

## Chapter 17 Langcliffe School



### **The early history**

The school at Langcliffe has been called variously Langcliffe National School, Langcliffe Provided School, Langcliffe Council School, Langcliffe County Primary School and finally Langcliffe Community Primary School, the different names reflecting the many changes which have occurred throughout the history of education.

Unfortunately there appear to be no records of the building and opening of Langcliffe School. A document dated 1894 mentions an old account book, then in possession of the trustees of the school, from which it appears that the school was built by public subscription probably on part of the village green in or about the year 1825. An entry from 1954 in Log Book 3 maintains that the school was opened on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1834.

The earliest known document relating to the school is a letter in The National Archives at Kew. It is stamped as received on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1860. It was written by William Mackesy, the vicar of Langcliffe. It forms part of much correspondence undertaken by the vicar in order to obtain a grant to repair the school. In the letter he states that the school had been built on the Waste and that the vicar had for the past 20 years or so, been the only manager of the school. He also states that there was no trust deed. Unfortunately there are no more documents from this correspondence, so we do not know if the money was granted to do the repair work.

### **The Log Book**

Our earliest information on school teaching comes from the School Log Book which begins on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1863, written by the Head Teacher, Mary Chambers. She had four classes and a pupil teacher, Sybilla Tennant. Miss Perfect assisted with the teaching of Needlework and the Rev. Mackesy regularly took lessons.

For the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Log Book 1 is our only source. Reading through the beautifully scripted, yellowing pages, an idea of school life gradually emerges. It is often very frustrating. Something is mentioned and then never referred to again.

From the age of 9 or 10, children could work part time in the mill, the other half of the day at school. The mill owners had to make sure that each child had attended school for the prescribed number of hours and so there are frequent references to *'the mill book being made up and returned to the mill'*. At 13 or 14 they left school to work full time. Some of the *'big half-time boys'* could be a problem and this is acknowledged by Her Majesty's Inspectors when they visited the school each year.

### **Lessons**

Scripture was very important, the classes being taken by the Vicar. The Rev. Travers McIntire replaced the Rev. Mackesy in 1864 and he was a daily visitor, often accompanied by his wife, sometimes by his daughter and son. He taught the children their Catechism, the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Hymns and songs were learnt each week and on saints' days the children attended church. Other lessons included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, dictation, composition, history, geography, needlework and object lessons. The children worked on slates and were examined regularly. The Mistress, Miss Chambers must have worked very hard. She was responsible for the Day School and also for the Night School (for scholars over 13) which seems to have taken place from October and throughout the winter. She also taught the pupil teachers, of whom there were usually two and a monitor. Their lessons were from 6.40 until 8.00 a.m. in the summer months but from 4 until 5 p.m. in the winter. The H.M.I. reports were very complimentary. They wrote of her *"good sense and great kindness"* and that *"the Mistress worked with diligence and skill"*.

### **The staff**

In 1871 Miss Chambers resigned and was replaced by Miss Sybilla Tennant. From this time children were admitted aged as young as three years old. The Misses Perfect and Miss Sedgewick were frequent visitors and often assisted with reading or needlework. Miss Tennant resigned in 1875 and Miss S.M. Palin was appointed in her place.

It is from this time that things started to go horribly wrong. More and more children were admitted to the school from different parts of the country as more mill workers moved into Langcliffe. Often these children could not read, write or say their letters. It would seem from the Inspectors' reports that Miss Palin was not strict enough. Still more children were admitted – unfortunately, there is no mention at this time of the number on roll, but on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1876 *"the numbers were higher this afternoon, there being 97 present"*. The school must have been bursting at the seams and the report of 1877 was very critical of the accommodation, the offices [toilets] and the supply of desks and books. The report also states that the *"teaching of arithmetic is uniformly bad"* and a reduction of one tenth was made to the grant for *"faults of instruction in Arithmetic."* (Following the Revised Code of 1860, a grant was paid by the Government for average attendance and performance in examinations).

Not surprisingly, this was all too much for Miss Palin. She was absent for a week with a severe cold. Then she *"went home for rest and change of air."* (The underlinings are hers). Six weeks later she was able to return to school. The pupil teachers had been left in charge with the Rev. McIntire coming to assist each day.

At the end of November 1878, school was held in the Reading Room at the mill, while building work was carried out – *"alterations and additions and a heating apparatus put up"*. In April 1880 a gallery was put up in the infants' class.

Despite these improvements to the building, matters were to get worse for Miss Palin. The Vicar, who had clearly been such a support to her, retired and was replaced by a very different man, the Rev. Samuel Sandberg.

There were problems very soon after his arrival in November 1880. He seems to have thought that he was the sole manager of the school. He was wrong in this (the Rev. McIntire had to swear an affidavit that Hector Christie and Wm. George Perfect were managers too), but in fairness it has to be said that Hector Christie had only visited a very few times and George Perfect not at all, according to the Log Book.

In May 1881, Miss Palin had given the registers and schedules to Hector Christie (the mill owner). On 14<sup>th</sup> May the Rev. Sandberg visited the school and demanded these documents. *"On hearing they were not in my possession, he threatened to stop the examination which was to take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> unless I went to the mill and brought them to him. He promised to remain in school during my absence, but on my return the pupil teacher told me he had gone and taken the Log Book and the keys to the school door"*. Mr Sandberg then attempted to lock the managers out of the school. After several requests the Log Book was returned to Miss Palin on 21<sup>st</sup> June and she was able to update it. The Rev. Sandberg did not visit the school again and he was taken to court by Hector Christie and George Perfect, who did from now on visit regularly.

When the school closed for the midsummer holidays on 9<sup>th</sup> July, Miss Palin resigned, but did agree to stay on when school returned on 9<sup>th</sup> August until 6<sup>th</sup> September when a new Master took charge of the school – this was Samuel Woolstencroft. He moved from Rochdale with his wife, Annie, who was employed at the school as seamstress, and they lived in St John's Row.

### **Inspectors' reports**

In January 1881 the managers decided to raise the fees paid by the children. Full-timers now paid 3d a week instead of 2½d and half-timers paid 2d instead of 1½d a week. (There were 12d in 1 shilling and that is equivalent to 5p.) In 1882 Thomas Brayshaw joined the managers. When the children were absent, the Attendance Officer visited. There are several examples of parents being fined 5s for the non-attendance of each of their children.

Throughout the 1880's and 1890's the Inspectors continued to be very critical of the school. Every year they recommended the appointment of an adult certificated teacher for the infants, pointing out that the Master would be helped if *"relieved of the instruction of the infants"*, but nothing was done. Numbers continued to rise. In November 1886 there were 196 children on roll. In the report of that year, the Inspectors suggested that *"considering the special difficulties of this school, it would be wiser to attempt fewer subjects. Discipline is only fair. The infants are much neglected and in a backward condition"*.

Mention was made of the school being flooded several times due to the drain being blocked in the field behind the school. This was to be a recurring problem throughout the school's history. On these days the school was closed. There were epidemics of measles and scarlet fever which closed the school for weeks at a time. The staff suffered from neuralgia, sore throats and colds. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1893 an Inspector called without warning and found *"the schoolroom very cold and the children shivering. The master was ill with a bad cold. The warming of the school should be improved"*. Nothing was apparently done.

The reports got worse. In 1892 *"as the infants are so badly taught and managed, I am compelled to declare this department as inefficient under Article 86 and to recommend the withdrawing of grants under Articles 98 and 98b. The situation calls for determined interference on the part of the managers"*. In 1896 two pupil teachers were caught giving *"surreptitious aid"* to children during an examination. *"They should be warned that this is a*

*serious offence against the moral tone of the school'*. We can only imagine their desperation. The Inspectors suggested various improvements to the school building – a porch for the children's outer garments, more desks in the gallery and better lighting for the main room.

The picture painted by the Log Book is a desperate one at this time. Why were none of the Inspectors' recommendations acted upon? It must have been incredibly difficult for Mr Woolstencroft trying to cope with large numbers of children aged from 3 to 14 with huge variations in their abilities and with a succession of pupil teachers and monitors, in a cold, damp building. And what of the children? It must have been a cheerless experience.

This terrible chapter in the school's story was brought to an end with these two entries in 1898.

*31<sup>st</sup> January* (Written in a very shaky hand) *"Master absent from school, suffering.*

*7<sup>th</sup> February I, Mary Agnes Proctor took temporary charge of this school. The Master Samuel Woolstencroft died on Sunday evening from pneumonia'*. The school was closed on the day of his funeral. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Langcliffe Churchyard. He was 59 years old.

His death must have shocked the managers into action. They appointed a new master and two assistant certificated mistresses. The H.M.I. report for 1899 stated *'A very marked and gratifying improvement'*.

During the summer holidays of 1900, the large room was much improved – the roof whitewashed, walls coloured and wainscoted to a height of 4 ft. New books and apparatus were purchased together with 24 new dual desks. The gallery in the infants' room had proved problematical and so was removed and the following year a piano was bought with help from Miss Dawson. An evening of Prizegiving was held for both day and night scholars and an afternoon visit to Morecambe for the Perfect Attenders.

Entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are other sources available – newspaper articles, parish magazines, photographs and of course the memories of old scholars.

### **West Riding County Council**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1904, the school came under the control of the West Riding County Council in accordance with the Education Act of 1902. Fees were abolished and grants were paid to the school – 22 shillings for Standards 1-7 and 13 shillings for infants. (There were 20 shillings in a pound). The classes were known as standards. The school building was handed over to the WRCC who paid an annual rent of £13 to the trustees of the school. In The National Archives there is a copy of the Agreement between the Managers (The Reverend Crabtree, Hector Christie, Thomas Brayshaw, William Perfect, William Hunter and John Longmire) and the County Council dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1906. Included in the schedule is a list of the furniture. An earlier letter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1905 from the Reverend Crabtree to the Secretary of the Board of Education, concerns the make-up of the Trustees and Managers.

The staff consisted of Henry Woodhead, three assistant mistresses – Miss A. Yeadon, Miss M. Jackson and Miss M. Proctor, two pupil teachers – Miss O. Higginson and Miss G. Hayes and a monitor, N. Howson. There were 112 children on roll. Mr Woodhead had been appointed headmaster in 1902. His family believe that he was aged only 21 at that time – the youngest headmaster in the country. During this first decade, several improvements were made to the building. Moveable screens were put in the main room to separate the classes (these were later made into a permanent partition), a new porch was built with drinking water and sinks, new windows were put into the main room to make it much lighter and airier, gas lighting was installed and the playground surface improved. Two young ladies were appointed who were to have a tremendous influence on the school and its pupils – Miss Mary Brennand came in 1905 as an assistant teacher and Miss F. May Graham in 1907 as a pupil teacher.

Medical inspections began at this time. They were to take place when the child started school, at ages 7, 10 and before they left. An article in the Parish Magazine of January 1909 was clearly designed to quell parental fears. *"Let it be clearly understood that the examination is of a private character. Only the medical officer, parent, teacher and child are present"*.

Cookery and Gardening began for the older children. In January 1905, 15 girls went to Settle for cookery classes. From the spring of 1908, the school rented a garden, part of the allotments along Howsons Lane. The boys kept careful diaries, the first crop – radishes, was harvested that June. It must have been a good year for vegetables because on 8<sup>th</sup> September a dinner was held in school for all the pupils. All the vegetables had been grown by the boys and cooked by the girls. The garden continued to be cultivated by the school until 1945.

For the first time mention is made of educational walks to local attractions. Visits further afield too became the norm. Mr Woodhead took 13 of the older children to Bradford, and they continued to Leeds by tram. Here they visited the Town Hall, Art Gallery and Museum where they saw mummies from Egypt. At Arnold & Son Works they saw all kinds of school materials being made (the log book was produced there!) and then they were able to spend their pocket money in the shops. Several of the children had never seen a town before or ridden in a tram. The Parish Magazine records *"They were amazed by the forest of tall chimneys."* In 1909 twenty scholars visited Manchester, travelling by train from Hellifield. A glimpse of the wider world came from the use of lantern slides or magic lantern. Mr Woodhead wrote in the log *"took St. 2 upwards for a sail around England by the aid of lantern slides"*. Later they *"took a stroll in the Yorkshire Dales"*. Also visited in this way were India, Congoland, the North Pole and Switzerland. Hard to imagine the impact now in our days of television and foreign travel, but it must have been really exciting.

Most of the children stayed at school until they were 14. The Education Act of 1907 provided for the Free Place System. A limited number of scholarship places became available at Giggleswick School for the boys and at the High School in Settle (opened at this time) for the girls. Each year the log mentions children aged about 11, who were entered for the County Scholarship, as it was called. Mostly they were successful, but the numbers were very small.

Attendance was an important feature of school life at this time. Despite the continuing problem of diseases like measles, chicken-pox, mumps and scarlet fever which swept through the school (in 1910 the school closed for 4 weeks because of chicken-pox), the attendance record was very good. Each year an Attendance Banner was presented to the school with the highest attendance record. Langcliffe School was a frequent winner. Those children who did not miss a single day throughout the year were known as the Perfect Attenders. They were presented with a medal and then each successive year, a bar was added. These were given by Miss Dawson. In 1914 Leonard Bannister had not missed for 11 years!

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1911, Mr Woodhead and his staff held an Open Afternoon for the parents to come and see the children working, with demonstrations and work on display. A school library was opened at the same time.

At the end of August 1911, Henry Woodhead left Langcliffe to become Head of Woodlands School. His successor was a young teacher from Skipton – Claude Bennett. There were 126 children on roll and his staff was Mary Brennand (St.1 and class 1 of the infants), Annie Yeadon (Sts. 2&3), May Graham (infant classes 2&3) and Mary Monk was caretaker. Mr Bennett took Sts. 4-7. Together they continued the good work of the previous decade. The H.M.I. reports for this time are uniformly good. Full advantage was taken when the weather was good with outdoor lessons and nature rambles, but there were still problems with the heating system and it was often very cold in the three classrooms.

The annual concerts, begun by Mr Woodhead, were continued; the money raised went towards the summer outings. In 1912 the infant and St. 2 children performed "Witches Play" (a fairy play), whilst the older children sang an operetta in costume called "Princess Ju Ju". The following year it was "The Spirit of the Wood" and "Cinderella".

The educational outings took place after the "Haytime" holiday (as Mr Bennett picturesquely called the summer break). In 1912, Sts.1&2 visited Morecambe and Heysham Dock –*"16 children had never seen the sea before"*. Sts.3 & 4 travelled to Liverpool and saw the Mauretania set sail. But Sts.5-7 went to LONDON! This was their itinerary. 6.05 Arrived at St Pancras, 7.00 Through Covent Garden Market, 7.30 Walk to Cleopatra's Needle. Embankment, Bank, Royal Exchange, Mansion House to London Bridge. 9.15 Up the Monument. 10.00 Tower Bridge. 10.30. Round the Tower of London, 11.30 Round St Paul's, 2pm Round Houses of Parliament, 2.45 Walk through St James' Park, Buckingham Palace, The Mall, and Trafalgar Square. 2.15 Round Westminster Abbey, 4.30 Round the Zoo, 7.30 round White City. 12.05 Midnight Left St Pancras". They must have been absolutely exhausted and I do hope they stopped to eat, but what a wonderful experience! They did it again the following year with variations to the itinerary – the afternoon was spent in South Kensington at the Natural History and Victoria & Albert Museums, ending with an entertainment at the Coliseum. Sts.1-4 went to Blackpool where they climbed the Tower for a lesson on the course of the lower River Ribble and had a car ride to Fleetwood to view the Docks.

### **World War 1**

Sadly, there were to be no more outings on this scale, because the following summer of 1914 saw the outbreak of the Great War. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1914, the children of Sts.1-7 went out onto the Green to sing several songs for the recruits leaving for Active Service. Many of the soldiers were old scholars. Claude Bennett joined the Duke of Wellington's Regiment as a Lieutenant (soon to be promoted to Captain) and left the school on 22<sup>nd</sup> September in the charge of Miss Brennand. He returned to the school on 8th December 1915, with his new wife to join in the Christmas celebrations. He was killed by an enemy sniper at Lagnicourt in France on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917.

School continued much the same throughout the war years, with attendance sometimes low in the summer when the boys were needed for haymaking. The children 'did their bit' for the war effort. The December concerts continued but the money raised now went to the Princess Mary Fund to buy Christmas presents for the troops. In 1914 £7 was raised. The concert included the singing of patriotic songs, two musical plays – "The Smiling Geishas" and "The Chocolate Coons", but the high spot was the parade of the Langcliffe Bantams. These were the youngest children, dressed in khaki, who went through their drill and were so comical that they brought the house down. Eggs were collected and sent to London for the sick and wounded soldiers and sailors – 330 on 18<sup>th</sup> August and 180 on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1915. Cigarettes and chocolates were sent to the Royal Engineers and three dozen sandbags were made in September 1915. Pound sales were held to raise money to buy wool so that comforts (scarves, mittens, socks and knee caps) could be knitted for the troops. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 1915, a large parcel was despatched to the men aboard the Battleship 'Victorious'. In 1916 a War Savings Association was formed, which by 1918 had raised £254 4s in war savings and £1,200 in war bonds.

In February 1915, the school was closed for three weeks because of measles, one of the little Bantams dying from measles and pneumonia. He was only 4. A little girl died from diphtheria in November 1917 and many children were sent to the Infectious Hospital after swabs were taken from their throats. Finally the school was closed in March 1918 and thoroughly disinfected and cleaned. All pens and pencils were burnt and the drains overhauled, but the disease continued its grip and the school was closed again in June for three weeks. During the week of the Armistice the school was again closed, this time because of influenza (Spanish flu?) for six weeks and again in March 1919 for three weeks. 'Vermin and dirty heads' are

the cause of great concern at this time and are mentioned frequently. Those children who were found to be thus afflicted were given a yellow card with instructions on what to do.

It wasn't all gloom and doom. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1919, the children were given a picnic tea to celebrate the wedding of Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Dawson from the Hall. This was followed by games and a singing competition. There were more celebrations in September when the school was closed for a week and the village celebrated the Peace.

### **Between the wars**

In December 1919, Miss Brennand ended her duties as temporary headteacher, but remained on the staff as an assistant teacher. Mr Graham Vevers became the new Headmaster with 104 children on roll. In July 1922, Annie Yeadon left and the classes were regrouped with the remaining three staff. At some point during the 1920's, the WRCC purchased a house in Craven Terrace, Settle for the headmaster. It remained the home of the headteachers of Langcliffe School until the 1970's. In 1934 Mr Vevers was replaced by Mr H.H.Bland who remained Headmaster at the school until 1947. His daughter, Mary Atkin, was a pupil during the 1930's and has compiled a fascinating file from her own memories and her father's diaries and records.

Throughout the twenties and thirties Armistice Day and Empire Day were always observed. On 11<sup>th</sup> November, the pupils would march to the War Memorial for the two minutes silence and hymn singing. They would have special lessons that day. Empire Day was on 24<sup>th</sup> May: again the children would march to the War Memorial with wreaths, flags and flowers. Patriotic songs were sung and in the afternoon there would be games and dancing on the Green, followed by a splendid tea. In 1923, the King and Queens' message was given on the gramophone.

Royal Weddings meant a day's holiday, as did General Elections as the school was used as a polling station. In 1927, a party of scholars and staff were able to visit the Eclipse Camp to look at the instruments used by the Greenwich Observatory. On 29th June a large party of children and staff left school at 4.40 a.m. for Winskill Crag to observe the total eclipse of the sun. The curious sundial on the playground was made about this time.

As well as Cookery, the older girls now had lessons in Housewifery and Laundry at the Girls' High School. They learnt how to wash and iron and how to clean windows and floors. Sewing and knitting were taught by Miss Graham.

The school day began when the bell rang at 9 a.m. Mrs Irene Bowker (née Marsden) recalls *"we had to line up in the yard and then march in order into the school main room where we always had prayers and a hymn. When I was about 10, as I had been having piano lessons, I was promoted to playing marches for the other scholars to march in to. I continued to do this until I left school at 14"*. Mr Albert Cheetham remembers when he was followed into school by the family pig. Miss Brennand gave him a long ribbon to act as a leash.

The school was closed several times because of illness during the 1920's. Children were often away for weeks at a time. If they were ill with scarlet fever or diphtheria, they were taken by horse and closed van to the Fever Hospital at Harden Bridge where they had to stay for about 6 weeks. By the 1930's, the school dentist was a regular visitor as well as the school nurse. In 1935 there is the first mention of immunisation against diphtheria. In 1934, the children were able to pay ½d for 1/3 pint bottle of milk and then there was the COD LIVER OIL! Many former pupils remember this with a shudder. The large bottle was kept on a shelf in the kitchen and for ½d a week they were dosed with a teaspoonful of the stuff once a day at playtime. The spoons very quickly became greasy and oily. It was Rita Ellerington's (née Venn) job to scald the spoons after use – she can still remember the nauseating, fishy smell.

The health of the children cannot have been helped by the continuing problems of flooding and damp. In 1930 when a new heating plant was installed, it was discovered that the joists under the floor were rotten and decayed. New floors were laid throughout, but the flooding continued. Mrs Atkin remembers a waterfall down the steps into the back lobby. The middle room (now the cloakroom and toilets) and the boiler room were most frequently affected. Every time the boiler room was flooded, the boiler could not be lit and so of course the school was cold. This often meant that the school was closed, much to the delight of the pupils! In September 1936, water was found to be standing under the classroom floorboards and there were real problems with the drains and sewers from the outside privies. When the school approach was flooded, Mrs Kathleen Marklew (née Kitchener) remembers her father giving her a piggyback into school, because the water came up over her boots. You can hear the despair in Mr Bland's writing "*Conditions in school thoroughly unhealthy, damp and foul smelling. Reported again to Divisional Clerk – nothing has been done for 2 months*". The Clerk of Works and Sanitary Inspector did then visit and some work was done but to no avail. From 1936-39 there was yet more flooding, more work was done, but the school was flooded again in 1941 and 1944. In 1945, many parents asked Mr Bland to forward letters to the Department of Education, requesting permits to purchase wellingtons for the children. The outcome is not recorded!

In 1935, Mr Bland attended a lecture about "The New Art", given by the Art Inspector, Miss W. Biggs. She wanted teachers to try her ideas in school. Mr Bland was inspired by these ideas and so encouraged the children to paint from memory, using large sheets of paper, big brushes and poster paints. The results were very exciting and the paintings were sent off to Miss Biggs who exhibited them at the Exhibition of English Education in Oxford that summer. In October a letter was received from Miss Biggs "*informing us of the interest taken by Lord Halifax (then President of the Board of Education) and Sir Michael Sadler*". Later that week a letter arrived from Sir Michael himself "*Lady Sadler and I were so much interested by the work done at your school and show in Oxford last August that we venture to ask your acceptance of one of our pictures from our collection*." The painting duly arrived. It was an impressionistic sketch of Tower Bridge and the Pool by Paul Maze. The children's paintings were then exhibited at Leeds so they were able to go and see their own paintings. There were articles in the Daily Express and the Yorkshire Post. Fame at last! But what has happened to the painting? It is there in the background of class photos in the 1950's. Miss Townson remembers it but does not think it was there when she retired in 1973. Did it get muddled up with paintings lent to the school from the county pool at Wakefield? We shall probably never know, but it would be wonderful to find it again!

The 1930's saw many improvements. The new heating plant consisted of an enormous boiler and it was the job of the senior boys to shovel the coke into the boiler house on delivery day and then keep the boiler stoked. It heated 6-inch diameter pipes which ran around each classroom. Mr Clifford Fox remembers the times when the water in the pipes got so hot that the pipes started knocking and they had to turn on all the hot water taps in the wash basins. "*Pure steam*" came out until the water had cooled. The privies (a hole in a seat over a deep, smelly pit) dated back to 1882. They were in the back playground, one set for the boys and one for the girls, separated by a very high stone wall which also divided the playground. These privies were replaced by flush toilets and a proper sewage system installed. In 1939 the school was wired for electricity and the old gas lights were replaced with electric lights.

The Inspectors continued to visit, of course, but their reports were only given every 4 years. These, on the whole, praised the good work being done. In 1936 there were 77 children on roll. Discipline is one aspect of school life which many of the old scholars have commented on. There is still the record book of corporal punishment which dates from 1907 -1946. In the early days there were many entries each year. Gross carelessness would earn you two strokes with the cane, laziness during scripture – four strokes, playing truant – four strokes on each



hand and four "on the seat." Gradually over the years, the cane was used less and less and then only for serious misdemeanours.

Games were played on the Green, although the High School playing field does seem to have been used in the 1920's. Football and cricket were played by the boys, with the girls sometimes joining in with the cricket, but usually it was rounders with netball and stoolball played in front of the school. Earlier in the 1920's, Mrs Betty Sharrott (née Alcock) remembers sword dancing on the Green while Mrs Rowena O'Neil (née West) recalls having to run and dance around the Green in clogs! Mrs Maud Riley remembers team games in the school yard. In March 1942 an arrangement was made whereby the school was able to use the Institute for PT and Games on a Wednesday afternoon from 1.30 – 3.30. The rent was paid by WRCC Education Department.

During the 1930's and 40's there were several snowy winters. The children would take their homemade wooden sledges to school and at playtime and dinnertime would sledge down Cowside from the "second gate". Mrs Marklew remembers *"a time when compacted snow made it like a Cresta run and almost as dangerous. The Council sent snow cutters and cart to spread ashes on the road – we were all indignant and boys ran home for a brush to sweep the ashes off again. This wasn't well received and they had to stop it."* Mrs Atkin recalls in 1940 being able to walk across the fields with her sledge, walking right over the field walls because the snow drifts were so deep. The children made snow houses by tunnelling into drifts. There were days when it was so bad that the school had to close.

The tradition of excellent concerts continued. Mrs Ellerington will never forget the arrival in school of two wooden boxes which, it transpired, contained various percussion instruments packed in straw. Her favourite was the drum. The infants practised under Miss Brennan's tutelage and gave a concert that autumn. Mrs Sharrott recalls a terrible occasion when a little girl's costume skirt caught fire, but it was quickly put out by the lad who came to help with the footlights. In the 1930's, the older children made a backdrop with pulleys and curtains to draw at the front. A play called "Robin Hood's Mill" was written by one of the boys, based on a local legend and performed in 1937. Puppet shows too were performed.

The school played an active rôle in the village celebrations for the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 and again in 1937 for the coronation of King George VI. There were visits to the local mills and gas works. In 1935, the seniors travelled to Leeds to see the Art Gallery, Town Hall, Museum and Newspaper Printing Works. Mr James Middleton has never forgotten that trip – he had his 7/6d spending money pick-pocketed! Fortunately Mr Bland lent him the money which he paid back the next day. The next year they visited Carlisle and in 1937 they journeyed to Bradford and were able to go into the Lord Mayor's Parlour and see his regalia. Lancaster and Heysham Docks were visited the following year and in May 1939 they went to Liverpool. There would be no more school trips until after the war.

On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1939, Mr Bland attended a meeting at Settle Town Hall about the Evacuation of children in an emergency. This became a reality with the outbreak of war in September and on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September the school was opened for the reception of evacuees from Bradford; Mr Bland acted as Reception Officer and Billeting Officer and his staff assisted. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September a state of war was declared between Britain and Germany and for the next three days school was closed. When it reopened there were 15 evacuees attending from the Bradford area for whom separate registers were used. As the war progressed some of the Bradford evacuees returned home but others came from Brighton, Leeds, London and Hull. The local police constable visited frequently to inspect the children's gas masks and there were regular Air Raid Practices – "rabbits" (take cover), "scatter" (to houses) and "down" (get down flat). There were concerns that the air raid siren could not always be heard in Langcliffe village. The black-out was introduced and anti-splinter netting put up at all the school windows. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1942, Mr Bland received secret instructions of procedure in

the event of an invasion. Clothing coupons were issued to the children. A building inspector visited to consider the school railings being used as war materials – the Log does not say whether they were taken or not. Money was raised for the “Overseas League Tobacco Fund for Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen”, the Settle Rural District War Weapons Week and “Salute the Soldier Week”. Work in the garden increased and a Rabbit Club formed, with the boys making the hutches and erecting a shed. In 1940 a radio set was installed and 10/- paid for its licence. In 1944 school meals were served for the first time – 48 meals were served. They cost 5d for children, 8d for teachers off-duty and were free for teachers on duty and helpers.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the children listened to the wireless news at 3.00 p.m. when the invasion of Europe began. There was a national holiday on V.E.Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945.

### **Later times**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1945, Miss Brennand retired. She had given 40 years of service to the school. Many former pupils remember her with great affection. The occasion was marked with presentations and tributes. Mr Dennis Middleton presented her with flowers. Later that year, on 14<sup>th</sup> November, Miss Brennand returned to take part in the celebrations to mark the end of the Second World War by planting a copper beech on the Green. It was named the “Victory Tree” and can still be seen to the left of the road gate at the side of the school. Miss B. Simpson was appointed in her place to the Infant Department.

There is an amusing entry in the Log Book for 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1946 – “*A Banana, the 1<sup>st</sup> for 6 years came to school today : caused great interest*”. The dates of the summer holidays were changed from the end of June – mid-August to about 20<sup>th</sup> July – the beginning of September. The Langcliffe Parents' Association was formed in 1946. The following year, in line with the 1944 Education Act, the school leaving age was raised to 15. This meant that the older scholars started a course of individual timetables and studies until 1948 when the 14 senior pupils were transferred to Ingleton Modern School.

During the dreadful winter of 1947 it was often difficult to get the dinners to the school, so the boys used to carry the containers up from the main road on sledges. One day the dinners did not come at all and so sledges were taken down to the local shop where potatoes, soup and bully (corned) beef and tea were bought and carried back to school and cooked on the gas stove in the lobby. A letter of congratulation was later received by the school, for its enterprise and effort, from the local Education Officer.

Mr Bland, having been appointed Area Youth Officer for the WRCC, left the school on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1947. There was of course a presentation ceremony, but sadly no details in the log. He must have been much missed by everyone, having been so much a part of village as well as school life. He was very highly regarded by his former pupils. A supply head took over for a term and then Mrs E.E. Harris was appointed Head Teacher. As Edith Graham she had been a pupil and pupil teacher at the school. There were 53 children on roll.

A Nursery class opened in 1949 with 17 children. This brought the number up to 71 children on roll. There are two remarkable events recorded during 1950. A great tit built its nest in the wooden letterbox on the school wall and reared eight fledglings (in subsequent years the letter box was taken over by starlings), and a consignment of sweets, the gift of the people of New Zealand, arrived. Each child received ½lb sweets which must have seemed wonderful after all the years of rationing.

In July 1952, Miss Graham retired after 40 years of devoted teaching, spent entirely at Langcliffe School. The occasion was marked by presentations from parents, past and present pupils and the managers. Miss Katherine Townson was appointed to the Infant Department. Miss Townson remained at the school for 21 happy years. She recalls the 1950's in the school as being cold, with an antiquated form of heating (there were serious problems with the boiler

and more flooding at this time). As the toilets were still outside, she needed to dress the youngest children in coats and hats before they could go to the toilets in the winter months. In the summer she enjoyed taking her class out – up Cow Close, looking in the stream for caddis worms and water snails, or down Howsons Lane and up to Cat's Steps looking for wild flowers and fauna. Once they found a squirrel's hoard of nuts and acorns.

The late 1950's and 60's are recalled by Margaret Graveson (née O'Neil), Helen Atkinson (née Bean) and Kenneth Atkinson. The nursery children were supposed to have a nap on a camp bed in the hall after lunch. Mrs Graveson found it very difficult to go to sleep, covered by *'a scratchy red blanket'*. Both she and Mrs Atkinson remember the Christmas party at school. The partition dividing the hall and classroom was pushed back to make a large open space for games. There were lots of party games and then, to find your partner for tea, you chose a card from a pile – one for boys and one for girls. Each card had a name on it – for example Lord or Lady Langcliffe or Earl Ellwood. There were always masses to eat for tea. In the evening there was a Carol Concert for the parents; “O come all ye faithful” was always the last carol. At Easter the children made an Easter Garden with models of the tomb and angel, trimmed with moss and leaves. It was taken across to the church for Easter Sunday. They all remember listening to radio programmes like “Singing Together” and “Rhythm and Melody”. Mrs Atkinson enjoyed Country Dancing, but Mrs Graveson absolutely dreaded it. Worst of all was Maypole Dancing – the maypole was put up in the playground with some of the big boys sitting on the base to keep it stable. *"Round and round we danced getting into some awful tangles which could only be undone by reversing"*. They would then dance on the lawn at Langcliffe Hall at the Church Garden Party. One year Mr Atkinson was chosen to sing at the Hall.

One of the school inspectors wore a fox fur round her neck. Mr Atkinson can remember hoping it would bite her! Mrs Graveson recalls a big book of “compositions” that was shown to the inspectors. *"If your composition was good enough, you were shut in a classroom on your own and had to write it out in the big book with no blots and no crossing out. Two compositions I remember we had to write were 'A day in the life of a penny' and 'The lifecycle of a frog' "*. She wonders where the book is now.

About 1960, the rent paid by WRCC to the trustees for the school building was increased to £50. It was then used towards the cost of educational outings and such like. At this time there were discussions about buying a plot of land and building a new primary school. The H.M.I. report of 1955 recommended that the nursery class should close when all the present children had moved up into the infants. (This happened in 1957). The report was rather critical of the school premises but said that they are *"by no means unsuitable for continued use until such time as a new school can be built."* About the work of the school it was very complimentary.

Mrs Harris retired in December 1961 after 14 years as headteacher. Mrs Emily Gregory was appointed her successor and remained at the school for 4 years. She was succeeded by Mr Brian Semple in September 1966. Plans to build a new school must have been abandoned, because after years of problems with frozen or flooded toilets, the decision was taken to adapt the middle classroom (now no longer needed as the numbers on roll were around 40), into indoor toilets with a storage area. A staff toilet and storeroom were added soon after, though unfortunately the flooding of the school continued. In March 1970, a TV set and aerial was installed.

The village green was still being used for games – Mrs Carol Cowburn (née Atkinson) remembers playing rugby (and kiss chase!) at this time, but in 1972, 1.7 acres of land surrounding the school were bought. At long last the school had its own playing field and wild-life area. The school premises were sold to the Education Authorities for £2,750 in 1973. The money was invested by the trustees who became known as the “Langcliffe School Landlords” and each year an award can be applied for by a school or young person requiring

assistance with their education or a travel bursary. In 1974, the West Riding County Council ceased to exist in the reorganisation of local government, and was replaced by the North Yorkshire County Council. Miss Townson retired in 1973 and Mr Semple left 2 years later, both highly regarded teachers. There followed a period of uncertainty, with numbers falling and several staff changes. Settle Middle School opened in 1977 which meant that children left their primary school after three years in the juniors, instead of four. There were serious doubts about the future of the school and many meetings were held between the Parent Teacher Association and the Education Committee. In 1981 it was decided that the school should remain open and Mrs Anne Clements was appointed as a permanent headteacher. She introduced a more open-plan approach to teaching. More work was done to the school building. The ancient coke boiler had been replaced in 1977 by a gas system. In 1982, the partition in the big room was removed and the ceilings throughout were lowered. The old toilets outside were dismantled, a new stone shed erected and the playground tarmacked.

Numbers however continued to fall, Mrs Clements left and it was decided that either Langcliffe or Stainforth School should close. Both villages fought hard to keep their school open, but in 1984, Stainforth School was closed. That same year, Mrs Hilary Foster (now known as Ms Macorison), was appointed headteacher with 17 children on roll. School Log Books are rarely maintained nowadays and the last entry in the Langcliffe School Log Book was made on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1985.

The years since were busy and successful for the school. The numbers have continued to fluctuate but the school prides itself on its family atmosphere. There have been more improvements to the school building. The old cloakroom/boiler room has been converted to a staffroom, the office has been enlarged, and there are new toilets for the boys and staff, with new ones for the girls due very soon. A special bay has been added for the school's computers. In recent years more work has been done to solve the flooding problem. New drains have been installed at the back of the school and so far these seem to be working. How pleased Mr Bland would be! The surrounding environment continues to be important – a wild-life pond was created some years ago, an event happily recalled by Mrs Hannah Evans (née Wiggin). The gardening tradition is continued and there is a tree nursery supported by English Nature. The school was featured in the BBC's Landmark education programmes. There have been two good Ofsted reports in 1998 and 2003. I doubt if Miss Chambers would recognise the school now with its bright and cheerful paintwork and the “cosy” feel that so many of today's pupils remark upon. So much has changed, but the teachers still work incredibly hard for the benefit of their pupils. Despite all the problems with flooding and heating brought about by the school's site, it has always been a glorious place to go to school when the sun shines. Miss Townson recalled a jovial remark by Sir Alec Clegg, the legendary West Riding Chief Education Officer, that the teachers should pay the authority to work here! Many of the old scholars have written or spoken about their happy memories, combined with affection and admiration for their teachers.

In 1999 the governors decided to restore the school bell which had been silent for many years. Many people in the village gave donations and the bell was re-hung and rang in the new millennium on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000.

The last few years have been difficult ones for the school. Ms Macorison took early retirement and moved to Australia. Her successor, Mrs Jill Wilson, brought new skills and huge enthusiasm to the job but the village was changing. There are very few families now living in the village, properties are very expensive and are often bought as second homes or holiday cottages. The local authority set up The North Craven Review and rumours were rife that the school would close. Numbers, which had been dropping, continued to fall. The parents, staff, governors and villagers put up a tremendous fight to save the school and despite a decision by the County Council to close the school, this decision was reversed by the Schools Organization Committee in May of 2006. The school bell was rung by all eleven of

the children in jubilation that our school had been saved and in July a Garden Party was held to thank all those who had helped in so many different ways. We had to say good bye to Mrs Wilson who had had to apply for another headship when it looked as though the school would close. The Autumn Term 2006 has started with eleven children and an Acting Headteacher, Mrs Pearl Bowker. The future is uncertain and challenging but it was ever thus at Langcliffe!

SOURCES Langcliffe School Log Books, Langcliffe Parish Magazines 1908 – 1924, The Craven Herald, An Introductory History of English Education since 1800 by S.J.Curtis and M.E.A.Boulwood.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful thanks are given to the following people for their help – Ms H. Macorison, Mrs J. Wilson and Mrs P. Bowker, the staff and pupils of Langcliffe School, Mike and Mary Slater, Mrs Atkin, Mr & Mrs Atkinson, Mrs I. Bowker, Mr Cheetham, Mr Cokell, Mrs Cowburn, Mrs Ellerington, Mrs Evans, Mrs Fiorato, Mr Fox, Mrs Graveson, Mrs Marklew, Messrs D.H.J. & R. Middleton, Mrs O'Neil, Mrs Riley, Mrs Sharrott, Mrs Tomlinson, Miss Townson, Mr Soames, Mr Wiggin and Mr Woodhead.

*Kate Croll*

#### **Postscript**

The School closed December 2007 since there was only one child in attendance that term. The handbell and plaque for excellence were placed in the church. Documents were inspected by the North Yorkshire County Record Office who have taken the Records of Corporal Punishment (2 books scanned) and the four log books. It is proposed to donate all photographs to the Folly.

