

# Tales out of School

## Church Schools

In the C19th and C20th the Anglican Church held a near monopoly of education up to age 13 years in Bidford, Salford Priors, Dunnington and Temple Grafton. In an age of fierce denominational rivalry, the National Society had been set up in 1811 to provide elementary education for the poor in accordance with 'the Principles of the Established Church'.

### Passive Resistance

Nonconformists strongly opposed state funding of Anglican schools. In 1904 Dunnington Baptist Minister the Rev. J Aitkin was summoned for non-payment of 3/6 as part of the poor rate half year. He was as objecting to paying the Education part of the Rate, on conscientious grounds. The court ordered him to pay.



**Bidford Junior School, 1914** © Warwickshire County Council PH352/30/93

## Private Schooling

The first evidence of a local Private School is found in the 1851 census. In Park Hall House, Salford, The Rev. Samuel Garrard ran a boarding school for boys, aged 9 years to 15 years. There were 30 boys with places of birth varying from Edinburgh and Monmouth to Madras, Calcutta and the East Indies. They were looked after by 7 servants!

In Bidford during the 1920's Florence Grove started a private school in the Assembly Rooms, then moving to a house across the road. Dorothy Johnson recalls: 'It was just one room, to me as a four year old, it was huge...there were about seventeen of us.'

## Infants



The Infant School had an attendance of 80 pupils. In the 1920s Mrs. Warner, wife of the Junior School Head, Arthur Warner, was in charge, Mollie Henderson started in 1921. 'I can remember my first day as a very shy four and a half year old. I had a dark red velvet dress with a starched pinafore over it and new brown boots which my mother had buttoned up the sides with a button hook which I still have. I didn't really want to go to school, I was happy at home amongst all our animals, cows, horses, pigs, poultry, cats and dogs, so it was with a very heavy heart that I went clutching my mother's hand.'

## Rude Discipline

Charlie Haywood. 'I was unfortunate to be caught talking....I had to stand on a chair and have the backs of my legs slapped. Mr. Warner was rather adept at using the cane, which in this case was an old army cane with a silver ferule on one end. Boys who had been caned before told us to hold our hands with fingers sloped towards the floor, the theory being that the cane would slide off and not hurt so much. Mr. Warner had other ideas and would smartly bring the cane up and catch you on the back of your hand so you received a double dose.'

**Yesterday's Children** details many accounts of childhood in Bidford, Copies from our Society

## Excitement for the Older Children

For Frank Spiers and his sister Dinah Holder extra-curricular activities provided some of the more memorable moments of their years. Frank enjoyed the drama productions that the Head, Mr. Warner, organised.

'Mr. Warner...was a good amateur actor. This rubbed off on his pupils and every year we performed plays in the Co-op Hall. [He] would write the play on the blackboard and we would copy it into our books then learn the words.'

Day trips to Liverpool and the Mersey Tunnel, Bristol and London were the highlights of Class 6 and 7 for Dinah.



The National School was built 1835 and enlarged in 1846 to accommodate 160 children. With the 1872 construction of the Broom Road the building

became the Infants School until 1950.



The Victoria Road School (built 1872)



School with post war extension 1959



Present School, built 2000

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## Legislation brings Education

It took a while for governments to recognise the importance of education.

**Forster Act 1870:** established right to education from 5- 13 years.

**Mundella Act 1880** Made school enrolment compulsory up to 10 years of age.

**Elementary Act 1891** made education free. In 1894 new regulations stated that children must attend school.

Until 1900 school inspectors assessed a school by its performance on the 3 Rs.

The school leaving age, if you attained your "certificate":

- 1880 10 years
- 1893 11 years
- 1899 12 years
- 1918 14 years
- 1947 15 years

A failed certificate, then you stayed until age 13.

## Salford Priors

Salford benefited from William Perkins who left a bequest in 1694 for schooling in the village.

The "Grammar School" took place in the rear south room of the parish church (right) until construction of the school below in 1860.



In 1860 the school moved to a new school building on the then edge of the village. The land was bought by the Perkins Foundation with building funded by public subscription. With only 8 "Gentlefolk" listed in the village the subscription of £680 was quite impressive.

## Dunnington

The first school was built in 1876 and the first Head Teacher, Mrs. Emily Williams stayed until 1909. The foundations of the new school were laid in July that year (photo left) and it opened in November. The picture below



shows pupils proudly in their winter coats. School was built for 90 children but average attendance was 63.

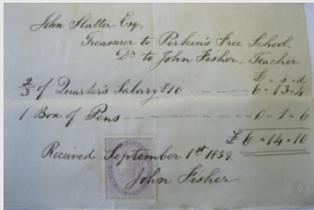


### Balancing a Budget.

The cost of running the school in 1894 was £110, of which £65 was the Head Teacher salary. The school received a grant of £50.

## The Salford Priors Head Teacher

John Fisher arrived in Autumn 1853. The school had around 75 pupils. The basis for his payment was quarter days, in arrears. He was paid £40 each year, at £10 per quarter and also compensated for agreed expenditure on books or materials. He had to request his pay as the hand written note shows! A house was provided.



He maintained good relationships with the governors despite having to chase them for decisions. He received a glowing report from the school inspector in 1859. He moved to Dallinghoo in Suffolk in 1859, to a better position.

## Preparing Children for the future

By 1895 most children stayed in school until the day after their 13th birthday because they had no leaving certificate. Girls generally went into service – that is as domestic servants. Boys normally worked on the land as labourers. In the 1930's Bidford school had allotments at Marriage Hill which were split up into plots for the boys to work for one or two periods a week. In a community where, in the 1930s, market gardening offered plentiful employment opportunities, the hours the boys spent on the allotment provided relevant training for life after school. While the boys worked in the garden, the girls learned domestic skills such as needlework and knitting. This was not a happy memory for Norah Hiatt and her friend Mary Bennett: *'12 months we were knitting a matinee coat between us. We done it one afternoon, and next afternoon we had to take it out, and when we left school we never finished it...I always said I would never touch another piece of knitting...I used to pay to have my babies clothes knitted'*

## The School Diary Tells a Story

We learn a lot about events in schools from their diaries. Locally schools closed for two weeks in June for Pea Picking and three weeks in August for Harvest. There were days off for a royal birthday, the flower show and an annual treat. Infectious illnesses were prevalent. Scarlet Fever was the worst, in January 1896 causing Dunnington school to close for 7 weeks. Diaries show that children as young as 3 years entered school. Some interesting entries:

- 1902 June Lord Ernest sent a medal for each child, to Commemorate the Coronation. They were given by Miss Eleanor and Miss Constantine Seymour. The school closed for the rest of the week.
- 1904 Jan The Warwickshire Fox Hounds were in full cry round the school at 1.30pm. Twelve boys started after them, and did not return to school.
- 1906 April Lady de Trafford complained about boys disturbing her sitting turkeys and hens.

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