

## EDUCATION

Taunton has long been a centre of education. In the Middle Ages the priory taught local boys and later the grammar school in Bishops Hull parish enabled boys from better off families to be educated but there little provision for the poor or girls. By the 17th century the town had several private schools for boys and girls, often short-lived but drawing pupils from the wider county as many took boarders. In the early 19th century the needs of poor children began to be partially met through the Sunday school movement and the establishment of church schools. Later large public schools were established as the need for secondary education, at least for middle-class children, was recognised. Later in the 19th century tertiary and adult education became more widely available.

Clergy of all denominations fought the imposition of a school board in Taunton in the 19th century but in the 20th century it was accepted that local councils should provide education including secondary schools for children unable to access grammar schools and further academic and vocational education. However, both church and private schools survive alongside state schools and colleges. In the 1920s and 1930s the growing demand for outdoor exercise led to the closure of some schools without playgrounds while others used public facilities. The need to provide better facilities for domestic and manual subjects, before 1917 only taught to all pupils at Bishop Fox's and North Town, led to the establishment in the 1920s of a centre at 92 Staplegrove Road. Used as a Homecraft school in 1972 it closed shortly afterwards and was demolished.<sup>1</sup> The later 20th century saw the development of nursery schools, special schools for those with disabilities and the establishment of comprehensive secondary education in the borough. Developments in early the 21st century included the creation of academies and the lessening of local authority control over education

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<sup>1</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/13/3/1, p. 395; C/E/4/311/13, pp. 117, 186; Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1928, 1939); *Kelly's Trade Dir. of Taunton* (1972—3).

at all levels, the widening of tertiary education and the establishment of international departments of the public schools bringing in students from all over the world.

### Pre-1800

In 1286 Master Walter de Tolre was master of the schools at Taunton and a scholar of Taunton was clerk of Launceston castle.<sup>2</sup> A landowner's son probably attended the same school c. 1293. Between 1393 and 1530 150 Taunton boys were educated at Winchester School probably due to the Winchester see's ownership of the manor.<sup>3</sup> The large number of Taunton men ordained in the later 15th century, some of whom were graduates, indicates they had access to education.<sup>4</sup> A man brought up in Taunton priory for seven years in the late 15th century was probably one of many.<sup>5</sup> By the early 16th century the priory had a choir school and in 1538 on the eve of the Dissolution paid a cantor £5 with house, fuel and gown to teach boys to sing.<sup>6</sup> Also in 1538 John Bytford was granted maintenance for himself and a serving boy for instructing novices and others in grammar and literature.<sup>7</sup> After 1522 boys could attend the grammar school in Bishops Hull parish but for long periods in the 16th century and during the Civil War that school was closed.<sup>8</sup> In 1539 it was said more than 200 boys under 14 in St James parish alone needed teaching.<sup>9</sup>

In 1606 at least four men and several women taught without licence of the bishop in Taunton St Mary.<sup>10</sup> By the 1660s four men were licensed to teach English, reading, writing, cyphering and arithmetic.<sup>11</sup> Mistress Musgrave kept a girls' school in Taunton in 1685 and

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<sup>2</sup> *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, I, B172.

<sup>3</sup> N. Orme, *Education in the West of England* (Exeter, 1976), 4, 105.

<sup>4</sup> R.W. Dunning, *Bath and Wells Ordination, 1465—1526* (SRS 99, 2021), passim.

<sup>5</sup> TNA, E134/15Eliz/Hil5.

<sup>6</sup> Orme, *Educ. W. of Eng.*, 212.

<sup>7</sup> T. Hugo, 'Taunton Priory' *PSANHS IX* (1859), 56.

<sup>8</sup> For the grammar, castle and Tangier schools see Bishops Hull, soc. hist., educ.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, E134/15Eliz/Hil5.

<sup>10</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/151.

<sup>11</sup> SHC, D/D/Bs/39, 41—2; D/D/Vc/41.

with Sarah Langham brought 40 pupils, ‘the maids of Taunton’, to greet the Duke of Monmouth.<sup>12</sup>

In 1635 Robert Gray provided for a schoolroom at his almshouse and desired the almshouse reader to teach ten poor children to read and write. The pupils were known as the hospital children and in the late 17th century there were usually five boys with a male teacher and five girls with a female teacher, each teacher receiving 10s. At least one additional child paid 6d. a month for schooling.<sup>13</sup> The children were to be instructed in the catechism and attend prayers in chapel but that had been abandoned by the early 19th century when the reader continued to teach ten children free of charge although they had to find their own books. He was allowed to take other paying children although teaching was actually done by his wife and was confined to reading and spelling with no writing or arithmetic.<sup>14</sup> In 1851 the reader described himself as keeping a small school although he had formerly been a bricklayer.<sup>15</sup> The school apparently ceased soon afterwards.

In 1768 the Market House Act provided for the profits of the market to be spent on a master to teach poor children aged 6—10 reading, writing and arithmetic until they were 12 when they would be clothed and apprenticed.<sup>16</sup> No profits accrued but clearly townsmen recognised the need for education.

### Sunday Schools

Joseph Alleyne was said to have had a Sunday school at St Mary’s church in the mid 17th century.<sup>17</sup> Mr Harris a Methodist gardener of North Town founded a Sunday school movement among the poor in that part of Taunton in the later 18th century leading others to

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<sup>12</sup> SHC, Q/SR/10/16.

<sup>13</sup> SHC, A/BIS/1/1.

<sup>14</sup> *5th Rep Com. Char.* 522—8.

<sup>15</sup> TNA, HO 107/1922.

<sup>16</sup> SHC, D/B/ch/7/2/2.

<sup>17</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/35.

develop the Society for the Institution of Sunday Schools and the first Sunday school in March 1788, which taught 200 children.<sup>18</sup> The importance of Sunday schools is often underestimated but in the early 19th century they educated more children than day schools, partly because they were free. The overseers of St Mary's found education for the poor was inadequate but that parents were unable to pay. In 1833 the church and chapel Sunday schools taught 1,145 children compared with 454 in their day schools. They were supported by subscriptions and collections and most had had lending libraries.<sup>19</sup> Schools were well attended and usually divided into morning and afternoon schools although the Roman Catholics had only an afternoon school. Many were members of the Taunton Sunday School Union founded by Thomas Thomson in the early 19th century.<sup>20</sup> On the 1880 Sunday School anniversary 2,012 children and 84 teachers from the Anglican Sunday schools took part in a procession.<sup>21</sup> Nine out of 18 churches and chapels had 3,279 Sunday scholars c.1903.<sup>22</sup>

By 1818 a Sunday school at St Mary Magdalene taught 60 poor children from both Taunton parishes supported by subscriptions.<sup>23</sup> In 1833 there were 107 Sunday pupils although St James had started its own school.<sup>24</sup> St Mary's opened a new Sunday School and day school in 1836 and children were supposed to attend both.<sup>25</sup> In 1876 there were 435 Sunday school children and in 1878 12 teachers taught 124 infants but average attendance was only 41 in the morning and 55 in the afternoon. In 1887 the boys Sunday school had 16 teachers and 109 boys divided between 12 classes.<sup>26</sup> By the early 20th century there were departments for young men and boys, young women and girls and junior girls with a total of three superintendents and 44 assistant teachers. In 1915 the girls' school, based in a large

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<sup>18</sup> SHC, A/CPT/15/5, pp. 380—1; D/N/tmc/7a/23. p. 14; E. Jeboult, *A Popular History of W. Som* (1893), 188.

<sup>19</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>20</sup> *Taunton of Today* (1896), 34—44; SHC, A/DIF/79/2, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/5/3/5.

<sup>22</sup> *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1904*, 105—13.

<sup>23</sup> *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 796; below, this section.

<sup>24</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>25</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/1.

<sup>26</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/2/6/1, 18/2/6.

room in the former post office in Church Square, had 281 scholars in 19 classes. By the 1920s the Sunday school was held in the former boys' day school. The St Mary's Mission in St George's Place had at least 93 children in its Sunday school in 1912.<sup>27</sup>

In 1846 Holy Trinity Sunday school had 60 boys and girls and St James Sunday school was affiliated to the National Society and taught 87 boys and 94 girls in a single schoolroom supported by subscriptions. A Sunday school at Rowbarton chapel of ease taught 27 boys and 25 girls supported by subscriptions and voluntary teachers and Rowbarton infant school taught 150 children who only attended on Sundays.<sup>28</sup> In 1866 the curate of Taunton St James accused the Rowbarton boys Sunday school of lapsing into dissent and the teachers complained of high churchmanship.<sup>29</sup> The St James infant Sunday school was held morning and afternoon at the mission room in Middle Street from c.1880 until the 1890s.<sup>30</sup> St Andrew's Sunday school, the successor to Rowbarton, was one of the largest and was short of teachers in 1895 when the day school managers wanted all teachers to take a turn teaching on Sundays. In 1901 there were 60 teachers and the school was divided into 20 infant, 18 girls' and 22 boys' classes.<sup>31</sup>

The Sunday school was particularly important among nonconformists who often attached large Sunday schools to their chapels. In 1802 the Wesleyans began a Sunday school, claimed in 1902 to be the oldest still in existence and by 1839 the older children had a writing class on Tuesday evenings and access to a circulating library.<sup>32</sup> In 1833 the Wesleyans established a second Sunday school at a house in East Reach, which had 81 children registered in 1839.<sup>33</sup> The school moved to Victoria Methodist chapel in 1840 and in

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<sup>27</sup> SHC, A/DBL/133/18; D/P/tau.m/2/1/33 (1912); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Nat. Soc., Schs Inquiry*, 1846—7 (1849), 16—17.

<sup>29</sup> SHC, A/BKP 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 1 May 1878 (review of Taunton St James): BNA accessed 24 July 2019; SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/8/1; D/N/tmc/5/3/5.

<sup>31</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a 18/7/1.

<sup>32</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/35; D/N/tmc/7/3/4, 7a/23, p.16.

<sup>33</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/7a/23, p. 15.

1851 average attendance was 65.<sup>34</sup> In 1888 the school was extended from three rooms to one large and 9 small classrooms.<sup>35</sup> By 1931 there was a small morning school and a larger afternoon school divided between primary and senior departments with a total of 233 children and 32 teachers with additional helpers.<sup>36</sup> The Temple Methodist Sunday school had 410 children on the books with 33 teachers in 1880—1 but thereafter numbers gradually declined to 286 and 49 teachers in 1916 divided between morning and afternoon schools.<sup>37</sup>

In 1815 a Baptist Sunday school was started at Silver Street and in 1824 a schoolroom was built.<sup>38</sup> By 1840 the school had 190 scholars and 42 teachers and opened a new schoolroom in 1850.<sup>39</sup> In 1880 it was enlarged and set of classrooms built over it and by 1889 there were 440 pupils aged up to 25 and two large schoolrooms, 16 classrooms and two infant rooms.<sup>40</sup> There were 40 teachers in 1905 and both Silver Street and Albemarle Baptist schools trained teachers.<sup>41</sup> Attendance declined from 207 scholars at Silver Street in 1939 to 152 scholars by 1941.<sup>42</sup> A new schoolroom was added to Paul's meeting in 1840 and in 1851 166 children attended morning service and 150 in the afternoon.<sup>43</sup> In 1920 there were over 200 children in the Sunday school, which had a lecture room and nine classrooms.<sup>44</sup> In 1843—5 a Sunday school was built behind North Street Congregational chapel for 100 infants, 160 children, 60 young people and 120 adults. The school was extended in 1859 and in 1884 there were 540 pupils and 33 teachers.<sup>45</sup> By 1893 it was said that over 10,000 had passed through the school but by then the school no longer functioned as an elementary

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<sup>34</sup> TNA, HO 129/315/3/4/13.

<sup>35</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/22/929.

<sup>36</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/5/3/1, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/5/3/5—6.

<sup>38</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.b/4/2/1.

<sup>39</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.b/4/2/1 (1840, 1850).

<sup>40</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.b/4/2/6, p. 102; TNA, IR 58/82651 (2015).

<sup>41</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1.

<sup>42</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.b/4/2/6, pp. 182, 229.

<sup>43</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.pm/2/3/1; TNA, HO 129/315/3/4/11.

<sup>44</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.pm/5/3/1, p. 42; TNA, IR 58/823635 (441).

<sup>45</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.n/3/2/1.

school and adults were mostly literate.<sup>46</sup> In 1910 the school comprised a large schoolroom with separate infant classroom and 14 classrooms, library and parlour on the first floor.<sup>47</sup>

Ebenezer Bible Christian Sunday school probably started in 1844 when a schoolroom was provided and 120 children attended in 1851.<sup>48</sup> A new school was built in 1897.<sup>49</sup> By the 1900s the school was divided between morning and afternoon schools, there were three classes each for boys and girls and an infant class. Between 1905 and 1914 a women's bible class was attached to the school. Numbers are not known and the church was said to take little interest but 68 children went on a Sunday school outing in 1913.<sup>50</sup> After 1917 school furniture was sold to pay debts and in 1935 both school and chapel closed.<sup>51</sup>

Mary Street chapel had a Sunday school by the 1840s but the boys school 'sank' for lack of teachers in 1852.<sup>52</sup> In the 1880s a Sunday school taught up to 170 children and adults and had a large library but attendance declined in the early 20th century.<sup>53</sup> The Plymouth Brethren had 40 children at a morning Sunday school in 1851.<sup>54</sup> It had 1,000 pupils in 50 classes in the 1890s, presumably meeting at different times. By 1903 the school covered the entire site around the chapel but was destroyed by fire in 1905. It was rebuilt with 10 classrooms and remained open until at least the 1960s.<sup>55</sup> The school building was demolished when the Octagon was renovated in the 1990s.<sup>56</sup>

In 1892 Rowbarton Methodist church was intended to become a Sunday school when a bigger church was built but instead a Sunday school was built beside the church in 1909. In

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<sup>46</sup> SHC, A/DIF/79/2: chapel centenary booklet.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, IR 58/82632 (153).

<sup>48</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 14 Feb. 1844: BNA accessed 29 July 2019; TNA, HO 129/315/4/1/3.

<sup>49</sup> SHC, D/N/mca/4/3/1.

<sup>50</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/5/3/3.

<sup>51</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/3/4/1 (1917, 1934—5).

<sup>52</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/4/2/4.

<sup>53</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/3/3/3, 4/1/1—5, 5/2/29.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, HO 129/315/4/1/4.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, IR 58/82627 (3480); SHC, D/N/tsmc/7/2/2; A/BVO/2.

<sup>56</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/28/1835; D/N/tsmc/7/2/2.

early 1960s over 100 attended with 22 teachers and a new school was built in 1965.<sup>57</sup> A schoolroom was added to Rowbarton Congregational chapel in 1898 but it was inadequate when 45 children were admitted c. 1908. When the new chapel was built the old one was converted into a Sunday school.<sup>58</sup>

### Elementary education

Before 1809 a girls charity school had been established, possibly the charity school given seats in Paul's meeting in 1805 although most children attended St Mary's.<sup>59</sup> In 1809 a charity school was established in the castle for 80 boys aged 6—13, later changed to 7—13. They were recommended by subscribers and were taught reading only, a suggestion that they learn singing was considered inappropriate for their social status. The school moved to a new schoolroom in Middle Street adjoining the house occupied by the girls' school. The boys were taught for up to six hours a day, learnt the catechism and attended two Sunday services for which they received clothes.<sup>60</sup> The children of both schools took part in the Taunton Festival procession in 1814.<sup>61</sup> Despite subscriptions and church collections, of which the boys' school took three quarters, a shortage of funds led to a request in 1815 for 1*d.* a week from each boy. Some children were removed but parents of boys who had behaved well received 7*s.* when their sons left school.<sup>62</sup> In 1818 140 children were taught and clothed from voluntary contributions.<sup>63</sup> The 80 boys and 50 girls at the Middle Street charity schools continued to receive a 'plain education' and annual clothing from public subscriptions until the 1830s. The girls' school was prepared to take a deaf and dumb girl in 1822.<sup>64</sup> By 1833 the

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<sup>57</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/36 (1957—1966); D/N/tmc/7/2/1a, pp. 2—3, 15.

<sup>58</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.rc 7/2/1.

<sup>59</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.pm/6/10 [16].

<sup>60</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/17/1.

<sup>61</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/150.

<sup>62</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/17/1.

<sup>63</sup> *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 796.

<sup>64</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/9/1/1, 5; Pigot & Co., *Dir. Som.* (1830); *Robson's Dir. Som.* (1839).

boys school appears to have closed but the girls school had 43 pupils supported by subscription .It may have closes by or soon after 1852.<sup>65</sup> The opening of parish schools probably rendered them redundant and St Mary's schools were regarded as the successors to the charity schools.<sup>66</sup> A charity school was recorded south of East Street in 1834.<sup>67</sup> A ragged school was begun by the town mission in 1847, probably one of those recorded in King Street in 1849, but closed for lack of funds.<sup>68</sup>

In 1818 several small schools educated children at their parents' expense but the poor, especially girls, lacked education.<sup>69</sup> Widows often set up tiny dame schools to earn a living especially when they had young children. In 1820 one had 14 pupils paying 2d. a week, enough to be denied poor relief for herself and two children.<sup>70</sup>

William Chorley, a former militia lieutenant, had a National School by 1820 in East Reach, possibly the day school recorded in 1818 with 85 children supported by subscriptions,<sup>71</sup> and removed to Holway Lane before 1821 when it was called the Madras school.<sup>72</sup> In 1833 the school taught 86 children supported by MPs, the vicar and payments by pupils and had a Sunday school. The master received c. £80 a year and the vicar fitted up a lending library.<sup>73</sup> The school was given up in 1835 and the premises were used by the new St Mary's school.<sup>74</sup> Another school in St Mary's parish taught 17 boys at their parents' expense in 1833, possibly that recorded in the 1840s where geography, scripture history, and arithmetic were well taught but the master needed assistants.<sup>75</sup> In St James' parish a day school taught 40 boys and 27 girls in 1833 and another begun in 1831 taught 11 boys, all at

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<sup>65</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824; *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

<sup>66</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>67</sup> SHC, DD/CH/102/1 (1834).

<sup>68</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 17 Jul. 1847, 7; 30 May 1849, 4.

<sup>69</sup> *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 796.

<sup>70</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/9/1/5.

<sup>71</sup> *Royal Com. on employment of children in factories* (1833), 76; *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 796.

<sup>72</sup> Toulmin, *History of Taunton*, rev. J. Savage (Taunton, 1822), 594; *Pigot, London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1830).

<sup>73</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>74</sup> Below, this section.

<sup>75</sup> Clarke, *Church educ. among the poor* (1846), 69.

their parents' expense.<sup>76</sup> In 1871 there were still dame schools but probably with fewer than 200 pupils whereas eight church schools taught 668 boys and 461 girls. The great difference in attendance between boys and girls may be partly due to the employment of young girls in the silk factories and was experienced by most schools. Even after education became compulsory many children attended part-time and left prematurely.<sup>77</sup>

The 1820s to 1840s saw the creation of nine voluntary schools for the poor. Fear of a school board was one reason why the Revd Frederick Smith built schools at Holy Trinity and Rowbarton in 1846. In 1871 the church schools were still concerned to avert a school board, following the 1870 Education Act, by providing more schools and enlarging the existing ones.<sup>78</sup> In 1873 a proposal to unite Taunton St Mary, Taunton St James, Bishops Hull and Wilton into a single School District to provide the additional accommodation required was averted, partly due to a fund raising campaign. Smith was concerned a board would destroy friendly relations between the Church of England and Dissenters.<sup>79</sup> In 1873 school attendance across the town averaged 1,286 but an estimated 1,350 children were not at school and schools had spare accommodation.<sup>80</sup> However, even Smith was against forcing the poor to send their children to school although from 1880 attendance did become compulsory and from 1891 it was free.<sup>81</sup> Taunton church schools established a joint council in 1894 and wanted nonconformists to join to avoid a board. By that date there were said to be 3,000 children in Taunton's voluntary schools with room for 750 more.<sup>82</sup> Parliamentary figures for the ten grant-aided elementary schools show that average attendance increased from 1,947 in 1889 to 2,350 c. 1895 and 3,089 by 1907.<sup>83</sup> A government official noted in 1898 that

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<sup>76</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>77</sup> *Returns of Civil Parishes ...under the Education Act* (1871), 342—3; TNA, RG14/14234—6.

<sup>78</sup> SHC, A/AUS, school rep. 1871.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, ED 2/391/2; Revd F. J. Smith, *A paper on rate-supported schools* (Taunton, 1873), 6—7.

<sup>80</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/6; TNA, ED 2/391/2.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Rate-supported schools*, 7.

<sup>82</sup> SHC, A/ARQ/1/1.

<sup>83</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.,m/18/2/6, 18/7/1; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26.

‘Taunton is determined to keep out a school board’, given as the reason why Taunton had an ‘unusual number of obsolete and defective schools crowded into a small area’. Most schools remained in the town centre and lacked room to expand or provide playgrounds. By 1901 it was said that many churches were now in favour of a board and were reluctant to support schools on a voluntary basis.<sup>84</sup>

In 1905 pupil numbers varied from 68 at Original Infants to 689 at St Andrew’s and the cost per pupil from £1 15s. at St James’ school to over £3 3s. at St George’s, the main reason being the number of teachers. All schools made a loss.<sup>85</sup> By 1909 3,820 children attended Taunton public elementary schools, apart from an unknown number at Central Boys and the British Schools which the Board of Education had condemned in 1908. There were still far fewer girls in school than boys. Part-time schooling of both sexes was common especially in the south of the town where many textile mills were situated and such children were often described as dirty, backward and unpunctual.<sup>86</sup> Attendance was poor but rose from 82 per cent in 1903 to over 90 per cent in 1915.<sup>87</sup>

Although elementary schools concentrated on basic literacy and numeracy they also taught geography, history, needlework, drawing, elementary and natural science even in the infant classes. North Town boys’ school had a science room and provided violin lessons. Children in several schools had swimming lessons. In 1904 it was thought desirable that not only should girls do four hours needlework including mending each week but that boys should also be taught to knit and sew.<sup>88</sup> A few years later there was concern that drawing and art were neglected. Boys were said to need at least two hours drawing a week and girls one and children were encouraged to use brushes and clay.<sup>89</sup> Several provided education and

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<sup>84</sup> TNA, ED 21/15538; Revd L. Palmer, *The Taunton Day School Crisis* (1901), 10—14.

<sup>85</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, ED 21/15532, 15537; below, this section.

<sup>87</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/9/1 (1903, 1915).

<sup>88</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1; C/E/1/162.

<sup>89</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/2, loose report.

practical work for trainee teachers.<sup>90</sup> Poverty meant that teachers were often concerned with children's well-being, especially in winter. The teachers at Original Infants notified the authorities of malnourished children and obtained charitable gifts of food, clothing and toys for their pupils and made clothes for them in winter when classroom temperatures were often very low.<sup>91</sup>

The introduction of a rate for church schools under the 1902 Act had roused resentment among non-conformists and probably led to the acceptance of the first council school at North Town in 1907. Taunton Borough Council was the local education authority for elementary education from 1903 until 1945 when its schools were transferred to Somerset County Council, which was already responsible for secondary education.<sup>92</sup> The county drew up ambitious plans under the 1944 Act to close schools and change the age range of others to provide education from the age of two in nine nursery, two mixed nursery and infant, three infant, two mixed primary, three junior, three secondary modern schools, two single sex grammar schools, and a secondary technical school with boarding accommodation for 50 boys and 50 girls. Town centre schools were to close or become nurseries with new schools in the suburbs. Although this plan was not carried out immediately nor in its entirety new schools were built on housing estates. Nursery provision had to wait for half a century as by 1949 such was the shortage of accommodation that schools were told not to take any children under 5 and the closure of all nursery schools in the county was planned in 1952.<sup>93</sup>

Considerable pressure was placed on schools in wartime by the arrival of evacuees and refugees. During the First World War Belgian refugee children were educated at Huish's and Bishop Fox's and evacuees at North Town.<sup>94</sup> In September 1939 Holy Trinity received

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<sup>90</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1.

<sup>91</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/2, pp. 209, 223, 242, 261.

<sup>92</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1; D/B/ta/4/9/1 (1945).

<sup>93</sup> SCC, *New Schools for Old* (c. 1945), 35—6; SHC, C/E/4/311/7 (29 Jan 1949, 25 Mar. 1950, 12 and 19 June 1952).

<sup>94</sup> SHC, A/AHO 1; A/AYO 1/1.

44 evacuees.<sup>95</sup> Individual children often returned home after a short stay but in some cases whole schools came to Taunton for the duration. Coborn School from Essex shared Bishop Fox's premises in Staplegrove Road. When Bishop Fox's moved to their new premises Clapham Boys and Blue Coat schools arrived to share the old site with Coborn.<sup>96</sup> Wellington Way School from Bow moved into Weir Lodge nearby with up to 120 children but had to move to St Andrews Hall when Bishop Fox's term began as they still used Weir Lodge. Other schools supplied desks and books but some classes were held outside and by February 1940 there were up to 240 children. Holidays were reduced so as not to overburden the children's hosts. Later the infants moved into Albemarle school and in summer 1943 senior girls transferred to North Town. Both children and teachers gradually returned to London and the temporary school closed in July 1944.<sup>97</sup> The education authority took over the closed Memorial Schools in Mary Street as a hostel for evacuees.<sup>98</sup> North Town infant school was used as a centre for refugees in 1940 and pupils were moved to other schools.<sup>99</sup> Belgian boys were sent to Queen's College because it could provide accommodation.<sup>100</sup>

Concern that poor children were attending school malnourished led to attempts to provide meals. North Town had cookery training rooms and in 1917 the borough's education committee proposed creating a school kitchen there. Some children from Original Infants were getting free meals there in 1921 but it is not clear if the scheme lasted much longer.<sup>101</sup> During the Second World War school meals were given a high priority. In 1941 the borough's community feeding committee estimated that 10,610 children needed a meal at 4d. a day.<sup>102</sup> In 1942 new central kitchens at Priory school began providing hot meals for children

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<sup>95</sup> SHC, A/BFW 1/5 (Sep. 1939).

<sup>96</sup> SHC, A/APN 2/6, p. 37; A/AYO 3/1 (1939).

<sup>97</sup> SHC, C/E/4/223/1.

<sup>98</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/5/2/32.

<sup>99</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/3, p. 213.

<sup>100</sup> Below, this section.

<sup>101</sup> SHC, C/E/4/311/13, p. 197; A/AUS, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> SHC, C/CD/1/1/29.

in the town schools but only for those whose parents could pay the 4d. cost, although a few were given free meals. Later central kitchens were built near Flook House off Station Road and on South Street.<sup>103</sup> Even independent schools like Weirfield took up to 80 meals a day from the kitchen.<sup>104</sup> However, the Central school complained in 1949 of tainted food, underfilled containers and a slug in the salad.<sup>105</sup> Later free meals were offered to poor children but most schools built their own kitchens and the central kitchens were demolished in the later 1960s.<sup>106</sup> Askwith kitchen supplied 1,100 meals a week in 1955 and the new kitchen at St James' school served up to 80 meals a day by 1965.<sup>107</sup> Schools in poorer areas provided breakfast in the early 21st century.<sup>108</sup>

Although the three public schools, built for boys, had between 22 a. and 58 a. and most secondary schools had c. 12—15 a., in 1964 Wellsprings was the only primary school with playing fields. Town centre schools had almost no land and even those built in housing estates often had limited provision for recreation. Many schools had to take children to public recreation grounds in the 20th century. New schools had more land but playing fields were vulnerable to development for school expansion or through sale of land to raise funds.<sup>109</sup>

Charities were set up to benefit schools and pupils notably the Wyndham Trust established by William Wyndham in 1922 to benefit children over 13 and in 1924 a second trust was established for younger children. Lectures by experts were given in the Wyndham Hall or in Bishop Fox's school. From 1956 lectures were replaced by books and educational outings and the two trusts merged in 1979 after which grants were given to school libraries. The charity was wound up in 2009.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/9/1 (1942); C/E/4/367/3, p. 216; C/E/4/367/6 (July 1957); C/WS/1/4, p. 724.

<sup>104</sup> SHC, A/CBG/26.

<sup>105</sup> SHC, C/E/4/359/6, pp. 52—3.

<sup>106</sup> SHC, C/CPHH/169 (1967), p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> SHC, C/E/4/327/1, p. 73; D/P/tau.ja/18/7/3 (1964—5).

<sup>108</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/171, 175.

<sup>109</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26—7.

<sup>110</sup> SHC, DD/X/WLT.t/1—5.

## St George's Roman Catholic School

In January 1812 a free day school for poor Catholic girls was begun at the South Road convent where they were taught reading, writing and accounts as well as religious education in a schoolroom below the chapel, known as the poor room.<sup>111</sup> In 1833 there were 30 girls supported by the church but the school closed later following a dispute with the parish priest.<sup>112</sup> In 1842 poor children were educated at the convent again and a 'middle school' opened there in 1865.<sup>113</sup> It is not clear when the poor children moved out of the convent but in 1858 St George's boys' school, sometimes called 'the poor school', was a two-roomed building in St George's Place with William Morley as head. There were c. 40 boys on the books who started the day by attending mass. There was no night school. The girls' school was apparently held in the home of their headteacher Mary Searle until 1871.<sup>114</sup> In 1870 a new school was built in the Mount for 100 boys and 100 girls, although only 65 were registered in 1873. The address of the girls school was given as Billet Street, presumably because they had a separate entrance.<sup>115</sup> In 1878 there were only 34 children in the girls school<sup>116</sup> and in 1883 average attendance was 138 boys but only 30 girls.<sup>117</sup> An infant school was formed c. 1900 in a cloakroom and the boys were taught upstairs. The junior schools were combined in 1908 with a headmistress and two assistants upstairs and the infants used the two rooms downstairs. Average attendance was 36 in the mixed school and 22 in the infants.<sup>118</sup> There

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<sup>111</sup> R. Trappes-Lomax, *The English Franciscan Nuns, 1619—1821* (Cath. Rec. Soc. 24 (1922)), 108—9.

<sup>112</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824; Bristol RO 35721/addnl 12, visitation returns 1858—9.

<sup>113</sup> Below, this section (convent); J. A. Harding, *The Diocese of Clifton, 1850—2000* (Clifton, 1999), 193.

<sup>114</sup> Bristol RO 35721/addnl 12, visitation returns 1858—9; *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, HO107/1922; RG 9/1616; RG 10/2370.

<sup>115</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883); SHC, A/DBL/135/1; D/RC/ta.g/2/5/1, loose tender 1870.

<sup>116</sup> TNA, ED 21/15537.

<sup>117</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889).

<sup>118</sup> TNA, ED 21/15537; ED 161/11460.

were 162 pupils by 1928 and the juniors attended practical sessions at the council handicraft centre in the 1930s.<sup>119</sup>

Numbers fell to 120 including evacuees in 1944<sup>120</sup> and 90 with three teachers in 1945 but increased to 138 with four teachers in 1955 when the parish hall was used as a classroom and dining room and there was only a small courtyard playground.<sup>121</sup> Despite the removal of senior pupils in 1958 the school remained overcrowded with c. 140 pupils rising to 161 in 1964.<sup>122</sup> In 1967 the church bought adjoining Nunsfield from the military authorities who had requisitioned it from the convent in 1939. A new school was built to the designs of Shirley-Smith and Gibson with a gymnasium and indoor swimming pool, which were replaced in the early 21st century. It opened in 1968 and the old school closed and was partially demolished for road widening.<sup>123</sup> The core two-storey building after being used as a youth club and charity offices was converted to dwellings in 2016–17.

The new school had 273 children by 1975<sup>124</sup> and in 1980 c. 30 came from the Wellington area.<sup>125</sup> In 1995 there were 203 children on the register<sup>126</sup> and 220, many from ethnic minorities, in 2017 when the school was doing well.<sup>127</sup> From 2014 the grounds housed an outstanding pre-school for children from 2, which had 35 children although it was designed for 24.<sup>128</sup>

### Original Infants School

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<sup>119</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/1; TNA, ED 161/11460.

<sup>120</sup> SHC, D/RC/ta.g/2/5/2 (30 Mar. 1944).

<sup>121</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; TNA, ED 161/11460.

<sup>122</sup> SHC, C/E/6/20 (8 Jan. 1959); *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>123</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/193/11016; DD/FIV/1/107; A/DBL/135/1 (1980); Orbach, S. & W. *Som.*, 814.

<sup>124</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>125</sup> SHC, A/DBL/135/1 (1980).

<sup>126</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>127</sup> [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123851](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123851): accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>128</sup> [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY474983](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY474983): accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

This Congregational school, also known as the British Infant school,<sup>129</sup> was started in the 1820s by William Davis. A new school for 200 children was built south of Mary Street in 1828 on the site of ruinous cottages one of which was renovated for a teacher. The cost was c. £600 raised from donations.<sup>130</sup> The school had three classrooms with entrance porch and later a lean-to kitchen was added.<sup>131</sup> It opened with 99 pupils. In 1830 110 poor children with their parents were given tea and a similar treat was given in 1835 to encourage good behaviour.<sup>132</sup> In 1833 there were 50 boys and 40 girls supported by payments.<sup>133</sup> Attendance in the 1860s was very low during the assizes or a circus.<sup>134</sup> Despite a resolution in 1865 that the school should be for infants only there were still many children up to age 10 in 1869—9 when the inspector complained of poor instruction, not helped by the many changes of teacher.<sup>135</sup> Numbers rose from 154 in to 207 by 1873 despite the opening of other schools nearby.<sup>136</sup>

Staff retention was a problem, partly due to the damp house, and one teacher managed the whole school with two young assistants but by the end of the 19th century inspectors' reports were good. From 1891 education was free but the headmistress went out collecting money for the school until 1900 or later.<sup>137</sup> In 1908 the school managers let it to the town council, which ran it thereafter.<sup>138</sup> Numbers fell to 75 in 1904 and 64 in 1907 but the transfer of infants from the Memorial schools resulted in 156 children on the books in 1908.<sup>139</sup> Improvements were required to accommodate the extra infants.<sup>140</sup> In 1913 the borough

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<sup>129</sup> *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

<sup>130</sup> SHC, DD/HC/9/32; A/AUS, TS 150th anniversary history by A. Trott; A/DBC 1/1; DD/CH/84/1.

<sup>131</sup> SHC, A/DBC/5.

<sup>132</sup> TNA, ED 2/391/2.

<sup>133</sup> *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>134</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/1, pp. 1, 69.

<sup>135</sup> TNA, ED 2/391/2; C/E/4/367/1, pp. 74, 93.

<sup>136</sup> TNA, ED 2/391/2; C/E/4/367/1, p. 153.

<sup>137</sup> SHC, A/AUS [p. 6]; C/E/4/367/2, p. 66.

<sup>138</sup> SHC, C/E/4/293/1.

<sup>139</sup> SHC, A/DBC 4/1; C/E/4/367/1, pp. 253—4, 460; D/P/tau.m 18/2/6; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26.

<sup>140</sup> TNA, ED 21/15532.

education committee planned to replace but instead embarked upon improvements including extending the playground.<sup>141</sup>

Like all infant schools Original Infants suffered from epidemic diseases sometimes resulting in pupil deaths and by the late 19th century here were long periods of compulsory closure for measles and whooping cough.<sup>142</sup> The school had many pupils from military families due to the proximity of the Barracks and during the war the children grew vegetables in the school garden and raised money for gifts for soldiers.<sup>143</sup> During alterations the school competed with the military for accommodation in local halls.<sup>144</sup> The school suffered from influenza in 1918 and measles in 1919. Children started at 3 and left at age 7 to attend the Mary Street Memorial School. Slum clearance reduced numbers from c. 80 in 1920s to 46 by 1933 when children remained until they were 9 taught by two teachers.<sup>145</sup>

By December 1940 the school had 91 children including evacuees.<sup>146</sup> Pupil numbers remained stable with three teachers until 1967 when nearly half the children transferred to Parkfield School.<sup>147</sup> The school still had military children whose families were often posted to Germany and a few children emigrated to Australia in the later 20th century.<sup>148</sup> In 1973 there were 87 infants with 29 on the waiting list but by the 150th anniversary in 1978 there were only 60 children with the opening of new schools elsewhere. The school was reduced to two classes with the middle room being used as a dining hall and finally closed in 1981.<sup>149</sup> Somerset County Council leased the building as a meeting and educational centre for disabled adults but access problems of access led the council to terminated the lease in 1999. In 2000 the building was sold and the proceeds distributed to various local charities and to the

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<sup>141</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32.

<sup>142</sup> SHC, C/E/367/1, p. 459; C/E/4/367/2, pp. 198, 208—9.

<sup>143</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/2, pp. 213, 237, 256, 260, 270; C/E/4/367/3, pp. 21.

<sup>144</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/2, pp. 235, 237.

<sup>145</sup> SHC, A/AUS; A/DBC 1/1.

<sup>146</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/5.

<sup>147</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26; SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/367/4, pp. 24, 30.

<sup>148</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/5.

<sup>149</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/367/4, pp. 181—2, 204, 212; C/E/4/367/6 (reports 1973—1981).

United Reformed church.<sup>150</sup> The stone entrance gate with the school's name and date remains but not in its original position on the street due to demolitions and road alterations in the late 1950s.<sup>151</sup>

### St James' school

This school was built in 1828 to designs by Richard Carver on land north-west of the church given by Thomas Lethbridge and opened in 1829 as the Taunton Church of England Infant School, originally for any poor child in the town. It taught 110 children in 1833 supported by subscriptions and school pence and could afford to pay the master £110 p.a.<sup>152</sup> The teachers were Samuel and Georgiana Bellchambers, later assisted by two of their daughters. The children aged 2—6 paid 1 ½ *d.* a week and were required to attend from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.<sup>153</sup> In the 1840s the infant school was well taught and the fee was reduced to 1*d.* a week. Local clergy raised funds and the headmaster collected subscriptions for a commission. The site of the former church house adjoining the church was given before 1844 to provide a playground.<sup>154</sup> By 1859, despite the earlier rules, children stayed at the school until they were 13 and it was divided into upper mixed and infants. By 1861 it was renamed the Taunton Church of England School and the premises were vested in the Official Trustee of Charity Lands. In addition to the trustees a team of lady visitors assisted in managing the school.<sup>155</sup>

Mr Bellchambers resigned in 1863 and his wife kept the school. By 1868 an evening school was held and the building was extended although the school was in financial

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<sup>150</sup> SHC, A/DBC 1/2, 2/1, 3/2, 4/3, 8.

<sup>151</sup> SHC, C/E/4/367/6 (1956—8).

<sup>152</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/1; *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 824.

<sup>153</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/1; TNA, HO 107, 972; RG 9/1617.

<sup>154</sup> Clarke, *Church educ. among the poor* (1846), 70; SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/1.

<sup>155</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/1.

difficulties.<sup>156</sup> After the death of Mrs Bellchambers her daughter Mary continued as assistant teacher until 1878 or later.<sup>157</sup> In 1871 102 boys and 53 girls attended, and in 1874—5 the infant school was enlarged at the south end with separate porch and triple-windowed gable.<sup>158</sup> Concern at the low attendance and poor income from school pence and government grant led the school to register as a charity in 1879.<sup>159</sup> Despite a threat of closure the school continued as separate boys' and girls' schools with three teachers in 1883 and in 1889 average attendance was 120 children and 107 infants. The school received good reports and was extended again in 1898, partly to avoid the need for a school board, and employed five teachers. A small charity known as Curtis's provided £7 a year towards costs. On three evenings a week senior boys used a room in St James Street, possibly a former temperance hall and used as a school during building work, and were taught arithmetic, drill, wood carving and drawing.<sup>160</sup>

By 1903 the mixed and infant schools had separate headteachers but the managers struggled to keep the school out of debt and often had to make staff redundant and merge classes, partly to pay for the 1898 extension completed in 1905. In 1915 there were 184 children and 123 infants but a plan to take juniors only was resisted.<sup>161</sup> The original building housed three infant classrooms and the extension four junior classrooms with 220 juniors and 144 infants *c.* 1928.<sup>162</sup> In 1945 there were only 137 children with five teachers and by 1964 only 26 infants and 66 juniors with the loss of surrounding population.<sup>163</sup> A kitchen was installed by 1965 and uniform was introduced in 1969.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/1; DD/EDS/1/130.

<sup>157</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/1/23 (1867), 18/7/1.

<sup>158</sup> *Returns of Civil Parishes ...under the Education Act (1871)*, 342—3; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/9/291; TNA, ED 2/391/2.

<sup>159</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 1 May 1878 (review of TSJ); BNA accessed 24 July 2019; VCH office, *Taunton Draft Scheme for Church of England Schools in Somerset* (1952).

<sup>160</sup> TNA, ED 2/391/1; ED 21/15538; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889); SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/8/1.

<sup>161</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32; D/P/tau.ja/18/7/2, 18/3/1.

<sup>162</sup> SHC, A/BEZ 1/1; A/BMG/5/1.

<sup>163</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>164</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.ja/18/7/3.

Numbers rose to 164 in 1975 and the juniors transferred to Priory school, renamed Archbishop Cranmer and converted into a voluntary controlled church school in 1977. The infants from Priory transferred to St James but in 1978 the old St James' school closed completely. In 1981 the original building became a church hall and the extension was sold and demolished for a doctors' surgery.<sup>165</sup>

### St Mary's or Central school

Originally intended to teach the older children of St Mary's, St James' and Wilton parishes, St Mary's school opened in January 1836 in the closed National school building in Holway Lane. The parish took on the lease and all the furniture, books and slates. The school taught 140 boys and girls reading, writing and arithmetic and the girls also learned needlework and knitting. Children under 7 were not admitted. School hours were 9 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in winter or 5 p.m. in summer Monday to Friday and on Sunday from 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. until service time. Weekday fees were 2 *d.* a week for the first child and 1 ½ *d.* for additional children or those transferring from St James' infant school. After a few months the school moved to premises in Upper High Street.<sup>166</sup>

Having acquired houses in Church Square by gift and purchase from Lord Ashburton in 1836, the parish employed Richard Carver to design National schools for 400 boys and girls with a master's house. The school abutted onto the west gable of the parish workhouse.<sup>167</sup> The boys' schoolroom had a 12-light window flanked by entrance doors and the gable was surmounted by a bell turret with cross finial. The girls' room lay behind and both rooms were two storeys high and well lit with many windows on three sides. Two floors of additional accommodation including the master's house extended westward along the

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<sup>165</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; D/P/tau.ja/18/7/3—4, 18/13/1.

<sup>166</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/1—2.

<sup>167</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/1/1—2, 18/2/1—2, 18/4/1.

street, the whole in square-headed Tudor style.<sup>168</sup> In January 1837 the children moved in and by 1838 there were 108 boys and 98 girls although attendance was only *c.* 70 per cent.

Problems with staff, especially masters who wanted higher salaries than the parish could afford, and with school pence charges, which fluctuated between *1d.* and *3d.* a week led to a decline in numbers especially of girls.<sup>169</sup> Financial difficulties and fear of a school board dominated committee meetings.<sup>170</sup>

In 1851 architect John Blizzard planned new toilets and upstairs classroom and in 1856 proposed converting the girls' schoolroom into an infant school and building a two-storey girls' block. Neither plan was carried out but the large room at the former parish workhouse was converted to an infant classroom. Average attendance of infants in 1858 was 99 compared with 85 boys and 71 girls.<sup>171</sup> The school was still described as for the children of the poorer classes of the Taunton and Wilton parishes and was managed by the clergy and nine lay subscribers. A ladies committee visited the girls and infant schools. Following the provision of a new vestry hall in Paul Street the old workhouse with vestry room was conveyed to the school trustees in 1862 for £235 and demolished despite some objections. Cottages in a court to the rear were purchased to complete the site required for a new school and in 1867 the whole site was vested in the Official Trustee.<sup>172</sup> There were only three teachers, one for each department, assisted by a small number of pupil teachers. During the rebuilding the girls school met in the Vestry Hall and the infants in rooms hired in the castle.<sup>173</sup>

The main section of the old school next to the master's house was remodelled as a three-roomed boys' school of by Henry Davis. A playground replaced the former girls'

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<sup>168</sup> SHC, A/DIF/116; DD/EDS/1/128.

<sup>169</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/2—3; 18/4/7.

<sup>170</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/1—7.

<sup>171</sup> SHC, DD/EDS/1/128; D/P/tau.m/18/2/4.

<sup>172</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/9/1/54; 18/1/2; 18/2/3, 18/4/1, 4.

<sup>173</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/5.

school behind. An eastern extension in 1866 provided girls' and infants' schools with two rooms on each floor to the designs of Benjamin Ferrey.<sup>174</sup> The new building had a four-gabled front with roundel windows in the top of three of the gables. The form of a large classroom at right angles to the street was retained but with a high arched window comprising three roundels over three lights and an asymmetrical entrance and a small spire with open belfry on the roof. The west range was retained although it was later remodelled.<sup>175</sup>

The Taunton Central National School, as it was then named, re-opened in the summer of 1867 still with only three teachers assisted by seven pupil teachers for over 440 pupils mostly boys and infants. Girls were sent to work in the silk factories or kept at home on Fridays by their mothers.<sup>176</sup> In 1871 there were 196 boys, 114 girls and 296 infants on the books and the school was in a sound financial state partly owing to a legacy, but needed more accommodation.<sup>177</sup> Walter Cliffe's charity paid the school pence for poor scholars. Evening schools were held in the 1870s and 1880s and in 1874 were attended by 210 young men and 130 young women while 571 children attended the day school. With 662 children on the books in 1877 an assistant master was appointed but in 1883 a girl of 17 was told she was too old to start as a pupil teacher.<sup>178</sup> The girls' school was threatened with loss of grant for poor results until the late the 1880s and although 242 girls were enrolled average attendance was often less than 100.<sup>179</sup> J. Houghton Spencer converted the master's house into classrooms and accommodation for a caretaker, and in 1890 there were 176 boys, 112 girls and 205 infants on the books and 10 pupil teachers.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/4/4; DD/EDS/1/128; C/E/4/359/1, p. 84; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>175</sup> SHC, A/DIF/116; SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/4/4.

<sup>176</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/5; C/E/4/359/1, p. 218.

<sup>177</sup> SHC, A/AUS, school rep. 1871.

<sup>178</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/6.

<sup>179</sup> SHC, C/E/4/359/1, pp. 424, 429, 461, 494—5; C/E/4/359/3, pp. 1—3.

<sup>180</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/6, 8; TNA, IR 58/82633 (242).

Free elementary education was provided from September 1891 and by 1896 there were 571 pupils although still far fewer girls than boys.<sup>181</sup> A savings bank was established. Girls whose parents were willing were taught French from 1892, algebra from 1899 and from 1908 the violin. Many children attended half time or left prematurely as late as 1916.<sup>182</sup> In 1905 the limited outdoor space and poor accommodation including the rented girls' room over a garage accessed by wooden steps, caused concern.<sup>183</sup> By 1910 the larger rooms were partitioned giving a total of 11 classrooms.<sup>184</sup> The boys' school was condemned and by 1912 the boys and their five teachers were preparing to transfer to the new Askwith school, their old school being retained for the Sunday school.<sup>185</sup> The Central School in Church Square taught 165 girls and 148 infants c. 1928 but later took boys again and was a mixed county primary school by 1938 when closure was planned.<sup>186</sup>

The outbreak of war delayed reorganisation and the trustees let the school to the education authorities from 1941 to 1970 with the rent supporting the Sunday school and the curate's house.<sup>187</sup> In 1945 206 children were taught by seven teachers and by 1955 there were 222 children.<sup>188</sup> Children were bussed in from Bishops Hull in 1958. Older children were taught swimming and dancing and went on country outings.<sup>189</sup> By 1964 there were only 25 infants and 64 juniors but numbers rose in the early 1970s because Bishops Hull and Parkfield schools were full but half the children would transfer to the new Galmington school in 1974. Despite objections the school closed in July 1975.<sup>190</sup> The sale proceeds and the Cliffe charity funds were used to endow the Sunday school but by 1995 the charity had

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<sup>181</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/8.; TNA, ED 21/15531.

<sup>182</sup> SHC, C/E/4/359/2, pp. 30, 84, 159, 218,260—1.

<sup>183</sup> TNA, ED 21/15531; C/E/4/359/2, p. 147, 162.

<sup>184</sup> TNA, IR 58/82633 (242).

<sup>185</sup> SHC, A/DBL/133/18; D/P/tau.m/18/8/1; C/E/4/359/4, p. 239.

<sup>186</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/1.

<sup>187</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/1/3, 8, 18/4/11.

<sup>188</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>189</sup> SHC, C/E/4/359/6, pp. 283, 288, photos.

<sup>190</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26; SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/359/6, pp. 448, 458, 468—9; C/E/4/359/10.

ceased to exist. After being used as an auction room the school buildings were converted into a restaurant.<sup>191</sup>

### British School

The school opened on 11 April 1836 in temporary premises, presumably the old National school in Holway Lane vacated by St Mary's. It had 80 boys and on 21 November a girls' school was begun. Both schools were said to be full by January 1837.<sup>192</sup> In 1838 a house close on Holway Lane, now South Street, was acquired in trust for a school for the labouring and manufacturing classes on the principles of the British and Foreign Schools Society and tenders were sought for a house and two schoolrooms.<sup>193</sup> The front of the building contained the teacher's house with two schoolrooms behind for girls on the ground floor and boys above.<sup>194</sup> There was no playground. In 1862 a master and three pupil teachers taught 179 boys aged 4—14 in one room from 9 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. They studied history, grammar, music, geography and some learnt drawing but there were very few books.<sup>195</sup> Although at least one factory had a night school some boys were sent to the British school part-time by their employer who paid the fees. Half-timers in the 1880s were said to do badly and some remained illiterate at 12. Of 115 boys on the register in 1883 half were part-time.<sup>196</sup> Boys as young as 11 left for full-time factory work and others played truant for every show or military event in the neighbourhood. Holy Trinity school was accused of poaching boys.<sup>197</sup> In 1890 flu and diphtheria were partly responsible for absenteeism but in 1891 there were eight boys on the register who had never attended.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/4/11; C/E/4/78; Char. Com. reg.

<sup>192</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 18 Jan. 1837, 12 Sep. 1838; BNA accessed 30 July 2019.

<sup>193</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/5/5/46.

<sup>194</sup> SHC, DD/EDS/1/127; *Robsons Dir.* (1839); *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

<sup>195</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/1, pp. 1, 9—10, 21, 73.

<sup>196</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/1, pp. 9, 60, 65, 71, 103, 117, 134, 377, 416, 438, 479.

<sup>197</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/1, pp. 384, 387, 405, 409—10, 479.

<sup>198</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/2, pp. 12—13, 32—6, 45.

In 1862 the British girls and infants school had two classrooms below the boys schoolroom, divided by a curtain, and each area had a gallery. Later the boys were moved downstairs. There was a teacher, four pupil teachers and 240 children from 2—15 including 79 infant boys and seven factory girls under 10. Few did any form of arithmetic and attendance was poor. The teaching of infants was left to a 14 year-old monitress in 1867 and although by 1871 average infant attendance was 61 they still shared a teacher with the girls. In 1891 the inspector considered their number should be reduced and they should be moved back downstairs.<sup>199</sup> In 1892 he offered a new building in East Reach as an infant school but the offer was not taken up.<sup>200</sup> The infants acquired their own teacher in 1893 assisted by a pupil teacher. One of the older girls looked after the babies. There were 130 infants on the register but average attendance was only 83.<sup>201</sup>

In 1894 the boys, girls and infant schools with 220 children were combined under one teacher.<sup>202</sup> Numbers rose to 384 in 1904 but thereafter slowly declined as closure was considered.<sup>203</sup> Most children left school at 13 to work in the collar factories and others attended part-time and were described as backward. Some boys also worked a milk or paper round before school and arrived late, unwashed and hungry.<sup>204</sup> By 1905 the teacher had six assistants but none was qualified until 1911.<sup>205</sup> In 1909 there were two infant rooms, one with a gallery and a babies' room on the ground floor and three mixed classrooms on the first, still with separate stairs for boys and girls, the latter outside. Total average attendance was 309. Accommodation was dark and insanitary and although the teaching was good the government grant was withdrawn and the school was condemned and closed in 1913. The children and

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<sup>199</sup> SHC, DD/EDS/1/127; C/E/4/221/1, pp. 1, 7—11, 32, 148, 243; C/E/4/221/2, p. 105.

<sup>200</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/2, p. 52.

<sup>201</sup> SHC, C/E/4/222/1, pp. 1, 9—10, 12.

<sup>202</sup> SHC, A/ARQ/1/1; C/E/4/222/1, pp. 21, 33—4, 46—7.

<sup>203</sup> SHC, DD/TAC/5/5/68; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26; C/E/4/221/2, p. 166; TNA, ED 21/15540.

<sup>204</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/2, pp. 221—2, 336, 349.

<sup>205</sup> SHC, C/E/4/222/1, p. 163, 243.

their headmistress moved to the new Priory Junior School.<sup>206</sup> However, between 1917 and 1919 the old school reopened because Priory was requisitioned as a Red Cross hospital.<sup>207</sup> The three-storey building was sold in 1919 to become a furniture depository and in the later 20th century was converted into small flats. The proceeds of the sale were used by the Taunton Town Charity for educational purposes.<sup>208</sup>

### Workhouse school

St Mary's parish workhouse had a schoolroom before 1820 but in 1822 the children were being taught in the sickroom, possibly the converted schoolroom. There were usually 25 or more children in the house.<sup>209</sup>

The new union workhouse also had a schoolroom, built under the chapel, and a couple were employed to teach the children who from 1838 were no longer allowed to go out to school.<sup>210</sup> By 1840 the room was overcrowded and the infants were placed elsewhere and taught by one of the older girls.<sup>211</sup> Later schools were built in the yard for 200 children but they were still unfinished in November 1848.<sup>212</sup> The infant school was described as fit only for a coal cellar and the girls school was regarded as the source of the 1849 cholera epidemic, which killed 25 of the 67 girls with the master and nine boys from the boys school. It was said that fewer boys died because their habit of breaking school windows ensured better ventilation.<sup>213</sup> Many children were violent and disruptive and corporal punishment was

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<sup>206</sup> TNA, ED 21/15540; IR 58/82648 (1762); SHC, A/BEZ/1/1/1; C/E/4/220/2, pp. 337, 367—8.

<sup>207</sup> SHC, A/BAV/14; D/H/ta/3/3 (1915, 1916, 1920); Taunton St James, school project.

<sup>208</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957), 124; SHC, C/E/4/401/79; DD/DH/2/1.

<sup>209</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/9/1/10.

<sup>210</sup> SHC, D/G/ta/8a/2.

<sup>211</sup> SHC, D/G/ta/8a/3.

<sup>212</sup> SHC, D/G/ta/8s/8, *passim*.

<sup>213</sup> *Rep. Gen. Bd of health on Cholera Epidemic 1848—9*, 37—8, App. II, 11—13.

regularly administered.<sup>214</sup> In 1856 one of the more able boys was appointed a pupil teacher in the school.<sup>215</sup>

By 1871 most children were boarded out and attended local schools and only eight girls and infants and 31 boys aged 6—14 were in the workhouse. A mixed school was created under a single schoolmistress and the old boys school was converted to a dormitory.<sup>216</sup> A Sunday school was started in 1880 but in 1881 only four children were educated in the workhouse. By 1900 they had been moved to the children's home in Cheddon Road.<sup>217</sup>

### Holy Trinity

Holy Trinity schools were 'large and noble' built in Tudor style designed by C. E. Giles on the south side of the church and opened in 1846 at the expense of the Revd Frederick Smith on land he bought in 1845.<sup>218</sup> There were two schoolrooms, two smaller classrooms and an integral teachers' house at the back.<sup>219</sup> Staff in 1846 comprised a paid master and mistress and seven voluntary teachers. The school was supported by the National Society, subscriptions and parents and taught 110 boys and 86 girls. With the children who attended on Sundays only, 256 children were educated out of a district population of 2,009.<sup>220</sup> Very young children were said to attend but in 1873 there were 324 boys and girls and no infants.<sup>221</sup> Smith was owner and manager but his son sold the school to the parish in 1896 and in 1897 the managers conveyed it to diocese and raised money to build an adjoining infant school on the north with three classrooms.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> eg SHC, D/G/ta/8a/10 (Nov. 1850, 17 Dec.1851); 12 (11 July, 1 Aug. 1855); 13 (Oct. 1855).

<sup>215</sup> SHC, D/G/ta/8a/13 (1856).

<sup>216</sup> SHC, D/G/ta/8a/21 (May, Oct. 1871).

<sup>217</sup> SHC, A/BVA/6.

<sup>218</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/4, deed packet 85; A/DIF/101/6/130; Clarke, *Church educ. among the poor* (1846), 69—70.

<sup>219</sup> BL, Add. MS 30293; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/74/1507.

<sup>220</sup> Nat. Soc., *Schs Inquiry*, 1846—7 (1849), 16—17.

<sup>221</sup> SHC, A/DIF/101/6/130; Clarke, *Church educ. among the poor* (1846), 69—70; TNA, ED 2/391/2.

<sup>222</sup> SHC, A/BFW 1/1; D/DC/tau.d/25/4, deed packet 85; TNA, IR 58/82648 (1707).

In 1897 there were 175 juniors and 169 infants and the school reports were very good although examiners in 1901 deplored the habit of turning children out into the street unsupervised during their break.<sup>223</sup> An iron schoolroom was built across the road in 1902 to alleviate overcrowding.<sup>224</sup> By 1910 there were 254 children and 164 infants.<sup>225</sup> The children were taught needlework, drawing, history, geography and elementary science and had swimming lessons from 1926. Reports continued to be good although c. 1928 only five of the eight teachers were qualified.<sup>226</sup> In the autumn of 1931 the older children transferred to the 'senior department', as the Askwith school was known at Holy Trinity.<sup>227</sup> The school was divided into eight classes with infants from 3—5 in one class. There was a mid-morning recreation hour and the parish room was used if the children could not go outside. In 1937 there were 278 children and in 1939 44 evacuees arrived but only 20 remained in 1941. In 1953 the school was declared full with 320 children. The school day was 9.30 a.m. to 3.45 p.m. with one and a half hours break midday and the school had a dining hall.<sup>228</sup>

By 1964 there were only 64 infants and 122 juniors<sup>229</sup> but with the closure of Askwith school its much larger premises off South Street became available. In 1966 temporary buildings were to be replaced by new flanking blocks, completed in 1970, and in 1969 the school was officially opened on its new site. In 1972 the old school by the church was sold to the borough council and demolished for housing.<sup>230</sup> By 1985 Holy Trinity school had a special unit for hearing impaired children, housed in mobile classrooms and taught a total of 241 children rising by 1995 to 298. The school was remodelled in 1990 to provide nine classrooms but there were still three mobile classrooms. By 2000 over 300 children were

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<sup>223</sup> SHC, A/BFW 2/1.

<sup>224</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/30/51.

<sup>225</sup> SHC, A/BFW 2/1.

<sup>226</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/1; A/BFW 1/1.

<sup>227</sup> SHC, A/BFW 1/1.

<sup>228</sup> SHC, A/BFW 1/5.

<sup>229</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>230</sup> SHC, A/BFW 2/3.

taught by 16 teachers with 23 support staff.<sup>231</sup> In 2015 a new block was added containing four classrooms and a nursery for 34 infants providing 120 places and creating a 14-class school. Following a poor report in 2016, when the school had 375 pupils, the school re-opened as an academy, part of the Redstart Learning Partnership.<sup>232</sup>

### St Andrew's School

The Revd Frederick Smith built a school on Kingston Road, which also served as a chapel of ease to St James. As Rowbarton infant school it was affiliated to the National Society and had 28 boys and 35 girls in 1846 besides 150 infants who attended on Sunday only. The six teachers were paid, supported by subscriptions and parents.<sup>233</sup>

The new building in Grove Terrace, known as Taunton St James Rowbarton school, opened in 1875 with 57 children but with room for 175 and within a month numbers had increased to 89. Behaviour and attendance were poor and there was only one teacher assisted by two pupils and a sewing mistress who came in as required. The pupil teachers were taught in the evening and the senior girls were often put in charge of children. The use of the building as a church precluded subdivision into classes and there were complaints that children were dirty, played truant or did not pay their fees. There were 80 infants and 62 other children in one room with one teacher in 1878. After the opening of St Andrew's church the schoolroom was divided in two and an extension was built in 1882 but it was still noisy and overcrowded 1882.<sup>234</sup>

From 1887 the infants had their own teacher and in 1888 a new three-room school opened for 210 infants on an adjoining site.<sup>235</sup> The babies were taught by senior girls but by 1895 the 82 children in the babies' room had a teacher and a monitress. The infants were said

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<sup>231</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/180.2.

<sup>232</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123848: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>233</sup> Nat. Soc., *Schs Inquiry*, 1846—7 (1849), 16—17; Morris and Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, ED 2/391/2.

<sup>234</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/1; D/B/ta/24/1/16/637.

<sup>235</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/6; D/B/ta/24/1/22/914.

to be weak in history, grammar and map drawing. They were arranged in five classes in 1898 and some older children were being kept in the infant school. In 1900 it was agreed that no child over 6 years 8 months should be in the infant school but younger children could move up if fit. By autumn 1901 there were 310 infants and in November a new extension with two classrooms opened.<sup>236</sup> Fluctuations in numbers led to calls to remove or employ more teachers but in the 1920s the school was used by Exeter University College for teacher training.<sup>237</sup> Numbers declined to 206 in 1945 and to 170 in 1955 after the opening of a new infant school at Wedlands.<sup>238</sup> The school was concerned at the traffic on adjoining roads and that there was a waiting list for places by 1962.<sup>239</sup> By 1965 there were 176 infants but in 1974 the infant school was merged with the junior school.<sup>240</sup>

From 1889 the junior school was known as St Andrews Rowbarton and was condemned as over full in 1896. A large bequest financed new accommodation designed by C. H. Sansome and using part of the adjoining vicarage garden. Two schools were created for 239 boys and 144 girls but were soon outgrown.<sup>241</sup> The two-storey girls' school on the west end of the existing building had two teachers, later joined by two pupil teachers, and 160 girls. In 1905 the inspector complained of overcrowding as there were 227 girls with seven teachers but the school was refused permission to enlarge or put up iron buildings. The money raised was spent on a church hall instead, the use of which was offered to the school.<sup>242</sup> Plans for a new boys' school across the road on the Green were also abandoned and in 1905 the iron men's club was relocated there. The existing boys school was enlarged to accommodate an extra 120 boys. Children continued to cross the road to the Green for recreation. When North Town council school opened in 1907 St Andrew's had 736 children

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<sup>236</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/6; D/P/tau.a/23/2; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/29/2.

<sup>237</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a 18/7/2.

<sup>238</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>239</sup> SHC, A/ARQ/1/2 (1957, 1962).

<sup>240</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>241</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/1; D/P/tau.a/18/1/1, 18/2/1, 18/7/1.

<sup>242</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1.

and those not members of the Church of England were encouraged to attend the new school.<sup>243</sup>

Charitable gifts and fees from an evening continuation school helped to maintain the premises and in 1914 the girls' school was extended over the boys' school.<sup>244</sup> During the war the girls made garments for soldiers. In 1918—19 influenza and measles reduced attendance but in 1924 there were 229 girls on the books.<sup>245</sup> In 1929 the schools were reorganised, with the help of a donation by the Great Western Railway, many of whose employees lived in the area, into eight classrooms for 320 seniors and four for 200 juniors arranged over two floors.<sup>246</sup> The schools were reorganised again in 1932 when the boys and girls schools were replaced by a mixed senior and junior school with eleven teachers. It took in senior children from Norton Fitzwarren and Cheddon Fitzpaine and there was concern about the range of abilities. The school had no garden and science was not well-taught.<sup>247</sup> A science room had been provided by 1933 and in 1935 electric lighting replaced gas.<sup>248</sup> Despite the opening of Wellsprings school there were 380 children with 12 teachers in 1955. In 1956 the senior children and their teachers transferred to the new Priorswood Secondary Modern school leaving 262 children at what became St Andrew's junior school. In 1974 the junior and infant schools merged as St Andrew's voluntary controlled primary school with 358 children in 1975.<sup>249</sup>

Numbers fell to 250 in 1995 partly because of a desire to reduce numbers and nearly 60 children were refused admission in 1998.<sup>250</sup> As a Victorian urban school St Andrew's was disadvantaged in having to take children to distant playing fields.<sup>251</sup> The school became an

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<sup>243</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a 18/7/1—2, 23/2.

<sup>244</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/46/704; C/E/4/401/126; D/P/tau.a 23/2.

<sup>245</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/3.

<sup>246</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 6/1.

<sup>247</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/2—3. 5.

<sup>248</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a/18/7/2.

<sup>249</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/5; C/E/4/64.

<sup>250</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 55; C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/177.

<sup>251</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a/18/7/3.

academy in 2013 as part of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Academy Trust and had 232 pupils in 2018.<sup>252</sup>

### Mary Street Memorial School

The Unitarians built a school for girls and boys with three coloured glass windows adjoining their chapel in 1847.<sup>253</sup> Presumably the boys' day school failed in 1852 with the Sunday school as by 1853 the day school was for girls only and in 1861 was a girls' infant school.<sup>254</sup> By 1870 only the upper schoolroom remained in use, accessed by an outside stair.<sup>255</sup>

Financial difficulties and the fact that only 12 of the pupils were Unitarian caused the church to close the school in 1874. Under pressure from parents it reopened in 1875 as a mixed school with one teacher, later increased to three, and 40 children who paid for their schooling and books.<sup>256</sup> The building comprised lower and upper schoolrooms but the chapel vestry was used by the school during the week and children were turned away for lack of space.<sup>257</sup> In 1881 the school day started with examinations, scripture, reading and music lessons from 9.10 a.m. The registers were taken at 10 a.m. and the children divided into five classes for reading, writing, grammar and geography. After a 15-minute break the whole school learnt arithmetic before a two-hour dinner break until 2 p.m. After further lessons, including sewing twice a week for the girls, the school ended at 4.10 p.m. The children were expected to do 'home lessons' in various subjects.<sup>258</sup>

In 1885 Manchester Unitarian minister, the Revd John Odgers, bought houses west and south of the school to build a new school in memory of his wife, daughter of the Revd Arthur Jones former minister of Mary Street chapel. The old school and eight adjoining

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<sup>252</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/1140062: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>253</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/5/2/24; T/PH/rea/3/72.

<sup>254</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/4/2/4; *PO Dir. Som.* (1861); above, Sunday schools.

<sup>255</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/4/2/4, 5/2/28.

<sup>256</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/2/1/6, 4/2/1, 5/2/26; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>257</sup> SHC, D/N.tau.mst/5/2/29, 32.

<sup>258</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/5/2/30.

houses were demolished, with the children temporarily sharing Original Infants school. The new school was completed in 1886 for 300 children and vested in the trustees of the chapel as Mary Street Memorial Schools. The building comprised large and small classrooms over two floors with a chapel vestry, a cookery school and a teachers' room. It accommodated day, evening and Sunday schools and was subsidized by the chapel whose keeper also looked after the school premises. In 1889 average attendance was 160 children and in 1893 there were 241 children on the books.<sup>259</sup> The infant teacher was assisted by up to three pupil teachers.<sup>260</sup> In the 1890s classes for male pupil teachers were held at the school.<sup>261</sup> In 1907 there were 236 pupils but that year the 89 infants transferred to Original Infants, and although re-opening the infant department was considered in 1914, Memorial remained a junior school.<sup>262</sup> In 1908 several of the 169 children only attended part-time and a large number were dull.<sup>263</sup> There was a further poor report in 1914 but numbers rose to 199 c. 1928 before falling to 70, many described as backward, in 1930.<sup>264</sup> In 1932 the children over 11 were moved to senior school and the school closed in 1933 when the remaining children and teachers moved to Original Infants or junior council schools.<sup>265</sup> The building was used for air raid shelters in 1939 and by 1941 was an evacuee hostel. Before and after the war it was let to several societies and from 1947 to c. 1972 to a dancing school.<sup>266</sup> The Odgers charity continued to support the Sunday school but had ceased to exist before 2011. Since the late 20th century the school has been used by a homeless charity.<sup>267</sup>

The two and three-storeyed, red brick building designed by Ernest Odgers of Plymouth has an irregular entrance front of four bays and a cross wing adjoining the chapel.

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<sup>259</sup> SHC, A/AAZ/1; D/N/tau.mst/2/1/7, 3/3/2, 5/2/26, 5/2/29; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889); TNA, ED 21/15532.

<sup>260</sup> SHC, C/E/4/219/1, pp. 11, 31.

<sup>261</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/3/3/2.

<sup>262</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26; TNA, ED 21/15532.

<sup>263</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26; TNA, ED 21/15532.

<sup>264</sup> TNA, ED 21/15532; SHC, A/DIF/95/32; A/BMG/5/1; C/E/4/219/1, p. 226.

<sup>265</sup> SHC, A/DVY/1; C/E/4/219/1, pp. 235, 239.

<sup>266</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/4/2/4 (1939), 5/2/32 (1934—5, 1940—1, 1947—63); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3).

<sup>267</sup> Char. Com. reg.: accessed 22 Oct 2018.

There are three elaborately carved pediments and the name of the school on a frieze. The end bay rises to a tower topped by a bell turret and the west front has a large stained glass window to the top floor surmounted by another carved pediment.<sup>268</sup>

### Wesleyan School

There was a short-lived day school at the Victoria Methodist chapel in 1866.<sup>269</sup> A new three-storey school for 350 children was built from 1868 at the east end of the Temple Methodist Church and a day school started there in 1874.<sup>270</sup> Numbers increased from 54 on the opening day to 200 a year later when the master was assisted by pupil teachers and monitors. He claimed to visit the home of every pupil. By 1876 he had a female assistant to take charge of the infant school but having received bad reports and lost its government grant in 1878, it was given up in 1879. The school then had 302 children, 110 of whom also attended the Sunday school.<sup>271</sup> In 1887 only two thirds of the children were nonconformist and only a quarter of those were Wesleyan.<sup>272</sup> Average attendance in 1889 was 189.<sup>273</sup> In 1897 children had to pay charges because it was a 'superior school' whereas other church schools were free after 1891.<sup>274</sup> Problems with poor light caused by a factory extension in the 1890s caused the closure of the girls school, which was on the lowest level, and from 1901 the school was restricted to boys only. Numbers fell to 147 in 1907 when it closed.<sup>275</sup>

### St John's Second School<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26.

<sup>269</sup> SHC, C/E/4/222/1, pp. 117, 120.

<sup>270</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/27, p. 114.

<sup>271</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/27, p. 114; C/E/4/218/1, pp. 14, 16, 23—4, 32, 92, 98.

<sup>272</sup> SHC, C/E/4/218/1, p. 223.

<sup>273</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889).

<sup>274</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26.

<sup>275</sup> *Jeboult, Popular History of W. Som* (1893), app.; SHC, D/N/tmc/1/5/1, 4/2/27, p. 181—3, 228—9, 237; D/P/tau.a/23/2; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26.

<sup>276</sup> Presumably so called as the Revd Smith had built a new St John's school in Bishops Hull in 1872.

That school was established south of Mary Street behind Heidelberg House by the Revd John Smith. It consisted of an L-shaped schoolroom and a teacher's house with a large yard, which his father the Revd Frederick Smith bought from the Taunton Town Charity in 1875. It was recorded in 1883 but had closed by 1886 and was used as warehousing in 1910.<sup>277</sup>

### Albemarle British School

This Baptist school was built in 1879 behind the chapel for 250 children, mixed and infants, under a single head teacher. It was extended behind adjoining houses in 1883 to provide two large and a dozen smaller rooms on two floors.<sup>278</sup> Average attendance in 1894 was 200 and there were 312 children including 92 infants on the register in 1901.<sup>279</sup> Closure was ordered in 1900 as the accommodation was inadequate and there was no playground. A site was found for a new school but fundraising failed. The school closed in October 1901 when 210 children and ten teachers attended the last day.<sup>280</sup> The building continued as a Sunday school but took refugees overnight in 1940 and taught evacuee children in 1943—4.<sup>281</sup>

### North Town Council School

The school was built by Pollards of Taunton in Staplegrove Road and opened in 1907 with boys, girls and infant schools, caretaker's house, laundry, playshed and latrines.<sup>282</sup> It was Taunton's first council school and for much of its history was the town's largest elementary school although divided into three schools on the same site. The infant school opened with 106 children but within a few months had 189 on the roll and was short of teachers. By 1910 there were 256 children but a measles epidemic kept attendance low. In 1917 there were

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<sup>277</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d/25/16, deed packet 1276; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1889); TNA, IR 58/82634 (387).

<sup>278</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/13/459; D/B/ta/24/1/17/698.

<sup>279</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883, 1894); SHC, D/N/tmc/2/3/3; Palmer, *Taunton Day School Crisis*, 5.

<sup>280</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.a/23/2; D/N/tau.mst/5/2/26; Palmer, *Taunton Day School Crisis*, 6—10.

<sup>281</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d unlisted box 19 (1939—40, 117); A/CDQ 1.

<sup>282</sup> SHC, ADR, box 4.

evacuee children in the school and wounded soldiers visited in 1917. The following year influenza disrupted the school, which was closed for long periods. After the war numbers fell but in 1925 a babies' class opened and with the three infant classes could accommodate 220 although there were only 169 on the register rising to 226 in 1928. In 1933 the infants had six teachers and the school was uncomfortably full with 249 children by 1936 but a few years later had to find room for evacuees.<sup>283</sup> Numbers fell after the war from 225 in 1945 to 206 children with seven teachers in 1955. Numbers remained stable until the school merged with the junior school.<sup>284</sup>

The boys' school opened with 200 children rising to 275 with six assistant staff in 1909. The early reports were bad but the school improved with boys learning the violin and swimming and some winning scholarships to grammar school. During the war the school lost teachers to military service but escaped the worst of the influenza epidemic. Numbers rose and by 1932 the school was turning children away as the six classrooms could only accommodate 300. In 1933 all boys over 11 were transferred to the new Priory Central school with two teachers. The school was extended and the boys school was amalgamated with the girls school for all children over 7½.<sup>285</sup> The number of girls was estimated at 270 c. 1928.<sup>286</sup> Following the 1933 re-arrangement the domestic science centre with its own teacher was retained.<sup>287</sup> In 1945 the junior school had 280 pupils with eight teachers.<sup>288</sup> The school site was divided between girls' secondary modern, mixed junior and mixed infants schools.<sup>289</sup> In 1964 there were 221 infants and 236 juniors but the closure of the girls' secondary school on the site in 1966 increased the accommodation by about a third.<sup>290</sup> Numbers of juniors rose to

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<sup>283</sup> SHC, A/BEZ 1/1, passim.

<sup>284</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>285</sup> SHC, A/BEZ 1/1, 4 passim; A/DVY/1.

<sup>286</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/1. The girls' school records went for salvage in the Second World War.

<sup>287</sup> SHC, C/E/4/311/15, p. 162.

<sup>288</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>289</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/13; below, this section, secondary schools.

<sup>290</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26; below, this section.

276 in 1975.<sup>291</sup> From 1989 infants and juniors formed a single school and numbers rose from 346 in 1985 to 410 in 1995.<sup>292</sup> Since 2012 North Town has been an academy under the Richard Huish Trust and was rated outstanding in 2017 when there were 508 children aged 2—11 on the books. A pre-school started in 2005 as Little Owls with 58 infants closed and moved to Bishops Hull in 2016.<sup>293</sup>

### Priory Council School

Priory School was built in Cranmer Road and opened in August 1913 for senior and junior pupils with 225 children and seven teachers, mostly from the old British school.<sup>294</sup> There were 118 seniors and 257 juniors on the books in 1915<sup>295</sup> but from 1916 the building was a Red Cross Hospital and the children were sent to Trinity School and then to the old British school until 1919.<sup>296</sup> In c. 1928 Priory school had 230 senior pupils and 215 juniors but senior pupils were removed in 1933 and the school took in mixed infants. It was so full that children were turned away yet the same year three married women teachers were given notice under a directive for removing married women from public sector employment.<sup>297</sup> By 1945 there were 428 children increasing to 451 with 14 teachers in 1955. Thereafter numbers fell to 371 mixed juniors in 1965 and 340 in 1975. In 1977 it amalgamated with St James' voluntary aided school to become Archbishop Cranmer Church of England voluntary controlled primary school taking over the buildings of the former boys' secondary school on the same site to provide accommodation for 450 children aged 5—11 with 16 teachers.<sup>298</sup> There was a swimming pool built c. 1965.<sup>299</sup> There were 398 children in 1985, a nursery class of 40 in

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<sup>291</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>292</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>293</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY311840; 21/137126: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>294</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>295</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32.

<sup>296</sup> SHC, A/BAV/14; C/E/4/311/14, pp. 40, 44, 51—8, 66.

<sup>297</sup> SHC, A/BFZ/1/1/1; A/BMG/5/1; C/E/4/311/14, pp. 67.

<sup>298</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64

<sup>299</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/173/10397.

1995 and provision for 12 language impaired children.<sup>300</sup> By 2000 there were 14 teachers, two language assistants and 20 classroom assistants, 12 other staff and visiting music teachers. The nursery took children from 3 and there was a playgroup on the site.<sup>301</sup> In 2013 it became a diocesan academy school renamed St James' Church School. It had many disadvantaged pupils, there was considerable turnover and by 2018 was oversubscribed with 466 children aged 3—11 but was doing well.<sup>302</sup> A separate nursery school in the grounds was designed for 30 children but held 62 in 2014 although many only came for part of the day.<sup>303</sup>

### Priorswood County School

The mixed Priorswood Infant school opened at Wedlands in 1949 and had 200 children aged 5—7 with seven teachers in 1955. Numbers rose to 247 in 1965. A few years later it became a full primary school and had 211 children in 1975 rising steadily to 272 children aged 4—11 in 1995.<sup>304</sup> In 2000 252 children were taught in nine classes by 11 teachers and 16 classroom assistants. There was a playgroup on the site, later a pre-school for children aged 2—5. The primary school had only 151 children when it was rated inadequate in 2017. Both primary and pre-school closed re-opening in 2018 as part of the Redstart Learning Partnership with 178 children between 2 and 11.<sup>305</sup>

### Wellsprings County Primary School

This mixed junior school opened in September 1950 to serve east Rowbarton and its new housing estates and relieve pressure on St Andrew's schools.<sup>306</sup> It took children from 7--11

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<sup>300</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/89 (349).

<sup>301</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/166.

<sup>302</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/139324: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>303</sup> stjamesch.co.uk/nursery; reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY464321.

<sup>304</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>305</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/175.1; reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY46440, 21/139388, 21/146747: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>306</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/5.

and was oversubscribed by 1953.<sup>307</sup> It was extended in 1955 when it had 402 children with 11 teachers rising to 427 in 1965 but pupil numbers declined thereafter to 237 in 1985. By 1995 the school also took infants and had a nursery class of 40.<sup>308</sup> In 2012 there were 274 pupils and 343 by 2017 when the school required improvement.<sup>309</sup>

### Holway Park County Primary School

Holway school opened in 1951 in Byron Road.<sup>310</sup> It was planned as a nursery school but was used as an infant school for 60 children aged 3—7. The growing population led the school to be expanded into a primary school with 106 children and four teachers in 1955. In 1975 there were 258 children rising to 312 in 1977.<sup>311</sup> In 1981 the school took only 169 infants and a new school for the 181 juniors was built in Broughton Close. Both schools were replaced in 1995 by a new building on the latter site with a new entrance on Shakespeare Avenue.

Named Holway Park Community School it had 338 children aged 4—11 in 1995.<sup>312</sup> In 2000 there were 22 teachers, some part-time, 27 support assistants and 24 other staff including an IT technician and a family support worker for 349 children, a quarter of whom had special needs. The school suffered from vandalism and lack of punctuality but there were free before and after school clubs, a nurture group for infants, a library and a music room.<sup>313</sup> It had improved by 2019 despite having above average numbers of disadvantaged children. The school had resources for children with autism.<sup>314</sup> Holway Community pre-school was established in 1992 and had 26 children in 2019.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; c/e/4/311/7 (18 July 1953).

<sup>308</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 30; C/E/4/64.

<sup>309</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123710: accessed 27 Aug. 2019.

<sup>310</sup> This building is now a school for excluded pupils: below, this section.

<sup>311</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/13; D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 81.

<sup>312</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>313</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/171.

<sup>314</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123739.

<sup>315</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/143077.

### Halcon School

Opened as Lambrook County Infant School in a prefabricated building in 1953 for 120 children aged 5—7, it was already full by 1955. Numbers increased to 184 in 1965 and 225 in 1975 but fell to 168 in 1978. In 1981 it became a full primary called Halcon School but numbers fell to 154 in 1985 before rising again to 184 in 1995.<sup>316</sup> In 1999 it had 64 children with special needs out of 137 and needed further adaptation for the disabled. Attainment levels were low and equipment and outings depended on a new friends group.<sup>317</sup> The site, off Outer Circle, is largely occupied by buildings with limited play space. After a number of poor reports the school closed in 2016 reopening as Minerva School, an academy in the Redstart Learning Partnership, with 180 children but was still inadequate in 2019 with above average numbers of excluded, disadvantaged and special needs pupils.<sup>318</sup>

Circles nursery school opened on the site in 2008 and in 2015 was a successful nursery with 42 children aged 2—8, which was absorbed into the Minerva school in 2016.<sup>319</sup>

### Parkfield County Primary School

Parkfield school, locally in Wilton ancient parish, opened in 1968 and had 292 children by 1975. Numbers rose to 370 by 1995 and 418 in 2000 in 14 classes. Older children learnt French and had access to several sports and the school provided an early morning and evening creche.<sup>320</sup> After a period as an outstanding school the school was inadequate in 2017 and had an above average number of children for whom English was not their first language amongst the 426 pupils.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/131/7 (5 Sep. 1953); D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 81.

<sup>317</sup> SHC, C/E/409/171

<sup>318</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123707, 21/143143: accessed 28Aug. 2019.

<sup>319</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY371197: accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

<sup>320</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/174.

<sup>321</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123714: accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

### Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School

Bishop Henderson school, also locally in Wilton ancient parish, opened in 1974 to serve the new Galmington housing estates with 118 children rising to 289 in 1985 and 356 in 1995.<sup>322</sup> It was a successful school with 433 pupils in 2017 although the capacity of the school was only 398.<sup>323</sup>

### Lyngford Park Primary School

The school in Bircham Road opened in 1971, was extended in 1974 and partly rebuilt in 1982 to provide 14 classrooms and six practical areas. By 1975 it had 414 children but declined to 257 in 1985 before rising to 320 in 1995.<sup>324</sup> It was a successful school in 2017 with 11 teachers and nine support assistants for 274 children aged 5—11, although a third met the criteria for free school meals. The children had a learner swimming pool, music groups and a school council. There was a nursery class.<sup>325</sup>

### Blackbrook Primary School

The school opened in Ashbourne Crescent off Lisieux Way in 1989 with 88 children, rising to 222 in 1995, well over its 160 capacity.<sup>326</sup> It had playing fields and gardens and two mobile classrooms in 2000 when there were ten teachers and nine support assistants, mostly for children with special needs.<sup>327</sup> Although a successful school it closed in December 2018 reopening in 2019 as Blackbrook Primary School, an academy in the Oak Partnership Trust, with 241 pupils aged 5—11.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>323</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123852: accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

<sup>324</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/175.

<sup>325</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/175; www.lyngfordparkprimary.co.uk: accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

<sup>326</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 44; C/E/4/64.

<sup>327</sup> SHC, C/E/409/168.1.

<sup>328</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123737; www.blackbrookschoo.com: accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

## Secondary schools

Until the 20th century secondary education, and especially a classical grammar education, was only provided by private schools. Even the free grammar school soon became a private school.<sup>329</sup> The creation of two schools for boys and girls by Richard Huish's charity in the 1870s with its surplus funds under the provisions of the 1869 Endowed Schools Act ushered in a new era in secondary education for Taunton. Both began as fee-paying schools but after the establishment of examinations for elementary pupils wishing to gain a secondary education they took successful scholars paid for by the county council. Most private grammar and public schools were willing to take scholarship pupils who were often brighter than the paying pupils. However, Weirfield would not because parents objected to their children mixing with poor pupils. A shortage of places for girls in the 1930s led to county scholarship children being boarded at a school in Frome, partly at parents' expense, which many could not afford.<sup>330</sup>

During the mid 19th century Taunton School, King's College and Queen's College public schools were established and at the convent a day school for girls, which all offered both preparatory and secondary education. In the mid 20th century elementary schools gradually became primary schools and new council secondary schools such as Askwith and Priory provided for children over 11 but almost exclusively for boys. As more children, including girls, entered secondary education mixed council schools were built notably Priorswood, Castle, and Ladymead. From 1978 all the council-run secondary schools were reorganised on the comprehensive system with sixth formers being removed into a dedicated sixth form college or into the Somerset College of Art and Technology. Planned additional secondary schools at Comeytrove in Wilton and at Holway were never built.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Bishops Hull, soc. hist., educ.

<sup>330</sup> SHC, A/DVY/1.

<sup>331</sup> SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, pp.79—80.

### Huish's boys school

In 1615 Richard Huish left £100 out of his London property to maintain five divinity scholars at Oxford or Cambridge Universities. Priority was given to his kinsmen several of whom claimed in the 18th century.<sup>332</sup> In 1729 there was no money for scholarships but by 1735 two scholars were maintained. Financial difficulties meant exhibitions were later suspended to be resumed in 1815 when five of £20 each were given.<sup>333</sup> By the 1860s £120 was given to six students but there was surplus money, which the trustees wanted to spend on secondary education.<sup>334</sup>

The managing committee of Taunton Middle School, held in the old grammar school in Bishops Hull parish<sup>335</sup> and the Governors of Huish's charity agreed that the 103 boys registered on 1 December 1874 at the Middle School would transfer to a new Huish boys' school on 18 January 1875 and the proprietor Thomas Rendell became the first headmaster of the new school.<sup>336</sup> Until they acquired the former Green's private school adjoining Grey's almshouses in East Street in 1881, Huish's school was held in the old grammar school but in 1880 Rendell left for Oxford and many boys were withdrawn leaving only 21. However, after moving to East Street numbers picked up again. By 1892 the boys received drill from a sergeant in the Somerset Light Infantry, art lessons from masters at the School of Art, shorthand and typing from the principal of Taunton Phonographic Institute and studied singing under the organist of St Mary's church. Fees varied from £3 a term for young day boys to £10 for boarders and there were ten free places. In 1892 new buildings opened in Mount Lane on the former gardens of Grey's almshouses. They were built of brick with Ham stone windows and tiled roofs to the designs of Taunton architect J. Houghton Spencer in vernacular style with catslide roofs broken by dormer windows and decorative brick

<sup>332</sup> *5th Rep Com. Char.* 499; SHC, DD/DP/186—7; DD/DP/C3161/1; PAM 838.

<sup>333</sup> SHC, DD/DP/C3161/1, 4; *5th Rep Com. Char.* 499—505.

<sup>334</sup> *Gen Digest of Endowed Chars. Som* (1869—71), 60—1.

<sup>335</sup> Bishops Hull, soc. hist. educ.

<sup>336</sup> SHC, A/AHO 7.

chimneys. The interior was lined with coloured brick laid in patterns and featured a very large schoolroom and three classrooms. There were flush toilets in the playground. The old building, previously rented, was purchased as Huish House for the headmaster and a field was bought for games.<sup>337</sup>

Laboratories and an art room were built in 1908 and a gymnasium in 1910. An old house with carved woodwork in Mount Lane was bought and demolished to extend the school c. 1912 but a scheme to convert the headmaster's house into shops was not carried out. During the First World War women teachers were employed to replace enlisted men and save money and the school took in six Belgian refugees. Two women teachers remained in 1921.<sup>338</sup> In 1917 a junior school was created with a headmistress.<sup>339</sup> By 1919 the site was inadequate and an American Red Cross hut was bought as extra accommodation. The school obtained only a tenth of its income from charity, a third from the fees and the rest from national and local government grants. As costs rose the school accumulated a deficit and numbers fell from 248 in 1921 to 208 in 1922 when the county council agreed to pay off the deficit of £3,000.<sup>340</sup>

During the Second World War many teachers were on active service but there were c. 600 pupils. However, the Junior School closed in 1945 as Huish's became a voluntary controlled secondary school. The new dining hall served over 300 boys a day.<sup>341</sup> In 1947 there were 450 boys in three streams with 22 teachers but half the boys left without qualifications, the buildings were unsatisfactory with half the teaching off site and there was no playing field.<sup>342</sup> In 1958 the county council bought Normans Field in South Road for a new school, which opened in 1964 with 521 boys, 10 a. of playing fields and swimming

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<sup>337</sup> SHC, A/AHO/27; *Taunton of Today* (1896), 48; G. Baker, *The History of Huish's, Taunton* (Taunton, 1980), 8, 30.

<sup>338</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/42/558; A/AHO/1.

<sup>339</sup> SHC, A/AJA/1.

<sup>340</sup> SHC, A/AHO/1; D/B/ta/24/1/49/773; Baker, *Huish's*, 63.

<sup>341</sup> SHC, A/AJA/1.

<sup>342</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; TNA, ED 109/9065/2.

baths.<sup>343</sup> Numbers rose to 542 in 1965 and 838 by 1975.<sup>344</sup> From 1956 the Huish charity provided bursaries and scholarships and in 1967 the university exhibitions were opened to boys from public schools in Taunton and neighbouring counties.<sup>345</sup>

In 1978 the school became a sixth-form college for 16—19 year-olds and was provided with a lecture theatre and other facilities. There were 56 teachers including the principal, a chaplain, and 30 non-teaching staff. The school had 28 extra-curricular groups and a monthly communion service. In 1980 the boys were joined by the sixth formers from Bishop Fox's but younger boys already at the school remained and continued to wear Huish's uniform. Boys remained eligible for up to £100 a year for three years at University under the Huish's Exhibition Foundation until 2018 when that charity ceased.<sup>346</sup> In 1985 there were 582 sixth formers. In 1993 Richard Huish Sixth Form College became independent of the local authority under the Further Education Funding Council.<sup>347</sup> Additional facilities built in the early 21st century include the Aspen Music Centre and Oak House across the road. In 2019 the highly rated college, taught over 2,000 pupils a year including international students.<sup>348</sup>

### Bishop Fox's school

Huish's school for girls began in 1875, under a charity scheme of 1874, with two girls in part of the Masonic Hall, the former Roman Catholic chapel, in the Crescent. Only c. 60 girls were enrolled in the first five years. In addition to the usual subjects the girls were taught algebra, geometry, French, drawing, music, needlework and health and could be prepared for University and teacher training college examinations. Day pupils paid fees of only £3—6 a

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<sup>343</sup> SHC, A/AHO/6; C/SEC/44.

<sup>344</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan: Taunton* (1964), 26; SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>345</sup> SHC, C/E/4/401/78; C/E/4/401/125.

<sup>346</sup> SHC, A/AHO/6, 25; Char. Com. Reg.: accessed 22 Oct 2018.

<sup>347</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>348</sup> [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/40/130808](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/40/130808); [www.huish.ac.uk](http://www.huish.ac.uk): accessed 3 Sep. 2019.

year, less than the boys, and there were four free places. The school struggled to retain girls as parents were often unwilling to send girls for more than a few years and rarely allowed them further education. However, several girls did go on to teach.<sup>349</sup> By 1884 the school had expanded into 20 The Crescent.<sup>350</sup>

The school was in financial difficulties by the late 1880s so a new charity scheme endowed the school with the estate William Walbee had given to the old grammar school and severed it from Huish's charity. It was renamed Bishop Fox's School for Girls and the Taunton Town Charity gave it £100 a year.<sup>351</sup> In 1890 there were 31 girls rising to 53 by 1897. The Laurels nursery in Staplegrove Road was acquired for a new school by selling part of the endowment land and with £1,000 from the county council.<sup>352</sup> The headmistress and five boarders moved into a house in Park Street and several of the teachers boarded nearby in 1901 but the school remained in the Crescent until 1904.<sup>353</sup>

The new building in Staplegrove Road was designed by Basil Cottam as a central range, opened in 1905, with provision for wings to the north and south but only part of the southern wing was added, in 1907. The school was too small from the start with classrooms in the corridors but had domestic science, art and science rooms and a large hall which was used as a gym and dining room and could be subdivided.<sup>354</sup> In 1906 the headmistress resigned to keep a private school and the Laurels was bought privately for the use of her successor and given to the governors in 1914. In 1918 Weir Lodge across Staplegrove Road was bought with land to expand the school.<sup>355</sup>

Numbers rose from 101 girls in 1907 to 261 in 1921. A quarter of the girls in 1907 had never been to school at all and a junior class was provided for younger girls. Although it

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<sup>349</sup> SHC, A/AYO/2/1; C/E/4/401/78; *Som. Co. Gaz.* 13 Jan. 1883; *Taunton of Today* \_ (1896), 48.

<sup>350</sup> SHC, A/ADR, box 4, ins. bk.

<sup>351</sup> SHC, C/E/4/401/81; Bishops Hull, soc. hist., educ.

<sup>352</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; A/DSG/1; A/AYO/1/2, TS notes on sch.

<sup>353</sup> TNA, RG 13/2278.

<sup>354</sup> SHC, A/AYO/4/1; S. Mason, *Memories of Bishop Fox's School* (Taunton, 1990), photo. 1910.

<sup>355</sup> SHC, APN 2/6.

was a fee-paying school there were 16 foundation scholarships in 1907 and a quarter of pupils were county scholars whose fees were paid by the county council. That caused financial problems for the school, which was trying to cut staff numbers and salaries.<sup>356</sup> Although not a boarding school the headmistress might have boarders in her house by private arrangement including teachers. Despite the need for money the school did not want girls who came for a year or two to be 'finished' but could not pass exams. Weir Lodge accommodated 106 younger pupils and in 1920 was altered to provide classrooms. By 1921 fees accounted for less than half the receipts and the school had run up a large deficit that had been met by the county council, which took over the school in 1922.<sup>357</sup>

At first numbers fell to 182 in 1923 but by 1933 had recovered to 260 including a sixth form and the building was inadequate.<sup>358</sup> In 1938 a new school with playing fields was created on a large site on Kingston Road but before the move war broke out and Coborn School from Essex was evacuated to the Staplegrove Road school. By 1940 Bishop Fox's had completed its move and Coborn, later joined by other evacuee schools, took over the old school, which after the war became a teachers' centre.<sup>359</sup> The junior school remained at Weir Lodge, which also accommodated 18 boarders from north Somerset, and in 1947 hutted classrooms were added. In 1951 110 children entered the junior school, most girls moving on to the grammar school.<sup>360</sup> Working-class girls were eligible for the Whitaker Scholarship established in 1914 but the charity had ceased to exist by 2010.<sup>361</sup> The Weir Lodge playing fields were sold shortly before 1976 for a health centre.<sup>362</sup> The 1905 school was let to the

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<sup>356</sup> SHC, A/AYO/1/1, 3/1.

<sup>357</sup> SHC, A/AYO/1/1; C/E/4/401/81.

<sup>358</sup> SHC, A/AYO/3/1.

<sup>359</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; Baker, *Huish's*, 76.

<sup>360</sup> SHC, A/AYO/3/1.

<sup>361</sup> SHC, C/E/4/401/81—2; Char. Com. reg.: accessed 22 Oct. 2018.

<sup>362</sup> SHC, C/E/4/401/81.

Somerset College of Art and Technology<sup>363</sup> but in the early 21st century became offices and studios and the grounds were developed for housing.

The grammar school expanded rapidly at Kingston Road and by 1947 there were 544 girls and 26 teachers rising to 776 girls in 1965 and 982 by 1975.<sup>364</sup> Despite additional buildings in 1946, and every few years in the 1960s and 1970s, the school was overcrowded and loss of land meant a separate playing field was acquired on Corkscrew Lane, some distance from the school.<sup>365</sup> In 1978 with over 1,000 girls it became a comprehensive school under a headmaster although boys were not admitted until 1980 when some of the 60 staff and the sixth form girls moved to Richard Huish Sixth Form College. Numbers fell to 786 in 1981 but by 1985 had risen to 870 with 55 staff.<sup>366</sup> The school had 29 classrooms, a music studio, nine science laboratories and many other specialist teaching rooms, yet it was considered poorly equipped. In September 1994 the school moved to new premises in Calway Road south of Richard Huish College and the Kingston Road site was sold for housing development. The gate piers with the arms of Bishop Fox were retained at the entrance to the new housing estate which takes its name Peile Drive from a former headmistress.<sup>367</sup> The new Bishop Fox's Community School became an academy in 2012. It was a successful school with 853 pupils aged 11—16 in 2017.<sup>368</sup> The endowment, known as Bishop Fox's Educational Foundation, was used to promote the broad education of young people aged 11—25 from an income of up to £165,000.<sup>369</sup>

### Convent Schools

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<sup>363</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 78; below, this section.

<sup>364</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>365</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 62; A/BIR/1.

<sup>366</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; C/E/4/64.

<sup>367</sup> SHC, A/BIR 1; A/BMG/5/2.

<sup>368</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/136851: accessed 4 Sep. 2019.

<sup>369</sup> Char. Co. Reg: accessed 22 Oct. 2018.

The Lodge, South Road, built as a hospital,<sup>370</sup> became a Franciscan convent in 1807—8, the nuns bringing with them their pupils from Winchester. They extended the buildings including a chapel, dedicated in 1811, to accommodate themselves and the girls' boarding school. They also taught poor children of the parish before other schools were available.<sup>371</sup> From 1865 they provided a day 'middle school' for girls, presumably fee-paying, in a new wing north of the convent with a large schoolroom and two classrooms with indoor sanitation. It was known as St Joseph's to distinguish it from the boarding school known as St Francis.<sup>372</sup> An undated 19th-century prospectus records a basic £42 a year fee for boarders covering board, religious education, English, French, history, geography, writing, arithmetic and needlework; music, dancing and drawing cost up to £7 7s. a year extra. The uniform was blue and white with straw bonnets trimmed with blue ribbons. Each girl, who was supposed to be at least 13, supplied her own bedlinen, fork, spoons, napkin ring and wine. There were no vacations but each girl could spend up to one month a year with her family. The school was run by two nuns known as the first and second mistresses.<sup>373</sup> In the mid 19th century there were usually more than 30 boarders and at least 10 teachers and from 1881 to 1911 c. 80 girls aged 7—20 in the care of a matron.<sup>374</sup>

In c. 1900 the convent laundry was converted into a residential housekeeping school for ladies known as St Anne's. Women paid 50 guineas a year to learn accounts, cookery and first aid; music and dairying were extra. It closed in 1911.<sup>375</sup>

By the early 20th century the girls at St Francis's had 13 weeks holiday a year but still had to bring their own bedlinen and cutlery. Many lay teachers were employed and housed in

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<sup>370</sup> This section, health.

<sup>371</sup> Above. this section (St George's).

<sup>372</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; D/DC/tau.d/24/4/2, p. 6; D/B/ta/24/1/5/145; Trappes-Lomax, *English Franciscan Nuns*, 102; *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1842); Harding, *Diocese of Clifton*, 193; below, rel. hist. RC.

<sup>373</sup> R. Berry, *The History of the Convent at Taunton* (Taunton, 1988), 40, 59.

<sup>374</sup> TNA, HO 107/972, 1922; RG 9/1617; RG 10/2370; RG 11/2366; RG 12/1876 (convent schedule); RG 13/2278 (convent schedule); RG 14/14250 (convent schedule); Berry, *Convent at Taunton*, 69, 71.

<sup>375</sup> SHC, D/DC/tau.d /24/4/2, p. 6.

the former St Anne's school. By the 1930s non-Catholic girls were accepted and also day pupils and the separate St Joseph's school was given up. By 1945 a preparatory school took girls aged 7—13 and also some boys and by 1950 older children were no longer taken.<sup>376</sup>

The Franciscans left in 1953 and in 1954 the sisters of St Joseph of Annecy took over and ran a single school, known as St Joseph's but still taking a few boarders, with kindergarten and preparatory departments. The buildings were converted to accommodate a predominantly day grammar school and the grounds were opened up as playgrounds. Between 1956 and 1959 pupil numbers increased from 191 to 275 from kindergarten to sixth form including 21 boarders, taught by 12 full-time and 10 part-time teachers. Although the teaching had improved, covering a wide range of languages and sciences, and a new science block had been built in 1958 the school was still not recognised as 'efficient'.<sup>377</sup> A modern gymnasium was built in 1960 and by the late 1960s there were c. 380 pupils mostly girls but boys were accepted in the kindergarten.<sup>378</sup> Boarding was phased out in the early 1970s and the sixth form discontinued when pupils could go to a sixth-form college. The remaining 400 pupils were insufficient for a comprehensive school and there were financial difficulties. By 1977 when the premises were sold to King's College there were only 143 senior girls and 77 girls and 13 boys in the preparatory school. In 1978 the school closed, re-opening as a King's boarding house for boys aged 4—9 and girls aged 4—11.<sup>379</sup> In the early 21st century it was turned into flats.

#### Askwith Memorial School

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<sup>376</sup> Berry, *Convent at Taunton*, 76, 79—82; SHC, PAM 2959, *Taunton Guide*, 1950, 44.

<sup>377</sup> TNA, ED 172/250/19; SHC D/DC/tau.d/24/4/2, pp. 6—8; Berry, *Convent at Taunton*, 87, 89.

<sup>378</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; Berry, *Convent at Taunton*, 91.

<sup>379</sup> Berry, *Convent at Taunton*, 99, 101; SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 84; D. Bromwich, *King's College, the first 100 years* (Taunton, c. 1980), 45—7.

The school, named after Archdeacon Askwith (d. 1911), opened in 1912 on South Street for boys only. It was a single-storey brick building with six classrooms ranged around a hall.<sup>380</sup> There were five classes for a maximum of 40 boys each and five teachers, two female, and a headmaster.<sup>381</sup> The 150 St Mary's boys were the first pupils and the school was sometimes known as the St Mary's Boys School. The vicar was chairman of the managers who included the vicar of Holy Trinity.<sup>382</sup> Askwith had 260 boys c. 1928.<sup>383</sup> In 1931 it became a mixed senior school taking children from Church of England elementary schools.<sup>384</sup> As Holy Trinity school provided most pupils by 1941 management was transferred to that parish.<sup>385</sup> In 1945 it was a mixed voluntary controlled secondary modern school with 166 pupils aged 11—15 and seven teachers rising to 309 with 13 teachers by 1955. From the late 1940s more girls were admitted than boys. In 1948 the two-stream system was given up for a few years although many children needed special attention and some girls came from a home for maladjusted children.<sup>386</sup> By 1955 there were 437 children in three streams, falling to 362 by 1964. There were concerns that too many failed General Certificate exams. The site was too small for a modern secondary, the Trinity Club was sometimes used for additional accommodation, but there was a swimming pool. Morale was low and absenteeism high when the school closed in 1966.<sup>387</sup> The children transferred to other secondary schools and the buildings were taken over by Holy Trinity primary school.<sup>388</sup>

### Priory Council Senior School

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<sup>380</sup> SHC, A/ARQ/1/1; D/P/tau.m/18/11/2.

<sup>381</sup> TNA, ED 21/15530.

<sup>382</sup> SHC, A/DBL/133/20—1; D/P/tau.m/2/1/33.

<sup>383</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/1.

<sup>384</sup> SHC, A/BFW 1/1.

<sup>385</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/11/2.

<sup>386</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/13; C/E/4/64; TNA, ED 109/9065/1.

<sup>387</sup> SHC, C/E/4/327/1, loose reports.

<sup>388</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26; SHC, C/E/4/64; above, this section, Holy Trinity.

A large school of nine classrooms was built adjoining the existing Priory primary school in Cranmer Road in 1933 for senior boys from St James', North Town, Memorial and Bishops Hull schools.<sup>389</sup> It became known as Priory Boys Secondary Modern School from 1945 when it had 198 boys and eight teachers.<sup>390</sup> The headmaster was gaoled for fraud in 1955.<sup>391</sup> Numbers increased from 383 in 11 forms in 1952 to 432 in 15 forms in 1959 with 20 teachers. Many classes were held in huts and even off site. The Oddfellows hall was used for examinations. Toilet facilities were inadequate, public recreation grounds had be used for games and catering facilities were shared with the adjoining junior school. Science provision was poor but gardening was taught. Few boys stayed over the age of 14 or went on to further education or professional work.<sup>392</sup> Numbers rose steadily to 686 by 1975 but in 1976 the school merged with West Monkton secondary school to form Heathfield Comprehensive School. Both sites were used for a few years until sufficient accommodation was available at West Monkton. The Priory buildings were taken over to expand the primary school on the site.<sup>393</sup>

#### North Town County Girls, later Girls Secondary Modern, School

The school was created in half the main building of North Town elementary school in Staplegrove Road in 1945 with 239 girls aged 11—15 who were already at North Town. It sought to emulate the grammar schools in having a uniform, which was not always popular. In 1947 parents complained that it cost c. £5 and required 34 coupons.<sup>394</sup> The school had 401 girls and 17 teachers by 1955. Accommodation was inadequate, classes were large and had to share rooms, meals were taken at the school meal depot near Flook House off Station Road

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<sup>389</sup> SHC, A/DVY/1.

<sup>390</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>391</sup> SHC, C/E/4/311/7 (20 Jan. 1955).

<sup>392</sup> TNA, ED 109/9065/5; ED 109/9343/18.

<sup>393</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64; D/PC/stapg/7/3, p 78; West Monkton, soc. hist. educ., forthcoming.

<sup>394</sup> SHC, C/E/4/311/7 (14 July 1947).

and the hall and playground were shared with the primary school. All the girls left by the age of 15, mostly for retail or factory work, and only a few went for further education. The school closed in 1966 and the girls transferred mainly to the new Castle School.<sup>395</sup>

### Priorswood County School

The school was built on Lyngford Road near the junction with Priorswood Road as a mixed secondary modern school. It opened in May 1956 and by 1965 it had 531 pupils and 25 teachers and 631 pupils by 1975. It became a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic school named St Augustine's in 1982 and there were 759 children in 1985. The school declined in popularity and there were only 488 children in 1995 but 582 in 1999 when there were 32 teachers, seven support assistants, three chaplains and 32 other staff. Children came from a wide area between Wellington and Burnham on Sea.<sup>396</sup> In 2010 it combined with Ladymead school to form Taunton Academy on the latter site and in 2017 St Augustine's buildings were demolished and replaced by a new campus for Selworthy School.<sup>397</sup>

### Ladymead County School

Built in Cheddon Road c. 1960 as a mixed secondary modern, this school had 484 children with 21 teachers in 1965. Numbers rose steadily from 686 in 1965 to 786 in 1985.<sup>398</sup> The school specialised in technology and had a large sports centre, shared with the public. In 1998 60 per cent of leavers went on the higher education, however the school struggled and had problems with behaviour. In 2010 it combined with St Augustine's to form Taunton Academy, a Church of England school under the Richard Huish Trust. The school was rebuilt for 1,150 pupils although there were only c. 750 in 2018 and although improving the school

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<sup>395</sup> TNA, ED 109/9065/4; *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26; SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>396</sup> SHC, A/DIF/70; C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/178.1.

<sup>397</sup> Below, this section.

<sup>398</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

had a higher than average number of pupils with special needs or eligible for the pupil premium.<sup>399</sup>

### Castle Comprehensive School

Castle was built as Musgrove Secondary Modern School on land in Bishops Hull parish off the Wellington Road to replace Askwith and North Town secondary schools and accommodate children from the growing estates in neighbouring Wilton and Galmington. It opened in January 1966 and by 1975 there were 720 children and 781 in 1976. It became a comprehensive school in 1978. The school's popularity with parents led numbers to rise to 886 in 1985 and 994 in 1995.<sup>400</sup> It comprised four and two storey blocks and a caretaker's house. In 1998 a large sports centre opened providing facilities for the school and the public. By 1999 there were 1,062 children on the roll and the school had two orchestras, two choirs, a school bank and a parents group raising over £10,000 a year for the school, which had a budget of nearly £2 ½ million.<sup>401</sup> A highly successful school, in 2011 it became an academy under the Castle Partnership Trust and had c. 1,180 pupils aged 11—19, the limit for the school.<sup>402</sup>

### Special schools

Until the 20th century children with disabilities attended school with able children or did not go to school. With the advent of compulsory education special provision had to be made although until 1960 only severe cases were eligible. Before 1928 the Taunton Branch of the Somerset Association for Mental Welfare set up a centre for c. 10 disabled children in Middle Street in a room leased from the YMCA. In 1935 they moved to the former Memorial School

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<sup>399</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/172; reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/136193: accessed 4 Sep. 2019.

<sup>400</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151, p. 67; C/E/4/64; D/PC/stapg/7/3, p 78.

<sup>401</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/179.1—2.

<sup>402</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/123886, 136916: accessed 4 Sep. 2019.

in Mary Street but with the outbreak of war had to move to the Oddfellow's hall and in 1953 to the Octagon. They received some support from the county council but were dependent on fund raising. All the children were taught by one teacher and were encouraged in arts and handicrafts with the hope of gaining employment at 16 when they had to leave. They received school meals from 1945.<sup>403</sup> A new centre opened in 1957 on Obridge Road, designed for 32 children. In 1961 it was taken over by the county council and had 57 pupils in 1962.<sup>404</sup> After special schools were provided the council ran the centre for adults with learning difficulties until it was converted into social housing called the Willows in the early 21st century.

In the early 1960s Monkton Priors special school for boys and girls aged 4—16 was opened in Pickeridge Close with boarding provision for boys. It had 84 children in 1963.<sup>405</sup> In 1975 there were 150 pupils but numbers declined to 104 in 1995, as more children were moved into mainstream education.<sup>406</sup> In 2002 it was renamed Priory School and rebuilt for c. 50 boys aged 10—18 with behavioural problems. In 2010 it became Sky College, was partly rebuilt again in 2013 with enhanced facilities and in 2019 had 65 boys of whom five boarded.<sup>407</sup>

Selworthy mixed special school was built in 1963—4 in Selworthy Road for children aged 2—19 with learning difficulties. Numbers rose from 51 in 1976 to 69 in 1985 falling to 53 in 1995 after the age range was limited to 4—11.<sup>408</sup> However, by 2000 it was taking children up to age 19 again and 58 pupils were divided between nine classes of which three were for children with extreme difficulties and a mobile building catered for those with profound communication problems. There were 30 teachers and special assistants.<sup>409</sup> In 2019

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<sup>403</sup> SHC, C/MD/54; C/E/4/311/7 (24 Apr. 1948).

<sup>404</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/127/6292; C/MD/54.

<sup>405</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; C/PL/2/13, p. 28.

<sup>406</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>407</sup> [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC038758; 25/123939](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC038758;25/123939): accessed 4 Sep. 2019; [www.skycollge.co.uk](http://www.skycollge.co.uk): accessed 30 Jan. 2020.

<sup>408</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/155/9456; C/E/4/64.

<sup>409</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/176.

it was oversubscribed with 98 pupils and c. 85 staff. It was a successful school, which in January 2019 became an academy under the Oak Partnership Trust and in September opened a separate secondary school. Having no further room to expand the Hazelbrook Campus was created on the site of the former St Augustine's school.<sup>410</sup>

In 2014 the Taunton Deane Partnership College was established to cater for excluded pupils, replacing former pupil referral provision. The old Holway primary school in Byron Road was used for permanently excluded children but there were also specialist units at Bishops Hull, Blagdon Hill and Otterhead on the Blackdowns. The partnership also provided education for child patients at Musgrove Park Hospital.<sup>411</sup>

Park House School opened in Cheddon Road in 2018 as an independent fee-paying therapeutic school for children aged 8—19 with mental and emotional problems, which prevented them attending mainstream schools. Its fees were extremely high, up to £128,000, but its intake was limited to 14 children.<sup>412</sup> Silver Bridge School for 45 children aged 6—19 with emotional and mental health problems opened in 2019—20 in Silver Street House.

### Nursery schools

In 1915 the Taunton Borough Education Committee, which then included two women, debated nursery school provision but decided it was unnecessary as only 5 per cent of married mothers worked away from home, nurseries being regarded as creches rather than schools.<sup>413</sup> In 1942 a nursery opened at Victoria Park for 40 children under five for the duration of the war. Although intended as a care facility the staff included a certificated

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<sup>410</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/25/123943, 146698; <http://www.selworthy.somerset.sch.uk>: accessed 4 Sep. 2019; [bbc.co.uk/news/live](http://bbc.co.uk/news/live): accessed 6 Sep. 2019.

<sup>411</sup> [www.tauntondeanepartnershipcollege.org](http://www.tauntondeanepartnershipcollege.org); reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/134699: both accessed 28 Aug. 2019.

<sup>412</sup> reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/27/145308: accessed 4 Sep. 2019.

<sup>413</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32.

teacher. In 1953 the council limited accommodation to 30 to reduce staffing.<sup>414</sup> A county nursery was built in the 1960s on the site of a former central kitchen at Holway. Opened in 1966 and extended in 1970 it remained open as the Hollies in the early 21st century.<sup>415</sup> Under the 1944 Act 11 nursery or mixed nursery and infants schools were planned but not built. By the end of the 20th century many primary schools had on-site nursery schools, pre-schools and playgroups, which remain active.<sup>416</sup>

### Private schools

There were many private schools in Taunton for those children whose parents could afford the fees although most were short-lived as they usually ended with the death of the proprietor. Dissenting minister Joseph Alleine and his wife Theodosia ran a day and boarding school at their house in the mid 17th century with up to 50 scholars.<sup>417</sup> In 1716 William Burd left £5 a year for his granddaughter to be educated.<sup>418</sup> In 1724 Thomas Chadwick, a dissenting schoolmaster left his son Joseph his study of books but the latter preferred weaving serge and later became a confectioner.<sup>419</sup> Most boys' schools, unlike parish schools, taught Latin and prepared boys for University. Boarding schools taught children from a wide area.

Henry Norris, a published poet, historian and son of a Taunton bookseller,<sup>420</sup> kept a school in Canon Street from the later 18th century with a large schoolroom. He believed in encouraging the natural curiosity of children, would not use corporal punishment and insisted boys had a thorough knowledge of English grammar before allowing them to learn Latin. One of his sons taught French and Italian for seven guineas a year for two private lessons a

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<sup>414</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/2/3 (1942, 1953).

<sup>415</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/155/9432; C/OP/3/151, p. 98.

<sup>416</sup> S.C.C., *New Schools for Old* (c. 1945), 35—6; *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 26.

<sup>417</sup> Revd B. Kirk, *The Taunton Dissenting Academy* (Taunton, 2005), 7; *ODNB*, s.v. Joseph Alleine: accessed 12 Apr. 2018.

<sup>418</sup> TNA, PROB 11/555/325.

<sup>419</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/2/1/3; Q/AC/4.

<sup>420</sup> Published *Aracyntha* in 1772. He was an expert in the history of weights and measures and helped Toulmin write his history of Taunton.

week. The school closed after his death in 1823.<sup>421</sup> His contemporary David Sutton (d. 1818) kept a boarding school but was more concerned with turning out young gentlemen and took parlour boarders. He had a harpsichord and globes and left the school to his sons if they wished to carry it on.<sup>422</sup> William Henry Sutton, possibly his nephew, had a boarding school in Canon Street in 1839, probably the same.<sup>423</sup> Also in Canon Street in 1822 were the boarding schools of Abel Salter Trood and Mary Brock.<sup>424</sup> There were boys' boarding schools in Upper High Street and Middle Street and a boys' day school in St James Street in 1830.<sup>425</sup> The Middle Street academy, kept by a Mr Maine, was begun in 1826 and by the 1850s charged up to 18 guineas a year with washing, French, drawing, music and dancing extra. Boys were given a commercial education and only 12 boarders, Day boys were taken for four guineas a year.<sup>426</sup> The Revd Dr Henry Davies, Baptist minister kept a boarding school in the early 19th century,<sup>427</sup> possibly the Academy kept by Henry Lock in 1872.<sup>428</sup> Robert Bailey after his retirement from Weirfield taught students who boarded with him in The Avenue in 1891. His son John continued the school until the 1900s.<sup>429</sup>

The St James Classical Mathematical and Commercial Academy was kept by the Clarke family in St James Street, presumably at Priory Farm, later Villa in 1841 when 39 boys aged 9—15 boarded and there was a large schoolroom behind the house.<sup>430</sup> It moved to Middle Street before 1851 and was continued by Augustine Clarke.<sup>431</sup> By 1861 he had been succeeded by Melville Raban who taught 29 boys with the help of two resident masters. In 1864 the school was described as a preparatory and finishing school for professional and

<sup>421</sup> SHC, A/DIF/9; DD/DP/47/6; Pigot, *London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3).

<sup>422</sup> SHC, A/DIF/9; TNA, IR 26/293/88.

<sup>423</sup> *Robsons Dir.* (1839).

<sup>424</sup> *Pigot, London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3).

<sup>425</sup> *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1830).

<sup>426</sup> SHC, DD/MA/14.

<sup>427</sup> *Pigot, London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3).

<sup>428</sup> *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872).

<sup>429</sup> TNA, RG 12/1877; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 135; Goodman, *Dir. Som.* (1902—3), 123.

<sup>430</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 23 June 1841; TNA, HO 107/972; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/18/721.

<sup>431</sup> TNA, HO 107/1923.

commercial life.<sup>432</sup> It appears to have closed after 1871.<sup>433</sup> Charles Green and Charles Cecil kept a classical, mathematical and commercial boarding school at East Street House between 1851 and 1881 with a large schoolroom at the rear along Mount Lane. They charged up to 26 guineas a year with music, dancing, drawing and languages including Hebrew extra and prepared boys for university examinations.<sup>434</sup> The school closed in 1881 and the buildings were taken over by Huish's boys school.<sup>435</sup>

In 1822 there was a lady's boarding school in Mary Street in the large house west of the infant school, the YWCA by 1901, kept successively from 1830 by Marianne Ball and her son William with three resident teachers and 18 girls and a boy boarding in 1841. From 1861 to 1866 it was kept by Sarah Elizabeth Harvey with 25 boarders.<sup>436</sup> She was succeeded by Thirza Reed and finally by the Edmondson family until 1901.<sup>437</sup> In 1910 the building still included a large lecture room, boarders' dining room, several classrooms and a dormitory with cubicles.<sup>438</sup> Neighbouring Mountway House was a school in 1841 and had a large room occupying the entire east side of the house.<sup>439</sup> Between 1887 and 1912 Mary Street House was a boys' school kept by Misses Alston and Rowe. There was a separate dining room for the children but only one schoolroom.<sup>440</sup> Julia Millington's boarding school in Hammet Street moved to the Crescent c. 1825 and remained open in 1830. Also in 1830 Susan Sutton kept a ladies' boarding school in High Street and Lucy Trenchard in Mount House.<sup>441</sup> In 1839 there were private schools for girls in Mary Street, High Street, Paul Street, Church Square and

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<sup>432</sup> TNA, RG 9/1618; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 56.

<sup>433</sup> TNA, RG 10/2374.

<sup>434</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 28; *PO Dir. Som.* (1866); *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA RG 9/1617; RG 11/2366; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/8/230.

<sup>435</sup> Above, this section.

<sup>436</sup> *Pigot, London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1830); TNA, HO 107/972, 1922; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103; *PO Dir. Som.* (1866).

<sup>437</sup> *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA, RG11/2366; RG12/1875; *Taunton of To-day* (1896), 50; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1899); *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3); SHC, DD/X/BOU/24.

<sup>438</sup> TNA, IR 58/82634 (399).

<sup>439</sup> TNA, HO 107/920; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/uncat/15292.

<sup>440</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1887, 1900, 1902—3); TNA, IR 58/82635 (404); SHC, D/N/tau.pm/6/4, cutting 23 Mar. 1912.

<sup>441</sup> *Pigot, London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3); *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1830, 1842).

North Street; the first two took boarders.<sup>442</sup> In the 1860s Tauntfield Lodge opposite the convent was a girl's boarding school.<sup>443</sup> Paul Street House was a girls' school in 1883.<sup>444</sup>

Hope Corner House on Kingston Road was a ladies boarding school kept by Ann Hancock in 1861 with 4 other teachers and 43 girls between 10 and 19 boarding. Her daughters carried on the school in 1864.<sup>445</sup> By 1871 it was run by Thomas Sibley, retired headmaster of the Wesleyan College, now Queen's, his wife and daughters and three other resident teachers including a French mistress and had 38 boarders aged up to 21.<sup>446</sup> The school moved c. 1878 to Flook House as the Ladies Collegiate School aiming to provide an education comparable to that in a high class boys' school including physical education for which a large gymnasium was built. It was given up shortly after 1907.<sup>447</sup>

There were also many private elementary schools even after the church schools had been established as parents regarded National schools as for the poor.<sup>448</sup> In 1830 day schools were kept by Joseph Clarke at Priory Farm House, the Revd Thomas Horsfield at Priory House, John Crockford, father of the founder of the clerical directory, at Church Square and later Middle and High Streets,<sup>449</sup> Messrs Perry and Cocking in High Street, James Hilton at Harvey's Buildings, High Street, John Male in Tancred Street, and John Rice in Upper High Street.<sup>450</sup> Seventeen private schools were recorded in 1842 and 20 in 1852.<sup>451</sup> In 1864 there were ten private schools for boys, twelve for girls and nine mixed schools. Numbers attending are unknown but in 1861, excluding the public schools, 248 children boarded and

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<sup>442</sup> *Robsons Dir.* (1839).

<sup>443</sup> *PO Dir. Som.* (1866).

<sup>444</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>445</sup> TNA, RG 9/1618; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103.

<sup>446</sup> TNA, RG 10/2374.

<sup>447</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/11/394; TNA, RG 11/2368; RG 12/1877; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883), p. 30; *Taunton of To-day* (1896), 50; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 159; SHC, A/DSG/1; TNA, IR 58/82614 (2182).

<sup>448</sup> Pigot, *London and Prov. Dir.* (1822—3).

<sup>449</sup> Edward Goldsworthy was not impressed with his education there: Goldsworthy, *Recollections of Old Taunton*, 21.

<sup>450</sup> *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1830): TNA, HO 107/972, 1922; RG 9/1618.

<sup>451</sup> *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1842); *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852).

there were 140 teachers in the town many of whom must have been private schoolteachers.<sup>452</sup> In 1872 most of the 27 recorded private schools were day schools.<sup>453</sup> Many entrants to Huish's girls' school in the late 1870 had attended local private elementary schools and the names of 19 were recorded.<sup>454</sup> Most schools were in private houses but Emily Josland kept a girls' school in a purpose-built school behind her house in Canal Terrace between 1879 and 1899.<sup>455</sup>

The standard of teaching in many private schools in the 19th century was probably low and teachers were often unqualified. The Davies family kept a day school at 12 Silver Street from the mid 19th century and later in their Davies hall. A girl who attended in the early 20th century later recalled sitting with c. 30 children around a table with slates and no formal lessons. The school closed c. 1928.<sup>456</sup>

There were still a number of private schools in the early 20th-century especially for girls including St Olave's begun in High Street by Kate and Emily Bentley before 1891.<sup>457</sup> Between 1894 and 1906 it was held at 17 The Crescent, preparing girls for external examinations, but moved to Parkstone, Dorset before 1911.<sup>458</sup> Marie Crease, a Frenchwoman, kept a girls school at Shrapnels in the Crescent between 1896 and 1901, when there were six boarders aged 9—14 and four resident teachers.<sup>459</sup> Other private day schools in 1900—2 were the High School for girls in the Crescent and the Bellevue boys preparatory school and Miss Spencer's school for girls both in Belvedere Road.<sup>460</sup> Maud McDermott, former head of Bishop Fox's school, established a private school at 22—3 Park Street before 1911. It had

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<sup>452</sup> TNA, RG 9/1617—18; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103.

<sup>453</sup> Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872).

<sup>454</sup> SHC, A/AYO/2/1.

<sup>455</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/13/568; Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1883—99).

<sup>456</sup> TNA, RG 11/2366; SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/28/1834; A/BID/1.

<sup>457</sup> TNA, RG 12/1875.

<sup>458</sup> *Taunton Courier* 23 Dec. 1891, 13 Sep. 1893; BNA accessed 19 Aug. 2019; Kelly's *Dir. Som.* (1894—1906), 154; TNA, RG 14/12286.

<sup>459</sup> *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1897* (Taunton, 1896), 135; *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900), 103; TNA, RG 13/2278.

<sup>460</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1900, 1902—3), 159.

four teachers, four classrooms and in 1911 seven girls aged 7—15 boarding.<sup>461</sup> In 1912 a large assembly hall was built to the rear but the school closed at the end of 1918 when the furniture was bought by Bishop Fox and Taunton schools.<sup>462</sup> It was probably the premises taken over briefly in 1921 by Mrs Rapp's Taunton Girls School for day pupils, before she moved to St Mary's vicarage in 1922. The school closed in December 1927 when the Rapp family moved to Burnham.<sup>463</sup> There were three day schools in the Crescent in the 1930s: number 2, known as St Dunstan's, kept by Mortimer Tantom who in 1923 had a school in Bishops Hull,<sup>464</sup> the Crescent School for girls kept by Miss Long at 19 until she became head of St Audries school in 1939 and the Gilbert School for girls and boys in no 20, the former Huish's girls school, between 1910 when it had a dancing saloon and a gymnasium, and 1929.<sup>465</sup> Eastcombe House, Holway Avenue was a mixed elementary day school between 1938 and 1950. Open air work was a feature of the school under the principal Mrs E. J. Holmes.<sup>466</sup> A preparatory school was held in East Reach in the 1920s.<sup>467</sup> The Second World War and the greater availability of state secondary education brought most of those schools to an end.

Amongst those that survived was Mountlands School opened at 103 South Road in 1930 as a pre-preparatory school for boys and girls up to 12. It was still open in 1977 with 74 children but closed soon after.<sup>468</sup> Thone Preparatory School in Staplegrove Road began in 1937 as the private enterprise of a master from Taunton School who rented it. In 1956 it shared some facilities with Taunton School and remained open until the early 1970s.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> TNA, RG 14/14242/317.

<sup>462</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/4/3/3 (1912); A/AYO/1/1.

<sup>463</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 6 Aug. 1924; 25 January 1928; BNA accessed 2 Sep. 2021; N. Chipchase, *Taunton Revisited* (Stroud, 1998), 21.

<sup>464</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1923).

<sup>465</sup> SHC, D/R/ta/34/9/3, p.73; A/BID/1; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 23; *Educ. Facilities in Som. (post 1935)*, 5; *Educ in Dors, Som and Wilts (c. 1938)*, 7; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1939); TNA, IR 58/82639 831).

<sup>466</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2; PAM 2959, Taunton Guide, 1950, 44.

<sup>467</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929), 26.

<sup>468</sup> SHC, A/APN/2/6; A/BMG/5/2; D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 84.

<sup>469</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2; A/CBG/19, 21.

Specialist private teachers taught in schools and private homes. A dancing master was recorded in 1709.<sup>470</sup> In 1840 Mr Clarke offered lessons in dancing and fencing as well as keeping his own school and in 1842 there were seven teachers of music, piano, singing and dancing.<sup>471</sup> In 1887 there were at least 14 private music teachers and others offering dancing, drawing and languages.<sup>472</sup> By the mid 20th century there were three specialist dancing schools in Taunton one of which continued to flourish in 2019 when there were several small studios and private instructors.<sup>473</sup>

### Taunton School

The school originated on Wellington Road, Bishops Hull in 1847 as the West of England Dissenters' Proprietary School or Independent College but moved to Fairwater House, locally in Staplegrove parish, with 12 a. of grounds in 1868. At that date there were 137 boys over 8 and seven resident masters who taught modern and classical languages, natural science, mathematics, grammar, history and geography. There were no exhibitions and places cost up to £42. The school was reconstituted in 1899 as Taunton School, a public non-denominational school for boys aged 7—19 but run on free church principles.<sup>474</sup> The extensive grounds provided room for a new hall block, built 1876—70 by Henry Davies. Science buildings opened in 1902, additional classrooms in 1906, a chapel in 1907 the gift of Lord Winterstoke, and a common room and libraries in 1911.<sup>475</sup> In 1928 a larger preparatory department opened, a music school was added in 1929 and in 1930 a new classroom wing enabled some classrooms to be converted into a hall.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> SHC, Q/SR/270/7.

<sup>471</sup> *Som. Co. Gaz.*, 12 Sep 1840; *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1842).

<sup>472</sup> *Goodman's Taunton Dir* (1887).

<sup>473</sup> *The Schools of Som.* (1964); *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1972—3).

<sup>474</sup> SHC, A/CBG/19; *Royal Com. to Inquire into Education* (1868), XIV, 489.

<sup>475</sup> SHC, A/CBG/19; A/DIF/106/1.

<sup>476</sup> SHC, A/CBG/20.

In 1914 it had 29 staff and 417 boys almost all of whom boarded but only 21 were in the sixth form. The dormitories were overcrowded and the only science room was for biology. The boys had one bath a week, porridge for breakfast and bread, butter and jam for tea and supper. There was a gymnasium and two swimming pools. The junior school was run by three female teachers who also taught history and French to the older boys but the younger boys were said to spend too much time on English and arithmetic.<sup>477</sup> By 1937 overcrowding had caused boys to be withdrawn and boarders had fallen from 544 in 1930—1 to 356 in 1937 although there were also 193 day boys of whom 78 were on free places. The sixth form had increased to 94. The 34 masters, two mistresses and six music teachers were regarded as too many for the number of pupils but the number of subjects taught had increased including the addition of German and Spanish.<sup>478</sup> The school grounds included a rifle range, parade ground and aircraft hangar by 1939<sup>479</sup> and on Greenway Road a block of buildings called Foxcombe, with tennis courts, running track, cricket ground, practice nets and a scout hut.<sup>480</sup> In 1956 there were 590 boys of whom 415 boarded and 173 preparatory boys of whom 104 boarded. Although 80 went to University many boys were low achievers and smaller classes were recommended. The school added new science buildings and a hospital with three nurses. The ratio of pupils to staff was 17.<sup>481</sup> By 1964 there were 768 boys aged 8—18, including 534 boarders.<sup>482</sup> Since 1976 Taunton School has been fully co-educational, girls' boarding houses were built in 1979 and in 1995 a new mixed preparatory school opened.<sup>483</sup> In 2017 there were 524 pupils aged 13—18 evenly divided between day and boarding, the latter from 35 nationalities, but still fewer girls than boys. The international branch nearby in linked

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<sup>477</sup> SHC, A/CBG/19.

<sup>478</sup> SHC, A/BG/20.

<sup>479</sup> The school biplane was burnt apparently by boys smoking: J. Brown, *Independent Witness* (Taunton, 1997), 23—4.

<sup>480</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2, plan.

<sup>481</sup> SHC, A/BG/21.

<sup>482</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 27.

<sup>483</sup> Brown, *Independent Witness*, 39, 79—80.

houses on Greenway Road had 83 pupils doing intensive examination courses.<sup>484</sup> The preparatory school catered for children from birth and had 495 pupils, mostly day, and since 2012 has also accommodated an international middle school.<sup>485</sup>

### Queen's College

The school, in Trull parish, originated as Castle School in Bishops Hull. The present main building designed in 'Domestic Tudor' style by James Wilson of Bath opened in 1847 on Trull Road as the Wesleyan Collegiate Institution, later Queen's College. In the early 20th century neighbouring Cotlake House was acquired for a junior boarding school and later other houses along Trull Road were added.<sup>486</sup> On Sundays the boys walked to the Temple where a college gallery was provided but by the 1880s they could not afford the seat rents and supported their own minister.<sup>487</sup> In the 1930s public services were held at the school on Sunday and Thursday evenings.<sup>488</sup>

The school lost money and was wound up in 1930 and placed in the care of a trust. The 116 boys were mostly boarders but only two thirds obtained any certificates and very few went to University. There were few subjects taught and the only modern language was French. Extra classrooms were built in the 1930s.<sup>489</sup> By 1941 there were 149 boys including 26 day boys and seven refugees. In 1946 a house was bought for the headmaster, teachers' houses were built and a new chapel was provided.<sup>490</sup> In 1947 numbers had risen to 190 but boys as old as 18 were in the lower forms and a two-stream system with higher admission standards was advised. This advice had been taken by 1961 when numbers had risen to 311

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<sup>484</sup> [www.isi.net/school/taunton-school](http://www.isi.net/school/taunton-school): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

<sup>485</sup> [www.isi.net/school/taunton-preparatory-school](http://www.isi.net/school/taunton-preparatory-school): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

<sup>486</sup> Bishops Hull, soc. hist., educ.; H.J.C. Cannon, *History of Queen's College, Taunton* (Taunton c. 1956), 16—17, 114; SHC, A/BMG/5/2.

<sup>487</sup> Cannon, *Queen's College*, 27; SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/27, p. 63, 184—5, 3/2/1.

<sup>488</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/3/2/3.

<sup>489</sup> SHC, A/CBG/22.

<sup>490</sup> Cannon, *Queen's College*, 120, 129, 132.

and 48 boys were in the sixth form about a third of whom went to University. There were more day boys than at Taunton's other public schools. New teaching rooms, a science block and more boarding houses had been added since 1947 and the grounds extended downhill to Galmington provided for playing fields. A new hall also served as a chapel and from 1999 public evening services were again held.<sup>491</sup>

Since 1972 girls have been admitted and in the early 21st century they made up nearly half the pupils. The school continued to be run by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust. It was regarded as a single school with four departments; nursery, pre-preparatory, junior and senior with pupils transferring to senior school at 11 rather than 13. In 2017 there were 700 children aged 0—19, mostly day pupils although a new girls' boarding wing was built in 2015. A purpose built nursery for babies from birth opened in 2016.<sup>492</sup>

### King's College

Attempts to establish a Church of England proprietary school for boys were made unsuccessfully in the 1840s.<sup>493</sup> However, in 1867 the Taunton College School Co Ltd, a proprietary school was established on a 14-a. site in South Road, Taunton. The boys learnt French, German, Sanskrit, music and drawing.<sup>494</sup> In 1871 there were two resident assistant masters, matron, seven servants and 20 boarders. The school struggled financially and in 1879 the company was wound up and the new school, which had cost c. £19,000, was offered for sale.<sup>495</sup>

In 1880 Canon Woodard purchased the South Road site, the 1867 buildings designed by C. E. Giles and the Fellows Library of the Taunton College School. He established King

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<sup>491</sup> Cannon, *Queen's College*, f.p. 156; .SHC, A/CBG/23; D/N/tmc/3/4/5, 3/4/7.

<sup>492</sup> [www.isi.net/school/queen-s-college](http://www.isi.net/school/queen-s-college): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

<sup>493</sup> SHC, DD/HC/20/25/5, 9.

<sup>494</sup> *VCH Som.* II, 445—6; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* 1866; *Morris & Co. Dir. Som.* 1872; SHC, DD/TBL/47; Wilts and Swindon HC, 740/46; *Taunton Courier* 9 Jan 1867, 12 Oct 1870, 10 Sep 1879; BNA accessed 25 May 2018; *Bishops Hull, soc. hist., educ.*

<sup>495</sup> TNA, RG10/2370; *Taunton Courier* 23 Jan 1879, 10 Sep 1879; BNA accessed 25 May 2018.

Alfred's College for boys, now King's College, marking the 1,000th anniversary of Alfred's death.<sup>496</sup> At first the school struggled and in 1896 with only 21 pupils it closed but re-opened the following year with six teachers and 14 boys rising to 120 by 1902. In 1899 a new wing was built and a tin chapel, later a gymnasium. In 1904 a permanent chapel was built, now the Lady Chapel, and the present chapel was built in 1908 and extended in 1936.<sup>497</sup>

The school suffered badly from the 1918 flu epidemic followed by measles.<sup>498</sup> Owing to the economic depression numbers of boarders fell from 177 in 1921 to 128 in 1926, when a large house was built for the headmaster. In 1931 there were a few younger boys, housed in two semis acquired for a preparatory school, but only nine in the sixth form out of 118. Most boys came for a few years in their teens before undertaking farming or commercial jobs. The teaching was inadequate, most staff had only been in post since 1929 and boys dropped subjects. The school was heavily in debt and could not repay the cost of building the staff accommodation in 1926.<sup>499</sup> Under threat of closure, the headmaster reduced salaries to keep the school open.<sup>500</sup> After dropping to a low of 78 boarders, numbers rose to 210 in 1936 with 20 day boys. However, there were few specialist rooms and the classrooms were very small.<sup>501</sup> The Holway Avenue frontage was sold for housing allowing the school to buy 50 a. for playing fields. In 1938 a gymnasium was built and the boys had several airplanes in succession including a spitfire. Numbers had grown to 290 by 1945 and in the late 1940s extra accommodation was added and the school began buying the adjoining large houses in South Road. The former Fullands school in Wilton was bought in 1946 and in 1951—2 Pyrland Hall in Taunton St James was bought for the preparatory and junior boys leaving the main site for boys over 13. In 1955 there were 432 boys in the senior school and 120 at

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<sup>496</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2.

<sup>497</sup> L. and E. Cowie, *That One Idea: Nathaniel Woodard and his schools* (Ellesmere, 1991), 98—9; D. Bromwich, *King's College the 1st 100 years* (Taunton c. 1980), 15—16 19—22.

<sup>498</sup> Bromwich, *King's College*, 23.

<sup>499</sup> SHC, A/CBG/16.

<sup>500</sup> Cowie, *That One Idea*, 100.

<sup>501</sup> SHC, A/CBG/17.

Pyrland. The sixth form had 62 boys, a quarter of whom went to university. Increasing numbers of boys came from overseas and there was a school choir and orchestra.<sup>502</sup> A science block was opened in 1957 and the large Unmack building in 1961.<sup>503</sup> By 1964 there were 449 boys aged 8—18, including 403 boarders<sup>504</sup> and a new assembly hall was built in 1968 when girls were admitted to the sixth form.<sup>505</sup>

In 1978 the former convent school was bought for a pre-preparatory school, which in 1987 combined with Pyrland to become King's Hall a boarding and day school for boys and girls aged 4—13. By 1990 there were 365 pupils there of whom 110 boarded and most children moved up to the College.<sup>506</sup> In 2018 the school had 304 children, mainly day pupils, between 2 and 13. New science facilities had recently been built. The few boarders were accommodated in the main building.<sup>507</sup>

In 1990 King's College had 400 boarders and 60 day boys over 13 and a sixth form of 200 of whom 50 were girls boarding.<sup>508</sup> Further buildings to the south of the site in the late 20th and early 21st century included a theatre and study bedrooms for boys and girls. In 1991 the school became fully co-educational although there were still more boys than girls in the early 21st century and more boarders than day pupils. In 2017 the school employed 284 people assisted by 30 volunteers, had subsidiaries in India and Qatar and had a turnover of nearly £13 ½ million. There were 455 pupils aged 13—18 in 2018.<sup>509</sup>

## Weirfield

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<sup>502</sup> Cowie, *That One Idea*, 100; Bromwich, *King's College*, 29—32; SHC, A/CBG/18.

<sup>503</sup> Bromwich, *King's College*, 40, 47.

<sup>504</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 27.

<sup>505</sup> Bromwich, *King's College*, 41—2.

<sup>506</sup> Cowie, *That One Idea*, 101—2.

<sup>507</sup> [www.isi.net/school/king-s-hall-school](http://www.isi.net/school/king-s-hall-school): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

<sup>508</sup> Cowie, *That One Idea*, 101—2.

<sup>509</sup> Char. Com. reg. accessed 22 Oct 2018; [www.isi.net/school/king-s-college](http://www.isi.net/school/king-s-college): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

Weirfield House off Staplegrove Road was built after 1851.<sup>510</sup> In the 1870s it was a boys' public school under Robert Bailey assisted by two resident masters and a pupil teacher. Numbers fell from 27 boarders aged 11—17 in 1871 to five in 1881 and by 1883 Bailey had retired.<sup>511</sup>

In 1879 Jane Loveday wife of a master at Taunton School had established a small girls boarding school at 5—6 Middle Street with an assistant teacher. By 1883 she had moved into the vacant Weirfield school, which became a girls' school with croquet and tennis lawns and a gymnasium. In three terms of 13 weeks the girls learnt the usual subjects and also vocal and instrumental music, for which the school had a good reputation, dancing and calisthenics, political economy, chemistry and natural philosophy. Several went on to London University but others were illiterate including one 18 year-old who came for a year to learn to read before she got married. Girls were taught for three hours in the morning and two and half hours in the afternoon and wore brown uniform.<sup>512</sup> There were also half-year courses in an adjoining house in cooking, buttermaking, laundry and dressmaking.<sup>513</sup> The school was entirely dependent on fees, appealing to parents whose sons were at Taunton School, and it was in competition for bright girls with Bishop Fox's nearby, which offered scholarships.<sup>514</sup> In 1912 there were 42 girls but by 1922 there were 165.<sup>515</sup> Staff changes probably caused a fall to 114 pupils in 1927 and 88 in 1931, by which date boys were admitted to the kindergarten. There were only four girls in the sixth form and 15 boarders. A new gymnasium was built that year and the school had a kitchen garden. Latin had been dropped but science was taught. There were seven full-time and three visiting teachers. The school earned recognition by the Board of Education but the first higher school certificate was only

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<sup>510</sup> SHC, Q/RDe/165/G.

<sup>511</sup> TNA, RG 10/2374; Morris & Co. *Dir. Som.* (1872); TNA RG 11/2368; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1883).

<sup>512</sup> SHC, A/DIF/79/2: *Where to Buy:...Taunton* (c. 1890), 14; M.M. Stych, *A History of Weirfield School, Taunton* (Taunton, c. 1973), [1, 4].

<sup>513</sup> Stych, *History of Weirfield*, [3].

<sup>514</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2.

<sup>515</sup> Stych, *History of Weirfield*, [7].

obtained in 1935. The school was extended with new blocks to the north of the house between 1933 and 1939 including a science block and Jubilee hall with stage. A boarding house nearby in Elm Grove was called Weirholm.<sup>516</sup> By 1952 the school had expanded considerably and had 263 girls aged 4—18 of whom 52 boarded but only five went to University. There were 28 staff including two head teachers. Accommodation was inadequate and all the kindergarten classes were held in the same room. Fees were from £14 a term for day girls and from £37 for boarders but dancing, musical instrument and swimming lessons were extra.<sup>517</sup> In 1964 there were 296 girls aged 4—18, including 49 boarders, and 5 infant boys.<sup>518</sup> However numbers fell to 191 c. 1978 when children were only taken from age 7 and the school was placed under a joint board of governors with Taunton School, which bought Weirfield.<sup>519</sup> In 1971, beginning with the sixth form, girls transferred to Taunton School, where they had their own headmistress for a few years. Weirfield became a girls' preparatory school for Taunton School until the girls moved to a new mixed junior school in 1995. The old school was demolished for housing.<sup>520</sup>

### Evening Continuation Schools

They began in the later 19th century for young people who worked in the factories and had missed an elementary education. At least one factory provided one.<sup>521</sup> The St Mary's Central school held evening schools in the 1870s and 1880s attended by over 300 young people.<sup>522</sup> St James provided evening classes in the 1890s, but only for boys, to learn arithmetic, drill, drawing. The senior boys used a reading room in St James Street three evenings a week.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/80/1676; A/CBG/25; Stych, *History of Weirfield*, [9].

<sup>517</sup> SHC, A/CBG/26; Stych, *History of Weirfield*, [9].

<sup>518</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 27.

<sup>519</sup> SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 84.

<sup>520</sup> Brown, *Independent Witness*, 34, 39—40, 79—80, 175—6.

<sup>521</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/1.

<sup>522</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.m/18/2/6.

<sup>523</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889); SHC, D/P/tau.ja/2/8/1.

By the early 20th century vocational classes were available in two or three schools as well as at the Technical Institute although most employers were said to be apathetic. However, the gas company paid for its apprentices to attend evening classes.<sup>524</sup>

Provision was insecure and was mostly aimed at young men. In 1913—14 four schools provided over 11,000 hours of classes attended by 118 males and 72 females but in 1923—5 there were no evening schools. A revival in 1925—6 led Askwith and Priory schools to provide technical and general courses for 58 young people, only eight female. although 383 children a year left school prematurely. Askwith provided two hours of teaching on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in arithmetic, English and geography. St Andrew's school had tried to revive evening classes but they were given up before the end of 1925. Probably most boys with some secondary education preferred to attend the Technical Institute.<sup>525</sup>

Several Sunday schools provided poor adults with a basic education in the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>526</sup> In the 1860s the Revd Joseph Jackson, curate of St James', taught men the classics for ½ d. a week at Rowbarton where one of his pupils was the amateur astronomer Roger Langdon.<sup>527</sup> The adult school movement provided a Christian education for men at the Quaker meeting in Bath Place on Sunday mornings from the late 19th century. A mixed East Reach Adult School, founded in 1895, was held in the Advent and Gloucester Halls off Gloucester Street by 1900. It had over 100 members and its own small orchestra. Most churches had men's bible classes and in 1900 they were also provided by the working men's club and the YMCA.<sup>528</sup> The lack of facilities for women in the early 20th century led to the building of a women's adult school in Harcourt Street, Rowbarton by 1908 although by

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<sup>524</sup> TNA, ED114/805, pp. 1—2.

<sup>525</sup> TNA, ED114/805, pp. 1—4, 11; ED41/391.

<sup>526</sup> Above, this section, Sunday schools.

<sup>527</sup> [www.archive.org/stream/thelifeofrogerlangdon](http://www.archive.org/stream/thelifeofrogerlangdon): accessed 30 Sep. 2019.

<sup>528</sup> SHC, A/DSG/1; DD/X/SOM/39; DD/FIV/1/59; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1898* (Taunton, 1897), 111; *Taunton and West Somerset Annual 1901* (Taunton, 1900), 109.

1939 it was also used by men on Sundays. In 1942 it was requisitioned and the women used the Congregational Sunday school.<sup>529</sup> They returned to Harcourt Street, which remained in use until c. 1961.<sup>530</sup> Various charities provided lectures for young people and adults but several ceased to exist in the early 21st century like the Cordwent Lecture but the University of the Third Age had active branches in Taunton.<sup>531</sup> Recreational and vocational evening classes for adults were provided from the early 20th century by the art and technical colleges.<sup>532</sup>

### Tertiary education

Taunton's history of higher education dated back to the 1680s dissenting academy. The 19th century saw the foundations of modern tertiary education. Art, technical, commercial, industrial and adult schools were established and reading rooms and evening classes were run by religious and social organisations but most were for men only. The Taunton Higher Education Committee had insufficient income in 1915 to maintain both the School of Art and the Technical College so a Joint Committee of Taunton Borough and Somerset County councils was set up to administer the colleges and evening continuation schools. Most adult education continued to be privately provided. Large numbers of students attended classes before the First World War but numbers fell in the early 1920s. The decline was blamed on poor economic conditions and the abolition of fee refunds to regular attenders, which discouraged young people.<sup>533</sup> However, after the Second World War there was a steady increase in the popularity of further and adult education.

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<sup>529</sup> *Taunton Courier* 23 Sep. 19083; BNA accessed 19 Aug. 2019; *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1929, 1939), A35; SHC, D/N/tau.rc/4/2/2 (1942).

<sup>530</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Taunton* (1957); SHC, A/APN/2/6.

<sup>531</sup> Char. Com. Reg.

<sup>532</sup> Below, this section.

<sup>533</sup> SHC, A/DIF/95/32; TNA, ED 114/805, p. 3.

### Taunton Dissenting Academy

A dissenting academy was established by Matthew Warren at Otterford, possibly in the 1670s, for training dissenting ministers. It moved with him to Paul's Meeting in Taunton probably in the 1680s and was kept in his home. The academy taught *c.* six students for up to six years approved and supported by the Exeter Assembly of Congregational and Presbyterian ministers. Although primarily for training ministers a broader education was given and some students became lawyers or doctors. Teaching was in Latin and each student had to submit a Latin thesis. Other ministers assisted with teaching subjects such as classics, physics and mathematics as well as divinity and ethics. The academy closed briefly between 1714 and 1717 and permanently *c.* 1752 because the principal Thomas Amory embraced Arian beliefs, which led to a reduction in students.<sup>534</sup> Angerstein's reference to the Quaker university *c.* 1754 is presumably outdated hearsay.<sup>535</sup> There are few records but *c.* 150 men are known to have studied at the academy and possibly many more did so.<sup>536</sup>

Some former students moved to an academy established in 1752 at Ottery St Mary in Devon, but which was held in Taunton between 1779 and 1794 under the Revd Thomas Reader.<sup>537</sup> In 1842 the Revd John Jackson kept a short-lived school in Mount St to train young men for the dissenting ministry.<sup>538</sup>

### Industrial and Commercial schools.

In 1833 Sir Robert Seppings gave nearly £100 to support a Taunton School of Industry, presumably for difficult boys. It closed in 1856 and the capital was given to the hospital.<sup>539</sup> A

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<sup>534</sup> Revd B. Kirk, *The Taunton Dissenting Academy*, 12, 16—34.

<sup>535</sup> T. and P. Berg [trans.], *RR Angerstein's Illustrated Travel Diary, 1753—5* (2001), 238.

<sup>536</sup> Kirk, *Taunton Dissenting Academy*, 38—72. Warren has a memorial in St Mary's church.

<sup>537</sup> Kirk, *Taunton Dissenting Academy*, 35, 76—7.

<sup>538</sup> *Pigot & Co. Dir.* (1842).

<sup>539</sup> SHC, D/H/ta/1/1/2 (26 Oct. 1857).

school of industry for girls was founded in 1809 in the lying-in institution in East Street. The girls were clothed and taught reading, needlework and housewifery supported by subscriptions.<sup>540</sup> It still shared premises with the lying-in institution in 1852 and was probably succeeded by the East Reach servants training home.<sup>541</sup>

The Shorthand and Typewriting Institute and School of Commerce, later Hallett's Commercial school, was founded in 1887 by Henry Hallett at Bridge House, Bridge Street.<sup>542</sup> Other subjects included French and German, bookkeeping, land surveying, journalism and elocution. Postal tuition was available.<sup>543</sup> It took both men and women, moved several times, and between 1935 and 1950 was at Mansfield House in Silver St.<sup>544</sup> Phillips Commercial School, established in 1901, taught bookkeeping. On the death of Mr Phillips in 1919 his widow continued it as Priory Commercial School, moving to 11—13 Priory Avenue where she taught typing and shorthand until she retired in 1959.<sup>545</sup>

#### Taunton, later Somerset, College of Art

In 1830 the Taunton School of Science and Art was established to promote the fine arts supported by subscriptions.<sup>546</sup> It was short-lived and in 1842 an attempt to set up an art union and institution with subscribers able to borrow paintings failed.<sup>547</sup> A Mechanics Institute Hall was built in Hunts Court, later Bath Place, by William Beadon of Otterford in 1839. It was taken over by the Taunton School of Art founded in 1856 and later renamed the School of Science and Art and then Somerset College of Art.<sup>548</sup> In 1890 the school also held classes in the Victoria Rooms on Fore Street and taught drawing and painting, architecture, anatomy,

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<sup>540</sup> Revd Jas Cottle, *The First Pastoral Letter addressed to the parishioners of St Mary Magdalene, Taunton* (Taunton, 1841), 19.

<sup>541</sup> *Slater's Dir. Som.* (1852); below, welfare.

<sup>542</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2; A/BRL/6/1; A/DIF/49. The building is now a shop and offices.

<sup>543</sup> SHC, PAM 469.

<sup>544</sup> SHC, A/DVF/7/1; A/DIF/49, 114/12; A/BRL/6/1/3; PAM 2959, *Taunton Guide*, 1950, 44.

<sup>545</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/2; *Taunton Courier*, 8 Aug. 1959: BNA accessed 11 Feb. 2020.

<sup>546</sup> SHC, Q/RSI/1.

<sup>547</sup> SHC, A/DIF/114/12.

<sup>548</sup> SHC, T/PH/rea/3/14; A/BMG/5/23. Later British Legion Club and now offices and shop.

modelling, building and machine construction and geometry. Students paid 35s. to 42s. for a term of two half days a week but evening classes were cheaper and held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for ‘artizans’.<sup>549</sup>

A new art school built in 1900 in Corporation Street had facilities for drawing, modelling, wood and metal working and weaving over four floors.<sup>550</sup> In 1912 there were 161 students mainly women who would often attend for many years but the usual number was 100—120 until the 1920s. Some classes were open to schoolchildren.<sup>551</sup> By 1916 it had a reputation for hand-made lace in Honiton style but using modern designs. The skill was taught to young girls locally including those with disabilities.<sup>552</sup> In 1917 the school provided day, evening and Saturday afternoon classes in lace making, enamelling, leatherwork, fashion plate design, cabinet making and the teaching of art. Courses were three years, four for drawing and two scholarships were offered to children at local secondary schools. Among distinguished pupils was the botanical illustrator Mary Eaton.<sup>553</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s it was known as the County and Borough School of Art.<sup>554</sup> The inspectors considered that the school had a good influence on several local industries and trades including cabinet making, house painting, sign writing, photography, dressmaking and the ‘thriving trade’ in antiques but regretted the decline in lace making and architectural studies. Some employers encouraged their workers to attend and 26 schoolteachers took classes but it was felt that the college’s facilities could be better known. There were only 39 day students in 1920 but 133 attended in the evening. The majority of the students were women and teaching was of a good standard.<sup>555</sup> When the Technical College moved to Staplegrove Road the art college

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<sup>549</sup> SHC, D/B/ch/9/3/10.

<sup>550</sup> SHC, A/CMY/456. The classical styled building survives as a public house and flats.

<sup>551</sup> SHC, A/BRL/3/1; TNA, ED 14/803.

<sup>552</sup> SHC, PAM 2443, *Arts and Crafts, a review of the work executed by students in the leading art schools* (1916), 120—2.

<sup>553</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/2/1.

<sup>554</sup> Goodman’s *Dir. Taunton* (1928, 1939).

<sup>555</sup> TNA, ED 114/804.

took over its premises on the opposite side of Corporation Street. By then art, design, crafts, photography and architecture were taught.<sup>556</sup>

By 1953 Somerset College of Art had 59 full-time, 166 part-time, 62 day-release and 242 evening students and a new site was planned for both the art and technical colleges in Wellington Road. Scholarships were available and grants for travelling expenses. All students were expected to join the students union in 1956.<sup>557</sup> Meanwhile additional annexes had been established by 1962 in High Street for lectures and for painting at the new college in Wellington Road. In 1964 the college took over the old Huish's school in Mount Lane as a school of design and that year there were 82 full-time, 388 part-time and 575 evening students.<sup>558</sup> In 1972 the college moved to the new art college on the Wellington Road site and in 1974 it merged with the technical college to become the Somerset College of Art and Technology. As a department of the new college it declined in size and in 1974 had fewer than 200 full-time students.<sup>559</sup>

### Taunton Technical College

The Taunton or Municipal Technical Institute was built in 1898 west of the old grammar school on the new Corporation Street and opened in 1900 with laboratories for mechanical, electrical and physical work, a photometric room and a drawing office.<sup>560</sup> In 1911 it offered courses in mathematics, drawing, English, French, magnetism and electricity, engineering, bookkeeping, typing and shorthand in the evening, with ten teachers. Chemistry lessons were held at Huish's school and typing classes at the private school of commerce kept by Henry

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<sup>556</sup> SHC, A/BMG/5/23; A/APN/2/6. The building is now a public house.

<sup>557</sup> SHC, A/BRL/1/1; PAM 268 (Prospectus 1956—7), 8, 11—12.

<sup>558</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/4/1; *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 27.

<sup>559</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/4.

<sup>560</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/4.

Hallett.<sup>561</sup> The college continued to send typing and shorthand pupils to Hallett's until 1945.<sup>562</sup>

Although numbers of students fell from 166 in 1913 to 134 in 1926 shortage of accommodation meant that specialist laboratories were used as ordinary classrooms and students' bicycles were a hazard in the entrance hall. Only half the students had had a secondary education and most studied commercial subjects including shorthand, engineering and building trades, although the equipment was out-dated and courses were not supported by employers. There were also pharmacy classes. The institute still drew most students from within Taunton.<sup>563</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s the principal was the headmaster of Huish's school.<sup>564</sup> In 1947 day-release courses were offered in bakery, butchery, hairdressing and building. Pre-nursing and agricultural classes were available to those aged from 15 but there were only about 270 students all part-time. There was a growth in recreational courses offered to the general public like keep-fit.<sup>565</sup> By 1953 accommodation was inadequate for the 210 full-time, 501 day-release and 1,570 evening students despite the acquisition of the former Bishop Fox's school in Staplegrove Road.<sup>566</sup> In 1955 the college's 16 full-time and 22 part-time staff taught vocational and commercial subjects, modern languages and courses leading to exams set by professional bodies like the Institute of Bankers. Some practical classes were held elsewhere including the gasworks.<sup>567</sup>

The first college buildings at the new site in Wellington Road were the building and engineering departments in 1958—9 and the first phase was not completed until 1967.<sup>568</sup> By 1962 there were 59 full-time and 45 specialist part-time staff<sup>569</sup> and student numbers rose

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<sup>561</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/1.

<sup>562</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/1/3.

<sup>563</sup> TNA, ED 114/805, pp. 2—6.

<sup>564</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1928, 1939).

<sup>565</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/1, 4.

<sup>566</sup> SHC, A/BRL/1/1.

<sup>567</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/1; A/AGL/2.

<sup>568</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/4.

<sup>569</sup> SHC, A/BRL/6/3/1.

from 347 full-time, 1,333 part-time and 2,666 evening students in 1964 to c. 600 full-time, 3,000 part-time and 2,500 evening students in 1969 when the college was divided into departments of engineering, the largest, business studies, building and surveying, liberal studies, and catering, housecraft and nursing.<sup>570</sup> It merged with the College of Art to create the Somerset College of Art and Technology in 1974 and by 1976—7 there were 1,495 full-time and 6,664 part-time students.<sup>571</sup> The Collinson Centre was built in 1982 on New, now Castle Street and since demolished,. After 1990 the Staplegrove Road annexe was given up and all activities were housed on the main site, which has been largely rebuilt apart from the distinctive art building.<sup>572</sup>

The college became independent of the Local Education Authority in 1993 as Somerset College and had its first graduates, with degrees from Plymouth University, mainly in design.<sup>573</sup> It merged with Bridgwater and Cannington Colleges in 2016 and the Taunton campus hosted University Centre Somerset in partnership with four universities. It had a large residential campus at the former police college at Canonsgrove, Trull but that was replaced by a campus at Cannington c. 2020. There was also a special unit for former special school pupils able to benefit from tertiary education.<sup>574</sup>

### Teacher Training

Many schools trained pupil teachers and some like the Central girls school had more trainees than teachers in the later 19th century primarily to save money. Young girls started as class monitors, sometimes helping teach a large infant class or having sole charge of the babies.<sup>575</sup>

At the British boys school pupil teachers were expected to study at home for two hours a day

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<sup>570</sup> *Som. Co. Devt Plan; Taunton* (1964), 27; SHC, A/BRL/6/3/4.

<sup>571</sup> SHC, D/PC/stapg/7/3, p. 84.

<sup>572</sup> SHC, C/OP/3/151.

<sup>573</sup> SHC, A/BRL/7/2.

<sup>574</sup> SHC, C/E/4/409/176; [www.somerset.ac.uk](http://www.somerset.ac.uk); [reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130803](http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130803): accessed 13 Sep. 2019.

<sup>575</sup> SHC, A/ARQ 4/6; D/P/tau.a/23/2; D/P/tau.m/18/2/5; C/E/4/367/2, p. 167.

in the 1860s but do not appear to have received any instruction.<sup>576</sup> St Andrew's school had a long tradition of training teachers. In the 1870s the pupil teachers were taught in the evening and in the 1920s the school was used by Exeter University College for teacher training.<sup>577</sup> The master of the Wesleyan school taught pupil teachers in the evenings.<sup>578</sup> A Taunton and West Somerset Teachers Association was said to have been founded in 1883.<sup>579</sup> In the 1890s classes for male pupil teachers were held at the Mary Street Memorial Schools.<sup>580</sup> However, in 1909 the old system of monitors and pupil teachers was given up.<sup>581</sup> In the later 20th century there was a teachers' centre at 92—4 Staplegrove Road.<sup>582</sup> In the early 21st century teacher training was based as Heathfield School in West Monkton.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> SHC, C/E/4/220/1, p. 75.

<sup>577</sup> SHC, A/ARQ/4/1; D/P/tau.a/18/7/2.

<sup>578</sup> SHC, C/E/4/218/1, p. 34.

<sup>579</sup> E. Jeboult, *Popular History of W. Som* (1893), app; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1889).

<sup>580</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.mst/3/3/2.

<sup>581</sup> SHC, C/E/1/162.

<sup>582</sup> SHC, C/E/4/64.

<sup>583</sup> <http://www.heathfieldcommunityschool.com/Taunton-Teaching-Alliance>: accessed 13 Sep. 2019.