

PAST TIMES

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

Seaton Ross



The new National School, was described as a grey brick building, when built in 1858 at the centre of the village near to St. Edmunds Church. The new school could accommodate up to 90 children.

Prior to 1858, the school was situated at The Cross and stood on the site which is now the old butcher's shop. The school is clearly shown on William Watson's 1828 plan of Seaton Ross at The Cross with the schoolmaster as James Gray.

Formal education did exist in Seaton Ross as early as the beginning of the 19th century, William Watson's plan of 1811 shows Seth Kirkby as the local schoolmaster, who lived opposite to where the present red telephone box and letter box are situated at South End. Seth Kirkby used his own property as a schoolhouse as there was no purpose built school at Seaton Ross in 1811.

A typical village elementary school in the nineteenth century consisted of one classroom in which all the children, ranging in age from five to thirteen years were in the charge of a single teacher.

The school at Seaton Ross in 1857 was described as "a school for boys and girls and a Sunday school is held in the schoolroom. The 1870 Education Act became the cornerstone in education legislation, there was to be provision for every child, and compulsory attendance until at least the age of ten.

Records show that in 1889, the National school (mixed) had an average attendance in that year of 56 with Ernest Newall as the schoolmaster and from 1893 to 1897, the average attendance was 44 with Caroline Sims as the schoolmistress.

Miss Sarah Featherstone became the new schoolmistress in 1901 when the school had an average attendance of 40. The school changed to a public elementary school in 1909 and Miss Featherstone remained the schoolmistress until after the first world war when a Miss Anger took charge in the 1920's.

The school eventually became a county primary school but with education cut backs the school was unfortunately closed in 1961.

So after over 100 years the building closed as a school and formal education in Seaton Ross came to an end. The building was extended in the 1990's and is now used as the village hall.



The foundation stone is still in place above the main door with the inscription - "National School AD 1858."

Malcolm Young