

THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG IN KING'S CLIFFE

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As we look at King's Cliffe in this year of grace 1997 we see that the village has two schools ; the Primary School in Park Street, its buildings of a rather aged vintage; the Secondary School standing above King's Forest, its buildings in a distinctly modern style. But we are then reminded that if we venture towards Apethorpe, down Bridge Street, we come to School Hill [the old name for the rise beyond the Willowbrook bridge], and there, one on each side of the road, two houses of 18th Century design. The house on the left is called "Library House". Immediately adjacent to it is an old schoolroom, well worth looking into. The house on the right of the Hill stands end-on to the street and we may be told, by one of the occupants of the two adjacent almshouses, that this is an old school as well. We ask ourselves what lies behind this pattern and is there any connection at all with those old-ish school buildings in Park Street ? We shall have lighted upon a long, long story; upon something integral to the history of King's Cliffe and its people; nothing less than the remarkable story of the education of the young in this village and their progressive entry into the world of Work, harking back to the early years of the 18th Century, harking back indeed, in one particular respect, to the year 1688. At this point I must inform the reader that it is a long story, even as I now attempt an abbreviated version. Many were the storms which broke over the village in connection with these early schools and rugged was the pathway which led to the shape which we see today.

It will be apparent that I have in mind the Charity Schools of the Law and Hutcheson Foundation. First there was the school founded for the education and "full cloathing" of fourteen poor girls of King's Cliffe by the Revd. William Law in the year 1727. Law subsequently built a schoolhouse and a school for this purpose, together with two almshouses; these we see on the right hand side as we walk up "School Hill". He also provided by endowment a salary for the mistress of this, his school for girls, and ordered that the girls should be instructed "in reading, knitting, and every useful kind of needlework." The endowment was a moiety of a small farm at Northorpe in Lincolnshire. Then in 1746 Mrs. Elizabeth Hutcheson, widow, founded a school for the education and "full cloathing" of eighteen poor boys of King's Cliffe, and afterwards bought a house for the schoolmaster, built a school against that house, and built also four almshouses for "four ancient and poor widows chosen out of the town of King's Cliffe." For the maintenance of this school and the master and the almswomen she purchased certain lands in King's Cliffe, a farm at Aslockton in the county of Nottingham, together with the other moiety of the farm at Northorpe, Lincs. In all this she was assisted by her spiritual guide and mentor William Law, with whom, together with Miss Hester Gibbon, she shared a home in Hall Yard. The boys were to be taught by a salaried master "well qualified to teach them reading and writing, and all the useful parts of arithmetic." What we have here, in this second foundation, is the Library House, the Old Schoolroom and the attached almshouses all set back on the left side of School Hill. We have then, by 1745, two separate Charity Schools, one for girls, one for boys; a salaried mistress for one, a salaried master for the other; the pupils of each school to be "fully clothed". By Deed of Chancery in 1753 William Law conveyed the girls' school, the two adjacent almshouses and the moiety of the Northorpe estate, on trust, to the trustees of Mrs. Hutcheson's foundation, which meant that henceforth they were managed as one foundation even though the two schools were kept separate. It is important that we note these details, for the reason that in years to come they were to be the subject of dispute, of controversy even.

But there was a still earlier charitable bequest in King's Cliffe, designed to provide a modicum of education for boys. This was Wildbore's Charity, founded by Richard Wildbore of King's Cliffe in the year 1688. Wildbore attached a covenanted payment of £5 per annum "for ever" to a house in Park Street and a close of land in the parish called Willowbed Close, this sum to be paid to the Rector and the Overseers of the Poor specifically for them to appoint a suitable person to instruct in writing eight boys of the poorest parents in the Parish. Eventually this endowment was attached to the Boys' School of the Law and Hutcheson Foundation - but not without controversy, especially as control of it was in the hands of the Rector and the Overseers ! It has not been found possible to identify exactly "Willowbed Close", but certain references to it in the Manorial Court Rolls seem to point to the close off Park Street which now goes by the name of "Blott's Close".

What has now been uncovered is the remarkable fact that in the course of the 18th Century a measure of free education, albeit of a limited pattern, had been established in King's Cliffe : 18 Boys and 14 girls on the Law and Hutcheson Foundations, eight poor boys supported by the £5 per annum bequest of the Wildbore Charity. In 1756 Mrs. Hutcheson's trustees , with her concurrence, increased the number of boys to 20, with the added proviso that every boy who stayed out his time in the school should be apprenticed to a trade. This facility of apprenticeship at the expense of the Charity came to be highly prized and we hear much about it in the controversies of the next century.

What we have studied thus far is, in fact, the facility provided by charitable bequest for the education of a limited number of poor children in the parish of King's Cliffe. As we move on to the 19th Century, i.e. from 1800 onwards, we shall discover that the education of the young in the parish proceeded on these lines:

- 1 The founding in 1813 of a "National", i.e, Church school, for the education of poor boys, with a Sunday School for girls.
- 2 The founding in 1846 of a "British" ,i.e Nonconformist school, for boys and girls.
- 3 The rise and fall of several private day and boarding academies within village, pupils usually boys and drawn chiefly from beyond the parish.
- 4 The provision of elementary education under the terms of the Endowed Schools Act 1869 and the "Forster" Education Act of 1870.
- 5 Transference of the Charity Schools to Park Street in 1873. Compulsory school attendance introduced in 1880.

The education of the "Poor", i.e. of the vast majority of the children of the land, was a matter which came to agitate the breasts of many in the higher ranks of society. From 1800 onwards the population grew by leaps and bounds, as became obvious from the decennial Census Returns (commenced in 1801). Villages as well as the new industrial towns and cities produced ever-increasing numbers of children, nearly all of them condemned to illiteracy, even the tenderest put out to long hours of work in factories and on farms. Christian consciences began to stir. Were these children to grow up heathen ? If they were to be educated, even on minimal lines, what were to be the aims of their education and who would pay for it? That the State should provide universal education was inconceivable in the political thought of the day, although in 1807 Samuel Whitbread introduced a Parochial Schools Bill into the House of Commons. This would have provided rate-assisted parochial schools, with two years of free schooling for children of 7 to 14 years whose parents could not afford the modest fees contemplated. The failure of Whitbread's Bill heralded a controversy over the education of the poor, its religious basis in particular, which was to bedevil the cause of education in England throughout the 19th Century. Loud echoes of this were to be heard in King's Cliffe as the century progressed.

But if Parliament was not prepared to promote the education of the poor in parochial schools, then where lay the alternative? The alternative lay with voluntary effort, and who better to promote such effort than the Established Church on the one hand, and the Nonconformist bodies on the other? Thus it came to pass that in 1811 was founded the "National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales", and in 1814 was founded (out of the Lancasterian Association of 1810) the "British and Foreign School Society." The elementary schools built and maintained by the British and Foreign Society were to be non-denominational, with the Bible alone as the foundation of their religious instruction. Here was the Nonconformist 'answer' to the National Society of the Church of England. Here also was the root of the controversy which would rage all through the 19th Century between Church and Chapel over education. Echoes of this would be heard in King's Cliffe through the middle years of the century and for long after.

In the year 1813, only two years after the founding of the National Society, the Rector of King's Cliffe, the Revd. H. K. Bonney, applied himself to the task of establishing a National School in the village. He acquired an old barn in Pig Lane (properly "Hog Lane", now Forest Approach) and carried out the necessary renovation, chiefly at his own expense. He received a grant of £100 towards the founding and equipping of the school from the National Society. It was a school for boys only, but a Sunday School for girls was to be held there on Sundays. At this point we must remember that in those times Sunday School was almost always an institution in which children were taught to read, sometimes to write, as well as receiving Christian teaching. Bonney attached his school to the Northamptonshire branch of the National Society and details of the school, together with letters written by the Rector, are to be found in the records of the National Society HQ and the Northants branch. The Society made an annual grant to the Cliffe National school of £20. The Rector and his wife then organised the girls' Sunday School held in the School each Sunday.

We read that in the year 1817 the number of boys in weekday attendance was 94, although by 1826 this had fallen to 67. In the year 1830 the number of boys was 55, and 45 girls attended the Sunday School. In 1841 the Master of the school, Thomas Dixon, was awarded the Langham Prize, an annual award for excellence amongst the Masters and Mistresses of the Northern Division of the Northamptonshire National Schools. For the year 1848 the figures were: 50 boys in the day school, 60 girls in the Sunday School. The school was further endowed by Miss Louisa Perry, sister to Mrs Bonney, with a bequest of £600 in 1869, her trustees to invest this sum at their discretion, half of the annual interest for the benefit of the National School and half for the benefit of the Sunday School " of King's Cliffe". What we shall learn when we come to the battles of the 70's and 80's in Cliffe was the great argument about how these "Louisa Perry" monies were to be directed once the National School ceased to exist.

This school seems to have been maintained in good shape, under a master, so long as Archdeacon Bonney was Rector. Soon after his death in December 1862 we find his curate, the Revd. Edward Wells, pleading with parishioners that they support the school, in which he himself conducted an evening adult school for men and boys of 10 to 60 years of age, teaching them to read and write after the day's work in the fields. The new Rector was the Revd Edward Du Pre, who seems not to have supported the school as his predecessor had done, certainly not financially. By 1870 it had dwindled to the point where, under a mistress only, it was an

infants' school, although frequently used as a convenient venue for public meetings. But by that time the great concern in the village was for the provision of adequate elementary schools, to meet the requirements of the new Forster Education Act of that year. We learn from a report in the Peterborough Advertiser of 12th August 1871 that the National School was then in a dilapidated condition, fit only to be pulled down.

In the Advertiser of 11th October 1873 the fictitious "King's Cliffe Weathercock", a troublemaker of the day, had this to say (among other things):- " Oh! the wind has just turned my weary head and brought my eye to bear on Pig Lane. Now this is unkind, as I have so often looked there hoping to see a change for the better, but what do I see - a school or the remnant of one. Shall I describe it - walls all prostrate, roof falling in, windows minus glass, broken seats, and these minus the scholars, schoolmaster, gone. 'Why', says a little fellow with a brown coat on, 'we are all gone to the Charity'. No, I say, you are not, for there are scores of boys and girls who never go near any school at all, so something must be wrong somewhere. Now, who will help to put us right, and are we here to have an elementary school, and if so who's to pay?"

Eventually the roof did fall in on the night of Friday the 21st January 1876; thereafter the old National School remained for years, at one end of Pig Lane, a ruined pile. Later on we shall learn about the formation of a School Board in the year 1873: this Board was the instrument which the Liberal politicians of the village, led by Mr. John Cunnington of Brentford, and Tansor Lodge, used to smite the Rector and the Charity Schools "party." One of the aims of the School Board party was to compel the Rector to surrender the site of the National School and the school portion of Miss Perry's bequest so that they could create a non-denominational Infants School. Rector Du Pre did not yield, and in May 1888 he caused the site to be sold by auction. Mr. Lucas Wade purchased it for the grand sum of £31, which sum the Rector devoted to the much-needed repair of the Thorpe Almshouses in Park Street.

Unfortunately there is very little written evidence for the British School which was established in Cliffe in 1846. There is but one letter in the Archives of the British and Foreign School Society Archives, Borough Road, Isleworth, Middlesex, which throws any light on the King's Cliffe situation. Ootherwise one has to rely on local newspaper reports, which tell one almost nothing about the organisation of the "British School" to be found in West Street from 1846 onwards. I turn to its beginnings. Nonconformity in Cliffe was first represented by the Wesleyan Chapel, founded in Bridge Street in 1824. The Methodists at this, the "Bottom" Chapel, may have contributed towards the British School at the "Top" Independent Chapel, but their prime concern, so far as children's education was concerned, was with their own Sunday School. Baptists from Barrowden opened their Zion Chapel at the rear of a house, on the north side of West Street, in September 1831 (the remains are still to be seen), but surrendered their cause to the independents in or about 1844. This cause had been nourished from Nassington, but now the independents of Cliffe built their own Chapel on the south side of West Street, where the building may still be seen. This Chapel was opened for public worship on 29th September 1846, and members quickly advanced to the building of a schoolroom attached to the rear of the chapel, and opened it for a Day School on "British and Foreign" principles, on 27th of September 1847. It was, of course, available also as accommodation for the Chapel's own Sunday School.

Here is the letter (now lodged in the British and Foreign School Archives) which the Minister, the Revd. George Amos, wrote to the Society for a monetary grant towards equipping the School:

"King's Cliffe, Wansford, Northampton.
May 18 1847.

My dear Sir,

The friends of education in this village and neighbourhood have built a School-room for 100 children to be taught on the British System, but as we are a very poor people we need help towards fitting it up.

We have formed a Committee for managing the School, and they have instructed me to apply to the Committee of the British and Foreign School Society for the grant of materials usually made to such Schools as our own. I have enclosed a list of books &c. from the Society's catalogue to the amount of £5, which if the Committee will grant we shall be very grateful.

I may add that the nearest School to us, in the British System, is nearly 8 miles. We are surrounded by thousands of a neglected population.

This is a station of the Home Mission Society. I am instructed to apply to you for a Master. £50 will be all we shall be able to raise for him. This, however, will be equal to £60 in some districts, as provisions and lodgings are cheap. We want a man of sterling piety - an Independent. We shan't want him 'till harvest is over. Will you kindly inform me by the next post if you can furnish us with such an one.

H. Dunn, Esq. Your obdt. Svt. George Amos (Indept. Minister)."

The Society made a grant and sent a teacher, a young man trained at the Borough Road Normal School, by name of Rivenall, aged 22. He arrived in Cliffe in late September 1847. From then on we learn nothing about him or about the working of the School. What we do learn about it is that from its commencement it was committed to the British System, which meant that it was to be Bible-based as far as its teaching was concerned, designed to appeal to the Non-conformists of Cliffe if they decided - and were able - to send their children, both boys and girls, to this School. It was, of course, up against the difficulty which beset the other schools in the village, namely the poverty which prevailed amongst labouring folk and which compelled them to send their numerous children out to work - at an early age and continuously. This was to be the problem for all elementary schools in rural areas right up to the end of the century, as School Log Books and attendance records show clearly.

Occasional reference in the two local newspapers to this British School affirm that the school thrived in its early years. The Sunday School associated with it numbered on average about 70 boys and girls. There is one piece of evidence about the Day School contained in a Letter to the Editor dated 11th May 1866. A report in the Stamford Mercury of 4th May that year had made bold to state, in a comment on the usefulness of the Law and Hutcheson Charity Schools, that there was a need to meet the increased educational demand in the Parish " there being a large number of boys and girls who are not eligible to the above (Charity) Schools, and who would be entirely without any education were it not for the liberality of the present Rector." Such a remark was like a red rag to a bull as far as the Non-conformists, with their British School, were concerned, and it brought forth this reply from Mr. Charles Stanyon, a prominent deacon of the independent Chapel:

"Education at King's Cliffe To the EDITOR of the MERCURY

Sir, I beg a small space in your journal to reply to your correspondent's remarks on the above subject. I do not wish to say a word against the laudable intentions of the trustees to extend education, and I shall heartily rejoice if their designs are carried out on liberal principles; but the remarks of your correspondent, I think, are calculated to make a wrong impression on the minds of your readers, and especially those who have known Cliffe years ago. He says there is a large number of boys and girls who would be entirely without education were it not for the liberality of the present Rector. I think no respectable man would wish to publish an untruth, and therefore I attribute it to forgetfulness on his part, that there is a British school which has been established 20 years, where the children of the poor receive an excellent education for a small payment. The qualifications of the teacher will bear comparison with any other in the place. The school is quite un-sectarian, and supported by voluntary contributions, and is open to the inspection of any respectable person in the village.

I am, dear Sir, yours &c.

CHARLES STANYON

A splendid letter which tells us more than a little about the British School of the Independent Chapel in Cliffe in 1866 ; that it had a capable teacher, that it was for the children of the poor, that it was un-sectarian and supported by voluntary contributions.

The only reliable evidence I can find for attendance at this School at any time is that given in a Stamford Mercury report of 24th November 1876. The School Board arranged for a complete census of children in the parish eligible for elementary education. This census revealed that in May 1875 there were 45 boys and girls attending the British School, 60 boys and 45 girls (including the Charity scholars) attending the Park Street Schools. In the second week of October 1876, there were some 46 boys and girls attending the British School (all aged 5 to 13); attending the Park Street Schools were 86 boys and 77 girls. On the 11th of November 1876, there were 18 boys and 33 girls present in the British School, 103 boys and 98 girls in the Park Street Schools. Against these figures there was to be set a total of children in the village aged 3 to 13 of 334; of children aged 5 to 12 some 244. From these figures it seems not unreasonable to suggest that decline was setting in at the British School by 1876 and it is not surprising to find that the Peterborough Advertiser of 1st September carried this telling report:

"BRITISH SCHOOLS.- The inhabitants of King's Cliffe are about to suffer a heavy loss through the closing of the British School. This has been the only school where girls could be taught writing and arithmetic, with the exception of a boarding-school, which was quite out of the reach of the working-class. Many excellent scholars have been turned out of the British School, and the education was superior to what can be obtained in the girls' charity or elementary schools of the present day. It will, however, now cease to exist, as children are told that unless their brothers and sisters leave the British School they will have no chance of getting into the Charity School, where they are clothed and educated free. The consequence is that the scholars are leaving the British School, with the exception of infants, and the committee do not think themselves justified in maintaining an infant school only. There are now eighty children in attendance. Two or three persons outside the Congregational Society which subscribed to this school have withdrawn their subscriptions. The result is they will have to build a new school, and pay rates to support their own folly. "

A not wholly unprejudiced report, it would seem, since the Endowed Schools in Park Street had been operative since January 1873, where the girls were taught writing and arithmetic. Again, the final sentence seems to point

to the need of a new infants' school in the Park Street pattern which there certainly was, as we shall see later on - but to suggest that continuation of the Chapel Infants school would have made that expenditure unnecessary seems to be an argument neither clear nor tenable. However, with this, the British School appears to have reached its end.

We must now turn our attention, as briefly as possible, to the number of private schools which blossomed in 19th Century King's Cliffe. None of these were involved with the education of the children of the labouring folk of the village, but their very existence throws light on the social patterns of the day and on what was conceived to be the purpose of the education of the offspring of the more favoured class in rural society.

There seems to have been almost no time in the 19th Century when there was not at least one private school for either "young gentlemen" or "young ladies" in the village. Mr. Francis Mason opened his "Boarding and Day Seminary for the Education of Young Gentlemen" in January 1808. The fees were 18 guineas per annum for boarders and 10s.6d, per quarter for Day scholars. Just where in the village his school was sited there remains no clue, but one can only think it must have been somewhere in West Street. Mr. Mason married a Mrs. Walker of King's Cliffe, and when he died in 1813 she carried on, as Mrs. Mason, with the school. It continued as a successful school, favoured mostly by well-to-do farmers and professional men of the district around Cliffe, on behalf of their sons, until it was alleged to have been purchased outright in 1832 by a Mr. Charles Kerin. His prospectus listed the Greek and Latin Classics, Mathematics, French, the English Language, Commercial Accounts and practical Surveying, all taught by "able Masters" for 26 Guineas per annum, board included. It seems that Mrs. Mason stayed on in the village (she and her husband were in turn buried in the north transept of Cliffe Church, where their floor-gravestones are still to be seen), for in May 1835 we read a complaint by Charles Kerin, in the Stamford Mercury, that Mrs. Mason and her son-in-law, one Robert Secker, were interfering with his pupils, attempting to draw them away to a school set up by Secker in Stamford. Kerin persisted with his school until in August 1836 he filed for bankruptcy! In no time at all Secker appeared on the King's Cliffe scene and advertised that he was setting up his own school in the village "for young Gentlemen", to commence 25th July 1837. Not to be outdone, it would seem, his mother-in-law, Mrs. Mason, re-entered the King's Cliffe scene and opened her own Ladies Seminary in August 1844.

These private academies proliferated in Cliffe in the early decades of the 19th Century. Thus in April 1811 the Misses Howes commenced their Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies; in 1831 a Miss Elizabeth Lowe opened her school for "Young Ladies" and in July of the same year the Revd Alexander Macdonald, curate of King's Cliffe, no less, opened his school for "young gentlemen". One wonders just how long these lesser institutions endured, but there seems to have existed a demand for them. However, Robert Secker's academy seems to have thrived, for in the Cliffe Census Returns of 1841 he is shown as Master of his school in Park Street, with an assistant and 19 pupils of the age-range 9 to 14.

One such private school which did well and had high standards was the one which the Revd. Miles Joseph Berkeley, M.A., F.L.S., opened in the spring of 1838 in a house in Hog Lane (Wellington House?). Berkeley was a remarkable person, a true scholar, who from 1833 to 1868 was Perpetual Curate of Apethorpe and Woodnewton, and who, since there was no parsonage at Woodnewton, resided in King's Cliffe. The stipend for his two parishes was £108 per annum, so that with his growing brood of children he was compelled to open a private school to support his family. His second advert in the Stamford Mercury, dated 4th Jan. 1839. ran as follows:

CLASSICAL EDUCATION, at KING'S CLIFFE, Northamptonshire. The Revd. MILES JOSEPH BERKELEY, M.A..F.L.S., of Christ College, Cambridge, takes into his family a limited number of Pupils under fifteen years of age, and instructs them in Greek, Latin, and French, with every other necessary preparation for the public Schools. TERMS - Board and Tuition, with no extras except for Books, Fifty Pounds per annum. Single beds. A quarter's notice of removal required. Dancing, etc, by approved Masters, on the usual terms. The School will reopen on the 1st of February. "

In about 1845 he moved his school from Hog Lane to that 18th Century house in Park Street which today we see as the central portion of the Primary School in Park Street. His great studies and researches were in cryptogamic botany and in spore-propagation – the cause of the potato blight which ravaged both Ireland and parts of England in the years 1845 and 1846. Berkeley was diligent in his pastoral duties; his fine handwriting graces the Registers of his two parishes, and those of King's Cliffe, where he sometimes did duty for his friend Archdeacon Bonney. He moved to the parish of Sibbertoft, near Market Harborough, in 1868 and died there July 1889, aged 86. As an assistant in his school in 1841, Berkeley had a Cambridge student named Churchill Babington, who in 1866 became Disney Professor of Archaeology in the University of Cambridge. The Census of that year reveals that he had 13 pupils in his academy, none of them from King's Cliffe.

In addition to these private schools there were, over the years, a number of small and short-lived academies, usually of the "Seminary for Young Ladies" variety. It may be of interest to note that almost the last of these emerged in West Street in 1894, as reported in the Advertiser of 13th January that year:

"A NEW BOARDING SCHOOL - The inhabitants are ever ready to receive additional residents. The Misses Fryer have taken possession of the spacious residence lately in the occupation of Dr. Phipps, and preparations are being made to receive their boarders after the Christmas holidays. The Misses Fryer have very successfully conducted a boarding school at Drayton, near Uppingham, and it is for larger and better accommodation, both in the housing of boarders and railway accommodation, that they are transferring their school from Drayton to King's Cliffe. Singular to relate, these same premises, which are so well adapted for a boarding school, were occupied by Mr. Thomas Freeman over twenty years ago for the same purpose. "

So it came about that "Drayton House School" (for girls) was established in West Street, King's Cliffe, in a "spacious" house which is still known as Drayton House.

We turn now to the transformation of the Law and Hutcheson Schools which came to pass in the years 1870 to 1879. We remember that they were schools wholly financed by charitable bequests, by income derived from agricultural properties. In the golden years of English agriculture from 1850 to 1870 that income had grown considerably. It was more than adequate to support both the Schools (where the number of pupils had been increased to 22 boys and 22 girls) and the Almshouses, though it was to decline sharply once the years of the great agricultural depression darkened the land from 1873 onwards. But in King's Cliffe of the 1860's critical eyes were cast upon the Trustees of the Law and Hutcheson Foundation. Why shouldn't they use their surplus of income to extend that education of the poor which was their responsibility? And what assistance would they give to the parish to provide schooling for all the children of the village as was demanded, in due course, by the Forster Education Act of 1870? Designed to provide elementary education for all children, the Forster Act allowed for the voluntary schools of the land, such as were provided by the National Society and the British Society; it allowed also for endowed charity schools, such as were the Law & Hutcheson. In addition (and this is to be given full note) the Act required that where there was shown to be a deficiency of school accommodation in a parish, then a School Board, elected by the ratepayers, could be set up with power to erect and maintain elementary schools, financed by rates (as the voluntary schools were not at that stage), and which were to be non-sectarian. But where either voluntary effort or charitable endowment could provide sufficient school accommodation, there would be no need for a School Board as such. I give this preamble in order to set the scene for our study of what came to pass in King's Cliffe. For such a study there is available a considerable wealth of written and printed material of which, in a narrow compass such as this, I can introduce only a modicum, and that in brief outline only.

Mention must first be made of two personalities who, in the late 1860's and right through the 1870's, were ever at cross-swords in the affairs of Cliffe, particularly the affairs of the schools. First, there was the Revd. Edward Du Pre, Rector from 1863 to 1896. A strong personality, not always resident in the parish and employing a succession of curates, he stood firm on his authority as Rector, particularly as chairman of the Parish Vestry and as a Trustee of the Law & Hutcheson Schools. Then there was Mr. John Cunnington, 1807-1882, a son of the celebrated William Cunnington, 1776-1850, merchant, brewer, builder of the West Street windmill and of Clive House, property-owner. John Cunnington, his son, was a soap manufacturer, of Brentford, Middlesex, and Tansor Lodge, Northants. As the owner of property in his native King's Cliffe, he was a ratepayer, a man determined to make his voice heard in the affairs of the village. Another strong personality, he chose to side with the Liberals of the village, most of whom were Chapel-men, though he was not. He had tried to fell Archdeacon Bonney in earlier years; now he was to do battle with Rector Du Pre. Incidentally, the Cunnington family vault is still to be seen, surmounted by its square obelisk, in the south-east corner of Cliffe churchyard.

It is evident that by 1865 the trustees of the Law & Hutcheson charities were alive to the need for improvement and extension of the Schools. At their annual audit in May 1865 they received plans for new schools and a schoolmaster's house, expressing their concern to extend the educational charities " for the benefit of the poor of the parish, in strict accordance with the will of the founders". At the same meeting Mr. Farmery Law, after 45 years as agent to the trust, resigned his office. He was succeeded as agent by Mr. Thomas Cunnington. The plans referred to were not put into effect, and the matter drifted on. A lengthy report given in the Stamford Mercury of 7th May 1869 deserves attention, first because it reviews the operation of the L & H Charities, second because it conveys, I believe, the impression that the public at large was indeed concerned that the trustees make progress in the matter of the Schools.

"KING'S CLIFFE. Charities - The annual meeting of the trustees of Law and Hutcheson's school charity was held on the 28th ult., when the accounts for the past year were examined and confirmed. Nine girls and three boys left the school, and the vacancies were filled up by others. The trustees lunched with the Revd. E. Du Pre at the Rectory. These charities are of great importance to the inhabitants of King's Cliffe, and a benefit to many families. The school for the girls was founded by Mr. Wm. Law in the year 1727, for the education and full clothing of 14 poor girls of the town, with a salary for a mistress well qualified to instruct them in reading, knitting, and every useful kind of needlework. The number of girls is now increased to 22. Mr. Law also built two tenements adjoining the school, to be inhabited separately by two poor ancient maidens or widows, to be paid 2s.6d, per week, and £2 annually for firing. The boys' school with four tenements adjoining to it, for the separate habitation of four ancient and poor widows chosen out of the town, was founded by Mrs. Eliz.

Hutcheson, in the year 1748. The school was for the education and full clothing of 18 poor boys of the town, with a salary for a master well qualified to teach them reading and writing, and all the useful parts of arithmetic. In the year 1786 the foundress increased the number of scholars to 20, and directed that every boy who shall have stayed his full time in the school, with good behaviour, be apprenticed to some trade. The number of boys now educated and clothed is 22, with a premium of £20 when they have done schooling to apprentice them, and an excellent suit of clothes throughout, when they have served half their apprenticeship. The usual term of schooling is from nine to ten to fourteen years of age, and many are the respectable tradesmen at this day who have received their education in this school, and been apprenticed from this charity. The widows were allowed 2s.6d, per week, but now they receive 7s. per week, with £2 annually for firing. About four years ago two more tenements were built, and two more widows made recipients of this charity. The excellent management of the trustees no one can doubt, as they are constantly improving, and at this present time have a surplus of several thousand pounds. With a surplus of this description in hand, some improvement might still be made of great importance to the inhabitants of King's Cliffe. With over 1500 inhabitants the town has no school for boys of the working class, except this charity. There was a National school and a schoolmaster (employed for over 50 years), and boys educated from six to fifteen years of age, but now it has dwindled down to an infant school and a female teacher. The inhabitants are generally of the opinion that to enlarge the present school or to establish another one, would be of the greatest use to the town generally, and it is hoped the trustees will endeavour to meet the requirements of the place. "

Mr. Gladstone's Liberal government of 1868 to 1874 first put the Endowed Schools Act of 1869 on the Statute Book, and then the Education Act of 1870. The debate on public education was now lively in the country as well as in Parliament. Rate-paying householders had received the vote through the Reform Act of 1867. All was now ready for "a great leap forward" in the sphere of public education. That leap forward was now to be taken in King's Cliffe. A report in the Mercury of 9th December 1870 graphically paints the picture for us:

" KING'S CLIFFE - On Monday evening last a meeting was held at the National school-room, to consider the position of the parish as regards the new Elementary Education Act. There was a very large attendance of the farmers, tradesmen, and other local ratepayers. The Revd. Edward Du Pre, the Rector, was called to the chair. After the chairman had explained the several requirements of the Act, a discussion ensued as to whether some of the charities or the surplus funds of such charities now extant in the parish and for the purposes of education could not be made, wholly or in part, available for the purposes of the recent Act. The chairman carefully explained that these charities were not affected by the Elementary Education Act, and in fact it was only the charity known as "Law and Hutcheson's" that had any excess of income over expenditure; that the greater portion of the income arising from that charity was annually expended in strict accordance with the wills of the donors; and that it was in no way the desire of the trustees of that charity to abstain from giving every assistance in their power in this case; that these charities were under the Endowed Schools Act, and that, with the sanction of the Charity Commissioners, the trustees were willing to devote a certain sum of their annual surplus to assist in extending educational advantages in the parish; but that the funds of this charity were not sufficient to find site, build new schools and residences, master and mistress's salary, and annual grant as well, without assistance from other sources. It was thought that if the trustees were allowed to give an annual grant that sufficient funds could be found, so as to obviate the necessity of a School Board; and as this meeting was only a preliminary one, it was proposed and seconded that the agent of Law and Hutcheson's trustees should wait on them, and ascertain as soon as possible what sums the trustees could provide, so as to enable the parish to apply, if necessary, to Parliament and other sources for a grant. The question was mooted whether a sum of money (£600) left by Miss Perry to the National and Sunday schools of King's Cliffe could be employed in the building of new schools. This occasioned a diversity of opinion."

Whatever occasioned the deferment of the architect's plans approved in May 1865, they were now brought forward again at a trustees meeting in May 1871 and tenders were sought by advertisement. By August of that year the "new" schools and the master and mistress's house were in course of erection around the newly-acquired house in Park Street which had been the home and private school of the Revd. Miles Joseph Berkeley. Two new schoolrooms were built, one for boys, one for girls, and there was another large room, this last being the major adaptation of the Berkeley house. About £2000 had been expended on the purchase and adaptation of the schools; it was expected they would be opened in the summer of 1872. The official opening did not take place quite so soon. On the 9th of November, 1872, the Peterborough Advertiser carried this report:

" KING'S CLIFFE – Schools - The commodious schools and residences for master and mistress, lately built by the trustees of Law and Hutcheson's Charities, will soon be in active operation; advertisements have lately appeared for a certificated master and mistress, applications having to be made to the Rector (the Revd. E. Du Pre). The boys and girls to the number of 44, elected annually on the foundation will, on the opening of the new schools be removed from their present schools on the hill to those now erected in Park Street. The trustees seem to have spared no expense in carrying out the designs of their architect, H. Kennedy, Esq., which will make these schools and residences equal to the requirements of this populous parish. The ventilating arrangements are all that can be desired both in the schools and class rooms, and it is to be hoped parents will not be backward in availing themselves of the advantages of a sound education which will shortly be open to their children. The children will be eligible from six years of age."

Finally, on Monday, the 13th of January 1873, the schools were opened, with Mr. William Brooks as Master of the Boys' School and his wife as Mistress of the Girls' School. We should note that in later years Mr. Brooks altered his surname to "Brookes". He held a First Class Teacher's Certificate and when he arrived in Cliffe was aged 37. The Advertiser reported thus on the school-opening, 18th January 1873:-

"NEW SCHOOLS.- On Monday the new schools were opened for the reception of boys and girls. Each room is sufficiently large for over 100 scholars, but only 4 girls availed themselves of the opportunity of the opening, in addition to the 22 that are clothed and educated by the charity. The boys are rather more numerous. The inhabitants generally were disappointed at the fees demanded. The children of agricultural labourers are to pay 4d per week, and those of trades people 6d, which is more than persons with large families can afford."

This telling report reminds us that under the Act fees could be charged; soon these charges, (later to be reduced to 2d. a week for a labourer's child), came to be known as "school pence". We should also remind ourselves at this stage that, because religious teaching in the L & H Schools had been "Church", this was carried over to the Park Street Schools, much to the disapproval of the Liberals and the Dissenters of the parish. Perhaps it was to be deplored that the Rector and Church influence were still visible in the life of the new schools. If a School Board and a Board School came into being, then such a school would have to be non-sectarian, with Bible-based religious teaching only. Here rests the gravamen which was shortly to raise fierce controversy in the parish. The other issue was that there was still no school for infants, an issue which the decay of the National School and the "Louisa Perry" bequest brought to the fore, as we have seen already.

So who was there associated with the village who would champion the cause of a School Board ? He was, in fact, near at hand, well known as a native and a ratepayer of Cliffe, scion of a well-known family, his name John Cunnington, of Brentford and Tansor Lodge.

It is interesting to note that even before the schools were open to receive pupils, use was made of them for a public gathering in the shape of a concert held on 20th December, 1872, "in the new schoolroom, under the patronage of the Revd. E. Du Pre, for the benefit of the church choir". What this occasion signified was that now King's Cliffe had a spacious meeting-place, in the new schoolrooms, for gatherings of almost any kind. Formerly there had been, for years past, only such restricted spaces as the National School or the British School, or earlier still, large rooms in the public houses. The availability of these schoolrooms for every sort of village activity was utilised in the most fulsome manner right down to the advent of the Village Hall in 1922, and for many years after that.

Amidst all the excitement over the bankruptcy of Rector Du Pre in March 1874, with a public meeting to protest to the Bishop of Peterborough about "this unpleasant case", the ratepayers of the village were summoned to several meetings by Mr. John Cunnington, the purpose being to establish a "School Committee" which, it was expected, would work with the trustees of the L & H Schools. We learn from the Advertiser of 9th May 1874 that Mr. Cunnington was made president of that Committee and that its function was to concert means in conjunction with that body "for securing a more general and efficient education of the children of the entire parish, and for securing due publicity of the affairs of the said Charities as enjoined by the founders" The parish was to be canvassed for the purpose of ascertaining the number and ages of the children eligible for school instruction; fifty ratepayers were then induced to sign a requisition notice to the local officer of the Education Department, Mr. Richardson of Oundle. The outcome was a meeting held (be it noted), first in the vestry of the parish church and then adjourned to the house of Mr. Thomas Law in Hall Yard, John Cunnington, Esq., in the chair. The Mercury of 27th November duly reported the meeting:-

" KING'S CLIFFE - A very important and numerously attended meeting of the ratepayers was held here after due notice on Friday last, to take into consideration the question of forming a School Board, in order to meet the requirements of the Elementary Education Act, and to make the munificent endowments belonging to this parish for the purposes of education available for that purpose. The late Rector of the parish resisted all attempts on the part of the parishioners to introduce an improved system, admitted on all hands to be necessary, in order to recover from their present neglected and degraded state the greater part of the poorer population of this neglected parish. John Cunnington, Esq., of Tansor Lodge, who is a ratepayer of the parish was unanimously voted to the chair. The provisions of the Act were explained by Mr. Richardson, the clerk of the Board of Guardians. After a lengthy discussion, in which the friends of the late Rector rendered a rather strenuous opposition, the meeting adopted by a majority of 28 to 7, that a School Board under the Elementary Education Act be formed. It is sincerely hoped that a remedy will now be found for the evil so long prevailing in the parish, and that justice will be done to the intentions of the excellent founders of Law's and Hutcheson's Charities..... T. J. Law, Esq. rendered most important service by allowing the use of his large room for the purpose of the meeting, the parish vestry having proved to be too small for the purpose. "

(Note: Edw. Du Pre was the non-resident Rector, not the late Rector. At this time he was the absentee Rector of King's Cliffe, but still in charge of the parish, with all due authority therein. J.B.)

In a letter to the editor of the Mercury Rector Du Pre promptly denied the charges made in the report just quoted. In defence of his fellow trustees he pointed out that after the expenditure of "nearly £3000" there was

now sufficient school accommodation, that an inspector had visited the schools and expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the manner in which they were conducted and with the standard of proficiency obtained by the scholars. He refuted the attack on himself concerning "evil so long prevailing in the parish" and went on to say: "As the present schools in every way meet the Government requirements, there is no need for alteration, and the establishment of a School Board will therefore be most persistently opposed by more than two-thirds in number and value of the ratepayers. The chairman of the meeting alluded to in your paragraph was Mr. John Cunnington, of Tansor, who is a ratepayer of two roods of land in the parish of King's Cliffe, and therefore to him it matters little how or to what extent our burdens are increased..... If the paragraph which invokes me to write be a fair specimen of your correspondent's educational proficiency, I think I may fairly suggest that the church's schools or the excellently conducted British schools of King's Cliffe would be beneficial to him. I am, Sir, yours faithfully, EDWARD DU PRE, Rector. King's Cliffe Rectory, December 2nd, 1874.

Needless to say, John Cunnington replied to this through the Mercury of the following week, sparing nothing. He argued that the Trustees, led by the Rector, had unwisely spent £3000 in the purchase and repair of old premises "at full twice the cost that thoroughly efficient schools might have been built for, besides overlooking the first requirement of the parish, viz., an infant school, to meet which, and to prevent, if possible, any further lavish expenditure of money, it has been judged necessary to form a School Board..... what he really fears is that he will be compelled to give up the monies that he now holds belonging to the parish left to it for educational purposes by the late Miss Perry and others and which the School Board, when formed, hope to apply to good and righteous purposes. . . ."

The lines of battle were now well and truly drawn: a School Board, not really needed since the Education Department had declared the new schools to be adequate for the requirements of elementary education in the village; the accumulated monies of the Louisa Perry bequest to the old National School; the generally-admitted lack of an infants' School. And the personal prestige of, on the one hand Edward Du Pre, on the other hand John Cunnington ! When it came to the day of the election of the five-member School Board, Monday the 21st December 1874, a fever of excitement ran through the village; the religious and political differences between the opposing candidates - and parties - immediately became apparent. "As soon as daylight came people began to be astir upon the subject. The church bells began to ring, and King's Cliffe band paraded the town. Towards the close of the poll the excitement was intense and the street impassable the final state of the poll showed that the blues had the victory, as only one out of the five of the Rector's party got in. The following was the result of the poll, Mr. T. J. Law, 244; Mr. Thos. Cunnington, 226; Mr. John Cunnington, 174; Mr. Elijah Dixon, 130; Mr. Ventross Green, 108. The Liberals were almost crazy when they found that the four good men whom they put forward were declared elected, and till "Cross" put an end to the public time scarcely anything could be heard, but the shouting of the victors. We may say that the Liberals worked in great harmony: they made use of Mr. W. Jobson's (jeweller, High Street) front room for a committee room. The numbers polled for those who were unsuccessful were as follows:- Revd. E. Du Pre, 74; Mr. W. Dainty, 30; Mr. C. Dainty, 24; Revd. J. E. Else, 23. "

So ran the report in the Mercury of 25th December 1874. Shades of the Eatanswill election !

At this point we do well to remind ourselves that the Charity Commissioners were the final authority for the L & H Schools, the authority to which the trustees were answerable. It was the Charity Commissioners who drew up the fresh Schemes of Administration that were required with the passing of time; it was they who decided just how the money of this - and of every other charity in the land - should be distributed or spent. In addition there was the oversight exercised on the teaching-side by the "Committee of Council on Education", usually referred to as the Education Department, an authority which extended itself as the years went by and all schools came more and more to depend on rate-aid and Government grants.

For years the School Board, elected every three years, was nothing more than a sort of mosquito, noisily buzzing around the parish, from time to time inflicting nasty red bites on the School Trustees. Its monthly meetings were reported in the two local newspapers, the Advertiser leaning towards the Conservative side, the Mercury definitely on the Liberal side. The primary aim of the newly-founded Board was to get the schools declared plain elementary schools, but this just couldn't be done. And if it could have been done, just what would have happened to those advantages which the poor of Cliffe prized so greatly, the clothing of those 44 charity boys and girls (now incorporated into the "new" Park Street Schools), the apprenticeship premiums for the 22 boys? When in 1877 the Commissioners proposed a new Scheme for the Schools, whereby a higher class school would be established within the Foundation but in lieu of the clothing of the L & H children and of the apprenticeship premiums for the boys, the School Board was quick to oppose and to alert the village. The Advertiser's village correspondent could write, in the edition of 21st April 1877: "The great majority of the inhabitants are quite satisfied with the Public Elementary Education, and would prefer the schools being carried out on the foundations known as Law and Hutcheson's. With the addition of all the children in the parish being educated free of charge in the Elementary Schools, this would be of much greater importance to the inhabitants than the higher class schools. Now that parents are deprived of the earnings to a great extent, and compelled to send them to school and pay fees in some instances, the apprentice-ship fee and the clothing are matters of

greater interest than ever." The School Board was to gain one advantage by the affirmed Scheme of 1879, namely that it would henceforth be entitled to appoint two trustees, or "Governors", as they were now to be called, to the Governing Body, a detail which induced the Conservatives to canvass the village to do away altogether with the School Board ! In the Board election of December 1877, the Liberals again defeated the Conservatives : the returned Liberals were Mr. T. J. Law, 226; Mr. Ventross Green, 189; Mr. Elijah Dixon, 185. One Conservative, Mr. Thos. Cunnington, was returned with 199 votes; the defeated Conservatives were Mr. George Miles, 180; Mr. Richard Brown, 163. By this time the Board had achieved some good; for example, its bye-laws were sanctioned by the Education Department, the chief of these being the appointment by the Board of an attendance inspector.

The Advertiser could report in its edition of 14th October 1876: " There are at least fifty children, between the ages of five and thirteen, who do not attend any school, although the school fee is not more than five farthings per week [approximately half of 1p today]. Two-pence is the nominal charge, but for regular attendance a portion is returned." A Mr. Owen was the attendance inspector appointed by the Board and he made his first report on the 15th November 1876. This report and its figures of children's school attendances was useful both to the L & H Trustees and to the School Board. The Board also assumed responsibility for the enforcement of the attendance and age-and-employment regulations of the 1876 Education Act, viz., if a child of 5 years of age made 250 attendances in each year for five years, he/she could be employed at 10 years; if a child failed to do so, he/she would have to attend until 250 attendances for five years were completed. It will be of interest to older King's Cliffe folk to learn that Mr. John Lucas Blake, the saddler and harness-maker who had his shop and home in Park Street (later known as "Boscobel"), became attendance officer in January 1881, and fulfilled that office for many years.

Despite widespread opposition in the village, the new scheme put forward by the Charity Commissioners came into effect in February 1879. There was to be an Upper Department in the Boys School to provide a "higher than elementary education" for both boys and girls who qualified for it, but with a tuition fee of not more than £3 a year. Free education and clothing for the Foundation scholars were removed, but apprenticeship fees to a total of £60 a year were retained for the boys. The last distribution of free clothing was made in November 1879.

It was at a Governors' meeting in January of 1880 that it was decided to take up the vexed issue of an infants' school. Also the notion of an Upper Department of the Schools, advanced in the Scheme of 1879, was taken up by the Governors when they met in the old school-house (the usual meeting-place) on 12th July 1880. It was decided to build a new room on to the Schools to accommodate up to 50 pupils, girls as well as boys, to charge a quarterly fee of 12s per pupil, scholarships by examination of £3 per annum to be taken on entering the upper school. It was decided also to institute scholarships in the lower schools, a total of £70 per annum (with deduction of school fees) to pupils who fulfilled various proficiency and attendance requirements. This last was to become the basis of the annual "Scholarship Day", a feature of King's Cliffe school-life right down to the new Scheme of May 1966, successful pupils receiving money up to the value of £3. It will be apparent that such "Scholarship Money" was greatly valued by parents, most of whom were extremely poor and dependent on agricultural wages, which, in the 1880s and 1890s were rarely more than 10 shillings per week.

In a very short period of time it became obvious that the parents of Cliffe had no use for the Upper Department; few pupils were forthcoming for the simple reason that parents had to have their offspring out to work as soon as possible. This was to be one of the reasons why another Scheme was introduced in 1889, when the Upper Department was scrapped, Evening Classes being substituted and an annual funding of £100 allowed for them. The yearly sum for "Scholarships" had then to be reduced to £40.

The additional schoolroom, initially designed to house the Upper Department, was built at a cost of £439; it is still to be seen adjoining the older buildings and bearing the date 1881 in stone-relief. It was no sooner open than the popular demand for an infants' School was again raised, led this time by none other than Rector Du Pre ! This did not mean that the School Board was dead, but rather that John Cunnington had dropped out of King's Cliffe life - he died 9th February 1882 - and, moreover, the Conservatives won a majority in the School Board Election of 15th December 1881, a tame affair compared with elections of old !

A report in the Advertiser had voiced the feelings of Cliffe people when in its edition of 5th February 1881 it revealed that out of the total Foundation income of £889. 10s, after £185 spent to support the almshouses, there remained a balance of £704 10s for educational purposes. The Government grant of £139 10s 9d to be added to this, not counting the children's pence, made a total of £884 0s 9d. "The inhabitants ask what are the Governors doing with this large income ? The schoolmaster and mistress's salaries with assistance and firing amount to £234 9s.10d. The children all have to pay, as school fees, 2d. or 3d. each, or about as much as other public elementary schools where there is no charity. It is the general opinion that, with a charity like this, every child in the parish ought to be educated free. Previous to the new scheme being issued, and for a century and a half, 50 boys and girls were educated free and clothed, and premiums were given to apprentice them, but now all must pay. The inhabitants are about petitioning the Governors to reduce fees to one penny per week each, and it is said that they will not let it rest until they have gained their object. Tenders have been given in for

the building of a new schoolroom, which is to be a high class school. But there is no infant school, and had tenders been asked for one it would have been more to the satisfaction of the inhabitants."

If we turn to the Mercury of 2nd December 1881 we discover, in broader canvas, a view of what was happening: KING'S CLIFFE.- The second annual meeting of the Governors of the King's Cliffe School Foundation was held on the 28th ult. Present : Lord Burghley, M.P.(in the chair), the Revds. St. John Reade and C. Hopkins, and Messrs. Monckton, Wilson, Sherard, Law, Howes, Miles, and Green. The bills for building the new school were ordered to be paid, with the architect's fees, amounting to £511 19s 4d. A deputation of the parishioners, headed by the Revd. E. Du Pre, waited upon the Governors asking them to take up the matter of an infants' school for the parish. They were assured by the Governors that the Governors were not unmindful of the requirements of the parish, and Lord Burghley added that the Governors would have taken the infants' school in hand at the first had not the Commissioners in their reply stated that the Governors must carry out the Scheme, and that an infant school formed no part thereof. As the building of the upper department was now completed, they would instruct the clerk to again correspond with the Commissioners on the subject..... The Revd. St. John Reade presented the result of the examination of scholars for admission to the upper department : 14 boys and one girl were admitted. An exhibition of the Revd. Wm. Law was awarded to the son of Mr. J. T. Bailey, value £20 per annum, tenable at Oundle; and £10 was awarded to the son of Mr. R. Dixon on leaving the school. Lord Burghley was unanimously re-elected chairman for the ensuing year. "

It looks as though by 1883 the good ship "King's Cliffe" was sailing into calmer seas : there weren't the violent squalls of former years, even though the politics of Liberals versus Conservatives, and the antipathies of Chapel versus Church maintained a steady warm temperature in the village. The railway had arrived in 1879; that opened up life in hitherto unseen ways for the people. Then again, in the eighties and nineties life became much harder for everyone, for labouring folk especially, by reason of the steady decline of the wood-turning industry and the consequences of the great agricultural depression, which was to last from 1873 to the early 1900's. In October 1887, for example, there were 50 agricultural labourers permanently unemployed in King's Cliffe - and so things remained for a number of years. The village people were less and less inclined to rally in protest about this, that and the other.

In 1883 there still remained the one nagging issue of a school for infants. We have seen above how in December 1883 Rector Du Pre himself led a petition to the School Governors about this. The Conservatives having gained control of the School Board in the December of 1880, were not now as keen to have the Board abolished as they once had been. The Board did now have the right of appointing two of its number to the Governing Body of the Schools, so it seemed best to keep the Board, despite the expense of the triennial elections. Always there was that site of the old National School in Hog Lane, and there was Louisa Perry's bequest to that now-decayed school. Mr. Elijah Dixon, shop-keeper in West Street, was ever quick to remind parishioners about this : he was an active Liberal. As a Vestryman he raised the matter time and time again in Church Vestry meetings and elsewhere. The issue dragged on. Just when the governors decided on a re-alignment of classrooms in order to accommodate infants I have not discovered. But the Stamford Guardian of 4th October 1889, alone of all the local newspapers, reports thus on the opening of an Infants' school:- " A NEW INFANTS SCHOOL -- A school for children under five years of age was opened the other Monday, when a goodly number of youngsters found their way thither. The fee, however, staggered many of the parents who had bargained to pay a penny and were asked for three. Consequently as cash is not plentiful in this locality, some of the mammas did not venture to send their darlings a second week." An official return on the Schools which Mr. Brookes made in February 1899 informs us, first that the Schools were now one "Mixed" School; second that Miss Elizabeth Ludlow had taken on the infants School in October 1890. At that date she had no less than 63 infant pupils !

There will be older persons in the King's Cliffe of 1997 who will find it possible, out of their memories of the old Hog Lane, to identify the site of the old National School, bought by Lucas Wade for £31 in 1888, from this report in the Stamford Guardian of 21st June 1889:

" IMPROVEMENT - The site of the old National School, in its dilapidated state, was put up for auction some time ago, and bought by Mr. Lucas Wade, who had the old school pulled down, and a new house built in its place, with a good brick wall built round the old playground. The alteration has much improved Telegraph-street. " (One assumes that this house was brick-built, as was the containing wall around it is.)

In the year 1880 School attendance was made compulsory for all children between the ages of five and ten. From ten onwards those who achieved a certain standard of proficiency and attendance could leave school for employment; this ruling used to be spoken of as "the labour exam" and many were the Cliffe boys and girls who joyfully made use of it ! At the same time the vexed question of school fees came under scrutiny. The 1880 Mundella Act did not abolish school fees altogether, as could have been expected with the imposition of compulsory attendance, and we find the Foundation Schools of the village still levying fees in 1890, as revealed in this report in the Advertiser of 8th March 1890, with its most interesting detail about school tokens:

" SCHOOL FOUNDATION.- Circulars were distributed to each of the scholars attending the above school on Friday last, which announced that from the first of March and until further notice, at the end of each week every

scholar who has attended punctually at every meeting of the school during the week will receive a token, which will be reckoned as a penny towards the school fee, if brought with the fee the following Monday morning. This plan has been adopted owing to the decrease of the annual government grant, which is attributed to the irregular attendance of the children, so that not only does the education of the children suffer, but higher fees have to be charged to make up for the loss of the grant. The Governors, therefore, will not be able to continue this reduction of the fees unless the government grant is sufficiently increased by the punctual and regular attendance of the children. The Governors, being very desirous to encourage punctual and regular attendance, which is most important to the efficiency of the schools and the welfare of the children, ask that the parents will do all in their power to assist them in this object."

This study could be carried much further, well into the 20th Century. But perhaps we should draw it to a close with a brief look into a reordering of the shape of the Schools in 1929, the County Education Authority having insisted on a complete renovation and enlargement of the buildings. This was the report given in the "Stamford & Rutland News" of 24th September 1929:

"THE SCHOOLS - The alterations and additions to the Endowed Schools are now completed, and, after an extended holiday of seven weeks, re-opened on Monday. The school will now have accommodation for 136 mixed and 72 infants, and will consist of separate forms for boys, girls, and infants, with a large central hall and three large classrooms and infant department. It is now one of the most up-to-date village schools in the county."

And a brief look at one of the regulations which William Law and Elizabeth Hutcheson prescribed for their schools: "(17) No holydays are to be allow'd in either school, but those of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide. In harvest time they are allow'd to glean in the fields for their parents, after having said each of them one lesson early in the morning. "

MASTERS OF THE KING'S CLIFFE ENDOWED SCHOOLS

William J. Brookes, 13th January 1873 to 31st December 1900

Mr Brookes was Master for 27 years. He served on the first Parish Council (1894) and, after retirement, as a School Foundation Governor. He was for many years the Church organist. He retired to the house in West Street, at the corner of Gaudern's Lane, known as "Englands", otherwise as "The Doctor's House". He died, aged 83, on the 30th November 1919.

George Hubert Priestley, 14th January 1901 to 27th April 1903

Died in office.

Ernest Edward Sibley, 6th July 1903 to 31st December 1914

Mr Sibley was a most energetic Head Master; also the Church organist; also a lively village correspondent for the Peterborough Advertiser and the Stamford & Rutland News, contributing much of old village lore. He moved from Cliffe to an appointment in Twickenham, Middlesex. Eventually he became Headmaster of Askwith Memorial School, Taunton. He received Holy Orders in the Diocese of Manchester 23rd September 1928, to serve a Curacy at St. James', Heywood, Manchester.

George Richard Love, 11th January 1915 to 3rd April 1952.

Another most energetic Head Master who, in 37½ years, inspired each generation of village children with a love of Learning and of Nature. He was solicitous of the many poor children; he organised school and village pageants; he encouraged the boys in horticulture in the school gardens he created. In 1920 the boys won the County Challenge Shield for School Gardening and for a second time in 1921. His was the longest Head Mastership of the Schools. Retired to live in Collyweston.

Mr. Arthur William Ford, April 1952 to July 1976

Mr. Ford was first an assistant at Finedon School, 1938 to 1942; then served in the R.A.F as a bomber-navigator 1942 to 1946. He returned to Finedon School 1946 to 1950; then came to King's Cliffe in 1950 as assistant to Mr. Love. He succeeded Mr. Love as Headmaster 4th April 1952, and retired July 1976. He died at Duddington 17th April 1979, aged 68. A most capable Head Master, he won the respect and affection of all his pupils.