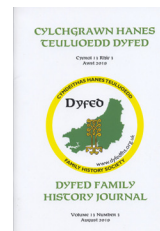


# Tales Out of School

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The growing number of school admission records and log books at FindMyPast have proved a useful resource in giving new information about my Pembrokeshire ancestors. At the last count FindMyPast had over 8.4million records in its National School Admission Registers & Log-Books collection (1870-1914). These were digitized in collaboration with over 60 county and borough archives. For Dyfed, there are 226,273 records for schools in Pembrokeshire and 61,849 for those in Cardiganshire. Unfortunately, there are none for Carmarthenshire. Other Welsh counties with coverage include Caernarvonshire, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.

## Admission Registers

Many admission books start at 1870, following Forster's Elementary Education Act of that year. Up to that time about 2 million out of 4.3 million children of primary school age in England and Wales were not in school. The admissions registers used a standard stationery book with pre-printed columns and though there were several suppliers, they generally followed a fairly common format. The front of the register included a page of instructions "Extracts from the Instructions of H.M. Inspectors" which included the note:

"The Code requires that managers of schools shall provide suitable records – registers, log book and cash book (article 8); and before any grant is made the Education Department must be satisfied "that the admission and daily attendance of the scholars are carefully registered by or under the supervision of the principal teacher, and periodically verified by managers.""

Sometimes there are additional notes, such as a page pasted at the front the Prendergast School Register starting 1899. It was from the Pembrokeshire Education Committee and headed "GENERAL REPORT ON REGISTRATION 1926. MOST IMPORTANT – To be specially noted by all Teachers". It goes on: "With the exception of two schools, the registers show that tremendous improvement has been secured during the [last] five years, as regards neatness, care, and general observance of the requirements of the Code. Of the documents examined, the Admission Register is shows the greatest amount of irregularity and of ignorance of the requirements of the Code." It goes on to give details of "the requirements most often neglected" which include an alphabetical index, how to properly record re-admissions, and recording the date of last attendance.

Pupil entries in these books run across a double page spread. The images below are from the "Register of Admission, Progress

Date of Birth. D. M. Y.	Last School (if any) Attended.	Highest Standard there Presented	Date of Presentation in Successive Standards.						Date of Leaving.
			I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	
14 9 48	Miss Padmore's	—	1884	—	—	—	—	—	April 1888
24 3 48	Mrs Padmore's	—	—	1884	1888	1889	—	—	Oct. 1890
6 6 43	National "	VI	—	—	—	—	—	—	June 1884
5 12 49	Newland B.S.	—	1884	1888	1889	—	—	—	Nov. 1889
10 11 49	National School	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	March 1888
4 12 44	National "	II	—	—	1888	—	—	—	March 1889
5 5 49	National "	I	—	—	1888	1889	—	—	Jan. 1890
4 4 44	National "	V	—	—	—	—	—	1888	Feb. 1889
31 5 45	Private, Sunderland	—	—	—	—	1888	—	—	Jan. 1889
15 5 80	Private, Sunderland	—	1888	1889	—	—	—	—	Aug. 1893

Admission Number.	Date of Admission. D. M. Y.			NAME (Christian and Surname).	Name and Address of Parent or Guardian.	If claiming exemption from Religious Instruction.	If excluded from Grant by Art. IV.
1496	21	2	84	Pittie, Elizabeth	Llanion, William Shipwright		
1494	28	3	84	Budge, Lillian Mary	Church St. Henry Inspector		
1498	4	4	84	Griffiths, Catherine	Military Rd. John Sawyer		
1499	4	4	84	Burch, Miriam Jessup	North, Guyther St. James Engineer		
1500	25	4	84	Philpin Elizabeth	3 Charlton Place Harry Labourer		
1501	10	5	84	Jones, Mary Elizabeth	Knig St. Emmet Landress		
1502	10	5	84	M' Donough, Maria Louise	Knig St. Richard Dentist		
1503	10	5	84	M' Donough, Gertrude Mary	Knig St. Richard Dentist		
1504	16	5	84	Thomas Evelyn	Lewis St. James Shipwright		
1505	16	5	84	Thomas Alice	Lewis St. James Shipwright		

Extract from a page of admissions to Upper Meyrick Street & Albion Square School. The right hand side of the double page spread is shown below.

and Withdrawal" for Upper Meyrick Street & Albion Square School in Pembroke Dock. This particular book covers admissions from 1861 to 1911. Information useful to family historians include details of address and the father's (or guardian's) name. Helpfully here, though not always, is the father's occupation. On some pages over half the fathers are shipwrights. Particularly useful

is the precise date of birth of the school child. This saves forking out money for individual birth certificates. Unlike the 1939 Register where birth years are sometimes a year or so out, I have found all the entries in school registers that I have been able to cross check totally accurate.

Other pre-printed books have slightly different right hand pages, in that they omit the stages of progress, but give exact dates of leaving and where they left to. I have found this very useful in finding information between censuses for my own family. For example the family of William Skyrme (1857-1944) and Elizabeth née Wilkins (1868) are shown as living at 9 Argyle Street, Pembroke Dock in the 1901 census and at 52 Laws Street in 1911. They had also lived in Laws Street in 1891 at Elizabeth's parents. It is natural to assume that they lived in Pembroke Dock between 1901 and 1911. However, School records of their five children who went to Upper Meyrick Street & Albion Square school showed otherwise. Against the entries of eldest son Arthur and his brother William is the entry – left 12 May 1903 “gone to Ireland”. A later entry for Phillip on his readmission on 29 Aug 1905 says “left 2 May 1906 to Haulbowline”. Another school admission entry of 1 Feb 1909 for East End (later Eastgate) School for younger brother David Courtney Skyrme (1897-1977) gives his previous school as “National School, Queenstown (Ireland)”. It happens that father William was a ship's fitter and that Haulbowline was the Royal Dockyard on an island in Cork Harbour. So between the 1901 and 1911 census this family had moved to Ireland, not once, but twice!

Admissions books may contain some interesting surprises. For example, at the back of the book shown in the images, is a page of notes by W.H.Phillips about nearby Llanion School. Probably dating from the early 1980s, he praised the foresight and wisdom of the Pembroke

Dock Borough Council and Education Authority in building a school to cater for the needs of children in that part of Pembroke Dock. He notes the pride of stonemasons for the dressed limestone form which the school was built. Children started at age 3 and “attended in all weathers, the boys wearing hob nailed boots.” The only heating was a coal fire and grate in each classroom.



**The School at Albion Square, Pembroke Dock**

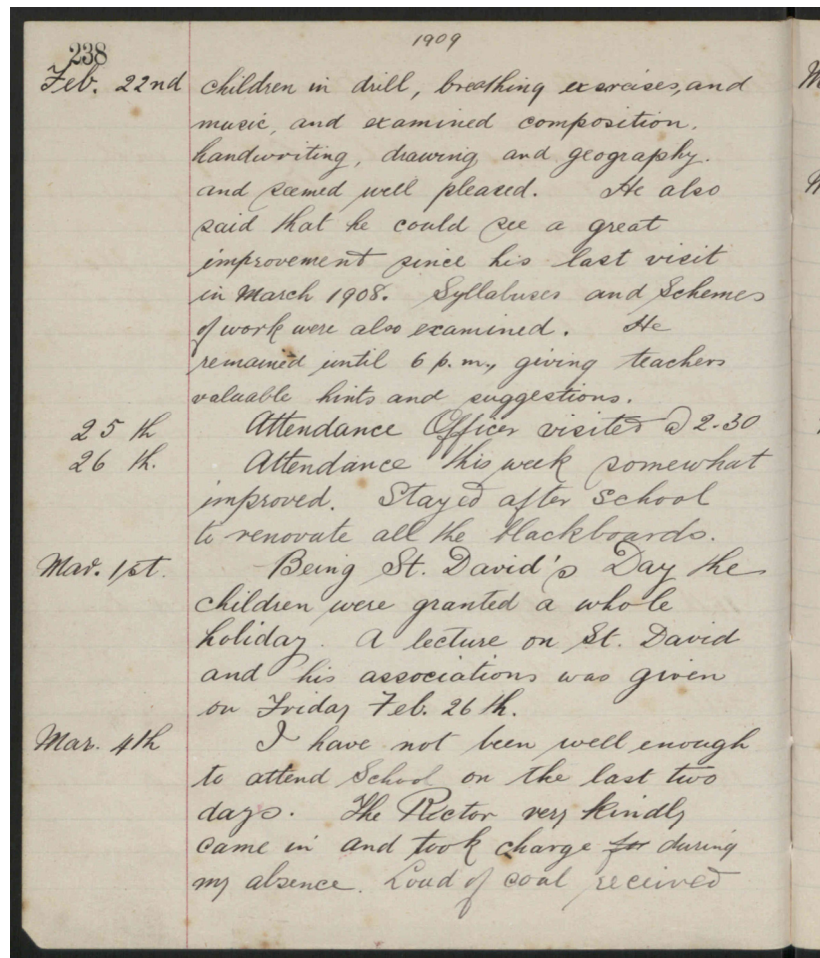
### **School Log Books**

Once you know which school your ancestor attended it is worthwhile browsing the pages of the school's log book for the time that they were there. The extracts below are from the log books of Angle School, Neyland School (Llanstadwell) and Upper Meyrick Street & Albion School (Pembroke Dock). Most of the entries in these books concern attendance. Generally there were weekly summaries, but occasionally an entry for a specific day when attendance was low. Some of the reasons for poor attendance include:



- *Illness.* 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1908: "Three children have been sent home this week suffering from ringworm". 8<sup>th</sup> Mar 1896: "Whooping cough very bad. More than half the school sick". The latter seemed to be recurring theme at this time of year.
- *Weather.* 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1880: "Attendance not so large being a very wet week". 5<sup>th</sup> Mar 1886: "Attendance very low .. owing to the severe snow-storm".
- *Distractions.* 12<sup>th</sup> May 1893: "The circus on, Monday drew off numbers of the children". 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 1910: "No less than ten boys are away this morning beating for a shoot on the estate."
- *Harvesting.* 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 1900: "A good many are absent potato picking". 29<sup>th</sup> May 1908: "No less than eight children have been away whole days this week collecting cockles."
- *Family work commitments.* 21<sup>st</sup> July 1882: "Many children stay away because they have to take dinner into the Dock Yard". 28<sup>th</sup> Apr 1884: "Attendance for some weeks past has not been satisfactory; the fish trade is a great drawback to this."

Just as today there were school closures for bad weather and problems with school building and facilities. But there were



A page from the Angle School log book for 1909.

several other reasons that would probably not feature today. Closures were mostly just for a day, but sometimes longer. As with attendances, illness often played a major part.

- 11<sup>th</sup> June 1883: "Owing to the low attendance caused by the 'Wesleyan Sunday School Treat' there will be a half holiday this afternoon". 11<sup>th</sup> Jun 1906: "Holiday all day on Monday. Anniversary of Sunday School".
- 2 Feb 1894 "School only open 4 times only in consequence of a wreck on Thorn Island West Angle".
- 20<sup>th</sup> June 1902: "The school will be closed from this date to 21<sup>st</sup> July 1902."

One week in honour of the Coronation of King Edward VII and the usual three week summer holidays”.

- 25<sup>th</sup> Jan 1904: “The infants were dismissed this morning because the class room was too cold for them”.
- 16<sup>th</sup> Feb 1904: “Being Shrove Tuesday a half day holiday was granted.”
- 5<sup>th</sup> Feb 1912 “All rooms full of dense smoke blown back by strong east wind. Unfit for children to be in them, Managers came and inspected – closed school and sent children home”.
- 5<sup>th</sup> July 1912: “School needed for a district meeting of the Oddfellows”.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 1912: “School closed for two weeks because of an epidemic of measles and scarlet fever”.

And of course, we must not forget “1<sup>st</sup> March: School closed. St David’s Day.”

The log books vary in detail according to the style of the writer. Some gave elaborate explanations and calculated attendance as percentages. Others had many terse one line entries, such as this entry for a whole week: “usual routine”. The other information that you will find includes:

- Schemes of Work – what topics were covered, including lists of the books that used in various classes. Throughout the year there are often comments on particular pieces of work and on examinations.
- The annual report of the school inspector. Sometimes these are summaries written by the head teacher. Other times they are written into the log book by the inspector.

- Information about teachers, including pupil-teachers – when they joined, when they were away (illness or taking qualification exams) and often a note of all teachers at the beginning of the school year.
- Details of visitors – the most common being the school rector, the attendance officer, and the borough’s medical inspector. In addition the Diocesan Inspector of Schools reviewed the state of religious knowledge. Here is one such entry: “The Attendance Officer has not visited this week. He is supposed to come on Mondays and Thursdays but he frequently omits his visits”.
- Details of equipment and building works. 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 1911: “School reopened. Goods ordered in July have not arrived. Children are hampered by lack of material”. 13<sup>th</sup> June 1912: “Resumed school after Whitsun Holiday during which the work of painting and colouring the inside of the schoolroom had been executed. The interior now wears a much more cheerful appearance.”

In terms of named individuals some logs are more explicit than others. Some simply mention numbers of admissions or departures, while others give their names. Your ancestor is most likely to appear if they were a teacher, a local vicar or an official:

- 23 Sept 1889: “School opened again after three weeks. Several children sick, Emma Tucker and Mary A Phillips dead.”

- 25 Oct 1889: “James Rees and Mary Watkins left the school and parish this week”.
- 11 Jan 1904: “I, Helen Myfanwy Roberts, Certificated School-mistress, began duties as mistress of this school.”
- 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1908: “Cecil Veal, who has been absent from School for fiftenn weeks with a broken leg, returned this morning.”
- 5 Nov 1911: “Miss Jenkins [teacher] absent today. Owing to the gale she was prevented from crossing the ferry from Pembroke Dock.”

I hope that these extracts give a flavour of what you will find in school logs. They provide information about some of the social context in which the school operates. And, of course, you can find more about such context by accessing Welsh Newspapers Online (<http://newspapers.library.wales/>) and reading the relevant local newspaper (e.g. *The Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser*) for a specific event or date that features in a school log.

## Conclusion

School admission books and log books are useful to find or confirm family member information, in particular places of residence between censuses. These documents are accessible at the relevant county archives. The Dyfed FHS website includes a list of all schools in the three counties and what records about them are held in their respective archives. The benefit of their digitization on FindMyPast is that all named individuals are indexed, including references in school logs. The

ability to search by name, location, school and year gives you a consolidated view of all entries for an individual. It is still worth browsing adjacent pages, both to find individuals whose names have been mis-transcribed, but also to find details of their classmates and others who may feature in other parts of your family history. Overall, these records are a valuable resource for the family historian.

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