

THE HISTORY GROUP

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CROWHURST DURING THE 19TH CENTURY



It has been said of Crowhurst that it is a Parish rather than a village for it had no central location, no pub and no shop.

It was a Parish of 2119 acres including 7 acres of water. In 1800 almost all of the adult population were farmers or farm workers living around scattered farms. The wages paid to Ag/Labs in the Godstone union, of which Crowhurst was part, was 9-10 shillings a week with rents being 1s 6d - 3 shillings a week. Extra work could bring the wages up to 12s a week. By the 1900s the wages had risen to 16 to 18 shillings a week, but we do not know how many hours were worked to earn these amounts.

In 1801 the first National Census was taken and since then have been taken every ten years, the first four were little more than head counts and very few of their findings have been retained.

Population figures:

1801 186 =103 males; 83 females

1811 194 =107 males; 87 females

1821 214 =118 males; 96 females

In 1820 the famous Crowhurst yew tree was hollowed out to hold twelve people. It was allegedly started off by a publican, it had a door fitted, and during the hollowing out a cannon ball was found embedded in the tree. Every Palm Sunday stands were set up around the tree and a fair was held. An elderly lady living in Limpsfield in the

early 1900s recalled her father telling how he and his friends walked every year to Crowhurst to attend this fair and brought back a piece of bark from the yew tree. Why he did this she did not know. Eventually, perhaps because it got out of hand with drinking & rowdy behaviour, the fair was stopped in the 1850s.

1831 census 212 =116 males; 96 females

1841 census Total 350. This was the first census showing addresses & occupations. In the case of Crowhurst the population was almost doubled by the inclusion of the Navvies working on the construction of the London South Coast & Dover Railway. The Railway ran from west to east across the parish of Crowhurst.

1843 Tithe Map of Crowhurst published.

1843 The London & South Coast Railway completed with no station in Crowhurst

1851 census 212 =122 males; 90 females, showing that with the completion of the railway the population had returned to pre railway numbers.

On 30th March 1851 a nationwide religious census was undertaken.

St Georges Church Crowhurst was described as 'a parish church, a perpetual curacy endowed with a charge on the Tithe of £40, other endowments = Queen Anne's Bounty £20, Fees £5, other sources about £10'.

Church attendance on that day - General Congregation - Morning 72; Afternoon 84

Sunday scholars - Morning 27; Afternoon 31

The weather that morning was very bad with heavy rain causing floods and bad road conditions,

J Haldane Stewart Perpetual Curate (perpetual = permanent, not temporary).

1861 census Total 211. The population was still almost 100% agriculturally orientated. There were 2 Sweeps and two 13 and 14 year old boys whose occupations were given as Sweeps Servant, plus a Draper and a Boot Maker

1862 Ground for a National School was purchased from Mr Wm Pepys and plans drawn up

1864 Crowhurst School building completed at a cost of £518. 11s.4p.

In 1863 a head Teacher was appointed, a Miss Jane Rowland (later Mrs Jane Coomber), Miss Rowland came from South Wales. There is no logbook for the school until July 1866.

In October 1866 a night school was started which ran until December, it is not clear if this was run to help children who had missed school, or to help adults receive an elementary education but it was repeated for several years

1867 the log reports that rapid progress had been made in writing on paper (a high standard of writing was required as the pupils had to use slate until they were allowed to use paper, which was still quite expensive).

1868 A school trip to Crystal Palace for 25 of the 39 pupils, they were taken by van and cart. An experience, the cost of which (£4.17s.4p) was born by a farmer. This event took place annually for several years.

'**Crowhurst**', being an agricultural area, meant that throughout the first 40 years of the school there were periods of large absence from school. In early spring children planted the bean crop instead of being at school, apparently a job traditionally done by children. And come the summer harvest holiday (nowadays called the summer hol-

iday), the older boys worked on the farm gathering in the harvest. The girls stayed at home to look after the infants while their mothers helped out with the harvest. Several times the school would open after the summer break only to have no pupils turn up and the school had to extend the holiday for a further week

20th February 1867, Miss Rowland married Wm Coomber of Mansion House Farm and during a long marriage gave birth to nine children. At each birth she took a fortnight off from school, the vicar of Crowhurst and his wife often taking lessons during a teacher's absence.

4th March 1867, one girl was told to stay at home till she could come to school cleaner.

During the school year there were several celebration days. 1st May was a holiday and the children chose a May Queen and paraded around with flowers. In June there was another day off for Lingfield Club, when a feast was held at the Star Inn in Lingfield. On **21st June 1887** the school was closed to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee. At half past four a tea was given to the pupils and their mothers in the schoolroom, games were played in a nearby field lent by a local farmer and all left at 9.30pm having all had an enjoyable evening.

The start of compulsory education and visits by the school attendance officer did not have an immediate effect on the attendance records but the attendance figures slowly got better

On **8th Dec 1896** the medical officer visited the school and ordered it to close until Jan 1897 'on account of there being a measles epidemic'.

On **23rd Dec 1898** Mr Williams of Mansion House presented each scholar with two oranges on leaving school for Christmas.

During the first 38 years of the school it appears to have had a good level of achievement at low cost, the total running cost of the school for 1901-1902 including salaries being £143.2s.2d.

1871 census 250 =132 males; 118 female

The census continued to show an almost 100% agricultural population. Included for the first time were a schoolteacher, a vicar and vicarage and a gamekeeper.

1881 census shows a population of 426 once again influenced by Navvies who were working on the construction of the Croydon, Oxted and East Grinstead railway line. The Navvies lived in huts somewhere near Chellows.

1884 Railway siding into Crowhurst brickworks constructed.

1884 First trains run on the Croydon, Oxted and East Grinstead Railway.

1886 Altered Tithe apportionments - The main consequence of this was to take into account the changes to the tithe rents caused by the construction of the new railway line through Crowhurst. In an agreement between the parish of Crowhurst and the Railway Company it was agreed that to compensate the parish for loss of Tithe Revenues caused by the railway running through the parish the Railway Company would pay rent to the parish.

In 1886 Dr Sidney Austin, a Lingfield doctor, started to hold religious meetings in the kitchen at Grubb Farm, Staffhurst Wood. It soon became too small for the numbers attending, so some Navy Huts used in the construction of the Railway were obtained and erected on Bombers Farm in Crowhurst near the Railway Bridge, on land owned

by Mr Charlton of Bombers who charged a rent of 1s per year. The chapel had lighting provided by three paraffin lamps which hung from the ceiling by chains and the room was heated by a small coke stove. These huts were used until 1913 when they were replaced by an iron building, later removed to Edenbridge.

1891 census, total 246, still mainly farmers or farm workers, but the newly built railway employed several inhabitants as platelayers. The brickworks were also beginning to employ brick makers living in Crowhurst.

1895 On 15th July 1895 in accordance with the wishes in the will of the late Mr George Marchant, a Trust Deed was drawn up between Mr Henry Marchant and the trustees of the National School Crowhurst regarding a legacy of £100 bequeathed in the will of the late George Marchant. This was to be invested and the monies raised to be given to the National School Crowhurst for recreational use by the pupils.

Witnessed by Mr Henry Marchant
Hugh Howard-Williams, vicar
Thomas Hooker, farmer
Alfred Boorer, Brickmakers Arms, Licensed Victualler
Fredrick Wood, Brick maker
Thomas Oliver, Labourer.

1901 census 243 = 127 males; 116 females

The occupations were still predominantly agricultural but with the brickworks employing 17 men and with two of the largest farms not having farmers living in the farmhouse things were starting to change in Crowhurst.

If the Parish registers are to be believed it is very surprising that with no formal education available in Crowhurst until the 1860s and with 99 marriages taking place between 1813-1900, of the 198 individuals only 37 could not sign the marriage register.



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Sources:

Taken from School Log Book
& Census records