

1876: THE OPENING OF THE 'BOARD SCHOOL'

The start of the journey to Portobello High School

The building of the new school was started in 1875. By February of 1876 part of the school was ready for occupation and the pupils from temporary premises at Wellington Street (now Marlborough Street) and Tower Street (Figgate Street) moved into the completed parts of the new building.

In April of 1876, the school was completed and the remaining pupils from Pipe Street moved in.

The school was formally opened on 26th April, 1876. The pupils' parents were invited to the ceremony, which included speeches from members of the School Board and singing by the pupils. It was stated that the "education and sanitary arrangements of the school were excellent."

To mark the occasion of the official opening the pupils were given a half-holiday.

The new school was a one-storeyed structure consisting of about ten classrooms, a headmaster's room, two small staffrooms and boys' and girls' cloakrooms. A small gymnasium could be used as a hall or divided into four classrooms by means of folding partition doors.

The janitor's house nearby was built at the same time as the school. The janitor and his family occupied only the ground floor of the house, the large room upstairs being used by the School Board for its meetings.

The school playground was spacious. Trees were planted around it and there were swings and parallel bars for the amusement of the younger children.

In June 1876, the average number of pupils attending the school was 290. At the beginning of the next session in September the school had 484 pupils on its roll.

There were only four certified teachers engaged in full-time teaching in the school at this time. The headmaster was assisted by one male and two

female teachers. In addition there was a sewing teacher who taught for two hours each day and a singing teacher who gave three half-hour lessons weekly.

They were assisted by several pupil teachers – promising pupils who were selected at the age of thirteen and apprenticed for four or five years. If they reached the required standard they could enter training college.

The staff was completed by the Janitor who was also Attendance Officer and Drill Instructor.

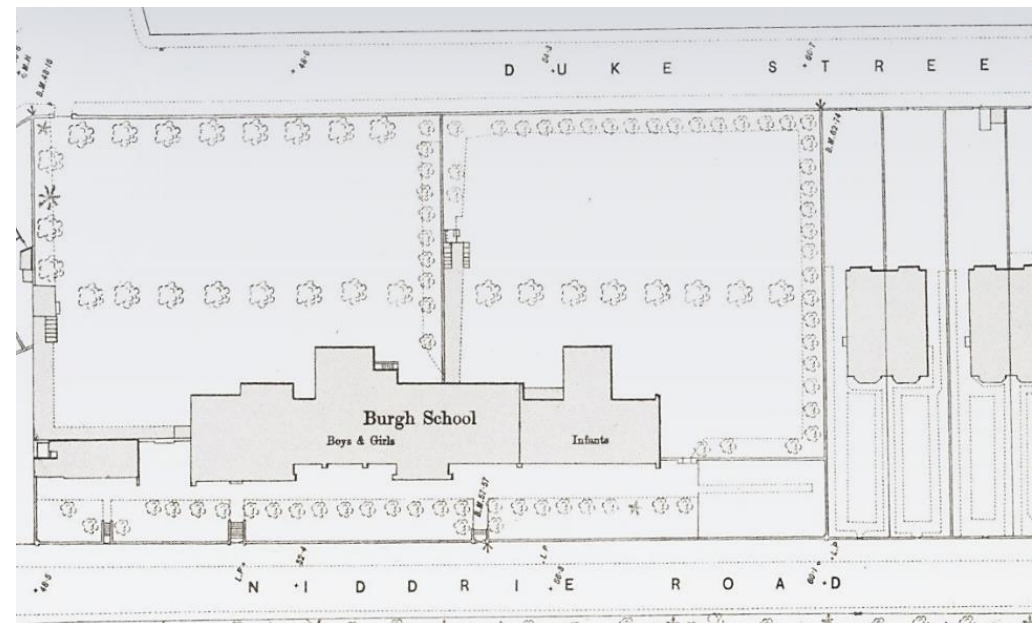
The main subjects were reading, writing, arithmetic and religious instruction. A substantial portion of the day was concerned with religious

training.

As the school role increased other subjects were included in the curriculum such as history, geography and art.

Subjects such as English Literature, mathematics and Latin were taught to some of the senior pupils. Thus a form of secondary education was initiated.

The girls were taught how to sew and were able to purchase what they made. Cookery was very popular but was taught after school as an extra-curricular activity.



The school in 1893, about 20 years after opening. Note the spacious playgrounds and that Park Avenue was then called Duke Street.
Portobello - Sheet IV.5.20. Surveyed: 1893.

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