

THE SCHOOL IN ALBION ROAD

As already stated, the Trustees of the Crispe Charity established an Infant school in 1869 in the premises adjoining the Institute in the Square – behind the old Vergers 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 Square 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 a 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 proved unnecessary by the generosity of Mrs. Gray of Birchington Hall – later Spurgeons Homes. She purchased the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Wilson's 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 1926 when the new Infant School was built on a site beside the National School in Park Lane.

There is no doubt that Birchington and Acol owed 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, before the state finally took over.