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SANDTRAYS AND MAYPOLES

THE BOLSTERSTONE ENDOWED SCHOOL

AN APPRECIATION by J.C.Walton

In 1991 the Sheffield Education Authority laid out plans to close a number of Infant and Junior schools in the area. This they claimed, was to save money and to fill empty places in larger Infant and Junior schools.

People and especially parents were appalled. At Bolsterstone there was a feeling of despair when they found they were on the list of closures. A good school with a famous tradition was to go to the wall. But not without a fight.

Being Clerk to the Bolsterstone Educational Charity, I thought how little is known about that tradition and of the history of the old Endowed School, so I decided to do something about it. All information has been gathered from authentic records and the Sheffield Archives.

The Endowed or Free School as it is known is not owned by the Sheffield Education Authority or by the church, but is administered by the Trustees of the Bolsterstone Educational Charity under the auspices of the Charity Commissioners of Great Britain. It has always had strong connections with the church, the Vicar of the time always invited to be Chairman of the Trust and usually readily accepts.

First I would like to set the scene. The Parish of Bolsterstone is an ancient one. It's Manor at one time contributing more to the King's revenue than the neighbouring parish of Sheffield. To some, Bolsterstone in 1600 may seem to have been an obscure place lying away from the main trading roads or tracks. Mortimer Road wasn't made until 1770. But even at that time Hans Winthrop Mortimer could see the importance of the area and built his road from Grindleford to Penistone hoping to make a fortune from strategically placed toll gates, but this was not to be as he ran out of money before it was completed. (A)

The village, built as it was in a strategic setting on a hill 1,000ft high, gathered people who made their homes there and on the surrounding hillsides. There was no shop, people were self-sufficient. Bartering and exchange took place. Whatever was needed was made by families themselves or by the village tradesman. Some goods would be bought from tinkers or gypsies. Several alehouses (I) existed.

The area around Bolsterstone was a hive of industry, with silicious sandstone for glassmaking being mined on Townend common and lead mining at Ewden and the Bitholmes. Corn mills were flourishing, and the first Broomhead Hall was built in 1640.

② All this at the time of the Civil War, when one Captain Adam Eyre who lived at Hazelhead but spent much time at Bolsterstone playing bowles on the green and who supported the Parliamentarian Army, was summonsd to London to witness the execution of Charles I in 1649, He took with him two packloads of Ewden lead which was acknowledged to be of the finest quality. This to keep him in good standing with the authorities. Captain Eyre is famous for his diaries and is quoted in a number of Histories on the district.

Even in those days the demand for education was there, as some 60 years before the first school was built in 1686 education was given in the Prayer House or Chapelry which was on the site of the present church. Penistone Grammer School founded in 1392 was for pupils who could pay for their education, and for those who could not there existed the 'petty' school. Teaching was mostly family training. Life was precarious. A young boy would leave school lucky if he was placed with a local merchant or farmer mainly animal minding or bird scaring and other menial tasks. Girls would be placed as domestic servants or family minding.

In 1621 Ralph Ellis of Spink Hall made provision in his will towards the maintenance of a schoolmaster at Bolsterstone. He gave £200 - a princely sum - but £50 was lost in the Civil War. A very traumatic time.

I understand the clergy had a hand in the teaching, but I quote - "The Rev. Christopher Dickenson in 1643 a man of scandalous living and conversation, whose appointment was irregular as he was incapable. It was alleged he often preached other mens sermons and if he tried to give one of his own was found tiring. He was frequently in alehouses very often drunk and abusive."

The Rev. William Marsh was even worse. Again I quote "He was a good preacher but had no conduct. He married several couples clandestinely and was sent to York jail where he lingered and was only released when the Archbishop of York intervened. He re clothed him and gave him a small parish with a stipend of £3.10.0. per year. Probably a reward for showing some ingenuity." So they would not have been good examples to the children.

Further searching brought to light the name of Mr Chappell and then Thomas Bramall as two of the early teachers, followed by Henry Hodgkinson in 1681. It is he who is regarded as the true father of education in Bolsterstone.

Hodgkinson came from London where he had training as a doctor and was the holder of a book of Apothecaries (Medical recipes) which he put to good use on the sometime sickly children.

③

The local doctor, who was a friend said of him "That his medical potions were on the sparse side but his diagnosis was usually right and with a few adjustments the desired treatment was affected." (4)

Hodgkinson found it so cold in the chapel in wintertime - no heating of any kind that the children took to going into the nearest homes to warm themselves. He complained bitterly and said that unless a more suitable room was found or a proper schoolroom built he would give up teaching - a threat that worked, for he was to continue to teach and take an interest in education for the rest of his life.

So the first school was built on what was known as the 'common' in 1686 in the reign of James II and named the Endowed School meaning 'free education.' Strict boundaries had to be made as the influx of children would be great. The catchment area for the school lay between the River Porter (Little Don) on the north - Ewden Beck on the south - up to Langley Brook on the west - down to the River Don on the east. This district was known in ancient times as Waldershelf and later as the Chapelry of Bolsterstone. Children within the area were educated free, those outside the area had to pay. One such person was Abraham Crossley born at Midhope Hall and who lodged with Joseph Stanley at the Nook during the week returning home for weekends. (5)

Mr Hodgkinson was paid £7.10.0 per year - the interest from Ralph Ellis original gift. He had the words 'Aurora Musa Amica 1686' - 'Morning is the Friend of Muses' engraved on a large stone and placed over the door of the school. There are no records of how many children were on the register in 1686, but it must be remembered that girls usually stayed at home to help with the family. No 1.66 children per family in those days, 6-8 children wasn't uncommon. The eldest girl would probably have to look after the two youngest.

The schoolmaster of the time would usually have some help with teaching, maybe a young man awaiting his call to the ministry. These people were known as 'ushers' Few teachers managed without doing other work oftentaking on the job of parish clerk registering birth, baptisms, marriages and deaths. He would be his own bondsman with his own holding and often deciphering letters, gauging crops for farmers, reading news in alehouses, settling quarrels and could even be found playing the fiddle or penny whistle at assemblies. One headmaster was even known to own the village mangle. *EVEN ALL TEETH IF THE BLACKSMITH WAS OTHERWIS ENAGED.*

(6)

HODGKINSON

Man took to teaching through love and pride of knowledge and because literacy opened few doors for people of peasant stock. Educating the poor had many opponents. Many influential people opposed it. *THAT'S FAR -*

One Bernard Mandeville wrote "Charity schools and everything that promotes idleness and keeps the poor from working, are more necessary of villiany than the want of ignorance and stupidity." His book was denounced as a public nuisance by Bishops and Ministers.

Whilst William Delf of Caius College wrote in 1654 "Provision of an elementary school should be made in every village" and pleaded for endowments from wealthy folk.

But even if a labourer could read or write incessant work and hard labour during the day left him too tired to read at night. If he could write there was no one to write to as every one he knew lived in the village. On the few occasions he needed to sign his name the law allowed him to make his mark instead which was just as acceptable.

What form did teaching take? Hymns were sung - prayers recited - sermons and stories listened to - frequent thrashings were metted out. Children were reminded of their lowly state and duty and respect owed to their betters.

Orders were given to parents on admittance of their children to Charity schools.

- 1) Parents take care to send children to school at school hours and to keep them at home on no pretence whatever except in case of illness.
- 2) That they should send children clean, washed and combed.
- 3) That they correct the children for such faults they commit at home and inform the master whereby the whole behaviour of children may be better ordered.

William Ronsley, schoolmaster of Sheffield wrote in 1657 regarding the following as essential to good order. "At no time talk or quarrel in school, but be quiet seated and silent much lest mayest thou deceive thyself by trifling thy time away in play. Bawl not aloud in making complaints, a boys tongue should never be heard in school but answering a question and repeating his lesson. Divulge not to any person whatsoe-ver elsewhere anything that thou hath passed in school either spoken or done."

How different was John Locke an Attorney of Somerset who in 1684 wrote giving good advice on what children should learn. "Reading - writing - arithmetic - simple accounts for boys - needlework for girls. It should be made pleasurable, based on activities and curiosity rather than iron rule or rote." So many different ideas even in those days. *300 HUNDREDS YEARS ON AND STILL CANNOT AGREE*

Then suddenly supporting Endowed and Charity schools became very fashionable among the more benevolent well-to-do educationalists. The poor were very much what the rich made them.

So back to Bolsterstone. In 1711 Mark Stanley took over from Henry Hodgkinson as schoolmaster and also became the ^{OFFICIAL} Parish clerk which raised his salary to £10 per year. He must have thought he was on to a good thing as he taught for almost 60 years and was rising 80 when he retired.

On to 1780 when the school in a poor state of repair and totally inadequate for the rising influx of scholars, was pulled down and rebuilt. This from a bequest of £1,366.13.4. in the will of John Hodgkinson of London who was the son of Henry Hodgkinson, late schoolmaster and doctor. This was a very substantial sum of money and in today's terms would amount to £900,000.

It was added to the endowment of Ralph Ellis. Hodgkinson directed that Trustees be appointed to manage and administer the fund and the school and appoint a schoolmaster - or remove him - as the case maybe.

All children were to be instructed and educated in reading - writing - accounts and other useful learning and good manners. The catchment area as before.

There was also at Wigtwizzle what was referred to as a "Dames School" where George and Henry Ronksley of the Dwarriden were taught. The school was held in a cottage known as Hollings House which no longer exists, except for a single upright stone set in the ground under trees at Broomhead Park, across the road from Wigtwizzle and above the lower entrance to the park. The old Dame who was probably self taught called it her little palace, and well she might, for it is said its cleanliness and charming rusticity was considered a gem amongst the homesteads in that locality.

I would like to mention here two more small Endowed schools in the area. Thomas Bland who was both curate and vicar at Bolsterstone 1772-1818 and who built Blands Chapel left £153 in his will for an Endowed school at Midhope for 8 poor children to be taught reading, writing and arithmetic. Maybe these children were from the otherside of Langley Brook and just missed qualifying to be educated at Bolsterstone.

Bland was the son of a shoemaker and was following in his fathers trade when the knife he was using slipped clumsily in his hand and he was badly cut. The accident so upset his mother that she pleaded for him to be put to some other vocation. So began his work in the church.

The other small Endowed school was at Snowdon Hill or 'Snodnill' as we know it. An Irish gentleman known as Black Dick taught a number of 'big boys and girls' in an old cottage in Hawksworths field near the Mission Hall which is in connection with Penistone church.

Bolsterstone Endowed School was again rebuilt in 1857 and included a house for the schoolmaster. Henry Hodgkinson's original stone was moved from over the doorway and built into the wall facing the playground.

So continued education under James Harropp affectionally known as 'Old Harropp' a brilliant writer and engraver. Also John Trickett and James Holmes until 1869 when John Grayson who lived at Spink Hall left monies in his will to be paid to the Trustees of the school to be invested and the interest paid to the schoolmaster for the education of 6 boys and 4 girls from the age of 10-13 in reading, writing, arithmetic and good manners. The children to reside in Bolsterstone. It must be remembered that children were leaving school at the age of 10 and were fully expected to go out and do a full days work. So the 6 boys and 4 girls were considered fortunate to have the advantage of further education.

The school gave elementary education until 1885, when the authorities of the time complained 'about the want of a certified teacher and 'separate offices' for boys and girls'. Samuel Fox as a gesture of goodwill built an extra toilet and the cycle shed in the playground.

Up to this time the endowment had been insufficient to provide for the demands of the authorities, but the school was very popular (being free) and had 140 children on the register. Knowing the size of the school, children would have been sitting cheek to cheek, using slate and chalk and sandtrays.

In 1850 plans and work were going ahead to build a National School in the village on the site of the old quarry, where bull and bear fighting took place. The building of the school was made possible by the kind generosity of James Wilson Rimmington Wilson and his family of Broomhead Hall who gave money and the land and provided stone for the building, and also by public subscription. The total cost was £716.00.0. Mention must be made of the Rev. Bell incumbent at the time for his part in dealing with the Education Authorities in Downing Street, London.

The school opened on Monday 11th October 1852 under the able superintendance of William Mitchell who taught in the most approved methods, all the rudiments

of an English education. The only drawback was the terms. Reading and writing on slates 2d. a week. Reading and writing on a copy book 3d. a week. Reading writing and arithmetic 4d. a week. Girls who wished to learn knitting, plain sewing and marking could do so without any extra charge. Boys who wished to learn the art of measuring and land surveying and girls who wished to learn fancy worsted work would be charged 5d. a week. All to be paid in advance. These payments for educating their children must have been a big blow to parents remembering the little school down the hill where lessons were entirely free. (7)

It was found after a while that the National School was 'languishing for want of pupils' and that an unacceptable situation was taking place, so it was decided to amalgamate the two schools. Samuel Fox a Trustee at the time was instrumental in helping to bring this about.

In 1885-1886 it was agreed by the Trustees of the Endowed School and the Managers or Trustees of the National School to meet to draw up the agreement, and I quote "It would make for a more advantageous working of the two schools, the Endowed School and the National School and for better administration and extension of the benefits of the Endowed School - as an experiment in the first place - if the schools amalgamate - both schools to be free to all children entitled to the benefits of the Endowed School, but others to pay fees as usual."

"The Upper or National School for mixed older children, the Endowed School under a mistress helped by a monitress would be for infants."

The West Riding Education Authority in 1905 approached the Trustees of the Endowed School as to giving scholarships to deserving children to enable them attend Penistone Grammar School. After consultation with the Charity Commissioners it was decided to agree to the request depending on availability of funds. These scholarships continued for 42 years until the Education Act was changed once again.

1938 saw the Endowed School closed for want of numbers, and in 1943 it was requisitioned by the War department until the end of hostilities. It was then leased to the church who used it for meetings, Youth club and sub-lets.

Come 1969 and the West Riding County Council asked for the use of the school to provide an additional classroom for up to 24 children as the Bolsterstone C.E. Controlled I.& J. School as it was called had almost 100 children on the register.

The Tercentenary of the Endowed School was celebrated in great style in 1986. Guided by Miss Pears headmistress and her staff, all the children dressed in the puritan costume of the 17th Century. The celebration reached its climax on Mayday. The children sang and danced around the maypole to the accompaniment of traditional tunes played by the local fiddler. Tygs - three handled mugs - were presented to all scholars by Mr Reginald Rimmington Wilson the Patron to commemorate the day. The event made headlines in the local press and was shown on Yorkshire Television news later in the day. Since these celebrations, maypole dancing has taken place each Mayday in the village square.

So came August 1992 when Sheffield Education Authority closed both schools bringing to an end over 300 years of education in Bolsterstone, a move that pestilence, famine and numerous wars failed to do.

I wonder what Henry Hodgkinson lying in his grave in Bradfield churchyard since December 18th 1745 would think of all this. (8)

Alexander Wilson Schoolmaster 1786 wrote
 Of all professions that this world has known
 From clowns and cobblers upwards to the throne
 From the grave architect of Greece and Rome
 Down to the frameman of a farthing broom
 The want for care and underserved abuse
 The first in real dignity and use
 If skilled to teach and diligent rule
 Is the learned master of a little school.

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- 1892
- Many children leaving school at 11 years. If they go into the Stocksbridge mills they are obliged to attend half-time until 13 years, but no such regulations seem to be in force if they go into the small pits.
- 2 March - One of the children is suffering from small-pox. All children in the vicinity are prohibited from attending.
- 27 April - Small-pox has broken out in the village.
- 6 May - Two boys came to school today after an absence of 22 weeks. I suppose they thought it high time to reappear.
- 1893
- 26 October - Magic lantern in school - 80 Irish views were portrayed.
- 1896
- 26 May - Measles epidemic - several deaths have occurred.
THE WILSON FAMILY SUPPORTING AEREAUX PARENTS.
- 1896
- Report of H.M. Inspector.
- The children are in excellent order and their attainments are satisfactory. ^{WBT} Clothing should not hang in the teaching room. More than one seat is not allowed in any single closet of the 'Offices'.
- 1898
- 5 October - Great annoyance is caused by gangs of lads assembling in the neighbourhood of the school during practice in the evenings when they indulge in singing and shouting. They are able to do this as most of them work in the pits and are at liberty in the early evening.
- November - Claire Jordan never absent from school for over 3 yrs having walked over 2,500 miles to and from school in that time.
- 1902
- Combined efforts are to be made to develop the intelligent child. The chief method is to create a love of reading by the loan of suitable books and papers from outside the school.
- Illness reported over the last 20 years -
 Whooping cough - Diphtheria - Measles - Tuberculosis
 Influenza - Mumps - Bronchitis - Scabies - Scarlet fever
 Smallpox.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BOLSTERSTONE

Some reminiscences from the Log Book made out each day by the teacher of the time William Mitchell who taught for 28 years.

1863

- 17 September - A beautiful day for harvesting, the fields are rapidly clearing.
- 18 September - Instead of having over 100 children at school today I have only 44
I hope to have many of them back next week as the fields are bare and the corn is nearly all housed.
- 21 September - A new Master was appointed at the Endowed school and he has taken a few of my scholars. Competition is a good thing = I will work hard - pray hard and trust.
- 24 September - About half my children absent harvesting and blackberrying. It is fine but cold. We lighted a fire in school today for the first time this year.
- 22 October - I notice several scholars copying while working at arithmetic.
I must prevent it!
- 1 November - Many absent with whooping cough.

1864

- 20 January - There has been some slight appearance of rebellion amongst the older children. Soon put down.
- 6 February - Mr & Mrs Rimmington in school all week encouraging the children in the severe weather.
- 14 March - Nearly all the boys have gone to see Bradfield reservoir which burst its banks on the night of the 11th a little before midnight.
- 4 July - Many children missing - bilberrying.

1885

- 23 October - Holiday Wednesday afternoon. The dinner of the Bolsterstone Ploughing Society was held in the schoolroom. HUGE ROUNDS OF BEEF - MONSTROUS VEAL PIES - MIGHTY HAMS, AND LASHINGS OF GOOD HOME MADE BEER.

1887

- May - Many older boys missing - breaking stones for roadmaking.

1891

- 11 June - Fred Hollins was run over by a cart in the village.