A Social History of Schools Organisation and Planning in the Nineteenth Century, up to the Education Act 1870.

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The 1870 Education Act was a landmark in English education. It was a major recognition by the government that the state bore some responsibility, at least, for setting up a national system of free and compulsory[1] education. It was only the beginning of legislation towards the educational system we know today, but from another point of view it was also the culmination of an educational structure that had slowly been growing up in England since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The nineteenth century was a crucial era in the ratification of this educational structure, and in this paper I propose to explore the changing development of schools organisation and planning from 1800 – 1870, with particular reference to the social and historical reasons which bought these changes about.   For the progress of the English education system is rooted in the past.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century, education was very much an upper and middle-class privilege. Yet, even as early as 1800, the embryonic framework, which was to provide the basis of the future education system, was deeply embedded in the social habits and customs of the pre-Victorians. There were, already in existence, the prestigious public schools for the sons of the aristocracy; a considerable number of privately owned day and boarding schools for the growing middle-class; grammar schools of varying status and condition; and a certain number of charity, or philanthropically provided, schools for the poor, whose aims however were social rather than educational.

King's Norton School,

The public schools had begun to develop into their contemporary forms of national institutions for the sons of aristocracy during the eighteenth century. Most of them had expanded either from the grammar schools of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, or from the college foundations laid down at the same period. Both Winchester and Eton, for instance began as only a part of a charitable institution, which catered for a large number of inmates of various kinds, as well as for scholars to learn Latin grammar. At first these schools were quite small – Eton began with places for 25 scholars. But after the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, the sons of the nobility could no longer be sent to complete their education, as they usually did, in an abbot's household. This, together with the general move during the Renaissance towards educating one's male children at a school, rather than at home with a tutor, led to an infiltration of nobility into the better known colleges and grammar schools. Originally these schools had provided free places for scholars, but as their statutes permitted them to take fee-paying children as well, many of them rapidly became very prosperous under this increasing influx of fee-paying 'commoners'. As their numbers expanded, so did the structure of the schools and many schools of impressive

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[1] Not entirely compulsory until the Act of 1880 and not entirely free until the Act of 1918 when school fees were abolished in all elementary schools.

size and design were rebuilt or added to in the seventeenth century. Winchester built a new schoolroom in 1683-7, possibly to the design of Wren. Eton had to divide the school into two parts and build a new Upper School in 1688-91, also designed by Wren, which cost £2,300. But accommodation for many of these schools was something of a problem, and much building went on rather haphazardly clustered around the old.

Rugby, which had developed from a small local grammar school, soon found that's its new schoolroom of 1750, which had two chambers above for boarders, was rapidly outgrown, and was forced to put boys into barns and outhouses, in an attempt to cope with the increase in numbers. It also adopted the Etonian system of tutoring boys in the master's own room's, so that they need not all be in the building at the same time, and as many boys as possible were boarded out in dame's lodging houses. The public schools however, in spite of these problems, continued to flourish. But, by the end of the eighteenth century, the inadequate and primitive systems of control over the boys, complicated by the lack of accommodation, led to an increasing number of school riots, and it became clear that radical reorganisation was essential of these schools were to avoid falling into total disrepute. In spite of bitter criticism from the Radical Press and numerous allegations of brutality and corruption, the public schools continued to expand at a phenomenal rate. Eton, which had places for twenty five boys when it was founded, had 364 boys in 1800, 627 boys in 1833, and 806 boys by 1861.

Rugby, always to the fore, had achieved an income, by the turn of the century, which more than doubled its expenditure, and this enabled it to build a fine new school complex in Tudor Gothic, thus overcoming the problem of accommodation. The sheds and barns were cleared away and the entire school was rebuilt during 1809 – 16 by the architect, Henry Hakewill. Dormitories were provided, thus bringing the boarding problem properly under the control of the school, and an innovatory feature was the provision of separate

Rugby

schoolrooms for different 'forms' and individual studies for the boys private use. The Tudor Gothic style was chosen, as it commonly began to be in the early nineteenth century, in an attempt to emulate the earliest academic buildings of Tudor England. There was a whole new emphasis on status and morality in a fervent attempt to overcome public criticism. Rugby is also particularly interesting because, having a less aristocratic clientele than many public schools, it was one of the first schools to introduce non-classical subjects, such as French, English History, Geography and Mathematics, into its curriculum. For most public schools, who were fiercely condemned for this reason, preferred to retain the rigid classical curriculum laid down by their original statutes. It was seen by many as an exclusive social cachet. But others saw it more as a symbol of stagnation. Men like Ruskin, drew up schemes and expounded theories for a broader educational curriculum. Mathew Arnold, the son of Arnold of Rugby, made a detailed study of Continental schools and expressed the opinion that British education was falling behind the best of the European systems. As a result the Clarendon Commission of 1864 was set up, to inquire into the conditions and management of the top nine public schools, and several suggested points of improvement were made with particular reference to internal and external methods of organisation. Apart from a pressing need for curricular reform and reorganisation of teaching systems, one of the most urgent social needs was the provision of properly supervised boarding accommodation, such as had already taken place at Rugby. And many public schools were recommended to be almost entirely rebuilt; some of the London schools such as Westminster

and Charterhouse were advised to move to completely new sites, partly to give them more room for expansion, and partly because it was felt that they would thrive better on more 'eligible' sites outside London[2] . The main effect of the Commission however was to hasten the passing of the Public Schools Act of 1808, which reaffirmed the position of seven of the nine schools as status boarding establishments charging high fees, and permitted them to reconstitute their governing bodies in order to give them the financial and legal independence from the control of ecclesiastical corporations, which was vital for their further development. It also recommended that the local day boys attached to these schools, the now sadly reduced remnants of the original 'free' scholars, should be separated from the main school and set up in local day schools of their own. This was only one of the numerous decisions taken in the nineteenth century which led to a key increase in social class separation.

This class separation was further exaggerated by the growth and provision of many new middle-class schools in the nineteenth century. The wealthy merchant and commercial classes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had always been able to use the existing grammar schools, but in the eighteenth century there was an increasing body of opinion, which felt that the grammar schools were not providing a sufficiently contemporary education. Most of them had limited classical curriculums, laid down by their original statutes, and many schools would not, or felt they could not, break away from these statutes. Only a few had the audacity and confidence to illicitly do so. So, as industrial expansion continued and the population in the towns increased, the new middle-class parents began to set up their own private day and boarding schools, with a few for girls, as well as boys, to fill the gaps in the educational system. These schools, financed largely by private philanthropy or public subscription, and usually Non-conformist in origin – although there were also Anglican schools, developed more practical broader curriculums for their children, often with a commercial bias. They also, particularly in the boarding schools, maintained an atmosphere of strong moral discipline, mainly in reaction to the grammar school image, which had, by now, like the public schools, developed a bad reputation for lack of discipline and vice, 'a promiscuous, numerous herd of rude, wild boys', as one contemporary observer commentated[3]. But although these schools are an interesting example of 'self-help', they did not greatly influence school building at the time, because they were for the most part small, and set up in existing buildings such as rectories or large houses. They are however important, because they provided a basis for the more crucial leap-off of middle-class education in the nineteenth century, when the middle-class began to achieve both, more political and social power after the franchise reforms, and concomitantly, more wealth. As their status increased, so did their desire for a good education for their children. But they could not possibly send their children to the best public schools, which had by now become the totally exclusive property of the upper classes. The social, if not financial barriers were too great. And yet, the small private day and boarding schools, which they had set up themselves, no longer, now seemed adequate to aspiring parents.

So, during the nineteenth century middle class education developed along two main lines, which were: a) the provision of 'proprietary' schools, and then, middle-class colleges which were a second stage development of the 'proprietary' schools; and, b) the revitalisation of the grammar schools.

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[2] Westminster did not, in fact, move out of London, but Charterhouse moved out to Surrey in 1872.

[3] John Clarke, the master of Hull School, Essays on the Education of Youth in Grammar Schools, (1720) referred to in Chapter Six: 'Public and private schools in the eighteenth century' in The English School 1370 – 1870 by Malcolm Seabourne, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1971 edition, p94

The 'proprietary' schools through which the middle-class first sought to provide their own higher education system, were in effect joint stock companies in which concerned parents bought shares. They were also part of a whole new attempt to break away from the restrictions imposed by the Anglican controlled schools, a duel which befogged the whole of the nineteenth century educational structure. It is interesting to note, in fact, that this aversion the main religious denominations had for one another, spread right into the architecture itself. For the Anglicans almost always chose Gothic for their schools and the Nonconformists had a penchant for the Classical. Several 'proprietary' schools were built in the 1820s and '30s and many of the larger ones, such as Mill Hill in Middlesex (see below),

built in 1825 and the new Edinburgh High School, built in the same year, were very impressive with provisions for separate classrooms, dining halls, public hall and libraries. Their freedom from ecclesiastical control gave these schools far more scope for experimentation in both curricular and structural organisation. But for some reason which it is almost impossible to define, the 'proprietary' schools, almost invariably led only a short life. The newly built Leicester Nonconformist Proprietary School, for instance, in spite of showing every sign of success in its early years, only remained as a school from 1837 – 47, and ended its days as a museum.

Mill Hill

Undaunted by these early failures, however, the middle-class, while retaining the 'proprietary' principle, shifted their interests to boarding school education. Education was becoming vitally important for success, at this stage of the nineteenth century, because of the newly introduced principle of competitive entrance examinations for such institutions as the Civil Service, in the early 1850s. And there was a generally increasing recognition of educational accomplishment as a priority for public and private achievement. So after the 1840s, there came into being the middle-class boarding colleges, all founded on the 'proprietary', share-holding principle; all later to become famous. Schools such as Marlborough, Cheltenham, Rossall and Liverpool College. The very fact that they were called colleges, after the mediaeval fashion, rather than schools, emphasised the status that they were now entitled to confer on their occupants. Most of them were beautifully sited, often taking over redundant family seats. But if they were newly built, or the extensions were made to existing buildings, the Perpendicular Gothic style was nearly always chosen, breaking away from the Tudor Gothic or Classical styles which had been popular in the earlier years of the century. As the schools became popular, new classrooms, dormitories, dining halls and chapels were added, usually evolving round a quadrangular plan, and this quadrangular plan was to become the standard pattern for most middle-class colleges built after the 1860s. This would no doubt have been admired by Pugin, who felt that 'the solemn quadrangle'[4] was the most suitable design for providing the right atmosphere for a serious education.

The middle-class colleges quickly developed a reputation for producing well-educated young men with a propensity for Christianity and sport. And in time, they became virtually sub-strata of the public schools system. But, in addition to this success, the middle class, eager to develop all forms of educational opportunity, had turned to the revitalisation of the old grammar schools, many of which had gone into a decline during the eighteenth century. A public inquiry, the Schools Inquiry Committee, was set up in 1864 to examine the condition of all endowed schools, most particularly the grammar schools. Over half of them proved to

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[4] A. W. Pugin The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (1841), p43

be in a highly dilapidated and dismal condition. Many of them were still in their original, vernacular style buildings, which usually just consisted of a single large room. But even before the Endowed Schools Act of 1869 had given a legalised new life to these schools, in many areas, particularly in the larger towns, where the need was greatest, the middle-class had begun to take over, reform, and rebuild these schools, as early as the 1840s and '50s. The King Edward's School, Birmingham, had a new schoolroom built in 1838; Bristol Grammar School, which had closed down in 1829, was re-organised and re-opened in 1847 with a modernised curriculum and pupils drawn, almost entirely from the professional and middle-classes. Manchester Grammar School, also re-built in 1837, particularly exemplified the changes taking place. In the 1850s the school was transformed by a new headmaster, Mr F W Walker. He introduced fee-paying day boys, and placed a new emphasis on intellectual achievement by introducing an entrance examination, and, later, by preparing his boys for open scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge. The school became a huge success for its, now, largely middle-class, intake, but sadly, in order not to hinder the progress of the elite, the lower part of the school, the original 'petties' school open to local day boys, where the elements of reading and writing were taught, before the boys progressed to the 'upper' or classical school, was sloughed off and developed separately into an ordinary elementary school. This pattern, common to many grammar schools, was to be repeated often during the nineteenth century. This removal of an open channel between elementary and secondary education, this separation of rich and poor, of the academically gifted from the non-gifted, was thus emphasised and re-inforced by the purposeful take-over of the grammar schools by the middle-class. And the impressive new grammar school buildings in handsome ecclesiastical Gothic which sprang up in the 1860s, symbolised in their very structure, the awe and mystique of this new image of intellectual exclusiveness.

By late Victorian times the aristocracy and the wealthier upper middle class had their major public schools: the remainder of the middle-class sent their children either to the new middle-class colleges, the revitalised grammar schools, or the more humble private day and boarding schools. In practical terms, these day and boarding schools had proved that education was not only desirable but a profitable institution which reinforced the possession of status and wealth in the hands of a few. But all these schools undoubtedly tended towards exclusiveness, retaining education as a class privilege, and there is no doubt that the most progressive step forward in the nineteenth century was the recognition of the principle that education should be provided not only for the rich, but also for the poor. This in itself was not entirely new; there had been many hospital, charity and Sunday schools set up in the seventeenth and eighteenth century to cope with the increasing numbers of industrial poor. But their function had always been almost entirely social. Charity schools bore inscriptions such as 'If any will not worke, neither shall hee eat'[5]. Robert Raikes, the founder of the first Sunday school, in Gloucester in 1780, expressed his approval of the children's 'sense of subordination and of due respect to their superiors'[6]

Men like Charles Hoole, the master of Rotherham Grammar School, who suggested in 1660[7] that all children should have the benefit of a formal education, regardless of sex or class, were rare indeed. For commoner was the attitude prevalent at the time of the Napoleonic wars, when men feared the influence of education on the poor; believing, that it would give them radical and destructive ideas; that if you educated them, they would 'break out' and

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[5] See Chapter 3, 'Town and Village Schools', The English School, op.cit. p40

[6] Pauline Gregg, A Social and Economic History of Britain, Harrap, 1965 edition, p232

[7] A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole, see Chapter 5, 'Schools of the Restoration period', The English School, op.cit. p62

smash the old established tenets of society. So that the idea of providing poor children with a minimum of education for its own sake, in a nationwide system of elementary schools, was quite revolutionary in content, and even when these schools quickly began to spread all over England, there were still many who continued to see education as a dangerous exercise, which must necessarily be made restrictive rather than enlightening if social control was to be maintained. So the whole ethos of elementary education, apart from a few, was almost totally opposed to that of the rest of the educational structure. The nineteenth century, in fact, saw the ratification of a schools structure which was to continue to provide, even into the twentieth century, schools for the rulers and schools for the ruled.

Nevertheless, the elementary schools provided at the time, what was seen as a revolutionary breakthrough in the educational structure. The first forty years of the nineteenth century were crucial for providing a basis for the controlled elementary education for all which was to be legalised by the 1870 Act. Two main societies were responsible for the rapid development of elementary education: the National Society, which reflected Anglican interests, and the British and Foreign Schools Society, which represented Nonconformist opinion. These two societies spent the whole of the nineteenth century, wrestling for control of the education system in Britain, and it was only with the setting up of government controlled, non-denominational schools, after the 1870 Act, that the squabbling began to die down. Each had their own designs and plans for internal and external structure and organisation, but it was in fact, the Lancastrian system, favoured by the British and Foreign Schools Society, that was eventually to prove the most popular and provide the basis for almost all elementary school planning in the early years.

The fact that the planning and structural organisation of these schools was taken so seriously, reflects the concern that was felt about making these new systems work efficiently. Planning itself was not new of course, but now, far more attention was to be paid to the internal organisation of the school. Earlier schools, built before the nineteenth century, even quite large schools of all kinds – although often ornate and elaborate externally, were often quite simple inside. The basic schoolroom plan had hardly changed at all since the earliest schools of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The usual plan was just a large single room in which all the pupils were taught together at the same time. Even when the school was quite a large one, possibly in a two-storey building, it was still basically just one large room on top of another; the 'petties' or English school, being held in the lower room, for instance, in a grammar school, and the classical or Latin scholars being taught in the upper room. The furniture in the early schools was minimal, usually just a few trestles arranged down the sides of the walls, facing each other, with a master's high chair, often on a raised dais at one end. Occasionally, in the larger schoolrooms, movable screens would be provided across the centre to separate the children, but separate classrooms were virtually unknown and rarely provided, even into the nineteenth century, except in a few of the larger schools.

There had been an interest in school planning since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but although many of these early plans were extremely interesting and relatively modern in conception, few of them were put to practical application at the time. In 1660, in his book 'A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School', Charles Hoole suggested that the ideal school should be big enough to house up to five hundred scholars. The building should be a three-storey one (such a school was in fact built in Shrewsbury from 1595 – 1630). The ground floor should be a 'petty' school; the first floor, the main schoolroom, with seats, desks, and ushers pews, with a raised masters desk at one end; and the top storey should be used for a school library, with globes and maps, and possibly, also providing some lodging accommodation. Another educationalist, John Dury, wrote a pamphlet called 'The Reform of

the School'[8] in 1650 in which he outlined a plan for a boarding school in which scientific, linguistic and other studies would be pursued in addition to the usual English and Latin. He also introduced the idea of having separate rooms for separate classes. However, both these men were ahead of their time.   One of the few basic innovations that was made in the seventeenth and eighteen centuries, was the provision of living accommodation for the master and occasionally an usher or second master. This was usually placed at one end of the school in the simpler schools such as that in Burnsall, Yorkshire, built in the seventeenth century, although in later schools, it was often also built in the centre of the school building, separating one large schoolroom from another, such as the English school from the Latin school, or more particularly in the nineteenth century schools, a boys school from a girls school. Much depended, of course on the size and type of school (i.e. day or boarding)[9] and the money available. Apart from these additions the basic structure of school building was for centuries modelled on that of a barn. Separate classrooms, as such, began to appear in the nineteenth century, mainly at first, in the new middle-class 'proprietary' schools. Many of these schools, such as Liverpool College, built in 1843, also led the way in providing such innovatory facilities as libraries for the use of the boys (books were rare in most early schools as so much learning was done entirely by rote), and even, in a few schools, laboratories for simple scientific work. The broadening of the curriculum, in this way, made the use of separate classrooms for teaching, imperative. But even in the 1860s, there were still many schools – even such prestigious schools as Winchester, where children were still being taught in a single common schoolroom. Even the Clarendon Commission of 1864 was still dubious about the effects of teaching boys in separate rooms. 'It is necessary at the Bar, and in other careers of life, and in the Houses of Parliament, that much mental work should be done of all kinds, amidst many outward causes of distraction. It would be a matter of regret if Public School life should in any way disqualify boys for the conditions under which they must do their work as men.'[10]

This problem arose again in a slightly different form in the new spate of elementary school planning intended to cope with the novel requirement of educating large numbers of working-class children with a simple English education.   Joseph Lancaster, the nineteenth century educationalist, was acutely concerned with the importance of the school building and the internal layout.   He particularly condemned the unhealthy confinement of the typical cramped school room and the disorder it engendered. In 1810 he produced a work entitled 'The British System of Education'[11] which advocated a new kind of large schoolroom layout with desks facing the master instead of being arranged down the sides, with plenty of space being left down the sides of the rooms for the children to gather in groups for special teaching. In 1811, he produced another work 'Hints and Directions for Building, Fitting Up and Arranging School rooms in the British system of Education[12], which went into considerably more detail, and had at the end 'a technical description of a plan for a schoolroom, intended for the guidance of a builder', which had various recommendations for the provision of space, heating, and noise-reducing arrangements. He even suggested the use of a sloping floor in order that the master should see the children more clearly.   His plans were taken up and elaborated by the British and Foreign Schools Society, which

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[8] ibid. p63

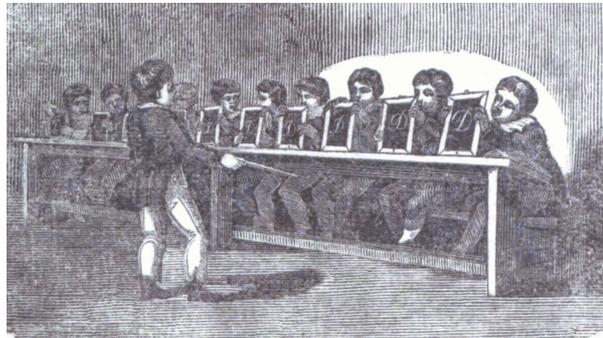[9] Boarders usually slept in a large chamber or garret, running the whole length of the school.

[10] Chapter 11: 'Middle-class schools', The English School, op.cit., p243

[11] ibid, p136

[12] ibid, p136

published a whole series of plans in their 'Manual of the System of Primary School Instruction' (1831).[13]

The Lancaster plans were to be the most favoured in the early elementary schools but there were other plans, which were also popular and later incorporated jointly with the Lancastrian plans into the designs of many schools. One such plan was the Madras system, which kept the children sitting round the walls of the room, but had plenty of space in the centre to allow the children more freedom of movement than was usual. Children were called out in groups to work in the centre. Both these systems were used in conjunction with the rigid monitorial type of teaching which was the main system of conveying information at the time. However, the monitorial system did not work very well with very young children and various suggestions were made to improve the situation. Samuel Wilderpin, another educationalist, suggested that the very young children should be provided with a separate classroom. He was also instrumental in suggesting that playgrounds with circular swings for the children to exercise on, should be provided in every school. Some of his ideas were taken up by David Stow, who suggested yet another type of school plan which incorporated a kind of gallery system of stepped seats at one end of the schoolroom, so that the children could see and hear the master more clearly, on those occasions when they were simultaneously taught. After, 1840, in fact, these last two ideas were often incorporated, and separate classrooms for infants were provided in many schools with a gallery system of stepped seats inside them.

These three basic plans; the Lancastrian, the Madras and the Stow, were to form the basis of the elementary school plans issued by the Committee of Council, a government organisation appointed in 1839; a kind of forerunner of the Education Department of today, which attempted to exercise some control over the vast number of elementary schools that were now springing up all over Britain. This body could do little at first to exercise curriculum control, or calm down the dissension between the denominational bodies who bitterly resented any attempts at government interference. So it concentrated, to begin with, on the actual organisation and building of schools. It laid down certain minimum standards, and reserved the right to inspect all schools which were aided by the government grant system, which had been in operation since 1833, and which the Committee of Council itself, had been set initially to supervise. The Committee also attempted to work out methods of teaching which would improve on the monitorial system. Some advocated the simultaneous method, where one master taught sixty to a hundred schoolchildren, all together in the same place. However, both these systems had grave defects, which became particularly apparent as the schools increased in size. One solution to the problem was seen as the adoption of the Dutch system of apprenticing pupil teachers, who would teach in the school as part of their early training and Robson's School Architecture[14] seems to take the pupil teacher system for granted as the inevitable method. But even this created difficulties. Ideally the children would need to be split up into separate classrooms, but the Victorians were extremely reluctant to do this, because it would mean that the master could not supervise, either the children or the pupil teachers adequately. So, again, various compromises were

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[13] ibid, p137

[14] School Architecture. Being Practical Remarks on the Planning, Designing, Building, and Furnishing of School-Houses, Edward R Robinson, John Murray, 1874

suggested. The main one can be seen in the 1851 plan issued by the Committee of Council[15]. There is still one huge room, with the addition of a separate classroom for infants containing a teaching gallery, at one end. But the forms are arranged in blocks down the long wall and between them are rods for curtains, which could be drawn to separate the children from each other, but not from the vigilant eye of the master, who sat on a dais on the opposite long wall. In this way he could observe the progress of the pupil teachers who stood in front of each block of children.

So, slowly, the internal planning of the elementary schools developed under the watchful eye of the government. In 1856 an Education Department was formed, from an amalgamation of the various official grant awarding agencies. In 1863 the new Department issued a set of 'Rules to be Observed in Planning and Fitting up Schools'[16] which became the precursor of the present day School Building Regulations. Externally the buildings were unusually of the simplest design and construction for the amount of money available was usually strictly limited. The early schools, following the Committee of Council's plans of 1840, had been built in the Tudor style, but after the influence of Pugin's 'Contrasts' and 'True Principles' began to spread, school buildings became involved in the ecclesiastical revival. As early as 1847, Henry Kendall (junior) published a folio volume of 'Designs for Schools and School Houses'[17] and urged the employment of professional architects in school building. He considered that the expansion of elementary education presented a 'noble opportunity for the exhibition of national architecture and for contributing to its general diffusion'. Indeed many interesting designs were published in the 1850s and '60s in 'The Builder' as the schools were swept along in the Gothic revival.

By 1870 the groundwork for the state education system had already been laid. It only remained now for the Education Act, which provided for the setting up of non-denominational schools, where no other type of elementary schooling existed, to complete the comprehensive network of English schools. Humble as they might be in practice, the Board Schools, so known because they were brought into being by the new School Boards, elected by local rate-payers, became a symbol of Victorian responsibility towards future generations of British men and women. It had been a long hard struggle for some towards the principle of education for all, but having once accepted the inevitable, the nineteenth century body politic, with typical Victorian aplomb, modestly self-applauded its own progressiveness and foresight. Perhaps Charles Booth, the great Victorian social reformer expressed the general sentiment most cogently: -

'Among the public buildings of the Metropolis the London Board Schools occupy a conspicuous place. In every quarter the eye is arrested by their distinctive architecture, as they stand, closest to where the need is greatest, each one "like a tall sentinel at his post", keeping watch and ward over the interests of the generation that is to replace out own. The School Board buildings, as befits their purpose, are uniformly handsome, commodious, and for the most part substantial and well arranged. The health and convenience of both children and teachers have been carefully considered, and, in the later ones especially, have been increasingly secured. They accommodate a little over 443,000 children, and have been erected at a cost of about four and a half millions sterling. Taken as a whole, they may be said fairly to represent the high-water mark of the public conscience in this country in its relation to the education of the children of the people'.[18]

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[15] Chapter 10: Church schools and State intervention 1840-70, The English School, op.cit. p201, fig 35S

[16] ibid, p211

[17] ibid, p212

[18] My Apprenticeship, Beatrice Webb, Longmans, 1950 edition, p218