THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

Article 17 : THORPE HAMLET SCHOOL
By Debbie Russell

Thorpe Hamlet School was built in 1887 on St. Leonards Road on land purchased by the Norwich School Board from local solicitor Isaac Coakes. It was built to replace the old school on Riverside Road when it was just a tow path. School was compulsory for children aged between 5 and 14 yrs and it was expected that each child should attend for 320 hours a year although 280 were acceptable. Parents whose children did not attend would be fined and some fathers were put in prison for non payment of school fines. The new school could accommodate 1100 children split into three separate departments — boys, girls and infants. Each department had its own hall and playground. The school was local authority owned but run by appointed managers who looked after the daily running of the school, they also had to attend monthly meetings with the Education Committee. The teaching staff were usually single ladies who would be expected to leave when they married, the only exceptions were during the war when the male teachers were called up for military service, then the married teachers were called in for the duration only. With the new school year now starting and a new intake of infants starting school for the first time I have delved into the Thorpe Hamlet School Log Book for 1916 to give you an insight of school life 100 years ago.

August 29th 1916

School re-opened this morning , all assistants being present, no-one had received notice of transfer. 36 children applied for admission or re-admission to roll. 226 scholars all being present.

September 1st.

The number on the roll this week 268, the average attendance for the week 81% . A few children still away from the city on holiday and several are sick.

October 12th.

Received from Dr. Cooper notice that Dr. Fisher will commence examinations of entrants on the 24th.

October 13th.

School closes this afternoon for a week's holiday in lieu of the Whit week, we will re-open on Monday 23rd when the hours for the afternoon session will be 1.30 — 3.30. Lessons in the afternoon will be taken half an hour earlier than shown on the timetable in each case.

November 6th.

By permission of Mr. Holme, college students visited the school today for observation

purposes, 4 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. Mr. R.F. Betts visited during the morning and asked for the loan of a teacher for the rest of the week owing to absence of the headteacher and an assistant at the St. Giles School. Miss Stevens will therefore be taking up duties there temporarily, her class will be divided. The older ones will be joining class IV and the younger ones with the babies class as neither of the three classes are large the numbers will not exceed 60.

November 13th.

Mr. D. O. Holme visited this morning to consult me as to the transfer of Miss Crisp to Wensum Boys School to take the place of a teacher called up for military service.

November 14th.

Received notice from Mr. Holme asking Miss Crisp to go to Wensum School informing me that Mrs Bullard from the special school would be placed here temporarily.

November 27th.

Received note from Mr. Holme this morning requesting me to ask Mrs Bullard to go at once to St. Marks school.

December 8th.

The low attendance this week has continued owing to bad colds and coughs. 17 marks have been lost since 30th November owing to closing the register at 1.35 in accordance with the request of the Board of Education notified through Mr Holme. The long distances which some of the children often come and the hilly nature of the district make it almost impossible for the little children to get back to school in the time allotted for dinner.

December 22nd

At 2.10 this afternoon children were assembled in the main room to participate in games and receive little Christmas gifts from the teachers. The timetable was adhered to for the last two lessons. 41 children have been absent for the whole week, average attendance 73%.

How things have changed in the 100 years since then, school lunches, central heating, electricity and indoor toilets, many children going to school in a car with plenty of clothes to wear and out of school activities. No having to stay at home because your clothes were so wet from coming home in the rain and your mum couldn't get them dry for the next day. I wonder how the children of today would cope if they had one school term living as a child 100 years ago?