

SHERFIELD SCHOOL

By his will in 1735, James Christmas of Stratfield Saye left £100 for erecting a charity school at Sherfield. A further £1,100 was provided for the purchase of land, the rents from which were to be used to pay a school master £25 a year for teaching the poor children of Sherfield and four poor children from Stratfield Saye. Also out of the rents, a sum of £10 a year was to be given to the poor of Stratfield Saye by distribution of bread every Sunday in the year "for ever". Any surplus rents remaining were to be used for clothing the poor of Sherfield .

The accounts for building the school show total expenditure of £205; of which the carpenter received £86.3.0d. the brick layer £24.3.6d., the blacksmith £6.6.0d and the glazier and plumber £6.14.0d.

John Underwood was paid his first half-year's salary in March 1739. On his death in 1761 he was succeeded by William Kemp as 'Master of the Free School' until 1801. Joseph Collis was master until 1836 when Mr. Dennis took over. In these days of serious price inflation it is interesting to note that for the first hundred years at least the salary remained at £25 a year.

The property purchased with the £1,100 was a farmhouse and buildings and about 60 acres of land at Farley Hill in Swallowfield. The farm was let at £25 a year initially but rose by 1807 to £65. It was sold in 1865 to the Dean of Bristol for £3,333 and the money invested to bring in over £100 a year by 1889.

In 1825 there was a House of Commons Commission of Enquiry into Charities and in correspondence with the James Christmas Trustees, the Commissioners said that in their view the amounts paid out for clothing the poor at Sherfield had been 'improperly limited' and they saw no reason for keeping larger sums in the Charity than were needed for the maintenance of the School.

In fact no payments for clothing are shown in the records for 1818. In their (predictable?) reply, The Trustees stated that funds were being accrued to defray possible expenditure on the farm buildings.

In 1864 a school room was built to house 120 children. The cost, £370, was defrayed by public subscription. At one period between the Great Wars, numbers rose to nearly 150 when an additional class had to be held in the Village Hall.

Two Sherfield residents, both 90 years of age, remember the school well. Miss Gladys Green of Bramley Road, first taught there in 1919 and continued there until 1951. Mrs. Alice Brown of Church End was a pupil there for five years from 1904. She vividly recalls the mile walk to school, which however unpleasant in the cold winter snow, was infinitely better than the two and a half mile walk both ways, made by two small boys from the Round House. In those days there were of course no school meals and children fortunate enough to acquire 'tuppence' (about 1p now) would buy a lardy cake from Jacksons Stores. A school treat was held in the summer at Sherfield Manor (now North Foreland Lodge), the home of the Liddell family. There was tea and cakes and a presentation of a bag of sweets for each child. Sherfield School closed in 1958 against much protest. But both this school and the one at Bramley were in a poor state of repair and a new school was built at Bramley for the children of both villages. Sherfield School was converted into three houses.

Stuart Grant

DIAMOND JUBILEE We warmly congratulate Jack and Dorothy Banbury on their recent diamond wedding. They were married at St.Saviour's Church, Mortimer West End on June 15th 1929. Mrs. Banbury, a regular member of St.Leonard's Church, was a teacher at Mortimer West End School before her marriage. Her husband has always worked in the countryside, on local estates or farms until retirement to Sherfield 16 years ago. They have two daughters, three grandchildren and two great-grand-children. May they enjoy them for many years to come.