

Elias Hurrion Neve 1789 - 1873

Schoolmaster at Newick, Sussex

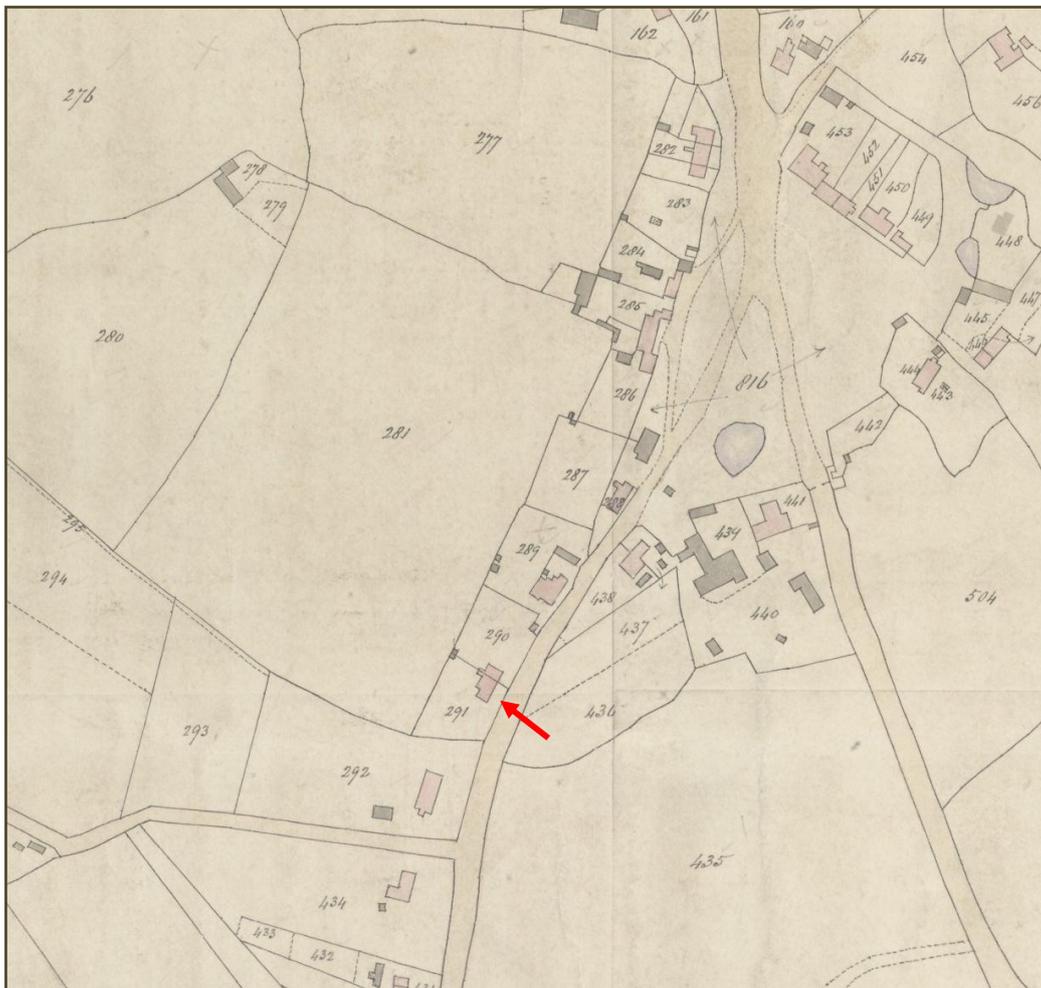


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Schoolmaster at Newick, Sussex

Elias Hurrion Neve was particularly known for being the master at the Boys School in Newick village, Sussex for the lengthy period of 47 years. He was baptised at Withyham, north of Crowborough, in 1789. He started as master of the Newick school when it commenced in the 1820s, when he was in his 30s.

The map below (the 'tithe' map from 1840) shows Newick village green and the location of the school (red arrow) in Church Road.



The location of the school (north is to the top right corner)

(Extract from tithe map - East Sussex Record Office: TD/E 42/1)

The formal education of children was not compulsory in these early days of the 19th century. Children depended for their education upon instruction provided by various religious and philanthropic bodies, particularly those associated with the Church of England. The Newick rector, Thomas Baden Powell, wished this Newick school to be recognised as a 'National School' so sought approval for this by letter dated 18th August 1822 to the Secretary of the National Society. The letter stated the following:

'It is the wish of those who have the management of the School for Boys at Newick in Sussex that the same should be united to the National Society.

In this school the National System of teaching is adopted. The children are instructed in the liturgy and catechism of the established church and do constantly attend divine service at their parish church or other place of worship under the establishment, as far as the same is practicable, on the Lord's Day; unless such reasons be assigned for their non-attendance, as shall be satisfactory to the persons having the direction of the school. No religious tracts shall be used in the school but such as are contained in the Catalogue of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge'

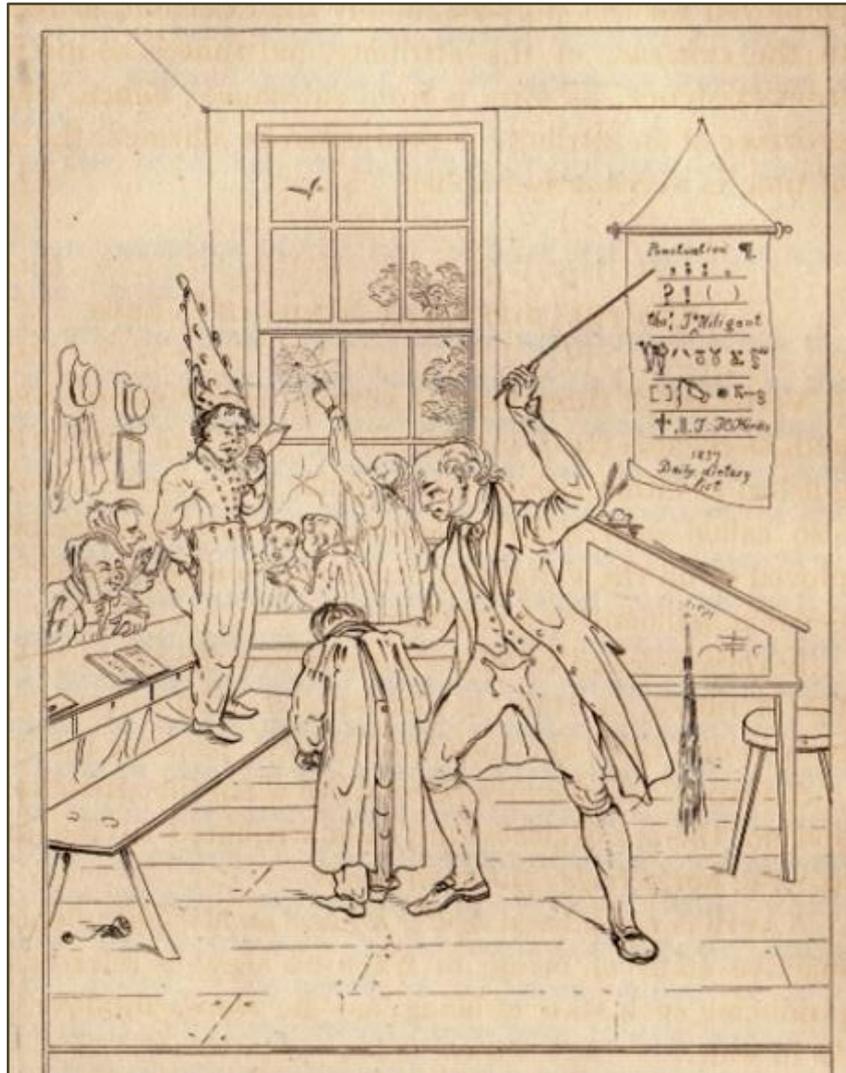
The letter was jointly signed by the rector Thomas Baden Powell, James Henry Slater and Elijah Barwell Impey.

The postcard photograph of Church Road below shows, on the left, the single-storey school (now demolished, along with the adjoining house).



The school building in about 1918, later demolished for the building of the Oldaker Road housing development

Below, is a copper plate engraving showing a schoolroom, drawn in 1837 by the skilful Newick artist James Henry Hurdis, to illustrate the book 'The Philosophy of Language' by William Cramp. The picture is intended to illustrate grammar, namely the verb 'punishes', ie 'the master *punishes* the scholar'.



A schoolroom in about 1837

It is possible, even likely, that this picture is based, not simply on the imagination of the artist, but based upon him seeing the actual interior of this Newick school in Church Road. It shows the teacher's desk, the simple wooden seating and desk for the pupils and an educational chart on the wall, all typical of the bareness of a Victorian schoolroom at that time, somewhat uninspiring by modern standards. The punishing of children with a cane was typical, as indeed was the use of a pointed dunce's cap, as shown, for a pupil who had committed some misdemeanour or shown inadequate performance and had to be shamed.

Elias was not only the village schoolmaster, but also the postmaster, a census enumerator and an assistant overseer collecting rates. The parish 'vestry' meetings were sometimes held in the school room. Elias was vestry clerk for the parish for a while and it is recorded, in March 1835, that he received a payment of ten shillings for providing candles and coal at those parish meetings.

The National Population Census through the mid 19th century shows Elias as a schoolmaster, living initially with a servant Mary Bannister (in 1841) and later with his mother Mary aged 84 and his unmarried cousin, Sarah Collins Neve.

Sarah Collins Neve was recorded in the census as a school mistress. Sarah is also referred to in the writings of Ellen Fuller (1846-1933) who wrote 'Memories of Old Newick by a Sussex Woman.' Ellen writes that Elias Neve taught the boys and Miss Neve taught the girls. Ellen Fuller was one of the pupils at Sarah's school, *'where we learnt our A,B,C'*. Ellen writes...*'Miss Neve had four cats...they all used to sit on the table in front of the window and each day a mutton chop was provided for the cats...woe betide you if you loved not the cats...Miss Neve had brown eyes and she took snuff...her hair was dressed in curls, not pretty little corkscrews on the forehead, but little rings plastered down on the forehead'*. Some girls from the village went to the Lady Vernon school at Font Hill for their education.

Elias Neve was said by one person to be *'...a quaint but rather lovable character whose eccentricities made him known far outside the boundaries of Newick'*. However, Ellen Fuller states that he...*'was very cruel to the boys; some of them say his fist when it came up against their ears it was as if they had been struck with a leg of mutton...the force of his hard hands...and he used to lift them up by their ears and he pinched a three-cornered piece out of Spencer Bates ears'* Ellen mentions that Elias also took snuff.

Correspondence in the Chailey Union files in the 1860s (eg May 1867) illustrates the concern of the Poor Law Board regarding Elias not producing correct audited accounts, as part of his job as assistant overseer. The Board recognised his infirmity and his declining capabilities.

The photograph of Elias on the front page of this illustrated essay, with his smock and his large, whalebone-frame umbrella, was said to have been one of the earliest photographs taken in the village. Elias also appears in the photograph of the church bells when they were being re-hung in 1867 (photograph reproduced in the *History and Guide to St Mary's Church*).

By 1869 Elias was 80 years old and had ceased some of his village jobs. He certainly had a very shaky signature by then. The 1871 population census shows Elias as an annuitant (retired) living in his house with his spinster cousin Sarah Collins Neve, who was then simply recorded as his housekeeper. Discussions were then being held regarding the proposed building of a new school in Allington Road.

In June 1873 Elias died at the age of 84. His last will and testament, proven in July 1873, awarded to his cousin Sarah Collins Neve '*all my real and personal estate,*' other than five pounds which went to Anna Dumsday, wife of the Newick tailor Abraham Dumsday.

The gravestone of Elias in the churchyard states '*In memory of Elias Hurrion Neve - for 47 years master of the Boys National School in this parish who died 6th June 1873 aged 84 years*'



The gravestone of Elias Hurrion Neve

Just six weeks after the death of Elias, his cousin Sarah Collins Neve died.

In 1872-1874 the new school was built and opened in Allington Road. In due course, the old school building in Church Road was used as a private school run by Elizabeth Fuller into the early 20th century.

Conclusion

Elias Hurrion Neve, by being the schoolmaster for such a long time, clearly had a great influence on the educational attainments of the population here in the village in the 1800s. He perhaps felt in the last year of his life that he had made his contribution to village education, as he saw the brand new school in Allington Road being built.

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Information Sources (ESRO = East Sussex Record Office, The Keep, Brighton)

Withyham parish baptisms register 1789... ESRO ref: PAR 512/ 1/1/2

Letter dated 18th August 1822 to the Secretary of the National Society...at the Church of England Record Centre, Lambeth Palace library (file 102)

Map and associated schedule 1829 for Allington Manor...ESRO ref: SAS SH 389

'*The Philosophy of Language*' by William Cramp 1838

Tithe map 1840 (property code number 291) shows that Elias lived at the school building...ESRO ref: TD/E 42/1 and also a copy in National Archives, Kew

National population census 1841- 1881

19th century commercial directories for Sussex... *Melville and Co, J G Harrod and Co, Post Office.*

Vestry minutes... ESRO ref: PAR 428 14/2/1

Photograph of Elias Hurrion Neve...postcard reproduction in private collection...also a copy in the Oldaker archives at ESRO ref: AMS 5785/11

Chailey Union minutes...National Archives, Kew...MH/12/12804, 12806 and 12807

Last Will and Testament of Elias Hurrion Neve....from Probate Office

Letters of Administration for Sarah Collins Neve at ESRO: AMS 5596/1/2

Gravestone of Elias in churchyard of St Mary's church, Newick

An 1875 form from Reverend William Powell referring to, inter alia, the date of starting the school in Church Road and the date of erection of the new school in Allington Road...National Archives, Kew...ED 7/121

Memories of a Sussex Woman by Ellen Fuller, at Sussex Archaeological Society

Article entitled 'Reminiscences of Newick by JW Isard' in *Sussex County Magazine* September 1930

Mid Sussex Times newspaper 29th August 1933, page 1 refers to the life of James John Bunney from Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, which includes reference to schoolmaster Neve at Newick being 'quaint' etc (the newspaper cutting also appears in the Oldaker archives at ESRO ref: AMS 5785/11)

History and Guide to St Mary's Church 1985 with later revisions

Newick - the Story of a Sussex Village by Joyce Lindsey, 1983, page 33

Newick - A Pictorial History by Newick Parish Council (1991) includes a photograph on page 39 showing pupils in front of the school building in about 1910 when it was run by Elizabeth Fuller

Postcard photograph of school in about 1918 from private collection

Newick Retold by Tony Mayes 2002

The Victorian Schoolroom by Trevor May (Shire Publications Ltd) 1999

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