

224 is the newsletter of the Deddington & District History Society. During our season we meet at 7.30 on the second Wednesday of the month, normally at Deddington's Windmill Centre. Membership is £10/18 pa singles/couples or £2.50 at the door for visitors, who are equally welcome. The editor actively encourages contributions to be sent to 1 South Newington Road, Barford St Michael OX15 0RJ. Email history@deddington.net

From the Chair

This issue of 224 is an Education Special. We are delighted to be able to reproduce an article by Malcolm Graham (whom many of you will remember as Director of the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies and as a speaker twice at our meetings) on the remarkable Percy Elford, the county's first Chief Education Officer. Colin Cohen has matched the text with a selection of wonderful photographs of Deddington school.

It is worth remembering that education was not compulsory before the Education Act of 1870. The impact was very gradual, for only an elementary education was provided. Standards were very variable. Teachers were often inadequate, and conditions in overcrowded classrooms were not conducive to learning. Absenteeism was common for a variety of reasons: the need to help with the harvest; unenthusiastic parents; no facilities for study at home; unserviceable shoes and inadequate clothes in winter; children who were often tired and hungry, which meant that they were likely to be fractious or apathetic. Our ongoing project to digitise the school records for Deddington (see Colin's report) should eventually provide material for detailed research that will enable us to test how far those issues were prevalent in this area.

On behalf of the History Society committee I send best wishes to our members for 2010. Thank you all for your support over the past year. It is our aim to continue to provide a rich mix of talks and events during the coming year and beyond.

Chris Day

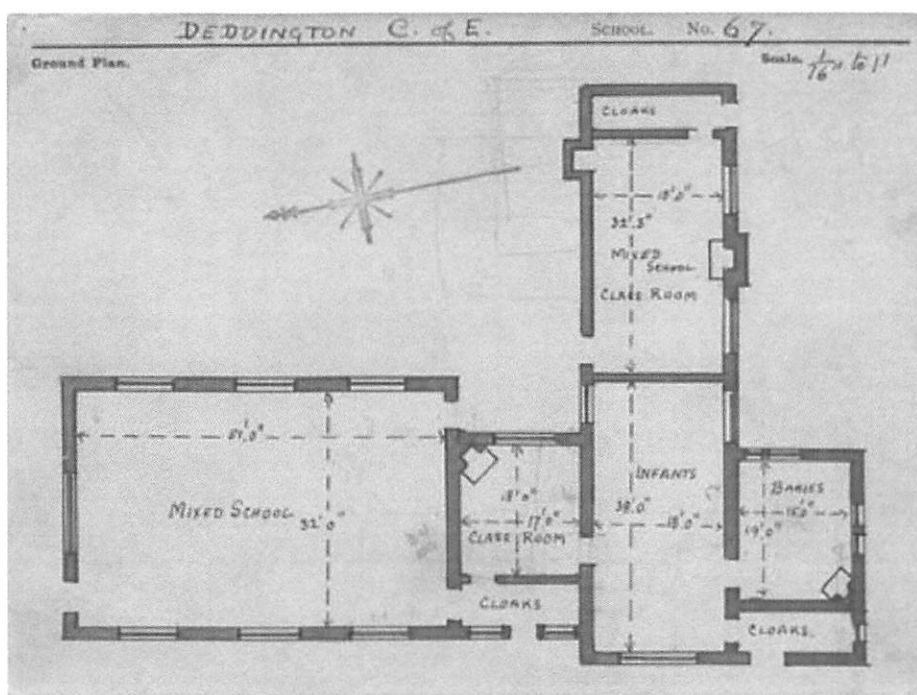
Percy Elford, The creator of an Oxfordshire schools Domesday survey

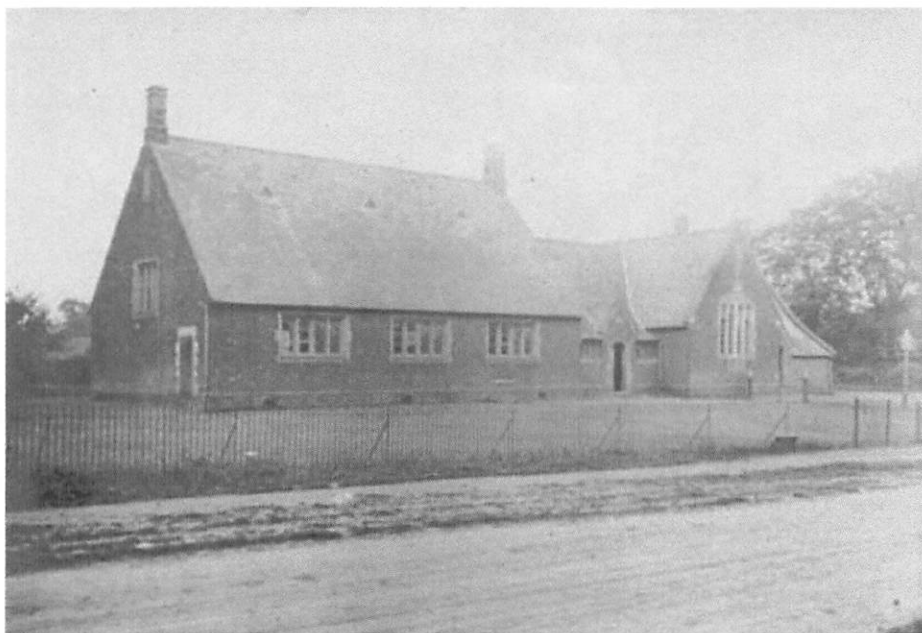
We are most grateful to Malcolm Graham, former Director of the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies at Oxfordshire County Libraries for permission to reprint this article which originally appeared in the 'Limited Edition' supplement to The Oxford Times.

In the corner of a strongroom at Oxfordshire Record Office, there's a bank of eight wooden catalogue drawers. Nothing surprising about that you might think but they contain a remarkable card index providing historical information, plans and photographs of every primary school in the pre-1974 county; well,

the county as it was in the 1900s since Caversham, Cowley, Headington and Iffley are included. This record, unique for the time in its comprehensive coverage, was the brain-child of Percy Elford (1867-1950), the County Council's first chief education officer between 1903 and 1920. He deserves to be better known.

The 1902 Education Act brought the administration of the country's elementary and secondary schools under the control of county and county borough councils. In July 1903, Oxfordshire inherited 235 schools and a stock of buildings which went back centuries; Ewelme school still flourishes today in the oldest primary school buildings in England, built in 1437. To create a new county service from such disparate beginnings, Oxfordshire County Council chose





The photos on these pages are from negatives held at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies at the Westgate Centre from whom prints can be obtained (for more details see the end of the article).

The images reproduced here are D266730 [page 1], D266728, D266727, D266725 [this page], D266718 and D266715 [facing page]. There are a further dozen images of Deddington School alone in the Elford collection, and many more for other schools including Barford St Michael, one of whose log books is included in the Deddington School records [see the article on page 4].



Percy Elford, an Oxford graduate who was a Fellow of St John's College, lecturing in Chemistry. His salary as Education Secretary was to be £600 a year plus travelling and office expenses. He had worked part-time for the council since 1893 as organising secretary of the Technical Instruction Committee and, as an early motorist, he was well-equipped to get around the county. His new contract allowed him to continue lecturing at the University 'upon the express understanding that such work did not interfere with his duties as Secretary.'

Elford soon had a staff of eight to handle the workload of his new department and a School Buildings Sub-Committee was formed in 1904 to deal with the tide of related issues that threatened to overwhelm the Elementary Education Sub-Committee. At its first meeting, Elford reported that he'd already been asked to inspect 78 schools by local managers or His Majesty's Inspectors; he was instructed to do this as soon as he could! Elford's travelling expenses caused some initial difficulties as the county council experimented with payments for depreciation to his car verified by an expert before settling on a mileage allowance of 1/- (5p) a mile up to a maximum of £120 a year. From the outset, Elford bombarded schools with written queries and Thomas Willson, his





successor as chief education officer, described him as 'a scientist with an interest in the collection and recording of information.' He quickly adopted a card index system which set out to provide standardised information about each school. Different cards, some of them colour-coded, featured site maps and building plans, attendance figures, notes of inspections, lists of staff, furniture and equipment, Board of Education reports, insurance details, financial summaries and copies of key documents. Elford also introduced a card, strikingly modern in concept, comparing the annual expenses of each school with the average for schools of similar size in the county.

The index cards form a Domesday survey of Oxfordshire schools further enhanced by paste-down prints of Percy Elford's own photographs. As requests for repairs, alterations and new buildings poured into the council's offices, the need for a detailed visual record of every school soon became clear. In October 1903, the County Surveyor presented plans of five schools to the Elementary Education Sub-Committee and members asked Elford 'where possible to submit photographs of the schools with the reports and plans.' As a keen amateur photographer, Elford needed no second bidding and, during school inspections that same month, he took the first pic-

tures for a collection which grew to more than 3,000 images. Since his primary purpose was to provide a visual context for decision-making, Elford recorded each school inside and out, sometimes down to the coat hooks in the cloakroom and the urinals in the boys' 'offices' or toilets! He visited some schools when they were closed and empty but many of his images show teachers and children in working schools. Back in the 1880s, young Flora Timms, later Flora Thompson, had been among the Juniper Hill children who noticed the milestone Oxford XIX miles on the nearby main road and tried to imagine what the distant city was like. In July 1905, her successors at Cottisford School must have been thrilled to see Elford arrive by car from Oxford, no doubt in a cloud of dust, and proceed to photograph both them and their school.

Percy Elford gave up his Fellowship at St John's in 1907 and concentrated entirely on county council business until he retired through ill health in 1920; he went into teaching for a few years and lived on until 1950.

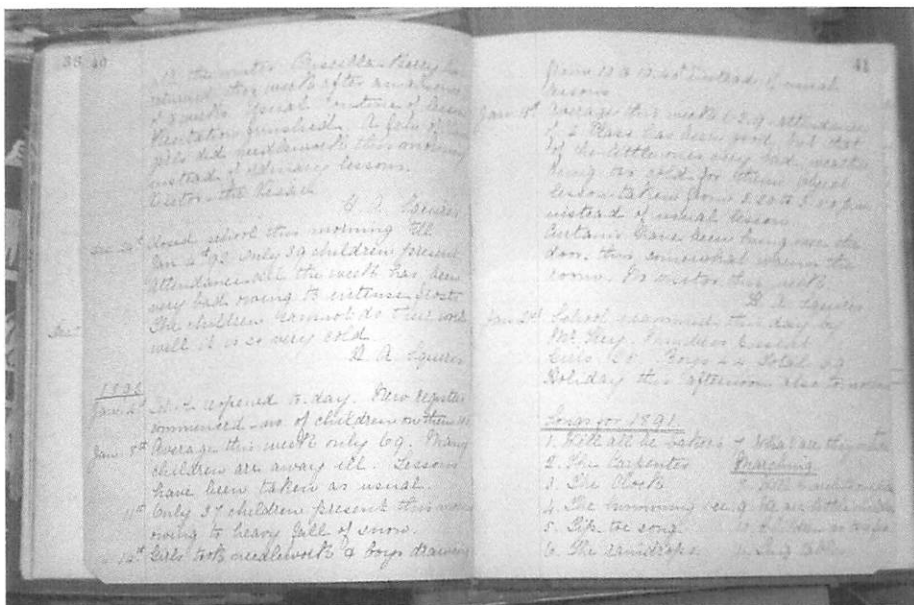
His card index remained a valuable administrative tool in the County Council education department at Macclesfield House until the 1980s when it was transferred to Oxfordshire Record Office.

To see any part of it, you should contact the office on 01865 398200 or email archives@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Oxfordshire Studies has copy negatives of Elford's photographic prints—the original negatives have long vanished—and you can arrange to buy copies by phone on 01865 815749 or by email to the COS at oxfordshire.studies@oxfordshire.gov.uk

County Council staff and volunteers are now busy digitising all the photographs to add them to the wealth of Oxfordshire images already available on Heritage Search www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/heritagesearch

Percy Elford achieves fame at last.



Digitising the Deddington school records

With the kind permission of the head teacher, Judith Tinsley, and starting back in 2006 we have been photographing every page of the school log books which go back to 1871.

This has been a long process and it would not have been possible without the dedicated help of Pat Brittain, assisted by Moira Byast and Jill Tustian or for that matter the loan of photographic equipment by Chris Day.

By the time you read this we hope to have reached a major landmark, which is the completion of the photographic stage. This will have entailed taking photos under controlled lighting conditions of over 30 books containing nearly 6,000 pages, borrowed one at a time from the school.

The next stage (a solitary task!) will be the quality control of each photo and then assembling them into pairs of pages, so that they can be read on screen as spreads like the original volumes.

Once this has been done they can be made up into individual 'books', then described and indexed and put onto a DVD for the school. Our aim in all this is to make the books easier to access by the children in their studies and to protect the originals, some of which are showing their age, from too much wear.

I shall write more about the books in future, but meanwhile here is a typical page spread and a page of a fund-raising leaflet from 1854 found in one of the log books.

Colin Cohen

REPORT.

WE have, after a protracted period of exertion and anxiety, the satisfaction of being able at last to present our REPORT and FINANCIAL STATEMENT to the Promoters of, and Subscribers to, the DEDDINGTON NATIONAL SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

The Rev. James Brogden, the Vicar of Deddington, published on the 19th July, 1848, a Report, in which he set forth the pressing necessity for New School Buildings, together with a list of Subscriptions, which he had obtained through his influence and exertion for that purpose. In the beginning of the year 1850, the Vicar left Deddington, and the Subscription list which he had made, amounted to £150 11s. 0d., besides a promise of £50 from the National Society. No site, however, had been obtained. On Monday, June 23, 1851, a resolution was passed at a Special Meeting of the Members of the Deddington Schools Society, stating "That it was desirable to take immediate measures for the erection of suitable School Buildings in this Parish." On the same occasion an offer was made by Dr. Wilson, and "accepted by the meeting with cordial thanks," of "a piece of ground in Church Lane, as a site for the Schools." The "Building

