

1909 - Stowmarket Grammar School/Stowmarket Secondary School.

The foundation stone of the Stowmarket Secondary School was laid by the Rev. C. J. Steward on 24th July, 1908. The school was located in Violet Hill Road on the site of the Lambs Fair meadow. Within the foundation stone was placed a copy of the East Anglian Daily Times, a copy of the Education Committee's regulations of the time and some coins dating from around 1909.

The School opened on 13th September 1909. Mr H. A. Webb, previously Headmaster of the Theobald School in Needham Market, became the first Head teacher and he remained until his retirement in December 1926.

**Article below is taken from:
Stowmarket County Grammar School Magazine
Vol. III. No. 11 December, 1956**

Some Reminiscences of 1909

A visit to the splendid new Grammar School inevitably brought back memories of our early days in the old building. Our entry was in strong contrast with the dignified proceedings of last September, for one of our boys scrambled through an unlocked window to open a door for us, since the architect had taken the keys in his pocket to Aldeburgh. We had a word by the morning post on a Saturday in the summer of 1909 that we were to leave the Oddfellows' Hall, the home of the Pupil Teachers' Centre for the previous four years, and begin in the Violet Hill Road building on the following Monday at 9 a.m.

Then began a hurried procession of students backwards and forwards during the whole morning with all the paraphernalia which a school collects. Messrs. Cole were good enough to enter into the game and moved all the desks, cupboards, tables etc. in the afternoon, and by dint of a good deal of week-end work we did begin school on the Monday morning, very pleased to find ourselves in possession. So we went on until the summer holidays, after which we were to take our place as forms III to VI in the Stowmarket County Secondary School under Mr. H. A. Webb, the first Headmaster. Men were appointed as new members of staff until the proportion of men

and women was equal. The new pupils, mostly for the junior classes, were quickly enrolled and prefects appointed. They set about their work with gusto and all soon fell into the new routine.

But it was not all honey! The scripture lesson in form VI was enlivened by the sight of form IV boys swarming, more or less successfully, up the ropes in the hall where P. T. went on, and by a sound like a horde of elephants as they barged into the partitions during their more strenuous exertions. All this time we would be entertained by the strains of sweet music from elsewhere.

There were times when the cookery mistress was unable to come from Ipswich and the Head would come to ask that we prepare the dinners for that day. Volunteers were never lacking and they never failed to produce something acceptable, even though it meant a girl scurrying to the butcher's for the meat while the rest made all the other preparations. They worked alone except for hurried visits from the Senior Mistress when her own class could be left for a short period. It was all in a day's work and all good for our education.

Conditions for the care of sick pupils and the drying of wet clothes left a good deal to be desired, especially in view of the facilities now provided, for the girls had to be accommodated in the cookery room where classes were going on and dinners being prepared, while the boys were more fortunate, were sent down to the furnace room and at times "forgot" to come up again.

For many pupils travel to and from school was very difficult, involving long, tiresome journeys by train, for the comfortable 'buses and coaches of today were undreamed of. Some even rode to school on horses. During the "great strike" boys from Felixstowe cycled on the Monday, took work home to do on Tuesday, cycled again on Wednesday and so on for the duration of the strike. It ended happily, before their enthusiasm evaporated.

Football, of course, presented no difficulty to the boys but hockey was another matter. None of us knew how to play, so having bought a book of rules and mastered a few, we began; when the whistle blew we all crowded round while we decided on the appropriate penalty. Fortunately we played on a field behind Lockington House and there lived a county player who offered to coach us for which we were very grateful.

We worked on Saturday mornings in those days. Wednesday afternoon was called a holiday but as we played games until 3.30 it could hardly be regarded as such, especially as many had to wait for the same trains as usual. Parents, teachers and friends appealed to the authorities to close the school on Saturdays. It was not until our third petition was strongly worded to show that many pupils from a distance could not reach home before 6.30 p.m. on a Saturday evening that we were successful. There was great jubilation when it was announced that from then on no school would be held on Saturdays unless work suffered. The shorter working week had begun for us.

Altogether life was very pleasant in those old days, as Old Students who have been abroad far and wide of late years frequently agree. It may interest some of them to know that Mr. Hart, who left the School in 1911 to go to South Africa, was present at the opening of the new building on September 29th. He still thinks that Stowmarket is the pleasantest little village that he knows and the old Secondary School still hold his affection.

Written by M. Bowden.

**Article taken from:
Stowmarket High School Newsletter
March 1986**

Secondary Education in 1909

In an age that decrees compulsory education to 16, and fixes the age of transfer to secondary education, it may be of interest to see what was happening in Stowmarket over 75 years ago.

An inspection of the Admissions Register of Stowmarket County Secondary School for September 1909 reveals a far more haphazard situation. Attendance at this level was not compulsory and the parents of 66% of the pupils paid fees; almost all the free places were awarded to girls, and almost half of these went into training for teaching. The need to pay meant that almost all the pupils' fathers were self-employed; several were farmers, there were also bank managers, the station master, a civil servant, a tax and rate collector and so on.

Of the 65 pupils admitted in September 1909 six stayed for a year or less, 30 for two years or less. This may be partly explained by the variety of ages on admission; forty seven were 13 or younger, 10 were aged 14, 4 were 15, 2 were 16 and 2 already 17.

The Register records what most of the pupils did on leaving school – including the fact that one was accidentally drowned in the Gipping before he left. Nine boys and ten girls proceeded to further education; one boy and five girls went straight into teaching. Five boys went to work with their fathers and the rest mostly became apprentices. The largest category of girls – 15 out of 37 – simply stayed at home.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of this intake is the variety of their previous schooling. Seventeen of them had attended private establishments e.g. Miss Woolby's Private Preparatory School, Stowmarket; Miss Cakebread's Private Preparatory School, Needham Market; Miss Woodward's Private secondary School, Bacton.

Most of the others came from one of 17 Elementary schools – there were 10 from Stowmarket Council Elementary School – but 9 had formerly attended Needham Market Grammar School. Altogether the pupils were drawn from 26 schools – and 2 pupils were recorded as without previous school experience!

Written by B. Le Grys (March 1986)

* * * * *

(The student who accidentally drowned in the River Gipping was William Henry Day. He died on 7th of September 1911.

He was born on 2nd July 1894 and entered the school on 13th September 1909. He became a student teacher on 1st August 1910. He left the school on 28th July 1911 aged 17. He lived in Needham Market and his father's occupation was listed as Smith (artisan). He attended the Needham Market Grammar School between September 1907 and July 1909.

His sister Elsie Miriam Daisy Day also attended the school. She started on 12th September 1910 and left 15th December 1916. After leaving the school she became an assistant teacher in an elementary school.)