

## How can the history of elementary education in Shipley between 1833 and 1880 be reconstructed?

Much has been written about the leading part Bradford played in changing education in England<sup>1</sup> but little is known about the schools three miles away in Shipley. The little work that has been done tends to concentrate on Saltaire's Factory Schools which later became Saltaire High Schools, yet as we shall see it is possible to reconstruct much more about the township's education and in doing so, to discover a story as revolutionary as anything going on in Bradford.

Ideally, any study of education in Shipley would include secondary schools and adult institutions, and would take in the 1902 Education Act and its consequences. However, there is so much material after 1870 that space forced me to concentrate on elementary schools between 1833 and 1880. The former date represents Althorpe's Factory Act, which included a provision for children in textile mills to have two hours schooling a day,<sup>2</sup> and was also the year that the government made its first grants, £20,000, towards school building<sup>3</sup>. The choice of 1880 is more arbitrary but coincides with A J Mundella's Act which made school attendance compulsory and marks the third election to the Shipley School Board. It was the first contested election and therefore highlights some of the arguments surrounding the working of the Board. After a look at the somewhat scanty evidence available pre-1870, we will concentrate on three main areas: the setting up of the Shipley School Board, their foundation of Albert Road Schools, and the 1880 election.

Before examining Shipley, it is necessary to know what was going on nationally. This was a key period in the development of education in England, culminating in the 1870 Education Act introduced by Bradford MP, W E Forster. An understanding of that Act and the circumstances and events leading up to it is vital in the interpretation of local evidence. Reading the background also prepares us for the complexities to be faced and the number of different disciplines to be

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Horne *The Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild* and the special centenary volume of essays *Education in Bradford 1870-1970*

<sup>2</sup> Sharp: *Education in Shipley* p C1

<sup>3</sup> Murphy: *The Education Act 1870* p 13

encountered. As well as education, national and local politics play an enormous part, as does religion; we must understand what Best describes as the social hierarchy<sup>4</sup>; economics are a major consideration and, along the way, we learn about health, welfare and even leisure activities that affected the children. My starting point was, therefore, three books that give an overview of the situation nationally.

*Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild* concentrates mainly on the educational and social aspects of schooling. Horne describes the different kinds of academic establishments from Sunday Schools, to Dame Schools, the voluntary sector, usually funded by churches, and finally the new board schools established after 1870. She is also a sound source for an understanding of the levels of teachers and their shortcomings, from the simple monitors at the bottom, to pupil teachers and fully qualified staff. The book covers the subjects taught and is the best source so far found to describe the children's lives, what they could expect from education and what its limitations were. Horne has a particularly useful section on half-timers<sup>5</sup> and demonstrates well how schools impinged on other areas of children's lives such as hygiene, diet and leisure. Her extensive research has produced a large collection of graphic photographs and she also delves extensively into sources outside official papers to produce a more human picture.

Murphy's *The Education Act* and Jackson's *Education Act Forster* deal little with the children but cover the background, build up and results of the 1870 Act in depth. As might be expected, Jackson goes into more detail about the parliamentary process, while Murphy is more concerned with the how the politics reflect the educational needs and the arguments that went on around schooling. Both provide a concise introduction to 19<sup>th</sup> century education. They take as a starting point the formation of the National Society, mainly supported by Tories, which aimed at ensuring education was firmly based within the Anglican church, and the founding of the British and Foreign School Society, made up mainly of Liberals and non conformists, who opposed interference from the state religion and preferred secular or non-sectarian teaching. It was this division that hindered educational progress

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<sup>4</sup> Best: *Mid Victorian Britain* p169

<sup>5</sup> Horne pp 107-127. I also consulted Edmund & Ruth Frow *A Survey of the Half-time system in Education* but that concentrates more on the efforts of various groups to end half time education than on the effect on the pupils

throughout the first 70 years of the century and led to compromises in Forster's Act that created many problems afterwards. Murphy has two particularly clear sections on 'The Religious Problem' and how it affected legislation.<sup>6</sup>

Jackson and Murphy take us through the various attempts to legislate via Factory and Education Acts, and cover the important Newcastle Commission of 1853 and the Voluntaryist movement, one of whose leaders was Leeds newspaperman Edward Baines.<sup>7</sup> The story culminates in Forster's success as part of Gladstone's Liberal government, significantly just elected by an enlarged franchise. After years of discussion on how far the state should involve itself in education, the Act had the modest aim of 'filling the gaps' not provided for by the current system, and then only after non state providers had six months to take action themselves. For all its compromises, Forster's Act is described by Murphy as 'one of the most important events in Britain's history'<sup>8</sup>.

There are few secondary sources on Shipley education and they are patchy in quality, though each provides some useful basic content. Sharp's *Education in Shipley and Saltaire 1800-1900* is a collection of extracts from a variety of secondary and primary sources. It is not well referenced and unsatisfactory in many ways, but there are a few items of great value. Cooper's 1972 essay *Shipley in the time of the School Board* is carefully researched and provides a great deal of basic information but also lacks references. White's 1956 thesis on voluntary schools in Wharfedale and Shipley provides brief introductions to each of the main schools in the area and has the advantage that he has gone outside the area for his references, for example quoting from the National Society's archives.<sup>9</sup>

To be fair to these authors, information up to 1870 is not abundant. As with so many places, the early education in Shipley was concentrated mainly on Sunday Schools and here Sharp has found a table, unfortunately undated and unreferenced, showing that Shipley had five Sunday Schools with 202 teachers and 860 pupils. The

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<sup>6</sup> Murphy pp 10-15 & 54-63

<sup>7</sup> Murphy p18

<sup>8</sup> Murphy p 79

<sup>9</sup> Two other books that are helpful in putting Shipley education into context are the centenary volume *Education in Bradford 1870-1970* and Malcolm Mercer's exemplary study *Schooling the Poor Child: Elementary Education in Sheffield 1560-1902*.

same table lists four Dame schools, four other private schools and three factory schools with a total of 283 pupils between them<sup>10</sup>.

A slightly clearer picture appears by an analysis of trade directories. In 1822, Baines lists just one teacher in Shipley, while Pigot's for 1828 and 1834 ignores education altogether. In 1838 we find three 'Academies' listed but by 1853, White claims of Shipley: 'Here are National, British and Wesleyan Schools' and lists five separate academies. Ten years later Jones's Mercantile Directory gives the names and addresses of six teachers and their schools. The next volume available is the Post Office Directory of 1879-1880 which gives details on each school, including the number of teachers and pupils, the membership of the school board as well as listing four private schools and a Roman Catholic school.<sup>11</sup>

Census returns give an indication of the number of teachers and scholars in the area. For example, the 1851 returns contain three 'governesses' and ten people describing themselves as 'schoolmaster' or 'schoolmistress', three living at the same address, probably running their own school. James Higson appears as a schoolmaster- stationer, suggesting the standard of teaching may not have been that high. The figure for 'scholars', which has to be treated with some caution because it was often a convenient slot for parents and enumerators, was 387, with an additional 11 'scholars at home', out of a population of 711 children aged 4-13. This represents 55.9 percent which is probably higher than reality, but which can be compared with the official statistics published after 1870.

The principal school in the area before the 1870 act was the National School attached to St Paul's church but there appears to be very little evidence remaining of its early years beyond the scant details contained in Sharp and White's thesis. The school was initially a privately run affair, growing out of a Sunday School, and according to White the first building was erected with the help of a National Society grant in 1844 partly to counter a British School that was just about to be built<sup>12</sup>. By 1858 the school was too small and moved to a new building in Kirkgate, which was

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<sup>10</sup> Sharp p SS5

<sup>11</sup> For details of the directories referred to, see the bibliography

<sup>12</sup> White *A History of Voluntary Schools in the Wharfedale & Shipley Divisional Executive Areas of the West Riding of Yorkshire before 1902* p 236

enlarged in 1872 and 1886. Sharp's essay contains a description of the new school taken from the Parish Magazine in 1886<sup>13</sup>, and a detailed study of other back numbers might yield more information about the school.



**Figure 1: St Paul's School, Kirkgate, Shipley with (inset) date stones of building and enlargement**

The other significant, pre-1870 school was Saltaire factory school. This mainly provided half-time education for the children working in Titus Salt's mill and was based in the dining room until it moved to a custom built school opposite the Institute in 1868. Once again we are grateful to Sharp, who has uncovered a 1934 biography of Joseph Wright, an Oxford professor, who was a half-timer at Saltaire School. He states: 'When I left school I knew very little more than when I first went. I knew the alphabet, and had a smattering of elementary arithmetic, and I could recite, parrot-like, various scriptural passages....Reading and writing, for me, were as remote as any of the sciences.'<sup>14</sup>

While the 1870 Act brought dramatic changes around the country, it didn't affect Shipley until four years later. Local newspaper coverage reveals that Shipley ratepayers only agreed to set up a board when Titus Salt jnr informed them the government was about to force them into it.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, after the years of national

<sup>13</sup> Sharp p VS3

<sup>14</sup> Sharp p FS2

<sup>15</sup> Bradford Daily Telegraph (BDT) 29 April 1874

wrangling over religion, all were agreed Shipley’s Board should not be dominated by any party or sect. Thanks to the wide-ranging nature of 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers, we can see that wasn’t always so, for an item on Carlisle’s new board states it was made up of: ‘a Roman Catholic, four denominational Churchmen, a Liberal Churchman, a Wesleyan, a Congregationalist and a Presbyterian.’<sup>16</sup> The first seven-man Shipley Board was elected unopposed and after three years issued a very upbeat report, which included the fact that on the Religious difficulty ‘*there has been no difficulty at all*’ (their italics).<sup>17</sup>

Their initial census had revealed a shortfall of 861 school places in the township and that the existing schools were ‘so overcrowded’ that the inspectors were threatening to reduce the grants, which were based on attendance and examination results. The Board initially took over temporary premises in the Saltaire Institute until, in 1876, they could move the pupils to the newly built Central Schools, which had accommodation for 900 pupils. Interestingly, we are told there were no half-timers at the school. The report gives a comprehensive list of attendances (figure 2) which includes schools not controlled by the Board, and explains that the decline in half-timers (figure 3) was because of the 1874 Factory & Workshop Acts, ‘dull trade’ and the stoppage of Well Croft Mills. Figure 4, also based on these figures, shows the Board were enjoying some success in getting more children to school.<sup>18</sup>

	Sep 1874			Sep 1875			Sep 1876			Sep 1877		
No on register:	Board	Other	Total	Board	Other	Total	Board	Other	Total	Board	Other	Total
Half timers	806	430	1236	821	408	1229	745	281	1026	681	288	969
Day school	454	480	934	595	586	1181	820	680	1500	1099	588	1687
<b>Total</b>	<b>1260</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>2170</b>	<b>1416</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>2410</b>	<b>1565</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>2526</b>	<b>1780</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>2656</b>
No in attendance	665	491	1157	853	574	1427	1016	586	1602	1207	542	1749

**Fig 2: Pupils in school in Shipley between 1874-1877 from Shipley Board report 1877**

<sup>16</sup> BDT 22 January 1874

<sup>17</sup> Shipley School Board report, 29 September 1877.

<sup>18</sup> The reports of the monthly Board meetings usually contained details of visits by the attendance officer but it was the Board’s boast that they had ‘not as yet been under the necessity of having recourse to extreme measures’ (Board Report 1887). This was not the case in Huddersfield where one parent was fined 5s for not sending his children to school and if he failed to pay was to spend three days in prison (BDT 24 September 1874).

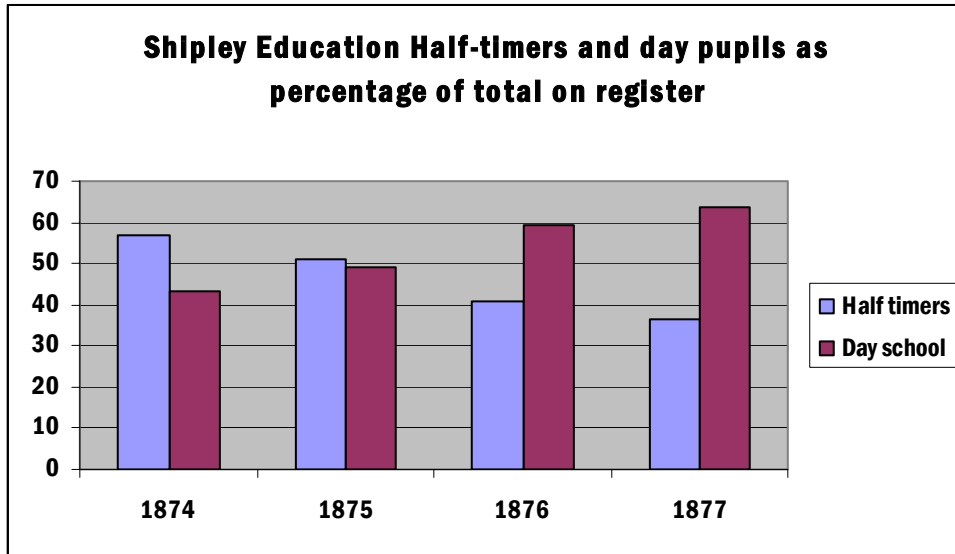


Figure 3 based on figures in Shiple Board report 1877

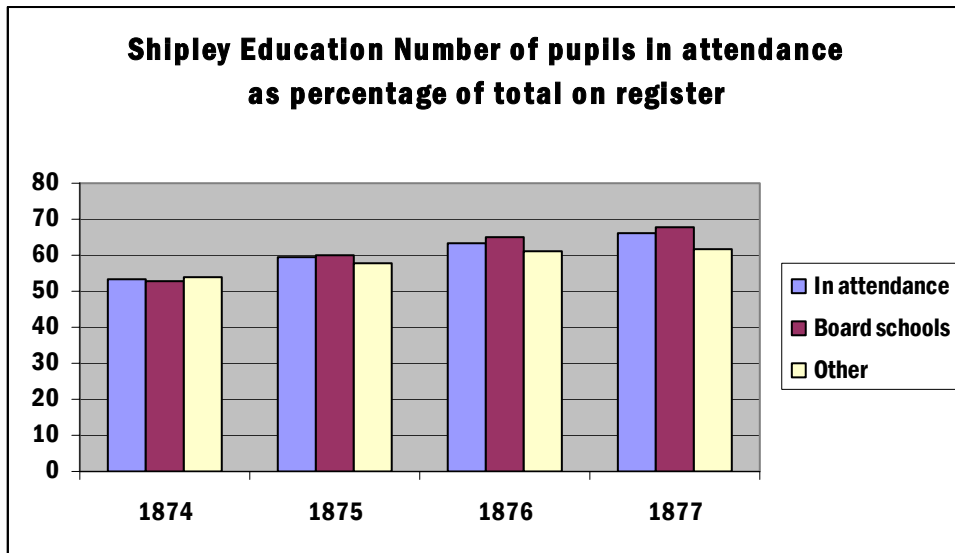


Figure 4 based on figures in Shiple Board report 1877

The Board also wrote enthusiastically about their plans to open the new Albert Road Schools in 1878.<sup>19</sup> What it omits is the fact that Sir Titus Salt, who had handed over Saltaire Factory School to the Board, had given notice he was reclaiming it to turn it into a High School. This obviously created a problem for the Board and caused a stir in Shiple, especially as the two new Board schools were built on Salt land, because Titus jnr felt it necessary to send a letter to the press setting out how much his father had done for education in the town and at what a low cost.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Shiple School Report 1877

<sup>20</sup> Shiple & Saltaire Times (SST) 24 June 1876



**Fig 5:  
Albert Road  
School**

The pupils finally moved from Saltaire Factory School into the new buildings in Albert Road in January 1878 and it is clear from the extensive press coverage that this was a revolutionary school in several ways. Whereas most schools of the period were large halls with different classes going on in various parts, this was based on an American model of a central hall, with eight classrooms off it on two floors, 'each classroom is surrounded by ample glass lights, so that the headmistress may see at a glance what is going on within.' (Figure 6) The report gives extensive detail, down to the fact that the hall is paved with wooden blocks laid on sawdust to prevent noise and that even children wearing clogs make 'but a fraction of the usual din.'<sup>21</sup> Other innovations were that the school was to have no pupil teachers, no corporal punishment and boys and girls were to be taught together. At the official opening the head mistress, Miss Stephens, goes to great length to reassure parents that while such a system 'was never even dreamed of here a short time ago', it is perfectly natural and beneficial for both sexes. An amusing speech by the chairman of the Huddersfield Board reveals that Miss Stephens and the infant head, Miss Smith, have been lured to Shipley from his area by higher salaries and it is clear from both teachers' addresses that they are at the cutting edge of modern teaching methods.

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<sup>21</sup> SST 4 February 1878





**Figure 4: Albert Road Schools interior, showing central hall with classrooms off, although the glass windows to allow the headmistress see in every classroom have now been boarded in**

While the newspaper reports provide many detailed insight into the school, and also print regular reports of Board meetings, including details of staff salaries and other financial matters, and weekly attendance statistics, we need to turn to the school log books to get a feel of the daily life in school. Here we learn about discipline, subjects taught, including details of songs and poems to be learned by heart, the problems caused by the annual inspection on which depends the government grant<sup>22</sup>, the effect of illnesses like measles, scarlet fever and whooping cough and even the head's prejudices.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, once again there is no mention of religious education that had so dominated the political debate.

<sup>22</sup> While the need for good results in core subjects concentrated most teaching on the 3Rs, there is plenty of evidence in the log books that special sessions on a wide range of topics, from 'autumn' to 'sugar' and from 'birds of prey' to 'morality', were used to inform pupils and as an exercise on which the head could judge the progress of young teachers

<sup>23</sup> In the Albert Road log entry of 23 February 1880 the head comments on a would-be teacher: 'She has a broad Scotch accent and therefore will not suit me.'

We are fortunate that the Albert Road logs start before the move and among other things we get a rare insight into just how poor the quality of pupil teachers could be from a note of their exam results: 'Lilly's papers are the best but her marks came below Minnie's as she loses so many for spelling. Minnie's arithmetic is a complete failure as she has not one right. Ada and Annie have done badly in everything and are not fit to pass first year at all.'<sup>24</sup>

The interest in the experimental new school is shown by the regular mentions of visitors<sup>25</sup>, which the head admits can be disruptive at times, but the overall impression is of a well run school, getting good reports. The biggest problem seems to be the constant taking in and releasing of pupils and the regular changing of staff which 'prevent the school making good progress.'<sup>26</sup>

By 1880, local trade is in the doldrums and with a Board election looming and ratepayers clearly unhappy at the high charges, the Board seek to show how frugal they can be. The logs don't mention the election as such but there are entries throughout March that tell of cuts in teachers' pay, the head being asked by the Board to help reduce expenditure, an increase in fees, a decision to pay teachers by results and even a plan to cut the summer holiday from three to two weeks, which the teachers managed to overturn. This is the background to a bitter election campaign in which three dissatisfied ratepayers try to oust members who have so far served without opposition. Among the complaints are overspending by wealthy Board members who 'were not as economical as the working classes', too much influence by Titus Salt jnr and the fact that both Board schools had been built close to Saltaire, leaving the rest of Shipley poorly supplied.<sup>27</sup> In the event, the most vociferous of the trio, James Grayshaw, topped the poll but only because his supporters had used a device, allowed in the 1870 Act, by which they could plump all their votes - one for each available seat - on one person. The other six places saw

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<sup>24</sup> Albert Road log books 10 September 1874

<sup>25</sup> The School Board visitors book includes W E Forster, A J Mundella as well as visitors from London, Blackburn, Birmingham, Liverpool, Hull, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Barrow, Argyleshire, Brighton, Torquay, Bournemouth, Tunbridge Wells, Canada, South Africa and Australia

<sup>26</sup> Albert Road log books 30 August 1878

<sup>27</sup> SST 2 October 1880

former Board members returned, which a letter cryptically signed Omega, suggested 'fully endorsed' the previous Board.<sup>28</sup>

While it is possibly a forlorn hope that much new evidence will become available for the early years of Shipley education, there is no doubt a great deal more can be achieved from 1870 onwards, especially by careful use of log books and newspapers, and by further research into local council and national archives. Detailed studies of half-timers, the economics of education, subjects studied, the success of schools in terms of attendance and results, as well as the politics and further developments could all be written, and the much neglected story of Shipley education given its proper place.

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<sup>28</sup> SST 9 October 1880

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Log Books of Albert Road Schools, Shipley by kind permission of headteacher and staff of the school.