

Figure 1: Schools serving Port St Mary, 1670–1979. (Map 1868)

Education for All... and for the Few

CHAPTER 5

ANGELA W. LITTLE

It is September 1927. Edythe is eager to put on her coat and begin her daily walk – and run and skip – to the Rushen School situated at the ‘Four Roads’ Port St Mary. The fine purpose-built building is brand new and opened a few months earlier. The school is an amalgamation of six smaller schools and serves the children residing in the Parish of Rushen. In this chapter we explore the development of ‘education for all’ and ‘education for the few’ for the young people of Port St Mary. The map (Figure 1) shows the village and its environs, the location of schools and the dates they were established.



*Rushen School,
established 1927.*

A step back in time

We can trace the history of the schools that became the Rushen School back to the 1660s. Most historians of education in the Isle of Man attribute the establishment of ‘education for all’ to the vision and determination of Bishop Barrow.¹ On his arrival in the Island from New College, Oxford, in 1663, Bishop Barrow was somewhat scathing about the Manx people he encountered:

I found the people for the most part loose and vicious in their lives, rude and barbarous in their behaviour; and – which I suppose the cause of this disorder – without any true sense of religion, and indeed, in a condition almost incapable of being bettered; for they had no means of instruction, or of being acquainted with the very principles of Christianity.²

Barrow’s main objective was the civilisation of the rude and barbarous people of Man through the principles of Christianity. Although a common prayer book had been translated to Manx in 1610 by Bishop Phillips, this was available in manuscript form only. Barrow reasoned that ‘the best way of Cure’ was to establish schooling through the medium of the English language, despite the fact that the mother tongue of most was Manx Gaelic. By 1672 English-medium schools had been established in each of the seventeen parishes as well as in its small towns of Douglas, Castletown, Ramsey and Peel.

The Rushen Parochial School was established at the site of the current Parish Church on a date between 1666 and 1672 [1]. The children – we believe girls as well as boys – were taught by a clergyman who held a teaching licence issued by the Bishop.

Parents paid a modest fee towards the clergyman's salary and could be fined for not sending their children to school. The clergyman was expected to admit to the school the children of the very poorest parents, without the payment of fees. Thus, in one of the earliest examples of its kind worldwide, the principle of access to *education for all* was established on the Isle of Man.

During Bishop Wilson's time (1697-1755) on the Isle of Man, school buildings were separated from the church itself. The Rushen Parochial School moved into a building erected close to where the Lych gate now stands, in 1734.

A second school in the parish, for girls only, was established at the Four Roads, Port St Mary [3] through a donation from Miss Jane Qualtrough of Kentraugh in 1798.³ Managed by the vicar and wardens of the Rushen Parish Church it became known as the Rushen Parochial Girls' School, or simply the Girls' School. In 1809 a Parish Sunday Schools with 80 scholars was established.

As with any education policy, implementation usually falls short of ambition. Barrow's scheme for 'education for all' was no exception and its successful implementation faced many obstacles during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Enrolments waxed and waned. So too did teachers' performance. In answer to the question 'how often do you visit your Parish school', the Revd. Joseph Qualtrough, Vicar of Rushen wrote 'The Master being incompetent and incapable there is scarcely any Parochial School'. After a further exchange of letters, the Governor of Sodor and Mann saw fit 'to withdraw the licence of the incumbent parochial schoolmaster from 12th October 1822', with a further order to collect the key of the school house from him on the 12th day of November 1822.⁴ Nonetheless, by the first quarter of the 19th century the principle that the children from ordinary families should have access to basic education, and that it should be fee-free for the very poorest, was becoming well established.

Secondary and Higher Education – education of the Manx elite

Those destined for elite roles in society – in the church and the law – enjoyed a separate and superior education. Already by the mid-17th century there were 'Free Schooles' for secondary education in Castletown, Peel, Douglas and Ramsey, though it is unclear how many of these were still in operation by the time of Bishop Barrow's arrival.⁵ In the seventeenth century a 'Free' school meant 'free from the jurisdiction of the ordinary' rather than fee-free.⁶ In 1666 Bishop Barrow established funds for a new Free school, the Castletown Grammar School [2], for young men to follow a superior education in preparation for roles as clergy in his Island-wide diocese. Among the male children of the 'gentry' in the Rushen parish, of whom there would have been only a few, some may have attended the parochial schools before transferring to the Castletown Grammar School, boarding in Douglas, or travelling 'across' to schools in England. Or they may have attended a school run privately by the incumbent Vicar of Rushen. The Revd. John Clague (Vicar 1782-1816):

Allowed his pupils diet, washing, and lodging, and taught himself the English, French, Greek, and Latin languages, also Euclid, algebra,

navigation, geography the use of the globes, arithmetic, book keeping, writing and spelling, all for £12 (British)... His fame, it seems, extended very far, for he had many pupils from Liverpool and the North of England and a few even from the West Indies⁷.

Clague's successor, the Revd. Joseph Qualtrough (1816-1824) opened an Academy for instructing 'young Gentlemen' in the various branches of a liberal education and offered two places to boarders⁸.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century the daughters of the gentry would probably have been tutored at home; in the early 19th century they may have attended the private venture Castletown Green School for Young Ladies or the Young Ladies Country Boarding School at Rushen Abbey in Ballasalla.

Figure 2. Isle of Man Education Legislation and developments in Port St Mary and the Rushen Parish	
Isle of Man Education Legislation and Milestones	Education developments in Port St Mary and Rushen Parish
c.1665 Bishop Barrow establishes scheme for basic education in parochial schools, fee-free for the poorest and compulsory. New type of Grammar school established	1666 Castletown Grammar School established c.1667 Rushen Parochial School established in the Parish church
1704 Ecclesiastical Ordinance reinforces compulsory education, including the imposition of fines on parents for not sending children to school	1782 Revd. John Clague runs private school in Parish church annex 1798 Rushen Parochial School for Girls established
1802 Sunday School movement begins	1809 Parish Sunday School established, followed by the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists 1817 Revd. Joseph Qualtrough runs private academy in Parish church annex 1831 Foundation stone laid for King Williams College (opened 1833) 1837 Port St Mary National School established (1st National school estd. Douglas 1810) 1840s Private schools for young children
1851 Act. Parish committees empowered to raise local rates to increase teacher salaries, erect dwelling houses for schoolmasters/mistresses, buy books and apparatus, provide teacher pensions. School inspections from England in return for financial grants	1855 Rushen Parochial School for Girls extended 1861 New Parochial School for Boys established on Church Road, plus dwelling for school master
1872 Education Act School Committees established in 17 parishes and 4 towns; gradual handover of control of schools from church to state. These schools became known as Board schools	1875 High School for Girls (later The Buchan School) established in Castletown 1876 Rushen Parochial Girls' school building (now a Board School) replaced on same site
1878 Education Act Compulsory education for those aged 5-13 years	1880 Port St Mary National School closed and Port St Mary Boys' (Board) School opened, infants' section opened 1896
1892 Education Act Abolition of fees in state-supported elementary education	
1896 Commission of Enquiry of Secondary Education	
1906 Report on Secondary Education (the Jackson Report)	

1907 Higher Education Act, four Higher Education Boards created, including one for the South	1911 Southern Higher Grade school/classes established opposite Girls school at Four Roads. Known as the ‘Tin Tab’ school
1915 Education Act Provision of free school meals for children in need	
1918 Education Aid Grant Act. Teacher salaries raised	
1920 Act Abolition of twenty-one school committees and four higher education boards. Replaced by the Central Council of Education and the Isle of Man Education Authority	1927 Six elementary and infants schools in the Rushen Parish merged. New Rushen School established at the Four Roads 1931 Castletown Grammar School closes
1939-1945 War time measures and establishment of Camps for ‘alien’ internees	c. 1940 Kindergarten for internee children (up to six years) established in former Port St Mary Boys’ School School for internee children aged six to sixteen established in the Cornaa boarding house. Adult education classes
1949 Education Act. Free compulsory education five to fifteen-year-olds. Primary (5-11) and comprehensive secondary (11-15) schools become separate institutions. Subsidised milk and school meals, free dental and medical inspections and treatment. College of Further Education to be established. Scholarship scheme to support UK university entrants	1948 Castle Rushen Secondary School established in Castletown. Children aged 11-15 years transfer to CRHS from Rushen School which becomes the Rushen Primary School
1987 Raising of school leaving age to sixteen	1974 Rushen School separated into an Infants school and Junior school 1993/4 New primary school for Port St Mary - Scoill Phurt le Moirrey. Rushen Infants’ and Junior schools recombine

So already by the start of our period of main historical interest, 1829–1979, there were at least two tracks of schooling, one for the children of the ‘common folk’ and the other for those of the gentry. The Manx saying ‘*Ta ynsagh coamrey stoamey yn dooinney berchagh, as t’eh berchys yn dooinney boght*’ translates as ‘learning is the fine raiment of the rich man, and it is the riches of the poor.’ It conveys the readiness with which the mass of the population accepted the idea that a superior education was, ‘if not wholly unattainable, at least a luxury, while for the wealthy it was their natural right and privilege.’⁹ It followed that children of the ordinary classes were content with their position in the inferior route of a dual track system in which one track served the few and one served the rest.

But how did these two tracks of schooling develop between 1829 and 1979? Figure 2 summarises the key milestones in Isle of Man legislation alongside the dates of establishment of education of varying kinds available in Port St Mary.

1829–1878

We do not know how many children were attending schools in 1829. However, the population census indicates that in 1851 out of 153 children aged five to fourteen living in the census district of Port St Mary village about half (50.3%) attended school, with more boys attending than girls (56% vs. 45%).

The Rushen Boys' and Girls' Parochial Schools

By 1843, the Parochial School, now enrolling mostly boys, was located next to the church. Land for a new Parochial Boys' School, complete with a dwelling house and garden for the schoolmaster, was purchased by the church from Thomas Gawne, owner of the Ballachurry Estate. The new school was built on Church Road and opened in 1861 [7]. The Parochial Girls' School was extended in 1855 with funds donated by Mrs Emily Maria Gawne, wife of Edward Moore Gawne, the landowner, Member of the House of Keys and Captain of the Parish. In 1876, following the 1872 Act of Education, the school was demolished and a new school built on the same site by the Rushen School Committee.

The Port St Mary National School [5]

In 1837, the children of Port St Mary gained a new school, the National School. 'National' in this context did not refer to the Isle of Man nation. Rather it referred to the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales. This society and a parallel one with an equally long name – The Institution for Promoting the British System for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion¹⁰ – competed with each other to open schools in the industrialising areas of England with rapidly growing populations of the 'working classes'. Both societies promoted the 'monitorial system' of teaching, in which a single schoolteacher was responsible for large numbers of children in one large classroom, assisted by a team of monitors. Little older than the children they taught, these monitors were tutored by the schoolmaster/mistress in reading, writing and some arithmetic skills before transmitting their skills to their 'row' or 'class' of children.¹¹

The titles of both societies also made clear that the schemes were intended for the children of the labouring and manufacturing classes. The first monitorial school was founded in Douglas in 1810 under the non-denominational scheme. In Douglas the better classes saw the monitorial school as a cure for the 'rude, insolent and savagely unmannered' creatures plaguing the town.¹² From 1815 the Anglican Diocese aligned itself with the National Society's monitorial scheme, and it was under this scheme that Port St Mary's National School was established on land purchased from James Holmes Esq. There are no records that indicate whether the school was seen as a way of curing the 'rude, insolent and savagely unmannered' behaviour of the youth of Port St. Mary in the same way as in Douglas.

In 1847 Mr Robert Quayle was the master and thirty boys and twelve girls were enrolled. He taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history, supported by monitors. Mr Quayle 'was a cripple and he was named the Little Master, being a short man walking on two crutches. He taught the boys very well and learned them for seafaring'.¹³ In 1851 Legislation was passed that enabled local rates to be raised to pay for school improvements, required teachers to have training and schools to be open for inspections from England. Mr Quayle was succeeded by a Mr Binns and Mr Stibbings, both from England and graduates from the National Society's Training College in

People of Port St Mary

EMILY MARIA GAWNE

The great granddaughter of John 3rd Duke of Atholl, Emily Gawne, was born in 1814 and died in 1889. Married to Edward Moore Gawne in 1835, she lived on the Kentraugh Estate from 1837. She is one of only four women to appear in A W Moore's *Manx Worthies* published in 1901. Moore credits her with having inaugurated 'a systematic plan of almsgiving which she carried out during the rest of her life', describing her as 'a true lady bountiful... regarded with affection, mingled with profound admiration and respect for her pious and amiable life'. Her influence extended across the parish of Rushen and beyond. In 1843 she established the Rushen Female Benefit Society, one of only two such societies on the Island during the first half of the nineteenth century created to support the welfare of working women. The Irish famine affected many Manx families very badly and she started a shop that sold tea, groceries, and other necessities at cost price. She supported the Rushen Girls' Parochial School in many ways and funded its extension in 1855. She funded the building of St Mary's church in Port St Mary in 1884.

Her husband was Edward Moore Gawne, with whom she had five sons and five daughters. Edward Moore Gawne was an MHK from 1829 and Speaker of the House of Keys from 1854 until its dissolution in 1867 when a democratically elected body replaced the self-appointed members of the House.

After her husband's death in 1872 Emily Maria continued her good works. In an 1880 debate in the House of Keys she was cited by Robert Sherwood, MHK for Glenfaba, as a woman who deserved to have the right to vote in general elections. Sherwood contended that 'as a principle of justice, taxation and representation should go together', arguing that many well known ladies were far more deserving of enfranchisement than many male householders. By

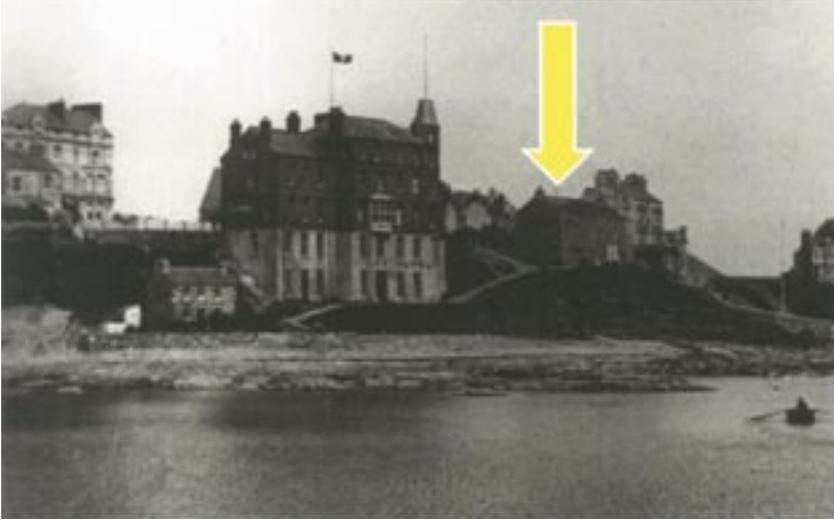


January 1881 property owning widows and spinsters had gained the right to vote through legislation believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

An ardent supporter of girls' education, it was an education that prepared girls and young women for their station in life. One of the girls who attended the Rushen Parochial Girls' School shared a memory with her daughter:

my mother.... said when she went to school they were taught sewing and everything at school, you see, and this particular teacher, she used to show them how to embroider little things and all. But when she (Mrs Gawne) came to see them, the children all had to put those away and just do ordinary little bits of plain work because the Gawnes thought that the children were getting ideas above their station ...if they were taught embroidery and things like that. So there was that and there was class distinction, wasn't there?¹⁴

Whether the Gawnes would have been impressed by and pleased to see the embroidery that was 'put away' we do not know. We simply know that girls who attended the school at this time were aware that they were being socialised for their 'station in life'. A stained-glass window is dedicated to Emily Maria's memory in the Rushen Parish Church.



The Port St. Mary National School, opened in 1837, situated between the Cliff Hotel and Ballamona

Battersea, London and Mr Robert Watson. Mr Cornelius Squires arrived in 1877 and was remembered by John B Gawne as ‘a sea captain, a native of Nottingham ... (who) taught navigation at nights.’¹⁵ Perhaps it was this and similar memories that led some Port St Mary residents to refer, even today, to the National School as the Port St Mary *Navigational* School. Figure 3 lists the names of all schoolmasters of the National School, and all other schools serving the children of Port St Mary, 1829-1979.

The school was also used for Anglican religious worship on Sundays and for many community activities – concerts, tea meetings, public meetings and meetings organised by the Harbour of Peace Lodge of the Oddfellows.¹⁶

Private Schools in Port St Mary

While Port St Mary did not see a growth in private education at the rate seen in Douglas, a government committee recorded at least two private schools in 1847.¹⁷ A Mrs Cregeen taught reading to twenty-four children in one and a Miss Carran taught eighteen children reading and writing in the other. There appear to have been others. Edward (Ned Beg Hun Roy) Faragher, the Manx author, translator and folklorist, is recorded as having attended an Infants’ School in Port St Mary around the age of six, run by an old lady... who taught ‘writing and ciphering.’¹⁸ Ned Maddrell, the last surviving native Manx speaker, recalled in 1958 that Edward Faragher had attended Margaret Bredgeon’s school in Cregneash. John Gawne recalls in 1950 that a Jane Watterson’s mother kept a school in Fistard in the 1880s. John Watterson recalls a school c. 1850 on the Lhargee (probably the Largan) run by the ‘little schoolmistress and her sister Magead’. He also recalls the school run by Miss Jane Harley in a house on the seaside of Primrose Terrace. Miss Jane Harley appears in the 1851 census, aged twenty-seven, as an unmarried schoolmistress. Her school was often referred to as Harley’s College:

One day a ship’s captain was travelling home by train and chatted to some visitors in the coach. When approaching Castletown, he was asked what was the imposing building on the left (sic). When he said that this was King William’s College, he was asked whether he had gone there as a boy. He replied ‘No, I went to Harley’s College.’¹⁹

Most of these private schools probably catered to the needs of the younger children, some of whom may have moved on to the Parochial schools or the National school in later years.

Figure 3. Master/Mistress/Headmaster/Headmistress of schools attended by children of Port St Mary 1829-1979
 (Sources: School Log Books, Lists of Charities, Directories (Porters, Thwaites, Slaters), Newspaper Obituaries. Excludes schools in Douglas and Castletown)

Rushen Parochial Boys	Rushen Parochial Girls	Port St Mary National	Port St Mary Infants	Southern Higher Education
1837–1846 Mr Thomas	1831 Mrs Pollard	1837?–1851 Mr Robert Quayle	1896 Mr M J Quilliam	1910?
1846–c.1863? Mr Thomas Qualtrough	1837 Miss Anne Corrin	1851–1853 Mr Binns	1896 Miss Mary Cowley	1924–1927 Mr J Fletcher
c.1863–1888 Mr Edgar Allan	1846–? Miss Margaret Cubbon	1853–? Mr Stibbings	1897 Miss Elizabeth Harris	
1888–1896 Mr J Quilliam	1860–1863 Miss Warburton	1863?–1873 Mr Robert Watson	1905–1927 Miss H Sansbury	
1896–1927 Mr William Cubbon	1863–1890 Miss EC Kewley	1873–1876 Mr Grindley		
	1890–1898 Miss H Hodgkinson	1877– Mr Cornelius Squires		
	1898–1905 Miss Rose A Mully	Port St Mary Boys’ School		
	1905–1913 Miss Essie Cain	1881–1898 Mr Cornelius Squires		
	C 1913–? Miss E O Marshall	1899–1918 Mr James Place		
	1926–1927 Miss E Kellett	1919–1925 Mr R J Wilkinson		
		1925–1927 Mr FW Wilcock		
	Rushen School (Rushen Primary from 1948)			
	1927–1943 Mr Wilfred E Kelly			
	1943–1953 Mr Percy Cubbin		Castle Rushen High School	
	1953–1974 Mr William Furth Little		1948–1955 Mr Godfrey Cretney	
	Rushen Infants’	Rushen Junior	1955–1976 Mr John R Smith	
	1974– Miss Audrey Barker	1974– Mr Denis Lewin	1976– Mr Harry Taverner	

Sunday schools

In this period not all children attended the day schools described above. Their only opportunity for learning was afforded by the Sunday schools. In October 1831 eleven guineas were collected at a sermon preached to raise money for the Sunday schools of the Rushen Parish which offered instruction to 300-400 children.²⁰ In 1847, the Port St Mary Wesleyan Sunday School was run by four male teachers and one female teacher for twenty boys and eighteen girls. The Primitive Methodists also ran a Sunday School. Many of these boys and girls would also have been attending day schools. The 1851 census indicates that of the 76 Port St Mary children *not* attending day schools, nine attended a Sunday School.



King William's College, opened 1833.

Secondary and Higher Education

Until the late 19th century education for the children from ordinary families finished at around the age of thirteen or fourteen. Parents who aspired for a superior education for their sons had options. As noted already the Castletown Grammar School was established in the mid seventeenth century. But in 1830 the foundation stone was laid for the new King William's College [4] and by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century private secondary education was offered by the Vicars of the Rushen Parish. Some 160 years earlier, Bishop Barrow had created an endowment for a university level college for the training of Island clergy. This vision was never fulfilled. Instead, King William's College offered a secondary level traditional liberal curriculum of English, mathematics, geography, history and writing. This was not unlike the offering of the Castletown Grammar School located nearby, the main difference being that the College charged higher fees and had boarding facilities. Though more expensive than the nearby Grammar School the fee level attracted many 'from across'.²¹ In 1834 the College's roll of boys was seventy English, fifty Irish, thirty Manx, ten Scotch (sic) and a few missionaries' children from India.²²

The sons of a small number of well to do families and clergy living in or near to Port St. Mary attended King William's College. The names of those admitted between 1834 and 1904 are recorded in a remarkable register (see box overleaf).²³

This register suggests that over a period of seventy years Port St Mary boys enrolled in this elite fee paying school averaged just 0.14 of a boy annually (10/70). For boys from Port Erin it was 0.07. The rest of the Rushen Parish topped the league with 0.16 of a boy enrolled annually over seventy years! Enrolment in this elite school was highly exclusive, socially selective and, except for the sons of the clergy who paid no fees, expensive.

The High School for Girls, Castletown [6]

The main development in schooling for the daughters of the 'better classes' during this period was the establishment in 1875 of the High School for Girls in Castletown with funds donated by Laura, Lady Buchan and Mrs Newton, in a large private house in Castletown. It became known subsequently as the Buchan School. We do not know whether any Port St Mary girls attended this school in its early years.

**BOYS FROM THE PARISH OF RUSHEN
ATTENDING KING WILLIAM'S COLLEGE
1834-1904**

The first boy to enrol at King William's College from the parish of Rushen, in March 1834, was William Corrin, son of the Rev. William Corrin, the Vicar of Rushen. Over the period to 1904 there were just ten boys listed as being from Port St Mary.

Henry, son of William Kelly
Henry Percy, son of Henry Kelly
Edwin and Henry, sons of E Qualtrough the net manufacturer
Thomas, son of J. Qualtrough, the Harbour Master
John and Thomas, sons of J. Lace
Frank, son of T. Lace
Miles son of Mrs Kissack
Francis, son of F. Kitto

From Port Erin there were five boys.

George and Walter, sons of G. Trustrum
James, son of J. B. Thorpe
Henry, son of E. Maddrell
James, son of H. Dalgleish

The remaining eleven boys were from the Parish of Rushen.

William (mentioned above), John, Thomas,
George and James, the sons of the Rev William Corrin
Hugh, the son of the Rev H. S. Gill
Charles and Herbert, the sons of the Rev. F. F. Tracey

The other three Rushen Parish boys were the sons of landowners.

Henry, son of E. M. Gawne (Kentraugh Estate)
Edward Murray, son of E. B. Gawne (Kentraugh Estate)
John, son of W. Watterson (Strandhall Farm)

The Isle of Man 1872 Education Act

The Isle of Man Education Act of 1872 is a significant milestone in the Island's education history. A central Board of Education was established and twenty-one School Board Districts constituted in the Island's seventeen parishes and four towns. Known more generally as the School Committees, their members were elected and empowered to provide elementary education for all with immediate effect. They took over many of the elementary schools managed hitherto by the Church. At this time, around 70% of all children in the whole of the Rushen Parish aged 7-13 years were enrolled in school. The Island-wide figure was estimated to be 75.6%.²⁴

The inaugural meeting of the Rushen School Committee was held on 25th July 1872. The Captain of the Parish, Mr J. J. Clucas, was elected as chairman with Vicar G. W. Kilpatrick as Vice Chair, thus ensuring a continued presence of the Church in decision making *de facto*, if not *de jure*. The other members in attendance that day were John Kermode, Thomas Qualtrough, Thomas Sansbury and Henry Kelly.

The Committee discharged many responsibilities and wielded considerable power in the community. It raised education revenue from local rates, enforced compulsory education through the imposition of fines, collected 'school pence' from the children, paid for repairs to school buildings, purchased school books and granted fee waivers to those households too poor to pay the school pence. It identified and purchased land for the building of new schools, dwelling houses for teachers and school extensions and hired, paid and, occasionally, fired teachers.²⁵ In 1876 it gave notice to Mr Grindley, the master of the National School 'for not having managed (the) school well for several months'.²⁶

By 1881 there were 158 children aged 5-14 years living in the census district of Port St Mary village, of whom 93% attended school,²⁷ a considerable increase over the figure of 50% just thirty years earlier. The

enrolment of boys was slightly higher than that of girls (95% vs. 90%).



Rushen Girls' School, established 1798, with modern extension.

Rushen Parochial School for Boys, Church Road, opened 1861, now a private residence.



Port St Mary Boys' School, established 1880, with modern extension and windows.



High School for Girls. Castletown, opened 1875.

1879–1929

By the late 1870s a number of changes were afoot in the Port. The railway had arrived (1874), increasing communications of all kinds between the country districts and Douglas, the new capital. Children were able to travel further afield for their schooling – to Castletown and Douglas, albeit for the payment of fees. Regular steamship sailings between Liverpool, Whitehaven and Douglas facilitated the travel of boys from well off families ‘from across’ to enrol at King William’s College and of elite Manx boys

to enrol at schools ‘across.’

A new boys’ school for Port St Mary [8]

Following the 1872 Act, the Port St Mary National School for boys and girls was replaced by the Port St Mary Boys’ school in 1880 on land purchased by Mr James Blythe. The new building was erected on the southern corner of the promenade and Station Road with a loan of £400 from the Oddfellows Harbour of Peace Lodge. Mr Cornelius Squires was appointed as Master of the Port St Mary National School in 1877, moving on to become the first head of the new Port St Mary Boys’ School. By now all girls aged seven and over attended the Girls’ School at the Four Roads. The National School building continued to be used for village meetings of various kinds, including the inaugural meeting of the Port St Mary Village Commissioners in 1890, by which time the building was known as The Rushen Hall.

Port St Mary Boys’ School.



Inspections, non-attendance, payments in kind

Schools were visited regularly by education officers. Periodically the Secretary of the Central Board of Education travelled from Douglas to make a 'visit of surprise' to the schools. Visits of lesser surprise were made by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from England.

Non-attendance was enforced by the Committee. In 1879, for example, it considered nine cases of boys around twelve years of age, seven of whom had gone fishing to Kinsale. Parents were summoned. Charles Clague's son, not yet twelve, had gone fishing because 'the family is delicate... he wanted the boy to earn to help other family members.' The case of James Hudgeon was more complex. Hudgeon informed the Committee that he had three sons. He had sent his youngest son, aged eleven, to the Fisherman's Association to earn some money in order to send his eldest son, who is 'liable to fits', to a trade. He stated further that his second son is a 'cripple' and continues to attend school.²⁸

'Payments in kind' were sometimes offered to the schoolmaster instead of fees paid in cash. Thomas Watterson recalled that the fee at Quilliam's school (the Boys' Parochial school) was 1d. per week. One day he took a note from his mother 'to ask if the schoolmaster would have a goose instead of fees for the Xmas quarter. He said he would take it.'²⁹

The 1892 Education Act

The 1892 Education Act removed the obligation of parents to pay fees (quartermage) for state-supported elementary education. The passage of the Act was not without controversy. Reform-minded MHKs felt that the masses needed to be educated and instructed in their new functions. Landlord politicians balked at the idea of being asked to pay an extra tax for fee-free education for the young, especially in the 'agricultural districts', which included Rushen. Such young people, it was felt, did not require education and should not be educated 'beyond their station.' The Act would only result in emigration to towns or to other countries. However, Governor Walpole judged that the centre of political gravity had shifted from the 'classes to the masses'.³⁰ School fees were abolished.

The Central Board of Education was increasingly exercised about the provision of education for five to seven-year-olds. After some deliberation the Rushen School Committee built an Infants' School in Port St Mary adjacent to the Boys' school [10], and in Port Erin, on the corner of Station Road and Droghadfadyle Road. The Infants' Schools opened in 1896 and 1898 respectively. One who attended the Port St Mary Infants' School recalls:

(They) taught us how to knit. We had thick needles and thick wool and we knitted a little doll's hat... And I can remember we were saying... we'd only be about five, 'needle in, thread around, catch, take it off... And that was the way you learned to knit ... We used to have little concerts ... and Miss Sansbury would be there, she'd be making hot cocoa, cold days, there was always a fire going.'³¹



Rushen Girls' School, Four Roads.



Rushen Boys' School, 1900 with Headmaster, Mr William Cubbon on left

The big sand tray, the rocking horse, the biscuits and the gooseberries stood out in the memory of another:

...when you'd practised (writing letters in the sand tray) – well, you could just rub it out, couldn't you, it was no problem. Then you got your slate and your slate pencil and you could write with your slate... And ...when you could read, just your simple little books, well then you got a ride on the rocking horse. ... (And) ... Mr Prideaux had the grocer's shop opposite... Every now and again ... his head would come up over the wall and he'd fling in handfuls of broken biscuits and we all tore like mad and grabbed. Hygiene didn't matter, you got your biscuit... you were thrilled to bits with that lot.³²

Despite the expansion of fee-free education for five years olds, some continued to pay for private schooling prior to proceeding on to King William's College, the Castletown Grammar School or the Buchan School. The Fieldby School, near the Four Roads, run privately by the Misses Whiteside offered private education into the twentieth century. And throughout the period 1879-1929, the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Sunday schools attracted large numbers of children. After its establishment in the late nineteenth century, St Mary's also offered a Sunday School.

*Port St Mary
Infants' School
class with the
prized rocking
horse.*



The ‘Tin Tab’ school [11]

In 1894 the Douglas Board Secondary School [9] opened its doors to boys and girls for a ‘higher grade’ education. And in 1896 there was an Island-wide enquiry into post elementary education. It was reported that Port St Mary parents were not overwhelmingly in favour of a ‘higher grade school’, and certainly not keen on such a school being located in Castletown, for which they would have to pay their children’s train fare. However, they were interested in vocational education. Some parents of a ‘goodly number’ of boys engaged in the fishing season in Kinsale thought that an evening continuation school would be a ‘boon... as so many of the boys engaged in the fishing idle their time away in the winter season’. But ‘this class of children could not afford a high fee... (and) the subjects most suitable for them would be woodwork, navigation, agriculture, typewriting and shorthand’. For girls, a ‘practical education in cookery, laundry work and housewifery would be a real advantage, Ports Erin and St Mary being pre-eminently holiday resorts.’³³

Following the Higher Education Act (1907), four Higher Education Boards were established across the Island, including one for the South. In November 1910 the Southern Higher Education School [11] was opened for boys and girls aged fourteen and fifteen, admitted through examination, on a site opposite the Rushen Girls’ School at the Four Roads. A temporary ‘building’ of iron and wood, the school acquired the epithet the ‘Tin Tab’ School and lay at the centre of what came to be known as ‘The Rushen School Crisis’.

The Rushen School Crisis – ‘the eyes of the Island were on Rushen’

The establishment of the ‘Tin Tab’ school was surrounded by dissent from the beginning. The Southern Higher Education District comprised the parishes of Rushen, Arbory, Malew and the town of Castletown. The school was intended to offer a more advanced education than that offered in the Elementary Schools, through practical subjects taught in a practical way – including practical mathematics, commercial subjects, woodwork, cookery, dressmaking and navigation. The decision to site the school in the parish of Rushen met with opposition from parents in Castletown and Malew who refused to send their children and whose School Committees refused to pay rates for its upkeep. Head teachers in the elementary schools in all the parishes of the South were unhappy about the establishment of a new school, not least because it was ‘creaming’ off some of the best pupils.

Following remarks made allegedly by the Chairman of the Council of Education (the central Manx authority at this time) during the Tynwald debate around the Vote for Education in 1911, matters intensified. The Chairman’s remarks were interpreted by some as implying that elementary school education was of a lower quality than that offered by the Tin Tab and that the teachers’ discontent involved an element of jealousy. Eight head teachers from the elementary Schools of the Southern District protested and wrote to the Chairman via an open letter to the *Isle of Man Times*:



*We do not, as teachers, object to criticism of any action we may take in the cause of education, but at the same time we claim our right, as free citizens of a free country, to reply to any reflections made upon us and uttered in public, where our reputations as teachers are at stake.*³⁴

Older children at the entrance to the Southern Higher Grade School, otherwise known as the 'Tin Tab' school.

The teachers questioned whether the subjects on offer were in fact being taught at a higher level than in the upper classes of the elementary schools and they reminded the Council that cookery, cottage gardening and woodwork were already on offer in other Elementary Schools. They questioned the practices of the master of the new 'school' canvassing for pupils. They let it be known that one of the School Boards (also referred to as Committees) in the District had written to their teachers requiring children to sit an entrance examination without parental consent and they questioned the numbers of students allegedly enrolled in the school. They also questioned the costs to the ratepayer. The ratio of the teacher salary to pupil costs was more than five times that in the Elementary School across the road:

*We have here in the South a waste of public money, where the School Boards have been so very careful over every penny spent on education. Really, it would have been cheaper to send all the children to King William's College.*³⁵

The teachers were invited by the Council of Education to apologise for writing to the press, which they duly did. The Council accepted the apologies but the Rushen School Board did not, regarding the three Rushen head teachers employed by them – Cubbon, Place and Cain – as insubordinate and inviting them to resign their positions. When they did not, they were dismissed. The school boards of the other parishes in the South did not see fit to dismiss their teachers. Having accepted the Rushen head teachers' apologies initially, the Council of Education members changed their minds, supporting the decision of the Rushen School Board instead.

The public were outraged. There were public meetings, letters to the press from Board members, parents and teachers, a 600-signature petition with and support for the teachers from the Isle of Man branch of the National Union of Teachers. On 7th October 1911 the Rushen School Board, led by Mr J.D. Clucas, H.K. C.P, resigned *en masse*. 'The eyes of the Island were on Rushen', wrote the *Isle of Man Examiner*.³⁶ Elections for a new board were called. Former members stood alongside a host of new candidates. Amid public debates and some 'disorderly scenes' candidates canvassed votes in what may have been the liveliest election campaign ever conducted within the Parish of Rushen (then as now). All members of the former Board were voted out. The teachers stayed in their positions.

The 1920 Education Act

The Education Act of 1920 abolished the School Committees and Higher Education Boards and replaced them with the Central Council of Education and the Isle of Man Education Authority. Parish parochialism in matters of education began to wane. While a number of children from Port St Mary attended the Tin Tab school from the age of fourteen others attended the secondary school in Douglas after sitting entrance examinations at the age of eleven. By 1921, of 532 students enrolled in the Douglas secondary school, thirty-six were from the Southern Higher Education District, including Port St Mary.

The Amalgamation of the Rushen Schools in 1927 [12]

Given the 'Rushen School Crisis' and the mutual opposition of Castletown and Malew and Rushen to a combined school, a full-blown secondary school of the type available in Douglas for the young people in the South would remain a distant dream.

A different plan was afoot in Rushen: the merger of the three elementary schools of the Rushen Parish, the two Infants' Schools of Port St Mary and Port Erin and the Southern Higher Education 'Tin Tab' School. This would become the Rushen School, built on land at the Four Roads purchased from J.M. Clucas of Ballakilly Farm. The site served the children of Port St Mary, Port Erin, Bradda, Cregneash, Croit-e-Caley, Ballakilpheric and on up the mountain to Scard. It offered education over ten classes – Infants 1-2, Standards 1-5 and Form 1-3. Children entered when they were five years of age and left when they were fifteen. Thus, a type of secondary education up to the age of fifteen was established, even though the official leaving age was still only fourteen. The new school opened for teaching on 4th April 1927.

People of Port St Mary

MISS ESSIE CAIN

Miss Essie Cain was the headmistress of the Rushen Girls' School at the Four Roads from 1905-1913 and hence an important figure in the daily lives of girls aged seven to fourteen who lived in the Parish.

Born and raised in Castletown, Essie left school aged thirteen and commenced a teaching apprenticeship as a pupil-teacher at Hanover Street School in Douglas. On completion of her apprenticeship she continued to teach at the same school until taking up the headship of the Rushen Girls' School in 1905. She held certificates and diplomas in Physiography, Hygiene, Domestic Economy and St John Ambulance, all of which were sought after qualifications for the education of girls at this time. She took a great interest in the Isle of Man Industrial Guild and in music, and entered her pupils in many music competitions, with great success, part of a long tradition of music in the Rushen schools that continued throughout the twentieth century. Alongside her full-time work in Rushen she served the children of Castletown as a teacher and the librarian of the Castletown Wesleyan Sunday School. A member of the Wesleyan church choir, she also looked after the musical requirements of the Queen Street Mission room for eleven years.

Miss Cain was a key figure in 'The Rushen School Crisis' and the debate about post elementary education in the parishes of the South. Along with seven fellow schoolmasters and mistresses she co-signed an open letter to the Chairman of the Council of Education via the *Isle of Man Times*, in which they expressed their discontent with aspects of recently opened Southern Higher Education

Photograph below: Miss Essie (back row) with the Rushen Girls' School choir, after winning the prize for singing in Manx Gaelic in c. 1910.

'School' – otherwise known as the 'Tin Tab'. They repudiated an implied criticism made in Tynwald of the quality of work in the higher classes of their schools. They went on to suggest that their work was as effective and certainly more cost-effective than that offered in the Tin Tab. The Council of Education demanded an apology: all eight headteachers apologised. However, the Rushen School Board did not accept the apologies of the Rushen teachers and invited them to resign. They declined and were dismissed. A public outcry ensued – public meetings, letters to the press, a petition signed by more than 600 persons. The Rushen School Board was forced to resign *en masse*. Essie and her co-signatories – James Place, head of the Port St Mary Boys' School and William Cubbon, head of the Rushen Parochial School for Boys – were reinstated.

Probably as a result of her vigorous defence of teachers and education standards – her 'resolute attitude for the rights of teachers' – Essie was the first elected woman chair of the Isle of Man Branch of the National Union of Teachers, in which capacity she represented the Island's teachers at the National Conference held in Weston-super-Mare in 1913. She died later that year, aged 54.



The purpose-built school had been designed with a rural-oriented curriculum in mind and the headmaster, Mr Wilfred E. Kelly, from the parish of Andreas, was selected, in part, for his knowledge of horticulture. All the classrooms faced south with access to garden plots and there was also a large area to the rear for vegetable cultivation. There were eleven teachers, including the head and 365 children – ‘the same number as the days in the year’ as Edythe, the little girl at the beginning of the chapter, recalled. It was probably the largest Island ‘country school’ of its day.

Secondary Schools in Castletown for Port St Mary boys

Throughout this period a few boys proceeded to the Castletown Grammar School and King William’s College. Willie Bridson attended the Port St Mary Boys’ school before moving on to the Grammar School in 1897 at the age of twelve years.

What a change! I had to rise at six o’clock and walk to the station – a distance of over a mile – for we lived in the last house but one in Lime Street. There was half a mile from Castletown Station to the Grammar School. There we managed to dry ourselves out before a large stove after a wintry passage. The Master was J.H.W.T. Wicksey, a very capable master, I found, who took a great interest in the boys who showed that they were anxious to learn. School went on till one o’clock, then from two until five o’clock when we had to wait impatiently for the train at 5.45pm to take us home. There were actually half a dozen boys from Port St Mary and Port Erin. I was ...away the round of the clock.³⁷

The Castletown Grammar School closed in 1931.

1930–1979

During World War II a number of Port St Mary people who had attended the Rushen School together during the 1920s were killed in action or captured as Prisoners of War. Some families lost all their sons of call-up age and many were left bereft with small children. The Town Hall was used as the Air Raid Precaution centre and was manned day and night.

In 1943 Mr Wilfred E. Kelly retired and was succeeded by Mr Percy Cubbin. The school log books of the time indicate that non-attendance at school was a continuing concern. Childhood illnesses of diphtheria, whooping cough, scarlet fever, mumps and the usual coughs and colds were common causes of non-attendance. The desks and books of those who were unfortunate to contract scarlet fever were fumigated. Heavy snow and bad weather generally affected attendance, especially that of the children from Ronague, Ballakilpheric and beyond.³⁸

Some school activities reflected an island at war. Ministry of Information films were shown in the school. Clocks were put on an extra hour in May 1941. Gas mask drills were held and children warned of the dangers of mustard gas. The oldest children were allowed to leave school a few weeks early ‘owing to the war there is a great demand

for child labour.³⁹ Every September the school closed for a day or two for the national effort of picking blackberries and rose hips. For example, on 15th September 1941 the children and staff picked a total of 214 pounds of blackberries, collected the following day by the Rushen Abbey van. Scrap metal was sold and added to a collection from staff and students that resulted in a cheque of £10.00 for the Prisoners of War fund. An extra holiday was granted in June because the school had smashed its fundraising target for ‘Salute the Soldier’ week.⁴⁰ On other days cocksfoot grass and foxgloves were collected for war measure purposes.

Some children aged eleven sat the scholarship examinations for entrance to the Douglas Secondary Schools, King William’s College and the Buchan school. By 1943/44 more than half the thirty-three pupils enrolled in the relevant class were proceeding to the Douglas High Schools for Boys and Girls or to King William’s College and the Buchan, the majority travelling daily from Port St Mary on the 7.10am train, returning on the 4.30pm train from Douglas.

Port St Mary Schools for Aliens [13]

As we have seen already in the Introduction, WWII brought a number of ‘enemy aliens’ to Port St Mary (see also Chapter 7). Hotels and boarding houses on Port St Mary promenade were requisitioned as a camp for ‘alien’ internees. One of the internees was Minna Specht, a German schoolteacher, who had fled to Denmark and then to Wales and Bristol, from where she was interned on the Island. She opened a kindergarten school for internee children up to age six years in the former buildings of the Port St Mary Boys’ and Infants’ Schools; and a school for the six to sixteen-year-olds in the

*Rushen School
Boys’ football
team, School
League champions
1933 (with
Headmaster Mr W
E Kelly (centre)*



'Cornaa' boarding house across the road. Adult education classes were also established in Port St Mary.⁴¹ If the camp in Hutchinson Square internment camp in Douglas became known as 'the university' then the courses on offer to Port St Mary internees might warrant the epithet of a university college or college of further education. The adult education curriculum included Greek, German literature, British history, reading Shakespeare, problems of life and mathematical training plus vocational courses in glove and dressmaking and shorthand and typing.

The post WWII years

Rushen School was closed for two days on the 8th and 9th of May 1945 to celebrate Victory in Europe and on 23rd May two dozen 'Victory' trees were planted in the school grounds by the teachers and children. The trees planted were, appropriately, *Abies nobilis* (the noblest of pines), Sitka spruces and Victory Laurels.

The expansion of secondary education for all was on the horizon. In the first phase of expansion all children aged 11 years and over from the East, the North and the West of the island were admitted to secondary schools in Douglas and Ramsey. Children in the South had to wait another few years. At this time too, the Sunday Schools attached to the chapels and church were well attended.

Castle Rushen Secondary School [14]

Castle Rushen Secondary School admitted its first students on the 1st September 1948 and it was opened officially by the UK Government's Home Secretary, the Hon. Chuter Ede, on the 6th May 1949. The site for the school, in Arbory Street, Castletown, was purchased from the Royal Naval Air Service (the air arm of the Royal Navy operating from Ronaldsway airport). The school was a collection of concrete huts joined together by newly built corridors. The new school acquired the epithet 'Shanty Town'.

The official school name was the subject of much discussion within the Education Authority and with the parents of Castletown and the Rushen Sheading. Castletown High School and Castle Secondary School were both considered. Mrs Cubbon of the



Boys from Mount Tabor Sunday School entered Port St Mary Carnival dressed as the village lifeboat crew c.1954.

Education Authority thought that the term Castle ‘rather savoured of dungeons’ while Mr W. T. Kneale, Chairman of the Higher Education Committee, thought that a ‘secondary’ school was a definite type of school and the term ‘high’ school should not be contemplated. Eventually the name Castle Rushen Secondary School was chosen. The inclusion of Rushen indicated that it took in the area beyond Castletown and the reference to the Castle captured its Manx flavour. However, it would not be long before the name of the school became Castle Rushen *High School*.

The first headmaster was Godfrey Cretney, a Manx man, who served until 1955. The center mistress, Miss G M Wells, assumed the position of Acting Head until the arrival of Mr J R (Jack) Smith, originally from Wallasey, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the Irish Guards and Kings Regiment and Head of English at Stretford Grammar School. In 1976 he was succeeded by Mr Harry Taverner, previously Head of English in North of England schools and Deputy Head of the Douglas High School for Boys. When the school opened in 1948 there were 147 boys and 116 girls on roll. For a period of three years, some of those who had commenced their education from age eleven in Douglas, continued to travel there until completion. The first head boy of the school was Alan Cregeen from Port Erin; and the first head girl Barbara Kennaugh from Castletown. Greeba Creer from Port St Mary was head girl from 1949–1952⁴²; and Ian Cottier from Port St Mary was head boy 1953-54. In 1958 enrolment had grown to 465; by 1976 it was 764.

The school was ‘comprehensive’ and ‘bilateral’ in the sense that it admitted all children regardless of ability, class or creed and offered two curriculum streams, one more academic than the other. It stressed the development of character, through cultural activities and sports as much as academic success. The school’s motto, suggested by Mr John Gell, the handicrafts teacher and Manx scholar was *Lhiat myr toilliu, to thee as thou deservest*. It was remembered by the ‘more mischievous pupils’ as ‘let me tell you!’⁴³

At the school’s first Prize Day Mr Cretney described the organisation of pupils in these terms:

*While there was segregation in the classroom of those quick to learn and those not so quick, and of the clever and the practical, there was no such distinction outside the classroom and it was there they aimed at building up the respect and understanding between those who would later form the adult population.*⁴⁴

This mixing outside the classroom would take place through sport (football, hockey, cricket, cross country, athletics and later netball), assemblies, the school choirs and orchestra, the playground and a range of school clubs. The school’s early days are remembered by former pupils as a happy time when teachers and pupils worked together to make a success of the new school.⁴⁵ On leaving Castle Rushen High School Godfrey Cretney moved to England to head up the newly created comprehensive Regis School near Wolverhampton. He was knighted in 1966 for championing the comprehensive system in England, an achievement influenced greatly by his pioneering years in Castletown.⁴⁶

Academic success was certainly encouraged and by 1959 the school was able to boast with pride of the six students who had gained admission to North of England universities, one girl and five boys, at least two of whom were from Port St Mary.⁴⁷

Ten years later Mr. Smith announced at the Prize Day held in November 1958 that 'Shanty town has been condemned'.⁴⁸ A new school planned in accordance with the latest requirements of the Ministry of Education with facilities for the teaching of science, a medical inspection room and a kitchen for the school meals service would be built on land adjacent to Shanty Town. The new school opened in 1962.

*Rushen Primary
School boys' choir,
1957*



*Rushen Primary
School sports day
c. 1956. Girls'
potato race*



The Rushen Primary School – 1948 to 1979

Now a primary school, everyday life at the Rushen School for the five to eleven-year-old children changed a little. The younger children struggled to maintain the gardens in the way the older, stronger children had done, an issue on which Inspectors' reports would comment periodically during the next ten years. The gardens were simplified over time. Three now-empty classrooms were refashioned to create a larger room for the Infants and a kitchen and dining room from where daily hot meals were served. After the end of the war swimming at the Port Erin baths had resumed. The children were taken by their teachers to the baths for swimming lessons, for which Education Authority paid the charge of 2d per head. The 'Port Erin and country' boys and girls swam on Fridays between 11am and noon; the Port St Mary boys and girls on Fridays between 3pm and 4pm.

Headmaster Cubbin retired in March 1953. He was succeeded by Mr William F. Little, previously Head of Braddan School and before that a teacher at Murray's Road Elementary School in Douglas, prior to serving in the Manx Regiment during WWII. One of his first tasks was to organise the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II celebrations held at the school on 2nd June 1953. Sports competitions, a Commonwealth pageant, country dancing and a tea were followed by two days of school holidays. Several Royal visits would follow. For example, on 9th August 1955 the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Castletown and Mr Little took the children by train (on a very wet afternoon!). On 6th July 1963, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother visited Rushen Primary school.

Rushen Primary School girls' choir, after winning the Vancouver Shield at the Manx Music Festival in 1960. Miss Phyllis Kennaugh on the right and Miss Theresa Watterson (pianist) on the left.





The Queen Mother visits Rushen Primary School on 6th July 1963, hosted by Headmaster W.F. Little.

Inspection reports commented favourably on the school's leadership and the higher than average number of teachers with specialised skills in embroidery, dance and music. Music was a major part of the school life and continued a strong tradition that had started in the 19th century in the Girls' school. The trip to Douglas on Mr Corlett's coach on 7th May 1960 for competitions in the Manx Music and Drama Festival was a day to remember. The school won first prize for its action song, girls' choir, mixed choir, boys' choir and percussion band. And because the girls' choir achieved the highest marks in all the children's classes it was awarded the Vancouver Shield, a very proud day indeed for the school and for Miss Phyllis Kennaugh, the music teacher. This reinforced the strong musical tradition of the school and echoed the successes of the Rushen Girls' School choir of an earlier generation and described earlier.

Mr Little retired in 1974 at which point the school was divided into two – an Infants' School (for which a new block had been built in 1972) and a Junior school. Mr Roger Haines headed the school for a term before Miss Audrey Barker assumed the Headship from 1974. The Junior School was headed by Mr Denis Lewin. Miss Barker recalls leading a number of innovations in the Infant's school. Although the classrooms in the new 1972 building had been built 'open plan', in line with the educational thinking of the time, the spaces within the open plan tended to be used by teachers for single grade group teaching with dedicated resources and materials in the traditional way. Over time teachers began to share resources and expertise and to use space flexibly. The curriculum was organised around three main topics, with one of the three reflecting a Manx theme in the traditional way. Maths and English were integrated within topic teaching where possible. Dependence on textbooks was reduced and television was introduced as an educational medium. Assessment practices emphasised individual student progression rather than student comparison and competition.⁴⁹

The two schools were recombined in 1993. Miss Barker assumed the headship of both until her retirement in 1997. With the expansion of the population of Port Erin enrolment numbers had grown in the Rushen Primary School and a separate Port St Mary Primary School opened in September 1993 on a site diagonally opposite that of the Port St Mary Boy's School built over a hundred years earlier.⁵⁰

Ambitions achieved and exceeded

A long view of the history of schooling in Port St Mary suggests that despite legislative measures dating back to the seventeenth century, compulsory education for all was not achieved in practice until towards the end of the 19th century. Parallel schooling tracks for the rich and poor established in the 17th century were reinforced through the establishment for the rich of King William's College in the 1830s and the private High School for Girls (later the Buchan) in the 1870s. The socially inferior track comprised the Parochial schools for boys and girls, Port St Mary National School, Port St Mary Boy's School, the Infants' School and the Sunday schools. The two tracks underlined the social class divisions of the times, confirming the Manx proverb *Ta ynsagh coamrey stoamey yn dooinney berchagh, as t'eh berchys yn dooinney boght*.

The principle of fee-free education for the very poorest was established by the parochial schools from the mid seventeenth century. Important legislation in 1872 shifted the control of schools towards the state, and abolished school fees in 1892. The 1920 Education Act signalled greater government control over education, moves to amalgamate small schools into larger units and the waning of parochialism in education.

Secondary education had a faltering start with the establishment of the Southern Higher Grade 'school' in 1911 and its subsequent incorporation into the Rushen School in 1927. Not until 1948 did the South have its own secondary school, separated from the 'feeder' primary schools. The 1949 Education Act consolidated a series of post war measures designed to provide education for all to the age of fifteen and the expansion of opportunities for post-secondary education through a college of further education and a scholarship scheme for entrance to universities 'across'.

Social class divisions between the fee-free schools and the fee-paying schools remain to the present day. However, from the early 1900s, the boundary between the two tracks of education – one for all and one for the few – became blurred. A few students from less well-off families could, on the basis of excellent performance in scholastic examinations, enter King William's College, the Buchan School and the Secondary School in Douglas. Social mobility based on academic merit was in its infancy. Within the government secondary school, divisions based on academic merit were institutionalised through 'streaming'. Scores on verbal reasoning tests administered at the end of the primary school were used to allocate students to academic 'streams' in the first year of secondary. So while social class remained the main marker of difference between the pupils in the fee-free and fee-paying schools, 'academic merit' rather than social class became the main marker of difference within the government school.

In most respects, Bishop Barrow's seventeenth century vision of elementary education for all has been realised, albeit with a continuation of a separate track for the few. In other respects – not least secondary education for all and access to university for the many – his vision has been exceeded *erskyn towse* – beyond all measure.