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City school's Norman legacy

NORMAN ROAD (ROSEBERY ROAD TO PELHAM ROAD)

In Norwich of 300 years ago our sheriff was an extraordinary man called John Norman — a man with a dream.

He wanted to make sure that his descendants were educated and when he died in 1724 he left one of the most elaborate wills you are ever likely to see.

And although his dream never quite came true it did result in a unique school for boys, built in Cowgate in 1839, that ran until the summer of 1934.

It was called Alderman Norman's Endowed School (Norman's Will) and it was unique because all the pupils were related to each other and each could produce a "pedigree" proving his ancestry.

John Norman, born in 1657, was a powerful and wealthy man. He owned land at Spixworth, Catton, Sprowston and in Kent.

He also had a brewery in St Peter Parmentergate in Norwich. He was sheriff in 1705 and mayor in 1714.

It must have taken him months or even years to produce his will.

It ran to 10,000 words and in it he made provision for the education of his male descendants and those of his wife.

He thought that 60 years after his death his estate would have provided enough funds to pay

for a boarding school.

John went into enormous detail about how the school should be built.

How it should be run and even what the boys should wear and eat.

The diet even included eight quarts of beer weekly.

In the event the estate didn't produce enough money for a boarding school, but the Cowgate School was built in 1839 and several generations of Norwich boys were educated there — sadly without the beer.

The headmaster for more than 35 years was John William Howes and his assistant was Miss Bowyer.

Between them this formidable pair they taught up to 70 boys, aged seven to 13 all in the same room.

John Howes, a character both respected and feared, retired in 1934.

His retirement at the age of 70 was one of the reasons why the school closed — some felt the boys were at a disadvantage when it came to secondary education.

So it closed the boys went off to other schools in Norwich. The building later became a cinema and a warehouse before being demolished in the 1960s.

The name of Alderman Norman lived on in Norwich education when the Mile Cross School was renamed the Norman School and today we have the Norman Centre.



School's founder: John Norman, left, who gave his name to a Norwich school founded through the provisions of his will. The school in Cowgate is pictured, right, with the pupils and staff pictured above in July 1934.



Do you remember?

It was back in 1970s during a cold and frosty night in Norfolk when this band was late for a gig.

They had been called the Fifth Gear Travelling Band because they worked at Lotus.

Front man Viv Ritchie apologised to the crowd for keeping them waiting and quipped: "We missed the bus."

The name stuck — and they turned into Mister Buss and went on to become a popular rock band travelling all over the country.

They split up and went their separate ways before reforming for the Evening News Golden Years charity gigs.

On Saturday they will be playing again at the UEA along with Accent, the Kriptones, Roller Coaster, The OffBeats, Mervyn & The Starbeats and Malcolm & The Jet Blacks. Tickets, costing £10, will be on the door.

Pictured are Mister Buss with Phil Chapman (bass), Nigel Hodgson (keyboards and vocals), Ian Wigg (lead guitar), Ian Clarke (drums), Richard Styles (rhythm guitar) and Viv Ritchie (vocals).



Did you know?

On this day in 1964

Sidney Poitier became the first black actor to win an Oscar for his performance in *The Lilies of the Field*. It was a much-needed morale booster for the black community at a difficult time for the civil rights movement.

In Norwich of 1370 The Bridewell in Bridewell Alley was built by Bartholomew Appleyard. His son William went on to become the first Mayor.

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