

Extracts from *The Heysham Peninsula on Education, in particular St Peter's Primary School*

[St Peter's School, Heysham, as we now know it, was known during the 19th century as a 'National School' under the National Society, founded by the Church of England in 1817; the school predates the Society. Board Schools came into being following the Forster Education Act of 1870.]

Recorded in the Heysham registers of Births, Burials and Marriages is a 'Copy of Foundation Plate of Heysham School'.

This School was Erected Anno Dom. 1769 at the sole expense of those whose Name and Subscriptions are hereon engraved, upon a Piece of Ground for which an Annual Rent of Eighteenpence is to be paid by the Schoolmaster, for the time being to the Rev Mr Clarkson, the present Rector and to his Successors, Rectors of Heysham, for ever.

There follows a list of 25 Subscribers whose donations vary from £9.0.0. (*from the Rector*) to 1.0 (*one shilling*) from Marg. Padget. These subscribers set out Rules and Orders for the Management of 'this School and the Conduct of the said Schoolmaster'.

That every Person or Persons of Property within the said Parish of 10 L (£10) per Anno or upwards, who has not already subscribed to the said School or their Tenants shall pay One Shilling p. Quarter for every Scholar sent by him or them over and above the Subscribers Quarterly Pay.

That the Schoolmaster and every succeeding Master make or cause to be made good all windows that shall be broke by any of his Scholar or Scholars.

That he teach the Scholars or hear them repeat the Church Catechism once every week.

That he attend the School in the Summer Season, viz from the 25th of March to the 29th September from 7 o'clock to 12 o'clock in the forenoon and from 2 to 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

In the Winter, viz. from the 29th Sep. to the 25th March, that he attend from 8 to 12 o'clock in the forenoon and in the afternoon from 1 to 4 o'clock.

The above agreed by a Majority of the Subscribers in number and value the 5th May 1779, who caused this to be engraved and fixed up the sd. School.

A further document, an Indenture deposited at the Public Records Office dated 19th June 1817 between Robert Thompson of Cheetwood, Manchester and Robert Mashiter and Robert Banks both of Heysham (*Churchwardens*) in which Robert Thompson gives to the others the sum of one hundred pounds

... 5 per cent consolidated annuities ... In trust to dispose of the same on the education of eight

poor Girls belonging to the parish of Heysham ... to augment the said Charity and to establish the same for ever for the education and instruction poor children both boys and girls belonging to the said parish in the principles of the Church of England ... provide useful learning for poor children, that is to say the Boys to read write and to cast accounts and the Girls to read write knit and work plain work and all the said children, both boys and girls to be educated and instructed in the principles of the Church of England as by law established and to read and say their Catechism and upon further Trust that the children to be admitted to the said charity shall one half of them be ... chosen in Easter week in every year and shall be continued for the term of two years, so that one half of the whole number to be instructed as aforesaid shall be elected and chosen and one half retire at the feast of Easter in every year and that such a number shall be from time to time instructed as the funds of the said charity will be sufficient to support ... the said poor children during the time they are receiving the benefit of the said charity shall go in procession to the parish church at Heysham aforesaid ... on every Sunday to hear divine service ... and that for their more orderly appearance they go two and two the girls first and the Boys to follow each two to go at the distance of about five or six feet from the two who follow ...

The Education Act of 1870 made education available for all, but it was not until 1880 that education became compulsory.

Many changes

Mr Arthur Stuttard was appointed in August 1877. He was head at Heysham until 1915. He ran the school with one teacher, Mrs Ward (infants and sewing, widow of the previous head master), even though the numbers on his register were excessive by any standards. The numbers varied between 133 and 96 up to the time of the invasion by the children of navvies in 1898. All during his stay at Heysham he was troubled with overcrowding, and with the advent of Klondyke and Dawson City this became much worse.

New children

At the beginning of 1898 the newly built huts were being occupied by the families. The first children came from Dawson City on February 14th 1898. These huts had been built for the 'skilled' men and at first were regarded as better class. Shortly after their arrival the school was closed due to an epidemic of whooping cough.

Then there was a rebellion by the local families. The school log book says:

April 18th, 1898 : Considerable numbers of new scholars admitted chiefly from huts of Railway Company. Several children withdrawn from school, on the ground that parents do not like their children associated with navvies.

By November the same year there had been over a hundred new admissions. Some would have been from the native families of Heysham, but the local names and addresses could have been counted on one hand. Still they continued to arrive. Whilst numbers in the

following years did not quite match this first influx, between February 1898 and March 1903 when the numbers really began to subside, 400 pupils with Klondyke or Dawson City addresses had passed through the school at Heysham.

Some did not stay long, some stayed and settled in the area. The records are erratic. The Master did not always enter the date of a child leaving the school and rarely did he give a reason for leaving. Some children stayed two years, others varied between one month and thirteen months. There was a lot of absenteeism and regular visits by the attendance officer - shared with the National schools and Board schools in Morecambe - had little or no effect, and attendance was sporadic.

Setting the Standard

Faced with children at many stages of education, or without it completely, it was some time before Mr Stuttard was able to present them in a 'Standard' (rather like the current National Curriculum Tests).

In 1903 he recorded that he presented a large number in Standard II.

These children were between the ages of 9 and 14, but should have been 7 plus. After this some notice was taken of the Standard reached at a child's previous school, but it was rarely higher than Standard II regardless of the age of the child. In only one case was Standard VI reached, and that by James Kerr, from Glasgow, a twelve-year old who had reached Standard V before coming to Heysham. According to the results and the amount of criticism received from visiting HMIs, the quality of education was below the average, which was not surprising considering the disadvantages of the school.

School Board.

On December 4th 1900 the Morecambe Visitor had a long editorial, entitled 'Voluntary versus compulsory'. In it the writer attacked the stand made by the church against a School Board with the alternative of another National School. Until this time the church had controlled local education absolutely, and was accused of providing education that was not sufficient for these progressive times.

Mr Stuttard was present at a vestry meeting in which the matter was discussed. He knew what salaries were and the cost of educating children, and it was probably the economics that were the deciding factor, but it was only by a narrow margin of 21 for to 19 against that a motion was passed in favour of a Board School.

At a later public meeting on February 25th the school was closed to decide by election whether Heysham should have a Board School. The result of this election was For 186, Against 104.

6th November, The Visitor

Heysham School Board

Discussion of the attendance at the two schools ... Employment of children scouring the district for absentees. This had happened in Morecambe some little time back, but Morecambe had put their foot down. A school attendance officer is employed, and parents will have legitimate cause for complaint if children are sent out to do his work.

The School opened in September of that year in the Wesleyan Schoolroom.

Opened school at 9 am when 103 scholars attended.

It was not until August 29th 1904 that the new school, now called Sandylands, was opened in a newly erected building and the Wesleyan Methodist premises vacated.

There were two staff, Mr McGregor, the Headmaster, and Miss Emily A Marshall, assisted by a probationer, Miss G Topham, ‘... until additional assistant appointed’. Miss Nellie Walsh was appointed on October 23rd.

On the whole the staffing problems were far less than those of Mr Stuttard at the National School, but as with that school the number of children on roll continued to grow.

On the day Sandylands opened Mr. Stuttard reported:

... Resumed school. The approaching completion of the Harbour Works has somewhat thinned the school.

He must have been very thankful. For the first time the HMIs visiting the school are praising his work and the work of his staff, and the realisation has come that Klondyke and the harbour workers are not likely to be a permanent feature of the area.