Educational Institutions

On October 22nd, 1792, a free-school with 50 places for poor children was opened in Ibstock, and a Sunday School for 80 poor boys and girls. Both schools were supported by the charitable contributions of the parishioners. For many years the Sunday School was solely supported by the Rector. Although the number of children was not limited, because of the activities of Dissenters and "the supineness of churchmen of all descriptions and indifference of the poorer class … to religious duties and places of worship," the number did not exceed 60.

In 1818 the Rector of Ibstock, Reverend S. Madan, made a contract with Robert Keigthley, a builder of Leicester, for the building of a school, alias The National School, and a school house at Ibstock. The Contract is held at Leicestershire and Rutlland County Record Office, ref. DE 390/60. Although the Contract refers to a plan showing the location of the school house, unfortunately there is no plan in the packet. The building was three times enlarged: in 1848, 1870 and 1892 to accommodate 360 children. Mr Walter Dunstan, a fondly remembered Headmaster, was still in post in 1922. The last log book held in the County Record Office is dated 1925. The pavement at the front of the building remained cobbled, with granite kerbstones, until the late ninteen-forties.

The British and Foreign Bible Society established the non-sectarian British School on the corner of Melbourne Road and Hall Street. In 1846 the school was in the charge of Mr & Mrs C. H. Badcock; by 1870 Mr & Mrs J. W. C. Johnson were in charge. The building, later known as The Town Hall, was demolished for road widening towards the end of the C20th. Plan DE 630, dated 1846-51, is kept at Leicestershire and Rutlland County Record Office.

A new Church of England School for infants age five (some started at four and a half) to seven plus was built in Grange Road, alias School Fields, in 1895 for 237 children, although as late as the nineteen-thirties an overflow of two classes used the eastern end of The National School building, which by this time had become The Church Hall, which catered for the C. of E. Sunday School, whist drives, plays and dances. Known Headmistresses were: Miss Meek (c.1922); Miss Poole (c.1932); Miss Lander (c.1942); and Mrs V. Hutchinson (c1966).

During the Second World War, the National School was used as a Government warehouse, with only the smaller part available for Mothers' Union, Youth Fellowship meetings, and other congregational activities. Anticipating that the nearby Infants' School buildings would be vacated sooner rather than later, the elders and wise-men of the Parochial Church Council began negotiations in1946 for the sale of the building to George Ward, a shoe manufacturer. When foreign competition caused a decline in the boot and shoe trade, the buildings went out of use until, through the vision and hard work of leading members of Ibstock Community Enterprises Ltd., they were refurbished as "Project 57" (i.e. No 57 High Street), a Centre for Small Businesses and Community Activities such as W.E.A. and Computer Courses. Sadly, when it became obvious that the sale of the nearby Infants' School would be long delayed (and it is likely that the P.C.C. lacked the will to raise sufficient funds to purchase) , use was made of a totally unsatisfactory room above the Rectory stables. Eventually, after much controversy and lack of vision, the whole of the stable-block was purchased in

1955, gutted and refurbished in 1957 as the present Church Hall. Although some found historical interest in the structure, the condition of its fabric promised to become a liability to future generations. A comment on priorities was the continued repainting for many years of a sign warning: "Beware! Spring-guns on these premises."

Educational Changes in The Twentieth Century

A new County Primary School on Melbourne Road was opened for 336 seven to elevens in 1906 and enlarged for 450 in1911, though for some years the National School continued to cater for Church of England children. Mr Frederick Stevens was the Headmaster in 1922. In the nineteen-thirties, under the Headship of Mr Horace Harratt, the school with others was used in the preparation of the ground-breaking Ministry of Education *Primary School Report*.

Later Heads were: Miss Ethel Simpson; Mr Glyn Francis; Mr John Paull; Mr Mitch Moore (Acting Head); Mrs Sandy Falkes (Acting Head); and Dr D. Gwynne Harries.

One of the country's first new H-type Central Schools was built in 1925 on land to the east of Central Avenue, a street which had been developed in 1920 from an earlier footpath by Mr R. B. Thirlby, whose family had owned the land. "H-type" referred to the two wings, one for each of the sexes, and joined about the mid-points of their lengths by a Domestic Science room, opening only into "the girls' corridor". "A-type" would have been a more accurate description as at the north-eastern (front) end the corridors were connected by an assembly hall. The latter was converted into a two storey suite of classrooms in the nineteen-nineties. The term "Central" indicates that children from surrounding villages were collected by bus to attend a school that was able to offer a wider range of subjects than could be had in the smaller village schools. The first headmaster was Mr J. V. Measures of Measham.

Above the entrance of a building in the school grounds adjacent to Central Avenue, alias The Jitty, is a plaque proclaiming that it is "Ibstock Mining and Technical Centre". It has served as a Night School and Woodwork Room - at which time it housed the Village Library (a kind of literary crush-bar where on winter Friday evenings patrons were in danger of having their legs singed by the coke-burning stove). From about 1950 it became the school Metalwork Room, until in the mid sixties the large room was divided into two classrooms. Towards the end of the century a Pre-school Nursery was housed there. Now in 2005 there are plans to convert the building into a Youth Centre and the Nursery to be accommodated once more in what originally was the school Dining Room.

Under the 1944 Education Act the school became Ibstock Secondary Modern. The school-leaving age was fourteen, and later fifteen. When J. V. Measures retired Mr R. M. Warner became Headmaster. In the nineteen-fifties able pupils (so called late-developers who not been selected at eleven or again at thirteen) were encouraged to stay on an extra year to take a limited number of General Certificate of Education and/or Certificate of Secondary Education subjects. The school continued to operate all through the turmoil and chaos of the erection of extensive flat-roofed buildings preparatory to its absorption in 1965 into Stewart

Mason's "Leicestershire Plan". Thus at Ibstock High School and Community College the age range of the pupils (regarded by many as too narrow) was from eleven to thirteen, at which time they transferred to one of the local Grammar Schools: Ashby de la Zouch Boys', Ashby de la Zouch Girls', King Edward VII Coalville, or The Dixie, Market Bosworth, (later becoming Bosworth School, Desford) which with Loughborough had been traditional stepping-stones of aspiring youngsters. With the amalgamation of the two schools at Ashby, The Desford and Loughborough schools ceased to be options. About this time the institution was again renamed to become Ibstock Community College; its Head Teacher became "The Principal" and its pupils "students".

During the nineteen-seventies, the Principal, Mr Derrick Palmer, BA, was the inspiration and driving force of a campaign to raise money through a variety of activities and by public subscription to build an enclosed, heated swimming pool. This proved to be a tremendous task to which he enthusiastically gave most of his spare-time.

Later Principals were: Mr Leonard Taylor; Miss Brenda Buswell; Mr Noel Melvin; and Mr William Kelly.

In 1974 the Infants' School in Grange Road was abandoned and a new Church of England (Controlled) Infants' School opened with the entrance via "The Black Path" south of the County Primary School on Melbourne Road. The original building soon proved to be inadequate, unable to match the growth of the school population.

Mrs B. Jones; Mrs M. Frost; Mrs V. George; Mrs J. Sharp served as Heads of the school after it moved into its new premises