

THE THREE 'R's' - READING, RELIGION AND THE RETIRED

Iain Wakeford 2014



In 1486 Adam Ryley (or Rydley) of Woking left to his son John £10 'for his exhibition in the schools'. This is apparently one of the first references to a school anywhere in Surrey (the Royal Grammar School at Guildford wasn't founded until 1509), but whether it was in Woking (or indeed in the county) is unknown.

If it was in Woking then I have no idea where it could have been, because it was not for another 240 years that we have any reference to a school being in the town, and even then we don't know where the 'one poore writing master, and some dames that teach the smaller children' were housed.

In Byfleet too in 1725 there was just 'one private school, a mistress teaching children to read' – possibly at what became the Clock House (where a later Dame School is known to have existed) – whilst the poor children in Horsell and Pyrford apparently had nowhere to go in their parishes.

By 1788 things had changed a little and whilst Byfleet's 'Dame School' had closed a school had opened in Horsell where Mrs Walker was the mistress of a school loosely associated with the church. By 1818 this school had grown to have space for 165 pupils, eighty-seven of whom are said to have come from Woking, rising to ninety-one by 1833 with another thirty-eight (of a total of 209) walking from Pyrford where there was still no school.

Again I am afraid to say that I have no idea



where this obviously quite substantial building was, so if any readers have any idea I would love to know.

I would also like to locate another school in the area, recorded by Edward Wedlake Brayley in his History of Surrey. He records that at Mayford 'on the green is a large house occupied as a school for girls, which is supported by subscription. When the spectator beholds the smiling faces and playful demeanour of these children, as they issue from the schoolroom and disperse themselves around, he cannot but remark how strongly contrasted their appearance is, to that of the listless, care-worn, and miserable-looking factory children in the northern district of this country.'

It couldn't have been the Industrial School, as apart from the fact that it was only for 'destitute boys, not convicted of crime' (rather than girls), it was also not established at Mayford until the 1880's and Brayley's history was published in the 1840's – so where exactly was this charming girls school?

Wherever it was it was clearly another 'Dame School', as the closest 'National School' at that time was in Westfield – opened in 1849 – the building that is now St Mark's Church.

'National Schools', run by the National Society for Promoting Religious Education (founded in 1811) were run by the Church of England and were generally for the poorer children of the neighbourhood than most of the privately run 'Dame Schools'. In Woking, by the end of the 1850's, we had a number, including Church Street School in Old Woking (opened in 1847); Pyrford (also 1847); Horsell (opened in 1851) and Byfleet (opened in 1856).

All were added to and enlarged over the years with the new Westfield School (across the road from St Marks) now being used as the



Moorcroft Day Centre; the early 20th century extension to Church Street School at Old Woking now being the St Peter's Church Centre; and Byfleet's old school now occupied by the St Mary's Day Centre. Horsell's 'National' School opposite the church is still being used for education, as is the later Board School at Pyrford (the Pyrford Centre), with the older schoolroom by St Nicholas' Church being a hall run by the church - so you could say that in one way or another they are all still serving their communities.

But as we have seen the 'National Schools' were not the only educational establishments and in the 1820's a Baptist Chapel and school

was built in the Wheatsheaf area of Horsell, with James Furner and his wife and cousin being listed as 'British Teachers' (the shortened name for members of the 'British & Foreign Schools Society for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion'). It was more or less where the Trinity Methodist Church is now, although the school had ceased to exist long before the church was even thought of.

In the 15th century schooling may have come early to at least one pupil in Woking, but as we have seen it was some time before the rest of the scholars of our area could get a decent education.



ONLY THE BELL SURVIVES OF THE OLD ST JOHNS SCHOOL



By 1855 there was a need for another school in the Woking area, for the growing number of children in the west of the parish around Knaphill and the newly built Chapel of Ease dedicated to St John the Baptist.

The Vicar of Woking, the Rev Bowles, had moved to the new vicarage there in 1853 and

soon after persuaded the Earl of Onslow to give an acre of waste ground just down the hill from the church for a school, with five trustees each subscribing at least twenty shillings a year for the school funds.

They were the Vicar himself, the Rev Mangles of Horsell, William Lyon of the Hermitage, George Jackman (the nurseryman) and

Richard Partridge of Goldsworth.

Unfortunately little is known of the early history of St John's School as the log books only survive from 1863.

Little survives of the school either, as it was pulled down in the 1970's for the old people's flats on the site, although the old school bell still hangs on the corner of Scylla Place.

ALL SAINT'S NEW HAW - SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1874

There are two All Saint's Churches on Woodham Lane – the one near the Six Crossroads at Woodham – and this one at the other end of the lane in New Haw. It is sometimes rather confusing.

All Saint's Woodham is the older church being founded in 1893, whilst All Saint's New Haw was not established until 1911. Having said that, again rather confusingly, the New Haw church building is older than Woodham's, being constructed in 1873!

The answer is that prior to 1911 this building was another school, thought to have been founded with the help of a grant from John Marshall-Paine, who lived nearby at Sayes Court in Addlestone.

The school opened in 1874 with accommodation for ninety-two children, although it is clear from the school log books that not always that number attended with frequent absences for harvesting and other farm work.

There were absences too for diseases and in the



winter with little or no heating it must have been hard for the teachers to do their job.

Apparently at one time the 'teacher' of the infants was only eleven herself!