

## FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

### The Croft, site of Croft Hall

Notes by Dr Lois Pihlens, 1992

- 1635 \*2 Bridge St - Dr. Thomas Sheaff (sic!) - a CANON OF ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL WINDSOR, bought 9 BS from Price, a London merchant, in 1591, and resold freehold to Henry Atkins in 1612.
- \*1 Rev Thomas Sheaffe D.D., Rector of Welford gave to the Town of Hungerford, 0.5 acre of land in The Croft, for the leading citizens to erect a free school house and to elect a schoolmaster and pay his stipend. (\*NB Other dates quoted for the foundation are 1628, 1636, and 1653 but are obviously incorrect as the original foundation deed has survived and clearly gives the date as 29th September 1635). [Thomas Sheaf D.D. had a son, also Thomas Sheaf, a doctor of medicine]
- 1729 \*8 **John Hamblin' s Charity:** by will dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 1729 John Hamblin gave 5 acres of land called Chantry Mead from which to pay the schoolmaster £4 per annum for teaching 4 boys, and a further £4 for clothing them.
- 1735 \*8 **Mrs Elizabeth Cummin's Charity:** In 1735 Mrs. Cummins gave £400 to the town, the interest on which was to be used for the education of an equal number of boys and girls. The boys were to be taught Latin and the girls reading, working (sic) and writing.
- 1776 \*5 \*6 **Rev. Edward Meyrick** was ordained in 1774. He came from Carmarthen to Hungerford in 1775, where he took in his first pupils. On 12th July 1776 he was licensed by the diocesan authorities "to teach in the Free School at Hungerford to which he was nominated by the feoffees of the school".
- 1783 "the curate (ie Meyrick) does not reside in the parsonage house (at Chilton Foliat) nor within the parish, but at Hungerford. The reason for non-residence is that he is the master of the grammar school at Hungerford". In 1786 he was appointed Vicar of Ramsbury and transferred his school from Hungerford to the Vicarage at Ramsbury and proceeded to reign over both the school and the parish until he retired in 1811. He had married Anne Graves, and they had 4 sons and one daughter.
- 1782 \*8 **Mr Capps Charity:** a servant of the family of Hungerford, known as "Trusty" left £50 to provide a school-room, on condition that 2 boys, elected every 5 years, should be taught Grammar and Classics
- 1792 UD Andrews - Master of Grammar School.
- 1796 BD Joseph Andrews - Master of Grammar School
- 1817 \*8 Trustees and Master decided to change inconvenience of boys and girls in same school and replace girls by one further boy for Latin!
- 1819 \*8 Report of Charity Commissioners: 40 boys, 32 of which (boarders or day) private, only 3 boys taught Latin, also 4 boys (Mr Hamblin's foundation) taught 3R's and clothed.
- 1823 PD Listed as "gentleman's boarding school"
- 1840 The Grammar School Act: allowed masters to teach other subjects apart from classical curriculum and to charge their own rate, and resulted in a national increase in popularity of Grammar Schools again (but not the case for Hungerford's Grammar, see 1866 Schools Inquiry Commission report)
- 1844 PD Edward Jelfs - endowed Grammar and Gents Boarding, Church Croft
- 1847: \*8 John Hives school master of Grammar School, his predecessor was James (or Edward?) Jelfs. John Hives was the school master until the Grammar School closed in 1884, splendid Latin scholar himself
- 1850 SL John Hives - Master of Endowed Grammar School, Church Cross (sic!). [John Hives,

Schoolmaster at Boarding School at 25 High Street, by 1841 - 1847]

- 1851 CS Grammar School - John Hives school master (45), 14 pupils
- 1861 CS Grammar School - John Hives school master (54), 19 pupils
- 1864 BO John Hives - Master of Free Grammar School, The Mall, founded 1653 [incorrect date] by Dr. Sheaf, for 9 boys, sons of inhabitants of Hungerford. Mr. Hives is allowed to take private pupils.
- 1866 \*8 Schools Inquiry Commission, Mr. Pearson's report: neither Mr Hives nor his assistant had a degree, teacher training or certificated teachers. 3 1 boarders, 6 fee paying day scholars, 9 foundation scholars (2 on Mr Capp's Charity, 4 on Mr Hamblin's and 3 on Mrs. Cummin's). Examination of 8 boys - average age 12.5 years, at this school 3 years, 3 Rs not to standard of National School for age. He wrote "What could be expected in a school where not a single blackboard existed?"
- 1871 CS Grammar School - John Hives schoolmaster (61), 12 pupils
- 1880 \*9 John Hives senior died March 1880. His son, John Hives junior, became schoolmaster, he ran the school until its closure in 1884.
- 1884 \*4 Free Grammar School closed, after 249 years.
- \*8 Closure due to Grammar School's poor standards and competition from Elementary schools in the town with higher standards. After 1884 The Trustees paid £20 a year to the National School for the education of the boys to receive additional instruction. The master's house and school-room were let at a rent of £15 per year.
- 1898 \*8 Premises sold for £400
- 1898 \*4 Premises sold on 11.11.1898 to Sir William G. Pearce, and the proceeds invested in the official trustees. The charities were then grouped, under the title "Grammar School Exhibition Fund" (= Thomas Sheaff, 1635; John Hamblen, 1726; Elizabeth Cummins, 1735, with codicil, 1743; Edward Capps, 1782; and the funds, under the "Endowed Schools" Acts of 1869, 1873 1874, and approved by His Majesty 1903 in Council, on 20.5.1903 were administered by one ex-officio and 7 representative Governors. Provision was made for a boy and a girl alternately to gain a Scholarship at a Secondary School tenable for 3 years with possible extension to 6, at the discretion of the Governors and Education Authority.
- 1917 Another arrangement 6.7.1917, by which the proceeds of the Cummins, Field, Hamblen, Hobbs, Lawrence, Raymond and Sir Vincent Smith Charities were to be administered by 3 ex-officio and 2 representative, for apprenticing, nursing and hospital benefits.
- 1891 KD Free School mentioned under the Charities (qv), including "4 for the Master to teach 4 boys, etc."
- 1903 KD -do- to 1891 KD re Charities.
- Mentions 1894 Local Government Act, when some charities were declared "non-ecclesiastical" and now administered by the parish council.
- Church House - erected by Sir William Pearce, Bart, opened 1900, also used as a men's club.
- 1920 KD Church House used as library, club, and Sunday School.
- 1939-45 \*7 During 2<sup>nd</sup> World War used as a British Restaurant
- 19?? Registrar's Office for Births, Marriages and Deaths (right ground floor room)
- 19?? Health Visitors Office (first floor room)
- 19?? Playgroup run by Mrs. Audrey Bond for pre-nursery children (in room at rear)
- 197? Rainbow Club, run by mothers for babies 0-21 months.
- 198? Sunday School, held previously at John O'Gaunt School.

198?                      New Scouts Hut erected at rear of property (previously housed at St John's Ambulance hut, Everland Road demolished in 1980s)

\*1 = Foundation Deed dated 29.9. 1635, re Hungerford's Free Grammar School at Berkshire Record Office

\*2 = Mr. Norman Hidden's research on 9 Bridge Street (see file) I

\*3 = Walter Money's "Historical Sketch of the Town of Hungerford" page 22, foot note, "j

\*4 = Rev. W.H. Summer's "The Story of Hungerford" page 160/1 ie. This chapter by C. Camburn

\*5 = Mr. Norman Hidden's research (?PRO)

\*6 = Mrs. Barbara Croucher's "The Village in the Valley" page 188

\*7 = Mr Jack Williams

\*8 = Mr Norman Fox's article on Hungerford's Free Grammar School in the Newbury District Field Club, 1990, Vol 14, no. 1 (copies available Newbury Library)

\*9 = Mrs Ann Long, from Isle of Wight – a descendant of John Hives.

CS = census returns

BD = Billings Directory

KD = Kelly Directory

PD = Pigot Directory

PO = Post Office Directory

SL = Slater Directory

UD = Universal British Directory