

## Education in Barlestone, 1870 - 1901

Barlestone is a small village due west of Leicester, which shows little current indication of the tussle that took place between the village curate, Henry Homer, and the Governors of the local Grammar School in Market Bosworth in the 1870s, events for which the villagers commemorated Reverend Homer through a plaque on the church gates. This essay will look briefly at the history of education in Barlestone between 1870 and 1901, but more specifically at the events that led to the foundation and building of the National School in Barlestone in 1879, a building that is still in use today (as the village hall).

Before 1866, Barlestone was part of Market Bosworth parish. The governance of the free grammar school in that town, established by the 16th century, had been amended by the Court of Chancery in 1844 to provide branch elementary schools in five local villages, including Barlestone.<sup>1</sup> Barlestone's school was built under this arrangement in 1849,<sup>2</sup> with money from the grammar school foundation, and on glebe land which was not conveyed to trustees.<sup>3</sup>

The Inspector's report which followed the 1870 Education Act was written on 29 July 1871, and noted that Barlestone School held 80 children, but there was a shortfall of 40 places.<sup>4</sup> The governors of the grammar school had already been warned nine months earlier that the school was insufficient, but they delayed replying until October 1871, when they advised that no changes would be made to the branch school.<sup>5</sup> In February 1873 the Education Department served notice to the governors that a school district would be created, and hence a board imposed, covering Market Bosworth and the villages of Cadeby, Osbaston, Barleston, Carlton, Shenton and Sutton Cheney.<sup>6</sup> A meeting of parish ratepayers was held in Barlestone on 15 May 1873, and resolved to write to the Education Department to advise that the parish was willing to see their school enlarged and the other requirements met, thus avoiding the board, but first they wished to wait until they knew what the Endowed School Commissioners would propose. Fearing that delay might result in the imposition of a board, the grammar school governors asked the ratepayers to reconsider.<sup>7</sup>

Concerned at the impact of a board on the poor, Barlestone's curate, Henry Homer, wrote to the Charity Commissioners, receiving confirmation that the rector of Market Bosworth, Reverend Small, could convey the existing village school and additional glebe land to trustees.<sup>8</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> *Charity Commissioners' Inquiry*, Parl. Papers, 1839 [163], pp. 183-93; *Endowed Grammar Schools*, Parl. Papers 1865 (467), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> W. White, *Hist., Gaz. and Dir. of Leics. and Rutland* (Sheffield, 1877), p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter 23 Jul. 1874.

<sup>4</sup> TNA, ED 2/271, Inspector's Report, 1871.

<sup>5</sup> ROLLR DE 633/4, 11 Oct 1871.

<sup>6</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter, 5 Aug. 1874.

<sup>7</sup> ROLLR DE 633/4, 21 May 1873, pp. 133-4.

<sup>8</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter 23 Jul. 1874, reply 7 Aug. 1874.

also asked whether a board school could continue to receive £30 annually from the Bosworth School Foundation for the mistress's salary, and pointed out that 'a very considerable owner of Cottage property' had already told him that if the rates were to be increased to pay for a board school, he would increase his cottagers' rents to cover this, which Homer pointed out would 'mulet the poor twice over', as they would have to pay increased rents and also pay 'school pence', where their children had previously received a free education.<sup>9</sup>

Barlestone was a poor parish, which would struggle to raise the money for a voluntary school.<sup>10</sup> A grant might be available from the National Society, but the many nonconformists in the village 'do not like the idea of a denominational school over which they would not have control', and as few of them were ratepayers, it was possible they might prefer a board.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Reverend Small, who had already tried to claim rent from the school,<sup>12</sup> was unwilling to convey sufficient land from the glebe to enable the school to be enlarged.<sup>13</sup>

The new scheme drawn up by the Endowed Schools Commissioners for the Bosworth School Foundation came into effect in August 1878,<sup>14</sup> and at the same time Reverend Small finally consented to provide land for an enlarged village school in Barlestone.<sup>15</sup> The Education Department was not inclined to stay its hand any longer, and wrote in January 1879 saying that 'there should be no needless delay' in providing a larger school at Barlestone.<sup>16</sup> However, the governors were still trying to prevent this, although their efforts were to shortly fail with the construction of a new, 220-place building.<sup>17</sup>

The detachment of the new school from Market Bosworth, other than financially, had other implications. The former 'branch' school had been exempt from inspection and many regulations, and schoolmistress Elizabeth Godfrey, who had been in charge of the school, had been teaching 130 children without a certificate.<sup>18</sup> This would no longer be permitted, but the Market Bosworth governors did agree to pay her £40 compensation (a full year's salary) for loss of office.<sup>19</sup> Certificated headmasters were recruited after this, although uncertified teachers were still in charge

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<sup>9</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter 5 Aug. 1874.

<sup>10</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter 5 Aug. 1874

<sup>11</sup> CERC, NS/1/701, letter, 5 Aug. 1879.

<sup>12</sup> ROLLR, DE 633/4, 18 Jan. 1871 and 12 Apr. 1871.

<sup>13</sup> CERC, NS/1/701, letter, 5 Aug. 1879.

<sup>14</sup> *Leic. Chron.* 3 Aug. 1878, p 8.

<sup>15</sup> CERC, NS/1/701, 8 Aug. 1879,

<sup>16</sup> TNA, ED 27/2478, letter 20 Jan. 1879.

<sup>17</sup> TNA ED 27/2481, 3 May 1879; CERC, NS/1/701, letter, 12 Aug. 1879 and Summary of Trust Deed, 11 Aug. 1879.

<sup>18</sup> ROLLR DE 633/4, 5 Sept. 1877; K.B. Hextall, *Know your Barlestone*, pp. 64-66.

<sup>19</sup> ROLLR, DE 633/4, 5 Dec. 1877, pp. 200-201.

of the infants (and for this reason the numbers of infants had to be kept to below 50).<sup>20</sup> Barlestone continued to grow, with further building taking place in 1885 and 1894, paid for via fund raising.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that not everyone in Bosworth and Barlestone agreed how education should be organised and funded. That Barlestone got a school in 1879 that would not burden the ratepayers is due almost entirely to the efforts of Reverend Homer.

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<sup>20</sup> ROLLR DE 633/4, 5 Sept. 1877; Hextall, *Barlestone*, pp. 64-66; White, *Hist. Gaz* (1877), p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> Hextall, *Barlestone*, pp. 64-66.