

# MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

## ANNUAL BULLETIN NUMBER 14

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### **PROGRAMME OF PAST EVENTS**

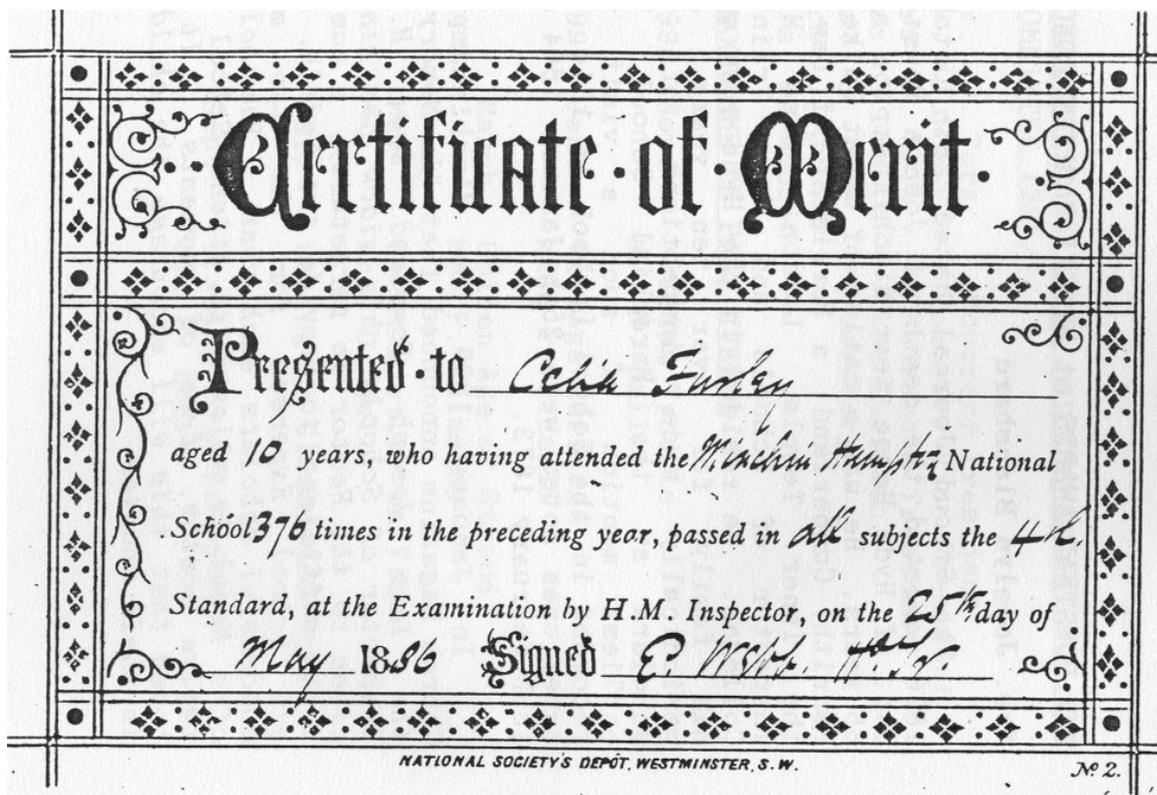
1996 Nov.    William Tyndale - Mr. N. Bailey  
  
1997 Jan.    Village Heritage - Miss P. Pinnell  
  
      March   Golden Age of Stroud - Mr. P. Walmsley  
  
      May     Local History on Video - Mrs. D. Wall  
  
      July    Outing to Gloucester Docks  
  
      Sept.   Tracing your Ancestors - Mr. H. Beard

# THE BOWSTEAD AWARDS at MINCHINHAMPTON SCHOOL

## Mrs. Jocelyn Blanshard

The Stroud Journal dated 28th October 1876 reported the death of Joseph Bowstead Esq. of Hyde House near Minchinhampton aged 65 years. He was a native of Great Salkeld, Penrith, Cumberland; a Barrister of Law of the Inner Temple, London; also H.M. Inspector of Schools and Male Training Colleges. He resided in the Hyde area with his family for over ten years, and periodically made inspections of the scholars at the Parochial School. The earliest mention of such a visit was recorded in the School Logbook in 1844, and later ones noted were 25th January 1864 and 18th February 1873.

In January 1869 the Minchinhampton Church Magazine announced that *“In Memory of the late Joseph Bowstead Esq. H. M. Inspector of Schools, his widow has kindly given to the Rector in perpetuity, a sum of money sufficient to provide two Medals, and all School Expenses for the two most successful scholars each year. The holder of a Medal is allowed to attend School for twelve months, free of payments. It is hoped that this will encourage the children in their studies.*



At that time the school fees were a quarterly payment of 5/- for each child above six years, and 3/- under six years. A later more detailed explanation of the Annual Examination appeared: “The Bowstead Examination is held yearly in the Boys and Girls Schools. Candidates must be born or living in the Minchinhampton Parish, and must be less than 13 years old on April 30th of the year in which the Examination is held. Requirements (Standard V): (1) Reading (2) Writing from memory a short story read twice. Spelling, writing and correct expression to be considered. (3) Arithmetic, four sums on easy fractions (addition and subtraction) practice, bills of parcels and single rule of three (unity method).

The names of the successful candidates placed on the school board. A silver medal (the die is in the hands of Mr. Albino of Nailsworth) is given to each top boy and girl, and a book (value about 6/-) for the second of each set of candidates”.

It is thought that William Albino was commissioned to inscribe the medals. He was a watch and clockmaker of Italian descent; his father Vitore, a jeweller, arrived in England in the early 1840's and settled in Bourton on the Water where William and his siblings were born. In 1882 William, his wife Mary and their family resided in the High Street, Minchinhampton, and their son Dominic attended the Parochial School, where in 1884 he was awarded the Bowstead Medal.

By 1889 William had moved his home and business to George Street, Nailsworth, and Trade Directories list him as a watch and clockmaker until as late as 1910. His premises were situated in what is now Tubbys Restaurant and the rear cottage was at one time known as Albino Cottage.

A note in the Minchinhampton School Logbook at the time of the Bowstead Award Presentation in 1900 reported that “*5 boys and 5 girls entered the Examination. The Writing was good throughout. So also was the Reading. The boys showed a marked improvement in this respect as compared with last year. The Spelling and Power of Expression need attention. The Arithmetic was quite satisfactory as a rule.*” The Rector judged the entries, but in 1919 it was noted that in the absence of the Rector, the Examiner was Mr. Napier-Clavering.

The Bowstead Award procedure was continued until 1981 with a total of 207 surnames and forename initials appearing on the Award Boards, which are still displayed in Minchinhampton Primary School. Only two variations occurred from the original draft; in January 1947 the Resolution was passed that the giving of the Bowstead Medal should be discontinued and a book awarded in its place, and later, in September 1952, that the Examination should be taken at an earlier age before the children left for Secondary School.

The silver Bowstead Medal in a black presentation case was one and a half inches in diameter, inscribed: “*In Memoriam Josh Bowstead Esq. M.A. Pemb. Coll. Camb, of Hyde House in the Parish, Barrister at Law Inner Temple London, H.M. Inspector of School and Male Training Colleges, Died .15th October 1876 aged 65*” and on the reverse side the full name of the recipient, the year, Prize Medal Minchinhampton National School Gloucestershire, and the text: “*Blessed is the Man that Walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly*” (Psalm 1 v.1) encircling the edge.

The names of the Bowstead Award winners are listed in the Local History Collection, with forenames as accurate as it has been possible to ascertain. The whereabouts of eight of the original 137 medals are known. How many others are still in existence?

## **SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to Minchinhampton School whose School Registers and Logbooks were used, Jessie Kirby, Alcie Daniels, Stan and Iris Dyer. The Census Returns and Trade Directories provided further information.

# BOYHOOD MEMORIES

## Mr. Harry Morle

I was awarded the Bowstead Medal in 1930. The Rector, Canon Rex. V. Hodson was the examiner of part of the tests, and I well remember making just one error of pronunciation. I think the word was compromised, which I pronounced "com promised".

I don't remember if Canon Hodson presented the medal or if the Head Teacher, Mr. F. T. Robinson, did. The latter was a well-meaning martinet, very strict in all things, which was good for us children. I remember quite clearly a music lesson just before the end of morning school, when we were gathered in Mr. C.G. Tombs' room. Mr. Robinson took the class to teach us musical scales. We couldn't quite grasp the idea whereupon Mr. R., eyes out on stalks, demanded that we stare at the blackboard and not once take our eyes off it. We were all in such a state of near-terror at his explosion of anger, and I recollect that we stared at the board so long that our eyes watered! Mr. Tombs was a gentler sort, a lovely man, a keen footballer (he had kept goal for Minchinhampton A.F .C.) and he liked his game of golf. They and Miss Pearcey were superb teachers.

My medal was of solid silver and I have it still, polished! I do not think parents were invited to the award ceremony . In those days parents and school were kept very much apart, unlike today when there are P.T.A.s. On leaving Minchinhampton School I attended Marling, following E.J. Shellard (Professor, retired), E. Ponting (Schoolmaster, retired), the brothers Critchley (both deceased) to be followed shortly by the Hughes brothers, not forgetting the Walker brothers. After Marling it was off to Bristol University, a break for the army during the War and then a teaching career from 1947 - 81.



Like many others of my time I'd had a hard start - my father died before I was four, my step-father before I was twelve (I'd just joined Marling) and both deaths were attributable to war service, gassing in the latter case. I well remember Armistice Parades from the British Legion Club to the Parish Church, led by bowler hatted ex-service officers, with three one-legged veterans taking part - David Newman (postman) Reg. Graham (motor cycling enthusiast, steward at the B.L. and cobbler) and George Ellins (steward at the Institute and the most cheerful man you could wish to find). In those days the Church was full for such an occasion.

There was a cohesion about Minchinhampton in those days - people cared for one another and were mutually supporting, and I was only conscious of one thing - the sacrifices my Mother made. There were other helpers too - the Rector, Mr. Robinson and the British Legion all played a part. The village (?town) shops have changed since, so have their names and owners, but "Hantone" remains much the same. It is lucky to be off the beaten track of motorways and main roads.

# THE OLD MINCHINHAMPTON SCHOOL

## Miss D. Fassnidge

In 1952 there were two schools in Minchinhampton: Mr. Robinson was Head of the Junior Mixed School; Miss Beard was Headmistress of the Infant School but due to ill-health she was forced to retire early, which was very unfortunate for her, as it was her first post as Headmistress. Miss Fassnidge was in charge of the Infant School until 1956, when the two schools were amalgamated under Mr. Robinson. There were three teachers and about 100 pupils in the Infants and four teachers and 220 pupils in the Juniors in those days. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson lived in the School House from about 1927 to 1960, with his daughter and son. Mr. H. Bosely became Headmaster on May 2nd 1960, and lived in the School House for several years before moving to his own house in Avening.

Morning lessons had to finish by 11.50 for children to wash their hands, and for the helpers to lay the desks for dinner. We had bowls fixed in the cloakroom for the children; the supervisor had to see each child wash their hands which took quite a time! About 60 children stayed to dinner and meals were brought from Dudbridge Canteen, they cost five pence a day. Local parents and friends helped to serve the dinners on a long table at the back of a classroom, and several carried trays of dinners to the Infant rooms. American cloths were laid on desks, with cutlery and beakers of water. After lunch plates were washed in the china sink, which was fixed in the small porch attached to the smaller Infant classroom, then the cloths were washed, left to dry, rolled up and stored in the cupboard, also fixed in the porch, before afternoon session. A gas ring in the porch was used to boil a kettle for tea or coffee at dinner time for the Infant teachers.



**School and School House in 1935**

At the end of the summer term 1953 the smallest Junior classroom was converted into a kitchen, for a cook and four assistants. The cook allowed us to have tea or coffee at breaktime (10.45 a.m.) and also after dinner, if we paid two shillings, an offer we appreciated very much!

In 1958 Mr. C. Tombs, who taught from 1929 until 1966 when he retired, used the Market House for his classroom, and this went on until a Terrapin was placed on the lawn in front of the Infant School. The reception class moved into the old cookery room at this stage. Two teachers, Miss Fassnidge and Miss Cooper, shared the larger room with two low wooden partitions. There was a tortoise stove in the middle of the room, which the teachers had to stoke. If they happened to forget the fire went out and the rooms were very cold!

As the Infant School had no space for activities, they were allowed the use of the Market House two afternoons a week at a rent of ten shillings. Christmas concerts were given for parents in the Market House and the teachers paid for the children to have a little present from Father Christmas. There were great difficulties taking the children up and down from school to the Market House, continual traffic, buses standing in the Market Square and about sixty children each to cross safely over.

When structural defects were found in the old school, three Terrapin classrooms were provided and part of the main building was held up with scaffolding on the inside. In 1966 Mrs. P. Matthews moved into one of these with a class of 48 Infants; her old room could hold no more than 36 children. The new school was completed and desks etc. were moved in at the end of the autumn term 1968. The official opening was on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1969, when Lord Butler came to speak. The Ricardo family of Gatcombe Park had been benefactors of the school in previous years, and Lord Butler was then owner of the Gatcombe estate.

This is based on the article provided by the late Miss D. Fassnidge for the Minchinhampton Jubilee Magazine in 1977.

# **FULL CIRCLE IN THIRTY YEARS**

## **Mrs. Diana Wall**

The present structure of Minchinhampton School dates from 1968 and was built by Gloucestershire C.C. to a design by a Nottingham firm. It replaced one exactly one hundred years old, which had become too small for the numbers attending and was also structurally unsound.

The need to replace quickly and relatively cheaply probably influenced the Education Committee decision in favour of a system-built (prefab??) school, the S.C.O.L.A. Mark II. It was intended to be a two-form entry Junior School, with the site for an Infant School earmarked to the southwest, behind the present library building. When this idea was dropped two terrapin classrooms were provided behind the new buildings; in 1975 a third was added, the cost of £4,000 being raised by the P.T.A.

The main block is two-storey, and the nature of the site, with a fall of over ten feet to the south-east, necessitated several floor levels, and the provision of a terrace with retaining wall to the main facade. On the north there is a steep bank down to the building, where site excavation was carried out. Many similar system-built schools are to be found in Gloucestershire, both Primary and Secondary Schools.

The construction is based on an eight-foot wide module, with infill panels of a stone effect, to complement the surrounding town environment. The whole building has a steel frame, and window panels of wood, with a rough plaster facing, were inserted between the stone sections. By 1988 many of the window panels had rotted, especially along the south-west front, and these were replaced with U.P.V.C. units. The modular construction meant that the whole replacement process could be completed within the six-week holiday period.

Throughout its life the flat roof has given cause for concern, and it has been repitched several times. Other schools have found difficulties with the end walls of the modules, and this has also been the case at Minchinhampton, notably on the south-east. A mounting catalogue of problems, together with a new approach to the provision of facilities for the 4 - 11 age-group, finally led to the decision to replace the whole school by the end of the millennium. Full circle in thirty years!