

Chapter Six: Taking control - education and civil administration

Education in the parish

We do not know when a system of education began in the parish. The first records we have are for the Croxall National School in the building adjoining School House. This is in the ecclesiastical parish of Croxall and it opened in 1820, operating until the Mary Howard School took over on the 22nd June 1915. Indeed School House is an ancient name and it may be that a school of sorts operated there before the schoolroom was built; as we shall see, it is probably the oldest building standing in Edingale.

For its first century and more, the school was very much a Croxall institution – some records include Oakley in the title and the National School had occasional connections with Catton. The vicar of Croxall was the secretary and general manager of the school and made regular visits to teach scripture. The connection with Croxall, Oakley (with its Howard connections) and Catton is probably about money: the aristocratic families were able to endow the school, whereas Staffordshire Edingale had no ‘squire’. In addition, until late in the nineteenth century, the vicar of Croxall was appointed by the Crown and would be seen as the senior clergyman in the locality. For some of that period, the vicar of Croxall was Bishop Thomas Staley, formerly of Honolulu – he was very involved in school matters. However, children from Staffordshire Edingale were educated at the school; one feature of the early years is the astonishing number of children from both parishes being educated in such a small building.

If 1820 is the beginning, then the first schoolmaster was Charles Cooper. The Croxall church register has an entry for the baptism of his daughter on 9th November 1821. The schoolmaster would have lived in the School House separated from the schoolroom by a connecting door.

In this period, schooling was paid for partly by parental contribution, partly by the charity of the local gentry and larger farmers, and partly by Exchequer subsidy. Much of the last of these was based on school performance – how little has changed down the years! The parental contribution varied between 1d and 3d per child each week and the logbooks note some creative efforts by teachers to ensure due payment was made.

“21st February 1868 – School broken up from 24th - 28th in consequence of the concert occupying 2 ½ days in its preparation and completion – the parents would not pay for them for the last 2 ½ days of the week.”

“28th April 1876 – Bishop Staley stated that after midsummer, each child would be required to pay 2d per week as school fee.”

“5th May 1876 – The pence paid this week on Tuesday was so little that several of the children were sent home to ask their parents to send it.”

“30th June 1876 – Four children moved to Haunton school this week on account of the school fees here being raised. Several of the parents only send 1d as formerly instead of 2d as required by the School Managers.”

“21st July 1876 – About 50 children attended this week. The decrease in the numbers is owing to the rise in the school fees.”

“11th August 1876 – Mrs Astbury came on Monday afternoon to protest against the raising of the school fees and refused to pay more than the old fee.”

“October 1891 – Money formerly paid as school fees is now invested in School Savings Bank.”

In the 1830s, Charles Rowley became the schoolmaster. His descendants still live in the village and our most recent road has been named Rowley Close.



Charles Rowley (1805-1869) - courtesy of Mary Radford

School logbooks also show the involvement in school life of local farmers: Eliza German, from Broadfields Farm, Croxall, taught needlework; Mr and Mrs Godfrey, farmers from Croxall Hall (before Croxall Grange was built) helped in a number of ways; and Mrs Oldacre from Broadfields, Oakley, bought materials including new reading books, slate pencils and chalk. Miss Anson and Lady Horton, from Catton Hall, would also visit.

On the 10th February 1871 the logbook states, *“Holiday on account of Lady Horton’s funeral. The singers, with the Mistress, attended the church.”* This was Anne Beatrix Wilmot-Horton, who was the subject of Lord Byron’s poem, previously mentioned.

The logbooks also record illnesses:

“11th October 1872 – Many little ones away on account of whooping cough.”

“23rd November 1874 – Attendance falling off on account of there being scarlet fever among the children.”

“7th December 1874 – Emily Alesbrook has died this week of fever.”

“December 1877 – Many children absent with the mumps.”

“July 1879 – Measles among younger children. Several entire families are away.”

“18th June 1881 – Whooping cough is prevalent in the village. Average pupil attendance for the week is 49.”

“November 1883 – The Station House children have scarlet fever.”

“11th December 1886 – William Asbury died of measles.”

“23rd December 1886 – The measles and ulcerated sore throats are found throughout the parish. The Rev WG Garland attended school and dismissed the children who came on Thursday morning. The epidemic of measles – Holiday – we have been given a certificate from the Medical Authority, Dr Faussett Sanitary Physician from Tamworth Union.”

“24th January 1887 – Commenced school. Many of the little folks are still too ill to attend school. During the epidemic all the children have been fed, by the favour of the Rev W Garland, Bishop Staley and T Levett-Prinsep, on two nights a week with soup.”

“8th December 1911 – Attendance very low – some of the children having chicken pox.”

Throughout the later years of the nineteenth century, the logbook details annual inspections from Her Majesty's Inspectors in January, and from the diocese on the standard of religious teaching in the school in July. There were also quarterly internal examinations. There were teacher-training days when the school closed for staff to go to Lichfield or Tamworth on courses. The first is recorded on 11th June 1869. During the holidays the offices and schoolhouse were, in rotation, painted, cleaned, scoured, whitewashed, lime-washed and the ash pit emptied and disinfected.

'School treats' were given regularly: these would be half-day holidays, tea at Croxall Hall, and so on. Incentives were given, in that, if attendance was good for one month, the children were given a half-day holiday the following month. Also money was given as a reward to the pupil with the best attendance record. There were regular visits from the Attendance Officer from November 1880. By 1908, he would weigh and measure the children in advance of a medical inspection by the Medical Officer of Health.

Sanitary inspections date from June 1881 and the Medical Officer of Health's first recorded visit is in April 1896. By 1905 they are both visiting the school regularly. The Inspector of the NSPCC visited for the first time in October 1908 and would regularly check for 'vermin'. The school nurse first started to visit from November 1914 and an Instructor of Physical Training visited from May 1915. To give some idea of life in the village school, around this period, listed below are some of the reasons for the school giving, or the children taking, holidays:

(First week in June) – "Holiday for village wake."

"19th December 1867 – School Feast. Holiday all day."

"23rd July 1882 – Holiday on Wednesday afternoon for choir to attend the choral festival at Tamworth."

"17th May 1868 – Gave several leave to carry their fathers' dinners and teas."

"15th May 1867 – Holiday for the club."

"7th November 1867 – Holiday in the afternoon to prepare for Bible meeting that evening."

"23rd May 1902 – School closed on account of the school being used for a Rural District Council election."

The logbooks also show a variety of Royal events:

"20th March 1871 – Rev Burdekin proposed a holiday for the Royal Wedding."

"30th May 1894 – There was a holiday because the Prince of Wales was visiting Lichfield."

"26/27th June 1902 – Holiday on account of Coronation festivities" (of Edward VII).

"21st June 1911 – School closed for a week from this afternoon in commemoration of the Coronation" (of George V).

"29th May 1924 – Visit of the Duke of York to Tamworth. Holiday all day."

Other interesting entries in the logbooks are:

"23rd May 1873 – Did not begin at the usual time in the afternoon as many children stayed to see the sheep being washed (dipped). Commenced lessons at 2.00 pm."

"18th June 1875 – After 4 o'clock, John German cautioned the boys against getting into his mowing field" (Broadfields Farm).

"15th August 1879 – School photograph is taken."

“January 1887 – Night school, 41 present. The school is used for any children who desire to attend at nights. Light and fire being provided. Teachers JE Dewick, SA Dewick, JW Dewick and ME Dewick (son and daughter). The work done, arithmetic and spelling, has been good and marks are given.”

“2nd December 1910 – Only 34 children present in the morning owing to very severe floods – the road leading to the school becoming impassable and water rising. On consultation with the Correspondent it was deemed advisable to send the children home, some of them being wet.”

“1st October 1911 – The Head Master and Assistant Mistress were assaulted by a parent this afternoon. She – the parent – struck the Master on the head with a stick and hit the Assistant in the face with her hand.”

“22nd October 1911 – School closed as the teachers were taking proceedings against a parent for assault.”

“30th April 1918 – Several away in the afternoon having gone to the funeral of Edith Vaughan who was drowned in the Mease on Friday.” (Edith, a pupil aged 5, had been collecting flowers for the May Day procession when she fell into the river and drowned).

“12th March 1919 – Great floods in the afternoon extending up the School Lane. School abandoned, the 16 children present having wet feet.”

“19th February 1929 – Attendance Officer visited – inspected miners’ children’s footwear and supplied five children with new pairs of boots out of money provided by the Miners’ Distress Fund.”

“30th May 1932 – Information to hand that a County Entrance Scholarship has been awarded to Christine Joyce Wilcox.” (Later, Mrs Harvey, a teacher at the school).

“1st June 1932 – Rev TR Pelham-Thornman came into school, congratulated Christine Joyce Wilcox on gaining a County Entrance Scholarship, suggested that the children be given a holiday on the first fine sunshiny afternoon in honour of the occasion and that the children be encouraged to provide an honours board for the school.”

There were many entries in the logbooks about repairs to the School House, for example:

“3rd December 1874 – The duties were carried on in the Infants department on Thursday when the fire grate of the large room was being repaired.”

“25th June 1881 – Sanitary inspection remarked upon defective ventilation and water supply.”

“3rd November 1890 – Workmen commenced building the ‘sanitary buildings.’”

“11th September 1905 – a new lavatory basin has been put up.”

Then in 1909 came a report from His Majesty’s Inspector:

“This is a very poor building and I very much doubt whether it can ever be made suitable for permanent recognition. The main room is overcrowded; the windows are all unsatisfactory, small square panes with swing casements. The partition is not sound proof and prevents all supervision. The closets are cleaned out twice a year.”

It seems inevitable then, that alternative accommodation would be required. It was, therefore, decided to build a new school on a site adjoining the playground of the old school. An entry in the logbook states

“6th July 1914 – Holiday in the afternoon when the foundation stone of the new school was laid by Mrs Levett-Prinsep.”

This notes the start of the construction of the Mary Howard School. The architects were Hicks and Charlewood of Newcastle-on-Tyne and the building contractors were Mitchell and Son, of Aldergate, Tamworth.

Mary Howard was the wife of Colonel the Hon Fulke Greville Howard who had inherited the Elford Howard estates. They lived principally at Levens Hall near Kendal, Cumbria and Ashted Park, Surrey, but also had estates in Norfolk. Mary Howard lived a long life from 1785 – 1877 and was a noted benefactress to schools and churches in or near all her estates. In fact, the endowment of the school that bears her name was from a trust fund and her descendant, Mr Howard Paget, opened the new school on the 22nd June 1915. The log book states simply “ ... moved from the old school into the new one.”

In the juniors’ room a marble tablet was built into the wall with the inscription:

*“To the glory of God
And in memory of
The Hon Mary Howard
Through whose liberality
This school has been erected
37 years after she had
passed to her rest.”*

The 1915 school building has been extended subsequently at both the north and south ends (the former to make a kitchen) and has the more recent addition of a temporary classroom in the school grounds. The village had to continue to raise funds for the maintenance of the new school. The *Tamworth Herald* on 11th September 1937 noted that a garden fete was held in the vicarage in order to raise the first substantial funds for refurbishing the school. The aim was to raise £60 towards external decoration and the installation of piped water as “sometimes, insects were present in the children’s drinking water.” The logbooks give further details regarding this 1915 building:

“2nd September 1936 – School re-opened as a Junior Mixed School.”

“12th November 1937 – Water supply now obtained from the mains.”

“10th January 1938 – School opened. During the holidays electric light fittings were installed in school.”



The school in 1925 with Henry Haycock the head teacher – courtesy of Fred Bacon

*Left to right Top row – **May Carter** (Teacher), Bill Duggins, Dick Mycock, Ron Hobley, Sam Bowden, Dicky Wood, Frank Rowley, Philip Miller, **Henry Haycock** (head teacher)*

Second row (standing) – Nellie Greensmith, Mary Hudson, Daisy Greensmith, Winnie Robinson, Lillian Bowden, Milly Ramsell, Evelyn Wilcox, Dolly Hudson, Sybil Clarke, Bet Hobley, Evelyn Tearle

Third row (standing) - ? Clayton, Alfred Vaughan, Dorothy Tearl, ? Clayton, Rose Bacon, Jack Rowley, Billy Wood

Fourth row (seated) – Tom Wilcox, Arthur Vaughan, ? Vaughan, Dorothy Greensmith, Aggie Charles, Emily Green, Vera Vaughan, Bill Rowley, Arthur Rowley

Bottom Line – Fred Bacon, Charlie Vaughan, Joe Bowden, ? Clayton, Albert Charles, Howard Rowley, ? Clayton



School photograph 1983, staff from left, Mrs Harvey, Mrs Sharpe, Mrs Lythe and Mrs Shuck



School photograph 1995, staff from left Mrs Smith, Mrs Wood, Mrs Hunter, Mrs Beaman and Mrs Meikle

Croxall School – Head Teachers

Charles Cooper	1821 – 1830
Charles Rowley	1830 – 1851
William Woolley	1851 – 1866
Elizabeth Sherwin	1866 – 1867
James Harper	1867 – 1869
Sarah Childs	1869 – 1873
Elizabeth Fisher	1873 – 1875
Mary Ann Lawrence	1875 – 1877
Ann Shilton	1877 – 1883
Thomas Jaques	1883 – 1883

Joseph Dewick 1883 – 1890

Thomas Sage 1890 – 1893

Henry Haycock 1893 – 1915

Mary Howard School – Head Teachers

Henry Haycock 1915 – 1925

Dorothy Colclough 1925 – 1959

Frank Woolley 1961 – 1979

Cristabel Lythe 1980 – 1993

Bernadette Hunter 1994 – 1998

Margaret Knuckey 1999 – 2007

Julie Bullous 2007 -

Civil administration

For centuries, ecclesiastical parishes ran local affairs. The ‘vestry’ meetings appointed not only churchwardens, but also a constable and at least one overseer of the poor to implement the provisions of the Poor Law Acts of 1598 onwards. The central idea of the Poor Law was that each parish looked after its own – at one point, anyone who wanted to leave their home parish had to take with them a certificate stating that their needs would be met by the parish of their birth, should they fall on hard times.

Parishes were grouped into hundreds, or their Danish equivalent, wapentakes - and then into counties. Edingale, with its confused boundaries, encompassed both the parish of Croxall, including Derbyshire Edingale, as part of the Repton wapentake in Derbyshire, and Staffordshire Edingale, being only one part of Alrewas parish (for Poor Law purposes) in Offlow hundred, in Staffordshire. The joint arrangement with Alrewas did not always function to Edingale’s advantage. In 1604/5, the men of Edingale including John Pymme, William Browne and Thomas Butler petitioned a Justice of the Peace against having to contribute towards a footbridge in Alrewas because *“we doe mainteine our bridges and hyways within our precynctes of Edengale without demanding anything from them.”*

Although records are not entirely clear, it seems that Croxall ‘hitched on’ to the Alrewas arrangements for appointing a constable and overseer of the poor, in the same way that Croxall had participated in the manor court. This pattern of working together seems to have meant that when an early form of civil administration was instituted – the Poor Law Unions – in 1834, both parishes came under Tamworth Union, despite Croxall being in Derbyshire. Boards of Guardians supervised the unions, and their most ‘famous’ (infamous) role was to run the workhouse. Our workhouse was, of course, the building that became St Editha’s hospital on the Wigginton Road in Tamworth.

In other ways, the village was self-contained. In Victorian times, a fire tender (a horse-drawn hand pump) was allocated to the village and was stored at Fields Farm. A plaque to this effect remained on the side of the farmhouse until well into the twentieth century.

Some of our boundary problems were at last resolved in 1888 when the Boundary Commissioners recommended:

“That so much of the Parish of Croxall in the Union of Tamworth, as is in the County of Derby, be transferred to the County of Stafford, and that the said Parish of Croxall be amalgamated with the adjoining Parish of Edingale.”

It was shortly following this that the county boundary was moved to the position it occupies today. Sadly, ecclesiastical parishes were not amalgamated.

In 1894, an Act of Parliament formed district councils (county councils having been formed in 1888), and the rural part of Tamworth Union became Tamworth Rural District Council. For some of this period, Robert Garland, of Raddle Farm (Bob’s uncle) was our councillor. Prior to this, he had been chairman of Tamworth Poor Law Institute (the Board of

Guardians). Eventually, much of Tamworth Rural District Council transferred to Lichfield Rural District Council, and, in 1974, Lichfield Rural District Council merged with the City administration to form Lichfield District Council – the pattern of local administration we see today.

The citizens of Edingale didn't take the opportunity to form their own civil Parish Council until 1934. Under the Staffordshire Review Order of 1934 the parishes of Croxall and Edingale and part of the parish of Alrewas were amalgamated to form the new civil parish of Edingale (the present boundaries).

The first parish meeting for the election of councillors was held on the 5th March 1934. Those present were: George Plested, William Baxter, Arthur Johnson, Thomas Lindop, Arthur Hilderley, Edward Joscelyn Holland and Robert Garland. Seven nominations were received for the seven seats – George Cliffe, Alfred Edward Duggins, Robert Garland, Arthur Hilderley, Edward Joscelyn Holland, Thomas Lindop and George Plested (five of these were farmers). Howard Carter was appointed clerk at a salary of £6.00 per annum.

At their first meeting, Robert Garland was elected chairman and treasurer, George Cliffe vice-chairman, and George Cliffe and Arthur Hilderley were to represent the parish on the Rating Authority. Their first agenda included: the parish pumps and the shortage of drinking water; the footpath through the Woodyard; the bad state of Pessall Lane bridge and the disrepair of the roads generally; and problems with sewerage. Other people who served the council through the 1930s were George Beech (Pessall Pits Farm) George Arblaster (Oakley Farm) and George Cooper.

Footpaths remain a perennial item on parish agendas. In fact, it's a little sad to see how many of our present problems have been discussed at parish council over the years with little or no response from the county or district authorities. The footpath at the foot of the Charter Homes has been on the agenda for over thirty years and the first request for street lighting was submitted in 1951 – for the scheme to be implemented in 1963.

The first council homes were built in 1932, and piped water came to the village in 1936/7. A telephone call office opened at the post office in May 1930. Residents who wanted the 'phone had to make calls from there. The 'electric light' came to the village properties in 1938, but was not extended to Croxall and the outlying farms until after the war. The present scheme of mains drainage came in 1963 (having been first mentioned at a parish council meeting in 1949). A refuse collection service began around 1948. Although two massive gas pipelines run through the parish (installed – with significant disruption – in the mid 1960s) and there has been much debate on the subject, we do not yet have a gas supply.

Over the years, there have been many longstanding members of the parish council: Arthur Rowley served an unbroken 53 years; Arthur Ward served from 1944 until his death in 1962; Laddie Simpson served from 1946 until November 1974 when he resigned due to ill health; Norah Mason was the first woman to serve on the council from 11th August 1960 (and is still a member) and Bob Timmis and Jack Dolman each served for a quarter of a century.