

**SOME OF  
BARBY SCHOOL'S  
TEACHERS**



**BARBY LOCAL  
HISTORY GROUP  
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## INTRODUCTION

This article contains information about a range of Barby School's teachers. Much of this information is contained in Barby Local History Group's publication *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 Years of Barby Schools 1865-2015*, where many other teachers are mentioned. Sources include parish registers, national censuses, documents held in the National Archives and Northamptonshire Record Office, Barby School log books, as well as the Group's archive of personal reminiscences and photographs.

## MISS HANNAH CURTIS

Miss Curtis was born in Bilton about 1835. In 1841 she was living with her parents and brothers and sisters in a house which was possibly near Cock Robin Corner.

Within the next ten years the family had moved to Barby and, in the 1851 census her mother Ann is listed as a school mistress. Ann very probably ran a small "dame school" in the home. John Salisbury ran a school in St Mary's Church but it is unlikely that Ann helped him. Dame schools were a source of income for those who may have been able to read and write. Ann's husband John was an agricultural labourer.

Hannah must have used the example of her mother to open her own school sometime between 1871 and 1881. She probably was not a good teacher, as evidenced by the later inspectors' reports at Barby School, so may have been quite relieved to become a second teacher to the Head, John Warren, bringing her pupils with her.

Interestingly, the Government Inspectors commented on the low standard of needlework, which she taught, but back in 1871 Hannah is recorded as a dressmaker in the census. Perhaps no-one employed her so she turned to teaching!

In 1883 Hannah went to Birmingham "to consult a physician ---- as she has a tumour and is awaiting an operation". She had the operation in April of that year and came back to school at the end of May.

Over the next few years the inspectors commented negatively on her work and recognised her for only one year, in 1885. In 1886 another teacher was appointed to teach the infants and thereafter Hannah just taught needlework in the upper school. In 1887 she left the school. She does not seem to be in the Barby census for 1891 and we do not know how she made a living after leaving the school.

Hannah's operation must have been successful as she died seventeen years later in 1900 and was buried in Barby churchyard on 23 April aged 63.

In 1861 Hannah Curtis' younger sister Jane was a servant in the household of Rev Charles Gilbee, Rector of Barby from 1850 to 1867. In 1871 Jane was working for Charles' widow, Maria Gilbee, who was living with her daughter, Emily, and later her son Henry. Jane continued in their service even after the death of Maria in 1891. By that time she was the housekeeper and the only live-in servant. Emily died in 1909 and in 1911 Jane was living on her own in Barby as a retired housekeeper; she was buried in Barby churchyard on 6 September 1926, aged 84. Another sister, Sarah, was buried in Barby churchyard on 12 May 1899.

## **MISS FLORENCE HARRISON**

Probably the longest serving teacher in the history of Barby School was Miss Florence Harrison. She joined the school in 1899 and retired after 35 years in 1935. She was the infant teacher and was uncertificated. (Many teachers at the time had no formal teaching qualification, a situation that persisted into the 1960s.)

Because of her lack of formal qualification, when she retired she had no pension and the School Managers put forward a case to the Local Authority for granting her one. However this did not happen and her leaving gift was primarily a cheque.

During the period of the First World War she was often unwell and away from school. On one occasion she missed the train from Northampton and came into school late. She lived in Barby at the time so had presumably been visiting.

Many pupils remembered her with affection, particularly as she made toffee letters to teach the alphabet! Another pupil remembers putting on concerts at her house in Shakespeare Terrace; but they had to tidy the house first!

In the Managers' minutes of December 1934 it was recorded "The Infants show great affection for her, and at the same time are well disciplined. The Managers have great confidence in her. She has a thoroughly good influence with the children".

In January 1913 Miss Harrison was joined on the staff by her younger sister **LILIAN**. Lilian had qualified in 1905 and it is probable that she took some of the older children in the big classroom with the Head. She moved on in October 1914 and eventually became a head teacher in Carlisle.

## MR JOSEPH EDWARD MUDDIMAN

Joseph Muddiman was born in 1885 in Long Buckby, the youngest of seven children. He started school in Long Buckby when he was not yet three years old.

By 1901 at the age of fifteen or sixteen he was a board school teacher, possibly at Long Buckby, and possibly a pupil teacher. In 1911 he was an Assistant Elementary Teacher employed by the County Council. We do not know if he spent time at college to gain his qualification, or indeed when he qualified.

He was a keen musician and played the organ at both Long Buckby and Whilton churches.

In 1913 Mr Muddiman was appointed Headmaster at Barby School and from the log books we can conclude that he took his duties very seriously. Unfortunately, after three years, in February 1916, Joseph Muddiman was called up to join the Army. Children from the school wrote to the men at the Front and on 9 November 1916 Joseph wrote back from the Somme to Gertie Batchelor, who kept his letter. He was killed six days later, on 15 November. He is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial, both Long Buckby and Barby war memorials, and his mother's grave in Long Buckby.<sup>1</sup>

Right: The Unveiling of the Long Buckby War Memorial



## MISS MABEL PHILLIPS

Miss Mabel Phillips started teaching at Barby School in December 1914. She had a teacher's certificate (number 13/961) indicating qualification in 1913 and she came from Derby. She served under Joseph Muddiman and took over from him as Acting Head when he went to war in 1916. Although still relatively inexperienced she was the only qualified teacher on the staff at that time.

In December 1916 Mabel Phillips married Harry Lane. A log book entry for 8 December states "I left school at 3 o'clock this afternoon as I had to go into Rugby on important business", business perhaps associated with her marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Muddiman also appears in another article on this website, *Barby's World War I Casualties*.

Two years later she had leave of absence from 13 September to 25 November 1918 under Reg 14. This was probably to give birth to a daughter, Ethel. In April 1920 an emergency teacher took over and Mrs Lane gave birth to another daughter, Madeleine. This time she did not return to school and until 1922 there was no permanent head.

It was uncommon for married women to continue to teach and particularly to return after having a baby. This is perhaps indicative of the difficulty of finding staff during and just after the First World War. A senior pupil remembered looking after Mrs Lane's baby during school time, so the baby was obviously brought to school on occasion, if not every day.<sup>2</sup>

## **MR THOMAS WILLIAM BARLOW**

Mr Barlow came to be Head of Barby School in 1943, in the midst of the Second World War and all the difficulties and privations that were affecting the school.

He had served in the First World War and had allegedly been shell-shocked during his service. He had been wounded in 1916 and latterly served in the Royal Flying Corps (later the RAF). A legacy of his time in the RAF was a pair of large leather gauntlets that he wore in winter.



There are conflicting memories of whether or not he owned a car – one of the few people in the village to do so if he did. However, those who remember him do agree that he was a good teacher.

Mr Barlow saw the introduction of the far-reaching 1944 Education Act and also the uncertainty surrounding the viability of this small village school.

Mr Barlow retired in 1957 at the time that all pupils over the age of 11 were transferred to Daventry County secondary school and Barby became an Infant and Junior school. He had been Head for fourteen years.

## **MRS ANN AUSTIN**

Mrs Austin started at Barby school in February 1941, initially as a supply teacher filling the place of Miss Hall who had left. However, she continued to teach here as a permanent assistant teacher -

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<sup>2</sup> For information on the Marriage Bar, see *From Blackboard to Whiteboard*.

“for the duration of the war” - throughout this wartime period up until July 1944 when she left to go to a school in New Bilton.

This was a period of uncertainty within the school with the numbers of children changing as evacuees came and went. Sometimes there was another teacher, herself evacuated, and the classes would be reorganised. Mrs Austin “managed the whole school without assistance – and very successfully too” when the Head, Mr Barlow, was away for a couple of days on two occasions.

She travelled from Rugby each day with her daughters who were pupils at Barby School.

In 1953 Mrs Austin again served as a supply teacher and was then appointed to the school as assistant teacher in charge of the Infants. She stayed until December 1957 when she retired through ill health.

Many people remember Mrs Austin with affection and the Managers were complimentary about her - “her work was good, and the discipline which she kept was excellent. She had a difficult lot of children, several of whom were refugees, but she had got them well under control, and taught them well”.

When she retired Mrs Austin was presented with a Crown Devon morning set on a gift tray from pupils, parents and managers as a sign of appreciation.



## **MRS VIVIENNE AGNES BROWN**

Mrs Brown became Head Teacher in September 1957, taking over from Mr Barlow when the school became Infants and Juniors only. She was appointed with no interview as she was the only candidate and the Managers were impressed with her credentials.

She came to a small two class school in the centre of the village and oversaw the move to a new school on the outskirts of the village in 1967. The pupil numbers rose from 27 in 1957 to around 131 in 1970.



Mrs Brown was originally a teaching head as the heads before had all been. Her entries in the log book convey her enjoyment of teaching and interest in children. She used the opportunities provided by village life to enhance the children's experiences, taking them to see the Meet of the local hunt and other events. When she became a non-teaching head she missed the close involvement with the children.

After her husband died Mrs Brown decided to postpone her retirement until she was 65 in 1971. However she continued until 1974. In that year she wrote in her report to the managers that "I am pleased to note that our children can usually give a good account of themselves when faced with competition". She went on to say how she was opposed to "heavy coaching or pressurising young children". She was known to be fairly strict but was well respected.

## **MRS EILEEN SMITH**

Mrs Eileen Smith started at Barby School in October 1966, the year before the school moved to its new edge-of-village site and after Mrs Brown had been requesting an additional teacher for the previous two years. Numbers of children finally reached 60 and Mrs Smith was appointed as the third member of staff. She had previously taught at Paddox School in Hillmorton until her first child was born. Her youngest child, Helen, was only three years old when Mrs Brown invited her to teach at Barby, so Helen spent two years at the back of the class before she became a scholar; there was no playgroup in the village at that time. Eileen Smith's husband, Bob Smith, was the village butcher.

In 1970 Mrs Smith became Deputy Head. By this time there were 158 children in the school and there were four classes. She was teacher of the Reception and Middle Infant children and took many of the children in the school for various sports. She was well liked by her pupils and settled them into life at school in a kindly manner.

In 1977 Mrs Smith became ill and in March 1978 she died of cancer at the age of 50. She was sadly missed by staff and pupils. (Mrs Dawson talks of "a difficult time".) A collection was made and a bench purchased to stand near the Infant room. Her husband donated a tree, which was planted in the school grounds.



Above: Mrs Smith with her eldest child visiting the newly-opened motorway bridge on Onley Lane

## THE WARRENS, FATHER AND SON

In 1875 Mr John Warren was already Headmaster at Barby school. He was a certificated teacher 3<sup>rd</sup> class. He ran the school with some help from his wife. Because his wife was unqualified no grant was paid to the school for geography or needlework (presumably the subjects she taught). By 1881 Miss Hannah Curtis was teaching needlework. She had given up her own school and as a consequence there were more pupils at Barby school.

Mr John Warren was ill on several occasions - the upper school only opening for two sessions in one term. In 1885 he had an eye operation in London and his son William re-opened the school from 10 - 15 August. William was classed as an assistant master and came from Hanwell school. William taught under his father's headship from 1888-1894. They both then resigned. Mary, John's wife and William's mother, died in this year and it is possible that she was ill and needed nursing.

William then went to St Peter's Training College in Peterborough. He was appointed to Barby as Headmaster in 1896 and continued there until 1901.

In 1911 William's family, including his father aged 84, are living in Hillmorton, William as a headmaster, possibly at a larger school.

## MR JAMES BOWES



Mr Bowes became head teacher at Barby school in 1927. He, like most men of his generation, had served during the First World War. He was a keen supporter of the British Legion and became the secretary of the Barby branch.

Early in  
1928 Mr  
Bowes was  
declared

missing and five days later was found in Edinburgh. He had suffered a breakdown, possibly triggered by a memorial to Earl Haig which took place in Barby and its associations with his military history.

In 1929 James Bowes left Barby school. It is not known whether he was still unwell.

