

Newsletter Number 3 for June 2015



What do these sites found in GL54 have in common?



Yes, at one time they were all schools. In fact, at one time or another Winchcombe has had over 20 different schools. Some of the buildings can still be seen and in the museum there are photographs of others that have been demolished. We hope this list will help inform your view and feel for one aspect of the changing face of the town.

At brief history

1521
Lady Joan Huddleston left money for a school to be held in Winchcombe Abbey for a small number of boys.
1539
After the dissolution of the Abbey the school continued, though its location is unclear. It was called King's School and several local vicars served as teachers.
1618
High Bailiff, John Barksdale, took the lead to build a school with ground floor schoolroom and schoolmaster's and boarders' rooms above. Today this is the Jacobean House, opposite St Peter's Church. In 1876 the town burgesses sold the house to J.C.Dent to repay the mortgage.
1621
Lady Francis Chandos of Sudeley Castle funded the new Chandos Grammar School to educate 14 boys. It gave its name to Chandos Street.
1682
George Townsend provided teaching at "Townsend's" school.
1855
Townsend's school was held in the back kitchen of William Tovey's house. By 1855 it merged with King's, whose premises had been rented out. King's School was held in a cottage on Abbey Terrace.
1857
The first infants' school for the children of working people was provided in a large new building [that included school, reading room and library] by Mr William Smith of The Farm [now called Charingworth House]. The school was built in Abbey Terrace. Later the building was called the Assembly Rooms, was used as a drill hall and a VAD hospital [Voluntary Aid Detachment] during WW1 and is now the Conservative Working Men's Club and includes other organisations. [William Smith was a great philanthropic benefactor to Winchcombe. His portrait hangs high on the wall in the museum in the actual room where a dinner was held in his honour.]

1850s and 1870s
Charles Sexty's School opened in The Hermitage, Queen's Square for a time. In the 1820s this house was used as Winchcombe's first post office. By 1850 Charles Sexty was holding a private 'Classical & Commercial' School for a limited number of pupils. [The museum holds a folder on subjects and fees at this school.] Mr William Sexty, of Bangrove Farm, was born in Gretton and started attending his uncle's school at the age of 6 in 1863, riding there and back daily on his pony. He died at Bangrove Farm in 1956 aged 103.
1868
Dent's School, next to St Peter's Church, was opened in January with money from the Dent family to educate older children until they left school. The museum holds Mrs Dent's opening address to the school. Children of infant age remained at Abbey Terrace. The architect for Dent's School was J. Drayton Wyatt who designed the buildings to blend with the adjacent church. The teacher's house was next to the pavement.
1870
Mrs Slatter, formerly Miss Malins, a teacher at Dent's School, started a school in Fairview House, 25 Hailes Street after her marriage. This school continued into the 20 th Century.
1876
The King's and Chandos schools became overcrowded and they merged in Chandos Street. The museum has a picture of Chandos School [closed 1907] and Bertie Stephen's book prize for 'Attendance & General Improvement'. The Headteacher, Charles Lapworth, was highly regarded though a fierce disciplinarian. Good handwriting was a passport to employment. All businesses needed clerks and secretaries with good handwriting in the days before typewriters. [The museum holds some splendid examples of the handwriting produced by the boys from quite an early age.]
1883
Gretton Road School was built for older boys to be educated until they left to start work. [The museum has a photograph with the names of the boys in 1910.] The building cost £1713 in 1883 and was called at various times the 'Board' school and the 'Council' school. [The head teacher Mr C.P.G. Lewis produced a volume listing all the ex-pupils who fought in WW1- this is now held in the museum]
1886
The former Wesleyan Chapel in Cowl Lane was converted and enlarged by Mrs Dent into an infant's school for 169 children and the Abbey Terrace school closed.
1897
Dent's School was enlarged to educate 170 older girls until school leaving age. The infants remained in Cowl Lane.
1907
The new grammar school was not a success. It was closed and pupils went to Cheltenham Grammar.
1911
A Public Elementary School for 180 infants was opened in Back Lane. The older girls remained in Dent's School and the Cowl Lane School closed. The building became Winchcombe Parish Hall and was later sold for private housing. [The museum holds photographs of 3 infants' classes in 1914 with names of many of the children listed. Spot your ancestor here.] [The museum also has the Dent's School for Girls' Honours Board for 1923 to 1936 and typed listing from 1925 to 1948. The 1948 list includes Gillian Jeyes, Patricia Thompson, Sonia Avery, Rita Phelps, Greta Febry & Margaret Wright.] Sadly some of the girls on the Honours Board were not able to take their place at grammar school due to the cost of uniforms.
1915
The Chandos Grammar School building was sold to Mrs E.Forster, of Postlip Hall, and became the Catholic Church and Presbytery. The latter was demolished in 1954. The museum holds copies of work by Alfred Key, Lewis Tovey and William Harvey. The schoolteacher was Charles Lapworth whose pupils ranged from 7 to 13.
1952
Back Lane Infants School exchanged buildings with Dent's Girls. The boys from Gretton Road joined the girls in Back Lane to form a mixed Secondary School for 120 boys & girls. The Gretton Road School became a Junior School.
1962
A new, non-selective school was built on the Greet Road. The juniors moved to the vacated Back Lane School. Gretton Road School closed; it became a youth club and is today an auction house.
1982
The Greet Road Secondary School became Winchcombe Comprehensive for pupils up to the age of 16.

1988
A new infant's school was built in Back Lane next to the library. Dent's School was closed and converted to private housing.
2000
Winchcombe Abbey School on Back Lane opened for both infants and juniors. Back Lane School closed and became Abbey Fields Parish Centre in 2004.

Any information?

Other establishments about whose history we are uncertain include:

1. Misses Tombs' School in North Street in the nineteenth century. The museum holds a sampler completed at this school. Needlework skills were valued as they could lead to employment as so much hand sewing and repair work was needed.
2. The Abbey Old School run by the Quinn family in Cowl Lane in the 1960s.
3. A small school run in the 1960s by Miss Hood that may have been on the Winchcombe Abbey site.

Any further information on all of these establishments would be most welcome.

And more recently

The museum holds a large collection of photographs from Winchcombe Infants and Junior School from the 1990s. These include:

1992	Gold visit to Bourton on the Water, the July 1992 Games evening, a Gold visit to Winchcombe shops where Crumbs the bakers gave every child a fresh bun. Does anyone recall this treat?
1994	The trip to Weston in June, the Bronze assembly in July.
1994	Gold and Bronze Assemblies in December, the Christmas Party and Mrs Fox.
1995	The Summer Fete on the 10 th June, bee keeping, road safety with Mrs Griffiths, the Gold Assembly on the 30 th June, games evening on the 16 th June and class photographs taken on the 14 th June.

There are many more photographs of the school in this period. If you were between 5 and 10 years old in 1995 you must be 25 to 30 now so come and enjoy finding yourself on one of these special days at school.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Barbara Edward for all the research she completed that underpins this listing of changes in the schools of Winchcombe. I am also grateful to Barbara Edward and Anne Crow for undertaking the task of reading an early draft of this newsletter. We do hope that this information will encourage more people to visit the museum and look at the rich sources held there including a folder containing masses of information on Winchcombe schools.

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