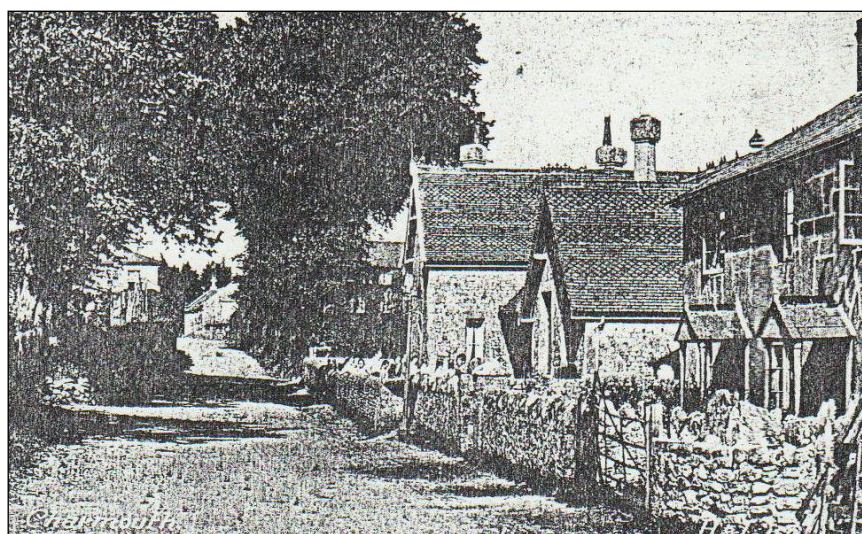


More Details about the Old School Buildings.

The building, below, was not the first on this site. The Ordnance Survey map of 1841 shows the school in this position. It is referred to as a National School in church registers, but in the early days the school was regularly inspected by the Rector and his wife suggesting that it might have originally been a church school. The first building was two storey with the Head teacher living on the ground floor with the schoolroom above. Mr W H Howard, H.M.I. stated in 1866 that the school building was becoming totally inadequate. They moved out of that building on 25th June 1869 and moved into part of the Lodge at the end of Lower Sea Lane. The foundation stone for the new school was laid on 26th August 1869 by Mrs Breton, the Rector's wife. All the shops in the village closed for the day to celebrate. They moved into the new building, below, on June 27th 1870. It did not then have the extension that later was used for the girls cloakroom and staffroom. There are no old photos of the back of the school, but the Log Book states that an additional classroom was added in 1881 at a cost of £350. This enabled the school to take 140 children.



On 31st January 1892 the H.M.I.'s report states that 'a porch was required for girls to hang their bonnets.' The subsequent boys' and girls' cloakrooms (below) were completed on 24th October 1904. Washbasins were not fitted into these cloakrooms until January 1950. The chimney in the centre of the school was taken down in September 1968.



This picture also shows the cross on the building at the end of Lower Sea Lane which is now the chemist's. The playground was then at the front of the building and it is just possible to make out children in the lower photograph. Both pictures also show an entrance in a different position to the one used when the school closed. (See next picture.)



In September 1971 work started on the construction of a staff toilet and the conversion of the boys' cloakroom into a staffroom. Unfortunately the staff toilet addition was not in keeping with the original building. (See below.) This was the first part to be demolished when the building was converted into dwellings.



The large area in the middle of the main building, which measured 950 square feet, was originally split into two classrooms and therefore PE could only take place outside. Indoor PE was made particularly difficult after a glass partition was erected in October 1925. Even as late as July 1963 the H.M.I.s report states that the large room cannot be used for PE partly because of the immobility of the screen, which can only be moved by the caretaker, and partly because the locker desks were too heavy to move and couldn't be stacked. The desks were presumably the dual ones with cast iron frames.

From January 1964 the Youth Club Hall was used for 1 hour a day for PE and dancing. Later, with the introduction of the additional classroom and the temporary buildings in 1970, the hall, as it became, was used for many activities including PE, school assemblies, lunches, Under 5' Group and many others.

In March 1978 a climbing frame was installed in the hall and PE mats and other gymnastic equipment were stored in a wooden shed just outside the North East door. The climbing frame was transferred to the new school.



This photo shows the roof of the PE equipment shed between the main building and the girls' outside toilets. On 1st February 1983 when a new fence was being erected between the school house garden and the girls' toilet a huge hole was discovered under the path leading to the toilets caused, over the years, by faulty plumbing. Two cubic metres of concrete was needed to fill the hole. It was fortunate that the hole was discovered before the path collapsed.

The photo was taken from the school house garden. This picture also shows the classroom that was added at the rear of the main building in 1881 following an H.M.I. Report of 30th April 1880 that 'another classroom and lights in the roof were much needed'. The sky lights weren't fitted until 4th September 1908.



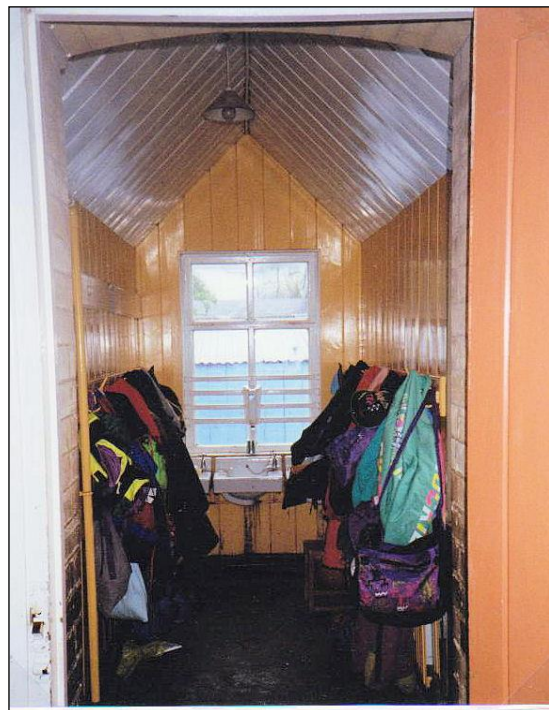
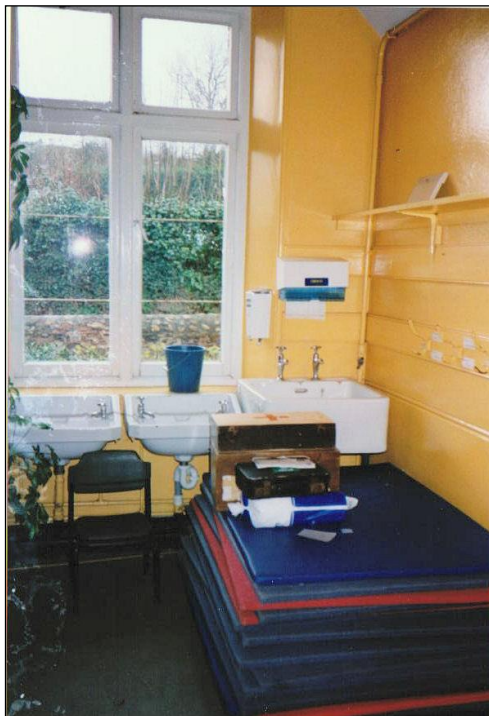
The School Meals service started in November 1943. A mobile canteen brought hot meals from the Bridport Centre until March 1953 when they came from Lyme Regis. These were eaten in the classrooms. From September 1946, when 50 children were taking lunches, until November 1959 school lunches were taken in Church Hall Club Room, opposite the school, but numbers fell so low there were no longer enough to warrant hiring the Hall. From this time until May 1970, when the children moved into temporary classrooms, meals were taken in the classrooms. In the bad winter of 1978 when meals couldn't reach the school from Lyme Regis, pasties were brought in from the local bakery, much to the delight of the few children present. In April 1980 the price of school dinners was increased to 45p causing many children to bring a packed lunch. From September 1980 school lunches ceased to be provided in any Dorset Primary School.

The central heating boiler in the corner, originally solid fuel, was installed in June 1960 and updated in January 1973. It was converted to gas in September 1977. Prior to this the school was heated by solid fuel stoves which must have been very labour intensive because in May 1947 the cleaner resigned because of heavy work connected to the stoves. It was suggested then that they should be converted to gas, but in July 1949 new stoves were fitted because gas was deemed too expensive at £200.

The display boarding on the wall, to show off the children's work, was paid for by the PTA and erected by parents and staff in July 1977, and in September shelving was installed on the North wall of the hall for a reference library. In March 1993 the Library was reclassified in the Dewey system by Mrs Wiscombe.



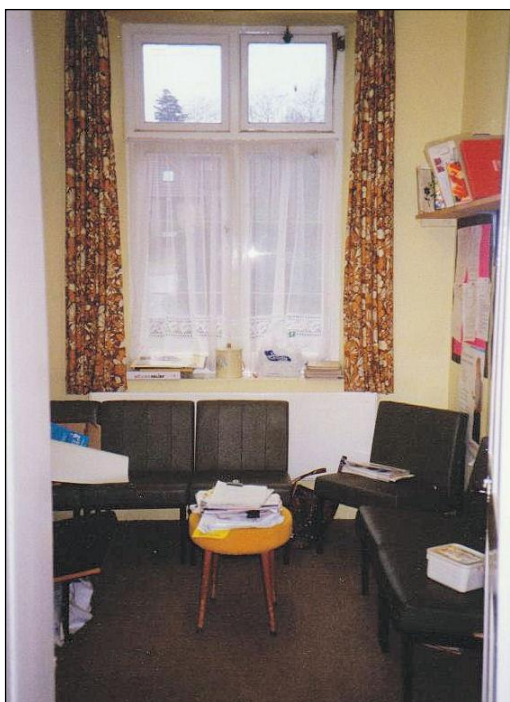
The lunches were held in two sittings, the younger children first. The tables used for the lunches had to be stacked along the sides of the hall. Dinner ladies put out the tables before lunch, assisted the children during their meal and cleared away afterwards. They also supervised the children on the playground during the lunch hour. A member of the teaching staff was also on duty while the children were eating their lunches.



In January 1950 washbasins were fitted in the cloakrooms, but hot water wasn't installed until November 1964. The girls' cloakroom, on the left, was also used as overflow storage for PE equipment. The main door into the school building for visitors was through this cloakroom. The boys' cloakroom (above on the right) was very cramped which made for difficulties on wet days.

The door in the South East corner of the hall lead into the classroom and from there into the boys' cloakroom. Unfortunately the classroom became a passage for people going from the hall to the temporary classrooms.

From the South West corner of the hall a door lead into the staffroom. This was also very cramped with seating for a maximum of seven people. A carpet was fitted in January 1972.



The door on the right of the picture lead into the staff toilet which was constructed in September 1971. Electricity was installed in March 1972 enabling the staff to have use of a fridge and tea making facilities. At one time this was also used as an office for the secretary who was appointed in October 1968 for 2 hours a week. These hours were increased to five and a half in September 1969.

Also leading off the hall was a kitchen with a hatch for serving lunches. The hatch, along with a sterilising sink, was installed in June 1979 only to become obsolete when lunches were stopped in September 1980. When school meals ceased the kitchen became a storage area for much of the equipment needed for the Under 5' Group. An electric cooker was also installed to allow classes to have cooking lessons. This room had also originally been used as a staffroom.



The hall was also used daily for school assemblies. These took place first thing every morning and had a moral or religious theme with a talk or story followed by a hymn and prayers taken by members of staff or occasionally a visiting speaker. One morning a week there was a hymn practice which the children and the staff thoroughly enjoyed.



This was the last assembly held in the old building and gives a good view of the hall showing how the tables were stacked in readiness for lunches and other activities. It also shows the hatch at the far end between the kitchen and the hall which was installed in June 1979.

The hall originally had a semi permanent sliding glass partition across the middle dividing it into two separate classrooms. In April 1976 when the hall was no longer needed for classrooms a curtain was fitted to allow better TV viewing at the North end. The first television, a 23 inch Baird, had been purchased in January 1965. The curtain also created an extension area for the top junior classroom. Lighting in the three original classrooms must have been poor, because in November 1964 10 extra lights were fitted taking the number from 4 to 14.

The classroom off the main hall was comparatively small, 400 square feet. The maximum number of children in this class was 26 leaving little room for movement. It was usual to have the older children in this room, but that was sometimes governed by the number of pupils in the top year. It was always better to have the top year all together in one room, because of the separate activities solely for them, so if the number was more than 26 one of the temporary classrooms had to be used.



This picture shows the classroom and was taken during a wet lunchtime when the children stayed in their classrooms and played games. It also shows the locker type desks that the children preferred because they could keep all their belongings in one place. They also took up less space and eliminated children's excuse to wander around the room unnecessarily.

Prior to November 1972 the Head teacher had lived in the school house. After that it was used for valuable office and storage space. The picture below shows the front room which was originally used for remedial groups once night store heaters had been installed in September 1973. It later became the television room. It was also used for peripatetic music tuition, medicals, small groups and Governors and PTA meetings. It also housed the photocopier!



The French window opened out from the TV room onto a small grassed area which was rarely used. Surrounding the French window of the school house was a beautiful Albertine rose which bloomed all Summer. This thrived despite the fact that it received no attention at all except to stop it growing over the French window, as it is doing in this picture.



There were two other rooms on the ground floor. The room which had been a dining room and looked out onto Lower Sea Lea was the Head teacher's office (below). This was shared with the school secretary for a time, but this proved unsatisfactory, because of the need for confidential meetings to be held in the room, so the furniture in the old kitchen was removed and the room converted into an office. As there was a hatch through into the Head's office it was an ideal solution.

The telephone, which had only been installed in the school in September 1968, was extended into both offices. A security alarm system was fitted in October 1983.



This picture shows the school office with Mrs Alison Bloxham, the school secretary, taken shortly before the transfer to the new school.



There were three upstairs rooms in the school house. These were left empty until 1977 when it was decided to use the space for storage. The school stationary stock was kept there as well as costumes and scenery used in Christmas Productions, Open Assemblies and Leavers' Concerts.

In October 1988 the bath, toilet and sink were removed from the school house bathroom and the room converted into an office for the Deputy Head teacher.



This picture is of the North side of the school house. The downstairs window on the left is the television room, the door lead into the secretary's office and the upstairs window is the room used by the Deputy Head. There was also a small parking area.



The front room viewed from the entrance and the stairs leading to the first floor. There was a door on the left into the secretary's office and the door on the right was to an under stairs storage cupboard.



This was the path from the North East door of the hall leading to the boys' toilets and the temporary classrooms.

The shed was for PE equipment, easily accessible from the hall and the blue cupboard on the right was used as a solid fuel store until the boiler was converted to gas. It then became the caretaker's store for rubbish prior to being taken out on collection day.



Here is a clear view of the path from the temporary classrooms to the main building. The brown extension in the background is the boys' cloakroom with the boys' toilet opposite. The sky lights in the main building were installed in September 1908. On the left in the foreground is the door to the boys' temporary toilet and on the right the steps to one of the temporary classrooms.

Before the mobile classrooms were installed parents had met with County Officials to discuss a covered way between the classrooms and the main building. Nothing ever came of this. It was brought up again in the 1980s, but was deemed impractical and expensive.

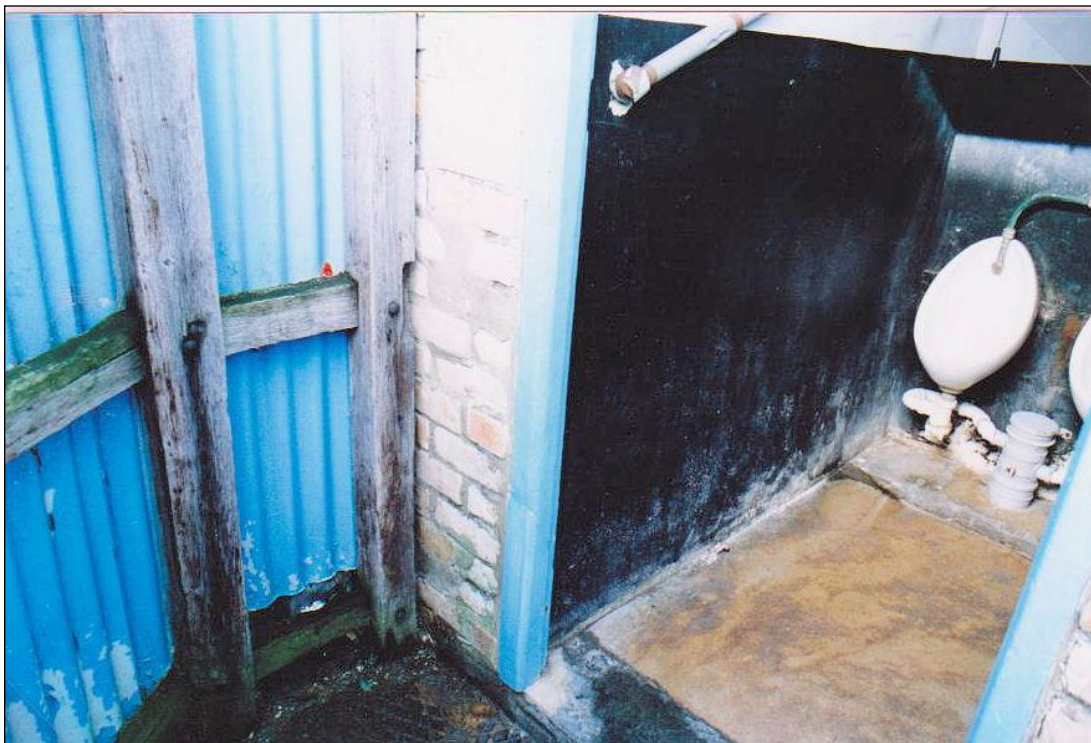


This was the outside of the boys' toilets. The fact that they were outside and the condition of the toilets, both boys and girls, were two of the main factors when stating the great need for a new school.



These are photos of the inside of the boys' toilets. The urinal on the left was permanently open to the elements and all the pipe work, although lagged, is on the surface, making it susceptible to even the slightest frost. This was a constant problem throughout the Winter months and during very cold spells the plumber came straight to the school on his way to work to enable the school to stay open.

The girls' toilets were even worse, as they were on the North side of the building.

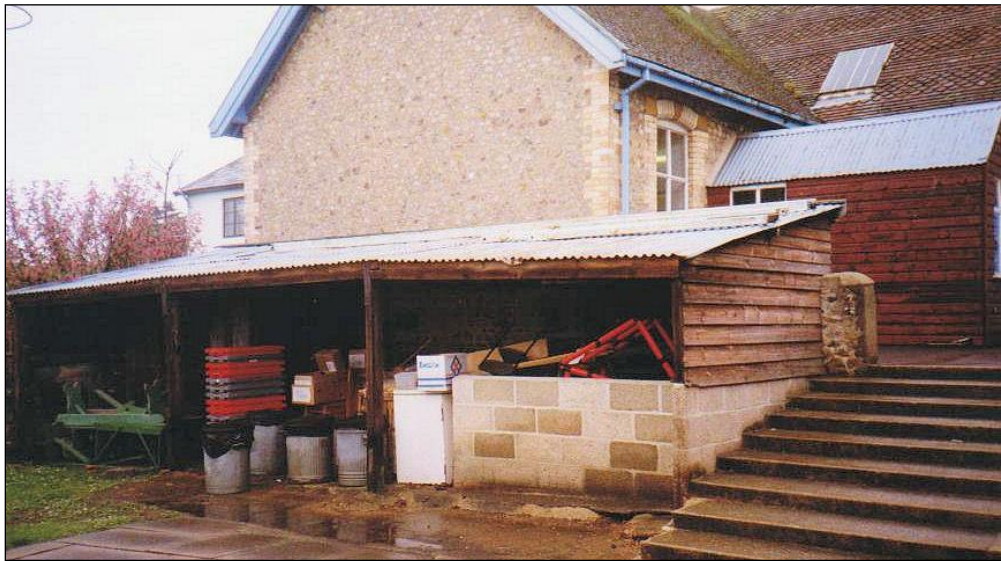


A water tank and fresh water were only connected in September 1906.

The toilets were renovated and fitted to the Charmouth main drainage system in June 1960. The Head teacher reported on the unsatisfactory toilet facilities in November 1967 and pedestal type toilets were fitted in the boys' toilet in January 1968, but sinks weren't fitted until June 1985, and even then not in the urinals.

On 4th September 1885 the Clerk informed the Board that Thomas Fippin refused to flush out the closets more than once a week unless he was paid extra. His services were dispensed with and Amy Newton agreed to flush out the closets every day for 6 pence (2 ½ today) a week.

This construction, often referred to as 'The Play Shed', next to the steps leading from the main building had to be used as a classroom at the beginning of the war when numbers increased due to the evacuees from St Peter's C of E School, Paddington, London. Although it was boarded up to make it weather proof, conditions must have been uncomfortable, cold, dark and difficult.



Charmouth is truly a combined or community school having taken in children from Monkton Wyld on 27th April 1908, Stanton St Gabriel, Morcombelake, 15 children, on 10th September 1946 and Whitchurch Canonorum and Wootton Fitzpaine in 1970. Children were also admitted from private schools in June 1886 and February 1898. In both these cases the children were found to be backward for their age.

The closure of the first two schools seems to have gone fairly smoothly, but there was much opposition from all three schools to the closure of Whitchurch and Wootton. Plans for the temporary classrooms were delivered as early as September 1968, but the scheme was put on hold in early March 1969 because Charmouth parents had lodged an objection. On April 21st 1969 the Minister of Education stated that the enlargement of Charmouth School would go ahead despite the protests. After that, much effort was put into making sure that the transfer took place smoothly.

The mobile classrooms and toilet block were completed on 23rd April 1970. These were equipped with some new furniture and some transferred from the closing schools. On the 9th September 1970 22 children from Whitchurch and 23 from Wootton were admitted to Charmouth School.



This shows the school from the East after the three mobile classrooms had been put in place. The sand area in the foreground was the long jump pit.

Although there had been much opposition to the erection of mobile classrooms there were also major benefits. These units freed up the area previously used for classrooms and provided the school with a much needed hall. The advantages and uses of the hall have already been addressed. Several years after the amalgamation of the three schools it was generally agreed that the benefits far outweighed the disadvantages, and that all children could be provided with a much better all round education in a larger unit.

The transport, which had been one of the negative points, actually ran very smoothly until in September 1985 when the County decided to impose charges for children travelling from the villages. County Councillors and Education Department Officials attended meetings to discuss several parents' refusal to pay for school transport quoting the fact that, when the schools in Whitchurch and Wootton closed, transport would be provided. The County's argument was that they had agreed to provide transport, but not necessarily free. One parent removed his child from the school. A few years later free transport was reinstated for children from Whitchurch and Wootton, but those coming from Lyme Regis and Symondsbury had to provide their own transport. A mini-bus came from Lyme Regis, but children from Symondsbury came by car.



As numbers increased it became necessary to bring in a fourth mobile unit. This remained until the early eighties when it was removed because numbers were very low. It then had to be brought back in September 1987 at considerable cost! Because they were all off the ground the mobiles were cold in Winter and susceptible to freezing. The three original units were very expensive to heat, each having four 3 kw convector heaters using peak electricity. The fourth had an oil stove.

These classrooms were also a problem to maintain. On 4th September 1980 the three original mobiles were reroofed. On 26th September they had to be redone because the first job was unsatisfactory. By November the Infant room was leaking again and there were more similar problems in December. On 16th January 1981 the Infant roof was redone, but by January 1982 further leaks were reported in the same room. In April 1986 the cleaner put her foot through the floor of one of the rooms and in September of that year the three original mobiles were strengthened externally by putting timbers up the sides and across the tops of the classrooms. These can be seen in the picture above. In April 1987 further leaks in the Infant roof had to be repaired. In September 1987 the three original mobiles were again reroofed and redecorated at a cost of approximately £20,000.

In October 1988 4in x 4in props were fitted to the centre of all the temporary classrooms for safety reasons. The photo opposite shows these props inside one of the classrooms. All these difficulties added weight to the arguments for a new school.

On a more positive note in November 1987 all the temporary classrooms were carpeted. The carpets were paid for by the PTA at a cost of £1013. They made a big difference to the comfort, the warmth and particularly the noise.



At one point in the late eighties the numbers were so large (41) in the Reception Class that, despite the fact that all available ancillary help was placed with that class, a large shed was purchased to use with small groups. There were windows in each wall and all the walls were lined for insulation then painted to allow pictures to be put around. Most importantly there was a fire extinguisher. A path was constructed from the classroom to the shed.

This facility was a novelty for the children and they loved being taken to work in it. They called it 'The Cabin'.



This picture also shows the girls' side of the temporary toilets with a drinking fountain just inside the door.

On the side of the toilet block is the red fire bell which was to alert the temporary classrooms in the event of fire. Because it was open to the elements it was not always as effective as it should have been despite the fact that fire practices were held each term. There was another similar bell on the wall of the main building. On one fire drill in October 1987 both fire bells were found to be faulty. The same problem occurred in April 1989.

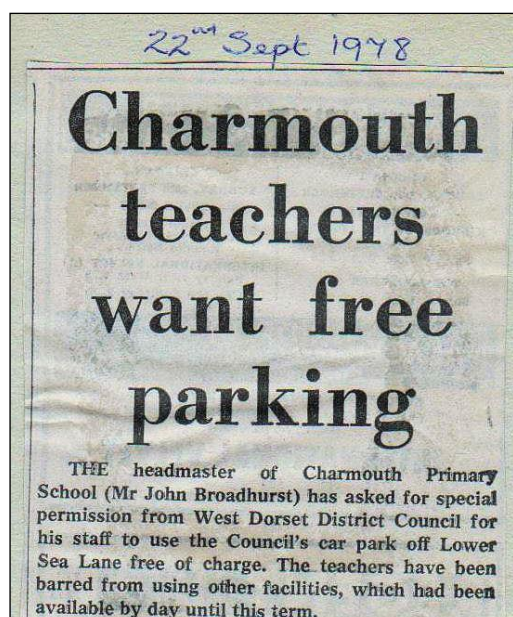


This aerial photo shows the positioning of the temporary classrooms. From September 1970 until the school closed in April 1993 Charmouth School was in the unusual position of having four fifths of its teaching area in temporary buildings. This was another major factor in support of a new school. Through the superb efforts of the teachers standards were very high despite the difficult conditions.

The small shed against the perimeter fence on the right of the picture was used to store the equipment for outdoor PE and games.

The picture shows the children on both the grass and hard areas. The grass area was only used during the Summer months: something the children really appreciated. It also shows the flagpole which was taken down in October 1980 for safety reasons and was not replaced.

Staff had previously parked their cars opposite the school on the tennis court car park. This facility was withdrawn by the Tennis Club and so, in September 1978, the Head teacher applied to the West Dorset District Council to be allocated some spaces on the central village car park off Lower Sea Lane. This was refused, a fact that was headline news in the local paper at the time.



The County then provided the paved area, adjacent to the playground, for staff and visitors parking.

Grounds.

When the school opened the only play area was the small space at the front of the building. The earliest reference to this is 18th June 1897 when gravelling was completed. Inadequacies in the playground are mentioned in the Log Book in September 1908 and in July 1909 it states that a start was made on a new playground which was completed in September of that year. By October this was considered dangerous to health because of drainage problems. One thing isn't clear is where this new playground is situated because the next reference to the playground is in March 1924 when land was purchased at the rear of the school, from the church, for £300.

This suggests that in 1909 the original playground at the front of the school was completely redone, most likely with tarmac, instead of the gravel, thus causing the drainage problem.

In 1926 a playground opened on the land purchased from the church. This was a grass area and therefore the small playground at the front still had to be used in wet weather. The remainder of the land between the new grass area and the Council Houses was purchased, at a cost of £1500, in September 1951. It was ploughed and became the new school garden in February 1952. Therefore the school no longer needed the allotments in Parkway.

Also in February 1952 the wall at the North West corner of the grounds was taken down and rebuilt nearer the school house. This enabled there to be a road built down to Wesley's Close. In April of that year the children planted potatoes on the new land, as a smother crop and a Bramley Apple tree was planted in the new field. In March 1953 fencing was installed around the new field.

On July 14th 1933 a Sports Evening, from 5.30 to 7.30 pm was held in the village playing fields. The playing fields were also used for games.

Gardening was an important part of the curriculum and a gardening examination was held each term. Pests were controlled with paraffin emulsion. The allotments used by the school were where No 6 Parkway now is. On 1st March 1948 all the 11+ boys and girls spent the day working on the allotments spreading manure and planting potatoes.

In March 1953 a fence was installed around the new field. On 12th March that year an official drought was announced and the children worked every afternoon in the school garden. The hedge dividing the new field from the existing school land was removed and on 30th September 1954 the field was ploughed and seeded using 84 lbs of grass seed. This must have cut down gardening sessions because they were only left with the allotment to the East of the school house garden. In May 1966 the fence dividing the allotment from the rest of the play area was removed and the ground seeded. The picture below shows the area previously the allotment. It also shows the props that were put to hold up the mobile classrooms.



On November 16th 1961 Netball posts were received and the field was marked out for football, but football posts were not erected until 2nd May 1962.

A wooden boundary fence was erected on the South side of the playground in September 1962 and on 12th March the following year the front playground was resurfaced. While the work was being carried out the children were taken down to the beach to play as the field was too wet to use.



This bottom part of the play area was tarmaced in July 1965, but no suitable path was provided until July the following year when a paved path was put down. This meant that the area could not be used much of the time because the way down to it was too muddy in wet weather. The boarding along the bottom of the fence was installed in April 1971 prior to the chain link fencing being erected in May 1972. The tarmac area had been extended to the school gate, shown in the picture below, in April of that year.



There was always at least one member of staff on duty on the playground and the children were always escorted into school by a teacher.



In October 1992 Wessex Water closed the lower part of Charmouth main street which meant that all traffic was re-routed down Wesley Close. For the safety of the children a wide concrete path was constructed parallel with the road, but inside the school fence, with a wider area for picking up and dropping of at the top.

This was solely for use by vehicles dropping off and picking up children with entry from the East end of the site. Another path had, therefore, to be constructed across the middle of the grass area for the children to go to and from the playground. The picture below shows the children using the original path while the new one, in the foreground, was being constructed.

The top picture also shows the outlet pipe for the oil stove in the southern end of the bottom mobile classroom which had been put on site 7th September 1987. This outlet pipe is referred to later.





This picture shows the children lining up to come into school on the new path. It also shows the line of the newer tarmac, put down in April 1972, to the left of the yellow line behind the teacher.

In January 1969 a small gate was constructed on the North side of the chain link fence to give pedestrian access to Wesley Close. The front gate was no longer used for children to enter the school keeping them away from the busier Lower Sea Lane.

At the end of the school day the children lined up by the mobile classroom and were seen across Wesley Close, by a member of staff, to parents waiting on the opposite side of the road. The gate was padlocked at night and during the school holidays.





This climbing frame which the children were able to use, under supervision, was delivered on 1st February 1977. When the school moved to the new site it part of it was taken to the village playing field.



When the extra mobile classroom was installed in June 1972 it was found to be heated by an oil stove situated at the back of the room. The chimney outlet for the stove can be seen in the aerial photo of the school grounds. The oil tank shown here was placed on a concrete block platform against the wall of the outside toilets. When the mobile was reintroduced in September 1987 the stove was at the front of the classroom.

There was no protection around the oil tank and today it would, therefore, be considered a Health and Safety hazard.

The school could in no way be classed as 'green', using oil in one mobile classroom, 3 kw electric heaters in the other three mobile classrooms, gas in the main building and electric night store heaters in the school house.

In the South West corner of the school site there was a small pond. This was constructed by simply making a pond shape out of concrete. This was left for 6 months to allow the acid to come out of the cement and then pond weeds and gold fish lived happily there and gave the children much pleasure. On one occasion when the weed was beginning to take over two senior girls were asked to remove some of it. Using a garden fork they plunged it into the weed and pulling it out they discovered the fork not only had weed on it, but they had also speared a fish. This only came to light when one of the young ladies in question was in her twenties!



Pets are very rare in school today, but the Reception class had several rabbits before moving to the new building. The favourite was called Lightning and they also had a guinea pig called Huffy. The children loved their pets and it was good for them to learn to care for animals. The rabbits were not without their problems. The temporary classrooms were all sited off the ground and had netting around their bases. However over time this netting had developed holes in places and on several occasions when the rabbits escaped from their cage they made straight for these holes and took much persuasion to come out!

The rabbits had to be cared for during the holidays and were often looked after by members of staff. On one occasion when a parent was taking a turn to care for the rabbit it was unfortunately killed by the family dog. Below shows the double cage made to lessen the chance of escape.

Stick insects were kept for a time, which was fine until they also escaped!

