

A Look at Leyland Free Grammar School



THE LANCASHIRE LIBRARY

SOUTH RIBBLE DISTRICT

LEYLAND FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The oldest part of the Grammar School still existing dates from the seventeenth century.

The building is L-shaped with a small walled yard in the angle. The long line of the L is the older part, and is of two storeys. The ground floor consists of one large room, the school-room; the first floor consists of three rooms with a connecting corridor. The shorter leg is a later addition, constructed in 1790 and known as the Schoolmaster's House, of two storeys and a cellar.

Although the building dates from the seventeenth century there has been a Grammar School in Leyland since the early sixteenth century: for three hundred years it has been the main educational establishment in Leyland, and was one of 300 schools in England at the time of the Reformation.

It was in 1524, the year that Hampton Court Palace was given to King Henry VIII by Cardinal Wolsey, that Henry Farington founded a Chantry at the altar of St. Nicholas in the Parish Church. There is no specific mention of a school in this document, but in 1546 a report was made by the Commission of Enquiry into chantries, which said 'the Incumbents...are bounde to kepe one fre Gramar Skoile in the Church.'

In 1548 the school was granted a certificate of continuance by Edward VI's commissioners. They recommended that the schoolmaster's salary should be paid from the revenues of the Duchy of Lancaster. The school closed in 1874. During its existence there had been twenty-two known schoolmasters.

In 1524 Henry Farington appointed two chantry priests, Sir Thurstan Helde and Sir William Walton. One of the priests probably taught grammar and the other music. A chantry priest needed a basic knowledge of 'plain song and grammar.' In 1535, 1546 and 1548 Thurstan Taylor was schoolmaster. He received £3 17s 10d for his salary.

In 1673 a letter was written by Hugh Bonkin, the schoolmaster, to Christopher Wase of Oxford, in answer to a questionnaire. Leyland was one of 704 out of a possible 2,000 who replied to the questionnaire.

In his letter Mr. Bonkin not only listed the masters who had been at the school, but also gave the names of the Governors and details of endowments. He stated that at the school there were:

'no bookes save a Dixionary which is Gaudman's workes; the which the Churchwardens of the parish of Leyland for the use of the schoole... not any libraries about us worth the writinge of.'

From 1563 - 1568 William Walker was the parish clerk. Part of his duties were 'to teach the young children to read if he be able to do so.' He was a graduate and would be the master's assistant, and would teach reading, music and writing. In his Will he requested:

'that everie one that is a scoler at Leyland Scole at the tyme of my death shall have on halpenny in silver.'

Among the masters there have been several graduates: Mr. Wright, 'Batchelor of Divinitie' of Cambridge; Mr. Sherebourne, graduate of St. Mary Hall, Oxford; Richard Wade, graduate of Sidney College, Cambridge; and Farrand Hodgson, graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge.

One of the most notable pupils of the school was Richard Cuerden, who was a pupil when Mr. Sherebourne was the master. Richard was born at Cuerden in 1623. He was admitted a commoner to St. Mary Hall, Oxford; from here he went to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he graduated as B.A. in 1642. He returned to Oxford to take his M.A. degree in 1646 and was made

Vice-Principal and Tutor at St. Mary Hall. He studied medicine, was created M.D. in 1663 and settled as a doctor in Preston. His name is on the Guild Rolls of 1662 and 1682.

He wrote a history of Lancashire in 5 volumes in 1688, and the manuscripts of this are preserved in the Herald's College, Chetham's Library and the British Museum. He died between 1690 and 1695.

In 1693, under the Test Act, Hugh Bonkin was required to take the oath of supremacy prescribed in 1559, and had to deliver into court a certificate to this effect signed by the minister, churchwardens and two witnesses. This was required of all who held civil or military office under the Crown, and since the school received revenue from the Duchy of Lancaster the master was considered to be a government officer. The statute was repealed in 1828.

The best-known schoolmaster was Thomas Moon, who was master for 60 years. His epitaph reads:

'In memory of Thomas Moon, a gentleman, who died January 4th, 1776. A man of sound learning, wit and probity. An instructive companion and a sincere friend, to whom a good conscience was more dear than accumulated wealth. He was for 62 years an indefatigable schoolmaster, and was 60 years master of the Free Grammar School.

He seldom grieved at worldly loss
Gold he esteemed as gilded dross
No change of fortune did destroy
His peace of mind and heartfelt joy.'

He was succeeded by Edward Marsden, who was master till 1832. Together Thomas Moon and Edward Marsden gave a total of 115 years service to the school. In 1811 there was an enquiry about schools in the parish and it was reported that there were 24 scholars in the school.

In 1826 in the Charity Commissioners' report it was stated that Edward Marsden instructed 'in reading all the children of the parish whose parents choose to send them, being usually about 30 in number.' He also taught writing and arithmetic. Reading was free, but he received fees for teaching the two other subjects. He was also qualified to provide a classical education to anyone who required it, for which he received additional fees.

The last master at the school was John Westley, who was master from 1861 - 1874. In addition to his duties at the school he was Vestry Clerk at the Parish Church, from 1866. He received a salary of £1 a year for this duty. In 1872 he was appointed agent in Leyland for the Royal Insurance Co. In the same year he became clerk to the local board and in 1874, surveyor. In 1885 he was appointed secretary to Osbaldeston's Charity, and in 1895 he was made Clerk to Leyland Urban District Council.

In 1864 he reported that the school was classified by reading; all the children received religious instruction in the Bible and Church Catechism, the days being opened and closed with prayers from the liturgy.

Discipline was maintained by corporal punishment, exercises and detention; there were 27 hours school time per week, and six weeks holiday in the year.

In 1865 Mr. James Bryce, assistant commissioner for the Schools Inquiry Commission, visited the school. He stated that:

'Leyland, although it gives its name to one of the hundreds of Lancashire, is only an inconsiderable village about 6 miles south of Preston.

It contains a so-called grammar school, which has for a long time been virtually an elementary school, although at the time of my visit there was one boy who could decline 'dominus' with only three or four mistakes.'

He found 35 boys and 12 girls present:

'Reading and spelling were not very good; five boys were fair in arithmetic; the head girls could not do, most of them could not even take down, an easy sum in the addition of money. Geography and English grammar were poor, the children showing very little intelligence.'

He noted that there were some Roman Catholics in the school:

'They do not go to church on Friday mornings with the rest, and are employed in writing while the rest are reading the Bible.'

He reported on how the limited facilities of the single schoolroom were used:

'Girls are taught in the forenoon along with the boys; in the afternoon they go to one end of the room behind the curtain and learn sewing from the master's wife.'

He also found:

'the scholars seem to be socially of a higher class than is commonly found in such a school; of 35 present, ten were stated to be children of people with independent means, professional men and land stewards, nine tradesmen, eight of farmers, eight of working men.'

In 1867 there were two boys learning Latin; all the 48 scholars were taught arithmetic; twenty were taught History, Geography, English Grammar and composition.

In 1874 the school closed, mainly due to the deterioration of the building and the lack of a reasonable number of fee-paying scholars and so the salary of the master declined. John Westley resigned his post.

The building was offered for sale and bought by John Stanning, who offered it to the Vicar and Churchwardens. The money was used to buy £121 6s 8d New Consols stock. From then the building was used to provide accommodation for evening classes, lectures, and parish functions until its physical state grew too bad for this.

It was renovated under a Government Job Creation Scheme in 1977 and now houses the South Ribble Borough Museum Exhibition Centre.

Schoolmasters of Leyland Grammar School

The earliest masters of the School would be priests from St. Andrew's Church, as the school was founded under the chantry foundation. A list of the masters from 1580 was given in a letter by Hugh Bonkin to Christopher Wase of Oxford in 1673: in 1524 two priests were appointed under the original chantry foundation by Henry Farington: Sir Thurstan Helde and Sir William Walton; in 1546 and 1548 Thurstan Taylor was both priest and schoolmaster.

From 1580 the masters have been Mr. Hodson (helped by William Walton, 'Bachelor of Musicke', Parish Clerk from 1563-1588); Mr. Corbitt; Mr. Wright (Bachelor of Divinitie, from Cambridge); Mr. Bennett; Mr. Siddell; Mr. Banckes; Mr. Walker; Mr. Sherebourne (graduate of St. Mary Hall, Oxford); Mr. Wright again; Mr. Knott; Mr. Shaw; Mr. Whittle; Mr. Broadhouse (graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge).

1671 - 1681	Hugh Bonkin	
1681 - 1705	Richard Wade	(graduate Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge)
1705 - 1716	Ferrando Hodgson	(graduate St. John's College, Cambridge)
1716 - 1776	Thomas Moon	
1777 - 1832	Edward Marsden	
1832 - 1861	John James	
1861 - 1874	John Westley	

The illustration of the Free Grammar School on the front cover is the work of Mr. Clifford Hawarden, of Preston.
