

The Building of the School

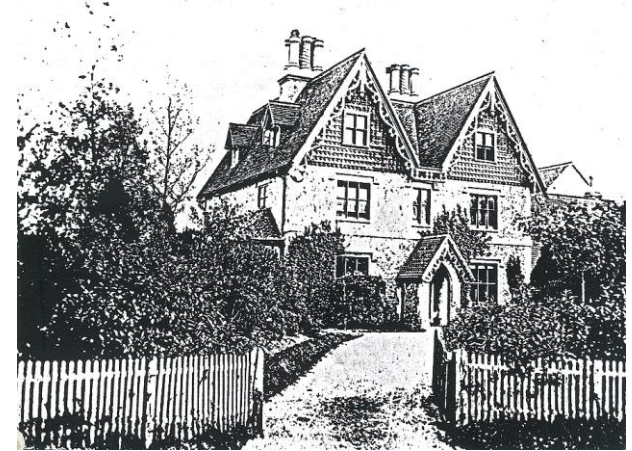
In 1851 Westcott remained a small village, unaffected by the new railway line on its northern boundary and far removed from the Great Exhibition that opened in London. But things were changing.



Holy Trinity Church

William John Evelyn, the Lord of the Manor, had allocated a piece of common land at the western end of the village as the site for a parish church and wealthy landowner Robert Barclay of Bury Hill had provided land at the other end of the village for a Vicarage. By 1852 both were complete.

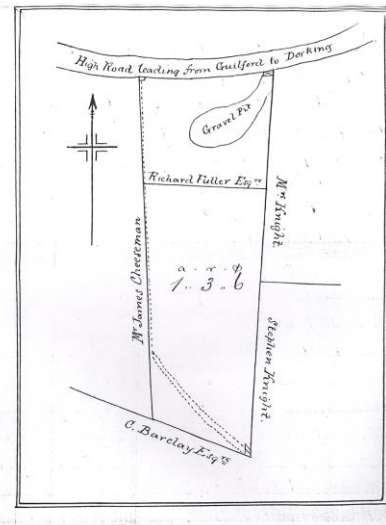
The next task was to provide a village school. The subscription lists so recently completed to finance the construction of the church were reopened and consideration given to a suitable site.



The Vicarage

On this occasion it was Westcott's other principal landowner, Richard Fuller of the Rookery, who on 19th September 1853 agreed to convey unto the Minister and Churchwardens of the parish of Holy Trinity Westcott a piece of copyhold land forming part of a field known as the Ball Field containing one acre, three rood and six perches on the understanding that it would be used as the site for a School for the education of the children of the labouring manufacturing and other poorer classes of Westcott and for the residence of a Schoolmaster or Schoolmistress to provide education of such poor persons in religious and useful knowledge.

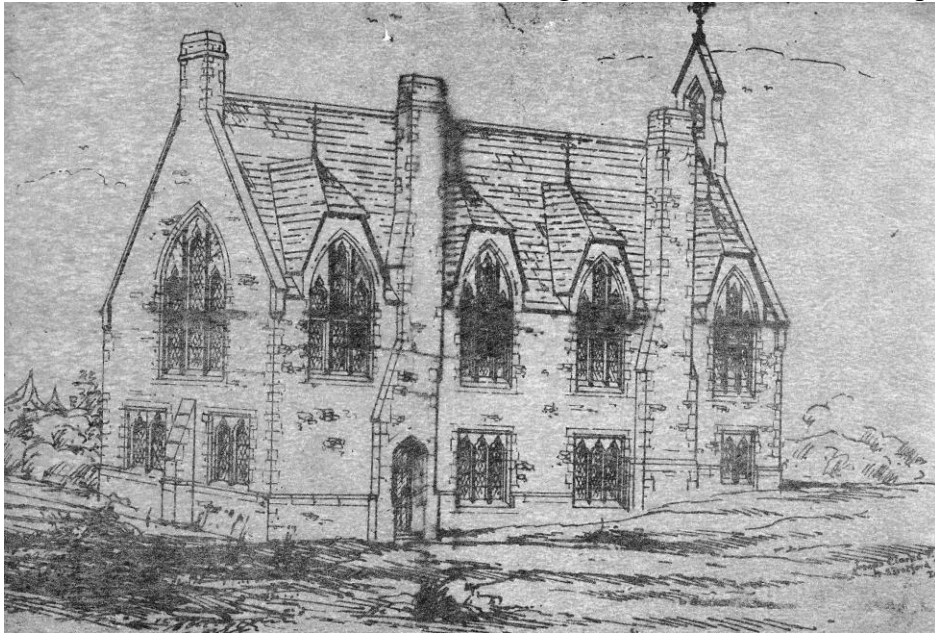
The conveyance included this plan of the location.



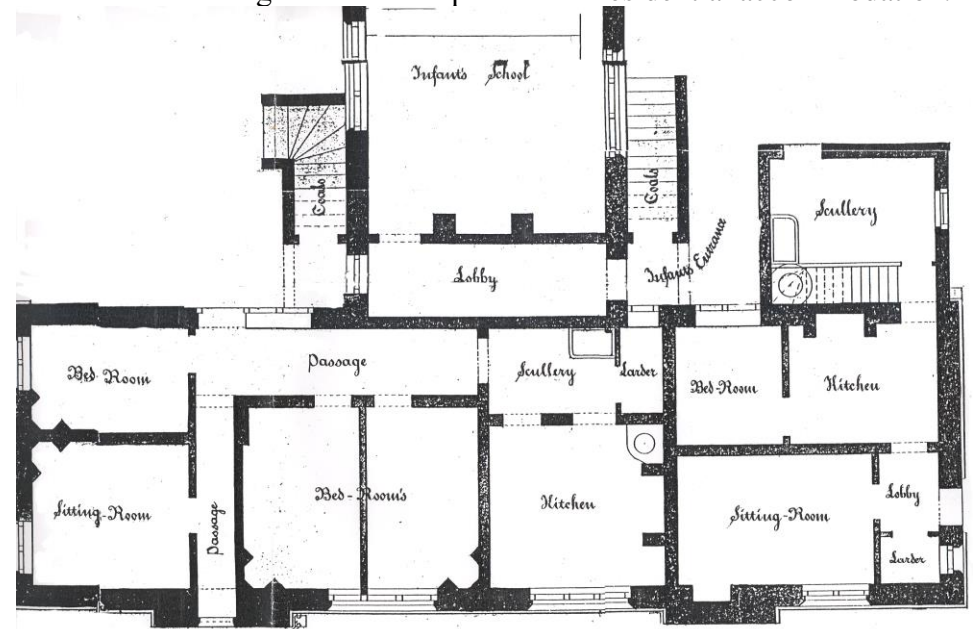
The site was secured but raising the money to pay for a new school was proving difficult. The Reverend Henry Seymour, Westcott's first Vicar and secretary of the School Committee, therefore made an application to the National Society (for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the established church) for a grant. He claimed that: *the children are in a lamentable state of ignorance, that by considerable exertions he had raised £580, that more cannot be found because the inhabitants of the district have just been called upon to meet the cost of building their new church and were shortly to be asked to raise a further sum to enlarge the church to meet the needs of a growing population.*

The National Society approved a grant of £60 and this was claimed on 22 June 1854 when the Henry Seymour, A K Barclay and William Fuller certified that: *The new School-house and Teachers' Residence has been built and finished in a satisfactory and workmanlike manner.*

The plan for the new school did not specify how many pupils it was intended to accommodate but simply set out to provide three school-rooms; one for boys, one for girls and a slightly smaller one for infants. These were to be on the first floor above separate residences for the School Master and School Mistress, as detailed in the following illustrations; an artist's impression of the building and the floor plan of the residential accommodation.



Architect's Drawing of Westcott School



Layout of the Master's and Mistress's accommodation on ground floor

In the early years the number of pupils would have been 100 or so but this increased to 150 in the 1870s following the introduction of compulsory, and free, education and as the size of the village continued to grow. It soon became impossible to teach them all in just three rooms, the largest of which measured only 30ft by 12ft. and in 1882, when there were 270 children on the school roll a separate Infant School was built.

The Log Books record various other milestones, including the introduction of mains water and drainage in 1899:

1883 *The fence round the plantation and Infant's playground was finished today, and the iron fence along the School Lane was commenced.*

1899 *The remainder of the School room has been fitted with new dual desks. The lavatories have both been supplied with a basin and waste pipe, whilst water has not only been laid on here but also in the School, the Master's house, and the cleaner's cottage. Formerly bowls were used and all water drawn from a well 100 ft deep. [The well can be seen in the photograph on page *]*

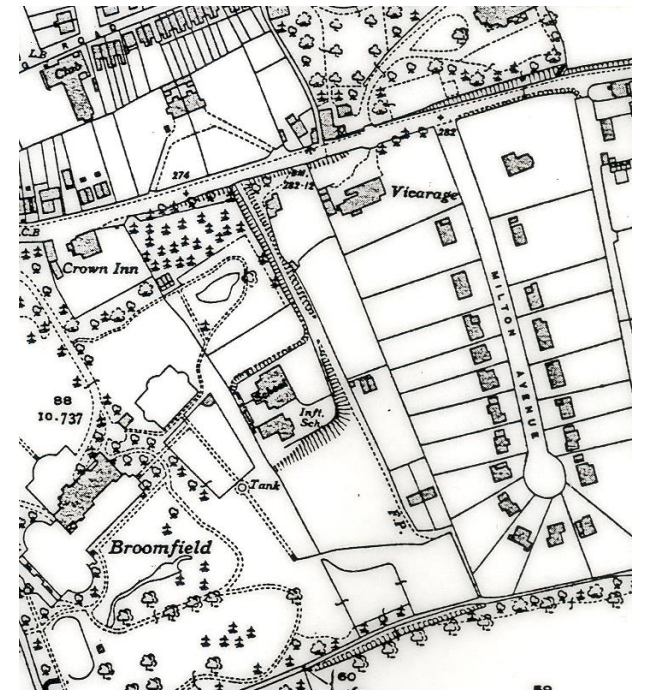
1909 *During the vacation the playground has been greatly improved by the addition of about sixty yards of gravel, and several loads of chalk.*

It was in 1912 that the school began to take on its present appearance when the Headmaster, James Gore, elected to live in his own house and all the accommodation on the ground floor became available, and was significantly increased by building two new classrooms and the School Hall. This extension was again funded mainly by subscriptions from local residents.

The development of the School is illustrated by these two maps.



The first dated 1878 shows the school, with a field to the north and a small plantation to the south. Broomfield to the west is not yet fully developed and apart from the gardens of the two dwellings in School Lane the land to the east remains farmland. Fifty years later, in 1937, the original school has been enlarged and the Infant School added. The layout of the Broomfield Estate can now be seen, School Lane Cottages have been built at the end of the lane, as has Milton Avenue. Today, Broomfield Park has replaced the former Mansion and its grounds, and The White House appears on land opposite the school entrance. Other changes have included the introduction of electric lighting to replace gas lamps, provision of air raid shelters - some of which remain in place today, the replacement of coke-fired boilers by gas, the installation of inside toilets and the provision of a canteen.



School Lane has been asphalted, the school field has been levelled to create an acceptable playing field and the school garden has been redesigned several times

In the 1880's the Schools accommodated over 300 pupils and a roll of 200 or so was normal up until the Second World War. With smaller families and the opening of new schools in Dorking, however, the number of pupils declined and in 1949 as part of a major reorganisation of local education Westcott was given Primary School status to provide education only up to age 11. The average attendance was now only half that of twenty years earlier and in 1971, in a further re-organisation following the Plowden Report, the School became, and remains, a First School for children aged 4 to 8.