

THE SCHOOL

A 'schoolmistress' is referred to in censuses from at least 1881, but we don't know where the school room was then.

In 1843 Jacob Curl, a local farmer, sold a thin strip of land 8yds x 40yds to the vicar and churchwardens so a school could be built. The list of expenses includes: Bill for Conveyance £8; Railing and Gate £2 4s 6d; Cleaning Schoolroom 3s; Deal Table 12s; Extra Shelving 3s.

The first school teacher Miss Bodham was paid £22.00 per annum. In 1873 the school was further enlarged, but still on the same tiny plot of land sold by J Curl. Recreation took place in the lane. For the 13 weeks it took to enlarge the school classes were housed elsewhere at a three shilling rent. Apart from the churchwarden accounts we have no record of the school's activities till 1903, from the school log book which is kept at the Norfolk Records Office.

It shows that the headmistress was responsible to the vicar and the Diocese for the standard of education. The vicar, the Reverend J Alvis, signed each entry and periodically a diocesan inspector visited. Like Offsted today, the inspector was interested in conditions at the school and repeatedly commented on the overcrowding, but unlike Offsted, he was not interested in academic achievement, only in the children's knowledge of prayers, hymns and the Bible.

There were about 70 pupils, though often children were away with colds. They also suffered with illnesses which scarcely figure today - impetigo, St Vitus Dance, scarlet fever, ringworm, whooping cough and chicken pox. In November 1907 the school closed for a whole month because of a mumps epidemic. Pupils left at age 12 until 1918 when the school leaving age was raised to 14. They had to have a certificate from the attendance officer.

School holidays were also different; a week at Easter and another at Whitsun. School closed in early July for haymaking, when all the older children would have helped in the fields. The summer and Christmas holidays did not seem to have been fixed beforehand, but were flexible enough to cater for local needs.

From 1895, the head teacher was a Mrs E Bolt and the infant teacher Miss Joanna Durrant. A trainee teacher (always female) was also employed, but Mrs Bolt was not easily satisfied and none of them stayed long. In fact, it's a wonder that Miss Durrant stuck it out. She and Mrs Bolt came to loathe one another. To begin with, however, Mrs Bolt's entries were mainly complaints about the assistant teachers "Mrs Jackson.....has never taught in school and appears to be a very weak disciplinarian." "Miss E M Smith ... very boisterous" About Miss Laud: "Mistress spoke to her about hitting a child on the head... She gave an utterly false excuse, adding rude and impudent remarks."

"Miss Raphael careless at supervising and practically does the work of the dullards herself."

Then the cracks also appeared in Mrs. Bolt's relationship with Miss Durrant, especially because Miss Durrant was violent.

January 05 "Complaints from parents re Miss Durrant striking children... Miss Durrant denies as usual."

March 09 "Miss Durrant bruised a child's eye with a slate... said it was an accident."

July 09 "Mistress heard Miss Durrant strike several children on the head."

Nov 09 "Mistress spoke to Miss Durrant again with regard to the position of pushing needles into the work with the thimble."

Pernicaty though she was, Mrs Bolt did not seem to punish children physically. The log book records corporal punishment in the upper school, only when Mrs Bolt was ill and a stand-in was employed.

Feb 1911 "William Reeve caned."

January 1912 The supply head Edna Howard wrote "I have given Fred Harper two strikes across the seat and two across the hand for writing a filthy note and passing it on to the girls."

The school closed for rebuilding in August 1913, when it was able to expand on to additional land given by Miss Barnard and her niece Miss Woodham. The new school was opened on 2nd February 1914, and Miss Woodham visited it on the 27th February. The opening ceremony was reported in the paper.

Mrs Bolt carried on grumbling about incompetent teachers until 1924, then Miss G M Williamson took over. She was succeeded by Miss Dagmar Hyacinth Smith, who was to be of tremendous help to the village, in February 1939. By this time pupil numbers had shrunk to 41 (this may reflect the effects on the Great War and subsequent flu epidemic), but soon went up to 51 as evacuees arrived. At that time, with the Second World War brewing and men in short supply holidays were adjusted to allow for local agricultural needs. On the 17th July 1942 the school closed for two weeks for fruit picking, reopened on 3rd August and closed again four days later for the three week harvest holiday. "Nurse Juggins" inspected the pupils monthly. There were times during the war and for a few years after when coal was in such short supply that it was impossible to heat the building adequately.

The Bunting family went to the school during the war. Geoff, who started in 1943, remembers being taught by Miss Shawl in the infants, and Miss Smith, who would single handedly be teaching all the children between the ages of 7 and 14 in the same room! The family did well, and rather than staying at East Winch and leaving at 14, went on to Gaywood. Geoff went to Gaywood aged 11 – for the younger kids, school transport wasn't free, and he worked for Captain Elwes for money for the bus and school dinners. Maurice who didn't

go to Gaywood until he was 15 was eligible for free transport! Both ended up as head boys at Gaywood.

Geoff remembers that the evacuees settled in fairly well. One Scottish boy who lived with Bill Underwood the postman, had a fight in the lane with Ray Stacey and bit him in the chest. “You could see the teeth marks!” he says.

Miss Mack succeeded Miss Shawl as infant teacher in February 1951, and on 21st February, in the same year, school meals were served for the first time. In 1954, Mr Ralph Burman leased the playing field to the school.

Mrs Chapman says that when she first arrived on 1st April 1967 there were still just two teachers, but of course by then pupils left aged 11 for the secondary school.

There was an open fire to warm the big senior room, and the milk bottles for the pupils would be placed around it, steaming in the heat. The infants room had a coal fired stove. However, central heating was installed only one year later, and the open fires had nothing to do with a later fire in the boys' toilets. The school had been collecting and reselling newspapers, which were stored in a shed next to the boys' urinals. One day someone smashed the window, and glass fell on the paper. The hot sun caused the paper to ignite. A little girl told Mrs Chapman that there was a lot of smoke by the toilets, but already the fire was burning fiercely.

Mrs Chapman is particularly pleased at the good standard of education at the school – pupils got into good classes at Gaywood Park. She organised excellent educational trips to the Norvic Centre at York, to the Railway Museum and to London Zoo.

Sports flourished, and with Linda Taylor in charge, an excellent girls netball team was established.