

**THE OLD ORDER BOOK OF  
HARTLEBURY GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL, 1556-1752**

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The Old Order Book of Hartlebury Grammar School, 1556-1752 by David Robertson

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**DAVID ROBERTSON**

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THE OLD ORDER BOOK  
OF  
HARTLEBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
1886—1782.

EDITED FOR  
THE WORCESTERSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY THE  
REV. DAVID ROBERTSON, M.A.,  
RECTOR OF HARTLEBURY, AND HON. CHAPLAIN TO THE KING.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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**T**HIS old Minute and Account Book of Hartlebury Grammar School was found in the iron chest belonging to the Governors which stands in the Vestry of the Parish Church, along with the original Charter granted to the School by Queen Elizabeth, the Seal of the Corporation of Governors, and many old documents.

The Book it may be said is only an old account book, and therefore of little interest. But it is more than that—it contains the history of one of the oldest Grammar Schools in England, from the days of Queen Mary (1556) to those of George II. (1750). It tells us how our ancestors managed or mismanaged village education 300 years ago—without the aid of Inspectors or County Councils or Boards of Education.

No one knows the age of the School.

The Bishops of Worcester have resided at Hartlebury Castle for 800 years. It is more than likely, therefore, that one of them was the founder of the School. It may have been Bishop Carpenter (1444), who lived for 35 years at Hartlebury and was one of the most munificent of the Bishops; or Bishop Alcock (1477), the Founder of Jesus College, Cambridge. We cannot say for certain, but one of the title-deeds dates from 1480<sup>1</sup>, and the Charter of 1558 speaks of the School as having existed "for the space of divers years, although for default of necessary foundation & good government, it hath brought but small commodity."

Queen Elizabeth did not therefore found the School, she only remodelled it, and, at the advice of Edwin Sandys, Bishop of Worcester, gave it Statutes and a Charter.

The titles of the property of the School throw some light on the matter. A large portion of the land is named "Virgin Marys," and another portion "Chaunters Medowe."

Now in 1325 a Chantry was founded in Hartlebury Church "in remembrance of the souls of John de Rodeberewe, Rector,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix II.

"his father and mother, and in honour of the B.V.M." This John of Rodborough, in Gloucestershire, is frequently mentioned in Bishop Giffard's Register, and was Rector of Hartlebury for thirty years (1290—1320). He was much employed and trusted by the Bishop, and was one of the Executors of his will. The Chantry was endowed with land in Hartlebury and the neighbourhood. The income went to support a chaplain, until the Reformation, when the land, we cannot doubt, was given to the Grammar School. Some of it has been lost, but the Governors still own "Virgin Marys" and "The Chantry Meadow," and have documents as old as the reign of Edward IV.<sup>1</sup>

The Seal of the Governors, which bears the date of 1560, has roughly engraved on it the figures of the Virgin and Child; perhaps adopted as the emblem of the School because its chief endowment came from the suppressed Chantry of St. Mary.

The Seal itself is curious—an impression of it is kept in the British Museum. It bears marks of frequent use, although it has been only three times used in the Order Book, and there is a mention in 1686 of its repair, *thus*, "mendynge seale 4d." Beside it was found a rough handle of wood to facilitate its use<sup>1</sup>.

THE OLD ORDER BOOK (12 x 8 in.) is bound in limp parchment, with quaint leather tags. The writing varies from excellent to very bad, but it is never wholly illegible.

THE SPELLING is amusingly erratic. For example, the word *heriot* is spelt in the following ways: *herret, harriott, harriot, harriate, haryette, hereyot, herriott, and haryote!*

One of the Governors spells his own name in *fifteen* different ways:—

<i>Thus, Alan Ley,</i>	Allen Lye,	Allan Lye,
Allan Leygh,	Allen Ley,	Allan Leigh,
Alin Leigh,	Allin Leigh,	Alaine Lygh,
Alaine Ligh,	Alain Lygh,	Allayn Lye,
Allain Lye,	Allaine Lighe,	Allen Liy.

This gentleman was evidently perfectly indifferent as to how his name was spelt. The one thing he aimed at was variety.

<sup>1</sup> See illustrations on page opposite.

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The Old Seal.



Stick shewing manner of usage.



Vignette of Title Deed of Tinnfields, date 1480.



Here are a few choice specimens of spelling taken almost at random :—

coolecktor	<i>collector</i>
sertivicat	<i>certificate</i>
ach wendsdaie	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
Srof tuesday	<i>Shrove Tuesday</i>
Mychlmes	<i>Michaelmas</i>
ester	<i>Easter</i>
ffermor	<i>farmer</i>
a dele borde	<i>a deal board</i>
a cay for the skowlle dore	<i>a key for the school door</i>
chertche	<i>church</i>
sepeuny	<i>subpoena</i>

We presume that English spelling had hardly crystallized into its present unhappy forms.

The person who did most for the refounding and good management of the School was EDWIN SANDYS<sup>1</sup>, Bishop of Worcester, afterwards Archbishop of York.

He obtained the Royal Charter<sup>2</sup> and drew up the Statutes<sup>3</sup>. He arranged that everything should be under the control of the Bishop. The Governors were to meet when and where the Bishop pleased, and were to grant no leases without his consent. The Masters were to work entirely under his direction<sup>4</sup>.

He loved education, and in after years founded a Grammar School at Hawkshead in Cumberland, his native place. And he held that true education is moral as well as mental, and that morality is inseparable from religion. So he desired that the Masters should "instructe, teache, and bringe vppe their scholars as well "in vertue and good learninge" as in "the true knowledge of God "and his holie word." And there was wisdom as well as beauty in his enactments, for he ordered that the scholars should be taught according to their capacities and wits, and not pushed up from standard to standard—however slow or backward—not crammed

<sup>1</sup> A portrait of him is given opposite p. 11. See also Appendix III.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> The Bishop is no longer the Visitor of the school. At present he is not even a Governor.

with undigested knowledge, but "according as the capacities and "witts of the said scholars shall require and aske."

He did not believe in secular education.

The VI<sup>th</sup> of his STATUTES is quaint.

"The said scholemaster and usher shall and may have use and take the profitts of all such *cockefights and potations as be commonlie used in scholes*<sup>1</sup>!"

Such were the recreations of Hartlebury scholars under the sanction of the Bishop of Worcester! Yet the elevating sport of cock-fighting was still fashionable in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the following extract from Berrow's Worcester Journal shows:—"July 5, 1804. "A main of cocks to be fought at the house of M<sup>r</sup> John Lloyd, "known by the name of the Pheasant, in New St, in the City of "Worcester, between the *Gentlemen* of Worcestershire and the "*Gentlemen* of Staffordshire; to show and weigh 35 cocks on each "side, in the main, for five guineas a battle, and fifty guineas the "odd battle. To fight on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, "being the three race days. Feeders: Potter for Worcestershire, "Gosling for Staffordshire."

If any of the Governors wilfully broke or infringed any of the statutes he was to forfeit, for his first offence three shillings and fourpence, and for his second offence to be put out of the Corporation and Government.

The ENDOWMENT of the School was not large. In 1557 the total income was only £9 *os.* 10*d.*, and a year or two afterwards it sank to £7 7*s.* 5*d.* Out of this the unfortunate Schoolmaster, the Rev. Hugh Grant, received a stipend of £7. A chief rent of 12*d.* was paid to the "Lord busshope." The repairs of the property for that year amounted to 14*d.*, and "so remayneth in "stocke, all charge discharged four shillings and fourpence!"

Things had reached a low ebb. So the Governors made an effort.

They sold an old cracked bell which probably belonged to the

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. B. Wilson mentions a similar performance in his time at Giggleswick school; combined with a distribution of figs, which were scrambled for, and with which unpopular governors or masters were pelted.

School, but must have hung in the Church steeple, being too big for any other position, and as it realized the large sum of £25 it enabled them to pay the Master a rather better salary and to do many needful repairs.

The Income of the School remained at about £13 until 1621 when the rents were raised to £20. It remained at the same figure for years, till the Commissioners for Charitable uses interfered; the rents were again raised, and the Income of the School was more than doubled. There was a further rise after about 70 years, and when the Book ends the income of the School stood at £65.

The Head Master did not receive more than £14 a year until 1654, when by order of the Commissioners his salary was raised to £32. A slight rise to £36 was given in 1728.

The usher's salary began at £4 a year and was advanced by very slow stages to £14, and at last it reached the noble sum of £18. We hope he had some other resources!

THE MANAGEMENT of the School property seems to have been uncommonly bad.

The lands were always underlet and the Governors never willingly raised the rents. From time to time they were compelled to do so. They were called before a Commission for Charitable uses in 1620, and again during the Commonwealth, and on each occasion the income of the school was improved by better management and the Masters were better paid.

But this did not last. In 1700 Bishop Lloyd appeared upon the scene and *visited* them. He attended two of their meetings accompanied by his Secretary, Francis Evans, who took the minutes, and sometime afterwards he wrote them the following sharp letter:—

“ To the Governors of Hartlebury Schoole.

“ 13 Aug., 1705.

“ My Good Friends and Neighbors,

“ I have thoroughly considered the case of yo<sup>r</sup> school, and find “ that the real value of the school land is above £100 per annum, “ of w<sup>ch</sup> the reserved rent is but £51 8s. 7d., out of w<sup>ch</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> Schoolm<sup>r</sup> “ has £32 and yo<sup>r</sup> usher £12; the remainder is applied to pay the