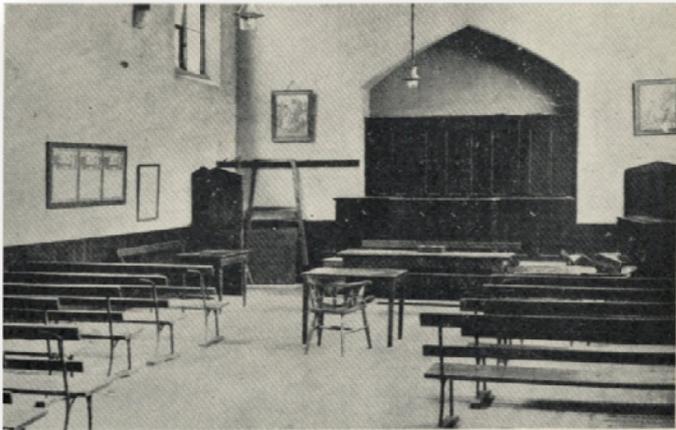


The origins of Truro School 130 years ago, January 1880

On Tuesday 20 January 1880 35 boys sat down to lessons for the first time at Truro Wesleyan Middle Class College. The boarding house and a master's residence was opened at 4 Strangways Terrace, Truro and the large lecture hall and classroom of the Congregational Church in River Street was used as the school rooms.



The River Street school room

The school's aim was to provide an education fit for a middle class boy, whether classical or commercial, to enable further study or to enter a trade, combined with a 'foundation of truth, the principle of all Christian morality', which it was thought 'alone can make a worthy British Citizen'

Letter from Robert S. Boyns, Seattle, Washington, USA (one of the first pupils) to headmaster H.W. Vinter:

...The receipt of your letter made me realise how long it has been since I was at Truro. Perhaps you will remember that I was one of the original students before the College buildings were built. I was a pioneer at Strangways Terrace, and also a pioneer at the Lemon Street House, and, of course, also in the new College building. I did not realise until I received your letter that you had been master of the College for so long a time, but when I think of it, it must be so because you were there long before I left although not then as Head Master...

*Truro College Magazine,
April 1920*

Truro Wesleyan Middle Class College, more often known as Truro College, was renamed Truro School in 1931.



'No. 4 Strangways Terrace became the centre of light and learning to many Cornish lads'

G.O. Turner, April 1892

**First directors/share-holders of
the Cornwall Wesleyan Methodist
School Association, Limited**

- William H.P. Martin of Truro, merchant
- Edward Banks of Falmouth, draper
- George Bazeley of Penzance, merchant
- Amos Jennings of Truro, grocer
- Edward Kendall of Truro, draper
- Humphrey T. Williams of Redruth,
draper
- John Doidge of Truro, banker
- Alfred Lanyon of Redruth, merchant
- William Bickford Smith of Trevano,
gentleman
- George J. Smith of Trevu, Camborne,
gentleman

The school's board of governors was introduced in 1904 and made up of several of the former directors with George J. Smith, by then Sir George Smith of Treliske, as chairman.

Several of the first pupils were sons of the directors.

Methodist Schools in Cornwall

- Dunheved College, Launceston opened in 1873 (boys)
- Redbrooke College, Camborne opened in 1879 (girls)
- Truro Wesleyan Middle Class College, Truro opened in 1880 (boys)
- West Cornwall College, Penzance opened in 1883 (girls)

Origins

To gain a true insight into the origin of the school, one must go back to the Wesleyan Conference of 1878, held in Bradford. This was the first Conference in which laymen of Methodism were associated with the ministers. To celebrate this 'The Thanksgiving Fund' was started and out of this Fund a sum of £10,000 was assigned to promote by grants the establishment of Middle Class Schools. At this time there was very little secondary education in Cornwall.

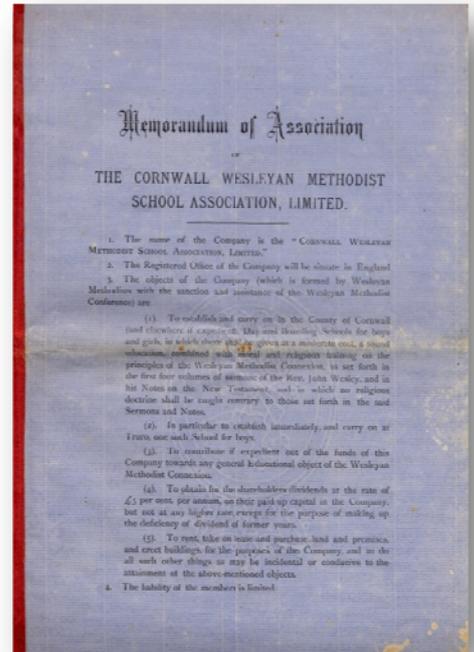
At the Cornwall District Meeting in May 1879 the Rev. T. Richards and Rev. J.S. Pawlyn proposed that a school should be established in Truro. In November 1879 the Cornwall Methodist School Association Limited was formed with a capital of £5,000 divided into 550 shares of £10 each. A strong Board of Directors was got together of which Mr W. Bickford Smith of Trevarno was Chairman.

from H.W. Vinter's History of Truro College

George Turner recalled in 1892 that

in the autumn of that year, 1879, I was appointed Head Master of what then was only a school on paper – no pupils, no premise and until just previously not even the laws of the school determined. But the sublime faith in the future justified itself, for controlling the inner machinery was a committee of shrewd, business-like Cornishmen, chief amongst whom was the indefatigable Hon. Sec. Mr E. Kendall. The hearts of none of these gentlemen beat more warmly towards the school than did that of the late Mr George Bazeley, of Penzance, who lived long enough to see its complement – a College for Girls – firmly established in Penzance...

Truro College Magazine, July 1892



Opening ceremony: 19 January 1880

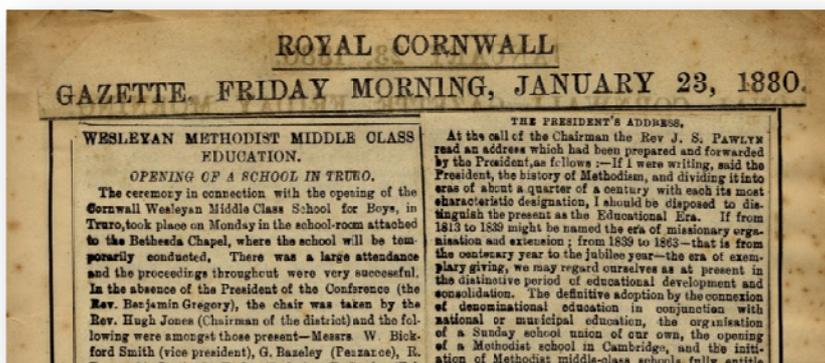
The proceedings of the opening day included a public opening in the River Street School in the morning with an address from the able pen of the venerable President of the Conference, the Rev Benjamin Gregory, followed by a dinner at the Royal Hotel, and a Directors' Meeting at the School House. In that address he concluded by saying 'What we may expect is a system of schools where the soundest secular education shall be given along with the foundation truths of revelation, and the principles of Christian morality and of worthy British citizenship ... where brisk and vigorous work will alternate with plenty of play'. H.W. Vinter

The Royal Cornwall Gazette, 23 January 1880 recorded that the President also spoke of the changes within education:

'within the present century the idea of education has been elevated and expanded...'

A topic that was expanded upon by the headmaster George Turner,

...one great thing had been secured – they had started well – (applause). They had made a good start in having so many of the public present to support them; and in the number of pupils they had secured already. They as yet lacked a valuable aid to a school – traditions of the past; but there was one encouraging thing: if they had no good traditions they had no bad ones – (applause). They started fair; and they looked to these boys to make the traditions of the school – (applause). ... They would try in that school to work on the principle that what was worth doing was worth doing well...



Truro College began on 20 January

1880 with 35 pupils

- 25 boarders and 10 day boys:

J. Arthur (1880 - 1882)
Sidney Bazeley (1880 -)
Ernest Boyns (1880 - 1884)
Robert S. Boyns (1880 - 1884)
Howard Chenalls (1880 -)
J. Furniss (1880 -)
Frederick J. Hart (1880 - 1882)
Charles Hocking (1880 -)
Jenkin (1880 -)
J.A. Jennings (1880 - 1885)
Tom Jennings (1880 - 1885)
Francis W. R. Jose (1880 - 1883)
T. Kendall (1880 -)
Richard H. T. Lewis (1880 - 1881)
Samuel G. Lewis (1880 - 1882)
T.M. Lowry (1880 - 1881)
Frederick W. McCoskrie (1880 - 1881)
H. Mitchell (1880 -)
William Michell (1880 - 1883)
F.J. Nettle (1880 - 1880)
William Olds (1880 -)
B. Paul (1880 -)
Herbert Paul (1880 -)
John H. Paul (1880 -)
George Penleric (1880 -)
Joseph T. Prisk (1880 - 1883)
John Richards (1880 - 1884)
M.P. Richards (1880 - 1890)
Harry Thorne (1880 -)
J. Bernard Trehair (1880 -)
A. Trounson (1880 -)
Alfred Walters (1880 - 1882)
Robert H. White (1880 - 1890)
Edward H. Wilton (1880 - 1880)
Thomas Wilton (1880 - 1883)

This is only an estimate of the first pupils because the original records have been lost.

Lost records

Former headmaster H.W. Vinter took the only copy of the earliest school register with him when he retired but it was lost when his 'over-zealous housekeeper smitten with spring-cleaning fever unfortunately burnt it'. The earliest surviving records are mostly accounts. The earliest school register dates from c.1890.

The teachers at the school in 1880

Headmaster: Mr George O. Turner

Assistant Master: Mr William Vincent

'Mr Vincent was the first, and at that time, the only assistant master. The energy and tact with which he threw himself into the work both indoors and out of doors is deserving of all praise...'

G.O. Turner in the *Truro College Magazine*, July 1892

'...Among the early music masters was Mr E. Holt, also organist of St Mary's, whose sudden death in 1882 came as a great shock. He is commemorated by a window in St Mary's Wesleyan Chapel, as well as in the grateful memory of many of his pupils'

from the *Cornwall Advertiser*, Thursday, January 23, 1913 'Methodism in Truro: V. Foundation & Progress of Truro College'

'...a musician of rare ability and of most unassuming manners'

G.O. Turner recalling Edmund Holt in the *Truro College Magazine*, April 1893

...The system no longer obtained under which masters and boys appeared to be bound to prey the one upon the other – the boys' idea being to see how little work could do and the masters' how much work could be got out of the boys; the masters studying how far they could restrict the boys' privileges, and the boys seeing how far they could baffle the masters and get the upper hand of them. All this arose from the old system of ruling by fear instead of by love... All this had changed now and they worked on an improved system...

Early school life

Turner later recalled the early days at the school and the relative hardships that they had to face.

Early in January 1880, order began gradually to arise from a veritable chaos of boxes and furniture of all sorts. Not the least valuable helper in all this was friend Lobb, the professional College carpenter of future years, who must be near some harm or other, for he is one of the few of whom all speak well. Some ten days are given us previous to opening, enough if all things were ready, but alas! alas! Not a bed for the boys had come to hand from the manufacturers, and the inaugural address had been given before the following problem was solved, given 3 or 4 bedrooms only, 25 boys, a few odds and ends of borrowed beds, palliasses, etc required to make every boy comfortable for one night.

Think of it ye College boys on the top of the hill in comfort and ease. Fancy the 'give and take' that was necessary that first night! Fancy how soon a patient spirit began to be developed in those boys! Many can be found somewhere or other to let you know what their first night in the new school was like. Many were the doleful tales – mostly idle rumours – that came to our ears of the material we were to work upon. From that night nothing corresponding thereto was ever seen. Boys who right cheerfully weathered that awkwardness were ready for anything, and so they proved themselves. How much of the general care and regard for discipline grew out of the first 25 it would be hard to say. All honour to them and the start they gave the College...

... The limited recreation ground around the School premises, despite the perpetual smell of tan, was at any rate large enough to shout in. The garden square behind the house which once boasted a grass plot, but knew grass no more for years, was a play ground somewhat contracted, but every nook and cranny of it was soon known to all...

...The field up the hill, just beyond Lander's monument, witnessed the first football practices, practices of which in a confidential whisper on enquiring youth asked if they would be allowed to continue (so strong was the sense of discipline thus early). Another field near the railway, notwithstanding hillocks innumerable and grass luxuriant, gave scope for learning the mysteries of cricket...

...Despite the difficulties inseparable from the start, life then was very enjoyable, though not a pupil knew how to work a vulgar fraction, though little more than the three R's so-called had crossed their mental horizon, though many a Cornishism would buzz through the air, the incorrectness of which, when pointed out, would shake their simple faith in the old county and show them that the world was bigger than any part of it, by no means an axiom to a boy.

Lessons were given in English, arithmetic, Latin and the humanities. It was not until the new premises were built that more subjects could be taught.

In a series of articles on Methodism in Cornwall written in 1913 in the *Cornwall Advertiser* it was recalled that at Truro College

...in the early days only a few boys were presented for the public examinations, but as time went on the standard of work was raised. In 1882



1882 rugby team

'The standard of education was necessarily low, but good solid work was done.'

H.W. Vinter



1883 cricket team

Awards made at the first Prize Day

Dux Prize

1st Class – F. McCoskrie

2nd Class – J. Jennings

3rd Class – T. Jennings

Improvement

1st Class – A. Walters

2nd Class – J. Arthur

3rd Class – J. Paul

English

1st Class – F. McCoskrie

2nd Class – T. Wilton

3rd Class – B. Paul

Mathematics

1st Class – H. Thorne

2nd Class – F. Jose

3rd Class – J. Furniss

Excellence in Examination

H. Mitchell, 3rd Class

Sunday Bible Class

A. Trounson

Truro College Magazine, April 1893

Frederick McCoskrie was number one on the roll call 'a form of senior prefect'.

At the first former pupils' dinner in 1905 Edward Wilton claimed the distinction of being the oldest old boy, as he was the first to leave.

J. Richards obtained first class in the Cambridge Junior Local Examination, and this was the start for future successes.

Cornwall Advertiser, Thursday, January 23, 1913

In December 1880 the first Prize Day of the School was held. Much of the Head Master's speech referred to the significance of the motto underlying the School Crest, seen now on the present magazine – 'Esse quam videri' – a motto not hastily adopted – a motto that has always been the main aim of the School, indoors as well as out of doors – in life, as well as at School – an eternal enmity to all shams and hypocrisies and a lasting alliance with the good and the true. On that occasion Mr (Sir) G.J. Smith of Treliske distributed the prizes and to him we owe much of the success of the School in subsequent years and also mention should be made of Mr James Wickett a good friend of the School for so many years.

H.W. Vinter

Expansion

It was not long before new school buildings were needed to cope with the demand for places by new pupils.

The question of site for the School premises involved many an anxious consideration. Many weary tramps taken in the neighbourhood, and bird's eye views of the surrounding country to fix a suitable spot. As must happen no one spot possessed every recommendation. The final choice of a meadow exactly opposite the present building was all but made when unexpectedly there came an offer to the Directors through the kind offices of our respected friend – Alderman S.J. Polkinhorn JP – of the present site, combining most of the advantages of the former with others that render it unsurpassed for position, seen as it is by all who enter the city by river, road, or rail. From few spots can so extensive a view of town and country be secured – no small feature in broadening the outlook of opening minds.

Before the first year was over, after considerable competition the plans of Mr Ettwell, West

Bromwich were accepted and a tender for the work was received from Messrs Julian and Sons, Truro. The School grew so for the Second Master and some of the boarders in Lemon Street, the boarders having increased from 25 to 36.

H.W. Vinter

The Lemon Street house had 'a front bedroom conveniently opposite a public lamp'

G.O. Turner, April 1893

The Royal Cornwall Gazette

in June 1881 noted that

...the success of the first year's working has clearly proved the necessity which existed for such a school... The directors, in presenting their first annual report to the share-holders, gratefully acknowledge that the year has been one of progress and marked success... The school is acknowledged to be supplying a great want, and to be bringing within the reach of the middle-class population of the county a thoroughly sound education, based on religious principles, at a very moderate cost... there are even now about 100 applications for admission to the school. The directors secured a site for the permanent school on what is known as Nicoll's estate, a piece of high land on the east side of the river Fal, commanding a view of the city of Truro and an extensive stretch of panoramic scenery around. From a sanitary point of view a better position could not have been secured, whilst the block of buildings from this elevation will have a most imposing appearance...

The foundation stone of the present school building was laid on 7 June 1881 by Mr W.A. McArthur MP, Lord Mayor of London. It opened in the spring of 1882.



View of Truro from the Trennick / Poltisco area

