

The Second World War brought 68 evacuees from Westgate on Sea on the south coast to Colton and the Ridwares. Most of them attended St. Mary's school along with the local children.

In 1954 the school became grant aided by the Lichfield Diocese. During the 1960's the name became St. Mary's. A major modernisation of the school took place in 1966. During the period of alterations the whole school went temporarily to Colwich school until the modernised Colton school reopened in 1966. The school we have today is a consequence of this modernisation and a few additions that have been completed in recent years. It still serves the local community, continuing the education of Colton children within the village for almost 250 years.



St. Mary's School, Colton in early 1990s.

### References.

The School Log Books, The Governors Minute Book and The School Trust Book & Papers, St Mary's School, Colton.

Census Records, Staffordshire Record Office.

### Acknowledgements.

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### Pictures

The Parr Family.

Colton History Society collection.

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# Colton History Society

## The History of Education in Colton



'School Cottages' The first school in Colton known as 'The Endowed School'.

The first school documented in Colton known as "The Endowed School" opened its doors in 1765. A parochial levy had raised the sum of £350 to purchase a schoolroom and school-master's house to educate poor children of the parish. The sum raised also purchased land in Colton and Uttoxeter to provide income from the rent. The children were to be taught to "read, write, to keep accounts and to 'know their Church of England Catechism". The head teacher had to accompany any of the children to church on a Sunday. The school received a financial

boost in 1821 from Francis Spencer who left in his will interest on £500 to provide it with income.

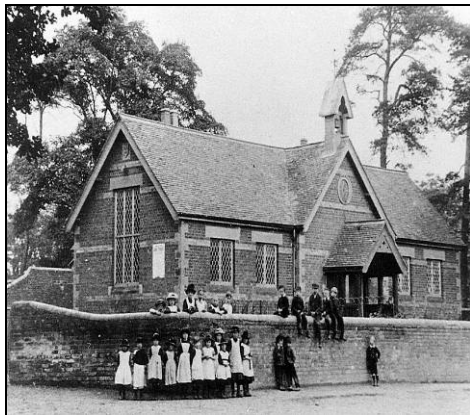
It was not compulsory at this time that children went to school. Those who attended were provided with free quills, ink and books.

The second school known as the "Webb School" began in 1818. The combined wills of two local benefactors Thomas and John Webb, left a Trust fund comprising of the rental from three cottages known as Webb's Cottages, some gardens, a small piece of land and the Three Wheels Inn. This was to provide money for the running costs of a school to educate "20 poor girls of the parish". They were to be taught to read, write sew and knit.

Local collective memory suggests that the school was first held in one of the Webb's cottages and then later moved into one of the buildings adjoining the first rectory where the new rectory now stands.

There was briefly a private school for 11 boys boarding at Colton House in the 1850's run by a Mr. Richard Mills and possibly around the same time another small school for girls run from Bellamour Hall by Miss Oldham.

In the 1850's the Endowed School and the Webb School began to work more closely together and eventually it was decided to amalgamate the two and build a new school for all of the children. Thomas Berry Horsfall, the Lord of the Manor of Colton, donated land and money to build this new school. Colton United School opened its doors in 1863 with the income now coming from the rental of School Cottages, (the former Endowed School), the land in Uttoxeter and the Webb Trust.



Colton United School.  
(Photo by Frederic Bonney)

The new school consisted of one

large classroom divided in two, one side for the boys the other for the girls and also a north classroom for the infants.

When the new school opened the Trustees set a scale of weekly payments for the pupils of 2d. for the first child and 1d. for each additional child. This was increased in 1874 to 3d for the first child, 2d for the second and 1d for any others. Some children whose parents could not afford to pay were paid for by local benefactors.

The headmaster was required to live in the village and a school house was built for him and his family to rent, which can still be seen on Bellamour Way.



Elm Cottage. The house for the headmaster until the 1960's when it was sold.

The school has seen 15 heads to date; ten men and five women. The longest serving was Mr. Broughton between 1923 and 1959.

In 1862 the curriculum was set by the trustees to include "reading, writing, spelling, grammar, history, geography, such subjects as useful or industrial knowledge including needlework and knitting to be taught to the girls, also religious knowledge ..." Church inspectors frequently inspected the school and the reports varied but Religious Education was always reported as being very good!

In the early 1900's gardening became an important feature of the curriculum, and there are still residents in Colton today who can remember tending the vegetables in the school garden as one of their lessons!

The school log books which exist from 1862 onwards give us a great insight into the organisation of the school and who was responsible for it. They record information on the curriculum, the heads and the teachers, the children, changes to the building and how external events affected the school in all sorts of ways.

One important matter recorded frequently was attendance. Attendance did not become compulsory until 1880. For a long time the pay of the head and his staff depended partly on the number of children attending and therefore the head was always

anxious to encourage children to come to school. The children in the early days were often away from school for a variety of reasons. The school log books provide us with the reasons. Illness such as measles often closed the school completely for two or three weeks at a time. Collecting of different harvests often required the children to help and kept them away from their studies. The First World War saw a number of boys leaving early to work in the fields because many of the farm hands had gone to fight. The weather also caused absences. Deep snow and floods frequently closed the school in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1930 it was decided to re-organise schooling for the 11 to 14 year olds on a local level. Those children who did not win a scholarship place to the local grammar schools were now going to go to Colwich School. This school was designated as a central school for the children from the Blithfield, Great Hayward, Hixon and Colton village schools for the senior part of their education.

As for those children who passed a scholarship entrance exam for grammar school and whose parents could afford to send them, the boys went to Rugeley Grammar School and the girls went to Stafford Girls High School.