

Schooldays .. the best days of your life

“... a picturesque Gothic style school, from whose pointed windows the teachers could, if they wished, pitch their pupils down the cliff side into the harbour below...”

Kelly's Directory records 300 pupils at Port Isaac School in 1914

Records show there was a charity school in Port Isaac in 1804, that was supported by voluntary subscriptions and by 1820 there were around forty pupils. However, in 1877, £2400 was raised by donations for the building of a new school on the site of the *Good Intent* Fish Cellars. The land was owned by Lord Robartes of Lanyhydrock. The Cornish architect, Sylvanus Trevail won a prize for the design of the building in a Chicago exhibition. However, all was clearly not well with him as in 1901, now internationally recognised and President of the Society of Architects, he shot himself dead on a train near Bodmin Road Station!

In the early days it was a paying school and the head teacher reported on July 23rd 1877,

“Fees for three children from the same family were 8d (just over 3p) and for each additional child another 2d (just under 1p). Whilst these seem trivial sums now, a newspaper article from 1912 states, “The fishermen of Port Isaac are very poor indeed. Seven and sixpence (37½p) a week was mentioned to me as by no means an exceptionally low scale of earnings.”

In May 1887 the board enforced a ‘No Fee, No School’ policy and sent children home if they had no money ... It was in 1891, when the Free Education Act was introduced, that the system became fairer ...

“Lizzie Couch and Betty Steer were the school cooks in the early to middle 1950s. They took great pride in the food they cooked, and spent many more hours in its preparation than they were paid for.

On one day each week, pasties were made, one for each child and each member of staff.

There was no interference in the kitchen from the headmaster (‘Boss’ Richards).

As there were a considerable number of children who walked to school from Port Quin, Roscarrock Farm, Trelights and Tresungers (the country kids!) it was certain that they were hungry by lunchtime.” George Steer

School Log 1887

May 27th - The Board commenced enforcing the payment of school fees. No child admitted without school money.

June 3rd - The enforcement of school fees is keeping away several children.

June 6th - Average for the week 136, no on books 190. Had to send several home on Monday morning because they had no money.



taken from THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC