

# Picture Special

Words by **Laura Longworth**

Pictures by **Neil Cross**

## Demolition job on former school site

Demolition work has begun on a historic former Leyland school to make way for a new Aldi store.

Parts of the old Balshaw's charity school, based at the junction of School Lane and Golden Hill Lane, have been torn down after the discount retailer failed to locate a historic time capsule on site.

The company has been working with close relatives of the previous headmaster to try and locate the capsule, and has carefully removed some of the school's cornerstones, which will be used in the new store.

An Aldi spokesman said: "We will begin construction of our new Leyland store this August and plan to open it in spring 2021."

"After completion, our existing store in Leyland [on Westgate in the town centre] will close, and all colleagues will be given the opportunity to transfer to our new site, which will see a much bigger shopping space and car park, in turn creating a further five to 10 jobs in the area."

"To ensure the history of the site is maintained, we plan to use some of the original stonework that was removed prior to demolition - this includes the boys' and girls' stones

that were above the old school doors." The former charity school was built by Richard Balshaw in 1784 to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and the principles of the Church of England to 100 poor children. Some 50 girls were taught to knit, sew and mark.

One of the headmasters, Mr Jackson, often known as "Pa Jackson", lived in the house attached to the building with his wife, the headmistress. This went against the original rules, as wives, daughters and relations of the headmaster were banned from being the schoolmistress.

By 1889, there were 110 boys and 70 girls in attendance, and a new hall and classrooms were added in 1904. Balshaw's became a grammar school at the end of the 19th Century. This status was transferred from Leyland Grammar School after its closure.

Balshaw's moved to new premises in Church Road in 1932 and the Roman Catholic Church left its Towngate home and bought the old building to create St Mary's All Age School. St Mary's senior pupils moved to Royle Avenue in 1957 while the infants stayed at Golden Hill before relocating to Haig Avenue in 1959.

