



"One Penny for each Child..."

... from the Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News archive

“ *"One penny for each child each week,
two pence when writing in a copy-book is
taught"*

In July 1861 a quarter of an acre of his glebe was conveyed by the Rector, with the approval of patron and bishop, to the Archdeacon of Surrey, as trustee for the Rector and Churchwardens. This was the site for a school, of which the Rector would be the all-powerful Governor. It was to be a school "for teaching poor persons of and in the parish of Abinger to read and do arithmetic and generally for imparting to them religious and useful instruction". Thus was founded Abinger Common School.

Children were required to be "neatly and cleanly dressed" and attendance at Sunday School was mandatory. Weekly charges of a penny per child and double if writing was taught were payable at the beginning of each week.

In the early part of the 19th century and until the new school was built in 1863, a parish schoolroom existed in the North chancel of St James' church. The new school, at first a church school, became Upper Abinger National School when the first admission was registered in 1873. It then consisted of one room (now the hall) for teaching all ages of children.



The class of 1894/5 at Abinger Upper School (Photo: Courtesy T. O'Kelly)

enlargement to the school was in 1912, further classroom (now Class 1) was added. The disruption to school work was such that it moved into the Abinger Institute (now Evelyn Hall).

During the Second World War evacuees came from London and joined the school. The older children helped the "Dig for Victory" campaign developing the school garden to provide much-needed vegetables to supplement the meagre food rations of the war years.

Changes in national and county legislation resulted in several changes in the school over the years; in 1949 older children

were transferred to the original Sondes Place School; in 1959 over 11s were transferred to Dorking schools and in 1972, with the reorganisation, Abinger Common became a First School for children from 5 to 8 years.

The centenary of the school in 1963 was commemorated by a special notice board placed in the school house garden; past and present pupils and Head Teachers came together for the celebrations. A hut was added to provide a second classroom in 1975. It was meant to be a temporary measure but lasted for 10 years. Finally, it was removed in a major extension of the school in 1985 when the existing Class 1 room was expanded, a school office was created and indoor toilets provided for the children. This extension, in use as soon as the builders had finished, was not officially opened until 1986 when it was named the Mary Ellen Carpenter Wing, after a former headmistress 1918-1949 (known to all as 'Governess' who died on 20th September 1986 aged 101).

Before another decade had passed, further extension to the school was needed due to the increasing number attending the school and to enable acceptable levels of class sizes to be introduced. The Governors and the Friends of Abinger Common School funded the project and the new room was ready for occupation in September 1995. On a snowy morning, the official opening ceremony was performed by Mr. Michael Broyd, a nephew of the late Mrs Mary Ellen Carpenter.

As the new century nears the end of its first year we see our latest projects taking shape - a new Reception Office at the entrance to the school, a new Library and an ICT area.

Abinger Common's friendly village school will continue to serve the local community to the best of its ability in the 21st century, encouraging the social, moral, intellectual, physical and spiritual development of the children in its care, preparing them for our rapidly changing technological society.

Hazel Weaver - Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News, September 2000