

CHAPTER 21 - SCHOOLS

Private schools

Stapleford was never blessed with a Public or Charity School, this much we know from Archbishop Herring's visitation; but some form of schooling there must have been, whether of a private nature, attendance by the more fortunate at a school in a neighbouring village (?) or at one in Stapleford of which we are not yet aware.

There was a school of sorts in the village by 1751, for in that year John Moorland, schoolmaster, buried his wife,¹ and the implications are that it was under the auspices of the Warren family. Ten years later six Stapleford residents (I have been prevented from finding out who they were) sent the following testament to the Governors of Risley School when Joseph Jackson applied for the post of undermaster there. "This is to certify that Mr. Jackson taught school at Stapleford for some time with so much diligence to the great improvement of our children that when Mr Warren took him from us to teach his children all the town lamented the loss of him as he was so promising".² How much Jackson was paid to teach the children of Stapleford we do not know, but for teaching the Warren children he received £8 a year. "1760.24th December. Pd. Mr. Jackson 3 quarters Salary for teaching the children due Nov. 30th £6:0:0"³

This family continued its interest in the schooling for Stapleford's children and perhaps most noticeably so by Lady Caroline Warren who maintained a school which probably stood in Church Lane (where it is known there were school premises) before deciding to build St. John's. A Mr. Shaw (what a pity the christian name is not given) was the schoolmaster: "1831. August 27th. Paid Mr. Shaw, schoolmaster £3:4:0 tp to September 3rd": from when?⁴Warren Household A/cs.

St John's School

By the 1830's Stapleford had become a populous village and the inadequacy of her little school was not lost upon Lady Warren. In 1836/7 she built "St. John's School" or "The National School" as it is sometimes called-a name derived from the fact that it was united to "The National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church". This was built "up Stabbo" on the south side of Nottingham Road roughly midway between the Roach and Bramcote

¹ PR

² Risley Par. Church by Rev. Lowther

³ Warren Household A/cs.

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boundary and opened its doors on November 20th 1837 on which day 98 children attended: 57 paying 2d and 41 paying 1 ½ d . Twopence a week was paid by a single child of a family attending, 1 ½ d if he or she, had a brother or sister attending at the same time. A commemorative medal was issued for the occasion and other medals were awarded from time to time, to scholars as a reward of superior merit and for regular attendance.

The school, along with the smaller one in Toton, was conveyed to the Trustees appointed by Lady Warren and who were, at that time, her grandson Lord Vernon of Sudbury Hall, Thomas Webb Edge of Strelley, Revd John Webb Edge (brother to Thomas), Revd John Woolley of Beeston, Revd John Downhall of Blidworth, Ichabod Charles Wright of Bramcote and John Sherwin of Bramcote. Richard Haygarth, vicar of Stapleford, later became a trustee.

Edward Fisher, of Market Harborough, was Lady Warren's Agent and had many dealings with the school on her behalf although she, herself, took a very active interest in its running and by the accounts it appears that during her lifetime she financed the schools when necessary and especially made reimbursements for larger outlays. "May 30th 1838 Rec'd of Lady Warren for Bill for Caps. £15:11:0". It would be nice to know what these were like and if they were uniform. The account also include payments made for many things a school needed; Alphabet Board, 2d; Ink by the gallon, Quills by the half-thousand, slate pencils by the thousand, Canvas, needles and thread as well as less general items such as: "Chimney sweeping 7s 6d; "12 Monitors, 13 weeks Rewards £3:18:0" i.e. 6d a week-a generous sum in those days. A tidy appearance was evidently a rule of the day: "S.Hooley for Cutting Hair 2s 6d".

School master and mistress

James Elias Perrin and his wife Jessica, both of whom hailed from London, were the schoolmaster and schoolmistress – and were so for many years: Elizabeth Walker, from Hucknall, was the infant schoolmistress. I do not think that Elizabeth taught at St. John's but at the other little school. The accounts for St. John's do not show any payments made to her as they do to the Perrins. By Lady Warren's will she was to have the use rent free, of the West Lodge of the school whilst she remained Governess at Stapleford school. Does this, I wonder, mean that she had some sort of superintendence over the two schools? In that same document Lady Warren makes a nice distinction when she refers to "Miss Walker the Mistress of my Infant School at Stapleford and "the Master and Mistress of my schools at Saint John's, Stapleford". Another teacher in the infants school was named, Sophia Johnson. (probably the Sophia born in 1819, daughter of Thomas Johnson and Sophia Wallis); she was paid £20 a year over and above whatever she received from the scholars; (another pointer to a separate establishment, especially as Sophia's name does not appear in the St, John's accounts). Elizabeth Walker's salary was £30 a year

and the Perrins' £90 a year for the two of them. Other "employees", whose names occur with some regularity in the early accounts, are Mary Ann Moore - £5 a year; William Startup, whose board was 7s a week as was Joseph Pink's; J. Grey and son were paid 2s 6d a week and then from 19th January 1839 this was increased to 4s 0d a week. Which two of these four men were the porters at the East Lodge mentioned in Lady Warren's will? It was by this instrument, proved 14th March 1849, that she endowed St. John's with £3,200 for the maintenance and salaries thereof.

One gathers that Elizabeth Walker was held in high esteem by Lady Warren. She, along with Esther Cook (probably her ladyship's personal maid) and George Butler were the only ones to accompany the hearse carrying Lady Warren's coffin on its long and sorrowful journey to Stratton Audley. The two ladies were to occupy the only mourning coach and George was to ride on the box of Lady Warren's chariot.

At what time the little school ceased to function I have been unable to find out, but St. John's was for many years the principal seat of learning in the parish and has given schooling to successive generation of Staplefordonians.

Taken over by the County Education Authority in 1954

In 1954 it was taken over by the County Education Authority and is known now as "St. John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled School", with the church still represented amongst the managers, as is only right.

The original endowment has now been formed into the "Dame Caroline Warren Educational Foundation" which provides money for education purposes to members of the Church of England, resident in Stapleford, and who are under 25 years of age. Change, ever changes, and now St. John's is likely to move across the road to a site bounded on the east by West Avenue.

Sunday schools

There were, of course, the Sunday schools; apart from their primary religious function they attempted to maintain a reasonable discipline and also to provide essential rudiments in education. The Census Return of 1851 shows at least 25 children between the ages of 5 and 14 classed specifically as Sunday Scholars, probably because they could not be spared from their homes during week-days.

Private schools

Within the framework of education in Stapleford in the 19th century (apart from those children who were taught at home), were the private schools. How many, and over what years they flourished we shall probably never know, but one such establishment was run by a Miss Draper c 1870-1880.

The Board school

Next on the scene were the Board schools, the earliest one being that in Church Street and built in 1880 with accommodation for 400 children. In 1898 a new boys' school was erected and the original premises remodelled. Now for many years a girls' school this is likely to be closed when that department removes to the Bramcote Hills campus. At the time when it beamed fashionable to give a name to a school; this was dubbed "The Arthur Mee School" in honour of that eminent literary figure who attended the old school as a boy.

Other schools

1906 saw the building of Hall's Road School, now called "The William Lilley School", followed in the early thirties by the Albany Schools. After World War II came "Stevenson", "Fairfield" and "George Spencer" schools; all junior and infant schools and needed to serve a very populous Stapleford.