

Schools and Schooling in Castleton 1687 to 1863

Introduction

Before 1870 there was no organised system of education in this country. Some children attended schools run by charities or churches. Other schools, called “Dame Schools” were set up by self-employed, often untrained teachers who were little more than child-minders. There were also fee-paying schools for those rich enough to afford them. Many children, especially in rural areas, did not attend school at all.

“National” schools were run by the National Society (founded in 1811) and linked to the Church of England through local parishes. Many of the charity or “endowed” schools later became National Schools, supported by local subscriptions and a National Society grant. By 1862, Government Grants also became available to support schools. In 1870, following the enactment of the Forster Education Act, the Government introduced universal education up to the age of 14 and provided schools in areas where there were none.

Schools in Castleton

The Bagshawe family of “The Oakes” at Norton, Sheffield was the pioneers of schooling in Castleton. The first known schoolmaster, Stephen Hall, was mentioned (in one of the Bagshawe Papers) in connection with the conveyance of some land in 1687. By 1706, however, the Rev. Thomas Roe, Vicar of Castleton, states in his Parochial Return to the Bishop of Lichfield “we have no school”.

By 1721 things had improved. Richard Bagshawe conveyed to trustees a newly erected building called the Schoolhouse, probably in the Market Place. William Street was the Schoolmaster and lived on the premises. In 1751, the Rev. Edward Bagshawe, Vicar of Castleton refers, in his Parochial Return, to an Endowed School where 40 children were taught.

During the 19th Century there were a number of schools in Castleton, some of them Dame Schools about which little is known. Between the 1830s and the 1870s the Armstrong Academy in Burrows House was a fee-paying boarding school for “genteel” young ladies. Up Goosehill, in a house and barn now called

The Old School House, Septimus Needham ran a school between 1835 and 1851. He was assisted by Olive Storey "Schoolmistress and Pauper" (according to the 1851 Census). A Miss Hartle taught at a school at Nag's Head Cottage in 1840, probably following in the footsteps of her father John Hartle, referred to as "Schoolmaster" in Parish records.

In the town survey of 1819, William Dakin, Schoolmaster, is mentioned as living near the Endowed School premises in the Market Place. He was then in his seventies and was succeeded by Robert Hall who was schoolmaster for 36 years from 1819 to his death in 1855 aged 79.

By 1841, Robert Hall had moved this school from the Market Place to premises adjacent to the Poor House of Castleton in Back Street. Robert Hall taught the children in premises, possibly a barn attached to the Poor House, said to be "dirty, badly ventilated and much out of repair". His daughter Frances, described in the 1841 Census as assistant to her father, probably helped in the school.

Robert Hall had received several unfavourable reports from H. M. Inspector of Schools. In 1847, the children were described as "miserable looking" and "wretchedly ignorant". In 1851 he was described as "wholly unfit for his post". Probably as a result of this report, an agreement was drawn up later that year between Robert and William Leonard Gill Bagshawe. Robert received £126 for relinquishing his rights in due course as schoolmaster and tenant and W.L.G. Bagshawe gained the right to appoint future schoolmasters.

After Robert Hall's death in 1855, the trustees and the Vicar, Rev. Hugh Ford Bacon, seized the opportunity to plan for a new school for Castleton. The boys from the Back Street school were re-housed temporarily in the upper part of the house and barn up Goosehill (Septimus Needham's old school). The girls were taught separately in a (now demolished) schoolroom attached to the Vicarage at Goosehill Hall. The Master at the Boy's School from 1859 to 1861 was Hartley Stuttard who recorded that there were 35 boys who paid fees according to income: the Doctor's son 1/- (12d or 5p) a week, sons of innkeepers 4d, of farmers and tradesmen 3d and miners' and labourers' sons 1d.

In 1862 the new National School was opened in Back Street on the site previously occupied by the Poor House and other dwellings, stables and gardens. It was

established formally by a Trust Deed dated 8th December 1863, the year carved on the school bell tower.