

School History 1920-21

1920 The First Move

A local newspaper dated 26th June 1920 gave the first report that the West Riding County Council's Education Committee had entered negotiations to purchase Hemsworth Hall for £9,000, in order to create a secondary school in the Hemsworth District. The land, comprising 20 acres was the former residence of Samuel Gurney Leatham and it was estimated that a further £7,000 would be spent in adapting the Hall. In the middle of January 1921 the County Council approved the initial expenditure of £2,000 for the adaptation of Hemsworth High Hall to the purposes of a secondary school. So begins the story.....

The Governors

One week later came the appointment of Governors to this school. At a meeting of the South Elmsall Education Committee, chaired by Mr. Gabriel Price, C.C. with Councillors J. Smith, H. Goddard, P. Gill, H. Bamforth, S. Hartley, Mr. C.H. Brooke and the Clerk, Mr. P. Beaumont, present, it was decided that Governors for the new school should be elected from the following bodies:-

Hemsworth Urban District Council	3 (one to be a lady)
Hemsworth Rural Council	9 (two to be ladies)
West Riding County Council	3
Leeds University	1.

A special sub-committee at Wakefield had been formed to monitor the progress of the conversion of the Hall to a school for 150 pupils, and it reported to the South Elmsall Education Committee that it was doing all it could to ensure the school would be ready for the pupils the following September.

By the end of February 1921, a situation had evolved which caused Mr. Gabriel Price (South Kirkby) to press for the exclusion of children under 10 years of age from the new school. He had been called away from a County Hall meeting of the West Riding Education Committee due to the illness of his son, but had left everyone in no doubt of his support for the motion "that after August 1st 1921, in all secondary schools provided by the County Council, where the accommodation of the school was insufficient, preference should be given to candidates above ten years of age, and that after August 1st 1922, no children under ten years of age should be admitted to such schools."

As a member of the Higher Education sub-committee, Mr. Price had played a prominent part in pushing forward this recommendation, which was ultimately referred back to his committee by a narrow majority for further consideration, maintaining that children under ten were too young to need a form of higher education, and unable to benefit from it. Behind this opinion lay his observation that those who could afford the fees of a secondary school were sending their very young children to them as an alternative to the local elementary schools which were attended by the working classes. He maintained that a form of snobbery existed among the rich parents of these younger children which was being unwittingly encouraged and supported by the general ratepayers of the community in the following way. Secondary education at that time cost about £27 per head per year, but the younger children were charged £6 to £7, which meant in effect that other children's parents had to make up the shortfall. Also, the places taken by those younger children meant that working class children who had qualified for admission through passing their entrance examinations were excluded, due to lack of available places.

Mr. Price asserted that Elementary schools should be regarded as efficient for the education of all classes of children up to ten years old, and if parents wanted to avail themselves of a privileged preparatory education, they should undertake to pay fully for it, and not look to the ratepayers to subsidise them.

One month later, the West Riding Education Committee held its next meeting, and the matter was again raised, this time with Mr. Price in attendance. Having re-considered the matter, it was highly unlikely that the stance of the Higher Education sub-committee would have changed, the following recommendation was formally put to, and finally adopted by the meeting:

"That after 1st August 1921, in all West Riding maintained Secondary Schools where the accommodation of the school is insufficient to allow the admission of all educationally suitable candidates of whatever age, preference shall be given to candidates above ten years of age on August 1st of the current year, such candidates to be admitted in order of merit, as judged by their work in the entrance examination of the school."

An amendment was moved by a Mr. P.R. Jackson which stated that no contributions should be paid by the County Council towards the cost of educating children under ten, unless preference had been given to candidates over ten. Speaking in support of this amendment, Mr. Price emphasised that as representatives of the ratepayers, they were obliged to give the child of the poorer man the same chances as the child of the rich man, a situation which did not exist at that particular time, when a privileged few took advantage of the subsidies provided by the ratepayers. He felt that if this policy were generally known in the West Riding, it would not be tolerated.

A further speaker to the motion, Mr. Foulstone (Darfield) contended that there would be an improvement in elementary schools if those children under ten who were presently attending secondary schools were sent to elementary schools in common with everyone else. The amendment was adopted.

The next matter on the agenda of March 1921 was Head Teachers' salaries. Mr. W.B. Cartwright, seconded by Mr. Price, moved an amendment to refer the matter back to the Higher Education sub-committee; however, no delaying was entertained, and the following scales were adopted retrospectively to 1st September 1920:

Headmasters:

Grade 1	Up to 200 pupils	Payscale £600 ... £25 ... £750
Grade 2	201-300 pupils	Payscale £700 ... £25 ... £850
Grade 3	Over 300 pupils	Payscale £800 ... £25 ... £950

Headmistresses:

Grade 1	Up to 200 pupils	Payscale £500 ... £25 ... £600
Grade 2	201-300 pupils	Payscale £600 ... £25 ... £700
Grade 3	Over 300 pupils	Payscale £700 ... £25 ... £800

Mr. Cartwright's reluctance to accept these proposals is clear when he urged the meeting to bear in mind that his sub-committee regarded these scales to be rather magnanimous and somewhat premature, since the county boroughs had not yet arrived at a decision on the matter. He felt that the disparity between the salaries of the elementary and secondary heads should be reconsidered, but nevertheless, his amendment was defeated.

As a final item to this meeting, Alderman P.R. Jackson was re-elected chairman of the committee, and Mr. Edwin Talbot vice-chairman for the ensuing year.

Governors' Meeting July 1921

By the middle of July 1921, enough progress had been made that the first meeting of the Governors of the new school could be held, courtesy of the Rev. R.H. Gilbert, at the Rectory situated next door to the school.

The following people attended:-

Alderman John Guest M.P. for the Hemsworth division,
Mr. Gabriel Price County Councillor for South Kirkby,
Mr. T.H. Foulstone County Councillor of Darfield.

Representatives of the West Riding County Council
Mrs. Lucy Garstang Leeds University,
Councillors Mrs. A. Schorah, J. Picken, W.H. Nicholson, J. Peckett, H.D. Clough and Mrs. G. Price

Representatives of Hemsworth Rural Council
Councillors Mrs. Salisbury, W.L. Lawton.

Representative of Hemsworth Urban District Council
The Rev. R.H. Gilbert

Also present were Mr. Hallam, Director of Secondary Education for the West Riding County Council, and the architect, Mr. H. Wormald, who would supervise the conversion of Hemsworth Hall into a Secondary School.

Unable to be present were Rural Council nominees Mrs. Charles Snow, and councillors J. Potts and J. Holland

At this first meeting, Mr. Guest proposed that Mr. Price be appointed chairman, and Mr. Nicholson seconded, saying there was no one better suited for the position of chairman than Mr. Price, who would form a link between the Governors and the County Council. As there were no other nominations, the unanimous decision was carried. In his speech of acceptance Mr. Price stated that he felt that at last the great wrong which had happened when the Holgate Grammar School at Hemsworth had previously been moved to Barnsley would be righted with the opening of the new school. He now hoped to see many children of the working classes pass from the elementary schools into the new secondary school and thence on to the Universities.

There were two nominations for vice-chairman. Mr. Nicholson was moved by Mr. J. Picken and seconded by Mrs. A. Schorah, and the Rev. R.H. Gilbert was moved by Mrs. Salisbury and seconded by Mr. Clough. Mr. Nicholson was appointed by 8 votes to 4.

A report was given by the architect about the conversion work at the school, and it was decided that the school should be opened as soon as possible after the middle of September. The next meeting of Governors was scheduled for August 12th 1921.

Governor's Meeting August 12th 1921

At the second meeting of the Governors, the Headship of the new Hemsworth Secondary School was considered. Eighty-seven applicants responded to the advertisement, the salary offered being £600 per annum, rising annually by £25 to a maximum of £750. The applicants selected for interview were:-

Mr. Frank Burkitt, Pocklington, near York.
Mr. A.G. Jenkinson, St. Austell's County School, Cornwall
Mr. E.W. Johnson, Ardwick, Manchester.
Mr. P.E. Medley, Strand School, London
Mr. A.S. Robinson, Crosby, Liverpool
Mr. F. Smith, Aberystwyth.

As most Hilmians may know, Major Arthur Godfrey Jenkinson was appointed Head Master of Hemsworth Secondary School, a post which he held until 1937, when he retired.

Mr. Jenkinson was educated and trained at Dulwich College and Brasenose College, Oxford, and before he became Headmaster of St. Austell's County School, had held appointments at Aysgarth School, Yorkshire, Harrow School, Edinburgh, and Edinburgh Academy. When first appointed Headmaster at St. Austell's in 1910, there were 120 pupils, a low standard of work, and poor discipline; at the time of his leaving, there were 225 pupils, good discipline and traditions, and a standard of work reaching to first-class Honours, Oxford Senior (local) and London Matriculation, Division 1.

Mr. Jenkinson had principally taught classics, French and English, and had lived abroad. He could speak French and Italian, and was musical and athletic. In December 1914, Mr. Jenkinson joined the 24th Royal Fusiliers as a private, and later held a commission in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, from which he was discharged in March 1919 with the rank of Major. He served two years in France and fifteen months in Italy.

The new school at Hemsworth offered places for 195 children, with the minimum age of admission being ten years, and there was a stated understanding that if there were signs of overcrowding then preference was to be given to older children. Alderman Price's wishes had been fulfilled.

It was mentioned to the Governors at this second meeting in August 1921 that there were already more than 36 children in the area waiting to attend the school when it opened.

A month later, the Governors met in the Board Room of the Hemsworth Poor Law Institution (later to be Southmoor Road Hospital) to consider the one hundred and twelve applications for the post of caretakers (man and wife) at the new school. The list was reduced to six, with the final decision deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

Also on that September 1921 agenda was the consideration of the 71 applicants for the posts of assistant master, and the 100 applicants for assistant mistress. Once again, the lists were each reduced to six, with the final interviews and formal appointments deferred to the next meeting.

A provisional date for the formal opening of the school was set for either the 14th or the 19th of November, 1921, and the meeting was informed that there had been 75 applications so far for places at the school with a potential capacity of 195.

The Board Room of the Poor Law Institution was again the venue for the Governors' next meeting in October 1921, presided over by Councillor G. Price. Also present were Councillor Mrs. Salisbury, Mrs. Garstang, Mrs. Guest, Mrs. Price, Councillors J. Peckett, H.D. Clough, J. Picken, J. Potts and W.L. Lawton. On that particular Friday afternoon, all the short-listed candidates were interviewed.

Miss D.L. Prince, B.A., of Bradford, and Miss Elsie Jackson of Newton Abbott received the appointments as assistant mistresses, along with Mr. Ernest Dickinson B.Sc. of Keighley, who was appointed assistant master at a salary of £267 10s per annum.

Mr. and Mrs. Manning, of Woodseats, Sheffield, were appointed as the first caretakers of Hemsworth Secondary School.

Governors' Meeting November 1921

A new participant was listed at the November meeting of the Governors, the newly-appointed Head Master, Mr. A.G. Jenkinson M.A., who would no doubt have exerted his influence over the appointment of Miss M.A. Griffiths B.A. as Senior Mistress at that meeting. It would seem no coincidence that Miss Griffiths came from St. Austell, Cornwall, which is also mentioned on the CV of Mr. Jenkinson. Only six applications had been received for the post of a second assistant master, and so a further advertisement was decided upon.

New figures appeared for the number of places available at the school, down from 195 to 185. 96 students had been accepted for the entrance examination, to take place without delay, and the formal opening of the school was to take place on November 18th 1921. The Chairman of the West Riding Higher Education Committee, Councillor Edwin Talbot, had accepted the invitation to perform the ceremony. A draft prospectus was submitted and approved, and navy blue and red were adopted as the school colours.

Mrs. Alice Schorah questioned whether people in certain parishes could afford to keep their children at school until the age of sixteen. At Shafton, she knew that the parents liked their children to begin working at the age of 14. Responding to this point, Mr. Hallam pointed out that it was a condition laid down by the Board of Education that parents should agree to leave their children at school until the age of 16, and unless this was the case, the Board would not make grants. In any case, the grants awarded to pupils were to cover any hardship involved. As support to this point, Mr. Jenkinson commented that people had got to become accustomed to what secondary education was about.

Councillor Price suggested that once the numbers of students and the districts they lived in were known, then the Barnsley Traction Company should be approached to provide a special bus service for the convenience of students.

The final item on the agenda was the consideration of an application from Mr. Alfred Richards, secretary of the Hemsworth branch of the Workers' Educational Association for the use of a room at the school for evening classes on "Literature". This was not granted, the application being referred to the Hemsworth Education sub-committee.

The Conversion

Once the tenders totalling £2,222 from the contractors were accepted, the adaptation work began. The County Education Architect in charge was Mr. H. Wormald, and his assistant was a Mr. Denton. Within three months of their start in July 1921, the premises had been renovated inside and out, to give as cheerful an appearance as possible, keeping the strictest economy in view. The various contractors were Messrs. H. Brook & Son, builder and plasterer of Brighouse; Mr. J.E. Waite, joiner of Wakefield; Mr. G. Williamson, plumber of East Ardsley and Mr. Charles Knipe, painter, of Bradford each of whom had tendered the lowest price.