

History of Kilmeston Village Hall

According to records in the archives in Winchester, Kilmeston Village Hall was originally built as a school house in 1853. It does not appear on maps before 1870. This may be because the previous cartographic record was dated 1843.

School records start in 1871. Interestingly, the size of the hall was annotated on several occasions being 25 feet 3 inches long by 16 feet 2 inches wide by 14 feet 10 inches high (suggesting a false ceiling?). There were no lavatories, no proper cloakrooms, only two small porches. Heating was obviously by open fire as fuel deliveries were regularly made and recorded. At one time the ceiling in the ladies cloakroom fell down and it took about three years to repair.

In 1871 there was one teacher by the name of M. Purcell who remained at the school until 24th December 1878 when Eleonora Holder took over. Records show that in 1909 a Miss Edwards helped with the teaching and is thought to have lived in the Old Pump House in Kilmeston and was still living in the village in the mid 1960s. There were regular visits from The Reverend J Maddock.

In spite of the size of the village, it seems that pupils travelled to the school from quite a distance away - many from outlying farms and cottages. Records show that as many as 46 children attended the school at one time, there being two teachers at this time but all the pupils were tutored in the one room. Records from 1871 until 1926 display attendance records of pupils, lists of visitors including the clergymen who visited on a very regular basis (it being a church school), lists of supplies, dates of school inspections and reports.

On January 8th 1872, a door mat was bought for the use of the school at a cost of 5 shillings and 6 pence! On 5th May 1879, they received a bell for the use of the school, the bracket of which can still be seen on the entrance end of the hall. The school was whitewashed on several occasions. Apparently the arithmetic of the school children was a little poor in early days but improved greatly after a number of years. Singing seemed to be a very important part of the curriculum and for this they were marched down to Dean House for practice with a Mrs O.Codrington. The songs were not all religious. It was very interesting to note that the attendance rates dropped considerably at harvest time - most of the children would have helped with the harvest - in one place it mentions a two week harvest holiday.

In bad weather attendance also fell considerably. It was interesting to read that in 1926 the Parish Council were using the hall for their meetings which is still the case today. The school was in continuous ([school photo](#)) use until April 30th 1926 when, due to the small number of pupils, it closed as a school, the remaining pupils relocating to Hinton Ampner School. In the 1930's the hall was used as a club which included snooker and later it was used for whist drives and dances. In the 1970's there were regular dances and Clive Bye ran a youth club for the children of the village and there were Christmas Parties.

Since this time the hall has been used as a social meeting place and club and for private functions such as parties and funeral

wakes, adult education classes, whist drives, fund raising events, harvest suppers and remains the only venue for village activities for people of all ages.

