things could not have been very bright for the master, for the dwelling part of the school was in a ruinous condition. In 1797, Mr. Kingsmill Grove of Thornbury, a partner in a paper-making and stationery firm in Bristol and Mayor of Thornbury 1790—1 and 1799—1800, volunteered to advance the money for rebuilding to be repaid out of the rents. The master, the Rev. William Llewellyn, ‘vicar’ of Oldbury on Severn, was then paid £15 a year but after the rebuilding as soon as Kingsmill Grove was repaid, he was to receive the net yearly income arising from the estates.

In 1808, Mr. Kingsmill Grove left £500 to establish a lectureship in Thornbury church. The holder was to read the service and preach once every Sunday. In 1826 the income was £20 19s 0d. per annum and the position was usually though not always combined with that of headmaster of the Grammar School.

The school survived the depression which followed the Napoleonic Wars in which many grammar schools disappeared though Nicholas Carlisle who published in 1818 a ‘Concise Description of Endowed Grammar Schools of England and Wales’ says, *tout court*, ‘Of the Free Grammar School at Thornbury the Author is not able to give any description’. Why this was the case is unexplained.

In 1826 twelve boys were taught gratis but the feoffees were considering increasing the number.

In 1826 the estates were worth £57 3s. 6d., of which forty guineas a year were paid to the schoolmaster but in 1867 he was receiving only £30 a year. The rest was absorbed in the cost of repairs to the school's properties.

The master from 1862 to 1869 was the Rev. H. S. Roberts, LL.D., of Queens' College, Cambridge, who had been for many years second master at Bristol Grammar School. There were then thirteen boys all of whom learnt Latin and a few had begun Greek. Mr. Roberts left in 1869 to become headmaster of Wigton Grammar School. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. Field who was also rector of Oldbury on Severn and the last headmaster under the old regime was the Rev. J. Leech who combined his duties with those of curate of Thornbury.

At this time the school year was divided into four quarters' and the holidays were consequently arranged so that the summer vacation began in June. The school was open for forty-two weeks in the year and had a thirty-hour week, 'besides preparation out of school'. It was divided into four classes, with twenty-four boys altogether. The average age of the first class was fourteen, of the second thirteen, of the lowest, ten years of age. Formerly the 'foundation boys' learnt only English, but 'now all learn Latin'. The trustees provided only for the wants of the six free boys. They are 'practically elected by favour though there is not much pressure for admission'. There were no blackboard or maps and no playground. An assistant master was appointed and paid by the headmaster.

These statements in the Charity Commission report of 1869 are scarcely flattering to the school. It was little wonder that proposals for reform should have been entertained and carried out ten years later.

An advertisement of the school in March, 1869, gives the fees as ten guineas per annum for 'the usual Classical Course' and six guineas for 'those requiring an English Education to fit them for Business Pursuits'. The boys who came from a distance—some rode to school five miles on a pony—had lunch with the headmaster. A stable close to the school building was converted into an additional classroom. There were no organized games though the boys played in a near-by paddock. A paper-chase was a frequent form of recreation. Any suitable day seems to have been chosen and school work for the time went by the board. The headmaster, rather 'peppery', had the pleasing and possibly psychologically sound habit of making a delinquent cut his own instrument of chastisement from a neighbouring hazel hedge.

But there was another school in Thornbury. On the south wall of the parish church is a conspicuous monument:

'In the middle Isle  
under a marble stone  
Lies, with his Ancestors,  
the Body of  
JOHN ATTWELLS, Gent;  
who died Febry ye 18th 1729/30  
Having by his last Will, dated  
May ye 16th, 1729  
(wch was proved in ye Prerogative  
Court of Canterbury)  
bequeathed to this and other  
Parishes, for charitable Uses,  
the Summe of 1200 li.  
He was the only Son and Heir  
of Richd. Attwells, lately of  
this Town, Gent, by Jane his Wife  
one of the daughters of  
John Ridley, Gent, formerly of  
Shrivenham in the County  
of Berks, who are all extinct.

Surmounting it are the Attwells arms: 'argent, a pile sable, a chevron counterchanged'. John Attwells died at the age of forty. The Attwells family had been connected with Thornbury for a long period—a Richard Attwells was mayor, 1612—13.

One of the charitable uses was the establishment of a free school, for which £500, a very large sum in those days, was given in trust. Attwells directed that a good master and mistress should be placed therein to instruct the children of the parishioners, gratis, in reading, writing, knitting and sewing and all other things necessary for such children to be instructed in. The school was not to be connected with any other school. In addition £200 was to provide an income for the apprenticing of poor boys of the town and another £100, the proceeds of which were to 'buy one good fat bullock or heifer which should from time to time yearly be given amongst the poor people of the said town on the Feast of the Annunciation'.

Attwells's Free School occupied the building in St. Mary Street, now known as the Church Institute. It had been bought in 1796 for £105 and the schoolmaster lived there and taught his pupils, but about 1811, Mr. Kingsmill Grove, that generous benefactor of the town, erected at his own expense a commodious schoolroom' at the back of the house.

In 1826 the annual income of the charity was £70 of which £42 was paid to the schoolmaster and the rest expended on repairs, apprenticing and distributing the meat to about one hundred poor families. Twenty-four boys and twelve girls were educated in the school.

In 1869, however, the Charity Commissioners found a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. On the day of the commissioner's visit, he found 'eleven children—nine boys and two girls—sitting round the fire in a stone floored



room, being read to'. The master apparently had no qualifications, the children attended only when they liked, in fact 'Attwells's foundation seems to be almost useless and to have been regarded more as a means of providing a pension for the master than as a place of training up children'.

The report suggested amalgamation with the grammar school. Consequently in the late seventies some public-spirited men of Thornbury of whom Mr. (afterwards Sir Stafford) Howard was the most prominent, prepared a scheme to rescue these various endowments and amalgamate them so as to provide one school for secondary education. The Charity Commission Report of 1867 and the subsequent Endowed Schools Acts of 1869 and 1874 had revealed the deficiencies in education in the country. So the endowments of the old Grammar School and of Attwells School were combined, a scheme was approved and sealed on 17th May, 1879, and Thornbury Grammar School started on its new career.

## II

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### 1879 - 1907

IN this way was established Thornbury Grammar School by 'the amalgamation of the foundations known as the Free School of Thornbury and Attwells Free School and certain other foundations and endowments'. The first meeting of governors was held on 27th September, 1879. The Chairman was Colonel Maclame. Mr. George Nixon was appointed headmaster and for the next twenty-eight years he guided the destinies of the school.

At first the school was carded on in the old building in Castle Street but this arrangement was clearly inadequate, so in 1880 these premises were sold and a piece of land known as 'Putleys' in Gloucester Road bought from Mr. J. C. Gwynne. On it was erected a schoolroom in the debased Gothic semi-ecclesiastical style so favoured of nineteenth-century school architects. The cost of the building was met partly by the generosity of certain donors among whom Mr. John Cullimore is specially mentioned.

Putleys was quite a large field (of five acres), with a gravel quarry in the north-east corner. The portion not required for the actual building was let out in allotments. The days of organized games were not yet!

The school fees remained at £8 a year.

The curriculum included no science and no 'drawing'. Latin was taught—though in 1888 it could be omitted in 'those cases where parents request that their children be not taught it'—and there was to be instruction in the

Holy Scriptures, Prayer Book and Catechism with exemption for those whose parents objected.

The property of the foundation consisted of houses and farms in Thornbury and its neighbourhood. (There was one farm in Monmouthshire.) The property in course of time was gradually sold and the proceeds invested in stocks. How closely the endowments were at one time mixed up with those of the Corporation of Thornbury is shown by the long dispute over the ownership of certain almshouses in the town. These were eventually allowed to be the property of the Corporation.

The scheme provided for scholarships which partly covered the fees. Attwells, three in number, were the senior— £8 a year for three years; one Edwards (£6 for two years) and one White (£4 for two years). Occasionally another White Scholarship was offered for one year.

So the school got into its stride. There was to be an outside examiner every Christmas and in 1884 this examination was undertaken 'under the scheme for the examination and inspection of middle class schools in the County' and Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol'. In 1888 the examiner was appointed by the Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations. The yearly reports were invariably satisfactory. In 1897 the governors discovered that the gentleman did not attend personally, so they demanded and obtained his physical presence at the examination which was to be both oral and written. The reports were usually published in the local papers.

The necessity of a playground for the boys became apparent and a piece of the land at the back of the school was enclosed for the purpose in 1886 though it must have been a rough dusty patch for as late as 1906 the inspectors of the Board of Education suggested that the surface should be asphalted.

Meanwhile a piece of waste land in front of Putleys which Sir Stafford Howard had bought in 1880 and given to the school was enclosed in 1889 and a boundary wall built (of Alveston stone) in 1893.

The problem of a house for the headmaster had been exercising the minds of the governors for some time. Mr. Nixon first lived at a house which had been the Beaufort Arms Inn (on the site of the present Picture House). and then he moved to Priory Cottage in Castle Street. The governors decided to build a house and in 1894 a respectable residence was erected on the school ground. Mr. John Cullimore generously paid for an improvement on the original plan—a bay with french windows for the drawing-room. This house made it possible for boarders to be accommodated and from time to time a few were taken by the headmaster.

During these years the inadequate financial resources of the school prevented any real expansion and in 1891 the governors resolved to ask the County Council for a grant for technical and agricultural education. County Councils had just been given the administration of the 'whisky money'. This famous grant has a curious origin. In 1890 the Chancellor of the Exchequer had proposed a tax on spirits to provide compensation for publicans who would have been displaced under a bill then before Parliament. The bill failed to pass but the tax had been granted, so the money was turned over to the, recently created County Councils for technical education and the relief of rates. Most County Councils, to their credit, be it said, used it for technical education in a fairly wide sense and as the amount available rapidly increased from year to year the 'whisky moneys enabled assistance to be given to quite a number of schools.

In the case of Thornbury the County Council was sympathetic and drawing classes were held in the school

in 1892. In 1894 evening classes in this subject were established and Sir Stafford Howard generously put in gas at his own expense to enable them to be held.

Part of the money of the foundation—£2 a year— had been used for scholarships to boys from the elementary schools of Thornbury, Falfield and Oldbury—all parts of the ancient parish of Thornbury—and in 1892 it was agreed that this money should be spent in prizes for regular attendance at those schools! Lack of candidates for scholarships seems to have accounted for this extraordinary arrangement. Not until 1904 did the governors decide to keep this sum for Grammar School purposes.

Although numbers had considerably increased in 1895, the finances of the school still gave anxiety and in 1897 a grave crisis arose. The growing deficit led to a proposition to close the school and 'to give the headmaster notice to quit'. This calamitous step was avoided by drastic economies—a reduction in the number of scholarships and a temporary cut in the headmaster's stipend. The headmaster's 'cut' was restored in a few months' time and the arrears paid.

However, conditions remained difficult and in 1901 there was an inquiry by the Charity Commissioners. The decline of the school was attributed to agricultural depression and the competition of the elementary schools !—an illuminating comment on the chaotic state of public education at the time. One cannot conceive to-day competition between elementary and secondary education, so as adversely to affect the latter. Local authorities had been allowed two years before to raise the age for compulsory attendance to fourteen, though exemption at an earlier age could still be easily obtained and when so many grammar-school boys left at about fourteen, there appears some excuse for the explanation given to the commissioner. The latter suggested that consideration should be given

to the proposal to include girls as well as boys at the Grammar School.

In 1900 the Board of Education came into existence and took over the functions of the Charity Commission as far as concerned education. The Board was permitted to 'inspect any school supplying secondary education and desiring to be so inspected'. In 1902 was passed an Education Act under which for all practical purposes public education in England has been maintained until the new Act of 1944. Under this Act, the County Councils were to be the Local Education Authorities and to set up Education Committees consisting of county councillors and coopted members with a special knowledge of education. The Local Education Authorities were 'to consider the educational needs of their area and to take such steps after consultation with the Board of Education as were necessary to supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary'. So new hope dawned for Thornbury Grammar School. The governors suggested to the County Council that Thornbury was an excellent centre for technical and higher education and they advocated the admission of girls to their school.

The Board inspected the school and required various improvements and additions. A new classroom was proposed and alterations were to be made to allow girls to enter the school.

The new room was built in 1906, the teaching of science was introduced, the first girls came, and in 1907 recognition of the Board of Education as an efficient secondary school was sought.

But Mr. Nixon was not the man for all these changes. He retired in 1907 and a new headmaster was appointed to meet the new conditions.

What of the boys during these years? Few in numbers  
—with the girls the total was but thirty in 1907—taught

together in one room, a short school life in many cases of two or three years, a rough playground and for games a small portion of the field, their time in school would seem to compare very unfavourably with the full life of a scholar of to-day. But perhaps it was not all dull, for it might be enlivened by the release of a number of blackbirds when a desk was opened!

### III

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1907 – 1932

THE new headmaster chosen from over fifty candidates was Mr. C. H. Ross, M.A., St. John's College, Cambridge, Head of the Modern Side, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Kingston on Thames, and the school entered on that career of expansion and success which has brought it to its present established position among the schools of Gloucestershire.

Recognition by the Board of Education was granted and the headmaster set about the task of fitting the school for the new conditions.

Organized games—cricket and football for the boys, tennis and hockey for the girls, played in correct sports kit—were arranged. (The previous games among the boys seem to have been tip-cat, marbles, whipping tops and hoops!) and the whole of Putleys was taken over as a games field. A school uniform, consisting of a dark green tunic with a white braid at the bottom (the braid disappeared in 1933) and a green hat for the girls and a green cap for the boys, was to be worn. In 1925 the cap became half green and half red. Permission to use the Attwells arms as a badge was obtained and the school motto '*Disce aut Discede*' (learn or leave) was adopted. A speaker at one speech day said he thought Mr. Ross must be a very kind man since he had omitted the rest of the motto. This is '*Tertia sors manet—vapula*'. (There remains a third choice

—the stick.)

A prefect system was established. The names of the prefects from 1907 to 1932 were until recently on boards on the walls of what is now one of the dining-rooms. It was then the assembly hall.



The numbers in the school increased; they rose from thirty to fifty-one in the first year and the problem of extra accommodation became acute. Mr. Ross used one of the rooms in his own house as a classroom. In fact during the whole twenty-five years of his headship the question of room was ever present—there was never adequate space for the school. In 1909 with the help of a loan raised by the County Council another hall was built which could be divided into two classrooms by a partition. A small shed, subsequently enlarged, was built for instruction in woodwork. A partition was erected in the old school. Three years later the numbers had gone up to seventy—six and three additional classrooms were erected. Thus in five years the accommodation had been trebled.

Meanwhile the Head had instituted an annual speech day and sports were held in the field. A small grass-cutter and roller were obtained. Trees were planted along the west side of the field in 1909.

In 1907 free places in secondary schools were brought into existence by the Liberal Government. Under this remarkable system of extending secondary education, the Board of Education gave higher grants to those schools which offered 25 per cent. of the number of entries of the previous year to scholars from elementary schools. The percentage was later raised to 40 and then to 50. This system had very considerable effects on secondary schools for it meant that a much larger number of pupils from elementary schools could now enter the Grammar School and the effect was cumulative. Schools on the up-grade increased more quickly, those declining went down more quickly. The free-place pupils also were of a fairly high intelligence. At Thornbury five were admitted in the first year. (In 1943 the number was thirty—five.) The Attwells, White and Edwards scholarships were absorbed in the

free places. ('Special' places were substituted for free places in the economy days of 1932, which meant in practice that parents who could afford to do so were obliged to pay the whole or part of the school fees.)

The headmaster soon began to submit candidates for external examinations. There had been isolated instances in previous years—two boys took the Cambridge Local in 1901, probably the Junior—but now every year the Cambridge examination was attempted—at first the Junior but very soon the Senior. Success accompanied the venture and congratulations from the County Education Committee on the lead which Thornbury was giving to the other schools in Gloucestershire were frequent. This lead the School has maintained. When the Higher School Certificate was instituted in 1918 Thornbury was the first if not the only school in the county to send in a candidate.

This insistence upon these successes may appear excessive but it was essential that the standard of school work should be raised and unless a school can show that its members are as well equipped intellectually as others, it is bound to fail of its main purpose.

In 1913 the headmaster by means of subscriptions from friends and later with the aid of a small grant formed a library for the school.

When in 1914 came the first Great War, the School gave performances of *Comus*, *Hiawatha* and *Alice in Wonderland*, and raised considerable sums for the Red Cross.

In 1916 the school sustained a great loss by the death of Sir Stafford Howard, Chairman of the governors since 1884. Thornbury has always been fortunate in having really good men on the governing body but Sir Stafford's unflinching generosity and interest had been of inestimable benefit to the school. His many gifts helped it in straitened

times. He 'bought and presented in 1880 a strip of land bordering on Putleys to make a proper frontage for the building; he paid fees for some pupils, gave prizes, guaranteed an overdraft and supplemented the salary of a manual instructor when funds were low. His last gift was one of £10 for laboratory equipment. This generosity was but part of the help he gave to the school. His influence at Whitehall—he was Commissioner of Woods and Forests—enabled him to gain and keep the interest of those in authority in this small country school and his support in all difficulties helped the headmaster to put the school on its feet.

Mr. W. D. Canning, the Clerk to the Governors, a solicitor of considerable influence in Thornbury, gave much quiet and unobtrusive assistance to the school.

Sir Stafford was succeeded by Mr. H. P. Thurston who had been vice-chairman for many years. He was a member of an old Thornbury family and his great-great-grandfather, John Thurston, was treasurer of the Grammar School in the eighteenth century. He was the founder of the Thornbury Glee Society. He died in 1918. He had been an able co-adjutor of Sir Stafford Howard and his influence as a prominent townsman of Thornbury was of great help to the school.

The Vicar of Thornbury, Canon A. W. Cornwall, succeeded him as Chairman and when he left in 1925 he was followed by Major (now Sir) Algar Howard. In 1928, Captain R. A. Bennett took the position and his membership of the County Council, of which he was an alderman for some years, helped to keep those happy relationships with the County Education Authority necessary for the continued progress of the school.

After the first Great War Mr. Ross raised subscriptions for a memorial to the eighteen old boys of the school who had fallen in the war. The inscription reads: 'This tablet

is a loving memorial to the old boys of Thornbury Grammar School, who gave their lives in the Great War, 1914— 1918.

They gave their lives for us and their names shall live gloriously for ever and ever'. The wording of the inscription is illustrative of the happy relationship between Mr. Ross and his pupils. The memorial is now on the wall of the assembly hall in the new building and every Remembrance Day a wreath is laid on it.

The adoption in 1920 of the national Burnham Scale of teachers' salaries was of fundamental importance to schools such as Thornbury. It made possible a staff of equal calibre with those of larger and richer schools, for all were now to be paid on the same scale. Inadequate as the new scales were, they yet settled for some years the salary question and masters and mistresses who preferred the fresh air and sunshine of rural surroundings could join the school without financial loss.

The years after 1918 saw continuous progress. Pupils went in increasing numbers to the universities and a State Scholarship was won. A commercial form was established in 1929. The numbers grew; eighty-four in 1918, there were one hundred and forty pupils in 1921, and they continued to come in a steady stream. The problem of further accommodation, always present, again became acute and a wooden hut was erected in the playground in 1930. This was only a stopgap and at last when numbers had risen to two hundred and twenty the Governors and the County took the matter seriously in hand and determined to erect an entirely new and adequate building. The site-chosen was on the other side of the headmaster's house, on that portion of 'Putleys' which once the governors had contemplated selling for building sites. The foundations were laid in the autumn of 1931 and a new chapter opened in the history of the school.

Mr. Ross retired in 1932 amid expressions of esteem

and regret from all who knew him, leaving to his successors the task of continuing the good work which he had so ably carried on for a quarter of a century.

He had, as the chairman of the County Education Committee wrote, 'made' Thornbury Grammar School and a comparison of the two classrooms of 1907 with the fine new building of 1932 is an ocular proof of his success.

## IV

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1932 -1950

THE new headmaster was Mr. R. W. Jackson, M.A., B.SC.(ECON.), London, from Cotham Secondary School, Bristol.

His first task was to arrange the transfer to the new building, now nearly complete. The school took possession in the autumn of 1932 and in November there was an opening ceremony with a religious service and speeches and in the evening a conversation to display the work of the school to parents and friends.

The feature of the building which most strikes visitors is the large amount of light which floods in through the 'vitaglass' windows of the rooms. From the field that side of the school appears all windows. The sunshine which pours in all day must help to maintain the health of the pupils and have a beneficial if subconscious influence on their work and conduct.

A good many changes had to be made as a result of the move to new premises. More rooms and larger numbers made desirable an extension of the responsibilities and importance of the prefects. An Old Thornburian Society to include ex-pupils of both sexes took the place of the former Old Boys' and Girls' Society. It could meet and hold functions in the School Hall. The former Society had held functions at various times in the Cossham Hall, and dinners at the 'Swan', and there was a famous outing to Stratford on Avon. In 1933 the Old Thornburians presented a shield for competition between the newly formed houses in games. The school was divided into three houses

—Clare, Stafford and Howard—named after the families

which had held the manor of Thornbury, and healthy rivalry between them soon helped to improve the athletic side of school life.

An extension of the school field to include 'Blakes', another three acres, made it possible for games to be played in school hours and the school now possesses one of the finest playing fields of all the schools in Gloucestershire.

In 1950 the playing fields were increased by the valuable addition of the Chantry Field, between the School and the Castle.

The old building was altered and adapted. Two dining-rooms and a kitchen enabled school dinners to be provided and the other rooms now allowed adequate accommodation for domestic science and woodwork.

Latin, which except for special pupils had disappeared in 1907, was re-introduced into the curriculum for some forms and Bristol took the place of Cambridge in the School Certificate Examination.

Mr. Jackson did not remain long enough to see the results of all these changes for at the end of 1934 he left to become the headmaster of Wintringham Grammar School at Grimsby and Mr. S.J.V. Rouch, B.SC., Bristol, from Cheltenham Grammar School, was appointed in his place.

The energy of the new headmaster in the years since his arrival has effected many further improvements and alterations, though some of his cherished schemes, owing to the war, have necessarily had to be postponed.

In 1935 colours were awarded for cricket, football, hockey and tennis. Physical training began to take a more important place in the curriculum and every year since then physical training displays by both boys and girls have been given. Uniform grey flannel suits for the boys improved the appearance of the pupils.

In the year of George V's Jubilee commemoration trees were planted in the field subscribed for by many who had an interest in the school—Mr. Ross, Mr. Jackson, staff and pupils.

The next year saw the first School Concert to raise money for the school sports fund. This became an annual event until Hitler put a temporary stop to it. The performances were highly successful in both an artistic and financial sense. Since the end of the war, concerts have been given at the end of the autumn term and plays in English and French presented in the spring term. In the same year the cricket pitch was laid and the care which it has received has made it such that the standard of the boys' cricket has consistently risen. The first Parents' Match in 1937 brought a splendid victory for the veterans.

Since 1935 other trophies, besides the original Old Thornburian shield, have been presented to the school. (See Appendix C.)

In 1938 seats were placed in the field and hard tennis courts laid in the quarry from which the governors had once received 9d. per ton royalty on gravel. In 1939 a seat was given in memory of A. S. Beake, school captain, who died that year.

During the years before the war several expeditions were undertaken by school parties—to Belgium in 1937, to Switzerland in 1938. A camp at Frocester was organized in 1936 and a cycling tour through the Mendips in 1939. These expeditions have been renewed since 1945 and a feature of the Easter holidays has been the stay by a number of Advanced Course pupils at Westward Ho! to combine recreation and the study of the geography and biology of the district.

The development of the upper forms continued. Two advanced courses—in Modern Studies and in Science—were definitely established and scholarships to Oxford and



Cambridge and the provincial universities were won in increasing numbers.

When the war broke out air-raid shelters were constructed. Fortunately, although at various times the alarm sent the pupils to them, the school never had to face an air-raid.

During the war period the societies, World Citizenship, Literary and Dramatic, Scientific, Geographical and Historical, and the Young Farmers' Club, continued to flourish. The magazine, the first number of which appeared in December, 1934, has continued to record the doings of past and present pupils. A very large number of old Thornburians, over one hundred and fifty, joined the services and those who have given their lives have been remembered by the planting of memorial trees. The school raised much money for various war charities and played its part in the national savings campaign. Boys and girls helped on the land in potato sowing and lifting and in other ways. The school raised sufficient money to provide an electric clock placed on the south face of the new buildings as a war memorial. It is hoped that a garden of remembrance will be provided by the Old Thornburians in the quadrangle.

In October, 1943, the headmaster restored the Founders' Service at the Parish Church which had not been held within living memory. It was an interesting and impressive service and the spirits of the Founders, if they were present on that occasion, however surprised they may have been to see an assembly of three hundred and twenty boys and girls, must have felt a glow of satisfaction that their gifts of long ago helped to make it possible, and this annual event should keep alive in the pupils' minds those who earlier made it possible to establish in Thornbury a school with traditions of civilized learning and behaviour. By the Education Act of 1944 all fees in secondary schools were abolished. Consequently entrance

is now obtainable only by what is in effect competitive examination and the number admitted each year is limited by the accommodation available. The provision of modern and technical schools will relieve the pressure but in what way and with what results it is impossible at present to be certain.

The ethos—the inner spirit and character—of a school, is difficult to assess. The word ‘school’ is the Greek for ‘leisure’ and in Latin school and play are the same word. This is not chance, for the object of a school is the training of intelligence and intelligence is to be enjoyed. A school is not to be judged by examination results alone—though Thornbury has a record in that respect comparable with any in Gloucestershire. The pupils are proud of the appearance of the place; they take part in maintaining the cleanliness of the building and the care of its surroundings

—field, flowers and trees. Possibly the most convincing test is the attitude of former pupils. They revisit their school and during the war many letters were received from those serving their country, all in some way or other showing their gratitude for the training they experienced and the feeling that they had gained in their old school advantages equal to any provided elsewhere.

It is not too much to say that the aims of the school are those expressed in Milton’s immortal words: ‘To lead and draw pupils in willing obedience, inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hope of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages’.

The tablet in the school hall, the memorial trees in the field, testify to the fact that some at least of its scholars, have not failed in this.

*SEMPER FLOREAT  
SCHOLA THORNBUR IENSIS*

## APPENDIX A

### HEADMASTERS

It has been found impossible to compile a complete list but from scattered references in the school account book, the diocesan records and other sources some names have been extracted.

- 1570- The unknown who 'ran away'.
- 1570-8 Richard Harbarde
- 1647 Christopher Cann.
- 1662 Thomas Jones
- 1686 Joseph Edwards, B.A.
- 1690 Samuel Godwyn, B.A
- 1703 Ralph Grove, M.A. (Vicar of Thornbury 1701-28)
- 1713 John Priest, B.A.
- 1737 John Wall, B.A.
- 1742 Richard Jones, B.A. (who 'ran away').
- 1744 \*James Partridge, B.A.
- 1749 \*Michael Evans, s.c.t.
- 1757 \* - Gwinnel.
- 1785 Samuel Musgrave (probably).
- 1792 William Lewellyn.
- 1813 \*Michael Terry, B.A.
- 1824 \*William Milner, S.C.L.
- 1824 \*William Wood, S.C.L.
- 1826 \*Charles Bethel Otway, M.A.
- 1827 \*Luke d'Anville.
- 1843 \*Richard Wally.
- 1846 \*Mathias Mawson Lamb, B.A.
- 1846 \*Richard Williams, B.A.
- 1848 \*Edward Goston Penny, B.A.
- 1852 \*Michael Terry, M.A.

- 1853     \*John Field.
- 1857     \*A A. Lewis.
- 1862-69   H. S. Roberts, LL.D.
- 1870     John Field (rector of Oldbury on Severn)
- 1878     John Leech.

Those of the above marked thus ‘\*’ were curates of Thombury. It is not certain that they were also head-masters of the Grammar School, though after the foundation of the lectureship by Mr. Kingsmill Grove, the post of headmaster was usually, though not always, combined with that of lecturer.

- 1879-1906   George Nixon.
- 1906-1932   Charles H. Ross, M.A. CANTAB.
- 1932-1934   R. W. Jackson, M.A., B.sc. (EcoN.),  
                  LONDON.
- 1935—     S.J.V. Rouch, B.SC. BRISTOL.

## APPENDIX B

### SCHOOL FINANCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Some information on the financial side of the Grammar School in the eighteenth century can be gleaned from an account book kept by the Treasurer of the School from 1734 to 1758. There were seven treasurers during that period ending with John Thurston, an ancestor of Mr. Laurence Thurston (Vice-Chairman of the governors for many years).

Their ability—or conscientiousness—varied considerably. Few gave details of transactions. Mr. John Thurston’s are the most enlightening.

There was at that time, of course, no assistance from rates or taxes for secondary education. The monies which

paid for the instruction of the scholars at Thornbury were provided by the endowments of the founders and administered by the trustees or feoffees. In 1737 the yearly rent of the school lands without the school house and garden amounted to £13 17s. 6d., by 1750 the total had risen to £15. In 1767 without the school house and garden, £14 2s. od. The property consisted of houses and a paddock in Thornbury and the rents appear to have been paid at irregular intervals—in some cases arrears amounted to three years' rent.

The treasurer was paid the rents in cash and personally accounted for the balance to the feoffees. Mr. Edward Parnall, treasurer from 1747 to 1754, when he submitted his final account, owed £16 12s 6 ½ d. and promised to pay this sum within a month. In actual fact he did not pay it until eighteen months later. A very large proportion of the receipts went in repairs—lime, tiles, 'helm' and 'masonry work'.

On one occasion (1756) the repairs to the 'Lamb' rented by Mrs. Longman for £5 cost £12 6s.11d. The headmaster's emoluments varied from time to time. Mr. Wall for instance in 1739 was paid £6 a year with the school, school-house and garden. Mr. Gwinnel in 1758 received £8. At another time the headmaster was invested with the whole of the school rents. This was the case with the Rev. Richard Jones in 1742, who 'ran away'. Occasionally the school house itself had other tenants. Dorothy Wither had a room there from Lady Day, 1736, to Lady Day, 1737, at a rental of ios. Griffith Facy rented the school house in 1747.

Sidelights on wages and prices in the mid-eighteenth century appear in these accounts:

John Wither for a 'lintorn' .. .. 2/-  
 pd Jno Williams for one days work ..

pd his eldest son for ditto .. .. 1/4  
pd his youngest son for ditto .. .. 9d.  
Mary Williams and boy were paid 6d. for cleansing the  
loft over the school and the school.

By the end of the eighteenth century rents—and consequently the income of the governors—had risen considerably. By 1826 the total was £57 3s. 6d. of which £40 was paid to the headmaster who lived in the dwelling house belonging to the school, but in 1869 the headmaster received only £30 per annum, although the annual in-come had risen to £75—the old houses, the rents of which provided the revenue, cost so much in repairs! However, the headmaster had the lectureship of £20 19s. 0d. a year and presumably made something out of one or two boarders.

Until well on in the nineteenth century, the limited banking facilities, the small amount of government securities available and the non-existence of ‘limited liability’ companies made property in land and houses the only permanent investment. Eighteenth—century school treasurers would have found trouble-free government securities a great advantage over the rents which they had to collect and the repairs they had to execute.

## APPENDIX C

### SCHOOL TROPHIES

#### HOUSE TROPHIES

Athletic Shield given by The Old Thornburians Society.  
1933.

Athletic Sports Shield given by The Old Thornburians  
Society. 1937.

Tennis Shield given by The Old Thornburians Society.  
1948.  
Cross Country Shield given by Mr. E. H. Williams. 1941.  
Hockey Shield given by Mrs. A. McDonald. 1944.  
Physical Training Shield given by Miss J. Haddelsey.  
1942.  
Rugby Football Shield given by Mr. C. P. Taylor. 1948.  
Association Football Shield given by Mr. J. Sagar. 1946.  
Swimming Shield given by Mr. W. G. Rabley. 1939.  
Junior Games Shield given by the Headmaster (Mr. S.J. V.  
Rouch). 1949.  
Junior Athletics Cup given by Mr. J. Molton. 1946. Junior  
Hockey Cup given by Surgeon-Captain G. S.  
Harvey, O.B.E., R.N. (retd.). 1946.  
Junior Cricket Cup given by Mr. S. H. Gayner. 1949. Cricket  
Bat given by Mrs. F. W. Davies in memory of  
her son, Donald. 1942.  
Academic Shield given by Miss H. M. Storey. 1942. Music  
Shield given by Mrs. R. Harwood. ~

#### INDIVIDUAL TROPHIES

Athletics Cup (*Victrix Ludorum*) given by Mr. H. R.  
Stephens. 1945  
Athletics Cup (*Victor Ludorum*) given by Messrs. S. A.,  
A. M., H. W. and T. A. Wilmot. 1945. Swimming Cup  
given by Mr. L. T. Thurston. 1948.  
  
The Maritime Gun presented by the Maritime Regiment  
R.A. in memory of their happy relations with the  
school when they were stationed at Thornbury, 1941—  
1945. 1946.