



'THE SCHOOL' BY K. S. JOHNSTON

It was in the year 1854 that a petition was sent from Hopton to the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education for aid from the Parliamentary Grant for assistance for the erection of a school on the following grounds, -"that there are in this Parish, 142 children from the ages of 2 to 12 growing up without any regular education, that the poorer class are numerous, and that the tenant farmers are not in a condition either by voluntary assessment of their own Individual means to build a school, the rents being high and the rates heavy".

The signatories to this petition were: —

Thomas Thornhill, Esq. , Lord of the Manor	Rev. Robert Hammond
Rev. Henry Dawson, M.A. Rector	William Scott, Draper
Thomas Robinson, Farmer	William Taylor, Farmer
Isobella Button	George Woollard, Farmer & Butcher
John & Henry Button, Merchants and farmers	

The man responsible for this application for government aid, the Rev. Henry Dawson, had already purchased from Joseph Brooke, for £120, a piece of land measuring 2 roods and 14 perches (just over acre) at the east end of Pound Close, in Nethergate Street, as a site for the proposed school.

Initially, the Rev. Dawson had approached the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, for their advice and financial support. It was with the National Society's aid and encouragement that many schools were built at this time.

By the August of 1854 the Rev. Dawson had received an estimate of £609.8.0 for the building of a school and dwelling house.

Despite the request for government aid most of this money was to be raised locally, and only £258.18.0 was eventually forthcoming from the Committee of Council on Education. The National Society made a grant of £30, and the Bury District Diocesan Board £35, while there

were donations from John Goodrich, Esq., £100, Rev. H. Dawson, £100, Thomas Thornhill, Esq., £10, Mrs. Button and family, £15, and many smaller amounts from numerous other residents.

However, before the government would furnish financial aid they had to be assured that the petitioners had the means of maintaining a school, for which they had to allow an estimated annual income of "at least 7 s 6d. per head for each child, on the total number to be accommodated". Again the Rev. Dawson was forthcoming with financial support with an endowment of £750 to give an annual income of £25. The children were to pay between 1d and 3d per week, to provide an estimated income of £12 per annum. £9 was to be obtained annually from donations and £7 from other sources.

And so it was that the "Hopton Parochial Schools" were built by Thomas Farrow, builder of Diss and Bury St. Edmunds, "for 25 boys, 35 girls, and 40 infants, with house for the mistress in the Parish of Hopton" in 1855. A copy of the invoice is given separately.

The final cost, including fittings, was £813.7.0, which suggests that even in those days there were hidden extras and possibly inflation.

Unfortunately early school records do not exist, but we do know that the children were accommodated in two classrooms, one 12' x 11' for the infant class, and one lofty room 40' x 18' where the children of two classes would sit at long bench type desks writing with slate and pencil.

With certain additions the Victorian building is now well into its second century. No longer in use as a school, it is soon to be converted into a dwelling.