

## HUNGERFORD'S FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Norman Hidden, 1990 (Newbury District Field Club)

The origin of Hungerford's Free Grammar School is an example of the pit-falls which beset the would-be local historian unless he or she is prepared to go back to primary documents. Errors can be found in the most prestigious of secondary sources. For example, the Lysons' "Magna Britannia", published in 1806, states that

*Dr. Edward Sheaffe, vicar of the parish, gave the school-house in 1636.*

Except for the surname of the founder the whole of this statement is erroneous. Walter Money, in his "Historical Sketch of the Town of Hungerford", repeats these errors on page 22, for he includes an Edward Sheafe in his list of the Vicars of Hungerford, and, in a note on the bottom of the page states

*He gave the house for the Grammar School; and was Vicar in 1636.*

Though in a note on page 73 he states

*Thomas Sheaffe, DD , by deed dated 1628 gave a house for a free school.*

In Parry's "Account of the Charitable Donations Relating to Berkshire", published in 1818, the date given is 1628. Parry also states that the founder was a Dr. Thomas Sheaffe, DD, and that he donated a school-house. The name of the founder is correct but Parry is in error regarding the endowment and the date.

The Charity Commissioner's Report of 1819 states that

*Thomas Sheaff, DD , (as appears from an inscription in the new church lately built in Hungerford, which inscription was taken from a tablet in the old church) gave a house adjoining to the Church Croft, to be used as a school-house for a free grammar school.*

The Schools Inquiry Commission Report of 1868 includes a reference to

*the house given by Dr. Sheaff in 1653 to be a school-house for a free grammar school.*

which is repeated in the section on "SCHOOLS" in Volume 2 of the Victoria County History for Berkshire, and by Dr. Pihlens in his recently published "The Story of Hungerford".

Though he does not make the point in "The Story of Hungerford in Berkshire", the Rev. WH Summers was aware of the true position. In correspondence with Mrs. HM Batson , (author of an unpublished "History of Welford"), he refers to a deed dated 1635 and to the fact that Dr. Sheaff 'did not exactly give a house but a piece of land on trust for the erection of a house'.

A copy of the deed referred to by the Rev. Summers is held in the Berkshire Record Office, and is dated

*the nine and twentieth day of September in the eleventh year of our sovereign lord Charles.*

Charles the First succeeded his father on 27th March, 1625, thus the eleventh regnal year ran from 27th March 1635 to 26th March 1636, and 29<sup>th</sup> September of the eleventh year would have been in 1635. This deed was in the form of a tripartite indenture between

- (1) Thomas Sheaffe, D. D. , Rector of Wel ford, Berks, and*
- (2) Jeosophat Lucas, late Constable of Hungerford, Berks,  
John Worrall, clerk. Vicar of the parish church of Hunger ford, Berks,  
Thomas Garmy, butcher, of Hungerford, Berks,  
John Burchs, Beer Brewer, of Hungerford, Berks,  
William Norcraft. Curryer, of Hunger ford, Berks,  
Richard Lovelacke, Chandler, now Burgess of the said Town of Hungerford,  
Berks, and*
- (3) John Popham, Esq., of Littlecott, Wilts,  
Francis Goddard, Esq., of Standen Hussey in the parish of Hungerford, Berks,*

*Richard Browne, Esq. , of Denford, Berks,  
Edmund Hungerford, Esq., of Chisberry, Wilts,  
Francis Chocke, Esq, of Avington, Berks,  
Alexander Browne, gent., of Denford, Berks,  
Thomas Smith, gent., of Sanden Fee in the parish of Hungerford, Berks.*

The deed states that the said Thomas Sheaffe

*Hath granted unto the said Jeosophat Lucas (etc. ) all one parcel of ground containing by estimation half an acre be it more or less lying or being in Hungerford in a close or field there called the Church Field shooting [jutting out] at the south end thereof upon a ground or croft called the Church Croft and upon the north end thereof upon a mead called Parsonage Mead adjoining on the west side thereof to Parsonage Orchard and on the east side thereof to land of Sir Edward Hungerford, knight,*

and that

*they the said Jeosophat Lucas (etc. ) shall and will with as much speed as conveniently may be build and erect and set up in and upon the said parcel of ground before granted ----- a sufficient and convenient building and free school house to be for ever used as a Free Grammar School and not otherwise in such manner order and form as in a schedule hereunto annexed is mentioned.*

Further that

*there shall be for ever hereafter a man of sufficient learning and of honest and religious conversation from time to time nominated elected and placed to be a schoolmaster in the said free school house for the educating and bringing up of youth in learning in such order and manner and form as in the said schedule hereunto annexed is expressed or mentioned,*

and upon hope that

*hereafter the Constables and Burgesses of the said town of Hungerford and some other godly citizens and well affected persons may after the said free school house shall be so erected as aforesaid be encouraged and induced to give and provide some convenient maintenance to and for such schoolmaster so from time to time to be elected and placed as aforesaid for the continuance of the said free school for ever.*

From the foregoing it can be concluded that

*In 1635 the Rev. Thomas Sheaffe, DD, Rector of Welford, gave to the Town of Hungerford half an acre of land only in the hope trust and confidence that the leading citizens would, at their own expense, erect a school-house and pay the stipend of a schoolmaster,*

The schedule attached to this indenture contained some ground rules for the appointment and dismissal of the schoolmaster,

*If any such ----- shall become vicious in his life and conversation, or given to any ill course of life, or become unable or defective or notoriously negligent in teaching and instructing or in governing the said children and youth, or shall be a heretic or not orthodox in the true faith, or shall commit or fall into any notorious synne or fault*

then another should be put in his place,

Evidence exists to show that the leading citizens did fairly speedily erect a school house for "An Inquisition held at Newbury on 26th September, 1661" states that

*Thomas Smith, the elder, of Milton Wilts, by an indenture dated 19th March, 1645, granted to the Vicar of Hungerford and others an annuity of 40s. out of an inn called the 'Three Swans' ----- for the advancement of the then late erected school at Hungerford and for the teaching and instructing of two poor children or male youths of the parish of Hungerford.*

There is no such clear evidence that they paid the schoolmaster a salary or whether he had always to rely on an income from paying pupils. The Constable's and Churchwarden's Accounts from 1658 to the 19th century contain no specific references to the payment of a schoolmaster's salary, though the

former does include several references to the school, eg,

*Paid John Pocock for a marble chimney piece at the free school-£1. 11s. 6d*

*Paid Mr. Burgess for the Fire Hoses at the free school- £4. 10s, 0d.*

*Paid horse hire and expenses to Lambourn to desire the Commissioners for Charitable Uses to appoint new trustees for the school - 6s. 6d.*

In the 18th century the school's endowment was increased by grants of land and money.

By will dated 28th April,1729, JOHN HAMBLIN gave 5 acres of land called Chantry Mead from which to pay the schoolmaster £4, per annum for teaching four boys, and a further £4, for clothing them.

In 1735 Mrs. ELIZABETH CUMMINS gave to the town £400, 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, otherwise one half of the legacy was to lapse to Newbury Grammar School. The girls were to be taught "reading, working (sic) and writing". In 1743 Mrs. Cummins donated a further sum of £600, to be applied in like manner, but this gift was challenged by the executors of her will with the result that the codicil was declared void.

In 1782 the school was left a further £50. by a Mr. CAPPS, affectionately known as 'Trusty', in order to provide a school-room, on condition that two boys, elected every five years, should be taught GRAMMAR AND CLASSICS.

In the last decades of the 18th and the first decades of the 19th centuries many Endowed Grammar Schools became moribund. For example, the Vicar of Newbury stated in 1818 that the grammar school had not functioned for the previous twenty years, and this sorry tale could be repeated in many another place.

Though the Hungerford school survived the pressures of this period it would appear to have done so because it was conducted primarily as a private fee-paying academy in which the schoolmaster did as little as he possibly could for the few foundation scholars. In 1823 it was listed in Pigot's Directory as a "gentleman's boarding school".

The Report of the Charity Commissioners of 1819 gives a fairly detailed account of the operation of the school at this time. Of about 40 boys being educated at the school 4/5 were either boarders or day scholars which the schoolmaster, James Jelfs, taught "on his own account", i.e. for payment, The Report comments drily "A considerable portion of his time is devoted to these engagements ". Only three boys were being taught Latin.

In addition there were four boys on Mr. Hamblin's foundation who were taught "reading, writing and arithmetic", and who were "clothed according to the donor's direction". About 18 months before the visit of the commissioners an agreement had been made between the Trustees and the Master, founded upon the alleged inconvenience of teaching boys and girls in the same school, that the schoolmaster should teach the Latin language to one additional boy in lieu of instructing the girls. The Report adds that "This regulation was probably adopted in ignorance of the directions of Mrs. Cummins, there being no copy of her Will in the Parish, and no sufficient memorial of her charity, ( we regret to say), having been set up as requested. "

A Mr. John Hives was the schoolmaster in 1847 but he does not appear to have changed the policy of his predecessor for the directory of that year also refers to a "gent's boarding school.". Mr. Hives was still headmaster when, in 1866, a Mr. Fearon visited the school on behalf of the Schools Inquiry Commission. Mr. Fearon's report states that neither Mr. Hives nor his assistant had degrees nor were they trained or certificated teachers. By this time the number of boarders had more than doubled (31), but there were only 6 fee-paying day scholars. All had (conveniently?) been dismissed for the Easter vacation, though, according to the master's own return, the vacation should not have commenced until the day after Mr. Fearon's arrival. In addition to the fee-payers there were 9 foundation scholars ; 2 on Mr. Capp's, 4 on Mr. Hamblin's and 3 upon Mrs. Cummin's foundations. The "classics" taught to the two boys on Mr. Capp's foundation was identical with the "Latin" taught to the three on Mrs. Cummin's, and consists, wrote Mr. Fearon, "in making them learn a small portion of the accident in the old Eton Grammar, and in causing them to construe an elementary Latin delectus.". Mr. Fearon's assessment of the quality of the teaching given to the foundation scholars was not a high one, but as a

balance to his criticism we have the opinion of one who had resided in the town for some 50 years between 1848 and 1900 that "Mr. Hives was a splendid Latin scholar." (N. W. N, 28 June, 1900)

The average age of the 8 boys examined by Mr. Fearon was 12½ yrs, and they had been at the school on an average 2⅞ years. Six of them read passably (about up to the fourth standard in a National or British school) from an English History used in the school ; the other two would decidedly not have passed an inspector. He gave them four lines of dictation from the passage read. Two of them wrote the passage without error. One of them was quite unable to do it at all ; while the other six had an average of 2½ errors each. This would not have been considered a satisfactory result for the fourth standard of a National school, the boys in which would certainly be at least two years younger upon average than these. The handwriting was fair. In arithmetic which was their best point, they were backward for their age. None of them knew anything of decimals, and only one could handle vulgar fractions a little ; and they showed little facility in working the most elementary sums in practice and proportion, Mr. Fearon concluded by asking, "What, however, could be expected in a school where not a single blackboard existed?"

Mr. Hives continued as headmaster until, in 1884, the school was closed "owing to the competition of the elementary schools"!

The chief of these was the National School founded early in the 19th century. Even in its earliest days this school must have had a good reputation for it attracted pupils from surrounding villages, and from families which would no doubt have considered themselves as middle class. An Admission Book covering the period 1816-1855 gives the occupations of pupils' parents. Included is a very large number of artisans such as carpenters, blacksmiths and shoemakers ; several tailors, shop-keepers, publicans, bailiffs and farmers ; also an engineer, a musician, a writer and a book-seller. Nonetheless right up to the 1870s boys from this school were being elected to the Latin Foundation at the local grammar school. In 1876, however, the competition became more serious. In October of that year the managers of the National School made arrangements by which "parents of the middle class will be enabled to avail themselves, at a cheap rate, of an excellent elementary education". To this end they adopted a graduated scale of fees: Tradespeople - 6d ; Mechanics and Artisans - 3d ; and Labourers - 2d. per week. If the Wesleyan Day School was as good as its counterpart in Newbury it too would have provided genuine competition with the grammar school.

For some years after the closure of the Grammar School the trustees paid £20, a year to the National School for the education of boys, who were to receive instruction additional to that given to the other children in the school ; while the master's house and the school-room were let at a rent of £15 a year. The educational portion of Cummin's Charity was accumulated, and, in 1898, the school-house was sold for £400 and the proceeds invested in gilt-edged securities (Consols).

In 1903 a new scheme was drawn up called THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL EXHIBITION FUND (1903). By this time the combined education endowments of Sheaff, Hamblin and Cummins amounted to

Chantry Mead and Westfield (c6 acres) let at £15. 8s. 0d. pa, £1,300 worth of Consols, producing £32. 11s.8d. per annum.

By the new scheme the income was to be applied in the maintenance of exhibitions of not less than £5 and not more than £15 yearly, tenable at any institution of secondary or technical education, and to be awarded to boys and girls of the parish of Hungerford who are or have been scholars in some public elementary school.

In March, 1905, the Charity Commissioners instituted an inquiry into the local charities. They reported that

Since the passing of the 1903 Scheme only TWO exhibitions have been awarded. The first, at Easter, 1903, was awarded to the better of TWO competitors, who proceeded to Newbury Grammar School. The (trustees paid) the fees of the successful candidate, the cost of books, and his season ticket from Hungerford to Newbury. The second was awarded on the day of the Inquiry upon the result of an examination conducted by the Headmaster of Newbury Grammar School at which there were 8 competitors. Both exhibitions were awarded for the term of 3 years.

From this time onwards, however, 3 year exhibitions to the Newbury Grammar School or to Newbury's Girls' High School, were granted alternately to a boy and a girl until 1923 when, in response to several requests from the Head Teachers of these institutions, the period of grant was extended to SIX years.

In 1942 John Holmes Wooldridge made a bequest which was added to the Grammar School Exhibition Fund, (see Appendix for details)

The 1944 Education Act provided FREE secondary education (of some kind) for all , and for a considerable period (about 20 years) thereafter no exhibitions were granted. On 5th March, 1952, the trustees of the Fund ejected to a Scheme proposed by the Minister of Education because the Foundation was solely for the benefit of children in Hungerford and it was unreasonable that the funds should be merged into a scheme relating to the whole of Berkshire. The trustees also resolved to write to the Minister requesting the powers to use the income of the Fund towards private tutoring for children resident in Hungerford with a view to enabling them to pass the examination for entry to a grammar school or, alternatively, towards providing further education. In November a letter was received from the Minister stating that it was not intended to proceed with a new scheme. No meetings were minuted between this date and June 1964.

At this first meeting after a 13 year hiatus the trustees agreed to hold talks with the Principal of the South Berks College of Further Education, and, a month later, decided to write to the Minister of Education requesting that the Scheme be altered to permit grants in aid of further education and for the provision of books, apparatus, instruments or materials. This initiative resulted, in July 1965, of a Scheme entitled "The Hungerford Educational Foundation". By this scheme the income of the Foundation was to be used "for the benefit of persons of either sex under the age of 25 years , whose parents or guardian have for not less than three years ----- been resident in the Parish of Hungerford and who, in the opinion of the Governors, are in need of financial assistance," (For other details see Appendix).

The Governors cannot be found guilty of any lack of imagination in their choice of persons or projects worthy of receiving assistance. One young man received £50 towards the cost of accommodation and travelling expenses to the School of Marble, at Carrara, Italy, while another received several grants amounting to a three-figure sum towards the cost of books, photographic equipment and travelling abroad, including Africa. Their definition of those "in need of financial assistance" was also very flexible. Most of the financial aid provided by the Foundation went to students at universities, at least some of whose parents could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be classified among the poor of Hungerford.

In July, 1980 a new Scheme amalgamated the Hungerford Educational Foundation with the Camburn Educational Trust under the title of "The Hungerford and Camburn Educational Foundation". This resulted in an extension of financial assistance to those studying music or other arts, and to those serving an apprenticeship. (For details see Appendix. )

Mr. CALEB CAMBURN was Headmaster of the Wesleyan Day School from 5th February 1886, to the closure of the school in 1910, when he was appointed as the Headmaster of the new Council School from which post he resigned on 31st November 1921. In 1937, when he was 80 years old, he began what proved to be a lengthy correspondence with the Education Department of the Berkshire County Council over the implementation of that part of his will which he intended should be used to set up a permanent Trust Fund. The income from this fund was to be devoted to making grants towards the cost of further educational facilities to an individual boy or girl of Hungerford "whose parents are quite unable to afford such costs".

No action had been taken by the time Mr. Camburn died, but, in implementing his will, the Camburn Educational Trust was formed by Order of the Charity Commissioners dated 25th July 1946. The trustees met first on 18th February 1947, but a scheme for the management and administration of the Fund was not adopted until 14th May 1952. (For details see Appendix) The first advertisement appeared in the Newbury Weekly News of Thursday June 12th 1952. The income from the fund was to be used mainly as Mr. Camburn intended except that, whereas he emphasised the educational character of the further studies, the scheme included assistance to those undertaking apprenticeships. The Trust continued to be administered separately until 1980 when it was amalgamated with the

Hungerford Educational Foundation.

Though the bulk of the funds of the various 20th century foundations were derived from those originally intended for grammar school education the administration of them does not really satisfy the intentions of the original founders of the old grammar school, especially with regard to their application to secondary education for Hungerford children of poor parents.

#### REFERENCES.

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The Hungerford Educational Foundation (1965).  
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#### APPENDICES.

##### THE JOHN HOLMES WOOLDRIDGE BEQUEST

"I give and bequeath unto my Trustees free of duty the sum of One thousand pounds for the purpose of formulating a Scheme in conjunction with the Charity Commissioners whereby the annual income from the said Trust Fund may be utilised for the foundation of one or more Scholarships to be open to children attending the Elementary Schools in Hungerford .. and under the age of twelve years and to be tenable if won by a boy at St, Bartholomew's Grammar School Newbury ... and if won by a girl at The Girls' High School Newbury . . . and in any event for no period exceeding six years,".

from THE CAMBURN EDUCATIONAL TRUST Scheme,

Application of the Income.

The net income of the Fund shall be applied by the Managers in one or more of the following ways for the benefit of children of Hungerford, hereinafter called "the beneficiaries" :-

( a ) The provision of financial assistanec, outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books to enable Beneficiaries on leaving school or other place of learning to prepare for or to assist their entry into a profession trade or calling,

( b ) The award of maintenance allowances tenable at any College or Institute of Further Education, or other place of learning approved by the Managers.

( c ) The provision of financial assistance to enable Beneficiaries to study music or other arts

( d ) Any other ways of assisting Beneficiaries in their studies or apprenticeships,

Making of Awards.

Awards under this scheme within the limits of the income of the Trust Fund may be made in each year to boys and girls (1) who have been in residence in Hungerford for a period of not less than two years before the date of the application for the award, (2) who have attained school leaving age, (3) who have satisfied the Trustees, after interview, as to their general educational attainment and as to their aptitude for the course of studies which they intend to pursue, and (4) who have satisfied the Managers that they are in need of financial assistance.

from THE HUNGERFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL EXHIBITION FUND and JOHN HOLMES WOOLDRIDGE BEQUEST Scheme,

Application of Income.

The net yearly income of the Foundation shall be applied by the Governors in one or more of the following ways for the benefit of persons of either sex who have not attained the age of 25 years, whose parents or guardian have for not less than three years immediately preceding the date of application for a grant been resident in the Parish of Hungerford and who, in the opinion of the Governors, are in need of financial assistance : -

( a ) Exhibitions or Grants tenable at any secondary school, training college for teachers, university, or other institute of further (including professional and technical) education,, approved by the Governors, to be awarded under rules to be made by the Governors including rules as to the value and period of tenure of the exhibitions, and the qualifications, and method of ascertainment and selection, of candidates ;

( b ) Financial assistance, outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books to help beneficiaries on leaving school, university or any other educational establishment, to prepare for, or to enter, a profession, trade or calling ;

( c ) Scholarships or Maintenance Allowances to enable beneficiaries to travel abroad to pursue their education ;

( d ) Otherwise promoting the education (including social and physical training) of beneficiaries ;

from THE HUNGERFORD AND CAMBURN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION Scheme.

The Trustees shall apply the income of the Charity in promoting the education (including social and physical training) of persons under the age of 25 years whose parents or guardians have for not less than three years immediately prior to the date of application for benefit been resident in the Town of Hungerford and who are in need of financial assistance and in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing :-

( a ) in awarding to such persons scholarships, exhibitions, grants or maintenance allowances, tenable at any secondary school, university, college of education or other institution of further (including professional and technical) education approved for the purpose by the Trustees ;

( b ) in providing financial assistance, outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books to assist such persons to pursue their education (including the study of music or other arts), to undertake travel in furtherance thereof, or to prepare for or enter a profession, trade, occupation or service on leaving school, university or other educational establishment.

NOTE. The above paper was printed, with many printing errors, by Norman Fox, in the TRANSACTIONS of the NEWBURY DISTRICT FIELD CLUB, Vol. 14. No, 1, 1990.