

## Educational provision in Bagworth, from 1600-1981

The school that served the village of Bagworth, Leicestershire formed an integral part of the local community for many generations. Unfortunately, the village no longer has a school, the only visual evidence of the old school being the former schoolmaster's house and the name of a road: 'Old School Lane'. Children living in the village now have to travel to the neighbouring village of Nailstone for their education.

Subscription books for the Archdeaconry of Leicester reveal three teachers who served Bagworth during the 17th century: Richard Mawson, curate and teacher, in 1639; William Wainwright, teacher in Bagworth and Thornton in 1666; and Gilbert Measham, teacher of Bagworth in 1693, who subscribed again in 1711.<sup>1</sup> There was also a Mr Edward Taylor, who 'quit his school at Bagworth' to emigrate to New England in 1688,<sup>2</sup> suggesting a formal school as well as a master. Taylor and Measham were perhaps encouraged to set up a school by a small endowment of 5s. annually, left by John Lea in 1675, to pay for the education of one poor boy from the village.<sup>3</sup> In 1706, Thomas Fox was licensed as a schoolmaster,<sup>4</sup> and the parish return to Bishop Wake in 1709 reveals that Fox was running a school in Bagworth, which had 25 scholars.<sup>5</sup>

In 1761, Joseph Newton was keeping a school in Bagworth in a house that belonged to Lord Maynard. That year, Lord Maynard decided to perpetuate the arrangement: he enlarged the property and placed it in trust, with additional land and an annuity of £8 per annum, to provide a free education to 16 poor children from Bagworth and Thornton; the master was also permitted to take paying pupils.<sup>6</sup> The additional land was lost through mismanagement,<sup>7</sup> but the school was rebuilt by the then Viscount Maynard in 1828.<sup>8</sup> It seems to have prospered, and had 50 pupils in 1833, the fees for 33 of them being paid by the parents.<sup>9</sup> By 1847 the number of pupils had increased to 88, and they met on Sundays as well as weekdays.<sup>10</sup>

The three active collieries in Bagworth in the 1870s,<sup>11</sup> resulted in the population increasing from 505 in 1871 to 604 in 1881.<sup>12</sup> The school was unable to provide enough places for the village, and in 1876 a school board was elected. Initially there was some friction, as the board wanted to take over the endowed school premises, and also see the correspondence between the school and the Education Department, but the rector and school trustees met both requests with an outright refusal.<sup>13</sup> A meeting was convened, and the trustees agreed to a lease, subject to the board paying for the enlargement of the school and the trustees retaining sole use at weekends and before 9.30 am and after 5 pm on weekdays.<sup>14</sup> In 1879, the Board sought to purchase a freehold site for a larger school, but the animosity

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<sup>1</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/34/1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Austin, B. and Gregory, F., *Bagworth School* (Leicester, 2007), p.

<sup>3</sup> *Charity Commissioners' Inquiry*, Parl. Papers, 1839 [163], p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> ROLLR, 1D 41/34/3

<sup>5</sup> J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln, 1705-15* (Oxford, 2012), II, p. 888.

<sup>6</sup> *Charity Commissioners' Inquiry*, Parl. Papers, 1839 [163], p. 216.

<sup>7</sup> *Education of the Poor Digest*, Parl. Papers 1819 (224), p. 464.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>9</sup> *Education Enquiry*, Parl. Papers 1835 (62), p. 498.

<sup>10</sup> National Society, *Church-School Inquiry, 1846-7, Leicestershire*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> W. White, *Hist., Gaz. and Dir. of Leics. and Rutland* (Sheffield, 1877), p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> *VCH Leics. III*, pp. 181 and 200.

<sup>13</sup> ROLLR, E/MB/A/17/1, pp. 1-3.

<sup>14</sup> ROLLR, E/MB/A/17/1, p. 7

continued, and the trustees of the Maynard estates refused to sell them any land, the estate manager commenting that they had asked for a valuable site, and ‘if any member of the Board had offered a portion of his own Cow Pastures or Home Close, I should have been better satisfied’.<sup>15</sup> The existing school site was eventually conveyed to the board in January 1880.<sup>16</sup> A new school for 99 children was erected at a cost of £407,<sup>17</sup> and opened for its first pupils in October 1880.<sup>18</sup> It was soon extended to accommodate 140 children.<sup>19</sup>

The log books show the important roles children played in the village, and the way local customs and expectations came into conflict with the increased provision of school places as a result of the Education Act of 1870. There were continuing issues with absences, as children were kept off school to contribute to the family economy by gathering peas,<sup>20</sup> blackberries,<sup>21</sup> and coltsfoot flowers,<sup>22</sup> with the latter used to make wine,<sup>23</sup> as well as for events such as ‘the miners’ excursion to London’ in 1891.<sup>24</sup> Poor weather also kept many children from school in the winter months. In an attempt to reduce absences, from July 1891 it was decided not to charge fees to children resident in the village, although other children continued to pay 6d. weekly.<sup>25</sup> More seriously, and highlighting the poor living conditions in the village and the difficulty of affording medical care, in 1891 an outbreak of whooping cough and measles resulted in the closure of the school from 27 October, when only 53 children arrived out of a complement of 169, until 4 January 1892.<sup>26</sup> It was noted on 30 November 1891 that 19 of the school’s pupils had died from their illness.<sup>27</sup>

The school’s records become very brief during the First and Second World Wars, perhaps a reflection of the shift in people’s priorities, and a wish to save paper. In October 1915, Lieutenant A Emmerson came to give a talk to the children about some of his experiences in France and Belgium.<sup>28</sup> Over the course of the First World War, three of the teachers left to join the forces.<sup>29</sup> When Mr D.J. Ollason left for military service in 1917, the five remaining teachers and the temporary teacher were all female, as was the school inspector that year.<sup>30</sup> The running of the school does not appear to have been adversely affected, with two Bagworth pupils being placed first and third in the scholarships for Coalville Grammar School in July 1918.<sup>31</sup> However, by 1934 the impact of too many inexperienced teachers resulted in a poor inspection report.<sup>32</sup> Between 1939 and 1945, little is said of the day to day school life, but the impact of the war can be seen in the arrival of 15 evacuees in 1939, although the book does not record where they were from.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>15</sup> ROLLR, E/MB/A/17/1, pp. 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> ROLLR, E/MB/A/17/1, Letter (loose) dated 17 Mar. 1906.

<sup>17</sup> ROLLR, E/MB/A/17/1, p. 155

<sup>18</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/1.

<sup>19</sup> *Kelly’s Dir. of Leics. and Rutland* (1888), p. 482.

<sup>20</sup> For example, ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 206 (27 Jun. 1890)

<sup>21</sup> For example, ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 210 (19 Sep. 1890)

<sup>22</sup> For example, ‘taking advantage of the splendid weather’ ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 218 (8 May 1891)

<sup>23</sup> Austin, B. and Gregory, F., *Bagworth School* (Leicester, 2007), p.

<sup>24</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 222.

<sup>25</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 227.

<sup>26</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, pp. 229-31.

<sup>27</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/1, p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/2, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Austin, B. and Gregory, F., *Bagworth School* (Leicester, 2007), p.

<sup>30</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/2, p. 29

<sup>31</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/2, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/2, pp. 35-53.

<sup>33</sup> ROLLR, E/LB/17/2, p. 168.

The first hint of the school's eventual fate comes at the end of 1951, when a window fell out due to mining subsidence, a cruel twist in view of how much the village had prospered from the local mining industry. Repairs and decoration took place over the Christmas holidays, but by February 1952 it had moved nearly two inches further and was again dangerous.<sup>34</sup> In 1959, the north playground sank.<sup>35</sup> A decade later the Coal Board informed the school that they were about to start work on a seam that ran directly under the school. It would take 8 weeks, and they suggested the school broke up early for summer, so the critical part of the work could be completed while the school was empty and before the miners' annual holiday in August. Ominously, the school was told, 'if the work were stopped half way through, this would undoubtedly result in the whole building splitting'.<sup>36</sup> Replacement premises were considered, but the Coal Board advised there was no subsidence-free land in the village.<sup>37</sup> By the time that advice changed, the number of pupils was projected to soon fall below 50,<sup>38</sup> and the economic crisis of 1973/4 caused all replacement school building to cease.<sup>39</sup> The pupils had to take their classes in temporary portable buildings erected in the village, while debate took place over replacing Bagworth's school with one in the neighbouring village of Nailstone.<sup>40</sup>

The school survived to celebrate its centenary, but only just. In September 1980 the children and their parents dressed in Victorian costume to parade round the village behind a brass band.<sup>41</sup> Bagworth Primary School was closed in 1981, and demolished, with children having to travel to the neighbouring village of Nailstone.

I am indebted to the staff at the Wigston Record Office and to members of the Bagworth Historical Society for their help with this project.

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<sup>34</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, 19 Feb. 1952.

<sup>35</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, 30 Jun. 1959.

<sup>36</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, letter to LEA, 6 Mar. 1969

<sup>37</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, 23 Mar. 1872.

<sup>38</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, 23 Mar. 1872

<sup>39</sup> ROLLR, DE 3627/46, 19 Mar. 1974.

<sup>40</sup> Austin, B. and Gregory, F., *Bagworth School* (Leicester, 2007), p.

<sup>41</sup> ROLLR, DE 5174/5, 1 Sep. 1980.