

Steep Children's Home

Mention has been found in the church registers of a "Steep Children's Home" – several children from this home were baptised at Steep church in the late nineteenth century. Further research produced a picture of the home with the following description. (Copyright: Hampshire Record Office)



".... a pretty little stone built house.....for the last thirteen years tenanted by Miss C. Norris, who has during these years devoted her life to the education and training of little children who would otherwise have been denied this. Almost hidden by the hills and beechwoods, it might be unknown to the outside world except for the good work that year by year goes on, quietly but surely helping both the minds and bodies of the children, who are always happy to come and sorry to leave....."

The home existed at least between 1880 and 1898. The 1891 census lists eight young girls between the ages of three and eleven years living there, all of whom had come from Portsmouth. Amongst other entries, the Steep registers record that Amy Lockyer aged 2½ years, whose unmarried mother was dead, was baptised at Steep church in December 1888 and lived at Steep Children's Home. The lady in charge was Miss Charlotte Norris who had been born at Corpus Christi College, Oxford; it is likely that she was related to James Norris, Doctor of Divinity, who was the President of Corpus Christi between 1843 –72 and described as a 'good old President – one of the kindest of beings'.

Steep Children's Home is now better known to us as a house named 'Berryfield'; it is in the Ashford area of Steep and was also a former residence of the poet Edward Thomas.

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