



Drawing by Mr. W. J. CUSACK

Langley Fitzurse School

Kington Langley

Langley Fitzurse School opened in October 1856 under control of the church. It consisted of a single room accommodating two classes of children, taught a class at either end. Heated by a pot belly stove it was bitterly cold in winter. Langley Fitzurse was not the first school in the village, previously a Dame School was located at the Granary of Lime Tree Farm, just up the road.

Two years after the school opened there were 72 children being taught, but an outbreak of diphtheria took the lives of ten of them, all within three months.

The school House was built alongside the School in 1859.

The Headmistress at the time, Miss Jane Bishop received a salary of £20 per Annum with free rent, wood and coal, whereas the Assistant Teachers received a salary of 2 Shillings a week. Miss Bishop's salary was later reduced to £16 per Annum when she failed to gain her certificate, her term at the School lasted just two years, the Assistant teachers changed rather more frequently.

The school was regularly examined by various clergymen. Reports in the 1850s and 60s indicated that the children were not particularly well taught. In 1862 the Rev E.W. Nutt stated that "The school was in a very bad state with not one child up to standard". The following year he commented "The children were still backward". Another examiner reported "The children were decidedly intelligent but had not been systematically taught, their dictation and arithmetic being very inaccurate".

In 1885 Mrs. Sarah Jane Little became the School Mistress, known as Govvy Little, she ruled the school with a rod of iron for nearly 25 years. Pupils of the school would recall her frequent use of the cane.

Despite these reports the school was enlarged twice in 1886.

In 1919 Mrs. Sanderson succeeded Mrs. Little and was the Head Teacher for nearly 20 years.

In 1920 there was another outbreak of diphtheria resulting in its closure by order of the Medical Officer for Health, followed by another closure later in the year because of a serious outbreak of measles.

The outbreak of war in 1939 saw a dramatic increase of pupils with the arrival of evacuees from London, they were all squeezed in somehow by the then Head Mistress Mrs. Merrett and her Assistant.

During the war a traveling dentist regularly visited the school complete with his treadle operated drill, he was allocated a small side room to set up his surgery.

During the war, in 1944, Miss Lavina R. Tucker took over as Head of the school. Pupil numbers dropped significantly in the mid 1950s with parents taking their children from the village school and placing them into either West Mead or Ivy Lane Primary Schools at Chippenham.

The arrival of Mr. Cusack in 1962 was to be the turn around of the school, both in numbers and performance. When he arrived there were only 28 pupils attending the school, but he set high standards for the school both in work and behavior, also introducing the black and gold school uniform. By 1964 it

became necessary to erect temporary classrooms in the school grounds to accommodate the huge increase in attendance.

Mr. Cusack was the last Head to live in the School House.

HEAD TEACHERS OF LANGLEY FITZURSE SCHOOL

1856 - 1859	Mrs. Noyes
1856 - 1860	Miss Scott
1860 - 1862	Miss Jane Bishop
1862 - 1865	Miss Rosa Feather
1865 -	Miss Mary Porter
1871 -	Miss Harriet Luce
1875 -	Miss A Haskell
1880 -	Miss K Reeve
1881 -	Miss Sarah Jane Commbs
1895 - 1919	Miss Sarah Jane Little
1919 - 1937	Mrs. Margaret Sanderson
1937 - 1943	Mrs. K. L. Merrett
1944 - 1962	Miss Lavina R. Tucker
1962 - 1982	Mr W. J. Cusack
1982 - 1987	Mr. Peter Sowery
1987 - 1989	Mr. Richard Epps
1989 - 1994	Mrs. Carolyn Maddox

Extract from Betty Birds Essay on Village Schools



The school was lit with oil lamps hanging from the high beams of the school ceiling and the children attended from 9am to 4pm. Those who could not get home for lunch ate their food in the little porch, usually a hunk of bread with cheese or dripping.

They wrote on slates and sat on forms with a long top on which they could rest the slates. There were no pens or paper. The sums were written up on the big wall boards.

The Parson came from Tytherton to examine them on scripture knowledge. They had plenty of scripture and sang the hymn "New every morning" every morning.

Other main subjects were reading, writing, multiplication, division, sewing and knitting. The last two were considered important for girls. Mrs. Little had bales of cloth at school for the girls to make their clothes from. These were sold to the parents. The girls made knickers, night gowns with pin tuck fronts and crochet edgings, and pinafores with braiding, often they had to make clothes for the Teachers and alter clothes for them too.

While the girls were sewing, the boys were either drawing or doing the school garden.

Memories of Langley Fitzurse School – Mrs Thirza Hawkins.

Kington Langley School c. 1952 – the top class

from the left, back row

Keith Gill Douglas Gale David Miles Michael Saunders John Bryant Graham Chedd David Giles
Donald Elms Rosemary Saunders Margaret Ashley Janet Tucker ? Robert Bailey
Rodney Gill Trevor Miles Ernie Bird Bernard Field Adrian Smith Philip Tapper





Langley Fitzurse Now

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