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Topic:	Chevington School
Date of Record:	July 2025
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Notes:	Part A – The Swimming Pool. Part B – Teachers Come and Go. Part C – The Long Drawn-out Demise of Chevington School.

Chevington School

This article will have relevance to those beginning their school education in the late 1950s to the late 1980's. For it was that following the closure of Hargrave school and subsequent overcrowding of Chedburgh school, children from the village began each school day being transported the 1½ miles to Chevington school. To find out why it is advisable to first read the companion article "Education in Hargrave" also in the History Section of this website.

There is also lots of interesting background and anecdotes to be found under the tabs 'A Local Perspective 2004' then 'Education' to be found in the left-hand column of the website Home page.

For many like the author the experience of being taught by Mrs Allen, Mrs Wilman and Mrs Griffiths in their formative years in the 1960's will stay with them for the rest of their lives. At the very least the tutelage received towards passing the '11+' examination would determine their secondary school education, be it grammar, secondary modern or technical school.

A - The Swimming Pool

Apart from education of the mind, there were physical activities ranging from playing 'tig' (chasing game), football on the sloping adjoining field, high jump in the sand pit, to the ultimate, the semi-permanent synthetic rubber swimming pool available in the warmer months.

The following item was printed in the Bury free Press on the 13th August 1967.

Summer comes in with a splash.

THE recent spell of fine weather has filled the swimming pools with bathers, and these children, under the supervision of a teacher, Mrs. M. Wilman, were having a wonderful time on sunny Wednesday. In the £200 pool at Chevington school. With parents' help, the pupils have raised £100 towards its cost by holding various money-raising events. Four children have learned to swim in the pool since it was erected at the beginning of July.



The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 22nd December 1967

CHEVINGTON CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL. Children of Chevington School gave a Christmas Festival nine lessons and carols to parents and friends in All Saints church. The Rev. Mark Shirley led prayers and lessons were read by Andrew Wales. Barry Sadler, Malcolm Nye, Robin Carpenter, Rosanna Clarkson, Julia Slade, Marc Fisher, Edward Pettit, Deborah Copping and Charles Delefortrie. Others taking part were Alexandra Clarkson, Amanda Clarkson, Nicholas Newman, Kevin Plummer, Stuart Smart and Helen Morley. A collection for the swim pool fund raised £3 14s. 6d.

The above item illustrates the mix of children attending Chevington school with around half those mentioned resident in Hargrave

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 14th July 1972.

Swimmers help the disabled

A sponsored swim is being held this week at the Chevington school in aid of Riding for the Disabled (Millfield branch).

The money raised will go towards the expense of riding lessons for physically disabled children from the Palace School, Ely. They attend Miss A. Hammond's riding school at Stetchworth, six of whose pupils have already learned to ride competently on their own.

Mrs. J. R. Dudley, a member of Millfield branch said: "These lessons are the highlight of the children's week and are a help to them in overcoming their disabilities. It is, of course, a big expense keeping them going and any contributions like this are a great help."



Stewart Smart (10), Jonathan Thompson (7) and Mark Rozier (8) of Chevington school.

Taking part on Wednesday in a sponsored swim.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th July 1972.

Sponsored swim aids disabled

Children of Chevington infants school who took part in a recent sponsored swim have raised £93 so far and all the money has not been collected yet.

The money will go to Riding for the Disabled.

A cheque was presented to Mrs. J. Dudley secretary of Millfield branch at the school's prizegiving.

Our picture shows Mrs. D. Allen the headmistress, presenting a cheque for £93 to Mrs. Dudley.



The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 21st April 1978.

Vandals slash school pool

Forty children at Chevington primary school could be without their swimming pool this summer because vandals have slashed the lining. The damage could cost several hundred pounds to put right as the lining has been deliberately cut near the bottom of the fabric.

Mrs Jane Howard, headmistress, said Suffolk County Council officials would see if the pool can be repaired, but it is feared the complete lining may have to be replaced. She did not know how long the pool would be out of use. "It's a struggle to maintain it and obviously money is not easy."

The cuts were first noticed on Wednesday, just after the school holidays, when Mrs Howard believes the damage was done. Parents and the county council paid for the pool which was opened in May 1967.

B - Teachers Come and Go

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 26th August 1955.

Gifts to teacher

A SERIES of presentations have been made to Mrs. Casey headmistress of Chevington School for the past six years, who is taking up a similar post Parham, near Woodbridge.

The schoolchildren gave her a half dinner service, and the managers presented her with a chiming clock. Mrs. Casey has also been church organist, Sunday school teacher and secretary of the Parochial Church Council, and has in fact identified herself with all phases of village life. The church-people presented her with standard lamp. Mrs. Casey's son Maurice, has won scholarship to Woodbridge School.

Her successor will be Mrs. Holmes, who comes from Yorkshire.

Below is an excerpt relating to Chevington school, is taken from a full-page feature article on the neighbouring village of Chevington

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 8th October 1971.

Meeting the people

CHEVINGTON

.....
The village is growing younger as young marrieds come into it. The number of children attending the Victorian school nearly doubled in recent years.

About 70 youngsters now start their education there, some coming from nearby Hargrave.

Mrs. Dorothy Allen, head teacher, has been at the school for 14 years. Next year the school becomes the first stage of the three-tier education system, taking children from five to nine-year-olds instead of up to 11.

Mrs. Allen does not think this will have much effect on the school numerically as there are now a fair number of under-fives in the village.

She is assisted by Mrs. Raie Wilman, who has been at the school for 12 years, and Mrs. Joan Shaw, who will move to Newmarket middle school next year.

Although the school was formed in the 1840 s, it has modern amenities which include a training swimming pool in the grounds. Last year nine children won bronze county awards.

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The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 9th April 1976

Retiring from 'ideal school'

After 19 years as headmistress of Chevington primary school, Mrs Dorothy Allen retires today.

Mrs. Allen (62), of 1 Queen's Road, Bury St Edmunds, started teaching in 1934, and taught in Brandon before moving to Chevington.

Mrs. Allen told the Free Press she would be sorry to leave her 41 pupils because she thinks the school is "the ideal set-up".

"At this school the children are not transported around the country and the parents know the teachers," she said.

But Mrs. Allen does not plan an idle retirement. "I'm going to do all the things at home I've never had time to do in the past," she said.

Mrs. Allen also plans on going caravanning with husband Ted, to France and the rest of Europe.



Mrs Allen with some of the pupils.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 1st April 1994

Head retires after 26 years

A HEADMISTRESS who has worked in Suffolk for 26 years has retired from Abbots Hall Primary School, Stowmarket.

Barbara Lees has been head of Culford Primary School, Chevington Primary School and an education adviser at Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

Pupils at Abbots Hall, where she has been headteacher for three-and-a-half years, performed a conceit in her honour last week. Mrs Lees, who is married with two children and lives in Culford, is also a local magistrate.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 24th December 1998.

Obituary reports

Mrs E M Griffith

A WOMAN who devoted her life to helping children, has died in Bury St Edmunds aged 94.

Edith Marion Griffiths, of North Court Nursing Home, Bury, died after a long illness. Her funeral was held at St Mary's Church, Newmarket, where she was a regular worshipper, spending time in her later life repairing vestments, church linen and hymn books and counselling anyone in need of help.

Mrs Griffith was born in New Cross, south-east London, in 1944 and married her husband George in 1925 when she qualified a schoolteacher. She taught in Surrey County Council schools until she retired as a deputy head in 1964. As well as teaching she was a Brownie leader. Sunday School teacher and member of St Mark's Church in Mitcham, Surrey.

Mrs Griffith was also a dedicated supporter of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, the Church Union and Church Army mission work with deprived children. When the family was bombed out. Mrs Griffith took charge of a home for evacuated children in Lolworth, Cambridgeshire, and later moved to Chevington, where she was in charge of a larger children's home.

At the end of World War Two, she moved back to Surrey until 1964 when she and her husband returned to Chevington. They moved to Newmarket in 1976 and she worshipped at St Mary's where she was known to many as 'Aunt'. Mn. Griffith leaves two daughters and a son, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 11th September 2015.

Raie Wilman Obituary

RAIE WILMAN Passed away peacefully in the Norfolk and Norwich hospital on 7th September, aged 87 years.

Teacher of Chevington school for 30 years, she will always be fondly remembered by everyone who knew her and especially her family.

Funeral Service at St Johns Church on Wednesday 16th September at 2pm followed by a Committal Service at the West Suffolk Crematorium - Informal dress. Flowers (no Lilies please) or donations (preferred) to Bury St. Edmunds Society



Former teachers Edith Griffiths and her daughter Raie Wilman are buried and memorialised in the burial ground adjacent to Chevington All Saints' Church.

C - The Long Drawn-out Demise of Chevington School

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th July 1972.

New era in educating the young

Amid end-of-term activity Bury St. Edmunds district primary schools have been preparing for the changeover to comprehensive education in September.

Infant schools will no longer exist under the new system. There will be junior schools for children aged from five to eight.

The government's plan to replace all Victorian primary schools means that both Culford and Chevington schools in the next three years will go into new buildings, the programme for which is scheduled for 1973 to 74.

The new schools will cover areas defined as Culford - Ingham and Chedburgh - Chevington.

School equipment will be moved into the new buildings or shared out among existing schools who will have to cater for the increased number of pupils. A spokesman for the West Suffolk education department said that all the teachers who wished to return to a local school have been offered posts for next term.

Negotiations for school transport are taking place with the Eastern Counties Bus Company and will be finalised in the near future.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 8th September 1972.

WEST SUFFOLK LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Chevington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

NOTICE is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act. 1944, (as amended) that the West Suffolk County Council, being the Local Education Authority, propose to cease to maintain the Chevington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School.

The Managers or Governors of any Voluntary School affected by the proposal, or any ten or more local government electors for the area or any Local Education Authority concerned, may submit objections to the proposal by a letter addressed to the Permanent Secretary, Department of Education and Science, Curzon Street, London, W. 1., which should reach him within two months after the date of the first publication of this Notice.

F. J. HILL. Chief Education Officer. Dated 8th Sept. 1972.

Note: The closure will take effect when alternative places for children attending Chevington School, can be offered in the new transferred Controlled Church of England Primary School to be built at Chedburgh. This is not likely to be ready before 1975.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 24th December 1987.

AXE FALLS ON SCHOOLS

.....CLOSING

Mr Brown (Assistant Education Officer at Suffolk County Council) said: "Our plans are that Ingham pupils should go to Barnham, Eastgate to Guildhall Feoffment, Icklingham to St Mary's in Mildenhall, and Shimpling to Lawshall.

"Horringer, Chedburgh, Chevington and Whepstead will close and a new school will be built at Horringer to accommodate all four schools".

The decision will affect about 250 of the county's children, whose ages range from five to nine. Mr Brown said: "The education committee believe that two teacher schools - which most of these are - are unable to provide as broad a balanced curriculum as we would like."

News of the closure of 32 pupil-strong Shimpling broke as staff and pupils were enjoying a Christmas party. Chairman of school governors Susan Stebbings described the timing as 'predictable', and added: "Although this is the season of goodwill, we feel no goodwill towards Sir Macdonald Miller and the rest of the members of the county education committee."

The timing of the decision was also slammed by James Rogers, PTA, chairman at 35 pupils Chevington primary school. He said: "I am disgusted. To do it as everyone's coming home for Christmas is deplorable. My children will now be shuffled off to a school four miles away." Chedburgh headmistress Mrs Margaret Lang, who has 38 pupils at the school, described it as a 'sad day for the school and the village'.....

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 14th July 1989.

School's out for ever

Schools all over the county break up for the summer holidays on Wednesday but for six schools in West Suffolk, the end of term will be the end of an era.

For most parents, pupils and teachers the end of term means a six-week break from homework, school dinners and three R's. But at half a dozen primary schools in the Bury St Edmunds area it will be a far sadder and more significant occasion.

The schools are closing down for good. On Wednesday afternoon, parents will pick up their children for the last time, and in September they will be starting at a new school in another village.

Horringer, Chedburgh, Chevington and Whepstead schools will be merged in a new school at Horringer, to be known as Ickworth Park County Primary School. Children in Pakenham will go to Norton, and pupils at Shimpling's school will be sent to Lawshall.

Many of the people we spoke to had fond memories of their schooldays, despite the fact that by modern standards the conditions were harsh and the discipline strict.

"If we were naughty we used to get slapped across the knuckles with a ruler," remembers Mrs Lucy Thurston, who was at Chevington School in the 1940's and now works there as an auxiliary helper

"We had ink wells with the old-fashioned ink pens and all the boys used to dip their pens in the ink and flick ink on our work. The girls used to like to write neatly," she said.

Mrs Thurston remembers how at that time Chevington School was a single building. The toilets were in a shed in the yard, and the dinner plates had to be kept wrapped in old newspaper because of mice and birds. The heating was by an old stove that gave off fumes. Books were also in short supply.

"I would be falling asleep because the children were all reading from the same book," remembers Mrs. Raie Wilman, who taught there for 30 years, and was a pupil there before that.

Nicholas Newman
July 2025.