

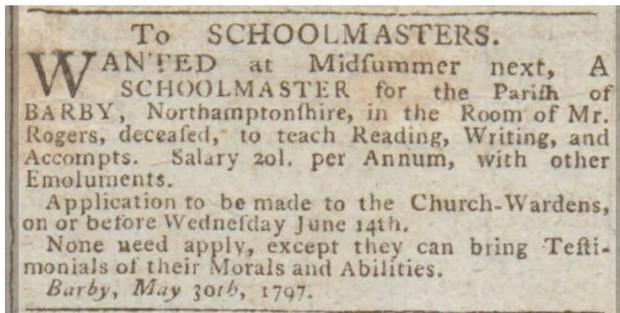
The '3 Rs' in Kilsby

My favourite present last Christmas was a year's subscription to the Online Newspaper Archive – unlimited access to an Internet database of 7 million pages of old British newspapers, covering daily events from 1770 onward in minute detail. There are reports on every conceivable subject, from house sales to horse-racing, debts, inquests, building projects, farming, crime and punishment ... the list is endless, and it is hard to know where to start ... but I will devote this article to a review of 'Education in Kilsby'.

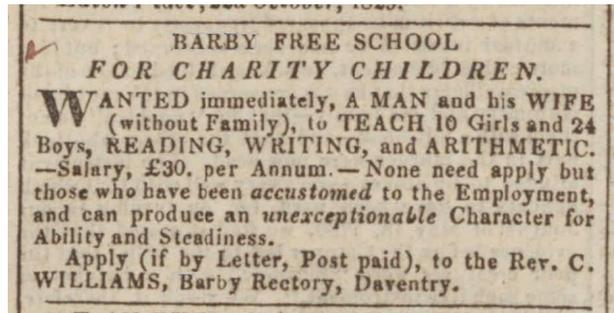
For centuries, the only form of education in any village was via the village priest – readers who remember my articles on William de Kildesby in previous issues will recall that his early education was from John Dalderby, Kilsby's priest from 1305-1316. Little changed until Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450 made books affordable by ordinary folk; by 1515, cheap printed copies of the Bible were flooding into England, and many ordinary folk were learning to read (incidentally, that's why many 'grammar' schools were founded in the 1500s).

By the 1600s, many villages had small schools, mostly funded by private charities, and the priest's role as teacher was taken over by a specially appointed schoolmaster. For instance, William Young endowed a school in Crick in the 1580s; Humphrey Davies was schoolmaster at Barby from about 1605 until his death in 1635; and George Harris was schoolmaster at Ashby St Ledgers in the 1630s ... but I have not yet found any records of schoolmasters in Kilsby before the 1700s.

The school in Barby was still operating in the 1700s and 1800s, as shown by these advertisements in the Northampton Mercury in June 1797 (L) and October 1829 (R):



To SCHOOLMASTERS.
WANTED at Midsummer next, A SCHOOLMASTER for the Parish of BARBY, Northamptonshire, in the Room of Mr. Rogers, deceased, to teach Reading, Writing, and Accounts. Salary 20l. per Annum, with other Emoluments.
Application to be made to the Church-Wardens, on or before Wednesday June 14th.
None need apply, except they can bring Testimonials of their Morals and Abilities.
Barby, May 30th, 1797.



BARBY FREE SCHOOL
FOR CHARITY CHILDREN.
WANTED immediately, A MAN and his WIFE (without Family), to TEACH 10 Girls and 24 Boys, READING, WRITING, and ARITHMETIC. —Salary, £30. per Annum. — None need apply but those who have been accustomed to the Employment, and can produce an *unexceptionable* Character for Ability and Steadiness.
Apply (if by Letter, Post paid), to the Rev. C. WILLIAMS, Barby Rectory, Daventry.

Some Kilsby Initiatives

Some of you will have heard of 'dame-schools' – elementary schools run by widows and spinsters, who taught reading and writing (and sewing, but probably little else) on their own premises, for a few pence a week per child, to make ends meet in the days before state pensions, cheap food and the NHS. One little dame-school operated in Essen Lane in the mid-1800s, and village tradition states that the 'schoolroom' was what is now the garage of Sundial Cottage.

However, there were enterprising educators in Kilsby long before Keziah Essen and her sister opened their dame-school, as the following adverts in the Northampton Mercury reveal:

23rd April 1791: "Miss LUCASES, of Kilsby, TAKE the Liberty to inform their Friends and the Public, that they have taken a large, airy, and commodious House, near the Church-Yard, in DAVENTRY, where they intend to open a SCHOOL, for the Education of YOUNG LADIES, on Monday, May 2nd: Their Terms will be Thirteen Guineas a Year, (Washing excluded), for Board and Instruction in plain Needle-work, Tambour, and Embroidery: English Grammar, Secretarial Writing, and Arithmetic, will be taught at Three Shillings a Quarter; and a Dancing-Master will attend (if desired) at Half-a-Guinea a Quarter, and Half-a-Guinea Entrance. The Utmost Attention will be paid to the Health and Comfort, the useful and pleasing Accomplishments, and especially

to the moral and religious Improvement of all committed to their Care. Their convenient HOUSE in Kilsby, together with the large Warehouses, Barn, Stable, and other Out-Houses, (all in excellent Repair), good Garden, and extensive Orchard belonging to it, is to be Let, and may be entered upon immediately."

9th July 1791: *"Misses E. and S. LUCAS, take the Liberty to inform their Friends and the Public, that their SCHOOL Opens, after the Midsummer Vacation, on Monday, July 25."*

The enterprising Lucas sisters continued their school in Daventry for several years. Meanwhile, back in Kilsby, ambitious plans were afoot to found a boarding school:

1st June 1793: *"Kilsby School. Mr. BEVERLEY respectfully informs his Friends and the Public, That he proposes Opening, on Monday the 3rd of June, A DAYSCHOOL, and at Midsummer, A BOARDING SCHOOL, at KILSBY, near Dunchurch; where Youth will be instructed in the various Branches of Education, on very reasonable Terms. Sensible of the Importance of a thorough Knowledge of the English Grammar, Reading and Spelling well, in every Situation in Life, Mr. B. will pay particular Attention to these, as well as other Qualifications. A due Regard will be paid to his Pupils' moral Duties and Behaviour: knowledge of the History of their own, as well as other Countries, will be cultivated in their Minds, and every Necessity deemed sufficient to form the Man of Business, or for whatever Situation they may be designed. A select Collection of Books, Maps, &c. will be kept for his Pupils' Use. Discipline and Encouragement will be held forth for the Instigation of Merit, on a new and improved Plan, which Mr. B submits to the Impartial, and flatters himself he will deserve the Encouragement he hopes to merit, by an Attention he feels he owes to the Public and his own Character."*

However, things did not go as well as intended ...

13th July 1793: *"Mr. BEVERLEY RESPECTFULLY informs his Friends, That he was unavoidably obliged to defer opening his School at KILSBY at the Time he intended, from not being able to complete his Room for the Purpose at that Period;"*

And by the following year, the venture had collapsed:

19th April 1794: *"To be SOLD by AUCTION, By Mr. TITE On Thursday the 24th, Friday the 25th, and Saturday the 26th of April, 1794, at the School House, KILSBY, A great Variety of useful HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE; Consisting of four-post and other Bedsteads, Feather and Flock Beds, Blankets, Sheets, and Table Linen; an extraordinary good Time-Piece, Eight-day Table Clock with an Alarum; a Lady's elegant commode Writing Desk; an exceeding good Tea-Urn; fine Wilton Carpet, 11 Feet by 9; Brewing and Dairy Utensils in general; a Quantity of curious old Coniac Brandy, Jamaica Rum, and Holland's Geneva, in Bottles; a well-constructed commodious Desk, fit for an Attorney's Office, Counting House, or large School; Boys' Writing Desks, Forms, Books, &c. – Also a Variety of SHOP GOODS, in Lots, for Families or Country Dealers, &c. in which are included Muslins, Muslinets, strong Broad Cloths, Corderoys, &c. – Sundry Articles of Japan Ware, Plated Buckles, Spurs and Stirrups, with Furniture for Horse's Bridles; Plain Strong Men and Boy's Buckles, in Copper and Iron; Gilt and Steel Watch Chains; Ladies' fashionable Ear-Drops and Necklaces, and other Articles.*

Also, to be SOLD or LETT, The SCHOOL-HOUSE and PREMISES. For further particulars, enquire on the Premises, and of Mr. Tite, Auctioneer, at his general Warehouse. Catalogues will be delivered in Time on the Premises; the George Inn, Kilsby; and at the Auctioneer's, High-Street, Daventry."

Perhaps Mr Beverley had paid too much attention to his 'curious old Coniac brandy', and neglected more necessary tasks ...

Victorian Efficiency

By Victorian times, a series of Acts of Parliament gradually forged Britain's haphazard system of education into a more efficient process (see the table for details).

A small local authority schoolhouse (or 'board' school, as they were known) was erected in Church Walk in the 1870s, where Kilsby's children were taught for a few years by Selina Brinsmuir, the sister of blacksmith Albert Lodder. However, this was soon replaced by a much larger schoolhouse on the main road between the George Inn and Rectory Farm – now a private dwelling – and it was in this building that generations of pupils in the 1890s and early 1900s were taught the 'three Rs' under the stern eye of Mr. William Postle (who was also village churchwarden and a keen organiser of village events).

Industrial Schools Act, 1857:

Enabled magistrates to send children found begging, or needing care, to Industrial Schools to learn a trade.

Foster's Education Act, 1870:

Elementary schools were established where other sources were inadequate. These 'Board Schools' were the first local authority schools, and soon replaced other informal schools.

Education Legislation, 1876:

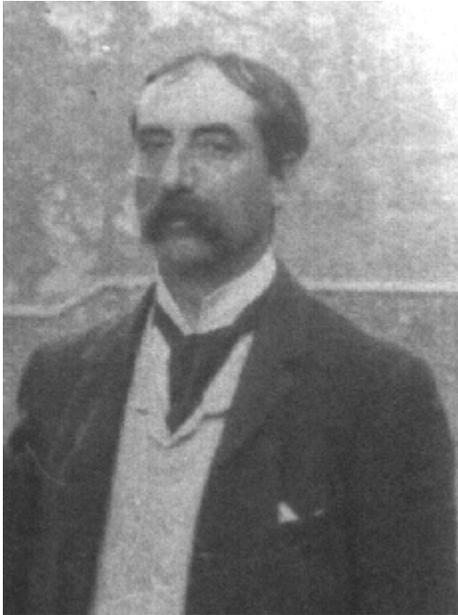
Established the principle that all children should receive elementary education, and imposed further restrictions on employment of children.

Education Act, 1880:

School attendance to age ten was made compulsory. A child who still had not gained a certificate at this age was required to stay on longer.

Subsequent Legislation:

Subsequent Acts of 1889, 1891, 1893, 1899, 1902, 1918 and 1944 altered details, making education free, then progressively raising the leaving age, to 15 years by 1944.



Gren Hatton,
March 2013

My second book about Kilsby ('At That particular Time') contains many anecdotes about Mr Postle, recounted by some of his former pupils in the 1980s and 1990s.

He was a stern disciplinarian, who believed in the merits of corporal punishment and never spared the rod – but at least one of his pupils remembered with fondness that he walked all the way to Rugby and back to buy her a little toy when she was lying ill in bed, so it's clear that he was also fond of his pupils. What's more, they all had beautiful handwriting, and were very competent at mental arithmetic and other basic educational skills, so it's evident that he did his job very well.

William Postle died in 1934, aged 77, and is buried in Kilsby cemetery.