Household & Family Session 6 – Education and Literacy

Literacy

Until the adoption of English as the common language of commerce and government in the 15th century, "literate" implied "Latinate" as well, and literacy was almost entirely the preserve of the Church.

IMAGE – MEDIEVAL SCRIBE AT WRITING DESK

The Reformation led to an upsurge of literacy among laymen.

(Quote 1) In 1638, **David Brown** extolled the virtues of literacy, in the introduction to his "True Understanding of the Whole Arte of Expedition in Teaching to Write":

"All high matters whatsoever nature or importance are both intended and prosecuted, secret matters kept, friends that be a thousand miles distant are conferred with and (after a sort) visited, the excellent words of godly men, the grave sentences of wise men and the profitable arts of learned men who died a thousand years ago are yet extant for our daily use and imitation. All the states, kingdoms, cities and countries of the world are governed, laws and printing maintained, justice and discipline administered, youth bred in piety, virtue, manners and learning at schools and universities and that which is most and best, all the churches of God from the beginning established and always kept unto this day edified".

However, some saw the spread of education as a threat. Henry VIII's 1543 Act for the Advancement of True Religion banned the reading of the Bible in English by such dangerous individuals as serving-men beneath the degree of yeoman, husbandmen, labourers, apprentices or women.

IMAGE – THE GREAT BIBLE, 1539

(Quote 2) In 1660, **William Cavendish,** the Marquis of Newcastle, was complaining to the exiled King Charles II:

"The Bible in English under every weaver and chamber maid's arm hath done us much hurt! That which made it one way is (that) the universities abounds with too many scholars. Therefore, if every college had but half the number, they would be better fed and as well taught. But that which hath done most hurt is the abundance of grammar schools and inns of court … And there are so many schools now that most read. So indeed there should be, but such a proportion as to serve the church and moderately the law and the merchants, and the rest for the labour, for else they run out to idle and unnecessary people that becomes a factious burden to the Commonwealth. For when most was unlettered, it was much a better world both for peace and war."

(Quote 3) Similar sentiments were echoed a hundred years later when **Lord Hardwicke**, the Lord Chancellor, pronounced:

"At the Reformation, invitations were made to bring the poor to schools. That is not proper now, for at present the poor had better be trained up to agriculture".

Why be literate?

Access to schooling was obviously an important factor in the spread of literacy, but so was the perceived *need* for literacy.

Until the 19th century, it was unnecessary for most people to be able to read and write. Their needs could be met by one literate person in the community, usually the local priest or scribe, who could relay the contents of official statements, ballads or printed handbills, while news and entertainment were provided by word-of-mouth.

(Quote 4) For the gentry and middling sort, literacy **was** useful in everyday life. **Sir Nicholas Breton** remarked:

"This is all we go to school for: to read common prayers at church and set down common prices at markets, write a letter and make a bond, set down the day of our birth, our marriage day, and make our wills when we are sick for the disposing of our goods when we are dead!"

Literacy was necessary to some of the "middling sort": For example, yeoman farmers, innkeepers, merchants or apothecaries needed to keep reckonings and record transactions, or read specialist handbooks. These skills were not generally required for craftsmen or those involved in manual trades.

Literacy was most prevalent in urban areas, perhaps as high as 76% of men living in some London boroughs by the mid-17th century.

How do we know *who* could read and write?

We can't know what proportion of the population could *read*, and our estimate of the ability to *write* is based upon evidence such as witnessing wills, depositions to courts and so on. These provide a socially unbalanced record and virtually no evidence regarding female literacy.

The amount of published material can help us estimate the spread of literacy.

IMAGE – PRINTING PRESS

Advances in printing made books cheaper and more widely available. By the 17th century, books are commonly found among the lesser items in inventories, rather than as prized possessions. Cheap almanacs, handbooks, moralising tracts, romances and chap-books were carried even into remote rural areas by travelling pedlars, or chap-men.

Medieval Schooling

Until the 16th century, the only schooling available to anyone but the richest person's children was provided by the Church.

In our region, the great Benedictine Abbey of Durham stood at the heart of a network of schools. Many parishes and large townships had "petty" schools (from the French, "petit" = "small"), attached to the local church and taught by the priest or a junior cleric.

Schooling might begin at the age of 4 or 5 and continue for three or four years, though interrupted by the agricultural seasons. Pupils learned their letters from the alphabet inscribed on a "horn book", a piece of wood covered with a protective sheet of transparent horn.

IMAGE – EXAMPLES OF HORN BOOKS

IMAGE – GIRL WITH HORN BOOK

The students who made sufficient progress would move on to reading and copying text from the Bible. The more able boys might be introduced to simple Latin grammar before going onto a local grammar school.

The Church looked on these petty and grammar schools as fertile ground for cultivating potential clerics. The few boys who progressed from grammar school to university would inevitably become priests.

IMAGE – TUDOR CHURCH SCHOOL

Durham Abbey had its own song school, a grammar school and a small college for novice monks, and for the poorest children there was the Almonry School.

(Quote 5) The 16th century "Rites of Durham" records:
"There were certain poor children only maintained and relieved with the alms and benevolence of the whole house which were called the children of the almonry. going daily to the farmery school, being all together maintained by the whole convent with meat, drink and learning."

These thirty poor boys were taught grammar in a room on the upper floor of the Abbey's farmery, or infirmary. The pupils were provided with bread and beer at the convent's expense, and were also allowed the tit-bits of meat from the novices' table, although the leftovers from 7 or 8 hungry young monks and their masters can't have provided a very substantial addition to the boys' basic diet!

In some townships, chantries were established by private benefactors to support schools for the teaching of local poor children, such as one founded in 1448 by the Earl of Northumberland at Alnwick , or the Chantry of Our Lady set up in 1541 by the burgesses of Morpeth.

IMAGE – MORPETH CHANTRY SCHOOL

The Reformation

The Reformation brought a great upheaval in educational provision. Parishes remained the main providers of elementary education through their petty schools, but the monastery schools were abolished.

The Abbey of Durham was dissolved but re=constituted as a Cathedral run by a Dean and Chapter. The old Abbey almonry school was merged with the grammar and song schools. Two masters were required to teach 18 poor scholars, who had to learn the skills of reading, writing and basic grammar before they were admitted to the school. These "King's Scholars" and their masters received board, lodgings and clothing from the Cathedral.

Edward VI swept away the chantry schools in an attempt to amend *"superstition and errors in the Christian religion"*. Although the King issued an injunction that *"all chantry priests shall exercise themselves in teaching youths to read and write and bringing them up in good manners and other virtuous exercises"*.

However, in many cases the old establishment was immediately refounded, often supported by the original revenues and endowments.

The King's Commissioners reported that the schoolmaster at Morpeth was *"well learned and honest of conversation and qualities"* and the whole of the confiscated properties of the Chantry of Our Lady was given for the maintenance of the school and the adjacent bridge over the Wansbeck. In 1552, the revenue from these properties amounted to £19 10s 8d per annum. Three hundred years later, the value was estimated at £90,000.

At Norton on Tees, the endowment of the dissolved chantry was simply divided between 8 students from the town who were attending university, giving them £7 each for seven years.

Schooling in Large Towns

Schooling in the larger towns was often better provided for than in the rural areas.

For example, the Corporation of Newcastle supported each of the four parish petty schools and a grammar school and, in 1562, they authorised an additional writing school to be maintained in the chapel of the Hospital of St. Mary the Virgin.

Despite this civic support, conditions were not always adequate. When, Henry Ewbank MA took over the school in 1585, he found the building in a state of decay, with rotten floors, unleaded roof and windows without glass.

The Newcastle Corporation records for 1561 show a payment to Peter Demont, Master of the French School and, in 1595 and 1598, a Mr. Rosse received moneys for keeping a French School for the Freemen's children.

The Protestant ethos encouraged individuals to donate to or endow charitable institutions, including a number of grammar schools throughout the region. These often provided educational opportunities for children from a wide geographical area.

(Quote 6) The **Burgesses of Alnwick** appealed for more support for their underfunded grammar school:
"Not so much for the education of their children only, but much more for the information and right bringing up of the youth of the whole countye of Northumberland; for as the said Borough of Alnwick lyeth in the middest of the said County, and therefore of greatest repaire and concourse of people, so hath it no grammar school within 20 miles compass erected for the trayning up of the children of this wild and rude country in good learning and virtuous exercises".

As a result of this appeal, they were able to attract funds for a new school building from several wealthy patrons, including the Earl of Northumberland who was currently residing in the Tower of London at "Her Majestie's Pleasure". All the town's trade guilds gave donations too, with the solitary exception of the Butchers.

The merits of education were filtering even into the remotest parts of the region.

(Quote 7) In 1563, Gabriel Hall of Ottercaps in the wilds of Redesdale, stated in his will that his two youngest sons should be educated at the Grammar School in Newcastle and *"when they have learned that their friends thinks to be done in learning and understanding every one of them to have twenty pounds apiece to make them a stock of merchandise"*.

Grammar school life

IMAGE – 16th CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The I6th century grammar school curriculum was restricted to the "trivium" of Latin grammar, logic and rhetoric. For example, the required reading list in the 1593 Statutes of Durham school included Cato, Ovid, Livy and Homer and *"for recreation's sake the epistles of Mr Ascham or Paulus Manutius"*.

The Master was required to teach his scholars to *"frame and make an oration, according to the precepts of rhetoric"*. Two pupils were chosen each week to *"pronounce by heart their said oration publicly in face of the whole school"*. Durham School held a regular writing competition with the winner claiming the pens and paper of the other boys in the class. As paper was expensive and the boys had to make their own quill pens, this would have been a welcome reward.

The school day was long. The boys of Newcastle Grammar School were summoned to lessons at 6 o'clock each morning, by the bell of St. Nicholas' church. They stayed until 6 at night, with breaks for breakfast and lunch. The day was two hours shorter in the winter months.

In "Dobson's Drie Bobs", a 16th century fictional account of life at Durham School, the hero stole a meat pudding which another boy had placed in front of the school-room fire to warm for his 8 o'clock breakfast.

Some pupils were required to attend school for a short time each day during the holidays *"to repeat such things as the school-master shall think profitable for their better proceeding"*.

Grammar Schools and Civic Events

Grammar school pupils played a central role in civic events.

IMAGE – BEATING THE BOUNDS

In 1667, the Town Council of Darlington provided cakes and ale to the scholars who took part in the "Beating of the Bounds", at a cost of 1s 6d.

The boys of Newcastle Grammar School received gifts of figs for "beating the bounds" of their parish.

In the days leading up to the annual Mayor Making in Newcastle, the pupils elected their own "mayors", and rival groups would march around the toon with their candidate hoisted high on a chair, bedecked with a medal on a chain, preceded by bands of amateur musicians and demanding money from passers-by.

Discipline in 16th century schools

School discipline seems to have changed little from the 16th century to the early 20th century. "Dobson" tells how at Durham School, after breaking his horn-book over a fellow-pupil's head in a fight, he was thrashed by the schoolmaster and, when he went home, he again had to *"untruss and offer his breech to the block"* to be whipped by his uncle.

IMAGE – DISCIPLINE IN A 16th CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Flogging was routine punishment in schools and universities throughout our period, and was used widely as a means to drill Latin and Greek grammar into youthful skulls.

(Quote 8) Ben Jonson described schoolmasters as: *"Sweeping a living from the posteriors of little children."*

An old custom observed in many schools as early as the 16th century was the practice of "bricking up" or "barring out", which took place just before the Christmas holidays.

IMAGE – BRICKING UP

The pupils would lock the school door and barricade the windows against their teachers, and formulate their own rules for the coming year. Sometimes the celebrations became too riotous.

(Quote 9) The Durham School Statutes of 1593 proclaimed:
"If any scholar or chorister...shall presume to shut the school doors or windows...for the keeping out of the schoolmaster, usher or any governors or officers of this Church...or to that purpose shall wear any weapon or use any force, he shall be removed as seditious and unfit".

It was not just the end-of-term riots that made it necessary for school rules to include the prohibition of carrying weapons.

(Quote 10) The **Hexham Grammar School Statutes** of 1599 stated:
"The boys shall use, in or near the school, no weapons (such) as dagger, sword, staff, cudgel or such like. They shall use no bullying, selling or defrauding of their fellows by any ways or means. They shall haunt no ale houses or play at unlawful games as dice, cards or such like".

Some weapons were officially sanctioned though. By Royal Command, all boys above the age of 7 had to engage in regular archery practice.

The pupils of Morpeth Grammar School repaired to the "Green Batts" for archery on Thursday afternoons.

In the fictional tale of "Dobson's Drie Bobs", Dobson's friend Raikbaines brought his "artillery" to Durham School one day so he could spend the afternoon shooting. Unfortunately, the usher left in charge of the school refused to allow the boys to leave the grounds.

(Quote 11) On his way home that night, Raikbaines spotted the usher sitting on the riverbanks and *"therewithal pulling an arrow from under his girdle, he sent it with a right good will, to bid Sir William a good Evensong"*,

Fortunately, no serious harm was caused, except to the boy's rear-end in punishment.

Spread of Literacy

From the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I until the 1580s there was something akin to an educational revolution in England. Greater prosperity led to higher levels of charitable giving by private benefactors, resulting in the funding of many new grammar schools.

IMAGE – 16th CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

There was a doubling of university entrants, including many more from the middling sort rather than solely from the upper elite. University graduates often became schoolmasters or tutors, which increased the availability of education throughout the country.

As a result, levels of literacy improved, mainly among the lesser gentry and yeomen, but there were improvements among husbandmen, tradesmen and craftsmen too.

However, at the end of the 16th century, the worsening economic situation led to a drop in charitable donations nationally. There was a general decline in literacy, particularly among husbandmen and tradesmen. The numbers of university entrants dropped and, consequently, there were fewer graduates available to go into teaching.

In 1576 the Bishop of Durham recorded only twenty one schoolmasters in the whole of Northumberland, and eleven of those were in Newcastle.

Studies based on the records of the ecclesiastical courts of the Diocese of Durham reveal aspects of the spread of literacy in the region in the 16th century.

TABLE – Percentage of Illiteracy in the Diocese of Durham

	Gentry	Yeomen	Yeomen in South & East Anglia
1560s	**41% illiterate**	**63% illiterate**	**50% illiterate**
1580s	**63% illiterate**	**52% illiterate**	***unknown***
1620s	**15% illiterate**	**79% illiterate**	**30% illiterate**

The figures may be distorted by the tendency in the region at that time to equate the title "yeoman" with any person of reputable standing in the community. In the 1560s, only 14% of men in the region were described as "yeomen". This had risen to 47% by the 1590s and 69% by the 1620s. Similarly, many of those described as "gentry" would have been heads of surname clans in the wilder parts of the region's uplands.

17th Century Advances

(Quote 12) During the 17th century, there was another increase in the funding of education by private benefactors, like **Elizabeth Jenison** who, in 1601, gave an endowment of £11 a year for a school at Heighington, near Darlington, to *"give instruction in the Accidence and Lily's grammar. Also in Greek grammar and other easy Latin and Greek Authors, according to their capabilities and as the Bishop of Durham direct."*

IMAGE – 17th CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

This was nominally a free school, but children from the parish whose parents could afford it paid 4d each on entry and 2d quarterly. More affluent parents paid a fee agreed with the Master.

By the early 1640s, literacy levels had recovered to their pre-1580s peak. Perhaps 20% of husbandmen were literate in many rural areas of England.

There is some evidence of the success of these advances in education for the poor.

(Quote 13) Samuel Pepys recorded in his Diary, for 14th July 1667:
"We found a shepherd and his little boy reading the Bible to him, far from any houses or sight of people."

However, for children from poor backgrounds, access to education remained quite limited.

(Quote 14) Thomas Tryon was born in 1634, the son of an Oxfordshire tiler and plasterer. **In his memoirs, written in 1705, he recounted:**
"About five years old, I was put to School, but being addicted to play, after the example of my young school-fellows, I scarcely learned to distinguish my letters before I was taken away to work for my living. All this while, tho' now about thirteen years old, I could not read; then thinking of the vast usefulness of reading, I bought me a primer, and got now one, then another, to teach me to spell, and so learned to read imperfectly, my teachers themselves not being ready readers. But in a little time having learned to read competently well, I was desirous to learn to write, but was at a great loss for a master, none of my fellow-shepherds being able to teach me. At last I bethought myself of a lame young man who taught some poor people's children to read and write; and having by this time got two sheep of my own, I applied myself to him, and agreed with him to give him one of my sheep to teach me to make the letters, and join them together."

The situation was perhaps worst in the North East, where literacy levels among the poor improved little until the period of Puritan government under the Commonwealth in the 1650s. In an attempt to address the situation, a Commission was set up in 1649 by Act of Parliament *"for better propagating the Gospel in the four northern counties"*.

As a result, charity schools were established in towns and villages throughout Durham and Northumberland.

IMAGE – 17th CENTURY PURITAN SCHOOL

The records of Darlington Church for the year 1654/5 show payments made for the teaching of paupers' children in the parish. Dame Seamer received 4s for teaching a boy for a year, while Edward Holmes *"a poor scholar at the petit school"* was given 3s 3d for *"half a year's teaching"*.

END OF PART ONE

Education after The Restoration

The period from the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 until the 1680s saw further improvement in educational provision and the establishment of more new schools by private endowment.

In 1663, **Sir Thomas Widdrington** provided a grammar school at Stamfordham for the instruction of *"all the labouring poor children of the parish and those receiving alms".*

(Quote 15) Haydon Bridge Grammar School was founded by **John Shaftoe** *"to the Honour and Glory of Almighty God in the education and instruction of youth in the knowledge of His Word and for and towards the maintenance of poor distressed Protestant families and for putting out to apprentice poor children".*

Not all benefactors of schools came from the ranks of the county gentry

(Quote 16) For example, Allendale School was founded in 1700 by **Christopher Wilkinson**, a yeoman: *"deeply sensible of the great want, prejudice and inconveniences incident to several children of many poor inhabitants within the parish of Allendale by neglect of due education, partly happening by their parents tutors or own inability to hire schoolmasters or pay for their children's maintenance and learning abroad".*

Non-Conformists, or Dissenters were in the forefront of spreading literacy among the lower ranks of society, but the Act of Uniformity of 1662 drove many dissenting teachers to leave the grammar schools and set up their own schools, such as Mr. Freteville's Puritan Academy in Newcastle.

Puritan attitudes towards the education of girls were not so progressive.

(Quote 17) Nine days before her own death in 1662 **Elizabeth Josselin**, the wife of the Puritan Vicar of Terling in Essex, told her husband how she wished her daughter to be educated: *"I desire her bringing up may be learning the Bible as my sisters do, good housewifery, writing and good work; other learning a woman need not".*

The School-master

Following the Reformation, the State quickly recognised the vital role of schools in ensuring allegiance to the Established Church and the Sovereign.

IMAGE – TUDOR SCHOOLMASTER

(Quote 18) Elizabeth I ordered: *"No man shall take upon him to teach but such as shall be allowed by the Bishop's Ordinary, and found meet as well for his learning and dexterity in teaching as for sober and honest conversation, and also for right understanding of God's true Religion".*

(Quote 19) This injunction was reflected faithfully in the first **Statutes of the Hexham Grammar School:**

"The Master shall be founded both in the Greek and Latin tongues, fully able to discharge his duty, that shall be both an honest man in conversation and also a zealous and sound Professor of the true Religion, abhorring all Papistry".

Schoolmasters were required to obtain a certificate from the Bishop's Ordinary, attesting their moral character, their acceptance of Royal Supremacy over the Church, and their orthodoxy in politics.

IMAGE – A SCHOOLMASTER'S LICENCE

(Quote 20) This example is from the **Bishop's Licence to Thomas Morland at Darlington, 1757:**

"Whereas the appointment of men of known learning and integrity to be Schoolmasters and to instruct youth is a matter that tends highly to the public good, and whereas you the said Thomas Morland are very well recommended to us, we find you upon examination to be a person well qualified for these purposes: We therefore very much confide in your sincere Religion, good judgement and diligence, do by these presents grant unto you our Licence and Authoritty to perform the office of Upper Master in the Free Grammar School within the Town and Village of Darlington in the County and our Diocese of Durham, or in any other Parish within the said Diocese where there is not any licensed schoolmaster, and to which you shall remove without consent in writing first had and obtained: and to teach and instruct youth the first rudiments of Grammar, in the Church Catechism and in any other books which by the Laws of this Land are allowed and approved of for their instruction (you having in the first place taken the Oaths, subscribed the Articles and made the Declaration which are in this case by law required to be taken, made and subscribed."

A fee was charged for the licence and another for its display at the regular visitations made by the Bishop's representatives.

These charges discouraged many teachers from obtaining the necessary qualifications, but the obligation was frequently overlooked. In his 1577 visitation Robert Swift, chancellor to Bishop Barnes, discovered that less than half of the schoolteachers in Northumberland held licences. The Master and Usher of Morpeth Grammar School were found to be "non licentiatus", but both were still teaching at the school several years later.

Church and State retained ultimate control over teaching through the Bishop's Licence until the end of the 18th century. Its power was rarely invoked, except in periods when Dissenters were being harried from responsible positions. For instance, 27 presentments of non-licensed teachers were brought before the Bishop of Durham's Consistory Court between 1665 and 1669.

While masters in the parish elementary schools remained closely linked to the Church, teaching in grammar schools was becoming a full-time career.

Son frequently followed father into the profession. For example, two of the sons of Robert Fowberry, Master of Newcastle Grammar School, became teachers after graduating from university.

(Quote 21) The list of items in **Robert Fowberry's Will** offers a glimpse of a 17th century schoolmaster's study:
"A little table and carpet cloth, a work desk, a 'seeing glass', a chair with two cushions and two little desks. 84 folio volumes and 79 others in quarto and a number of small books. Large map of the world in two globes, a map of England and Ireland, two small maps and two pictures".

Schools vied with each other to gain the services of qualified masters of high reputation.

When Amor Oxley transferred to Newcastle from Morpeth Grammar School in 1635, his under master and a number of his pupils moved with him.

On Robert Fowberry's death, the contest for his post attracted the attention of the King, who wrote to the Mayor of Newcastle desiring him to accept his favoured candidate. However, by 18 votes to 7, the Governors chose his opponent, one of the school's under-masters, instead.

After its founding in 1699, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) pressed for stricter application of the Bishop's Licence to ensure conformity with the Established Church.

In 1711, encouraged by the Society, Ensign Fenwick, son of the Lord of the Manor of Embleton, enlisted into the army all the schoolteachers in his district on the grounds that, as they were unlicensed they must be vagabonds and liable to impressment. Fenwick was so enthusiastic that he enlisted one Robert More, Master of King Edward's Charity School, even though he actually possessed a Licence.

Discovering the mistake, the SPCK attempted to have him released from service, but his commanding officer in Flanders had no men to spare to escort him to Antwerp. Although More's release was promised, he still had not returned home when the War ended the following year.

It was common in poorer areas for the post of schoolmaster to be combined with that of parish clerk. This saved money for the parish but hardly rewarded the double burden of work.

IMAGE – 18th CENTURY SCHOOLROOM

In 1789 Mark Revely, teacher and parish clerk on Holy Island was paid only £7 per annum, less than the wages of a farm labourer, and he had to supplement his upkeep with gifts from his pupils' parents.

(Quote 22) The Orders of Morpeth Grammar School of 1725 explain the qualifications required of an early 18th century schoolmaster:

"In the choice of the Master, singular care and circumspection shall be used. He shall be of a Healthful Constitution, and of exemplary Life and Conversation, Pious, Sober, Grave, Diligent and Industrious, and of Authority to encourage Virtue and discourage Vice. He shall be Master of Arts and excellently skilled in the Greek and Latin tongues, and all niceties of Both. A man Dextrous in teaching, of Temper and Moderation wisely to distinguish between defect of nature and wilful negligence. The Master and Usher shall instruct good Manners as well as Literature, and teach Poor Men's children with as much care and diligence as the Rich. They shall teach all Freemen's and Brothers' children gratis, yet may receive what is voluntarily offered. The sons of all the tenants and Farmers who have not a Free Household Estate above the value of £20 per annum shall be taught for 20/- per annum. Beside the Church of England Catechism, nothing shall be taught in school but Latin and Greek, except the rudiments of Hebrew (to such as desire it)."

IMAGE – 18th CENTURY SCHOOLMASTER

(Quote 23) Excellent qualifications were not always enough to ensure a position. When **Adam Oliver** applied for the post of schoolmaster at Bamburgh in 1789, he was able to offer to teach: *"Teach English, Arithmetic, Book Keeping by Single and Double Entry, Geometry, Conic Sections, Mensuration* (i.e. calculating area)*, Land Surveying, Gauging, Plain and Spherical Trigonometry, Astronomy, Geography, Navigation, Principles of Mechanics, Gunnery, Laws of Centrifugal Force, Algebra, and the Application of Fluxions to the Several Branches of Mathematics".*

Despite these abilities, Oliver was not offered the position, but he taught in Night School at Alnwick until his death in 1805.

The 18th century

The 18th century saw a growth in the provision of charity schools for the children of the poor.

Within 20 years of its founding in 1699, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) had helped to found more than two dozen schools in the region, teaching over 750 pupils, and it had laid down the first list of qualifications for charity school teachers.

By 1709, elementary schools had been established in each of the four Newcastle parishes, through a combination of private subscription and civic funds, and teaching a total of some 150 boys and 40 girls.

It became the common practice for pupils in the charity schools to be clothed in distinctive uniforms. The boys of St Nicholas' School in Newcastle received a grey coat, cap, waistcoat, leather breeches, two shirts, grey linen bands and two pairs of shoes and stockings each year, while the girls were dressed in dark brown gowns and petticoats with matching bonnets, aprons and tippets (shawls).

IMAGE – BLUE COAT SCHOOL GIRLS

Durham's Blue Coat School was founded in 1708 and Canon Bothamly remarked on the children *"flaunting their vivid blue down the dingy streets".*

At the end of their education, it was common for charity schools to find places for their pupils as apprentices with suitable masters, and provide a lump sum of up to 40s to help further their careers.

A gift of books was often given too, usually a Bible and a Prayer Book, together with *"The Whole Duty of Man"*, a moral advice book which was published in 1693. This book was also presented by many of the craft guilds to young men when they were bound to their apprenticeship.

IMAGE – WHOLE DUTY OF MAN

(Quote 24) The introduction to "The Whole Duty of Man" explains *"The only intent of this ensuing treatise is to be a short and plain direction to the very meanest of readers, to behave themselves in this world, that they may be happy for ever in the next".*

(Quote 25) Even in the 18th century, there were still voices warning of the dangers of literacy being too widespread. **The All Saints' , Newcastle, Parish Charity School Sermon** in 1756 included this reminder; *"It is not the Design or Tendency of this Institution to withdraw the children of the Poor from the land and labouring offices which seem allotted them by Providence; or to advance them to a superior Rank in Life".*

Discipline in the 18th century

By the late 17th century, the use of corporal punishment was being questioned.

(Quote 26) John Locke asked: *"Why ... does the learning of Latin and Greek need the rod, when French and Italian needs it not? Children learn to dance and fence without whipping; nay arithmetic, drawing, etc., they apply themselves well enough to without beating ... This sort of correction naturally breeds an aversion to that which it is the tutors' business to create a liking to ... Such a sort of slavish discipline makes a slavish temper."*

This view was not held universally.

(Quote 27) Oliver Goldsmith remarked in the 1760s:
"I do not object to alluring the child to duty by reward, but we well know that the mind will be more strongly stimulated by pain."

It became common among the wealthy to provide education for their children by means of private tutors at home or in private academies, rather than sending them to the local grammar school. The classical syllabus was considered inappropriate, and there was a fear of contamination from boys of lower social status.

Grammar schools were also gaining a reputation as training grounds for vice, ruled by the excessive use of flogging.

IMAGE – FLOGGING IN 18TH CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

(Quote 28) In 1769 **Thomas Sheridan Senior** demanded: *"Away with the rod ... Let pleasure be their guide to allure the ingenious youth through the labyrinths of science, not pain their driver to goad them on."*

(Quote 29) In 1774 **Philip Francis** engaged a private tutor for his son:
"Since it is my purpose to make him a gentleman, which includes the idea of a liberal character and sentiment, I cannot think it consistent with that purpose to have him brought up under the servile discipline of the rod ... I absolutely forbid the use of blows."

The grammar and public schools were having to meet the new circumstances.

(Quote 30) However, not everyone welcomed the change, as **Dr. Johnson** remarked:
"There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end they lose at the other."

Old habits died hard in many schools, though.

(Quote 31) In the late 18th century **George Hangar** described being beaten at Reading Grammar School:
"The tyrant did but seldom use the rod; his favourite instrument was a long rattan cane, big enough to correct a culprit in Bridewell ... The shrieks of the boys who were writing beneath his blows were music to his soul ... I declare to God I have seen wheals on the sides, ribs and arms of boys of the bigness of a finger."

Education for girls

Girls were among the last to benefit from the growth in educational opportunities.

(Quote 32) In 1719, **Daniel Defoe** wrote about "The Education of Women": *"One of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilised and a Christian country, is that we deny the advantages of learning to women. Their youth is spent to teach them to stitch and sew, or make baubles. They are taught to read, indeed, and perhaps to write their names, or so; and that is the height of a women's education."*

Wealthier families engaged private tutors for their daughters and some better educated mothers gave lessons at home themselves.

IMAGE – MOTHER TEACHING HER CHILDREN

Some schools admitted both boys and girls, such as the Charity School founded at Berwick in 1725 where 26 boys and 6 girls learned reading, writing, arithmetic and Church music.

However, it was not until the 1770s that schools specifically for girls became relatively common. Many of these were private academies for young ladies, but one of the first was established under the terms of the will of Elizabeth Donnison who left £1,500 for the founding of a school to teach poor girls of the parish of Sunderland. 36 girls were instructed in reading and sewing, each receiving a full suit of clothes at Christmas and two pairs of shoes each year.

Though reading was taught, in many schools it was not considered necessary for girls to be able to write. Handicrafts like needlework were considered to be more useful. In 1754, only one woman in three could sign the marriage register, compared with two thirds of men.

In 1792 a Green Coat Charity school was established by the ladies of St Andrew's Parish in Newcastle to teach 40 girls writing, accounts and handiwork.

The pupils of the Bamburgh Castle School of Industry for Girls, founded by the Lord Crewe Trustees in 1794, attended classes for reading, writing and accounts under the Usher of the Castle's boys' school. Most of the school day, however, was devoted to knitting, clothes mending and spinning linen and wool. In each 1/- of the profits from the work went to the Mistress, the rest being distributed among the girls by an elaborate ticket system, to reward regular attendance and good performance.

New Subjects

The influence of the guilds had waned by the 18th century but, in 1712, the Brethren of Trinity House in Newcastle founded a school for the education of their children and apprentices.

Industrialists were also becoming involved in the education of their workers' families, such as Ambrose Crowley. In 1691, Crowley set up an ironworks at Winlaton in north-west County Durham. Crowley's workers had to sign up to an employer/worker agreement which, in exchange for a guarantee of 80 hours a week work and a modest sum deducted weekly from their wages, they received health treatment, a pension, tuition in reading for themselves and an elementary education for their children.

During the 18th century there was a growing demand for a widening of the curriculum and grammar schools began to offer subjects such as mathematics, history, geography and natural philosophy.

In 1760, Charles Hutton, the son of a colliery labourer, opened a mathematics school in Newcastle, and schools of navigation and other specialist academies were flourishing, as were night classes and lecture courses in a great variety of subjects.

Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society was founded in 1793, one of the first of its kind in the country.

IMAGE – NEWCASTLE LIT & PHIL

It hosted lectures and demonstrations by famous members of the Society such as George and Robert Stephenson, Joseph Swan, William Armstrong and Charles Parsons, and it was instrumental in stimulating scientific discussion and study on Tyneside, at a time when the Industrial Revolution was making a major impact on the region.

Women were first admitted as early as 1804.

Today, the Lit and Phil possesses the largest independent library outside London.

The Sunday School Movement

The Sunday School movement is associated with Robert Raikes, a newspaper publisher, whose interest led to the opening of the first church-based Sunday School in Gloucester in 1780.

IMAGE – SUNDAY SCHOOL, c. 1800

The Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday Schools was founded in 1785 and the first Sunday school in the North East was established at Hanover Square in the same year.

By 1797 the Society had founded 1,086 schools throughout the kingdom, with a total of 69,000 pupils attending each Sunday.

One North East hemp manufacturer claimed the Sunday Schools had transformed some of his workers' children from *"the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men"*.

Epilogue

By the end of the 18th century Newcastle was a major centre of printing, second only to London, and particularly noted for the publishing of school text books.

Cheap illustrated chap books were also produced in great quantities in Newcastle and distributed throughout the region by travelling pedlars.

IMAGE – CHAP BOOK "JACK THE GIANT KILLER"

Contemporary writers referred to the wide availability of this cheap, simply written material, even in the remoter districts, and modern writers on the subject consider them significant indicators of a widespread basic reading ability in the area.

IMAGE – SCHOOLROOM, CIRCA 1800

From its backward state in the 16th century, the North East had become one of the best-educated regions in England outside London.