

Uppingham in 1870 and 1877: a study in contrasts



The issue which Thring's Borth venture was intended to force: dramatic sanitary improvement in Uppingham.

This is the scene in High Street West, looking west, in 1870, five years before typhoid first struck.

The town had only a partial sewerage system which was poorly maintained, and there was no mains water. Houses - including the boarding houses - depended on wells which were contaminated by leakage from cesspits and excrement from roaming livestock.

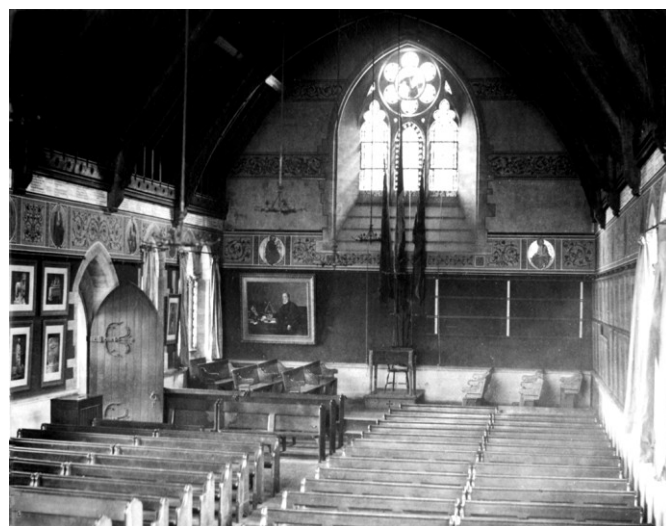


High Street West, looking east towards the town centre, in the summer of 1877. Note the improved state of the streets, which were now drained, and regularly swept, maintained and repaired.

Despite being based far away in 1876-7, Thring had played a leading role in the setting-up of a private company to provide the town with mains water. The town's ratepayers - including Thring and his housemasters - were to feel the effects of greatly increased rate charges in the years which followed.



'One Heart - One Way': High Street East, Uppingham, decorated in April 1877 to celebrate the school's return.



Thring's 1860s schoolroom, after the school's return.

The flags in the centre background were brought back from Borth. They had been used there to summon boys to meals and lessons from their widely-dispersed lodging houses. They hung in the schoolroom for the next 120 years, and are now preserved in the Archives.

Thring's book of Borth Lyrics.

In 1880 Thring published his collection of *Borth Lyrics*. Over the years his writings had included a sizeable amount of poetry and, three years after his return to Uppingham, the *Lyrics* demonstrate his continuing affection for the Welsh coast, and his sense of nostalgia for the year that he and the school had spent there.

Illustrated with etchings by Charles Rossiter, and written to be orchestrated as choral pieces by Paul David, Uppingham's Director of Music, they also reveal many of the influences which drove Thring on in his work. These influences include Thring's energy and love of wide open spaces; his interest in the natural world, the importance that he attached to traditional values of chivalry and (unusually amongst Victorian headmasters) his ability to see the world through the eyes of children as well as adults. The *Lyrics* also demonstrate his gratitude for all the kindness that he received there.



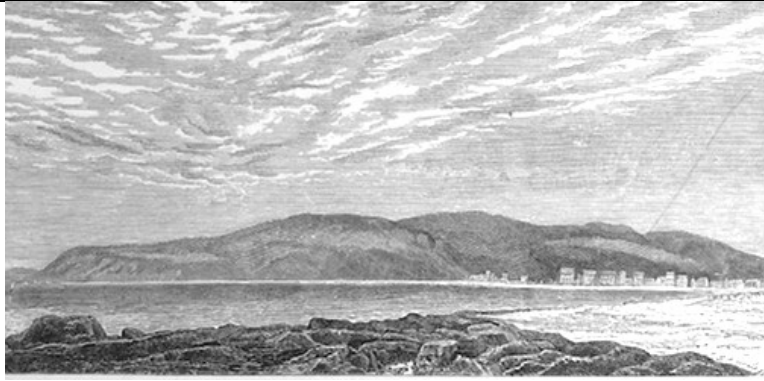
Storm clouds gathering over Borth, with the church (left) and the hotel (right) given increased height by Rossiter to emphasise their significance.

One of the *Lyrics*, entitled 'The Journey', included his vivid impressions of the place which had attracted him so much when he first set eyes on it, and which had given him sanctuary:

... And leaning up against the hill,
Whose headland, purple-black,
The southern waters, as they fill,
Kiss daily, and fall back,
A simple hamlet, nowise planned,
Puts out a long arm white,
Where level sea and level sand
Scarce know each other's right.

The mountains rule the east, but all
The west, the sea, the sea;
Save when the sun at evenfall
Disputes her sovereignty.
A kindly people held the land,
A kindly race and free;
So rest they found, that pilgrim band
At Borth beside the sea.

(this section is continued on the next page)



Rossiter's etching of Aberdyfi (on the opposite side of the river estuary from Borth), viewed from the south. Again, the huge skies are given great prominence.

The Colony:

East and west, and north and south,
As if we were shot from a cannon's mouth,
Hurrah, hurrah! Here we all are.
Never was heard in peace or war.

The first in the world are we,
Never, oh never, was heard before,
Since a ball was a ball,

And a wall a wall
And a boy to play was free,
That a school as old as an old oak-tree,
Fast by the roots was flung up in the air,
Up in the air without thought or care,
And pitched on its feet by the sea, the sea,
Pitched on its feet by the sea.

Ere the old school walls were dumb
With the silence of despair,
'March, boys, march! The end has come!'
Rang the watchword proud and clear.
We our standard rallied round,
Thrice a hundred faithful found.

Playgrounds - leagues on leagues of shore;
Class-rooms - all the sea-king's caves;
We are touched by Ariel's power,
Free of air, and earth and waves,
We are elves of Ariel's range,
Nought but suffers a sea change.

Ah! The wand has laid its spell
Over cricket-fields and trees;
Presto! - Woods, and mountains, shells,
Rocks, and sea-anemones;
Thrice turn round and shut your eyes,
Open to a fresh surprise.

Open on the level sward
Slid Gogerddan's hills between,
When Gogerddan's genial lord[^]
Looked upon the starry green,
Lady-bright with summer stars,
Heard the schoolboy's loud hurrahs.

Lo! The panting cricket train
Up the valley slowly creeps,
Lo! A boyish hurricane
E'en o'er Cader Idris sweeps.
Never in the good greenwood
Lived more gaily Robin Hood.

Little bits of fairy world,
Fairy streamlets, dropping rills,
And the Lery softly curled⁺
In amongst the dreaming hills:
Never in the good greenwood
Lived more gaily Robin Hood.

East and west, and north and south,
As if we were shot from a cannon's mouth,
Hurrah, hurrah! Here we all are.
Never was heard in peace or war.
The first in the world are we,
Never, oh never, was heard before,
Since a ball was a ball,
And a wall a wall
And a boy to play was free,

That a school as old as an old oak-tree,
Fast by the roots was flung up in the air,
Up in the air without thought or care,
And pitched on its feet by the sea, the sea,
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[^] = Sir Pryse Pryse
⁺ = The Lery, Borth's river.

CHAPTER 10: THRING AND BORTH AFTER 1877, AND THE UPPINGHAM PATH

There is no doubt that the year in Borth was a formative time in Thring's career both professionally and personally. The experience confirmed his passion for a wide-ranging school curriculum, and his belief in the essential goodness of human nature and the importance of trusting one's pupils. Despite the doubts and low points (which caused one master much later to remember the winter months of the year as 'a horrid time'), and even though it tested Thring's psychological resources to the limit, it also brought out the best in him.

He often said that Borth was the happiest time of his 34-year career: 'the only time when there was any sense of free work'. It also confirmed his faith that God had given him 'A great deliverance'. He often asserted: 'That year at Borth stands alone in the history of schools'.

Psychologically and physically he believed the experience had been very restorative. A month before the school left Borth for the last time in 1877 he wrote to a friend: 'It is curious that, after so many years' work, one's working life should have been on the scaffold, so to say, three or four times this last twelve months, and each time a reprieve at the eleventh hour'.

He was also convinced that 'there is plenty of work before me yet. Why else is it I have got my health back so curiously - health [that] I have never had all my working life? I have learned so much from this time...'

For all these reasons it is not surprising that he did not stay away from Borth for long - and there were two additional reasons for his regular return in the years that followed.

Firstly there was a matter of financial necessity. The financial pressures which had dogged him all through his years in

Uppingham had been greatly increased by the events of 1875-7. His personal finances had always been hopelessly mixed up with those of the school (something which his family would come to rue after his death). Now he was forced to economise - and this included having to give up the house in the Lake District which he had rented for holidays each summer from the mid 1860s. Instead, he spent time at Borth during several of the summers between 1877 and 1882.

It seems that he was not alone in making this choice: an article in the *Cambrian News* (1978) stated that many former Uppingham pupils took their holidays there in these and subsequent years: so did at least one housemaster, who had gained a passion for fishing whilst living there.

Thring was always warmly welcomed when he returned. In 1880 he was even greeted at the station by a brass band. He wrote to one of his housemasters from there in 1881: 'You will laugh when I tell you that I have been preaching at an Eisteddfod today'. He had become so popular in the village that several mothers named their children after him.

Secondly, he felt that he had unfinished business there. He hoped that the national press attention which his school's temporary stay had attracted could be turned to advantage, strengthening Uppingham's reputation as a school *and* Borth's as a centre for tourism. No doubt his intentions were good, but he was always a man stronger on vision than on detail and realism.

During these summers he often brought friends with him to Borth, and recommended its attractions to others. The evidence for this can be found in entries in the Visitors' Books:

The Bishop of Oxford gladly bears witness to the benefit an invalid may gain from the pure fresh air of Borth, and to the pleasure he may find in rambles among the neighbouring hills. The Bishop wishes all happiness and blessing to the good people among whom he has been living for six weeks.

September, 1881

Althea B Mackarness - Sep 4 1881
 Katharine E. M. Mackarness Sep: 1881
 Arthur J. Mackarness Sep: 1881
 Anne Peronside
 Anne Emily Mackarness -
 Florence J E Mackarness -

From the 1881 Borth Visitors' Book:

'The Bishop of Oxford gladly bears witness to the benefit an invalid may gain from the pure fresh air of Borth, and to the pleasure he may find in rambles among the neighbouring hills. The Bishop wishes happiness and blessing to the good people among whom he has been living for six weeks.'

Bishop Mackarness was Thring's school-friend from their days together at Eton. The entry is also signed by other members of his party. Next to this entry in the book is a copy of Thring's second article for The Times - see extracts on page 40.

We have spent a most enjoyable holiday of five weeks in Borth, and are satisfied that it is one of the healthiest sea-side resorts in Wales, admirably safe for children, and most convenient for making excursions.

W. Cecil Wood.
 Wellington College.

August 31, 1882.

W. Cecil Wood
 Dorothy E. Cecil-Wood.
 Marjorie M. Cecil-Wood.
 Ravenshaw W. B. Cecil-Wood.
 Mary Wood
 Herbert W. Penney, Epsom.
 Arthur J. Edgell. Hornwood
 {C. S. M. Hurling}

The Visitors' Book: 31 August 1882:

'We have spent a most enjoyable holiday of five weeks in Borth, and are satisfied that it is one of the healthiest sea-side resorts in Wales, admirably safe for children, and most convenient for making excursions - W. Cecil Wood, Wellington College.'

Wood went on to be headmaster of Epsom College (1885-9), but died at the early age of 39. We do not know whether he and his party came on Thring's recommendation, but it seems a possibility.

The Headmaster of Uppingham School lived at Borth a whole year from March 1876, and has spent the summer holidays there with his family since 1878. He considers the climate of Borth the best he has ever known; fresh in summer, and mild in winter without being relaxing. The kindly treatment that the school received from the Welsh people gave him very friendly feelings towards them, which have increased with time. Borth is a place... with splendid sands, beautiful walks within easy distance, well situated for excursions, and in all respects delightful to lovers of sea and country.

Edward Thring
 J. M. Thring
 To Mrs. Thring
 P. E. Thring
 Mr. R. Thring
 Mr. Grace Thring

1882: 'The Headmaster of Uppingham School lived at Borth a whole year from March 1876 and has spent the summer holidays there with his family since 1878. He considers the climate of Borth the best he has ever known; fresh in summer, and mild in winter without being relaxing. The kindly treatment that the school received from the Welsh people give(s) him very friendly feelings towards them, which have increased with time. Borth is a place... with splendid sands, beautiful walks within easy distance, well situated for excursions and in all respects delightful to lovers of sea and country.'

It is signed by Thring, his wife, Marie, his sister-in-law, Anna Koch, and four of his five children.

It was against this background that the plan for the Uppingham Path developed: a scheme for a permanent memorial of the school's stay, but one which would also have a practical value.

The path runs inland from Borth Church towards Talybont (see photographs on page 62). Even from far away in Uppingham, Thring brought his characteristic enthusiasm to the project - including raising funds for it amongst former pupils and parents. Letters in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth show him lobbying Major Williams, land agent for the Gogerddan Estate, from Uppingham in September 1880: 'We seem likely to get a large sum for the path, over £100 at least (over £12,000 at 2021 values), as it has been very warmly taken up, and the people appear very pleased'.

There was however, a snag. Thring stated that he was 'totally unable, from want of money' to buy one of the farms whose land stretched across the path's originally

intended route. He proposed renting some grazing land from Sir Pryse Pryse as an alternative, and he tried to argue for a very moderate rental:

‘It cannot be worth much to the farm, and it would be a great improvement to the town, and by making it attractive to visitors would much increase the value of Sir Pryse Pryse’s land which, if I succeed in bringing Borth on as I expect to do, will become a very different concern from what it is at present. If... you would kindly let me know on what terms I can rent the land, and I will see whether I can afford it.’ He suggested setting up an Improvement Committee to oversee the project.

He appears to have been successful, in that an agreement was signed in August 1881 ‘... whereby the said Sir Pryse Pryse agreed to let and the said Revd Edward Thring agreed to take and hold all that footpath known as the Uppingham Path... being by measurement 1276 yards or thereabouts, and to... keep [it] in good repair.’ The tenancy was to begin a month later, with Thring paying an annual rent of £1 per annum in two instalments until either party decided to give twelve months’ notice to let the agreement lapse.

The Path was opened with due ceremony at the end of that month, but if the Gogerddan authorities thought that Thring would now be satisfied they were to be disappointed. He had barely had time to return to Uppingham before he wrote to Major Williams again, urging him to add his support to a more ambitious proposal which he (Thring) had just posted to Sir Pryse Pryse, and which he believed could become very popular.

Thring was convinced that the area around the path at the Borth end could be turned into some form of local and tourist attraction. Pryse could perhaps ‘fence it, lay it out roughly, and put it into the hands of a Committee, to charge for entrance; he

might let it for that purpose on such terms as would ensure no profit being made... if the plan succeeded, without his reaping the benefit’.

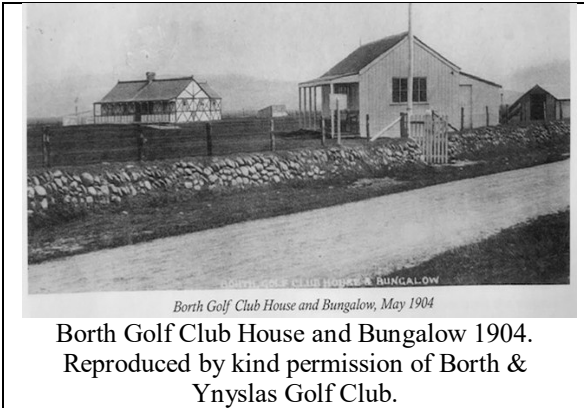
Thring added: ‘I feel sure that such a scheme would help Borth very much, and the rise of Borth means considerable advantage to Sir Pryse Pryse as a landowner. And if he founded Borth by a public act of this kind. The thing would not be lightly forgotten, but his name would be held in honour, as well as his property benefited’.

Again there was a financial catch: ‘I have no interest in the matter beyond the good it would do to all parties. I should be very willing to take trouble in carrying out a good plan, but personally if any drawback in the way of rent is asked, as it is a public question I should be unable to touch it’.

It seems that Pryse and Williams did not share Thring’s optimism for such a plan, and anyway Thring now began to turn his attention to the impending celebrations of Uppingham School’s Tercentenary, due in 1884. Then, only three years after that milestone, the tenancy agreement came to an end with Thring’s sudden death in October 1887.

From a series of letters in 1895 it appears that the agreement relating to the path had by then been taken over by Borth Parish Council. The Gogerddan Estate Office had to issue a reminder about overdue rent. This produced a request from the Council through its clerk that the rent be reduced to ‘a very nominal rent of say 1 shilling per year’ on the grounds that ‘the path is such a service to the Gogerddan tenants’ – but the Clerk (anxious not to antagonise Gogerddan) was keen to distance himself from the ‘ridiculous request, as I consider £1 a year low enough a nominal rent’. He wanted his view to remain confidential, but he need not have worried: no reply appears to have been forthcoming.

The years passed, and former Uppingham pupils came and went on visits - among them golfers playing on the full course established on Borth links in 1885. It seems possible that timber from Thring's temporary wooden schoolroom was used in building the first clubhouse.



By 1911 Sir Pryse Pryse was dead, and Uppingham's headmaster was Thring's successor-but-one. For many former pupils who had experienced life at Borth in the 1870s, it was a more distant memory, and for the latest generation of Uppinghamians it was a story which they only heard about at the annual Commemoration Service in the chapel.

However, the path remained - prompting an approach to Gogerddan's new master, Sir EJW Parry Pryse, from the Borth Carnival Committee. The immediate reason for writing was new, but the rationale given for the path's importance had a familiar ring: 'You are perhaps aware that the bridge crossing the Lery at the back of Borth Church has partially collapsed. The Uppingham Bridge as it is called has been allowed, through want of funds I presume, to become functionally a total wreck, and probably beyond repair.

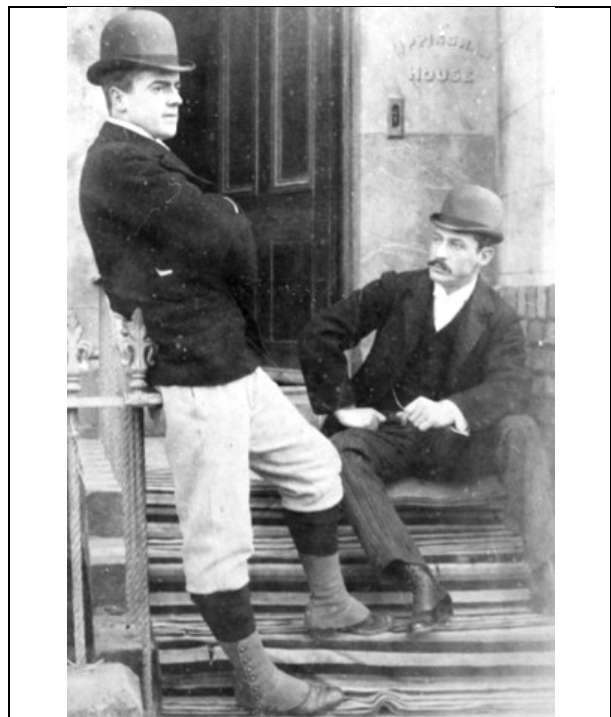
The Committee... has been approached... with a view to having the bridge either efficiently repaired or rebuilt... for the benefit of the visitors, residents and tenants of the neighbourhood, the farmers

of course using the path and bridge as the shortest way into Borth'.

The writer pointed out that the bridge had been badly sited, and that over the years its wooden piles had rotted. In times of flooding, heavy items floated down and lodged against it, causing dams to form which diverted water across the fields. Cattle trampled down the approaches to it, causing 'a hazard for ladies and children'.

Moving the crossing a short distance upstream would enable a new, shorter bridge with fewer piles driven into more solid ground. Gogerddan's permission would be needed, and again there was a difficult question of finance:

'We have some funds for it, but limited'. The Committee hoped that tenant farmers might be asked to provide cheap labour, and that the Estate would contribute 'a dozen good larch trees'.



Two unknown men outside 'Uppingham House', Borth, in 1891. It was thought at one time that they might have been walkers or even golfers with Uppingham connections, but it seems more likely that they were local men, supplied with clothes for the occasion by Borth photographer John Thomas.

Opening a new path

from the *Cambrian News*, September 2nd 1881.

‘On Saturday last, between three and four o’clock, a new path was opened which connects Borth with Talybont, Taliesin, and the ranges of hills which run along the eastern boundary of Corsfochno, and on which there are many objects of interest to English visitors in addition to the extensive scenery which their elevation commands. At Talybont are lead mines, and Welsh woollen factories; and a picturesque lane running from the end of the village leads in a gradual ascent to Taliesin’s grave, where mystical associations of the spot can be enjoyed with a view of the glorious panorama of the Dovey. The path has been constructed at a cost of over £160. It commences near the railway station, passes under the hillock on which the church stands, thence over the river Lerry (*sic*) by a wooden bridge, and into the highway which eventually cuts the turnpike road the Aberystwyth end of Taliesin. Two seats have been erected on the line of the path, one near the church and the other on an elevation after passing the Lerry. An inscription on the back of the seats states that the path has been constructed in grateful memory of the sojourn of the Uppingham School at Borth in 1876 and 1877.

Shortly after four o’clock the children of Borth were marshalled in procession by Mr John Ellis and Mr R.P. Roberts, and headed by a large banner proceeded to the commencement of the path, where they were joined by the Rev E. Thring and Mrs Thring, the Bishop of Oxford and Mrs Mackarness [and many others].

When the procession had gone to the wooden bridge over the Lerry, the gates of which were found locked, Mr George Owen mounted the steps and demanded in the name of her Majesty the keys of the contractor, Mr E.W. Jones, who, in delivering them, expressed the pleasure he felt in so doing... After this sally, Mr Owen handed the keys over to the Rev E. Thring, who opened the gate and formally declared the path open amid the cheers of the spectators. The assembly then passed over the bridge and made for the bryn on the other side of the river where the second seat had been provided.

[Sir Pryse Pryse was not able to be present, but his representative] Mr G.G. Williams, assured the assembled company that ‘he wishes prosperity to Borth and the neighbourhood and he is quite alive to giving people the means to going about to see our wild hills and of benefiting by our wild air’. (Cheers and Laughter.) ‘This path would never have been made at all but for the interest shown in Borth and its neighbourhood by Mr Thring. (Applause.) He is the great mover...’

The Rev. E. Thring in reply said: ‘...I came to Borth under circumstances you all know and I found out that the gentry of this land and Sir Pryse Pryse and the neighbouring people thought that a set of outlaws were coming, and that Uppingham School would not leave a pheasant in the covers, a twig on the trees, or a fish in Cardigan Bay. (Laughter.) We were welcomed... in our adversity as warmly as they now receive us... we were after all a very respectable set of vagrants. (Laughter and cheers.)

Now I think that is worth remembering. You Welsh people, when you thought all things would go wrong treated us as if all things would go right. (Cheers.) I for one shall never forget it, and I rejoice to make this pathway a memorial of those days, because... roads and paths are the great shaking-hand power of the world by which... people visit one another and see things they would not otherwise see.

I would have spoken of the glorious hills today, but do they not speak for themselves, hill calling to mountain across this great carpet of colour? This is what the path has done for visitors... and the hills shall come down to the sea, and not only the hills, but butter, and eggs, and poultry, and many other things... So let us all rejoice in this completed work, which for many a year shall be as a token of what the friendship is between Uppingham and Borth... (Loud applause.)

[After further speeches and a vote of thanks to Major Williams, the Gogerddan land agent, and others] ‘the Children having sung, the assembly returned to Borth. On the way back the young ones were supplied with buns. Throughout the afternoon the weather was beautifully fine, and that and the complete arrangements of the Committee made the event successful and enjoyable’.

Extracts of information from *Slater's Directory, 1880*

(i.e. three years after the school's departure)

'Borth is a delightful watering place on the shore of Cardigan Bay, either for a day's pleasure or a week's sojourn. Some years ago it consisted of only an irregular row of fishermen's cottages on the shore of one of the finest sands on the coast. Now, however, a large hotel has been erected, and there is plenty of lodging-house accommodation for visitors. A prettier spot for "a day at the seaside" it is impossible to imagine; for the invigorating sea breezes are often more gentle on the West coast than at other places in the Principality.'

Railway station/Post office-	Stationmaster - H Stinchcombe
Postmaster -	Abraham L Lewis. Letters from London arr. 7.56am, dep. 7.56am and 6pm.

Nobility, Gentry and Clergy:	Revd. Richard Davies - 7 Cambrian Terrace
	Revd. E Felix Lewis - 6 Cambrian Terrace

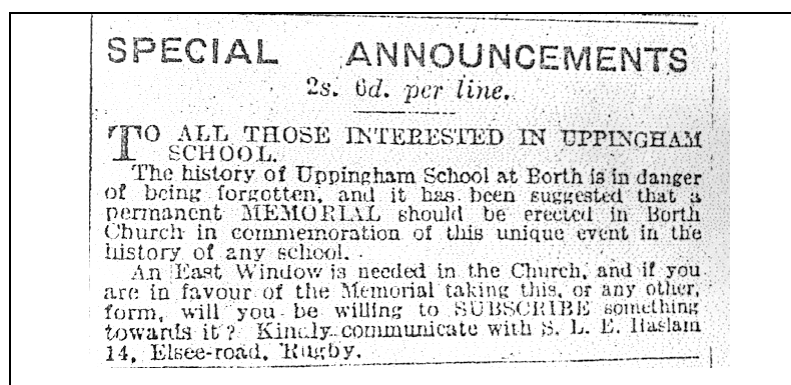
Board School:	-	Evan Jones, Masters; Margaret Lewis, Mistress
National School:	-	--- Pritchard, Master

Baths	-	Edward W Jones
Boot and Shoe Maker	-	John Ellis
Butcher	-	Enoch Arter, William Ody, Mary Williams
China, Glass etc Dealers	-	William Roberts
Coal Merchant	-	William James
Confectioners	-	William Roberts
Fire Office Agent	-	Abraham L Lewis
Grocer and Tea Dealer	-	Evan Griffith
Hotels	-	Cambrian: C Mytton; Borth Hotel: Geo Lewis
Ironmonger	-	Abraham L Lewis
Joiners and Builders	-	Evan Griffiths; Edward Jones; Samuel Tudor
Linen/Wool Drapers/Mercers-		Abraham L Lewis; Robert P Roberts
Master Mariners	-	Daniel David; John Enos; Hugh Hughes; John Hughes; John Lewis; Evan Lloyd; John Lloyd; David Rees; Richard Williams
Shopkeepers/Gen.Grocers	-	Elizabeth Davies; Jane Davies; M Richards
Stonemason	-	John Roberts
Taverns/Public Houses	-	The Friendship: Mary Hughes; The Prince of Wales: Samuel Black; The Railway: David Hughes; The Victoria: Margaret Jones
Toy Dealer	-	Jane Airey

Lodging House Keepers:

Jane Airey	11 Cambrian Terrace	Anne Arter	Bradford House
Margaret Arter	2 Prince Street	William Bowen	10 Cambrian Terrace
Daniel David	Osborne House	Daniel John	Cambrian Cottage
Jenkin Davies	Diana House	Richard Davies	7 Cambrian Terrace (Revd.)
Jane Edwards	12 Cambrian Terrace	John Enos	Bealy House
John Evans	6 Cambrian Terrace	Hugh Hughes	Dart House
John Hughes	Fairfield House	John Hughes	5 Prince Street
John Hughes	5 King Street	James James	Ocean View
John James	6 Prince Street	William James	New Street
Anne Jenkins	1 Prince Street	Anne Jones	Sea View House
Edward Jones	?	John Jones	Tymawr
LC Jones	9 Cambrian Terrace	Margaret Jones	6 Picton Terrace
Mary Jones	Picton Terrace	Abraham L Lewis	Picton Terrace
John Lewis	Cambrian Villa	John Lloyd	Conby House
Mary Lloyd	7 High Street	Mary McClellan	?
Mary Pritchard	?	David Rees	9 Prince Street
Margaret Richards	7 Prince Street	William Roberts	?
Mary Williams	High Street	Richard Williams	Britannia Place

CHAPTER 11: THE UPPINGHAM MEMORIAL WINDOW, JUNE 1925.



In common with many similar schools, in the years immediately after the Great War Uppingham was preoccupied by plans to commemorate the large number of former pupils (460) killed in the conflict. £33,000 was promised by 1920 for a memorial hall.

However, the announcement shown above appeared in *The Times* on 23 September 1919. By that time most of Thring's surviving pupils from Borth were in their 50s or 60s. They embarked on a fundraising project of their own: for a commemorative East window in Borth church to show their gratitude for the hospitality which the school had received forty years earlier.

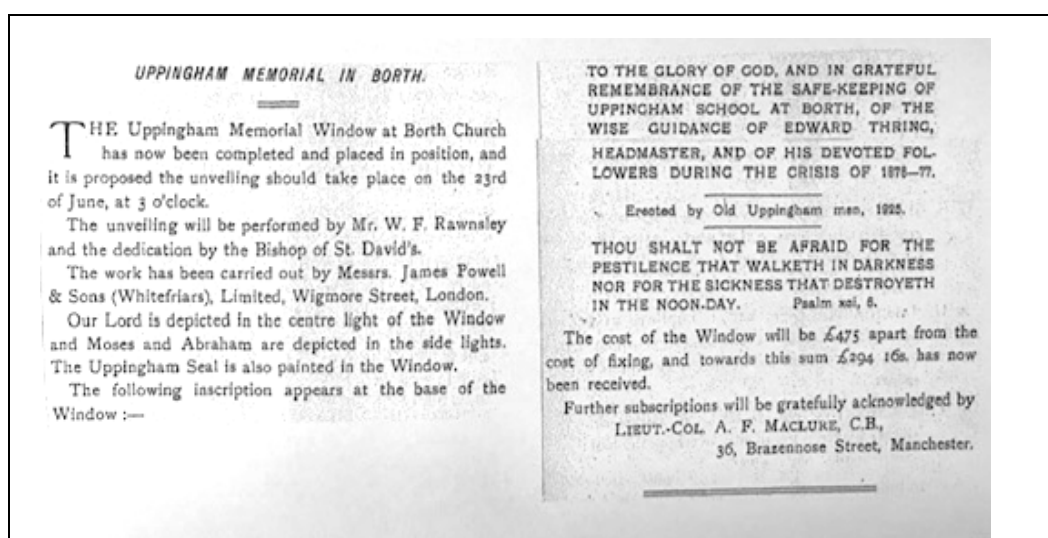
The scheme appears to have been conceived by Mr P.A. Birley, an OU who

joined the school three years after it came back from Borth. His father had been one of the two trustees who supported Thring through the typhoid crisis.

The campaign was co-ordinated by Mrs Sophia Haslam. She was the widow of Sam Haslam (d.1915), one of Thring's housemasters, and her diaries in the 1870s give us a unique insight into life as a housemaster's wife in those years.

She died in 1922, so did not live to see the window brought to fruition, but she bequeathed a lectern to Borth church.

Three years after her death, six Old Uppinghamians from the Borth era retraced their childhood steps and gathered in the church for the window's dedication.



The *Uppingham School Magazine* for July 1925 states that the service was conducted by the Bishop of St David's, Rt. Revd. John Owen, and the lesson was read by the headmaster of Uppingham, Revd. Reginald H. Owen, (unrelated to the Bishop, but himself later Archbishop of New Zealand).

The sermon was preached by Canon WCE Newbolt, Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, who had been Captain of the School in 1863: one of many of Thring's pupils who became clergymen.

The window was formally handed over by Willingham F Rawnsley, then aged 80, who had entered the school in 1855. He was one of the first pupils whom Thring recruited, and he returned to teach at the school five years before typhoid struck, so had experienced life at Borth in 1876-7.

Two accounts - one from Uppingham and one from Borth - survive of the window's dedication: a day which must have revived some powerful memories in those six former pupils:

The Borth Window: *Uppingham School Magazine: July 1925*

'Borth (in 1876) was a long way off, even by rail... Even now, in spite of motors, it is still a long journey to get there. Hence we had but a sprinkling of Thring's Old Boys there... John Skrine's fine Borth Commemoration hymn (see page 42) sounded very significant as we thought of the refuge from the pestilence. Canon Newbolt preached an excellent sermon... Then we had Lyte's hymn "Praise my Soul the King of Heaven" after which came the bishop's blessing, followed by an old Welsh hymn sung with true Welsh fervour, and very strikingly, for the church was filled from end to end.

The window round is a very beautiful one by the noted glassmakers, Messrs Powell, late of Whitefriars, London. Of the three lights, the life-sized figures under Gothic canopies are, in the centre, Our Lord, with below Him a scroll bearing the words "The Author and Finisher of our Faith" (Hebrews xiii, 2). To his right is the figure of Abraham, and on his scroll the words "By faith he went out not knowing whither he went" (Heb xi, 8). In the third light is a fine figure of Moses shading his eyes with his hand as he looks out towards that promised land which he was never to enter, and on his scroll are the words "By Faith he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews xiii, 27).

The window, as a window should, lets in plenty of light. The colour which enriches the whole is given by the robes of the three figures, Abraham's being green, Our Lord's royal red and Moses' blue. Above in the head lights are the school seal and the arms of the Dioceses of St. David's and Peterborough, while in the panels below the figures are the inscriptions in fairly legible letters...

Equally appropriate was the reading by the Vicar of Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills," one of Thring's favourites, ending with "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth for evermore." (There) followed the *Nunc Dimittis*, and then, beautifully read by the Head Master from Mrs Haslam's lectern came that poetic lesson from Hebrews xi. Then the hymn 278, "O for a faith which will not shrink through many a foe": clearly a reference to our great Head Master who "when in danger knew no fear; in darkness felt no doubt."

Mr WF Rawnsley then, on behalf of the subscribers, handed the window over to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Borth Church, using the language which is inscribed in the window itself: "In grateful remembrance of the safe keeping of Uppingham School at Borth" etc, and the Bishop of St David's, then dedicated it with short prayers. A very pleasing service concluded with the full rendering of the old Welsh hymn, "O Frynlau Caersalem ceir gweled" ("We'll view from the mountains of Canaan").

May I add that nothing could exceed the friendliness of Bishop Owen or the painstaking kindness of the Vicar, who entertained us all to tea in the hotel which we knew almost fifty years ago.'

**‘Uppingham Window’:
Borth Dedication Ceremony
“TRADITION OF PAST VICTORY.”
from the *Cambrian News*: 26 June 1925**

‘Of Borth it may truly be said “I am part of all that I have met.” This was exemplified on Tuesday afternoon when Old Uppinghamians gathered for the dedication of the beautiful east window in St Matthew’s Church as an expression of their gratitude for what Borth was to them (at) a critical crisis in the history of the school.

Uppingham is the creation of Edward Thring, pre-eminent among great headmasters of his day... The association began in 1876 (and) after much searchings of heart Thring boldly adopted the course of removing the school bodily... it was ‘a race for life’ and no time could be wasted... This migration, which is known as the ‘Exile’, caused great stir in the village and district (but there was) complete harmony between village and school, the natives vying with each other to make the “Exiles” feel at home...

The only token that has (hitherto) survived this visit is the path leading across the bog, made by the boys, known as “Uppingham Path” with three stone seats which bear an inscription recording their gratitude. This memorial old Uppinghamians have since felt to be utterly unworthy of what Borth had done for them... It is interesting to record that ever since the return home a “Borth Day” has been annually observed at Uppingham on June 11th when a special service of thanksgiving is held.

The event caused great interest in the village which was testified to by the overflowing congregation. A beautiful service had been drawn up by the Vicar, which was well-rendered by the choir, Miss Gwen Matthews being at the organ...

Chancellor Newbolt ... took as his text the first verse of the 125th psalm; and said it was just sixty-eight years ago since he entered Uppingham School as a small boy and now he was called on to look upon what they might call the three score years and ten of school life, dominated, as they felt, by a great crisis, and encircled, as they believed, by the halo of a great victory.

The migration of the school to Borth was the triumph of the determination and boldness. It was executed with consummate skill and mechanical resources and it was surrounded with happy memories. By the removal to Borth, Uppingham School was (made) safe, and Uppingham Town recognised with gratitude the significance of the victory. By that memorial window they would consecrate that day a sense of God’s abiding presence...

(Old Boys) knew what it was that Borth meant to them. It meant a tradition, and that tradition meant a great victory... emblazoned on the flags (and) enshrined in memorials. They were recorded in history. Yet, he was thinking that day of unrecorded traditions... - obstacles overcome and victory after failure... What the sword of Goliath was to David, Borth was to Uppingham.

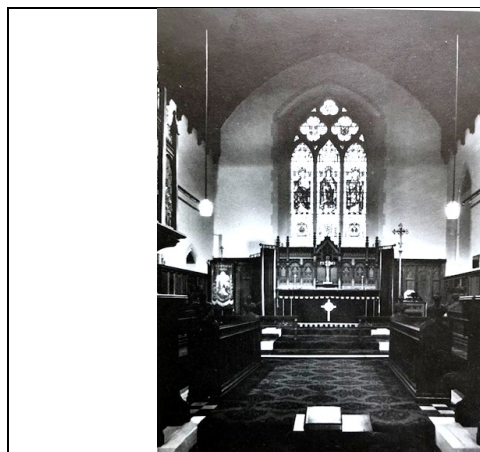
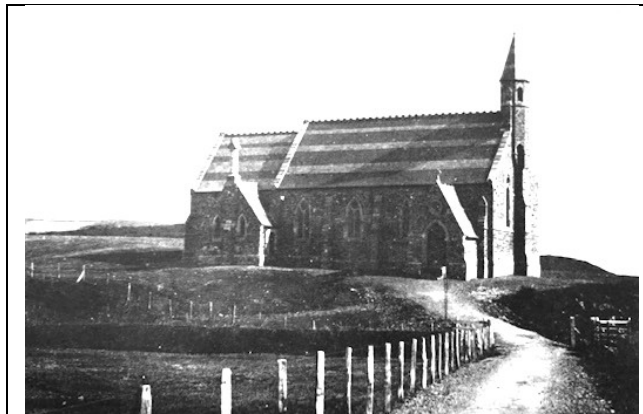
Other robed clergy present were Chancellor Price, Machynlleth, and the Revd. Lester Jones, St Asaph...

After the service a reception was given by the Church at the Grand (*formerly Cambrian*) Hotel, where the Vicar took the opportunity of extending to Old Uppinghamians, whom he described as honoured freemen of the village, a hearty welcome in the name of Borth and expressed sincere gratitude for their magnificent gift, which is not only an adornment to the Church, but which will also serve to cement the association of Uppingham with Borth more than ever.

Truly Borth, and particularly Borth Church, “is part of all that it has met”, which many recent beautiful gifts testify.’

St Matthew's Church, Borth and the Uppingham window

The top photograph shows the exterior of the church soon after it opened. The middle ones - of the interior and the East Window - were taken in 1976-7, one hundred years after the school left Borth. The remaining two, showing detail from the window, date from May 2021. The wording is also shown on page 53.



CHAPTER 12: UPPINGHAM AND BORTH SINCE 1925

In the half century after the unveiling of the Uppingham window, OUs continued to visit Borth: some to play golf there. Those from Thring's time gradually gave way to a generation who had heard about Borth at the annual Commemoration Service.

One link ended in 1940 when Thring's daughter Margaret, by then in her early 80s, finally moved away from Uppingham. For several years previously the headmaster of the day, John (later Lord) Wolfenden, and his wife had invited her to School House after the Commemoration service to drink a glass of port and to reminisce about her early life.

As the centenary of the typhoid epidemic drew near, my research into it began, and, thanks to the generosity of Coll Macdonald, Uppingham's headmaster from 1975 to 1982, I was given time to pursue what proved a much larger task than originally envisaged.



Coll Macdonald, Uppingham's headmaster (second from the right), who visited Borth with his wife, Hilary, for the official opening of the Uppingham Fields.

In the early summer of 1977 it resulted in a series of essays in a special edition of the *Uppingham School Magazine*, and a two-act documentary play performed by staff and pupils in the Uppingham Theatre. In the Easter holidays of that year the school's Geography Department, which normally went to the Lakes for its A level fieldwork, decided instead to base this work in the Borth Youth Hostel. Staff used

the nearby marshland for physical geography topics; environmental work was done in Aberystwyth, including a traffic survey.

Participants wrote later that 'it is not difficult to imagine Thring's Sports Day on the long, straight shingle ridge...' They also viewed the Uppingham window in the church; observed the significant number of houses along the High Street which still appeared to have names with Uppingham associations, and visited the empty hotel shortly before it was finally demolished, 'its former glory much faded, and its windows and walls a target for vandals and graffiti-ists'. Although much-changed inside, it was easily recognisable as Thring's former HQ (see page 59).

During visits to Borth at that time I talked with people who remembered stories about the school told by their grandparents - among them Mr AE Richards, whose grandmother had looked after the Thrings in the house known as Ethelwen (see the photograph on page 21).

I also visited Lady Marjorie Pryse, a descendant by marriage of Sir Pryse Pryse. The sad decline of the Gogerddan Estate after his time (which resulted in its sale in 1950 to Aberystwyth University) is told - along with Lady Marjorie's own remarkable life story - in David Lewis's book listed on page 64. By the time I visited her at Ffynon Caradog, her memory was sketchy and she was living in parlous circumstances - but she passed on to me a marble desk set which she believed was a gift to her ancestor from Thring as he left Borth for home in 1877.

The years go by; the seats along the Uppingham Path have been restored, and visits from OUs - including golfers - continue to take place as the 150th anniversary of Thring's arrival approaches.

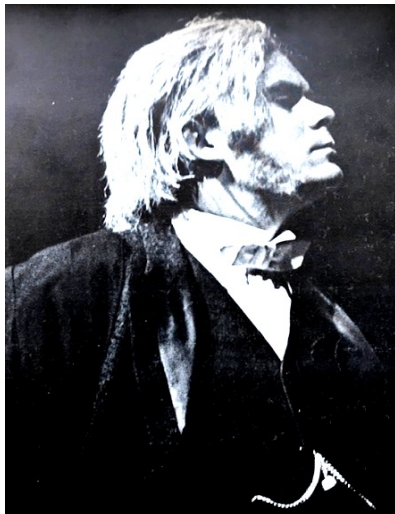
Uppingham-Borth Centenary Celebrations: 1976-1977



Cover of the Borth Centenary edition of the *Uppingham School Magazine*, May 1977.



The *Magazine*, April 1976: the stained glass window in Thring's 1860s schoolroom showing the raising of the flag at Borth to summon pupils to lessons.



Tim Montagnon, cast as Thring in the Borth Centenary Play, Summer 1977.



From the Borth Play: above, Thring's first meeting with Sir Pryse Pryse - for fictional purposes on Borth station; below, a recreation of the group photographs on pages 29 and 36.



Borth 1977-2021



The Cambrian Hotel in 1977, just before demolition: little changed externally from the photograph on page 29.

It dominated the seafront but rarely made money as a hotel. However, it housed a succession of educational institutions in times of war or other crisis, including PE students from Chelsea College during the 1939-45 war. It was later purchased by the Welsh League of Youth and renamed *Pantefedwen*.



In 2002 the hotel site was occupied by the Borth tourist office. By 2021 the office had closed, but the building remained. Cambrian Terrace and the station are to the right.



The plaque to the left of the door of the tourist office. Its wording is similar to that which appears on the two stone seats along the Uppingham Path.

Nearly 150 years after the school left, much has changed of course, especially through successive refurbishments of buildings - but some things remain, and others can be guessed at...



Cambrian Terrace, 2021:
the former site of the hotel is to the left.



The shingle bank in front of the hotel –
which caused the school some difficulty during the
great storms of winter 1876-7.



2002: accommodation used by Uppingham pupils
125 years earlier?



2021: compare with photographs on pages 21 and 36.



Borth seafront, 2021: taken not far from the
photograph of boys on the beach shown on page 26.



Judging by its railings, this is one of several houses on
the main street which might be the former
'Uppingham House', shown on page 50.



Lorne Villa, Borth - possibly named after Lorne House, a boarding house in Uppingham.



Highfield, Borth in 2021: another name in common with one of Thring's school's boarding houses.



Two photographs of Borth station in 2021. The passing loop has gone, but much is still recognisable from earlier times.



The train from Aberystwyth has just arrived, having come up the line from the recently re-opened station at Bow Street.



The *Uppingham Fields* are situated near the community hall and sports centre.



Thring took regular afternoon walks in Uppingham with his dogs, although there is no mention of them in the Borth narratives.

The Uppingham Path, 2021



Borth Church, photographed in May 2021 and still essentially as seen in the photograph on page 56.



The signpost just below the Church, at the point where the Uppingham Path begins.



One of the two stone seats on the path, a short distance to the north of the Church.



The inscription on the seat, restored to how it looked when the Path was first opened.



Two views of the Uppingham Bridge, which was re-sited and restored in 1911 (see page 50).

Thring's philosophy of life and education

(There is a summary of Thring's career in the companion booklet about Uppingham, pp. 95-96.)

'We stand on the threshold of a new world. Railways and steamships and telegraphs have made this earth of ours to all intents and purposes another planet...'

'If children are precious, and human lives not to be bought and sold, and to educate well requires all the knowledge of the trained intellect, all a good man's patience and a brave man's heart, believe - and act on this belief.'

'I don't want stars or rockets: I want every boy to have a chance of showing his little light to help the world... It is impossible to overrate the importance to a child of giving confidence. Very much of what is called idleness and inattention is only utter bewilderment.'

'Inspectors are not half so well qualified to judge a school as we are.'

'Teachers are the most living creators of life... They must help the young in all things, imposing no unnecessary rules, thinking energetic power. A dull boy's mind is a wise man's problem.'

'There is nothing more characteristic of God on earth than the boundless liberality with which he has scattered little pleasures in everybody's reach. But, if this is so, then man most imitates God when he gives in this almighty way, when he opens and makes free, and scatters pleasure as God does, and makes it possible for others to be glad.'

'How to learn: First, see. Then examine what you see. Lastly answer, or write. Live with the scenes. Make no attempt to remember anything you can put before your eye, or can picture to your mind's eye. Memory is not sight. Picture an apple. Note its size, shape, colour, inside, texture, parts, pips, core etc; skin, juice. Compare with other fruits. The untrained boy begins to try and remember what he knows about an apple and flounders hopelessly for ever... Think in shape. Why we learn:

- 1) Skill is the object of all good work
- 2) Skill means the power of doing exactly what is wanted to be done, at the right time
- 3) Skill is produced by thought and practice
- 4) Anyone without skill is so far without education
- 5) Memory is not skill, and may be a hindrance to skill
- 6) Skill does not mean being full, but being master of strength, and trained movement
- 7) The trained mind is worth all the knowledge in the world.'

'The educator deals with latent powers. The teacher puts in a given task. The educator considers, the worse the material, the greater the skill in working it. The teacher does his task, and charges the material with the result. The educator knows his subject to be infinite, and is always learning himself to put old things in a new form. The teacher thinks he knows his subject and that the pupil ought to know it, too.

The educator loves his work, and every day finds fresh reason to love it. The teacher goes through his work and finds it more irksome every day. The educator encourages. The teacher punishes. The educator is a boy amongst boys in heart. The educator meets the young on their own ground, and from their own point of view.'

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 as his literary executor.

JH Skrine:

Uppingham by the Sea (Macmillan, 1878).

A short narrative, presenting the school's time at Borth in glowing terms, by Thring's disciple and colleague.

Nigel Richardson:

A Great Deliverance, (2021).

The companion publication to this one, focusing on events in Uppingham which led to Thring's time in Borth.

Typhoid in Uppingham: Analysis of a Victorian Town and School in Crisis 1875-1877 (Pickering and Chatto, 2008).

The monograph, which includes the national public health context, was expanded from a Ph.D. thesis for University College, London, 2006).

Thring of Uppingham: Victorian Educator (University of Buckingham Press, 2014).

This full-length biography of Thring includes a much more comprehensive reading list.

Tessa Biggs: *Clwb Golff: Borth and Ynyslas Golf Club - Links with the Past* (Borth and Ynyslas Golf Club Ltd., 2009).

David TR Lewis: *The Families of Gogerddan in Cardiganshire and Aberglasney in Carmarthenshire* (published by the author, 2020, and available through local bookshops).

This includes details about Sir Pryse Pryse.

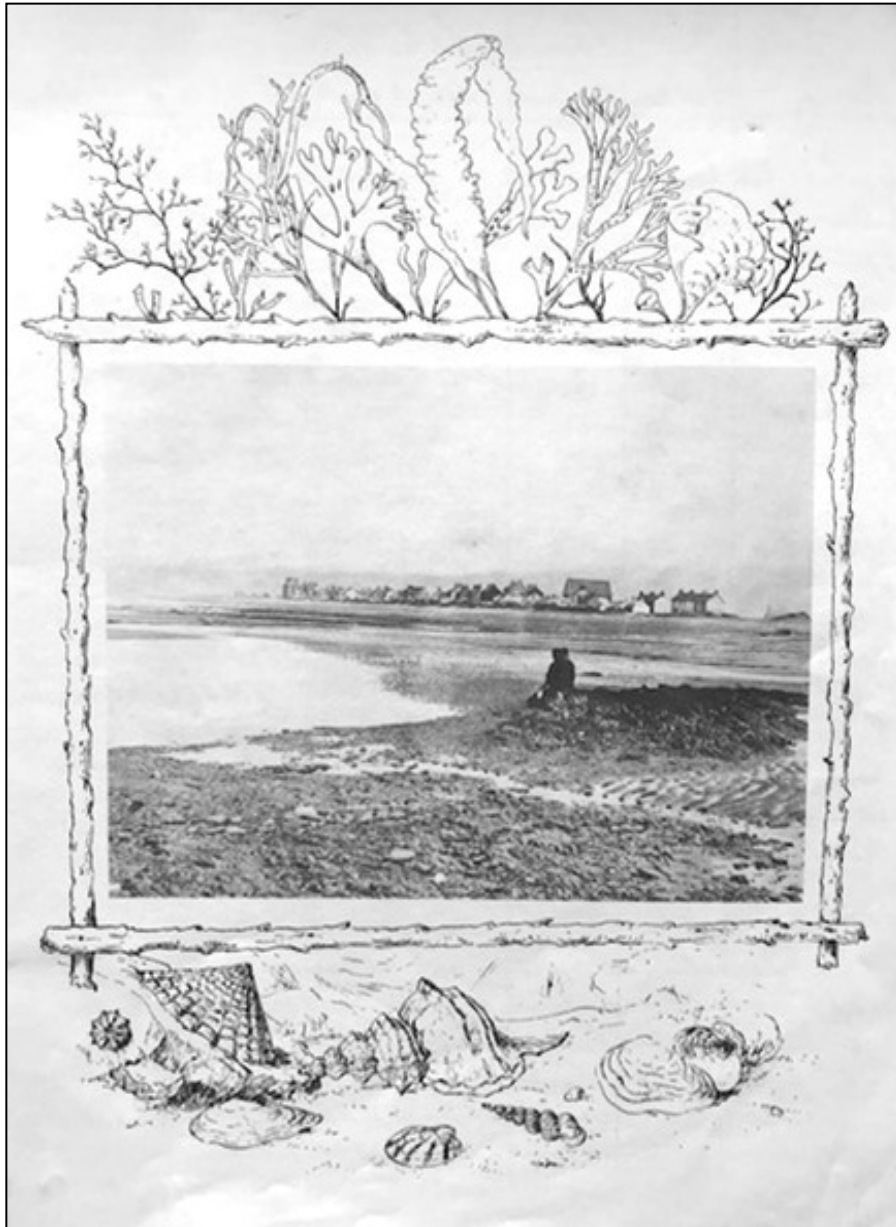
Malcolm Tozer: *The Ideal of Manliness* (Sunnyrest Books, 2015).

This explains Thring's philosophy of life and education.

There are archived copies of the *Cambrian News* and the *Aberystwyth Observer* in Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Archifdy Ceredigion Archives holds a number of related publications and documents, including several letters in the Gogerddan Estate papers relating to the Uppingham Path.

The Uppingham School Archives holds copies of most of the documentation relating to the school, including back numbers of the *Uppingham School Magazine*.



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