

THOMAS POOLE'S LEGACY TO STOWEY

FOUNDER OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL



School Pupils c. 1921



Thomas Poole

A FREE SCHOOL FOR THE VILLAGE CHILDREN

- In 1812 Poole funded and built the village school on land donated by him in the tanyard. It was the second free school in the country and was large enough to accommodate up to 200 local children
- Poole's cousin, the Reverend John Poole, had established the first free school in nearby Enmore in 1810 and he inspired Thomas to provide a free school for the benefit of local children
- The school opened on 28th March 1813 with 85 children all ably taught by Jane Turner, the daughter of an Enmore Farmer, and it gained an excellent reputation
- In 1814 Poole's friend Josiah Wedgwood, son of the pottery manufacturer, wrote asking for a 'rough sketch' of Poole's 'beautiful school', to serve as a model for a school for 200 children he himself wished to build. Praise indeed!
- In 1979 a new school was built among new houses west of the village and the old school became a public library, museum and exhibition centre
- In March 2019 it became a community library and is managed by a charity and run by volunteers. The library has now been re-named The Thomas Poole Library Nether Stowey



The Old School c. 1900



Extension built in 1925

THE THOMAS POOLE LIBRARY NETHER STOWEY

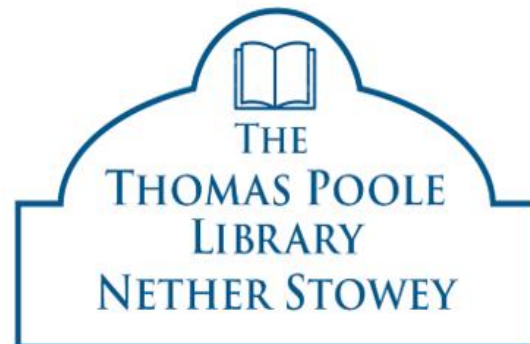
The importance of this building to the village lies in its link with the man who is remembered to this day for his philanthropic work for the community. He founded not only the school but a Savings Bank and Friendly Societies for men and women. He was also a farmer, promoting the latest developments in crop production. Conscious of the plight of the poor at a time of steeply rising prices – there were riots in the locality in 1812 over the price of flour – he even trialled different recipes to provide cheap bread for the poor. For these qualities, and many more, it seems fitting that the new charitable organisation should be named after him.

Nether Stowey school children in costume c. 1928

The school mistress, Miss Gulliford, is seated on the left.

Pupils standing include; George Ware, Wally Hill, Eric Kelly, Gwen Wilkins, Edna Chidgey, Kitty McPhial, Mercy Williams, Herbert Ware, Clifford Palmer, Olive Stockham, Bert Hobbs, Geoffrey Palmer.

Pupils seated include; Eddie Hill, Nora Castle, Eddie Villis, Louis Pain, Norman Ware, Cissy Palmer. Pupils seated at front William Aldridge and Laurence Hill



The Thomas Poole Library
Castle Street, Nether Stowey
Tel: 01278 732741
www.thomaspoolelibrary.org.uk

SCHOOL TIME LINE

- 1812** A schoolroom, similar to that designed by Richard Carver for Nettlecombe in 1819, was built by Thomas Poole
- 1813** A day school opened which soon had 118 children with two teachers. The school was maintained by subscriptions and fees
- 1826** The school taught reading, writing, and arithmetic to 130 children including some from neighbouring parishes and by 1835, there was a separate infant school
- 1847** The school was united with the National Society whose purpose was 'the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in the Principles and Practices of the Church of England'. At this time the school had three separate buildings, two paid teachers and 112 children attending daily
- 1903** There were 55 children and 38 infants on the register though by 1912 numbers were falling
- 1917** An evening school was begun
- 1925** An extension was built to provide additional classroom space
- 1957** In spite of the removal of senior pupils, numbers continued to rise with the increasing population of the parish
- 1979** A new village school was built and the old school became a public library