

Parish Relief

Over the years the parish poor have been fairly well looked after under a number of charities which gave relief in the form of money and bread.

The William Gough Bequest

¹William Gough of Sweeny, gentleman, by his Will which was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1669 charged his lands in Trevelach near Oswestry with the sum of £5 a year. The charity was left for the apprenticing of poor children born in the parish, who his cousin Richard Gough of Newton and his heirs should appoint. The money was given to a variety of trades. ²In 1751 it was given to an apprenticed weaver, in 1759 an apprentice shoemaker, in 1770 a mason, in 1778 a cooper. Sometimes the money left over might be distributed to the poor of the parish. In 1799 the money was given to an apprenticed weaver, in 1807 to Richard Donn who was to be apprenticed to a shoemaker in Ellesmere for seven years. The age of apprenticeship seems to have been 14. Girls being apprenticed were in the minority but in 1812 it was given to Hannah Pemberton, aged 14, who was apprenticed to a dressmaker in Shrewsbury. She was given £5. In 1897 the sum of £5 was paid to Thomas Ball, Tailor of Baschurch, being the half payment for the apprenticeship of Charles Cooke. In 1931, £10 was given to a girl who was apprenticed to a hairdressers in Shrewsbury for three years. Her father had to pay another £8 in order that she might be trained. In 1935, £10 was given to a girl for a three year apprenticeship as a Shorthand Typist at Vincent Greenhouse in Shrewsbury. Payments are still made today in respect of apprenticeship tools.

The Thomas Atcherley's Charity

Thomas Atcherley of Marton by his will 1680 left to his daughter Mary Atcherley lands in Eyton (Butts Grove and Butts Grove Meadow) and also a small meadow in Marton, and they were to pay 24 shillings to the Rector on each Good Friday, and distributed on Easter Monday. In 1787 a question arose as to whether this benefaction should be chargeable with land tax or not. It was decided that it should so since that time, two shillings has been deducted from the annual income for the payment of land tax, and the remaining £1-2-0 given to the Rector. This charity was distributed in cash annually at Easter.

The Dame Mary Hill's Charity

Dame Mary Hill of Hardwick in the Chapelry of Hadnall left to the poor of Myddle parish, the interest of £100 to be annually distributed, by her will of 1787. The interest on this £100 was paid by Sir Rowland Hill at a rate of 4% except for two shillings which was to be spent each year in cleaning and keeping in repair the tomb of Dame Mary Hill in Myddle churchyard. In 1883, Lord Hill, who had up to that time paid 4% interest, handed over the capital sum of £100 to the Charity Commissioners, who only allowed 2½%. The income is the benefit of the poor and is distributed at Easter. The notice on the board in the church stipulates that the

¹ Charities records – parish chest

² Document in the parish chest, showing who was given money

income should be divided on the 2nd day of February in each year, but by custom it has for years been distributed on Easter Monday.

The Mr Thomas Watkins Charity

Thomas Watkins of Ely in the county of Cambridge, clerk, left to the poor of this parish the sum of £20, the interest thereof to be divided among those who did not receive any parish allowance.

The Mr Richard Watkins Charity

Richard Watkins of Prescott left to the poor of Myddle parish the sum of £30, the interest to be distributed by the Minister in presence of one of the Churchwardens, or of two credible inhabitants, amongst the poor of the parish who did not receive any parish allowance.

The Mr John Mansell Charity

John Mansell of Myddle left the sum of £10, the interest of which was to be distributed to the poor of the parish on Easter Monday.

These three sums, £20 +£30 +£10 amounting altogether to £60 were in 1794 loaned to the Trustees of the Old Incorporation of the Ellesmere Union Workhouse, from whom the interest was 4% per annum, which was distributed to the poor on every Easter Monday. In 1867 the money was repaid to the Rector and Churchwardens who transferred it to the Official Trustees of Charitable Funds by whom it was invested in the purchase of £66-6-0d of consolidated £3 per cent Annuities. The interest from that amounts to £1-19-7d per annum and though this is a somewhat smaller sum than the previous investment produced, yet it is counterbalanced by the additional security afforded, that the Charity being in the hands of the Charity Commissioners can never be lost or alienated from the poor of the parish. The income is for the benefit of the poor and is distributed at Easter (according to past practice). The income is now £1-13-0d.

³The Unknown Donors Charity

1. Mrs Mary Cotton, late Watkins, of Shotton, widow, left to the poor of the parish to be distributed yearly, the use of £5.
2. Mrs Mary Prithard, widow, left to the poor of the parish to be distributed on St. Thomas's Day the use of £5.
3. Daniel Wittingham gave to be distributed on St Thomas's Day for ever, the use of £5.
4. Roger Chaloner of Marton left to be distributed on St Thomas's Day for ever, the use of £12-10-0d
5. Samuel Furmston of Brandwood, left to be distributed on Good Friday, the use of £8.
6. Elinor Atcherley of Shrewsbury left £10 to be distributed on All Saints Day.
7. Thomas Lloyd of Earnstry left to be distributed on St Thomas's Day yearly the use of £5.
8. The total amount is £50-10-0d.

With £24 of this money, a small field of about an acre was bought at Wolverley near Loppington for which an annual rent of £1-10-0d is received. In 1859 the Rector unable to

³ Parish Magazine 1878

find any account of the way in which the remaining £26-10-0d had disappeared, wrote to the Charity commissioners and received the following reply,

“With reference to the several small benefactions of which you state ‘no account of the way in which these legacies have been paid and distributed can be anywhere found’, I am to inform you that at the date of the Reports of the former Commissioners of Inquiry, (1830) there were paid out of the parish rates the annual sums of 25 shillings and 16s and 6d supposed to be in respect of interest at 4½% on the residue (after payment of £24 for the land at Wolverley) of several small bequests which had been carried to the account of the parish. These sums had been paid for many years.”

When they ceased to be paid, no record can be found to prove. The rent is now £3 per annum which is distributed.

The Richard Gough Charity

Richard Gough left a rent charge on his lands of twelve shillings per annum. Of this eight shillings and sixpence is paid by Newton House Farm and three shillings and sixpence by the owners of Whitehorse farm. This money was to be used to buy bread which was then distributed to the poor of the parish.

The William Watkins charity

William Watkins of Shotton left a capital sum of £5 which was to be distributed in the form of bread.

The Mrs Mason Charity

Mrs Mason, sister of William Watkins in her will of 1724 left the capital sum of 35 which was to be distributed to the poor in the form of bread.

The Richard Hayward Charity

Richard Hayward of Balderton left £10 which was to be distributed to the poor in form of bread.

These bread charities were operated each month. The first two have been lost. There is no record of them whatsoever. In 1884 a sum of eight shillings and sixpence was still continuing to be paid annually from the Newton estate, and three shillings and sixpence from the Balderton Estate, making twelve shillings. This was distributed as bread. The charity was operating as late as the 1930s but has since lapsed.

The Duke of Bridgewater Charity

The charity was founded by the Will date August 1828 of the Rev. Francis Henry Egerton, Duke of Bridgewater and Rector of Myddle 1797-1829. The trustees of the charity should be the Rector of Myddle and two Representative Trustees who shall be appointed by the Parish Council of Myddle. The bequest was of £2000, which was in 1830 invested in 3% consolidated bank stock in the names of Horseman, Punstock, Bate and Deighton. The stock was registered at the Bank of England. It was for the benefit of Hadnall and Myddle Parishes. In 1913, the capital sum was divided and Myddle's portion was £1224 which gave an income of £30-12-0d. The income of the charity was to be made to help the general benefit of the poor of the parish, to infirmaries, or hospitals, clubs for supply of coal and clothing etc; funds in order to provide nurses and midwives; payment for travel to hospital,

medical aid, food and clothing; and temporary relief in money in case of sudden destitution. In 1850 the Rector used the money to help the clothing and coal clubs, and to the poor. Now the money is distributed to the poor mainly. There was no other will after 1829 which left money to the poor.

The Mary Groom Bequest

Mary Groom died in 1934 and bequeathed a legacy of £1000 to the Rector and Churchwardens of the Parish of Myddle. The income of this to be used for the purpose of defraying the expensis of holding a morning service on every Sunday in the year at Harmer Hill School Church. The money was paid over to the Lichfield Defence Bonds. This was then converted to Conversion Stock at 3½% in about 1951. The income is about £43-5-11d.

The Louisa Jane Wynne Bequest

Miss Wynne died in 1949 and left £50, the income of which was to be applied to the upkeep of the burial ground attached to the Chruch of Myddle, also the grave and tombstones provided that if at any time for a whole year the grave including the curb relating to her family was to be kept in proper order, and if not the money was to go to the Royal Salop Infirmary.

There was never a work house in Myddle. The poor were given money and allowed to remain in their homes. The money was to supplement their wages. The overseers of the poor, of which four were elected each year, distributed the money and if the poor had no work, helped them if possible to find some. Often the same overseers were elected for another term of office.

Most of the people of the parish over the centuries have been employed in agriculture. This was by far the biggest industry.

At one time quite a lot of quarrying must have taken place because there are nearly a hundred sandstone houses in the parish, and the quarries show evidence of being worked. Early in the 18th century an agreement was made between Alexander Durncombe, the Countess of Bridgewater's agent, and the Abraham Darby Company giving them permission to mine copper or other minerals at Harmer Hill or Myddle Hill for fourteen years. (see appendix 27) As royalties of the mining, the Countess was to receive one seventh of the ore found. Whether they found any ore is not really known.

Certain people had the right to cut clay on the commons but there were often disagreements about who had the right. (see appendix 28) At Balderton Green in 1751 a certain Charles Goore was trying to assert his right to dig clay for bricks. He believed that Balderton Green really belonged to his estate but it was not worth quarrelling about. Eventually after a stream of letters between the Duke of Bridgewater's agent and Goore, it was decided that he could cut clay from the Green.

The Blacksmith's shop had been operating for nearly five hundred years when it closed in 1950. The shop has now been turned into garages.



Fig 47 The building that was the blacksmith's shop

An interesting story attached to the shop is that of Wild Humphrey of Myddle Castle.

⁴Humphrey asked the blacksmith to shoe his horse back to front so that people following would think he was going the other way. The blacksmith refused, so the outlaw took the blacksmith's wife, who was ill in bed and threw her and the bed into the pond which was near the shop. This pond is not there now. The last blacksmith, Mr. Neal said that he had to finish because there was a lack of work, but until then it had always been a very thriving business.

The Saddler's shop, which was established about 1850, was in a house between Myddle and Myddlewood. To look at it was nothing different from a private house.

⁴ Mr Neal, the last blacksmith

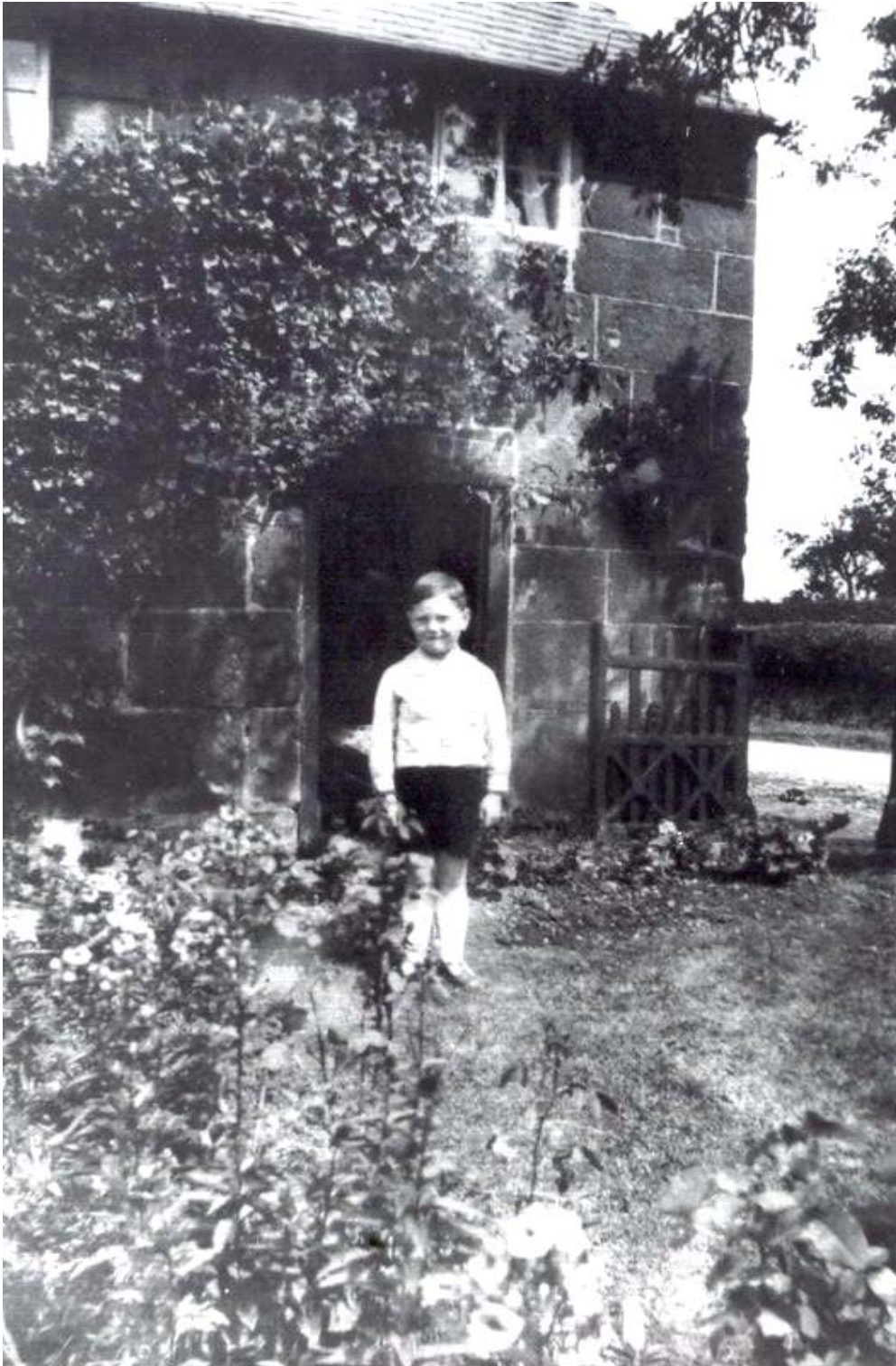


Fig 48 The old saddler's shop

It was a family business run by the Brookfields and went from father to son until it closed in the 1930s. At one time, it was responsible for all the saddle work at Marton Hall, Petton Hall, Fenemere, Myddle and Harmer Hill. With the coming of tractors, the need for the saddlers work was diminished. All these industries have died.

As there have been no really important industries in the parish, except for agriculture, there are no really noticeable changes in the population figures for the parish. They remain fairly static.

	⁵ Shropshire	⁶ Myddle
1801	167,693	779
1811	194,298	775
1821	206,153	783
1831	222,503	807
1841	225,820	834
1871	248,111	764
1891	236,339	690
1901	239,783	675
1911	246,307	744

In the Shropshire figures there is a steady rise of about 8% every ten years until 1841 and then there is quite an increase until 1871 when there is a decrease in 1891. After that there is a steady increase. Both the increase and the decline can be attributed to fluctuations in the mining industries but the decline is also associated with the migration from the country to the town. The increase in 1871 is due to the activity of the coal pits and iron works. In Myddle these figures remain very much the same as they are not influenced by the fluctuations of industries. In 1891 and 1901 there is a decrease and this is probably due to a migration from the country to the town. The 1861 figure of 804 was a decrease of 30 since the previous census so quite a few people were discontented with the country way of life. (see appendix 29) the parish registers began in 1541 and the first volume gives the occupations of the father and the townships where they lived. An example of this is seen in (see appendix 30). The entries are taken at random to show the occupations. From the entries it seems that families of 8 to 10 were very common. The burial in 1598 of the man who drowned in Harmere proves that there as a mere at Harmer Hill at that date.

Births deaths and marriages

⁵ W.W. Watt, Shropshire

⁶ Census and Shropshire Directories



Fig 49 Map showing the distribution of marriage partners for people in Myddle, 1755-1835

In the marriages between 1755 and 1835 often one marriage partner came from outside the parish. There are odd examples of one partner coming from outside the county. In the eighty years there were six people from Montgomery in parishes just over the border, one from Hanmer in Cheshire, one from Liverpool, one from Manchester, one from Wrexham, one from Bangor, one from Cambridge and another from London, and two from Staffordshire; in all about 16 people.

In 1770, 1771, 1799, 1804, 1805, 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810, 1818 and 1827 both partners came from Myddle parish. The run of these marriages from 1804 – 1810 suggests that times were hard. The number of marriages in these years was about three a year, while it was usually about seven. In 1790 there was a marriage where both partners came from Baschurch parish and were married in Myddle as Baschurch church was out of repair. The better years as far as marriages are concerned were 1769 when there were 11, 1779 there were 11, 10 in 1781, 12 in 1789, 14 in 1790, 11 in 1815, 10 in 1822, 15 in 1823, 10 in 1825, 15 in 1828 and 11 in 1834. The highest number of marriages was in 1823. The 1820s seem to have been a time for marriage. (see appendix 31)

1868 seems to have been a particularly bad year. There were 20 baptisms, only one marriage and 18 burials. Of these two were caused by consumption, seven by diphtheria and fevers and four taking place suddenly or after a very short illness. Six children were among the burials, one nine months in July, one aged 14 and one aged 13 in August, one aged 8 another 5 and another one all in August. 1869 was a much better year as far as marriages were concerned – there were five. There were 17 baptisms and 18 burials of which five were children. The fevers had still not died down properly. The next year was one of revival. There were ten marriages, which is usually a sign of more prosperous times, and 15 baptisms.

Shropshire Directories

The early Shropshire directories show that Myddle had a post office in 1851 at Mr. William Parry's house, the letters arriving from Shrewsbury at 8.30 a.m. and being dispatched at 5.00 p.m. Taking the directories from 1851 to 1905 we are able to see the changes in ownership. (see appendix 32) One of the Brandwood farms stayed in the hands of Thomas Birch throughout the years and the farm called The Wood stayed in the Roberts family, although there was a change of name from Thomas to John by 1885. The Rector was the same Rev. G. H. Egerton and the shopkeeper was still Edward Jones. A boot and shoe maker named John Done appears at both dates. Apart from these five people there were a number of ownership changes. In 1851 the public house at Myddle was called the Lord Alford Arms, but by 1856 it was renamed the Red Lion as it is now known. In 1851 William Cheshire is the blacksmith and also the victualler of the Blacksmith Arms, but in 1856 he is just named as the blacksmith. The Blacksmith Arms had evidently closed. The owners of Marton Hall changed twice although it remained in the hands of the Atcherleys until about 1890. The saddlers do not appear in 1851 but are in the 1856 directory. This suggests that the Brookfield family started their business between these years. The occupations that are noted are those which would find a local market for their wares or a local use for their skills.

Gough's 'History of Myddle'

A book which gives an idea of life in the late seventeenth century is Gough's 'History of Myddle 1700 – 1701'. The book measures 12 inches by 8 inches and is now in the hands of the County Archives. Inside there are more than a hundred pages of Gough's decorative hand. It is clearly mid seventeenth century, which is the period in his childhood when Richard Gough learned to write. He enjoyed drawing as well as writing and though he showed no particular skill for this, there are some attractive borders and margins decorated with 'doodle patterns', and another page contains a profile portrait very possibly of himself.

Richard Gough was born in 1634 and his long life took him through five reigns and the Protectorate to his death in 1723. He made a plan of the parish church pew by pew and then wrote the stories of the families entitled to worship from them. He wrote about the Civil War and he said that out of the three townships of Myddle, Marton and Newton, there were no less than twenty men who joined, of whom fourteen were killed.

“First, Thomas Formeston of Marton, a very helpful young man but when he was killed, I cannot tell.”

“Second, Nathaniel, son of John Owen of Myddle; the father was hanged before the wars and the son deserted it in the wars, for he was a Cataline to his own country. His common practice was to come by night with a party of horses to some neighbour’s house and break open the doors and take what they pleased.”

Few of the parish went to serve parliament and of those who did no one was killed. “John Mould, son of Thomas Mould of Myddle Wood, was injured. He was shot through the leg with a musket bullet which broke the master bone of his leg and slew his horse under him. His leg was healed, but was very crooked as long as he lived.”

Richard was a boy at the time, but he did witness a skirmish between the Parliament party and the King’s men in his predominantly Royalist village, and remembered as an old man a strange character who lived for a time with the Rector “having evidently been dispossessed of his benefice” and who “always wore even while preaching a dagger at his girdle underneath this upper garment”.

He nearly always spoke tolerantly of the young, even of three girls who made a plot to poison their husbands. Only one succeeded and she took fright and ran away but was “arrested upon a holiday, dancing on the top of a hill in a company of young people”. A relation of his own married her husband when they were “both so young they could not make passing thirty years between them – they lived lovingly together and had many children”.

Nothing escaped Gough’s pen. As a boy he remembers the Rector as a man “naturally addicted to passion” but “of a discerning spirit to discover the nature and disposition of persons” though the parish clerk comes under criticism as “he can read but little, sing but one tune of the psalms and can scarce write his name or read any written hand”.

His own contentment of a wife and family probably made him more compassionate for the vagrant poor who presented such a problem to every parish in those days. There is a story of a luckless young woman who wandered from place to place with a young baby wrapped in a “piece of green say apron” and accompanied by a “little boy of two or three years old in a whitish coat with ribbons about the waist of the coat”.

He writes that his own aunt Katherine “was so extreme fat that she could not go straight through some of the inward doors of the house but did turn her body sideways and yet she could go upstairs and down again as nimble and tread as light as a girl of 20 or 30 years of age. This perhaps to some may seem idle to think of, but indeed I thought it a very strange thing”.

Everything had some importance to Gough. He was concerned with the human aspect and enjoyed telling stories. One interesting extract is about Myddle sixpences. “John Gossage

was accused for uttering money which was counterfeit, and for keeping a tinker in his back house, who made money. I have heard my father say that there was a sort of sixpences which they called Myddle sixpences, which seemed to be good silver, and went for current money." No trace has been found of these sixpences.

Life at the end of the nineteenth century

The parish magazines give a few thoughts about life at the end of the nineteenth century. There was the Myddle Coal Club of which there were about 80 members. The money was raised by the collections on Harvest Festival Day and a £5 gift from Lord Brownlow. This money was distributed to the members at five shillings each, and the extra was the balance for the next year. In 1868 it was unanimously agreed at a meeting at the Bridgewater Arms to establish a Co-operative Society in Harmer Hill. The Myddle Clothing had a membership of about a hundred. They deposited money throughout the year and then on a day, usually in October, a gentleman came out from Shrewsbury to supply them with goods. They could spend their savings together with a bonus of five shillings each from the Bridgewater Charity. At Christmas time there was always the tea for the Cottagers wives and the school feast.

Myddle School

There was a school at Myddle before 1642 for in that year Gough tells us "the old Communion Table was brought into the schoolhouse for boyes to write on; the old Reading Pew was likewise brought into the schoolhouse for the schoolmaster to sitt on." The present school building, which lies next to the Red Lion Inn, was built in 1838 for 120 children. The HMI report was usually satisfactory. In 1868 the boys were said to be intelligent and to have passed creditable exams. The girls were well ordered. Also in that year, in consequence of the unusual forwardness of the harvest the school was closed Thursday 30th July to 24th August. This shows that agriculture in Myddle depended even on the older children for help. The harvest festival was held on 6th September. In November it was proposed for the first time to open a night school in the winter for the instruction of those young men willing to improve themselves and take the opportunity of free instruction. Owing to the expense – heating and light – it would not be opened for less than twenty. There were enough people interested. In February 1869 the school had still not opened since Christmas as there was scarlet fever in the schoolmaster's family. The Parish Magazine made the plea "This fever is of such an insidious nature, difficult to get rid of when once broken out that we trust parents will still use every precaution both in keeping their children out of the way of infection and in rendering their premises clean and sweet. In the HMI report 1869 they again praised Myddle school but said that the instruction of arithmetic should not be confined within the corners of the examination schedule, but this was the same throughout the county. The following year the authorities suggested that the fires should be lighted according to the temperature rather than the calendar.

After the 1870 Education Act which said that there should be eight square feet for each child reckoning the children as one sixth of the population of the parish, the local magazine reported that the accommodation both at Myddle and Harmer Hill School was sufficient. In 1871 it was reported that Mrs Hand's Government Certificate which was obtained by an examination after a term of residence at Salisbury Training College had been revised and raised to the first class. The night school still operated on two nights a week during the winter and in 1873 a Bible class was added on Sunday nights "thus on three nights a week

an opportunity is offered free to all young men, to improve themselves both in secular and religious knowledge". The parents paid one shilling a quarter for their children's education. The attendance at school was affected by the weather and by the amount of work to be done on the farms, and of course by illness.

⁷"Jan 9th 1889 very poor attendance this morning, rain

July 1st and 8th. Many children absent to help in the hay.

June 26th 1891 5 cases of measles broke out"

On 30th June, the school closed until 20th July because the measles were so bad. On 24th July the average attendance for the week was 39, 30 being ill with measles. In September free education was begun. Also in that month the school was only open from 1 until 3.15 each day as the boys were needed for harvest. The harvest holiday started 12th September. There was a number of outbreaks of mumps in 1892 which kept the attendance down for four months. On May 19th the children were given time off to watch the Volunteers for the Army start from the Red Lion. Very often days were given free to the children so as to attend local treats given by Marton Hall and other farmers. In 1893 complaints were made by the HMIs about the infant room, which they said was badly lit. In 1894 alterations were made to the school in the form of an extra classroom. The 1894 HMI report said that more and better desks were required for the infant room which was also insufficiently warmed. Better lighting was needed in the main room. By 1895 the same complaints were still being made but they were improved before the 1896 report. In February 1897 the school was visited by a Medical Officer of Health as there was a case of Diphtheria at Webscott. Nothing more came of this. The 1897 HMI report was not so pleasing – the work at the infant end was better than the upper school. In 1898 a grant of £12.0.6d was received from the North Shropshire Association of Voluntary Schools which was to be used for the purpose of "Improved Apparatus".

Under the 1902 Education Act, Myddle School was found as receiving children from Myddle, Loppington and Baschurch parishes. The main building was built more than 60 years ago.

Main room	31' length	18' breadth	12' height
Infants room	29	14	12
Class room	16	14	12

The number of places recognized was 120, the average attendance being 62 and the number on the books in 1901 was 80. The Head Teacher was paid £44 per annum, plus half the annual grant, which in 1901 made her salary £78.13.0d. There was no teacher's house.

An agreement of 27th August 1909 between the Earl of Brownlow and Rev. Woolward and managers stated that the Earl agreed to let the school have a house at a rent of £13 a year which the managers were to pay if there was no one in the house.

⁷ Myddle School log books

The most common names to be found in the School Admittance Book 1873 – 1900 were Jones, Mullinix, Vaugham, Birch, Boliver, Adam, Brayne and Lloyd.

A school church was built at Harmer Hill in 1865 for sixty children. It was built by public subscription and was announced free from debt in April 1868. The usual HMI report was like that of 1872. “The scholars are quiet and orderly. The Elementary Subjects are taught with creditable success, although spelling needs attention. The General Knowledge and intelligence of the Scholars is improving. This school was under a disadvantage in that equipment had to be cleared away as it was a church at weekends.”