

Warnham Historical Society

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School Records. Part 1

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The earliest record so far discovered of a school at Warnham is a reference in John Baker's Horsham Diary 1750-1779 (p. 62) to a boy attending "Dame Willerd's at Warnham" (Sussex Archaeological Collections, Vol. 52, pp. 38-81). "She (Dame Willerd) had 30 scholars at 2d a week, the readers ... (He) did not know how much the writers of which some few the widow taught herself".

Indeed it is probable that there was a Dame school in the village until about the middle of the 19th Century.

In 1845, the Lord of the Manor, J.W. Commerell of Strood Park, dedicated a piece of waste land just outside the village (where the West Sussex County Council gravel tip now is) to the Vicar and Churchwardens to build the first National School.

This school was duly erected in 1851 by subscription at a cost of £270 11s 4d. It was built by Carruthers of Reigate (Wm. Moseley, Architect). It's dimensions 30' x 20' with a height to ceiling of 12' 8". The classroom was 20' x 12'. The subscribers were - James Broadwood of Lyne, £50, Mrs. Fuller of Warnham Court, £10, Mrs. Barnett, West House, £5, Mr. Child of Slinfold, £2, Rev. F. Vincent, Slinfold, £10. The Privy Council provided £74, The National Society £30, and the Chichester Diocesan Association £40. The balance, £49 11s 4d, was made up by the Vicar, The Rev. James Wood.

The accounts of the schools from 1853 to 1879, are available in two books in the Chichester Parish Records (PAR. 203/25/2 and 25/3). The school appears to have been run mainly on the "children's pence", paid weekly. This provided a very variable income, some weeks only 1/11d, and others as much as 6/-d or 7/-d, showing that attendance was very irregular. These contributions were supplemented over the years by donations from individual ladies and gentlemen in the village, as clearly the cost and, presumably, the number of pupils, increased.

Teachers came and went very frequently - though not named, always in the accounts. Miss H. Eaton presided as School Mistress in 1858-62, Miss S. Powell from 1864 to 1867, Miss McHaffie 1867-1868 and Miss Savill 1869 until this school closed. A cottage was apparently rented for them from Mr. J. Agate (Street Farm). Latterly these ladies were assisted by junior pupil teachers and, towards the end of this period, we notice a local fledgling, who had herself been a pupil, became a teacher, and later took over the juniors in the new school after 1872 - Miss Ellen Garman. A Mr. Wanstall taught the Sunday School over a long period.

The new National School

Under the new Elementary Education Act of 1870, which required separate teaching for juniors, this school was no longer big enough. Following an Inspector's report in July 1871, pointing out the inadequacies - partly ascribed to accommodation and partly to frequent changes in teachers - a public meeting was called by the Vestry in October 1871 to consider a proposal to finance and build a new elementary school for the juniors. It was agreed to adopt the voluntary principle for financing, as opposed to a rate-aided one with contingent disadvantages, and to appeal for subscriptions for building a school

which was initially intended to be approximately 40' x 20', including a classroom of 20' x 16' which could be used as a reading room for the young men of the village out of school hours. An estimated £500 would be required together with a substantial sum for repairs to the existing (senior) school.

Following this meeting an appeal was sent out to principal tenant farmers who agreed to a voluntary rate to meet the balance of £300, not already met by donations from landowners, and a further appeal went to the latter and to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, the National Society and the Chichester Diocesan Association. But at a further meeting on 30th December Mr. C.T. Lucas, having looked more carefully into the question of cost, and also into the extent of repairs required for the old school whose foundations by now appeared to require underpinning, (a commentary on the original construction and design), undertook to build the new infants school and reading room at his own cost and to hand this over to Trustees for the village. He considered it was inexpedient to repair the old school building and had spoken to Mr. Broadwood who had offered an alternative site for a new building.

Mr. Lucas subsequently came to the conclusion that the two schools should be combined and at a meeting of the vestry on 20th January, 1872 he put forward plans that he had had prepared by a London Architect, Mr. J. Livock, for a single mixed school to accommodate 160 children, with a parochial reading room and a schoolmaster's house, at an estimated cost of £800 (based on an allowance of £5 per child - but actually he thought more likely to cost £1100. This would have a large schoolroom 45' x 20', an infants' room of 30' x 18' and a classroom and reading room 20' x 18'. A plot of land where the old school now is was promised by Mr. Broadwood together with £150. Mr. Lucas also offered the services of his foreman, who was supervising the rebuilding of the Vicarage, to supervise the work. This scheme was subsequently adopted and the project was put out to tender.

Tenders were substantially higher than the £1100 estimated, and the contract was awarded to Mr. Inkpen of Abinger who submitted the lowest tender of £1500, but who subsequently went broke during the contract, with consequent delays and inevitable further increase in cost. At this stage Mr. Lucas guaranteed to meet the shortfall.

Discussions took place during the spring of 1873 regarding the old school and it was agreed with Mr. Broadwood that this should be pulled down and the land returned to the Manor. Legal questions then arose regarding the disposal of the materials and it was agreed that these should be sold and the proceeds put into the building fund. Problems concerning the management of the successor school were also raised but finally it was agreed that a Committee of Management should be appointed with a Ladies Committee to overlook the girls' school and supervise the needlework, etc.

The final cost of the school was £2,205. Besides the local subscriptions, the National Society contributed £72, the Chichester Diocesan Association £50, and £25 from Sir Percy Shelley. Under his guarantee Mr. Lucas met the shortfall to the tune of £807.

The new school opened in October 1873 with Mr. William Morris as Headmaster and Miss Ellen Garman as Mistress of the junior school.

In the meantime there had been a proposal by the Government Education Department to unite Warnham, Slinford and Rudgwick as a single school district and to establish a new schoolroom at Rowhook for 50 scholars. This caused some misgivings and another public meeting was called on 23rd August, 1872 to consider how this should be done. It was accepted as inevitable that the schoolroom should be provided by the three parishes on a voluntary basis, otherwise it would be provided by a School Board and a school rate be levied. The cost was estimated at about £150 for a schoolroom of 28' x 16'. Warnham's share would be £50. This was guaranteed by Mr. Lucas. There was some contention between the three parishes regarding the site during the subsequent negotiations

and at one time it seems that Slinfold's bid, supported by a full guarantee of £140 of the £150 needed, from one of its parishioners, might gain the day. However, it seems that discussions continued during 1873 and a site in Rowhook on land given by Mr. Childs was eventually agreed. A schoolroom of 30' x 15' with a ceiling height of 14' was provided and also opened in October 1873.