

THE SCHOOL

The first school in the village, owned by the township, was located a little north of Austwick Hall on Townhead Lane. It belonged to the township and was built on land belonging to the Hall. It comprised two rooms, one above the other, each with a stone fireplace. There was an external staircase to the upper floor which appears to have been the schoolroom. Circles were painted on the floor for children to play games in bad weather. The schoolmaster and his family lived on the lower floor. Thomas Green's charity supported the education of poor children of Austwick Township at Austwick School with £50 bequeathed in his will of 1769. It provided proper books for five poor boys or girls living in the township. The residue was for the use of the schoolmaster for instructing the reading of English. In 1797 £3 pa was to be paid to the schoolmaster. Anne Hargeaves' charity later contributed £3 pa. In 1831 £520 was raised by subscription – the interest to be applied to paying for instruction of thirteen children resident in Austwick Township. These children were nominated by the subscribers – one child for each £40 subscribed.. The children were to be taught reading, instructed according to the practice of the Church of England, writing and arithmetic. The various charities are described in more detail in the Charity Commissioners Report of 1894.

The first known named schoolmaster was Robert Brown(e) (born 1811) who married Elizabeth Marshall and had three daughters.

The 1841 census shows Solomon Wilson, his wife Judith, a son and daughter, all weavers, and three more young children living in Austwick. An agreement was made in 1842 to exchange the original township school for the cottage and barn where the Wilsons were living. The weaver moved to the former school house and the cottage and barn were demolished. The schoolmaster remained in post and moved to Rose Cottage, near the church. He at one time also lived in what is now the vicarage.

‘Notice is hereby given to the Principal Land Owners, & Inhabitants, &c of the Township of Austwick, that a Meeting will be held in the School Room, there, on Saturday the 16th day of April, Inst. at 6 O’Clock in the Evening, in order to make an Agreement, & obtain the consent of the Landowners, Churchwardens, Overseers & Inhabitants, generally, that the old School House, Premises, &c (the Property of the Township) may be given in Exchange for the House, Garden & Premises &c, now in the Occupation of Solomon Wilson, & for the Barn adjoining the said House & Garden, all in the Town of Austwick, the Property of Thomas Clapham, Esq., Stackhouse, Nr Settle. A new School House is about to be erected by Cha. Ingleby, Ar. Ingleby, Esqres & Miss E. A. Ingleby, provided the Land Owners &c give their Consent for the above Exchange.

Robert Brown, Assistant Overseer.’

A conveyance was drawn up on 28 April 1842 (West Yorkshire Registry of Deeds, OL 438/349 and OL 439/350). Robert Brown is noted as Schoolmaster. William Howson, farmer, is of Austwick Hall. There was a Conveyance of Feoffment from the Churchwardens and Overseers to Thomas Clapham and one from Thomas Clapham to the Churchwardens and Overseers.

A plaque on the wall states that the new school on the main road through the village was built in 1842 by Charles, Arthur and Miss Ellen Abbotson Ingleby of Lawkland Hall. Arthur, in his will of 30 August 1850 bequeathed money generously.

The 1851 census shows that Solomon Wilson was a cotton weaver, his wife Judith a handloom weaver, his four children Ruth (26), John (24), Alice (19) and Agnes (16) were all handloom weavers, and Elijah (12) was a scholar. By 1861 Solomon and Judith were worsted weavers and Alice a silk weaver.

This new National School had headmaster Edward Hedgeman (a Londoner) and Miss Hannah Hedgeman his daughter aged 26 in 1871 as a mistress at the school. The 1871 census also shows Ann Scott aged 71 as a schoolmistress. In the 1881 census Frederick W. Wilson age 23 is schoolmaster and his sister Mary Ann Wilson is schoolmistress.

Former teachers in later years included Mr H. Fryer, Mr Mamby, Mrs E. Thornton, Mrs H. Davis, Mrs M. Wildman and Mrs D. Swale.

There were also schoolrooms provided in the Methodist Chapel opened in 1901.