

Could your child write this letter?

YOB CULTURE? Are sloppy educational standards to blame? You might begin to think so after reading an extraordinary letter penned in 1862 by 11-year-old William Titley.

It was discovered recently among family papers by Anthony Hoddinott, a retired farmer, at Dorchester in Oxfordshire.

Written in copperplate script, the letter — an extract is shown above — was the result of long hours of painstaking practice with scratchy nibs and messy ink.

It begins: "My dear Parents, In forwarding for your inspection and approval a summary of my studies I have pleasure in stating that the session will close on the 21st Inst.

"With kind love to all at home, I

A rare insight into Victorian schooldays

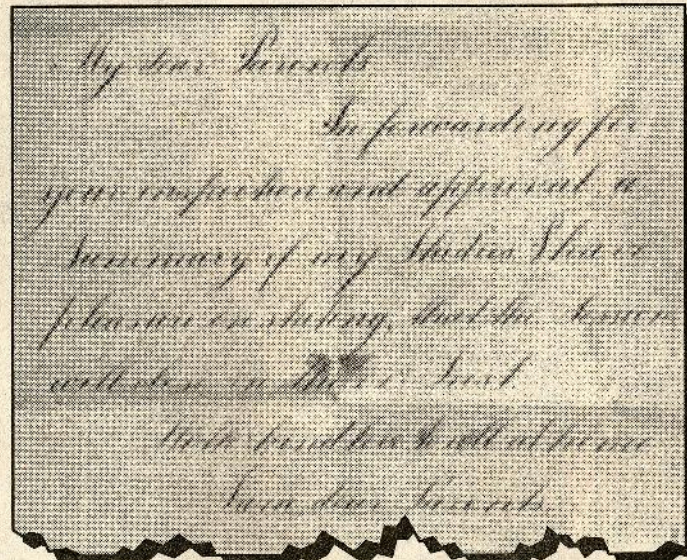
By Val Hennessy

am, dear Parents, Your affectionate son, William W. Titley." He goes on to list the schoolwork undertaken in the previous term at Bramham College, Yorkshire.

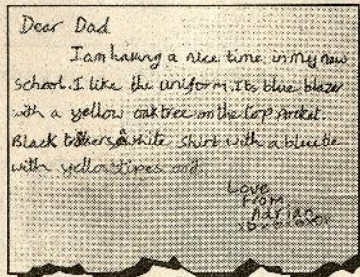
In the days before calculators, William writes: "In arithmetic, I have solved a great variety of sums in the Elementary Rules and in Simple and Compound Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division, and been regularly practised in Mental Calculations and the Commercial Tables.

"Also undergone weekly a testing examination both in mental and slate arithmetic."

He writes: "In English, I have committed to memory and repeated in private the greater part of the etymology from Allen and Corn-



PAINSTAKING: William Titley (right) and the letter he wrote at 11



TODAY: Adrian's letter to his father

well's Grammar, and written all the exercises connected with the same." He had recited aloud to his teachers 322 lines of classic poetry, and 40 verses of the Bible.

On top of this, he had also studied two mammoth tomes called Ince's English History and

Browne's History of Rome. He had read huge chunks of the Bible aloud, and had "been practised frequently on the countries of Europe and Asia."

No gazing at VDU screens for William, or watching blaring 10-second-attention-span educational videos.

As 80-year-old Mr Hoddinott points out, William would have worked in a room full of silent boys sitting at rows of desks.

"They started with the basics, they learned how to multiply, how to spell and how to speak properly.

"Perhaps I'm old-fashioned, but it seems to people of my generation that educational standards have rather gone to the dogs."

He added: "If a modern-day pupil handed in work written in William's perfect handwriting, his schoolmas-

ter probably couldn't read it." The Sunday Express asked a present-day 11-year-old to write an account of his school work.

A liking for his uniform was a priority for Adrian, a pupil at William Ellis School in Highgate, London, in a letter to his father, part of which is shown here.

He writes: "Dear Dad. I am having a nice time in my new school. I like the uniform. Its blue blazer with a yellow oak tree on the top pocket. Black trousers, a white shirt with a blue tie with yellow stipes (sic) on it."

Today's 11-year-old is used to fast food and instant information, hence Adrian's enthusiasm for information technology.

"I've got my own disc," he tells his father. "After school I go to I.T. Club and I do my work there."

He concludes: "The food is nice and I have hamburgers, chips and pizza nearly every day."

Written by William Walker Tittley at the age of
eleven in ~~1861~~ 1861. Grandfather of A.M.H.
He was born at Headingley Manor
The writing on the left is Mother's (Dorothy) 1850.

Bramham College.

June 12th 1861.

My dear Parents,

In forwarding for
your inspection and approval, a
Summary of my Studies, I have
pleasure in stating, that the Session
will close on the 1st of Inst.

With kindest love to all at home
I am, dear Parents,

Your affectionate Son,

William W. Tittley.

In English, I have
Committed to memory, and repeated
in Private, the greater part of ^{the} Etym-
ogy, from Allen and Cornwells Gram-
-mar, and written all the Exercises con-
nected with the same. Read with
Mr. Haigh various Works on Science
and Literature. Been practised fre-
quently in the Countries of Europe,
and Asia. Read in Class successively,
from the Bible, Watts's Scripture

History, the Book and its Story,
Ince's English History, Browne's
History of Rome, the First Cut
whism of Common Things, here
frequently practised in Spelling.
Written regularly from Lichfield, and
130. Sentences, from Hopkins's Ge-
ographical Exercises. Committed to
memory, and repeated in Private,
322 Lines of Select, and 90 of Sacred
Poetry, also 50 Verses of the Bible

as Proofs of Scripture Doctrines. Care-

fully revised the above, and repeated

the greater part of them, to Mr. Haig

In Arithmetic, I have

Solved, a great variety of Sums, in the

Elementary Rules and in Simple and

Compound Addition, Subtraction,

Multiplication, and Division, and

been regularly practised in Mental

Calculations, and the Commercial Table

Also undergone weekly a Testing Exam-

ination both in Mental and Slate Arithmetic