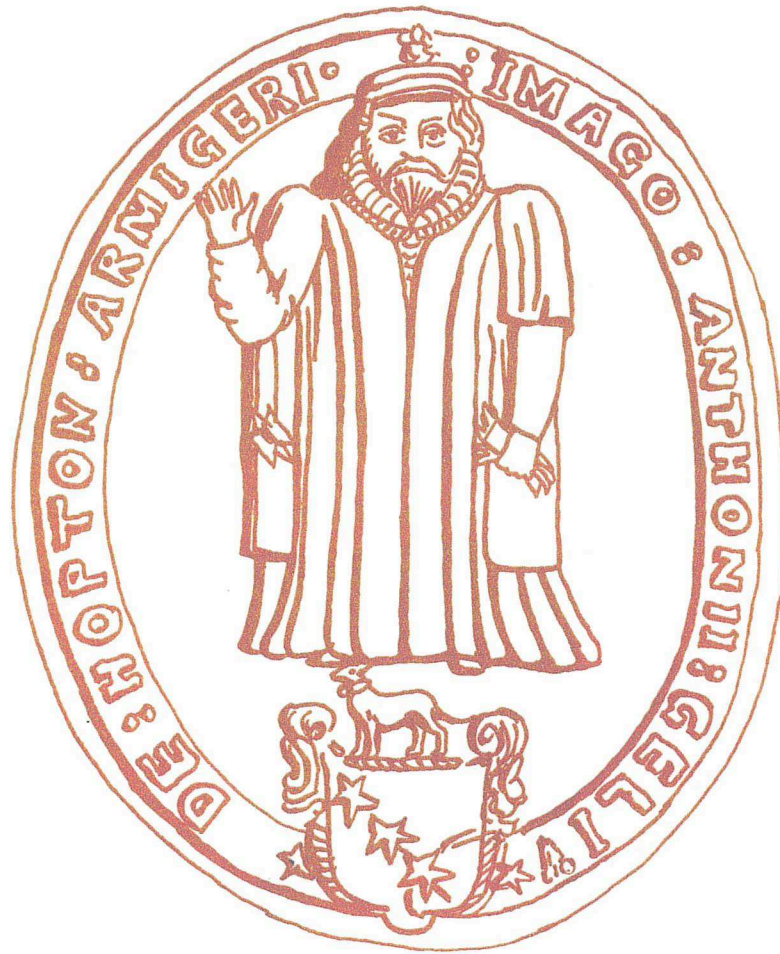


THE FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
of
ANTHONY GELL

1576-1908



by ROY PEARCE 2014

SOME NOTES on the EARLY HISTORY of WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

To begin at the beginning. The Traditional date for the foundation of Anthony Gell school is 1576, but other dates in those early years deserve attention: 1579, 1583, 1584.

In 1976, observant to tradition, the school celebrated its four hundredth anniversary following the firm instruction of The Hon Aileen Gell, widow of Col Philip Gell, imperious Chairman of Governors from 1952 to 1970. Mrs Gell was also mother of the eponymous Anthony Gell, who chaired the Foundation Trust in the 1980s. The traditional date of foundation arises from the stone, still in place, erected above the doorway into the 1827/8 grammar school building in the Wirksworth churchyard. 1576 is however three years before Anthony Gell made his momentous will in 1579 and eight years before Letters Patent were granted by Queen Elizabeth I.

The door stone, according to C.E.B. Bowles (see below), had probably been the foundation stone in the schoolmaster's house which was built in Anthony Gell's time on land adjacent to the churchyard, and was intended as the site of the proposed school building. When the old school and the house were demolished for the 1827/8 rebuilding the stone was incorporated in the new school, but there was no school house.

In February 1579 Anthony Gell signed his will and on 12th November 1583 he died. Anthony was a bachelor, living at Hopton Hall and wealthy from the the Gell family investments in land and their prosperous local lead mines. His brother, Thomas, who succeeded him, established the foundation to carry out Anthony's wishes in the following year.

1584 marks the year when the trust was formed for the benefit of the free grammar school and 'for the relief of six impotent men in the same almshouses'. 27th October 1584 is the date of the Letters Patent for the establishment of the school and the almshouse for poor men 'to be upheld for ever' to fulfil the will of the late Anthony Gell Esq.

A copy survives in English of the Letters Patent – almost certainly they were originally written in Latin. As well as an annual grant of £20, land and rents were assigned by the will and 'six discreet and honest men were appointed governors of The Free Grammar School of Anthony Gell Esq.' with one master or pedagogue, 'who shall be sufficiently skilled in the Latin tongue to be enabled to instruct the Youth committed to his care in that language'. I have referred interchangeably to the trustees as governors, though they mostly through the years stood back from 'governing' the school and providing close oversight of the head's work.

Amid these dates the crucial fact is that some time in the second half of the sixteenth century a school was founded in Wirksworth and has continued (more or less) in existence until today, serving its ever-changing community through more than four hundred years, though not without some difficult moments in its history.

The vision and generosity of Anthony Gell was supported by Agnes Fearne, who in her will, dated 14th July 1574, 'demised' her house and lands to Anthony Gell for the benefit of a school and almshouse, when that charity should be established. Agnes granted considerable land in Idridgehay and Kirk Ireton to benefit the charity. At the time Wirksworth was a thriving and affluent town, riding high on its riches from the many lead mines, and clearly there had been discussion amongst influential people, including the Gells, about the need for a grammar school – many other towns, including Ashbourne a little later, were setting up schools at this time. The Elizabethan grammar schools were established to produce for the rapidly expanding bureaucracy a supply of able, young men, fitted through intensive study of Latin grammar to fill places as clerks, clerics and civil servants in the increasingly complex business of government.

The six trustees/governors are self perpetuating and still today appoint their successors as governors of the Anthony Gell School Foundation, though the almshouses are now a separate charity.

This brief account of the origins of the school and almshouses is largely taken from a detailed academic paper published by Charles E. B. Bowles M.A., F.S.A. in 1920 in the Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society, of which he was the editor. Bowles (1848-1923) lived in Wirksworth, at first in Nether House (now demolished) on St John Street and later on North End, and was respected in the town as man of learning. He served as a school governor for several years, 1904-1920. Bowles' valuable historical paper closes in 1799, a significant date, and focuses on the history of the charity rather than the school, but it has been an important source for this account.

For over a hundred years after the foundation the record is blank

We know of Samuel Ogden, who was the Headmaster of Wirksworth Grammar School from 1695 to 1697. His career co-incided with great political and religious upheavals in the country and in 1662 he had been ejected as a clergyman from his living at Mackworth, near Derby, because of his non-conformity. He continued however to be a successful head of a private school. Four of his pupils were admitted to St John's, College, Oxford and Thomas Parker, who went to Cambridge, became Chief Justice, Lord Chancellor and Earl of Macclesfield. Ogden was in direct rivalry with the Derby Grammar School and its head, Thomas Cantrill, brought an action which was heard in 1695 at the Court of Arches, where Ogden's schoolmastership was declared contrary to the canons of the Church [of England] and detrimental to the welfare of the free school and he was compelled to close his school.

It was then that he came as headmaster to Wirksworth, always a refuge of the rebellious, having been appointed by Sir John Gell, a power in the land since the Civil War and, no doubt, controlling governor of the Wirksworth Grammar School. Ogden served briefly until his death in 1697, but we have no details of his work in the town.

The details about Ogden come from *The Grammar Schools* by W.A.L. Vincent

The next reference to the school, comes through Bowles and his study of the charity, and relates to the headship of Samuel Hanson who in 1774 was in dispute with the trustees over both governance and money. The membership of the governing body had lapsed and when trustees died they had not been replaced. Hanson, as master, together with the six poor men 'caused an information to be exhibited in the Court of Chancery against Philip Gell of Hopton Hall, stating that the said Philip Gell was, and had for several years past been in possession of the rents and profits of the said estates.....'. The accusation was that Gell had not applied the relevant income for the support of the almshouses and the school. To modern eyes this was a deep corruption. It was a brave man who took on the Gell family and I can only assume that there was community support for the petitioners, especially as other members of the Gell family were included: Temperance Gell and Thomas Gell with Vincent & Margaret Newton, Robert & Elizabeth Charlton and Agnes and Ann Macclesfield. The petitioners sought that the charities be re-established and the income devoted according to the trust to their benefit. They won the case, which was heard before the Lord Chancellor on 13th December 1774. A new governing body was formed and restitution was made of all the trust funds and lands to the new governing body. The decree is dated 4th & 5th November 1776. No Gell was included among the new trustees, 'six honest and discreet men, inhabitants of the Wapentake of Wirksworth'. I notice a Philip Tomlinson among the trustees.

This dispute leads us to Rev Abraham Bennett (1749-1799), the most distinguished scientist ever to live in Wirksworth. The laudatory encomium to Bennett from the Wirksworth website is attached. Notice that there is no reference to his duties as Headmaster of the Free Grammar School of Anthony Gell.

My understanding is that Bennett held the mastership of the grammar school from 1776 to 1799, when he died at the age of forty nine. Having come to Wirksworth as curate at a salary of £60, Bennett accumulated through patronage other clerical posts which supported his inventive scientific work, though not I suspect with matching duties. His membership of the Lunar Society enrolled him among distinguished intellectuals in the Midland counties and locally, as well as the Devonshires, the Gell family are recorded as important patrons. Bennett was clearly not a rich man and he had six children, so he needed money to manage his scientific research and to fulfil his social obligations as a Lunar member.

I have no knowledge of what happened to Samuel Hanson after the court case, a scandal which, inevitably, caused much local enmity. Perhaps Hanson decided it would clear the air if he withdrew. Maybe he had already retired. We know that Bennett came to Wirksworth as curate in 1776, the year of the court judgement, and from that time is head of the school. He is referred to as M.A., but there is no record of his attendance at the universities of that time. Did Gell, despite his recent disgrace, pull strings to slide Bennett into the post as Headmaster? The tradition is that Bennett regarded his mastership as a sinecure and appointed others to do the teaching. How sad that this distinguished man of science made such a slender contribution to the school. Not everyone is cut out to be a school master, however learned.

WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

THE SCHOOL THROUGH THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the beginning of the nineteenth century and the Hubbersty era we begin to have some documentary evidence and a few newspaper references to the school, though they seldom have much meat. The evidence is limited, but working from home I have, through the excellent service of Derbyshire libraries, been able to access on line some nineteenth century newspapers: the Derby Mercury, Sheffield Independent and Nottingham Guardian, in particular. Even the Pall Mall Gazette unravelled a mystery for me. References to the school are slim. I was also able to search the Wirksworth parish records, a wonderful website, and the local census returns from 1841 onwards. The Derbyshire Record Office holds governors' minutes from 1845; they are skimpy at first in reporting school matters with the focus mainly on the property held by the trustees, but as the century progresses there is more detail. Always I sought more information beyond the formal reporting of resolutions or orders. When the second master was dismissed I wanted to know more; who were these interesting men who came to the school in remote Wirksworth and mostly were disappointed? I have had no letters or photographs, no school magazines, though the parish magazine provided one lively story, and no written memoirs. So what appears here is a first tentative stab at tracing the story of WGS through that momentous century, with lashings of interpretation of rather slender evidence.

I found myself relishing the tales of these Head Masters, so the story line runs mostly through the lives of some fascinating and unusual men. I am a people person. Usually leading WGS was a struggle. I feel I came to know them well and to sympathise with their lot; mostly discouraging, usually unsuccessful.

And with the young boys who learnt by rote and struggled with a tedious and unexciting curriculum. Certainly not the good old days.

The letter 'I' appears too often, but that reflects this personal view of a challenging time in the history of education in Wirksworth. I hope I have got most of the facts right; the judgements are my own, coloured by twenty years as head of Anthony Gell School (1971-1991).

I would normally write headmaster; always the reference in documents is to Head Master.

Roy Pearce Autumn 2013.

Updated 19 Mar 2007

WIRKSWORTH Parish Records 1600-1900

Return to [Front Page](#)

Rev. Abraham Bennet 1749-1799

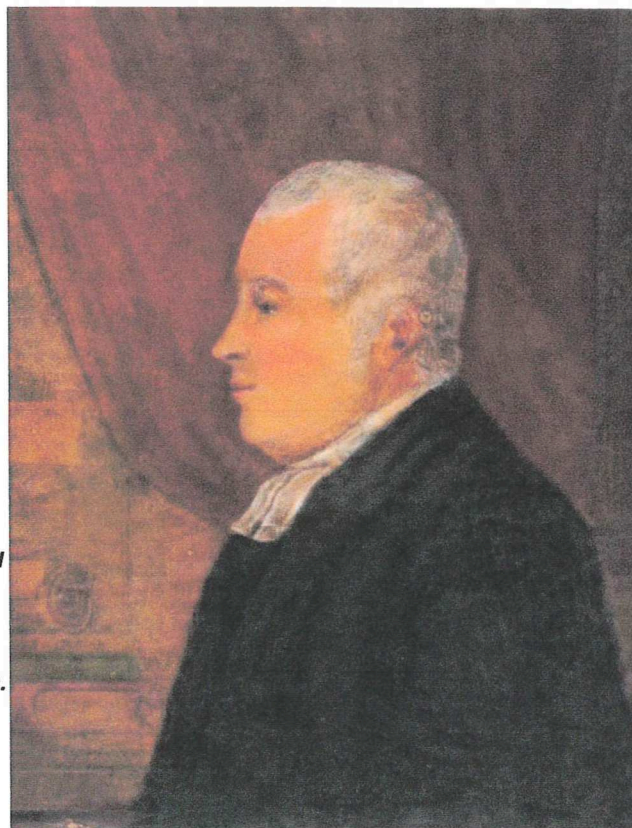
[MENU](#)

Abraham Bennet, Curate of Wirksworth 1776-1799, was perhaps the foremost man of science produced by this Derbyshire Parish. He was a member of the Lunar Society, in 1789 published his chief work "New Experiments on Electricity", and was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society. [More information](#) is listed below.

A memorial in the vestry of Wirksworth Parish Church sums up his life: *To the memory of/The Rev ABRAHAM BENNET F.R.S./who was XXIII years Curate of Wirksworth/Rector of Fenny Bentley/Domestic Chaplin to/ His Grace the Duke of Devonshire/Perpetual Curate of Woburn/and librarian to/His Grace the Duke of Bedford/He was author of a work entitled/ 'New Experiments on Electricity'/which established his reputation for science/amongst the Philosophers of all countries/ he died at Wirksworth on the VI day of May MDCCXCIX/aged XLIX years. (Alabaster tablet)*

An outline Pedigree is:

Abraham Bennet was baptised on 20 Dec 1749 at Taxal, Derbyshire, son of Abraham, schoolmaster of Whaley Lane, Cheshire and Ann Fallowes of Cheadle, who were married at Cheadle St. Mary's on 20th Oct 1748 by banns. A brother William was baptised 9 Feb 1752. Abraham Bennet married Jane Fallows on 5 Apr 1774 in Manchester Cathedral. Their children were: John baptised 1776, Mary (a twin) died 1777, Sarah (a twin) baptised 1778 and died 1778, Jane baptised 1779, Elizabeth baptised 1780, William baptised 1783, Mary baptised 1784, Catherine baptised 1786 and died 1789. Eliza married Francis Holliwell of Belper, watchmaker in 1803 at Huntingdon. Abraham Bennet died in 1799 after 'a severe illness'. Jane his wife died in Mappleton in July 1826. Also see [Email](#) and [Taxal genealogy](#).



Link to Page

Description of Page

["New Experiments on Electricity"](#)
by the Rev.A Bennet, FRS
printed 1789 at Derby

A full transcription of "New Experiments on Electricity", published by Bennet in 1789. Contains description of his inventions of gold-leaf electroscope, doubler of electricity and his theory of electricity. Contains 141 pages, 4 plates, list of 408 subscribers, and description of 157 experiments and 50 observations

[Description of a new Electrometer](#)
by Rev. Abraham Bennet, MA.

In a letter from the Rev. Abraham Bennet, MA to the Rev. Joseph Priestly, LLD, FRS, Sept 14, 1786.
Also an Appendix, in a letter to Charles Blagden, MD. Sec.RS, Dec.18, 1786.
Also Three diagrams.

[Account of a Doubler of Electricity](#)
by Rev. Abraham Bennet, MA.

Communicated to the Royal Society by the Rev Richard Kaye, LLD, FRS on 1787 May 10.
Also a diagram and a Diary.

["Memoranda Miscelanea"](#)
by Rev. Abraham Bennet, MA.

Full transcription of Bennet's "Notebook" containing extracts from books, periodicals and newspapers demonstrating the thought processes of a man of the 18th century 'well versed in different branches of Natural Philosophy'

[Recommendation to Fellowship](#)

Recommendation by the Lunar Society, leading to Bennet's election to the Royal Society in 1789. Contains 10 signatures.

["A Derbyshire Electrician"](#)
by Dr Colin Pounder

An article about the achievements of Abraham Bennet by Dr Colin Pounder.

["A Provincial Electrician"](#)

An appreciation of Abraham Bennet's works by Dr Paul Elliott, of Nottingham University. This article was published by the Royal Society.

WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL - HUBBERSTY & SON 1799-1851

Following the dismal headship of Abraham Bennett the first half of the nineteenth century was dominated by the headships of Hubbersty and son.

Rev. Nathan Hubbersty (1767-1828) became the head in 1799, revived the school from its poor state and served till his early death in 1828. His son, also Nathan (1804-1881), succeeded him and was in post till 1851, a remarkable span of family service.

Hubbersty, originated from Kendal in Westmorland and had been educated at Clare College, Cambridge. I know nothing of his previous teaching, but he was 32 on appointment and married Mary Dorothy Tomlinson (1777-1852) from Hopton on 28th April 1801, fairly soon after his arrival. They had six children and Mary survived her husband and lived in Wirksworth till her death in 1852, aged 75. I note that one of the governors appointed to revive the broken trust in 1776 was Philip Tomlinson Gent. from Hopton, so most likely a Gell nominee. He is the father of Nathan's wife. I know no further, but I would not be surprised if the young bachelor headteacher in need of a wife found her in a respectable local family, though Philip Tomlinson died in 1800.

Our first reference to Hubbersty is in 1801 as follows.

From the Derby Mercury 5th February 1801

WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL DERBYSHIRE

An assistant is immediately wanted, who is perfectly qualified to teach the English Language grammatically, Writing, Arithmetic, and the ordinary branches of Mathematics – He must be a single man; and of unexceptionable character.

The particulars of the situation may be known by personal application, or by letter addressed, (post paid) to the Head Master, the Rev N HUBBERSTY, by whom Letters of recommendation and specimens of writing, will be duly acknowledged.

Mr Hubbersty also informs his Friends that at Lady-Day his house will be ready for the accommodation of Young Gentlemen as Boarders, to whom every attention and assiduity will be devoted to qualify them for the learned professions or trade; he will particularly regard their health and manners, and will studiously endeavour to instil into the minds of his pupils, the true principles of pure Christianity, as the best and most powerful motives of Morality.

TERMS: Board, Twenty Guineas per annum. Education, one Guinea per quarter.

Further particulars and the plan of education, may be known by applying to the Rev N. Hubbersty, at Wirksworth. Wirksworth Jan 26th 1801.

Several points arise from this fascinating advertisement printed over 200 years ago.

I have typed the words as published, except that the letter ‘s’ is ‘f’ in the published version.

Note the strong Christian message, at the heart of the school for hundreds of years. Hubbersty also served as curate to the nearby village of Carsington.

Hubbersty advertises the traditional classics and maths grammar school curriculum, but he soon realised it was an unrealistic demand on many of the boys – no girls, of course – attending a school in Wirksworth. Some were as young as eight.

The expectation in the advert for the ‘single’ master to serve as assistant is high, but no salary is stated. I suspect there would have been additional boarding duties.

The boarding facility is probably an innovation. It was difficult for children to get into Wirksworth from the villages, so boarding increased the pupils available in an enlarged rural catchment area, kept the numbers up and as a private initiative by the Head Master provided him with some additional, much needed, income.

Where was the Head Master’s boarding house? I identify Slaley House, a large and splendid building even in the 21st century, on North End as the most likely location. Boarding would be an issue for many years, until 1938 when, with few boarders and little demand, the boarding wing, then on the main site, was closed.

The new head rapidly increased the numbers to about 100 boys and employed two additional masters. On appointment he was paid £50, raised in the twenties to £70. I am sure that success led to the rebuilding of the school in the churchyard in 1827/8; the increased salary was a vote of approval.

The original school was sited in the churchyard. ‘And her Majesty also gave to the governorsthe school house near Wirksworth churchyard.’ By the end of Bennett’s reign the fabric of the school was in a poor condition. The handsome 1827/8 building served the school till 1966 and stands today, a modernised and elegant private residence.

At this time in an audit by the Charity Commissioners a fund was discovered totalling £900 held by Mr Gell of Hopton, which was properly part of the charity funds. The commissioners had to go to the Court of Chancery to get the money repaid. There was a scathing judgement and instruction for proper audit, a well-deserved black mark for the Gells. Governing bodies were made up of distinguished local gentlemen and I am confident the Wirksworth Grammar School trustees were dominated by the Gell family – Philip in four generations. They may have had only marginal involvement in running the school and probably only emerged when there was a major issue, such as the appointment

7

of the head or some disaster. How sad that fifty years after the previous financial scandal and the intervention of the court we find the Gell family at fault again, found out by the Charity Commissioners. The agent for the Gells was John Cruso, solicitor from Leek, who acted also as clerk to the trustees, and was succeeded in that post by his son. The income from the charity properties had not been held in a separate account. Property had been let below market price and rents had been paid direct to Philip Gell. The Commissioners recommendation was blunt: 'future appointment of trustees a selection should be made from landholders of the wapentake (sic) of Wirksworth who are not thus connected with Mr Gell.' From this scandal Mr Cruso junior survived as clerk to the reformed body of trustees.

My reading suggests that Hubbersty was so successful that he was able virtually to set up a second school with some chosen boys, 30 children mostly boarders at £30 a year, under his personal guidance, a kind of private scholarship group following the traditional grammar (Latin & Greek) curriculum on the model of the public schools, no doubt based at Slaley House on North End. The rest of the boys were educated at a lower level by the assistant masters in the old school building, like an elementary school. They followed a less taxing academic regime and tended to leave at thirteen. The few who had ambitions to continue in education went to Derby Grammar School, probably as boarders. Once the new building in the churchyard, built at a cost of £1,664-6-3, was opened in 1828 the school seemed set for a strong period, but suddenly Hubbersty, who had served for 29 years, died, aged 60, in August of that year, and his son, also Nathan Hubbersty, took over.

The younger Nathan Hubbersty was only 26 when he became head. His appointment was announced in June 1829 by advertisement in the *Sheffield Independent*: '*Mr Hubbersty B.A. of St John's College Cambridge, formerly of Shrewsbury School under the venerable Archdeacon Butler has been appointed to succeed his late lamented father Rev N Hubbersty B.D. as Head Master of Wirksworth Grammar School.*' He also advertises Boarding & Education at 50 guineas per annum with washing at 15 shillings a quarter. At this time he was not in holy orders, but he was soon ordained Deacon in 1829 and is Rev N Hubbersty MA (MA no doubt by purchase) and is giving highly praised sermons as priest at Alderwasley and in Derby in 1830.

I have found little in the *Derby Mercury* relating to the life of the school during his period of headship, which lasted till 1851, apart from the regular notice of terms beginning. There is however interesting information about Nathan on the censuses of both 1841 and 1851. He was married on 28th June 1838 to Margaret Emma, third daughter of Richard Hurt of Wirksworth, thus tying himself into one of the top establishment and influential families of the district. It was common practice for the clergy to hold more than one post; as well as master at Wirksworth Nathan was curate at Alderwasley, where the Hurts were based at Alderwasley Hall, so there was a local connection. Emma bore five children: Richard Nathan (1839-86), who became a soldier; Charles (1840-1889); Henry, who died in 1857 at Melton Mowbray, aged 15; and Mary (1843) and Margaret (1845), the last in 1845 the year of her mother's death. Nathan was left with five young children. He had

5

been married only seven years. It must have been a difficult time for him and within a few years he had given up the headship.

Although Nathan appears on the 1851 census in Wirksworth, his first wife has died in 1845, so he is on his own. His youngest child, Margaret is also not recorded. No explanation. By April 1851 Nathan had retired as head of WGS and is recorded on the census of that year as perpetual curate at Alderwasley. I contrast below the census returns for 1841 and 1851.

1841 national census. Nathan Hubbersty aged 35 [not accurate, should be 37] living on North End with his mother Mary (60). his wife, Margaret and two young sons, Richard 2 and Charles 10 months. In the house there are seven servants, a school assistant and eighteen boarders aged between eight and fifteen. Among the boarders I notice three Hurts (James 14, John 13 & Francis 8), children of the famous and extensive Hurt family from Alderwasley, most of whom were sent away to board at the public schools, some to Eton, some to Harrow. And, of course, Nathan had married into that family.

Hubbersty's brother Philip also lives in Wirksworth, St John Street, a successful attorney.

The 1851 census. Nathan Hubbersty, aged 47, perpetual curate of Dethick and minister of Alderwasley: he & his family all born in Wirksworth. There is no mention of being head of WGS. The vacancy was advertised in 1851. He had served for 22 years following his father, so they covered between them the first fifty years of the century. Family: Richard 11, scholar at home. William 10, scholar at home, Charles 9, scholar; Harry 8, scholar; his mother Mary, 74, annuitant. There is no mention of the two daughters, Mary (8) and Margaret (6). Perhaps they had been passed to relatives from the strongly male household, so that they received more appropriate care. There are six servants and two boarders, Bernard 13 (born in Putney) and Theodore Octavius Hurt 11, another Hurt. Theodore was the eighth child of Francis the cricketer, born in Duffield, and in 1851 the Hurt family was living at Hopton Hall. Theodore was an unusual young man. He was lame from birth, an easy-going imaginative child who did not manage the traditional Hurt careers in the army or the church, but became a wanderer in life; never found his metier, lost all his money in a failed farming venture in New Zealand, but performed a notable service by writing up the later history of the Hurt family.

Inevitably Nathan married again: December 1854 to Eliza Caroline Hurtop, widow of a clergyman from Eastwell in Leicestershire and born into the Manners family. She had been widowed in 1852, aged 34. They were married at Melton Mowbray and Nathan had moved up the social ladder from marriage to a Hurt to join the family of the Duke of Rutland, the Manners. I know the Hurts had a strong link by marriage to the Manners family, through Francis the cricketer, so again there is a connection.

9

By April 1851 Nathan, though still living on North End, I guess in Slaley House, had retired as head of WGS and is recorded on the census of that year as perpetual curate at Alderwasley.

In 1861 Nathan is in Leicestershire, having moved to Eastwell Hall near Melton Mowbray, where he is a farmer with 380 acres employing 10 labourers and three boys. I assume he had continued at Alderwasley, but on his re-marriage, as members of the wider Manners family, he and his new wife took over the estate, which belonged to the Duke as part of his Belvoir property. In 2013 their house, Eastwell Hall, is a listed building. I speculate that after twenty (not wholly successful?) years at WGS, with his first wife dead, Nathan felt he needed a career change and his wife's family and the fields of Leicestershire gave him an attractive opportunity to seek a different career.

In 1861 and 1871 he is on the census in Leicestershire as a clergyman 'without cure of souls'. By 1881 now in his seventies, he is back in Wirksworth, living at the Gables on Coldwell Street, also without souls.

The 1881 census. Rev Nathan Hubbersty, a clergyman 'without cure of souls' appears in Coldwell Street; he died in that year at the age of 78. I notice he was living two doors from Wirksworth Hall, where his widowed sister, Agnes Eleanor Wood presided, having married and survived to be widow to a wealthy banker called Richard Price Wood. Her death and funeral at the age of eighty in 1892 were reported in the Derby Mercury with columns of obsequiously deferential praise for her benefactions, her Christian faith and her generosity to her community

I imagine that Nathan in his seventies was no longer able to run the estate and so returned to Wirksworth with his wife and they were sheltered by his affluent, younger sister at the Hall. Remember there were no pensions for retired heads. Nathan died, aged 79 in 1882. So ended the long connection of his family with the town, though his brother, by now an important lawyer, was still living on St John Street and following the example of his brother-in-law, the late Price Wood serving as a school governor. It was a small world.

I looked further back and wondered where Nathan, junior, had gone to school and what was his qualification for headship in nepotistic succession at the age of 25. I discovered that before he came to Wirksworth he taught at Shrewsbury School. Its Head was Samuel Butler, one of the most famous and influential heads of his age; a man of the highest classical scholarship and in his time at Shrewsbury 'the standard of its scholarship was as great as any public school in England'. From this red-hot academic atmosphere Nathan was catapulted with limited experience into his father's place at Wirksworth. He must have been a well-qualified classicist to have been appointed to Shrewsbury, but I suspect strong influence in his application to Wirksworth. While head at Shrewsbury Butler, amazingly to modern understanding, also held the post of Archdeacon of Derby. With a vacancy in Wirksworth and a reference from Butler Nathan was the obvious candidate, a shoo-in. I wonder if he was an old boy of Shrewsbury School.

It may seem odd that Butler was able to fill two important, geographically distant posts adequately. His work as head and a leading educationist was famous and I found a eulogy to his energy and vision as Archdeacon in the biography of William Hutchings, curate in Wirksworth 1824-29. Archdeacon Butler made regular energetic 'visitations', characterised by stern attention to detail. His instructions were delivered in a series of written 'charges' and the 1825 'charge' emphasised the Church's role and responsibility in education and the need to give a 'right direction to the minds of the rising generation'. Although W.G.S. was not formally run by the church it was clearly seen as an institution ripe for zealous application by the clergy.

Nathan and his father, both Cambridge graduates in holy orders, were scholarly men and highly academic school masters. They hoped that they could establish a high standard of learning with religion at its heart in Wirksworth and to some extent the father seems to have been successful. But there were problems.

No school exists in a social vacuum; the community it serves colours its success. In the eighteenth century Wirksworth was coming to the end of its great Georgian prosperity with its handsome town houses and high prestige in Derbyshire society. The town was about to embark on the long slow decline, which was only stopped in the second half of the twentieth century. The wealth from the ancient lead mines was drying up and the community was beginning to find its jobs in textiles (women) and the quarrying industry, producing high quality limestone. There is a list of not very well paid textile jobs: 'woolcombers, worsted makers, cotton manufacturers, calico silk and linen weavers, gingham and tape manufacturers'. With the air increasingly polluted by the dust and dirt from the quarries Wirksworth steadily became a less desirable place to live and work.

In the eighteenth century an anonymous 'divine' considered the inhabitants of Wirksworth 'most rough and uncivilised. Nowhere else had he met with such rudeness, indecency and immorality'.

The school had never been strong and though it was possible to recruit in satisfactory numbers, the abilities of the boys did not match the demands of the dry, traditional classical curriculum with its remote and tedious emphasis on rote learning of grammar.

Both Hubberstys and their successor Rev. H. R. Brett, were Christian gentlemen resolute for the highest academic standards, but the needs of their uncultivated pupils were different: they required a more general education which fitted the boys for positions in the local economy. Nationally the academic curriculum of the grammar school barely changed through the early part of the nineteenth century while the country rose on the back of its technological achievements to be a world and imperial power. No wonder we lost ground to Germany, which introduced its technical schools as the century moved on.

The wealthy families in Wirksworth, the gentry like the Hurts and Gells, sent their sons away to board at the public schools and to qualify for the army or the professions. When the railway was established ambitious families could send their children easily to Derby

Grammar School, which retained its high academic standards. In the nineteenth century the headship of WGS was a struggle. Its gentlemanly holders have my sympathy.

I have found evidence of only one pupil in the Hubbersty years. (See A Window on John Smedley's World). John Smedley, born in 1803, son of a working man in Wirksworth and later founder of the great family business at Lea, attended WGS, but left at fourteen after a 'scanty' education. The classics had not touched him. John, a gifted and practical man, like many others needed a different curriculum.

There are few references to the school in the Derby Mercury, but one significant notice was published.

A scheme was made by a Court of Chancery in 1844 relating to Wirksworth Grammar School which provided that it should not be compulsory for any scholar to learn classics or mathematics, but the head should be a graduate of one of the universities. If the charitable purposes of the school (teaching grammar) were to be altered the Court had to be consulted; an example of the strangulated system which impeded educational progress. I think of Jarndyce. This 'scheme' from Nathan's time reflects the reality that few Wirksworth pupils were managing the traditional classical curriculum and acknowledges the realities of the split school quietly established by the older Hubbersty.

My final Hubbersty snippet relates to the younger. Via a Hubbersty family website I found the following: 'He also had a number of correspondences and even a hike or two in Wales with Charles Darwin'. That sets my imagination running. Darwin had been to school at Shrewsbury – had they been fellow pupils? Interesting people the Hubberstys.

I have concluded the story of the Hubberstys and must now look back to the school. From 1845, when, following the financial scandal, a new governing body was established, we have minutes of governors' meetings. The beautifully kept minute book is a frustrating source. The distinguished body of governors met only twice a year normally, in June and December. The majority of their work related to administration of the extensive property held locally by the trust and the government of the almshouses. Governors allocated places to well-behaved older men and on occasion removed a resident for poor behaviour. One old man caused concern by not cleaning his room, but magnanimously the governors arranged and paid for a man to clean for him. You have to search hard to find references to the life of the school.

THE BIG BLACK MEMORIAL BOARD

In the atrium at Anthony Gell School, high on the wall, there is erected a big black 'memorial' board, which was originally installed in 1844 in the 1828 school building adjacent to the churchyard. It is a remarkable structure and was moved into the main entrance to the new comprehensive school in 1965. The beautifully written gold wording on this ancient board is still legible and a typed version is attached.

The early part tells the familiar foundation history, but the property details in paragraph four are not recorded elsewhere. Most captivating is the amazing open rebuke to P[hilip] Gell for his mismanagement of the trust funds, described earlier. The list of trustees who replaced the failed body included both a Hurt and an Arkwright, unlikely to follow Gell's wishes. Here for the first time, following the original nominees, we have a list of governors of the trust, a strong line-up of influential establishment figures; busy men, and I doubt they had the time, inclination or energy to pursue the minutiae involved in the management of the trust estates, which at this time were considerable. They met only twice a year and their meetings began with formal consideration of Trust accounts and the property portfolio. The key man, inherited from the previous regime, was for many years, the clerk, Mr Cruso, who came from Leek and was paid £15 per annum. I sense that he alone understood all the complexities of the property portfolio.

The 'Board and the Inscription thereon' are, as I write in 2013, 'still kept clean and legible'. The attached typed version was rediscovered in 2013. I assume it was produced as a record in 1965, when the Board was erected in the new building and the original 'typos' have deliberately not been removed. I am confident William Walker was, sadly, a hat maker, not a 'bat maker'.

At the first meeting of the re-formed governing body on 3rd August 1845 The Rev. Harward, Vicar of Wirksworth, was in the chair, though Sir William Boothby, who was absent, was the elected chairman.

- In the oft repeated formal wording of the minutes 'it was ordained':
- that the bankers to the Trustees should be Arkwright of Wirksworth;
- that government inspectors be permitted to inspect the school;
- that the Head Master's salary be raised to £120;
- that Mr Cruso, as clerk, should ensure that in accordance with the instruction of the High Court a chest should be made to hold the deeds of the property and held at Arkwright's Bank with the two keys held by Rev. Harward and Mr Arkwright;
- that an assessment of buildings and property should be carried out by Mr Cruso;
- that a board be erected to record the decision of the court as instructed.

In December of that year Mr Hubbersty was requested to select 30 additional free scholars to increase the number to fifty and a list to be tabled. It is not clear whether the numbers on roll had dropped and this was an emergency move to restore the numbers from the time of the first Hubbersty. Of immediate practical improvement was the decision to install a water pipe to serve both almshouses and the school and later, in 1848, that the school yard (playground) be paved.

This is the last reference to the school during Hubbersty's headship. Then on 15th May it was ordered that Rev F.H. Brett be appointed Head Master from mid-summer in the room of Rev Nathan Hubbersty at a salary of £120. The 'room' is an interesting word. It indicates responsibility particularly for the upper school, meeting in the 'upper room?' For that Brett was well qualified. So ended the long reign of the Hubberstys, father and son, at Wirksworth Grammar School.

A personal diversion. **CRICKET AT WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Oddly the other reference in the newspapers to the headship of the second Hubbersty relates to cricket. In 1849 Wirksworth Cricket Club was formally established by Francis Hurt and in the first season I discovered two references to a school match. In May the Derby Mercury reports that the game was postponed. In Hurt's unpublished diaries Francis records a game against Hubbersty's school in June.

Wednesday 6 June: *'Played in match against Hubbersty's school and got beat. Our bowling very bad and theirs little or no better. A very fine day.'* *The club beat the school in the return match.*

To continue the theme. There are two other cricket references over the years. In 1878 a match is reported between the school and Alderwasley with a full score card; won easily by the school. I sense another Hurt initiative in a different generation.

There is also a game in 1890 against Cavendish School in Matlock, which was spoiled by rain, though not before young Blackwell had distinguished himself by scoring 28 and taking the two Cavendish wickets that fell before the rain. Blackwell later played for the county, but died young in 1900. Was he the first 'old boy' to play for the county. Not the last! You can see his memorial plaque in the Wirksworth parish church.

The match:

9 July 1990 Cricket. Wirksworth Grammar School v Matlock Cavendish School.

WGS 52 (Blackwell 28); Cavendish 8/2 when rain stopped play.

WGS team: Evans, Blackwell, Steel, Tatlow, T Walker, J Walker, W Hooke, L Beesley, E Beesley, Harrison.

We have the names and scores of the players in both matches. Blackwell was the son of a local tradesman, typical of the entry through many years. Also in the team note two Beesleys, Lawrence and Ernest, sons of the local bank manager. Lawrence, having moved to Derby Grammar School went to Caius College Cambridge where he took a first in Natural Sciences. He returned to Wirksworth to teach science for two years and after moving schools was involved as a passenger survivor on the Titanic: he wrote a successful book about his experiences. Although Beesley's story comes much later in time his transfer to Derby for advanced study is typical of the move necessary for an able and ambitious Wirksworth boy throughout the nineteenth century.

Cricket is the only game, sport or physical activity I have found relating to the school during these years. Why? Drill would have been basic in the curriculum. The public school governors would have been keen on cricket, a morally acceptable sport to Victorians, and so in June 1883: 'ordered that £2.00 be allocated to Mr Berridge as a subscription to the cricket club for 1883'. Of the four trustees present I know three were active club members. I assume the subscription allowed the school to play matches at the club ground.

FRANCIS HENRY BRETT HEAD MASTER 1851-1859

The headship vacancy was advertised in 1851 (Derby Mercury) at a salary of £120 and the Rev. F.H. Brett was appointed. The payment is what was granted to Hubbersty as an improved salary following the re-organisation of the trustees in 1845. I suspect that the school had begun to struggle after the golden years of the first Hubbersty and the difficulties with Gell over the trustees' money. A policy to improve the position was adopted in accordance with the scheme made by the Court of Chancery in 1844, which removed the compulsion of a grammar curriculum for all pupils. I have no record of numbers at this time, but Nathan's decision to change direction after twenty three years of headship was convenient. The governors who guided that decision were almost certainly from the town establishment, the upper class, which rejected the grammar school for their own boys, but wanted to offer the old mix of religion (CoE) and the classics as a generous benefit to local children. The situation was common across many country grammar schools. There was no assessment of the needs of children as the momentum of change in Victorian society speeded up: – perhaps there was, but the powers that be got the wrong answer. I learn that Gladstone was un-interested in the education of the masses and at first opposed the 1870 Forster Education Act, though he was devoted to Oxford, Homer and the classics. Had his mighty intellect and energies been turned to education the world might have been different.

Bretts' first advertisement (see below) set the scene. Note the similarities with the advertisement presented by the first Hubbersty fifty years earlier. The message to potential parents was the same regime of traditional, academic rigour. F. H. Brett came from another highly academic environment at Stamford Grammar School and was better qualified and even more learned than the Hubberstys. You did not become a Cambridge Wrangler, a high status mathematician, without being a top level scholar. He also continued the Hubbersty tradition by holding an ecclesiastical appointment as curate at Carsington and marrying into a wealthy family. Brett was married in 1853 to Annie, daughter of Thomas Smith of Bladon Castle; a son was born in 1854 in Newton Solney and a daughter in 1858. Bladon Castle at Newton Solney, near Burton, survives as a ruinous folly.

Advertisement in the Derby Mercury 1851

The Rev F. H. Brett, MA, (late Scholar of St John's College Cambridge, Wrangler BA 1845 and for several years second master of Stamford Grammar School) having been appointed Head Master of the above School, intends to offer to the public the advantages of a sound Education in Classics, Mathematics, Modern Languages etc., preparatory to the Universities, the Professions or the naval and military schools on very moderate terms.

The School is situated amidst beautiful scenery and the neighbourhood is remarkable for its salubrity; no case of fever, or other serious illness having occurred in the School for fifty years. Every attention will be paid to the religious training of youth and also to their domestic comforts. The School will re-open on Monday July 28th. Prospectus with terms sent on application.

15
Brett advertises in the following year: note the salubrity, 'conducive to habits of thought'. Health was important in Victorian boarding schools – remember the Brontes. Note in the second advert the reference to science, a particular enthusiasm of Brett.

Wirksworth Grammar School
Francis Henry Brett MA Cantab Head Master

The above School will re-open for boarders after the Christmas vacation, on 29th January,

In addition to the usual Grammar School course of Classics, Mathematics etc. instruction is likewise given in the elements of Chemistry, Botany and other natural sciences. English Grammar and Composition are also duly attended to.

The attention of the gentry of Derby and the neighbourhood, is invited to the advantages offered them by the above School, in the salubrity of its situation and in its quiet and picturesque locality, so conducive to habits of thought and study.

Prospectus, with terms, testimonials etc. will be forwarded on application.

I have found a similar notice of November 28th 1855 which names the distinguished governors who might attract the gentry of Derbyshire.

Governors in 1855.

Sir Henry Fitz-Herbert Bart;

Peter Arkwright Esq.;

The Rev T.T. Smith, Vicar of Wirksworth;

Captain Goodwin MA;

Thomas Poyser Esq.;

Wiliam Walker Esq.

Much of the advert is repeated from January, but there is reference to 'sound and careful training in the Greek and Latin languages'. The 'salubrity' is this time 'peculiarly adapted to the pursuits of Academical and general education'. Boarding is in the Head Master's house.

The governors are an impressive and gentlemanly team. Fitz-Herbert from Tissington; Arkwright, a member of the famous family and bankers to the trustees; the Vicar, Tunstall Smith, to add to the Christian ethos. and Captain Goodwin with a MA degree, who will appear later in the story. Thomas Poyser was a surgeon in general practice living on Coldwell Street.

The three press notices are the only public evidence I have of Brett's tenure, but there is a fulsome obituary published on his death in 1899 in Carsington.

A remarkable photo of
Francis Henry Brett, Head Master 1851 -1859
He became Vicar of Carsington, 1859-1999.
The only portrait of a nineteenth century Head.



Brett held, in addition to his headship, the curacy of Carsington from 1851–1859 ‘when the Bishop of Lichfield gave him the living of Carsington’. This relieved him of his post at the school and enabled him to spend the next forty years as rector of this tiny village parish with 250 souls. He raised the money and built a new rectory house opposite the church where he lived and he ‘materially contributed’ to the church restoration. ‘He was considered to be one of the most learned men in the whole district, being not only a mathematician, as his Cambridge degree testifies, but an excellent classical scholar, skilled also in chemistry and botany and other subjects. He was a firm adherent to homoeopathy, and had long studied it, and the parishioners had in him one who was ever ready to give them remedies for their ailments.’

Brett is buried in the churchyard at Carsington.

‘It sounds,’ said my friend, ‘like Jane Austen.’ What a comfortably agreeable life style, allowing much time for his scholarly pursuits and honoured in his community, a pleasant contrast with labouring to teach the boys of Wirksworth the elements of Latin and Greek grammar.

From the Governors' minutes. During Brett's headship there are again few references to the school in the trustees minute book.

An interesting issue. In 1851 it was reported to governors that a National School (usually sponsored by the Church of England) would open in the town. Trustees decided to re-organise the grammar school into two divisions, reflecting the 1844 recommendation: a classical, for which Brett was admirably fitted, and a commercial. Marcellus Peal was in charge of the lower room as second master. Fees were adjusted with the 'upper room' (ie classical) costing £4 per annum and the lower room £2. Free places were now limited to twelve, though trustees could admit above that number 'giving due regard to the character of the school'. The National School trustees would be invited to make recommendations of possible entrants.

Also in 1851 the Temperance Society asked if it could hold a meeting in the school. In discussion it was suggested that the application was inconvenient and the request was rejected.

13th December 1852, a remarkable minute. 'Ordered that the repairs of the school windows be charged to the master of the school and not to the Trustees.' Had there been negligence or bad behaviour and trustees regarded the head as responsible? Was internal maintenance the head's responsibility?

In 1854 £5 was paid to the Head Master for the purchase of philosophical apparatus so that he could present lectures for the benefit of the whole school. Later an additional £5 was granted. I know of Brett's scientific interests. The curriculum was beginning to move forward.

In 1855 the trustees agreed to finance 'repairs to the school' – unspecified, but not, this time, down to the head.

In 1857 we have the first allocation of money for prizes with £5 granted to Rev. Brett for examination and prizes. Henceforth there are regular 'orders' that money (usually £2-£4) be allotted for prizes to pupils twice yearly, at Christmas and the end of the summer term.

In December 1858 the steps in the lower school were repaired at a cost of £2-6-8 in response to the request of Mr Peal. This re-inforces the view that the two divisions, the upper and lower rooms, had begun to operate almost as separate schools – see later for Marcus Peal, second master.

Unusually at this time the names of four boys admitted to the school are recorded: John Hall Frost, William Hanson, James Spencer, all on scholarship, and one George Housley was expelled for non-attendance.

In June 1859 Brett resigned and trustees decided to advertise in the Ecclesiastical Gazette, an appointment to be made on Lady Day.

REV. HERBERT HARRIS M.A. HEAD MASTER 1860-1867

The governors' minutes: 'Ordered that Rev. Herbert Harris, second master of Whitchurch Grammar School, Shropshire is appointed from Lady Day 1860'.

Mr Harris, aged forty, was warmly welcomed and I discovered a report in the Derby Mercury of a grand event that first year which he attended with the Wirksworth 'volunteers', gathering at Wigwell Grange in September 1860. Harris was there in a place of honour at 'a very sumptuous entertainment given by its worthy owner', but the Grange and its residents were to figure less happily later in his story.

The 10th Derbyshire (Wirksworth) Company of Rifle Volunteers had been established by Philip Gell as a local defence force, with only the more prosperous citizens in membership; they had to be able provide their own equipment. They sported 'scarlet coats with yellow facings and white trousers'. Known and respectable householders only were to be admitted into the force. The company had been invited in 1860 by Captain Goodwin, a school trustee, local magistrate and owner of Wigwell Grange and estate, to exercise in his grounds. After their drills 'the gallant captain invited the corps to dine with him on that day'.

'Captain Goodwin took the chair supported on his right by Capt Hurt and W Webb Esq. M.D., surgeon to the corps, and on his left by Rev J Harries (sic) M.A. and Lt Walthall. There was a series of toasts. The 'gallant captain' proposed in eloquent terms the Rifle Volunteers of Great Britain. Captain Hurt proposed the health of the gallant chairman ('drunk with three times three and musical honours'). The company then toasted Dr Webb. 'Finally the health of Rev J Harries (sic) Head Master of Wirksworth Grammar School followed.'

'Many of the Wirksworth Corps are musical and their songs....enlivened the proceedings.' Harris had joined and been accepted by the gentry of the town: Goodwin, Hurt, Walthall, Webb is a parade of the local establishment. It sounds like a convivial evening. But there were two subsequent events which cast a shadow over Harris's headship, the Beeson case and the amazing story of the Wigwell Grange murder.

Harris's salary was soon increased to £130, but the numbers in school remained low. Despite complaints from parents he refused to take boarders, though the second master did. When Harris left in summer 1867 there were only '48 boys, of whom eleven were in the upper school and learnt Latin and 36 in the lower school receiving a commercial education'. (Endowed Grammar Schools Report: see appendix). The report refers to the rivalry with Beeson's school and 'the absence of general demand in the locality for higher instruction'. The recommendations of the 1841 scheme and of the Court of Chancery were at last established in the curriculum and organisation of the school. There were now eighteen foundationers, 'selected with regard to poverty', who, I assume, received a scholarship and remission of fees. They would have been destined for the upper room and the traditional classical diet.

19

The income of the Gell Foundation charity, mainly from ownership of and rents from land holdings was £340 per year; how tiny it seems. There are several notices of the sale of a field at this time in the newspapers and frequent items in the minute book relating to the ownership of land and property and sometimes an investment in consols at 3%. The income from some smallholdings was nugatory. The minutes record no increase in fees, but there are regular references to prize money and to some repairs. One intricate property negotiation in 1862 related to the sale to the Midland railway of land required for the intended railway line into Wirksworth. Mr Cruso was instructed to carry out the negotiations and it seems, amid rather confusing notes, that the land was sold for £184-6-9. The line below the Hannages was opened in 1868.

In the 1861 Wirksworth census Herbert Harris, 40, is, rather strangely, a 'lodger' at Church Street, adjacent to the school. Harris seems to be living on his own and there is no sign of boarders. Was someone else running the big house in North End? Harris as head, refused to take boarders 'though the trustees and the parents desired it'. In 1861 Mr Marcellus Peal, who had been in post for twenty years as second master, was replaced by the fateful James Beeson to teach writing and arithmetic as master of the lower school: salary £45 plus fees of all the boys enrolled, 22 at present. In 1864 there was an advertisement in the Derby Mercury that Mr Baxter, (second master in succession to Beeson), takes boarders at 20 guineas per annum. Perhaps this was an effort to resolve the boarding dispute with Harris. The minutes record no increase in fees, but there are regular references to prize money for scholars at Christmas and in the summer and to some unspecified repairs.

Minute 16th June 1862: The Head Master having found it necessary to discharge the second master of the school for misconduct and having nominated Mr Baxter to succeed to the appointment ordered that such appointment be confirmed.

Like many of the trustees' minutes this statement conceals much. Beeson, who was highly regarded by the parents, left the grammar school and with his wife established his own school nearby in what we now know as Greengates, a house on Coldwell St., barely a hundred yards from the school. Beeson's school, The Excelsior Academy, even took girls! He started 'night classes for art, writing and mechanical drawing which were a great success' and was known for his 'mind bending tasks'. I can understand why the young Beeson filled with progressive ideas, clashed with his conservative head.

The story, (see the 400th magazine) passed down in Wirksworth legend, is that the Head Master found his assistant asleep in front of the roaring fire one afternoon when he should have been teaching the boys in the lower class, who were still playing in the playground outside. Was there even a whisky bottle in view? The young teacher was popular (too popular?) with pupils and parents and Beeson's Academy in Coldwell St. attracted pupils away from the grammar school by offering a less formal curriculum and, with handwriting a speciality, preparing boys for 'business.' I recall seeing the boys' coat pegs in Greengates. I am sadly not sure of the original source of this magnificent story, but I suspect it was the catalyst for the decline in numbers at the grammar school recorded in 1867. Significantly that was the year that Harris left.

THE WIGWELL GRANGE MURDER

The other remarkable event of Harris's headship was his involvement in the Wigwell Grange murder. Perhaps his role was innocent, but some have seen the trial as an establishment cover up. Certainly there were questions in this sad story of love and tragedy not addressed, let alone answered.

One amazing aspect was that Captain Goodwin, grandfather of the young woman who was murdered, immediately burned all her correspondence with the young man who killed her. Was this relevant evidence? Surely a senior magistrate would have known not to tamper at the scene of the crime. Emotions ran high and the process of justice was less rigorous than today.

My hard question about Harris is whether he was the potential lover of Miss Goodwin. The late Derek Wain, who studied the case and wrote up his research twenty years ago, claimed to have discovered a young clergyman from Cheshire, known to the family, who had been in Wirksworth at the weekend before the crime. This young man, despite the extensive and sensational press coverage, oddly, knew nothing of events till much later and was never traced as a possible witness. The trial at Derby was amazingly short and over in three days.

THE STORY

In August 1863 Miss Elizabeth Goodwin, a young woman aged 22, living with her grandfather Captain Goodwin, at Wigwell Grange, on the road from Wirksworth to Whatstandwell, near Longway Bank, was murdered by a young man 'of good family', Mr Townley. This became a cause celebre nationally and the death penalty was imposed at Derby Assizes, though not carried out.

After a frenzied attack and the immediate death of the lady, Mr Townley was arrested at Wigwell, escorted by the constable to Wirksworth and kept that summer night in the town lock up, which now serves as a comfortable b&b. He was taken to Derby the next day.

Amazingly the Head Master of Wirksworth Grammar School became involved in this 'dreadful story'. You can find a full account in the Derby Mercury and other papers in August 1863.

Harris knew the Goodwin family and had attended the great rally of the volunteers soon after his arrival. How well did he know Miss Goodwin? She would have been a suitable catch for a bachelor head, a clergyman, who had recently arrived in the town and was known to her father. I wonder about their relationship. We will never know.

Harris became involved in the murder investigation because Townley called upon him at his house in Wirksworth on the day of the murder. Harris gave evidence at the inquest and I quote the report from the Derby Mercury, 26 August 1863.

'The Rev Harris was the first witness.

He said, "I saw the deceased alive on Friday 21st inst at her own house and have not seen her since. George Victor Townley (the prisoner) called on me about half past one pm, at my house and he asked me if I was aware that he was engaged to Miss Goodwin. I told him I was not, when he said she had written to him to break off the engagement, and had refused to see him. He said he called upon me as Miss Goodwin's friend to tell me how matters were. I said anything I knew of Miss Goodwin was in confidence. I declined to tell him, though he asked me more than once, if Miss Goodwin was at Wigwell. I told him she was there on Wednesday. He asked me if there was a clergyman staying there and what was his name. I told him there had been a clergyman staying there, but declined to give his name; he said he had written to Miss Goodwin to release her from her engagement, but he insisted on hearing from her own mouth that she gave him up; he must see her sooner or later. It was then about two o'clock, time for me to attend to my school. I told him I would see him again about half past four, when he called again, and I suggested he should write to Miss Goodwin asking her to see him in the morning, or if he went up that evening no doubt he might see her. He decided to go that evening, and left me; he asked me if I should be in all evening; I said I should. The last thing he said was that he would call on me again."

The Foreman.

To whom did you suggest that he should write a note? – To Miss Goodwin.

Did he seem in an excited state? - No cool and calm as possible.

Did he intimate any revenge? – Not at all, he said he did not wish to stand in Miss Goodwin's way.'

There were no further questions. My own questions and comment.

Why did Townley call on you?

Did you yourself have a close relationship with Miss Goodwin?

Were you the clergyman at the house on Wednesday?

Harris must have taken this event hard, especially as he knew the family well. Following his trouble with Beeson, the scandal of the murder, his reluctance to take in boarders and the decline in numbers he left town in 1867. It had not been a happy headship.

Rev. Herbert Harris died in Ringwood, Hampshire in 1888, aged 69. On the 1881 census I found him living in a 'lodging house' in Upton on Severn, but I know nothing of his life after Wirksworth.

THE ASSISTANT MASTERS

I have discovered three assistant masters who served as second master in charge of the 'lower room' during the headship of Harris; Peal, Beeson and Baxter.

Marcellus Peal appears on the 1841 census, living in Coldwell Street, and was still in service as second master in 1861. On 8th May 1861 there is an advert in the Derby Mercury for a master to teach writing and commercial subjects @ £45 per annum but 'will receive all charges of boys in lower school numbering 22'. I assume this was a replacement for Peal, then rising sixty, with the fateful arrival of the charismatic Mr Beeson?

Mr Baxter, second master at WGS, advertised for boarders in 1864 and appears in Wirksworth on three censuses 61, 71, 81, revealing an interesting career progress.

We begin in 1861 when James Baxter aged 31 is a school master living in School House, on North End Street. It is not clear that in early 1861 he taught at the Grammar School, but I am sure he replaced Beeson. Baxter was born in Wymondham in Norfolk and his thirty year old wife Alice was born in Mortlake (on the Thames, where the boat race ends) and she is a school mistress. He has two young children, two servants, no boarders, but a pupil teacher, Ellen Evans, aged thirteen (amazing) living in the house.

It is hard to identify the school house; on the census it is placed next to the cemetery, (surely the Lock Up is next door) but that may mean it was facing. The houses are not numbered and I do not trust the order. I note that on North End Street, which was then the main road through the town, there are three pubs: The Royal Oak, which survives, The Swan Inn, also next to the cemetery in numerators' order, and the Cheshire Cheese Inn. Both Baxter and his wife came from a distance when most inhabitants of Wirksworth were born in or very near the town. This was the time when the first teacher training colleges were opening in London, including a famous one at Battersea, down the river from Mortlake. Clearly both Baxters were professional teachers. I wonder if they had been trained or taught together, married and come to Wirksworth to work together, as did many others in later years. Their children were all born in Wirksworth. Baxter, as advertised, took on the boarding responsibilities. He was still in post as Berridge arrived in 1883. A trained teacher would have been an innovation at the school, but I guess as he had no degree, headship would not have been a possibility: a post reserved for graduates of an English university – and to sustain the CoE hold on education a minister of the established church. I wonder where Baxter's wife was teaching. Had they both come to town to teach at the National School. Perhaps later she was at Beeson's, who took in girls.

Baxter was valued in the town. In 1871 the family had moved and, living on Coldwell Street, he is identified as school master and clerk to the burial board. He has five young children (four girls and a boy, all scholars) and one servant. Alice, his wife, is still a school mistress.

In 1881, aged 52, he has progressed and is both school master and registrar of births and deaths, a most responsible position, as well as clerk to the burial board. His son James aged 18 is a chemist's assistant (surely working at Paynes!) and two elder daughters are dress maker and milliner. He is now living at Middle Peak View on Cromford Road. No trace in Wirksworth of any family members in 1891, but he had stayed long enough to win respect in the town. There is no reference to his work in boarding pupils.

Now for James Beeson. He was born in Derby and before Wirksworth ran a private tutoring business in the Derby with writing and mathematics as his specialist fields, so he was well qualified for the advertised vacancy at WGS. He appears locally only on the 1871 census, where, still running his school, he is recorded as a school master, aged 44 born in Derby, married to Ann (born in Turnditch), living on Coldwell Street with two young children, both born in Wirksworth. On the census he is next to Mrs Wood (of the Hurt family). I know he was running his school in Greengates and Mrs Wood lived at the Hall, nearly opposite.

A final piece of speculation on these two schoolmasters. I wonder if Baxter's wife taught at Beeson's school. Beeson and Baxter could well have been allies against Harris, reflecting the issue of Harris and his relationships at the school.

Marcellus Peal probably held the school together, like many deputies over the years, working first for Hubbersty. On the '41 & '51 & '61 censuses Peal is a schoolmaster, living on Coldwell St., born in Wirksworth, with his wife Betty and daughter Sarah, aged 22 in 1861, a school mistress. There is a servant and James Harrison, a nephew, is a school boarder. Peal is also recorded as 'registrar'; preparing himself for a secure retirement. Then in 1871 he is living on St John's Street aged 69 with no family, one servant, and described as a 'savings bank actuary.' By 1881 he is 79 and is a 'bank manager', living on North End. I think that means he was in charge of the savings bank. Did Peal hand on the job of registrar to Baxter, his successor at school? Peal died in Wirksworth in 1886 aged 83.

I see these three teachers as a trinity of good schoolmasters who contributed to our town.

This is a good moment to examine money and salaries. When Harris left the school the advertisement for a graduate of a university and member of the Church of England – not necessarily in orders (my note) - offered £135 (an increase on Harris's pay), and scholars fees. 'Trustees pay £45 to the stipend of the second master with whom the Master makes his own arrangement.' The cost of the advert was £1-13-2.

I move on to 1870 when the minutes read: 'Mr Baxter's salary be raised to £108, provided that such guarantee shall not exceed £20 per annum in addition to his present salary allowed him by the trustees.'

Then in December 1871 'ordered that the sum of £11-18-0 be paid to Mr Baxter to make up the salary guaranteed of £108'. In 1873 he was paid £7-17-0 on the same basis. This new arrangement with the trustees arose because the fees of the boys were reduced in

1870 to 6d a week in response to competition from state schools set up following the 1870 act and it gives me some evidence on how the staff were paid.

The Head's salary was augmented by the fees paid by pupils, which were fixed by the trustees, who also paid for any free places. Finances for boarding were a private initiative. From this income the head had to pay his assistant, but the trustees allocated £45 for this. In Baxter's case he seems to have had the fees for all the boys in the lower school and when that money was reduced he complained that so would be his salary. As a result governors decided to guarantee him £108 per annum as salary and if his accounts showed his income had fallen below that figure they would contribute the difference. This again indicates how separately the upper and lower schools operated, going back to the days of Brett and Peal. From his income the head also had responsibility for certain expenses – see the instruction that Brett should pay for windows, but trustees paid for any major repair or development. I think Baxter was doing well on £108: my reading of Bourne Grammar school at this time suggests teachers were paid £30, but perhaps the fees emolument was much greater. Certainly the guarantee is a mark of confidence. Baxter seems to have been a stable and sensible person, a pillar of the school through a period of unsatisfactory headship.

The appointment of the successor was not straightforward.

Minute 4th March 1867: 'ordered that Rev. F. S. Cresswell teacher at Dartford Grammar School be appointed from mid summer.'

Minute 25th March: 'resolved that Rev. C. H. Collyns of 27 Park Street, Bath, be appointed.'

Clearly the first choice had turned the job down, not a good sign.

Before I deal with the Collyns' headship I record some items from governors' minutes.

March 1867: 'ordered that Nicholas Price Wood and Philip Hubbersty, both resident in the Wapentake of Wirksworth, be appointed Trustees.' Philip is the brother of Nathan Hubbersty junior and Price Wood, a wealthy banker, married Nathan's sister.

10th June 1867: governors are seeking a site for a master's residence. This project was finally achieved in 1888. Most schools provided accommodation for the head and this decision was related also to the boarding issue and to the rejection of the post by the candidate first appointed to succeed Harris.

December 1867. Mr Brealey was appointed 'agent to the Trustees' at a salary of £15 per annum, following the death of Mr Cruso – I see no words of thanks or approval for Mr Cruso, who had served since 1845.

Mr Brealey reported that there had been no progress in obtaining land so he would continue seeking a site 'suitable for the master's residence'. Estimates were to be made

and the Charity Commission would be asked about the possible expenditure. This means trustees would need permission sell land or draw on capital funds.

On 14th February a plan was considered at an estimated £1,200.

As no house was provided the head's salary was raised by £15.

In 1868 it was reported that a new store had been built for the upper school.

June 1869: Trustees Messrs Walker and Price had died and they were replaced by two famous names, who would hold office and influence for many years; Henry Chandos Pole-Gell – the latest member of the Gell family, though not in direct line, and Charles Wright, successful businessman, philanthropist and proprietor of the famous Vaults, his prosperous wines and spirits firm. Wright would serve for forty three years.

The 1870 Forster Education Act now influenced the deliberations of the trustees.

16th November 1870: a special meeting to consider 'the desirability of bringing the lower school within the provision of the new education act'.

and

'ordered that the fees be reduced to 6d a week'.

This is the move which produced the salary guarantee to Mr Baxter.

10th April 1871: 'ordered that the conscience clauses required by the Educational Act (sic) be hung up in the lower school room.' There is a religious issue here with non-conformists anxious about and challenging the traditional CoE control of education. I wonder about the views of the new head.

I sense at this time that with greater competition from the state school system the winds of change had begun to blow, though rather gently, through Wirksworth Grammar School.

My final snippet from the governors minutes in this section concerns the 'box', which was held at Arkwright's bank and contained the deeds of property held by the trust. In 1872 the box was found to be empty. Remember that in 1845 following the confusions about property and the trust finances the Charity Commission had instructed that a chest be purchased to secure the deeds of property and that two key holders be appointed from the trustees.

Resolved: 'to seek the deeds from Mr Cruso's office.' He was based in Leek.

This is a good moment to look at the national scene. We have noticed how Wirksworth Grammar School had adapted to local needs by establishing a commercial department. However it was still required by their statutes that grammar schools teach 'grammar': ie Latin & Greek. When the Clarendon Commission inspected the top public schools in their report (1864) they criticised the curriculum; 'their course of study, sound and valuable in its main elements but wanting in breadth and flexibility.....a young man is not well educated if all his information is shut up within one narrow circle.'

Subsequently the Taunton Commission (reporting in 1868 in twenty one volumes) inspected nearly 800 endowed schools, including WGS: 'the course should be broadened to include mathematics, modern languages and science'. The report on Wirksworth informed us that there were 47 boys in the school and Harris would not take boarders.

Reform was coming, but with glacial slowness and at Wirksworth numbers were desperately low. Wirksworth Grammar School needed a more comprehensive intake if it was to serve its community properly. I note that the British School in Wirksworth , established in 1860, had three hundred pupils, though the head in his 1876 report (Derby Mercury) deplored the poor attendance; often only 200 were regular attenders.

How sad that the two recent heads had been spattered by local controversy – we know nothing of their educational achievements.

REV. C. H. COLLYNS HEAD MASTER 1867-1874

Rev C. H. Collyns of Park Chapel, Bath succeeded Rev. Herbert Harris in 1867. In the notice of his death in 1882 in the Leeds Mercury he is, rather mysteriously referred to as the former head of King Edward School, Bath. – I suspect deputy head. Collyns had been educated at Oxford, was in holy orders and was a fellow of his college, Christ Church; another scholar of distinction. However the only reference to his teaching before or after his appointment is a notice about Mr F. Potter of Cromford (Derby Mercury December 1869) which informs us that Potter had passed the London University second exam for BSc, prepared for the Logic and Philosophy papers by Rev Collyns.

From the 1871 census. Charles H Collyn, 50, living on North End, HoWGS, born in Exeter. His family: Mary, his wife, 40, born in Poole, Dorset; Charles, 7 scholar, Bath; Edith, 4, scholar, Bath; Arthur, 2 born in Wirksworth. There are two servants and one thirteen year old boarder. NB I am sure his name is Collyns, enumerator's error.

There is no indication that Collyns was living in the school house or accommodating many boarders. Baxter, second master, is not taking boarders in 1871. My best guess is that the few boarders involved were parcelled out in small groups to friendly landladies – that is how the public school house system began. Not until the late eighties, when the school house was built on the Hannages, was satisfactory boarding accommodation provided.

The other recorded local contribution by Collyns arose when he attended the licensing session of the Wirksworth magistrates in September 1873. 'There was a large attendance of inn and beerhouse keepers applying for the renewal of their annual licences.' Collyns presented a petition, signed by ratepayers and residents, urging the magistrates not to grant any new licences.

He was supported by a clergyman from Matlock Bath - unsuccessfully. Collyns may have been a man of principle, but it was, surely, a silly thing for the Head Master to do. As his intervention could have closed off all the pubs in thirsty Wirksworth, Collyns's temperance policies would hardly have been popular with the masses. I doubt the governors were pleased at his intervention. What about the Vaults. Collyns resigned in December 1874, but after he left Wirksworth he carried on campaigning. In 1876 & '77 he addressed public meetings (reported in the Sheffield Independent) at Keighley on vaccination and at Nottingham on vegetarianism. He spoke often on Temperance and at his death in 1882 was national secretary of the British Temperance League. He lived at Grange Crescent, Sheffield and was a stalwart member of the Liberal party. Unusually for a cleric he was in favour of the disestablishment of the Church of England. Was he sympathetic to the dissenters' case on other points? Collyns's unusual enthusiasms would have hardly recommended him to a staunch Tory establishment and he was even attacked in the church magazine, so I am not surprised that his Wirksworth tenure was brief. But he had lively retirement!

REV. TIMOTHY JOHNSON B.A. CANTAB
HEAD MASTER 1874-1882 and VICAR of KNIVETON.

On 15th December 1873 Collyns resigned, only three months after his ill-judged involvement in temperance politics. In the same month the St Mary's church parish magazine, an important organ of the town establishment, fired a remarkable farewell broadside at the departing head. I can only assume Collyns had left immediately. The anonymous article (an extract is included) could only have been published with the authority of the vicar, Tunstall Smith, who was a member of the governing body of the school. Perhaps he wrote it. In May there was a forerunner of the final blast with an almost-gossip column note that they had heard the head had resigned: 'We hear the resignation has been accepted by the trustees.' This appeared while Collyns was still in post. The writer commented on the difficult financial position and the need for the charity to have 'a dependable income source'. To the trustees: 'we conjure them to use all the care they can at this moment in making an appointment.' The December article contained much lamentation about the poor recruitment, the lack of funds to run the school properly and the sad decline of the school – the implication that Collyns was incompetent is clearly and strongly expressed.

One factor making for difficulties at the school must have been the success of Beeson's Excelsior School, which was featured in the 1872 parish magazine reporting that a commodious schoolroom had been erected adjoining Mr Beeson's residence [on Coldwell Street] to accommodate fifty boys. In any rivalry of teachers the charismatic Mr Beeson was certain to be the winner.

The headship was advertised in both the Times and the Ecclesiastical Gazette at a cost of £1-7-10 and we now come to the mysterious headship of Rev. Timothy Johnson. In 1872 Rev. Timothy Johnson B.A. of Queens' College Cambridge, had been appointed vicar of Kniveton. He was a Lancashire farmer's son, one of eight children, who made his way to Cambridge. I found him in 1871, vice principal of Culham College. It seems an odd move to distant Kniveton, where the living was worth only £70. There were twenty five applicants for the Wirksworth headship and Johnson at thirty three must have seemed a good academic catch and was appointed in the knowledge, that he would fill both posts. He would have been known locally for his work at Kniveton since 1872 and probably seen as more reliable than a stranger like the two previous heads; a safe appointment. His period of office was to be a big disappointment. From a poor position the state of the school became worse.

Johnson was appointed from mid-summer 1874 and before he was in post the church magazine expressed a view. 'We can only express an earnest wish that the newly appointed Master will be able to raise the Upper School from its present deplorable condition.' A more supportive critic might have expressed some confidence in the ability of Johnson to do so. There was a further reference to the lack of a house in attracting strong candidates, but the writer loses some credibility in stating, to my surprise, that the school had been in existence for 800 years. Eventually I spotted the printing error that the school was approaching the three hundredth year since Anthony Gell's will.

I wonder whether there was an interregnum with the reliable Baxter holding the fort. I knew nothing of Johnson until I began to research this paper. Then I discovered in the Pall Mall Gazette (an unusual source), 23rd February 1876, the announcement of the death of the wife of Rev. Johnson, Head Master of Wirksworth Grammar School and Vicar of Kniveton. I checked the marriage records and found Timothy Johnson marrying in 1861. Strangely his wife's name is not given in the death notice, nor did the notice appear in local papers.

On the 1881 Wirksworth census Timothy Johnson, appears: 41 years old and vicar of Kniveton. His second wife is Ellen, 31, and he has two children (aged 5 & 2) and two servants. The family is living on Rise End, Middleton. I can only assume he had re-married speedily after his first wife died. It is not recorded in 1881 that he was head of WGS. I know from the minutes that in 1878 he applied to the governors for permission to live at Kniveton: this indicates poor commitment to the school and after consideration of his request it was refused. I suppose he used substitute teachers if he had parochial business; not a satisfactory arrangement. Johnson resigned from the school with six months notice in July 1882. I further discover that there was a new vicar at Kniveton in 1882, so he left both posts. Later Johnson appears as Rector of Elton (1901) and then in retirement in Gratton in 1911, both small Derbyshire villages. He died in 1926 aged 86. I sense a man disappointed after early promise.

There are two references in the local press to the school in Johnson's time.

The cricket match against Alderwasley (see above) took place in September 1878 and there is a report in the Derby Mercury of an accident in November 1876.

'ACCIDENT AT WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL. Yesterday afternoon an accident happened to a boy named Thomas Else, resident at Wash Green, and a pupil in the commercial department of The Wirksworth Grammar School. The boy was sliding down the handrail guarding the staircase to the upper school, and fell over into the passage underneath, breaking his arm and dislocating his elbow. He was at once taken to Dr Milligan, who rendered all necessary assistance.'

Thomas Else was ten years old and Dr Milligan lived at hand on Coldwell Street. Why did such a minor incident hit the newspaper on the day after it happened? A disgruntled parent? The editor of the parish magazine? Were the knives out for the head?

Before I leave Johnson I note in the minutes (June 1874) that the governors agreed to the use of the upper school for Science and Art night classes at a charge of £20 for 'gas and the necessary fittings'.

In 1877 it was reported that Johnson had been overpaid by £11-5-0, but there was no explanation. The money was not reclaimed, but it was resolved that in future all salaries be paid by cheque.

In the December 1876 minutes I spotted that 'the report of the Head Master having been received and read was found to be satisfactory.' This is the first time I found it recorded that the head had given a general report and I wonder if pressure was being brought on an unsatisfactory incumbent to be more accountable to the governors. At the time of Johnson's departure there seems to have been confusion whether the trustees, who had the power to appoint also had the statutory power to dismiss a failing head. From now the reports of the Head Master became regular, at first annually in the summer, then under Berridge twice a year. How disappointing that no summary is included in the minutes, so we still have little evidence of what was happening in the school. In December 1880 the only reference in the minutes to the school was to allow £1 for prizes.

The other notable event during Johnson's headship was the death in October 1881 of the younger Hubbersty, buried with massive attendance and great honours in the Wirksworth church, a splendid establishment occasion. The funeral of the former head was attended by two distinguished 'old boys' Messrs Wass (Mill Close Mine) and Walthall, from Alton Manor, both of whom later became trustees of the charity. A plaque in the church honours the Hubbersty family.

Johnson's headship was ending unhappily as had that of the three previous holders. Before a new head could be appointed there was the great petition in September 1882.

Trustees had met in the summer and had produced an advertisement, a copy of which survives.

WIRKSWORTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL. The Headmastership of this school will be vacant at Christmas. Stipend £145 per annum, with an addition of £5 per annum from rent of land, also scholars' fees. No house is provided.

The Master must be a Churchman and a Graduate of the English Universities. The Trustees pay £55 per annum towards the stipend of the Assistant Master with whom the Master can make his own arrangements.

Testimonials and references must be addressed to John R. Parkin, Clerk to the Trustees of the Wirksworth Grammar School, Idridgehay, near Derby before August 18th 1882.

Note the requirement for a 'Churchman' – not necessarily CoE, nor in holy orders -, the absence of a house, the arrangements with the Second Master and the effort to recruit during August. Were they keen to replace Johnson as soon as possible?

Now we come to the great petition. In September 1882 a group of influential local people waited on the governors to express their concern about the running of the school and the inability of the governors under the present constitution to replace a failing head. The original Derby Mercury report is attached.

The petitioners included:

Dr Webb, the surgeon we met at Wigwell Grange;
Rev Harwood, vicar of Middleton;
Rev Stallybrass, congregational minister;
Mr Beesley, bank manager and parent;
Dr Harvey, GP on West End;
Mr Wheatcroft; mill owner at Miller's Green and the biggest employer in town;
Mr William Hall; draper and school parent, Market Place.

With eighty townspeople having signed the petition urging the adoption of a second grade scheme (effectively relegation and a less demanding curriculum) of the Charity Commissioners for the future of the school this was a heavyweight group, too important to be ignored. (The vicar of Wirksworth was on the governing trust, but he would, surely, have known of the manoeuvres.) The petitioners came because 'as townsmen they had observed the very unsatisfactory state of the school. It seemed to have got as low as it could be'.

They sought an expanded and more widely representative group of governors, instead of the small group of trustees. 'Dr Webb disclaimed the slightest reflection on the present trustees. They were gentlemen of the highest position and integrity, and the inhabitants had the most perfect confidence in them.' Humm!

The petitioners proposed a more widely representative board of thirteen governors.

The deputation was concerned about scholarships to the school. In a complex section they argued that as well as the fee payers there should be competitive examination to the school, open to children at an elementary school. This was a straightforward attempt both to increase the numbers and to widen the social intake.

Under the new scheme the headmaster must be a graduate of a British University, but he need not be in holy orders. I sense the determination of Stallybrass and Wheatcroft here. Wheatcroft was a staunch dissenter. This was an effort to move, however little, direction of the school away from the Church of England. Although religious teaching should be that of the Church of England, there is an emphasis on the right of scholars to be exempt from any religious services on grounds of conscience. We noticed above the trustees' decision about the publication of the conscience clauses in the lower school. It is hard to imagine in the ecumenical days of the twentyfirst century the strength of hostile feeling on the religious issue in our community through the nineteenth century.

The head master 'is to sign a document on election that he will consent to removal and give up all property of the school at any time to the governors'. I guess this refers to a dispute about school property when Johnson left and it seems that the trustees had the right to appoint, but not to remove the head.

This intervention was an earthquake.

How did the trustees respond? From the minutes: on September 18th they resolved that the deputation be accepted and they met on 22nd September. The deputation asked that the appointment of a head be delayed until the new scheme could be adopted. The governors said they could not delay the appointment, but allowed three of the petitioners to attend the 'election' of the Head Master. The Vicar of Wirksworth (Tunstall Smith) with Col. Pole-Gell, and Charles Wright represented the governors and Webb, Harward and Stallybrass the petitioners. Interviews were held at the Red Lion on 26th September: the four candidates were allowed 10/6 (ten shillings and sixpence – 52.5p) for travel by train and luncheon was provided. Alfred Berridge was appointed and he agreed to sign the declaration.

The governors did not agree to the appointment of additional trustees and the issue of scholarships and re-organisation would await a later date – but on all three points change was coming.

Though the minute book is uninformative, the full press report, no doubt written by the petitioners, goes into much fascinating detail. The position is clear. Under Rev. Timothy Johnson, the school had collapsed. The trust had failed to intervene and local dissatisfaction burst forth. This was a serious challenge to the closed group which had negligently allowed the school to decline. Since the 1873 article in the parish magazine the situation had got worse. I am intrigued that it had been difficult to remove the head when he proved incompetent. The CoE tradition was under fire with the emphasis on pupil withdrawal and the removal of the obligation to appoint a man in holy orders. Stallybrass was on the appointing panel.

A final sad thought. Baxter was still on the staff? He was a reliable, respected and experienced man. I am sure he was a non-graduate, so however skilled in his job, surely good enough to deliver the less academic curriculum, he could not be appointed. In the words of Peter Cook, 'He didn't have the Latin.'

What would Berridge make of it?

MR ALFRED BERRIDGE B.A. OXON, HEAD MASTER 1883-1908

The result of the search for a head was the appointment of Mr Alfred Berridge, B.A., as Head Master from 1883, an outsider, appointed from a London school, aged thirty two, the first head of the century not to be encumbered by holy orders. Berridge, in Wirksworth rumour and unchecked tradition, was a member of a dissenting sect, perhaps the Plymouth Brethren. A professional teacher, he came originally from Aberystwyth, son of a 'Royal Mail Coach Guard', another upwardly mobile schoolmaster. He had taught in Lancashire and London, sound experience, and served into the new century until the 'new school' was established in 1908. Governors had put aside the unsuccessful policy of recruiting distinguished academics: a more down-to-earth approach was necessary. His task was to deliver a sound education within the limitations available in Wirksworth, above all avoiding the unhappy incidents of recent years. On the 1891 census Berridge is living in school house (St John's Street is the address) with his wife and three children, all three born in Lower Norwood, London.

Although W.G.S. was run down this was a challenging opportunity for Berridge to develop the school with the support of a more active and understanding governing body and with significant community support for a vigorous new broom. Governors now understood the need for change; the pressure from the town brought by the petitioners was positive and the new scheme of government negotiated with the Charity Commissioners would soon come into force. The curriculum was changing with science and technology on the near horizon.

There was a new clerk. J.R. Parkin had been appointed in 1880 and was proving himself a vigorous and efficient officer. His father had worked for the trustees as land agent and the son took over and was appointed clerk. He appears on successive censuses as pupil to his father, who was listed on census returns as land agent, valuer and lawyer; then in 1891 John R. Parkin himself is recorded as estate agent and architect. These varied skills were valuable to the trustees and he would be the key person in managing the 1887 changes and establishing the school house and the long desired boarding facility. This involved complicated struggles over land and negotiations with the bank about financing the project and with the Charity Commissioners and their architects who supervised developments closely and slowly. The campaign was a running saga through the early years of the Berridge headship, but Parkin's efforts were rewarded finally when the new building opened in 1889.

Johnson was in post till Christmas 1882 and reported to the governors at their December meeting, but Berridge was present at a special meeting in November, when he signed the 'declaration', as sought by the petitioners. Berridge agreed formally to do his best, to accept dismissal if the governors so decided and not to abscond with any school property. The implications of the Johnson headship shout out. There were other changes and further encouraging points at this long meeting, no doubt with Berridge fully involved in the discussion.

33

The school year would be divided into three terms – had it previously been a two term year? In 1864 a press notice announced that term would begin on 1st August. Was there a harvest holiday previously? Had Johnson been haphazard in his arrangements? There would be no school on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons – note Saturday morning school.

Fees would be: £2-2-0 per term for over twelves, £1-10-0 for U12s.

There would be considerable refurbishment of the school building. The head could buy desks for forty boys, including five desks with four seats. (My wife sat on a four seater at her village school in the 1950s.) Also: roller blinds to be installed on south facing windows; a cloakroom with pegs at the main entrance and fire irons and a 'cocoa (sic) mat'. Soon there would be gas fittings for the lower room of the school – four lights in the school area, one in the cloakroom. The cost of cleaning and fires was to be discussed with Mr Baxter, indicating that previously this had been the head's financial responsibility and Baxter's control of the lower school meant he had to be consulted.

Berridge's salary would be paid quarterly and governors would consider whether they should pay for a school advertisement. I don't think it happened.

Above all the clerk was instructed to prepare plans for a schoolmaster's house.

Berridge must have been encouraged by this positive response to what were no doubt in many cases his suggestions.

Johnson presented his final report in December: it was 'accepted' and at this meeting Frederick Charles Arkwright and Dr William Webb (petitioner and rifle volunteer) were appointed trustees, replacing Alfred Arkwright and Philip Hubbersty, so ending the long Hubbersty connection going back to 1799.

The key issue at the beginning of Berridge's headship was the new scheme and head and governors were working with this in mind through the complicated draftings.

We have a copy of the new schedule for the second grade scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners and formally adopted by the school governors in 1887. This is a detailed thirteen page document, which meets the criticisms of the 1882 petitioners. I assume that negotiations on the wording took some time and the many drafts disappeared into the bureaucracy of the office of the Commissioners. Berridge was appointed bearing in mind the new thinking of the school governors following their 1882 shock and he signed up to the revised schedule when it was formally adopted in 1887.

There are many fascinating points in the schedule. The trustees are still responsible for both the school and the almshouses. I am sure that was a weakness in the school governance. Though the school is known as Wirksworth Grammar School the foundation is for The Free School of Anthony Gell Esq.

The foundation governors in 1887 are Rev. Tunstall Smith, Vicar of Wirksworth, Col H.C. Pole-Gell of Hopton Hall (the Gell Family), Frederick Arkwright of Willersley (the ubiquitous Arkwrights), Charles Wright, the successful business man, who ran the Vaults and was a great benefactor of the town, and William Webb M.D. St John's Street, whom we have met before. There are in addition now five representative governors, nominated by; the governors of Derby Grammar School, the local JPs committee, the governors of the Belper Education Board, the local state schools and the Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire. They were given responsibility for matters relating to the school, a compromise on the splitting of the charity and the kind of improvement sought by the 1882 deputation. Detailed responsibilities are laid upon governors relating to money - separate accounts, including wood and mineral rights - and to appointment procedures.

The sections on the school and the conduct of Head Master deserve to be included here in full. They seek to address the dissatisfactions of the petitioners on the management of the school and to tackle some of the abuses. Was Dr Webb, who led the delegation, the driving force in these reforms?

I note particularly the following points.

- 1. The school shall be a day and boarding school. See my further note re boarding.
- 2. The governors will, as soon as possible, build accommodation for sixteen boarders.
- 3. A clear procedure is laid down for the dismissal of the Head Master.
- 4. There is no requirement that the Head Master be in holy orders.
- 5. The Head must sign a declaration relating to his duties on appointment.
- 6. He will dwell in the school house.
- 7. He will not hold any other office.
- 8. Neither he nor the staff will receive additional remuneration from pupils.

School House and the boarding wing were opened in 1889 with accommodation planned for 13-15 boarders and there is a photo of Mr & Mrs Berridge, posing splendidly on the school house lawn with the boarders, I guess about that date. In 1901 only four boys are recorded on the census as boarders, two born in Georgetown, British Guiana, perhaps boarding while parents served abroad. As a diversion I discovered that when Thring, a famous Victorian revolutionary head, went to Uppingham, not dissimilar in size to Wirksworth, he found only 25 pupils. He persuaded his staff to take in boarders and eventually this tiny, country grammar school expanded to become a school for three hundred boys with a number of boarding houses. Wirksworth lacked that kind of vision and inspirational leadership. We just toddled along in the old ways.

Berridge's stipend was £150 with a capitation payment of £2-4 per pupil. Boarding fees were £42 per annum and only boys aged eight to sixteen could be enrolled in the school. This reflects the requirements of the new scheme relating to sixteen year olds and the reality of a division into a pre-prep unit and a main school, but with no sixth form. Pupils such as Beesley moved on to Derby Grammar School for higher study.

This is the undertaking Berridge had to sign under the new scheme.

'I name declare that I will always to the best of my ability discharge the duties of Head Master of Wirksworth Grammar School during my tenure of office, and that if I am removed therefrom I will thereupon acquiesce in such removal and relinquish all claim to the mastership and its future emoluments, and deliver up to the Governors, or as they direct, possession of all the property of the school then in my possession or occupation.'

We were moving into the era of external examinations and now schools could enter pupils for both College of Preceptors and Oxford & Cambridge local exams. The first reference to public examinations is in 1883: 'ordered that fees for boys examined by the College of Preceptors be paid at a cost of £1-1-0.' The public schools opposed an expansion into a national examination system, because they feared government intrusion and payment by results, which had been so unpopular in elementary schools. However Berridge saw that examinations were a necessary part of his brief to raise standards in Wirksworth and took advantage of a friendly press to publish the successes of his pupils on a regular basis. I noticed in the lists a Harward, W.T. Taylor, certainly a scholarship boy, who became secretary of Derbyshire County Cricket Club and Beesley of Titanic fame. Those granted scholarships to the school by the County Council also had their day of glory in the Derby Mercury.

The other major issue for the governors as the new schedule drifted forward was the building works. I have gathered some of the more interesting items recorded in the minutes. With Parkin as clerk there is more detail in governors' minutes and I have omitted items, which in previous years would have been included. I note the close interest of the Commissioners, who clearly recalled the dubious financial dealings in the past and were watching carefully.

STEP BY STEP to SCHOOL HOUSE.

The clerk had been instructed at the pre-meeting with Berridge in November 1882 to prepare plans for a schoolmaster's house. These items from the minutes follow his determined progress. Some property had already been sold to raise the necessary money. Boarding was seen as an essential development for the future.

1884. The clerk was instructed to prepare plans for a schoolmaster's house.

1885. Plans and estimates had been sent to the Charity Commissioners.

1885. Plans for the school house approved by the Charity Commissioners

1885 30th April: to ask the bank for a loan of £600.

1885 December. The clerk to advertise for tenders at a cost of £2,089-11-0, to be accepted by February 1887.

1887. There would be no changes in the working of the new school until the house was built.

I note the reference to 'new school', reflecting the considerable changes involved in the new scheme. Governors saw this as a new beginning with a new head, new boarding provision and a revised curriculum.

The Charity Commissioners asked why the Clerk's salary was being raised to £20 per annum. Governors replied that he deserved a pay rise because of the additional work demanded of him in the administration of the new scheme.

1887. The new school building would be insured for £500.

1887 December. The amount for the building of the school house be limited to £1,800 with places for 12/13 boarders.

This indicates the financial difficulties the project was facing. There is no record of the bankers, Moore & Robinson, loaning any money, so the estimates and the number of boarders had to be reduced.

1888 27th March. Final estimates for school house presented by the clerk for the approval of the trustees, which will then be submitted to the Charity Commissioners.

Joseph Walker & sons, bricklayers; builder of Steeple Grange.	£925.00
John Waterfield, joiner, North End.	£475.00
Joseph Potter, master plasterer, St John Street.	£102-16
Heaton & Sons, slates.	£74 - 00
<u>Total</u>	<u>£1,776.16.</u>

1888. It was finally agreed by the trustees that the school house should go ahead. They resolved to sell consols in two tranches worth £198 and £300 to pay contractors, but they decided not to have a brass plate to mark the opening of the building on the grounds, sadly, because they could not afford it - and Mr Berridge was to pay for the 'copper'.

1889 October. It was reported that the building was ready for inspection by The Charity Commissioners' architect. Urgent approval was requested because boarders were being accommodated at houses in the town and the Head Master would soon have to vacate his accommodation.

1889. School House opens.

The new schedule for the school and the building of school house occupied much of the governors' energies, but Berridge was endeavouring to move the school forward. We have noticed his commitment to examinations. I record selected items from the minutes.

1883 June. Ordered that £2.00 be allocated to Mr Berridge as a subscription to the cricket club for 1883. Of the four trustees present I know three were active club members. I assume the subscription allowed the school to play matches at the club ground.

1885 December: ordered that trustees meetings be held on Tuesdays at one o'clock, not Monday at 12.00. No reason given. Lunch probably.

1887 August. Messrs. Moore & Robinson, Bankers, to take charge of the deeds and documents and to be bankers to the new charity.

Mr Berridge was instructed to make his annual report at mid-summer.

Mr Cuthbert Harward was appointed 'examiner to the school'. His fee was £5-5-0. His report in 1890 was considered 'very satisfactory' and a copy was to be sent to the local newspapers.

1890 June. This was a long meeting with more school topics than usual: Sir Joseph Lee J.P. of Lea Hurst, the house previously occupied by Florence Nightingale's family, who had been appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, was removed from the governing body on grounds of non-attendance; two boys were admitted on free scholarships and there was one vacancy – Berridge was instructed to inform the local schools; Berridge asked for an increase in his superannuation (£10 granted) and he was re-paid income tax; the upper school needed cleaning, at a cost of £6-6-0 – Mr Smith (I do not know who he is) offered to pay half, if the governors would match the contribution – agreed: the north windows of the upper school were to be boarded up; weights were to be placed on the garden gates to keep them closed. 'The Head Master reported that during stormy weather water flowed into the house off the new school playground.' Governors would visit the playground.

The impression is that governors were now working together in support of the school, though finances, as ever, were stretched.

1891 September. 'Only one boy had presented himself for the competitive examination for appointment as a Free Scholar and the Head Master did not consider him eligible.' A new exam was to be advertised.

From the inauguration of the school house, the boarding wing and the new 'scheme' three themes dominate the trustees' minutes: with the rise of the county council the moves towards science and technology in the curriculum; the problems of property and finance; the efforts by Mr Berridge to increase numbers and build a stronger school – all, of course, intertwined.

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY are coming – slowly.

1892. The Committee of Science and Art was permitted to use the upper school – cost of gas and any damage to be promised to be defrayed. County Council considering development of District Secondary Schools.

1892 June. The school was accepted as a district secondary school and Berridge was appointed to be secretary to the Technical Education Committee.

1893. The County Council having made an offer of £60 for scientific purposes the governors 'allowed the Head Master a sum of twenty pounds out of the Moiety due to them for additional teaching staff.'

1893. 'The necessary alterations in the construction of a Chemistry laboratory were ordered to be done under the direction of the local committee at the expense of the County Council.' The Derby Mercury reports in July 1893 a meeting of the Technical Committee of Derbyshire County Council. 'A scheme for setting up a small laboratory at Wirksworth Grammar School has been submitted and the committee have decided to grant an amount not exceeding £50 towards the cost of the scheme.'

1893 December. Derbyshire County Council suggested that there be two additional governors, nominated by the county council for the purpose of furthering Technical Education. The governors replied that there were nine governors, two of whom, were county councillors so 'they were sufficiently in touch with that body.' My note: not a reply conducive to a creative way forward.

1895 June: improvements to the science laboratory.

1897 June. The Technical Education Committee of the county council proposed a 'scheme for the development of the school'. Clerk to inquire about kindred schemes.

1897 November. Governors agreed to manage the 'Science and Art classes to be held in the school.'

1900 May. Meeting convened at the request of Mr Harold Wagner, H.M.I. to discuss the general management of the school, particularly with reference to science classes. No resolution was passed.

1900 July. The County Council asks to affiliate the school as a Rural School of Science in line with national policy. Trustees would receive £5 per head annual capitation. Mr Small of the county council and Mr Swain H.M.I. attended the meeting and the proposal was agreed.

With the arrival of the county council the wind of change was beginning to blow more strongly though into Wirksworth.

MONEY & PROPERTY

The cost of building school house, achieved by Parkin within the revised estimate of £1,800, had stretched the trust's finances. As I read the minutes it was hard to follow the many complexities and intricate negotiations involved in rents, leases, borrowings and sale of property. Perhaps that led to Parkin's downfall. The Charity Commissioners were anxious about the trust and at first urged that the bank overdraft be reduced and then instructed that a full audit of the accounts take place.

Amazingly and disappointingly with no other details: 1895 November. 'The report of the auditors on the state of funds in the charity was read. It was thereupon moved that a letter be sent to Mr Parkin, the clerk of the trust, signed by the chairman, informing him that the trustees no longer required his services. Carried nem con.'

At the same meeting Mr G.A. Marsden was appointed clerk and was authorised to sign cheques at Moore and Robinson's Bank - 'all papers and other property to be handed to the new clerk.' Marsden was given a salary of £20 and a bonus of £10 for extra work.

Amusingly in July 1896: 'Mr Parkin should be told he could not any longer be allowed to shoot or sport over lands belonging to the Trust.'

I am sure that Parkin showed the drive and expertise that finally produced the school house and the long-desired boarding facility. Why was he dismissed? He had managed complicated struggles over land and negotiations with the bank about financing the project and with the Charity Commissioners, and their architects who supervised developments closely and slowly. There seems to have been some dodgy business.

Trustees were more pleased when, through the will of Hannah Ogden of Wirksworth, £500 was bequeathed to set up a scholarship fund to support a pupil wishing to attend Derby Grammar School or a public school. Another bequest was £300 to the Charles Seeds prize fund, but questions were asked about who had received the receipts of the Anthony Bunting Charity.

Trustees insured school house for £600 and inspected properties in Wirksworth, Kirk Ireton, Kniveton 'and other places'. There was an ongoing disputatious negotiation with the Wirksworth Council about land on Water Lane, needed for widening the road, and about making a new road from Warmbrook to Wood Street. They sold land at Middle Peak for £1,000 and bought Barnes Croft adjacent to school house for £127. Moore & Robinson's Bank amalgamated with the Capital and Counties Bank who became bankers to the trustees.

The Charity Commission was still wary of the trust and appointed 'Mr Selby Briggs to hold an inquiry into the circumstances and property of the charity.'

His report was presented in June 1889. 1889

1. He did not agree to girls being enrolled, unless a new head was appointed.
2. Governors were asked to forward an agreement relating to Mr Berridge's superannuation fund which must be held in a separate account.
3. 'In view of the low state of the numbers in the school governors must take care to avoid increasing the overdraft and the school should if necessary be closed for a time other than that the Endowment should [would?] be further impoverished.'

The last year of the century and three challenging issues for the governors. This is the first reference to enrolling girls; soon to come.

Payment to the staff was never generous and Berridge is repeatedly requesting payment into his superannuation fund: from time to time £20 was voted for this purpose.

We have a note of the staff pay in December 1895

Quarterly payment to the head	£36-0-0
Assistant master	£15-15-0
Moiety	£37-7-6
Total	£92-7-6

I realise that moiety means a portion, a half, and wonder about the whole. Was it the amount taken in fee income? Did both teachers benefit? I think the boarders' income was a private arrangement by the head, but this is never made clear, though boarding fees were fixed by the governors.

In December 1900 Miss Berridge (daughter of the head, aged 19) was appointed as an assistant mistress and teacher at a salary of £40 per annum – surely a student teacher.

In 1902 Miss Berridge was replaced as part of the negotiations about a master to teach science. Governors asked the county council for a grant of £120 for two years to employ a science master. This was not granted, but both Berridge and Sharp, his assistant master, asked for a pay rise in December 1902. The governors set up a sub-committee to 'go fully into the financial question of the school'. Maintaining the school with modern developments on limited finances was becoming a serious challenge.

Mr BERRIDGE – his contribution through changing times.

Berridge had been welcomed warmly by the governors in 1882 and they hoped that his energy and the opening of the boarding house would increase the entry. I discovered only four boarders on the 1901 census, but we have no record of numbers on roll, though Kelly's Directory of 1904 reports 45 boys with E.J.Hamer B.Sc., W.H.L.Sharp & F. Simmonds as assistant masters. Disappointing that the numbers were level with the lows of Victorian times. The Head normally had only one assistant with sometimes help in art and woodwork, though we have noted the brief appearance by Miss Berridge. Perhaps his work in technical education meant the school needed more staff. The small number

of boarders recorded on the 1901 census and the hostile comments in the report by Mr Selby Briggs for the Charity Commissioners indicated little confidence in either Berridge or the governors. There is little colour in the items emerging in Berridge's headship. We know Mr Nutt was second master in 1889 and there is in the same year a press report on the cricket match against Cavendish. Berridge's son appeared on a Wirksworth Cricket Club scorecard at the turn of the century.

The final judgement must be that Berridge, who served for twenty six years, tried hard, but in the end understandably failed. Berridge set himself to enter his pupils for public examinations with the College of Preceptors, a sign of progress. He reported regularly to governors and they instructed him to send the results to the press. The school was inspected, at first by an appointee of the governors, Mr Cuthbert Harward, later by the College of Preceptors, who were strong in support; 'excellent' in both 1900 and 1901.

The head was keen to introduce science and technology and served as head of the District Technical School and secretary of the county committee, but the system and facilities kept impeding progress. It must have been difficult to find space for any science provision in the churchyard building. In 1901 Berridge asked that a room be set aside for science. Governors agreed to a partition 'to be installed at the lowest cost'.

Berridge suggested an 'isolation house' which was 'considered' by governors, but was never established. Was this to accommodate boarders who had infectious diseases? He became tenant of land adjacent to school house and installed fences. You sense that his commitment to the school was strong.

We have seen how in 1899 there was the first reference to a mixed school, surely his idea and a crucial development to be fulfilled as he departed in 1908.

At the same meeting the question was raised of 'utilising the school as a mixed school'. No decision was made, but in December 1901 'Governors were of the opinion it is advisable that the adapting of the school for both sexes be approved'. Mr Doughty was appointed architect to produce plans for extension of the 1827/8 building. This was an historic decision and to his credit Berridge must have been leading this policy.

By October 1902 'The Board of Education had revised the scheme for the admission of girls'. The governors' response was to set up a committee to 'go into fully the financial question of the future of the school and Mr Berridge's salary'. Science and technical education had been delegated to the recently formed county councils and from 1896 financial support could be given with money raised from the rates. The 1902 act gave responsibility for secondary schools to county councils.

We are now moving into the last lap of the Berridge headship. Three themes dominate the deliberations of the governors: the financial problems with much greater demands on the slender income of the charity; the threatened closure of the school and finally the successful move to a new school which would be mixed, with girls admitted for the first time.

43

In 1905 Capital and Counties Bank expressed concern about the finances and asked that no further cheques be issued. It required a personal visit from the clerk and assurances about the size of the property portfolio to solve the problem. When trustees wished to borrow money for the new building they offered Bull Hill Farm at Kirk Ireton as security.

The major property issue related to expansion of the school. Mr Doughty, a local architect, had been asked to produce plans for extension of the churchyard building. His initial draft was rejected and, when the second was submitted to the county council and the Board of Education, Mr Folland, from the Board, said the churchyard site was unsuitable and suggested building on land adjacent to school house as accommodation for both boys and girls; the decisive moment.

The Balfour education act of 1902, the inspiration of a gifted civil servant, Sir Robert Morant, who set himself to bring some order to the organisation of secondary education in England and to tidy up the variegated provision which had developed, for the first time gave the newly established local authorities responsibility for the organisation of schools, in this case Derbyshire County Council. A major influence in the re-organisation was Sir Michael Sadler, professor of education at Manchester University and previously an inspector of schools. As Derbyshire began to review their schools Sadler visited Wirksworth in 1904. He produced a dispiriting report and concluded that the school should be closed and the small number of grammar school boys transferred to the growing community of Duffield. They could travel by train. There were only about thirty boys on roll and, with the town dirty and depressed, relying on poorly paid work in textiles and quarries as sources of employment in the dust bowl at the top of the valley, Sadler saw little hope that the school would be able to entice enough boys with parents willing to pay for grammar school education. The buildings were poor, the numbers persistently low and the standards dreadful. The main career route was to work as clerks on the Midland Railway, and nobody stayed beyond sixteen.

Things began to move very fast. Governors discussed the report on the 'internal condition of the school' with Messrs Fletcher and Bridge, school inspectors and Mr Stone representing the county council education committee. They resolved to carry on as a 'dual school' and to 'erect a new building on land adjoining the Head Master's House'. They 'opposed the removal of the grammar school from Wirksworth to Duffield'. The town was, of course, outraged that closure should be suggested and a committee was formed to save the school. 'The clerk produced the sealed order of 13th October 1903 authorising the appointment of two women to be hereafter Co Optative Governors of the Foundation.' Governors voted to admit girls and two distinguished ladies were appointed trustees: Mrs Gem, wife of the vicar of Wirksworth, and Miss E.E. Arkwright.

Governors seized upon the suggestion that a new school be built and organised a public appeal. The target was one third of the £4,500 estimated cost of a new building, with Derbyshire County Council contributing the balance. Money was contributed by local worthies and £1,037-5s was raised. To me as a supporter of the cricket club the names are familiar! The affluent town establishment rallied. The chairman and chief donor (£330) was H Walthall Wathall from Alton Manor. Other famous names were two

Wheatcrofts from Haarlem Mill, Marsden, Arkwright, Dr Broster, even the Duke of Devonshire. Charles Wright from the Vaults, the fantastically profitable wines and spirits business on Coldwell Street contributed £25. They, in co-operation with the county council, built the new school, a handsome building, which we now know as Gell block, faced with Wirksworth bricks and Black Rock gritstone.

Docherty, whose charges seemed excessive and were reduced after a visit from the pertinacious clerk, was ditched as architect and the building, by good fortune, was designed by the distinguished county architect George H. Widows, who also designed the junior school and many other fine school buildings in Derbyshire.

Money for the new building.

	CONTRIBUTIONS	
The New School	Derbyshire County Council	£1,175
Estimate of Mr GW Walker	Governors' appeal	£530
of Wirksworth	Loan @ 4.5%	£1,250
	Seeds Charity	£330
Totals	<u>£3,525</u>	<u>£3,285</u>

Until the 1902 act Wirksworth Grammar School had operated as a proudly, but not very effective, independent organisation. Now the county council was leading the way. They even suggested in 1907 that the governors should sell to the county council land on Wood Street, adjacent to the new school, on which an elementary school could be established. Governors rejected the proposal and the school was built at Wash Green. What might have happened had the decision been reversed?

It was clear in Wirksworth, and in many other towns through the country, that, if a strong system of education was to be established as national policy to sustain a great empire, there must in some way be state support. This was channelled through the local authorities, but the school maintained its independent governing body and made its own decisions until the Butler act at the end of the second war.

I reflect how the three major education acts of the twentieth century were pivotal in the history of our school: 1902 Balfour, 1944 Butler, which abolished fee paying in the grammar school and the 1965 Crosland comprehensive education act.

The decision to re-found the school as a mixed grammar school was a wise one, in retrospect the only one if a grammar school was to survive in Wirksworth. In this account I have often been critical of the distinguished members of the governing body, but they deserve credit for a rapid response at the vital moment. It would have been easy following the damning Sadler report to have accepted the inevitable and allowed the school to drift slowly away. The determination of the governors, local pride and the active support of the county council drove the project forward rapidly. A sub-committee was set up and these five (Messrs. Wheatcroft, Bowles, Broster and Sealy Fisher with the

clerk, AJ Marsden) were practical and successful men with the energy to get things done. They managed to secure a loan at 4.5%, having been told by the county council they could not commit to anything more than 4.25%; no doubt by shrewd lobbying.

The foundation stone of the new school was laid on 13th November 1907 by the Right Honourable Victor Cavendish, M.P. and following the stone-laying a banquet was held in the town hall with the chief toast, 'Success to the Wirksworth Grammar School'. Mr. H. Walthall Walthall presided and the governors each made a contribution to finance the celebration. Within a year the new school would open.

Mr Alfred Berridge handed his letter of resignation to governors in December 1907. He and the family moved to Norfolk and he died in Cardiff in 1919 aged 67.

The governors' reply was remarkably generous; in the past the departure of a Head Master had barely been acknowledged. Berridge had done his loyal best through many years in difficult circumstances. He replied graciously to their generosity.

Proposed by Mr Wright and seconded by Mr Wheatcroft it was resolved;

'That the Governors of Wirksworth Grammar School receive with much regret the resignation of the Head Master, Mr Berridge, after twenty six years of faithful service, and desire to record their sincere appreciation of his high character and devotion to duty, and acknowledge with gratitude the success which has attended his teaching and shown by the many distinctions gained by his Scholars, and earnestly hope that God's blessing may be with him and his family in the rest he has deservedly earned.'

An appointment committee was set up, which included Mr Small from the Derbyshire Education Committee. In reply to the advertisement there were 187 applications. These were reduced to a list of twenty and three candidates were interviewed by governors.

Name	Post	Votes for
L Hansen Bay BSc	Head, Deacons School, Peterborough.	3
JJ Scott MA	Trent College, Long Eaton.	2
RE Yates BA	Nottingham High School.	1

and they duly appointed Mr L Hansen Bay, Head Master of the School.

Roy Pearce October 2013.