

CHARITIES & EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN ENGLAND & WALES CHARITIES OF KENT REPORTS - PART 1

By Alfred Walker

Mrs. Anna Gertruy Crispe, by will dated 13th Feb. 1707 gave to the Overseers of the Poor of the parish of Birchington, 47 acres of land in Birchington and Monkton, in trust, for certain purposes mentioned in her will –

“And also, for ever yearly, to keep at school, with an able dame or schoolmaster living in the parish of Birchington, 12 boys and girls of the parish of Birchington and Vill of Acole, to learn to read and write, and the girls to work needlework; all to be educated in good manners and to be at Church orderly; each child to have a Bible at leaving school: the remaining rent to be applied towards binding some of the boys kept at school as apprentices to some handicraft trade.”

The farm premises were let by auction, on lease for eight years from the 11th October, 1813, to Thomas Sidders, at the rent of £51. 14s. for the first year, and £150 for each succeeding year of the term. This rent is considerably above the real value of the farm, and the land is not expected to produce much more than half the present rent, when the lease expires. The tenant has applied for an abatement in his rent, but none has yet been allowed him.

The schoolmaster receives £36.15s yearly for teaching the 12 boys and girls mentioned in the will; and he takes 12 more in addition, sometimes one or two more. There are never less than 24. They are all taught reading, writing and accounts and the girl's needlework; each of the first 12 receives Bibles on leaving school. The overseers appoint the first 12 children, but the selection of the other 12 is generally left to the schoolmaster. The apprentices are taken from the first 12 children, and the funds are, at present, more than sufficient for the boys who offer to go out apprentices. The prentice fees have varied from £10 to £25 and even £35 has once been given. In the last two years four boys were bound out, and there are now two more ready to go as soon as masters can be provided for them. There is now a balance of £180 in the hands of the Overseers. The general expenditure for the school and the other charitable bequests of the testatrix amounts to about £45 yearly. The remainder of the rent will be applicable for binding out apprentices, the number of whom of course will vary with the income. If the rent should be reduced to nearly half, as is expected, there will be hardly sufficient to put out two boys yearly with premiums of £25 each.

THE CHARITY SCHOOL & THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS OF BIRCHINGTON WITH ACOL

The first school in Birchington and Acol of which there is a record was the Crispe Charity School, established under the Will of Anna Gertruy Crispe of Quex who died March 23rd 1708. She bequeathed in her Will to the Overseers of the Poor of Birchington and the Ville of Acol, 47 acres of land lying in the parishes of Birchington and Monkton – now known as the Crispe Farm – then let at 18 pounds yearly – the income from which “to keep at school with an able Dame or Schoolmaster the number of twelve boys and girls to be taught and learn to read and to write and the girls to work needlework – to be educated in good manners and to be at Church orderly, and having learned to read to give each at leaving the School a Bible.” Also it was stated that the remaining money, after the other bequests had been met, “to bind some of the boys apprentice at some handicraft trade.”

So was started in 1709 the Crispe Charity School. This school was one of hundreds founded all over England during the reigns of William and Mary, and Queen Anne. They were much needed, as the State at that time did nothing for the education of the poor, and small parishes such as Birchington and the Ville of Acol had no

endowed school, although perhaps a village dame or some other unofficial person taught a few village people their letters in return for small fees.

A copy of the last Will of Mistress Anna Gertruy Crispe dated 13th February 1707 is written in the front of the first volume of the Crispe Charity Land Account Book, where there is also a summary of the terms of the Will. Mistress Anna Gertruy Crispe was the last of the Crispes to live at Quex. She was buried in the Quex Chapel of the Birchington Parish Church where there is a white marble monument with a bust to her, and on this monument is inscribed the portion of her Will by which she left the 47 acres of land in trust for poor widows and for education. The monument is by a brilliant sculptor, William Palmer of London.

The Crispe Charity School was one of the first to be established in East Kent. The first "Dame" was Elinor Jarvis who was paid on December 31st 1709 the sum of £2 11s 8d. The entry in the Account Book reads,

"Paid Elin Jarvis as appears by Recait (receipt) 02 11 08"

On March 25th 1710, (Lady Day) she was paid for teaching 12 scholars £5 1s 10s in four quarterly amounts and 10s 6d was paid for 3 Bibles to give to scholars who were leaving school. In 1711 she was paid for teaching 12 scholars £6 6s 1d in quarterly amounts and 3 Bibles were given to scholars leaving the school.

Where this school was situated is not certain – it may have been at her own home – but it is known that much later the school was situated in a house at the corner of Park Road and Canterbury Road. In the Instrument of Appointment of the Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes, which goes with the Tithe Map dated 1839, a Schoolhouse is listed as Plan 72 at the corner of Park Road and Canterbury Road and as having been occupied by a Thomas Christopher Wilson and owned by a Stephen Chandler, but neither of these two seems to be connected with the school at that time. Elinor Jarvis continued "Dame" until 1715 when according to the Parish Registers an Elinor Jarvis married a Clement Benefield. At this time several of the Jarvis family were living in Birchington. One, Daniel Jarvis was Overseer of the Poor for Birchington in 1707. In 1715 Elinor Huse was the "Dame" and was paid £5 19s 6d in four quarterly payments. She remained "Dame" until 1729 when she probably died as according to the Account Book, Goodman Huse was paid £1 8s 0d for his wife's teaching and school. According to the Parish Burial Register, an "Elenor ye wife of Michael Hews was buried November 23rd 1730."

In 1730 Elenor Huse was succeeded by Elizabeth Mirriams who remained the Schoolmistress for 43 years, until 1774, and the most she ever received a year was £10 17s 4d. What happened to her is not certain, but in 1777 an Elizabeth Mirams was buried in the Parish Churchyard.

She was followed in 1774 by the best known of the Schoolmasters, Gilbert Stringer who was, as stated on his tombstone at the east end of the Churchyard, "33 years Master of the Charity School (the gift of Anna Gertruy Crispe formerly of Quex) Thirty seven years perpetual Parish Officer, Treasurer of the Union Workhouse Thirty Years." For a number of years he was an Overseer of Birchington and also Guardian. So he was an important official in the Parish but his salary until 1810 was never much more than £10 a year.

It was when he was Master that the Churchwardens and Overseers of Birchington and Acol agreed that the boys and girls "who they please to put in the Charity School shall not come in until they are about eight or nine years of age, and they are to continue three years and no longer. If the parents of these boys and girls neglect to keep them at school, Harvest and Hopping excepting, the Overseers were to turn them out and put in others." They stated that the Schoolmaster "shall learn the Boys and Girls to read and work for three pence a week and when the Schoolmaster shall think any Boy or Girl qualified to learn to write ----- the Schoolmaster shall learn each one to write and cipher for Sixpence a week." In 1789 the Overseers

agreed to pay the Schoolmaster a fixed Annual Salary of Ten pounds Sixteen Shillings.

In 1809 the rent of the Crispe Farm let to a Mr. John Sidders was increased to £51. 14s per year, so Gilbert Stringer's salary was increased to £20 a year for teaching the children "to read and write" but now he has 20 scholars. Their ages ranged from 5 years to 12 years and some had been in the school for three years.

The children in the school from Easter 1809 to Easter 1810 were as follows,

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Birchington | John Sayer | Aged 12 years | entered Easter 1806 |
| | Thomas Bushell | 11 years | 1807 |
| | Henry Bishop | 10 years | 1808 |
| | John Emptage | 11 years | 1808 |
| | Wm Rofe | 10 years | 1809 |
| | Ann Smith | 10 years | 1809 |
| Extra from Birchington. | | | |
| | John Bushell | 12 years | 1809 |
| | James Brockman | 5 years | 1809 |
| | Wm Philpott | 5 years | 1809 |
| | Wm Chandler | 7 years | 1809 |
| Ville of Wood (Acol) | | | |
| | Lewis Wales | 12 years | 1808 |
| | Richard Hayward | 8 years | 1808 |
| | Phebe Hayward | 10 years | 1808 |
| | Sarah Hughes | 10 years | 1808 |
| | Edward Dawson | 11 years | 1808 |
| | Alice Wales | 6 years | 1809 |
| Extra from the Ville of Wood. | | | |
| | Thomas Wales | 5 years | 1809 |
| | Edwd Chandler | 9 years | 1809 |
| | Clement Austen | 7 years | 1810 |

Of these 7 had Bibles at the end of 3 years when they left the school. But this adding of extra children's names over and above the 12 as stated in the Will seems to have caused some difficulty with the Churchwardens and Overseers for the following appears in the Account Book,

"At a meeting held January 15th 1816, consisting of the four present Overseers and some of the Overseers for the years 1813 and 1814 and several other Parishioners, it was unanimously resolved that they were fully satisfied of the impropriety of Gilbert Stringer the Schoolmaster with having entered in his own hand writing in this Book in the Accompts for the year 1813 a List of children denominated these as Extra, in number Ten, designated there as if by Agreement. No Agreement of the kind ever having been made or mentioned and he hence forward desired to make out his Bill with the names of the Twelve Children only agreeably to the Words of the Will. "A note is added, "The tuition of the extra Children was advised by Mr. John Friend (Overseer) and approved by Doct. Scott, (Vicar of Monkton and Birchington) and was much commended by ye Commissioners appointed to exam the Charities 1818".

It is interesting to note that for 1816 onwards for several years only 12 names of children are entered – 6 of Birchington and 6 of Acol. But in 1817 Gilbert Stringer's salary was increased to £36 15s 0d per year and this increase was no doubt due to the fact that the rent of the Crispe Farm was now £150 per year. At the meeting when

this was decided the Vicar of Monkton, the Rev. R. P. Whish was present – which had rarely happened before.

In the Government Reports on the Charities of Kent 1815, it is stated that “the premises (that is the farm) were let by auction on lease for eight years from the 11th October 1813 to Thomas Sidders at the rent of £51 14s for the first year and £150 for every succeeding year of the term. This rent is considerably above the real value and the land is not expected to produce much more than half the present rent when the lease expires. The tenant has applied for an abatement in his rent but none has yet been allowed him. The Schoolmaster receives £36 15s yearly for teaching 12 boys and girls mentioned in the Will and he takes 12 more in addition, sometimes one or two more. There are never less than 24. They are all taught reading, writing and accounts and the girl’s needlework, each of the first 12 receiving Bibles on leaving the School. The Overseers appoint the first 12 children, but the selection of the other 12 is generally left to the Schoolmaster.” In the Appendix to the Reports is the evidence given by Mr. Gilbert Stringer to the Commissioners of Education of the Poor at the House of Commons.

He said there was an endowed school at Birchington. Previous to Easter 1817 his salary was £20 but at that time it was raised to £36 15s. He said he taught 12 boys and girls and the 12 taken in addition, reading and writing and arithmetic. There was no allowance for books and stationery – the parents find these themselves. He said he built the school room which belonged to him. There was no house attached to the School – he had to find that himself. The original 12 scholars and the 12 added lately are always filled up and there are always candidates for a vacancy. The children attended Church regularly. He sent the girls to another school to be taught needlework – (not known here). There were in the parish of Birchington and Vill of Acole about 180 children who had not the means of education, about 140 of whom attend regularly at the Sunday School.” The population of Birchington with Acole at this time was about 700. It was stated to the Commissioners that the apprentices were taken from the first 12 children and the funds were at that time more than sufficient for the boys who offer to go out as apprentices. The apprentice fees had varied from £10 to £25 and even £35 had once been given.

By 1827 Gilbert Stringer had 28 scholars but in 1828 he ceased to be Schoolmaster and Peter Wootton took his place at the same salary of £35 15s, of which £10 was paid to Gilbert Stringer probably as a pension until his death in 1832. Peter Wootton was Schoolmaster for only a short time as in 1832 Sympson’s name appears in the Account Book as receiving the salary. In 1834 he is followed by Michael John Benefield. He remained for two years only, when Thomas Sidders became the Schoolmaster at a salary of £36 15s but this was increased in 1839 to £50, but now he had 50 children. Lack of accommodation for the increased number of scholars had been a problem for the last few years so in 1836 the Overseers, the Vicar and others at a meeting agreed to bid a sum not exceeding One Hundred and Thirty Pounds for the Old Union Workhouse in Park Lane next to the present school which was offered for sale, the Workhouse now not being used as the Union Workhouse at Minster had now been opened. The bid was unsuccessful and the Old Workhouse was bought by John Powell Powell Esq., for £225.

From now on it seems as if the Governors of the Charity paid for materials needed for the School, as the following items show,

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| “Scrip Cards and 200 pencils | 5s |
| 1½ Doz of Copy books and 100 of pens | 6s 6d |
| Slate pencils | 1s 6d” |

But doubts arose as to the ability and efficiency of Mr. Sidders, so a Committee was appointed in 1850 to report on his work and it was decided to attend the Schoolroom to hear the examinations of the children by an examiner conversant with the “present

system of education” and to obtain his opinion and advice. A committee of local people – 4 in number visited the School and reported that they considered Mr. Thomas Sidders “insufficient to teach upon the present system on which the Education is generally conducted throughout the Country, but at the same time earnestly recommend the Overseers to continue Mr. Thomas Sidders Schoolmaster remembering the many years he has been the Master of the Crispe School, provided he will regularly attend for three months the instruction of Mr. Johnson at his school at St. Lawrence and make himself an efficient master upon the present system of Education.”

Mr. Sidders agreed to the recommendation and attended St. Lawrence School and Mr. Johnson reported favourably on him. There is no doubt that he was introduced to the monitorial System popular at this time. This system was that, some of the more intelligent senior pupils were appointed as monitors. These monitors came to school early and were given concentrated instruction by the Master. When the rest of the pupils arrived they were divided into small groups, each group under a monitor who passed on the instruction just obtained from the Master. He would superintend the working of the whole school and towards the end of the day test the children to see if the lessons had gone home. Mr. Johnson in his report stated that Mr. Sidders,

“applied himself to the working of the System with that diligence and ardour which should at all times characterise a teacher of the young, and I have no hesitation in saying that you will, in a few months, notice a decided improvement in those dear children entrusted to him by the working of the New System. I may also add that he has acknowledged the Old System to be erroneous.”

As a result of this Mr. Sidders was “elected” Master of the Crispe School until 1851, and a number of books were procured, religious and secular, slates, pencils, maps of England, the World, Europe, and Palestine, and a visiting Committee was appointed to visit the School monthly.

Mr. Sidders’ salary was now £48 per year. It is interesting to note that for many years and during these discussions regarding Mr. Sidders neither the Vicar of the Parish of Monkton – Rev R. P. Whish, nor the Minister at Birchington, Rev H. F. Whish, his son, were ever present at the meetings. The Chairman was a Rev G. W. Sicklemore, M.A., Vicar of St. Lawrence, Ramsgate.

In 1862 Mr. Sidders retired and it appears that the Charity School closed as now the National School in Park Lane was well established.

In the December 1862 the Governors of the Crispe Charity agreed that thanks be conveyed to Mr. Sidders for the “zeal and assiduity with which he has conducted the Crispe’s Charity School for the last 27 years and greatly regret that the state of their funds render it impossible to recommend a retiring allowance.” But the following year it was agreed to give him a pension of £10 annually for life. This decision caused considerable discussion between Managers of the National School and the Governors of the Crispe Charity, so that in the end the Vicar, Rev. R. P. Whish said “for peace sake – the proposals regarding the pension are accepted by the National School managers.” It must be remembered that none of the School Masters or Mistresses mentioned up till now were in any way qualified teachers.

The pension of £10 was paid to Mr. Sidders until 1868. By now the National Schools were well established and attention must now be directed at them.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS

There was much opposition to the founding of a National School in Park Lane, Birchington in the 1840s, the opposition coming mainly from the Governors of the Crispe Charity School and from a number of the Parishioners. The then Vicar of Monkton with Birchington and Acol, Rev. R. P. Whish wished to found a school, but his efforts were frustrated. He made an application for a grant towards building a

school in 1845 to the National Society for Promoting Religious Education in accordance with the Principles of the Church of England and in this application he mentioned a Day and Sunday School for 18 boys and 15 girls in Birchington which he described as follows:-

“An endowed school not at all available for the purposes of education under the National System, (the monitorial system) the Trustees having appointed a master entirely incompetent.” This was Mr. T. Sidders. He had tried to get the Trustees of this Charity, the Crispe Charity, to use the endowment to pay the Master and Mistress of the new school but this they declined to do. So the matter was dropped for a few years but nevertheless a site for a this new school was conveyed under a Deed dated 19th August 1845. By this Deed John Powell Powell Esquire of Quex Park freely and voluntarily and without any valuable consideration conveyed to the Rev. Richard Peter Whish, Vicar of the several parishes of Monkton, Birchington and Acol, a parcel of land in what is now known as Park Lane attached to the Birchington Workhouse which was purchased in 1837 by John Powell Powell from the Visitor and Guardians of the Birchington Union, when the Union Workhouse at Minster was opened. The land was to be used by the Vicar and his successors as a site for a school for poor persons of and in the several parishes of Birchington and Acol and as a residence of the Schoolmaster or Schoolmistress, such school to be always in union with the Incorporated National Society and conducted according to its principles and for the furtherance of its ends and designs and to be in all things under the management and control of the Rev. Richard Peter Whish or other Vicar for the time being of the Parishes of Birchington and Acol. John Powell Powell declared and directed that the Vicar for the time being shall alone have the power to select and appoint the Master and Mistress.

Money to build the new school was raised by subscriptions amounting to £389-5s-0d, a Government grant of £129 5s, a grant from the Diocesan Board of £70 and £40 from the National Society.

The one room school with a Master's residence attached was built, the cost being £625 and that building remained in use until it was demolished and the present modern building erected a few years ago. Because of the help from the National Society the school was always referred to as “The National School” until the mid 1950s.

In the Minute Book of the Birchington National School it is stated they were founded in 1848 and opened on the Feast of St. Barnabas, i.e. June 11th 1849. The Trustees were the Vicar of Monkton with Birchington, and the Curate of Birchington. The first Master was Mr. A. H. Ansell from St. Mark's College, Chelsea, and the Mistress, Mrs. Ansell. The School was subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, and by the Diocesan Inspector of Schools.

The building was pseudo Gothic in style, rectangular in shape about 48 feet by 22 feet, single storey, of local brick with a tiled roof. Attached to it on the north side was the School house of two storeys, and next to that the Offices, and there was a well in front of the offices. The roof timbers were open to the school and the floor boarded. The cloakroom was in the porch. At first the school room was heated by an open fire and later by a stove standing out in the room. The playground was in the front of the building up to the Acol road. The site was surrounded by a burr brick wall capped by flints so common in old Birchington.

The building seems to have been erected according to the suggestions set out in the Minutes of the Committee of the Privy Council for Education of 1840. When the school opened under Mr. Ansell there were about 60 pupils, boys and girls. After several years of discussions, at times acrimonious, the Trustees of the Crispe Charity and the Managers of the National School agreed on a scheme of management for the school which was approved by an Order of the Court of Chancery dated 6th March

1862. Under the Scheme the Trustees of the Crispe Charity agreed to pay £50 per annum out of the funds of the Charity to the Treasurer of the National School so long as the stipulation contained in Rule 13 of the Scheme be conformed with and that the Scheme, Order and Minute are entered in the Managers' Book of the National School and is also printed. A copy of the Scheme etc was printed and is now in the Crispe Charity Cash Book. Rule 13 of the Scheme deals with the income of the Crispe Charity and how it is to be used and states that children of Dissenters from the Church of England need not learn the Church Catechism, or be instructed in any distinctive principles of the Church of England, or attend the School or Parish Church on Sundays. A copy of these stipulations entered into with the Trustees of the Crispe Charity were painted on a board and placed in the National Schoolroom.

It appears that throughout all this Mr. Sidders, late Master of the Charity School came off badly, for it was agreed in 1862, "That thanks be conveyed to Mr. Sidders for the zeal and assiduity with which he has conducted the Crispe's Charity School for the last 27 years, and the Trustees greatly regret that the state of their funds render it impossible to recommend a retiring pension." But the following year he was awarded a pension of £10 annually for life.

On the 1st May 1863 Mr. Ansell, the first National Schoolmaster, was given notice to quit. According to the Minute Book of the Crispe Charity, "owing to the current reports in the neighbourhood as to the conduct of Mr. Ansell, the Schoolmaster, as to seriously impair his authority and usefulness and injure the character of the School, Mr. and Mrs. Ansell be given notice to quit the situations now held by them in the National School within six weeks of the date of this meeting." What his conduct was to cause the Managers to take this serious step is not known but it must have been serious.

It was then agreed to advertise for a suitable Master and Mistress for the National School, between the age of 30 and 45, the minimum stipend to be £50 per annum and free residence, and the Master was to render an account of the 'head' money paid by the children under the Scheme. 'Head' money was the weekly sum of two pence paid by each child attending the School, payable on Monday morning. The head money was applied for increasing the salaries of the Master and Mistress and for providing books and stationery for the purposes of the School and prizes for the scholars.

But the question of the pension to Mr. Sidders still was not settled until in the end the Vicar, The Rev. R. P. Whish, in exasperation, wrote "for peace's sake the proposals regarding the pension are accepted by the School Managers". Some of the Trustees of the Crispe Charity were Dissenters and the Charity Commissioners had stated that the Trustees could not use money of the Charity for a pension.

From now on much of the information regarding the National Schools comes from the series of Log Books kept at the School. They are a record of the daily life of the School and in these books the Head Teachers enter accounts of any important happenings, events, visits etc.

The first Log Book extant opens on 9th March 1863 with the entry, "Elizabeth Murphy admitted. Pupil Teacher ill."

On March 10th is this,

"Holiday, Prince of Wales' Marriage." This refers to the marriage of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.

On March 12th is written,

"C. Hatcher played truant a day and half. Brought to school today and punished."

"March 25th Boys absent to work – planting." They were potato planting.

"May 1 May Day. Children had the day in the playground under the garlands."

In June 1863 the average attendance was 61, but June 10th was a very wet day so only 13 children were at school, but by June 24th attendance was increasing on account of the school feast which was held the following day.

The next entry of interest is for July 6th,

“Two boys whipped for throwing ink about.”

In the September of 1863 the new Schoolmaster took up his duties. The entry in the Log Book for 7th September 1863 is as follows,

“William Lockyer Banks, Certificated Teacher, 2nd Class, 3rd Divs., late master of Boughton Monchelsea National School took up duties as Head.
40 Children present.

The children appear to be intelligent and docile (to a certain extent) but wayward and passionate. They require gentle but very firm treatment if I mistake not.”

Mr. Banks remained Master for three years until 1866 during which time He made a number of interesting entries in the Log Book. Here are some,

“Charles Hatcher played truant several times”

“Sept. 7th - Hatcher made his appearance this morning. Promised to give him a penny at the end of next week if he would be present every day.”

“Sept 21 - Children are inveterate chatterers and busybodies.”

“Oct 8 - Wm George Snell has gone to join the Revenue Cutter at Ramsgate.”

“Nov 9th - Elizabeth, Edward, and Freeman Everall, Henry and William England, and Adeline, Ellen, and William Corney who live at St. Nicholas Station of the Coast Guard left for the winter, the way being dangerous – indeed the boy, William Corney who came to bring me notice, was blown over the cliff today on his way here. Fortunately he was but little hurt.”

The St. Nicholas Coast Guard Station was at the point near Plum Pudding Island, so the children would have quite a way to walk to and from School in Park Lane. This Station was disused when the Coast Guard Houses were built at Minnis Bay in the early 1880s.

It appears that at this time there were “private” schools in Birchington as this next entry shows,

“Nov 10 1863 - Sarah Huckstep has gone to the ‘Parlour’ School.” This school was run by a Miss Sidders, an unqualified teacher, and probably held in the front room of her house. She was possibly related to Thomas Sidders, a past master of the Crispe Charity School.

Mr. Banks had his difficulties – mainly over school furniture. On November 18th the Vicar came to the school and promised a new set of desks, the old desks to be converted into cupboards, but in the following January the children could not write in copy books as the new desks had not yet arrived, and the old desks had been converted into cupboards during the holidays, but the new desks did arrive two days later. The next day one of the scholars was in trouble as this entry shows,

“Ambrose Adams commenced to trace on the new desks with his slate pencil notwithstanding a caution given. Flogged him and cautioned the rest of the school again.”

Keeping the school clean and warm was somewhat different then from now. It seems as if the older children took turns to light the fire as this entry shows,

“Nov 26 1863 - Arthur Adams, whose turn it was to help light the fire this morning, suspended from school as his parents objected to his doing that duty, but Mrs. Adams came to apologise in the afternoon and the boy was allowed to attend again.”

Again in 1864 a Charles Mills was withdrawn from the School by his parents rather than he should do his turn in sweeping the school and lighting the fire.

Parents were expected to pay for breakages by children as this entry shows,

"1863 Dec 8 Received a note from Mrs. Ginman, grandmother and guardian of Charles Coffin, stating that she refused to pay for a slate he had carelessly broken. Suspended him from attendance at school till payment shall be made."

The next day is this entry,

"Charles Coffin brought payment for the slate."

The Schoolroom at times in the winter was very cold with only the one open fire to heat the room. In February 1864 the Master wrote this,

"The Children's minds seem frozen as well as their bodies, poor things."

That February was very cold with snow and a hard frost. Several names were struck off for continued absence but some of these no doubt were engaged at Quex picking stones. These were probably for filling holes in the roads.

From the May of 1864 till the following February 24th 1865, the Schoolroom was used for celebration of Divine Service while the Parish Church was being "restored." This was when the extensive Victorian 'restoration' of the Church was carried out. The Schoolroom was whitewashed, and painted to make it fit for use as the Parish Church during this restoration work.

In May 1864 appears the first Inspector's Report on the School. Here is what is written in the Log Book,

"The School is very quietly carried on.

Answers in Religious Knowledge satisfactory.

General attainments fairly good except Arithmetic, in which many failed.

Needlework very fair but very slow.

Average attendance 59.

Number of children presented for examination 30.

Numbers presented for examination as having attended 200 times during the past year:-

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Boys 24 | Girls 15 | Total 39 |
| <u>On Examination</u> - | Reading 28) | |
| | Writing 25) | at 2s 8d 65 |
| | Arithmetic 12) | |

On Attendance only

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------|
| Infts under 6 at 6s 6d | 9 | |
| Av. Attendance | £8 | 17s 0d |
| Examination | £6 | 10s 0d |
| Infts under 6 | £2 | 3s 11d |
| Total | £17 | 10s 11d |

The School fee is 2d per week per child."

The amount of the grant was the result of the Revised Code of the Committee of Council of 1862 and became known as "Payment by results." The grant paid was to help towards the running of the School, and was based on attendance and results in the examination. There was a syllabus for the examination in each of the standards – from Standard 1 to Standard VI. In Standards 1, 11, and 111, the children had a slate and pencil for the exam and in Standards 1V, V and V1 paper, pen and ink. Not all children were entered for the exam, only those the Schoolmaster thought had a reasonable chance of passing and so gaining part of the grant.

The annual examination over and the report entered in the Log Book the Schoolmaster, Mr. Banks, had further worries as shown by this entry for July 11th 1864,

"Finding that false reports are in circulation carefully and sedulously disseminated by malicious persons for their own base purposes respecting the time of commencing school mornings and afternoons, I have determined that I will henceforth

carefully note the exact time when I begin Prayers in the morning and the Doxology in the afternoon. I hereby certify that the time in every case will be exact by the Wesleyan Chapel Clock and entered here at the moment and signed by me.

Witness my hand

W. Lockyer Banks.

Monday afternoon – Opened School at 2 p.m. W.L.B.

12 Tuesday – commenced at 9 a.m. W.L.B.”

What caused this trouble has not been ascertained.

In the following September Mr. Banks was forced to open the afternoon school later than usual as this entry shows,

“September 12 Mr. Hodges’ Steam waggonette being on the Square, I allowed the children to look at it for a quarter of an hour and therefore P.M. opened School at 2.15 W.L.B.”

Towards the end of the year Mr. Banks was badly in need of assistance, and asked the Curate for an Assistant, but the Rev. Whish, “denies help under the pleas of want of funds.”

On the day the Church was re-opened after the Restoration the School had a holiday and soon after that the Schoolmaster was greatly cheered when the Vicar and the Curate came into the School with the agreeable announcement that he should be allowed a Pupil Teacher to help him in the School and that furthermore his stipend would be raised from that time.

But Mr. Banks did not enjoy his increase in salary for long, for in January 1866 he left and the Curate, Rev. H. Whish took charge for the time being, but soon after a Mr. Thomas Williams entered upon his duties as Master. He did not stay long for the Log book entries end on 6th February 1866 and do not re-open until January 31st 1870.

From the Minutes of the Trustees of the Crispe Charity it seems as if an Infant School was established in 1869 in the premises adjoining the Institute in the Square, but more of this later.

The Log Book of the National School re-opens on January 31st 1870 when a Mr. Thomas Goodburn was in charge and when the average attendance was 49 and the number on the register 100.

The children attended Church on Ash Wednesday, and on March 2nd 1870 the Master was not at all pleased with the order and was compelled to punish four boys for “light” conduct during the service. On March 7th a Henry Brooks entered upon his duties as Master and he immediately punished three boys for going to Church to see a wedding against the Curate’s desire and against the Master’s orders.

The entry for November 22nd 1870 is worth recording,

“Gave C. Pemble one stripe with the cane for continued disobedience. He then ran out of the school and in a few minutes returned with his father who assaulted me with a horse whip in hand by calling me a b----y fool and using other foul language in the presence of the school children, after which he left the room saying he would take d----d good care not to send his children here again.”

Mr. Pemble was a butcher and a member of the Church Choir. Mr. Brooks states that he was suspended from the Church Choir.

From about 1868 to 1870 the school went through a difficult time and it appears from the Minute book of the Crispe Charity that the school was closed for a while as no Schoolmaster could be obtained. This may be the reason for another “Parlour” School opening, this one near the Mill and several children left the National School to go to that.

In 1871 the Rev. John Price Alcock became the first Vicar of Birchington when Birchington with Acol became a separate ecclesiastical parish separate from Monkton.

He took considerable interest in the School and often visited to hear Reading. He attended the meetings of the Trustees of the Crispe Charity and became their Chairman and so the relation between the National School Managers and the Crispe Charity Trustees became much happier. The Trustees of the Crispe Charity made a grant of £50 annually to the National School.

There are several references to the annual **School Treat** and this entry for 22nd September 1872 is interesting,

“The School Treat brought the children from field work, but **not** to school and some who were not well with measles attended the feast.”

In 1872 a certificated master, Mr Herbert Catford was appointed to the mixed school in Park Lane and under his energetic management the school ‘attained to a high degree of perfection.’

At the passing of the Elementary Education Act in 1871 it was considered that some alteration would be necessary to render the school efficient. A Vestry Meeting was held and it was agreed to place the School in a proper state of efficiency to enable the Managers to meet the Government requirements, and it was agreed “to make the present school equal to the school accommodation required by the Government and, to obtain funds for that purpose, a voluntary rate of two pence in the pound was to be levied on owners and occupiers and be forthwith made and collected.” The rate was never raised but a sum of £250 was raised by voluntary subscription and the school was enlarged.

Another room was built on the south side of the original schoolroom on land belonging to the Cotton Estates, exchanged for a small piece of school land once part of the old Workhouse. The land was exchanged between Henry Perry Cotton of Quex and the Rev. John Price Alcock, Vicar of Birchington with Acol and the Churchwardens at the time. The Indenture is dated 30th August 1876.

The Charity Commissioners in 1874 drew up a scheme regulating the controlling of the school. By this Scheme the “land was vested in the Vicar and the Churchwardens and their successors to be used solely as and for a school, the school to be open at all times to inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools, the school shall always be in union with and conducted according to the principles of the National Society for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church, the Minister for the time being shall have the superintendence of the religious and moral instruction of all the scholars and may also use or direct the premises to be used for the purpose of a Sunday School.” The Management of the School was to be vested in a Committee comprising the Vicar, the Churchwardens and Overseers, and certain other persons. The Master must be a member of the Church of England.

In the Log Book is a mention of the recent enlargement of the school which “affords better opportunity for the separate instruction of the classes.”

It is interesting to note that in July 1875 two classes were taken to Margate to see the Prince and Princess of Wales – but the day was very wet. **By 1876 the average attendance had grown to 120. On April 21st there was a holiday, being the occasion on which the foundation stone of the new School–Church at Acol was laid. This School–Church is now St. Mildred’s Church at Acol. It was then that the Trustees of the Crispe Charity discussed the establishment of an Infant School at Acol and the scheme was put before the Charity Commission, for power to enable payments to be made for this. It does seem that for a time a School was held at Acol and payments towards its maintenance were made. It was only a few years ago that the fireplace in St. Mildred’s Church was blocked up – the open fire to warm the schoolroom in the nave of the Church.**

Here are a few more interesting items from the Log Books,
 “1876 Nov 3rd - Many children absent in consequent of there being a Wax Works Exhibition in the Square.”

“1877 Sept. - Attendance low as whole families are gone off hopping.” No doubt they went hoping at Acol or at Dent-de-Lion where hops were grown at this time.

“1879 Nov. - Few boys away from School to go Guy Fawking.”

By 1880 the average attendance had risen to 144. Reports of Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools appear in the Log Books.

It is interesting to note that the School had a Treat in Quex Park in Celebration of the Coming of Age of Mr. Percy Cotton in 1887, who later became the Founder of the Powell Cotton Museum.

Mr. Catford carried on the School successfully for 17 years and during that time several enlargements were made to accommodate the increasing numbers. One addition was made in 1881, the work being carried out by J. Bristow of the Square, the same man who later re-shingled the Church Spire in 1887.

In 1889 Mr. Alfred W. G. Score became School Master and he remained until 1900 when he was succeeded by Mr. C. Laming.

In 1890 it appears that there were then three rooms in the school. Some children made excellent attendances. Sarah Bishop in 1890 attended 428 times out of a possible 429. She was in Standard VI. Herbert Webb for the year ended 31st March 1891 attended 421 times out of a possible 422. He was in Standard V. Ashton Pemble attended 420 out of a possible 420 times in 1893. As a prize he had 5s in money and a book called “Old Jack.” Again the following year Ashton Pemble made full attendance as did Evelyn Stevens. For the year 1896 12 pupils made full attendance.

The teaching staff as shown by the Inspector’s Report was as follows,

Alfred Score, Head and Certificated Teacher of 1st Class.

Sarah Score, Certificated Teacher of 2nd Class

Albert Jenner – Assistant Teacher and ex-Pupil Teacher

Mabel Peach – Assistant Teacher and ex-Pupil Teacher

John Brown – Pupil Teacher.

The roll was 247 but attendance was poor as so many pupils were absent hop-picking. The fees were paid weekly and often children were sent home for the fees and often did not return.

Beach combing was carried on then, as now, as this entry shows,

“1890 Feb. - Some boys were absent to collect logs of wood thrown up on the beach from a wreck.”

Owing to increasing numbers in the school, there was some over-crowding and the H.M.I. in his Report threatened to forfeit the Government grant if the average attendance is again allowed to exceed 189 – as in the December of 1890, when the average attendance was about 200. This caused the School Managers to seriously consider building a new school for girls and efforts were made to raise the necessary money. In August 1900 a Bazaar was held at Quex Park in aid of the Girls School and Capt. Powell Cotton’s extensive museum of big game shot by him in his travels was thrown open to visitors. Land for the school was conveyed voluntarily by Percy H. G. Powell Cotton, later known as Major Powell Cotton, to the Vicar and Churchwardens as a school site – the land being situated behind the old school, and on Tuesday August 27th 1901 the Foundation stone of the new Girls School was laid by Capt. P. H. G. Powell Cotton and the Vicar with the Church Choir conducted a short service.

In the following January 1902 the new school was opened with a Dedication Service conducted by the Vicar, Rev H. A. Serres, which took place in the playground and when all the children were present. Miss Davis became the first Head Mistress and there were 132 girls on the books to start with. The Archbishop of Canterbury was interested in the new school and came to Birchington on Sunday January 14th 1900 to

preach in the Parish Church on behalf of the National School Building Fund for the new Girls School, and when the offertory came to £8 15s 8½d.

In the Parish Magazine for August 1900 is a long account of the Grand Bazaar and Fete held at Quex Park. It says the Fete was under the distinguished patronage of the Earl of Westmoreland, the Earl Stanhope, the Lord Harris, Lord Forrester, Rt. Hon. Jas Lowther, M.P., Sir Wm. J. Ingram, Bart., J.P. Sir Sebag Montefiore, etc. The Fete was opened by the Countess of Guildford. There were Blue Hungarian Band Concerts, and the grounds were illuminated at dusk by Messrs Brook and Co., of Crystal Palace with 3500 coloured lamps and 200 Chinese and Japanese lanterns. There were also coloured 'Crystal Palace Lights' which changed colour several times and a Magical Illumination by masses of coloured fire which produced an artificial representation of the Aurora Boreales. The Fete realized a net gain of £359.

In the previous June of 1900 Mr. and Mrs. Score left when presentations were made to them who for 11½ years had filled with the 'greatest satisfaction the important post of Headmaster and Headmistress of the National School.'

His successor, Mr. Charles Laming, lived for a time in the School House adjoining the old school building. There were now two separate schools on the site – one for boys and the other for girls.

In 1926 the need arose for a new Infants School so the Vicar, the Churchwardens, and the School Managers raised the money with the help of grants and built a new Infants School at the rear of the old school and near to the Girls School, so now there were three buildings on the site – three schools with three separate Head Teachers. All three were Church Schools but under the supervision of the Kent Education Committee of the Kent County Council. For many years now the Governors of the Crispe Charity had made an annual grant to the Managers of the National Schools, the last grant being made in 1956 when the sum of £63 4s 3d was given – that was two-thirds of the Charity's net income. The grant ceased when the schools became 'Controlled'.

In 1935 with the extension of the boundaries of the Borough of Margate to include Birchington the schools were transferred from the Kent County Council to the Margate Education Committee of the Margate Borough council – Margate being what was known as a Part III Authority. Soon after this Margate appointed its first Director of Education – Dr. A. Alexander, later to become Lord Alexander. One of the first things he did was to re-organise the schools of the Borough into Infants, Junior, and Secondary modern Schools, and as a result King Ethelbert Secondary Modern School was built. The three Birchington schools were joined to form a Junior Mixed Infants School under one Head Teacher. Mr. A. T. Walker was appointed the first Head Master of this school but he never took up the duties as he was transferred as Head to the larger school of Salmestone in Margate.

Mr. C. Troke was then appointed and he had the task of converting the Schools into a Junior Mixed and Infants School.

It was in 1939 that Major Powell Cotton conveyed to the Vicar and Churchwardens a piece of land close to the school for the construction of an Air Raid Trench Shelter for the accommodation of children attending the School. The purchase money was £15 12s 6d. The Conveyance gave the Vendor the right to repurchase the land for £15 12s 6d at any time when in his opinion or in the opinion of his successors in title the land shall not be required for the purpose for which it was purchased, namely the construction of an Air Raid Trench Shelter. A few years ago the shelters were filled in and a classroom built on the site.

In 1940 at the beginning of the Second World War all the State schools of Thanet were closed and the children evacuated to Staffordshire. The Birchington children – or rather those whose parents wished it, went to Fazeley in Staffs. As a large number of children were not evacuated and as there were no official schools in

Margate, the Vicar of Birchington, Canon N. M. G. Sharp, with the help of volunteers, opened Park Lane School as a private school and it became known as the 'Vicar's School.' This Vicar's School continued until the school was re-opened in c. 1944 and Mr. Troke and a number of the Teachers returned from Staffordshire.

With the passing of the 1944 Education Act the Birchington C. of E. School again went back under the supervision of the Kent Education Committee – the Part III Authorities such as the Borough of Margate Education Committee being abolished and Birchington became part of the Thanet Division of the Kent County Council with the Divisional Offices at Denemount, Broadstairs.

On the retirement of Mr. C. Troke, Mr. Webb was appointed and he was followed by Mr. Hubbard. On his resignation Mr. Mabe was appointed. A few years ago the old school was demolished and the new modern front section was built.

THE SCHOOL IN ALBION ROAD

As already stated, the Trustees of the Crispe Charity established in 1869, an Infant School in the premises adjoining the Institute in the Square – behind the old Verger's house and what is now Beckley's Sweet shop. The salary of the School Mistress of this Infant School was fixed at £30 per annum, and one half of the children's pence, and she should be allowed 2 tons of coal in each year provided she kept sufficient in the School room for the "comfort and health of the children."

In the November of 1869 the Trustees of the Charity received an application from the Rev H. T. Whish asking for the use of the Infant School for "Penny Readings". In 1870 the Trustees of the Charity met as Managers of the Infant School at the Powell Arms and found the school successful and so agreed to obtain slates, pencils and a register, and as the Rev Whish had taken away some forms which belonged to him it was agreed to obtain some more and to erect a small gallery.

The Report of the Diocesan Inspector of Schools on the Infant School in the Institute for 1872 is in the Crispe Charity Minute Book and reads as follows:-

"The children in the school, which is not under Government, seem to possess very little religious knowledge. The discipline also imperfect and there is want of order and method. It is indeed rather a Nursery than a School." At the time the Mistress was Harriet Sidders. This school in the Square continued until 1892. The Log Book of this school is still extant and dates from 1873.

Harriet Sidders was succeeded by a Miss R. E. Banks in 1879 when the average attendance was 58. The Trustees of the Charity rented the premises from the Committee of Management of the Institute for £6 - 10s per year.

By 1892 a new Infants School was necessary and an appeal to the public for subscriptions was suggested but this was prevented by the generosity of Mrs. Gray of Birchington hall – later 'Spurgeons Homes'. She purchased the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Wilsons Road, now known as Albion Road, and leased it to the Vicar and Churchwardens for a term of 21 years for a peppercorn rent of one shilling a year, to be used as an Infant School. The back of the room was raised to form tiers and the small piece of land at the side formed the playground. This was used as an Infant School until 1913, when plans were prepared for a new school in Park Lane. However, the First World War intervened, to the school continued until 1926, when the new Infant School was finally built on a site by the National School in Park Lane.

There is no doubt that Birchington and Acol owe a great debt of gratitude to Mistress Anna Gertruy Crispe and to the Governors of the Crispe Charity for first establishing a school in Birchington and to the Vicar, the Churchwardens and many others of the Anglican Church for what they did in establishing and maintaining the Schools for so many years.