

Educational provision in Desford before 1870

Although there was a subscribed master in the village in 1662 (Edward Holmes),¹ and rector John Wightman subscribed as a 'teacher' in 1702,² there seems to have been very little long standing educational provision within Desford before 1870. Responses to Bishop Wake's visitation inquiries of 1706 and 1709 expressly stated there was no 'schole' within Desford.³ The only endowed educational provision came from the will of Joseph Pougher, which from 1730 granted ten shillings each year for the provision of Bibles to the two poor children who were deemed to be the best readers in the village.⁴ However the village was not devoid of provision towards poor children for William Barnes left a sizable endowed fund for the provision of apprenticeships.⁵

By 1819 there was one school (it was not recorded whether it was a daily or Sunday school) funded by subscription, which consisted of twenty pupils. The Rector, John Fry, stated that 'the poor are without the means of having their children instructed, though very desirous of so doing'.⁶ By 1833, the number of schools within the village had increased dramatically, and there were now six daily schools. These included the National School, which was funded in part by the National Society at Leicester (the rest being covered by a subscription and payments by some children) and comprised 60 pupils.⁷ This school was named Anson House and was located at what is now 51 Main Street.⁸ The remaining schools were funded entirely at the expense of the parents: one school founded in 1826 with 16 female pupils; another founded in 1829 with 12 mixed pupils; another founded in 1833, again with 12 mixed pupils; and two schools where no date of establishment is given, which had 40 mixed pupils and eight females respectively.⁹ The inquiry provided no more details about any of the schools. It is possible at least one was a dame's school, as Desford is known to have had one located at Welford House (on High Street), which charged 2d. per week.¹⁰

This substantial growth in schools was short-lived, although the 'Misses Barratt' had a school here in 1843.¹¹ The fees for this school in 1844 were 16 guineas per annum, with music an additional 15 shillings per quarter.¹² By 1846, Amy and Arabella Barratt's boarding school was still open and there was also a National School, 'built about five years ago'.¹³ It had 49 pupils and was built on glebe land or some other site which was likely to be permanent, but the master had been recently dismissed, due to a lack of funding to meet his salary, and replaced by a mistress, who received a salary of £23 annually.¹⁴ Many village boys were now attending Lady Byron's free school in Kirby Mallory, where each boy could cultivate his own piece of land, and the children were also supplied with linen.¹⁵ In 1851, George O'Dell had recently opened 'Desford School', as a boarding school for 'young gentlemen' at a cost of 20 guineas per annum, or 18 guineas for boys under 10 years old, with

¹ ROLLR, 1D 41/34/2.

² ROLLR, 1D 41/34/3.

³ J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln, 1705-15* (Oxford, 2012), II, p. 846.

⁴ *Charity Commissioners' Inquiry*, Parl. Papers 1839 (163), p. 156.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁶ *Education of the Poor Inquiry*, Parl. Papers 1819 (224), p. 452.

⁷ *Education Enquiry*, Parl. Papers 1835 (62), p. 484

⁸ C. Wessel, *Schools in Desford* (Desford, Unknown Date), p. 1.

⁹ *Education Enquiry*, p. 484.

¹⁰ Wessel, *Schools*, p.1

¹¹ *Leic. Chron.*, 7 Jan. 1843, p. 3.

¹² *Leic. Chron.*, 13 Jul. 1844, p. 2.

¹³ W. White, *Hist., Gaz. and Dir. of Leics. and Rutland* (Sheffield, 1846), p. 541-2.

¹⁴ National Society, *Church-School Inquiry, 1846-7, Leicestershire*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ *Ibid*; White, *Hist., Gaz. and Dir.* (Sheffield, 1846), p. 567.

an extra fee payable for tuition in the Classics and mathematics.¹⁶ In addition, a relatively rare news report relating to the parish day school highlights a joyous Christmas spirit, in which Mr and Mrs Picton, organised a concert at which the children from their school sang and in addition a 'gorgeous Christmas Tree', which had been hidden throughout the concert, was later uncovered much to the delight of the children and the 200 villagers present. Furthermore, each of the 134 children was given a Christmas present as well as a bun and a 'little packet of sweetmeats' to take home.¹⁷

In contrast to the earlier returns of 1706-1709, the Anglican Church later developed educational provision. By 1833, there was a Sunday school which educated 200 mixed pupils, funded partly by the Rector and through an annual collection.¹⁸ By 1846 the Anglican Sunday school had 33 gratuitous teachers and six paid monitors to educate 279 children, including all 49 children who attended the church day school, with funding for the Sunday school being met by subscription.¹⁹ By 1851 the Anglican Church was teaching 370 pupils, alternating between morning and afternoon teaching sessions on a Sunday.²⁰ Despite the presence of both Particular Baptists and Primitive Methodists within the village, neither chapel held a Sunday school in 1851.²¹ In 1863, the Baptist chapel was used throughout the week as an Infant school,²² but it could possibly have been used for a longer duration with an infant school also being mentioned in 1855.²³

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¹⁶ *Leic. Chron.*, 22 Mar. 1851, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Leic. Chron.*, (25 Jan. 1868), p. 3.

¹⁸ *Education Enquiry*, p. 484.

¹⁹ *Church-School Inquiry*, 1846, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ TNA, HO 129/413 I/ 3 7

²¹ TNA HO 129/413 I/3 8; HO 129/413 I/3 9.

²² White, *Hist., Gaz.* (Sheffield, 1863), p.652.

²³ *Post Office Directory of Leicester and Rutland* (1855), p. 32.