

St Erth School 1922 - 2022

One Hundred Years & Counting



A Record of the School's Centenary Celebrations

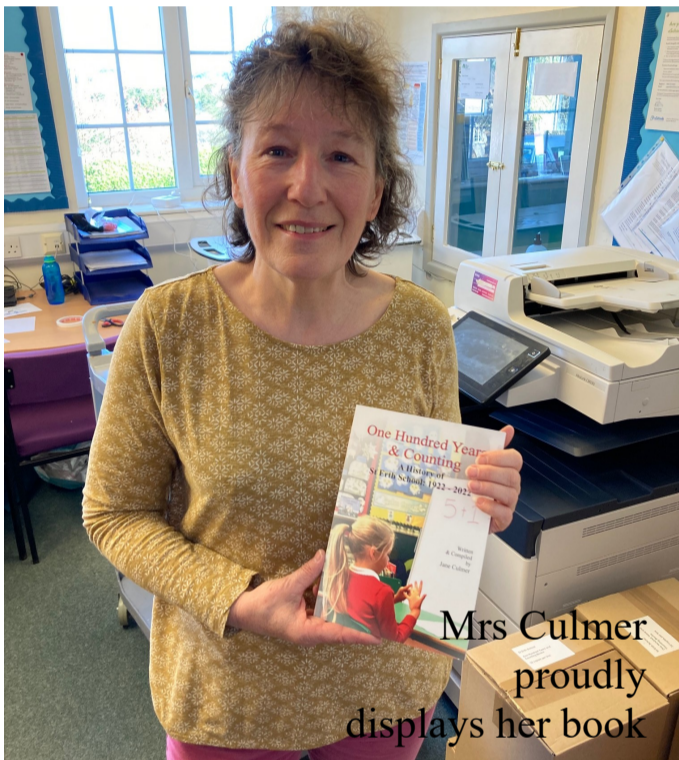
April 2022



Our big day has arrived and the Marquee goes up



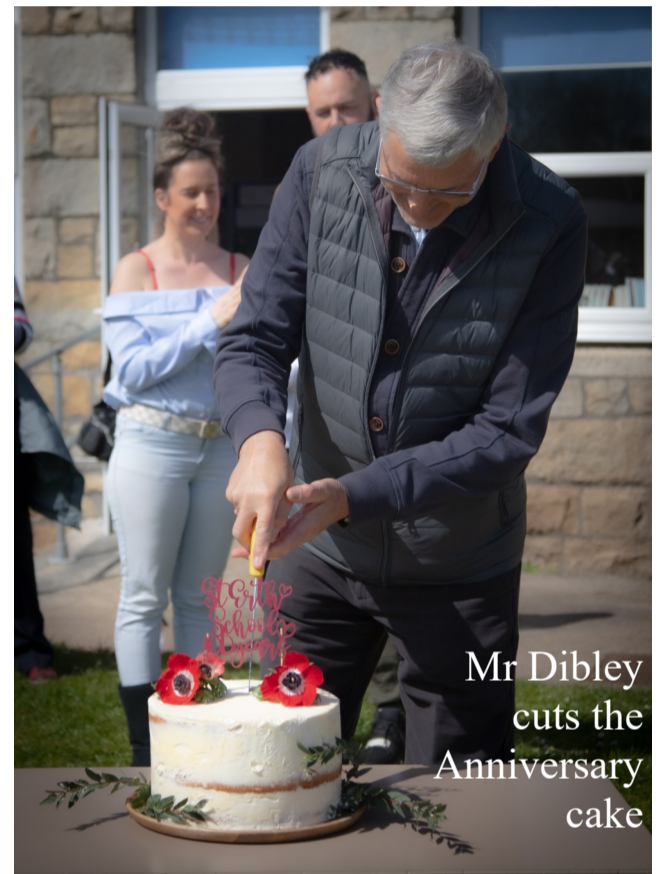
Mr Coleman welcomes the crowd and gets the children ready to sing



Mrs Culmer proudly displays her book



Mrs Rogers makes a speech



Mr Dibley cuts the Anniversary cake



The Sandy Acre 7 entertain



Old friends catch up

St Erth School opened on 3 April 1922 and the actual anniversary was marked by a service in St Erth Church.

The service began with the hymn, 'O God, our help in Ages Past' which had been sung at the opening ceremony at the School 100 years earlier. Presiding over this earlier event, on 1 May 1922, was the Chairman of the School Managers, Rev J J Murley and, by chance, it was another Rev Murley (Patricia) leading the service 100 years later.



At the service, following a brief history from the current Head-teacher, Bill Coleman, pupils entertained the congregation with some of their favourite school songs. They shared more facts about the School's history as well as giving their thoughts for the future of the school.





The service was well attended by current and former staff, governors and pupils.

Members of St Erth Chapel also joined the service, reflecting the coming together of the two Church communities, who had each run their own Schools in the village for many years before the new Council School replaced them both.



On the following Saturday, 9 April, the main celebratory event took place at the School.



Brilliant sunshine greeted the large crowd that turned out, many of whom had travelled from out of County to join in the celebrations and some of whom had attended the School in the 1930s.



The afternoon started with speeches from the current Headteacher, as well as two previous Heads, Keith Dibley and Niki Rogers.

Once the anniversary cake had been cut by Mr Dibley, the celebrations were in full swing.



The children entertained at several points during the proceedings, with singing and Maypole dancing and then played contentedly in the school grounds whilst parents and visitors reminisced and caught up with friends they had not seen in a very long time.



St Erth Concert Band had been due to attend but the Covid pandemic was still ongoing and sadly caused them to cancel at the last moment. Nevertheless, in addition to the chil-



dren's singing, music was played: a selection of popular music from throughout the past 100 years, starting with 'The Charleston' and ending, appropriately, with 'Perfect Day' - our very own 'Top of the Pops of the century'.



Refreshments were provided by the School's fundraising group, 'The Friends', as well as The Star Inn, with

their mobile bar, and the village Feast Committee.



There was an extensive exhibition detailing the history of the school.



Pupils' work was also shared in a photographic presentation and there were many fascinating displays from the following individuals and (mostly) village organisations:

Stephen Murley, Stuart Palmer, St Erth Rainbows, Brownies and Guides, St Erth Nursery, Open the Book, Hayle Heritage Centre, St Erth Sewers, St Erth Chapel (Rainbow Youth Club, Messy Church, Tea & Toast and the Farmers' Market), Forest School, St Erth Christmas Lights Committee, The Star Inn, St Erth Parish Council & St Erth Players.



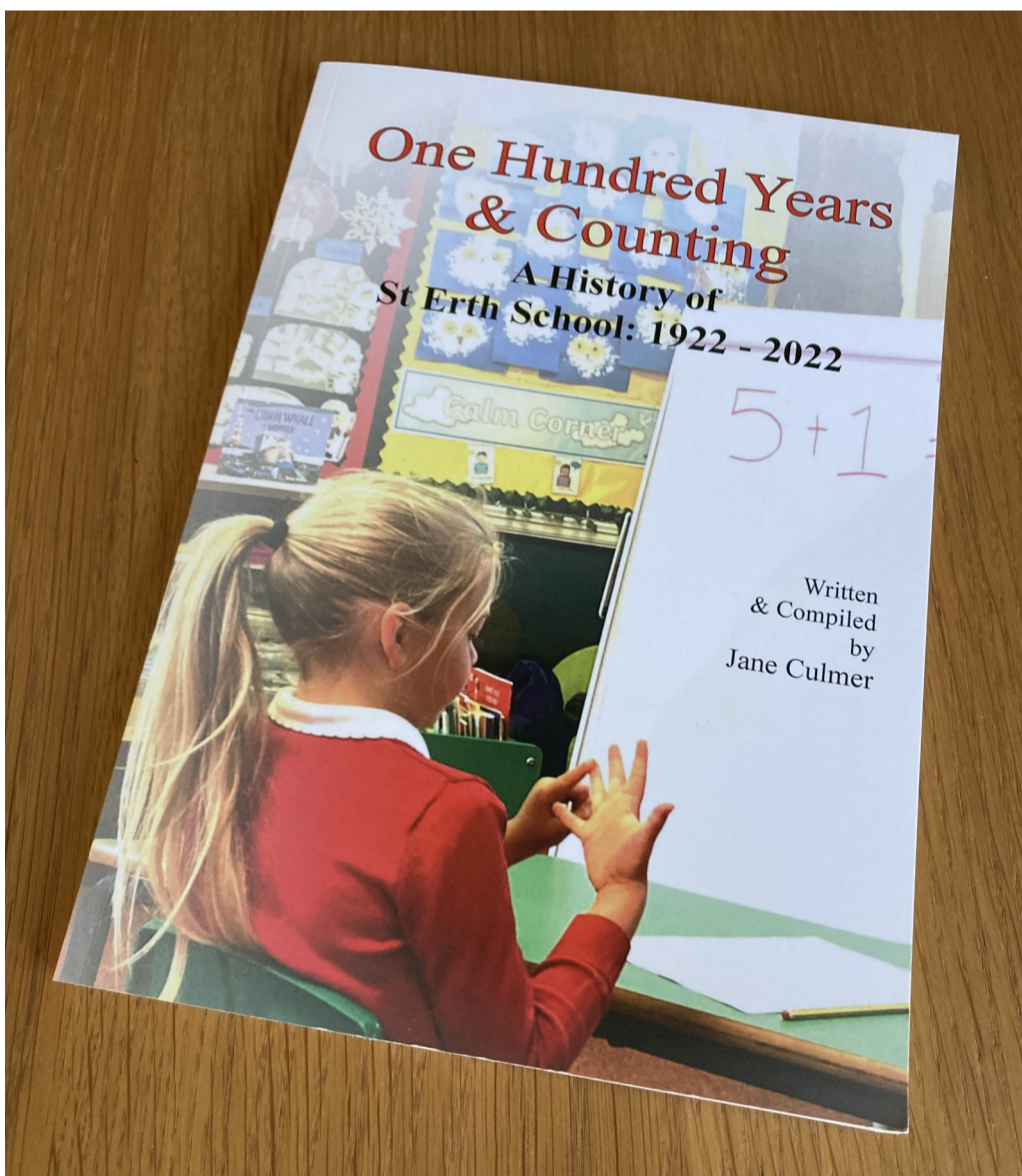
The celebrations concluded a week later, with a performance from local band, The Sandy Acre 7, in the Church Hall. The band generously donated the entrance takings to the School.



There was a large audience of mainly village families, as well as staff from the School. After some persuasion, the Headteacher took to the stage, sharing his moment of fame with an incredibly supportive group of parents and pupils.



The centenary celebrations were a great success, embraced by the whole village and a truly inclusive occasion, highlighting the central role the School plays within the community. The various events will be remembered by those who took part for many years to come and this display book will help share it with those unable to attend.



Whilst the following pages show the exhibition panels that were on display at the School, the full history of the School is told in a new book, 'One Hundred Years & Counting'. This costs £10 and is available through the School. Thanks to generous support with printing costs, all proceeds from the sale will go to School funds. If you would like a copy please contact the School - 01736 753153.



Early Schooling in St Erth

Village Schools before 1922



The first known school in St Erth was a Dame School. Run privately, usually by a woman in her own home (hence the name), this type of School offered tuition to children from wealthy families who could afford the fees. Most children did not go to School.

In 1754, however, a local vicar funded a church school which broadened educational opportunities for the children of St Erth. Eventually this became a National School in 1840, when government grants were introduced, and at the time it was non-denominational, taking children from both Church and Chapel families. However, there were still many children that did not receive any form of education.



Artist's impression of a Dame School



Early photo of pupils at St Erth National School



St Erth Church Hall - location of the National School



Chapel Schoolroom, the former Wesleyan School

In 1870, the government sought to expand education to all 5-12 year olds and funds were provided which allowed the Methodists to open their own School in 1872. The two Schools, the National and the Wesleyan, co-existed alongside each other, near the village bridge.



Pupils of the Wesleyan, early 1912



Early Schooling in St Erth

Village Schools before 1922



Pupils of the National School, early 20th century

Life was not easy for the pupils of these early Schools. Although attendance was compulsory, poverty, domestic chores and work often prevented children from going to School. Sometimes they had no shoes to wear, or they were needed to look after younger siblings, or work in the fields, particularly at harvest time. Childhood illnesses also had a devastating effect on attendance levels, as did the weather. Getting to School often meant a long trek across muddy fields come rain or shine and often pupils arrived so wet that they simply had to be sent straight back home.

A typical day started with drill. Then, after applying themselves to the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, children went home for lunch. Afternoons might include a nature walk. The girls undertook needlework as a major part of their curriculum.

The Standards of Education in schools in England from 1872
Six Standards of Education were given in the Revised code of Regulations, 1872. It should be remembered that these standards do not correspond to year groups. In Victorian times promotion was on merit, and many children did not complete all the grades.

STANDARD I	
Reading	Read one of the narratives that comes after monosyllables in an elementary reading book used in the school.
Writing	Copy in manuscript handwriting a line of print, and write from dictation a few common words.
Arithmetic	Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures, and the multiplication table to multiplication by six.
STANDARD II	
Reading	Read a short paragraph from an elementary reading book.
Writing	Write a sentence from the same book, slowly read once, and then dictated in single words.
Arithmetic	The multiplication table, and any simple rule as far as short division.
STANDARD III	
Reading	Read a short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.
Writing	Write a sentence slowly dictated once by a few words at a time, from the same book.
Arithmetic	Long division and compound rules (money).
STANDARD IV	
Reading	Read a few lines of poetry or prose, at the choice of the inspector.
Writing	Write a sentence slowly dictated once, by a few words at a time, from a reading book, such as is used in the first class of the school.
Arithmetic	Compound rules (common weights and measures).
STANDARD V	
Reading	Read a short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative.
Writing	Another short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper, or other modern narrative, slowly dictated once by a few words at a time.
Arithmetic	Practice and trials of parcels.
STANDARD VI	
Reading	Read with fluency and expression.
Writing	Write a short theme or letter, or an easy paragraph.
Arithmetic	Proportion and fractions (vulgar and decimal).

The Standards System operated in the Schools and children were assessed annually to determine if they had reached the required standard to progress through the classes.



Fistral class experience the Victorian classroom at the Museum of Cornish Life, Helston



Pupils at St Erth Wesleyan Day School c1900

Did you know?
If pupils failed their annual end of year tests, they could stay in the same class with the younger children for another year, or longer!

Despite the harsh regime, by the early 20th century, the Schools were well-established and highly regarded and they both resisted suggestions that a new Council-run School should be opened in the village. However, they were housed in two deteriorating buildings and eventually their Managers yielded to the growing demands for a new School to serve all the children.

On Friday, 31 March 1922, they closed their doors for the last time.



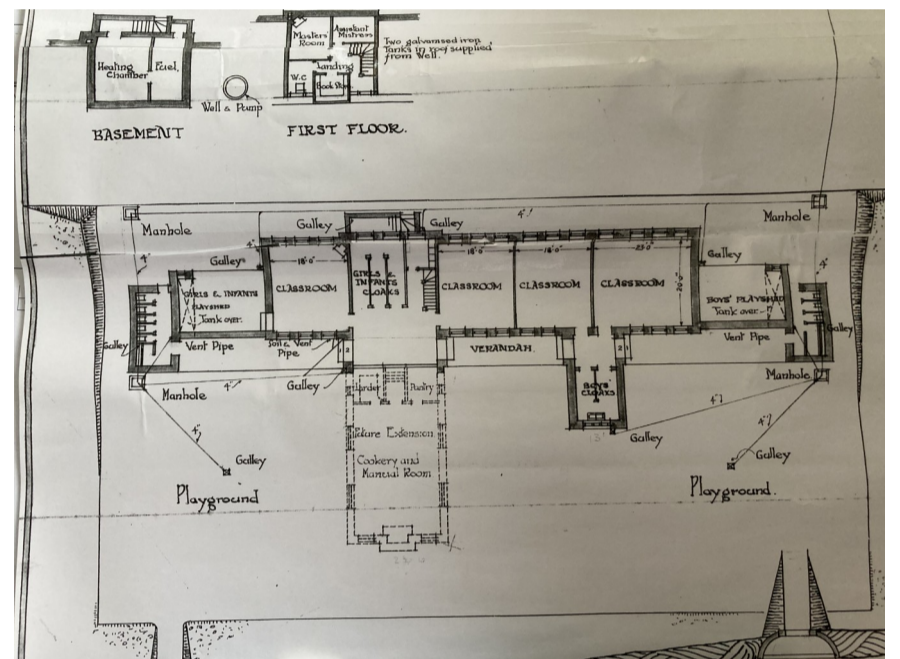
The New Council School

Early Years: 1922 - 1939



St Erth Council Mixed School opened on Monday, 3 April 1922. This was the start of the School year at that time. Mr Walter Francis (Frank) Bew was the new Headmaster and he had 126 children under his care, although there was a stated capacity for a further 40 pupils, in four small classrooms.

The building was not quite finished: washbasins needed fitting, equipment still had to arrive and the grounds needed setting out. There was no electricity to the building. Water came from a well to serve the outside toilets and was often unreliable. On top of this, defects with the construction, particularly leaking windows, meant that running the School was not a straightforward task. But Mr Bew and his staff were optimistic.



Miss Maddern and her class

Did you know?
It only cost £5000
to build the new School.

Whilst Mr Bew taught the oldest pupils, up to the school leaving age of 14, there were three other teachers: Miss Maddern, Miss C Warren and Miss D Warren.



Miss Clara Warren and her class



Mr Bew with his class, c1920s



The New Council School

Early Years: 1922 - 1939



At the official opening ceremony in May many parents were present, along with the new Managers of the School. These included Revd Murlley and Mr Varker, previously Managers of the National and Wesleyan School respectively, who now found themselves working alongside each other to run the new vil-

Did you know?
The 1932-1933 school year was a whole term longer, when the start date for the school year was changed from April to September.

Extracts from *Our School Days* by Arnold Derrington, who started at the School in 1927

The School . . . was constructed on a veranda plan, with open covered sheds at each end. We could shelter there in play times, have "drill", and congregate before doors opened. Steps from one led up to the Infants' Room where Miss Edith P Cocking looked after us. There was a pervading carbolic smell, with clean wood block floors well scrubbed. The swing doors had rounded edges and were painted dark green with heavy brass handles which contrasted with the glossy cream walls, giving an ideal clinical atmosphere. . . . We loved Miss Cocking.

We used slates with hard chalk, and picture letter cards. I still remember B for Bat, "bifforbat" was one word for a long time! Large print rag books, and grubby red covered reading books were used.

At Christmas time, new paper chains were made, old honeycomb bells taken from storage, and we were given advertising "perks" such as Oxo shaped spectacles, Beecham's table books, Bisto kids pictures to colour in and other exciting "samples" from leading firms.

Arnold returned to the School over 40 years later for a brief period as Acting Headteacher.



Class photo - 1929



Class photo 1930



Arnold Derrington in the middle of the front row. c1929

The problems that had blighted attendance at the two previous Schools remained an issue. Mr Bew was particularly frustrated by parents' indifferent approach to schooling but he was determined to improve the figures, ordering an attendance shield to introduce an element of competition between the classes. Gradually, however, attendance levels improved as compulsory elementary education became an accepted part of everyday life.



Mr Bew taught the older pupils of the School, up to age 14

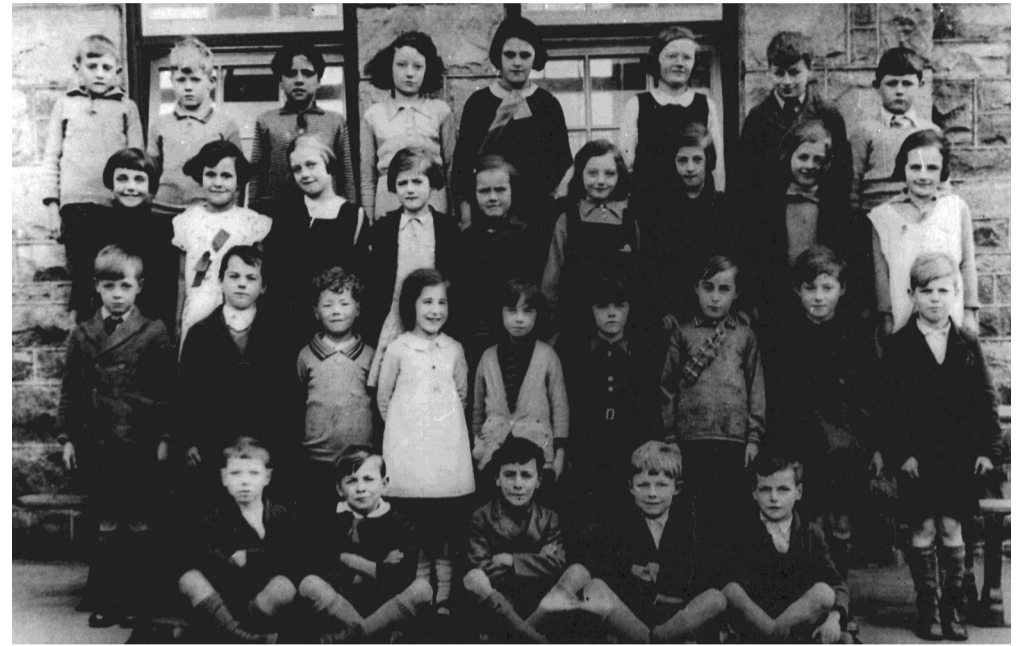
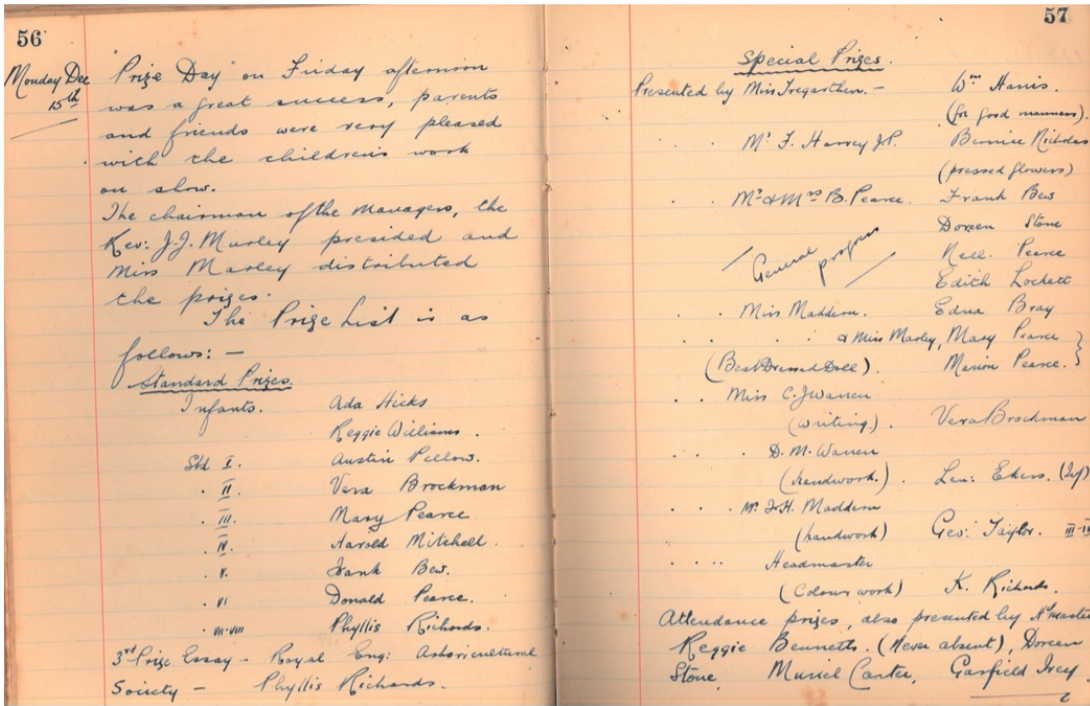


The New Council School

Early Years: 1922 - 1939



School work proceeded well and an early inspection praised the School. Prize-giving days were established with awards given for attendance, traditional academic subjects, good manners and even 'best-dressed doll'.



Class photo 1930s

Report on the first Prize Day, in December 1924. The Headteacher's son, also called Frank, won the prize for Standard V.



The early School excelled at Netball. Here's one of the first teams, pictured with all the staff.

Travelling Dairy School.
St. Erth Centre.

Awards to Elem: girls.

Name	Theory	Practical
Phyllis Richards.	1 st	1 st
Rhoda Hart.	2 nd	1 st
Doreen. Charleston.	1 st	2 nd
Cora Nicholas.	1 st	2 nd
Cissie Nicholas	1 st	2 nd
Edna Bray.	2 nd	1 st
Lily Nicholas	2 nd	2 nd
Lily Rowe	1 st	1 st
Mary Martin.	2 nd	1 st

1923 'Butter School' results

School life settled into a familiar pattern. Classroom work was alleviated by off-site education, such as the Butter-making School and Cookery classes that the older girls attended, and also by special events, chief among which was the village Feast.

Did you know?

The School used to have a holiday for the Feast of St Ercus, which was a major village event. In more recent years, the School attended officially, singing to entertain the villagers.



Class photo 1936



Class mid 1930s



The School during the War

1939 - 1945



With the threat of war looming, preparations were made in school throughout the summer term 1939, with children being issued with gas masks and the installation of extra fire fighting equipment. War was declared on 3 September 1939 and the School was closed for the first day of term to allow further arrangements to be made.

Evacuees were expected and extra classroom space was sought. When they began to arrive from London in June 1940, a Double Shift system was put in place, whereby pupils alternated between morning and afternoon schooling. By October 1940 the nearby Church Hall was set up as additional classrooms and full-time schooling resumed.



ARP (Air Raid Precaution) Wardens organised civil defences, such as gas masks for the children.



Evacuees leaving for their new temporary homes

Further evacuees arrived from Plymouth in 1941. Despite a greatly expanded number on roll (166 at one time), it was primarily the existing St Erth staff that had to undertake the additional teaching. There was a severe shortage of teachers, mainly due to the enlistment of male teachers into the services. This shortage continued well after the war ended.



The former Church Hall, (built in 1921) used to provide additional classroom space during the war.

Did you know?

Many evacuated children returned home for a 'holiday' during the war, despite the ongoing threat from bombing.



The School during the War

1939 - 1945



Pupil absences remained an issue. Not only was illness still a major factor but many older pupils, both boys and girls, were needed to undertake agricultural work in term time due to the shortage of labour. For this they were given an exemption from School for up to 2 weeks.

5 th	17 Senior Scholars away for agricultural employment (10 boys + 7 girls)
6 th	Agricultural Employment - Absent 10 Boys Girls 18 (morning) Boys 11 - 18 girls (afternoon)
7 th	Agricultural employment - (a.m) 11 Boys, 8 girls (p.m) 11 Boys, 8 girls
8 th	Agricultural employment (a.m) 12 Boys 8 girls (p.m) 12 Boys 8 girls
Examined registers & primary registers and found all correct W.J. Dew	

Extract from Log Book showing numbers of pupils engaged in agricultural work - June 1944



Air raids were frequent in the early days of the war although, over time, pupils and staff came to ignore them and simply carried on with school work. Lessons continued as before the war, with the usual annual testing. More able pupils also took 'Intelligence Tests' to try and gain a place at Secondary School. As places were limited and fees were charged, most pupils remained at St Erth School until the school leaving age.



Whilst St Erth suffered no bomb damage, nearby Penzance was not so lucky.

Did you know?

For the first few years of the war, the School remained open in the holidays for 'informal instruction' to provide a safe haven for children whilst parents worked.



The School during the War

1939 - 1945



Mr Bew served in the local Home-guard between 1940 and 1942. He retired from teaching in 1943. His successor, Mr Benjafield, not only had to deal with the challenges of war but also the austerity of the post-war period and the ongoing problems the School faced. Amongst these, water still came from the School's well which was giving increasing problems, through either a broken pump or repeatedly running dry. Water often had to be brought in by tanker.



St Erth Homeguard - Mr Bew is seated in the front row, 4th from the left

MINISTRY OF FOOD—NATIONAL (FOOD) RATIONING
SPECIAL AUTHORITY TO PURCHASE RATIONED FOODS

Holder's Name: *H. W. Benjafield,*
Address: *Council School, St. Erth.*

Commodity: *TEA.* 8 Weekly Quantity: *13.000.*

is hereby authorized to purchase the quantities of food(s) specified opposite from—

Retailer's Name: *Mrs. A. R. Eady*
Address: *Post Office, St. Erth.*

during the 8 weeks ending *26/5/45.*
and each successive period of 8 weeks.

Signed: *H. Reane*
(Food Executive Officer.)
Date: *9/3/45.*

Code No. *S.W. 113*

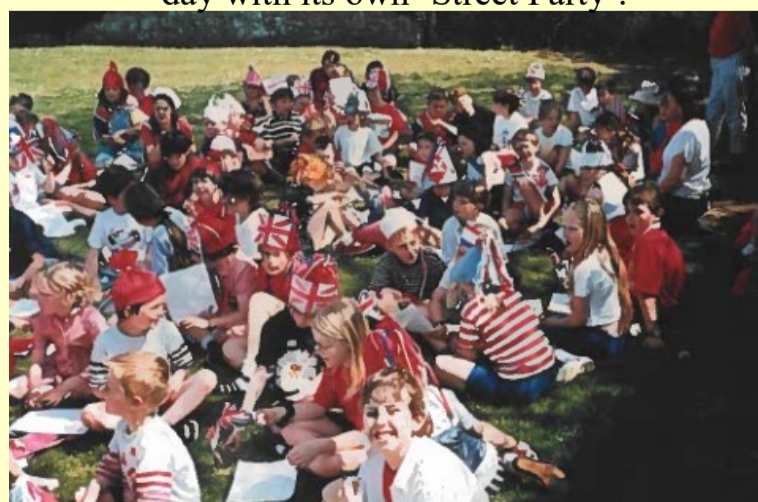
Stamp: *PENZANCE & WISBY PENWITH JOINT FOOD OFFICE*

In the middle of the war, the School had a change of Head-teacher. Mr Bew retired after almost half a century of teaching, mostly in Cornwall, with his final 21 years at St Erth School. The School was packed for his retirement presentation, with those present singing 'For he's a jolly good fellow' and the National Anthem, followed by three cheers. He was succeeded by Mr Harold Benjafield.

↑ Even the School was not immune to war-time rationing



The School celebrated the 50th anniversary of VE day with its own 'Street Party'.



Within a month of peace being declared in 1945, the evacuees returned home. Many retained fond memories and close links with St Erth, visiting their host families in subsequent years. Some even relocated to Cornwall later in their lives.



8th June, 1946

TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations.

I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

George R.I

King's Victory message to all School children



Recovery

1946 - early 1950s



With peace came a renewed optimism and several changes which affected the School.

After many years of deliberation, the School finally got its own kitchen which began serving meals in July 1946. The first cook, Miss Lockett (known to pupils as Auntie Nellie), had to cope with food rationing, power cuts and, often, a lack of water when the well ran dry.

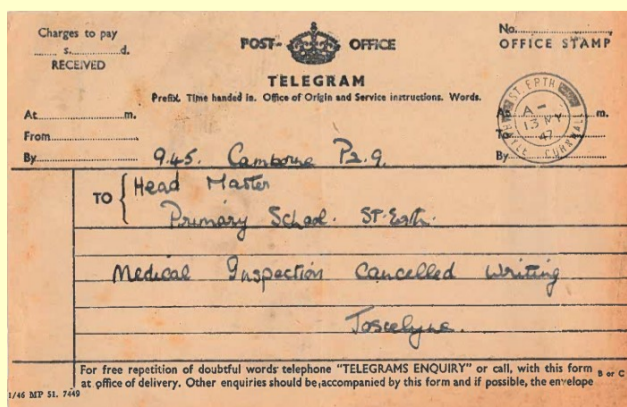


Infant class 1950

Children's lives were gradually improving. The use of child labour to support agriculture was finally abolished in April 1950.

The setting up of the National Health Service at the end of the war extended the health services on offer through schools. Medical examinations of pupils were long established, not only a full exam when pupils started school but also regular inspections by the School nurse for head lice, etc. Such services were broadened with the Local Education Authority providing guidance to parents on a variety of common diseases. The recently introduced School immunisations programme, which started with Diphtheria in 1942, was also expanded over the coming years.

If medical examinations were cancelled at the last moment, the only way to let the School know was by telegram.



Cornwall Education Committee.

IMPETIGO. (Contagious Sores).

Directions for Treatment.

1. Soak off all crusts with warm water or warm sweet oil (olive oil). Use pieces of old linen for this purpose and then burn them.
2. Apply white precipitate ointment (5 grains to the ounce) frequently.
3. If any crusts reform repeat the soaking.
4. If there are sores on the head, cut the hair from around the sores.
5. The disease is very contagious and is spread from place to place and from child to child by infected fingers, towels, etc.
6. A child with sores should use a separate towel, hair brush, etc.

Guidance for Parents regarding Impetigo

Dental visits had started at St Erth School in 1931. However, treatment was not free until the arrival of the NHS, at which time uptake of the service increased and any required treatment took place in local clinics. In time, dental inspections were withdrawn from Schools.



The School's first cook, Miss Nellie Lockett, flanked by her two assistants, Mrs Nicholas (left) and Miss Hayes (right)

CORNWALL COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY HALL, TRURO.
March, 1946

50 received
25/3/46
Secretary in Log Book - dated 25/3/46.

Dear Sir or Madam,

DIPHTHERIA

As you probably know, there have been a few cases of diphtheria in your area recently. In the case of children who have not been immunised during the last 5 years, it is possible to give them additional protection by means of one injection which rapidly increases their resistance to the infection. The Medical Officer of Health of your area has kindly undertaken to be responsible for giving this additional dose if you wish your child to have the advantage of this increased resistance at this present time. You will, of course, realise that this single dose is only of value in the case of children who have already been immunised. If your child has not been immunised then a complete course would be necessary. I expect that you will wish your child to have this additional protection, and I shall be glad if you will kindly sign this form and return it to school.

Yours faithfully,
R. N. CURNOW,
School Medical Officer.

I hereby consent to have my child.....
given an injection of diphtheria prophylactic.

Signed.....
Address.....
Date.....

Parents were encouraged to consent to their children receiving the Diphtheria booster.

Did you know?

The School Dentist not only came to inspect pupils' teeth. Before the NHS was set up, any treatment that was needed also took place in School, including extractions.



Recovery

1946 - early 1950s



The (Butler) Education Act of 1944 increased the school leaving age to 15 from 14. It also brought free secondary education to all pupils, with transition to secondary school at age 11. However, with no local Secondary Modern Schools yet built this aspect had little immediate impact on St Erth School and the number of pupils on roll remained high, averaging 127.

A Cycling Proficiency Scheme was set up in 1947. This has continued throughout the following decades.



Here we see children participating in 1987.

And today we have the Bikeability Scheme.

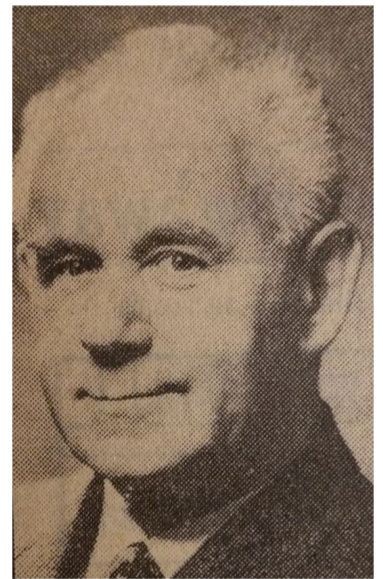


Health and Safety increased in importance. Accident reports were required for injuries at School and staff became trained as First Aiders. Miss Wherry (seen below with her class of 1948-49) was the first to fill this role.



Amidst all this change, Mr Benjafield retired and was replaced by Mr Warren in April 1951.

Electric lighting was finally brought to the School shortly after Mr Warren's arrival and mains water eventually came in 1955.



Although pupils had previously undertaken School visits to local sites, Mr Warren introduced full-scale educational visits. One of the earliest was to Plymouth, where pupils no doubt witnessed the phenomenal post-war reconstruction that was taking place. Other visits included Launceston, Truro Cathedral and The China Clay works in St Austell.



Class photo 1947 with Miss Penberthy



St Erth pupils would have learnt of the bombing of Plymouth from the evacuees.



In 1952, the Duke of Edinburgh visited Hayle to open the Recreation Ground. Mr Warren took all the children along to attend the ceremony.

