

FOXBORO COTTAGE

Built at the end of the Napoleonic Wars out of materials from the former barracks on the Woodbridge Road in Ipswich, Foxboro Cottage has a varied and interesting past.¹ In its 200 year history it has seen many changes the best known of which is undoubtedly its use as a school which ran from around 1866 until its closure some ten years later. There had been other schools before it and, leaving aside the church Sunday school which began in 1816 and continued - perhaps with occasional breaks - until recent times, weekday education in Playford is first recorded in 1833.²



The Dame School by Ipswich artist Frederick George Cotman, 1887
courtesy Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service: Ipswich Borough Council Collection

Little is known about this early school except that it was run by ‘an old woman’ as in Cotman’s painting above and attended by 12-14 pupils.³ A small Dame School is mentioned in 1842 while in 1851 and 1861 a young school mistress is found living with her husband at The Brook where the school would have been held in their front room.⁴ The move to Foxboro Cottage came about only a few years later following a change of teacher, the replacement being a single woman residing at home with elderly parents and a disabled sister. Unable to provide accommodation for the children, a new premises was found in the left hand half of Foxboro and, for the first time, the village had a

¹ SROI, EG94/B1/2, letter from Sir George Biddell Airy to his cousin Manfred Biddell of Lux Farm, 1882, copied into the Playford Parish Council Minute Book, 1948-1971. *Ipswich Journal*, 13 March 1813, 8 July 1816, advertisements for the sale of demolition materials began in March 1813 before the war had ended. 1871 Census.

² SROI, 1192, Education Files, Abstract of Education Returns, 1833.

³ Frederick George Cotman (1850-1920) was born in Ipswich. He was a painter of portraits, landscapes and historical scenes. He was a nephew of the Norwich artist John Sell Cotman (1782-1842).

⁴ Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin, 1978), 15-18, 23-25. Dame schools were the most basic form of schooling, the quality of education varying enormously with the teacher. Some taught how to read and write and perhaps a little arithmetic while others were little more than child minders.

discrete building given over to education, the property even being left vacant during the holidays. Because of its importance in Playford's Victorian history, this account will explore not only the house's agricultural origins and more recent past as a private residence but will also consider the development of weekday education in the village that led up to its becoming a National School before external events brought about its closure.

The house's origins

As with Glenham at the bottom of Hill Farm Road and the former Barrack Cottages in the south-east corner of Archway Field, Foxboro Cottage was built in or around 1815 from materials salvaged from St Helen's Barracks on the Woodbridge Road. But, while it is known that Arthur Biddell, the tenant farmer who lived at Hill House, put up the two cottages at the bottom of the hill for occupation by his own labourers and that the Barrack Cottages were built by a speculator following the sale of a building plot, there is uncertainty as to whether it was Biddell or his landlord the Earl of Bristol who was responsible for the building of Foxboro. Put up as a single dwelling, there is even greater uncertainty for whom it was built. George Biddell Airy (born 1801), the future Astronomer Royal and a nephew of Biddell, was a frequent visitor to Playford in his youth. In a letter to his cousin Manfred Biddell of Lux Farm written in 1882, in which he reminisced about the village as he first remembered it 'in the winter of 1810-1811.... [but certainly] sometime before the Moscow expedition', he explains that 'houses were wanted for labourers and that, when the materials of the Ipswich Barracks were sold...., Mr Biddell bought largely'.⁵

He goes on to explain that his uncle not only 'bought the couplet of houses [at the bottom of Hill Farm Road] but that 'he built also the house at the top of the hill, both parcels from the barracks materials'. But while it could be explained that at around the age of fifteen and after a gap of some seventy years, Airy failed to distinguish between landlord and tenant, it is nevertheless of interest to note that in the first surviving document that confirms its ownership, the tithe map of 1844, it is Biddell who owns the properties at the bottom of the hill and Lord Bristol the one at the top.⁶ While the Tithe Apportionment map of that year states quite clearly that Arthur Biddell is the owner of the Glenham property, the absence from the map of the present-day Foxboro indicates that it belonged to Lord Bristol. The circumstance whereby a property did not appear on a tithe map was not uncommon: when a landowner was also the tithe owner, a situation was created in which he was effectively liable to pay tithes to himself. Such a state of affairs was resolved by 'merging the tithes', that is, extinguishing the liability to pay them by virtue of also being entitled to receive them. In this instance it would appear that landlord and tenant shared out the costs and ownership of the two properties between them.

Living on the spot Biddell, rather than the Bristol Estate, would have organised the acquisition of materials and the building of the property and in return he was given the building plot on the corner of Hill Farm Road as Airy reports. Such an arrangement adds strength to the understanding of how closely the two worked together and how much Lord Bristol relied on and trusted the young Biddell, still barely thirty years old and only seven years into his tenancy. Over the years he provided considerable help in running the Playford outpost of the Estate whose headquarters were at far away Ickworth near Bury St Edmunds. As well as dealing with this spate of building work, Biddell was also playing a key role in settling Thomas Clarkson in at Playford Hall Farm, a sudden

⁵ SROI, EG94/B1/2, *op cit*.

⁶ SROI, FDA196/41/19, Playford Tithe Apportionment, 1844.

change of tenancy that was necessitated by the untimely departure of John Cutting in the spring of 1815. And throughout later decades it was Biddell rather than Ickworth who advertised, interviewed and installed a succession of tenants for the under-maintained water mill where making a satisfactory living proved beyond the capabilities of many of the successful applicants.

As late as the 1960s the Foxboro property had a central front door which was replaced by the present bow window. The door had opened only into the left hand cottage, the entrance to the right hand property being on the south side. Further confirmation that the house was originally built as a single dwelling and from barracks materials comes from Manfred Biddell who, writing in 1892, comments that ‘on the front door.... may be traced the words “Officers Rooms” although [it] has been many times painted over’.⁷

Some early tenants

The record of an early tenant family reinforces any suggestion that the house was constructed on a much grander scale than other properties in the village built at the same time and from the same materials. Its first occupant was Lt William Walford a veteran of Trafalgar who in 1813 had married his first cousin Mary Cutting of Playford Hall. Their daughter, also Mary, was baptised in Playford church in 1816.⁸ Walford’s father, Joseph, was a farmer and surgeon (doctor) in Rushmere but the wider Walford family had made money as iron founders and were large landowners in Hasketon and villages to the north and west of Woodbridge.⁹ Later in the century they became patrons and rectors at Dallinghoo where nine plaques on the walls of the church testify to their eminence.¹⁰ There is also a Walford tomb in the central aisle of the nave of St Mary’s church in Woodbridge. With such a high social background and at such a period in history it is unlikely that the young family would have moved into the cramped quarters of an ordinary labourer’s cottage.

Airy further reports that there was also at one time another eminent tenant living in the house, a daughter of Mr James Ransome (1782-1849) but he fails to say which daughter or when she was there. Neither of Ransome’s two surviving daughters are likely to have been old enough to have been tenants in their own right before the house was divided and they must therefore have lived less royally than the Walfords before them. That they had access to the cottage is explained by the fact that their father was the son of Robert Ransome (1753-1830) founder of the Ipswich engineering firm Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies whose sister Jane had married Arthur Biddell. The elder of Ransome’s two daughters, Hannah (b. 1813) married in 1839 George Docwra, a farmer, land owner and miller from Kelvedon while Jane (b. 1820) lived with her father in Rushmere until his death in 1849.

⁷ SROI, HD436/3, 17, Manfred Biddell, *Extracts &c. from the books and papers of the Parish of Playford*.

⁸ SROI, EG94/B1/2, *op. cit.* The National Archives, ADM/35/2129, *Bellerophon* Pay Books, 1 October 1805 to 31 January 1806. ADM/36/16498 entry 674, *Bellerophon* Muster Rolls, April to November 1805. ADM 196, 509, William Walford’s postings. National Maritime Museum Greenwich, LBK 38, *Bellerophon* Log Book. Walford had joined the Royal Navy when he was 12 years old and was still only 15 when he was a midshipman on the *Bellerophon* at Trafalgar. Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, P306/1/19, Rochester marriages. *Ipswich Journal*, 3 December 1859, William Walford’s obituary. Walford had a possible greater claim to fame than Trafalgar. Following defeat at Waterloo, Napoleon fled to Rochefort on the west coast of France hoping to find asylum in America. He was trapped by the British blockade outside the port and surrendered to the *Bellerophon*, the ship on which Walford was now senior lieutenant. Walford accompanied Napoleon to Plymouth where he awaited sentence and eventual exile to St. Helena. SROI, FC 22/D1/4, Playford Baptism Register, 1813-1971.

⁹ SROI, HA/51, Walford family papers.

¹⁰ Church guide, Dallinghoo.

Jane would seem the more likely of the two to have occupied the cottage. She married in 1851, two years after her father's death, and it could be that in those two years when she was perhaps trying to sell her father's house that she moved to be close to her aunt at Hill House. She married Frederick Corder (1818-1908) from the family of drapers who ran the large upmarket department store in Ipswich that stretched between Tavern Street and the Buttermarket. The shop, established in 1787, ran until around 1980 when a considerable part of the site was taken over by Waterstone's bookshop. The couple lived in St Margaret's Green until Jane's untimely death in 1866 at the age of 46. Their son was John Shewell Corder (1856-1922) the influential Suffolk architect best known perhaps for his 'meticulous and tactful restorations' of Christchurch Mansion and the Guildhall in Lavenham as well as for the detailed pen and ink drawings that he made of the older buildings in Ipswich and the surrounding area. Corder Road in Ipswich, between Westerfield and Tuddenham Roads, is named after the family but there is disagreement as to whether it was after the father or the son.¹¹

For whom was it built?

Airy states that 'houses were wanted for labourers' but as Hill Cottage was put up as a single and superior dwelling in a prime site overlooking the valley, for whom was it built? Certainly not for Lt. Walford who by chance had been put on half-pay as the house neared completion providing him with temporary accommodation while he was searching for a permanent home in which to retire.¹² The answer most likely is that it was for a bailiff, a key man on the farm who dealt with day to day matters and who ensured that all 17 men and boys employed there were kept fully occupied at all times. There was already a precedent for such accommodation within the village: a large three bedroomed house in Brook Lane with '2 sitting rooms and a back kitchen' was the home of the bailiff at Playford Hall when Thomas Clarkson was enquiring about housing for his staff before moving to the village in 1816.^{13 14}



Looking north-west from the Cricket Meadow, c. 1880. Bailiff's cottage in Brook Lane, originally belonging to Playford Hall Farm, right. Cottages at The Brook, left. Artist unknown.

Viewed from Hill Farm Road, Foxboro looks perfectly symmetrical, well balanced with its central front door now replaced with a bow window and its footprint on OS maps from 1881 always shown

¹¹ <http://ipswich-lettering.org/streetnames.html>

¹² *Ipswich Journal*, 3 December 1859, obituary, William Walford.

¹³ SROB HA507/3/747, Bristol Estate Survey undated but c. 1870-71.

¹⁴ SROI, HD474,172, letter from Thomas Clarkson to Arthur Biddell, 1 September 1815. Clarkson found Playford Hall in very bad repair; similarly 'Payne's cottage, one end of it in ruins'. Payne was Cutting's bailiff who lived 'on The Green' and who faced eviction, Clarkson wanting to install his own man who he intended to bring with him from Bury. The Green was the triangular piece of grass at the top of Brook Lane where the telephone kiosk now stands; Payne's cottage was not actually on the Green but a little further down the lane approximately where Lower Lodge now is.

as a perfect square. This is deceptive for behind the right hand facade lay a two storey projection, a full sized bedroom area over the back kitchen, whereas behind the left-hand frontage a sloping roof over the scullery severely curtailed the bedroom space underneath. The house was not to remain a single dwelling for long, the earliest indication of its being divided comes from the Census of 1841. The Census of that year records only limited individual information, and before that none at all, but John Chapman, agricultural labourer, and John Field, gardener, appear as neighbours somewhere in the village but it is not known where. Ten years later in 1851 they are found living side by side in Hill Cottages. Such evidence strongly suggests that the house was divided sometime in the 1830s or even in the decade before that which would tie in with what is known about other cottages in the village at a time of rapidly rising population.¹⁵ It is not known whether the house was built in this unbalanced way or whether the superior bedroom area of the right-hand part was added at the time of division. Certainly later in the century farm bailiffs occupied the larger side: John Chapman was recorded as bailiff there in 1851 having been promoted from agricultural labourer and in the 1871 Census Edward Kidby (1831-1909), great-grandfather of José Booker, is seen to have moved from Grundisburgh with his wife and eight children and lived there as bailiff for Herman Biddell. No matter how the house was constructed, the two halves were most unequal: the two cottages had similar downstairs facilities but the upstairs room of the left hand side was so severely restricted by the sloping roof that there were in effect only one and a half bedrooms there. That the two cottages were not included in the Bristol property report of 1870-71 is regrettable as this would have confirmed the accommodation available in the two parts; it can only have been omitted because it was regarded as a superior building only some 50 years old and not in need of any repair.¹⁶ By contrast its opposite number in Brook Lane, the former bailiff's house for Playford Hall Farm, was in fact no longer a bailiff's house at that time as the Clarksons had left and the land was now being farmed by the two Biddell brothers. The cottage had been downgraded to accommodate a shepherd with a family of six children and its condition had deteriorated sharply. The outbuildings were described as 'very bad and the whole place very dirty and untidy'. It was demolished in the 1880s. A tradition seems to have lived on that the Hill Farm bailiff should be accommodated close to the farm and be given grander accommodation than those he was supervising; even after the division of the house, those criteria still applied although less generously than was originally intended. By the time of Kidby's arrival as bailiff however he had no agricultural labourer as neighbour, living in inferior circumstances to his own, but the school.

Education in the village in the 1800s

As a measure of its insignificance, school records maintained by the parish are all but non-existent and reliance has to be placed on a succession of county surveys carried out across Suffolk throughout the 19th century. The Sunday school movement had been started in 1780 to provide an

¹⁵ Playford's population rose from 189 in 1811 to 264 in 1821 when many men returned from the barrack town of Ipswich at the end of the wars with Napoleon. It had risen again to 299 by 1831, a 40% increase since the beginning of the new century. Thereafter there was a decline and numbers stabilised at around 250. In 1831 a cottage at The Brook is described as lately divided in three (private possession) while in 1838 the deeds of the former yeoman's house where Cobblers now stands state 'now divided in two dwellings' (SROB, HA507/2/479). Similarly, the remaining two cottages still standing at The Brook (2015) were in 1831 described as 'now divided in three tenements' (SROB, HA507/2/464) but a sale notice of 1824 indicates that they had already been divided in three by then. (*Ipswich Journal*, 30 Oct 1824). Rather than being 'divided', another dwelling had in fact been attached to the western side of the southern cottage and was still there in 1902.

¹⁶ SROI, HD436/3, *op. cit.*, 17. Of the other cottages built from the barracks materials, the four (originally two before they were divided) in the corner of Archway Field were described in 1882, little more than 60 years after they had been built, as 'in a worn out condition beyond repair'. They were in fact demolished in 1892. Unlike the others which are still standing, they had been built by a speculator with no direct interest in the village and they certainly suffered serious neglect by an absentee landlord in the last 30 or so years of their life. The two on the corner of Hill Farm Road were reported by Manfred Biddell to be in 'good repair being on good brick foundations'. It can be assumed that the house at the top of Hill Farm Road was also built to a similarly higher standard.

education for working children on their one day off a week from work either on the farm or in the factory and, besides a knowledge of the Bible, aimed to teach youngsters how to read and write. Sunday Schools were generally set up before day schools and were well attended, Sunday observance being strictly maintained until well into the following century. Weekday schools by comparison were not well supported as boys in particular from as young as six were required to work on the farms: the farmers wanting cheap labour and the parents wanting the meagre wages that they earned. There were often therefore more girls than boys in class with girls staying on much later perhaps to the age of twelve. Sunday schools can take their place as the starting point in child education, the standards of which did not materially improve until later in the century with the Acts of 1870 and 1880. The earliest reference to a school in Playford comes in the 18th century mention of which is made in this series under Playford Hall but, being a school for privileged outsiders, it will not be considered here further.

The Select Committee on the Education of the Poor, 1818.¹⁷ The report was published the following year and, as a majority of schools nationwide were then Sunday schools run by the local church, information was provided by the clergy. Playford had no resident incumbent at the time being joined with St Matthews in Ipswich where William Layton was Rector. He came to Playford only every other Sunday and, as the Sunday school had been set up by Catherine Clarkson two years earlier in 1816 the year that she arrived at Playford Hall, he sought help from The Hall in completing the Return.¹⁸ In answer to how the school was funded, Thomas Clarkson gave his reply: ‘No School upon any charitable Foundation exists in the Parish of Playford nor has there been any one of that Description in the Memory of the oldest Inhabitant; nor has anyone heard that there were ever Funds destined to such a Purpose’. He went on to say that ‘the poorer classes are desirous of having their children educated. Their wishes are at present fully gratified by Means of a School regularly kept every Sunday in the Church by the voluntary Subscriptions of two or three individuals and open to all who chuse to go to it. It is well attended. From 30-40 (Boys and Girls) are all that this small Parish can furnish’.¹⁹ Davy visited six years later in 1824 but was not entirely impressed: ‘a school for 40 boys and girls is kept in the chancel on Sundays for which a small stove is placed there. The whole is very dirty and ill kept’.²⁰

Abstract of Education Returns, 1833.²¹ Information for these was provided by the Overseers. The Return for Playford states that the ‘Sunday school is attended by 50 children of both sexes [and is] chiefly supported by Mrs Clarkson and is superintended by the clergyman, the Revd. C. Day.’ By now there was also ‘one daily school (kept by a female) in which are 12-14 young children whose instruction is paid for by their parents’.

Arthur Biddell as overseer had replied to the enquiry in fuller terms not only confirming Mrs Clarkson’s role in setting up the Sunday school but also adding that the children ‘entered at 4 or 5 years old and quitted at about 12 or 14’. He was also misquoted. It was not the Revd. Charles Day

¹⁷ SROI, 1190, Education Files, Select Committee on the Education of the Poor &c. (1818).

¹⁸ SROI, HA2/F2/2, Biddell Family Papers, Overseers’ Book 1827-1835. Response to Education Return by Arthur Biddell, 13 October 1833 and quoted by his son Manfred in SROI, HD436/3, *op. cit.*, 20. Playford Parish Overseers’ Books from 1780 to 1898 are catalogued among the Biddell Family Papers with the exception of the years 1836 to 1848 which are to be found with the church records FC22.

¹⁹ SROI, FC22/M1/1, Playford Parish Records, letter from Thomas Clarkson of Playford Hall dated 9 May 1818 to the Revd. William Layton of St. Matthew’s, Ipswich, concerning the charity school in the parish.

²⁰ SROI, J400/4/MS vol. 10-11 (Add.MS 19086-7), Carlford and Colneis Hundred. David Elisha Davy (1769-1851), the son of a Rumburgh farmer, was educated at Yoxford and Cambridge; he was ordained deacon in 1792. He was an antiquary and collector of Suffolk historical material.

²¹ SROI, 1192, Education Files, Abstract of Education Returns, 1833. Also catalogued under qS373 and 370/942.

who supervised the school but a ‘superintendent’ who had a salary of 50s or £3 and ‘who acts under his [Day’s] direction’. Biddell went on to say that the clergyman ‘takes an active part in the school and greatly contributes by such attention to improve the manners of the rising generation of this Parish to the age at which they leave school’.²² By the time Frederick Crisp had taken up residence at Playford Hall in 1878 however, the year after the day school had moved to Bealings, the Sunday school had ceased to exist.²³ Crisp re-established it in his old barn and, certainly by 1880 when the nation celebrated the Sunday Schools Centenary, it was going strong once more. Nearly 50 Sunday School ‘scholars’ and, it would appear, the ‘entire population of the village’ attended a celebration in the grounds of Hill House, one of several such national commemorations that Herman Biddell put on so well. There were probably other such blips in the life of the school for Crisp had arrived during an interregnum and the centenary celebrations provided the new incumbent, the Revd. John Freeman, the opportunity to meet his parishioners.²⁴ While the day school in the village closed in 1877 with its move to Bealings, it is of note that the Sunday school continued well into the 1960s.

That the day school at this time was small and insignificant is borne out by the fact that it all but went unrecorded. Biddell, as Overseer, reported that there *was* no infant school ‘unless the following be termed one: one daily school kept by an old woman for little boys and girls.’²⁵ The school would have been held in the front room of the old woman’s cottage but where it was and what her name was is not known. Biddell recorded no figures for attendance but the Education Returns for that year not only confirm that it was kept by a female but that ‘there were between twelve and fourteen young children whose instruction is paid for by their parents’.²⁶ It must have been Biddell who provided those figures but omitted to transcribe them into the Playford Overseers’ Book.

Third General Annual Report of the Diocesan Society of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk for Promoting Education in the Principles of the Established Church, 1842.²⁷

In the Diocesan report of 1842 the Sunday school is seen to continue at the same level of support with 50 children in attendance although now instructed by both a master and a mistress. A ‘small Dame’s School’ is also mentioned, no doubt a continuation of the one run by the ‘old woman’ but possibly now under a new teacher and at a new location. No pupil numbers are given. James Frost, in his description of Playford in the early years of Victoria (who acceded to the throne in 1837), states that there was ‘but a very small school’ but gives no indication of numbers.²⁸ The school was not in receipt of any grant from the Diocesan Society, the teacher’s income deriving solely from fees paid by parents. Unsurprisingly, no pupils are recorded as being put forward for examinations.

The same report adds that children from ‘the parishes of Great & Little Bealings, Playford, Kesgrave and Martlesham now attend for the most part at a school situated in the last mentioned parish.... the daily attendance of scholars averages about 134’. The Report also adds that the school is conducted ‘on Dr Bell’s system’, a method of teaching that became popular in the 19th century

²² SROI, HA2/F2/2, *op. cit.*

²³ *Ipswich Journal*, 5 May 1883.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1880.

²⁵ SROI, HA2/F2/2, *op. cit.*, 13 October 1833.

²⁶ SROI, 1192, Education Files. Also catalogued as qS373 and 370/942. County of Suffolk, Abstract of Education Returns, 1833

²⁷ SROI, 372.84, Suffolk Archdeaconry Diocesan Society, Annual Reports 1841-72. Third General Annual Report of the Diocesan Society of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk for Promoting Education in the Principles of the Established Church, 23, Deanery of Carlford.

²⁸ James Frost (1835-1906) reminiscing in 1887 about changes in the village during his lifetime. Private possession.

whereby abler children were used to help the teacher by passing on information that they themselves had learned from him before lessons with the class had begun. It was a cheap way of imparting knowledge and allowed class sizes to become much larger than they would otherwise have been.

The school mentioned was erected in 1840, and enlarged in 1853, by R N Shawe of Kesgrave Hall one of the largest landowners in the area. White's Directory for 1855, under the parish of Little Bealings, records that 'Kesgrave District School for 12 parishes is here.... for about 150 free scholars, girls and boys'.²⁹ Although labelled Kesgrave District School and described as 'in Martlesham', it stood near the easterly entrance to Beacon Lane in the parish of Little Bealings with buildings on either side of the Martlesham road, its site still identifiable in the name of School House. One of the first of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, the Revd. F C Cook, was impressed with the standard of education there in the 1840s describing the school as 'large [and] for three parishes'. Pupils were found 'skilful' in arithmetic 'up to fractions' and had a knowledge of Holy Scriptures which surpassed any that HMI found elsewhere. He also noted that 156 pupils were present out of 236 on the register but unfortunately the numbers are not broken down by parish and it remains unknown how many from Playford attended.³⁰

Church School Enquiry, 1846-47.³¹

Attendance at the Sunday school was down on previous reviews although there were still 19 boys and 11 girls present and the number of 'gratuitous teachers' had increased to one male and two females. There was also a paid monitor and a paid teacher who was presumably the clergyman. This would have been Willoughby Dickinson, first occupant of the new vicarage that had been built in 1845 when he was then the curate. From 1826 Playford had been united with Rushmere, where the Marquis of Bristol was also patron, and when the vicar of the combined parishes Thomas West died in 1848, the two livings were split and Dickinson became incumbent in his own right.³²

The Enquiry is concerned with church schools only and so, for the first time, an indication is given of the central Church's involvement in the daily Dame's school. Two columns in the review, however, concerning information on money paid to the teacher are regrettably left blank and so no further light is shed on the actual level of support that the Church made compared to the money raised by the 'children's pence', that is money paid by the children's parents to attend what were still classed as private schools. Numbers had dropped from 12-14 in 1833 to as low as five (three boys and two girls) and there was one paid teacher. The reduction in numbers is likely to have been due to the success of the Kesgrave District School which, as reported above, had opened in 1840 and was providing a good level of education. The 1842 Report had stated that 'children from Great and Little Bealings, Playford, Kesgrave and Martlesham now attend for the most part at a school in the last mentioned parish' and indeed a footnote in the 1846-47 report further confirms this stating that 'some of the children are received in a private school of R N Shawe (Kesgrave), distant two miles'.

²⁹ Gerald and Margaret Ponting, *The Story of Kesgrave*, (privately published, 1981), 126.

³⁰ Ponting, *Ibid.*, 126.

³¹ SROI, 1193, Education Files, Church School Enquiry 1846-47.

³² In 1843 while still curate Dickinson had married Mary Clarkson, the niece and daughter-in-law of Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846). She had been widowed six years earlier when her husband, Thomas Clarkson junior and the Clarksons' only child, was thrown from his gig in London when with 'a lady not of good character'. Dickinson subsequently took the living at Wolferton in Norfolk; both he and his wife are buried in Playford churchyard behind the Clarkson graves.

Dame schools were the lowest level of schooling and were often run by an elderly woman but invariably in the front room of someone's cottage. The quality of instruction that children received varied enormously: some teachers provided a good education and ensured a good standard in reading, writing and arithmetic while in many instances they were no more than child minders and story tellers. Girls were taught needlework, sewing and knitting. Often in need of the money, the mistresses took in as many children as could be crammed into their house, charging a penny a week for



Cottages at The Brook. Ellen Mann lived in the corner cottage (1) with her parents and taught at Hill Cottages c. 1866-77. Her predecessor, Mary Woby, is thought to have lived in the eastern half of the double cottage nearest the camera (2); the school was held in her front room.

each child. The ten-yearly censuses throw occasional light on these teachers. In Playford in 1851 Betsy Cadman, the young wife of an ambitious journeyman miller with two young children, was likely to have been one of the better sort but she was not destined to stay in the village for long. Mary Woby by contrast was married to an agricultural labourer and stayed put all her life. Recorded as a 'schoolmistress' in 1851 and 1861 and living at The Brook she could have been a teacher ten years before that as occupations were not recorded in earlier Census returns. It is quite possible therefore that she could have taken over from the 'old woman' of 1833 and almost certainly would have been the 'paid teacher at the Dame school' as recorded in the 1846-47 Enquiry. Mary's husband was also talented and played the violin 'as well as Sheldrake at The Hall'. He played the hymns in church from the singing gallery before it was taken down in 1859 and, while Sheldrake had been trained by Nursey at The Grove in Little Bealings, Woby was taught by Cullingford who was later to be the leader of the Woodbridge Orchestral Band. In those days many working people were surprisingly musical and it was not at all unusual for them to be able to read music and read it well but unable to read a single page in a book.³³

Much like the 18th century school at Playford Hall mentioned above, brief mention in an account of the history of education in the village should be made that the Revd. Christopher Hodgson, vicar of Playford from 1858-1871, boarded four 11 year old 'scholars' at the vicarage only one of whom at the time of the 1861 Census came from Suffolk.

Return of Schools, 1871.³⁴

In his reminiscences of early Victorian Playford, James Frost states that by about the year 1864 the school was at 'one of the Hill Cottages' and he goes on to say that the 'Revd. Hodgson and others'

³³ Amy Biddell notes, private possession. Amy Biddell (1880-1959) was the second daughter of Herman Biddell of Hill Farm and Archway House and a granddaughter of Arthur Biddell. Her notes were gathered from information provided not only by family but also from David Amoss (1843-1930) who worked for three generations of the Biddell family.

³⁴ SROI, 1195, Education Files, Return of Schools, 1871.

took an active part in its running.³⁵ The 1871 report is superficial giving no mention of teachers but it is clear from what Frost says that Ellen Mann played a subsidiary role. The school at this time was classed as a National School, that is one founded by the National Society for Promoting Religious Education: the Church had become more closely involved and was most probably instrumental in securing the use of Hill Cottage. National schools provided instruction for the poor in accordance with the teachings of the Church of England and followed Dr Bell's system thereby adding strength to the view that Ellen Mann was more a monitor than a teacher despite her description as 'school mistress' in the 1871 Census. The school is also classed as private, that is, fee paying so tying in with village hearsay that parents paid a penny a week for each child.

In the 1871 Census there were 40 children in the village between the ages of five and twelve yet only 14 of them attended school.³⁶ There could be a number of reasons for this disparity. The Return for Playford makes no mention of the R N Shawe school in Little Bealings despite its being referred to in the Reports of 1842 and 1846 yet pupils from the other parishes of Great Bealings, Kesgrave, Brightwell and Bucklesham are known to be still attending there. Indeed, the Shawe school was going strong, full to the gunwales with 88 boys and 69 girls against a stated capacity of 162. That said, the mention of alternative schooling outside the village was never raised by older Playford residents keen to discuss their grandparents' education and it must be wondered if Playford children went there in the 1870s. The Census of 1871 also shows that 21 boys were employed on the farms and, while no indication is given of their ages, it has been shown that, nationally, significant numbers of 5-9 year olds were still working on the land while numbers between the ages of 10 and 14 were huge. This tallies with the fact that of the 14 children who attended the school at Hill Cottages, as many as 11 were girls despite there being an even split between the sexes of children of school age in the village.³⁷ It would tie in also with the fact that José Booker's grandmother (born Mary Ann Frost, daughter of James, in 1863) attended the school while her grandfather (Richard Kidby born the same year) did not. Richard Kidby had started out on the farm at the age of six scaring crows and missed out on his education altogether yet the 1871 Census, when he was seven years old, records him as a 'scholar' confirming suspicions that enumerators down the years so categorised every child who *could* have been at school.³⁸ In such circumstances it is perhaps unsurprising that José was of the opinion that the school was exclusively for girls.³⁹ Parental apathy was rife and, not having received any education themselves, many parents were unable to apprehend its benefits. Poverty was a stronger reason: it was not so much the fee of a penny a week that was paid to the school but the loss of a weekly wage of perhaps 9d to 1s 6d that a boy could

³⁵ SROI, HA2/F6/1B, Biddell Family Papers, Playford Parish: Overseers Rates Books. The first time that a rate was levied on the school was in November 1866; this is likely to be a more accurate date for its opening than Frost's suggestion of 1864 which was written down from memory after a lapse of over 20 years. The last rate payment was in November 1877 which accords precisely with the opening of the Bealings Board School in the previous month. The Rate Book also gives additional confirmation that the school, and therefore Hill Cottages, were the property of the Marquis of Bristol and not the Biddell family as was the case with Glenham at the bottom of the hill.

³⁶ The Return states that the 14 children attended in space that was allotted for 13 suggesting that only the single downstairs room was used for teaching much as before in previous premises.

³⁷ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/5/EW1871GEN Occupations of the People. The national picture was, unsurprisingly, much the same: in 1871 there were approximately 1.60m boys and 1.52m girls between the ages of five and fifteen who were classed as scholars. An additional 0.57m boys and 0.78m girls just 'stayed at home' while 0.40m boys and 0.26m girls were engaged in recognised occupations. Pamela Horn, *Children's Work and Welfare, 1780-1890*, (Cambridge, 1994), 72-74. Nationally some 3,000 boys between the ages of five and nine were classed as agricultural labourers in 1871 a figure that rose to 71,000 for those between ten and fourteen.

³⁸ In the same Census Richard Kidby's elder brother Jo, who was to marry the sampler maker and laundress Jane Pryke, was labelled an 'agricultural labourer' when aged only nine and living with his family at Hill Cottages..

³⁹ Peter Northeast, 'The provision of elementary education in 19th century rural Suffolk', *Suffolk Review*, Summer 1981, Vol. 5, No. 2, 93. Northeast noted that girls stayed on longer at school than boys and that in some parishes provision was made for boys at work in the fields to be taught in the evenings but there is no evidence of that in Playford.

earn which many were unwilling to forgo. An education would not earn him a penny more in later life. Girls on the other hand learned to do something practical, something that would stand them in good stead and indeed provide them with a livelihood. Mary Ann Kidby for example became a seamstress, a skill that she no doubt learned in her days at school. Compulsory education between the ages of five and ten was still a little way off and was not introduced until the Act of 1880.

Frost's date of 'around 1864' for the school opening at Hill Cottages is likely to have been the time when Mary Woby retired from teaching. She would have been only 48 but her husband had been moved to New Buildings to become a stockman and a school so far out of the village would have been unacceptable; both her and her husband stayed on there until they died, both in their eighties. Until then, all three teachers - the 'old woman', Betsy Cadman and Mary Woby - had provided the necessary space in which to teach: the 'old woman' of 1833, most probably a widow, while both Cadman and Woby had just two children apiece and husbands out at work all day. Ellen Mann by contrast was a single woman of 26, living at home with ageing parents and a disabled sister seven years her senior. An older brother had been a 'pupil teacher' but by 1864 had most likely left home.⁴⁰ Her father was William Mann, a second generation shoemaker in the village, who lived on the corner of Brook and Warren Lanes in a house that was later to be called 'Journey's End'. His workshop stood in the corner of Archway field opposite the triangle of grass at the top of the lane.⁴¹ A replacement for Woby had been accepted but one who could offer no accommodation. In the event this was found in the northerly of the two Hill Cottages which was given over to the school in its entirety to the extent that it was left empty during the holidays.

Two surviving samplers

Two samplers survive from the schools. The earliest, dated 1843, was bought on the internet in c. 2008; its present owners and whereabouts are unknown. It was made by Hannah Rush aged 12 who would then have been at Mary Woby's school at The Brook. It comes as something of a surprise that the words 'Playford School' appear in the work as they give the school an unexpected status. Hannah was born in the village in 1831 but baptised in Grundisburgh; neither of her parents had been born there so it is assumed the family were Nonconformists and attended the Baptist chapel there. Hanna was the daughter of Charles Rush, part of a large family who worked for Arthur Biddell on both Lux and Hill Farms; both he and his wife died in the village in their eighties. Soon after leaving school Hannah went into service in St Matthews, Ipswich, married and lived in East Bergholt for 25 years where her husband worked on a farm. The family then moved to Ipswich in around 1880, living for many years in Spring Road where she died



Jane Pryke, left, who made the sampler below in 1867 when she was 11 years old

⁴⁰A pupil-teacher system was used, in schools approved by an inspector, whereby children aged 13 could be apprenticed to a teacher for 5 years and, after passing an exam, could attend a training college for three years. It is possible that Ellen Mann's bother, Philip, served his pupilage at R N Shawe's school in Little Bealings which was well regarded by HMI. His apprenticeship would certainly not have been spent at Mary Woby's Dame school at The Brook.

⁴¹ SROB, HA507/3/747, Bristol Estate Survey c. 1870-71. William Mann owned not only his own cottage but also the one next door; he rented his shed from the Estate. His mother, described in the 1851 Census as a 'proprietor of houses', directed in her will that her four cottages on The Green be sold to pay off a debt to a supplier and William's shed, which stood in front of them, became entangled in the deal. All the properties were bought by the Estate and later demolished as part of its programme of improving the housing stock in the village but the shed was reprieved. It was not knocked down until several years after William's death in 1887 and was finally demolished along with Barrack Cottages when Archway House was built.

in 1916 aged 85.

The other sampler was made by Jane Pryke some 14 years later in 1867 by which time the school had moved to Hill Cottages. Much more is known about Jane Pryke; she was the grandmother of Janet Selby who was heavily involved with Culpho church until about the year 2000 and the custodian of the sampler which she took with her to Somerset on her retirement. Jane Pryke was born in 1856 in the eastern half of Copyhold where she was later to help her mother and two younger sisters run the family laundry. Her mother had originally come down from Snetterton in Norfolk to be in service at The Hall; her father was a carrier who had preceded James Frost as a carter at the mill and who later operated his own business which included the delivery of laundry to many of the big houses in the area. Jane married Joseph Kidby, the eldest son of Edward Kidby who had moved to Hill Cottages from Grundisburgh in the 1860s to be the bailiff at Hill Farm. Jo Kidby followed his father as bailiff living, not at Hill Cottages, but in one of the properties in the corner of Archway field. He was soon to move to Culpho where he and two of his young sons became cowmen at Hall Farm; iconic photographs of the family at work there in the early part of the 20th century are part of the Suffolk Photographic Survey in the Ipswich Record Office.



Victorian evangelism: 'pray without ceasing'

1 Thessalonians 5.17

The sampler made by Jane Pryke when the school was at Hill Cottages

The school's closure in 1877

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 was the first piece of government legislation to deal specifically with the provision of education in this country; it created school boards in those districts where there were insufficient school places for the numbers of working-class children as enumerated in the Census. A Parish meeting was accordingly held in Playford Vicarage on a weekday morning in November of that year 'for the purpose of deciding whether the rate-payers will erect a school-room for the Parish or unite with Bealings for a District School'. The decision of that meeting was that 'the invitation by Great Bealings to unite in a District School with the three parishes of Great Bealings, Little Bealings and Playford be respectfully declined'. Attending the meeting were the Revd. Christopher Hodgson, in the chair; Manfred and Herman Biddell, farmers of Lux and Hill Farms respectively; E C Hakewill, prominent church architect who had retired and built Playford Mount for his own use only three years before; Francis Coates, a shop-keeper and carrier; William Mann, shoe maker and father of Ellen the teacher, and George Woby, agricultural labourer who worked for the Biddells. The vote against acceptance of the Great Bealings' offer was won on the casting vote of the Chairman; the agricultural lobby, being the main rate payers, naturally voted in favour. Hodgson's action would have riled the Biddells particularly Herman who,

as sole churchwarden, would have been instrumental in introducing him to the Playford living. Hodgson had served his curacy at Burgh where Herman was friendly with the Rector there and indeed married his daughter Harriet in 1870. With Herman's fiery temperament, it was probably no coincidence that Hodgson left the parish within months of the meeting. It was probably no coincidence either that, within two years of his departure, plans had been finalised for major building works at the church: the demolition and rebuilding of the chancel, another area of potential conflict between parson and quick-tempered churchwarden.⁴²

All seemed lost until Great Bealings, conscious that Playford had made no progress in erecting its own school, sent a second invitation fully two years later. One of the clauses in the 1870 Act was that teaching should be non-denominational and that parents could withdraw their children from religious education. Great Bealings too had been dragging its feet, worried that the Church would lose influence and had tried to form a 'Denominational School' but had finally conceded defeat. They were now interested in revisiting the earlier plan of forming a School Board with neighbouring parishes and adding Kesgrave to the list of participants. Playford reacted swiftly, setting up a Parish meeting in less than two weeks and this time Herman Biddell was on the winning side. There is no indication of who attended that meeting beyond Biddell and David Mann the Parish Clerk and Sexton but it was 'unanimously resolved that Mr H Biddell should attend the meeting [at Great Bealings] on 4 December and be empowered to give the consent of the Parish of Playford to act in conjunction with the other parishes named for the purpose of forming a school board for the district which these parishes would constitute if upon attending the meeting such a step seemed advisable'.⁴³

The opening of the Board School in Sandy Lane, Little Bealings, followed five years later in October 1877 and brought about the immediate closure of the school in Playford. Regrettably the log book for the new school, covering the years to c.1915, has been lost and with it the names of those Playford pupils who made the transfer.⁴⁴ Great Bealings' second invitation had been very timely. The two main advocates, both relative newcomers to the parish, who were in favour of Playford going alone, were no longer around: the vicar, who previously had the casting vote, had left the year before to take up a living in faraway Yorkshire and Hakewill the architect had died only a month before the second invitation arrived. Playford's new incumbent, licensed less than two months earlier, seems to have played no part in the proceedings. At a time when the Vestry had responsibility for all secular parish business, Biddell, as sole churchwarden, had a clear run.⁴⁵ Hodgson did return to Suffolk but after a gap of 20 years becoming Rector at Campsea Ashe from 1891-1906. Herman Biddell was later to resign as churchwarden in 1904 in another dispute this time with the newly instituted Clement Wright who, invoking Church Law, demanded that there be two churchwardens rather than just one. Too narrow a platform to share with anyone else, Biddell took umbrage and terminated all active involvement in church affairs. He died in 1917.

It was late in the century that government finally took control of education and real advances started to be made. Whereas in the 1850s a child might expect no more than two to three years of schooling, the Act of 1880 made attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten.

⁴² SROI, FC22/E4/1-2, Playford Parish Records: plans and specifications of new chancel and nave drawn up by R M Phipson, Diocesan Architect. Phipson had carried out the major restoration of Playford Hall 1867-71 and it was on the completion of this major project that he was appointed Diocesan Architect.

⁴³ SROI, FC22/E1/13, Playford churchwardens' memoranda and accounts, 1816-1960, 76-77, 80.

⁴⁴ James Pawsey, ex inf. See also *Little Bealings School* by James Pawsey, privately published, 2012.

⁴⁵ Secular and ecclesiastical duties were separated with the setting up of parish and district councils in 1894.

Thereafter the school leaving age rose steadily: it was raised to 11 in 1893, to 12 in 1899, to 14 in 1921, to 15 in 1947 and to 16 in 1973. And when Kesgrave Area School on the former A12 trunk road opened in 1931 children between the ages of 11 to 14 from surrounding parishes including Playford, instead of walking across the meadows to Bealings now cycled to school on council owned bicycles.

Elementary education in the village, never much more than a series of infant schools in the teacher's front room, had lasted in Playford little more than 40 years. Northeast declined to include the village in his map of Suffolk schools saying that those schools classed as 'infants' had not been mapped even though it is known that a few children did stay on until they were 11 or older.⁴⁶ Playford therefore is one of a very small number of parishes in the county credited with having no school at all; what there was was very poorly attended and the standards of teaching can only be guessed at.

After closure, Ellen Mann went as housekeeper to her uncle William Woby who had been taken on in mysterious circumstances as gardener to the Revd. Willoughby Dickinson, now vicar of distant Wolferton on the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk. Dickinson, as mentioned above, had been curate then incumbent at Playford from 1841 to 1857 and on his retirement, both Woby and Mann returned to Suffolk, first to a house in Ipswich that Dickinson had bought for them and then back to the family home in Brook Lane where they died: he in 1906 at the grand age of 90, she in 1923 almost 50 years after the school in which she had taught had closed its doors.

A return to two farm cottages

The house which the school had occupied was immediately taken by David Amoss another trusty servant, coachman to Herman Biddell at Hill House and a family favourite. Amoss was to work for three generations of the Biddells over a period of 70 years and, when Herman Biddell built Archway House for his retirement in 1896, he built Archway Cottage for Amoss and his wife. By the 1890s the two Hill Cottages were once again occupied by key employees but who were now closely connected to the farm rather than to the house: a cowman on one side and a horseman on the other. Frank Gardiner was the horseman; he had come from Essex in the 1890s and was to live in the right-hand half for over 50 years. Three generations of Gardiners were to live in the village. Arthur, his son, who lost a leg at Gallipoli and who after the war repaired boots and shoes in the former brick-built shed behind the shop on Butts Hill while his son, Cyril, a tank driver at Alamein, on being demobbed went to live in Tuddenham. Four generations of the Dunnett family lived next door from sometime before 1911 until 1951. Nearly all had long service on Hill Farm: Walter, who started in 1879 as a farm boy aged 12 and was a stockman for over 60



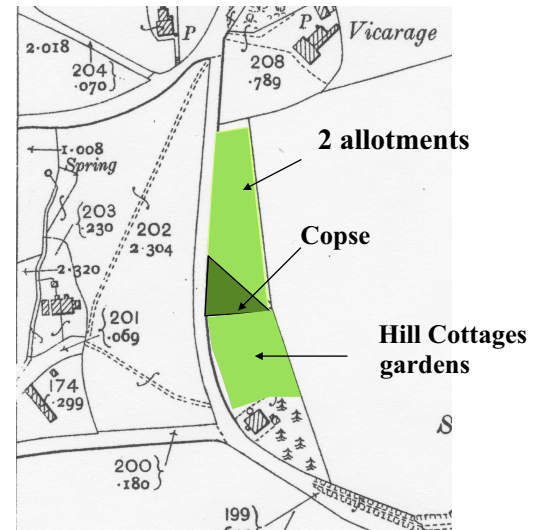
Top: Frank Gardiner, horseman, occupied the right-hand cottage for over 50 years. Below: Walter Dunnett and family. Four generations of Dunnetts lived next door for much of that time

⁴⁶ David Dymond and Edward Martin eds., *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, (Suffolk County Council, second edition, 1989), Elementary Education in the 19th Century, 118-119.

years, his son Fred who died in service after 50 years and Fred's two boys Basil who did 48 years and Geoffrey who to date has completed 63, the last 20 as gardener at Hill House for Charles Lofts. Both boys were born in the cottage.

An upgrade in the 1960s

Frank Gardiner died in 1950 and Fred Dunnett moved down to the Council houses in Hill Farm Road the following year. The cottages continued to be occupied by men on the farm but were soon converted back into a single house and rented out to third party tenants on short term lets.⁴⁷ It was at this time that the sizeable piece of land stretching up to the vicarage, extending to over an acre, fell into disuse. Until then the land nearest the two cottages had been the cottage gardens while that nearest the vicarage contained the last two surviving allotments in the village.⁴⁸ The two separate areas were divided by a small triangular copse. The allotments were worked by Fred Dunnett and Alfred Phillips, a retired horseman who lived in the cottage where Cobblers now stands; he died in 1956 aged 85. The two garden areas fell into disuse and quickly reverted to scrub such that by the early 1970s when the three houses were built in what is now St Mary's Drive, the former vegetable plots were indistinguishable from the little copse that had separated them giving the appearance of having been woodland forever.



OS map 1927. The area between the vicarage and Hill Cottages up to c. 1950

Most of the village at the time including the Hill Cottages, their gardens and adjoining allotments were then part of the Bristol Estate but following the death of the 4th Marquis in 1951 were sold to Charles Lofts to pay for death duties. Charles Lofts' parents lived with him and his wife Josie in a divided Hill House but when his father Duncan died there in 1965, his widow Ivy moved to Hill Cottage renaming it Foxboro after Foxboro Hall in Melton where she had been brought up. She lived there for over 20 years and following her death in 1988 at the age of 95 the property was sold to Steve and Julia Hicks the current owners (2015). In 1996 they added a second storey to the left-hand half of the house so giving it the symmetry that it had previously lacked.



The original central doorway was replaced by the large bow window in the 1950s. The symmetrical facade hides a more complicated rear elevation: the upper storey of the right-hand side is either contemporary with the original house or was built on when it was divided in the 1820s or '30s. The differing upstairs accommodation of the two halves can be readily seen in the right hand photograph.

⁴⁷ SROI, Lists of Electors.

⁴⁸ Until the 1930s there were allotments where the Playing Field now is.

