

Upwood Village School

The first record of a school in the village dates from 1871 but some form of education for children was obviously taking place in the village before this time. The 1851 census return records two school-mistresses — Hannah Hall and Maria Kington and a school-master William Allen Walker, a lodger in the home of Thomas Key.

The National village school was built in 1871 with funds donated by R.H. Hussey Esq., the Lord of the Manor at Upwood, with space for 63 children. The census return for that year records that Emily Young was the National School Mistress, supported by a pupil teacher, infant teacher and 2 monitors. Conditions at that time must have been less than ideal as the census reveals 90 children of school age in the village.

The 1891 census return shows Jane Carpenter as the Head Mistress with Sarah Ann Raby (a lodger with Miss Carpenter) as the Infant Teacher. The school house was somewhere in the High Street.

In 1893 the school was enlarged at a cost of over £300, funded again by R.H. Hussey Esq. The plans for the extension show two main rooms — the Infant room and the Mixed room — both being 32ft x 18ft. There was also a boys' lobby, a girls' lobby and an infant cloakroom. Two playgrounds, one for boys at the back and one for girls and infants at the front together with two outside blocks of earth closets are also depicted.

Unfortunately the Log Books for the school cannot be traced but the Admission Register does give an insight into reasons for children leaving school. In 1880 the school leaving age was set at 10 years, rising to 11 years in 1893 and 12 years in 1899. It was not until 1918 that the school leaving age was raised to 14 years, increasing to 15 years in 1944.

Many of the children leaving Upwood school went straight to work, either on the land or in industry. Some of the other reasons given for leaving include 'gone into private service', 'burned to death', 'required at home' and 'not strong enough to come in winter'. Some children were fortunate and gained a place at the local grammar school in Ramsey. The Admission Register also shows any previous school attended and, between 1891



*Upwood School 18th April 1921. Back row — Reg Thompson, B Job, W Edwards, F Gaunt.
Middle row — H Shelton, A Gaunt, M Woodward, H Murfin, Ena Ingle.
Front row — A Thompson, J King, I Townsend, M Lambert, D Elderkin, M Hempsted.*

and 1900, families with school-age children were moving into Upwood from places as far afield at Stockton, Sheffield, Leeds, Colchester, and Portsmouth.

The early Managers of the school are unknown since the only available Minute Book dates from 1903. The first recorded Managers were Revd. Cooksey (chairman), Mrs. Cooksey, Messrs. Thomas Smith, Frederick Townsend, F. Kidman and George Thompson. The Managers were responsible for administrative matters such as appointing and dismissing staff, setting holidays and dealing with Reports from the Inspectors. Typical business for 1903 included permission to close the school on Wednesday 12th August 1903 for the Choir Outing to Hunstanton and agreeing a six week holiday for Harvest. In May 1904 it was considered unnecessary to allow a half-day holiday for Ramsey Show but the Thursday and Friday of Feast Week (30th June/1st July) were given as holidays. There were staffing problems with many changes of Head Teacher over the years. In May 1905 the salary offered was £65 per annum plus house and coal. In January 1915 things were not as they should be at the school. The Managers reported that they were 'so dissatisfied with the management of the school — the work and the discipline — that they have decided to terminate the Head Teacher's engagement'. The newly vacant post was advertised at £75 per annum plus house and coal.

In March 1917 Mabel Gaunt was appointed monitress and she worked at the school until 1921 when she resigned and her place was taken by Grace Gaunt.

In 1903 Mrs. Jacobs is recorded as the school cleaner. She wrote to the Managers asking for 2/6d for cleaning the school, saying that she had previously cleaned for less because it was made up to her in other ways. It was agreed that she should be paid 2/6d per week but the payment was to include two thorough cleanings for which she had previously been paid extra.

By March 1920 Mrs. Slack was cleaning the school. The fires had to be laid and the cleaning completed by 8.30am.



*Upwood School Football Team 1936-37. Back row — Doug Shaw, Fred Deighton, Hubert Hart.
Front row — George Edwards, Gerald Gaunt, Basil Fuller, Derek Parker, Keith Edwards.*

Mrs. Axbey (a pupil at the school 1912-1922) recalls:

'The school day was from 9am-noon and 2-4pm. In winter the day ended at 3.30pm as some children had a long way to walk home. In Standards I-V the curriculum included arithmetic, composition, reading, dictation and spelling, geography (much work on the British Isles) history, nature study (always popular in the summer when it was taken outside) singing, poetry, dancing, sewing and drawing. Each day began with Scripture — a hymn and bible reading with a visit from the vicar each week. The vicar helped prepare the children for the Scripture examination. Upwood school was awarded a prize — a picture of The Good Shepherd.

'In the Infant room there were rows of desks with bigger children sitting at the back. There was an open fire at the end of the room and large pictures on the walls. The younger children wrote on a slate with a slate pencil, practising letters with 'pot hooks' e.g. c's and a's. Beads were counted and threaded and each child had a small abacus. The holidays weren't long. We had some Saints Days and the Managers would sometimes give extra holidays for blackberrying and collecting conkers at Upwood House during World War I (allegedly for making oil to grease the guns). Playground games included skipping, Ring a Roses, Poor Jenny sits a-weeping and Bully (it sometimes got a bit rough). The school was also used for whist drives, dances and dancing classes which cost 6d and were attended by Revd. Kitchener and his two daughters. Marjorie Townsend played the piano.'

During World War II the Admission Register shows the instability of the times with evacuees registering at the school. Time spent at the school was often short — two brothers were admitted on 17th July 1944 and left to return home on 26th September.

A school survey carried out in 1946 records that there were two female teachers with 34 pupils. Heating was by anthracite stoves and lighting by oil lamps with one roof ventilator. Sanitation comprised two pail toilets and a urinal for the boys and three pail toilets for the girls.

The school closed in 1959 when children transferred to the new school on the outskirts of the village adjacent to the RAF base. The building is now used as a Village Hall.

My memories of upwood School — Mid 1930s to early 1940s by Freda Greenwood (née Gaunt)

The school was situated in the High Street. The Infants used the smaller room nearest to the road, the older pupils used the other room.

It was quite basic, the rooms were lit by oil lamps and heated by a free-standing coke stove. The shed for coke was in the girls' playground. The boys' and girls' playgrounds were separated by a fence, the girls' was nearest to the road. We had to make our own amusements during our playtime. As there was no sewerage in the village, the toilets were of the bucket type.

The school was a Church of England establishment even though about half of the pupils were Methodist. I remember that the head teacher was a Miss Phoebe Higgins and the infants' teacher was a Miss Alice Bass.

The school day started with the ringing of the bell, assembly and prayers then followed in the big room. After this, the infants then went into their own classroom. As there were only two classrooms, there could be three or four different subjects being taught at the same time by a single teacher. We were taught the three Rs, History and Geography. Religious instruction was taken by the vicar who, on occasion, also administered the cane. I think this only happened once whilst I was at school (it was not me!).

When the health visitor came we were measured and then we were taken to the local bakery to be weighed on the 'sack scales'. These were up the wooden stairs at the side of the granary.

The head teacher's sister, Miss Annie Higgins, came into school to teach the girls knitting and sewing. She also played the piano and taught us country-dances, these we performed at the Church garden Fête.

During the war years we collected hips from the hedges to be made, we were told, into rose hip syrup. We did have parcels from American school children delivered to us. These contained a selection of paints, crayons, pencils, rubbers and painting books etc. We all wrote 'thank you' letters but I don't think any lasting friendships developed from this.

My school days at Upwood ended when having passed the entrance exam, I left to go to the grammar school at Ramsey.

Great Raveley School

Great Raveley National School opened its doors to its first pupils on Monday, 26th November 1866. The building, measuring 37ft 10in long by 19ft wide, was designed to educate 102 pupils but, on that first day, the Register shows that only 46 children were present. These children were drawn from a local population of 318 people.

The building and running of the school was funded by the Diocese of Ely, with day to day management being undertaken by the then vicar, the Revd. William O'Farrel Hughes, living at Upwood House in Upwood. He was assisted in his task by his wife who gave scripture lessons to the children and acted as school secretary.

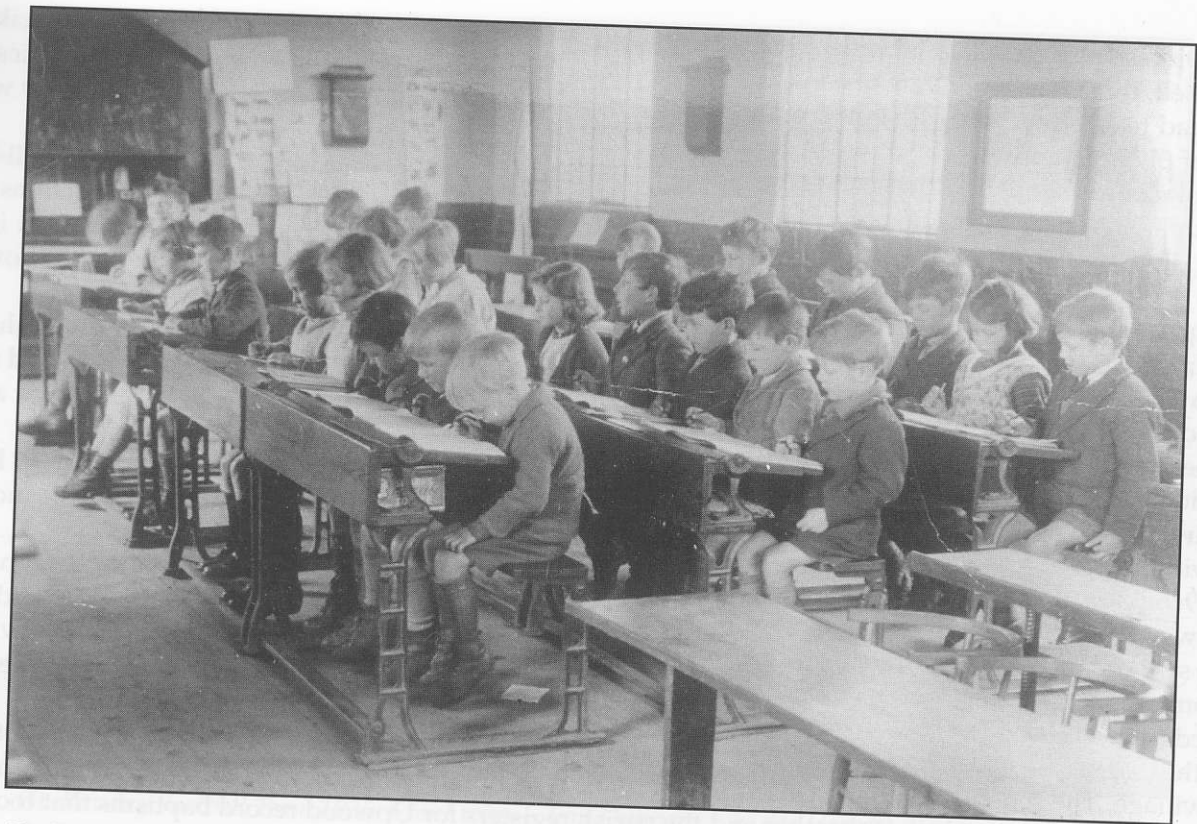
Much information can be gleaned from the Log Book kept by the Head Teacher. This book was inspected annually. The first such report, dated 2nd August 1867, augured well for the future: 'There is every reason to hope in the formation of an efficient school in this Parish'. The Log Books, now held in the Huntingdon County Record Office, make interesting reading and show glimpses of a very different way of life.

Children were admitted to the school as young as three years old. The numbers attending the school fluctuated, often depending on the seasons as children were needed to help on the land, particularly at harvest time. Inclement weather also had its effect on attendance with the majority of children having to make their way to school on foot. Sometimes the attendance fell for more pleasant reasons, as the following entries from the Log Book show :

3rd April 1867 — 'A fox hunt this afternoon has caused many of the children to be absent' (the local hunt met at the Three Horseshoes PH, next door to the school).

1st May 1867 — 'Only seven children present this afternoon, the rest being at the school treat given by the Dissenting Chapel of the district'.

29th October 1915 — 'The children were given a holiday today so that I might be at liberty to entertain a friend from Brighton who was only calling in passing through'.



Gt. Raveley School 1933 — children include Ron Berridge, Frank Herbert and Ray Herbert. Do you recognise any of the others?

The Diocese also supplied a house for the Head Teacher to live in, built shortly after the school. Like the school itself, this is now a private residence, situated just across the road from the school. Earliest salaries paid to the head teacher and the assistant are not recorded but, in 1931, we do know that the head teacher was in receipt of £171 per annum whilst two years later, in 1933, an assistant teacher was being paid £52 18s.

School records show that the school was not only concerned with the educational and spiritual well-being of its pupils. Medical inspections took place on a regular basis as did dental check-ups, Extractions were actually done on the school premises! On another medical note, the school was closed for a fortnight in November 1918 by order of the Medical Officer, due to the national outbreak of influenza. The records show that several pupils died.

During World War II, Great Raveley provided a refuge for young evacuees from London boroughs. The school attendance register shows 11 such evacuees being enrolled on 17th February 1941. Brothers and sisters attended school together but were often lodged with different families. Some only stayed in the area a short while before returning home, others remained until October 1942.

Patrick and Sheila Day from Deptford stayed with Mrs. Poulter whilst their younger brother Gerald lodged with Mrs. Lowings. The Browns from Balham lodged with Mrs. Darwood and the Bredons from Bermondsey lived with members of the Edwards family.

In 1946 plans were drawn up to install a kitchen to allow for the preparation of school dinners. Whilst the school was connected to mains water, lighting was still by oil lamp and sanitation was taken care of with pails.

The school was heated by an anthracite stove and it was reported that, during a particularly harsh winter, it was sometimes too cold for the pupils to undertake written work and that lessons were taken collectively, huddled around the stove for warmth.

By the end of our 100 year span, the school was rapidly proving too small for the growing number of pupils in the village. The school eventually closed in July 1962. A last point worth noting, throughout its history, the school was licensed as a place of worship and the parish registers for Upwood record baptisms that took place in the schoolroom.



Gt. Raveley Football Team 1935. Front row — Tom Dunham, Charles Herbert, Reg Seaton, Les Stokes. Back row — Ron Smith, Des Herbert, Harry Smith, Bill Hufford, Len Brighty, Frank Herbert, Ron Smith, Cliff Jacobs.