

A GREAT DELIVERANCE

UPPINGHAM'S TYPHOID EPIDEMIC 1875-7

Nigel Richardson

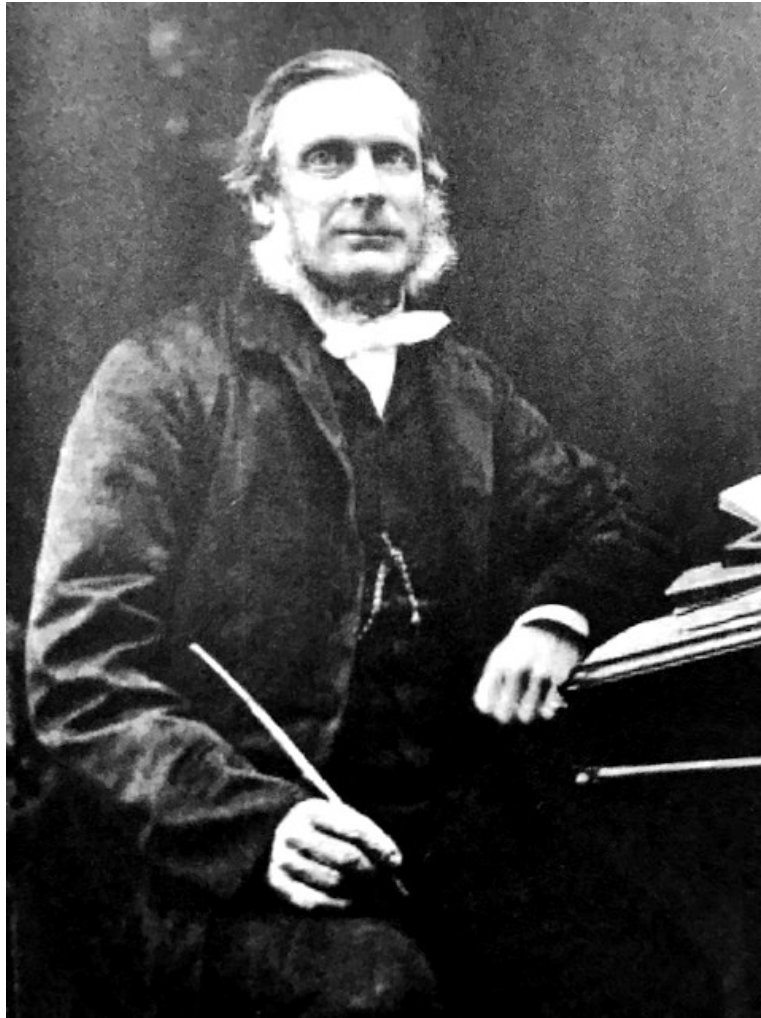


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BRIEF GLOSSARY OF TERMS

RSA	Rural Sanitary Authority	MOH	Medical Officer of Health
LGB	Local Government Board	PWLB	Public Works Loan Board
MO	Medical Officer	USA	Urban Sanitary Authority



Edward Thring (1821-87), Headmaster of Uppingham School 1853-87.

Front Cover: Uppingham from the south-east, 1871.

First published 2021.

Published by the author: NPVRichardson@btinternet.com

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ISBN No. 978-1-9196205-0-3

There is a twin publication, *A Spring Invasion*, which describes the school's time in Borth in 1876-7 in greater detail: ISBN No. 978-1-9196205-1-0.

With thanks to Uppingham School for the use of many pictures from its archive, and to the Uppingham Local History Study Group and others as indicated in the text.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Peter Lane: a good neighbour and a distinguished local historian who shared his knowledge generously.

BACKGROUND

‘A Great Deliverance’ was Revd. Edward Thring’s description of what Uppingham School experienced after the typhoid epidemic which struck it three times in 1875-6, causing its temporary migration to the Welsh Coast. He likened the school’s upheaval to the wanderings of the Israelites in the Old Testament.

For the town, these events represented a deliverance of a different kind. It emerged from its previously hazardous state of public health, thanks to the provision of a greatly improved sewerage system and new mains water supply - achieved after much pain, recrimination and expense.

In 1975-6 whilst teaching history at the school I came across a slim book in the library by JH Skrine, one of Thring’s masters, entitled *Uppingham by the Sea* (1878). It paints a vivid picture of the heroic school battling against indifferent, even vindictive, town leaders.

From this came a research path of almost four decades: in the school archives, amongst census records and business directories at the Leicester Record Office, the back-numbers of the *Stamford Mercury* and several provincial and national papers. It also prompted the first of many visits to Borth, and to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. A documentary play was performed in the Uppingham Theatre in 1977 to mark the centenary of the school’s return.

At that point I had only uncovered material which was highly sympathetic to the school. In 1993 after moving elsewhere I had a great piece of good fortune: the discovery of many boxes of papers in the National Archive at Kew relating to the town’s dealings with the Local Government Board (the government department which oversaw local authorities in Victorian times). These documents demonstrated how well-

documented Uppingham was for a town of its relatively small size, and also that the challenges faced by the town’s leaders were formidable. The dispute was more complex than had previously been thought.

In 2004-6 I brought the two strands of research together in a Ph.D. thesis for University College, London. The thesis became a published monograph: *Typhoid in Uppingham; Analysis of a Victorian Town and School in Crisis 1875-1877* (Pickering and Chatto, 2008).

That book is no longer in print, but I hope this abridged version will make the events of 1875-7 accessible to a larger number of readers. A twin publication, *A Spring Invasion*, describes events in Borth. I have aimed to avoid too much overlap between the two booklets, but it is necessary to explain how events in Uppingham and Borth interacted.

Ironically, the time to work on both of them resulted from the weeks of self-isolation demanded by the Coronavirus-19 epidemic of 2020-21. Uncertainties about the spread of that disease and the need for drastic action to overcome it provide interesting parallels with what Uppingham, albeit on a more local scale, went through 150 years earlier.

Many people have helped me along the way, notably my supervisor, Professor Anne Hardy, at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the Study of the History of Medicine, two former Uppingham colleagues, Dr Malcolm Tozer and Jerry Rudman, the school archivist, and Helen Palmer, County Archivist at *Archifdy Ceredigion Archives*. Others are acknowledged in my monograph, and in *Thring of Uppingham: Victorian Educator* (University of Buckingham Press, 2014) which explains Thring’s wider significance.

Nigel Richardson,
Harston, Cambridge, July 2021.



Boys leaving a lesson held in the Elizabethan schoolroom.



Uppingham
from the South West
Published by John Henthorn, Uppingham

Uppingham from the south west in 1870. Left to right: the Lower School and its gardens, West Bank, West Deyne, Lorne House, Thring's 1863 school room, the chapel and the parish church. Houses built on this large scale greatly stretched the town's limited health and water provision.

INTRODUCTION: THE VICTORIANS AND TYPHOID

The typhoid epidemic of 1875-7 which ravaged Uppingham is a notable event in the nineteenth century history of public health and of education.

Most public health research has centred on cities and large towns, but England in the 1870s also contained over 400 market towns with populations of up to 10,000 and many more inhabitants in their surrounding villages.

In many of these smaller communities records are hard to come by, but Uppingham's epidemic is almost uniquely well-documented. It also provides us with a snapshot of how little was known in the 1870s, especially in rural areas, about the causes of typhoid.

Modern science has shown that typhoid is a systemic infection caused by the bacterium *salmonella typhi*. Untreated, it lasts 3-4 weeks, killing about 10% of its victims and leaving 2% as permanent carriers. It is progressive: marked by the gradual onset of a sustained fever with headaches, coughing, severe digestive discomfort and generalised weakness.

It can cause spleen and liver enlargement, and it is sometimes marked by a rose-spot rash. The attack rate of the disease is in proportion to the number of organisms ingested. Almost unique among the *salmonellae*, its bacilli are adapted only to humans.

It is normally waterborne, contracted through drinking water contaminated with the bacterium *salmonella typhi*, and often transmitted via sewage-contaminated water, or by flies which carry the bacterium from infected faeces to food.

The bacillus can survive for many weeks in water and ice. Rivers, ponds and wells are all infected by carriers, either directly

or via excreta washed down by rains or faulty sanitary systems.

Prevention therefore depends crucially on separating sewage and drinking water. The disease can also be spread through contaminated food (especially by carriers handling milk, ice cream, fruit and salads, or as a result of shellfish in contaminated water), infected vomit, and typhoid pus.

The typhoid patient usually ceases to excrete the bacillus within a month of onset, but convalescent carriers may do so for up to about six months, and it can remain in chronic carriers for some years.

Symptomless carriers represent a special danger because their existence is often picked up only during the investigation of an epidemic, if at all. Around 3% of people who have been infected continue to excrete bacteria in either urine and/or faeces once restored to health, and thus become 'healthy carriers' who may infect others through handling foods, etc if hygienic precautions are lax.

The Victorians' knowledge of typhoid went little beyond the fact of its being acute and highly infectious. Doctors and civil servants had a broad understanding of its water-borne (and sometimes milk-borne) nature, but gained little insight into precisely how this occurred, other than through 'an excrement-sodden condition of the soil'.

At the 1867-9 hearings of the Royal Commission on water supply, germ theories had still been speculative. It was not clear why faecally polluted water only occasionally produced epidemic disease. Previous decades had seen the gradual rise of the germ theory (water-borne 'poison') against the miasma theory (foul air or gases) and theories of contagion (person-to-person touch).

Understanding was achieved in stages: notably through the connection made in the 1840s by William Budd between typhoid outbreaks and faecally contaminated food and water, which was subsequently confirmed by John Snow's medical mapping of the effect of the Broad Street pump during the 1864-5 London cholera outbreak.

Even though the germ theory gathered momentum, there was continuing disagreement about its precise nature, and a reluctance to abandon the miasma theory altogether. This was an age which associated odours very closely with disease. Moreover, medical knowledge gained in London and other cities filtered down only slowly to rural areas.

This explains why, throughout the Uppingham epidemic, several causation theories were pursued simultaneously. It was only in the decade just *after* the Uppingham crisis that key discoveries in bacteriology were made: the cholera and typhoid bacilli were identified and cultured, a diagnostic test was devised, and finally a vaccine was produced in 1900-2.

Meanwhile in the 1870s, in cases of water-borne typhoid (as opposed to outbreaks caused by contaminated milk or food), a few epidemics were dramatic - with a succession of patients rapidly affected when a normally safe water supply became seriously contaminated. Mostly, however, there was a slow, on-going series of single cases or small groups appearing over quite a period of time, resulting from low-level pollution.

All but the chronic carriers were hard to identify and isolate, although in an age when nearly all domestic work and cooking was done by females, it was recognized that chronic carriers typically tended to be middle-aged or elderly women.

Methods of treatment were haphazard at best. They included the depletion of blood, improving the diet, pouring cold water over the surface of the body, 'shaving the scalp and applying cold embrocations', or ordering that all windows be kept open. There were herbal treatments based on hellebore root and alcohol (especially champagne) for the wealthy, and elm or holly bark concoctions for the less affluent.

In 1876 the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* estimated that about 100,000 people contracted typhoid each year - with perhaps another 40,000 undiagnosed cases. The average case lasted up to five weeks, and the *Journal* estimated that nearly 14,000 were ill at any one time.

Estimates of deaths per year varied; *The Times* suggested 10,000-12,000. Optimists noted that fatalities had been declining for fifteen years, but a more pessimistic Medical Officer of Health (MOH) wrote that, despite skilled nursing and careful medical treatment, typhoid's course remained 'prolonged and perilous... excepting diphtheria it has probably the highest death-rate of all the infectious diseases prevalent in this realm'.

It was no respecter of class. Whereas louse-borne typhus and to a lesser extent cholera (water-borne) tended mostly to affect poorer city dwellers, typhoid was less confined to urban areas and could affect the highest in the land. It had claimed the life of Queen Victoria's husband Albert, the Prince Consort, in 1861 and nearly carried off her eldest son, the Prince of Wales a decade later.

The limitations of knowledge in mid-Victorian Britain can be seen in a leading article in *The Times* on 13 January 1876, in which the paper hedged its bets between the miasma and germ theories. It described how typhoid was:

‘A sort of smallpox, which affects the bowels instead of the skin... It is spread abroad chiefly by discharges from the intestine [which then] find their way into cesspools and sewers [rendering them] poisonous and also the gas which is evolved from them...

... The fever is reproduced mainly in three ways - first, by poisoned sewage obtaining direct access to drinking water, by leakage or soaking, and so being swallowed; secondly by the poisoned gas escaping from the sewers into water mains or cisterns, so that it is absorbed or dissolved by the water, and so swallowed; and thirdly by the poisoned gas making its way, through badly-trapped drains or other channels, into dwelling or sleeping rooms, and so being breathed by the occupants...’

Even a medical expert as famous as Sir John Simon (the first MOH for the City of London) had once believed that typhoid was spread by ‘sewer atmosphere’, although shortly before 1875 he had come to accept that a more likely cause was ‘molecules of excrement’ and ‘microscopical forms’, as the new germ theory gained acceptance. *The Lancet* (another well-known medical journal) was similarly uncertain: in that year it reported several typhoid cases among men exposed to sewer gas.

Uppingham’s epidemic also aroused great interest in educational circles in the 1870s.

The growth in the school’s size and national reputation since Thring’s arrival there in 1853 was well-known. He was understandably keen to draw the public’s attention to the threat which the epidemic posed to its very existence, not least because he and his housemasters had so much of their own capital and livelihoods bound up in the school.

The fact that typhoid had existed in small towns like Uppingham for many years had

made few headlines, but once there was a threat to the sons of the rising middle classes, it provoked a highly-publicised crisis of confidence amongst influential parents living right across the country and beyond.

However, Uppingham was not the only small town with a large boarding school. Many such schools flourished in the wake of the economic growth symbolised by the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Their development led initially to big economic and employment benefits for their local communities while times were good, but when harder economic conditions arrived in the 1870s, tensions grew. By the end of the century, with the growth of the railways and of a more sophisticated retail network, schools had come to rely less on local tradesmen and more on national distributors.

Nor was Uppingham the only boarding school to be hit by epidemic disease. Each year, after relatively healthy summers, the coming of autumn coincided with the new school year and posed a special threat.

By their very nature, highly concentrated, residential communities of young people were always at risk, and they were hit by (amongst others) smallpox, influenza, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, mumps, whooping cough, tuberculosis, pneumonia, meningitis, septicaemia and acute rheumatism.

Waterborne infections spread rapidly: in *Tom Brown’s School Days* at Rugby, the description of the illness of Tom’s friend suggests enteric fever. Its famous headmaster, Dr Thomas Arnold, once took large numbers of pupils to the Lake District to escape cholera in the town.

Conditions in boarding schools were often primitive. Thring’s own schooldays in the 1830s were spent in the notorious Long

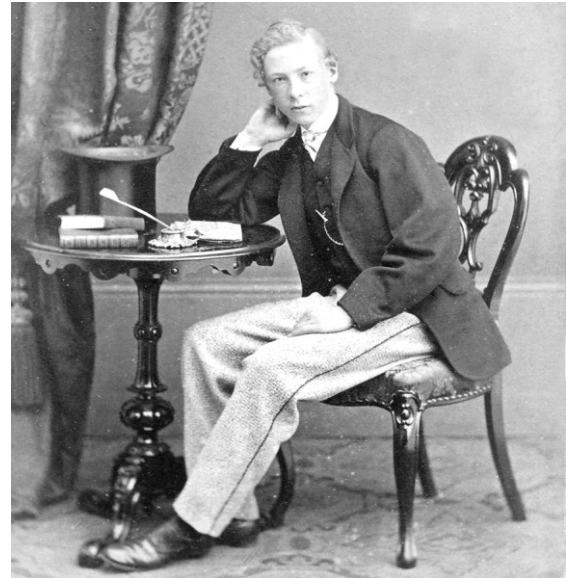
Chamber at Eton, with no basins and no piped water. At Westminster rats ate the boys' clothing as well as their food. The contents of Winchester College's privies (outdoor toilets) passed into a stream outside the College gate, joining up with town sewage. In Rugby, piggeries, kennels and stables were part of everyday life in the town, and after the annual fair the filth in the streets took over a week to remove. Ditches and cesspits existed alongside wells used for drinking water.

Many boarding schools were affected, including Charterhouse, Christ's Hospital, Cranleigh, Epsom, Haileybury, Lancing, Marlborough, Radley, Rossall, St Paul's and Wellington. Prep schools suffered too - including Oxford's Dragon School and Summer Fields.

As demands for better public health grew after 1850, there was a clamour for improved conditions in schools. *The Lancet* called repeatedly for better hygiene and food, comprehensive record-keeping, notification by parents of diseases suffered at home, medical examinations of pupils on their return to school and the appointment of medical officers (MOs) in all boarding schools.

Only with mains water and better drainage at the end of the nineteenth century and with the development of new drugs fifty years later did the epidemic problem largely disappear.

In the century after Thring, historical writing described the Uppingham epidemic almost entirely from the viewpoint of the school. While in no way playing down his leadership and organisational skills and his bravery, this account - 150 years after the events that shook Uppingham to its foundations and threatened it with permanent closure - seeks to show that earlier accounts of the battles between town and school were too simplistic.



JH Skrine (1848-1923), Captain of the School 1865-7 (as shown in this photograph), he returned to teach there from 1873-87.

His book *Uppingham by the Sea* (1878) gave a romanticised picture of the school's time at Borth. Later he was Warden of Glenalmond College.

Extract from *Uppingham by the Sea*

'There is something magnetic in a famous site: it attracts again a like history to the old stage. Thirteen centuries and a half after the finding of Taliesin (a child in Welsh mythology, drifting in a coracle until discovered by fishermen), the same shore became once again an asylum for other outcasts, whose fortunes we propose to chronicle...'

English schools have always honoured their traditions, counting them the better part of their wealth. Some have majestic memories of royal benefactors, or can point to a muster-roll of splendid names... Such traditions are not ours. But a tradition we have henceforward, which is all our own and wholly single in kind. We persuade ourselves that in far-off years those who bear our name will say, that in the memory of a great disaster overcome, no mean heirloom had been left to them...'

The 1871 census: Town and School

One of themes running through many of the events of 1875-6 was the way in which the town and the school overlapped, physically as well as economically (and still do). Census extracts confirm this. Immediately below are extracts from the three pages which relate directly to people in Thring's own boarding house.

In extract 1, the Nichols and Thring households are listed as living in School Lane; thus Thring's nearest neighbour was a town confectioner. It lists Thring's three daughters and their governess: his two sons were boarders elsewhere in the school. Extracts 2 and 3 list the Thring family's domestic servants: parlourmaid, matron, upper housemaid, kitchenmaid, under housemaid, under nurse, footman, page and nurse.

The under-mentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the									
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Occupied by Persons	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION	AGE of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	
60	School Lane	1	Thomas Nichols	Head	Mar.	42	Confectioner	Northampton	Northampton
			Mary Nichols	Wife	Do	33		Do	Northampton
			Emily Nichols	Daughter	Do	15		Do	Northampton
61	Do	1	Edward Thring	Head	Mar.	42	Almoner of Church of England M.D. Head Master of Uppingham School	London	London
			Mary A. Thring	Wife	Do	37		Do	London
			James C. F. Thring	Son	Do	36		Do	London
			Samuel S. Thring	Son	Do	14		Do	Uppingham
			Margaret S. Thring	Daughter	Do	12		Do	Do
			Emma G. Thring	Daughter	Do	4		Do	Do
			Amelia V. Thring	Governess	Do	24	Governess	Do	Do
			William M. Cannon	Page	Do	18	Page	Do	Do
			Philip W. French	Do	Do	18	Do	Do	Do
			Arthur C. Lewis	Do	Do	18	Do	Do	Do
			Charles S. Clough	Do	Do	18	Do	Do	Do
			Arthur Arnold	Do	Do	14	Do	Do	Do
			Emma Elie	Servant	Do	20	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Lady Burbridge	Do	Do	20	Do	Do	Do
			Mary Beckett	Do	Do	20	Do	Do	Do
			Ellen Beckett	Do	Do	18	Do	Do	Do
			Mary A. Jackson	Do	Do	16	Do	Do	Do
			Emma Weston	Do	Do	14	Do	Do	Do
			Thomas Wiley	Do	Do	14	Do	Do	Do
61	School Lane	1	Charles Pettit	Servant	Do	28	Domestic Servant	Do	Do
			Harriet Dye	Do	Do	28	Do	Do	Do

On the pages from which extracts 1 and 2 are taken, there are also the names of 33 'scholars' (of whom only five are shown here, the last being Arthur Arnold at the top of Extract 2). Their places of birth range from Leicester to places right across the country, Dublin and India, illustrating how Thring had taken the school away from its historic roots as a country grammar school.

The Rector, Revd. William Wales, would emerge as a severe critic of Thring. He was Chancellor of the Diocese of Peterborough, married to a wife with private means. This may help to explain the six servants on the census return. Although the Rectory at 2 London Road (opposite the parish church) was one of the best houses in the town, his neighbours seem to have been less affluent. They are not shown here, but the census lists them as a laundress and a teacher of music on one side, and a gasfitter and publican on the other. Those listed at the top of the census's next page are a labourer, confectioner, baker, baker's apprentice and dressmaker.

57	Market Place	1	William Wales	Head	Mar.	42	Rector of Uppingham	India	Bombay
			Louisa M. Wales	Wife	Do	32		Do	Leicester
			Henry S. Spencer	Servant	Do	18		Do	Leicester
			Reginald Barlett	Servant	Do	18		Do	Leicester
			Mary A. G. Malins	Do	Do	16		Do	Leicester
			Ellen Wills	Do	Do	14		Do	Leicester
			Ann Goodwin	Do	Do	12		Do	Leicester
			Samuel Stapleton	Do	Do	10		Do	Leicester
			James Price	Do	Do	8		Do	Leicester

The 1871 Census: town and school on High Street West

This is another example of how town and school intermingled, as the following two pages from the census show. No. 22 was a school boarding house. No. 23 was owned by a local GP, Dr Thomas Bell, who was also the school's Medical Officer. He too had living-in servants.

William Campbell, the housemaster of Lorne House (25 High Street West), had a large family of his own - which helps to explain his entourage of domestic servants. As with Thring's house, Campbell's boys came from across the whole of England - as the page in the census which follows these two (but is not shown) confirms.

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. of HOUSE	HOUSES No. of Inhabited Buildings (No.)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION	AGE of Years	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN
22	High street	X	Charles R. Bingham	Refric		24	Scholar	Hunts, Ramsey
			Richard L. Bingham	Do		20	Do	London
			Martin M. Bingham	Do		18	Do	York, Driffield
			Henry L. Bingham	Do		16	Do	London
			Henry J. Bingham	Do		14	Do	Liverpool
			John G. Bingham	Do		12	Do	Sussex, Washington
			Alfred L. Bingham	Do		10	Do	Do
			Thomas L. Bingham	Do		8	Do	Wants, Northam
			Thomas L. Bingham	Do		6	Do	Willesden, Hampstead
			Henry J. Bingham	Do		4	Do	London
			Thomas L. Bingham	Do		2	Do	Gloucester, Exeter
			Alfred Bingham	Do		13	Do	Do
			Edward L. Bingham	Do		11	Do	York, York
			Robert L. Bingham	Do		9	Do	York, Horncastle
			Samuel L. Bingham	Do		7	Do	York, Horncastle
			George M. Bingham	Do		5	Do	York, Horncastle
			Edward L. Bingham	Do		3	Do	Do
23	High street	1	Thomas Bell	Head	Married	34	General Practitioner (Dr. R. G. P. & Dr. W. G. P. & Dr. W. G. P.)	Rutland, Appleton
			Louisa M. Bell	Wife	Married	32	Do	Rutland, Appleton
			Margaret K. Bell	Daughter	Single	14	Do	Do
			Allie M. Bell	Do	Single	12	Do	Do
			Charles V. Bell	Son	Single	10	Do	Do
			Edward M. Bell	Son	Single	8	Do	Do
			Mary G. Harding	Servant	Single	20	Do	Cambridge, Leamington
			Ann Taverne	Servant	Single	18	Do	Do

23	High street	X	Ann M. Baker	Servant	Single	16	Domestic Servant	Rutland, Boston
			Margaret B. Baker	Do	Single	14	Do	Do
			Elizabeth B. Baker	Do	Single	12	Do	Do
24	Do	1	George Williamson	Head	Married	34	Tailor & Confectioner	Rutland, Waddington
			Margaret Williamson	Wife	Married	32	Do	Do
			Martha A. Williamson	Daughter	Single	14	Do	Do
			Frank B. Williamson	Son	Single	12	Do	Do
			Henry A. Williamson	Son	Single	10	Do	Do
			Edith A. Williamson	Daughter	Single	8	Do	Do
25	Do	1	William Campbell	Head	Married	34	Chapman M.B. (without D.M. & M.B.)	Rutland, Appleton
			Fanny Campbell	Wife	Married	32	Do	Do
			Emily Campbell	Daughter	Single	14	Do	Do
			Louisa G. Campbell	Son	Single	12	Do	Do
			John F. Campbell	Son	Single	10	Do	Do
			Fanny G. Campbell	Son	Single	8	Do	Do
			Agnes G. Campbell	Son	Single	6	Do	Do
			William G. Campbell	Son	Single	4	Do	Do
			Margaret Campbell	Servant	Single	16	Do	Do
			Elizabeth Martin	Servant	Single	14	Do	Do
			Elizabeth P. P. P.	Servant	Single	12	Do	Do
			Ann Templeman	Servant	Single	10	Do	Do
			Charles Walker	Servant	Single	8	Do	Do
			Ann Walker	Servant	Single	6	Do	Do
			Sarah L. Walker	Servant	Single	4	Do	Do
			Sarah Walker	Servant	Single	2	Do	Do

Not shown are George Williamson, 'tailor/confectioner', at No. 24, and William Beardsworth, 'plumber and painter', at No. 26. No. 27 was occupied by the curate and his wife. At No. 28 was Eliza Baverstock, 'clergyman's widow'. Her late husband had been one of Thring's masters in his early years at the school.

CHAPTER 1: TOWN AND SCHOOL IN 1875

Uppingham in 1875 was a typical rural market town of just over 2600 people living in c450 properties. Small, close-knit and with a strong sense of stability, as yet it had no railway, so omnibuses departed six times a day for the stations at Manton and Seaton.

Forty-five local carriers provided goods and passenger links to Oakham or nearby villages. Daily papers did not arrive until lunchtime. Letters arrived and were despatched twice a day and once on Sundays.

The town covered about 50 acres, with its High Street running east-west. The narrower North Street and South Lane ran parallel on either side of it, with shorter lanes running at right angles.

There had been a settlement for twelve or thirteen centuries, but most buildings were less than a century old. They were built with material from nearby quarries - although workings which had once been close to the western edge of the town had now given way to housing.

Local trade directories show the area as overwhelmingly agricultural. Most people drew their income from working on the land as agricultural labourers, gardeners and in farm-related trades, or as saddlers, blacksmiths, shepherds and herdsmen.

The market had been in existence since 1281 and was now held every Wednesday, with music, singing and dancing. Revellers bought hot pies and gingerbread from local street sellers. During cattle fairs in March and July, pens of sheep and other animals occupied much of the High Street, giving off very pungent smells. Horses, cows and pigs were kept in groups all through the town and they often escaped.

Horse racing and feasts took place through the year, along with Guy Fawkes celebrations which included cartloads of

effigies of well-known figures to be burned. These events sometimes got out of hand, causing the local constable to intervene. In 1841 this had led to a near-riot with shots being fired.

The population included some familiar family names: Baines and Cliff(e), Dorman and Ellingworth, Thorpe and Tyers. Just over half the family businesses in the 1876 Directory had also appeared in 1850, which is not surprising: over half the people in the town had been born there and most of the rest within twelve miles. Of married men born in the town, over 60% had chosen local brides.

The spire of the fourteenth century parish church had recently been restored: services were held there at least twice each Sunday. It was closely linked to the national school which could cater for 360 children. The Rector, William Wales, and his three churchwardens had all been in post for two decades, assisted by sidesmen who were mostly shopkeepers or farmers, along with one of the local doctors, Thomas Bell.

The 200+ small businesses included nearly 30 builders, joiners, carpenters plumbers and those offering domestic services such as clock repairs and chimney sweeping. 35 derived their income from farming and agriculture; there were a dozen innkeepers and nearly 60 shopkeepers - including seven butchers, five bakers, seven grocers, a greengrocer, florist, photographic artist, and no fewer than fifteen dressmakers, tailors and milliners - along with three doctors and surgeons and one vet.

Many shopkeepers were members not of the parish church but of one of the several dissenting chapels.

The *Stamford Mercury* appeared each Friday. Its advertisements and announcements included the meets of local hounds, the workhouse Christmas treat, lectures, concerts and dances.

Theatre performances were held in a barn in the grounds of the Hall in High Street East. The reading room contained a subscription library of newspapers and 1,000 books for 300 subscribers. The town boasted one club for football and two for cricket.

There was a fire station on the Glaston Road and a small police station with two cells on Stockerston Road. Gas lighting had been installed in the 1830s and improved thirty years later, but supplies to houses and streets were not always reliable and the local company's charges were hotly disputed. There was no electricity.

The town's affairs were overseen by a hierarchy of professional men who, knowing a great deal about their clients' affairs, exercised strong influence and patronage. A county court was held every two months at the Falcon Hotel, and four local magistrates took turns to sit in local courts on the first Friday in each month.

Two law firms (the Sheild brothers and W.H. Brown) were based in the town, acting as coroner, registrar, land agent, bailiff, treasurer or legal adviser to local organizations including the guardians who oversaw local government and their sub-committees for sanitary and workhouse matters.

The lawyers were also local agents for five insurance companies. They lent money, carried out property transactions and arranged mortgages for clients, many of whom ran shops and small businesses. Bank manager J.C. Guy represented four further insurance providers. Other local government officials included the Registrar of births, marriages and deaths, and the Inland Revenue Officer.

The Mutual Improvement Society, which was planning to acquire reading rooms and classrooms, had the Rector as its president. John Hawthorn, his deputy, ran the main bookshop, two book distribution outlets

and a printing business. Guy was the Society's secretary and ironmonger Charles White its treasurer.

Uppingham also contained a school sub-community comprising in term-time nearly 15% of its total population. The small Elizabethan grammar school, founded in 1584 and based in the schoolroom next to the church, had barely a dozen pupils until mid-century, but since 1853 it had been transformed by its forceful headmaster, Revd. Edward Thring.

Thring created a boarding community of over 300 boys and well over 100 adults (masters, their families and house servants) who occupied a dozen boarding houses: some of Uppingham's newest and largest properties. The growth of the school had put great additional pressure on the town's inadequate public services.

Town and school interconnected in a number of ways. The school invited townspeople to its concerts and plays: Thring was keen to foster good relationships, conscious that the school had better facilities than the town. It gave an annual Christmas party for children from the workhouse on the Leicester Road.

Unlike those major boarding schools built around a single campus, Uppingham School was a community of houses, spread out right across the town. This caused continuous daily contact between town and school - as pupils and masters went to and fro from houses to lessons (taught by housemasters in their house halls and by other staff in makeshift classrooms and laboratories), or to visit friends in other houses, or during afternoon sport, races, paper-chases and following hounds along the surrounding roads and fields.

Housemasters and their families lived in Uppingham all year-round, and the wives ran the domestic and catering side of the house, so there was plenty of contact (and friendship) with townspeople. There were

occasional tensions too, as when pupils strayed on to private property, or when town boys made fun of school pupils' caps or put stones in snowballs. Some pupils went round after dark only in groups.

Some townspeople were wary of the school, speaking of 'them dratted scholars'. A few even claimed that Uppingham would be better off without the school altogether, although most recognised its benefits for the local economy. The large number of shops and small businesses in relation to the town's size reflected the school's purchasing power and pupils' impact as customers in bakery, grocery and sweet shops.

Other townspeople sold, repaired or cleaned items of uniform. John Hawthorn at the post office had provided stationery, stamps and books to masters and boys for half a century: he was one of the school's strongest supporters - although he also supplied service sheets and other items to the Rector for the church.

Pupils and staff at the school all had to be accommodated, fed and provided for. With pupils feeding in their houses and no central catering or purchasing system, each house made its own decisions about suppliers. The houses employed nearly 100 living-in staff *in toto*; the 1871 census showed that four of them had between 7 and 9 each - including governesses, a few footmen, numerous cooks, nurses, parlour-maids and kitchen-maids, and one 'boots'.

In addition there was a large army of people living in the town but working in the school by day: self-employed or on piece-work. Houses had to be repaired and altered; some were still being developed. Furniture and equipment had to be bought and maintained, and gardens tended.

All in all, town and school were highly interdependent economically: the school could suffer in reputation and well-being if local businesses failed. For those

businesses the presence and goodwill of the school was a key factor in their continuing prosperity and development. Farm produce was purchased locally by the houses, so the food shops must have noticed a big drop in their turnover when the holidays began.

The interlocking set of social and economic relationships between town and school is highlighted by the 1871 census returns for the High Street.

It includes several houses, each with a dozen or so adults and children and around thirty boarders, interspersed with well-to-do neighbours: Guy the bank manager, Bell the doctor, Pateman the solicitor, Peter Fryer who was a master butcher and multiple shopkeeper, and two successful farmers, William Mould and John Shield. Sandwiched in between them all lived a network of less well-to-do small businessmen, traders and artisans representing a huge range of goods, trades and services. The personal and business relationships of the housemasters and their wives greatly overlapped.

By 1875 Thring had been headmaster of Uppingham School for 22 years.

Born in 1821, the third son of a Somerset country gentleman and rector, he progressed after Eton to King's College, Cambridge. Ordained in the Church of England in 1846, he served a curacy in a run-down area of Gloucester - a difficult time which included some elementary teaching and resulted in a breakdown.

After travel in Europe and a whirlwind romance, he returned to England and, despite the scepticism of his family and his limited experience of working in schools, he was appointed to his post in Uppingham in 1853, shortly before his marriage.

Archdeacon Robert Johnson had endowed schools and almshouses in Uppingham and Oakham in 1584 on a modest scale, but Thring's arrival coincided with a great

expansion in middle-class education as the Victorian industrial boom began.

Thanks to the growth of railways, between 1853 and 1875 Uppingham acquired its national catchment of boarders, but as the school moved well away from its local free grammar school roots, the places for local day-boys were largely phased out.

Thring's original 43 pupils grew to 100 within six years and he reached his chosen ceiling of 300 in 1865. A dozen came from abroad: the rest from all over Great Britain and Ireland, notably from Liverpool, Manchester and London: areas of the country which had recently made the greatest advances in public health. Significantly for future events, some of the school's most influential and assertive parents were doctors: they would have been highly aware of recent national developments in issues of health and medicine - and the popular and political expectations driving them - even before the school became stricken with typhoid.

By 1875 Thring had over 20 teaching staff - a big running cost, but one which he believed to be essential. He decreed that 23 boys should be the optimum size for a class and 31 for a boarding house, although most crept up above that number. He and 11 of his staff were housemasters: individuals contributing different but complementary temperaments, capabilities and outlooks.

After some early appointments which he came to regret, the housemasters of the 1870s were a more settled group. They were nearly all graduates of Oxford or Cambridge and mostly from professional families, although few had any background in teaching. Several would run their houses for over thirty years. Including Thring himself, seven were in holy orders.

Nearly all of them were married, and Thring himself had five children. He

regarded the part which the housemaster's wife played in each house as one of the most humanizing influences on it. Some housemasters were more disciplinarian than others; some more financially astute; some more extrovert. Revd. Robert Hodgkinson ran the Lower (junior) School: a legally and financially separate institution but one which sent many pupils on to Thring.

Unlike their modern counterparts, housemasters ran financially separate entities. They had to be men of private means, able to commission architects and builders. Some converted an existing house in the town or bought one which was already a going concern.

A few started off in a small town house and then built a much larger one on the outskirts. Several took out large mortgages. The distance between houses and their individual catering arrangements gave each house a distinctive ethos - and gave the school a plumbing system of uneven quality. Boys washed in the mornings in chilly stone-floored washrooms, with rows of stone basins filled with water from cisterns which took up to two hundred strokes of the pump serving them.

Thring had one very direct instrument of control if housemasters developed baronial tendencies and resisted his way of running things. They made profits (or, occasionally, losses) from their houses, and were paid comparatively little in fixed salaries as classroom teachers. Thus they relied on Thring's recommendation.

Any housemaster whom he judged to be inadequate could soon be starved of prospective parents. They had to conform to his standards of food, accommodation, supervision and care or they risked being rapidly frozen out. He was determined not to let them increase their numbers to increase their revenue.

The school's scheme of management had been revised as a result of the Endowed Schools Act of 1869 and the Taunton Commission which resulted from it. Parents paid boarding fees to the housemaster and tuition fees to the school's trustees, who also controlled the income from the Johnson charity which paid for the small number of local dayboys who still attended the school. This resulted in a complex system of notional and actual payments between the trustees and the housemasters, which had led to Thring's own finances becoming inextricably enmeshed with those of the school.

Effectively being shareholders in the enterprise as a whole, he and other housemasters had to decide what proportion of any profits to contribute to the school's building projects. It is clear from Thring's statement to the Commissioners in the 1860s about the cost of education at a good boarding school that he felt that Uppingham's fees were barely adequate.

He had formed distinctive ideals about education, developed over many years in writings and published sermons. An academically average boy should have as much time and money spent on him in the classroom as a brilliant scholar - in contrast (he claimed) to the philosophy of the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby.

Classes should be allocated to staff according to their teaching talents rather than their seniority: 'to teach an upper class requires more knowledge, a lower more skill as a teacher'. A good school needed good facilities - its 'machinery'.

As the school grew the housemasters had therefore subscribed to many building projects which the trustees were unable or unwilling to finance - including the school's chapel and an ambitious gymnasium. By the mid 1860s over 90% of the school's buildings, land and equipment had been financed by Thring

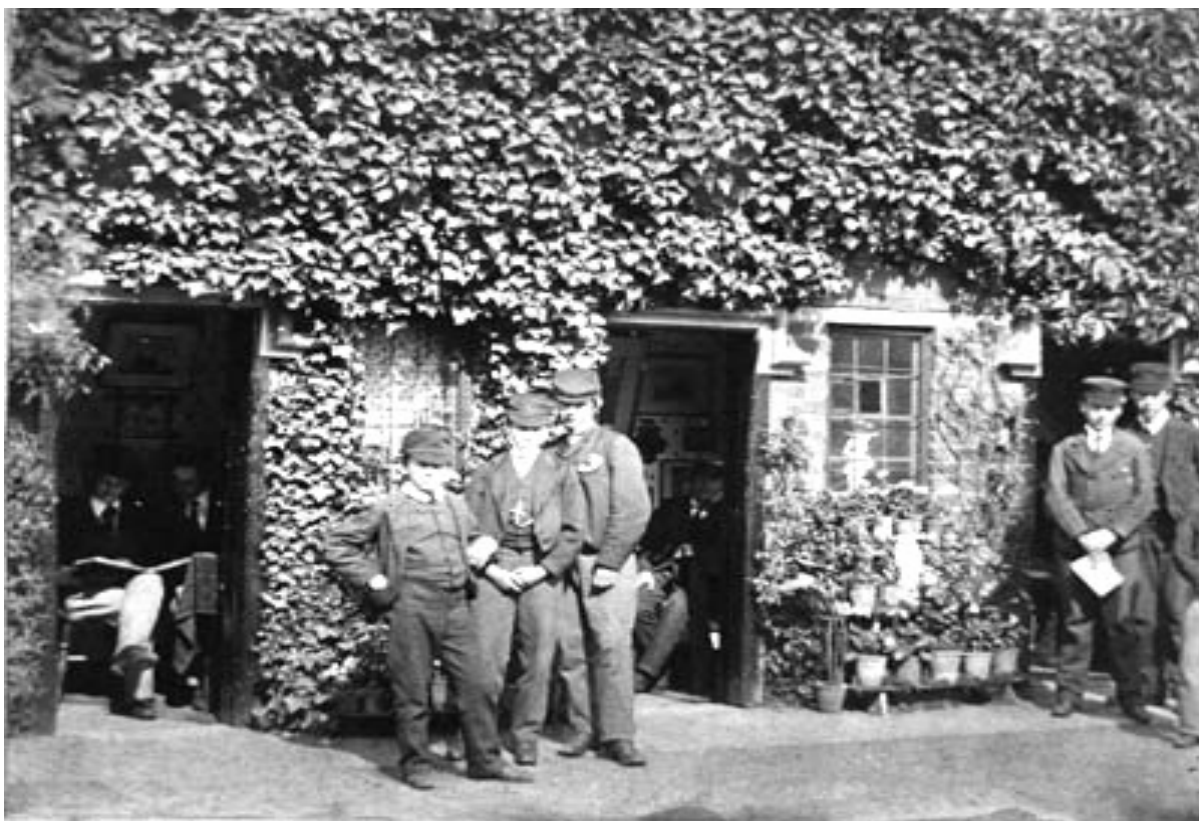
and his staff, while the trust had provided a mere 8.75%; by 1875 the masters had spent over £40,000 on buildings.

The school was prospering, but if times were to change for any reason housemasters would have plenty at risk - with Thring set to lose most of all. He was always in debt, and he was forced to take out loans which were a great source of worry. There was also the potential for dispute between the masters and the trustees in any time of economic downturn. In a small country town there would be few alternative uses for, and buyers of, large properties.

Thring was visionary, extrovert and enthusiastic - at times impulsive. He had a brain which moved in intuitive leaps and drove a passionate personality. He was committed to spiritual simplicity. Unlike the high-church rector of Uppingham's parish church, William Wales, he had little time for ritualism or doctrinal minutiae. It was unlikely that the two men would ever warm to each other.

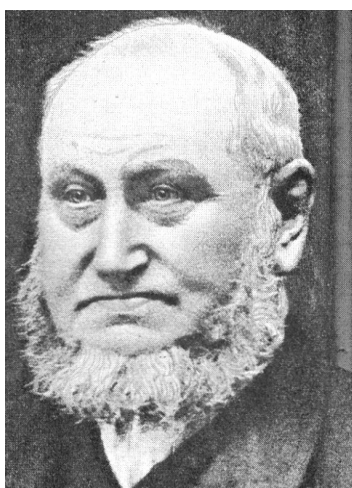
Thring always fought tenaciously to protect his school: it represented his livelihood and his life's work. In 1875 he was just emerging from a period of prolonged battles to protect the school externally - against the attempts of the government-appointed Endowed Schools' Commissioners to restrict the independence of schools and their headmasters. One by-product of this had been the creation of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC), whose first meeting had been in Uppingham in 1869.

As two headmasters of famous schools travelled north by train to Uppingham across the sodden countryside of the East Midlands to that first conference, one told the other: 'Thring must be a wonderful man to have made a school like this in the midst of such a howling wilderness'. It was perhaps a harsh verdict, from a man missing the familiar leafy lanes of Kent.



Boys outside their studies: 1860s.

Below: three figures living in the town and mentioned in the census and/or trade directories in the 1870s:
(by kind permission of the family of the late Peter Lane and of the Uppingham Local History Study Group).



Edmund Robinson:
once Thring's porter, in 1870 he dealt in
corn and china, living in Brick Yard.



Fred Southwell:
the town crier and sexton, who
lived in Ragman's Row.



Jim Riddle:
a chimney sweep, who lived
in Dean's Terrace.

CHAPTER 2: LOCAL SOCIETY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rutland in the 1870s was quintessentially rural. Nearly 82% of its acreage was under cultivation, and the influence of the leading members of its gentry was exercised largely through the ownership of land and property. It was a society with three distinct landowning groups.

At the top, it had the highest proportion of country houses per acre of any English county, and the four greatest landowners owned half of Rutland between them. In the middle, 10,000 acres were owned by 'great and lesser yeomen' or men working medium-sized farms. Compared with other counties, a large proportion of this group was made up of clergymen. At the bottom of the social scale there was an unusually high proportion of small-scale landholders: the average size of a holding in the county was almost the lowest in England and Wales.

Of 258 people listed in the land tax assessment for 1874-5, three stand out. Lord Gainsborough was a large-scale landowner with property in three counties: erstwhile High Sheriff, Lord Lieutenant and Whig MP. Sir Charles Adderley, another three-county landlord, was a Tory MP and former President of the Board of Trade. He never lived in Uppingham but had tenants in the Hall.

The third came a long way behind the first two but is significant. The rector, William Wales, was a school trustee (governor) *and* a member of the town's board of guardians (responsible for local government matters), as well as being chancellor of the Diocese of Peterborough. He enjoyed rents from those leasing his glebe land, manorial rents and fines from his copyhold tenants, and pensions in lieu of former tithes.

The Rectory manor included much of the area on which the school and its houses stood. Wales's rent collection was overseen by the solicitor William H.

Brown, who, like his legal rivals the Sheild brothers, had attended the school.

The 1873 return of owners of land produces a similarly revealing picture in Uppingham itself. Five men held more than 100 acres: Wales, two other trustees of the school, and two members of the town's board of guardians, the solicitor William Sheild and a Preston farmer, John Parker. Those in the 50-100 acre category included several other guardians, Thring and five of his housemasters.

The list of owners of houses and buildings, dominated by Gainsborough and Adderley, includes three important groups: the professionals (one surgeon, three solicitors and two bank managers), housemasters, and twenty leading shopkeepers representing a wide range of businesses, many of which supplied goods and services to the school as well as the town.

The landed influence was also very strong within the board of trustees responsible for the schools in Uppingham and Oakham. The board included four of the twelve largest landowners; and numbered 19 in all. It was chaired by 'the right male heir of the Founder', Mr AC Johnson. Several members were magistrates or had been High Sheriff.

The two trustees nominated by Thring and the masters under the school's scheme of governance were different from the rest: Thomas Birley and Wensley Jacob were businessmen; both had sons at the school; they lived far away in an area which had a very strong concentration of pupils, the industrial North-West. Both had been members of a parent group that had rallied to Thring's support against the Endowed Schools Commissioners a decade earlier.

Bishop Mandell Creighton of Peterborough, a trustee himself *ex officio* and thus not at the centre of their affairs,

admitted: 'There are several bad governing bodies in England, but none nearly so bad as ours'. Thring never enjoyed an easy relationship with his trustees, believing them to be out of touch, 'mean-spirited consequential dignitaries'. Few had academic interests or experience. None had been educated at the school; very few (other than Birley and Jacob) had been school parents. They were sensitive to criticism within the town that the school had turned its back on the local community and had been handed over to the new rich.

Baffled by Thring's driven character and relentless sense of purpose, they thought him high-handed and unpredictable. They were men of conservative outlook and financial prudence, who found his ambitious plans hard to understand. Once responsible for a school of only a few dozen day pupils, they now found themselves in charge of a much larger, financially complex, enterprise - yet having allowed its boarding side to grow, they now had little control over much of the school's income.

One local board member appears to have been highly influential: the rector William Wales, who enjoyed so much influence and prestige in other respects. The parish church and its fine rectory were right in the heart of the town. He was a man of private means who had married well. Because his father died young, he had attended Christ's Hospital which existed to educate boarders whose parents had fallen on hard times: a far cry from many of Thring's prosperous clientele. Although now nearing retirement he was also chairman of the managers of the town's national school, president of the subscription library, a magistrate and president of the town's Mutual Improvement Society. Like Thring, he had been in Uppingham for many years.

He had given handsomely to the church restoration, and the Peterborough diocese saw his parish as thriving and well-

organised: rightly so, as he drew congregations of 500 each Sunday morning and evening.

As an Anglo-Catholic, he strongly disapproved of dissenters and of Thring's evangelical fervour. He also greatly disliked what the headmaster had done to Uppingham's former grammar school, and the building of the large school chapel which had taken the boys away from attending the parish church.

Although successful in his previous living in Northampton, he had made vociferous enemies there. Never a man for humour or compromise, his enemies drew cartoons of him and nicknamed him *Billy Wales, the black slug*. His sermons suggest an imperious, distant and aloof, albeit godly man with a strong sense of public duty.

He was friendly with a number of the masters (notably Hodgkinson at the Lower School) but resentful that they cited lack of time in declining to take any Sunday services to relieve his workload. It would be understandable if Thring, who had committed so much of his own financial resources into his school, was at least a little envious of Wales' much greater wealth, both personal and institutional.

In addition to all his other positions Wales was also a leading guardian (board member) of the Uppingham Union. In 1834 parishes had been grouped together by legislation to form 700 local authorities responsible for poor relief and sanitation. Market towns were usually their focal point, being accessible and convenient. JPs were guardians ex-officio, and the other board members were elected each year by the ratepayers. They tended to be public spirited men of good intention but much less technical expertise.

Thus decision-making about the town's affairs centred round property owners, farmers, shopkeepers and small-scale

professional men, who tended to be the principal ratepayers and employers.

The dominance of property interests can be seen in this body of men too. Most of them were farmers around Uppingham - responsible for oversight of local services in the Uppingham Union, an area of 35 parishes (mostly, but not all, in Rutland), of which Uppingham was much the largest community. The 25 guardians met each Wednesday.

Their paid officials included a clerk, WH Brown, the solicitor who acted for the rector over his rents. They also employed an overseer and collector of poor rates and taxes, an inspector of nuisances, a medical officer and public vaccinator, a chaplain, a workhouse master, matron and assistant, and a schoolmistress. The workhouse on the Leicester Road had been completed in 1837, initially for 140 inmates but later increased to 170.

The Union's key sub-committee was the Rural Sanitary Authority (RSA). Its minute book suggests that members strove to carry out the increasing responsibilities devolved onto them since the 1872 Public Health Act carefully and conscientiously.

They accounted in detail for workhouse expenditure. Local government taxation returns for 1874 show that the sums they raised in rates and loans were already way ahead of all but a handful of RSAs across the country - much of their income being spent on sewer construction. Expenditure on lighting was well in line with other unions. To finance this work they had taken out one of the largest fifteen loans in England and Wales by such a body: one which would take many years to pay off. Overall, their spending ran well ahead of their local counterparts, in real terms and relative to their population.

They consulted the Local Government Board (LGB) in London on a wide range of issues, as they were legally bound to do.

They lobbied over several years up to 1875 for greater powers (bye-laws) and the status of an Urban Sanitary Authority (USA), believing that this would put them in a stronger position to enforce building regulations, organise sanitary upgrades and borrow further money or raise rates to pay for improvements. The LGB doubted the need for this greater status, and a stand-off continued throughout the period between the passing of the 1872 Public Health Act and 1875 when the typhoid crisis threatened to overwhelm the RSA.

Inevitably, some guardians had conflicted interests: a public duty to promote sanitary reform whilst also as landowners being concerned to control costs and rate rises. This conflict existed in many small towns, but for men like Wales it was exacerbated by being a trustee of the school and thus having a duty of care to protect the lives of its pupils. The trustees had a responsibility to set fees which were not exorbitant, yet which allowed for essential expenditure.

There was an additional dimension to the school's increasing clamour for costly improvements in the town: as a charity it was exempt from some rate charges. Land endowed by Archdeacon Johnson in 1584 on which it had built classrooms was an example - and a source of further local resentment. However, the boarding houses were liable for full rates as commercial ventures, and two of the houses appeared high up in the list of assessed properties. In justifying his sanitary demands, Thring claimed that 'we are large ratepayers'.

The chairman of the guardians was Revd. Barnard Smith, rector of neighbouring Glaston. He had long experience in this role, and his commitment to the Union and its sub-committees was strong and time-consuming: he did not miss any of the 87 meetings of the guardians in the three years up to January 1877. Busy farmers and professional men were happy to leave many of the week-to-week affairs to him (and to Wales). The scale of his

responsibilities and the burden on the clerk from a huge range of legal, financial and other issues can be seen in the weighty volumes of LGB papers.

Although Barnard Smith and Thring were both clergymen, they were very different in temperament. Thring was a classicist while Barnard Smith was a mathematician: the successful former Bursar of a Cambridge college who wrote inventive textbooks. Dry, logical and tidy in mindset, he had far more in common with Wales than with Thring, who was a man of big-picture vision rather than detail. Like Wales, Barnard Smith had no children, and unlike Thring but like Wales, he was a man of financial means.

The local rating system had been devised nearly 300 years earlier (1601) and was calculated almost entirely on ownership of land and buildings. Its workings, and the increases in rates which it generated, were never popular with rural landlords, especially during agricultural recessions when it became harder to pass demands for payment on to tenants.

In 1875 landowners had faced periodic steep rises in both county and local poor rates, especially recently. While times were good this had not been a major issue: farming productivity increased; the growing population boosted demand, and new railways helped to transport produce to cities. However, the early 1870s brought a national agricultural recession. It was a time for landowners to restrict their spending, both personal and institutional.

The effects of a poor summer in 1873 and the very wet autumn in 1875 - coinciding with foot-and-mouth disease, other animal infections and the growing import of cheap food from the vast prairies of North America - affected local farmers very badly. Bishop Creighton stated that communities in his diocese suffered more than most. Rents declined and returns for landlords reduced, which led them to call

for rate reductions. Belt-tightening further down the social scale meant reduced spending in local shops. Again, agricultural workers in Rutland were hard-hit, causing severe depopulation. Many small traders had large mortgages - some of them handed down from one generation to the next - and borrowers who had overreached themselves ran into trouble. They feared that rate increases would be passed down to them by landlords when rent reviews took place.

For all these reasons, the Uppingham guardians, like their rural counterparts right across England and Wales, feared a ratepayers' revolt if they launched into bold and expensive programmes of sanitary reform. The RSA calculated that the school had reached a steady state of numbers, so the local population increase was largely over. There had hitherto been no major epidemic of cholera or typhoid.

No government inspector had significantly criticised the town's local leadership or demanded extensive new sanitary work. To do so would have gone against the prevailing attitude amongst all classes that centralisation and interventionist legislation were somehow foreign to the national spirit. Parliament liked power to be devolved to local communities, and it did not intervene except in extreme cases of neglect or incompetence. Central government inspectorates developed only slowly, and where inspection did take place there was a widespread local suspicion of new officials such as MOHs.

Much therefore depended on the initiative of the local guardians, especially in small towns and rural areas. Some of their paid officers were inefficient, and in many areas amateurism and local autonomy were still the order of the day. There was little coordination with neighbouring guardians across untidy boundaries. The separation of bodies responsible for nuisance (i.e.

pollution hazards) and sewerage was a particular problem.

By the 1870s the measures introduced in cities and towns over the previous two decades to improve sanitation and water supply needed to be applied to the nation as a whole, and the well-known medical journal, *The Lancet*, began a special section on public health matters. New legislation set out, in 343 sections, a formidable list of requirements on guardians and RSAs: everything from nuisances, public health and infectious diseases to burials, offensive trades, food inspection and slaughterhouses. They were also expected to provide an adequate water supply, drainage and sewage disposal.

Enforcement of these responsibilities proved slow and difficult. Guardians dragged their feet, fearing to upset ratepayers, conscious of their own lack of technical expertise, daunted by the size and costs of loans, and by the workload that this all implied. Some found it hard to prioritise; others hesitated to pay for outside expertise or got into disputes amongst themselves or with their officials.

Determined central government direction was needed, but the two departments which dealt with the 27,000 different authorities - the LGB and the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) - were ineffective, slow and overwhelmed with work. As departments, they were unglamorous: pay and prospects of promotion were poor, and their senior leadership was often mediocre. It sometimes took officials twelve months to answer a letter, and there were frequent battles within the LGB about what was essential or merely desirable, along with disputes between technical experts, medical advisers, and bureaucratic administrators who often carried the day.

Some personnel wanted to force the pace with the RSAs much faster than those who believed in gradual persuasion, concerned

that an RSA, deciding its own timescales and appointing its own consultants, should feel that its role really was worthwhile. The latter group included Robert Rawlinson, the Board's chief engineering inspector, who would play a major role in Uppingham. He declared: 'If persons are unwilling to receive you, you must shake the dust from your boots and go elsewhere... you cannot compel unwilling men [and] an unwilling community'.

The LGB retained expert doctors and engineers as an inspectorate for use in really contentious or difficult cases, but too often the key criterion was not that the appointee was an expert, but that he was a gentleman. Thus the very first generation of inspectors tended to be drawn from the minor branches of landed political families or the gentry. Many held office for decades; they often oversaw just one or two districts, and they continued to persuade rather than to instruct.

The proportion of public expenditure spent on local government rose sharply after 1870, but Treasury oversight remained strict to keep spending under control and to minimise waste. The LGB's medical department was criticised for demanding bigger budgets and more staff. In 1873 the LGB won a small victory in getting the interest rate on loans to RSAs reduced from 5% to 3.5%, but two years later the Treasury reversed this in all but the most urgent cases and capped the total sum lent each year. It is small wonder that many RSAs preferred to raise money commercially rather than borrow from the slow and cumbersome LGB and PWLB.

The writers of *An Outline of Local Government and Local Taxation in England and Wales* (1884), concluded: 'The defectiveness of local government overwhelms the LGB'. Given the range and scale of all its problems, it was no better equipped for the challenges of the Uppingham epidemic than the guardians themselves.



School and town in the mid 1860s: Thring's boarding house is on the left.
The new chapel and schoolroom show the scale of his ambition compared with what had gone before.



Revd. Barnard Smith,
Chairman of the Uppingham Guardians
and RSA 1863-76 (Glaston Parish Council).



Revd. William Wales,
Rector of Uppingham 1859-79
(Northamptonshire Record Office).

CHAPTER 3: LOCAL MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Between 1800 and 1850 the population of England and Wales almost doubled, coinciding with a period of rapid industrialisation. Many cities became densely packed with low-quality, low-cost housing with few planning controls.

In rural areas the health hazards were just as real. Few villages had drains, and local people threw everything - sewage, rubbish, slops and household waste - into simple pits or the midden (rubbish) heaps which lay outside many houses, into any handy field or ditch, or on to the street or village green. Livestock grazed and wandered largely unrestricted, leaving behind the inevitable physical evidence of their presence for days or even weeks to come.

Local people drew water from springs and wells. These were relatively unpolluted while the population was still sparse, although summer droughts could cause water shortages and a 'stink'. Some form of fever might then break out, and infant mortality rose through what some locals called 'summer diarrhoea' or 'infantile cholera'. However, the rains returned in autumn and usually made everything at least bearable again - unless they led to some form of epidemic.

Many city dwellers first began installing new-fangled water closets after experiencing them when they visited the 1851 Great Exhibition. In contrast to this, rural people mostly continued to relieve themselves into holes in the ground behind their cottages, or in alleyways or fields with streams.

Gradually, large sewage buckets or closets were introduced through which waste material would not leak. Soils or ash were thrown in to cover the contents, turning them into a solid mass. Medical authorities called repeatedly for pail closets to be installed in houses but even zealous RSAs found it hard to make residents conform

because bye-laws were often inadequate. Even where cesspits existed, they needed large amounts of water to drive the waste out of houses, which was hard to achieve if the water had to be manually drawn from a well in the absence of any mains supply. Drainage gradients needed to be generous to prevent the build-up or rushing-back of waste when systems were full, especially where drains were shared between houses.

Pits had to be leak-free, and sited well away from houses if cellars were not to be flooded. Regular, careful emptying was needed by local scavengers or night-soil men taking waste to sites a safe distance away from wells and springs, and fenced off from animals to avoid the risk of cross-contamination. Too often however, pits were left to overflow until a local farmer came to collect the waste. The cost to the local authority of checking and cleaning the cesspits was often deemed prohibitive.

In Uppingham before the 1850s there were open channels of water along each side of the High Street. They turned blue on Mondays from the blue-bag and soap used on washing day, and green on Wednesdays when they became polluted by the urine of the market's sheep and horses. Some inhabitants and many inns brewed beer with water from these channels: grey/brown in colour and strong in smell.

In 1875 there were still complaints that dead animals were being thrown into muddy ponds, and that waste of all sorts was being dumped into pits behind dwellings. Some householders had built privies over old ash-pits, mixing waste with water or dry earth and ash, but many houses shared exit pipes. Most of the cobbled streets were still largely dirty and ill-drained.

These problems had been increased by the town's growing population, densely

crammed into houses in yards behind the street-front shops and often with restricted access through them or down short lanes next to them. Many people were forced to live in the same buildings in which they worked. Rag(man's) Row, off North Street West was one of the worst examples, with 36 people housed in eight shacks with very low doors and unglazed windows. Innocents Yard had a density of occupation of 122 persons per acre.

The acquisition by the school of many properties along the south side of High Street West drove even more families into yard-housing. Wealthier citizens often moved to the edge of the town.

In 1857-8 a main sewer was laid through the northern part of Uppingham, followed by a deeper southern one in 1872 and a sewage outfall works two years later. After that, however, many properties remained unconnected to the new system: three-quarters of them still drained into cesspits - including the small number whose owners had installed water closets.

It was all seriously inadequate to serve a growing town and school, but Uppingham seems to have been no worse than its neighbouring towns. Possibly it was better, because the East Midlands was far from being in the forefront of sanitary reform.

Leicester had a notoriously high rate of infant mortality between 1860 and 1899. Few streets in Stamford possessed sewers. Oakham residents complained bitterly in 1856 that their drains could not cope, drawing unfavourable comparisons with Uppingham's (by then) imminent north sewer. In 1871, with cholera looming, the local paper reported Oakham's 'abominable stench' near the market place.

The national picture of water provision was little better than the sanitary one, although the expansion of cities in mid-century led to an increased demand for

better supplies of drinking and washing water, as cholera and typhoid became more frequent. Even where there were water closets and piped water to service a community, there were problems of sporadic supply, leaking joints, continuing water impurity and pollution – as well as the high cost to consumers.

There was also a continuing debate about whether water should be provided by public authorities or private companies. The mid-century saw a shift towards private schemes. Only later did municipalities return to the field, sometimes expensively buying out the established private companies.

Parliament tried to prevent monopoly abuse and inter-company rivalries, but it recognised that even if private entrepreneurs (including some MPs) tended to act for short-term gain, they could often get things done more quickly than bureaucratic, slow public authorities.

The poor fared worst. Rural communities were expensive to supply with water, and had limited funds for installation. The public health legislation introduced during the 1870s obliged RSAs to provide a supply, but in many cases it was limited. Many homes had only one tap, and received water for only a few hours per week. The poorest had to rely on street standpipes. Some authorities delayed, or ignored their legal obligations. Others pared schemes down to the minimum.

There was increasing analysis of water impurities but, lacking any bacteriological knowledge, inspectors concentrated on the water's visual state or its chemical additives. Murky, polluted water was easy to spot, so clear, sparkling water was frequently taken to be a sign of purity - even though it might easily hide just the pathogenic organisms which caused cholera and typhoid.

Uppingham in 1875 also reflected the national situation in respect of its water supply. It still had no waterworks, relying on well-water for drinking and for servicing any water-closets. As yet, schemes for using water from springs outside the town had come to nothing.

The better properties - including the boarding houses - had private wells in basements or gardens, but others had to rely on rights of access to a pump in a neighbour's yard, or on trundling water-carts or carrying buckets from public supply points spread across the town, including one in the market place. There were pumps in many yards and 'a fine stone drinking trough' at the bottom of Leamington Terrace.

A small tributary of the River Welland flowed through the town, and the geology and landscape of the area (steep hills separated by fertile valleys) suggested that the wells should be healthy. No amount of sound geology, however, could make up for pollution caused by manure heaps next to springs, wells or pumps.

A former housemaster drew on his memories twenty-five years later, (by which time bacteriology had moved on apace), to suggest that while 'Uppingham was by tradition a healthy place [with] bracing breezes and plentiful springs... those sparkling wells sported millions of bacteria, enough to account for whole consorts of fevers'.

Again, the East Midlands area was no leader. Leicester had no piped water at all until the 1850s. In Stamford, severely hit by typhoid in 1868-9, a report criticised how its underlying geology had been broken up by building and quarrying. The river passing through the town was 'a most offensive cesspool', liable to frequent flooding, and parts of the town would remain without piped water a decade later, as the council spent seven years debating

improvements. In Oakham in 1868, 'hundreds of poor families have to go two miles for fresh water'.

Country doctors were key figures in the battle against winter coughs, colds, influenza, chest infections, diarrhoea and typhoid and other fevers. The term *general practitioner* (GP) was introduced in the 1820s for those who practised all types of medicine, including surgery, midwifery and pharmacy. An 1858 Act established registration by the state of qualified doctors and set up the General Medical Council to govern the profession.

However, GPs' more systematic training and increased status did not necessarily imply a high degree of expert knowledge. New medical discoveries were handed down only slowly from laboratory scientists in cities to GPs in country areas. The medical schools were geared more towards academic medicine and the production of specialists than the needs of an aspiring GP, whose work was not yet accepted as a specialism in its own right.

Local doctors were taught to look for symptoms, but diagnosis and prognosis were very inexact skills. GPs dealt humanely with their patients, but there was little training in precise measurement, and few effective drugs were available. Often doctors could only reassure patients and console relatives. From 1874 they were also expected to certify and notify causes of death.

Country GPs enjoyed - and fiercely protected - their territory and status. Socially they might rank alongside rectors and lawyers, but professionally they were fighting for patients, as growing numbers of new doctors emerged from medical schools and an increasing variety of specialists threatened their livelihood. They needed a core of middle-class, fee-paying patients to offset the bad debts of poorer patients who could get cheaper

advice from assistants, prescribing chemists, homeopaths and unqualified charlatans. Some patients rejected all these agencies and resorted to home remedies. Medical books and patent medicines were widely available in local shops.

GPs' livelihoods and incomes were built up carefully and nurtured over many years. They needed organisational and entrepreneurial skills; many worked from a room at home, with their wives acting as book-keeper and practice organiser. They instinctively distrusted going into partnerships, and younger sons often inherited practices from their fathers.

Rural GPs made many more home visits compared with in-surgery consultations than their urban counterparts did, and they travelled greater and costlier distances. Some augmented their income as public vaccinators, coroners, workhouse MOs or registrars of births, deaths and infectious diseases. Other became MOs to schools or RSAs and USAs. A few joined the ranks of the first district MOHs.

In 1875 the school had its sanatorium on Stockerston Road, built and paid for by Thring and the housemasters six years earlier. There was no town hospital, but the workhouse had been envisaged as a complex and multi-purpose building which was a workhouse, orphanage, old peoples' home and even an unemployment centre.

Three doctors served Uppingham and its wider population: nearly twice the national average per head of population. Dr Augustus Walford was also the workhouse MO and the public vaccinator; Dr Frederick Brown was the brother of WH Brown, the RSA clerk, and Thomas Bell, the most recently trained of this trio, was also the school's MO.

The competition for custom from patients must have been intense between them.

Dr Thomas Bell, aged 39 and with a wife and four young children, lived in High Street West, close to several of the boarding houses which would be stricken with typhoid. His family had longstanding medical roots in Uppingham, his grandfather having settled there in 1780 as an apothecary and a pillar of the local congregational church. Bell's father had practised medicine in the town for many years and still lived there in retirement.

Bell also had a strong emotional attachment to the school as well as the town, as he was the fifth of seven brothers who had been day-boys there. On qualifying in London in 1861 he had returned to Uppingham with good references from his tutors. He was a man with a passion for natural history who knew 'every inch of the countryside around for miles', and he was calm, kind and conscientious but also shy. Possibly he was someone who would retreat into himself when under attack. He lived for his work, keeping abreast of the latest knowledge by spending his holidays visiting hospitals. However, he was not a high-flyer, relying more on hard graft than any gift for brilliant diagnosis. Housemasters were sometimes frustrated by how slow he was to form a view of a case, although they recognised that once he had done so he was rarely wrong.

By 1875 there was an additional new pressure on GPs: the supervisory power of Medical Officers of Health, especially in a crisis. These officials were part of the government's response to growing concerns about public health and the increased popular interest in health statistics: a response which would include the recruitment of sanitary engineers, food and drugs specialists, building and factory inspectors and town clerks.

Originally appointed for cities and large towns, the MOH system had recently been extended into rural areas. MOHs aroused

little enthusiasm amongst ratepayers, who feared the costs of their regular reports to the LGB. Some guardians delayed an MOH appointments as long as possible.

The LGB, which could provide expert back-up when needed, made little attempt to specify the type of person to be appointed as a MOH. Those selected had to be medically qualified, and local doctors were allowed to go on seeing their own patients, but rural communities faced two problems in finding good candidates. First, the work involved a level of statistical analysis and bureaucracy that was unattractive to many would-be applicants; secondly, the pay was relatively low.

Some MOHs were part-time and others were given only a short tenure. Smaller RSAs could not afford a full-time appointment or someone of high calibre. Struggling to fill vacancies, and hoping for a quiet life, many RSAs appointed a busy local GP or someone of relatively low ability. Other RSAs combined into districts, to pay a larger salary which would attract stronger candidates.

Once appointed, the first generation of MOHs did not have an easy time. A strong stigma about infectious disease coloured the public's perception of their work. Their powers were poorly defined. Local GPs, sensing a threat their own authority, resisted MOHs visiting individual patients. Householders who welcomed their GP were often hostile to the MOH - especially if he demanded the isolation or removal of a patient. Angry ratepayers resented the cost. RSAs paid miserly expenses, expecting MOHs to use their own transport. A few were even threatened with murder. Many were sustained only by a passionate belief in their work.

Given all this, the likelihood was that the MOH in a town like Uppingham would be someone upgraded from the post of inspector of nuisances, or maybe someone

timid and out of his depth. However, the Uppingham RSA was one of those which had joined forces with others in recruiting its MOH. As a result, when the 1875 crisis came, the town's leaders and the school found that in Dr Alfred Haviland they were dealing with a practitioner of substance and iron will, who was genuinely messianic about public health.

Like Thring, Haviland came from a Somerset family. His great-uncle and father were surgeons in Bridgwater. His father's first cousin was John Haviland, Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge University and a Fellow of St John's College. He qualified from University College Hospital, London, in 1845 and became (like Bell, his near-contemporary in age) a partner in his father's practice. The 1849 Bridgwater cholera outbreak gave Haviland first-hand experience of epidemics and of the public's demand which followed it for better water supplies. He became a surgeon at the hospital, but his career was cruelly cut short when he poisoned his finger during an operation in 1867 and nearly lost his life.

He believed strongly that the health of a town was determined not only by its living conditions but also by climate, geology and natural history. He brought together meteorological data and cholera statistics in an influential book *Climate, Weather and Disease*, analysing ten years of death rates to show the geographical distribution of heart disease.

So began a lifetime's interest in medical mapping, which he subsequently took to new levels of sophistication in studies of cancer and other illnesses. He lectured on the comparative health levels in several leading holiday resorts, and he produced an influential essay entitled *Hurried to Death* about how rushing to catch trains provoked heart attacks.

He became an honorary lecturer at St Thomas's hospital, attracting favourable

comment in *The Lancet* and the *BMJ* - although some of those who admired his commitment suggested that, in his medical mapping, he fitted facts to theories rather than vice versa, and that his opinions were hasty, arbitrary and seriously flawed - as in his support for miasma theory.

Haviland was appointed in 1873 at an unusually high salary from a field of 63 candidates to be the first MOH for the Northampton districts. His territory was scattered over four counties and poorly served by railways. Undaunted he set to work, drawing heavily on his statistical and mapping skills. He worked fast, and with a good eye for detail which he used vividly for effect, because he courted, and thrived on, controversy. Thus he wrote an early report which described one town's 'magnificent supply of pure spring water which is in a most loathsome condition, contaminated with filthy ooze and drainings from slaughter-houses, wells converted into cesspools, obstructed drains, muck heaps and surface water...

Within a year he was disputing his new employers' refusal to pay the costs of publishing his lengthy annual report on his area as a whole. It was a manifesto which revealed a man with a mission - and it included his belief that typhoid was 'a national disgrace [and also] the best indicator that we have of the sanitary condition of any place'. He observed that the disease was generally contracted through infected water or sewer gases or by contagion, but he noticeably declined to commit himself as to which.

He strongly favoured ash closets over water-based sewage systems. He praised the impact of recent legislation but claimed that more progress could be made only if the powers of RSAs were strengthened.

This report also described the individual towns and villages in his area. In Uppingham's case, he declared that its

RSA still had much to do, but he also confirmed that it had been a lot more active than its neighbours. Its death rate for both adults and children (including those at the workhouse) was lower than in most other places he had visited. He saw no reason for the town to be singled out for urgent scrutiny by national inspectors.

He did, however, have two concerns: there was a high incidence of scarlet fever, and after two good decades its death rate from fevers in general was not falling as fast as in other places: it was 'too stationary to be satisfactory'.

This 1874 report confirms the impression of Haviland as having high ability, energy and forcefulness. He would not have found a kindred spirit in the steady, unostentatious Dr Bell whose priorities as a GP were very different. Bell was contented, doing a job he loved; Haviland was spurred on by a frustrated yearning for a surgical career that might have been.

Nor would Haviland have found that he had much in common with the Uppingham guardians, daunted by their increasing population and rising costs - and certainly not with the mercurial Thring, concerned to protect his school whilst maintaining his independence. Neither man took kindly to anyone who questioned his professional judgement. Each of them fiercely guarded his own area of expertise.

Neither Bell nor Haviland had, nor could have been expected to have, a clear idea about the causes of typhoid in 1875. However, the imprecision of their knowledge shaped their actions in contrasting directions. Haviland drove on hard for improvement, whereas Bell's *laissez faire* approach would come to haunt him. Along with the inability to carry out effective water analysis, it would also make any definitive assessment of the causes of an epidemic hard to achieve. The seeds of the bitter disputes to come had already been sown.



An early boarding house, before much larger ones were opened: the house next to the Old Post Office on High Street West in the 1860s.



Dr Thomas Bell: one of the three Uppingham GPs, and the school's Medical Officer.

Detail from a stained glass window in Thring's school room.



Brooklands, built in 1861: a 'country' house on the London Road, some distance from the centre of the school: its grand scale reflects the school's expanded ambitions as its numbers grew.



Dr Alfred Haviland:
MOH for the combined Northamptonshire Districts.

THE WANTS OF UPPINGHAM.

A PARISH COUNCIL of INDEPENDENT MEN who will endeavour to promote the prosperity of the Town in all ways, not a Council of Men who will only study the welfare of one portion of it.

A COUNCIL that will sanction a small loan (spread over 25 years) to purchase the Market Place (£300 will buy), also to alter the Shambles so as to make it a Parish Room and Offices, Corn Exchange, &c., for the use of the Town and also Farmers who patronize Uppingham Market.

A COUNCIL that will insist upon a full valuation of the School Property according to law, namely, cost of erection, value of land, &c., and also according to rent where rent is paid. *These buildings being erected for the purpose of making money* should be valued accordingly. The Clergymen and Gentlemen who enjoy the monopoly of the Uppingham Charity of over Eleven Hundred Pounds a year are scarcely justified in quibbling over this matter when their poorer neighbours have to pay full rates according to their rent.

A COUNCIL that will endeavour to get a Supplemental Scheme to the Uppingham Charity, namely a Lower School for Uppingham Town Boys. Also a larger Grant for the National School, say £100 a year instead of £10 as now given. Also the Bede Houses should be raised to £25 a year. Also a portion of the Funds of the Charity should be advanced for the purchase of the Lecture Hall Buildings for the National Schools to enable the Committee to carry out the new system of mixed education, which requires more room and a small Lecture Hall.

A COUNCIL that will protect the Ancient Charters of the Town.

A COUNCIL that will reduce the Sanitary Rate and keep less balances. The Town does not want another £280 Iron Box just yet.

A COUNCIL that will make suitable changes in their officers from time to time; 10 years is too long for an individual to hold unpaid offices.

A COUNCIL that will give more publicity to the Finance of the Town (both Rates and Charities).

A COUNCIL that will check the dictatorial power of the place monopoliser, which power is now used in an offensive manner towards the old inhabitants.

What money can ever compensate the present generation of Uppingham Boys for the loss of their classical education and their chance of a University exhibition and education.

Did the Founder of the Uppingham Charity, though allowing them to take a few boarders, ever expect the Clergymen and Gentlemen who draw from his estates, &c., Eleven Hundred Pounds a year to commence trading on their own account?

UPPINGHAM CHARITIES FOR UPPINGHAM.

No Politics.

No Sunday Canvassing.

CHAPTER 4: UP TO AUTUMN 1875

Uppingham suffered minor epidemics of fever at least five times between 1840 and 1855, prompting criticism about the state of its streets from churchwarden William Compton and the *Stamford Mercury*. This resulted in the new northern sewer being built in 1857-8: a first step, but a seriously flawed one because it was laid with narrow pipes at a depth of only four or five feet.

Even so, it was expensive. Its main pipe and branches covered parts of High Street West and School Lane (including several small boarding houses), High Street East, Orange Street, North Street, Queen Street and Adderley Street. It ran down Seaton Lane to a small sewage farm a mile away.

It was left incomplete and not all properties were linked up to it, partly because of opposition from house owners who feared that it would drain their wells as well as their cellars: a foretaste of bigger struggles to come.

Seven years later (1865) the decision was taken to pave the streets with York slabs, at a cost of £1,101. Improvements raised expectations, but also fed anxieties. By 1870 the housemasters were calling for a mains water supply, and an LGB inspector was summoned, whose visit came to nothing. However, after new demands a year later (whether from town, school or both is not clear) for better water and sewerage, a second LGB official produced a far-seeing and ambitious report. This pointed out all the existing deficiencies, and recommended ash closets instead of cesspits, proper rainfall channels and drains to divert water away from the wells, better drain ventilation, an extended sewage farm and a new reservoir to the north of the town.

The school welcomed this report, but after a meeting of ratepayers called by the RSA only a scaled-down sewerage scheme was approved, to be paid for by a PWLB loan

and a rate increase. An engineering company was commissioned to produce a specification for extensions along the southern side of the town, linking up with existing pipes from the rectory and the market square, and then running along Stockerston Road and past the Lower School, before heading south-east along South (i.e. Spring) Back Way and across the London Road to the sewage farm on Seaton Lane which would be extended.

The new south sewer would be deeper and larger than its northern counterpart, with frequent ventilators. Thanks to favourable gradients, little pumping would be needed. However, it too was far from cheap.

All this showed very clearly why sanitary law needed streamlining, because a dispute began between the Sewer Authority (headed by Wales) and the Nuisances Removal committee of the RSA (headed by Barnard Smith) over precisely how the extra sewage would be deodorized. Wales's group was responsible for the proposed improvements, but Barnard Smith believed it was illegal for the new sewer to be built before the problems of a polluted water supply had been remedied.

The engineers drew up further plans in March 1872, but despite outbreaks of smallpox in June and scarlet fever in November, action followed only slowly. Tenders came in unexpectedly high, resulting in prolonged correspondence with the PWLB about the loan.

With the 1872 Public Health Act, sewer powers passed to the new RSA, and Wales and Barnard Smith effectively joined forces. Both served on the new sanitary sub-committee - along with eight other ratepayers, including two housemasters. It soon faced significant local opposition to the size of the loan, the proposed rate rise and the costs to householders of abolishing their cesspits.

Sir Charles Adderley then objected to the siting and leasing arrangements for the sewage farm extension next to his land. In the process he became involved in a dispute with one of his neighbours, John Pateman (a solicitor-partner of William Sheild but unlike Sheild a strong supporter of the school), who favoured the proposal. This argument broadened out into one about how much the need for any improvements should be blamed on the growth of the school.

Adderley withdrew his objection only after LGB intervention to modify the plans because of its concern about the escalating budget. Even so the costs went on rising, and two other loan applications followed. After long delays these were granted at a relatively favourable interest rate of 3.5%, but over only thirty years instead of the fifty years that the RSA had asked for. Its members became increasingly nervous about escalating repayment costs.

Barnard Smith repeatedly asked the LGB for guidance about the extent of the RSA's powers under recent legislation. It sent him hugely detailed replies about levels of delegation to sub-committees, account-keeping, the appointment of officials and even the disinfection of workhouse clothing and bedding, but the RSA also demanded to be given the status of an Urban Sanitary Authority. It believed this would extend its existing powers over water supply, sewerage and drainage, nuisances, workhouses, cemeteries, street cleaning and markets, lighting, and the regulation of traffic. Above all it would enable the RSA to insist that recalcitrant householders linked their properties to the sewers rather than continuing to rely on cesspits, and it would permit the levying of an additional 'general district rate'.

However, the LGB felt that Uppingham was too small for such status. It agreed to the recruiting of an additional collector of rates, but simultaneously complained about the late submission of accounts and

inadequate account-keeping. The RSA and its clerk, WH Brown, were now feeling the heat.

All through 1874 the RSA (through its clerk) sent the LGB further questions and requests: for guidance on audits, about how far paupers' children could be made to travel to school, and whether payment could be made to a local doctor for attending a difficult birth at the workhouse.

It also wanted a further loan, for sewerage improvements at the workhouse which had run over budget. Only three ratepayers turned up to object about costs when the inspector came down to see things for himself, but it led to further requests from London for a breakdown of expenses.

Unabashed, the RSA pressed again for USA status, citing precedents elsewhere. Keen to lay the issue to rest, the LGB agreed to a local enquiry on the matter. Despite posters advertising this being attached to the doors of all churches and chapels, once again only a handful of ratepayers turned up. The Board rejected the RSA's case whilst granting it increased powers on a few specific issues.

The RSA countered by drafting bye-laws on such issues as the minimum space and construction standards required for new housing, the drainage of new streets and all waste water, and the upgrading of existing sewerage through improved ventilation, footings and damp courses.

The proposals were submitted to the LGB early in 1875, but no reply had been received by 21 October when typhoid broke out in the school, causing Haviland to call for the LGB to make an urgent response.

The seeds had been sown for future disputes between town and school, and events now assumed a momentum of their own.

1875 brought extremes of weather coupled with unusually large variations in temperature. Sharp frosts at the start of the year deepened existing cracks and added new ones in sewer drains and cesspits - damage which did not show up at once because the spring was one of the warmest and driest for half a century.

Dramatic rainfalls occurred in early June - over eight times the normal level - making the town a sea of mud. Temperatures plunged again on 11 June, ushering in an early summer cold snap which lasted through to August, when six weeks of very warm weather set in.

Mild and wet autumns were a notorious prelude to typhoid outbreaks. In September 1875 the rains and mud returned with a vengeance, causing a sharp jump in deaths amongst elderly people right across England. There were then bitterly cold winds for four weeks from 20 November. By the time the mild weather returned just before Christmas, the school had long since broken up.

The extremes would continue through the first three months of 1876. That period included the highest early-year rainfall for a decade, setting up the classic pattern of wet weather and re-emerging typhoid.

Back in early February 1875 Thring's diary had recorded 'much illness in the town - scarlet fever. I fear we shall not escape'. He had also heard rumours of measles locally, and he asked the guardians to have the water analysed with a view to getting 'a proper supply for the town', reminding them of an earlier diphtheria outbreak in 1861.

On meeting the local inspector, he expressed concern about the pollution of well-water by cesspits and animals. Quoting a professor from the Pharmacological Society of London who had analysed several samples (presumably on the school's initiative) and who had

found that water which was pure on entry into the town became quickly contaminated thereafter, Thring declared that a mains water supply was essential.

By 13 February there had been four scarlet fever deaths in the town in ten days. It worried but also energised him: 'God has given me back some of the old elastic work power. I can do ten times as much as I have been able to do for years'.

A fortnight later he was dejected again after receiving an anonymous letter denouncing the filthy state of the town, and 'sneeringly telling [me] that if [I] did nothing about it, no one else would - but I don't see how it can be done. The law helps us very little.'

The scarlet fever outbreak had also attracted attention from Haviland. Whether he visited Uppingham or (more likely) received a report from his local inspector, he decreed that the town's infants' school was the likely source, and he urged the closing of it for thorough disinfection.

Thring kept up the pressure, but little had been done before the summer term began on 5 April - other than the RSA sending twelve well water samples from points across the town to London for analysis. The report which came back a full three months later stated that all except one of them were heavily contaminated with sewage, and that the water was 'excessively hard and very unsuitable for domestic purposes'. A mains supply should be provided and nearly all the wells closed. The RSA made no response, afraid of ratepayer anger at yet more expense.

By then, on 7 June a pupil in the Lower School (Hawke junior, aged 9) had written home that he had a sore throat. His mother (nursing her sick husband) wrote to Mrs Hodgkinson, the housemaster's wife, who replied suggesting that it was only a cold, and that the boy was improving and playing with other boys again.

However, within days Mr Hodgkinson wrote to inform the Hawke parents about their young son's alarming gastric symptoms. Lady Hawke visited the boy on 21 June and, quickly realising how ill he was, she summoned a specialist from Peterborough.

Hawke rallied, but then suddenly collapsed and died on the evening of 24 June, the day after the school had broken up for the summer. His death was certified on 28 June by Dr Bell as caused by enteric (typhoid) fever. Bell was later accused of having failed to recognize this cause until he consulted a colleague, a charge which he fiercely rejected.

Although running legally separate institutions, Thring and Hodgkinson collaborated closely and it would be surprising if they did not discuss Hawke's case. However, they did not notify the RSA. They were under no obligation to do so, and they probably underestimated the danger, hoping that it was an isolated case and that the infection would vanish over the long summer holidays.

Hodgkinson himself was then ill for some weeks, possibly with typhoid symptoms, but he had never seen a case of it and knew little of its causes, later claiming: 'There was nothing to awaken [my] anxiety'. All this explains later criticisms that the school did nothing to investigate the origins of the outbreak, and allegations that Thring feared any unfavourable press coverage that might cause pupil numbers to reduce.

On 2 September just before the new term began a local plumber, Mr Chapman, was summoned by Hodgkinson to the Lower School. According to Haviland's later report, details of which were hotly disputed by Hodgkinson and Thring, Chapman was called in to clear an obstruction in the sewage-flow from the boys' trough closets into an unventilated cesspit:

'The corner [in] which the obstruction was supposed to exist being dark, a lighted candle was used, and almost immediately a tremendous explosion took place, the sewer gases igniting, passing up to the ceiling like a streak of lightning, and at the same time burning the whiskers, eyebrows and hair of Mr Chapman'.

The incident appeared to support the miasma-theorists. Coincidentally, only a week earlier the *Lancet* had carried a report of typhoid amongst 'men exposed to sewer gas'.

Three weeks later and with term well under way, thirteen year-old Kettlewell went down with fever on 21 September, again in the Lower School. Bell again confirmed typhoid as the cause: Hastings major followed on 28 September, with two more cases as the next month began. Thring wrote in his diary of 'that fatal fourth of October... two or three cases in the school. This begins to make me anxious'.

Richardson developed symptoms on 7 October: a serious case from the start and one which proved fatal. Over the next five days Dr Bell saw ten other Lower School boys, along with eight from other houses, and eleven other adults and children - mostly members of staff families or servants working in boarding houses. Some had indeterminate symptoms, but he was fairly sure that at least two were suffering from typhoid.

Only now - presumably on Bell's advice - were cases from the Lower School sent to the sanatorium rather than being cared for in-house. Lower School boys had no automatic right of access to the 'san', and it was thought better not to let them mix with older pupils from other houses who might pick up and spread the infection.

The school's deepening crisis was symbolised by the weather on Saturday 9 October, when a football match took place

between the pupils and a masters' invitation XV. For three days there had been torrential downpours and at lunchtime the clouds opened again, but the captain of football declared: 'We play [on] through thunder and lightning'.

A sizeable number of spectators braved 'pitiless rain' which afterwards became even heavier, continuing through the evening and much of the night. Awash with mud, the town became covered with 'the well-known malaria called the church-yard smell, which is almost as offensive as disinfecting powder, and must be a perpetual reproach to all anti-cremationists'.

We do not know whether Thring was on the touchline that afternoon. He would probably have known all the members of the visiting team, so he would surely have been there in normal times, but illness was now spreading through several boarding houses and other properties. Six boys were admitted to the sanatorium on the day of the match, joining seven others who had been admitted over the previous few days.

For days Thring had hoped that a dry spell might chase the sickness away, although he was deeply concerned about two ailing children of members of staff and he was worrying too about what might happen within his own family: 'The bell tolled [in the town], and I was in great fear, but a man had died in the workhouse. I very much fear that we shall not escape death'.

On the evening of the match-day a seventeen year-old who was to become a chance casualty arrived by coach at the Falcon Hotel. His name is unknown, but he had caught the train from Southampton to Manton to become a page-boy in the Lower School. The school later claimed to have offered to pay his fare home again but that he chose to stay. This was disputed by Haviland who alleged that the boy replied: 'If I had known, I would not have come; and if I had money in my

pocket, I would go back again'. Whatever the truth, just over three weeks later he would be dead.

On the day after the match, the Sunday chapel service raised Thring's spirits, but a steady stream of new cases emerged in the days that followed: a few in the town, but most of them in the school, where the cases were also more serious. Five of the 13-16 year olds were from West Deyne, two doors down from the Lower School, along with Cecil Mullins, the housemaster's four year-old son. The baby son of Paul David (the Director of Music who lived nearby) was also gravely ill. At the Lower School, Hastings' younger brother went down with the disease.

Most worrying was the case of Stephen Nash, who complained of feeling faint during singing practice. Aged 14, he was from Redgate - a 'hill' house' on London Road, nearly half a mile from the houses of boys previously affected. The cases were spreading geographically but there was no way of knowing the cause. Miasma could not be ruled out; boys travelling around the sodden town might have ingested foul water; contagion seemed a possibility as they rubbed up against each other in school; an outside carrier might be bringing new infection into the town.

Dr Bell saw Nash that evening and again two days later, and Thring met the boy's 'kind and sensible' parents when they came to visit him in the sanatorium.

Even the mildest cold symptoms produced fear amongst boys and staff. Local rumour suggested that there were now nearly 40 cases, and although Dr Bell insisted that the true figure was around a dozen, the wilder rumours started to reach parents. Some of them reacted with aggressive calls for action (mostly unspecified) or by calling their sons home. Others arrived unexpectedly at the school, including some who kept vigils at the bedsides of those most seriously ill.

On Monday 11 October Wensley Jacob, a school trustee, Birkenhead businessman and father of two pupils, contacted Thring. Six parents from nearby Liverpool, including two doctors, had been to see him, demanding that the school summon the MOH. The next day Thring received a letter from another Liverpool doctor-parent, 'speaking in the name of many parents in a kind spirit, but also in an imperious one'.

Thring now faced a very difficult decision. If he closed the school and dispersed pupils to their homes all over the country, he risked spreading the infection and accelerating the panic to a point at which the school might never reopen. However, if he kept it in session and the epidemic grew he would inevitably be accused of complacency, secrecy and selfishly putting his own interests ahead of those of his pupils. Reputationally, this might prove even more damaging in the longer term.

He saw his immediate priority as being to bolster morale and prevent a sense of deepening crisis. On balance he judged it was best to let school life continue as normally as possible, even if some staff faced personal family tragedies.

He also needed to summon up the right mix of assertiveness and tact in dealing with an RSA which he increasingly believed to be incompetent. However, backed by Mullins who was beset by cases in West Deyne and who was watching his own son deteriorate, Thring decided that he had no alternative but to ask for urgent help from Haviland.

He wrote asking the MOH to come over from Northampton to 'test and examine' the drainage system and water supply of all the houses. Either through courtesy or because it was tactically sensible to sound conciliatory, he added: 'If you cannot come yourself, perhaps you would kindly telegraph to me, as it is no use to us to have the inspection by any man whose

name will not carry respect and conviction amongst the parents of the boys.' He saw Haviland as the best-placed figure of authority to put pressure on the RSA, and if necessary even the LGB.

Bell's view of the invitation to Haviland is unknown, but he met regularly with Thring during that week over the latest developments. So did a relentless succession of concerned parents and housemasters.

Whilst out on brief walk with Grace, his youngest daughter, to relieve the intense pressure, Thring 'met Christian (housemaster of Redgate) who said Nash was [thought] to be dying; wrote part of another letter, went to dinner, lay down, but was sent for by poor Mullins who had already said there was no hope for his own little boy... I found him quite perplexed about his house, overdone both in body and mind'.

Thring was concerned too about the Lower School: 'I really fear it will send poor Hodgkinson into his grave...' He prayed. Briefly there was hope that Nash and Cecil Mullins might be rallying, but on Wednesday things were bad again - and now Hodgkinson needed support: 'driven out of his wits by the calamity and fuss. I very much fear that he will not stand it'.

Even so, Thring stuck to his earlier decision telling a staff meeting on Thursday that 'it [would be] a great wrong to many [parents] forcing them to have their boys home... when a house was got hold of by illness, I should have parents written to, but I strongly dissuade the removal of the boys; then if it spread I should make removal optional, and if it got very bad, I should throw the responsibility of keeping them here on the parents. We should always stay so long as there were any boys to teach and keep them'. He also declared that he would 'not permit the school to be overhauled (i.e. investigated) by any but a competent and true authority'.

In such a small community the RSA members must have known that the situation was bad and growing worse. Before their weekly Wednesday meeting they instructed their local inspector to investigate and he confirmed formally that there were typhoid cases in the school.

Keen to be seen as proactive, they too decided to approach Haviland. A telegram was sent: 'Fever in the school houses here; your immediate attendance is requested'. Haviland thus returned home from work elsewhere on the Thursday to find urgent communications from both school and town. He replied immediately that he would come over next morning.

Meanwhile there had been a meeting between the RSA's inspector and Thring at which accusations of secrecy and inertia were traded. Thring wrote with irony in his diary: 'Was not a little amused to hear from him that he [claimed to have] known nothing of fever in the town until today. So I may be excused for having known nothing [about illness in the school]'.

On Friday morning Haviland arrived by train to begin enquiries - just as young Cecil Mullins died at West Deyne. Another telegram came from Liverpool, demanding to know whether or not Haviland had started his investigations. 'When will it end?' wrote Thring in his diary. 'I am myself very tired and done up... all one's feelings of joy in doing one's best, and the happy sense of one's work is so utterly destroyed'. The achievements of twenty-five years might now 'melt like the snow of spring'.

Sunday brought the death of Richardson. Thring went for an afternoon walk and was fearful that there might have been a second death that day when he heard the church bell toll, but it was for a woman in the town. However, Nash died on 21 October and Oldham, another Lower School pupil who had been in the sanatorium for only 24 hours, two days later.

The list of school-connected cases of varying severity did indeed come eventually to over forty, including no fewer than seventeen from the Lower School and nine from West Deyne. Six different senior school houses were affected. The sanatorium list includes crosses against the names of four marked as 'an undoubted case of typhoid, although we cannot be sure when these crosses were included. In all, five boys died, together with Mullins' young son.

Bell also recorded that twelve of his town patients showed similar fever symptoms during September and October, including (mildly) the children of bookseller John Hawthorn and HH Stephenson, the school's cricket professional.

Thring attended Cecil Mullins' burial in the churchyard on Saturday 16 October, barely 150 yards from his own house, just as a group of angry parents gathered at the Falcon Hotel. Feelings were running high; one father arrived late for the meeting and was greeted by others asking whether he had come 'to take his boy out of the hands of these murderers'.

When Thring heard about this later, he commented ruefully: 'Nice for poor old Hodgkinson, whose whole life has been bound up in the house and boys; nice for me too, for I am murderer No. 1'. He then went straight off to meet Haviland, though (it seems) Bell was not included.

The MOH had evidently wasted no time in looking around both town and school. He was furious that the RSA had done nothing to improve the privies at the infants' school, eight months after he had first drawn attention to them. At this stage, convinced that the typhoid had originated in the Lower School, he declared that it was quite safe for the school as a whole to continue.

Thring, possibly experiencing public health officialdom for the first time, found

Haviland's imperious manner hard to take. Although glad that the MOH supported his own view that the school could remain in session, he was worried that Haviland was listening too much to alarmist rumours in making what appeared to be very rapid judgements: 'I confess that my blood rather boiled when I heard this man deliver an *ex cathedra* statement, as if all he said was gospel on a question where there was so much to be considered'.

A few days later Haviland carried out a thorough inspection of Thring's boarding house. Thring was relieved: 'I am glad to say there is not much of consequence. He also passed both my wells as perfectly pure' - an analysis which was confirmed a week later in water samples which Thring sent independently to London.

After that, however, Haviland's advice seemed erratic: he told Thring (22 October) that all boys in infected houses should be sent home, but he wrote to another housemaster (Christian) that he saw 'no danger whatsoever in allowing [your] pupils to remain' - despite Nash's death, but possibly because Redgate was a hill house, well way away from the centre of the school.

Unsurprisingly, Thring preferred to emphasise the second message. He wrote to every parent, re-emphasising that each house was geographically distinct and with its own catering arrangements. He reiterated all the reasons for not sending boys home - although he said that if parents insisted on it or the disease took real hold in any individual house, there would be no alternative.

Getting the right tone was far from easy - especially with the parental medical fraternity - and before sending it he consulted his two trustee allies on Merseyside. They queried whether the letter sounded too dictatorial, but he pressed ahead and later claimed that parents welcomed it.

At this point Dr Christopher Childs, a popular Old Boy sportsman who had gained an Oxford First and recently qualified from St George's Hospital, London, wrote offering Thring his services. Thring at once recruited Childs as science master and 'sanitary officer'. Taking on new staff would reassure parents that the school had a future and Childs would go down well with the Old Boys. Childs might also be able to relieve the pressures on Dr Bell, although Thring failed to realise how much it would cause Bell to fear for his own position.

The RSA gave the school little comfort in these testing weeks. Some of its members were at best lukewarm towards the school, and they may well have enjoyed Thring's discomfiture. It made sense for them to await Haviland's findings, and they lacked the expertise to ensure that any decisions that they made would be cost-effective, or indeed effective at all.

Gradually though, as the extent of the epidemic sank in, they saw the need to seem in control. They were quick to pronounce that wells at Redgate (on the edge of the town) were quite pure, only for Thring's independent analysis of the same supply to describe it as 'turbid' and over-heavy in carbon and nitrogen. On 27 October the RSA served notice on four of the housemasters to 'remove nuisances arising from their cesspits', in the wake of Haviland's initial visits to houses. Thring saw this move as prompted, not by a conviction that the cause of the epidemic had been found, but by the RSA's concern to place the blame for it firmly on the school.

He was equally irritated by the reaction of the school trustees to recent events when they met on 29 October. Declining to seek their own expert independent advice, they proposed a sub-committee to work with the RSA, urging it to give every assistance to Haviland and the housemasters, thereby

implying that they supported the recent order about the cesspits.

Much worse, they ordered Thring to close the school immediately. He thought them spineless: 'A most bitter disappointment. The trustees with all this great school handed over to them... [will work with] authorities here whom we mistrust and despise... it is very hard to keep down the bitter, sour feeling'.

Very reluctantly he announced that term would end on 2 November and that he hoped to reopen 'the week after Christmas Day'. He was deeply worried that parents might now consider alternative schools. He worked hard to keep his housemasters in line: the houses must be made faultless, costly though it would be to them. On the night before the school broke up, he described his feelings in his diary: 'The last evening, alas! of our maimed school-time. The strange childish relief I feel at not having to get up for school tomorrow [and] the lifting of that fearful weight of the possibility of fresh fever. For the first time for many days I have drawn something like free breath'.

Recriminations between school and town came fully into the open once the boys had gone. The RSA made public its enforcement notice about the cesspits, adding that 'serious blame attaches to the masters in whose homes enteric fever originated.' It criticised Bell for inadequate investigations, for failing to report the situation to the RSA, and for declining to attend a meeting of the town's doctors arranged by Haviland. It also commissioned a notable sanitary engineer based in London, Rogers Field, to report on the town and its properties.

Thring was deeply angry at this rush to judgement before the evidence had been gathered and assessed. He complained to Birley and Jacob that 'we were going to be made a scapegoat of... the most wonderful bit of Jack-in-officism', and he

emphasised the 'astonishing audacity' of the RSA, which had been so inadequate over the previous two decades and especially recently:

'It is the most insulting thing I ever knew... truly laughable, but noxious too, as they mean to send it to every parent whose boy has been ill. They think nothing can touch them. I shall have difficulty in keeping the masters quiet under the insult... Altogether this is a time of humiliation and sackcloth'. His worst suspicions were confirmed when the RSA's inspector told him that 'if we applied to the [LGB], they would only send down the complaint to him, and he (Thring) had better save himself the trouble'.

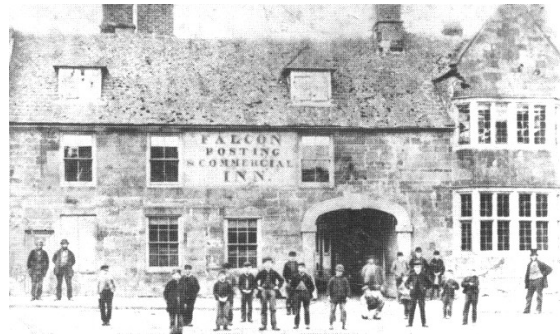
He was increasingly worried that Haviland's full report - due within weeks - might conclusively take the RSA's side against the school. A MOH's sympathies might lie instinctively with an RSA, and he was perhaps also aware that Haviland's responsibility was to the whole local community, not just the school. The school must therefore enlist influential support beyond the immediate locality to get the LGB to intervene. On 5 November he wrote to his brother, Sir Henry Thring, who had extensive networks within parliament, urging him to lobby the LGB:

'If it rested with us, all could be set in order, but it does not. I want nothing but fair play. My masters are hard-working, and ready to do anything that is judged right. The town is at fault...unless we can get the central authority turned on, it is ruin... The town is trying to make the school its scapegoat, [to] hide past mismanagement and prevent outlay and exposure. Uppingham may forget but cannot forgive that it exists mainly by the school... The row and panic amongst our parents is so great after the lies and exaggerations that have been set going...

... You government men have no conception of local tyranny'.



The Lower School in 1872 (now The Lodge):
the house where the first two outbreaks of typhoid
originated in June and October 1875.



The Falcon Hotel, 1860:
scene of an angry gathering of parents in October
1875, accusing Thring of negligence and secrecy.

Lower School.			
Name	First seen	Declined	Length of illness
Nawoke B.E. Maki	June 16th	June 17th or 18th	Died on the 24th June
McKewell	Sept. 21st	Sept. 22nd or 23rd	Able to go home on Oct. 19th.
Hastings ma	" 28th	Same day	Removed in invalid carriage by Dr. Hastings on
Wainman	Oct. 14th	"	Convalescing Oct. 11th sent home some days
Perera	" "	"	Weak but able to go home on Oct. 19th.
Marsh	" "	"	Able to go home Oct. 26th or 30th.
Bycknell	" 5th	"	" " Oct. 22nd.
Price	" "	"	Convalescing Oct. 11th sent home some
Harman	" 6th	"	Able to go home Oct. 22nd
Hillard	" "	"	Removed in invalid carriage Oct. 25th.
Bill ma.	" 7th	"	" " Oct. 23rd.
Richardson	" 7th	"	Died Oct. 17th
Martineau ma	" 9th	"	Able to go home Oct. 20th
Smith ma	" 9th	"	" " " Oct. 30th went home
Harcourt	" 9th	"	" " " Nov 5th.
Hamilton	" 9th	"	" " " Nov 10th
Hastings mi	" 11th	"	Had been under Dr. Hastings 5 or 6 days
Roham	" 18th	"	saw him, went home with his brother on Oct. 3
			Died on Oct. 23rd.

18 Cases

18 Cases

By invalid Carriage is meant a Carriage with Couching
up to Mrs. Rodgkinson's house, the boys obliged to be removed there
would be some weeks in getting well.

The remainder went in Cabs to the Station and then in own
Carriages but all would be at least 10 days or fortnight before
they could work and some a month or six weeks.

Extract from the Sanatorium Register, Autumn 1875.

Incomplete water analysis

The first page of an analysis of the 12 wells around the town in July 1875, a month after the first typhoid outbreak in the Lower School.

Requested by Thring and commissioned by the RSA, it was conducted by Dr Thudicum of the Medical Department of the LGB. Like many of those which followed over the next two years, it demonstrates that in the era before bacteriology had developed, analysis was confined to chemical impurities in water.

*Tabular Statement of the results of the
Pathological Laboratory on behalf of the*

Number of Water	1	2	3	4	5
Ammonia by Nessler's	0.00145	0.000277	0.00277	0.0133	None
Nitrous Nitric acid as Nitric Acid	0.770	12.070	34.413	12.329	13.868
Chlorine	0.687	10.82	14.72	10.28	7.800
Sulphuric Acid	2.200	10.711	16.633	9.706	10.580
Potassium as Chloride	0.6606	7.93	40.37	16.152	13.11
Sodium as Chloride	1.6401	14.41	16.45	19.899	14.66
Temporary Hardness	14.00	14.70	33.00	14.00	20.80
Permanent Hardness	3.00	33.00	31.00	11.00	15.20
Total Hardness	17.00	47.70	64.00	25.00	36.00
Total Solid Residue	18.75	90.28	141.32	63.75	76.23
Loss by Ignition	4.87	25.69	27.77	4.85	13.167

The numbers indicate grains per gallon



Redgate: a house on the London Road (closed in 1940) and far from the houses previously affected. Its boys included one of the fatalities in the second typhoid outbreak, Stephen Nash.

In Memoriam.

Stephen Payne Nash,

Born March 3rd, 1861,

Came to this School in August, 1875,

Died at Fairfield on the 21st of October last,

Aged Fourteen.

Memorial notice announcing Nash's death in the sanatorium (Fairfield).



(Old) Constables, on the north side of High Street West: another of the early new houses which between them put so much pressure on the town's sanitation.

CHAPTER 5: WINTER 1875-6

Thring's readiness to use his powerful contacts fed the RSA's resentment and suspicion that he was resolved to divert all blame away from himself.

Sir Henry duly went to visit the LGB, which gave him a very sympathetic hearing. Landowner Sir Charles Adderley also lobbied it: he believed that relations between the RSA and the school had irretrievably broken down. He claimed that the earlier sewerage improvements in the town had been poorly thought out. There should be a government enquiry lest good ratepayers' money was poured after bad: it would be no point in adding to the sewerage system without improving what was already there. The RSA needed greater powers but it could make more use of those which it already had. For him, the water supply was a secondary issue.

Sir Henry and Adderley succeeded in their quest for a LGB enquiry. Thring was euphoric: 'A great day. The local tyranny is now shut up for a time... A great cloud rolled away, I begin to breathe freely'. Seeking to show the school as pro-active, he hired Alfred Tarbotton, a Nottingham engineer, to recommend improvements to the houses, urging housemasters not to resist the cost.

The two recent analyses of well-water across the town had highlighted its contamination, so he planned to finance trial borings for a new water supply. A private company might be the best provider, and legal advice was that an act of parliament should be sought for it.

The RSA quickly and predictably gave notice of opposition to what it saw as Thring's unilateral action, claiming that their riposte was 'merely to protect our own interests and those of the ratepayers', but just before Christmas a draft company prospectus went out to housemasters and trial borings began.

Meanwhile Haviland had given the LGB early warning that the epidemic was serious, but its senior officials differed amongst themselves over whether or not to become deeply involved. It was unwilling to take sides too soon, or simply to back the party which protested the loudest.

There were several reasons for this. First, demands for LGB intervention by *any* local authority fed on-going internal debate amongst officials about the merits of direct intervention compared with gradual persuasion and making local leaders stand on their own feet. Secondly, it was being lobbied with contradictory messages by the RSA and the school. Thirdly, the school's pressure was unrelenting - even counter-productive.

An official annotated one of Thring's stronger letters as needing to be treated with caution. When Thring sent Childs to reinforce the school's case, the LGB expressed every confidence in Haviland and Field, who were likely to make far-reaching proposals: the problems in Uppingham were well-known and 'if the college' (sic) thought the town's drainage was inadequate, it could make a formal complaint... the LGB would no doubt send an engineer to assess things for himself'.

Thring could not have known that Field (perhaps conscious of being the RSA's client), had recently told an LGB official that some housemasters seemed 'less anxious about perfecting their sanitary arrangements than by doing the [minimum] work which would satisfy the sanitary authorities'. He greeted the LGB's response with deep gloom, sending Childs to London again but to no avail, and then firing off to the LGB a further complaint against the RSA: the school paid large sums in rates and it needed urgent help in the shape of an LGB inspector's visit.

Thring's previous letters had been sent to Sir John Simon, head of the LGB's medical department but this time he took his case direct to its President, George Sclater-Booth. Sclater-Booth's annotation suggests that he took a much more urgent view of the school's plight than Simon: 'Will you deal urgently with this? It is an exceptional case, and I think we ought to appoint [an] inspector'.

'JS' (presumably Simon) reluctantly suggested Robert Rawlinson, the LGB's chief engineering inspector, but with the caution that adding Rawlinson to the expertise of Haviland, Field and Tarbotton might be undiplomatic. Keen as ever to be even-handed, the LGB kept the RSA informed of its actions, and braced itself as yet another school deputation quickly arrived in London.

Throughout November the LGB's officials agonised over its degree of involvement, as Sclater-Booth insisted that Rawlinson go to Uppingham. Ironically, Rawlinson had always been a strong advocate of non-compulsion on local authorities and he argued that once his visit was over, the LGB should draw back: 'It is important that you repudiate the idea of responsibility for any future outbreak. The responsibility is, and must remain, local'.

There was a further, inconclusive, exchange of notes between the LGB and the RSA on the bye-laws question. After that, at various points up to Christmas, the LGB received updates from the school, the trustees, the RSA and water analysts about their respective activities.

However, the LGB now also risked being drawn into a private battle between Bell and Haviland. Bell wrote on 12 November protesting about the MOH's over-bearing conduct. He had already complained to the RSA about Haviland's demand for information about his patients. He resented the attempt to force him to come to a meeting between Haviland and all three

town GPs. The LGB wrote back supporting Haviland's actions but stating that the MOH had no *legal* right to make Bell appear. Beyond that, it could not express a view on what was a local matter.

Bell persisted through December with a string of detailed complaints. He had met the inspector of nuisances and had talked at least three times with Haviland himself. The doctors' meeting had been called at very short notice (at variance with Haviland's claim that Bell pleaded sudden illness). If he (Bell) was under fire for not having reported suspected typhoid cases to Haviland in June and October, were the other doctors being investigated over alleged cases in the town a year earlier? Haviland had visited his (Bell's) patients unreasonably and repeatedly, sometimes suggesting alternative treatments.

Bell's own campaign cannot have helped the school's cause with the LGB. It replied dutifully each time, asking Haviland for comment. The MOH stated that his forthcoming report would rebut all Bell's charges. The LGB noted in its files that even if he had breached medical etiquette, he had not exceeded his legal authority.

By then, Uppingham's battles were appearing in columns of the national press. Perhaps fed information by disaffected parents, *The Lancet's* editorial on 30 October stated that the town was apparently free from typhoid, but that there was plenty for Haviland to investigate in the school. It published an anonymous letter from *Medicus*, claiming to be a relative who had visited one of the stricken boys. *Medicus* said that he had received evasive responses from Hodgkinson and Thring, that Bell had tried to avoid meeting him; that the boy had been treated in the sanatorium, close to another who was 'in the second week of typhoid, with a temperature of over 105 degrees fahrenheit'.

Thring instructed his staff not to write to the press without consulting him first: a consistent response was necessary and he wanted to avoid a public slanging match - with reason, for Bell had just admitted to him that there were ventilation problems in the sanatorium and a shortage of beds, cooking facilities and storage space. Its superintendent had resigned (possibly under pressure to do so): it was an additional short-term problem but in retrospect fortuitous, because her successor soon reorganized the building, but giving credence to the criticisms which Haviland's report would shortly make.

The Times took up the attack on 5 November, quoting from the RSA's recently published self-defence. It lambasted the sanitary arrangements at 'isolated' Redgate: cesspits, water closets, sinks and water supplies were all inadequate and poorly sited:

'It would be impossible to find arrangements more directly fitted to engender and spread the special disease which has shown itself at Uppingham School... The Lower School is a splendid mansion, but the architect seems to have altogether forgotten to provide for the health of its inmates. Gigantic cesspools were in close relation to the water supply and every arrangement was made for the pollution of the air by regurgitation of gases from the water closets'. Quoting a report in the *Sanitary Record*, it too suggested that the school had been complacent and secretive.

The Lancet returned to the attack a week later, reporting the RSA resolution that 'serious blame' attached to the housemasters and criticising Bell. It wondered whether 'his reticence was due to pressure put on him by school authorities'. It challenged Thring's fitness to continue as headmaster, for allowing healthy boys to visit infected houses: actions of which the trustees and parents should be made aware. By way of contrast

it concluded: 'The Sanitary Authority have acted with spirit and determination'.

Similarly critical articles appeared that day in Uppingham's recruiting heartland. The *Liverpool Post* believed that 'the commonest precautions have been recklessly disregarded', while the *Liverpool Daily News* alleged that 'letters and telegrams sent by anxious parents had remained almost unanswered... Mothers, who fled in an agony of apprehension to Uppingham, had the greatest difficulty in obtaining access to their sick children'...

'...Even the autocratic will of the headmaster of an English public school is inefficient against the laws of nature; sewage gas will bring enteric fever, however sternly he may set his face against it'. As for the school's strong reputation for Latin and Greek: 'perhaps when the cesspools are cleared out, the water supply is beyond suspicion, and the boys are back, the Local Government Board will send a teacher of elementary physiology into Rutlandshire. It would be a good investment of time [for] both masters and boys, even if the [study of classics was] intermitted for a month or two'.

Another paper described Thring as 'a bigoted old-fashioned hater of pure air and water', but he stood firm, and he replied to a supportive letter from his opposite number at Rugby: 'I prize your letter. It is very cheering in these heavy days to have a little sunlight let in'.

The disputes in the press then moved on to whether it would be safe for the school to reassemble in January. Haviland and *The Lancet* urged caution, but Tarbotton, his survey of the houses now complete, wrote more reassuringly: the latest analysis of springs by London experts was 'most satisfactory'. In December *The Times* criticised the RSA's intention to make the forthcoming reports public before the trustees had seen them as 'a partial and

premature act'. Barnard Smith rebutted charges in the *Medical Examiner* that the RSA was antagonistic to the school.

It was not yet clear how much damage the publicity had dealt the school or what the experts' reports would bring. Thring was cheered by rumours of a London official stating that the RSA had much to do and that 'if work was not done quickly, [the LGB] would send down their own engineers, and charge it to the parish'. Much bleaker, however, was the letter he received from the parent of a boy in his own house, describing how he had run into Haviland in the street in Northampton. They had talked for about ten minutes:

'Mr Haviland did not say that it would be a year before the school could re-assemble... [but] it would be a long time; that the sanitary condition of the school was very bad; the boys did not get enough to eat and drink, that those who paid for extra meat did not get an equivalent for their money... he said quite enough to deter any father from sending his son to Uppingham [and] will deter many from returning. P.S. My boys are anxious to return and I shall be glad to send them there, provided I can be assured that the place is safe!'

Thring forwarded the letter to the LGB, adding: 'It is hard having Mr Haviland as our judge. Money has not been spared since 22 years ago I began life at Uppingham, with 25 boys... I venture to think that [his actions] and views of his duty are not such as would be approved by the Board'. He wanted all the background documents to be laid before Sclater-Booth, but an official merely noted that 'the papers are with Mr Rawlinson, and he cannot spare them today'. The LGB was watching its boxes fill up with a sense of foreboding: it had insufficient enforcement powers and manpower - and it had another 700 local authorities to oversee.

All the parties now awaited the publication of the four experts' reports. Tarbotton

(commissioned by the school) sent his findings to Thring, the trustees and Rawlinson just before Christmas 1875. Despite conceding that all the houses had been defective in various ways (with unsuitable drain and sewer layout, faulty joints, poor ventilation and inadequate flushing), he judged the shortcomings merely as those 'too often found in most modern houses and mansions'.

Criticising the RSA, he pointed out that the four 'hill' houses had no possibility of connecting to the sewer system unless it was radically extended. Prospects were not much better for 'town' houses because the sewer system was too shallow, poorly constructed and 'totally unventilated'. One house had been forced to build cesspits because the RSA had banned it from connecting to the sewer for fear of overloading the system.

He conceded that the Lower School (although only recently built) had been very defective, but extensive works had now taken place - including a new well for drinking water. He urged the RSA to seek a 'better source of [water] supply unless private enterprise be more active'. The masters had all been very co-operative.

If Thring hoped this report would persuade the trustees to agree to the school's reopening, he was quickly disappointed. They decided on 28 December to defer any decision, pending Rawlinson's LGB report whose timescale was still uncertain.

Rogers Field's report (commissioned by the RSA) came out on 6 January. Carefully researched, wide-ranging in scope and full of technical information, it charted the growth of the town and its sewerage improvements, and it detailed the sanitation in all 379 properties in the town.

Field was unsparing of his client (the RSA) in describing the town's sanitary state. The sewers had ventilators choked by dirt, faulty joints, inadequate gradients

causing flooding into cellars, and the lack of provision for flushing. These were deficiencies so serious that it would be better to re-lay the sewers than to repair them: a strategy which might also tempt more townspeople to join up to the system, as 'the greater portion of the town [is] still draining into cesspools, many of which are very badly situated and offensive'. At the sewage farm the tanks were too small, and emptied all too infrequently. Many private wells seemed contaminated, and there was no public water supply. Better water provision would provide healthier drinking and would also support comprehensive water-carriage arrangements for sewage disposal rather than dry-earth treatments.

Within the school Field had visited every house, noting engineering flaws in drains passing under them, poorly sited water-closets and deficiencies in sinks, baths and lavatories. He emphasised miasmatic problems caused by gases and foul air; he backed Tarbotton's recommendations, and he too praised the co-operative masters.

Rawlinson's findings (for the LGB) followed quickly on 12 January. His report was brief, reflecting his reluctance for the LGB to be drawn too far into the dispute. Noting the actions taken by RSA and school over two decades, including Thring's repeated requests for improvements as pupil numbers increased, he described working closely with Tarbotton and Field in visiting all the key sites. He believed that once Tarbotton's recommendations had been carried out, 'the school will be in as complete and satisfactory a state as the best modern sanitary science can put them'.

He praised Field's work and reiterated the dangers from contaminated wells, criticising the RSA's 'imperfect' past actions because 'after all this expenditure the main sewers have been practically useless' owing to inadequate maintenance. He also noted the 'local opposition by the ratepayers', who ignored the RSA's

notices requiring improvements, showing 'obstinacy in not draining their houses'. He too added a miasma reference: 'There is most unfortunately a strong prejudice in small rural towns and villages against sewer ventilation because, it is said, the openings permit bad smells to issue'.

Overall he was very supportive of the school and his report impressed the trustees. Six days later (18 January) they agreed that the new term could begin on the 28th, although Wales wanted the decision delayed until Haviland's report had been published. Wales - his interests conflicted by his other role in the RSA - had possibly received a preview of the MOH's report, unlike the other trustees.

Notwithstanding Wales's demand, Birley and Jacob persuaded the trustees that Thring should tell parents that the necessary measures had been carried out and that Dr Childs had 'been appointed science master and charged with all sanitary arrangements'. Thring believed the decision to re-open had been a close-run thing, and he reflected gloomily on the likely impact of the bad publicity.

He would have resigned if the trustees had gone against him: 'It would be ludicrous, if it was not so important, to see them... sitting in solemn conclave playing with other men's lives... Yet there they are, totally ignorant of the business of the school, also passing judgement on us and our work and our fortunes'.

Haviland was in no hurry to produce his report, as he wanted to give critical parents every chance to contact him. Originally called in by both town and school (for very different reasons), he had visited Uppingham several times between October and Christmas 1875, writing in *The Lancet* and the *Liverpool Daily Post* that as he had no evidence that structural improvements to the houses had been made, he could not recommend the return of the boys.

Having had early warning from his Northampton parent of what Haviland's report might contain, Thring's sense of foreboding grew, fed by knowing that its headlines were being disseminated elsewhere but had not been sent to him. Just before the new term was due to begin, he confided to his diary:

'Private copies of the indictment of the school going about. The masters are very troubled, [with] reason, for it is clever and scurrilous. I have heard from London that the report is going about there. Beale (a doctor, supportive of the school) is disgusted. Jacob and Birley have also seen it. I hear the Bishop of Peterborough says the trustees must notice it... fresh danger'.

Haviland's report ran to fifty foolscap sides: by far the longest of the four reports. It bore its author's trademark combative tone, opening with a graphic description of the preconditions for any typhoid epidemic, the need for speedy investigation of the first case, and the imperative need to keep young people away from any infected house. He included a long chronology of events from Hawke's death in June at the Lower School, via Chapman's explosive visit to its underground chambers, to the clutch of cases in October which had caused four more fatalities. He asserted that there had been thirty cases in the school by 12 October but 'not a single step had been taken towards investigating the cause of this lamentable outbreak'.

He rejected Thring's claim to have summoned Haviland before parents began to express their fears. Mrs Richardson's complaint that her son's condition had been kept from her until it was too late 'made a deep impression on me... I found indeed, that she had reason to complain and that she did not stand alone'.

He criticised Hodgkinson for allowing a Lower School cook to go back to her home in Caldecott, probably causing the death of

an 18 year-old who lived next door. He censured Dr Bell for failing to attend the doctors' meeting - in contrast to Dr Walford who had come despite 'serious illness' - and he implied that Thring had ordered Bell to stay away. He condemned Bell's complaints to the LGB and rejected a charge made by 23 town residents that he (Haviland) had made 'various unofficial statements'.

He was particularly incensed that the infected houses had not been closed to other boys at an early stage. He was convinced that the epidemic originated in the Lower School, citing yet another expert water analysis (whose author would claim later to have been misrepresented). He believed that Nash from Redgate had contracted the disease by swimming in infected water. This led him to paint a graphic picture of the course taken by the stream flowing out of Hodgkinson's garden and through the town:

'Pure at first; then progressively contaminated by sewage mixed with excess rain and well-water, 'oozings from the site of the old gas works... drainings from manure heaps, a cowshed, a pigstye, a stable, and other accumulation of filth... before [being] still further polluted by the overflow of a cesspit and drainage from the cemetery. It then flows on beyond the town and becomes the feeder of the bathing place and swimming pond!' There the water became so filthy, that local adults avoided it, but 'poor Nash had bathed in this filthy pond as late as the 14th September. It then passes to the south of Bisbrook (sic), where I am informed it is used for brewing purposes'.

Four pages described drainage deficiencies in the Lower School and in shared pipes between West Deyne and Paul David's neighbouring house, where water discharged down one drain resulted in foul air being forced up the other. Thus he too introduced a miasma speculation. Neither of the two wells at West Deyne was fit for

drinking, yet boys had used them despite their housemaster's instruction not to. He referred more briefly to deficiencies in the other houses and then turned to the sanatorium. Visiting it with Field, he had found major cesspit deficiencies. There was 'a great want of nurses [and] the matron complained that all authority over them was denied her'. He condemned the practice of waking boys up for feeding, when what they really needed was sleep.

He was especially critical of the treatment of John Millington Sing from the Lower School. Bell had allegedly advised that Sing be fed at thirty-minute intervals without fail. However the nurses had found that it took fifteen minutes to wake the exhausted boy, and once he had been fed and had gone back to sleep, it was time to wake him again. Haviland had told one of the sanatorium nurses that sleep was the paramount need. 'The advice was followed, and the boy then slept soundly for several hours and eventually recovered. I could not see a boy struggling for life, and not give him... advice which I knew to be sound' - yet Bell had later complained about Haviland's interference.

Haviland also attacked some arguably less relevant aspects of the school. Studies and dormitories were small and overcrowded: he alleged that there was less cubic space per pupil than prisoners received in the Daventry lock-up, from which he concluded that 'it is absurd to suppose that a boy can study in an unventilated box'. The food was sparse and un-nutritious. The late breakfast (after early-morning lessons) was a possible cause of disease because it weakened boys' resistance.

There was no discussion of disease theory questions as such. Suggestions of both infection and contagion were interspersed with frequent references to poor ventilation, sewer gases and 'how the poison is generated in the excreta of an affected person after they are voided, [through] a process of putrefactive

fermentation undergone when massed in cesspits etc'. He asserted that 'the poison is liable to gain access either to the air or the water': another indication that he did not rule out miasma causes, particularly in the case of Kettlewell from the Lower School who (he believed) had contracted the illness 'by being exposed to the influence of sewer-gases, emanating from the unventilated cesspool' there.

He had also considered possible sources of contaminated drinking material, but while a better supply would be beneficial, this was a less pressing issue. On the other hand, 'only by such a means can you guard against the present and future influence of the disease'. He had pondered - and rejected - the idea that milk from cows in Ridlington might be to blame.

Haviland re-used some of the statistics from his earlier report on the combined districts, but he drew noticeably more favourable conclusions about the general state of health in the town than in that earlier report, claiming that the other two GPs had reported only three typhoid cases between them in the previous two years: all of them in one property. Scribbles by Thring on his own copy of the report suggest that Bell disputed this.

Finally Haviland thanked RSA members for their support 'throughout this tedious investigation', implying that they alone had invited him to intervene and making no mention of the school's own request. Barnard Smith added insult to injury by distributing the report with his own long memorandum of events. He too emphasised Bell's un-cooperativeness, and he too rejected the complaint of the 23 townsmen about Haviland's conduct.

Hodgkinson felt bound to respond to criticism of his actions. In a short pamphlet he admitted his previous ignorance of typhoid but disputed details about the Southampton pageboy and the Caldecott cook. He claimed that

Chapman's gas explosion had been greatly exaggerated. The town's cesspit system was one 'which the local authority did not raise their little finger to alter or improve'.

He sent a copy of his letter to Wales, who responded in conciliatory terms to his longstanding friend, appreciating Hodgkinson's distress but claiming that the RSA had been forced to publish Haviland's report in full or, like Thring, it would have been accused of secrecy. Wales claimed that Haviland's was an independent voice. No-one was blaming Hodgkinson personally for the state of the Lower School cesspits, but the first case of illness should have led to an investigation. The RSA really was doing all it could to improve the town, but it was inevitable that ventilators would sometimes become blocked, and the LGB had been unyielding over new bye-laws. The two men exchanged courteous letters again but it had become a dialogue of the deaf.

Haviland's responsibility was indeed to the whole community, not to the school alone. Even so, his report was much more critical of the school than the other three. He must have had some inkling of the reputational damage that the report would cause, and it is not clear why he turned so decisively against the school after his early, relatively civil meetings with Thring.

He showed no empathy for the practical difficulties which housemasters faced - at a time of year of shortening daylight and deteriorating weather - in countering their pupils' demoralising fear about the disease and the prospect of an early death. He ignored the fact that they taught classes and therefore could not watch their boys all the time: that many lessons took place in house dining halls and that boys needed to move around the town, making it hard to restrict their movement and to separate them from friends in other houses.

Thring inevitably felt that Haviland concentrated too much on the immediate

causes of the epidemic whilst saying little about the RSA's longer-term inactivity. The MOH may also have been incensed by what he perceived as Thring's high-handedness in repeatedly lobbying the LGB himself, and through third parties. He was outraged by Bell's complaints to the LGB about his actions; he had a low opinion of Bell's skills, and anger at what he saw as the local doctor's complacency.

Although Haviland made criticisms of the town, they were moderate compared with those of Field and Rawlinson and they contrasted starkly with the blame that he heaped on the school. Maybe he decided that the school should bear nearly all the blame because it had experienced over twice as many cases as the town, in which there were eight times as many people and where there was little evidence of illness amongst those of school age. While he concentrated on problems of infected water, his bombastic style reveals a scatter-gun approach to criticism, mixing together all the contemporary theories about typhoid's causes. This creates the impression that his zeal for public health went far beyond his precise knowledge about epidemiology.

Haviland would make only occasional appearances in Uppingham during the next year - usually to advise on cases of low-level illness or how to prevent them. He did not create the antipathy between Thring and the RSA, but he certainly sustained it. He had developed a strong personal dislike of Thring, yet neither was wholly to blame: they were temperamentally too similar in some ways.

But the manner and method by which Haviland promoted his public health crusade ensured that any chance of cooperation between town and school rapidly disappeared. It also created lasting and bitter enmity with Dr Bell, who would pursue it relentlessly through the year to come. In that sense, Haviland was the catalyst for the events which lay ahead.

Extract of Haviland's criticisms

of wider aspects of the school in his report, which the MOH claimed had been raised by parents. Thring annotated it, using florid question marks and words such as 'rambling', 'tautological' and 'irrelevant':

School Regimen and Routine

'A growing boy, like any other growing animal, must be judiciously fed and exercised if it be desired to make the most of his physical and mental powers, especially when both are often several taxed as at school.

There must not only be abundant good wholesome food, but there must also be great judgment exercised in distributing the supply during the hours of activity.

At an age especially prone to succumb to certain forms of disease, such as *Enteric Fever*, the stomach is the one organ that needs the most watchful care, In youth the stomach must be *naturally satisfied, not artificially appeased*. If a well-distributed, wholesome supply of nutritious food be within the reach of a boy, as a rule you will not find that boy gorging himself at all times, whenever he has a chance, with indigestible stuff, simply for the sake of eating. Cases there are, we well know, of morbid appetites; these are, however, to be treated medically, and even in many of these the most sure cure is a well-distributed nutritious diet.

[My] first complaint is that the boys frequently go early to their form-masters, sometimes at a long distance, to take their lessons, with empty stomachs; returning to the master's house with whom they reside, to breakfast at 8.30 or 9 a.m., this meal consisting merely of bread and butter and tea.

The effect of this is to tempt the boys on their way to their lessons to expend their pocket-money in buying all kinds of stuff at the pastry-cook's on the road.

They dine at 1.30 p.m., and from all I can hear are provided with a good substantial meal of meat, pudding, vegetables and beer. At 6 p.m. they have a bread and butter tea; after which, until the next morning at breakfast, they get nothing, unless they take bread and water or their parents pay something extra for a modicum of cheese.

Such a system requires no comment. A boy's empty stomach has neither conscience nor discretion; and surely if the present fees for board and lodging are not sufficient to keep this organ out of temptation, and to preserve it from being too open a portal for the entrance of *miasm* in some form or other, the parents should be informed of the fact, and not allowed to remain under the impression that they are expending enough on their boys to insure them plenty of wholesome and well-distributed food, whilst their boys are expending their pocket-money incontinently in filling up gaps in their stomachs caused by a "regulation" fast of 12 or 14 hours' duration.

It is impossible to estimate how often the empty stomach in the morning might have favoured, during the late outbreak, the invasion of the disease, the poison of which had been so long lingering about the different centres of infection. A boy should always start in the day with a good substantial breakfast, and after the fatigues of play and study should end it with a hearty supper of good, wholesome and easily-digested food. Nothing predisposes to disease more than indigestible food, especially when the bowels are the seat of the disorder, as in *Enteric Fever*; and the only rational mode of keeping the stomach out of temptation is to supply it with wholesome food at proper intervals, recollecting that young stomachs should never be allowed to be empty, for when they are, their temptation begins.'



The Bathing Pond to the south-east of the town (1869),
roundly condemned by Haviland in his report.



George Scater-Booth (later Lord Basing):
"The safe man".
Caricature by Ape
in *Vanity Fair* in 1874.

*List of cases of Typhoid Fever attended by
Dr. Bell from June 1875 to Feb
25-1876 in the Town of Liphigam*

Name	Relationship	Date	Age
Carter W	Daughter	1875 July 6 th	12
Hudson Ely	"	Aug 4	20
Norman W	"	Sept 14	23
Scott	Son	" 23	23
Hawthorn	Daughter	" 24	24
Ward Thomas	(Prof. & Pastor)	" 25	25
Hawthorn W	Son	" 25	25
Braithwaite Wm	Daughter	Oct 3	3
Leeson W	Son	" 6	6
Scott Emma	(Sister of Wm)	" 9	9
Kerrick W	Daughter	" 12	12
Smith Martha	"	" 30	30
Proke Jonathan	"	Nov 1	1
Stetham H. H. (Sister)	"	" 10	10
Howell W	Daughter	" 12	12
Quinlan	"	" 14	14
Butler W	Son	" 14	14
Clark Wm	"	10 th	10
Quinn Wm	"	" 9	9
Henderson W	Daughter	" 23	23
Kerrick W	Son	" 25	25
Braithwaite Wm	at W. H. H. H.	Dec 5	5
Harbottle E	at W. H. H. H.	" 22	22
Coat John	"	" 25	25
Quinn W	"	1876 Jan 1	1
Ward Thomas	at W. H. H. H.	" 31	31
James Ely	(Prof. & Pastor)	Feb 13	13

From a list of typhoid patients attended by Dr Bell in the town, September 1875 - February 1876. Its two pages list over 40 names, confirming that the epidemics were not confined to the school.

CHAPTER 6: SPRING 1876

‘A terribly cold north-east wind and a slight fall of snow, threateningly more... it seems still very uncertain when the school returns, maybe 21st (but probably not), or 28th or 4th February,’ wrote Mrs Hodgkinson from the Lower School to her daughter just after New Year.

Two weeks later came the trustees’ decision that the return would be on 28 January: ‘Pray God keep us this term,’ wrote Thring in his diary: ‘Masters meeting this morning. Had to speak to them strongly about tittle-tattle’.

For a passionate man, he was feeling surprisingly at peace. After the busy weeks of presiding over an empty school, he could now get back to what he judged as ‘proper work’. Although raging at Haviland’s report, he was almost resigned:

‘As we have often said, “If this thing is of God, it will stand; if not, let it go”... It illustrates the impossibility of getting at the truth in a complicated matter... I was almost amused at the ease with which I was made out a liar and a scoundrel. I may yet go down to posterity as the great flogger, a bigoted old hater of pure air and water, and a senseless, unfeeling tyrant over boys’.

He was surely irritated by a letter from Dr Bell asking whether it was he who had told Haviland that Bell had been slow to diagnose the disease - and by another long critical editorial in *The Lancet* backing Haviland and stating: ‘The school assumed a grave responsibility... Sad as the lesson is, it will not be without value if it teaches [the masters] to trust less to their own omniscience and more to the guidance of those best qualified to give advice in such emergencies’.

A few days later, however, he felt more positive. ‘Thirty new boys... and 305 on the school-books, so we have not suffered an appreciable check’, he wrote cheerfully

on 29 January, although he may have been in denial about the real state of numbers: the school roll lists over fifty pupils who left the school in October - December 1875 but only thirty who joined in January. Another sixteen would leave in March, some transferring to rival schools such as Rugby and Repton.

Many of the leavers were from the North-West or London - suggesting a negative parental grapevine there. Two of the houses worst infected by the epidemic were especially depleted: West Deyne and Redgate. It was fortunate that numbers in the school had crept up above Thring’s optimum 300 in the previous years: this allowed for a little unnatural wastage now.

As the term progressed he began to complain that he had too little time for intellectual work and teaching, but he was cheered that ‘the water works on the hill are going well’, and that parliamentary processes for the new water company were under way. The Bill got its second reading in the House of Commons on 25 February, coinciding with a rebuttal in the *BMJ* of Haviland’s assertion that the Lower School supply had been the certain source of the epidemic.

The RSA remained uncertain about the water supply question: reluctant to seem obstructive of the public good, but unenthusiastic about endorsing a company beyond its control, and keen not to let Thring seize the initiative. It instructed Field to assess the best value-for-money option for providing a mains supply, but it also began moves to oppose the Bill or at least to insert a clause protecting its interests.

As February arrived, Thring’s diary remained optimistic: ‘The first week over, such a blessing, and time, the great healer, moving slowly on, carrying us, please God, out of immediate danger by degrees’.

He did however tell a member of staff closest to him that he was taking nothing for granted, and he included the words 'if we are allowed to go on working together'.

His fears were well founded. On 20 February: 'This morning I have entered once again the valley of the shadow of death. Cobb (housemaster of a small house on the High Street, not previously infected) came to tell me he was almost sure that he had a case of typhoid in his house. Poor fellow! He quite broke down... The town has neither flushed the drains nor disinfected them, done nothing except the ventilators they were compelled to put in'.

Thus the roller-coaster of hope and despair began all over again. Lessons had been learned from the previous outbreak: precise information was immediately sent to all parents, Cobb's boys were sent home, and Thring braced himself for a possible rapid exodus from other houses. Two housemasters went to confront the RSA and judged them 'frightened at the gathering storm'. Thring noted two days later: 'For the first time today the sewers have been examined and found foul enough to account for any fever. The rector was hauled out to see them, and he has heard some plain truths too'.

This time, he found the Uppingham parents 'wonderfully steady'. Only one wrote critically, and Liverpool families sent a demand to the LGB for urgent intervention. Tarbotton returned with a medical expert to check the houses. Thring sent his own memorandum to the LGB, assisted by Jacob and Birley (one of whose sons had joined the school that term): they would still support him even if other trustees did not. Bell moved fast to reassure the worried parents of boys with minor ailments, but he was still fending off criticisms of his earlier actions.

The Lancet reminded its readers of its (and Haviland's) earlier warnings against the

school reassembling too soon. This view seemed to be supported by suspected new cases in West Deyne and Redgate during that week, although doctors were called in rapidly from London who reported no evidence that the fever was connected with the houses themselves.

Then came news that a boy in Lorne House (next to West Deyne) had been taken home by his parents, and had now developed typhoid symptoms. Thring wrote on 3 March: 'I feel quite sure this is the beginning of the end... the school will slip away like a wreath of snow'. He fulminated against Wales, 'whose letters furnish us with an admirable barometer of what to expect from the powers that be in this place'. *The Lancet* reported 'a case or two in the town itself'.

Soon Bell was seeing growing numbers of boys who feared (wrongly) that they had contracted the disease, whilst also having to defend himself uncomfortably in correspondence with the father of a boy now at home with diarrhoea symptoms. Many telegrams began to arrive from worried parents. It was inevitable that a fresh bout of pupil withdrawals would begin and then accelerate.

Meanwhile for the LGB another round of acrimonious disputes had begun. At New Year it received a copy of the petition from townspeople protesting against Haviland's leaking of his findings. Close on this came an RSA resolution condemning the petition, stating that the MOH had merely done his duty and that he had the RSA's full confidence. Thring and Bell wrote demanding pre-publication copies of Haviland's report and expressing concern that a hostile report would persuade the trustees to delay the pupils' return.

Rawlinson advised the LGB that as the school had fully implemented Tarbotton's recommendations and his own, nothing which Haviland might allege could

materially affect the trustees' decision. The LGB duly forwarded this advice to Thring, an action which outraged the 'astonished' RSA and led to a visit to London from Barnard Smith who succeeded only in irritating LGB officials.

A subsequent internal memorandum from Rawlinson denounced the town's inactivity over many years, contrasting it with the school's urgency in hiring Tarbotton. Rawlinson added that the RSA and Haviland 'think far too much about the school and far too little about the town, as it is clear that the school drainage was retarded by the defective state of the sewers. If these had been perfect, Hodgkinson need not have constructed [his Lower School] cesspits'.

Unaware of Rawlinson's view, the RSA wrote again complaining that it had 'not received the courtesy and support which they might have expected from the Board'.

Things became no better for the LGB once Haviland's report was made public. Bell disputed Haviland's charges point by point in a long letter on 5 February: 'The whole report is open to very severe and just criticism: it quibbles over trifles, it enters so extensively into personalities in a manner so much to be regretted, it is so voluminous that the cause of the outbreak is almost lost'.

The LGB decided not to forward this diatribe to Haviland and replied that it could not take sides between the two doctors, after which Mullins weighed in, sending the LGB a complaint about Haviland's comments on the dormitories in West Deyne, and denying allegations that infected boys had been allowed to enter other houses.

The RSA then returned to the attack, criticising an assertion by Rawlinson that his report had been a response to a request from the school and its trustees. The latter had never been involved, the RSA claimed

(rightly). Moreover, Thring had been wrong in going to the LGB behind the RSA's back.

It disputed Rawlinson's view that the school had completed its improvements, claiming that as late as 18 January nothing had been done at the sanatorium, not even the emptying of cesspits. It had been promised that Rawlinson's report would not be published before Haviland and Field had completed their work. It even criticised Rawlinson's investigation: 'He visited the town only once, and that for [only] four hours. And this is called a royal commission!' Rawlinson again told the LGB that the RSA was concerned only to protect itself.

By late February, with news filtering through of the new typhoid cases in the school, a new figure emerged in the LGB's files. Joseph Rayner wrote on behalf of the Liverpool parents (who were now notably more supportive of the school than during the previous autumn). He contrasted the recent pro-activity of the school with the inactivity of the RSA, and demanded that the LGB exercise its rarely-used powers to *order* sewerage improvements in the town.

The LGB dutifully asked Thring for formal confirmation that the disease had reappeared, and received in return an explosion of anguish spread over no fewer than fifteen sides of paper: there was great alarm at the school; Tarbotton had been called in again but the town had done nothing; sewers remained unflushed and the wells were still dangerous.

During the first fortnight of March Thring contacted the LGB three times again about new cases - in West Deyne, Redgate and in his own house on 13 March. Worse still, the new well which the school had sunk outside the town for its own use had been pronounced unsafe by water experts.

This had convinced him that there was no alternative to breaking up on 14 March,

and once again he asserted (with no expectation of success) that 'it is for the London authorities to determine what course of action should be taken that will enable the school to return with safety to Uppingham'.

Meanwhile Haviland had also been very active, returning to Uppingham to investigate this latest outbreak. He reported to the RSA that the school's welcome had not been exactly warm, and he hoped that Barnard Smith would complain to the LGB about that hostility. He had arrived as soon as his many other commitments allowed, but had meanwhile sent the inspector of nuisances, Mr James, on ahead to see Cobb, in whose house the latest problems had started:

'Mr Cobb being at school and engaged until 12 noon, Mr James called again at 12.10 and found Mr Cobb at home. Mr Cobb [said] 'he would meet Mr Haviland either in the street or at the Falcon but he would not see him at his house... [Mr James] said I would only meet him at his house, where the enquiry must necessarily be made. Mr Cobb's reply to my message was: 'His compliments, and he had nothing to say'.

The RSA made much of this incident, immediately informing the LGB which noted: 'It is most unfortunate that so much ill-feeling exists between the school and the sanitary authority, as it entirely prevents any co-operation between them'. It sent a copy to Thring, who replied tactfully that perhaps there was some misunderstanding: Cobb had merely been informed that Haviland was back in the town, and had said that he (Cobb) had no reason to meet him. There had been no suggestion, however, that Cobb would refuse to speak to Haviland at the house.

Although keen to defend his beleaguered housemaster, he conceded that the misunderstanding was not helpful and that with hindsight things could have been

handled better, but he added: 'When we admitted Mr Haviland in October last to *all* our houses, he took advantage of it to make statements about our inner life'.

Thring also stated that he thought Haviland should have informed housemasters before visiting their houses, but the school had nothing to hide, and the MOH was now free to go wherever he chose. He concluded: 'I wish in all things to show respect to authority', regretting if any contrary impression had been given.

Two days later Barnard Smith again called on the LGB, at short notice, stating that he was anxious to clear the way for 'immediate action', now that there were new cases in the school. The LGB's notes suggest that this was a more cordial and constructive meeting than their previous encounter and, concerned that important evidence should not be lost by delay, it asked one of its medical inspectors to visit Uppingham (a visit unfortunately postponed when the inspector's mother was taken ill).

Only a day later, however, the RSA once again complained bitterly that it had 'met with antagonism where it had every right to expect co-operation', and that it was being 'condemned as supine, indifferent and inactive'. We do not know what provoked this, but the LGB reiterated its impartiality and then got on with replying to a long succession of routine queries from the RSA's clerk: whether the expenses of recent enquiries could be settled by post office order; how to deal with a disputed surcharge revealed in a recent audit, and whether there would be a conflict of interest if the son of a RSA member was allowed to tender for the milk contract at the workhouse.

Deadlock would increase the chances of the school's permanent closure. Radical thinking was needed, but this was unlikely from the RSA, or from the LGB whose President defended its non-interventionist

stance in a similar epidemic in Lancashire when he spoke in parliament on 11 April.

By then, a new debate had begun. Talk within the school of leaving Uppingham began around 4 March and is generally credited to William Campbell, housemaster of Lorne House: a man of long experience and few flights of fancy. He articulated this adventurous possibility at a housemasters' meeting with a memorable, dramatic question: 'Don't you think we ought to flit?'

As the idea gained support, Thring told his brother that Uppingham was more vulnerable than better-known schools such as Marlborough and Winchester: 'I doubt whether Tuesday next will see us with a third of the boys left here. They are melting away. This is ruin. We are thinking of migrating to the Lakes... our classes together there till the summer'.

He needed the backing of those trustees whom he could persuade. Jacob and Birley met him in Manchester on 7 March, where Birley told him that the newspapers there had been besieged by parents wanting to place adverts for private tutors and alternative schools.

However, Birley also knew of a hotel-keeper in Wales who was keen to get the school. This idea caught Thring's imagination, and he told the two men that there was unanimous support for Campbell's proposal. The claim was hardly true. At least two housemasters opposed even a temporary removal, although a third wrote to one of his parents that migration was the only option for survival: 'If we do not assemble somewhere while [improvement] work is being done, the school will surely vanish'. Thring added that there was also 'good likely to accrue to every boy's character who shall come and share our difficulties in this crisis... so we hope for the confidence and support of all parents'.

Once back in Uppingham, Thring wrote to AC Johnson, the chairman of the trustees. Johnson had already given Thring a free hand in principle on the question of moving, but who needed to know the details to try to persuade his fellow board members. Thring suggested 'that the school will break up for its Easter holidays on Tuesday next, and that we shall reassemble in three weeks' time... in some healthy locality away from Uppingham. Most probably Borth, near Aberystwyth'.

Within a few days local and national papers and the *BMJ* were reporting that the plan would become reality. Even *The Lancet* expressed sympathy for the school, although it did not mention Thring's plan to move. Its target for criticism was Rawlinson who (it said), although aware of Haviland's earlier misgivings about the school reassembling, 'assumed a great responsibility in speaking so decidedly with respect to the sanitary improvements. The school authorities are therefore greatly to be pitied; they asked advice, and they spent their money freely in improvements, and now they have a second [epidemic] which, we fear, must cause them severe pecuniary loss'.

Some of the trustees were very hostile to the migration proposal, especially as news of it had reached them not from Thring but through rumour and gossip. Wales, who must have understood the likely impact on the town better than those trustees living further afield, led the protests. Thring wrote to Birley: 'The rector has put his foot into it, having prevented a meeting of the trustees being called by saying there was no need. And he has already been using threats against us for our action. Let them do their worst'.

The trustees had the constitutional power to stop the plan, but some feared the school's permanent closure if they did so. Despite Wales's opposition, a meeting was arranged. Thring approached the day with anxiety: 'The rector was sententious and

threatening to one of the masters. [He said] the trustees would stop it all. He might just as well try to stop a train with his finger. All the masters are unanimous. Legal or illegal, change of air is the only possible prescription’.

The meeting took place on 11 March, four days later than the masters had wished. The minute book tells us little: ‘A statement of the Rev Edward Thring [on] the second outbreak of typhoid was read... in consequence the trustees sanctioned the proposal of the headmaster to break it up’.

Despite the much more important and urgent issue confronting them, they first demanded that the housemasters send them details of the dimensions and ventilation arrangements in every dormitory - suggesting that they wished to make a point about the extent of their authority, and that they were taking Haviland’s criticisms very seriously.

When they finally addressed the main question they reserved their position pending further developments and more information. As a body they were seriously divided. Johnson stepped down from the chair for part of the meeting, probably under criticism for exceeding his powers.

They resented being presented with what seemed to be a *fait accompli* and some were angry that Thring appeared already to have briefed the newspapers. The *Stamford Mercury* and the *Manchester Critic* had carried reports a day or two earlier that reassembly of the school was planned to take place ‘in three weeks’ time at some healthy locality away from Uppingham’ and *The Times* had quickly picked up the story. The *Mercury* even told its readers that the move would be ‘either to North Wales or the Lakes’.

Thring’s diary suggests a robust debate: ‘The first battle on the whole won. The trustees have sanctioned the break-up of the school, but on ---’s (possibly Wales’s)

dictation would not put on record any expression with reference to the migration; in [one trustee’s] words, ‘They knew nothing of the school till it came back again.’ They were, in effect, washing their hands of it financially. He also inveighed against an (un-named) opponent:

‘He spoke of the [new] buildings as burdensome to the trust, and endeavoured, whilst taking over some £14,000 worth of property from our hands, to saddle us with the burden of any deficit’.

The same speaker had then demanded that one master remain in Uppingham to teach the day boys. ‘I said I should not leave any of my staff, but if necessary a man might be got to do it, or the day boys could come with us, and the trustees could pay a fair proportion of their board and lodging. Then he threatened that the trustees would cut [our] salaries. I quietly pointed out that the scheme [of governance] appointed that tuition fees must first go to paying the masters’.

Over the following days, Thring’s mood oscillated between despair and elation: ‘A very good sermon from Christian (the chaplain). When shall I spend a Sunday again as headmaster in this place? I had a feeling as I stood in chapel to-day, never - never; but then I looked up... and I felt more than ever... a great shaping power guiding this work... and friendship and help all round about one’.

Although daunting, the trustees’ meeting had strengthened his resolve: he would have to decide his own destiny. He was buoyed up by the now-unanimous backing of the masters and their offers of financial support. The LGB was taking a closer interest again. The headmaster of Rugby had written a second time, promising not to capitalize on Uppingham’s misfortune by encouraging parents to transfer to him. *The Times* published *Pater Alumni*’s long letter contrasting the ‘plague-stricken city’ and the supine attitude of the town with

the imagination of the school in seeking to leave it.

On 13 March, the day that a boy in Thring's own house contracted typhoid, he preached at the end of term service: 'Difficulties become tests of willingness and strength; all hardship, when overcome, strengthens life'. It was, wrote one master, a day of 'wild winds and pitiless snows [as we] gathered, with thin ranks, for the last time. In a few hours we shall separate, to meet, who knows certainly where'.

One omen seemed good. The Old Testament lesson appointed for the day described Jacob's wanderings in the wilderness, including the words: 'I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest and will bring thee again into this land'. That evening Thring wrote: 'Some marvellous divine purpose will come out of it all. Tomorrow I start for Liverpool and on Tuesday for Borth and other places in North Wales. Borth seems likely'.

Little would have been secret in a tight-knit community, but the RSA made no immediate response other than to confirm that it would press for a clause in the waterworks Bill to protect its interests. Barnard Smith and Wales must have known of the economic impact of a prolonged absence by the school, but they would also have weighed up all the difficulties and risks that Thring's plan implied: logistical and financial; the impact on pupil recruitment and retention; on masters having to uproot their families. The two town leaders calculated that the school could not stay away for long. To let it go, causing a brief economic blizzard in the town, would provoke less anger amongst local ratepayers than giving in to Thring's demands for expensive improvements which might hit those ratepayers even harder in the long run.

By mid-March, however, alarm was belatedly stirring in the town as the

implications of the school's impending absence sank in. The RSA received a demand from a group of local shopkeepers and suppliers to be admitted to its next meeting. Barnard Smith prevaricated (claiming that an LGB inspector was due again shortly). Undeterred, the protesters asked the churchwardens for a meeting to discuss necessary town improvements.

The meeting on 23 March was heated, amid rumours that the RSA was planning its own water supply at a price which would undercut Thring's scheme. Lower prices would be welcome, but what smacked of a spoiling operation against the school by the RSA was not. The opposition was voiced by two housemaster-ratepayers and by Dr Bell, though others who had signed the petition were largely silent - for now.

Four motions were passed: that a private water company was preferable to one organized by the RSA; that a surface supply would not do; that the meeting disapproved of any spending by the RSA on plans for a surface supply, and that a copy of all these resolutions should be sent to the LGB. Bell dispatched this with alacrity on the following day.

The meeting coincided with further anonymous correspondence in *The Times* over three days. *A member of the school* reiterated the RSA's negligence, only to be contradicted by *One of the sanitary authority*, who emphasised what a healthy place the town had always been, its inhabitants' sense of safety, and the extent of past and planned future improvements.

This was echoed in the *Manchester Critic* by *One of the townsfolk* who chided the paper for its pro-school stance, blaming past delays on inadequate bye-laws and 'legal see-sawing', comparing the Uppingham RSA authorities very favourably with its equivalent body in Manchester and - most alarmingly for Thring - questioning whether Borth would

in fact prove to be any safer a place than Uppingham for the school to be.

Nevertheless, for Thring the die was cast and only one familiar challenge remained: the attitude of trustees. They reassembled on 24 March, deeply wary. They formally encouraged the RSA to carry out all Field's proposals, banned any housemaster from taking more than 30 boarders, and decreed that no boys in any house recently infected should be allowed to return without Thring's permission.

They went on to deal him further blows. On being told formally that he had arranged the school's removal to Borth, they resolved to put just £50 towards the costs of travel, board and lodging of those day-boys who chose to go with the rest. This was unrealistically small (and only half the sum agreed at the same meeting as a bonus to their clerk for all his recent extra work). They declined to make any decision on travel costs for the masters.

They had decided to be trustees of the school *at Uppingham* in the most literal sense of the term, with no other firm commitment. Maybe they reckoned that as they controlled less than half of the school's total annual expenditure, Thring and the housemasters should have to meet all the other costs.

Trustees and headmaster appeared to be living in parallel worlds, although Thring tried in his diary to see it all in positive terms: 'I feel so grateful at the deliverance from the town. It is like an escape out of prison. Things may be hard at Borth, but it is the hardness of liberty'. Even so, there was no disguising the fact that effectively he was to be on his own.

Barely three weeks after Campbell first suggested that they might 'flit', Thring and his staff left the town. There was little time to pack up personal items and equipment and to arrange for Bell to keep an eye on their houses.

The Lower School pupils remained. We cannot be sure whether Hodgkinson decided not to go with Thring because he sensed that it was the wrong decision; whether he thought that younger boys were too vulnerable to be uprooted, or whether Thring persuaded him to stay in Uppingham because of the shortage of accommodation at Borth. However, the decision seems strange, given the threat which typhoid posed to younger boys.

At this point nearly all parties had a great deal to lose. Thring and the masters were running up alarming costs even if (as they hoped) most parents sent their boys to Borth and the venture lasted only for a few weeks. Preparations for the water company were as yet incomplete and the RSA was showing no sense of urgency over sewerage improvements. The trustees' future attitude was hard to gauge.

For the trustees the school's absence was a financial headache and, despite their pronouncement about being responsible only for it *at Uppingham*, they were answerable to the Charity Commissioners for it. Their social standing locally would not be improved if it suffered.

Town ratepayers faced a harsh economic future. They had plenty to fear from rapid, expensive sanitary improvement. A mains water supply had cost implications, whoever provided it. However, they faced crippling, unforeseen loss of trade through the absence for an unknown length of time of the town's largest business and its principal employer.

The RSA's leading figures faced a formidable volume of extra worry, work and technical complexity. Details, estimates, tenders and loan arrangements would need to be properly worked out. These would take time, and there was a risk of costly mistakes. They were uncertain whether the townspeople, the school, the LGB and the press would make allowance for this. After so long as RSA

chairman, Barnard Smith was weary of the burden: on 29 March (and not for the first time) he told his fellow-guardians that he would retire when the time was right.

Meanwhile defeat, real or perceived, for the RSA at Thring's hands by rapidly acceding to his demands would be a humiliation and a threat to its members' local prestige and influence, but they were confident that Thring had over-reached himself. They knew the trustees would not put large-scale finance into his scheme. Mrs Bell recorded that 'some of the guardians were saying that nothing would be done, and Mr Thring would have to bring the school back to the town as he left it'. There were things to be said for procrastination, provided that the RSA could persuade the ratepayers to be patient.

Finally, there were consequences for the LGB. Claims and counter-claims continued to rain down from both sides. For the LGB's officials, however, Uppingham was just one of many local problems requiring their attention: a small town with a relatively insignificant typhoid outbreak - but one which was creating a great deal of work. They still preferred not to take sides, but there were risks to their credibility and reputation if, later on, a desperate, well-connected school united with a resentful RSA to scapegoat them.

Bell remained in Uppingham rather than going to Borth. He could not desert his town patients, and during any absence his practice would be rapidly eroded by his two rival doctors. However, he remained the school's MO, and it fell to him to write letters to parents of boys who previously had mild typhoid and now needed permission to re-join the school at Borth.

When news reached him of Childs's appointment as school MO at Borth, he realised the long-term risk to his own position. If the school closed, or stayed away permanently, his role would end. Meanwhile it would be Childs, not he, who

would have Thring's ear: something he could not afford to ignore and which made him highly zealous in the school's cause.

Initially, he corresponded with all the housemasters to reassure them about the sanitary and other state of their empty houses. It suited him that Thring asked for this as he (Bell) was fearful of losing the housemasters' confidence. He lobbied Thring regularly by letter for reassurance, insecure about whether some housemasters might decide to ask one of the other doctors to undertake future checks on the physical state of the empty houses.

More positively, Bell became the school's eyes and ears in Uppingham, and its main protagonist, sending regular news down to Borth. His *Letterbook* (along with the LGB papers) is a major source of information. Unsurprisingly it gives prominence to everything that he did on the school's behalf, and it reveals an inveterate and caustic letter-writer, inclined to see conspiracies at every turn.

The reappearance of typhoid in March 1876 demonstrated its elusive nature. Town and school authorities were no nearer to discovering the origin of either outbreak, other than increasingly suspecting that it was water-borne, although both outbreaks might have been caused by returning pupils or someone in the town. This time though, no-one could reasonably blame inaction by Bell.

Meanwhile, for the school it remained to be seen whether Borth would be any less prone to epidemics than Uppingham. If not, this could be another reason why Thring might be forced into a humiliating retreat back to Uppingham with his sanitary and water supply aims unachieved. It is unlikely as he got to know his new surroundings that Thring ever considered this to be an option, but he must have wondered in his darker moments whether the school would survive.

*A Special General Meeting of the Trustees
held at Uppingham on Saturday the 17th day of March 1876*

Present

A. C. Johnson Esq^r Chairman
The Rev J. H. Hudson *The Hon^{ble} the Chancellor*
W. J. Jacob Esq^r *Wiles*
G. H. Finch Esq^r M.P. *The Rev J. Mould*
T. H. Bailey Esq^r *J. H. L. Wingfield Esq^r*

*A statement of the Rev^d Edward Thring to the Chairman
in reference to the second outbreak of typhoid fever in the
school was produced and read*

Resolved

*That in consequence of the reappearance of fever in the school
the Trustees sanction the proposal of the Head Master to break
it up*

17th July 1876

*A letter from Mr Thomas Bell respecting the reappearance
of cases of typhoid fever at Uppingham was produced and
ordered to be filed.*

*That while in the opinion of the Trustees there is nothing
in the present condition of the Town of Uppingham which
calls upon them to rescind their resolution of the 17th ult^o
yet having regard to a memorial addressed to them by the
whole body of the Assistant Masters they are willing in
compliance with the same that the school should remain
at Uppingham during the autumn term.*

Extracts from the trustees' minute book for two key meetings in March and July 1876.

*To the Churchwardens of the Par
Uppingham*

*We the undersigned request the
Churchwardens to call a Meeting of the
Ratepayers for Thursday next March
2nd at 12 o'clock at noon to take into
consideration the Sanitary requirements
of the Town as set forth in the report of
Rogers Field Esq^r &c.*

Thomas Bell William Wilford
Charles Basilii Mrs Dobby
Marko Braithwaite Henry King
John Hawthorn Charles Wright
Maule Hubbard Charles White
George A. Tomshurst
W. Wilford.

*In compliance with the above requisition
Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the
Ratepayers will be held in the Boys Nar-
-tional School room on Thursday March
2nd 1876 at 12 o'clock at noon.*

John B. Mould Churchwarden

The ratepayers' petition in March 1876, demanding a meeting with the leaders of the RSA.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMER 1876

On 26 March Thring sent a telegram from Borth to one of his housemasters who had yet to leave Uppingham: 'It is flat treason and treachery. I have wired to stop it'. We do not know to what this refers, but it seems clear that distance had done little to dispel his anger at the events of the previous months.

More cheerfully, on the next day a specially chartered train brought essential equipment (including the cricket roller) from Uppingham to Borth and the boys arrived a week later. Fewer than a dozen failed to appear, which he took as a rousing vote of confidence from parents. Soon after that a clever little satire began to circulate, penned by one of the boys and entitled *How I came to Borth*:

'Leave bickerings and cesspools far behind,
Take thy stern future with a quiet mind.
Better are herbs and peace, be well assured,
Than all the Local Sanitary Board.
Weigh dilute sewage 'gainst pure mountain
springs,
Weigh unflushed drains 'gainst air the salt sea
brings
Weigh all the chances well with equal scales
Since Wales won't come to you then go to
Wales.'

It did not take long to find its way back to Uppingham, where the rector predictably took offence at the use of his name in this play on words. Bell wrote to Thring urging him to stop boys writing such things; they would not help, especially at a time when public opinion might just be starting to move in favour of the school.

The poem did, however, add some spice to the annual RSA elections in late April, which offered both sides the chance to test local opinion, but also exposed them to potential rejection. For the school, getting new blood on to the RSA was an attractive prospect. Bell believed the election would be close-run, but he identified some potentially vulnerable existing members,

and both he and solicitor John Pateman stood as candidates.

As Election Day approached, 'race pamphlets' were produced: anonymous reports on the election and its likely results with nicknames such as *Blue Pill* for Bell and *Little Awkward* for Barnard Smith.

The RSA clerk, WH Brown, was election organiser. He intended to make no allowance for the absent masters when deciding how much time should elapse between sending out the voting papers and holding the count. Thus those far away in Borth risked being disenfranchised.

One housemaster had written to the LGB about this threat before leaving Uppingham, warning of the logistical difficulties of voting from afar and making it clear that the masters were 'exceedingly interested in the outcome', but the LGB now declared itself powerless to intervene.

Brown took the ballot papers to the various school houses at the last moment legally allowed, but Bell had drawn up a plan to frustrate him. Supporters of the school followed the clerk round as he delivered the voting slips, collecting them up from each house and passing them to Charles White, the ironmonger. Joseph Woodcock (baker/greengrocer), arguably the guardian most hostile to Barnard Smith, provided a dogcart and horses, and White was taken straight to Rugby station where he caught the last train of the day. It was a slow one and he travelled right through the night, arriving at Borth early next morning.

He found Thring and the masters waiting on the station platform with tables and pens at the ready. Mrs Thring brought him breakfast, and within minutes (the train having travelled down to the terminus at Aberystwyth and back again), White was on the return journey to Rugby with the completed voting papers, to be met there again by Woodcock. They handed in the

votes with fifteen minutes to spare. The journey proved fruitful: after disputes over doubtful or spoilt papers, several opponents of the school were voted off.

As one of the successful candidates, Bell became a thorn in the flesh of those RSA members who were happy to see the school suffer. He challenged the size of Brown's salary as clerk and lobbied hard to speed up the drainage improvements and the water company's formation. He also threatened a legal challenge against any expenses claimed by RSA members in their opposition to the water Bill, and demanded that the government auditor surcharge them.

The RSA for its part remained concerned about the lack of control it would have over a private company. It again asked Brown to explore ways of protecting its interests - such as being exempt from any financial liability for roadworks caused by pipe-laying. However, it had no real idea about how to achieve this control within the Bill: Brown was instructed merely to obstruct it, and Wales told Bell that 'there was no hurry about it'.

Invited back by the RSA to examine experimental drilling by the company of new wells to the south of the town, Field told the LGB that he doubted whether a sufficient supply would be found there. He was right: workmen drilled down 420 feet, but to no avail, which led the RSA to claim that the company's plans would never provide sufficient water for regular flushing of the sewers.

Bell told Thring and Birley that all this was merely mischief-making, but as the company turned to other possible sites, Birley let slip at a trustees' meeting that one of these was on land between the sanatorium and the workhouse (now Constables).

Wales, as ever deeply conflicted by being a trustee and a leading RSA member, put

the latter interest first and informed Haviland, who stated that this new site would be far too near the sanatorium cesspits which had been so roundly condemned earlier. He ignored the fact that they had been recently drained and filled with quicklime.

All this argument brought home to the RSA the dangers of procrastination if it risked the provision of better water failing altogether. It therefore asked Field to consider the feasibility of a rival scheme based on local springs. Field replied that this would depend on rainfall projections: any scheme would need to produce 50,000-60,000 gallons per day, and although he had found a pure source, he was less sure of its volume. He would continue to experiment, but if any site needed steam pumps, it would surely prove to be too expensive an option.

Bell meanwhile became a go-between for the RSA and the solicitors acting for the water company. He made suggestions about the share issue, reported progress on the trial borings to Thring and asked the solicitors for assurances to be given to the RSA that the price of the water would be reasonable. Guided from Borth by Mullins (a keen meteorologist), Bell produced monthly rainfall statistics, in an attempt to allay Field's doubts about the supply.

Before Field's researches were complete, the LGB came out decisively in support of the private company, judging that the RSA (unlike a USA) had no statutory power to oppose it. This was a rich irony, given the RSA's demands over many years for USA status, but the LGB sensed that Barnard Smith and others had been engaged in a spoiling operation. There was no guarantee that Field and the RSA could produce a viable scheme, and with the school threatening to remain away from the town for an unlimited period, the Bill should go ahead. Rawlinson, ever-supportive of local autonomy, dissented privately, feeling that the LGB should back the RSA.

In response to this, the angry RSA sent another deputation to the LGB on 13 May. Bell asked unsuccessfully to be included, in order to keep watch on its other members, but on its return he managed quickly to discover (as he wrote to Thring) that the deputation, which had arrived confident of winning the LGB's support, had been shocked at the cold reception it received, and at the instruction given to put its house in order. It was this which was decisive in preventing further delay, the RSA reluctantly deciding that it must back off - either because of a shortage of funds and expertise, or resulting from a belated recognition of the town's interests as the local economy stagnated.

Despite Haviland's continuing opposition, the Uppingham Water Bill had its third reading in the House of Commons and received the royal assent by 13 July. Thring and his four fellow-directors (including Birley and Jacob and Hawthorn), gained powers to raise capital by issuing shares, make borrowings and levy charges up to specified limits. The company had a year to deliver its promises, after which the powers would lapse. Work on the water supply could now begin in earnest.

Sewerage improvements had proceeded only tortuously. It was clear that they would take far longer than the single school term which Thring had envisaged.

Early in May, Field lodged his outline sewerage proposals with the LGB and Rawlinson approved them. They included replacing manhole covers and installing flushing boxes along the High Street; laying sections of pipe at greater depths; repairing the existing system and creating branch sewers between High Street East (via Queen Street and Adderley Street) and the south sewer below the cemetery.

Field stated that completing the drawings would take at least six weeks, after which work could not begin for three or four

months, because tenders would have to be invited and scrutinised; sureties produced; loans agreed; contracts drawn up and contractors' plant hired.

Bell disputed the timescale and feared that Field's gloomy predictions about the future water supply might become a pretext for the RSA to slow the work down. There was the prospect of yet more delay when the LGB decided to send a medical inspector to check on progress, but its decision was overtaken by the emergence of three simultaneous sources of pressure.

First, as the two largest land and property owners in the town, Lord Gainsborough and Sir Charles Adderley lodged a formal petition with the LGB, urging it to investigate the RSA's inactivity: they claimed it was essential to have sewerage works complete by the end of the summer holidays, or Christmas at the latest.

The RSA was again stung by what it saw as interference from Thring's rich and influential contacts. Repeating many of its earlier grievances, it demanded full support from the LGB. The LGB again emphasised its even-handedness, called for greater harmony and postponed its inspector's visit, but declared that it would not be dictated to by the RSA, which it believed was side-stepping the main issue. It believed that ratepayer opinion would start to shift against the RSA.

Secondly, the LGB was lobbied by a new group of Liverpool parents, led by a Captain Withington, demanding that it intervene legally to get the action needed for the school's speedy return. With the Borth venture apparently going well, parents (once so hostile) were seeing Thring's actions as imaginative, even heroic, in the face of small-minded local bureaucrats. Like Rayner's initiative a few weeks earlier, this clarion call from the school's north-west recruiting heartland gave Thring strong encouragement.

Thirdly, there was a question in parliament from a local MP on 4 May. *Hansard* records that the LGB President, Sclater Booth, replied: 'My attention has been called to the unfortunate circumstances which have led to the withdrawal of a well-known school to the coast... I have now every reason to believe that the sanitary authority is ready and willing to undertake such works of sewerage and water supply as are required to put their district into a satisfactory state, and that they have taken the necessary steps (Hear hear)'.

Under this combined pressure the LGB ordered the RSA to start sewerage improvements forthwith. It also complained at not yet having received the plans and estimates and it issued a veiled threat: it was receiving complaints about the RSA which it hoped it would 'not be necessary to investigate'.

Unabashed, the RSA retorted that it would 'not venture to express an opinion on the vexatious character of the interference to which [it has] been subjected throughout the discharge of [its] duties in very difficult and unexpected circumstances', and that it would welcome any such investigation. It persisted in queries about its bye-laws and on whom the costs of printing Haviland's report should fall.

It did, however, send a report from Field on the latest situation, and agreed to send representatives to the LGB within days to discuss it. On 13 May the LGB finally approved Haviland's reappointment as MOH, which the RSA had been asking for since February. Bell thought Haviland's reappointment was deplorable, but inevitable.

During June the RSA promised the LGB that, to speed up the work, it would accelerate the usual tender procedure, and it promised to use 'a local contractor of standing'. The LGB finally received Field's plans and estimates and authorized

in principle the loan to pay for them but, ever mindful of procedure, it decided that a local enquiry must be held before the loan was confirmed. Notices advising ratepayers about the loan should be posted in the usual way: the enquiry would examine not only the case for the loan, but also broader questions about the state of the town.

Major Tulloch, the inspector, arrived on 7 July. Bell gleefully reported to Thring how tempers quickly frayed as Tulloch complained that the RSA had sent him only the reports from Haviland and Field, omitting those more sympathetic to the school from Tarbotton and Rawlinson. He summarily dismissed objections from the RSA about the advertisement process.

When he went out to see the town for himself, it was a hot July day (which must have encouraged the miasma theorists). According to Bell: 'The drains luckily stank on that day their best. Major Tulloch said the state of the place was a scandal and that the works must be done. His duties took him to many queer places, but he had never been in one so openly foul'.

Thring added that 'Townspeople spoke pleasantly of the school, and money statistics were advanced without contradiction to show how much the town gained by [its presence]'.

Even after this embarrassment, Bell feared - with reason - that the RSA might delay things. It resented the LGB insisting on open competition for the tenders by including firms from beyond the immediate locality, and it objected to the proposal for a bonus for the contractor if the work was completed on time.

Once it was clear that the school would not return in September, and stung by Tulloch's criticisms, it confirmed Bell's fears by deciding to re-advertise, only to have the advertisement declared invalid on a legal technicality. Its delaying tactics

would place Thring under as much financial pressure as it could achieve.

As the initial exhilaration of being at Borth wore off, Thring's moods returned to alternating euphoria and gloom. He wrote to his brother Godfrey that he was glad to have escaped: 'I have not had, as at Uppingham for so many years, to sit like Job, scraping boils on a dunghill', but he could not ignore all the pressures mounting on him. A decision would soon be required about the school's location for the autumn term.

He was also very aware that his debts were increasing. This was despite a fighting fund initiated by Captain Withington. Circulars had been sent to every parent and the fund was publicised nationally in *The Times* on 21 April following a letter from *A Parent*. *The Aberystwyth Observer* picked up the story and the *Stamford Mercury* reported that £200 was raised in the first week, but it would not be enough. Thring confided to his diary on 26 May: 'My bank books came this morning: a heavy weight there'.

He again felt powerless: 'It has suited the [RSA] to represent us as hostile, but it would be difficult for them to show [this]. When a great wrong is done by people in power, they are always lavish in their accusations. My answer is: Why are we at Borth if we are powerful or pugnacious? People are not turned out of house and home and brought face to face with ruin for their own amusement'.

He also dreaded having to re-engage with the trustees, having clashed so much with them in the past and holding them in such low esteem. There had been minimal contact from them since he left Uppingham: none of them had visited Borth (nor would do so, apart from Birley and Jacob, who had come down briefly to see their sons), so any knowledge they had of the school's situation would be largely second-hand.

However, they were his employers, and he grew very anxious on hearing that they planned a special meeting for 17 June. He wrote to Birley: 'Bear in mind that a *fiat* of the trustees for return without an affirmation of safety means the break-up of the present school. If they order [it], the order will not be obeyed [and] a large number of masters will stand by me... It is strange sitting here and waiting quietly for one's doom, and at such hands'.

All through June he had been testing the masters' support for a possible second term away. Initially he had so much opposition that 'to hold on in Borth was impossible', but he worked on them, telling them that if they returned home they would have lost 'almost all the advantage that we had gained by our daring move'. It would be 'unconditional surrender' and therefore unthinkable. He felt 'things tend more and more to a final breaking away from Uppingham' and he (and at least one housemaster) spoke of re-founding the school elsewhere.

Whether or not Barnard Smith and Wales knew all this, some trustees appear to have become aware of it. At their meeting in Thring's absence they confirmed his worst fears by declining to seek medical advice about the latest state of the town and summarily ordering him to return with the school to Uppingham in September.

He rued the lack of support from some of his colleagues, fearing it would give the trustees the pretext to dismiss him. However, the trustees' stance back-fired. Faced with such high-handedness from men remote from their situation, the housemasters belatedly rallied, agreeing that a second term in Borth was inevitable.

Thring told them: 'This should have been [their] opinion six weeks ago', but a direct confrontation proved unnecessary when Dr Bell wrote on 1 July that there were fresh typhoid cases in the town: 'As I knew you had to give an answer to your (hotel)

landlord at the end of this month, I thought it best to drop a line... I fear it must decide you to stop away for next term, I cannot see how you can come back’.

Bell’s advice was quickly backed up by the LGB, which reacted to Major Tulloch’s blistering report by stating that on no account should the school return before Christmas. When the trustees met on 14 July, they had no alternative but to reconsider their summons: a move communicated to Thring by telegram.

Their *volte-face* was expressed in face-saving terms, later repeated in the trustees’ minute book: ‘In [their] opinion there is nothing in the present condition of Uppingham to cause them to rescind their resolution of the 17th ult., yet having regard to a memorial [from] the whole body of assistant masters they are willing... that the school remain in Borth for the autumn term’.

Thring drew wry amusement from their tone: ‘It is fun to see what a sour face they make over it, and are foolish enough to show that they make’. At least they granted £500 (in advance of the next term’s fees) to keep him financially afloat.

A few days later on ‘a glorious day, bright and hot’, term ended and the boys departed by train - but not before Thring had told them ‘to come back [in September] with the soldier spirit to face whatever remained’.

He surely knew that a second term would have none of the novelty of the first. Spring and summer, with so many possibilities out of doors, had been pleasurable, even exciting, but an autumn term with shortening days and increasing wind and rain would be very different. Birley wrote to Bell from Borth on 7 June: ‘The place is glorious now, but I do not think it tenable in winter in its present condition... [but] you need not tell the rector’.

Meanwhile, there was a by-product for Borth of the school’s presence. If typhoid could spread, so could an enthusiasm for public health reform. Learning from the school’s arrival in Borth, local people had become concerned about their own lack of mains water, and during the summer a public meeting took place at which there were many complaints about smells and other dangers. If Borth’s RSA could not, or would not, provide mains water, other means must be found.

Similar demands were made by Aberystwyth residents for their own town at a meeting a month later, and the *Cambrian News* mused: ‘How watering places can expect to flourish, as long as visitors are unable to obtain even scanty supplies of doubtful water, is a mystery’. By then the masters had gone their separate ways for the summer, so Thring, on holiday at his usual retreat on Grasmere in the Lake District, was not there to witness the protests, but it seems likely that their irony was not lost on him.

Christian (of Redgate) spent much of his summer in Uppingham, handling matters with Bell on Thring’s behalf, with Birley and Jacob giving advice from afar as necessary.

Bell relieved his frustration by reviving his long dispute with Haviland. When he reported cases of typhoid amongst his town patients to the RSA on 1 July, it immediately informed the LGB. Haviland was sent to investigate, and claimed: ‘I proceeded to the premises where I met Mr Bell and requested him to accompany me... He however refused to do so and dared me to enter the premises... Having been thus impeded in the execution of my duty, I left... and I report the fact, asking how I [should] act under the circumstances?’

Bell countered immediately, again demanding that the LGB confirm that Haviland had no power to enter any house

without the agreement of its occupier. The RSA, in a difficult position now that Bell was one of its members, supported the need for an LGB ruling, and it replied that Haviland had no such power.

Three days later, Bell wrote to the LGB again, pointing out that, under the 1875 Public Health Act, MOHs were required to look into causes of disease outbreaks as a whole, but not into individual cases. He added that he had kept Haviland fully informed about the latest cases, despite the MOH's failure to apologise for earlier incidents between them. A reply from the ever-cautious LGB suggested that it should not interfere in what it was a matter of professional etiquette rather than law, but it upheld Bell's view of the legal position.

Bell replied, justifying himself again at length. It was insulting for Haviland to talk about 'a *supposed* case of typhoid fever'. Infuriated at Bell's persistence despite being an RSA member himself, the LGB considered whether 'to advise Mr Bell of his social responsibilities', but decided eventually that 'the safe course is merely to acknowledge it'.

Unabashed, Bell dug deeper, finding that Haviland had failed to send in annual reports and illness and mortality returns for either 1874 or 1875, and writing sarcastically: 'If the LGB stand for their official (i.e. Haviland) leaving their letters unanswered, they will stand for anything'.

The letter went on to question the RSA's every decision. What were its motives in allowing further delay? Was there not a risk that, with the project so delayed, only small contractors would tender for the work? As a result, might the work be poorly done? Why had the RSA resented the LGB's insistence on open competition? Why was it opposed to incentives for the work being completed on time?

Thriving on all the contentiousness, Bell also wrote to Thring that Haviland had no

right to go on objecting to the proposed flushing arrangements for the sewer system (his action being ostensibly on the grounds that the water company was not yet in a position to guarantee enough water to make them work). Thring, still on holiday, appears not to have responded.

The RSA meanwhile became involved in a dispute with the LGB over the terms of its new loan. The Treasury, alarmed by the sums being requested by sanitary authorities from across the country, was pressing through the PWLB for an increase in all but the most extreme cases of the standard interest rate of 3.5% on loans.

Major Tulloch's recent recommendation reflected this new policy, but the RSA pleaded that it was indeed a special case, and that the 3.5% rate already agreed should stand. The LGB agreed to support this but warned the RSA that it had no power to overrule the PWLB, if it vetoed this. As a sop to the PWLB, it insisted on a repayment period of only 30 years rather than the 50 which the RSA wished for. The ratepayers would have to foot the increased cost.

As the day for opening the sewerage tenders drew near, Bell became anxious. He wrote again to the LGB: the weeks were slipping by; the weather would soon deteriorate, and construction work would be more difficult. He hoped the LGB would force the pace, implying that it lacked the will rather than any legal power to do so. Ever mindful of others' business, he also proposed that Jacob visit the PWLB to lobby for a rapid decision on the loan, and that Field attend the opening of tenders to add engineering expertise even if Barnard Smith opposed it.

Bell's main fear was that if the company could not rapidly guarantee enough water for flushing, Barnard Smith would use this as a pretext to delay all sewerage works until the waterworks was complete. This

was possibly a year away: 'I said to [Barnard Smith] you cannot put off the works until that time. Oh yes, he said, we can, if Mr Field and Mr Haviland tell us they ought not to be done'. Bell concluded: 'Barnard Smith does not want to open the tender in that case'. He was convinced that the RSA was determined 'to make Mr Thring submit to them'.

He considered whether the ratepayers could be goaded into protesting, or even if the LGB should be encouraged to seek special parliamentary powers to act with 'energy and firmness'. At the same time he revealed that he could not shake off his fury at Haviland's reappointment as MOH.

Thring shared Bell's pessimism, writing to Christian from the Lake District on 9 August: 'How I hate the whole subject... The rector has written a specious letter [in which] he lets out that since Sir C Adderley and I have failed to bring them (the RSA) to book with the LGB, no other power can'. He hoped Adderley would fight on, but it was not for him (i.e. Thring) and the masters to get involved in the RSA's interest rate demands. If the town would not admit its errors, there was little he could do.

On 13 August Bell accused the RSA of putting out false information about the increased burden on the rates which would result from the sanitary works, which he saw as a smokescreen to hide the costs of its earlier opposition to improvements.

To Bell, every delay and every problem was a conspiracy rather than the result of procedure, bureaucracy, accident or, incompetence - even the slowness of the final decision from London over the PWLB loan: 'I do not think that the LGB Inspector was here accidentally: Barnard Smith knows more about that than he cares to tell'.

More positively, he had kept up the pressure on Thring's opponents almost

single-handedly through the summer months until the time when some of Thring's most influential masters now re-joined the campaigning.

William Earle, the longest-standing member of the staff by some years, wrote three letters on 14 August. First, writing as 'the Second Master' he urged the LGB to compel the RSA to complete the sewerage work by November. He emphasised that he wrote not only for the school but on behalf of leading ratepayers in the town, a community in which he had lived for much of his life.

Again the LGB stood back, referring the request to the RSA, which responded on 28 August. Progress on Earle's concerns could be expected very soon (it claimed) because the new bye-laws had been agreed and adopted, and a tender for the sewerage work was about to be accepted, subject to satisfactory references. It assured him that it wanted no further delays.

Earle also wrote to Wales. Their friendship went back for nearly two decades, and he hoped it would survive all these controversies: 'I can hardly tell you how distressed I am that the [LGB] are again going to postpone the drainage; I simply cannot believe [it]. I hope that you will let your disapproval be publicly known. It will endanger the peace of Uppingham in our time. I beg you as one who has been and who still desires to be your friend... to do all you can'. No reply has survived.

Finally Earle wrote to Gainsborough, Adderley and a third powerful trustee that 'no time should be lost'. He suggested that a large deputation of ratepayers should be encouraged go to the LGB. He would gladly join it.

Christian had told Earle that the prospect of further delay was 'disgusting and really alarming... the time has come for a more distinctly aggressive policy on our part'. He thought that as all the magistrates could

sit on the RSA *ex officio*, they too should be contacted to apply their own pressure.

Mullins, on holiday in Somerset, agreed: 'The intelligence you give is disgusting and really alarming. [No] time should be lost in having a petition to the LGB prepared.... the time has come for a more distinctly aggressive policy on our part'.

He favoured seeking support from other local clergymen because ratepayers 'might rally to a leader who was not afraid of Barnard Smith or the rector... I will willingly find £5 (or if necessary £10) towards good legal advice. At any rate that Haviland's power to interfere should be questioned'.

Christian sprang into action. On 11 August he too wrote to Adderley, begging him to put down further parliamentary questions. Adderley responded that it was 'inconceivable that men should act thus' and asked Christian to discover whether any MPs had sons at the school. Just three days later, in response to a backbench question, Sclater-Booth denied any link between the school's postponed return and the delayed drainage works. He surely cannot have believed this, but may have thought it counter-productive for the RSA to be publicly shamed any further.

Christian also wrote to the PWLB on 16 August requesting a speedy verdict on the loan question and its interest rate. He was assured that a decision was imminent, but Birley and Jacob told him that the LGB should be contacted immediately if there was any more delay. Thring, who had interrupted his Lakeland holiday for a further meeting in Manchester with Birley and Jacob, wrote appreciatively to Christian: 'I am so sorry you have all this worry'.

Thring believed that the school had now done all it could and that it was now up to the ratepayers to assert themselves: 'The utter want of business acuteness makes

one laugh... clever men would not bungle so much in conducting their own case... The crisis seems to have come, but I cannot think that the school [and I] should be dragged through the mire of a street fight with the rector'.

Birley agreed: 'If the inhabitants of Uppingham care for the school to return, they must assert themselves as they have never done yet. Parents here [in Manchester are] very little inclined to lend any help - they argue that if Uppingham does not care for the school, it need not have it - and that it would be much better if Mr Thring would leave the place and set up his flag elsewhere'.

The 'crisis' to which Thring referred was a demand by local residents (four months after their earlier approach) that Barnard Smith should meet a ratepayers' deputation. A group representing 75 other townspeople had drawn up a resolution which pulled no punches:

'Our interests will be seriously damaged by any further delay [adding] to [our] pecuniary loss, inconvenience, and suffering... it will imperil the existence of the school and prove a deep and lasting injury to the ratepayers and owners of property...'

The deputation was led by John Hawthorn, the printer and bookshop owner, who must have felt the school's absence as keenly as anyone. One of his principal supporters was William Compton who had led the call for town improvements right back in 1857. Most of the traders were chapel-goers but Compton was one of Wales' churchwardens and a prominent benefactor to the parish church: better-placed than anyone to call the rector to order. His patience had run finally out.

The meeting took place on 13 August. Bell reported to Thring that when Barnard Smith confirmed that the RSA had dropped its objections to the water

company, 'the deputation expressed themselves perfectly satisfied [but] then the rector [Wales] allowed his temper to get the better of his judgement, and said, attacking Mr Hawthorn, that they were not to suppose their [resolution] had made the least difference to their decision...

... He was going on in this strain when Compton said: "Come Mr Wales, don't spoil it, we are all harmonious now", and others joined in so the rector shut up, contenting himself with telling Mr Hawthorn, 'that he hoped now he would use his best influence to bring about a more charitable and peaceful feeling in the parish'. Hawthorn replied "he should leave that, to someone more influential than himself" and that the memorial was too fully signed to please the rector and his friends'.

The deputation successfully demanded that a second meeting take place a week later, and threatened that if there was then no progress it would contact the LGB. Bell told Jacob that he feared Wales and others might make trouble for some of its leading figures (perhaps those whose landlord was the church).

In fact, with the RSA in disarray, Field back-tracked from questioning the water company's ability to service the sewer flushing: a change of heart which did much to neutralise Haviland's continuing hostility to its drilling operation.

Three days later (16 August) seven tenders for sewerage improvements were opened, the lowest coming from a Mr Smart of Northampton. Field agreed to examine them without delay. Bell anticipated that Smart's tender would be accepted but he did not trust the RSA to move quickly to take up Smart's references, so he did this himself ahead of the next RSA meeting.

The references proved satisfactory, and the tender was accepted on 23 August, four

days after another angry meeting at which ratepayers protested against all the delays and Wales again lost his temper. Meanwhile confirmation arrived of the loan and its 3.5% interest rate, and the LGB ordered a rapid start to the work.

Thring had little sympathy for Barnard Smith, but he saw Wales as the real villain:

'The rector is just like a naughty little boy crying "I don't care, I don't care!" when put in a corner. I am sick of his cant about "controversy" and "our not joining them"... We have now entered on the last scene of the curious drama...

Nothing surprises me in the rector; he has clearly got out of his depth, and his nose full of water, and [he] may splash about a good deal'. He hoped that any masters spending the summer in Uppingham and chancing to encounter Wales would treat him with 'cool civility'.

Some of the moderates on the RSA were now keen to make peace with the school: the busy harvest time was imminent. A leading farmer, Edward Wortley of Ridlington, contacted Christian (still in Uppingham) on 17 August. Wortley claimed not to have been fully aware of recent events, and he asserted that some of the delays had been 'partly legal and unavoidable hitherto', but he believed 'now to defer or not to urge on with all speed would be childish and cruel'.

It was a welcome gesture. Earle wrote to Christian on 19 August: 'All will I trust now go smoothly and oh! For the return of peace and happy days'.

Despite his optimism the timescale for the school's return was still far from clear. Moreover, the animosity between school and RSA, headmaster and trustees, Bell and Haviland, even the RSA and the LGB, remained deep - and any attempts to build bridges were still very fragile.

UPPINGHAM
WATERWORKS
COMPANY.
(39 & 40 Vic. Session, 1876.)

NOTICE.

THE Directors of this Company are now proceeding with the construction of the Waterworks and the laying of the Main Pipes throughout the Town, for the supply of such of the Inhabitants of Uppingham as are willing to be consumers of Water, at the Rates and Charges authorized by their Act of Parliament.

Consumers' Service Pipes applied for during the construction of the Works will be laid down, FREE OF CHARGE, from the Mains up to the Houses or Boundary Wall of property to be supplied with Water; the Owner or Occupier will at his own expense supply and maintain all pipes and other appendages within his premises.

Intending Consumers are requested to apply to the Secretary for Forms of Application for the Supply of Water, and that the Service Pipes may be laid up to their premises.

By order of the Directors,
JOHN HAWTHORN,
SECRETARY.

WATERWORKS, UPPINGHAM,
7th December, 1876.

BORTHOLME, UPPINGHAM, UPPINGHAM.

Advertisement for the Water Company, 1876.

CAMBRIAN HOTEL, BORTH,
R.S.O., WALES,
December 26th, 1876.

THE important question whether the School should return to Uppingham after Christmas has been decided on the best authority.

Dr. Acland, F.R.S., Regius Professor, Oxford, and President of the Medical Council, visited Uppingham last week, and inspected the state of the Town, and decided that it was not safe yet for the School to go back.

He says that more time is required, and that the works must have been in operation before the Town will be secure.

These conditions will we trust be fulfilled by Easter. In the mean time the Trustees have sanctioned arrangements for our spending the next Term at Borth.

The mild climate of Borth, and the many appliances both for work and play that our prolonged stay at Borth has enabled us to furnish, render this very practicable. The efficiency of the School will in no way suffer. The School therefore will reassemble at Borth on *Friday, January 19th.*

EDWARD THRING,
HEAD-MASTER.

Notice sent by Thring in December 1876 to the parents of all the boys at Borth, announcing a third term there.

Extract from unpublished recollections of Alice M. Bell

She was the wife of Dr Thomas Bell, the school's MO. Many years after the event, she described how the voting papers for the RSA elections were conveyed to Borth and back.

Mr C White caught the only train that would get the voting papers to Borth in time. Only slow trains stopped at Borth, so

Mr C. White was travelling all through the night.

Arrived at Borth Station in the early morning he found Mr Thring

and all the Masters on the Platform. Tables and presses and ink

were there, and all the voting papers were filled in, while Mr White

had breakfast prepared for him in a waiting room. Mr Thring

had sent the breakfast down, & was herself on the platform to give

him good wishes. In less than an hour the slow train to Rugby

came up, & Mr White had to begin the crawl back. He found

woodcock & the horses at Rugby all refreshed by the night's

rest, and "he galloped and trotted them" back to Lippin-wade to

get the voting papers in. in time. They got in with 15 minutes

to spare. There was a complete change round of Guardians

Mr Thring's chief Supporters were all returned, and his

CHAPTER 8: AUTUMN 1876 - SPRING 1877

Any fragile truce between the various warring parties was soon tested once again in the columns of the national press. *Paterfamilias* returned to the attack in *The Times* on 28 August. Reminding readers of all the past events, he stated that there was still no guarantee that the school would be able to return, even after Christmas. The school had carried out all the experts' suggestions, but while the RSA had accepted Field's plans for town improvements, 'no effectual effort has been made to carry them out'.

There needed to be 'more activity displayed in remedying the original evil [and] an end to mischievous and harmful delay'. Criticising the trustees as supine and drawing heavily on classical analogy, he described 'the spectacle of a great school under a man of originality and power... driven from their rightful home to an obscure welsh village (*sic*) at the extremity of the land, leaving their fields and beautiful Temple to lie desolate'.

Bell wrote to Jacob that this had 'acted like a blister, and some of the [RSA] were very unhappy about the lies it contained', but they would not reply because 'while the school can get fair space allowed in the *Times* for anything they have to say, they (the RSA) would have their letter mutilated and pushed into a corner'.

On 1 September *an old inhabitant* rebutted all the claims of *Paterfamilias*, listing the low number of deaths in recent months, which (he said) showed that the town really was healthy and that the RSA had been far from inactive. Reviving the old controversy about Thring changing the school for the worse, he declared that it 'was founded for the benefit of town and district... *Paterfamilias* and other parents take advantage of our charity and send their sons to reap the benefits, and are the first to raise an unjust cry against the town'.

He detailed what the RSA had spent in recent years and the impact of this expenditure on local rates, prophesying further big rises which would be borne only by local townspeople while '*Paterfamilias* pays nothing towards the expenses that he so loudly calls for'. He criticised the school for having failed so far to provide a water supply 'from want of capital, energy or proper advice'.

In Borth, term began on 15 September with one immediate priority for the masters: the battening down of the hatches before winter set in. The expense of this worried them, and it could only be partially offset from Captain Withington's fighting fund. They were alarmed too on 26 October by seven cases of scarlet fever amongst the boys. Childs imposed stringent isolation and the outbreak was over in ten days, but *The Lancet* seized the opportunity to assert that Thring could not blame the RSA this time, and that the school's health arrangements were very poor compared with Marlborough College.

Thring still hoped for a return to Uppingham by Christmas, based on the news that sewerage work there had begun at last. He was reassured that the Lower School (still *in situ*) had experienced no problems since Tarbotton's improvements nine months earlier. As the weeks went by, however, typhoid reappeared in the town and the date of the school's return was again put back as the works proceeded disappointingly slowly. Only with their completion could it contemplate leaving Borth: surely by the spring.

Bell continued his many campaigns to unmask plots and incompetence. He believed *An old inhabitant* was a former RSA member voted off earlier in the year: 'It is a great pity that they do not stick to the truth. They are like the ostrich; they cannot see their deficiencies and believe everyone else is blind'.

He again complained to the LGB about the RSA: he would cooperate with it unless it tried to exceed its powers, but he also blamed the latest rate rise solely on the disputes it had precipitated. He feared it might aim for further delays in the drainage work to phase its escalating costs. His disputes with Haviland still rankled, but he would not risk further trouble by reporting another typhoid case in the town on 19 September: 'One asks: What is the use of a medical officer?'

The *Stamford Mercury* reported on 22 September that Smart had begun laying the drains, but even now things did not go completely according to plan: 'On Monday evening, as Mr Holman of Bisbrooke was returning from Leicester, one of the holes being left unprotected, the horse got in and injured itself severely, breaking the harness. Fortunately the occupants of the cart escaped unhurt. On Tuesday evening, Mr Askew went to look at the place where the horse slipped in, and by some means he got in and sustained serious injury'.

In early October deep digging proved much harder and more protracted than had been anticipated, and on 29 November Smart applied to the RSA for extra time - which Bell blamed not on Smart but on 'miscalculations and blunder' in the RSA's tendering. He wrote to Thring about four more typhoid cases among his own patients and rumours of others.

Thring recorded in his diary: 'We hear that the drain work has brought some fearful revelations, and that [Barnard Smith] has had to come and see to it, as the workmen refused to keep on the whole day. I grieve that there is more typhoid [in the workhouse]... The popular feeling at Uppingham, if not [already] stirred up, must gradually find out that we have been most patient...'

Meanwhile Bell had discovered a new cause to take up. He alerted the RSA to longstanding drainage problems at the

national (town) school, of which Wales was chairman, and claimed that this had triggered a rare dispute between the two leading figures on the RSA:

'[Barnard Smith] and two or three others appeared glad to have had the matter brought before them... they have been [on] at the rector about it before, and he has always asked for time, pleaded that they (the school) had no funds, that the [RSA] ought to help and that the gradients were unsuitable etc etc, all to delay... Mr Wales does as he likes in the management of [the school's] affairs'.

Bell did not let the matter drop, forcing the board of school managers to get estimates for improvements, and demanding resignations if nothing was done. After the RSA meeting on 1 December where Wales again pleaded a shortage of funds, Bell threatened to form an alternative board to overthrow the existing managers. He asked Thring whether the masters might pay the legal costs of such a move: arguably an insensitive request, given all the other financial pressures on them.

Alternatively, as Bell did not wish to become a manager himself, he asked whether perhaps the masters would put one of themselves up for election to the existing board? He thought Wales might actually favour this if his old friend Earle would consider standing, but Earle initially put conditions on the proposal which the other managers urged Wales to reject. We do not know the details, but Bell recognised that Earle's 'extreme intimacy with the rector' might place him in a difficult position and he then suggested several other masters.

Ultimately, Earle relented and was elected. The national school's drainage issue dragged on for some months before a new dry-earth closet system with regular treatments was put in place, although some managers felt that it was not a good long-term solution.

Encouraged by the RSA's embarrassments over the national school, another housemaster wrote to Bell suggesting that he raise similar questions about sanitation at the workhouse. Like the sanatorium, whose cesspits Haviland had criticised so strongly, it was very near the intended site of the new water supply to which the MOH was also vociferously opposed. It would not look good for the RSA to have criticised the sanatorium, if simultaneously it had ignored or kept secret the state of pits at its own workhouse only a few hundred yards away.

Bell seized on the issue with alacrity, but the evasive Barnard Smith 'could not say' what state the workhouse pits were in, nor whether they were all to be connected to the sewers; he promised that he would raise it with the master of the workhouse when they next met. He may have hoped Bell would lose sight of the issue, now that there were new typhoid cases in the town but, unfortunately for him, Haviland suddenly intervened again on 12 December with a memo to the RSA which it duly sent on to the LGB.

Haviland seems to have had no prior knowledge of the workhouse issue, but he again complained bitterly about the small distance between the sanatorium pits and the water company's site. The old pits had not been removed, and the water company's new well did not go deep enough. He went back over all the scarlet fever cases earlier in the decade. Unless an alternative site for the water source was found, he would not answer for the consequences.

Whatever his reason for reviving these issues, Haviland's intervention stoked the fires of the workhouse dispute. Bell again called for its pits to be abolished, arguing that there was already a well there which could service new water closets. However, Barnard Smith, supported by Wales, was fiercely opposed to spending yet more ratepayers' money. He did not see 'why

we should go to the expense of filling our cesspits to please the water company'.

Despite warning his fellow RSA members that they risked being accused of double standards, Bell received little support. Legally he could not make them act, although Barnard Smith was forced to let the issue be debated, and the *Stamford Mercury*, supported by *A guardian* in *The Lancet*, predicted (correctly) that the pits would eventually be removed, once the new water supply was complete.

The water company's progress was mixed. Construction work was gathering pace near the sanatorium and the first shares had been taken up. Thring and several masters subscribed, but demand was low amongst townspeople, partly because of resentment at a school-led enterprise, but also because they were now feeling the full financial effects of the school's absence.

Thring was unsympathetic: 'I do not understand the people of Uppingham. I fear I never shall. How people with property in the town can calmly run the risk of seeing it destroyed in value for want of drainage and water supply, and how people with hearts can be indifferent to the illness and death of their neighbours, is beyond me'. He was concerned to have allies on the company's board, because the RSA was now using the letters' column of *The Times* for a dispute with solicitors for the company, who had objected to remarks from *An old inhabitant* which stated that the company was a ploy by the school to thwart the RSA's own attempts to provide better water.

The solicitors fiercely rebutted this allegation, reminding readers of the paper that Thring's venture had been publicly supported at a large gathering of townspeople. Every effort had been made to address the RSA's concerns, but its insistence that no street should be dug up without its consent would 'have rendered the [company] a dead letter'. The slow

progress was due not to any 'want of energy' from the company, but to the RSA's expensive attempts to thwart the legislation needed to set it up. Bell repeated many of these points to anyone within the town who would listen.

Growing concern by late autumn about the ever-slipping timetable of Smart's sewerage work, and the news of the re-emergence of typhoid, prompted Thring to inform the LGB on 5 December that the school would probably be unable to return to Uppingham at New Year. He overreached himself in suggesting the name of an independent doctor who might inspect progress on the LGB's behalf: the irritated LGB replied that the school must decide its affairs for itself.

For Hodgkinson, whose Lower School recruitment had been hard-hit, it was 'very disastrous to me that the school [is] not returning'. The reaction was even gloomier in Borth. Thring was secretly resigned to another term there, but although he was necessarily upbeat with the boys, morale among the masters was very low. Many of them wanted to spend Christmas in Uppingham, and they left Borth as soon as term ended, even before any decision had been made about the following term. Maybe Thring was wise to reveal nothing of his post-Christmas plans until pupils and staff had gone.

On one issue Bell in Uppingham and Childs in Borth were united. It might anger the RSA if Thring brought in another expert to advise on whether it was safe for the school to return, but he must do it. As a result, Professor Acland, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford and a member of the 1870 sanitary commission, visited Uppingham on 18 December. Armed with the reports by Haviland and Rawlinson, he toured both town and school very thoroughly, meeting formally with Bell, Childs, Tarbotton and two housemasters, and calling on Hodgkinson and Wales. Haviland later visited him in Oxford.

Acland was emphatic that the school should not return in January. Jacob rushed down from Liverpool anticipating that Thring would need support against the trustees, who met on 22 December, again in the headmaster's absence. They reluctantly accepted Acland's advice, but decided that they could come to no final settlement of the year's accounts until Thring sent them more details. They did, however, vote a further £300 to pay the masters' salaries and £250 to Thring towards his expenses.

A potential sting in the tail was the instruction to him to draw up a statement 'showing in detail the value of the property belonging to the masters conjointly and separately for which they consider themselves to be entitled to be indemnified under the [governance) Scheme'. They were at last starting to consider the school's future financial structure - and maybe the implications for the time when Thring might eventually step down.

Only two days earlier Thring had written to Christian, who had returned to Uppingham to take part in Acland's fact-finding. He was grateful, but he could not hide his weariness and dejection. Several housemasters still in Borth were disputing financial matters:

'I am glad that you are cheered. I should be if I were not so tired, and worried... I shall want (need) a secretary for the next three months and a lawyer at the end. My letters are such a heap... I write from 10 to 1 daily without stopping, and the inside of my head feels as if I was growing a fleece there. [If only] I could think that there really is a break in the clouds, and some glimpses of light under them'.

Even on Boxing Day he was at work in Borth, writing to the parents to announce another term there and assuring them that the efficiency of the school would not suffer.

The end of the old year brought a dramatic twist. Barnard Smith missed the RSA meeting on 27 December – something almost unprecedented. He died of typhoid two days later. Maybe eighteen months of worry and dispute had weakened his resistance medically: his dogged opposition to abolishing the workhouse cesspits suggests an exhausted man.

Even in an age accustomed to sudden death, his passing caused deep shock, not only in Uppingham but when the news reached Borth on New Year's Day. Thring's reaction was regretful but unyielding: 'The sad and fearful news reached us that Barnard Smith has died of typhoid fever - apoplexy the immediate cause. Poor fellow! He has fallen a victim to his own obstinacy and delusions'. In a letter to Bell he went further: 'It is fearful to be suddenly taken away whilst doing wrong. God help us all'.

The members of the RSA gathered on 3 January 1877 and formally recorded the 'unexpected and deeply lamented death of the Reverend Barnard Smith', noting 'their strong and grateful sense of the services he has rendered'. The *Stamford Mercury* described him as 'a staunch friend to educational pursuits... he devoted his talents and experience for the benefit of the ratepayers. There was not a charity or institution within the neighbourhood of which he was not an active member. His loss will not fully be recognized until time shows the actual value'.

However, with Barnard Smith gone, there was an opportunity for a fresh start. Recognising how demanding his role had become, the guardians now separated the chairmanship of the Union (the guardians as a whole) from that of the RSA. Wortley, who had written in such conciliatory tones earlier, took the former role. Bell approved of this, but was still determined to pursue the issue of the workhouse cesspits.

He demanded to know what legal powers the guardians had, or needed, to make structural alterations and how these might be paid for. In less troubled times the RSA members might have tried to block what implied more work, expense and engagement with the LGB but, shocked by Barnard Smith's sudden death, they asked Field to draw up the necessary designs. Copies were sent to Haviland and to Dr Walford (who was MO of the workhouse).

Predictably, this produced a new burst of acrimony - this time between Haviland and Walford. Walford supported Bell's call for the workhouse to be given water closets linked to the new sewerage system. Haviland, a convinced advocate of dry-earth arrangements everywhere, argued that they would be the best solution. He reiterated that the water pressure might not be adequate for water closets because the workhouse was on some of the highest ground in the entire town. Wortley, whose own property had used a dry-earth system successfully for many years, agreed.

Bell could not resist sniping at Haviland: 'It is extraordinary that [he] never found out [when writing his notorious report a year earlier] that there were cesspits at the union... If he knew of them he kept them very dark, and I think his opposition arose from his annoyance at my having brought them to light'.

The uncertain RSA members appealed to Field for guidance. The LGB was keen to avoid being drawn in; it had kept out of the dispute about the sanatorium cesspits and the new water station, and it considered that it was far too late to start querying the company's arrangements.

Eventually Haviland's view prevailed, a decision confirmed by the RSA on 21 February. The workhouse inhabitants were not to receive the same new facilities as the rest of the town.

Haviland again attacked the site of the new water supply, but, like the LGB, the RSA decided that the time for opposition was past. The company's share capital had been fully subscribed, construction was well advanced, and pipes had been laid along every street. Bell reported to Thring that 'the flushing cart has arrived, and the sewers are being swept out... the health of the town is good, very little illness indeed'. He had recently seen two child cases of typhoid caused (he believed) by polluted wells, but these wells could be closed off when mains water started to flow.

Meanwhile storms at the start of the new term in Borth had given the school further experience of the realities of Atlantic coastal life, and a longing to return home. It would be important for Thring to continue having supporters within the RSA. The next spring elections were not far away, and while it was unlikely that the masters would have to vote from Borth a second time, Bell considered that 'the animosity is not dead, Haviland has been showing his teeth, and the [RSA] will back him the moment the year of grace (for the company to complete its work) expires: at present they feel powerless to do it any serious damage'. Worried that Wales might try to find new candidates whom he could manipulate, Bell wrote to Thring several times asking whether a housemaster might stand.

He even tried to persuade Thring to throw his own hat into the ring: a tempting prospect, but one which, in the final days at Borth, was a battle too far, even for Thring. In what was almost his final letter from Borth, he urged Bell himself to stand again: 'I heard what an astonishing exhibition the rector made of himself at [a recent] meeting. This last year has taken him quite out of his depth... But I could not bring myself to challenging direct comparison with the Rector. He is no antagonist for me'. Bell (together with Pateman, the school's second choice candidate) was elected.

Bell had one personal issue to revive. Word had filtered back more than once from Borth about the excellent Dr Childs - culminating in local people there giving him a hero's farewell. Bell was concerned that Childs should not be allowed any medical role in the school once it returned, lest it threaten his own position. He suggested that Childs would not have the time to do both teaching and doctoring, and he reminded Thring of a promise, made back in the dark days of autumn 1875, that Childs was being taken on only as a science master.

Childs, however, was resolved to continue practising medicine in some form, and claimed that Thring had proposed that each housemaster should choose between the two of them. Bell feared that if this were allowed to happen, it would be the prelude to Childs resigning from the staff and starting a GP practice of his own. He also feared that Childs planned to publish a report on the typhoid outbreak (which Childs denied), which might possibly support the earlier criticisms of Bell's actions.

Bell claimed to be 'in doubt as to whether he should trouble Mr Thring' about these issues, but it seems clear that he hoped others 'would do the troubling for him'. Unsuccessful in this, he eventually wrote to Thring himself, but he need not have worried. Thring confirmed that Bell would have his support as the school's sole MO.

By now, the trustees had approved the school's return, but they were again in dispute with Thring over his expenses claim, and insisting for the future on clearer advance budgeting and no exceptional spending without prior permission. They were determined to tighten their financial grip on him.

The return would not be a moment too soon. In different ways it had been a hard winter for both town and school. There appear to have been few businesses

bankrupted during the school's absence, but the economic downturn had been marked. The *Stamford Mercury* described the March Spring Fair: 'This year, despite the usual accompaniment of steam-horses, swing boats and rifle galleries etc... not much business was done'. A week or two later, however, the paper confirmed that the school's return was fixed for 6 May. The works were complete; water was flowing and the new drains were in place.

The school remained in session in Borth over Easter 1877. After a farewell concert in Aberystwyth, and a lengthy, effusive farewell celebration in Borth at which almost the entire village turned out, the pupils left. 'And so the grand page of life is turned,' wrote Thring on 13 April, 'the chapter come to an end. But it has been glorious'.

He returned to Uppingham on 24 April 1877 'with wonderfully mixed feelings... thankfulness to God for a page turned and closed; intense dislike of the place, mixed with a feeling of home and being master once more in my own house; the old constriction of stomach and feeling of dread, mixed with a sense of no longer being at the mercy of others and subject to the racket and disturbance of hotel life'.

Messages of congratulations poured in. They included one from a fellow-headmaster: 'Your exodus was one of the bravest exploits ever performed, and you deserve to be hung all over with Victoria crosses'. A week later he noted: that 'the town is really making a grand demonstration: arches and flags all up in the street: they must have taken much time and care and spent much money. This... is a new start in life here... a signal refutation of the calumnies vented on us last year, and the whole moral atmosphere of the place will no doubt be changed'.

There were banners and evergreen triumphal arches: 'Welcome home', 'Flourish School: Flourish Town' and

'Uppingham School: a good name lives for ever'. These heralded two evenings of triumphant processions after the pupils returned: 'The whole town was in a wonderful fervour of enthusiasm'.

The *Stamford Mercury* praised Thring's 'determined efforts', and described how flags were hung from houses with so many streamers and so much bunting 'that it would have done honour to a royal visit to a town four times as large as Uppingham. There was scarcely a house which did not contribute its quota towards the gaiety of the scene'.

Mr White, the doughty carrier of the voting slips to Borth a year earlier, displayed large welcoming notices outside his ironmonger's shop in the High Street. Dr Bell's surgery was bedecked with Chinese lanterns. When the bus from Seaton arrived, its horses were detached and pupils dragged it around the town. Bands played; many cheers were given. The only sour note was sounded by Wales, who declined to have the church bells rung - possibly out of pique that Thring had just been elected to replace him as president of the town's Mutual Improvement Society. In the end, even he sensed the mood and changed his decision.

Three days later at a ceremony at the school, speeches of welcome were given by Bell and by John Hawthorn, who had played a major role in the ratepayers' summer revolt and who observed that 'the absence of the school had pressed with severity on many tradesmen'. Thring was presented with an illuminated address, and replied at length, reiterating that 'we are united now as never before' and observing that, with the new term's intake of pupils in addition to the 66 who had joined at Borth, nearly 100 boys were experiencing the school for the first time *in Uppingham*.

In an effort to maintain the new spirit of co-operation, a town-school feast was held later in the summer, and a joint cricket

match took place against a Derbyshire XI. A new recreation committee was planned: among its first events were a flower show, a concert and an athletics festival, as well as a big Guy Fawkes Night celebration. Lecturers on many different topics continued through the winter with cookery and elocution classes and play readings.

The growing number of houses linking up to the new sewers seems to have had the desired effect, but there would be continuing calls for the abolition of all cesspits and the town would not be disease-free for some years. There was a brief scare late in 1877 when scarlet fever was reported at one of the hill-houses, but the case proved to be an isolated and mild one. Three smallpox cases were recorded in the town early in 1878, one of which proved to be fatal. Later that year a small-scale typhoid outbreak caused new concern about possible water impurities.

Bell criticised the RSA's clerk for letting alarmist rumours circulate by being slow to commission a water analysis. However, this eventually proved that the water company was not to blame. In many respects the company was performing well. The LGB approved its regulations, along with an agreement with the housemasters for reduced charges, on the grounds that their pupils were in Uppingham for only part of each year.

By June 1880 the LGB had begun working with the RSA to adopt a new hydrant system for extinguishing fires, flushing drains and watering the streets. The *Stamford Mercury* reported that the company had 'agreed to put at the [town's] disposal their tank of 30,000 gallons, and by starting their pump supply, 5000 gallons an hour could be kept up'.

However, the company later ran into trouble, justifying all the earlier fears of both Haviland and the RSA about the

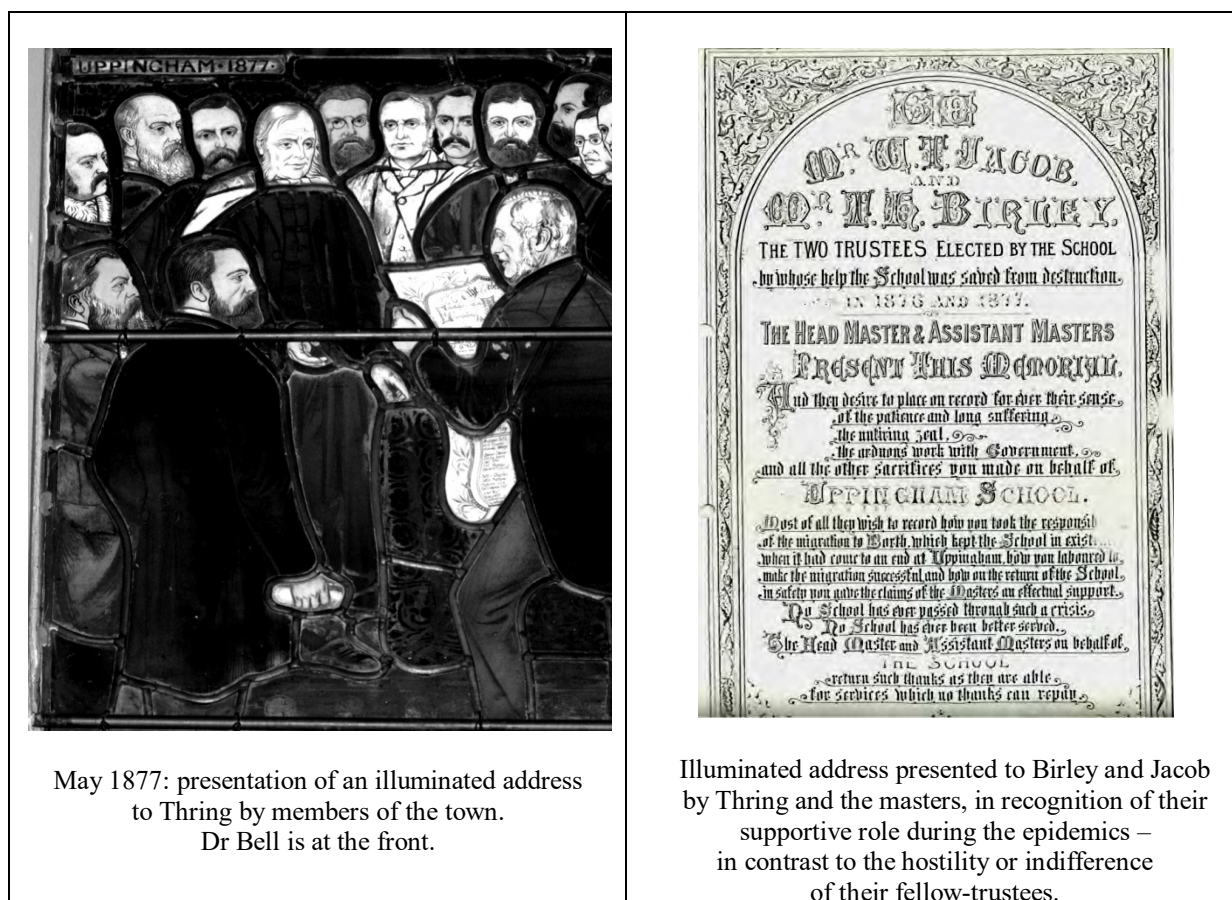
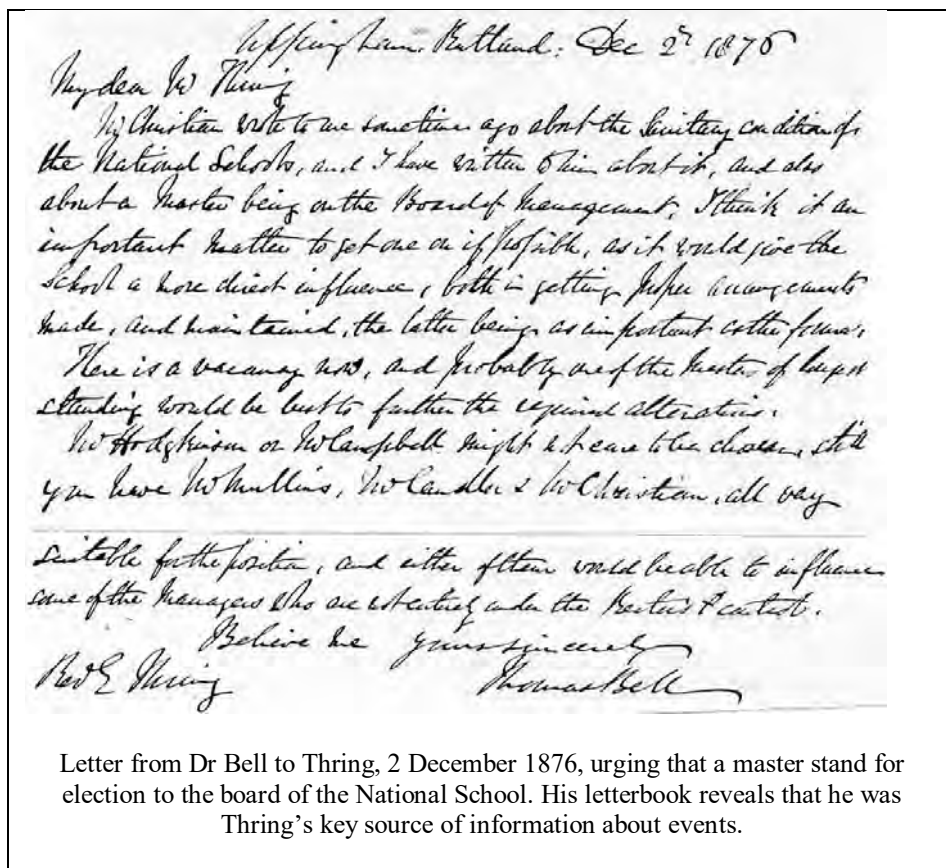
inadequacy of its technical specifications. The drillings between the sanatorium and the workhouse had initially produced large quantities of water - to the extent that the whole site around the new water tower became flooded - but the water table soon dropped, and the supply became insufficient as demand for it increased. In 1882 the summer supply was restricted to less than an hour per day.

In a desperate attempt to find additional supplies in December 1883 the water company sank a new, larger and deeper well to a depth of 112 feet, but found nothing. Headings were then driven from the bottom of the existing well in various directions before a new supply was discovered further to the north, which solved the problem for a while, and there was sufficient water in August 1888 for 'the old bathing place on the Seaton Road (to be) filled with water, after having been empty for several years'. Boating was provided on the August bank holiday, along with a band, dancing and fireworks.

However, in the same year a new boy arrived who, much later in life, recalled that 'a water-supply that was unscientific and somewhat precarious [often led] to the rumour that if it did not rain we should be sent home, and supplied the perennial jest retailed to newcomers that the water in the school bath got so thick by half-term that once an adventurous fag, adept at diving and of name unknown, had in some past era... dislocated his neck by diving into the mud'.

Notwithstanding all the problems which the company faced in its early years, by 1900 the company's shares were selling at more than six times their 1876 price.

The origin of the Uppingham typhoid outbreak and the identity of its carriers were never conclusively established.





‘One Heart - One Way’: High Street East, decorated in May 1877.



What Thring came back to: his own house, photographed in 1877.

CHAPTER 9: RECKONING AND AFTERMATH

As life returned to normal for town and school, they both faced a financial reckoning. For the town, the parliamentary local taxation returns for Uppingham and its immediate neighbouring towns show just how much burden the RSA imposed on the local community in financing its improvements.

Taking the years 1874-83 as a whole, Uppingham's RSA spent well over twice as much as Oakham (a sanitary district slightly smaller in population) and Market Harborough (30% larger), and nearly four times as much as Melton Mowbray and Stamford (c50% larger).

Moreover, the loan which it was struggling to repay by the late 1870s was exceeded in only twenty RSAs in the whole of England and Wales, most of which had a much larger rateable value. Barnard Smith and Wales, who had warned so repeatedly about the burdens which would fall on hard-pressed ratepayers, proved to be correct in this, if less so in their assessment of the wider issues.

The school faced even greater pressures. Thring had always known that the costs would be substantial, but his desperation for the school to survive and his bitterness against his opponents had always prevailed over that realisation. He and the housemasters were hit twice, because as ratepayers they could not escape the costs of the town's improvements, while also suffering the personal financial consequences of the move to Borth.

As he had always feared, Thring found himself even more deeply in debt. Forced to end such luxuries as his annual expedition to the Lake District, he appealed to the trustees for further help. They showed scant sympathy and played for time, merely agreeing in June 1877 to reimburse the outstanding travel costs of the day boys to Borth. In October they

passed two motions implicitly critical of Thring: for a failure of accounting procedures, and for what they saw as excessively high expenditure on concerts and musical instruments. Their minute book also records:

'They had before them a memorial from the masters concerning expenses of the school at Borth. They find themselves without accurate knowledge of the particulars of [these], neither do they know who are liable for them, whether the masters as a body or individually in varying proportions. They resolve to form a committee of investigation and request to be furnished with full information, when they will further consider the subject'.

Thring must have welcomed the inclusion on this committee of Birley and Jacob, but Wales was a member too. The trustees came to believe that the debt could be gradually reduced by increasing the overall number of boarders - which they must have known Thring would greatly dislike. At their April 1878 meeting they passed a resolution 'to bring the whole financial condition of the School before the Charity Commissioners'.

The arguments dragged on for some months and through several more board meetings. In October 1878 the trustees agreed to grant payments to Thring and various masters, but these amounted to only a small fraction of their overall costs.

Thring then contacted the Commissioners himself, urging that the entire Borth expenses should be refunded. His petition was made 'with great diffidence', but also with passion about how the school had been built up through the financial contributions which he and the masters had made as 'the living representatives of the new foundation'.

He suggested that the costs to himself and his colleagues of the first epidemic in the

autumn of 1875 and of Tarbotton's recommended improvements totalled far more than the trustees' latest grants. Then, after the second outbreak in March 1876 there had been all the expenses of the move to Borth, which Thring estimated at over £3,000, to which the trustees had granted sums amounting to barely a third of those raised through Captain Withington's fighting fund.

He tried to show that the houses could not increase their boarder capacity. He also suggested that the Borth migration had merely exacerbated a longstanding problem: 'the impossibility of carrying on the school (under the fee arrangements fixed legally a decade earlier) without an increase of funds'. He believed that many thousands of £s needed to be invested in plant and equipment if the school was to function properly, and he suggested that the tuition fee be raised by one-third.

The trustees, fearful at the financial consequences if the commissioners backed Thring's petition, tried again to evade all responsibility for the move to Borth. Thring wrote to the commissioners once more on 24 May, protesting. He reiterated all the past events and the immense pressures which he and the housemasters had faced, seeking to show that he had consulted with the trustees at every stage.

His efforts were partially successful. The commission was in no doubt that 'although the removal of the school to Borth had not the express sanction of the trustees, yet their subsequent acquiescence in it must be assumed... from the part they took in the management of the school during the time of its stay [there]'. It agreed to the suggested fee increase, exempting only the very small number of day pupils.

The additional revenue would ease Thring's burdens, but no more than that: it seems certain that he and his colleagues never recouped much of the Borth expenditure. The trustees did, however,

agree to take over the sanatorium in 1878, together with its mortgage, half of which was still outstanding.

The commissioners added one further recommendation: that in the longer-term the school should buy up the houses from the housemasters. This was implemented in the years after the Great War of 1914-8: new housemasters would no longer have the burden of purchasing them from their predecessors. Then, in the years after World War Two, the school moved to end the arrangement whereby housemasters drew profits as boarding-house keepers. Henceforth they would be paid a fixed salary instead.

In most other respects, Thring had won the day. Unlike Arnold's staff at Rugby, many of whom went off to headships elsewhere, the majority of his loyal housemasters remained at Uppingham until retirement, although his relationship with Hodgkinson, once so close, never recovered from the pressures to which the epidemic exposed it. George Mullins, whose little son had been one of the early victims, lost another son in 1893, this time to pneumonia.

Thring's final decade as headmaster was quieter and more mellow. Others saw him as more distant, partly because as he became more widely known he took on many writing projects and public speaking commitments. He claimed to feel rejuvenated by his teaching, and although he was always a worrier, he felt: 'One moves amongst the masters so secure and at ease, and not on the watch any more for the next plot or stab'.

The Borth commemoration on St Barnabas' Day each June became a major event in the life of the chapel. Thring spent part of the summer at Borth during several of the following five years, always warmly welcomed: in 1880 he was greeted at the station by a brass band and a year later he preached at the local Eisteddfod. A

number of boys born in Borth in those years were named after him.

His relationship with the trustees remained difficult, partly because he struggled to produce financial accounts of the standard which they now required from him. Financial concerns dogged him for the rest of his life. He thought of retiring but he was concerned about how little capital he had accumulated over the years. This in turn led to disputes about how any pension for him might be calculated. Ironically, although the trustees had for so many years resisted spending money on new buildings for the school, in the final year of Thring's life their financial priority was not his pension arrangements but the funding of ambitious plans for new classrooms.

Thring died, still in office in October 1887, aged 66. Only after his death did the impossibility of untangling his finances from those of the school become fully apparent, to the detriment of his widow and five children who inherited barely £500 between them.

The *Times* recorded that 'a throng of mourners came from all parts of the country' to his burial in Uppingham churchyard, where one of the wreaths at his funeral came from 'the women of Borth'.

Bell remained as the school MO and in general practice, becoming MO of the workhouse and public vaccinator too on the retirement of Dr Walford. For many years he was a JP and churchwarden. He also contributed an article to *The Lancet*, in 1899, entitled *A woman disembowelled by a cow*.

He died on 11 July 1914. The school's tribute ignored his pricklier side and any shortcomings of his in 1875-6, reflecting on all that it owed him: 'His life was a constant influence for good, in school and

town. He would not give up work, and was, within a few days of his death, attending some patients: a striking example... Who shall say that England does not need such lives?'

Bell's arch-enemy, Haviland, retired in the early 1880s, and went to live on the Isle of Man. He threw himself into local life there and was much in demand as a writer and lecturer on the island's climate and geology, but he met his match as a controversialist in Revd. Theophilus Talbot.

Haviland praised the healthy Manx climate, suggesting that it resulted in very few cases of consumption in the island, but Talbot claimed repeatedly and furiously that Haviland's research was hasty and superficial: comments which are significant in view of the bitter criticisms of his earlier role in Uppingham. He later returned to the mainland and died in 1903.

Wales was rector for only two years after the school's return before retiring, first back to Northamptonshire and finally to Leamington Spa. He died in 1889. His steward (and the RSA clerk), the solicitor William H. Brown, resigned shortly after Wales left, having been exposed for stealing clients' money.

Robert Rawlinson was knighted in 1883 and remained chief engineering inspector of the LGB until 1888. Rogers Field returned to Uppingham in 1879, recommending further extension to the sewage farm on Seaton Lane. His career included advising Wellington College on its diphtheria outbreak and designing the drainage systems for both Sandringham House and Bagshot Park. He drew on his Uppingham experiences in a handbook on sanitary bye-laws adopted for national use by the LGB in 1877.

The LGB remained in existence for another forty years, although its relationship with local authorities was

significantly changed by the setting-up of county councils and county boroughs under the Local Government Act of 1888. In 1918 it was reorganised and renamed the Ministry of Health.

The Uppingham epidemic is significant in three key areas: in showing the inadequacies in local and central government systems at the time; the limitations of contemporary knowledge about epidemic disease in rural areas; and the impact of local rivalries and strong personalities in their communities.

It also contributed to better medical care in boarding schools. Less than a decade after the events which threatened Dr Bell's career, MOSA (the Medical Officers of Schools' Association) was founded. One of its first tasks was to draw up guidelines for guarding schools 'from the outbreak and spread of preventable infectious diseases', which drew heavily on events in Uppingham.

A century later, an educational historian, Professor John Honey, recorded:

'In the early decades of the [twentieth] century, a schoolmaster could still notice that illness was common enough to be a major topic of conversation in public schools: "What epidemic sickness had plagued the school last year, or last term, and what was likely to plague this term..."'

... Epidemics themselves were to become less common, and certainly less virulent, after the development of chemotherapy (e.g. M&B) in 1936 and antibiotics in the 1940s, leaving empty school sanatoria as huge white elephants to be adapted where possible in our own day as additional boarding houses.'

This adaptation is exactly what happened in Uppingham with the opening of the first girls' house, Fairfield, in 1975.

Most historians of Victorian education have seen the Borth adventure as a pivotal

event in Thring's career: one which marked the end of a period of sustained battling - both in Uppingham to get his school built and fully established, and externally against the Endowed Schools' Commission, before a final decade in which his achievements and reputation were beyond dispute, whatever his continuing battles with his employers.

The events of 1875-7 show his energy, imagination, organisational ability and visionary qualities to the full. Other schools migrated in the face of various threats - notably in the next century to get away from wartime bombing - but the scale of Thring's enforced improvisation is arguably much greater than theirs.

His obituary in the *Stamford Mercury* in 1887 quoted 'W', who had recently written to the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

'Uppingham has lost its second founder and England perhaps her ablest and certainly her most original educationalist since Arnold of Rugby... He might have been a great soldier if he had not been a great schoolmaster; for he was a born leader of men. This characteristic was never more forcibly illustrated than in 1876 - a feat unprecedented in the annals of English education'.

Thring's diaries and letters, the *Uppingham School Magazine* and the subsequent writings of his disciples need, for a full understanding of the context, to be balanced against the LGB papers, the RSA minute book and Dr Bell's *Letterbook*.

Taken as whole, they constitute a uniquely detailed study of a rural community in crisis, and a reminder of the struggles involved in securing the provision of the universal public utilities which so many of us are now privileged to take for granted.

They also support Thring's assertion, soon after his return: 'That year at Borth stands alone in the history of schools'.



Thring's 1863 schoolroom after the school's return.
The flags in the centre background were brought back from Borth, where they had been used to summon boys to meals and lessons from their dispersed lodgings. They hung in the (Old) School Room for the next 120 years.



Thring's final summer: School House, 1887.
His wife, Marie, and sister-in-law (Anna Koch) are to his left,
and on either side of him are his three daughters, Sarah, Margaret and Grace.

The first Borth Commemoration Sermon

delivered in the school chapel by Thring: in May 1878.

(He inserted diagonal lines to indicate pauses in his delivery: double lines meant longer pauses).

‘These great walls, brethren, would be dreary enough if empty, and silent,/ with the life departed from out of them./ The holy building left desolate,/ the holier and greater it is in itself,/ speaks all the more sadly of the hearts that created it,/ and the death of the hopes and the prayers/ that made it,/ and lived in it./

It is hard at this moment of thanksgiving/ to bring back that other moment,/ when eyes looked up at these statues, the silent memorials of a grateful heart,/ and thoughts of the life they embodied arose within,/ thoughts of the spirit power that is in every true gift of these gifts offered here/ arose,/ accompanied by the stern questioning,/"Is it all over?/ Shall these eyes never more see them again?/ Is an end indeed come?/ And though future years may fill the walls with a fresh tide of life,/ are we and ours swept out of them to return no more?"//

On that last Sunday, as I took my last look,/I can truly say that the only thought, which made me think I should return,/was the thought/ of the spirit life that has been lavished in this House of God,/ the heart-blood that its courses have been laid in,/the faith and truth that has given and received life/from this holy voice in stone,/ which we call our chapel,/ But for that/I had believed the end had come./ And others must have had the same questionings in their hearts.//

We went out,/unknowing where,/unknowing what might lie before us./ We went out,/but not empty./ We had a treasure to guard,/a trust to keep,/an heritage that might not be cast away,/as long as there was any hope of saving it./ We had the honour/and discipline,/and law,/and order,/of this school,/its living freight of character/and truth, in charge;/and we might not leave it;/we might not desert it;/as long as there was any hope of saving that life.//

Do not think/I have forgotten/ the ruin that would have come on houses, and homes,/had we broken to pieces then,/and had to begin afresh elsewhere,/with the past of this school wiped out./I have not forgotten it.// But it was for the sake of the life that the boys of this school/have received,/ embody,/and pass on to their successors,/ that we did not break in pieces.// And moreover/bad as that ruin would have been,/it would not have been hopeless./ Our own fortunes might have risen again;/but the school once scattered,/the life of its years of growth brought to an end,/that could not be recalled.// A new school might have come in time,/but it would have been new./ This school life would have perished with the school which was the life./

So we went out,/carrying with us the hope of saving that life,/and with the resolve not to desert our posts as long as that hope remained.// And we went out with a *Great Deliverance*,/ a deliverance so perfect,/that it now seems as a dream,/ a deliverance so perfect/that we cannot realise how close the doom was;/only one week./ In only one week,/had not the deliverance been,/all would have been over here;/and silence,/and emptiness,/and stories of the past,/all that would have remained of this school./ Shall we, because the deliverance was so perfect/that many never knew the danger/shall we/think lightly of the deliverance?/ Because God spared us,/first,/ the utter overthrow that came so close,/ that we could count its hours :/and next,/spared us the wasting and slow decay of an imperfect escape,/and half measures,/shall we/think lightly of the deliverance?/

(continued overleaf)

On that last Sunday/the lesson for the day was the lesson we have heard this day also./ How Jacob awaked out of his sleep/and said,/"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not,"/And how he said,/"If I come again to my father's house in peace/then shall the Lord be my God."/ Yes,/like Jacob we hold our thanksgiving today for a great deliverance;/ and year by year/I trust,/as long as this school lives,/the memory of its life preserved shall be commemorated as it is on this day/— that strange flight,/the home we found,/the strange return/—and every year shall deepen the feeling of a great deliverance,/and make us say with Jacob: "The Lord is in this place. The Lord shall be our God."/

We are too close to it as years pass;/ as time passes on,/what has happened will be better seen,// And is not a Society in its living bound together by bonds of life and truth?/ Is not the holder of the promise,/even as Jacob was?/ He went forth with the promise in faith;/and we now feel/that as long as he and his were true to that promise/they would not perish./ Who does not feel/that when the Red Sea opened to let Israel through/it was part of a great past, and a certainty that a great future lay before them,/and that the promise was theirs,/slaves though they had been?/ The great deliverance proved it./

And, brethren, may not we hold fast to higher hopes of living life,/because/our life has been delivered by so high a deliverance?/When God takes a people,/and separated them,/and gives them special judgements,/and chastises them with special chastisements,/and brings them low,/through oppression,/ or any plague,/or trouble,/in a special way,/and then deliver them by a special deliverance,/so that all the world see it,/and we are astonished,/and speak of it;/surely all this is as a prophecy of life to some,/and a confirmation of life that is./ Whoso is wise will ponder these things.//

Remember/a great deliverance is also a great judgment reversed;/ a great warning,/as well as a great prophecy;/a great fear/as well as a great thanksgiving./ Wherever the destroying angel has set his foot,/and yet holds his hand and spares,/is evermore holy ground,/ even as the threshing floor of Hannah, the Jebusite,/which David bought to build God's temple on./ We too live evermore,/if we are wise,/under the shadow of our great overthrow,/under the light of our great deliverance./

We too shall consecrate,/ if we are wise,/a great consecration of self to God,/putting away from the midst of us all evil leaven,/girding ourselves for truer life,/and each/quietly upholding the other/to make the life that has been so wonderfully and passing on the deep feeling of life redeemed so strangely,/ from year to year/as long as these walls last./ The story of it will live whatever you do./ It is yours to make it live,/not as an old and curious story,/but as a birth-time of new honour/and new truth,/ ever fresh in the living roll call of the sons of promise.//

Nor let us forget today/the kindly people with whom we found a home;/ by whose welcome, and whose goodness we brought that eventful year to a happy end./ If it was an honour to you/that they bore witness to the school/that nothing mean had been done by you,/their witness was their greatest honour:/ proof that they value true life,/proof that true life was at home with them, and possible./ Every true son of Uppingham,/as long as these walls last, will feel his heart glow at the history of that year;/and a great company, fear and wonder, gratitude, and praise will throng his memory;/a volume of life past,/and life to come, of judgment, prophecy,/and promise/will be bound up for the child of promise/in the name of Borth.'

Membership of the Uppingham Union --

Name	Place of home	Occupation	Attendance:				TOTAL	Membership:
			4:75 -9:75	10:75 -3:76	4:76 -9:76	10:76 -1:77		
SMITH, BARN'D	Glaston	Rector	26	27	22	12	87	Ch SC/Ed
SIMKIN CH	Wardley	Farmer decd1/76	12	4			16	VC/SC
FOSTER GE	Uppm	Solict'r/landowner	22	19	2		43	
PARKER J	Preston	Farmer	10	9	10	6	35	
ROOKE S	Gretton	Farmer	19	7	16	11	53	SC/Ed
SHEILD W	Upp	Solicitor	6	15	13	7	41	SC
WALES W	Upp	Rector	6	13	12	7	38	SCeo:Ed:UT
WOODCOCK J	High/Add St	Baker/g'grocer?	20	23	20	14	77	
WORTLEY E	Rid'lton/Brooke	Farmer	4	10	17	8	39	VC/SCCh 77
BAINES W	Ridlgton/Seaton	Farmer	5	4	5	5	14	
BELL T	High St	Surgeon/Dr			14	11	25	SC76
BERRY	Medbourne	Farmer	1	1			2	
BRYAN JH	Stoke Dry	Farmer	2	1	1		4	
BURTON J	Drayton	Farmer	5	10	8	1	24	SC
CLARKE	High St	Blacking manuf	3	2	2	2	9	
CORRY	?				3		3	
DENNIS	N Luffenham	Clergy						SCeo
EVANS FREKE	BisbrHall	Landowner	1	4	5	1	11	SCeo:Ed:UT
GRIMSDICK	Slawston	Farmer			2	1	3	
HAY	Beaumont Chase	Farmer						
HENWICKE	?		1				1	
HOLLAND	Drayton	Farmer	8	7			15	
JOHNSON	Bisbrooke	Farmer		4	4	2	10	
LETTS	Medbourne	Farmer	3	5	3		11	
MARCHANT	Easton Magna	Farmer		5	4	4	13	
MOULD	Easton Magna	Farmer			4	2	6	
PIERCY	Slawston, Lcs	Clergy				1	1	SCeo
PRIDMORE	S Luffenham	Farmer	1	3	5	5	14	
PRETTY G	S Luffenham	Farmer	1				1	
ROBINSON	Oakham Rd	Glass/china/corn	3		2	2	7	
ROYCE	Laxton/Oakham?	Farmer	1	1	2	3	7	
SANDERS	?		2				2	
SATCHELL	Gretton	Farmer	1	4	4	4	13	
SHARMAN	?					2	2	
SHELTON J	Barrowden	Fmr/Wheel inn	6	5	3	2	16	
SIMKIN N	Hallaton	Gent/farmer			3	1	4	OT SC76
THOMPSON	Stoke Dry	Clergy		2	1		3	SCeo
WADE	Wardley	Farmer			4	2	6	SC76

Key to membership column:

Ch = chairman

VC = vice chairman

SC = Sanitary ctee eo = ex officio

Ed = education ctee

UT = trustee of Uppingham School

OT = trustee of Oakham Sch.

Houses and housemasters: 1875/7

The School House Revd. E Thring

The Lodge

S Haslam

Lorne House

W. Campbell

Red House

Revd. B Hesketh Williams

Constables

Revds. TB Rowe/AJ Tuck

West Deyne

Revd. GH Mullins

Brooklands

Revd. WJ Earle

Highfield

Revd. WAE Vale-Bagshawe

Corner of School Lane

CW Cobb

West Bank

H Candler

Fircroft

WF Rawnsley

Redgate

Revd. G Christian



Celebrations in May 1877: High Street East looking towards the school.



Thring in his final year: 1887.



High Street West in 1870 looking west.
The nearest building on the left is the house on the corner of School Lane,
where the third outbreak of typhoid first appeared.



High Street West in 1877, looking towards the town centre.
Note the improvement compared with the 1870 picture.

Victorian England's Forgotten Visionary: a brief biography of Thring

Revd. Edward Thring (1821-87) is most often credited as the man who founded the Headmasters' Conference (HMC) of leading independent schools in 1869. Five years earlier he had published *Education and School*, a book which pleaded passionately for filling young minds with 'Life Power', rather than merely cramming them with facts. Unlike other headmasters of his day, he rejected a classics-only curriculum and championed independent learning and a huge range of academic and technical subjects, music and sports, along with large play-areas and gardens. Lower-ability pupils merited as much attention as the brilliant. Classes must be taught by full-time career-schoolmasters, with smaller groups for the strugglers. Teaching the less gifted should never be seen as a chore, given only to junior staff: 'A good teacher ought to rejoice in a stupid boy as an interesting problem... To teach an upper form requires more knowledge, but a lower one more skill in a teacher'. Punishments must be proportionate and purposeful. Public disgrace merely eroded self-respect, 'making criminals, not mending them'. Praepostors (prefects) must promote responsibility throughout the entire pupil-body, because trust and fairness counter-acted bullying. Boarding schools must have high-quality accommodation and food. Every boy, however junior, must have an individual space: 'A boy's study is his castle'. Open dormitories were an anathema, and partitioned cubicles an essential.

Thring's reputation was cemented by *Theory and Practice of Teaching* (1883), a book which went through seventeen reprints and sold across the world. A handbook for his profession and a precursor of child-centred education, it challenged parents to ask why children found schools so un-friendly. Teachers must get inside young minds to instil a love of learning and an appreciation of language; teach sentence analysis; encourage reading aloud with clear enunciation; help children to develop visual and drawing skills. They had to prepare lessons scrupulously, and to record how different children reacted to them. Exams ought to test skills as well as factual knowledge; they should be 'just, certain and not liable to shift by change of examiners'. Above all, in children it was 'impossible to overrate the importance of giving confidence. Very much of what is called idleness and inattention is only utter bewilderment'. He criticised parents who saw schools as mere service-providers. He described how, in an age of fast-changing technology, there was 'much boasting of the money being spent in schools... much rushing to and fro... authority busy at work'. He championed teachers ('skilled workmen') against government officials ('amateurs in perpetuity'). He questioned officialdom's competence to spend large budgets wisely, and he insisted that inspections encouraged depressing uniformity, testing only whether schools were 'cut to the state pattern'. He railed against 'ignorant and hostile' school governors.

Thring's ideas were deeply rooted in his own experience: his happy childhood in Somerset; his harsh grammar school in Ilminster, and then the rats and anarchic violence of Eton's notorious Long Chamber. King's College, Cambridge offered only a brief respite before he plunged into a teaching curacy in the Gloucester slums: a vivid lesson in personal and professional development which gave him a nervous breakdown. After recuperative travels in Europe he became headmaster of the small grammar school in Uppingham in 1853, inheriting around 40 pupils but turning it, over three decades, into a boarding school of more than 300 boys, despite having no institutional backers and being forced to rely on personal loans and rich housemasters who ran satellite enterprises around him.

In the 1860s the commissioners investigating the state of England's endowed grammar schools were astounded that he played football and cricket with his pupils. He formed HMC because he feared that schools would be ever-more regulated by government, and despite spectacular rebuffs from suspicious, individualist fellow-Heads. Then came typhoid, the near-closure of the school for good, and Borth.

A dynamic but deeply insecure man, Thring could be at times unreasonably dictatorial and dogmatic. He told his masters: 'I am supreme here, and I will brook no interference'. Yet he was also deeply sensitive - a man who held that 'Man most imitates God when he scatters pleasure as God does, and makes it possible for others to be glad'.

(continued on next page)

Thring's story tells us much about how Victorian headmasters shaped the cultural attitudes and leadership styles of a generation of adults - including several future prime ministers - and later sustained those who would mourn sons killed on the Great War battlefields, where Uppingham's dead included the brother and the fiancé of Vera Brittain, author of *Testament of Youth*. Urging his boys to do good in the world, he rejoiced as some of his former pupils formed a pioneering Mission in London's East End. His godson and former pupil (Canon HD Rawnsley), whom he introduced to the Lake District, became a founder of the National Trust. He corresponded intensely with best-selling children's author, Juliana Ewing. Scorned by some as an over-grown 'King of Boys', his final years brought disappointment with both his sons and deep worries about his own future. Yet he also became a champion of educational opportunities for women, hosting the fledgling Headmistresses' Conference in the final year of his life. A striking photograph survives of him surrounded by his 59 female visitors.

Taken dramatically ill in chapel in October 1887, he died a week later in his boarding house, leaving little money for his family because of his huge investment in his school - a situation which does little credit to his trustees/governors (or the Charity Commission). Although by far the best-known headmaster in the generation after Thomas Arnold of Rugby, his views became unfashionable for a time after his death. He vanished into comparative obscurity during the growing militarism of the years before the 1914-18 war, but has been widely recognised in and beyond Uppingham since then for his breadth of educational vision.

Thring's great mantra was that 'everybody learning to use time well is the one secret of a good and healthy moral life'. His fear was of a world in which teachers had time only to teach lessons, thus becoming 'ill-tempered machines', too busy to 'share in and promote [pupils'] joys and to hear of their latest new discovery'. His distinctive vision for a highly respected teaching profession inspired its members, and he championed the true nature of teaching and learning, and the importance of the pupil's perspective.

Some suggestions for further reading

Bryan Matthews: *By God's Grace... A History of Uppingham School* (Whitehall Press, 1984).

GR Parkin (ed): *Edward Thring, Headmaster of Uppingham School: Life, Diary and Letters* (Macmillan, 2 volumes: 1898; single volume 1900). Sir George Parkin was mentored as a young Canadian headmaster by Thring, and was chosen by him to be his literary executor.

JH Skrine: *Uppingham by the Sea* (Macmillan, 1878). A short contemporary narrative, presenting the school's time at Borth in glowing terms, by Thring's disciple and colleague.

Nigel Richardson: (1) *A Spring Invasion*, (2020). The companion publication to this, focusing on events in Borth; (2) *Typhoid in Uppingham: Analysis of a Victorian Town and School in Crisis 1875-1877* (Pickering and Chatto, 2008). A monograph which includes the national public health context; expanded from a Ph.D. thesis for University College, London, 2006); (3) *Thring of Uppingham: Victorian Educator* (University of Buckingham Press, 2014). A biography, with a fuller reading list.

Malcolm Tozer: *The Ideal of Manliness* (Sunnyrest Books, 2015). It explains Thring's philosophy of life.

Vivian Anthony: *Chancellor William Wales: Rector of Uppingham 1859-79: Church leader and rebuilder* (Rutland Record 40, 2020). It includes details of his struggles with non-conformists: a further dimension to his complex web of relationships within the town.

Auriol Thomson: *A Study of roles and relationships in a Rutland Village in the mid Victorian period: Glaston c1860-90* (MA in English Local History, Leicester University, June 1999). It includes information about Barnard Smith.



School Gate, 1863. The decorations celebrated the marriage of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) and Princess Alexandra. Thring's house is in the background.

ISBN 978-1-9196205-0-3



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