

There were 22 children on the school roll in 1958. At that time Miss Freeman was head teacher. Her employment at the school almost equalled Harriet Webb's long record. She taught at the school for 35 years, from 1927 to 1962, lodging in the village and cycling home to Brackley at weekends.

Eventually, and perhaps inevitably, one hundred and three years after it was built, Thorpe's little school closed in July 1967. Seventeen of the nineteen pupils transferred to Culworth School and two transferred to a grammar school. Peterborough Diocesan Board of Finance subsequently sold the land and buildings in 1970 for £500 to a newly formed charitable trust known as Thorpe Mandeville Village Hall.

The head teacher's final record thoughtfully reminds us of different times:
'13 July 1967: Closure of Thorpe Mandeville School. I shut the door of this little school with much sadness. I do not think it is often realised how much a small school gives in experience of human relationships; the younger ones striving to keep up with the older, and the older ones taking thought and responsibility for the younger. It is teaching in its ideal form.'

RHUBARB

Ruth Brown

“Not the money in it there used to be...
Why, there were a hundred or more acres out there.
All grown up; a proper factory we had here.
Rhubarb. Henbane. Belladonna. Poppies.
For the apothecaries in Banbury and further still.
The whole of the village was at it, but that died off.
Like coal coming up the canal in barges,
Then the railway went and the mill packed up.
End of an era.
Built them modern thatched cottages on the old rhubarb field.
The old beds were grubbed out.
One of them new-fangled homeopath shops have opened up
On Church Street, where the old butcher's used to be.
Course, now they want the old remedies back again.
Demand's higher than ever.
Suppose, in a few years' time, we'll have a grant
To put our roots back in again. ”

This poem recently won a national poetry prize. We are privileged to reprint it here.