

GOING TO SCHOOL IN THE HORMEADS

Front cover: Whilst Richard Welch was the head-master 1970-78, a further extension was built onto the school. This had two most unusually shaped windows in the western elevation. They were of unique design, and form an H and a D which can clearly be distinguished from houses in Hare Street and by travellers along the road from Hare Street to Great Hormead. Mr. K. Gibson of Great Hormead has kindly drawn the plan of this western elevation for the front cover of this pamphlet.

“The benefits of education have been realised with unusual thoroughness” (H.M.I. Report on Hormead School 1894).

The year 1870 is the landmark in education with which nearly everyone is familiar. The Elementary Education Act was passed on 9th August 1870 and for the first time in British history local authorities all over the country were actively encouraged to provide education for the children in their area. Before that date, education had been provided on a haphazard and voluntary basis by endowed grammar schools, dame schools, privately founded schools receiving financial aid from churches and chapels; and the Sunday Schools for which Robert Raikes is given credit following the establishment of his first Sunday School in 1780. In 1876 a further Act of Parliament made school attendance compulsory and from 1891 elementary education was provided free of charge.

In the Hormeads, parents had been sending their children to school, and paying ½d or 1d a week, for generations before attendance was made compulsory. The earliest reference to our village school occurs in 1815 when, from the context, it was well established. J.S. Hurt, in his book on Bringing Literacy to Rural England: the Hertfordshire example, published in 1972, lists the schools established between 1811 and 1828 and noted under the heading ‘Great Hormead’ that ‘On 22 Feb 1815 a £50 grant was made on this date of its union with the National Society.’

This little school became known as the National School, and had a chequered career. The Rector of Little Hormead wrote in 1843 that the ‘school was declining & soon after ceased’, but the newly appointed Vicar of Great Hormead had other ideas. He recorded the names of the 25 ‘children in Mrs Barkers School Mmas 1843’. Against 7 of the names he placed an asterisk, denoting that those pupils were ‘paid for by Mrs Gould’ who was the mistress of Hormead Bury at the time. In those days, sponsors and supporters

of schools were allowed to place or pay for children on the school roll. Mrs Gould's seven proteges were probably the children of the farm labourers who worked on the Bury estate.

In the Census returns for the village, 1841, 1851 and 1861, the number of children who were identified as 'scholars' is remarkable. It would appear that however poor, Hormead parents struggled to find the few pence each week to send their children to the village school. From this evidence, it is apparent that a large proportion of the village children were given the opportunity to acquire a little learning by the time they were 11 or 12 years old. The credit for this effort was shared by the parents and the Reverend Charles Colson, who was the greatest influence and driving force behind this unusually high standard of rural education.

The years 1846-73 were the golden years in the history of the school for the Rev. Charles Colson, a scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge, not only provided the children with a newly built school in 1846, but taught there every day and took a keen interest in the pupils and teachers. The progress and success of this village school with its steadily increasing number of children attending (long before attendance became compulsory) can be traced in the entries from the vicar's Notebook, preserved in the Hertfordshire County Record Office. This has been my source for many references to the school between the years 1846 and 1873 (when Charles Colson left the village).

In 1868, the village schoolmistress called Sarah Ann Smith, started to keep a School Log Book. A series of these books, kept up to the present day, is now preserved by the Headmaster of the school, and I am most grateful to the present Head, Mr. Philip Noble, for allowing me to read the Log Books and extract notes from them up to the beginning of world war two. I have used many of the entries verbatim in the following short history of the village school.

The Building

Before the present school was built, it is believed that the school children attended classes in a hut or old barn behind the vicarage (i.e. the vicarage house pre-1981).

When the Rev. Charles Colson was appointed Vicar of Great Hormead in 1842, the vicarage was let to tenants who were given notice to quit, and the vicarage was pulled down and rebuilt. At the same time, the school was built on the present site, again on the initiative of Charles Colson. He had a firm belief in the value of

education, and it must have been a source of great pleasure and pride to him when he wrote in his Notebook:

"The new vicarage and the schoolroom built in 1845.

Came into the house Nov 1845

School opened Jany 1846."

He was so pleased, in fact, that he made reference to the new school again,

"New school opened Jany 1st 1846. Miss Needham 1st mistress."

He also added that about two tons of coal left over from the distribution of cheap fuel to needy villagers in the winter of 1845/6 were "added to the school stock". Miss Needham would have been expected to keep shovelling this into the stove which heated the schoolroom. This stove was using coke by 1908 and in 1909 a new stove and fire-guards were provided by the school authorities.

The ground plan of the 1846 school building is preserved in HCRO (ref: D/ES/1/48) and reproduced with the kind permission of the Chief Archivist.

The school was extended to take up to 150 children and a plan for the extension is preserved at HCRO. 35' was added to the back; the kitchen became a wash-house; the living-room a temporary infants school; and a gallery was added over the filled-in portion between the clockroom and toilets.

This extension plan is updated, but the school log book for 1870 tells us when the alterations took place:

25 June – a classroom is to be built out behind the school, one third the size of the school, new set of desks in one class and the front door blocked up.

26 Sep – The new set of desks have come today and they are going to fix them this evening.

10 Oct – The children went in the new class room this afternoon for the first time.

31 Oct – The lower division of boys had lessons on the new gallery this afternoon.

In 1872 further alterations were made:

1st March – the ceiling of the small class room has been taken away, very great improvement, new desks are going to be placed in the room after it has been repaired painted and coloured.

April 5th – the 4th class were able to go in the little classroom, quite delighted with the room.

On the end-papers of the first School Log Book, one of the teachers has written:

Dimension of School

	Length	Breadth	Height
Mixed	36	18	13
Infants	21	18	13
Class	18	12	13
Library books	350		

A. Bartlett, a school inspector, made regular checks on the building. In 1897 he reported, "School in excellent order and premises especially neat and well kept." In 1899 he was more critical, "The remainder of the desks should be renewed as soon as circumstances permit. Both gallery and desks in the Infant room are old-fashioned and not well suited to modern requirements. A new stove is also needed in this room."

There are few other notes of interest concerning the building, but the school bell had to be rehung in the verandah in 1910 as it was found to be unsafe, and the playground was pronounced to be still very muddy and "deeply furrowed" in 1911.

The Staff

"One of the monitors has left, going to service, not strong enough for a teacher." S.A. Smith 1869

For a long time, there was only one teacher in the school, but as the number of children increased, the system of using unqualified pupil-teachers and assistant teachers with monitors, to work under the qualified head mistress, developed.

James Law

The first teacher whose name I know was James Law. He was schoolmaster in 1772 and 1783 Militia Lists. In 1788 he married, as a widower, the widow Ann King. There is no further trace of him after this date.

Nathaniel Pryor

A Hormead man, was the schoolmaster at the time the school was united with the National Society in 1815. He came of a farming family and his brother, Edward, farmed the Parsonage Farm. Nathaniel was also a farmer until about 1813 when he changed his occupation to that of village schoolmaster. He died in 1835.

Mrs Barker

John Barker married Elizabeth King in 1809. She was the daughter of Henry and Elizabeth King, and this family was actively engaged in the village school for much of its early history. The name 'King' keeps recurring in the records – the girls receiving prizes of books when other pupils' prizes took the form of items of clothing, and the adults giving years of service as the local schoolteacher.

Elizabeth Barker was left a widow some time before 1840. In the census of 1841 she lived near the Three Horseshoes with her son Thomas and daughter Nancy. The Rev. Charles Colson listed the 25 pupils, in four classes, in 'Mrs Barkers School' in 1843. She was still teaching at the time of the 1851 census, but as Miss Needham was then head mistress and living in the schoolhouse, Mrs Barker was probably acting as assistant mistress. She died in 1855 aged 67.

Frances Jane Needham 1846-58

On the 1st Jany 1846 the new school was opened with "Miss Needham 1st Mistress." Part of the school building was designed as a schoolhouse, with a living room an kitchen behind it, on the ground floor. This arrangement continued until the school was altered and extended in 1870.

The occupants of the schoolhouse are shown in the Census returns for 1851 and 1861, when Miss Needham, then her mother, were living there:

Census 1851	The Schoolhouse	Frances Jane Needham	Head	Unmarried	34	schoolmistress	Born Pancras Mx
Census 1861	The Schoolhouse	Jane Needham	Head	Widow	72	Schoolmistress	Born St. Pancras

Frances Jane Needhamn stayed at the Schoolhouse for ten years and then married Wren King, a Hare Street grocer who lived in Leveret Cottage, in 1856. She continued as the schoolmistress, with her mother's help. The Census of 1861 shows Miss Needham's new home and status:

Census 1861	Hare Street	Wren King	Head	Married	Aged 50	grocer	Born Gt Hormead
		Frances "	Wife	"	Aged 43	Schoolmistress	Born St Pancras

(+3 of Wren King's children by a previous marriage)

In the 1862 Directory of Herts, Mrs Frances King is named as mistress of Hormead National School, and she was head of the school until she retired in 1868 and was succeeded by Miss Smith.

Sarah A. Smith 1868-72

Miss Smith started the 1868 log book, the earliest which has been preserved to the present day. Her first entry was dated Jan 13, when she wrote, "I commenced my duties this a.m." Her comments about the school and the children show a genuine concern for their welfare and indicate a long and weary battle over attendance. On many days she records poor attendance due to the children being kept away in order to work in the fields. Apparently, she finally became resigned to this when she ceased refering to the 'summer vacation' and called it the 'harvest holiday' instead.

Census 1871 Sarah A. Smith unmarried 24 born Clerkenwell
National Schoolmistress

Miss Smith lodged with Thomas and Olivia Chapman of Hare Street, Thomas being a farmer who lived next door to Hare Street House. When she arrived in the village, she was a very young teacher and still a probationer, but on 27th June 1870 she wrote in the log book, "I received my Certificate the 25th. The report is capital viz. 'S.A.Smith manages a class well, delivers a lesson in good order, and questions her scholars skilfully'. Not a very modest young lady! But since the three qualities specified are the hallmark of a good teacher, perhaps she may be forgiven for writing the report in the log book.

Miss Smith also gives us a reminder that a teacher had to wait for three months for a pay packet in those days and it was with a sense of relief, no doubt, that she wrote on '23rd Dec 1869 Received my quarters salary this morning.'

Harriet Theresa Cook 1873-1875

1873 January 6th - I commenced my duties as mistress this morning. The School was kept by the Pupil Teachers aided by the Rvd C. Colson and Miss Colsons last week.

Fanny Picken 1876-1885

1876 Jan 3 - I commenced my duties as mistress of this school this morning. No. Present 79. Fanny Picken. In the Census of 1881, Miss Picken was a lodger with Thomas and Olivia Chapman who had moved from Hare Street and lived at Chapman's Farm, now called Little Meadow, in Great Hormead. She was born in Cambridge.

S. Smith 1885

1885 Oct 5th - commenced my duties as mistress of this school. School could not reopen on Sept 28th because the workmen had not finished. Only 79 present this morning. S. Smith. 19th Nov. Resigned my duties as mistress of this school.

E.Wallis 1885-6 Temporary Mistress

Miss Wallis was the assistant mistress (engaged as such 22nd March 1878) and she took charge of the school until the next head mistress arrived 26 Dec 1886, and then left.

Mary Jane Headford 1886-87

Mary Jane took charge 26th Dec 1886, then in August the following year, after an 'incident' she departed in haste. The story is told in the log book, written in the vicar's handwriting. He was a school manager, and for many years the managers checked the registers and signed the log book to indicate that they were correct. These records were important since there was a close link between the attendance numbers and the teachers' salary:

1887 August 7th "At five minutes to 12 o'clock this morning I entered the school and having called the names of the children present, I found that the Registers had been carelessly and incorrectly marked. I therefore dismissed the school for the Harvest Holidays. The Mistress, Mary Jane Headford, quitted the village next day.

Signed J.A. Byron Bone
Correspondent and Manager"

The comment 'quitted the village next day' was subsequently added to the main entry, in paler ink.

Martha Ann Penkeyman 1887-1922

Monday Sept 19th 1887 School re-opened. Staff: Martha Ann Penkeyman Head Mistress; Maggie Murray, Assistant Mistress.

Miss Penkeyman is still remembered in the village, both with affection and great respect. She was a firm disciplinarian, with a deep concern for the well-being of her pupils.

Twelve years after she was appointed Head Mistress, she was joined on the staff by Alice Brett, a teacher who never fully qualified, but was content to be first a pupil-teacher, and then later to work under Miss Penkeyman as her assistant. The two became close friends, (more like sisters, as the villagers remember them) and lived in a cottage in Halfacre which Miss Penkeyman called Worsley Cottage.

In Gt. Hornead churchyard are two identical graves with flat oblong kerbs inscribed with a cross. They mark the resting places of Miss Penkeyman and Miss Brett, and lie side by side. The inscriptions on the gravestones are:

PENKEYMAN, Martha Ann died 24 Feb 1952 aged 89. The devoted teacher of boys and girls at Hornead for two generations.
BRETT, Alice, daughter of Thomas and Sarah died 21 May 1944.

Miss Penkeyman always wore a long black dress, with an immaculate white collar edged with lace. She appears on a photograph of the schoolchildren and staff taken c1903.

Emily Winifred Balls 1922-1942

1922 Nov 1st Opened school this morning and commenced duties as head teacher of Great Hornead C.E.school. Mrs. Balls lived first in the Glebe Barn House in Little Hornead and then in the newly-built Highfields up Bell Hill in Hare Street. She was a very strict teacher.

Grace Tipler 1942-1961

Miss Tipler lived at White Ash in Little Hornead, and then moved to Willow Pond next door. She supervised the children in the making of the frontal cloth to cover the small side chapel table in Great Hornead church.

She was buried in Little Hornead churchyard when she died at the early age of 53 in 1961. An entry in the log book tells of her departure:

1961 March 17 Miss Tipler, Headmistress has been absent, ill since-----she is now in Hertford County Hospital and has undergone a serious operation this week. It was her intention to retire at the end of the summer term.

Mr. Hutchings 1961

Mr. Hutchings took over from Miss Tipler, but retired 26 July of the same year.

Michael Gordon Anderson 1961-1966

He commenced duties on 1st September 1961 and his wife, Mrs. Myrna Anderson also taught at the school. They both left 15 April 1966.

Christopher John Saville 1966-1969

He commenced duties on 28 April 1966, and his wife was an assistant teacher. They left July 1969.

Clifford Morris 1969.

Temporary head for one term, September to December.

Richard Welch 1970-1978

He planned the latest extension to the school buildings, and was the initiator of the delightfully painted school bus with its pictures of elephants and spiders and other story-book creatures which make it instantly recognisable as the Hormead School Bus.

Philip Noble 1978-

Assistant teachers

They usually took charge of the Infants Department and the lower standards or classes. They were very poorly paid, and a number of them left and went into service instead. The outstanding exception was Alice Brett whose long service to the school was recorded in the log book:

1920 Jany 2nd - Miss Alice Brett retired from her post as (uncert.) supplementary teacher in this school where she was been for 41+ years.

Alice Brett born 7.7.1862. The Fund of Appreciation for her long service eventually amounted to £75.

The frequent coming and going of the assistant teachers was not always recorded in the log book, but the turn-over of staff was detrimental to the progress of the pupils and occasioned a remark by one of the Inspectors:

1876 This school has suffered more than usually from a change of Teachers. The attendance is yet very desultory.... The discipline is, at present, unsettled...

One pupil-teacher made the grade, however. Emily Mole, the daughter of a Hare Street wheelwright, managed to secure a place at Hockerill Training College in 1874.

Monitors

They received even less notice than the assistant teachers in the log books, but they too went into service in preference to teaching. Their pay was one shilling a week in 1875. Often only twelve years old themselves, it is not surprising that the school inspector found them incapable of coping with a class of small infants:

1908 Inspector's Report: 'The babies are not sufficiently or suitably employed by the monitor, and hence are uninterested and rather restless.'

The Parents

"father was in a fearful temper...
pardon was asked by the mother."

Very few entries in the log books refer directly to the parents, suggesting that there was little interaction between the teachers and parents to occasion a note or comment. There were just two incidents which may be safely repeated at this distance in time.

1869 June 10th - One of the boys had his knife taken away by the monitor, greatly displeased the boy's father, came to the school about it, but when an understanding was given, he thought the action just.

June 13th - I told Mr. Colson about the knife and he went to him, the father was in a fearful temper as usual, and for the improper speaking Mr Colson has suspended the children from school.

June 21st: The Dews have come back again, pardon was asked by the mother.

The second incident to raise some passions occurred

1887 11 Jan. I punished John Hills for disobedience, his mother kept him away the whole of the next, & sent word that he should not be corrected.

The teacher appears to have been so incensed that she omitted to say whether John had been kept away for the next day, or week, or longer!

Whilst the parents were still having to pay for their childrens' education, there were occasional difficulties over payment:

1881 Jan 27 Louisa Carver of Little Hormead was sent home on Monday for her school money. She has not returned all week.

1889 12 April: Made the change in the childrens' payments. The eldest of a family pays 1d and the others pay ½ each if they are three or over; but if only two they each pay 1d.

Elementary education was made free of charge in 1891 and this must have been quite a relief for some families.

Although few of the log book entries refer directly to parents, the attitude of some of them can clearly be inferred from other entries. In this rural community, the farm labourers' families need to earn

as much as possible whilst field work was plentiful, hence such entries as:

1868 June 12 – much small attendance on account of hay-making.

1869 Sep 27 – much greater attendance this morn, but a great many of the 1st class are picking up potatoes, and some were picking nuts today.

1870 21 July – Rather poor school, wanted to go to the fields to their fathers.

In 1887 the headmistress became quite distressed over this state of affairs:

1887 Apr 29 – several boys away the latterpart of this week being unlawfully employed by Mr. Whyman

June 30 – Most of the boys at work for Mr Piper, Churchwarden and Mr. Whyman

July 4th – It is impossible for the teacher to be successful in her efforts under the above circumstances.

This was Mary Jane Headford writing – hers was not a happy stay in, or departure from, the Hormeads.

When the same absenteeism occurred at the end of the war, however, no-one demurred:

1918 school closed during the week ending Nov 1st that the children might assist in gathering the Farmers' potato crop. It stayed closed until Nov 20th for the same reason.

But there can surely have been no excuse when it happened in 1926:

June 11th – There was no attendance at school on this day as the older children went to work at Mutfords all day cleaning the sugar beet.

Absenteeism meant that the children got behind with their schoolwork:

1872 28th Feb – William Webb in the 3rd class reads very badly, has been away for some time working in the fields, must send him in the 4th class for some time.

The Pupils

'A Proportion of naturally happy Scholars' (H.M.I. Report 1927)

Before the Education Acts were passed, children aged 4 and upwards joined the school on any day of the year. They also left it

on any day, according to when their parents decided they should attend, or leave, school. The terms also differed from modern times. Harvest holiday was from the second week in August to the last week in September (hopefully) or the first week in October when harvest was late. Frequently the teachers tried to open the school in late September and had to close it again for a further week or fortnight, due to lack of pupils. This meant a longer summer term and shorter autumn term. The Christmas break was very short, the children still being at school on the 23rd December and school resuming on the 26th December in many years.

The children changed classes and standards early in April in the 1860s and 1870s and it was a matter of going up a class when a certain standard of attainment had been reached. Some pupils stuck in one class for a long time! The boys tended to leave school earlier than their sisters, being anxious to start earning a wage.

The attendance figures for each child were kept most carefully for two important reasons. Firstly, there were prizes to be won by the pupils who never missed a morning or afternoon school. Secondly, there were grants to the Little Hornead pupils from the Porter charity, and the grant was based on the attendance record. Absentees lost precious pennies and when every ha'penny was needed in a household, this could mean the difference between a child attending school or not getting any more schooling because the parents could not afford it.

The school hours were adjusted to make maximum use of natural daylight. In winter, the afternoon session was from 1.30 to 3.30pm whilst in the late spring and summer months the afternoon school was from 2pm to 4pm. Occasionally a finer adjustment would be made mid-term:

1885 Nov 25 Afternoon school commenced at 1.45 instead of 2 o'clock today and left 15 minutes early: this will continue until Christmas as it is too dark for the children to work the last 15 minutes.

Achievement was rewarded by prizes at the School Feast held either in July or August each year and attended by the whole school and evening class and Sunday schools. Sensibly, the prizes took the form of clothing, with the rare exception when a book was presented. The King family produced two exceptionally bright girls and at the School Feasts of 1858 and 1859 they received books as prizes. The Notebook of Charles Colson records the prizes given in those years:

1858: 1st class 4 frocks; 2 bonnets; 6 shawls; 4 girls pinafores 2½yd; 1 boys brown holland 2¼yd

2nd class – 2 frocks; 1 girls pinafore; 3 boys pinafores; 2 caps N.B. Elizabeth King to have a book

3rd class – 1 boys pinafore; 3 girls pinafores; 2 boys belts, necktie. And in 1858 the 1st class prizes were 3 frocks, 1 book (M. King), 15 shawls, bonnets, caps and 'Hands' i.e. handkerchieves.

Later, the reward for scholastic achievement became a place won by scholarship at the grammar school. Probably a few of our brighter pupils obtained places at Buntingford Grammar School prior to its closure in 1900, but the places mentioned in the Log Books were after that date and to Ware Grammar School. Fred Sexton won a £10 grant to attend the nearest grammar school in 1893; and Eva Clayden and Irene Nash passed the written part of the examination for Ware Grammar School in 1927 but only Irene appears to have been awarded a scholarship. In 1935 Jean Emily Cousins and Doreen Michaela Barnes gained free places at Ware.

One enterprising boy decided to sit the examination set by the Air Ministry for boys wishing to be trained as mechanics, and arrangements were made for him to sit the exam at school on 7 December 1920. Armand Vernon Henry Richardson duly worked through three papers, from 9-11, 11.15-12.45, and 2.15 – 4.45. Sadly, the teacher keeping the log book at the time failed to note whether he succeeded in passing or not.

There was one prize which the plodders and not-so-bright could always pick up, provided they had a certain amount of stamina and tenacity. This was the prize for 100% attendance. It is surprising how many children achieved this goal, e.g.

1909 Dec 23rd – Herbert Cousins and Bertie Barron have made 5 yrs Perfect Attendance and Prize awarded by the County Council, a silver Watch, was presented to them by Lady Romer.

I have counted 5 more silver watches up to 1916 for five years' perfect attendance. There were also prizes for one year's perfect attendance, and just for 'good attendance'.

Attendance was frequently affected by illness, and when illness struck it could run through the school and affect so many children that the school had to be closed for a while. The diseases which were most prevalent between 1870 and 1940 were whooping-cough, scarlet fever, small pox, measles and mumps. Less severe were ringworms and the persistent problem of 'unclean heads' which one could describe today as a 'century's old problem'.

The measles epidemic of 1884 was a serious matter for adults as well as the children. Six adults and six children died before it was finally over and of those who survived, the log book gives ample evidence of the lingering effects when three or four children found it difficult to do their lessons owing to 'weak eyes'. In 1890 the scourge was scarlet fever and on Oct 17th the 38 Hare Street children were all kept away from school owing to this outbreak.

A mumps epidemic closed the school in 1899 for some time, and scarlet fever in 1907, measles in 1910, influenza in 1911 and in 1937 measles and influenza occurred together and closed the school for a fortnight in the January.

The only serious accident recorded in the log books concerned a boy who was knocked down by a motorcar.

1932 9 June – George Andrews was knocked down by a motor car in Buntingford on his way home from the Sports. Although at the time his injuries did not seem severe, he died at 9.30 am on the morning of 9th June. The Doctor had sent him to his home.

13 June – Certain children over 12 years were allowed to attend the funeral of George Andrews with 2 teachers.

The Sports mentioned above were an inter-school competition at which the Hormead children excelled. From about 1924 until the outbreak of war, schools of a certain size. E.g. either under or over 100 pupils, competed against one another in high jump, long jump, races, etc., and Hormead School competed in the under 100 pupils group.

1925 July 23rd – some of the children attended the Annual Sports at Braughing School and certain boys entered for the two open events. For the second year in succession, the Cup, which was open to all schools in the district for running 100 yards, was won for this school by Sidney Bardwell.

1927 June 1st – went to Buntingford and the school again succeeded in winning the District Shield for Schools under 100 on books.

They won again in 1928, 1929 and 1930 and did even better in 1932 – 9 June – shield for girls (of any size of school) as well as the shield for Mixed Schools under 100 on books were both won by this school.

Lucy Bentley and Freda Burley were the girls who succeeded in bringing the shield to Hormead. In 1938 the school tied for two shields out of three when 'Maurice Bentley won the championship

medals for 440 yards and High jump and Barbara Jemmett won that for High jump under 11”.

Numbers of Pupils on the registers

1843	25	1869	145	1908	76
1854	70	1872	125	1910	78
1858	103	1874	140	1912	74
1859	103	1882	100	1914	73
1860	108	1886	100	1917	73
1862	119	1895	105	1923	69
1863	121	1898	101	1927	75
1866	113	1902	100	1933	70
1868	116	1906	82	1939	44

In 1940 the number of Hormead pupils was 48 and then on August 12th the numbers at school rose to 125 when the evacuees arrived.

Discipline

‘Kept in two because they were fidgety’
(School Log Book June 3, 1872)

The log book entries frequently refer to the children arriving late, or not at all, and the recurring problem of getting them to come to school instead of going to work in the fields. Once at school, there was not a great deal of misbehaviour, and no evidence of it once Miss Penkeyman arrived.

Some of the boys and girls were rude, and some played truant, and were expelled temporarily. Various means of enforcing discipline were tried:

1869 19 Apr – some of the children were rather late, had to keep them in, kept them in double the time they were late.

1880 13 Aug – two children were sent home on Thursday afternoon for coming at 2.40.

Sending them back home seems to have been a good ploy, for it put the problem of disciplining the child firmly back in the parents’ court – if the child actually went home that is. Sometimes this policy back-fired, and the parents kept the child at home a week or more:

1888 Dec 14th – John Hills was sent home on Tuesday for insubordination.

1889 Feb 15th – John Hills has been readmitted this week.

Young George Bull suddenly decided he had had enough of school for one week, and departed home early:

1886 Jan 30 – George Bull left the playground on Friday morning during the play-time and did not return all day.

Feb 6 – George Bull returned on Monday morning, and was punished for leaving the Playground on Friday.

Despite all the teachers' complaints about discipline in the early years, one visitor was impressed by the standard in the classrooms:

1871 27th Oct – The Revd Harrison from Canada visited the School, said that we had far better discipline than they had at their schools.

Punishments for failing to absorb the lesson were aimed at forcing the child to concentrate harder:

1871 29 Nov – kept in Joseph Ginn because he did not know the answer that was asked; so he wrote it out, then learnt it.

1869 June 26th – One boy was kept in because he did not know the eighth commandment, had to write it six times.

1871 17 Nov – kept in Sarah Tott because she did not know the answer to the question "what dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief".

Sarah Ann Smith, the headmistress in 1869, showed an insight into human nature in an entry for July 13th 1869; 'Several of the irregular children have come more lately on account of the feast being soon.' And after the school feast – what then?

1871 28 July – very few children, very wet, and tired after the School Feast yesterday.

THE CURRICULUM

The Curriculum was very basic at first, being the three R's plus a lot of time devoted to religious instruction. The curriculum widened after 1870 and some surprisingly modern ideas and imaginative teaching emerges from the log books. Quite a number of the entries in 1869 refer to the subjects taught:

21 April – Some of the 1st class did the Weights and Measures sums very well, but E. Moss and R. Chapman very poor.

12 May – Miss Piper took the little girls in needlework and Arithmetic.

25 May – We have a new set of pictures 3 doz. Of the Swiss Family Robinson, Chickseed without Chickweed, and the History of a Cat.

26 Oct – Three in the second class had a great many mistakes in spelling, J. Brett, H. Skinner, E. Cousins, shall make them learn some words at home every night.

The next year, the needlework took a very practical form, and geography was introduced:

1870 28 Feb – The girls who are going to be confirmed made their caps this afternoon.

7 July – I gave the 1st class Geography this morning instead of writing from memory, they liked the lesson very much.

1871 17 March – the 1st class wrote from memory the Capes of the Southern part of England from the Welland to the Avon very well.

The 1893 report on the results of the Scripture examination show what was expected of the children in that department:

The infants were a particularly good class, answering both in Old and New Testament was quite excellent. The Apostles' Creed & Decalogue were simply explained and Psalms and Texts bearing on the Scripture lessons were readily repeated...The older children showed a very satisfactory knowledge of the Old Testament history and the Xtian Seasons. Church Catechism was able explained in individual cases. Knowledge of Acts 1-xiv was limited to the brighter children....

Learning poetry by heart became a part of the 'New Code' of required learning, introduced in 1875 and at first there were 75 lines to be learned, which was increased later:

1878 March 22 – Poetry to be learned Lines 1-100 of Goldsmith's Deserted Village.

Object lessons were introduced in 1874 and were topics such as Honey, Boots & Shoes, Roads & Railroads, Insects and the Spider; The Tiger, etc. They sound much more interesting than some of the earlier lessons. Drawing was another subject which is mentioned, and after a drawing examination on Tuesday July 25th 1893 in the morning, the children were given a holiday in the afternoon.

The gardening classes had to be put off successive Saturday mornings in March 1896 'owing to the wet weather.' A new school garden was acquired in 1933 and the boys started digging in it on 15th February and then on March 29th they 'measured it accurately and found it to contain 15 square rods.' In 1936 the H.M.I. reported, 'The garden is most creditable and the Head Mistress makes good use of it in her teaching of Practical Arithmetic.'

Cookery classes for the girls took place in the kitchen in the village hall from 1927-29 and then were moved to Buntingford Centre which had the advantage of 'The children being conveyed to them in a Motor Omnibus'.

The woodwork lessons had a shaky start – and a most aptly named master:

1927 Sep 21 – The proposed Woodwork class at Little Hornead did not commence as no apparatus has arrived.

Sep 28 – Woodwork Instructor, Mr. Cane, arrived and took a class in drawing in the small classroom.

Oct 13 – The Woodwork Master arrived to take Woodwork at the Glebe Barn, Little Hornead, where the apparatus has arrived. He remained there, but there were no boys.

Oct 20 – 1st class in woodwork in the Barn got under way in the afternoon, 8 boys attended.

The lack of boys on 13th October is really not surprising when one reads an earlier entry in the log book for that day:

'The children were dismissed before the Registers were marked to go picking potatoes for the local farmer.'

The woodwork class was transferred to Barkway Centre in 1930 – giving the boys a chance to ride in the Motor Omnibus each week.

There were many other references to lessons and subjects taught, but these must suffice to give some idea of what the children were expected to learn in earlier days at the village school.

THE CHURCH AND THE GENTRY

The Church of England clergy were very closely connected with the school, and for the 30 years prior to the Act of 1870, its mainstay. The village school is a church school to this day, with our own vicar taking a close interest in it, thereby continuing a longstanding tradition.

Since it was due to the influence of the Rev. Charles Colson that the school was built in 1845/6 and he taught in it, it come as no surprise to find the school building being used as an adjunct of the church. The Vicar formed a Club for the men of the village and used the school in which to hold the meetings and feasts:

1868 June 16 – The children had a half holiday this afternoon on account of the Club Feast.

The same thing happened again in May 1869 when the vicar made a record of the accounts for this particular supper, attended by 39 Great Hornead men who each contributed 6d:

W. King's billl (i.e. Wren King, grocer of Hare Street) 57½lbs of beef at 9½	3-6-6
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Mr Moule for cakes (i.e. Fred Moule, baker, H.S.)	9-8
Pryor for beer (J.I. Prior, Three Tuns)	1-2-0
Sundries 2/-, Lettuces 1/-	3-0
	£5-1-2

Certain church services were attended by the whole school:
1868 Sep 15 – Service at Church this evening. Thanksgiving for Harvest. Children to assemble at 5.30 and go to Church.
1870 Mar 9 – The children have a half holiday this afternoon because of the Confirmation.

Another indication of the close link between School and church:
1890 Feb 14 – The school was closed on Monday afternoon on the occasion of the 'Induction' of the Rev. G. Smith.
1903 Mar 11 – On account of the death of the Rector, Rev. George Smith, the school was closed Wed, Thursday & Friday of this week. (Signed) Geo. Parsey Piper Trustee.

The school building was also useful as a meeting place for secular purposes, particularly before the parish room was built in 1905.

1874 Jan 23 – was obliged to substitute singing a hymn for 1st lesson this morning on account of School not being ready in time for usual lesson. A Magic Lantern Show for the children last night caused it.

This show had been organised by the vicar and in his Notebook he recorded that there had been a 'magic lantern show at school (G.J.T. exhibiting) about 70 tickets issued wh: was quite as many as was desirable.'

The school seems to have been used as a church each Sunday for the few months during the restoration work on the church:

1872 June 3 – The Hymn books & c: have been brought from the Church, the men have begun there today.

C.C. Notebook: Church reopened April 22nd 1873.

The highlight of the school year was the School Feast held in July or August, and organised by the vicar. Charles Colson started this annual feast in 1858, to which the day school evening class and Sunday school pupils were all admitted, though the privilege had to be earned.

1875 Aug 5th – School treat. Only those children who had attended 250 times in the last year were admitted to the tea. All were allowed to play, several prizes were given for regular attendance, needlework and other attainments.

The whole village turned out on this festive occasion, and the gentry brought small gifts, probably as prizes for the games. The school prizes of clothing were distributed to the children who had come top in the drawing arithmetic, scripture exams.

The first feast mentioned in the Notebook suffered from the English weather:

'School Feast & Prizes – 1858

The Feast was prepared for Thursday July 8th but put off to the next day – on a/c of the wet – 103 children in the books of day school about 20 besides in Sunday School.

Mrs. Robinson made 8 pecks of flour 2-2-6

Mrs. Chamberlain made 1¾ pecks of flour 1-1-5

& the children having a little cake on Thursday Mrs. R. Made one peck more for Friday i.e. 8 pecks in all (7 had been ordered at first.)

They tended to over-provide food with the result that 'all Mrs R's eaten - & 4 cakes of Mrs C brought home to send round.' That was in 1860 and two years later 'Mrs Duvall made 11 pecks of flour into cake, Mrs Chamberlain as usual, enough of the latter was left to send round to a few old people.' In 1868 the vicar wrote that there were '3 bushels of cake from Mr Robinson and the usual quantity fr: Mrs Chamberlain, N.B. too much - 2½ bushels fr. W.R. plenty.' One gets the distinct impression that the vicar did not care very much for Mrs Chamberlain's cakes.

The Congregational Chapel started having a feast for their Sunday School children, and that meant a lot of absentees from school on another afternoon. Common sense prevailed when the two feasts were held on the same afternoon from 1931 onwards.

The local gentry did much to encourage and support the vicar in his task of running the school. Some of them acted as school managers and trustees, and made frequent visits to the school. Too frequent, if one may judge from the log book entries, for they must have been a disruptive element when lessons were in progress, and sometimes a sore trial to the teachers. The following entries from the log books are just a very small sample:

1872 March 6th – School was visited by Mr Eyre from Berkshire – thought the School was in very good order (Charles Eyre, owner of Hormead Hall).

1887 July 6th – School visited by Miss Matilda Piper who stayed some time and at the end of the lessons heard the children sing. (Piper family lived in Ashdown House)

1909 Dec 23 – During p.m. Lady Romer came to school and very kindly gave to each child a box of biscuits and a bon-bon from

Master Stephen. Mrs Francis also came to school and gave each of the Infants a present off their Christmas tree. Each of the older children received a present and every child had an orange. (Lady Romer was mistress of Hormead Bury).

Important social events in the village were marked by a halfday holiday for the children:

1880 Oct 28 – finished school early this morning so that the children might be present at Miss Wyman's wedding

1911 Feb 17th – The school was closed on Monday afternoon owing to the funeral of Miss S Wilcox (of Hormead Cottage).

1922 July 14th – The School was closed on Wednesday owing to the Bazaar at the Bury.

There were other occasions when it was obvious that so many children would be kept away from school, that it was diplomatic to declare the school closed for the afternoon.

1929 Apr 10 – There was no attendance at school on the afternoon of this day as many parents wished to take their children to the Brent Pelham Point-to-Point Race.

1930 Aug 8 – double session then closed early for children to go to Buntingford Horticultural show as some of them had exhibited.

Perhaps the 20th century teachers had read the early log books and themselves learned a useful lesson. In the past the battle to get the children to come to school when the fair came to Great Hormead or Hare Street was invariably lost by the teachers:

1874 June 26 – Attendance this week irregular on account of the Village Fair.

1875 June 25 – Hormead Fair caused irregular attendance this week.

1875 July 30 – Hare Street Fair caused irregular attendance this week.

There were two ancient customs which no teacher could prevent, but which now seem to have died out completely:

1871 Feb 14 – Very few in school this morning, being a custom among them to go about singing the 14th February.

1872 Feb 14 – Some of the children went about singing this morning according to a very ancient custom... Mr Colson gave me some money to give to those who did not stay away from school; were very pleased.

1869 Dec 21 – Very few children today on account of the weather, and a custom of going to the houses of the gentry to ask for a small gift for Xmas.

1870 Dec 23 – Very few in school today because they have to go after coals and gift money.

It would seem that the school children attending school before the last war had very many more halfday and whole day holidays, either officially or unofficially, than are permitted now.

National events

Certain national events had their effect on the school. Royal weddings, Silver Jubilees and accessions, provided holidays for the children. In 1908, the teachers and children at the school celebrated a royal event in their own special way:

1908 Dec 2nd – December 1st being the Queen's birthday, the Teachers and Children sent Her Majesty a telegram wishing Her 'Many Happy Returns of the Day'. The following is a copy of the reply. To the Secretary of Great Hornead School. 'The Queen thanks the teachers and children of Great Hornead School for their kind good wishes on this day.'

On the 9th November 1909 they sent the King similar greetings for his birthday, and again received a reply.

Other holidays occurred when the school was used as a polling-station. This was first noted on 21st January 1910, and Bank Holidays were first recorded in 1923.

The 1914-18 war was a sad experience for this village with over 70 men away serving in the forces, and there was an appalling death toll for so small a village. The school children sent contributions of fruit and vegetables for the use of the fleet, via Royston Society. They also collected money for the Over-Seas Club for fighting men fallen into captivity and the soldiers in the trenches. Nor did they forget the animals which suffered in that war:

1917 May 18th – Children collected £1-11-0 for the R.S.P.C.A. Fund for Sick and Wounded Horses.

On the afternoon of 4th October 1918 the school closed 'for blackberry gathering, 19lbs were gathered.' Whether these were for the soldiers, or home consumption, the log book does not say.

In 1916 the Daylight Saving Bill became law and the teacher wrote an account of its introduction in the log book as though rehearsing how she would explain it to the children:

1916 May 22nd – The Daylight Saving Bill has now become law the hands of the clock were put on one hour on Saturday evening May 20th 1916. Time is therefore one hour in advance.

In 1924 the Armistice was remembered:

1924 Nov 11th – 2 minutes silence kept after singing of 4 verses of Kipling's Children's Hymn, 'Land of our Birth'; a special collect and the Lord's Prayer. After silence sung National Anthem.

Government edicts increased space and meant more interference from central and local government and this took the form of visits from Inspectors. Visits from the gentry cease, only to be replaced by interruptions from an army of officials demanding to look at the childrens' eyes, hair, teeth, exercise books, P.T. drill, even their gardens.

Among the last entries before the next war overtook the village was a note of the children being fitted with gasmasks in the parish room on 28 September 1938. A year later they were busy getting ready for war in earnest:

1939 Sept 11th – School reopened after the outbreak of war one week late. Trenches were dug the following day at the back of the school.

Mercifully, they were never needed.

Hare Street School

There was a small school in Hare Street from about 1840 until c1885. This was probably for young children too small to go to the National School. I think only one teacher with one class was at this school, which is not mentioned in the directories or any other source. The references used here, come from Censuses and the Parish Registers which give the vocation of villagers.

William Allen was the first teacher. All his relations were blacksmiths in Hare Street, living near the Jolly Butchers. William was a blacksmith himself until after his fifth child was born in 1816, and he was also the parish clerk for many years. His change of occupation did him little good, however, because he died a pauper – a fact which did not overtake his blacksmith relations.

Census 1841	William Allen	60	Schoolmaster	
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Census 1851	William Allen	69	Schoolmaster	Born Gt. Hormead
Census 1861	William Allen	79	Former schoolmaster, pauper	Born Gt. Hormead

William Allen died in 1866, aged 85.

Elizabeth Ellen Newell took over at the school when William Allen retired. She was the daughter of Joseph and Jane Boswell and married the son of the Rector of Little Hormead in 1848. He is never seen or heard of again after the birth of their daughter Mahala in June 1849. This girl died when she was 18, and Elizabeth Ellen had to support herself on leaving her parents' household in the 1850s. This was when she started teaching in the school in Hare Street, and gave her occupation as schoolmistress in the Census returns of 1861-1881.

According to local information, Charlotte Hayden Wilson (nee Moule, 1879-1951) attended this school when she was a little girl and Mrs Newell was the mistress. The school was held in the thatched cottage attached to the north side of The Bakery which was burnt down in 1965.

No-one in the village at present, whom I have asked, has any recollection of this school, and I think that when Mrs Newell retired, it closed down.

Mrs Newell's sad life came to a close in the Three Counties Asylum in 1899 when she was 73 years old.

The Sunday School

The Sunday Schools frequently became the village day schools at a later stage. In the Hormeads we had the two running concurrently in the Rev. Charles Colson's time.

When it was started here we do not know, but there was a Sunday school at Barkway in 1798 and another was started about the same time at Barley, so a movement towards educating rural children was strongly under way in this part of the county by the early 1800s. They were given support and encouragement by the National Society. Indeed, children in National Schools were instructed in the Anglican faith and were required to attend the Sunday School attached to the established church.

Nonconformists suffered in the country-side where single school was usually a church school. Here in Great Hormead, there was a Sunday school under the supervision of the Rev. Charles Colson, vicar of Great Hormead, and also the ministers of the Congregational Chapel in Great Hormead catered for the children attending the chapel by organising the Sunday School there.

Between 1858 and 1873 Charles Colson noted the number of children in the Sunday school who were entitled to attend the School Feast. In 1858 there were about 20 boys, and between 30 and 35 a year later. The number had risen to 40 in 1860 and was up to 45 in 1870. When he left the village in 1873, the records cease.

The Evening School

Evening classes were held at two separate periods in the time under review. The first evening classes took the form of adult literacy classes for those members of the village who had either missed schooling altogether, or failed to acquire the necessary skills of reading and writing whilst they attended the rural school. This was an evening class conducted by the Rev. Charles Colson. He listed the boys who attended in 1844:

Philip Bush, William Ginn, Thomas Brett, Joseph Lawrence, James Boswell, William King – now belong to the Evening School – 1844.

Their ages varied between 15 and 18. He taught these boys himself, and he also had two private pupils lodging at the vicarage c1851. The vicar gave his occupation in this Census as 'Vicar of Great Hormead, M.A. of Cambridge, & Private Tutor.'

Following his departure from the village, there was a 20 year gap before any evidence emerges of another evening school. The School log books tell of the next venture in the Rev. George Smith's handwriting:

1893 week ending Nov 6th – Evening School opened Nov 1st under the Rev. G. Smith as Teacher approved by H.M.I. Attendance Tuesday 7-8.15. Friday 7-8.15.

The Rev. George Smith kept the evening class running until 1900. He claimed fees under a grant system according to the number of pupils, attendance figures, and number of subjects taught. Both girls and boys were pupils and the subjects included reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history and cookery, to which were added joinery and vocal music classes at a later date.

In 1895 the Inspector said the evening school was 'thoroughly well taught and disciplined throughout' and that progress was most satisfactory. When the vicar left the village, the classes ceased. The Correspondent commented then that it was 'Impossible to overestimate the valuable educational work which Mr Smith had done in this village.' George Smith's last note in the log book was: '1900 April 6th - All classes now closed.'

Private Tuition

Until the middle of the 19th century, when some indications of private tuition being given in the village occur, we can only conjecture as to how the wealthier parents obtained some education for their children. Resident vicars and rectors sometimes ran a small village school, but many of our parsons were absent or substituted curates here. A few of the village children would go to the grammar school in Buntingford, no doubt, whilst it was functioning from c1625-1900. Such evidence as we have of private education in the villages, is of tutors and governesses employed by certain households.

The references to these tutors occur in the Census returns, where they are listed among the servants, e.g. the Wymans of Hormead Hall had a governess in 1871 called Sarah Jackson who was 25 years old and came from Furneux Pelham.

There was a special little schoolroom built at Ashdown House in Hare Street. It is still standing, to the south of the house. The small red brick and flint building has a slate roof and brick chimney stack, with a high window. This window is so situated that the children could not see out of it and so be distracted across the back garden. In a Sale Catalogue of 1910 it was described as 'Schoolroom with Fire-place and dwarf Cupboards.' Since this building is not on an estate plan of 1844, but present in 1910, it must have been built during the time Francis Caton Piper owned Ashdown House. He had six children by 1851 and then in 1861. Miss Wainwright was a governess there in 1854 but was replaced by a Mrs Pawsey in 1856.

Samuel Rowe, who lived in Hare Street c1871-5, was a tutor, and may have taught the Piper children in the early 1870s, since a firmer hand was probably required then for the Piper boys aged 12, 15 and 17, not to mention 14 year-old Emma. Perhaps the Patten children from across the road at Hare Street House joined in the lessons. In 1861 there were five of them between the ages of 5

and 12 years old. The two families were very friendly, and may well have shared the cost of a tutor or governess for their children.

After 1871, I can find no evidence of private tutors, and the children from every household would go to the village school after 1876 when attendance was made compulsory.