

Warnham Historical Society

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School Records Part 2
Notes on Warnham School 1873-1885

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With the opening of the School in 1873 a period of progress began. During the next twelve years the staff increased in numbers, their status (as reflected in their salaries) improved and new methods of teaching were developed.

Such improvements were general throughout the country as an indirect result of the Education Act of 1870. The Act established a system of County Primary Schools in parishes which had no Church School. Warnham, of course, had a Church of England School, but the Act aroused general interest in education and this was reflected in Church Schools such as Warnham.

The finances of Warnham School were in the hands of the Management Committee, which always included the Vicar and Churchwardens. They had several sources of income including 'Voluntary Rates', donations from the National Society (i.e. 'The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church'), fees paid by the children which varied from time to time and could be waived for parents in need, small Government grants which depended on Inspectors Reports and private subscriptions from local inhabitants. The latter source of income was by far the most substantial as many people contributed comparatively large sums - in particular Mr C.T. Lucas. None of this, however, provided a regular and dependable income and the Management Committee sometimes found itself short of cash. There was as yet no national salary scale for teachers and the salaries of Warnham teachers at this time depended largely on the amount of money available.

In 1874 the School settled down in its new building. Dr William Morris was Headmaster and Mrs Ellen Garman was Mistress of the Junior School at an increased salary of £20 a year. There were also two Pupil-Teachers who were paid £15 a year each with the promise of an annual increment of 30/- a year for the five years of their pupilage. These were Thomas Hall and Mary Branch. Another name sometimes appears in the minutes, that of Miss E.J. Hall. Possibly she was another Pupil-Teacher and could have been a sister or other relative of Thomas Hall.

The Pupil-Teacher system had been started in the 1840s in certain schools, having been adapted from a system already operating in the Netherlands. Pupil-Teachers were children themselves and were often appointed at the age of 13 in their own schools. The general plan was that they continued their general education under the guidance of the Headmaster outside ordinary school hours while they helped with teaching younger children during the day. The system had been considered a great success, but like all systems, its effectiveness must have varied greatly from school to school and depended on the interest and energy of each individual Headmaster. By the 1870s the value of the system was being questioned, and in the next decade Pupil-Teachers, as well as being older, were being collected together into centres once or twice a week for their own education, a scheme which led eventually to the establishment of Teacher Training Colleges.

Opportunities for schooling in Warnham were at this time increased. A new school at Rowhook was opened in October 1873. The school was run by the combined parishes of Warnham, Slinfold and Rudgwick and was situated close to the place where the three parishes meet. It was little more than a small brick building and was built on the line of Stane Street. Today, in 1982, it is still standing

though in a rather derelict condition and is used by a local farmer as a store. The Rowhook school was managed by a separate committee drawn from the three parishes. The Warnham representatives were the Vicar and Mr Lucas, though the latter soon resigned in favour of Mr Charman. The first Mistress was a Mrs Holloway who was not a certificated teacher. There was no separate subscription from Rowhook, but a contribution was paid from the Warnham subscriptions. While Rowhook children attended the separate Rowhook school, Warnham School admitted about fifteen children from outside Warnham School District. These came from the neighbourhood of Warnham Railway Station but lived within Horsham School District. These arrangements clearly worked smoothly, as in January 1874 a letter arrived from the Education Department in Whitehall saying that the two schools in Warnham Parish provided "ample accommodation".

On the other hand there were some difficulties on the Management Committee. The Secretary complained that the attendance record of some members of the Committee was far from good. and he urged them to "pay more attention to their duties". There was also some difficulty in keeping the accounts in balance. Subscriptions were insufficient and Mr Lucas made up a deficiency of £13 19. 6d. The Secretary also thought he should have some remuneration for his services, but he did not get anything.

In 1875 Miss Ellen Garman applied for an increase in her salary and it was rather grudgingly raised to £25 a year, as no one else in the village could be persuaded to do her job ! Thomas Hall, the pupil teacher also applied for an increase and after some hesitation his salary was raised to £20 a year "provided he pays great attention to his duties" and on the understanding that it would not be raised again. Nothing was said about an increase for the other pupil teacher, Mary Branch, an ominous omission in view of the developments of 1876 when a report on her was "unsatisfactory", apparently on the grounds that she had failed her examination. The Vicar thought her "steady and painstaking", but she "was not very good at answering examination papers". One instinctively feels that she was a good and sympathetic teacher. Thomas Hall, however, passed his examination and was given a reward of ten shillings by the Committee.

An Inspector's Report in the autumn of 1876 was entirely satisfactory and a grant of £91 from Whitehall was made to the school. A letter was sent to all rate-payers informing them of this happy state of affairs and inviting them to make larger subscriptions. But in spite of this Mr Lucas again came to the rescue by making up a deficiency in the funds.

During the next two years there were some important changes. The Committee found a new Secretary and Treasurer with the result that there was an improvement in the keeping of the Minutes and Accounts. In 1878 the faithful Miss Garman again applied for an increase in salary and an extra £4 a year was granted as she had passed an examination which made her a Certificated Teacher and this brought a larger grant from Whitehall for the Infant School. This partly went to pay for an additional teacher, a miss Nutt, from Slinfold, who was appointed at a salary of £25 a year. On the other hand the unfortunate Mary Branch was dismissed at the end of summer term 1878 (in spite of the Vicar's good opinion of her) for incapacity, failing her examination and "because of the peculiar conduct of her parents towards the Secretary". The nature of this conduct is not specified ! At the same time the Headmaster asked to have a settled salary instead of being paid out of "School Pence" which was a variable amount. But his plea was not successful. There was trouble of another kind in the summer of 1878. The Headmaster was having some difficulty with discipline "on account of all the teachers coming from the village" which seems an odd reason. (Presumably Miss Nutt of Slinfold must have come to live in Warnham). At the same time a "troublesome boy of weak intellect" was expelled from the school.

In 1879 there were some changes in the Committee. Mr C.T. Lucas, who for many years had been a generous supporter of the school, resigned, and new names appear on the Committee, those of Messrs Churchman, Holland and Simpson.

The next year, for the first time, a set of text-books was purchased for the school, namely fifty copies of Watts' "Elementary Scripture Catechism". Another suggested innovation was the appointment of a School Cleaner. An Inspector's report was "entirely satisfactory" and the Government grant was increased to £121 18. 0d. Possibly as a result of this Miss Garman's salary was increased from £29 to £30 a year.

With the 1880s compulsory education had been inaugurated by the Mundella Acts. Developments were therefore expected at Warnham. In December 1881 a new pupil-teacher, Annie Bilson, was appointed. She was aged 16 and was thus somewhat older than the pupil-teachers of earlier years. On becoming a qualified teacher five years later she remained at Warnham with a salary of £35 a year.

In October 1882 Miss Nutt resigned and Miss Garman followed suit in 1884 after eleven years of faithful service. Only a few months later some unruly pupils caused damage at the school. The parents of those guilty were desired to send their offspring to appear before the Committee of Management. The children duly apologised and the parents were required to pay for the damage. Not long after, one, David Budd was commissioned to clear the school drains. Unfortunately the Treasurer had omitted to obtain an estimate in advance and when Mr Budd sent in a bill for £13 11. 11d. the Committee thought the sum exorbitant, but eventually, after some grumbling, paid it.

Miss Garman had been replaced in 1884 by Miss Luxton who introduced the next far-reaching development which had yet happened at Warnham School. She proposed to use the new Kindergarten method of teaching in the Infant Classes. This indicates that Miss Luxton had been trained in a new and professional way, while the Kindergarten system itself was a new and almost revolutionary method of education, breaking with long established tradition. The Managers were naturally alarmed at this startling proposal and held over this decision until the Inspector could be consulted. Eventually he gave his agreement and modern methods came to Warnham. The new system needed a larger staff and Miss Mary Wilkins of Bridport in Dorset was appointed as an additional infants' Mistress. Soon afterwards the Inspector recommended a further increase in staff, but unfortunately no money was available. The best that could be done was to appoint a girl, Mary Nightingale, at two shillings a week, to help Miss Luxton. These new methods with increased teaching staff saw Warnham School in 1885 launched successfully into the closing years of the century.

During the period covered by these notes (1873-1885) the Headmaster was Mr William Norris. The number of pupils increased gradually from about 100 to about 160. The introduction of compulsory attendance seems to have made little difference which suggests that the great majority of Warnham children enrolled at the school in any case. But in 1877 an Attendance Officer appeared on the scene, a Mr Attree. He seems to have helped occasionally with teaching in addition to his duties at other schools.

But attendance was very irregular throughout the period. Health among the children was evidently very poor compared with today's standards. Children in large numbers were often absent with colds, whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever and other ailments. There is no mention, however, of typhoid or tuberculosis which was so frequent among children in large towns. The teachers were quite often ill as well, though not apparently the Headmaster. Many children were often kept at home by bad weather - snow, storms, excessive heat in summer and rain. Other reasons for absence were "gathering acorns" (a great number involved every autumn), hay-making, harvest, following the stag hounds, and, on one occasion in 1876, "watching a steam plough" !

There were also a good many days or afternoons off school for various Church occasions, Horsham Fair and not infrequent School tea-parties at Warnham Court, both in winter and summer. On top of this "absence without leave", was by no means unknown.

There was a surprising number of visitors to the school chief among whom

was a local clergyman, the Reverend J.A. Scott. His status at the school seems a little uncertain, but he describes himself as "Hon. Sec. to the Managers and Correspondent" and he seemed to regard himself as senior to the Headmaster in the school hierarchy. His visits were of weekly, if not daily occurrence, and he often involved himself in teaching scripture and in examining needlework. There were also frequent visitations from the gentry, especially ladies, mainly from Warnham Court and Ends Place. They seemed to regard the school as a show-place for the visitors. They must have been something of an interruption but seem to have been taken as a matter of course by the Headmaster. The ladies were fond of helping with needlework and were constantly handing out prizes for good attendance and the like.

Another clerical visitor was the Diocesan Examiner, the Reverend R. Blight who was for ever conducting examinations in Religious Knowledge and handing out certificates.

The subjects taught were almost exclusively Reading, Writing, Scripture (of which there was a great deal), Dictation (a favourite of Mr Scott's), Singing and Needlework. A geography lesson was evidently something of an occasion, especially if a map was displayed. But it was gradually put on a more regular basis during the period.

There was a normal amount of misbehaviour, including "throwing stones", obstinacy and "kicking Miss Nutt " ! But punishments were quite mild, even for the latter.

In October 1879 the Rev. J.A. Scott disappears from the scene and his place as Secretary to the Managers was taken by the Vicar himself the Rev. J. Hood. He was evidently a new broom in the school and everything became much more business-like, and was even more so under the regime of Mr. Bowcott in 1882. Mr Scott's minutes and accounts had been sketchy to say the least.

In 1882 moreover there was a thorough-going Inspection of the School by a team of H.M. Inspectors. This recommended more help in the Infants Department and led to the appointment of Miss Luxton as noted above. The Report particularly noted the excellence of Religious Education in the school and a very well deserved tribute was paid to Miss Garman and to the Headmaster Mr William Norris who had nobly held the post throughout our period with a remarkably small staff.