



EDUCATION IN THE LOCAL AREA 1800 – 1900

Education began in the RH7 area long before it became compulsory.

The 1841 census shows Mary E as a schoolmistress with scholars at home.

The 1851 census also records Hannah Westcott of Ebenezer Lodge as a 'Proprietress of School', with several scholars living with her.

In 1844 work began on the building of a school in Blindley Heath.

In 1849 Caroline and Courtney Phillips gave:

' A piece of land in the Parish of Lingfield part of 'two Stile Mead' containing half an acre...'

'Upon trust with all buildings to be erected thereon for a church of England School for poor persons in the Parish of Lingfield and the neighbourhood to be called Lingfield Parish School.' (Minute book of the proceedings of the committee of Lingfield School.)

The minutes of 19th June 1850 record thanks to Caroline Phillips for providing the land and John Edward Cox Esquire for the plans and supervising the erection of the building. Thanks are also given to Herbert George Yatman Esquire:

' ... for the kindness that proposed the erection of the school room, and for the perseverance and liberality that at the sole expense of himself and family brought it to completion.' (Minute book of the proceedings of the committee of Lingfield School.)

The Yatman family maintained their philanthropic links with the schools in the area for many years.

A scale of payments for pupils was agreed upon:

For the elder sons of Farmers and Tradesmen per week ~ 6 pence

To the younger sons of ditto ~ 3 pence

For labourers children ~ 1 pence

In 1851 Land was conveyed by Felix Ladbroke for the building of Dormansland School.

However, some children (boys) in Lingfield were being educated by the church, before the building of the school. On 12th April 1852 it is recorded:

'...that in the last week of the Vestry Room School there were 72 boys on the books. That since the opening of the Lingfield Parish School there has attended 150 Boys and girls. That 94 are now in the Books 68 of whom write in copy books.' (Minute book of the proceedings of the committee of Lingfield School.)

The fact that 68 children were able to write in copy books is very important. Renewable resources such as paper, pens and inks were expensive. Only the most able were permitted to use them. To 'blot one's copy book' was a serious offence.

On 28th March 1853 Benjamin Groves, the Lingfield Schoolmaster resigned and was appointed Governor of The Lingfield Workhouse.

On 22nd March 1856 Reverend Fry:

'...was authorised to purchase Reading books and other necessaries for Dormansland School as required at his discretion.'

It was reported in 1856 that the schoolhouse had been sold for £200, which was donated to the Lingfield school new building fund. The committee was authorised to buy the extra land that would be needed for £45 from Captain Phillips.

The plans for the new school buildings were passed on 19th January 1858. Although the plans for the schoolmaster's residence had to be altered and a more modest house was designed.

The plans show the school clearly divided into boys and girls sections.

On 12th February 1858 it was decided to award the contract for building the new Lingfield School to Mr Wallis of Godstone. Mr Wallis's tender was for £999.12.

The Yatman family were still heavily involved with the finances of the schools, because on 7th April 1858 the committee authorised the payment of:

'... Miss Batchelor as Mrs Yatman has hitherto done, for the present commencing from the 25th March subject to such arrangements as shall be deemed necessary when the new school are (sic) opened and to procure materials hitherto supplied by Mrs Yatman.' (Minute book of the proceedings of the committee of Lingfield School.)

Miss Batchelor was retained for the Infant School Department at a salary of 7/- a week and half the pence of the children. 1/- a week was to be allowed for a monitor as at Dormansland school.

£35 was allowed for the furnishing of the Master's House.

The married Master's salary was to be £60-£70 and half the pence of the children. The master was also expected to keep a Night School and have charge of the Sunday School.

On 21st October 1858 Mr Wallis was warned about running late with the construction of the building. The committee considered whether they might need to invoke the penalty forfeit.

In October 1859 Benjamin Groves returned to his position as the schoolmaster of Lingfield School.

On 21st January 1860 the Minute book recorded:

Insured at Westminster Fire Office for 7 years

The Dormansland School House and Cottage ~ £250

Benches and fittings ~ £50

Yatman Schools ~ £175

Forms, desks and fittings ~ £25

On 28th January 1862 it was agreed that the Dormansland Schoolroom be enlarged.

On the roll in 1864:

Boys 68

Girls 47

Infants Lingfield 106

Infants Dormansland 81.

In 1864 Crowhurst School was built at a cost of £518.11s.4d.

After the introduction of School Boards following the 1870 Education Act, the committee began to discuss whether the care of the school should be handed over to a school board. Because of the funding given by the Yatman family, Mr Yatman had to be consulted. He was very reluctant to give his support and had to be approached several times before giving his permission for a School Board to take over management of the schools. In fact it is not until 1880 that:

'A School board having been formed for the Parish of Lingfield at a meeting held in the Vestry Room for the purpose of transferring the school from the late Managers to the Board. It was resolved to adopt the plan of HM Inspector (see last report) viz: using the large school as a Mixed dept and the other exclusively for Infants. This was carried into force on Monday 15th Nov 1880' Lingfield Boys School Log Book.

In August 1887 the School Board agreed that it was imperative to increase the size of the school accommodation.

On 7th October 1889 the logbook records the death of the schoolmaster Walter William Groves:

'This afternoon, poor Mr Groves died after a lingering and most painful illness of about 8 months. He was Master of this school for 11 years. During that time he was highly respected by all. According to appearances and accounts, he seemed to be a man who did his duty and was beloved by all.'

His permanent replacement was William Abell who took over the Mixed School on 6th January 1890. His wife quickly joined Mr Abell on the school staff. They worked together into the 20th century.

Sources:

Scholars and Slates – Sussex Schools in the 1880s, Steve Johnson and Kim Leslie, published by West Sussex County Council 1990

The Victorian Schoolroom, Trevor May, published by Shire Publications Ltd 1999

This Sceptred Isle 55BC – 1901, Christopher Lee, published by BBC books 1997

A Project on Working Class Education in the Victorian Period, Nicola Caskey, published in Primary History, issue 36, Spring 2004

The Education Revolution, Richard Ratcliffe, published in Ancestors, issue 21, May 2004

1841 census 1851 census

The Minute book of Lingfield Parish School Committee

Lingfield School Log book (Schoolmaster)

Lingfield School Log book (Schoolmistress)

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