A VILLAGE SCHOOL AND ITS MASTER ST JAMES'S SCHOOL, SUTTON 1887-1925

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Sutton was for many centuries a tract of the royal forest to the south-east of Macclesfield but in the early nineteenth century the more populous part of the area was absorbed into the borough of Macclesfield. The rural part, fanning out from the village of Sutton, became a separate civil parish; its population grew steadily from 1119 in 1891 to 1426 in 1931. The main sources of employment around the turn of the century were farming and quarrying together with silk printing and dyeing at Langley, three-quarters of a mile from Sutton village. In addition there were the service employments — inns, a wheelwright and blacksmith, coal merchants on the canal wharf, shoemakers, a tailor, grocers, post office and domestic service.

This article examines the Church of England primary school at Sutton in the period from 1887 to 1925 when Buckley Frederick Moffatt was the headmaster. The material comes mainly from surviving log books in the County Record Office, supplemented by interviews with former pupils and others. The role of the headmaster is considered, together with school life generally and the impact of changes in the outside world, especially in central and local government; and an attempt is made to assess how typical this school was of others of the period.

Buckley Frederick Moffatt

Many new churches and schools were built in the early nineteenth century to serve growing populations in and around towns like Macclesfield: St James's church opened in 1840 followed a year later by the school. The cost of the school was £500 15s 8d which was met by public subscription and a grant of £150 from the National Society. The building consisted of a schoolroom of 47 feet by 20 feet and a two-bedroomed house for the master. According to the trust deed the school was to be "under the direction and control and visitation of the incumbent and to be united to the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church"[1].

The development of primary education in this country was bedevilled by the rivalries between religious denominations and their respective education societies and by the general suspicion of state control. It was not until 1838 that a special committee of the Privy Council was set up to administer the government grants for school building which had recently been made available: this committee established the important principle of inspection of schools receiving state help. In 1862 the Department of Education, set up four years before, promulgated the Revised Code, better known as payment by results, in an attempt to raise standards of teaching. Payment depended on regular attendance under a certificated teacher and annual inspection in the 3Rs by Her Majesty's Inspector. Rigid schemes of work were laid down for each year or Standard. If successful in the examination, the child earned the government grant, and was promoted to the next Standard. It was important to both schools and teachers that examinations were taken successfully by as many children as possible. Teachers were sometimes tempted to falsify the registers of pupils and the system led to a lack of trust between them and the Inspectors.

The Education Act of 1870 laid down a framework for schools to be provided within the reach of every child. The country was divided into school districts: if provision anywhere was inadequate, the Department of Education allowed the denominations until the end of the year to build with the help of a Parliamentary grant but not local rates. If this did not happen, an ad hoc elected body known as a school board was set up with power to build and run a school (or schools) aided by Government grant and local rates. Fees (school pence) could be levied up to nine pence a week but a board could remit these in cases of poverty.

Denominational teaching was not allowed in board schools and in all schools receiving a government grant the conscience clause allowed children to be withdrawn from religious instruction. Religion was no longer a subject to be inspected as a condition of grant. By 1876 1·5 million new school places had been provided, one third by boards, the rest by churches.

By 1880 schooling was compulsory to the age of ten but the Factory Acts still allowed children over ten to attend school half-time if they reached a standard of proficiency in the 3Rs. In 1891 education became virtually free. Payment by results continued with examinations restricted to sample groups. In 1895 these were replaced by inspections. Good schools could earn higher grants consisting of a fixed proportion plus a merit grant decided by the Inspector on the basis of the organisation and discipline, the intelligence employed in instruction and the general quality of the work.

The Education Act of 1902 abolished school boards and made county and county borough councils the local authorities for all elementary and secondary education. The managers of voluntary schools provided the buildings, could appoint teachers and were no longer responsible for running expenses. Rate aid became available to secondary schools with the aim of providing a "scholarship ladder" for able pupils. Elementary education, however, was still seen as "training in followership rather than leadership training, suited to the working classes"[2].

The Code of 1900 finally ended payment by results. Inspectors now advised teachers and disseminated new ideas instead of examining children and assessing grants on the results. The LEA began to exert influence, especially as it now had its own inspectors. In 1906 local authorities provided meals if children could not profit from education through lack of food. In 1907 they were given the duty of medical inspection of children entering public elementary schools though treatment did not become compulsory until 1921.

The Education Act of 1918 abolished half-time and set the leaving age at fourteen. The Government agreed to pay at least half of net expenditure of LEAs; health and meals services developed, and LEAs advised on choice of employment.

The supply and quality of teachers were key factors in the development of schooling. Many teachers up to the 1900s came via the pupil-teacher system under which boys and girls were indentured from thirteen to eighteen to teachers who gave them seven and a half hours instruction per week before or after school. The pupils were examined on a prescribed, graded syllabus at the end of each year: if satisfactory the teachers were paid a government grant. At Duke Street school in Macclesfield where Lizzie Ingham (later a teacher at Sutton) was indentured in 1903, the grant for three pupil teachers' instruction was £15.10.0[3]. "PTs" taught in school up to five and half hours per day; at 18 they competed for scholarships to teacher training colleges. Later they were only required to teach half-time and in towns attended the rest of the time at special centres. After 1907 many attended the new secondary schools either full-time or part-time.

Buckley Moffatt

St James's Sutton was Buckley Moffatt's first post, commencing temporary duties there on 27 June 1887 as cover for a master who was terminally ill. Born in 1864 at Mossley, Lancashire his parents moved to Macclesfield where his father was the gatekeeper at the Lower Heyes Mill. He trained as a pupil teacher in Macclesfield and then at Culham teacher training college.

According to Moffatt's first log book entry "he gave the Upper Division a Bible lesson on Elisha. The boys read well. Arithmetic is weak. The Vicar visited ... The children repeated the commandments. I have determined that Standards III to VI shall repeat multiplication, pence, shillings, weights and measures tables for twenty minutes every morning". The number of children attending was 65. As in many similar schools there was only one room, and "Miss Linzey taught the infants and Standards I and II on the gallery while he juggled with Standards III to VII and ex-VII. And on a wet day steaming garments were suspended round the room"[4].

It was only just before the death of the master on 29 September that Moffatt was able, after three refusals by his wife and the intervention of the vicar, to see him and "with difficulty learnt the whereabouts of the examination schedules" for the all important annual examination in October which would determine the amount of Government grant. Moffatt then entered upon permanent duties. On examination day "Every pupil on the register was present". However the outcome of the exam was disappointing: the lower division gained only 64 per cent. The Inspector criticised the unsettled state of the school due to the illness and death of the master.

The amount of grant earned was crucial for Moffatt as it affected his salary. In his first year he received £76 15s 10d in November following the annual exam but nothing more until the end of the school year, the following September, when he was paid £61 4s 7d for the school pence (which he collected weekly) and £5 "salary", a total of £143 0s 5d His house was rent free and in due course he earned a further £16 for evening classes. This system continued until 1901 when, at the prompting of the LEA, the managers agreed to pay £100 salary in quarterly instalments plus half the capitation fee for pupils, making a total of £154 16s 0d[5].

Even with payment by results a good teacher could go beyond learning by rote. Moffatt's first year saw innovations as well as tighter discipline: on Fridays "For the last half hour ... I took the boys in drill in the yard while the girls were sewing". There was an object lesson on the manufacture of a silk handkerchief; new maps were acquired and printed reports procured to tell parents (and later subscribers whose contribution to the school in cash and in kind was valuable) about the children's progress. At the next Government examination Moffatt remarked that "order to my mind was almost perfect", and the average mark was 92 per cent. Moffatt duly received his "parchment", a certificate attesting his competence as a teacher.

Moffatt's personality and teaching made a lasting impression on many of his pupils and his is still a name to conjure with in Sutton. A typical comment from a former pupil was that "We were so fortunate to have such an educated schoolmaster"[6]. He certainly possessed in full measure intellectual force, determination and high Christian principles but he also had a very human streak of vanity. According to his grandson Moffatt "often used to take part in games of cricket with the boys at lunch-time... and he really had to keep going to exercise with the children to keep fit. It was a well-known fact that he didn't like losing".

Moffatt expected his pupils to behave with due deference to their elders and betters. One boy was sent to ask Mr William Whiston for a block and a piece of silk from their printing works at Langley. Percy lost the note but had read it and passed on the message verbally. One of his classmates explained: "Next morning on Moffatt's desk there's a letter from Mr Whiston. While he'd be willing to help the education of Sutton scholars ... it wasn't very businesslike ... to send a boy for a verbal answer". Percy was in trouble: "Oh he did give him a caning". The note turned up in his pocket lining when someone grabbed him while playing dogs and rabbits in the school yard.

Being in Moffatt's good books had its drawbacks. One pupil remembered: "He was a marvellous teacher but he had favourites. When I were a favourite and he sent me on

Class photograph, St. James's, 1905. Moffatt (right)

all his errands goodness knows I were missing my teaching then". On one occasion he had to push a barrow with half a hundredweight of seed potatoes and packets of seeds from Macclesfield at least two miles away and was rescued by a milkman who tied the barrow on behind his horse-drawn float. But even favourites could expect the cane if they were thought to have stepped out of line. The same pupil had to "fetch him his dinner from Byrons Lane (a mile away). One day there was a quart jug in a basket and two chops and it were nearly full of gravy... Percy was going to his dinner: 'What's got for owd Jigger's dinner' ... He snatched this jug and took all the gravy. So I left it on t' desk and run home. When I come back 'John, did you have a mishap with my dinner?' No, sir. 'Well, Mrs Moffatt knows I like plenty of soup, there was none in'. So John got the cane that time but Percy got it too: "I said served him right for the soup"[7].

In later years even Moffatt's stern principles were tempered with afterthoughts: one woman remembered "we had those hoops and we went to meet Mr Moffatt after his dinner and we were all decorated up... and he was late coming back and the kids was all late for school. We all got chastised although he was so pleased we had gone to meet him. He must have been very remorseful, he went down to the shop and bought one of those great big jars of boiled sweets for us"[8].

Like many teachers of his time[9], Moffatt had a strong steak of patriotism. Black lines are ruled round the log book entry for Queen Victoria's death: "School was suspended at 3 p m on the day of her funeral and he gave a short address upon some of the good traits in our late Queen's character", which suggests he had some reservations about other traits! The British empire was often used as a peg on which to hang a geography lesson. A holiday was granted for the coronation of George V and pupils "went on a hill and formed a crown, we all had red, white and blue mob caps and we had to sit on the grass with our heads down showing the mob caps"[10]. When the King and Queen drove through "we walked several miles to see the royals and pushed the baby in a pram. I was so disappointed I thought the Queen sat with all her regalia and she just looked like an ordinary woman with her toque on"[11]. Moffatt notes that the children sang the National Anthem as the King and Queen passed. Special days were observed faithfully: Empire Day, when the children saluted the Union Jack and sang the National Anthem, and, later, Armistice Day with "Need for Observance", prayers, hymns and two minutes' silence.

Moffatt was a keen member of the National Union of Teachers. Considerable gains had been achieved with the passing of a Superannuation Act and the ending of payment by results but the campaign for adequate salaries was limited by the inability of small voluntary schools to pay more. Moffatt was president of the County Association of Teachers in 1916 and a member of their council for 21 years. The NUT also campaigned against the obligation on teachers in church schools to undertake extraneous duties with the choir, organ and Sunday school. Moffatt appears to have been involved willingly with the church, especially the Sunday school where he taught for many years. He was even capable of preaching a sermon at need and, according to his grandson, kept a drawerful of notes ready for such emergencies.

The *School Guardian* periodical in 1894 referred to the anomalous position of elementary school teachers, especially in rural parishes: "Their higher education raises them above the labourers and even the majority of farmers and small shopkeepers; and yet they are not generally the social equals of the clergy or gentry"[12]. There is no evidence that Moffatt entertained such concerns. He was quite prepared to tackle any of the local big-wigs on behalf of his school or individual local pupils and, socially, he had many friends and family in the teaching profession, some of whose visits to St James's are recorded in the log books. He was a member and, for some time, secretary of the local cricket team and played billiards regularly at the institute in the village. Altogether he had a comfortable and well-respected place in the community.

Assistant teachers and pupil teachers

In the early years the staff consisted of Moffatt and an assistant mistress whose salary in 1901 amounted to £45 per annum, paid quarterly. Miss Linzey, Moffatt's first assistant, left in 1890 with a "beautifully illuminated album" and a log book comment: "Good solid work, never tiring, always patient, a capital writer on the board, a first class sempstress". Assistant teachers often went on with examinations: Miss Cooper, who replaced Miss Linzey, was placed in the third division of the 1st year's Certificate - "Disappointing to her and annoying to myself after the time I devoted to her".

When staff were ill classes were taken by children acting as temporary monitors. Some went on to be recognised as pupil-teachers at the age of 13 although Moffatt considered this too young. Anne, Moffatt's daughter, however, who in an emergency took Standard III though not quite 13, was "a big strong girl and fond of teaching". She became a probationer and later, together with her sister, was one of four girls from St James's who won County scholarships to Macclesfield High School out of seven awarded for the whole district.[13]

Another pupil teacher was disappointed to be merely head of the Second Class in the Queen's Scholarship. But she was "competing with 9000, many taught half-time and went to PT centres" whilst she taught all day and depended on what coaching he could give outside school hours. She did, however, achieve a Double First in the Certificate at Bristol. Her leaving present was a dressing case for which the children contributed £1 out of thirty-five shillings.

By the 1900s pupil teachers from St James's attended central classes in Macclesfield on three days. Anne Moffatt returned to teach for a year before going on to Whitelands Training College. One ex-pupil remembers "when Mr Moffatt had to go out somewhere and Anne would take us she didn't half spank us"[14].

Lizzie Ingham (the writer's mother) took charge of the infants at St James's in 1906. She had been a pupil teacher since 1902 at Duke Street Church of England school, which was situated in a poor part of Macclesfield. Miss Barber, the head teacher, however, had a reputation and according to the log book the HMI reported in 1906 that "The teachers are earnest and painstaking... the methods are those of a good modern infants' school but lack of space forbids many developments"[15]. Central classes for pupil teachers were only just being started so Lizzie had to be in school some days at 8 o'clock for her own lessons and attend on Saturday mornings for dress-making, which

School House, Sutton c.1905

she particularly resented. Later she went half-time to the High School. Discipline was tight: the log book notes that "Lizzie Ingham asked for 10 minutes off Tuesday afternoon".[16] In April 1906 she was placed in the 3rd Division of the Second Class but could not consider training college because of family circumstances, and on 12 November was appointed, barely 19, "under Article 50" at St James's.

Her infants class at St James's included a number of under fives whose mothers were glad to have them off their hands. One of them recalls that "I was three years and eight months. There was Sarah, Rachel, Herbert, Thomas and Suey going to t'school. Sarah were more like a mother to me and I toddled off up to t'school... Moffatt said 'What's this child doing here? Take him home' " After three more trips he was allowed to stay at school[17]. If the little ones got tired during the day Lizzie told them to rest their heads on their arms on the desks and have a nap. They had a corner by the fireplace, listened to stories and played with bricks and picture shapes while the more formal teaching went on.

After four years' experience Lizzie was made "responsible for the conduct of the school" when Moffatt went to his sister's wedding; and when he was off with a cold she "took charge and reported the order and conduct of the children as good". She had a baptism of fire, however, when one of the big boys in the top class threatened her but was pulled down by two others: after that she never had any difficulty. In this she was luckier than the teacher in *Cider with Rosie*: Spadge Hopkins defied the teacher and after a scuffle lifted her on top of a cupboard, after which she made no attempt to control him[18].

Lizzie left in 1912 to marry and received two pieces of table silver and other presents from managers, teachers and scholars. According to Moffatt she had proved herself a "bright, capable and untiring assistant". By then there were two assistant teachers and when he retired in 1925 Moffatt was proud of having the only school of its kind in the county with two college trained certificated teachers — even though they were only paid the uncertificated rate which at that time was £172 per annum.

Outside influences

The pace of life undoubtedly quickened during Moffatt's time at Sutton: it is easy to forget the relative isolation of country areas even when only two miles from a town in the days before the motor car and the telephone. Without the benefit of mechanical snowploughs winter snows disrupted school attendance. In February 1888 with "the heaviest fall of the year" only 30 children were present. A week later "the snow still lies five and six feet deep in parts". The school was often closed for a week in early January because of the weather and the children were sometimes sent home for a second week with a certificate of attendance. On a later occasion search parties were out till midnight looking for three little girls lost in the snow; and in one blizzard Lizzie Ingham was fetched by her fiance with a carriage and horses borrowed from the undertaker — otherwise she would have been marooned in Sutton. On the other hand local people adapted to the conditions. One former pupil remembered "We had blizzards in those days... We lived a mile and a half away but you didn't think about it, there were such a lot of us, all big families, all coming to school together. Farmers used to be coming down taking the milk to the station and we used to hang on and run behind"[19].

John Bullock, the farmer who gave Lizzie a lift to school

Lifts were welcome: Lizzie normally walked or cycled the two miles to school but on wet mornings one of the farmers returning from the station waited for her with his milk float. And "Didn't Mr Warburton bring your mother in a tub thing (governess cart?)... he used to come to the church clocks every Monday morning".[20] Occasionally she had a lift with a solicitor going back in his dog-cart at tea-time to sign letters in his office in Macclesfield.

Before the days of telephones messages had to be carried personally: "Her brother called at my residence at 7 30 am to say that she had knocked ankle and the doctor had ordered her rest". (After two weeks off with blood-poisoning the Vicar sent his trap for her) In 1916 a "telephonic message" is first mentioned; previously urgent contacts from Chester were by telegram.

School Managers

As a Church of England school St James's was under the control of the managers, especially the vicar who, as managers' correspondent (secretary and general dogsbody) was responsible for the appointment of teachers, general supervision, the fabric of the building, paying bills and raising funds. He lived across the road, was constantly in and out of the school and played an important part in religious teaching and observance. He and his wife gave much practical help: when "Mabel Wood and Glady Mayer fell into the pond whilst gathering marsh plants Mrs Gough saw that they had a hot bath and change of garments". A boy who broke his thigh running in front of a van was taken to the vicarage to await the ambulance. Occasionally the vicar's interference was unwelcome; for instance, on one cold day he sent the children into the playground when Moffatt thought it was not fit for them to be outside. In his retirement speech, however, Moffatt thanked the vicar for a variety of help: he had "levied tribute upon his library, impounded his cyclostyle and raided his kitchen for utensils as models in a drawing lesson"[21].

Many of the owners of the big houses around the village, who had often made their money from textiles in Macclesfield or Manchester, were managers of the school or supported it in other ways. John May, a solicitor, clerk to the Board of Guardians and a leading figure in Macclesfield for sixty years, was a manager: he allowed the children to visit the garden of his home Ridge Hill to see the plants in the conservatory. One former pupil remembers Mrs Wise as a "great lady of the village": she lived there for 50 years and, amongst other things, commissioned handsome altar frontals from the Leek Silk Embroidery School which are still used and valued by the church. Buckley Moffatt could always get "what he wanted. He used to go round... At Christmas we had that big red pillar box with a mince pie and an orange. Phillips at Sutton Oaks, J and N Phillips of Manchester and Mays used to give and they all came and we had to sing carols"[22] According to the managers' accounts, 21 subscribers of amounts from half-a-crown to one guinea produced £14 towards expenditure of £170 in 1889-90 but by 1900-1 (presumably when the LEA was taking over more of the funding) it had dropped to £9.

In the early days the starting date in June or July for the main holiday of three weeks was settled with the managers according to the weather and the state of the crops. In July 1888, for example, the vicar and another manager postponed the holidays for a week "owing to the unpropitious weather for haymaking". The only other breaks were one week at Easter and two at Christmas until 1897 when one week's holiday at Michaelmas was instituted. An extra week was given for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee; and the master could grant holidays, for example, for Shrove Tuesday, the opening of the Victoria Park in Macclesfield and Trafalgar Day, though the last went by the board in 1897 as Moffatt declared "I do not see why we should annually celebrate in public so unpleasant an episode in French history".

On the whole Moffatt got on well with the managers. When his mother died they granted him an extra week's holiday. There were, however, some tensions: for example, he noted long delays in furnishing the infants' department when "Mr May refers me to Mr Whiston and Mr Whiston to Mr Wood". The managers too sometimes vetoed interesting projects like a school museum whilst the vicar deemed a Post Office savings scheme "unnecessary at St James's".

Sometimes the managers' meetings manifested the small-mindedness and attention to petty financial detail which can be the drawbacks of such bodies. Moffatt only attended by special invitation so instructions were given for him to produce a book of moral instruction appointed to be used, to report immediately any breakages of school furniture and to report figures for evening classes. Although a separate committee with representatives of the Langley School Board supervised the evening classes, the Sutton managers declared it was "absolutely necessary they be the sanctioning authority for holding evening classes"[23].

A good deal of time was spent determining charges for lettings of the school for theatricals, dances, Girls' Friendly Society, the Conservatives and so on. Indifferent cleaning of floors (though no water was laid on to the school) and wasteful consumption of fuel in stoking the boiler were regular moans. The caretaker's wage, however, was only £10 a year, raised to £14 in 1905. The privies were another preoccupation of the managers: new

pails had to be bought at a cost of £3; two barrels were provided for fine sifted ashes and the cleaner was instructed to place a trowel full of ashes in the "offices" each day; later a bale of peat was substituted for the ashes — and the privies were still there when the school closed in 1970.

But when the attack came from outside, the managers rallied behind Moffatt. After a critical report from the HMI "They feel justified in stating his explanations of the strictures ... in view of the efficient manner in which the school has been carrried on for many years"[24].

Various other church bodies were involved with the school. The National Society provided bibles and testaments. In 1897 the managers decided to join the Diocesan Association scheme for further aid to necessitous schools. The Diocese granted £10 for six new desks and later £10 for increased staff — £5 for salary and £5 for teaching apparatus, but the next year refused further aid for a pupil teacher unless a second one was appointed, so the scheme was perhaps a mixed blessing.

The Diocese supplied examiners for scripture in church schools. In the early years Moffatt recorded comments from the report such as "a satisfactory result in spite of a want of neatness due to too much slate work" or, later, "the children appeared happy and much interested in their Scripture lessons ... Group I acquitted themselves very creditably on the comparison of the Nicene creed with the Apostles". But by 1899 he reported with ironic exasperation that the Diocesan report was "exactly like last year's - turned out of the same lathe. A large number were silent among the infants - what does the Reverend gentleman expect? We have admitted 18 infants since February. The remark about a fair knowledge of the Christian year is particularly rich seeing that not one question was asked on the subject".

As the representatives of central government, Her Majesty's Inspectors played a key role in the development of primary schools. An Inspector's report after the 1870 Act quantified the need for additional school places in the Sutton district: there were 180 children but as 40 of these worked half-time at the Langley print works an extra 50 places only were considered necessary to supplement the 110 places already available at St James's. There were long discussions about a possible extension at St James's but an additional school at Langley was thought better for the whole area. Attempts to provide a school at Langley by voluntary effort failed so a school board was set up to build and run a school there.

Annual inspections began at St James's in the early 1880s when the managers wished to qualify for grants under the payment by results system. According to one Victorian HMI his chief function was "to assess the amount which the Treasury should pay ... by rapid examination of every child above seven who had attended 250 times in the school year ... The principal function of an Inspector in an infants school ... was to call over the names" - a grant of eight shillings (or ten if the teacher was certificated) was then payable. Most of the children in the two lowest standards "stood back-to-back" to prevent copying "and did dictation and arithmetic" — counting on the fingers was hard "when you have a slate in your arms". They went home and "we proceeded to examine the rest, the aristocracy, who worked their sums on paper. If the master was a good fellow. I showed him the whole result before we left" so that he could calculate percentages gained. The vicar (or his wife!) kept the Inspector in a good temper by "votive offerings of lunch"[25].

Teachers were desperate to keep up numbers: when a mother called to say she was taking her daughter to the doctor on inspection day Moffatt said "it was imperative to have her at school today if at all fit". Average attendance figures also counted and measures were taken to prevent teachers falsifying the records. An inspection report of 1893 laid down that registers at St James's must be inspected "at least once a quarter by managers at irregular intervals". One can scarcely imagine anyone of Moffatt's stern rectitude stooping to falsify the figures but any mistakes by assistant teachers had to be reported to the Inspector. On one occasion when the Inspector found that for the second time a teacher had failed to mark the register Moffatt commented "A repetition of the offence will be serious".

On the whole the results of the annual examinations and inspections were satisfactory. A poor needlework report might be balanced by a good one for drawing. The 1892 report was not as good as the previous year's but there were 50 new pupils and higher grants had been earned. Two years later the report was excellent: "The Mixed Department has earned every penny that was possible".

In 1897 the annual examination at St James's was replaced by inspection. According to Sneyd Kinnersley reports were now more demanding to prepare because of the variable grant for certain subjects and the general merit of the school. By this time Moffatt was on good terms with the HMI: "Mr Fawcett kindly allowed me to read the composition and give out the dictation tests, a privilege I appreciated to the full". In the event Moffatt was "proud of our report. There is not a qualifying statement in it. I shall give a holiday tomorrow". By the next year, though, holidays had to be reported to the HMI.

Inspectors played an important role as go-betweens in Government plans to upgrade primary schools. Sneyd Kinnersley described how HMIs who stayed in one area got to know it "topographically and individually — managers, teachers and children ... Buildings had grown up with them". Many had been improved with "pleasant recollections of hard fought battles waged with managers for the sake of the children or with the powers of darkness for the sake of both managers and children".[26]

In 1892 the Department of Education issued a circular calling for reports on defects in school buildings, especially church schools, many of which needed considerable sums of money to bring them up to standard. The next year the managers of St James's were told by HMIs that structural alterations were essential. There were "no cloakrooms, approaches to the offices were not separate for boys and girls and seats were not separated" — presumably a two- or three-seater privy. A room for the infants was also required. Discussions went on for a year and the school was threatened with closure for non-compliance. About £100 had to be raised by subscription and there was a delay while Moffatt found a house as the church would not grant any more land and the only alternative was to take the school-house into the school. By March 1897 when the managers had the playground re-gravelled Moffatt could record "few schools are so well equipped as ours in regard to playground, good buildings, light, ventilation and apparatus".

After the Education Act of 1902 the LEA wielded much of the power over primary schools and the role of the HMI

changed. Instead of examining children and assessing grants on the results, they now had to advise teachers and encourage innovation. The LEA now had its own inspectors and the Board of Education encouraged the LEA to make systematic surveys of schools. In September 1903 the Cheshire County Council Inspector made a "survey of premises, apparatus, stationery etc and asked the managers to appeal to the county for an additional teacher under Article 50 to take Standards I and II with a monitoress". Inspectors for drill and physical education visited St James's as well as members of the District Sub-Administration Committee and individual county councillors. Later on the County Council had a representative on the managers.

Further alterations were now required by the LEA and the school moved out for some months to a nearby Sunday school. "The infants' room will be added to, the windows made larger, a boys' cloakroom and a store-room and a new girls' cloakroom will be provided. New offices for boys and girls outside and new ventilating arrangements". Much of the £800 required came from a bequest but £340 16s 2d was raised by a two-day bazaar in the vicarage grounds where teachers were in charge of an Indian stall.

Following the imposition on the LEA of the duty to arrange medical inspection, former pupils remembered "We used to have our heads seen to" by the nurse who visited fortnightly (for which she was paid ten shillings and sixpence annually) and "we had a medical every year" by the doctor. From the 1900s it was the medical officer of health rather than the managers who made the decision to close the school during epidemics, on one occasion for twelve weeks. In 1921 when LEAs were given the duty of providing medical treatment, children with sight problems were referred to the county oculist and the medical inspection was taking a full day and a half. There is no reference to a school dentist. The nurse always reported "a very clean set of children" though a former teacher said there were always some "nitty Norahs" and some children who were badly flea-bitten, perhaps from contact with animals.

Although from 1906 LEAs could provide school meals for children, St James's had only a kitchen range for warming food, and a can given by the vicar's wife to go on the stove for "hot drinks for those staying over lunch". The Mayers walked over two miles to school, and a form-mate described how "They brought a tater pie and put it on t'shelf. We heard such a crash ... mice had been at it ... the basin were broke and Fred were in tears and I helped him clean it up. They had to go to the vicarage for their dinner ... a real good dinner and apple dumplings and custard but he said I'd rather have my tater pie ... after he'd carried it all that way"[27].

After the War the first contact is recorded with the County Rural Libraries Centre which sent 35 books. Moffatt noted "38 applicants. I hope the novelty will develop into steady appreciation". About the same time he records his first discussion with the Labour Exchange about juvenile employment in Sutton.

Attendance and Discipline

In 1886 117 pupils were on the school register with an average attendance of 104 and numbers stayed around this level until the Great War. By 1923, however, the number on the books had fallen to 90. Before attendance became compulsory and school fees were in most cases abolished in 1891, some parents may have been deterred from sending children to school by the cost of books and pencils as well as school pence for which the maximum cost was set at nine pence per week. One writer remembered the stigma attached to non-payment: "Sometimes, when they filed past their teacher's desk on a Monday morning to pay, a child would hang back miserably, muttering that he hadn't got the money today, but would bring it next Monday for sure".[28] Debts could mount up: one family, for instance, left the village owing £1.19.2½ for fees and books, a not inconsiderable amount when a labourer's wage would be well under £1 per week. In the 1900s Moffatt noted with disappointment that "even under the County Council with no fees and books free children still absent themselves".

Some reasons for non-attendance were beyond dispute. One boy was absent for six months because of serious illness and another died of tuberculosis after missing 18 months of school. Rumours of epidemics like smallpox also kept children away. Truancy by children was not a problem: Moffatt noted only two cases in seven years. But the corn and hay harvest played havoc with attendance and so did Macclesfield May Fair. Farmers expected children to stay at home for all important agricultural operations and still maintain progress. "They forget" wrote Moffatt "that I have a harvest to reap".

It was hard work to keep children in school as they approached leaving age: one girl, for instance, was taken away to the dame school so that she could more readily be kept at home on washing day - according to Moffatt "A waste in Education". Each October brought "the customary laxity in attendance noticeable after an exam" which "prostrates some children for a fortnight". One has the impression that Moffatt would have seen through some of the excuses dreamed up by pupils in *Cider with Rosie*: "we forged notes from our mothers, or made ourselves sick with berries, or claimed to be relations of the corpse at funerals (the churchyard lay only next door)"[29].

Exemptions and half-time working were constant sources of frustration for teachers. Education was compulsory until the age of 13 but children of ten years (raised to 11 years in 1893 and 12 in 1899) could be employed if they could obtain a "labour certificate". Moffatt found it "ridiculous to see boys and girls of 10-11 leave school after passing the 4th Standard and play about the lane". The criteria for proficiency and exemption varied between districts and the system was hard to enforce. Sarah Bourne went full-time into service: one of the methods of dodging the Elementary Education Act. When the top boy went to train as an under-butler Moffatt thought "superior domestic service much preferable to factory life".

Moffatt's pupils were noted for winning scholarships and a good number went on to become teachers. Perhaps because of this bias towards teaching (after all one of the few careers open to women at the time) he showed as much interest in the girls as the boys. But sometimes family pressure forced pupils to become half-timers when Moffatt "would have liked to present him for a County scholarship". Some children got their own way to a point: one boy at the end of a large family who were all at work by then remembered later: "When they was twelve they went half-time to the print works at Langley. I took my brothers' dinners when we was school holidays ... I said I don't like smell. I'm not going working in t'mill ... It came through from school authorities you can leave school at 13 if you're going in a factory ... but if you want to go farming or gardening he'll have to go till he's 14. So they

let me stop till I was 14". He then worked from 6.30 am till 9 pm in house and garden for a gold sovereign at the end of his first month[30].

Apart from the children who became teachers, James Wadsworth obtained a civil service clerkship and went on to become an architect to the London County Council; but Moffatt's really famous pupil was Charles Tunnicliffe, the book illustrator and bird painter, who entered Lizzie Ingham's class in 1906. Moffatt started him on his career to art school. According to one of his classmates "He went to see them at the farm and he went to Joneses at Lyme Green Hall and asked if he would give some help. He asked him to draw the bull and he was so pleased that he gave £500. That was a lot of money"[31]. Tunnicliffe's successes at the School of Art in Macclesfield and later at the Royal College of Art are recorded regularly in the school log book.

After 1870 school attendance was the respon..ibility of school boards but enforcement was lax in many rural districts as magistrates were often sympathetic to farmworkers keeping children from school in order to provide farmers with the labour they needed. No visits from the attendance officer were recorded in the early years and Moffatt's view was that the "chief power lies in rendering the school attractive".

After 1902 the attendance officer, who was also the relieving officer to the Board of Guardians, visited the school regularly, nine visits being recorded, for instance, between January and April 1906. A number of his visits involved welfare as well as attendance, for instance, at one visit three cases of ringworm were noted. Only one instance of possible cruelty or neglect is mentioned in the log book and in that instance the NSPCC were unable to prosecute for lack of evidence: Moffatt writes of "two physically miserable little girls, mentally acute" who were examined by the doctor and, with written authority from their parents, sent to an uncle and aunt. In 1910 a parent called to take three boys away as the family "were entering the workhouse".

Attendance and discipline were sometimes closely related: one boy was said to have left for the dame school "as he found St James's too strict". Discipline *was* strict by our standards but punishment was relatively light compared with many similar schools of the time. The schoolmaster in *Manchester Fourteen Miles*, for instance, whose wife led him "a proper dance", caned the children so savagely that one parent, a County Council ganger on the roads, came into the school and "suddenly closing his enormous hands round the schoolmaster's neck said briefly: 'Sithee, Mister, if tha lays a finger on my lad again, or on t'wench either, Ah'll choke thee'"[32].

At St James's corporal punishments are recorded for "whistling aloud in school during a temporary absence of mine", putting a worm down an infant's back, making an indecent drawing on a slate and attempting to "molest" a girl (the last merited severe punishment). Amongst other misdemeanours two were punished for insubordination, refusing for some time to hold out their hands after breaking the compasses. Two boys lit loaded cartridges and caused a grazed temple and a busted finger: this warranted a letter to parents as well as punishment. In the first case of theft (in 1899) half-a-crown disappeared from the cloakroom and was changed at a nearby inn. The school were told no holidays and the culprit confessed, receiving severe punishment in front of the whole school.

Corporal punishment was rare for the girls, again perhaps a more lenient regime than many other schools of the period. One pupil remembered "having the cane only once. There was a little railing outside the school and we were told not to climb on it. I was frightened to death going home what they would say. Instead I remember having to write lines 'No work is worth doing badly. He who does his best all the time will surely outstrip the man who waits for a great opportunity'. We had to write that I don't know how many times, depends what you'd done wrong"[33].

On the whole parents made no objection to the punishments meted out and one irate mother who complained about excessive corporal punishment to her daughter was dealt with firmly: "she went away in striking contrast to her arrival". At the very end of Moffatt's period a complaint about excessive punishment by an assistant teacher came before the school managers who wrote to the County Council secretary for elementary education backing the teacher and saying that the "father had expressed himself satisfied with the enquiry and promised to send the boy to school in the morning"[34]. Fewer corporal punishments are recorded in the log books in Moffatt's later years but this may be because there were fewer entries on all subjects.

Both school and home laid down strict codes of conduct. According to one informant "Once he sent someone to Mrs Wise's with a letter. And he said if she offers you anything you're not to accept it". When the child returned with sixpence he was sent back with it. "That was the old way ... When we left school Dad used to say you've got to do as you're told, there's masters and men and you've got to realise who's the boss. But I don't think we were sort of downed like in these Victorian things they show on television, subdued, you know. We weren't like that"[35].

Curriculum

Throughout his teaching life Moffatt sought to introduce new ideas and to relate lessons to outside events, both local and national. Equipment and curriculum developed steadily. Drawing and scale drawing were introduced as well as singing by tonic sol fa. In June 1890 Moffatt took the children "on the Hollins for practical geography". An itinerant potter gave "a capital lesson" on the art of pottery but unfortunately failed to mark the register. A globe was obtained from the Educational Supply Assocation; candle specimens and a print of a moulding machine were given by local firms. In 1897 the first

St. James's School, c.1895

temperance lecture was given by a Band of Hope lecturer, "the style good and incisive". Other opportunities for innovation were grasped. A lantern was given for joint use by the school and the Institute, thus widening the scope for lectures as sets of slides could be borrowed.

One pupil from the 1900s commented "I was always very fond of poetry. We had a lot of poetry and singing. We were very happy. But I wasn't a bit happy with arithmetic. I was really afraid of him (Moffatt) so I just went vacant". He did try to enliven even arithmetic - the height, weight and girth of children were measured instead of a formal lesson[36]. Another former pupil told how Miss Ingham used to play the piano and a harmonium for the infants. "We were going in for a singing competition ... they had a piano out on the lawn and each child had ... his voice tested ... so we trained and went to the Drill Hall and all the schools in Cheshire ... and we came in third"[37]. Pupils valued the religious training they had received. One of them said "It was so nice when you went to church, well everything in your hymn book and prayer book you knew. What did we used to say on Friday night? Safely through another week God's brought us on our way — Mr Moffatt sang it at college"[38].

From 1899 evening classes were planned to take advantage of the new County Council grant under the Technical Instruction Act of 1889.[39] The classes were mainly in practical subjects - commercial arithmetic, business routine and commercial correspondence, commercial geography, shorthand, typing, cookery and dressmaking - but on at least one occasion citizenship was included as a subject. The claim has been made that for working-class girls "the new adult education movement offered what the state elementary system patently failed to provide: teaching that extended a little beyond rote learning and plain sewing".[40] Sutton's Evening Continuation Classes, however, in their own perhaps limited terms were successful, with, for example, an enrolment of over 100 with 80 per cent attendance in 1907-08, and successes in the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes examinations. Gertrude Moffatt with her distinction in commercial arithmetic went on to a secretarial career, and Lizzie Ingham with hers in dressmaking to teach the subject in school.[41].

The curriculum continued to develop. By the 1900s object lessons were considered old-fashioned and gave way to walks for nature study. "We had to get the buds and the leaves and the bark and the history of the tree and stick them on pieces of cardboard". They went to Turk's Head reservoir for a lesson on canals and feeders and to, "is it a barrow?" at Toot Hill.."but we didn't do anything very unconventional. In those days you were at school and that was it".[42] In 1913 the assistant teachers and senior scholars held a penny bazaar on a Saturday afternoon and raised £3.10.0 towards a school laboratory. A small weekly payment secured an adjoining field for football, with two thirds of the cost met by the older boys. Slides on circulation of the blood were lent by the Medical Officer of Health; one Christmas a gramophone was borrowed for an impromptu concert. To the very end of his teaching career Moffatt made good use of current happenings to enliven the curriculum, for example, in 1921 the children had a special lesson on solar and lunar eclipses before watching one through smoked glass.

After 1902 new subjects were introduced at the prompting of the LEA. Their lecturer on hygiene and domestic science took girls from Standards IV to VII on "ventilation, personal hygiene, care of the skin and hair and care of infants". The girls also went to a centre for cookery together with girls from the board school at nearby Langley. There were only seven boys over 12 "so cottage-gardening cannot have a class as the County Council would lose 14 shillings. Dreadful! And we wish to keep labourers and farmers' sons upon the soil". Eventually "the gardening instructor measured the garden and made a plan for cropping...The boys planted fruit trees, gooseberry bushes and raspberry canes". Three old scholars each brought a load of manure.

By this period too the range of school outings had extended compared with earlier times when the only visit mentioned was to a missionary exhibition - though a half-holiday was granted for the visit of Barnum's circus to Macclesfield, perhaps because the children would have gone with or without leave. The field treat for the day and Sunday schools (mostly the same children) had always been a great event with a procession round the area following a brass band, prizes for egg and spoon races and tea all paid for by local benefactors. One former pupil remembered "When we had a field treat - take your own mug - there was always a competition for a nosegay of flowers. And Bailey's girls from Bank Top Farm always won...because they lived where they could get all the variety". Visits were now made to the Macclesfield baths and, in two brakes, to an arts and crafts exhibition at Alderley. Day outings were arranged to Belle Vue, Blackpool and even Cleethorpes which Moffatt considered instructive as they went through "five counties, the Pennines, over the Trent and through Grimsby". Visits to the cinema began during the Great War - to see Tom Brown's Schooldays and a film about "VD and that kind of thing".[43] Later a party accompanied by two teachers went for several days to the Empire Exhibition at Wembley (with a medical examination first): quite an expedition for that era.

The Great War and after

During the First World War St James's like other institutions was mobilised to support the war effort. The school held concerts in aid of war funds and received post-cards from men at the front thanking St James's scholars for gifts. A War Savings Association was set up and collected £54 from 64 subscribers in its first three months.[44] Subjects for lantern lectures now included the ruined cities of Belgium, aircraft engaged in war, Serbia and the food battle. A family of Belgian refugees came - "They were confectioners, they did marvellous cakes" and their boy Leon was admitted to the school "We made sandbags and rolled bandages...and collected horse chestnuts for cattle meal" amounting to seven hundredweights. Later "The chief object of the Inspector's call was to organise the gathering of blackberries", over two hundredweights in two days. "The lads used to go to the garden. They had to feed the celery with guano and it was liquid and the smell, I've never forgotten". When the children were hungry "We got a spade and went down digging earth nuts from the field".[45]

Attendance was affected by "Special exemption...1 March - 31 October to children over 12 who are to be employed in agriculture or to help mothers at home to enable others to work in agriculture". The Cheshire Education Authority also allowed head teachers to grant five extra days' holiday at "seasons of pressure in agriculture". Extra demands were made on teachers: in

Group II at St. Jame's, c.1895

1917 Moffatt was appointed to a local Food Control Committee and the following March the school was closed for a day for the staff to attend at the Macclesfield Union to fill in meat coupons. Old boys and ex-pupil teachers on leave from active service visited the school regularly and attended the Christmas concerts: a mark of the regard they felt for the school and its master. Seventeen old boys, including Moffatt's son Fred, "paid the great price". (In 1922 a bronze tablet was designed by Charles Tunnicliffe in their memory.)

The strains of the war were apparent in the report of the full inspection in 1922. "Signs of vigour and healthy life noted in the last report (1913) continue as far as derived from the Head Master but the general level of work has not yet recovered from the adverse influences during the War and subsequently". The Inspector referred to an epidemic, an inexperienced teacher and the reorganisation of the school into three classes. "The Master does too much for the children...chorus answering". He suggested more speech training, more reading books and more practical needlework instead of "specimens".

Moffatt admitted to feeling his age: he had already switched geography from the third to the second lesson "in order to get a rest before the recess". He retired in 1925, with a cheque for £102, an album illustrated by Charles Tunnicliffe and the thanks of the managers for his "long and faithful services and for his great interest in everything connected with the welfare of Sutton".[46] He was indeed a good example of the new type of elementary school teacher identified by Masterman's *The Condition of England* in 1909, "taking the lead in public and quasi-public activities" and "raising families who exhibit sometimes vigour of character, sometimes unusual intellectual talent".[47] After retirement he embarked on a second career as a councillor on Macclesfield Borough Council, serving on a number of committees including education. His intellectual vigour was unimpaired and his grandson recalls "a fairly severe autocratic figure who couldn't understand why I couldn't do geometry". Because of illness he had to miss out on the mayoralty in 1936 but had already demonstrated his loyalty to the Prince of Wales for whom he had an almost mystic veneration by paying for the parks department to set out the Prince's cypher and crown in daffodils on a prominent hillside in central Macclesfield. Sadly King Edward VIII had abdicated before the daffodils flowered, children picked them and the outline was only just visible the following year. Moffatt retired from the Council in 1938 and died, aged 86, in 1951.

Conclusion

Much of the experience at St James's in Moffatt's period is replicated in contemporary accounts of similar schools. Poor attendance was a widespread problem, but often worse than at St James's, for example, the log book for the *Akenfield* school complains in 1889 that "Twenty boys hardly ever attend and are seen working. The law is broken here with impunity. It is impossible to obtain a merit grant. Work how you will, it is uphill work in rural schools-the irregularity is something fearful".[48] Discipline was another difficulty especially for women teachers. The head teacher had to keep on the right side of the vicar and local benefactors - Akenfield had a visiting duchess who distributed sweets and pocket handkerchiefs. Many schools had to cope with the disruption of removing to temporary premises while alterations were made to the buildings. The influence of HMIs, the importance of examinations and attendance (Hilda in *Manchester Fourteen Miles* attended school for the examination with influenza against doctor's orders) and the growing power of the LEA: these factors too are mentioned frequently. In all aspects of these St James's was not unusual.

Laurie Lee concluded in *Cider with Rosie*[49] that "We learnt nothing abstract or tenuous there - just simple patterns of facts and letters, portable tricks of calculation, no more than was needed to measure a shed, write out a bill, read a swine disease warning". Moffatt, however, managed to go beyond this in stimulating the imaginations of at least some pupils, for example, about poetry and the world about them, in ways that remained with them all

their lives. As a gifted teacher he was well able to prepare the clever pupils for success in examinations especially for entry to the teaching profession. Although one of his last assistant teachers thought him hot-tempered and "too fond of using the cane...he'd have done a lot more by talking to the children, giving them a tongue-thrashing",[50] even so the corporal punishment was not heavy compared with many other schools of the time.

Moffatt expected high standards of behaviour and the children generally responded, for example, when the children had to stay indoors in the lunch hour because of bad weather, it was a "point of honour not to disturb other children and teachers" on the opposite side of the partition.[51]

The same assistant teacher thought the "atmosphere of the school really good - the children were very considerate one for the other...and Mr Moffatt wouldn't stand any bullying...He tried to show and teach justice" and made much of "the honour of St James's".[52] His influence was all the stronger because of his long spell of 38 years at the school, because as a small school he knew each child, and because of the close links with the local community. As he said after 21 years at the school "during the period 700 children had passed through...and though the master of a town school might have that number through his hands in a third of the time he would not be able to say as he did that the last four years of the children's school lives were entirely in his hands".[53]

It is impossible to measure intangible factors like the impact of a particular school in any exact way but the impression remains from former pupils and others that Moffatt wielded a powerful influence for a long period in the school and in the village, and that he could claim success in achieving his declared aims that he had "ever striven to form character, to train intelligence, and to make good citizens".[54]

Notes

Unattributed quotations are from the St James's School log books at Chester County Record Office.

1 Information in Public Record Office, Kew. The National Society taught the Prayer Book. Its Nonconformist rival the British a enforced Bible-reading but excluded denominational teaching.
2 E J R Eaglesham, *Foundations of 20th Century Education in England* (1967) pp 51-53
3 Duke Street National School Macclesfield Log Book, 28 January 1901 (Cheshire County Record Office).
4 *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, 18 January 1908. The gallery was a stepped area round the room.
5 St James's School Managers' minutes: accounts for 1888 and 1901.
6 Tape recorded interview (TRI) No 1.
7 TRI No 2.
8 TRI No 1
9 See Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Manchester, 1971) p.142
10 TRI No 3.
11 TRI No 1
12 Quoted in A. Tropp, *School Teachers* (1957), p.147.
13 She married another teacher and as Mrs Binks taught for many years at St James's although as a married woman the LEA tried sacked in the 1930s.
14 TRI No 1
15 Duke Street National School Log Book, 10 April 1906.
16 Duke Street Log Book 6 June 1905.
17 TRI No 2.
18 Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie* (1959) p. 59.
19 TRI No 1.
20 TRI No 1.
21 *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, October 1925.
22 TRI No 1
23 Managers' Minutes, 9 November 1907.
24 Managers' Minutes, 17 October 1906.
25 Sneyd-Kinnersley, *Some Passages in the Life of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools* (1908)
26 Sneyd-Kinnersley (1908)
27 TRI No 2.
28 Margaret Penn, *Manchester Fourteen Miles* (Cambridge, 1947) p. 118.
29 L Lee, *Cider with Rosie* p.66.
30 TRI No 2.
31 TRI No 1.
32 M Penn, *Manchester Fourteen Miles* p 129.
33 TRI No 1.
34 Managers' Minutes, 10 June 1924.
35 TRI No 1.
36 TRI No 1.
37 TRI No 2.
38 TRI No 1.
39 This was funded by the "whiskey money" excise tax, originally intended to compensate holders of public house licences.
40 J Liddington and J Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: the Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (1978) p. 115.
41 *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, 4 July 1908 and Managers' Minutes 8 August 1905 and 6 July 1909.
42 TRI No 1.
43 TRI No 1.
44 Managers' Minutes 23 September 1916.
45 TRI No 1.
46 Managers' Minutes, 29 June 1925.
47 Quoted in Tropp, *The School Teachers*
48 Ronald Blythe, *Akenfield* (1969) p. 165.
49 L Lee, *Cider with Rosie*, p 62.
50 TRI No 4.
51 Managers' Minutes, 10 June 1925.
52 TRI No 4.
53 *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, 18 July 1908.
54 *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, October 1925.