

The old Saint Bartholomew's Primary School

Quorn Parish Council welcomes you to Stafford Orchard

This old school you see in front of you holds a fond place in the hearts of many older villagers. It was the first state primary school in the village and children were taught here until 1970.

The original school was built in 1834 during the reign of William IV. It was founded as a National School and the infant school was added a year later. The building we have now is a mixture of several periods and styles.



Primary school class of c1906 with Headteacher 'Gaffer' Adams. Mr Adams lived at the Red House on Station Road (overlooking the Stafford Orchard). It was said that he used to stand at his window watching for any mischief.

There is very little documentation dating from the 1830s, but from 1868 there are school log books which provide a fascinating social history of mid-Victorian village life and of the pressures faced by families and small children at that time.

Illness and even death were not uncommon. With inoculation and medicine in its infancy, epidemics could run amok and close the school completely for weeks, if not months. In 1900 the local council distributed bills around the village calling attention to the serious prevalence of infectious diseases in the neighbourhood and warning parents of the necessity to seek medical aid when symptoms first appeared. In 1912 and 1913 chicken pox and mumps epidemics closed the school for a month at a time. As late as in 1937 a diphtheria outbreak resulted in several children hospitalised in an isolation unit in Markfield.

Absence from school is a common theme running through the log books as apart from illness, children were set to work in factories, hosiery work at home or harvesting in the fields. A new headmaster, John Judges arrived from London in September 1874 and set about improving attendance:

"Oct. 16th. I wrote to Mr. Underwood, hosiery manufacturer, requesting him to make arrangements for allowing his factory children to attend school, one week in the morning and the other in the afternoon and so on alternately."

By the end of the month we find that Mr Underwood has complied and:
"Sixty children present this afternoon; this is the largest no. present at one time since I have had charge."

The 2d a week fee for schooling would also have been a deterrent to attendance and was abandoned in 1893 for elementary schools.

On July 10th 1911 a new teacher commenced her duties as headmistress at the school, the glamorous Miss Louise Burrows.

Louise was for a while engaged to D H Lawrence and was his inspiration for Ursula in 'The Rainbow' and his poem 'Kisses in the Rain'. In 1910 Lawrence wrote to his mother:
"I have been to Leicester today and met a girl who has always been warm to me – like a sunny happy day – and I've asked her to marry me in the train quite unpremeditated between Rothley and Quorn".

Unfortunately for Louise, in 1912 Lawrence met Frieda Weekley and left her. She remained devoted to him and in 1930 visited his grave at Vence in France. Louise Burrows was headmistress here until 1921 when she moved to a larger Leicestershire school.

Stafford Orchard was not always the cared for recreation ground you see now. As this photograph from the turn of the last century shows, the children were lucky if the grass had been grazed by animals short enough to play cricket on. In 1939, parish councillor Mr Dexter felt it a disgrace to the parish,
"if the original donors of the land could see it today, I should think they would repent of having given it."

In 1920 the school dentist paid a first visit and the log book tells us that 29 children required 'stopping' or extraction. No child cried!

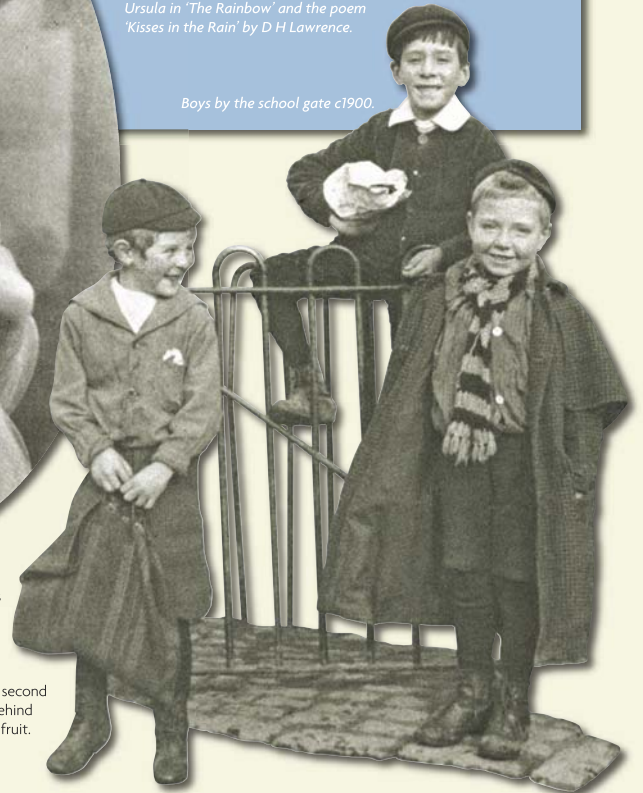
By the 1960s the need for a larger school with modern facilities became apparent, and by 1973 the school had moved to its present site on the other side of the village, on Willowcroft. After the move the old school fell into a decline and was used sporadically as an examination centre for Rawlins Community College, and a polling station. Only a ballet school and a children's nursery made use of the building until its eventual closure in 2006. In 2009 the school was purchased by Quorn Parish Council to save it from demolition with the hope of returning it to community use.

Find out more about Quorn's history at www.quornmuseum.com



Miss Louise Burrows, inspiration for Ursula in 'The Rainbow' and the poem 'Kisses in the Rain' by D H Lawrence.

Boys by the school gate c1900.



School life continued with minor disruptions through the course of the two world wars, the children doing what they could to help the war effort. In 1916 the log book notes that they gathered sacks of chestnuts for manufacturing war munitions and during the second World War, the small, square piece of land behind the school was used to grow vegetables and fruit.