

Back to school ...

We can't believe its that time again ...

Going back to school in September during the 1950s was an early autumn tradition for the children of Appleby Magna, a picturesque village in Leicestershire, England. As

games with friends. The school itself was a modest building, filled with bright classrooms that fostered a sense of belonging. With small class sizes, teachers were able to provide individualised attention, nurturing each child's academic and social development.

Curriculum subjects included the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the education extended beyond academics. Teachers emphasised moral values, discipline, and respect, preparing students



the warm days of summer began to wane, excitement and anticipation filled the air. Families prepared for the new academic year, often marking the occasion with a shopping trip to gather supplies. Children eagerly awaited the moment they could wear their newly tailored uniforms, typically crafted by their mothers with care. These uniforms, which included sturdy shoes and neatly pressed shirts or dresses, symbolised both pride and tradition.

The village school, a central hub of community life, was where students would gather to resume their studies. The atmosphere was lively, with children chattering excitedly about their summer adventures, from exploring local fields to playing

not only for tests but for life. The school day often included outdoor playtime, where children could unwind, explore nature, and strengthen friendships.

For many, the journey to school was an adventure in itself. Children walked or cycled along scenic paths, breathing in the fresh country air and enjoying the camaraderie of their peers. The return to school in Appleby Magna was not merely about books and lessons; it was a joyful celebration of learning, community, and the simple pleasures of childhood in 1950s England. This annual transition marked a new chapter, filled with potential and the promise of discovery, shaping the lives of young learners in the heart of the countryside.

Anne Silins recalls ...

Grandma Bates and her wonderful generation

My early years in Appleby Magna had a great influence on my life. It was such a small and happy village where all adults kept a keen eye on the village children as we played. It didn't matter where we were, walking the streets, the lanes or the footpaths someone was looking out of their kitchen window. Another woman – another 'mother' was watching our comings and goings. They were not being nosy, but rather making sure we were safe and didn't come to any harm.

On New Year's Day of 1965, here on Vancouver Island, I sat with my two young sons and my husband as I told them stories of that happy childhood in Appleby. Our eldest son who was 4 years asked me, 'to tell them more about growing up with your Grandparents in Appleby'. With that request in my mind I wrote a letter that evening to my Grandma Bates and two of her sisters. I asked them for how life was in Appleby in the early 1900's. What I received were amusing stories but not about their life, but about village life in Appleby in the late 1800's. My Grandma had been told some of these tales by her Mother in law, Anne (Nicklin) Bates. Some tales were their own remembrances.

The following is a summary of those letters.



The Atherstone collecting at the Old Rectory in Appleby Magna

Many of Grandma's stories were indeed about my Great Grandparents Charles and his wife Ann Bates. Charles lived in Appleby. Ann was born and grew up in Snarestone. They married in Appleby in May 1869. When in their late 30s, and after nine years of marriage they had not been blessed with children. The two of them decided to take a giant step and sailed to Australia to visit and be close to the two brothers and one sister of Charles. These siblings of Charles had been 'sent' to Australia and I mean 'sentenced there'. Their crime was repeatedly poaching rabbits on the Squire's land in the Appleby area. Charles and Ann met with their siblings, in the area around Melbourne. They stayed for two years in Australia. But Australia was strange and so different from

their homeland. It wasn't the land, the dream, they thought it would be. They were homesick. They longed to return to Appleby and England.

So it was that they set sail to England, another long sea voyage. This second voyage had a bonus Great Grandma Ann became pregnant. After 13 years of marriage a blessed child, a little girl, Mary Jane, known as Jenny, was born in Ashby. That daughter was followed two years later by a son, Charles Thomas who was my Grandfather. He was born in Appleby.

Here in Appleby they at first had a small shop at the bottom of Black Horse Hill, (now Mawby's Lane) in the middle house which is built over the Appleby Brook. This small shop did well and later Charles and Ann and their two children went to a larger shop at the junction of Church Street and Bowley's Lane.

Charles Bates was a wonderful rider and he hunted with the Atherstone Hunt for many years. First on his horse White Stockings and later on Major. After a hunt he would arrive home feeling very merry and often danced around their kitchen table. Photographs from that long ago time show him to be a happy man, short in stature and quite bowlegged.

They loved Christmas and there were great days when my Great Grandpa Bates and his daughter Jenny and son Charles Thomas, would take Christmas dinners, cooked by Ann, to village old people who would not have had any Christmas dinner. On Christmas Day, in the evening he and his wife entertained the Church Choir in their home. At that time, at the turn of the century, Appleby was noted for its choir which had 40 men and boys. The boys had a glass of my Great Grandma's ginger beer, mince pies and biscuits and after an hour were sent on their way home. The men of course kept drinking ale and they settled down to singing and more dancing. None went home sober. Even the village policeman came to celebrate with the choir and he was in no better condition, but how they all enjoyed it.

This Great Grandpa Bates was very keen on blood sports and he kept a badger in his pig sty. On a Sunday morning he would invite men in the village to bring their dogs and have a fight with his badger. This usually took place at the Bull Ring in Top Street. My Great Grandma Ann Bates got tired of this sport, she felt sad for the poor badger. One day when Great Grandpa had gone hunting she took a spade and hit the badger on the head and killed it. She buried it in their kitchen garden. The next day there was a great hue and cry -- the badger had escaped!

So for a fortnight every evening the men in the village gathered together with their dogs and went hunting for the badger. At last when Great Grandma had had her fun, she told them they could call off the hunt as the badger was buried in their kitchen garden.

Born in Snarestone in 1620 (some historians have argued that he was born in Norton), John Moore was the second son of Charles Moore and Cicely Yates. The family lived at the manor house in Appleby Parva.

As the second son, John was expected to make his own way in the world, so he became apprenticed to the Grocers Company in London. This was one of the mediaeval guilds, and by the time Moore joined, it was one of the richest institutions in Britain. Its members lent money to businesses and banks, and traded in goods. Moore soon made his fortune by buying lead from Derbyshire and Yorkshire and selling it in Europe.

He lived through a time of great civil unrest. He was originally a non-conformist, which meant that he did not believe in the ideology of the Church of England. This meant he was not eligible to stand for Parliament, but he found that he was more able to progress after making it known that he had brought his views more in line with the establishment. He became an alderman, the Chair of several boards, and eventually Lord Mayor of London. He was even given a post at Court.

In 1666 the Black Death decimated the population of London. This was quickly followed by the Great Fire, which famously began in Pudding Lane, which is a five minute walk from Moore's eventual address in Mincing Lane. Following the fire, Moore lent money to businesses and private individuals, and London began to be rebuilt. The architect Sir Christopher Wren was involved in this process, designing street layouts and landmarks such as St Paul's Cathedral. The two men worked together on rebuilding part of a London school – Christ's Hospital. This school still exists today, although it is now in West Sussex. Moore and Wren also worked together on an entirely new style of school – and began building it in rural Leicestershire, near the childhood home of Sir John Moore in Appleby Magna.

Designed as a building to house at least two (if not three) separate schools, this building is still being used as the local primary school, over 300 years after it first opened its doors in 1697. This enigmatic and unique building is the subject of another article in a later edition of this magazine.

In 1683, he was given a royal augmentation on his coat of arms, following his loyalty to the Crown during a rebellion. He became an MP in the parliament of James II. He was particularly interested in the woollen manufacturing laws, and in giving certain widows and orphans in London an allowance of free coal. He seems to have been a quiet and thoughtful sort of man; loyal to his friends, and generous to his family. He was also very astute and controlled his finances carefully– letters between him and his nephews in Appleby Magna show that although he financed the

school project in Leicestershire from his home in London, he always retained a diligent hold on the purse strings. He is described by diarists at the time as being very wise and fair. He had a good reputation in London as a politician and as a merchant – this reputation held him in good stead in the face of political unrest and family bickerings.

He died in London in 1702, childless, and having never seen the school that his money had built in Appleby Magna. His generosity has helped many schoolboys – there has been free education provision on the site for over 300 years. This was radical during Sir John's lifetime.

Our researchers at the museum are currently investigating several aspects of Moore's life. For example, a letter recently uncovered in America suggests he was involved in the founding of East and West Jersey, which eventually became New Jersey.



Moore's inevitable involvement in the slave trade is an area of great interest. He was one of the leading businessmen in London in the late 1600s, so was around when the Atlantic slave trade was a growing concern. Like nearly every other businessman at the time, he was involved. He was on the board of both the East India Company and the Royal African Company, both of which traded in enslaved people. However, it is thought that Sir John did not own slaves, although he did lend money to businesses involved in the trade.

If anyone would like to join our team of researchers, we always have several projects going on at the museum! Please drop our Museum Manager an email: sally.lowe@sirjohnmoore.org.uk

Superstitions and beliefs ...

With Autumn approaching ...

Superstitions during the Victorian era, particularly in September, reveal a fascinating blend of folklore, tradition, and the societal beliefs of the time. As autumn approached, the changing seasons inspired a variety of customs and superstitions among the Victorians. One prevalent belief was that the first-person to speak to a household on the first day of September would determine the family's fortune for the rest of the month. This led to anxious anticipation and careful selection of visitors.

Additionally, September was often associated with harvest time, and many superstitions revolved around agriculture. Farmers would avoid making significant decisions on certain days, fearing that bad luck would impact their yield. It was commonly believed that if one harvested crops during a full moon, it would ensure bountiful growth for the following year.



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Another intriguing superstition involved the weather; it was said that if September began with clear skies, it would lead to a harsh winter, while a rainy start promised a milder season. These beliefs were deeply embedded in the cultural fabric, reflecting a world where nature was revered and its influences acknowledged. The blend of fear and reverence for the unknown made September a month rich in superstition and tradition, echoing the complexities of Victorian life.

What's on !

All at Sir John Moore's Appleby Magna

Sunday 7th September 12-3pm

- Free Appleby Exhibition 12-3pm
 - Free heritage open day 12-3pm
 - Cellar bar open 12-4pm
 - Free guided museum tours 12noon, 1pm, 2pm
 - A talk about our local village history project by Sally, our Museum Manager 3.30pm
 - A talk about pirates, highwaymen and robbers, by Danielle Burton, Historian 2pm
- Tickets for Danielle's talk £5, available from Alan at the Cellar Bar, from Sally in the museum, on the door, or online: www.eventbrite.co.uk

Friday 12th September 7pm

- Royal Birmingham Philharmonic Ensemble 7pm
 - Cellar Bar open at 6.30pm
- Tickets £15, available from Alan at the Cellar Bar, from Sally in the museum, on the door, or online: sirjohnmoorebce.eventbrite.co.uk

Sunday 14th September 12- 3pm

- Car show 12-3pm
- Guided tour round the museum 2pm
- Cellar Bar open 12-3pm

Sunday 21st September 12 – 3pm

- Appleby Exhibition 12-3pm
- Free heritage open day 12-3pm
- Guided museum tours 12noon, 1pm, 2pm
- A talk about Sir John Moore by Sally, our Museum Manager 3.30pm

Tickets £5, available from Alan in the bar, Sally in the museum, on the door, or online: <https://whowassirjohnmoore.eventbrite.co.uk>

