

Village Schooling

Village Schools

The first record of any schooling in the village was 'that in 1646 one John Willowbed was the schoolmaster, church warden and village constable'.

In 1673 the will of William Ward directed that a school should be erected in Little Houghton and would provide free education to eight boys from Little Houghton, eight from Brafield and four from Great Houghton. The school was finally built by Thomas Ward in 1762 in Lodge Road and still stands.

There was nothing further recorded on schooling until the mid 1800s. In 1847 a schoolmaster was recorded, but in the 1850s John Cave was listed as master of the national school and Sarah Cave was the schoolmistress.

In the late 1850s the Reverend Robert Woodward, MA, Professor of Music had a school at the Hall known as 'Doctor Woodward's School for Young gentlemen'

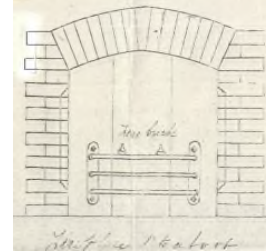
In 1861 a national school was established on the corner of Cherry Tree Lane which accommodated up to 70 children and in 1869 records show that the majority of attendees were girls (55 to be exact). The schoolmistress at this time was Miss Jemima Copeland. There was also a night school in the village and it must be assumed, because there are no records to indicate otherwise, that this was held in the same building. An 'infant and dame' school had also been established at this time but, again, records are scarce so little further comment can be made. It is not mentioned again in any of the records after this date so it must be assumed to have been a short-term arrangement.



The original School on the corner of Cherry Tree Lane.

In 1870 plans were submitted and approved for coalbunker. The plans also included a drawing of the outside privies for boys and girls, and a fireplace to be installed.

In 1874 the curriculum included the 3Rs, needlework, grammar and geography. By 1893 it also included spelling, mental arithmetic, recitation, singing and musical drill. Children had to pay a penny per week to attend but if they couldn't afford it, then the Reverend Woodhams would pay the penny.



A new National School was built in Cracknuts in 1894 to accommodate 80 children. A schoolhouse was also provided for the schoolmistress, Miss Nellie Dawson. In 1901 the parish magazine reported that the School Inspectors called, but 'nothing untoward' was found.



The School in Cracknuts opened in 1894

This school was also used as an Evening Institute but it seems that attendance was not good as the report in the school log book for July 1897 states: -

"The room is well warmed and lighted but the average number in attendance is so small that the Managers resolved to close the school three months earlier than usual. The few who have attended regularly have made good progress"

"No fixed grant can be paid for the hours given to Drawing, the school not having been inspected in this subject by the Science and Art department."

In June 1900 the 'Evening Continuation Class' reopened and the average attendance was reported to be about 50% of those on the books - presumably at that time of the year when the reports were made everyone was out helping with the harvesting.

The school building was also used for things other than learning, as the log book entry for 1904 states that the

'Monday and Wednesday night Classes for Reading, writing and composition, arithmetic and drawing will be held on Tuesday and Wednesdays once a month as the schoolroom is required by the Benefit Club.'

Apart from their normal daily work the children of both schools had annual treats, teas and parties. In 1908 the children went on a day trip to Llandudno. They departed from the village at 5:00am and returned at 2:30am the following day - a little more than a day trip that must have been terribly exhausting.

At this time the children were actively involved with drama and entertainment which were very popular as sometimes it extended over two nights so that parents and all others who wanted could attend.

As can be seen, schooling evolved in the village over the years very much with the broadening of the curriculum and with teachers who seemed to work hard in their vocations.

Alas 1924 saw the closure of the school in the village. The children were now obliged to attend the Church of England School in Little Houghton, which was adjacent to the Church. It was split into three classes. The infants' room had an open fire, which was, of course, surrounded by a large fireguard. On cold frosty mornings little bottles of milk (a third of a pint) would be placed around the warm area of the fire to thaw in time for the mid-morning break. An ex-pupil remembers that Mr Dobson, headmaster at that time, would visit the classroom each morning and, among other things, it would be his habit to puff away the dust, which had accumulated on the fireplace, over-mantle.

The other larger room was split into two areas by a large curtain, which had 'acquired' many scissor holes, through which to peep into the adjoining class (not ideal conditions for quiet study!).

The toilets were outside at the end of the playground.

During the war, when so many children were evacuated from London to live with families in both Great and Little Houghton, this small school could not

accommodate them all, so older children took their lessons in the Little Houghton Parish Hall.

Great Houghton children walked to and fro across the fields to school four times each day, as they had to go home for their lunch time dinners. Rubber was very scarce, so it was with great excitement that any child living one mile or more away from school received a free pair of wellington boots sent from Canada. The Canadians also sent to the children of both villages drinking chocolate powder. This arrived in large boxes ready to be weighed out and distributed. Although not that appetising as a drink it made very good chocolate fudge!

In 1955 the village again had a school with the establishment of the Preparatory School housed in Great Houghton Hall. This is still going strong and is featured in the next passage.

A new school was built in Little Houghton in 1960 at the end of Lodge Road providing improved facilities. The village children attended until their last secondary year, when they went to Yardley Hastings, until a new Secondary Modern School was opened at Wollaston.

The catchment area of the school at Wollaston includes Great Houghton, and all the children over the age of 11 are 'bussed' to Wollaston from the White Hart every day to travel the 15 or so miles to secondary school, unless of course, they attend the Grammar School in Northampton.



Considering the circumstances that prevailed over the years it could reasonably be asked whether schooling has changed for the better? Clearly the opportunities for education have improved beyond all recognition but are the children as fit, it is wondered, as those earlier children who walked almost five miles every school day - rain or shine?

Northampton Preparatory School

Introduction

The preparatory school, located on the village High Street, is a non-profit making co-educational school for boys and girls from the age of four to thirteen. Although located in the village, it is not the “village school” because parents are required to pay fees for their children’s education. Whilst some village children attend the school, the majority attend the local authority primary school in Little Houghton although Bursaries are funded by the Great Houghton Preparatory School Trust.

The school offers its pupils a balanced education, influenced by the National Curriculum, but introducing some subjects earlier when appropriate and concentrating on breadth of knowledge. The school has a good academic record and its pupils have moved on to a variety (over 50) of independent and maintained secondary schools.

A Brief History of the School

Great Houghton Hall was purchased from the family of Mr J.J. Martin - who had owned it since 1920 - by Mr O.E. Barnes in 1954.

In September 1955 Great Houghton Preparatory School started its first term with six pupils. Three of these children were five years of age and started the pre-preparatory group (entry is now at four years). The other three were eight years old, the age of preparatory intake. The numbers of pupils in the school rose steadily as each intake progressed through the school. This rise in numbers enabled more changes to be made to the original hall.

The converting of the stable block to classrooms, a workshop and changing rooms, together with improved washroom facilities were the first alterations. These were followed by the addition of a dining room, the science lab, art room and the first phase of the theatre/gymnasium. The second phase to the present full size was completed in 1980.

Three years after the school opened the two pasture fields adjoining the hall, Home Close East and Home Close West, were purchased. They were levelled into terraces to produce playing fields. A multi-sports, all weather surface was constructed in 2001.

The School Principal - Mr O.E. Barnes, M.A. F.R.G.S.

Mr Barnes served as a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm during the second world war. After this he studied for his degree at Jesus College, Oxford. This was followed by teacher training and three years spent at an independent school in Norfolk. After a further three years as an instructor in the Royal Navy he came to Great Houghton to found the school.

He continued as Headmaster until 1990, when the Deputy Head, Mr Tim Street, took over. As Principal, Mr Barnes remains responsible for the non-academic administration of the school and is Chairman of the Governors.

Former Pupils

Because boys and girls leave the school at thirteen years old, the school does not always hear of their progress as adults. One ex-pupil is Matthew Engel, who was the editor of Wisden and writes for the Guardian and other national newspapers about cricket and other events. Kenneth Baird worked with the Aldborough Festival and later became the Director of Music at the English National Opera for some years. Guy Zitter became Editor of the Daily Mail, and others became directors of companies including Nicholas Wilkinson at Shell.

The School and the Village

The school clearly has a different relationship with the village than might be expected with a local authority or grant maintained school. Nevertheless it has contributed towards village life by providing facilities for events such as the Senior Citizens' lunch, W.I. Meetings, Cub Scout occasions, the public debate over the Coca Cola development and by providing a venue for the local MP's "surgeries". The school has also provided coaching facilities in some sports for children from other schools as well as arranging performances for the school's choristers in the church.

On the occasion of the Queens Silver Jubilee Year a stained glass window with an educational theme was designed by the school and installed next to the pulpit in St Mary's church.

The school employs a number of villagers, either as teachers or in other capacities.