

11. THE VICTORIAN SCHOOLHOUSE

Queen Victoria (The Hanoverians)

KEY POINTS:

- Reverend John Davies Trigge and his wife Emma moved to Loxwood in 1871
- In 1872 Emma Trigge opened the first Sunday School in the Chapel of Ease
- The Victorian Schoolhouse was built between 1876 - 77 and opened in January 1878, and was the focus of education for over ninety years.
- The stone plaque on the front wall shows L.P.S for Loxwood Parish School
- The schoolhouse was designed by architect James Girdwood of London and constructed by builder Edwin Woolgar of Itchingfield.
- The entrance to the school was through the playground to the left. The house entrance was via the gate on the road.
- Open fires were used to heat the building and water was obtained from a well in the grounds.
- The schoolhouse had a spire and intricate weathervane.
- Teachers sat at a raised desk so they could see across the classroom
- Children sat on benches arranged as four blocks of three.
- The school was designed for 48 children and within ten years it was catering for 120.
- In 1898 the school became known as Loxwood County Primary School
- The school closed in 1967 with the opening of the new school at Nicholsfield

THE VICTORIAN SCHOOLHOUSE

The Victorian schoolhouse opened in January 1878, but that single fact is only a small part of this important and fascinating story about social change, the building of the schoolhouse and children's education in Victorian England.

In the Victorian era this area of the village was dominated by commercial enterprise with numerous farms, the canal, Onslow Arms, Toll House and the Brewhurst Estate all operating at full capacity. However, for all that industry, Loxwood didn't have a school, or a Sunday school, which was open for every child. The majority of children were uneducated and worked with their families on farms, with just a few lucky children attending Dame Schools each day, such as the one run by the Dependent Brethren at Hall House.

The nearest Sunday School was at Alfold Church which some children from Loxwood attended once a week to be taught religious education and some basic studies.

The arrival of Reverend John Davies Trigge and his wife Emma in 1871 started a change that would provide all the children of Loxwood with daily education for the first time and ensure that future generations would have schools of which they would be proud.

John Davies Trigge & Emma Andrews

John Davies Trigge was born in Brompton, London, in 1828. At the age of thirteen he was studying at Foys Boarding School, West Brompton under the tuition of Headmaster William Foy. John Trigge excelled at Foys, and when he was only twenty-two, he was appointed Headmaster at the prestigious Central National School in Brighton. The school was administered by the Church of England and was located in a stunning bow fronted three story building in Church Street, described as a rare example of Regency Gothic architecture . This was one of the first schools in Brighton, however the educational standards had declined, and John set about changing the teaching staff and all the teaching practices.

A visit by the school's inspectors, to review the changes John had implemented, was held over two days in 1850. The inspectors gave the pupils (boys & girls) exams in reading, writing, grammar, history, mathematics (both written and mental) and geography. The inspectors report stated "that they were entirely satisfied with the results and believed that with the new staff and Mr Trigge's leadership, the standard of education would be greatly improved".

John Trigge was a leading advocate of church school teachings, with its aim of providing schooling for all children regardless of their family's financial situation. In 1853 the first meeting of Church of England Schoolmasters Association, was held at the Central Brighton School. John Trigge delivered a very intellectual lecture to fifty teachers outlining how the association would benefit the "teachers of the new generation". The Association was inaugurated under the supervision and patronage of the Bishop of Chichester.

In 1856 after a successful period at the school, John decided to focus his life on the Church and he resigned from The Central National School, to study at Magdalen College Oxford. Nine years later John Davies Trigge was Ordained in Chichester Cathedral by Bishop H B W Churton. He returned to Brighton and worked as an evening lecturer in St Peters Church, and it was in Brighton that he met his future wife Emma Andrews, who was working at The Vicarage in Montpellier Road.

Schooling Becomes Mandatory

Around this time Loxwood Village had applied to the Church Commissioners to become a separate ecclesiastical parish. Reverend Trigg moved to Wisborough Green in 1869 taking lodgings at Burchetts, presumably because he would be appointed vicar at Loxwood.

In 1870 it became mandatory for all children aged between 5-10 to attend school and a national fund was established to construct schools in towns and villages across the country.

Reverend John Trigg and Emma Andrews were married at St Lukes Church Chelsea in 1871 before moving to Loxwood, when John became the Curate of the Chapel of Ease. Emma established a Sunday School in the Chapel of Ease, which was open to all children, and this was the first time that all children had the opportunity to be educated in Loxwood.

Sunday Schools across the country were popular with 25% of children attending each week. To encourage regular attendance, children would be rewarded for reaching certain milestones. In many schools, children would be given a brown paper book and a stamp for each week's attendance. Once the book was filled with stamps, a prize would be given to the child. These prizes were often simple items aimed to promote the Victorian values of work and thrift.

Two years later in 1873, Loxwood was confirmed as a separate Ecclesiastical Parish breaking its tie with Wisborough Green Church and Reverend Trigge was announced as the first Vicar of the Parish in November of that year. A large imposing vicarage was designed by Maynard-Shaw of Grays Inn, London and built in the autumn of 1874 by the local building company of Robert Pink from Hambledon, at a cost of £1,500. Reverend Trigge and Emma moved into their new vicarage and the area became known locally as Vicarage Hill.

Loxwood Parish School

The Sunday school run by Emma Trigge provided basic reading, writing and arithmetic as well as Religious Education but that could not cover the pressing need for much wider and regular education.

The government was under pressure to build schools nationally, and the building fund administered by the Public Works Loan Commissioners, was hard pressed to keep up with the applications, which caused constant delays.

The Wisborough Green School Board was formed in March 1874 to be responsible for the school in that village and to oversee the building of a schoolhouse in Loxwood. George Napper of Lakers Lodge, and local surveyor Henry Hemmings of Loxwood Place, were members of the Board. A site for the new schoolhouse was identified as 'waste land' near Loxwood bridge and Henry Hemmings acquired the land as a gift from the Onslows in December 1874.

Plans for a schoolhouse were drawn up by James Girdwood Architect, of 49, Pall Mall London and Edwin Woolgar of Itchingfield won the tender to build the schoolhouse, which would cost £1,123. The contract signed by Edwin Woolgar in September 1875 included surety of £500 each from three businessmen in Itchingfield, to guarantee the work and performance of Edwin Woolgar. The completion date for the schoolhouse was noted in the contract as 31st July 1876.

The schoolhouse was classic brick and tile Victorian design, using local handmade bricks. Interestingly some of the bricks retained fingerprints from the brickmakers process, which can still be seen on close inspection of the walls. The tall window at the front was set higher to discourage children from being distracted by looking out and there was a small rectangular opening window at the top. The date carved into the stone above the front window shows 1876, the intended opening year and the letters L.P.S. proudly announce this is "Loxwood Parish School".

The entrance to the school was on left hand side through the playground. Children walked into a lobby, with the girls' cloakroom on the left and boys' on the right. There was a door into the large classroom which stretched the length of the school building. Three tiered rows of desks in four blocks, catered for 48 children, sitting on benches. The teacher was at a raised desk which gave a clear view across the room and the small infant classroom through a door in the far corner.

The school was heated with open fires and water was carried from a well in the grounds, with the playground to the left and rear. The spire and intricate weathervane on the top of the roof illustrated its significance to the Church of England.

The gate on the right was for the house which had an oak framed porch. There were three bedrooms, a parlour, kitchen and scullery. The large garden for the house was on the right-hand side.

Initially the construction progressed on time but in March 1876, the architect suggested the classroom for the infant children should be built out of the left-hand side at the back, instead of the front and that caused a significant change to the roof and the build programme. Whether that change had a material effect on the timetable is unknown. However, the building work began to fall behind schedule and the July 31st completion date was missed. It appears Edwin Woolgar was in dispute on another contract and in November 1876 the School Board wrote to Edwin Woolgar and his guarantors warning them that the slow progress would not be tolerated. In June 1877 with the building still unfinished Edwin Woolgar was removed from the project and the contract ended in a legal dispute. The schoolhouse was completed by Henry Spooner of Alfold Bars and other local tradespeople. Edwin Woolgar was declared bankrupt the following year.

The schoolhouse building was finished in October 1877 and the Sunday School run by Emma Trigg started using the school the following month. The school board decided to wait until after Christmas to open the new Parish School and children attended their first full day on Monday January 7th 1878, which was an exciting and significant milestone for the village.

The first Head Teachers were Charles and Lydia Smith. Charles was nineteen and Lydia twenty-one, they moved to Loxwood from Stepney in London. The social impact of schools in Victorian times provided women with the rare opportunity for public office, and they exercised significant influence as teachers. Lydia was the school mistress and over the next twenty years the school had continuity of teaching, led by Lydia, and by all accounts the school was widely respected.

Teaching methods were focused on discipline and encouragement and 111 pupils were attending the school by 1884 and that had risen to 120 two years later. In the classroom they had to adopt an amount of repetition, which would consist of the teacher writing on the chalkboard and the children copying the work down.

There are many reports of the children attending village tea parties and the annual village festivals featured children singing, dancing, and using their craft skills by decorating the insides of festival tents and village buildings with flowers. The school children were always

involved at village fairs and high praise and encouragement was given to the children in speeches by village elders and to Emma Trigg for her Sunday School initiative. It appeared to have been a happy school and one of the pupils went on to be a member of the Queen's Household and was behind Queen Victoria at the marriage of one of her grandsons.

The End Of An Era

In 1891 Emma Trigge was running another Sunday School in Brighton with travel to and from Loxwood much easier via the new train service. In 1893 a new church was planned. Reverend Trigge had begun the fundraising to replace the Georgian Church, and the site chosen was opposite the Victorian schoolhouse. In 1896 the Bishop of Chichester's fund had allocated £800 to build the new church, however sadly, Reverend Trigge did not live to see the new church. He died on July 12th 1897.

In 1898, the school became known as Loxwood County Primary School with a new Head Teacher and staff. The school was still administered by the Wisborough Green School Board, with Maurice Botting as its chairman. Emma Trigge moved from Brighton to Bedford Road Horsham with her sister Mary where she would live the rest of her life.

The Victorian schoolhouse was extended in 1912 to provide separate entrances and cloakrooms for boys, girls and infants and a new toilet block. The schoolhouse served the village for over ninety years and the thousands of children that passed through its doors cherished the memories of their time at school. The last headmaster was Henry Pepper who took over from R E Parkin in January 1960. Henry Pepper was in charge when the County Primary School moved to its new facility at Nicholsfield in 1967 and that shifted the focus of education and the 'hustle and bustle' of everyday life away from Vicarage Hill.

One Of The Most Important Historical Assets

The Victorian Schoolhouse is one of the most important historical asset in the village, and stands as a reminder that 'education for all' wasn't always the norm, in fact for over six hundred years of village life that wasn't the case. The significant contribution made by all the teachers and staff, who served the community from the Victorian schoolhouse, began with the arrival of Reverend John Davies Trigge and his wife Emma in 1871 and the Sunday School they started.

The high esteem in which they were held by the villagers at the time, illustrates the positive changes they introduced, and their legacy continued through the generations that followed, which must surely be considered an outstanding achievement by any measure.

Further reading:

Points of interest - Nicholsfield

Points of Interest - Loxwood Church

Local Villages - Ifold Village.

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