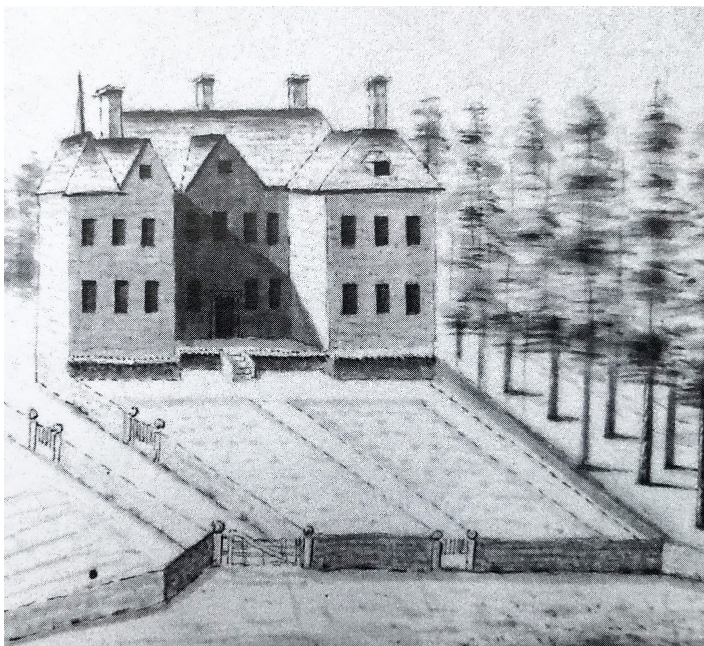


## The Varied Schools of Ewelme

Ewelme News, Apr-May 2009

We have often received enquiries regarding the Victorian Garlick boarding school that flourished for nearly 40 years in two old houses known as West Court (a large and ancient house demolished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the smaller Elizabethan cottage called The Mount. Postcards in the archive show The Mount as a handsome house, reputed to date back in parts to the Tudor era, but it was demolished to make way for the building of the Chaucer Court development in 1968. It would surely have been Listed in these preservation conscious times, but the property fell into dereliction and the overgrown land provided an adventure playground for village children. Old maps show a complex of other buildings on the site which covered over an acre of ground, but they had largely gone by the 1960's during the Leatham's occupancy, the last family to inhabit property.



Drawing of Wace (or West) Court



The Mount

Fortunately, Dr Kate Tiller, the local historian, has written a dissertation about the school published by Oxoniensia in 1992, and we have put together some facts from her research and some probable fictions from our Archive - which may be of interest.

The boarding school, known as the Commercial School or the Academy was run by James Garlick (1793-1843) and then by Elizabeth, his widow (1796-1875) – at her death records of the school cease. James married three times, fathering 17 children and his son Thomas Henry Garlick (1813-1873) was a butcher and publican at The Greyhound Inn. The Garlick school was founded some time in the 1830's (there was a girls school in situ before that), and the first official record in the Census of 1841 shows James and Elizabeth, with 6 children and 4 domestic servants, lived at the school and adjacent boarding cottages. There were also 48 boarding pupils aged from 7 – 14 yrs, of whom 9 were from Oxfordshire. Twenty-five lived in the main house West Court, and 23 were boarded in a detached cottage, [The Mount] living with an additional 5 adults of various ages and occupations.

By 1851 the widowed Elizabeth's domain had 2 of her children, 4 servants and an English teacher but with only 27 boy pupils between 8 and 15 yrs, of whom 20 came from Central London. Presumably to raise the numbers Elizabeth admitted girl pupils in the mid-1850's, but this situation lasted only a short time.

By 1861 the school role had recovered its numbers to 44 boys aged between 4 and 16 yrs, 30 of whom came from London. Elizabeth lived with her bachelor son Septimus, an assistant master and 2 servants. In 1871 the master was joined by a governess for the 41 pupils, 29 from London, plus 2 servants. After Elizabeth died in 1875 the school is not recorded again.

In 1839 an 8 yr old pupil called Peter Spokes arrived at the Garlick School from a prosperous corn dealers' family from Wallingford. He went on to Wallingford Grammar School from 1843-1845 and became a chemist in Reading. From 1869-71 he was the Mayor of Reading and he received a knighthood in 1872. In a memoir of his school days Sir Peter recalled an incident when he helped a London boy called Lark to abscond from the Garlick School. They climbed over the wall after afternoon school and made their way to the GWR station outside Wallingford where Lark was left on the platform to make his way back to London. Being in Wallingford, Spokes decided to visit his parents, who promptly returned the truant to Ewelme where the absence of Lark was discovered. He was found, still waiting on the platform, and returned to the school by midnight.



**The Mount shortly before demolition**



**The Mount shortly before demolition**

Dr Tiller had access to letters written home by various children reporting their academic studies, and they also mention cricket matches on the common, attending church and the day in 1857 when 40 boys went to buy garden seeds from Mr J Gammon for their gardening projects.

Private schools, small and large, for the children of the emerging Victorian prosperous middle-classes flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and their sons were sent away as boarders at very young ages. Dr Tiller records that the Suffolk's medieval school at Ewelme had periodically become inactive and even derelict in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but by circa 1833 it was restored by Rector Burton as a voluntary elementary school to provide basic education to local children by the Anglican sponsored "National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church". However, Ewelme hosted many other schools – in 1808 there were 3 day schools with 12-14 pupils each. In 1815 the local curate reported 2 day schools, 2 Sunday schools and 2 boarding schools. In 1818 there was a boarding and day school for 60 boys, 2 days schools teaching 40 children and a Sunday school. By 1833 there were several Dame schools for very young children, a day and Sunday National School, and a boarding school for 40 boys. (Could this be the first mention of the Garlick School?)

The Mount appears to have had a ghostly reputation. From some interviews conducted for the Archive, and particularly from 'Granny' Winfield's conversation with George Cannon, emerge stories of a poltergeist that poked the residents in their beds, took off the bedclothes, made strange noises, and caused objects to fall or be moved. Mr Tom Orpwood and Mr Jack Snell sat in the house all night but the apparition did not appear. Miss Edwards was called in and reputedly the ghost of 'the old schoolmaster' (thought to be Mr Garlick) requested a cross be put in every room. The Leatham family compromised by putting a cross of matchsticks in each room, and were never troubled again.

There is also a story of glimpses of another ghost supposedly of an old lady carrying a lamp, the sight of which was enough to make 'Granny' Winfield's mother faint when she lived at The Mount as a young servant girl. The young lady's father thought her swoon had been caused by aggravation from the boarders – until he too glimpsed the lamp carrying apparition.

*Ewelme Village Archive*