

Deddington National Schools

National Schools for boys and for girls had been established in 1814 and 1815 respectively during the incumbency of the Rev. John Faulkner (Vicar 1790-1821), under the "benevolent auspices" of William Wilson Esq. of Over Worton House. The object of the National Schools was to educate the poor in the principles of the Church of England.¹

The school premises were converted barns attached to Appletree Farm on the east side of Hopcraft Lane (then School Lane), ownership of which was subsequently acquired by the Rev. W.C. Risley (Vicar 1836-1848).

By the mid-1830s the National Schools had become less well supported, causing the Rev. Risley to consider alternative solutions, but without success.

A letter from Risley in February 1848 stated: "I shall have something to say about the Schools, which have *never* been conducted as I could have wished, *or as they ought to be*, from peculiar circumstances."²

Resolving the "state of inefficiency" of the National Schools appears to have been almost the first priority of Risley's successor, the Rev. James Brogden (Vicar 1848-1864). A memorandum circulated by Brogden in July 1848 contains the following statistics:³

- the number of scholars had declined from 235 (141 boys, 94 girls) in 1815 to 80, although the population of the parish had increased from 1,640 in 1811 to 2,025 in 1841;
- annual subscriptions to maintain the schools had declined from £141 in 1815 to £39.

Brogden's memorandum proposed acquiring a freehold site for new school buildings, taking advantage of government aid and other sources of grants, thereby placing the schools on a permanent foundation. Generous donations from the great and the good approached by Brogden were reported in the *Oxford Journal* in October 1848 and March 1849.

Brogden also addressed a Memorial to the patrons of the living, the Dean and Canons of Windsor, in April 1849 asking if they could provide a suitable site. Although the initial response was positive, nothing seems to have come of this request.

Brogden's initiatives led to a large public meeting in February 1850, attended by the principal inhabitants. The meeting coincided with the beginning of the first of Brogden's prolonged absences, on account of his decision to remove to London, and was chaired

¹ The 'National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales', was founded in 1811. The 'British Schools' founded by the British and Foreign School Society were non-denominational.

² Quoted by Brogden in his open letter to the Rev. Dr. William Wilson dated 16 February 1850 referred to below.

³ *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times*, No. 9, 5 March 1850, p. 2.

https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/newspaperreferencestodeddingtoninpreviouscenturies/northoxfordshire_monthlytimes

by the Rev. Dr. William Wilson of Over Worton House, who had been appointed Curate of Deddington.

Brogden sent a 23-page open letter, printed by J.S. Hiron,⁴ to be read out at the meeting, decrying the "deplorable decay" of the schools, and reiterating his earlier proposals for new school buildings. There were concerns, however, as regards the terms of government support. Rather than building new schools, the meeting resolved to form a National and Sunday School Society to restore the schools to their former efficiency by more conventional means. Donations amounting to £160 had already been pledged, together with annual subscriptions of £22 10s.

At a second meeting, it was resolved to appoint an efficient master of the boys' school, at a salary of £40, and a mistress of the girls' school, at a salary of £25. The *Oxford Journal* commented: "To the Rev. W. Wilson, Curate, may be mainly attributed the measures now taken to secure good schools for the education of the children of this populous parish."

Mr. Thomas Ward was appointed the new master, and Miss E. Watt the mistress. By May 1850 donations had been pledged by 66 subscribers. At the end of the year Mr. Ward established a National Schools clothing fund.

The growing number of children being taught by the rejuvenated schools caused problems because of the inadequacy of the existing accommodation. At a special meeting in June 1851, the Rev. Dr. Wilson advocated building new schools, which suggestion was carried by the meeting.

One of the first fund raising events was a cricket match between the first 9 and the next 18 of the Deddington Cricket Club. There were also a number of collections after sermons preached in aid of the new schools.

The Rev. Dr. Wilson had donated a site in Church-lane for the new schools, although this was subsequently sold when it was found to be too small. Instead, a site on the corner of Earl's Lane and Banbury Road was donated by W.C. Cartwright Esq. of Aynho Park, lord of the Duchy Manor, the largest of Deddington's three manors, in February 1852, prompting an appeal for increased donations. The site was marked out in March 1852, and excavations for the foundations began in July.

Work on the new buildings began in earnest in February 1853. Eight local farmers lent their horses and wagons to transport sand from Duns Tew to the site. The corner stone was laid by Samuel Field, Vicar's Churchwarden, on Easter Tuesday 1853.⁵

⁴ A LETTER relating to the RESTORATION of the NATIONAL SCHOOLS of the Parish of DEDDINGTON, Oxon. Addressed to the Rev. WM. WILSON, B.D., Curate. By JAMES BROGDEN, M.A. Vicar of Deddington. Dated 16 February 1850. Bodleian Library, G.A. Oxon 8° 1255 (1); *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times*, No. 9, 5 March 1850, pp. 1, 2 & 3.

<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/newspaperreferencestodeddingtoninpreviouscenturies/northoxfordshiremonthlytimes>

⁵ A printed circular may be found in the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 2, folio 25b. There is a transcript in https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/17016/Scrapbook2nonnewspapertranscripts.pdf

As the building works progressed, notwithstanding generous institutional donations and contributions by the great and the good, it was projected that there was a shortfall of c.£200 to complete the project.

Accordingly, plans were made for a 2-day grand Fancy Bazaar in the newly completed school buildings in September 1853, in conjunction with the annual flower show of the Deddington Horticultural Society on the first day, although the first event was a well-attended lecture on 'Secret Correspondence, Ancient and Modern, and Telegraphic Communications'.

The new buildings were designed to accommodate 168 boys and 120 girls at a cost of c.£1,000, it being hoped that the bazaar would raise the then outstanding c.£150.⁶

The first schools inspection following the relocation took place in December 1853, in the presence of the Rev. Brogden whose first sequestration had just ended. There were 101 boys and 109 girls on the school rolls. The schoolmaster was Mr. Bromfield (following the untimely death of Mr. Ward (38)), and the schoolmistress was Mrs. Walker. 8 boys were commended by the Diocesan Inspector.

Brogden insisted on a formal opening ceremony following his return in January 1854, on the Feast of the Epiphany, when the children marched in procession from the parish church to the schools, headed by a band playing 'Rule Britannia' and the National Anthem. The Vicar delivered a generous inaugural address thanking the major benefactors, with a special mention of the energy and liberality of the Rev. Dr. Wilson. Following the address, the children "were regaled with cake and wine",⁷ after which prayers were said and the evening hymn sung.

Despite such a promising start, Brogden soon instituted a troublesome dispute over the administration of funds, leading to the withdrawal of subscriptions and the closure of the boys' school within a year, and of the girls' school in June 1855. Brogden's living was sequestered for a third time in October 1855.

None of this was reported in the Banbury and Oxford newspapers, until a lengthy letter from 'C.F.' (Charles Faulkner) was published in the *Banbury Guardian* (and two other papers) in November 1855 decrying the collapse of day schooling for the poor in the town.⁸

It will scarcely be believed that a town possessing two fine new school rooms, erected within the last three years, at a cost of between twelve and thirteen hundred pounds, should have those rooms abandoned, the windows being broken, the play-ground overrun with thistles, nettles, and rank weeds, horses and any cattle constantly getting into it, the gates and fences being daily destroyed, and no one endeavouring to counteract this flagrant evil.⁹

⁶ The final cost was £1,244 14s. 7d.

⁷ Probably orange or ginger wine.

⁸ A cutting may be found in the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 3, folios 70b-71. There is a transcript in https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/17471/2021cogginsScrapVol3.pdf

⁹ It would have been more accurate to say that the new school buildings had been completed only 26 months previously rather than "within the last three years".

The National Schools Sunday School, which used to teach 250 children, superintended by the master and mistress, with 20 "gratuitous" teachers, had also effectively collapsed. In contrast, attendance at the Nonconformist Sunday Schools was Wesleyans c.50, 'Reformed Methodists' c.100 and Independents c.80.

Faulkner's letter prompted a meeting attended by virtually all the principal inhabitants, chaired by the Rev. W.C. Risley. It was unanimously resolved to re-open the schools. £57 10s. was pledged immediately, and volunteers were to canvas inhabitants for subscriptions. Charles Faulkner was confident about raising the requisite funds, "his only fear was, that possibly they might be interrupted in their proceedings from a quarter whose interference might upset all their arrangements."

The National Schools re-opened in February 1856, with about 70 boys and 70 girls. The new master was Mr. John Dart, and Miss Hannah Glumm was the mistress. In a poll of subscribers to fill four vacancies on the committee of management, Charles Faulkner came a poor fifth.

For the remainder of the 1850s, the local press carried regular reports on school treats, government and diocesan inspections, and subscribers' meetings. Henry Churchill, solicitor, was secretary of the schools' management committee from 1856 to 1864. At the end of 1858 there were 143 girls and 133 boys. Rev. Brogden did not return to the parish until April 1859.

The annual school treat for 200-300 children of tea, games and amusements took place on St. Peter's Day on 29 June each year.¹⁰ In 1857 and 1858 the event was held in the Rev. Risley's park adjoining Deddington House in New Street. In September 1852 and September 1853 school treats were organised to coincide with the annual flower show and the Fancy Bazaar.

The children of the National and Sunday Schools also enjoyed an annual May-day treat. In 1859 the May Queen "was escorted in procession round the town. First came the boys as her trusty knights, to clear the way, carrying a number of flags and banners. Then came Jack-in-the Green; then followed the state carriage containing the queen [drawn by her six maidens], backed up by a gigantic may-pole." Songs were sung en route. After cricket and other games, a hearty tea was served to 255 children. "The day [was] one of the gayest we have ever witnessed in Deddington."

Other sources are 'Deddington's Schools' by Buffy Heywood, 2004,¹¹ and the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire.¹²

The January 1851 issue of the *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times* carried an advertisement by the Misses Bartlett announcing their intention of opening a Seminary for Young Ladies in Deddington. References were provided by the Independent Ministers at Deddington (Rev. Obed Parker), Banbury and Adderbury.

¹⁰ Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

¹¹ https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2796/schools.pdf

¹² See the chapter on the parish of Deddington in the Victoria History of the County of Oxford, Vol XI (1983), ed. A. Crossley (London: Institute of Historical Research), sub-section on Education.

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol11/pp81-120#h3-0013>

The 1851 decennial census return lists a Jane Bartlett, 34, schoolmistress, living in Market Place.