

PARR HALL SEMINARY

"Grundy Wm and Misses, (Ladies' Boarding School), Parr Hall"⁽¹⁾
"Grundy William (Gents' Boarding), Parr Hall"⁽²⁾

It is from the *Diary of a Governess* (O.U.P., 1939, 2 vols.) that the only amplification of the above advertisements of William Grundy and his family at Parr Hall can be derived, and in the peculiarly unfortunate circumstances that brought Miss Weeton into contact with it, allowance must be made for her prejudice against the school. Mary Stock, the author's daughter, was a pupil in the establishment from 1819 until at least 1825 (*i.e.* between the age of four and nine years): her mother's chief criticism of her education was the undue weight given to unessentials. We know that the child studied music, needlework and French (on strictly grammatical lines): as the choice of subjects lay with the parents, defects in the curriculum of any particular child are not to be held against the school. Mrs. Grundy was dead by 1824 (Vol. II, p. 321), and her work as co-principal was taken over by a Miss Jackson, who became head teacher in 1825, her teaching work by a Miss Hammond, appointed in 1824 (Vol. II, p. 258). Miss Weeton makes no reference to the work of the daughters of Mr. Grundy in the school.

By innuendo, Ellen Weeton lets it be inferred that the moral character of William Grundy was not such as to commend his school, though she is unable to suppress, while wondering at it, the fact that "Mr. Grundy's School should flourish as it does" (Vol. II, p. 351). It continued to flourish, possibly until 1832. In the land-tax returns for Parr (Lancashire Record Office) tax to the amount of 5s.-3d. was paid on unspecified building and land by William Grundy as proprietor, with Henry Parr as tenant in 1829 and 1830. On this same property, if we may infer so from its unvarying position in successive lists and from the constant sum involved, the proprietor and tenant in 1825 had been respectively Thos. Hoole and William Naylor, in 1826 and 1828, Thos. Hoole and Peter Dixon. The lists of electors for the north division of the County Palatine of Lancashire for 1832-9 give William Grundy as resident at Hoole Bank, Parr, and Thos. Polding as the occupier of 56 acres of land and himself as the tenant of Parr Hall. From the same sources we know that the owner of Parr Hall in 1840 was John Orrell of Birkenhead (Thos. Polding is in that year listed as of Mill House Farm); in 1841-42, Thos. Howarth; in 1843-44, Thos. and Roger Howarth; in 1846-7, Thos. Howarth; for 1848 and 1850

⁽¹⁾ Ed. Baines, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster* (1825), Vol. II, p. 707.

⁽²⁾ Pigot's *Directory of Lancashire*, (St. Helens), 1828.

the property is not shown; in 1849 the owners were Roger and John Worthington; in 1851, Peter Ford.

It seems to have been established that the William Grundy who from 1832 to 1839 was resident at Hoole Bank was the school master of Parr Hall⁽³⁾; the will of William Grundy, gentleman, of Parr, proved at Chester in December 1844, whose wife was alive in 1844 and who had at least two sons and two daughters, seems to indicate that he died with some degree of affluence.

Part of the subsequent history of the school at Parr Hall comes to light in 1834. Two years previously, at Seneley Green House, Ashton, a Mr. and Mrs. Morgan had opened a Catholic Boarding School for Young Ladies "with the assistance of a lady of great experience". The subjects covered were English, history, geography, reading, writing, arithmetic, at an annual charge, including board, of 25 guineas, one guinea entrance fee, and 2 guineas for washing. Lessons in French, music and dancing were available and there was the further inducement: "each young lady will have a separate bed". (*Laity's Directory*, 1832-4).

Annually from 1834 to 1837, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan advertised their school from Parr Hall. In 1838, it was being run by the Misses Morgan and efficient assistants, and Miss F. E. Morgan appended a testimonial from the Superior of the convent in Paris "where she found her education":

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"Je soussignée, Supérieure des Religieuses de la Congrégation de Notre Dame, certifie que Mlle Morgan a été élevée dans notre établissement durant les cinq années passées. Je crois qu'elle est tout à fait capable d'enseigner non seulement la langue française mais encore l'histoire, la géographie, etc., en un mot tout ce qui peut constituer une éducation soignée."

18 novembre 1833

Marie St. François de Sales,
Supérieure

The following year Miss Morgan fortified her claim to the patronage of Catholic parents with a certificate from a priest, John Lund of Blackbrook. The next mention of the school is in the *Catholic Directory* for 1842, when Mrs. Morgan was responsible for the domestic and Miss Morgan for the academic side, the latter aiming "particularly to render study a pleasure and to accustom her pupils to clear and distinct ideas in every part of their education", and once again the French testimonial was produced, as also in 1844.

By 1845 only two lines appeared in the *Catholic Directory*, which may suggest that the school was becoming well known. These two lines were next repeated in 1851. In 1852, Mr., Mrs. and the Misses Morgan were concerned with Parr Hall Seminary, where Miss A. Morgan taught drawing and Miss F. E. Morgan French and music. The fact that reference might be made to the Superior

⁽³⁾ *Vide* T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, *History of St. Helens*, p. 177.

of Mount Vernon St. Convent and the Rev. Richard Sumner of St. Francis Xavier's suggests that Liverpool parents were sending their children to Parr Hall. In 1853 Mr. Morgan, and in 1855 Mrs. Morgan, disappeared from the advertisement⁽⁴⁾; 1858 is the last reference we get from this source to the school which had thus lasted twenty-four years under the aegis of the Morgan family.

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⁽⁴⁾ I am indebted to Dr. T. C. Barker of the London School of Economics for the information that in 1853 Edward Morgan was listed as an Accountant. He may, like many other schoolmasters, have arrived at this as a result of long years of teaching arithmetic.