

Thomas FLOWER's School in Hallatrow

One of the earliest schools in the parish, of which there is a record, is that of Thomas FLOWER. In the first quarter of the 18th century FLOWER rented and lived at Tennis Court Farm, Hallatrow. Adjoining the Farmhouse on the Osmunda side, set slightly back from the Wells Road, was a line of 5 cottages called Tennis Court Cottages, which were erected sometime between 1802-1811. Thomas FLOWER rented one of these to use as his Schoolhouse. The 1825 Survey of Hallatrow shows:

<u>Map No.</u>	<u>Annual Value</u>
97 & 98	
<u>Tennis Court Farm</u>	
Dwelling House, Buildings & Garden occupied by Thomas FLOWER, schoolmaster;	£5. 0. 0
<u>Tennis Court Cottages (5)</u>	
Tenement & bit of Garden occupied by Samuel PADFIELD;	£2. 0. 0
Schoolhouse adjoining the last occupied by Thomas FLOWER;	£1. 5. 0
Tenement next adjoining occupied by Edward BULL;	£2. 0. 0
do. occupied by Charles DOLEMAN;	£2. 0. 0
do. occupied by Richard TUCKER;	£2.10. 0

It is not known when the school started or how many pupils attended.

Besides running his school, Thomas FLOWER acted as Assistant or Deputy Overseer of the Parish. The office of Overseer was an honorary one, two Overseers being elected annually for High Littleton and Hallatrow respectively to serve for a year. One of them undertook to keep the Overseers' Accounts. As the years passed, the job became more and more onerous and time consuming. The system of appointing Overseers in rotation also meant that there was a lack of continuity from one year to the next.

The shortcomings of the system were addressed in 1814, when it was decided to create the position of Assistant Overseer, who would be paid a salary, to undertake most of the administrative duties of the Overseers, and would not be subject to annual election. It was presumably considered that the local schoolmaster would be a suitable person for the job.

On 18 April 1814, at a Vestry held at the Farrington Inn, Thomas BRODRIBB & Lawrence LANSDOWN were appointed Overseers for the ensuing year "*but it was unanimously determined that Mr Thomas FLOWER should serve the office and be paid the sum of Ten pounds for such service, out of the Parish Rates.*" Furthermore it was agreed that "*the Annual Vestries in future shall be adjourned from the Church to Tho's FLOWER's for completing the Parish business.*" This seemed an ideal arrangement and for the next seven years Thomas FLOWER continued to serve the parish as Assistant Overseer on a salaried basis. At each Annual Vestry it was customary for the Overseers' Accounts to be examined and approved.

At the Annual Vestry held on 27 Mar 1821, adjourned from the Church, to the house of Thomas FLOWER in Hallatrow, "*the preceding accounts of the Overseers were examined and approved*". However, all was not well. Serious defalcations were discovered in FLOWER's Accounts and there was a considerable cash shortfall to find.

Negotiations ensued in private between certain members of the Vestry and Thomas FLOWER to try to resolve the situation. This resulted in Notice being given on 1 April 1821 of a Select Vestry to be held at the Church on 4 April to report on the matter. No less than 13 members attended the Vestry, where "*in consequence of various sums of money due by the late assistant overseer, Mr Thomas FLOWER of the Hamlet of Hallatrow, to this parish, amounting to the sum of £89.12.10, they have unanimously agreed to receive annually (in liquidation of such debt), the sum of £22, the same being now about to be secured by the said Tho's FLOWER unto Jacob MOGG Esq. of all his dividends received to him by the Will of his late Father and amounting to the sum of £44 per annum, for the benefit of the parish & his other creditors in general, until such time as the whole shall be paid off.*" It was further agreed that a sum of money "*now in the Bank of Messrs. HOBHOUSE & Co. and belonging to this parish, be immediately applied to the payment of such sums of money as may be now due by Tho's FLOWER to the parish and that the dividends arising from his Stock in the 4 per cents be paid over to*

Jacob MOGG Esq., the Trustee for the repayment of the same.” A Deed dated 3 May 1821 was duly drawn up to secure the terms of the repayment.

Thomas FLOWER’s financial affairs were in a poor state and parents must have been a little reluctant to send their children to his school. Over the next 5 years Thomas FLOWER had only managed to repay in total what he should have paid in 2 years. At Xmas 1824 “*Thomas FLOWER, schoolmaster of Hallatrow, received blankets etc. from Mary JONES’ Charity.*

There was clearly some sympathy for his plight and the matter was raised at the Annual Vestry on 31 March 1826. The minutes report that “*In consideration of the severe family afflictions of Mr Thomas FLOWER, the late Assistant Overseer of this parish (& particularly of his Wife, who is now bed-ridden) & of the decay of his School, upon which he chiefly depended for his support, it is the unanimous opinion of this Vestry that it is expedient & would be an act of charity that the provisions made by him by a Deed dated the 3rd day of May 1821 & an indorsement thereon dated the 25 day of November 1823, for the liquidation of a Balance due from him to the parish of £89.12.10, arising from a defalcation in his Parish Accounts (of which nearly the half has since been paid), should no longer be exacted by the Parish but, that the same should be hereafter paid to Mr FLOWER for his more comfortable subsistence. It was, upon the motion of Capt. SCOBELL & seconded by Mr GABY, unanimously resolved that the residue of the said balance now due from Mr FLOWER to this Parish be, & the same is, hereby remitted him &, that Mr Richard LANGFORD, the surviving Trustee under the before mentioned Deed, be & he is hereby authorized to pay all such Dividends & properties of Dividends & Monies, which under the provisions of the said Deed & Indorsement would otherwise be & become due & payable to this Parish, unto him the said Thomas FLOWER, his Executors, Administrators & Assigns, to & for his and their own use & benefit, & for which his & their Receipt & Receipts shall be good & sufficient discharges.*”

MLB