

Press cuttings

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* *Hay, Eltham No. 2, 1976*
THE possibility of Horseheath losing its school is typical of the current trend for centralisation in all walks of life. Small units in government, business and industry, as well as in education, are often casually assumed to be less effective and less desirable than larger groupings.

Local government re-organisation was a major experiment in centralisation, which not everyone would consider to have been a successful one. The increase in the administrative workload means that a small error can have more far-reaching effects and be much more costly than before.

Small individual problems must take their turn for consideration with major issues. Obviously there are also advantages in having a more central form of local government and the smaller units which preceded it also had their faults.

In education there is quite substantial consideration on the side of the smaller school, although its facilities may appear inferior and its size restrictive. In a village such as Horseheath the school is part of the community, where each child has an individual importance and with smaller classes time is less of a problem.

Although some reasons can be justified for choosing a larger school, the basis should not be a financial one which cannot be conclusively justified.

Second time around for school man

11.3.1976
A 64-YEAR-OLD Horseheath man is collecting signatures for the second petition he has raised during his lifetime to fight the closure of the village school.

Fred Barker of 7 Audley Way, Horseheath, who has been a member of the school managers for 12 years and the parish council for more than twenty years, hopes to get at least 100 signatures on the petition before sending it to the Cambridge-shire Education committee.

Twenty-five years ago, Fred went around the village with his petition when the school was threatened with closure, but it was kept open and now has 31 pupils.

The parish council wrote to the County Education department expressing opposition to the closure of the school, after hearing that it was among 14 small schools in the area which the authority were considering closing for economic reasons.

"My argument is if they are not going to save any money, and it would have to be a vast sum to be justified, what is the point of closing the school. What are Horseheath children going to gain by being taken several miles by bus to another village? We have a swimming pool, television and all the necessary facilities. I cannot see how other schools in the area can improve on these facilities," said Fred.

"I do not believe that big is necessarily better. All four of my sons attended Horseheath school and they have all gone on to take up skilled professions.

"If they do close the school, the village would be without any kind of meeting place. All the different organisations use the school. The village could not possibly afford to buy the school at the sort of price it would be sold at," Fred said.

With some 30 signatures so far on the petition, Fred will be carrying on this week until he reaches his target of 100 names.



Fred Barker gathering names on his petition in the second round of his personal battle to keep the Horseheath Primary School open.

'LET US GROW TO KEEP OUR SCHOOL' SAY HORSEHEATH

A CALL has been made for more development at Horseheath to strengthen arguments for keeping open the 30-pupil village school now threatened with closure by Cambridgeshire County Council.

The planning committee of South Cambridge District Council meeting today will be told in a report from the planning officer that with a present population of 400 going up to 450 by 1981 the Parish Council at Horseheath had asked for a change in policy to allow housing development on a scale that would ensure the continued viability of the school.

While opportunities for development exist at Horseheath any policy change of this nature could only be considered in the context of the forthcoming Structure Plan.

The planning officer, Mr E. J. Wilson, says there are wider social implications to be considered such as the area to the west of Linton, extending from Castle Camps in the south to Carlton in the north having long been recognised as one of the less-advantaged parts of the district in terms of access to local facilities such as shops, community services, recreational opportunities and transport and jobs.

Mr Wilson says there are at present schools in Linton, Balsham, Horseheath and Castle Camps, the last two having less than 100 pupils on the roll. Closure of either would further reduce the level of facilities in the area and it was hoped the County Structure Plan would be examining these problems of this and similar rural areas with a view to developing a coordinated policy.

His report adds: "While Linton and Haverhill must obviously continue to provide most of the services for this area, it might prove desirable to develop Horseheath and Balsham as secondary centres for facilities of a more local nature."

"Such a policy could entail some limited residential development at Horseheath and would argue strongly for retention of the school. It is therefore suggested that any decision on closure taken in advance of the Structure Plan would be premature."

The report also points out that Horseheath school provides the only hall in the village available for public hire.

Parents

Nov. 1981

prepare

for

fight

Parents at Horseheath, near Haverhill, are to launch a campaign to prevent any threat of closure of the village school.

There are only 27 pupils at the school and parents fear the recently announced education cutbacks could lead to its closure.

Although there are no definite proposals to cut back the school, parents are determined to oppose any move that would close it down.

The chairman of the Friends of Horseheath School, Mr Tom Harrison, said they would be trying to get as much support as possible from school governors, councillors, and anyone else who could help.

Prepared

"We are taking a very firm line," he said. "We only need to lose two or three pupils and we are immediately in the firing line."

"We want to be as prepared as possible to fight any threat of closure now and not when it raises its head and it's too late to do anything."

He felt that the county council might take a sympathetic view if enough interest was shown in safeguarding the school.

"We are setting up a fund-raising year to meet the cost of some of the things the council can't meet," said Mr Harrison.

We think the council will take a lenient view where there is a lot of support from the people in the area and if we can take some of the financial burden off the council they will look at us more favourably.

"We think our children get a better education here than at a larger school and that's why we want to save it."

Haverhill Echo

at the time...

Dec. 24 1981

School bids to stay alive

THERE was a further indication of the determination by the residents of Horseheath village to keep open the village school when the Christmas party and draw organised by the Friends of Horseheath School raised almost £400.

This money will be used mainly for the purchase of stationery, books and other essential equipment to benefit children attending the school.

Following the recent announcement by Cambridgeshire County Council of further expenditure cuts in the educational services it would not be possible to maintain the school's high standards without such fund raising activities.

A fund has been set up to ensure the school's future and the committee of the friends are most grateful for the very generous support and help given by so many people.

Parents in closure fight

CEN 7.9.1982

Committee to tackle Horseheath school worry

Parents at Horseheath, near Haverhill, are so worried about the future of the village primary school they have formed a committee to fight any attempt which may be made to close it.

They fear the school, which has about 30 pupils, may be recommended for closure in a review of the county's small schools, to be held in the next few months.

At a special meeting, parents and governors pledged their opposition to any closure, which could mean the children being sent to Linton or Castle

Camps for lessons.

The school's new headmaster, Mr Laurence Barley, who has been appointed only as an acting head, attended.

Afterwards the chairman of the governors, the Rev Vivian Ryder, said: "We are in limbo. Until the education authority's working party makes its decision we don't know where we are."

The senior area education officer, Mr David Spreadbury, said the authority was keeping a watching brief on all small schools with less than 75 pupils.

Numbers had fallen at Horseheath with no sign of them rising again and there was room for pupils in neighbouring schools.



Mr Barley with some of his pupils.

The case for keeping village school

I AM writing to comment on a report ("News," September 7) concerning Horseheath Church of England School.

The last paragraph stated that the numbers at the school had fallen "with no sign of them rising again and there was room for pupils in neighbouring schools."

I presume this information was provided by Mr Spreadbury since it follows on from his statement that the education authority is keeping a watching brief on all schools with less than 75 pupils.

I would like to convey to you the deep concern this paragraph has aroused in our community. As you know the school is under review and will shortly be visited by the primary education working party, who will subsequently make a recommendation about its future. Their investigations

are only in the earliest stages, and no decision can be reached before they have taken into account all aspects of the situation. I would therefore like to complain about that final paragraph which seemed to many of us to suggest that our school is already doomed. We believe very strongly that it is not only viable, but an excellent educational institution and an important asset to the whole community; and we intend to convince the working party of our case.

I can confidently refute the impression that numbers are falling and will continue to do so. A survey of the pre-school children in Horseheath alone suggests that numbers will increase steadily over the next two to three years. This is not taking into account the considerable interest which exists in neighbouring villages among parents wishing to send their children to Horseheath, once its future is assured; nor does it take into account the likely influx of primary school age children

from families moving into the village.

Although conceding that there may be room now in neighbouring schools for our current roll of 30, I would question whether this will be so in a few years' time. DES circular No. 5/77 acknowledges that the primary school population of England and Wales will fall in the mid-1980s, but will then increase again nationally in the 1990s. Surrounding schools already serve rapidly expanding communities, whose child populations are likely to rise markedly in the years to come. Importing children from the Horseheath catchment area would surely just result in larger classes and the overstretching of existing facilities, to the educational detriment of all the children.

The final point to be made is that in 1981, a booklet was published, entitled "A Positive Approach to Rural Primary Schools" by Professor Richard D'Aeth of Hughes Hall, Cambridge. It forms the report of a Cambridge Policy Study in Edu-

cation, which strongly recommends the retention of small schools and re-defines their evaluation. At the time of this publication and since then, it has caused a national stir and much debate in educational circles. How very gratifying it would be if the Cambridgeshire Area Education Committee followed the lead of its own university policy-making group and endorsed their wise principles by putting them into practice.

S. M. FLANAGAN
The Old Rectory,
Horseheath.

CEN 29.9.1982

'Save-school' parents lobby group

Parents at Horseheath, near Haverhill, who are worried that the village school may be closed because it is so small have met councillors to put their case for keeping it going.

The councillors — members of a working party looking into the future of small schools in the county, were visiting Horseheath to see the primary

school.

The parents presented each councillor with a 16-page document saying why the school should continue.

Although no decision has been made yet, parents fear that because it has only about 30 pupils it could become a target for the cost-cutting county council.

They have formed a committee of parents, school governors and supporters to fight any threat to it.

CEN 29.9.1982

Mr Peter Wilton, treasurer of the Friends of Horseheath School, told the councillors that closure would inevitably result in increased public expenditure.

He also claimed that the number of children attending the school over the next three or four years would rise by over 60 per cent.

Afterwards he said: "I think they were impressed by our submission. It's likely to take approximately two months before any report is made."

The chairman of the working party, Coun Jane Brookes, said the parents report would be studied very carefully, and they would be consulted before any final decision.

She said small schools cost more to run than large schools. "You've got to come up with a balance and it's very difficult."

© See also Letters — Page 20.

BATTLE TO SAVE THE SCHOOL

Havenhill Echo 18.11.82

HORSEHEATH has this week begun to prepare battle plans to save the village school which Cambridge-shire County Council are being urged to axe at the end of the 1983 summer term.

The education authority say the present 26 pupils is not a viable number and the Horseheath children should be transferred to the larger village school at Castle Camps.

The closure move is still at a proposal stage and villagers are preparing to fight all the way to save the school, which has existed at Horseheath for about 100 years.

The first round will come next month when under the council's consultancy procedure there will be a public

meeting at Horseheath to outline the plans.

Tom Harrison, a local solicitor, who is chairman of the Friends of Horseheath School, said this week: "We are extremely disappointed the county is going ahead with the closure procedure. There is no doubt it will be opposed. There is a long way to go before any irrevocable decision can be made to close the school."

Cambridgeshire's special sub-committee reviewing the future of small schools met on Thursday and recommended

consultations on the possible closure of schools at Horseheath, Kennett, near Newmarket, Stunney and Prickwillow.

The working party reported that preliminary fact-finding visits had been made to Horseheath, Linton, Balsham and Castle Camps schools and it was proposed Horseheath children should transfer to Camps, four miles away.

26 pupils

"This is the best option in the light of available accommodation," said a council statement, adding that consultations would take place with parents, staff, governors and local councillors.

Tony Millns, county council press officer, said Horseheath had 26 pupils at present. The figure may rise by two or three in due course.

The school had space for 60 children so it was less than half full. At Camps there were 60 children in a school that could accommodate 90.

Mr Millns said parents may be able to choose Balsham as an alternative, but it was likely free transport would only be to Camps.

Wider range

The recommendation is going to the education committee on January 18 and before the school could close it would have to be approved by the county council in February and by the Secretary of State for Education.

Mr Millns said the main reasons for the closure move were Horseheath's small numbers and the fact that a wider range of facilities could be provided at larger schools.

Mr Harrison said one of their arguments would be that numbers at Horseheath would increase. The size of the school was right for 40-50 children and their claim was that over the next few years school figures would be approaching that number.

Protest by Horseheath parents

HORSEHEATH parents, opposing a threat to close the village school, claim that they are not being given enough time to prepare their case.

A Cambridgeshire County Council working party has recommended the school, with less than 30 pupils, should close next September and children sent to Castle Camps, four miles away. The recommendation goes to the education committee next January.

Consultations, including a public meeting on December 10, have started but parents claim the closure move is being rushed through.

Mrs Sue Flanagan, a parents' representative, said they were stunned by the timing.

"We believe this is a particularly short time and feel as though the whole issue is

being railroaded through.

"This is faster than most schools we have been in touch with. We were expecting it to be based on a closure date in 1984."

She also said parents felt the notice of the public meeting was very short.

Many parents would be unable to attend because it coincided with the annual Christmas party for Vestey estate employees.

A county council statement last week said it was because of accommodation availability and future pupil rolls.

Mrs Flanagan said they had asked for specific details of finances, other reasons for closure, and minutes of meetings so parents could judge for themselves.



Headmaster Mr Lawrence Barley with children at the school.

3225828

CEN 2.12.1982

LETTERS

Horseheath school

IN reply to the story in the Echo of November 18 concerning Cambridgeshire County Council's proposal to close Horseheath School in July 1983, we would like to make the following points:

1 It was stated that in the education authority's view the present roll at Horseheath School is not a viable number.

We have done our own local survey of pre-school children in this area and have demonstrated to the review working party that this roll will rise steadily over the next few years, so that by 1986 the school will be filled to capacity.

2 Tony Millns, the county council's press officer, justified the proposal to transfer Horseheath children to Castle Camps by saying: "At Camps there are 60 children in a school that could accommodate 90."

We dispute this assertion. 90 children in the present accommodation at Castle Camps would represent serious overcrowding and an inevitable drop in educational standards.

3 The story also stated: "The recommendation is going to the education committee on January 18." This presupposes that the review working party will not be persuaded by the views of the Horseheath people at a public meeting to be held in the school on December 10.

We approach this consultative stage in the proceedings in good faith, believing this is the opportunity for our views to be discussed with the working party, but it appears from Mr Milln's statement that we

are wrong to believe that any arguments we offer will be taken into account. This makes a mockery of the whole exercise of consultation.

4 Mr Millns went on to say that one of the main reasons for closure was "the fact that a wider range of facilities could be provided at larger schools." We wish to point out that no parent of a child at Horseheath is complaining that our facilities here are inadequate.

We are anxious to refute what we feel are inaccurate or unfair comments on our school's future.

TOM HARRISON
SUSAN FLANAGAN
VIVIAN RYDER
JAMES JOHNSON
JOAN JOHNSON
PETER WILTON
ADAM TULLOCH

(Members of Horseheath working party to save Horseheath C of E Primary School).

CEN 1983

Villagers protest at school closure

PARENTS from Horseheath near Haverhill travelled to Cambridge yesterday to protest about a proposal to close the village's primary school.

They lobbied members of a county council working party looking into the future of small schools which recommended that Horseheath, with less than 30 pupils, should close from next July.

Three parents, Ron and Marina Knowles, and Dr Jamie Flanagan handed out leaflets containing their objections.

The parents have criticised the way the consultation period has been handled. The recommendation was announced in November and has to be approved by the Education Committee on January 18. A public consultation meeting was held in the village last month.

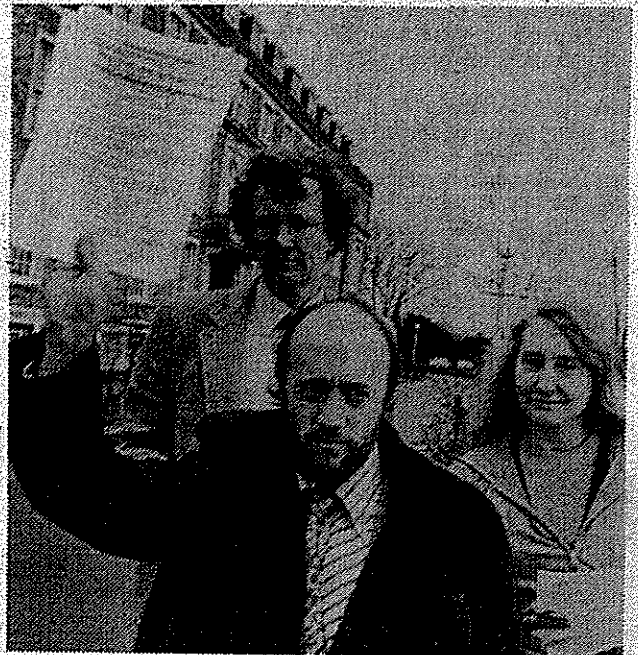
The parents say they have not had enough time to prepare their case and have accused the council of steam rolling the whole issue.

They have also said they might ask the MP Mr Francis Pym, the Ombudsman or the Secretary of State for Education, to investigate the way it has been handled.

There had been fears that their views would not be heard at yesterday's meeting as their representative, Coun Alan Breitmeyer was chairing another meeting at the same time.

However, the working party chairman, Coun Jane Brookes agreed to alter the agenda and Coun Breitmeyer was able to attend the relevant part of the meeting.

The meeting was not open to the Press or public and officials would not disclose what was said or decided. But a letter was to be sent out to the parents last night.



Mr Knowles (centre) with Dr Flanagan and Mrs Knowles (right) outside the Shire Hall. 248334

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Reported

Letters

Why coun to axe sc

17/1/83

YOU are quite right to describe the process of school closures as "painful" in your leading article on January 11, and it is understandable that the parents of Horseheath (others) should fight to retain their local schools.

But in order to understand why the authority should wish to embark on such an unpopular and apparently masochistic exercise your readers should spare a thought for the vast majority of children who attend much larger schools who are suffering because so many small schools remain.

The number of pupils in primary schools has been falling for a number of years. It will fall again next year. The authority receives grant from central government for each pupil and the grant is cut as the number of pupils declines. So we have to reduce our costs by employing fewer teachers and other staff, but in the very small schools it is essential to employ at least two teachers in order to ensure that the whole 5-11 age range is not taught together in one class. Even in three- or four-teacher schools the classes are likely to be small and therefore "uneconomical" in terms of children per teacher.

The result is that the classes in the bigger primary schools — in the city and the larger villages — become unacceptably large because we cannot afford to employ enough teachers to keep classes small in all schools both large and small. And so those in the large schools suffer.

Whilst, therefore, I do understand the concern behind your leader, my sub-committee's responsibility is for all primary children, and it is in their interests that the working party of which I am chairman has the unenviable and unpopular task of considering the possibility of closures.

Incidentally, a village does not necessarily lose its school for all time following a closure. Some years ago the old village school in Hardwick was closed as numbers dwindled. In 1979 a new school was opened following large scale housing development in the village, and these splendid new educational and community resources are a fine example of the county's response to

proven need. The same thing also happened at Earith in 1975.

(Coun) JANE M. BROOKES
Chairman, Primary
and Special Education
Sub-Committee

151 Shelford Road, Trumpington,
Cambridge.

School closures

27/1/83

I SHOULD like to reply to Coun Jane Brookes' letter of January 17, in which she very eloquently sets out the reason behind the authority's current wave of primary school closures.

The motivation is said to be a desire to spread the teaching resources more fairly throughout the county so that pupil:teacher ratios are improved in the bigger primary schools by releasing teachers from the smaller schools after closures.

This would seem at first sight to be an admirable aim, and indeed many well-meaning members of the council's working party, sub-committee and education committee vote to close schools because they sincerely believe they are helping to achieve more equitable pupil:teacher ratios. They are deluding themselves.

One of two things happens to a teacher released by closing a school; he will either be re-deployed elsewhere in the county to a post which already exists (and not one created to improve pupil:teacher ratios) or he will accept voluntary redundancy. It is not difficult to deduce what is actually happening to pupil:teacher ratios when schools are closed. Certainly small classes in the smaller schools are being abolished, so that the lower end of the scale is eroded, but larger classes elsewhere remain

unaffected.

Parents do not regard councillors like Mrs Brookes as ogres. We do appreciate the difficulty of their task these days in attempting to make the books balance, but we become annoyed when closures are somehow justified by making fictitious claims for the effects achieved. We feel morally blackmailed when we are exhorted to "spare a thought for the vast majority of children who attend much larger schools who are suffering because so many small schools remain open."

Councillors and others on the relevant committees actually vote to close schools for a variety of reasons.

Some, as I have suggested, believe the fallacy set out in Mrs Brooke's letter. Others feel that even small financial savings are worth making, despite the regrettable cost to the local community.

Some sincerely believe that two-teacher schools are undesirable for educational reasons, even though there is an impressive lack of real evidence to support this view. Others seem to hold the vague, ill-defined notion that it is inappropriate, almost messy, to continue supporting all sizes and types of primary schools; they feel that it would be so much neater somehow if the children of the county were herded into large, more uniform units.

As a parent and resident of a small village, I am making

an earnest plea for the retention of those schools which have established themselves as educationally sound, and which enrich the lives, not only of the children, but of the whole community. It would be a move towards a saner world.

SUSAN FLANAGAN
The Old Rectory,
Horseheath.

Move by parents to call in Sir Keith

It's 'gloves off' in fight over schools

20/1/83
PARENTS in three Cambridgeshire villages are continuing their fight to save their local primary schools from closure.

And in one of them — Prickwillow, near Ely — parents may invite the Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, to visit the school, if all else fails.

"It is now gloves off," said the chairman of the Prickwillow action group, Mr Derek Andrews.

The county education committee this week recommended that the small schools at Prickwillow (30 pupils, though the number is expected to rise slightly), Kennett, near Newmarket (28), Horseheath, near Haverhill (29), and Stumney, near Ely (12), should be axed.

Chances

The recommendation goes to next month's full county council, though the final decision rests with the Department of Education.

Yesterday, Mr Andrews said there were still several chances for the closure plan to be thwarted.

He said: "It seems to me that whatever the strength of our case the ruling Conservative group on the council is absolutely set on its course.

"It is now gloves off because the county council has treated us very badly. If the council sticks to closure we shall ask Sir Keith Joseph down here to see what they are destroying."

Mr Andrews said the invitation idea was not a hopeless gesture.

Statement

"Last term Sir Keith overturned a plan by Durham County Council to close one of its small schools because he thought their case was not a strong one, so it can happen."

Parents at Kennett will be meeting next Tuesday to formulate a statement for circulation to every county councillor.

The headmistress, Miss Pat O'Donnell, said: "We feel as if we're being brushed aside. We've only had since last November to prepare our case against the closure."

Preserve

She said parents were annoyed that councillors appeared to be ill-informed about the school. One education committee member had said numbers at the school were falling. Numbers were actually on the increase.

"We're really incensed that

they haven't considered the case properly," she said.

Labour supporters throughout the county have pledged their support in the "keep the schools" campaign.

Said Mrs O'Donnell: "We feel that anybody who will help preserve rural life is welcome to help. It's always the rural community which suffers in times of crisis. They're taking the heart out of our village."

Waste

Parents at Horseheath are also to contact individual councillors to get their support to have the education committee decision overturned.

Their spokesman, Mr Peter Wilton, said: "We have been

given very little time during the last two weeks to discuss our case with individual members of the education committee.

"We believe this is yet further evidence of the determination of certain members to railroad this decision through, irrespective of the opinions and wishes of parents and residents."

He said the decision, as it stood, meant a deterioration in educational standards, waste of public resources, loss of teaching jobs and a "sad loss to the village community."

"We do not believe that the majority of elected members on the county council will want this when they have had proper and adequate time to consider the full implications of closure."

Battle for school continues

24/2/83

THE fight to save the village school at Horseheath will go on — even though Cambridgeshire County Council decided on Tuesday, by 32 to 28 votes, that it should be closed.

The decision was described as "lunatic" by Mr Ron Knowles, a parent and member of the school's action committee.

The final decision rests with the Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph, and the action committee now plans to appeal to him.

The school caters for 29 people.

The committee thinks there is a real chance they can beat the plan to close the school.

Another committee member, Mr Peter Wilton, said: "There have been a number of cases which have gone to the Secretary of State with a recommendation for closure, but which have then been overturned."

He said the committee also plans to take up its case with MPs.

One of its major fears is the journey children will have to make along winding roads to Castle Camps School if the Horseheath school is closed.

Mr Knowles said if Sir Keith had to travel by bus from Horseheath to Castle Camps the committee would have no trouble in convincing him.

Horseheath was one of four schools the County Council wants to close because, it says, it cannot afford to employ teachers at schools with only 30 or so pupils.

Coun Alan Breitmeyer (Con), who represents Horseheath, told the meeting there were indications the number of school age children at Horseheath would increase and there would be few savings from closure.

He said: "Shutting the school would remove the hub of village life."

But Mrs Jane Brookes, chairman of the committee which recommended closure, said recent figures showed the birth rate for Cambridgeshire was falling.

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Death sentence for Horseheath school

BUT FIGHT GOES ON

THE final nail was banged into the coffin of Horseheath school on Tuesday when county councillors, who faced jeers and chants from more than 100 protestors outside Shire Hall, decided it should close at the end of the year.

The 29 children at the school will have to travel the four and a half miles to Castle Camps school from January 1984 although the council is going to pay for the transport.

Horseheath was one of four schools closed down on Tuesday following a county council primary school review which is designed to save £60,000 a year.

Horseheath's share of the saving will be just £14,874 and local member Alan Breitmeyer who opposed the move warned the council on Tuesday that the transport arrangements were suspect and an alternative service could wipe out much of the money saved.

HORSEHEATH villagers will continue their battle to save their school with an appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, said Tom Harrison, chairman of the Friends of Horseheath school.

Mr Harrison said: "We are very disappointed at the county council deci-

sion, particularly after we had taken great pains to point out reasons for keeping it open.

"An appeal to the minister is a provision left open to us. The matter will have to be decided by him as final authority. We have no idea how long the appeal and decision will take."

"The buses are intended to be combined with Linton Village College putting the service on a knife edge as to whether it will work. It could cost up to £6,000 to change the system, reducing the saving," he said.

He pointed out that while the number of children at the school at the moment was under 30 it was estimated there would be more in future years making it a viable two

classroom school.

The transporting of children to Castle Camps also worried Bill Brennan who said: "The council should think again on the alternative. The roads to Castle Camps are some of the worst in South Cambridgeshire.

"To send young children along those roads first thing in the morning is not the best choice and I can see a serious accident happening."

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Horseheath School

4/3/83

IN A state of desperation that was verging on outright panic, Cambridgeshire County Council's controlling Conservative group voted on February 22 to close the village school at Horseheath.

So eager were they to perpetrate this act of educational and social vandalism that they imposed a ferocious whip on all their members, determined that, since they could not win the argument they would at least win the vote by the ruthless exploitation of their majority on the council.

Such was their determination to put dogma before democracy that even the chairman voted on the motion for closure, a procedural solecism unknown to me in many years of watching local government in action.

Governors, friends and parents of Horseheath School had spent much time and effort in meeting members of the council to argue the case for the

school to be spared; at least two of the Conservatives, plus our own local Conservative representative, Brigadier Alan Breitmeyer, were convinced by the evidence we produced and promised to vote against the closure, while others said they would abstain. Coun Breitmeyer kept his word and spoke forcefully on our behalf.

They may have been won over by the glittering rhetoric of the Education Committee chairman, Coun John Horrell, who was at pains to explain to his colleagues that the people of Horseheath had been "consulted" about the closure. Coun Horrell has a nice way of tailoring ill-cut facts. One might equally say that a condemned prisoner is "consulted" about his fate.

The members of the school closure committee who visited Horseheath in December came with their minds made up. While Coun Horrell sat silently at the back of the crowded school throughout the public meeting, Coun Mrs Jane Brookes floundered gamely up front. She responded to our succession of arguments against the closure with the patronising comment that we had stated our case well. Given the intellectual level of the justification for closure which came from her, it was hardly surprising that we would prevail in the debate.

Her case was that villages

which lose their schools, and thereby their community centre, thrive on such deprivation and that little children love waiting for buses on cold, dark winter mornings.

Mrs Brookes is so taken by her own logic that she actually trotted out her argument for a fresh airing at the full county council meeting.

It is bad enough to suggest that five and six-year-olds should be expected to wait for 20 minutes or more in a badly lit village street, often shrouded by freezing fog, to clamber aboard a school bus, competing with older children for seats on a half-hour journey through arguably the most treacherous roads in the county. To say they will enjoy the experience beggars belief.

Certainly the Labour and Liberal parties were unable to grant it any credibility, and our thanks are due to them for their support in voting against the closure and for social and educational sanity. The lone Conservative, Coun Breitmeyer, who voted with them is also due our gratitude.

The rest can congratulate themselves on their purblind discipline. It could well snuff out our school. Let's hope it does not snuff out some young lives.

RON KNOWLES

The Old Forge,
Horseheath.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE County Council voted on February 22 to close four primary schools, including the village school at Horseheath.

During the course of the debate on that occasion, Coun Horrell, Chairman of the Education Committee, said that his committee's decisions about school closures should be judged on the alternative proposals rather than on any other issues.

We therefore feel directed to comment on the proposal for Horseheath children.

It is claimed in the agenda for this council meeting that "the transfer to Castle Camps School will provide larger, more modern, better provided and better equipped accommodation for the Horseheath children." They would actually exchange two perfectly adequate, pleasant, well-equipped classrooms for accommodation comprising two classrooms and a hall (necessarily used as a classroom and therefore totally unsatisfactory in its role as hall or gymnasium); moreover they would share this accommodation with the 60 or so children already at

Alternatives facing Horseheath

CEN 10.3.1983
Castle Camps School. Does this really represent an improvement in conditions?

The Council agenda continues: "There are strong educational arguments in favour of the Horseheath children attending a larger school, such as greater peer group stimulus, increased opportunities, more teaching resources and a reduced requirement to teach over an extended age range." There will certainly be more children, since the amalgamation would produce about 90 children, and Horseheath numbers 29 at present. However the effective teacher contact would probably decrease, because there would still only be three teachers at Castle Camps, whereas the two at Horseheath are currently augmented by a variety of voluntary help from trained people. There will be a slightly reduced requirement to teach over an

extended age range, but classes will still have to cover at least a two-year span and will contain about 30 children each, well above the county average. Does this educational provision benefit in any way either the Horseheath or the Castle Camps children?

The other aspect of the proposal for Horseheath is the bus journey. It is planned that the children should travel the 4½ miles along a very difficult route on a bus which would have already taken secondary school children from the Castle Camps area to Linton Village College, and which would then return to Castle Camps School via Horseheath, Shudy Camps and Camps End. Their school day would therefore have to start and finish late because of the requirements of a bus timetable. The bus would be totally unsupervised and would at points along its journey be filled to capacity and beyond with children as young as five years old. Is this a worthy aspect of the overall proposal?

In conclusion we would suggest that if the recommended closure of Horseheath School were to be judged in the light of the alternative proposal, as Coun Horrell urges, no thinking councillor would have voted for closure.

SUSAN FLANAGAN
JAMES FLANAGAN

The Old Rectory,
Horseheath.

SDP's singles out local school

THE proposed closure of Horseheath Primary School has been highlighted at a national conference by Lord Kilmarnock, SDP spokesman for education.

The action committee fighting to keep open the 29-pupil school had sent in details of its case. Now, he has referred to the school's case at the annual conference of the National Association for the Support of Small Schools.

Mrs Sue Flanagan, of Horseheath Manor, an action committee member, went to the conference in London and was thrilled to have the village school highlighted.

Value

"Lord Kilmarnock said it is an example of a school which ought to remain open, because of its value to the community, and the numbers of children weren't that low, and they were going to rise in the coming year," said Mrs Flanagan.

"He said it was a particularly good school, and which had community support."

Mrs Flanagan went to the conference with her husband, James, Mrs Sue Stone, a teacher at Horseheath School, and Mr Tom Harrison, chairman of the Friends of Horseheath School.

The Horseheath alternative

I FEEL that as a member of the teaching staff at Castle Camps school, I really must correct some of the statements in Mr and Mrs Flanagan's letter (March 10) concerning the closure of Horseheath School.

1. Their "totally unsatisfactory" classroom was purpose-built as a classroom, but of a size to be used as a hall, and is eminently satisfactory in that role.

2. It is most unlikely that there will be a total of 90 children — 15 of our present 68 children will be transferring to Linton Village College in September, as will some of the Horseheath children, making an estimated total of 80 children, should the two schools amalgamate. We already have a staffing total of 3.2, which is likely to increase, and we also have voluntary help.

3. Had anyone from Horse-

heath contacted Castle Camps school, they would have been told that the bus is supervised. I travel on it every day, and have done so for the last seven years. The bus already travels via Shudy Camps, and carries at most 20 children, therefore leaving ample room for children from Horseheath. The school day is planned to start at 9.10 a.m., and will finish at its present time of 3.15 p.m., making very little difference to their timetable.

Whilst sympathising with the wishes of Horseheath parents to keep their school open, I do not feel that they are helping their case by misrepresenting facts concerning this school.

MARY PENFOLD

Hollybush Way,

May 83

SAVE SCHOOL CAMPAIGN GETS VIDEO TREATMENT

HORSEHEATH villagers are having a video film made to show to the education minister in the new government, whom they hope to meet at the end of next month to plead against the closure of the school.

The village has harnessed massive support in the fight to reverse the decision of Cambridgeshire county council to close the 30-pupil school at the end of 1983.

The appeal to the minister needed only one submission signed by no less than 11 electors—but more than 30 different submissions have gone in involving 200 to 300 names.

Peter Wilton, one of the school governors, said even the Farmers' Union backed by Sir Richard Butler, the president, had made a submission. Various groups in and around Horseheath made their representations by the end of April to make sure the secretary of state will be obliged to consider the case

Minister to consider Horseheath's case

against the closure.

Mr Wilton said in the next week a professional would be making a video of the school and the village which they would take with them to their expected meeting with the minister.

The film would illustrate what an asset the Victorian school is to Horseheath and district. Mr Wilton believes it would add considerable weight to their arguments.

The campaign to save the school is being headed by Friends of Horseheath School who have been contributing between £500 to £1,000 every year for the past five or six years to buy school facilities.

"This shows what an active com-

munity we have in keeping the school going. Our main argument is that it is worth saving. It is a good school with a good record. "We have pledges from parents at West Wickham and other surrounding areas that they would be prepared to send their children to Horseheath school if its future was assured."

The axe is due to fall because of the small school roll. Pupils would be transferred to Castle Camps School. But Mr Wilton said this presented another argument as the older children would move to Castle Camps in January and then be involved in a further move to Linton Village College next Summer—three schools in less than a year would be most unsettling for the youngsters.

A number of MPs have been approached to support the fight and a pink booklet has been published called "The case for Horseheath School."

CAMBRIDGE EVENING NEWS, Wednesday, June 8, 1983 15

Worried parents confront Pym

THE problems of the Lebanon, the Common Market, and the Arms Race were put to one side when the Foreign Secretary, Mr Francis Pym, visited Horseheath near Haverhill.

Mr Pym, on an election walkabout, found the villagers interested in one thing and one thing only — the future of their tiny primary school, which is due to close later this year.

About two dozen parents and children gathered out-

side the school and questioned Mr Pym for half an hour about the planned closure.

Although they were unable to get his backing for an appeal they are making to the Secretary of State for Education, Mr Pym did say that he had been surprised by the county council's decision to close the 29-pupil school.

After congratulating the parents on how they had presented their case, Mr Pym said: "As you read the case

it's surprising that the decision was taken as it was."

Despite what could have been interpreted as a criticism of the county council, Mr Pym stood up for the right of locally elected representatives to decide local issues.

He agreed to take a delegation of parents to meet the next Secretary of State for a face-to-face discussion, but said convention would pre-

vent him, as a Cabinet Minister, from taking part.

Most parents accepted this but one, Mr Ron Knowles, said it meant they were being disenfranchised because their MP happened to be a Minister.

While Mr Pym was being shown round the school he was approached by a 10-year-old pupil, Michael Wilton, wearing a "vote Pym" sticker, who asked him to sign it.

Alliance claims

PYM TELLS HORSEHEATH PARENTS:

I'll help but I can't fight

FOREIGN Secretary Francis Pym will pave the way for a Horseheath delegation to the Secretary of State for Education to try and reverse the school closure decision — but he won't be able to go into battle with them.

He told disappointed villagers on Monday that he was bound by convention that one Cabinet Minister couldn't make representations to another.

Ringed by parents and others whose hopes of saving their school lie in the deputation to the Minister, Mr Pym answered questions and exchanged views about the school's future.

He complimented the village on the way they had put their case and said he was surprised Cambridge-shire County Council had taken the decision to close the school.

"I am in favour of retaining village schools," said Mr Pym, who has been Horseheath's MP for many years. "But I am also conscious the county council have a responsibility of using their resources. They are the legally elected body."

Disappointment

Asked by one parent, Ron Knowles, if he was taking sides against them, Mr Pym replied: "I am not taking sides. I have promised I will extend every facility to make your representations — and I hope the Secretary of State will come down on your side."

Then Peter Wilton, a governor, asked him if he would take them to the Minister and he replied he couldn't because of the convention — but he said he would introduce the delegation to the Secretary of State first.

Mr Pym said the county council had possession of his file on the school closure issue at Horseheath. "I have met great disappointment here. The right course is to take the case direct to the Minister now and I will arrange that as soon as we can after the election."

Mr Pym then went into the two-room school where he looked impressed by the facilities. One ten-year-old boy, Michael Wilton, pleaded with him to try and save the school.



Francis Pym faced a barrage of questions from villagers when he met them on Monday to discuss the future of their school.

I formed the impression gans" for Friday and Satur- tonic wine.

Pym to help parents

MP Francis Pym's dismissal from the Cabinet has worked to the advantage of parents at Horseheath, near Haverhill, who are fighting to save their village school from closure.

A delegation due to see Education Secretary Sir Keith Joseph soon to ask him to stop the closure will

now be accompanied by Mr Pym.

If he was still Foreign Secretary Mr Pym would not have been able to speak on the parents' behalf, as a Parliamentary convention prevents cabinet ministers from doing so.

When Mr Pym explained this to parents during the election campaign some of them claimed they were being disenfranchised because their MP was a mem-

ber of the Government.

The parents now expect Mr Pym to back them in their fight.

Mr Tom Harrison, chairman of the Friends of Horseheath School, welcomed Mr Pym's decision to join them for the meeting, which will probably take place next month.

The county council wants the school, which has fewer than 30 pupils, to close by the end of the year for economic reasons.

28/6

Anxious parents meet

Joseph

PARENTS from Horseheath, near Haverhill, who are fighting plans to close the village's primary school, have put their case directly to the Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph.

A five-strong delegation led by Cambridgeshire's MP, Mr Francis Pym spent half an hour with Sir Keith giving their reasons why they feel the school should stay open.

Cambridgeshire County Council wants to close the school, which has less than 30 pupils, by the end of the year because of falling rolls.

Parents and villagers have fought the proposals strongly and hope to persuade Sir Keith to use his power to over-rule the council.

Points

Ironically, Mr Pym was only able to attend because he is no longer Foreign Secretary. A Parliamentary convention prevents Ministers taking such cases to Cabinet colleagues.

Mr Pym said: "We had over half an hour with the Secretary of State who listened very carefully to all the points put by the delegation. He said he would weigh very carefully the facts and representations and come to a conclusion, but he didn't indicate when this may be."

A parent, Mr Tom Harrison, said: "Sir Keith Joseph was very courteous and polite. There was one disappointment for the parents. They had made a video film about the school and its position within the community, but it is doubtful if Sir Keith actually saw it. Mr Harrison said he was disappointed but was sure it had been seen by one of the Minister's advisers."

8 CAMBRIDGE EVENING NEWS, Saturday, October 15, 1983

School will close, says Sir Keith

EDUCATION Secretary Sir Keith Joseph has ruled that two Cambridgeshire primary schools — one at Prickwillow, near Ely, the other at Horseheath, near Haverhill — should close.

But he has called on Cambridgeshire County Council to allow both a stay of execution.

Both were scheduled to close at the end of this year, but Sir Keith wants them to stay open until the end of next summer term.

His department is to hold talks with the council about the matter.

The 30 Prickwillow pupils will transfer to Ely, the 25 at Horseheath to nearby Castle Camps.

News of Sir Keith's decision has come as a blow to both villages action groups and to South East Cambridgeshire MP, Mr Francis Pym, who led delegations to Whitehall.

Viable

"I'm extremely disappointed at the decision," said Mr Pym. "I've visited each school myself and put my weight behind the objections that were lodged by the parties concerned."

He said although the two villages were given a "fair hearing" by Sir Keith there was bound to be "great disappointment."

Mr Derek Andrews, chairman of the Prickwillow group, who first heard of the decision from the "News", said: "I'm deeply disappointed. Words cannot say what I feel."

"We just can't understand how the county can be in such a terrible state that it needs to close a school as viable as ours."

He said the council original-



Horseheath School

D2928383



Prickwillow School

2738

ly wished to close it at the end of the summer term this year, but the deadline had had to be put back to Christmas because the formalities had not been completed.

A spokesman at Shire Hall said the council was still waiting to receive the decisions from the Department of Education and Science.

Coun Mrs Jane Brookes, chairman of the working party, which recommended the

closure hinted that the council would accept the suggestion about extending the closure date.

It would make good educational sense to wait until the end of the summer term next year before closing the school, she said.

A spokesman for the Horseheath parents, Dr Jamie Flanagan, said they would not comment until they had heard the decision officially.

What's on tomorrow

DEATH SENTENCE FOR HORSEHEATH SCHOOL

Hav. Echo 27.10.83
HORSEHEATH villagers have failed to win a reprieve for their century-old school which will now definitely close its doors at the end of next summer.

The verdict, announced on Friday, has sickened villagers who fought hard to save the axe from falling on the 25-pupil school.

They had hoped their final plea to the Secretary of State for Education, backed by a special film, would do the trick, but in less than a year's time Horseheath school will just be a memory.

Resistance

But it is on the cards that the village will still be showing some resistance to Cambridgeshire County Council's plans to designate Castle Camps as the alternative school for Horseheath youngsters.

Horseheath school governor Peter Wilton said already many parents had said they preferred their children to go either to Linton or the Meadows school at Balsham.

"There is no public transport to Castle Camps which means parents without transport would be in difficulty when they want to visit the school for some reason or another," said Mr Wilton.

He said they would be making a survey to find out how many wanted to use the designated school.

"If there is a genuine



Ruby Dockerill with some pupils at Horseheath school which is having to close next year.

wish not to do so, Francis Pym, the South Cambridgeshire MP, has offered to take it up for us with the education authority."

Mr Wilton said the governors couldn't understand the logic of the closure bearing in mind the council intended spending £250,000 on extending facilities at Castle Camps.

"Such a proposal seems an appalling misuse of

public resources when there is a perfectly adequate school already at Horseheath with excellent facilities and a very high educational standard," he added.

But in spite of the bitter disappointment, the battle was over. The only small consolation was that whereas the county council had suggested a December closure, the minister had put it back until next July.

Friends of Horseheath School, the parish council and many other local groups and individuals campaigned to save the small school, but Cambridgeshire listed it as one that had to close because of its size.

Nobody is more upset than 72-year-old Ruby Dockerill, who was cleaner and dinner help at the school for 35 years. She was among those featured in

the Horseheath school film sent to the Secretary of State.

Mrs Dockerill said: "It's a real shame. It has always been such a well-run school. Everyone there has been happy and it has a good reputation for education."

Acting head Lauren Barley said the two members of staff — a teacher and himself — had been promised other posts when Horseheath closed.

Village school loss a 'bitter blow'

PARENTS at Horseheath who have just lost a two-year campaign to keep the village primary school open, have reacted bitterly to their defeat.

Last week the Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph, backed the Cambridgeshire County Council decision to shut the 26-pupil school, but postponed the closure from next December to next July. Children are likely to be transferred to Castle Camps School.

In their first public reaction, the parents' spokesman, Mr Peter Wilton, said: "The decision is a bitter disappointment for parents and residents of the village, and neighbouring communities who have all worked so hard to try to save the school. This decision is a black day for the village."

Mr Wilton described the closure as "illogical" and

claimed a public meeting was told last December that the council would be prepared to spend up to £250,000 to develop and expand Castle Camps School.

Transport cost

A council spokesman denied that such a sum would be spent.

He said Castle Camps School could accommodate up to 90 pupils. At present it had about 65 and the 26 Horseheath children could go there, although he added that some may eventually go to schools in Linton or Balsham.

The only extra costs of the transfer would be for transport and staffing. Even then the council would be saving about £15,000 a year by closing Horseheath, he said. If more than 90 pupils were at Castle Camps then a mobile classroom would be used.

"It won't cost anything like £250,000," he said.

Final hours for a village school

HORSEHEATH Primary School breaks up for the last time tomorrow, marking the end of an era for the village.

The Church of England school, with only 25 pupils on the roll, is closing — and the children are being sent to other schools.

The present building was put up in 1872, but records show that the village had a school as far back as 1609.

The Church of England Diocesan Finance Board is selling the school to the village for the knock-down price of £25,000, and the building will end up as a village hall.

Last year parents waged a hard-fought campaign to keep the tiny school open, but were turned down by the Secretary of State for Education, Sir Keith Joseph.

Review

The decision to close the school was taken following a review of small schools throughout Cambridgeshire.

Most of the children, aged four-and-a-half to eleven, will start next term at Castle Camps Primary School, and will be accompanied by one of the school's two teachers, Mrs Sue Stone.

Other children will go to Linton Heights Junior School, Balsham Primary School and Linton Village College.

The head teacher, Mr Laurence Barley, who has been at the school for the past two years, said he would be getting a job at another school in the county.

Mr Barley said that there



Horseheath school with head teacher Mr Laurence Barley, Canon Vivian Ryder, staff and pupils. D5048424

were schools in the village as far back as 1609 and the present building was well over 100-years-old.

Fought

"It is the end of an era for education in Horseheath. Whichever way you look at it, it is a very sad occasion because this typifies a pure English country setting. You cannot get anything better for

a child's start in its education," he said.

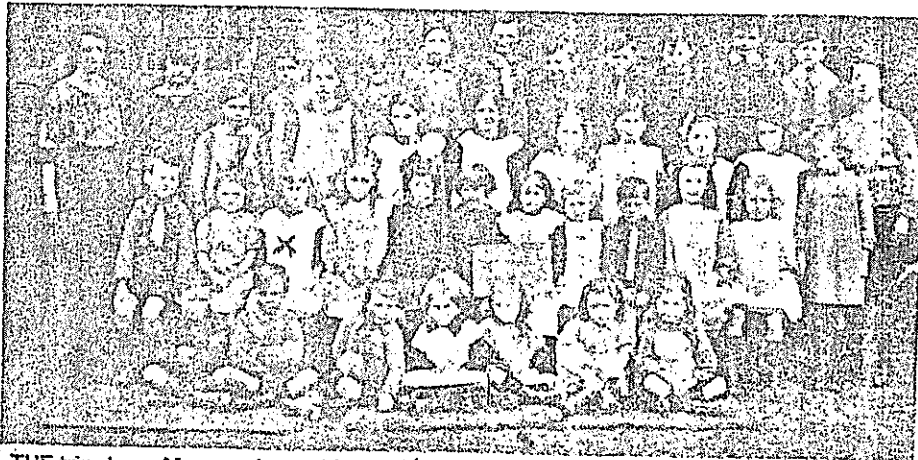
The village, he said, had fought hard to prevent the school closing, and had produced some wonderful reports showing why it should stay open.

"But it came down to finances and the fact that there are not enough children in the neighbourhood to support even a small school," he said.

Mr Barley said he was pleased that the building was to become a village hall.

"I am happy that the building will be used again in some ways for the benefit of children of the parish and the community," he said.

He added that the final chapter in the school's history would be a service at the church on Friday, conducted by Canon Vivian Ryder, who is chairman of the governors.



THE trip down Memory Lane this week stretches back a long way – nearly 70 years in fact as this oldie dates back to 1920. It was a picture taken at Horseheath village school, which no longer exists of course, and belongs to Mrs Alice Free of Streetly End, West Wickham.

They are (back row, from left):- Miss Stinton, another teacher, Stanley Bradnam, unknown, Reg Hurrell, Bill Dockerill, Teddy Cole, Walter Stowbow, Stanley Cole, Foster Jacobs, Walter Dockerill and Kath Cole (teacher). Second row (from left):- Florrie Hammond, Olive Hammond, Peggy Cole, Margery Bowers, Joy Bowers, Joyce Howard, Margery Stinton, Elsie Simpkin and Edie Hammond. Third row, Alan Dockerill, Violet Free, Jessie Dockerill, Brenda Dockerill, Dorothy Stowbow, Betty Stowbow, Emily Atherton, Florrie Atherton, unknown, Deborah Ling and Alice Dockerill. Front row, Jimmy Cole, George Dockerill, Arthur Hammond, Alice Bradnam, unknown, Flora Free and Betty Mynott.