

Peter Railton Book

Local author and historian Peter Railton publishes his latest book

• The Victorian Village Schools of East Yorkshire •

Local author and historian Peter Railton has just published his latest book "The Victorian Village Schools of East Yorkshire". The book takes a general background look at some of the individual village schools and their histories during the Victorian era.

The book is in an A to Z format, beginning with Anlaby and ending with Woodmansey.

Two examples from the book are below.

Anlaby

The photograph shows the school staff about 1890. Mr. Abbot was the Headmaster and the female teachers were divided between the original infants' school in the photograph and a junior department that used to exist across the road but has long since gone.

My late mother-in-law attended the school as a child and remembered how the pupils were expected to show deference to the wealthy families of the area, the girls to curtsy and the boys to touch their caps when a carriage from the "big house" passed by - some unco-operative lads would try to escape their duty by hiding in the gardens or running up a convenient snicket, but got the cane from the Headmaster if they were reported!

Anlaby School. James Abbot, Headmaster and staff.

The Head's wife took the girls for sewing and she was as strict as her husband. Hands must be clean - dirty work meant the offending hands received a smack with a wooden rule and if the stitching was not satisfactory it had to be pulled-out

and done again; hence many girls were excellent knitters and embroiderers well into old age.

The Wilsons were the predominant family and were well liked by most people and were good employers; a Sunday dinner was sent to anyone in Anlaby who was too ill or too old to cater for themselves. The Voase and Ringrose families were also well to do - Amelia Ringrose was a friend of Charlotte Brontë in the 1850s.

The building is now Anlaby Village Hall, and there is a playschool facility thus continuing its association with children. Today's school is on the corner of First Lane.

The old infants' school is Anlaby Village Hall now.

Woodmansey

This iconic little school lays on an 's' bend on the Hull to Beverley road and is passed by hundreds of motorists each day. The schoolroom with its entrance porch has a master's house which is as big as the original schoolroom, as was often the case.

It was built as a National School and still retains its links as a Church of England School and was built between two parishes to serve both Thearn and Woodmansey, but the school is merely known now as Woodmansey Primary School.

Refurbishment of the window frames has been very carefully carried out and gives the school a 'just painted' effect. There are extensions at the back to cope with the extra demands over the years.

The book priced at Â£7.50 is available from Barkers in Cottingham, W. H. Smiths, Browns Hull, The Book Shop in Toll Gavel, Beverley and Sokell in Driffield.

To purchase a copy of the book please click on the link above.

General Background about the book

General Background

Education has been flourishing in East Yorkshire for centuries, beginning in buildings now often gone, in cottages, in some priories, church porches, ancient grammar schools and village A.B.C. schools. Let us look at the general background and then move on to look at some individual village schools and their histories in more detail.

Opposite the "Light Dragoon"™ in Etton a low white painted building stands on a corner and is used as the parish community hall, but originally it was the village school converted from a barn and is much older than the one near the church. Similarly at Londesbrough stands such another building known as The Reading Rooms, but originally a school house dating from the late 1600s™ pre-dating the Victorian school in Top Street. Bishop Wilton has its older school building which eventually became part of a garage, again a much older one than the

present school built in Victorian times and still very much in use. There are a few other old school buildings scattered around the countryside but they are not so numerous as those built in the 1800s to cater for the needs of local children.

Who built these schools, and why? - They were usually founded by a local landowner or clergyman, often free to attend but sometimes charging a few pence a week. The aim was to improve the lot of the children of the area most of whose fathers worked on the land or in occupations associated with it, and provide the opportunity for some at least to learn a trade.

There were several small grammar schools founded in East Yorkshire, generally by local landowners or clergy employing a master to teach Latin and perhaps Greek to boys who were admitted free under the will and endowment of the benefactor. Some boys benefited from these schools, going on to university at an earlier age than they do now - often at ten or twelve years old. There was usually accommodation for the master who could charge fees to other boys whose parents desired such an education. Latin was the language of the church, the law, local and national administration, but as English came to be used more and more these country grammar schools declined and usually became A.B.C. schools teaching reading, writing and arithmetic to both boys and girls, still under the terms of the endowments. Halsham is a good example as we will see later.

Some of the earliest foundations in the East Riding were at Walkington in 1537, Halsham in 1579 - this building opened in 1584 was still providing education up to 1949, more details of that later on - Burton Agnes in 1563, Skirlaugh in 1611, Aldborough in 1663 and Atwick in 1689. The schools were often housed in part of the church or in one of the very early buildings already indicated.

Benefactions continued in the 1700s again mainly through local clergy but also through the local gentry, male and female, but increasingly through public subscriptions, i.e, local people setting up a school for boys and girls even if it was in a house or a farm and paying someone to teach the village children, but there was no coordinated curriculum. Sometimes the services of the parish clerk were obtained and at Garton-on-the-Wolds in 1743 a Cambridge graduate taught an early school and received food in part payment, "his meat from door to door is most he gets for his instruction, he receives very small wages".

Dame schools were a prominent feature; a woman, usually elderly or widowed, would teach a few village children for a penny or so for a living, with varied outcomes. Some very respectable ladies achieved good results while others devoted as much time to the gin bottle as to the pupils! These "schools" slowly declined in the 1800s as educational facilities improved.

School building benefited from a more prosperous period in farming which had been facilitated by new ideas in stock breeding, new varieties of corn and other crops, increased use of the new machines and of course by a bigger demand for food from a growing population in the towns and cities. Money was available for a school in nearly every village in the 1800s.

The list of benefactors is impressive. Richard Sykes built a school at Kirk Ella in 1838; Colonel Northcliff one at Langton in 1841; Captain Duncombe at Barmby Moor in 1845; and at Hayton, Hayton School erected by W. H. Rudston Read, Esq. Lord of the Manor 1854 is inscribed over the door of this tiny school building; the Todd family built a school at Swanland; the Jacksons at Sancton in 1870. At North Ferriby is an old school "In memory of Charles Turner, built 1877", which is a private house now as is the one at Great Hatfield which bears the inscription "This stone laid by the Hon. Mrs Bethell August 23 1880". Sir Henry Boynton built Burton Agnes school in 1871 thus continuing the provisions of 1563. At Howsham, that tiny school bears the inscription "This School was re-built by Col. Cholmney A.D. 1832", denoting an earlier one on that site.

Some of the larger landowners provided sites for several schools on their various estates - Lord Hotham at South Dalton and Humbleton; Lord Londesborough at Goodmanham, Routh and Middleton; Lord Wenlock at Kexby and Stillingfleet; Lord Middleton at Wharram and North Grimston. But the greatest school builders - and church refurbishers - in the East Riding were the Sykes family of Sledmere, especially Sir Tatton Sykes the fifth Baronet who built, or restored, or provided land for schools at Garton-on-the-Wolds and Wetwang in 1843, then at Kirkburn, Fimber, Bishop Wilton, Thixendale and Wansford; the gem of them is the school at Sledmere itself, an attractive building and still in use as are Bishop Wilton, Garton and Wetwang.

Generally, these Victorian schools were small and unpretentious and reflected the needs of the time. Some catered for as few as 20 girls and boys, others more. For example the school at Foston on the Wolds was built in 1844 at a cost of £57:13s:10d and could accommodate 69 pupils, though it measured only 23ft. by 18ft. A continuous bench and desk top were arranged down the long walls at each side, with four smaller ones in the centre and a desk and chair or stool for the master or mistress at one end.

This school was a single roomed structure, while others had two rooms or one long room which could be divided into two by means of folding doors. There was usually a porch which served as a cloakroom with pegs to hang coats on; two earth closets, one for girls and one for boys, round the back of the school (there was no water supply in those early days for rural schools); a coal house or bunker for fuel to heat the stove or grate in the winter; a playground which could be paved but was often a grassy field as at Hayton. Most of the schoolroom furniture was made from timber grown on local estates.

The very patchy provisions of education was of concern to successive governments - the mix of clergy schools, those endowed by local gentry, subscription schools set up by local farmers and tradesmen, dame schools, old grammar schools struggling with valueless endowments, one owner schools sometimes offering a grounding in the three R's but all too often just a means of keeping the wolf from the door - what was needed was an organised system of education for all children - a national system which the Church of England set out to provide and which can still be identified today by the inscription "National School" above the door or on the side of the building and which in an altered form is still with us today.

In 1812, a Dr. Bell, Superintendent of an orphanage in Madras, India, hit upon a way of teaching large number of children reading, writing and arithmetic very economically - the teacher would instruct older and brighter pupils called monitors who would then instruct groups of pupils in their charge. This idea was greeted enthusiastically in Britain in those early days of industrialisation and the division of labour and was put to good use in the large town schools and could be extended to the village schools.

The attraction of the National Society to the rural scene lay not so much in its teaching methods but in its organisation and financial possibilities. The Society had as its aim:-

"To communicate to the poor generally, by means of a summary mode of education lately brought into practice, such knowledge and habits as are sufficient to guide them through life in their proper stations, especially to teach them the doctrine of Religion according to the principles of the Established Church."

The National Society offered grants for the erection of schools, the cost of which had to be matched locally by the parishioners through subscriptions, bazaars, teas, band concerts etc. Many schools were founded this way including the National School at Cottingham in 1835 - more details later.

The Wesleyans were also active in the provision of schools, but mostly in the towns though Cottingham had a Wesleyan school to rival the National one; these schools were organised on the principles of the British and Foreign Schools Society, somewhat similar to the National Society. The Catholics too provided schools but mainly in the towns.

In 1833 an annual government grant for education began which was shared between the National and British and Foreign Schools Societies at first. The sum of £20,000 was available for that first year - the annual grants rose rapidly to £500,000 in the 1840's due to the demand for financial help not only from the two main societies, but also from the providers of endowed or subscription schools or private venture schools and was dependant on the suitability of the building, which led to improvements to existing schools and the building of new ones and to

the appointment of government inspectors to visit schools to make sure that the requirements were complied with. All this led to a Privy Council of Education being set up to oversee these arrangements and to administer Treasury grants directly to the schools. The government had "got its foot in the door" of education, while still working in tandem with the two main societies and local effort.

The first school in this area to be built and subsidised by government grant via one of the two main societies was the British and Foreign School on Dock Green in Hull in 1833 - this school was eventually demolished to make way for the Railway Dock, now incorporated into the Marina - the next was the National School at Barmby-on-the-Marsh in 1834, followed by Burton Agnes and Keyingham in 1835; these last three replacing schools held in the churches.

During the 1840s alone, some 30 schools many with a house for the master or mistress which was often as large or larger than the schoolroom next door, were erected in the East Riding by voluntary effort. The local benefactors had been most generous in their provision of building land and in many cases paid for the whole building process as we have seen, using the local or estate bricklayers and carpenters to erect the school after architects plans were accepted, but the provision of books, slates, pencils, rules, blackboards and cupboards often fell upon the shoulders of the local villagers and farmers, who appealed to the National Society who usually came to the rescue with those necessities plus bibles and prayer books.

As time went on, the majority of our village schools came under the umbrella of the National Society whose church congregations gave generously, thus augmenting the government grants; many were built by them and many more erected by the local gentry were taken over by the Society, either partially or completely, as the costs escalated. The National Society often built a school between two parishes to serve the children of both, e.g. Thearn and Woodmansey, Beswick and Watton, both still flourishing and extended and both still Church of England schools, reflecting the enormous contribution of the National Society years ago. It is said that by 1850 a school was within walking distance, even across fields, of most children.

The National Society were also instrumental in forwarding the training of teachers; as we have seen, many teachers were local men and women with varying abilities and it was felt that the growing costs of subsidising local education warranted professional teachers dedicated to their job and the Society supported two concurrent schemes. One was the pupil teacher system where a boy or girl could be apprenticed to a school whose teacher was approved by the government inspector. This apprenticeship began at about 12 years of age and the pupil became qualified after five or six years experience and passing a series of examinations. The pupil received lessons from the master or mistress both before and after school hours. Some of them moved on to the new teacher training colleges established by the Society in the 1840s. The first College in this area was the St John's in Monkgate in York for men, with an annex for women at Ripon - the College of Ripon and St.

John is still in existence after its foundation in 1841.

Those ex-pupil teachers who went to a college were usually supported by a government bursary, but most stayed on at their school or got a post at another school. So, gradually, the education given in the village schools improved due to the extended learning of the teachers but was still confined to the three R's plus religion until the late 1870's and into the 80's when natural science, geography, history and so on became part of the curriculum in the village schools as well as in the towns and cities which were also undergoing this social revolution and the local school master or mistress became a respected figure in the community.

A composite picture of a village school in mid-Victorian times would be a schoolroom and perhaps a house for the teacher as described earlier, with an average of 30 children aged from five to eleven and bringing their three or fourpence fee each Monday morning; schools could usually accommodate more pupils but average attendances were low. Differing ages meant group teaching and sometimes the teacher had the help of a pupil teacher or monitor, but help often came in the person of the vicar's wife or sister or daughter to teach the girls needlework in the afternoons and of the vicar himself to take the scripture lessons and hymn singing - the clergy were most important in the life of the school; the National Society was the arm of the Church of England and we have seen how instrumental their input was in education, the vicar could and did oversee the workings of the school and was often in a position to remove a teacher in a National School if he felt justified.

After 1862 schools became subject to an annual inspection by an H.M.I. (Her Majesty's Inspector) The emphasis has shifted from the adequate nature of the school building, to that of the attainment of the pupils i.e. any future grant depended on the attendance and progress of the pupils; this new scheme was worrying to a town school but threw the village schools into a panic because of the fluid nature of attendance at the time - small numbers equalled small grants - poor exam results equalled poor grants, plus the fact that the teachers salary was linked to it all! So on inspection day all the pupils were expected to attend no matter what, with clean hands and face, hair combed, boots blacked, pinafores clean and ironed - an all round good impression was the aim. Reading, writing, arithmetic and religious knowledge were examined - practically all the early H.M.I.'s were clergymen and the first Inspector for the Northern District was the Rev. F. W. Watkins.

Even though this was the era of 'elementary' education the standards expected in the exams were certainly not elementary - this terminology merely meant the basic subjects which were tested according to age and ability and heralded the dawn of the term Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3 etc.

By the late 1860s it was apparent that the voluntary societies and private enterprise could no longer keep pace with the growing populations in towns and countryside and more school building was needed in many places to cater for the burgeoning child numbers. So an Education Act passed in 1870 authorised the setting up of local school boards of between five and fifteen members, male or female, according to the size of a district where a new school was needed. These school boards were to be elected by the rate payers and a special rate was levied for the purpose of building the school. Annual examinations were still to be conducted except in religious knowledge which was to be undenominational, if taught at all. This angered the National Society who immediately set about building or enlarging 30 more church schools, often with the help of local gentry - inscriptions on some present church schools indicate "built in" and "enlarged in" as, for example, at Garton on the Wolds.

The first school boards to be elected in our area were at Hutton Cranswick, Burstwick and Hedon in 1872 and they set about having schools built to remedy a shortage of school places. Increases in rates are, and never were, welcome but the numbers of present and future pupils were assessed and work went ahead; between 1870 and 1890, 28 board schools were built in the East Riding. In some cases, a school board took over the running of a National or British or Wesleyan school as at Cottingham, while others kept their independence and some of the old endowed schools were able to carry on with help from the Hall. These will be referred to at the appropriate time.

By 1900, the haphazard and uncoordinated system of school provision was no longer acceptable to government and an Education Act of 1902 abolished the school boards and established county councils as the providers. Board schools were taken over and the National Church of England schools carried on with help were needed.

Even though 28 board schools had been built in the East Riding, the National Society had provided the majority of village schools, or taken over the running of others, or were in partnership with the local gentry who had built the schools in the first place and were naturally reluctant to surrender their pre-eminence and things were put on a sounder footing after the Education Act of 1944 which emphasised the dual system of education i.e. the voluntary schools, mainly National Society, and the local authority ones.

The voluntary schools were offered two financial options. One was to become voluntary controlled, where the local authority would take over the complete running costs of the school, and the other was voluntary aided where the local authority helped with certain finances. For example, Beswick and Watton, Garton on the Wolds, and Wetwang schools are C of E (VC), i.e. Church of England Voluntary Controlled; there are many other C of E formerly National schools in our area, some aided and some controlled. One in four primary schools nationally are Church of England schools today and one in ten secondary schools.

As regards teachers' salaries - in the National schools in the 1850s a master would get about £40 per annum and a mistress £30 and these salaries rose gradually during the 19th century. A pupil teacher was paid £10 a year, rising to £20 after his or her five year apprenticeship and monitors were paid a few pence a week. The term school master or mistress was elevated to that of Head Master and Head Mistress as other qualified staff joined as assistant master or assistant mistress as time went on. Before the days of teachers' pensions the village schoolmaster or mistress usually carried on until they died or were unable to continue - there are records of teachers instructing several generations of the same family in the same schoolroom.

In 1899 the school leaving age was fixed at 12 years old and the fees of weekly pence abolished although some schools charged fees for a few years after that. As regards teachers' salaries in 1870, a master received about £94 per year and a mistress £57, by the end of the century a master might get £100 and a mistress £88. There were variations from village to village depending on the size of the school and the number of pupils. Assistant teachers were paid pro-rata where they were employed in the larger village schools - monitors and pupil teachers could expect between £10 and £20 per year. Salaries and running costs were met partly by the childrens' weekly pence (up to 1899), but mainly by grants from the National Society and the Treasury and very often by local benefactors.

So what was the ethos in those Victorian schools? Discipline was maintained by several means. Every one had a place in the scheme of things - a niche to fill and village children were left in no doubt where their place was; they were, by and large, the children of land workers and would become land workers or house servants themselves. They were taught respect for the vicar and his family and even more for the local Lord of the Manor or other generous benefactor of the village and school. The hymns that they sang in church or Sunday school were repeated daily in the school - all had a similar theme, "we all have our stations in life and must be satisfied with them." for example - "All things Bright and Beautiful" - a lovely hymn, but one verse referred to - "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate.....the Lord has ordered their estate."

composed by Mrs Alexander in the mid 1800s and - "Daisies are our silver, buttercups our gold, this is all the treasure we can have or hold." again a hymn of the same period; or the poem made into the Christmas carol, "Once in Royal David's City" which ends with - "Christian children all must be, kind obedient, good as he." Christian values, obedience, and respect, with the cane as the final arbiter. One of the most important reasons for learning to read was to be able to understand the Bible. The visiting clergy often examined pupils in verses of the bible and most of the reading books had messages of virtue, honesty and truth and were supplied by The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.

But, as we have seen briefly, the curriculum of even the smallest village school expanded dramatically after about 1870 to include natural science, botany, measuring, weights and similar topics that would prove useful to a new generation of farmers and workers in an age

of advances in agriculture, and there was a new generation of better informed teachers to teach them. The girls also benefited from instruction in cookery and household management as well as the usual knitting and needlework. More emphasis was placed on practical work where space permitted and with the advent of the board schools after 1870, the pace advanced due to the generally larger buildings and better facilities - but again this applied to the larger villages leaving the small traditional village school at a disadvantage until extensions could be made and new ideas could be practiced.

In those days before the pre-eminence of the state and local authorities, village life usually revolved around the "big house". We have seen the generous financial support from local estate owners for the erection of schools which often continued in partnership with the National Society. Most of the estate workers were housed in cottages owned by the Lord of the Manor or other wealthy landowner - many spent their lives in one village having attended the local school to which their children and grand-children would proceed along with the children of farmworkers and tenant farmers; villages were largely self-contained and self-sufficient and life was lived under the benevolent - or otherwise - eye of the "big house" which not only provided employment and education, but looked after the elderly and needy on the estate.

Relaxation was provided by the occasional fair, and sports days and carnivals were held in a field loaned by the Hall; horse and cattle shows, sheep dog trials and ploughing matches were a regular feature of estates villages and the local school children with their teachers and clergy enjoyed a day at the seaside if in waggonette distance, or by rail as the railways spread to the countryside, or enjoyed a feast and a few roundabout rides, all laid on by the Hall.

At school, playtime was observed as now - some activities have remained the same, like tig and block, but others have disappeared like whip and top and marbles for the boys and hopscotch for the girls, though skipping remains fairly popular for girls and conkers for boys, who's main past time was fighting then and football now! The teacher or a senior would toll the school bell up in the turret - they would also usually prepare the fire in the stove or grate in winter time, and lessons began at 9am. Dinner time was from 12 until 1 o'clock with most children bringing a sandwich to eat due to the often long distances from home. The school emptied at 4 o'clock and pupils who lived in the village were soon home, while others would wend their way across the fields and paths, often seeing a father or brother at work ploughing or harvesting on the way home - a pleasant journey in good weather, but not through rain or snow!

So it is against this general background that we can look at individual village schools - some of the many that were provided in our area.

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