

A HISTORY OF THE INFANTS SCHOOL AT HILL, LEAMINGTON HASTINGS

1685 The first school in Leamington Hastings was started by The Lord of the Manor, Sir Thomas Trevor, the Vicar, John Allingham and the freeholders at the time of the enclosures when the Poor's Land Foundation was set up.

Provision was to be made for maintenance of a schoolmaster. Sometimes later it was a dame. Classes would probably have been in the church or their own homes.

1811 When The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Faith was introduced Leamington Hastings parish subscribed to it

1823 Nov. 11th "Parish Subscription for the National Society for Education of the Poor .£1-0-0.Thos., Congreve. Church Warden. Disbursement"

1840 The National School at Hill was built by the Revd. H. W. Sitwell, Lord of the Manor and Vicar, at his own expense, comprising a school, playground, schoolmaster's house and garden. He conveyed them by deed in trust to the Poor's Land Foundation Trustees for 10s.

After the 1839 Government grant to education inspectors were appointed to see that the money was spent wisely. The Revd. H. W. Sitwell and later his nephew, the Revd. D. W. Sitwell, became the Diocesan Inspectors for Hill School.

The first log book available is from 1872 to 1928 and consists of the Headmaster's comments, those of the Worcester Diocesan Inspectors and those of the Warwickshire County Council's Inspectors. eg. 1873 report of the Revd. D. W. Sitwell. "Boys' Mixed School, The discipline and general efficiency are good. In the individual examination the children did well and showed that Mr. Garratt had taken very great pains with them.

Girls' School. This is a Sewing School only for the girls who are taught by Mr. Garratt. They are with him from nine to twelve and from a quarter past one to two. At two they go to Mrs. Cockerill and stay with her to four when they go home. The arrangement seems to me to work well. The specimens of needlework shown do Mrs. Cockerill credit."

1879 Leamington Hastings School. (Warwick) Summary. This was a summary of the W.C.C.'s report. "There is much that is pleasing in the work of this school. The children are nicely behaved and receive a sound and sensible education. The elementary subjects satisfy me well and give evidence of thorough grounding. Under Article 19(C) the Geography is intelligent and the children take a real interest in this subject. For the second extra subject under this Article, the boys offer Grammar and History and the girls needlework, but the latter is so weak, especially in the lower stages that no Grant can be allowed. Needlework throughout the school requires careful attention. The little children under seven years of age, must improve in their needlework to satisfy the requirements of Article 19(a)1 another year."

1880 9th July. Diocesan Inspector's Report "It is much to the credit of Mr. Garratt that single handed he can bring so large a school up to so high a standard. Number on register 60"

It was suggested that an assistant teacher be appointed to teach the infants and take charge of the needlework. Miss Harriet P. Probert, a certificated teacher, began work in January 1881.

1881 The classroom was divided into two and the main room was floored with boards. The infants were to be supplied with a Ball Frame, an Object Box and Form and Colour Box.

1894 1st September. Miss Jessica Tew became the Assistant Teacher. She qualified in March 1897.

By the 1870 Education Act, School Boards were allowed to charge the pupils for attendance, but this was abolished in 1891. The Headmaster's Report in 1891 stated "The Education Act 1891 adopted. School Pence not collected this week beginning August 3rd."

From 1876 attendance at school became compulsory and from 1880 up to an age, not above 13. This does not seem to have affected the children too much as there are frequent mentions in the Log Book that the boys were absent bird scaring, helping with the harvest or doing other farm work.

Parents could be penalised for not sending their children to school regularly, so some local parents were prosecuted.

1896 8th November. From the Headmaster's Report "The School Attendance Officer called today and said that the Attendance Committee had decided to prosecute Mrs. Lever of Hill for not sending Frank to school."

1900 15th January. "This morning I gave the attendance Officer a Certificate of Attendance of Lawrence Gulliver, the Attendance Committee having decided to prosecute."

1928 18th June. "Kathleen Green of Kytes Harwdwick has been granted special permission to leave school because of her mother's serious illness. Her age 13yrs 7mnths.I have taken her off the register.

After the 1902 Education Act which made County Councils responsible for education they provided 'Rate-Aid for voluntary schools. During the next few years the Charity Commissioners reorganised The Poor's Land Foundation and the Leamington Hastings school Foundation was formed.50% of the funds were for the maintenance and improvement of the school premises and 50% for the advancement for the poorer children. By 1874 the 50% for maintenance had risen to 85%

1930 31th January. Head Teacher's Report. "Three seats fixed on the green today by order of the Managers As all the scholars bring their lunches to school, the seats will be appreciated during the Summer months."

Scholarships were awarded. eg. 1928 30th November." The Trustees of the local charity have decided to award a scholarship to Frank Hopkins"

The 1944 Education Act brought further changes. The Governors changed the status of the school to Voluntary Controlled because of funding. The premises were to be maintained by the County Education Authority, but the Governors retained the right to appoint a minority of the Governors and to provide denominational instruction.

Secondary Education was thoroughly reorganised and the children from the area attended Secondary Schools in Rugby from the age of 11. School buses were provided.

In 1959 The Leamington Hastings School Foundation scheme was amended and the net income was to be used for awarding scholarships; providing financial assistance for outfits,clothing and tools to those who were entering a profession, trade or calling; promoting the education,including social and physical training of the beneficiaries and in meeting outstanding liabilities incurred by the School Managers.

The Education Authority had enlarged the school grounds by buying a small plot of land lying between the school grounds and the Parish Hall.

When Mrs. West was Head Teacher from 1928 to 1955 the life of the school expanded.

1928 11th May. "Holiday today May Day activities held on the green. A programme of country dances and team games will be given, the Maypole Dance included. All parents and friends invited. This year the May Queen is Ida Green. Tea will be served to children in the schoolroom"

1929 21st October, "A rummage sale was held on Saturday to provide funds for the school tea and Christmas party. £7. was taken."

1931 24th May "Empire Day was observed in the usual way. Lessons were given on the British Empire, the Union Jack and the Daisy."

1932 22nd December. "School party in the Parish Hall tomorrow when all parents and friends will be present to see the children's fairy play. "The wrong side of the bed."

1934. 29th November "Holiday all day. Wedding of the Duke of Kent."

1935 " Holiday May 6th and 7th for the Jubilee.

1937 11th May. "School closed this afternoon for the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and for the Whit Holidays. To reopen May 24th.

Outings were made to such places as the seaside, the zoo and Windsor Castle.

The Prefect system was started. Children voted for them and badges were sent from the Education Office.

As written earlier, scholarships for children to attend Secondary Education in Leamington Spa and Rugby were started and there were added more amenities to the school grounds.

1935 5th March. "Mr. Blythe called today and discussed the building of a cycle shed. He had approached the Director of Education."

Mr. and Mrs. Blythe, who lived at Hill, were great friends to the school.

1931 17th April. " Mr. And Mrs. Blythe visited this morning and distributed Easter eggs amongst the children."

1931 11th, January. " This week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Mrs. Blythe has sent hot soup to the children at Noon. She has supplied a set of spoons and mugs to hold the soup."

This was repeated in the following two months.

1931 was a particularly cold Winter and on January 30th, the children were all given a pair of woolen mittens knitted by the W.I. and the senior girls. " When the mornings are cold these will prove a comfort, especially during writing lessons."

Mrs. West encouraged the children to help others e.g.

1929 8th January. " The children have decided to give £2-0-0 from their fund towards the collection to build a Parish Hall."

1931 21st March. "The children collected 510 eggs for the Rugby Hospital."

1933 16th. September. "Collection of goods for the Rugby Hospital "Pound Day" conducted at school this week – a very satisfactory collection."

1940 9th January. "£5-0-0 sent to Mrs. Blythe – school children's effort towards the Red Cross Fund. - money raised by rummage sale."

Throughout Mrs, West's time at the school the heating stoves gave trouble.

1930 29th. August." Posted chimney sweeping account to the Office. Both chimneys swept during the holiday – cost 5s. "

1954 17th. March. "Our stoves are in a very bad condition. As the children, particularly in the Infant room become drowsy, we think fumes escape into the class room..Also children are suffering from sore throats and sickness."

31st March. "This morning the school was full of smoke and fumes, especially in the Infants room. We found it necessary to send the infants outside during the morning session." During the Summer holiday a new stove was installed, but the trouble continued

15th October. "Infant room chimney swept by Mr. Bud. The chimney has been smoking badly and the children had to leave the room."

18th. October. "Monday morning. "The Infant room stove smoking badly this morning, even after sweeping the chimney."

1955 1st March. "A very cold morning. Temperature in school 30 degrees. New stove in Infants room not functioning properly. Children joined Juniors. Vicar cleared pipe. Children able to return at 3.pm." The fumes from the stove probably accounted for the often poor attendance, causing children sickness, sore throats and bronchitis.

There were the usual outbreaks of epidemics like measles, mumps, scarlet fever, whooping cough and chickenpox. Sometimes siblings were excluded in the hope they would not pass on the disease and sometimes the whole school was closed. e.g.

1929. 27th February. "Register not marked. 34% present."

28th School closed until March 11th." This followed very bad colds and influenza.

11th March. "School reopened. Many children suffering from measles following influenza. Only 10 children present out of 44. School closed until March 25th." Throughout the rest of March there were only 11 to 12 children present each day.

1930 saw an outbreak of scarlet fever. From October 21st to November 5th there were 3 children reported and on November 25th only 18 children were present,

November 8th "School closed by Medical Officer for two weeks, to open Nov. 24th. After a short respite, there were further cases in December and January and June of the following year.

In 1934 several children had whooping cough.eg. 11th May "Attendance very poor this week. 61% throughout. Children are suffering from bad bronchial coughs. A few cases of whooping cough reported" There were more cases in 1951.

1937 8th November."There are three cases off mumps at Broadwell and others suspected."

In 1941 and 1942 there was a measles epidemic and the school was closed for a fortnight and another outbreak in 1949.

1942 17th July. Six cases of chickenpox were reported. "Attendance less than 60% due to chickenpox." and on 28th August. "Several children still absent following chickenpox."

There were also several cases of impetigo and some children were excluded.

Milk was provided for the children in bottles by Mr. Champion of Stockton. "The straws are wrapped." From 1937 the milk came from the Coventry Farmers Dairies Ltd. And in 1955 Mrs. West was pleased when the milk began to come in 1/3rd pint bottles. "This is more convenient."

1950 30th. January. The provision of school dinners began "School dinners served today in the Village Hall. 165 dinners served this week, the first week."

Another amenity was the supply of a telephone. This made it much easier for Mrs West to report absences and give and receive other information.

1938 6th July. "Phoned Office today. Left message. School closed today by phone message."

1921 12th June. " Electric kettle from Warwick although a power plug was put in in September...to provide hot water when the stove is not in use."

Obtaining water must have been very difficult at first as the children had to fetch water from the School House or the farm across the way.

1944 31st August "We are relieved to find we now have fresh water. The standpipe is just outside the school." There were steps outside the wall to get to the farmhouse.

Listening to the radio was another innovation and the children would be able to follow important events.....much improved when a new radiogram was installed.

1936 12th May. "H.M.V. Model 370 radiogramophone has been installed in the school today. We thank Mr. Blyth who has made this possible"

There were several Royal occasions: the Silver Jubilee and death of George Vth. The Coronation and death of George VIth and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth 2nd.

1934 29th November. "Holiday all day. Wedding of the Duke of Kent."

1935 3rd May. "Holiday all Monday and Tuesday, May 6th and 7th for the Jubilee celebrations."

1936 28th January. "The whole school listened in to the broadcast of the King's funeral. We followed the cortege from Westminster Hall to Windsor and after a short rest for dinner we heard the funeral service in St, George's Chapel. The reception was splendid. The childrenlistened attentively throughout"

1937.11th May. "School closed this afternoon for the Coronation of King George VIth and Queen Elizabeth and for the Whit Holiday"

1953 28th April "Mr. Chaplin, the Welfare Officer, called today to deliver 38 Coronation spoons for the children."

22nd May."The Vicar, the Revd. G. Goode visited today and presented the Education committee mugs to the children after speaking to them on the Coronation Regalia. School closed today for the Whit Holiday and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth 2nd."

Bad weather continued to affect the school and Mrs. West, who lived near, often found she had the whole school to deal with as the assistant teachers were unable to get in, or sometimes the school had to be closed as so few children were present."eg.

1930 11th December. "Poor attendance today owing to a very stormy morning. 29 children present."

1937 11th March. "A very stormy morning....the roads in a shocking condition, a few inches deep in snow and water.29 children present.....Several children were very wet and their clothes had to be dried in school."

On one occasion, the Infants' porch was flooded and on another Mrs. West was unable to phone the Education Office

1938 22nd. December. "A very bitter morning...thick snow on the ground and still snowing. 15 present. Unable to phone the Office..the register not marked. Letter posted to the Office/

1942 20th. January " 8 children present Heavy snowfall."

In her eventful time at the school Mrs. West had World War 2 to deal with.

1939 11th September."School opened this morning after remaining closed last week because of the outbreak of war. Evacuees living in the Parish will use the school in the afternoons."

25th September "All the evacuees left this parish for the Harborough Magna district on September 23rd .This school returned to normal today."

21st November. "From today afternoon sessions will commence at 12.45 and terminate at 3.0pm because of the early "Blackout" All children stay at school for lunch, so the new times will be convenient during the dark months."

1940 14th May. "By Government orders school was opened this morning. Every child requested to carry a gas mask."

28th July. "Received 12 yards of window protection net at 1s.11d.halfpenny. From Woodwards at Leamington , also a small roll of narrow mesh wire for window protection. A roll of window tape is on order."

1st August."School closed this afternoon for Midsummer holiday. Two weeks only owing to war conditions."

11th November."Poor attendance today following heavy night raid on Coventry." There were further occasions when this happened.

22nd. November. "By order"School closed this afternoon. 40 children, Coventry

evacuees expected this afternoon about 2pm....”

There were also 9 voluntary evacuees as well. The Senior children were taught in the Parish Hall.”

1941 6th January. “15 evacuee children with their master, Mr. Sensecall are forming a class in the school until their accommodation can be arranged.”

17th September to 2nd October. “Mr. Sensecall took a party of Senior children picking blackberries, crab apples and rose hips for the local jam preserving centre”

31st October. “Mr. Sensecall left to teach in Coventry.”

The children began collecting salvage after a talk was given to them by Mr.Proudfoot and in 1944 were given badges by the Rugby R.D.C

12th.May. “Badges for salvage collection given out today by representatives of the R.D.C. The children far exceeded their target and by request of the organizers, were dismissed a little earlier than usual this afternoon.”

From May 13th 1943. Mrs. West had to take the whole school herself for 11 weeks as no further help was forthcoming when the Infant teacher, Mrs. Blades, could not continue,

20th September.”We are still without a teacher and naturally the school suffers.”
From 22nd Mrs. West herself was away ill until 1st. November and a different teacher came daily on loan from Dunchurch.

1st November. “During my absence Mr. M. Smith, Dunchurch , has sent a teacher each day to take my place . Unfortunately, it had to be a different teacher each day so that the work of his school did not suffer too much.”

When the war ended in 1945 the school was closed on V.E.Day so that the children could join in their own village celebrations.

The success rate for children taking the scholarship to the Grammar Schools at Leamington Spa and Rugby was excellent,one hundred percent often being achieved.

Mrs West retired in July 1955. She is held in great esteem and affection by her former pupils.