

## Earby Through 60 Years

### School Masters and School Companions Haytime Truant who went for Beer

(By John Hartley)

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(Transcribed by Stephanie Carter)

The Education Act of 1870 necessitated the provision of approved schools for the education of children under 13 years of age, and our village was fortunately placed in that respect. The Old Grammar School built in 1594 was still in effective use as a day school; and a model school of that period was erected by the Wesleyan community, assisted by subscriptions from sympathetic supporters.

From the outset, the school was well staffed, Mr Samuel Leach being the first headmaster, with Miss Ann Brunskill as infant mistress, and they were assisted by Mrs Leach and pupil teachers.

When my school days started, Miss Wright, of Skipton, had succeeded Miss Brunskill, who married Mr John Edmondson. Miss Wright was a kind and sympathetic teacher, and won the affection of the children committed to her care. A similar tribute is due to Miss Brunskill, although her period of service was not so prolonged, and she remained in the village a very highly respected lady until her decease a few years ago. Miss Wright married Mr Stirk, of Crosshills, and she later retired to Morecambe, and passed away only a few months ago.

My recollection of Mr Leach is that of an efficient and painstaking master, who liked to see work well and neatly done, but who was rather inclined to be partial to some of his favourite scholars. On the other hand, it must be admitted, that he had some very raw material to deal with, and a schoolmaster's position in those days was hardly "a bed of roses".

Discipline was a cardinal feature of school life at that time, and when the infliction of corporal punishment was resented by some big raw-boned lad there was sometimes a scuffle in the large room or the classroom, to the discomfiture of the master "when the wood began to fly". The practice of "making an example" of a lad, to impact fear into the rest, has happily been discarded.

At heart, Mr Leach was a kindly-disposed man, and I received many tokens of his genuine goodwill. He was a keen lover of music, as was his wife and daughter (Louisa and Bessie), and they were very zealous in promoting musical culture among the young people.

#### An Eminent Journalist

Mr Albert Brown, who had two older brothers in the scholastic profession, was my favourite teacher when I was in the lower standards, and he constantly showed me great kindness. He always wore a most charming smile, and he was the soul of good nature. He gave up teaching for journalism, and joined the staff

of the "Pioneer" at Skipton. He won, by competition, a position of distinction in Ceylon, where he was the official reporter to the Legislative Assembly. On returning to this country he had a meritorious career on several important journals in England and Scotland as sub-editor and editor. His last appointment was the editorship of the "Southport Times". At the outset of his career he won a Society of Arts first-class certificate, and I recollect how I was fascinated at school with his hymn book, which had been transcribed into beautiful shorthand.

The departure of Mr Leach for Ingleton, where he entered into business, coincided with the close of the Bracewell regime, and among the changes in the village one of the most noteworthy was our change of schoolmaster. Mr James Lindley, who came to Earby from Aspull, near Wigan, was an ideal schoolmaster, and with perhaps a few exceptions, he won the affectionate regard of succeeding generations of children who for 35 years came under the influence of his magnetic personality. He had a fine presence, of tall commanding appearance, with an open countenance, and withal eager, buoyant and full of enthusiasm for his new charge. I immediately came under his spell, to my lasting good, and I yield to no one in grateful appreciation of his sterling character and invaluable service to the community.

A short time after he entered upon his new duties he offered a prize medal for the boy and the girl who made the most progress during the year. I resolved to make a strenuous attempt to secure the medal, although I was handicapped by having started work half time at the mill two months prior to this offer being made. I made up for the shorter length of time at the school by early rising, getting up at the same time each day as when I had to go to work in the mill. So for more than two hours each morning I was engaged in writing, drawing maps, working out problems in arithmetic and making myself proficient in spelling and reading. I had a further advantage, as my brother was in a higher standard, and when we were doing our homework in the evening I used to attempt the same exercises in the various branches of learning. It was one of the happiest days of my life when my name was associated with the desired distinction.

The girl who won the similar award was Carrie Bradshaw, who lived next door to us at Green End.

### In Disgrace

Before the summer holidays started, Mr Lindley arranged a "break-up" concert, to take place on a Saturday evening. On that occasion I played truant and brought myself into temporary disgrace. Before I entered into my "teen" years I was very fond of hay-making, and on this occasion I had been "engaged" by Mr George Andrews, of Lane Ends Farm, to work in the hay during my spare time for 2d an hour. Mr Andrews, who also owned Crowbeckle Farm near the station, where he resided, was a retired station-master and also the proprietor of a coal business, which had previously belonged to his parents.

This particular Saturday was gloriously fine, and, as the beer allowance ran short, I was commandeered to go to the White Lion for a further supply. On returning down the main village street I met Mr Lindley face to face at the mill corner.

He was returning in great haste from a political meeting at Barnoldswick which had been addressed by Mr Herbert Gladstone. There I stood just clad in my shirt, fustian trousers and clogs, with a gallon bottle of beer in my right hand, when I should have been at the school, attired in my "Sunday best" to take the part of "King John" in a Shakespeare play. Mr Lindley said little – he was too taken aback – but his look of painful reproach has never faded from my imagination. I knew, however, that there were other boys who could take my place.

Twelve months later, an opportunity was afforded to me to atone in some measure for my misdemeanour. It was the annual school examination, and on those occasions we went in a "spick and span" condition to the school to help maintain the school's reputation, because the grants depended upon results. The full-time scholars were examined in the morning in the main subjects, and the half-timers in the afternoon. There were not so many of us and I was the only one in the sixth standard. For the composition test I was told by the HMI (who I think was Mr Sedgwick) to write an essay on "Some great man". After a moment's reflection I chose to write on Sir Walter Raleigh. When the task was completed the inspector took in hand the foolscap sheets. With Mr Lindley by his side he scanned through the paper, then he looked down at the writer, and a short conversation followed. The look of pleased approbation on their faces has ever since been one of the inspirations of my life.

#### Last School Holiday

On the following morning the examination took place in the special subjects, drawing, grammar and geography, and at Mr Lindley's request I changed turns at the mill to attend the school. The scholars had holiday in the afternoon, and I missed that holiday, which went further against the grain, as that was the last school holiday that came my way. I continued working half-time as a doffer in the mill, and went half-time learning to weave, until I was ready for two looms, two months before I was old enough to be passed by the doctor for full-time working.

Some of the schoolmates with whom I had happy fellowship at various stages of my school career were John and Henry Speak (twins), who were born the day after me; W Waterworth ("Willie Watter"), Fred Smith ("Fred at Coolham"), Edmund Greenwood ("Neddy Green"), Jack Carlisle, and my cousin Tom Hartley.

About the time I left the school another lad appeared, with whom I was destined to enjoy very intimate friendship, which has persisted through all the intervening years. The lad was Amos Fletcher, familiarly called "Mossie" by his family and friends. His father was a joiner by trade and came from the Midlands to find work for himself and his family of five children. Unhappily his health broke down, and the family had a hard struggle "to keep the wolf from the door". Under the circumstances in which she was placed, the mother struggled bravely and I never saw a house kept more scrupulously clean, or children more tidy.

My friend found employment in the warehouse of Messrs. Moorhouse and Hartley, and one by one the other children obtained work (Herbert is secretary to

the House of the Resurrection Mirfield and Joe is occupying an important insurance post in Canada.

At that time we lads were much indebted for the extra interest Mr Lindley took in us after we had left the day school. There were no properly organised evening classes as now, although occasional science classes were held at the Baptist School and the Village Institute. At the Wesleyan School a Mutual Improvement Class was formed, of which Mr Lindley was the leading spirit, and he invited the youths associated with the class to a private class in the school for the study of English Grammar and Literature, and he made no charge for the services he rendered to us. The youths shared in the secretarial duties of the "Mutual" and occasionally gave short papers. We invited teachers and lecturers from neighbouring towns, and in successive years we had visits from Professor Vallance, the famous elocutionist, of Glasgow.

We were also regular attenders of Mr Lindley's Society Class and Adult Bible Class. The "Mutual" had a good career of ten years, when it was succeeded by the Wesley Guild.

#### A Shorthand Teacher

Mainly through reading Dicken's favourite novel "David Copperfield", Mr Fletcher became interested in shorthand, and attended a class at Barnoldswick, taught by Mr Tom Smith. He gave himself unsparingly to the study of the art and became a very efficient writer. While still in his teens he commenced to teach a shorthand class in the Wesleyan School, and he was the local correspondent of the Craven Herald for a few years.

Along with Mr Fred Heelis, a distinguished Skiptonian of the "winged art", he joined the staff of a shorthand academy at the Northern Institute, Park Row, Leeds. They both secured engagements as visiting masters at schools and colleges in the West Riding, and were subsequently appointed as examiners in commercial subjects by the West Riding County Council Education Committee. In recent years Mr Fletcher has been the managing director of a typewriting company's business in Leeds, while Mr Heelis became the Principal of Pitman's famous Metropolitan School, and later a director and governor of the Publishing House of the same name.

#### A Touching Farewell

About fifteen months ago I was in the principal street of Wakefield along with Mr James Demain (having been to the County hall on educational matters) when a motor car pulled up and Mr Fletcher came running after us. He, along with his wife, were on their way to Sheffield on business. After a brief conversation we arranged to go to Doncaster to see Mr Lindley, who had been very ill and had just returned home from a nursing home. We were allowed by the nurse to see him for five minutes, and the scene was most impressive. The old master's delight in beholding once more two of his oldest scholars and friends was unbounded, and his face beamed with joy as he greeted and conversed with us. A few weeks later he passed on to his reward.

My friend shared with me that feeling of sincere affection for one of the noblest-minded men who ever came into association with the people of Earby, and if any success or worth of character has been attained by us we could say with Charles Kingsley, "We had a friend".