

Research was undertaken to discover some of the history and development of the school over the years. The original log books of the school are now held at the Cheshire Record Office, along with various other documents relating to the building of the school and its relationship with St. Peter's Church.

The records show that between 1822 and 1875 a National School for children existed in the area, but not on the present site of the existing school. The original building which served the children of Duddon, Clotton, Hoofield, Burton and Iddenshall still stands today, as a dwelling house which is part of Smithy Court.

Land was conveyed to the school to begin building new premises on 26th September 1874. On 14th May 1875 the old school building was closed and on 17th May 1875 the new school was opened on the present site. The Headteacher was Mr. Longdin and his wife also taught at the school.

The first H.M.I. Report on the school stated:

'The school is making fairly satisfactory progress. The children read and spell well, but the style of writing is very poor throughout the school.

Arithmetic and singing require more attention. The new school room is very suitable and convenient but the ventilation is imperfect. Books, a blackboard and cupboards are wanted.'

The school log books show many interesting entries, including all the changes of staff, but much information about social conditions and life at the time can be gleaned from the entries. The poor attendance of the children at school is often referred to, citing illnesses such as whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever, diptheria, chicken pox, mumps and influenza and sometimes these were so bad that the school was closed.

Other absences from school resulted from haymaking time, fruit gathering and mushroom gathering! Tarporley Race days and Beeston Festival also claimed many children to have unofficial days off from school. (In September 1876, 4 children were actually crossed off the register for irregular attendance.)

The H.M.I. Report of May 1876 stated:

'The condition of the school is only moderately satisfactory but Mrs. Becket who has only had charge of it for about six months cannot be held responsible. There are some signs of improvement but much will still have to be done before the school can be considered efficient.'

In December 1876 Mrs. Beckett died and in February 1877 Sarah Vanderpeear was appointed as the new headmistress.

By June of 1877 there had been another inspection which stated:

'The children are decidedly backward (but not more than perhaps under the circumstances of the past years might have been expected).

I shall look for very considerable improvements at the next inspection.'

Inspections over the next few years gave much the same points of view, including :

'There should be two or three sets of reading books for each class.

The infants are backward. They should be taught with more method. A few pictures would enliven their classroom.'

'This school does not do well in anything. The reading is poor, the handwriting is not well formed, and the arithmetic is very weak The first standard children are very backward. Geography is passable, although weak in the first class.'

However, things did begin to improve and by the 1880s the reports began to be more favourable. By the turn of the century the school was still called Clotton Hoofield School and in 1902 the vicar reported that the Earl of Haddington who owned much land in the area had promised a suitable site for a school house for the school teachers and a plan was submitted.

Close links have always been kept with the Church and the vicars always spent time in the school giving religious instruction to the children. Prizes were also given to deserving Sunday School scholars. Vicars also appeared at times to give the odd lesson in arithmetic and dictation!

In October 1903 the H.M.I. Report called the school 'a capital little school' and noted that it was 'becoming overcrowded'. (By 14th April 1904 there were 100 children on roll).

LOCAL MEMORIES:

Last year, some of the people who attended the school at different times were kind enough to tell us of a few of their memories of their school days and some of their information has been included here.

Our thanks to all those people who were kind enough to contribute in this way and also those who lent us precious photographs to copy.

Mrs. Clutton attended school between 1927 and 1938:

'I liked embroidery but I didn't like history.'

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'I once got punished with the ruler because I was mucking about in Church, but it wasn't my fault! When I left school I worked for Mr. and Mrs.Johnson at the School House. I remember the hurdy-gurdy man coming and I got to turn the handle while he collected the money.'

Mrs. Lewis attended school between 1929-1943:

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'I remember chanting tables all together. Sums and words were chalked up on blackboards on the wall. We had slates and later books to work with. There no school meals, everyone that could not get home and back in an hour took sandwiches. There were very few trips.

The infants and the big room had open fires. There were earth toilets which the caretaker had to empty.

The boys had a garden to work in at the bottom of the playing. This lesson took place while the girls were sewing. We made an assortment of clothing, also wool rugs were made in the top class.

At the morning break time you could line up for Horlicks which was a halfpenny a cup. This was made by the Top Class girls with a teacher looking on, in a big urn that had a 'posser' which had to be pumped up and down until all the lumps had gone.

The Top Class also went to Tarporley School. Girls went there to do Washing and Finishing of Clothes of your own. Also we learnt baking. The boys did Woodwork.'

Mrs. Davenport attended school between 1931-1941:

'We studied history, geography, nature study, music, craftwork, religion, sports, painting and first-aid (when the war broke out). If parents could afford it the school uniform was a black gym-slip with a white blouse and a black and yellow tie. Boys had to wear the tie at all times.

I walked to school and most children went home for dinner. Some would have to go a long way home and be back for 1.00pm. At play-time we played hopscotch, marbles and other ball games.

There was always a cane at school and this was made from the bamboo tree which grew in the yard! Boys got the cane and girls got the ruler, for things like truancy and telling lies.

Two school outings that I remember include a trip to London on the train and going to a pageant on the Roodee at Chester.

There used to be an Open Day when mums used to come and look at our work and craft. The school managers and their wives used to come and very often they would buy the crafts because mums hadn't got much money in those days.

When the evacuees came to the village in 1939 it altered school life completely. The village children only went to school for half a day, the evacuees went for the other half and they swapped over.'

Mrs. Evans attended school between 1938-1948:



'I was taught by Miss Weaver, Miss Constance, Mrs. Robinson and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. I walked about a quarter of a mile to school.

Sometimes girls got caned when they did their embroidery wrong and I remember when Mrs. Ramsden said it was all wrong and cut it up!

During the war there used to be a siren and there were two air-raid shelters on the field.'

