

MENSTON HERITAGE GROUP

Menston schools from 1622

1622 Church of England

The first school in Menston was established four hundred years ago by the Rector of Guiseley. It was in a large room over some outbuildings of Willow House Farm in Main Street (opposite the Primary school playground). It is known that this school was continuing to function in 1797.

1831 - 1887 Wesleyan Day School and Sunday School

In the nineteenth century the number of Wesleyans (Methodists) in the village increased rapidly. In 1833 they formed one fifth of the population. (Menston's population was about 350 people) Land and money was given by Mr Francis Fawkes for the new building, now named Old School House and Cottage (between Waites and Stocks Hill). In 1887, the children joined the Board School along with those from the Church school.

1860's Church of England Church, Day and Sunday school was in a cottage at 37 Derry Hill. St John's Church opened in 1871.

1873 - 1886 the Church of England School

It moved from its overcrowded premises into the new purpose built school (now occupied by Parmley

Graham) next to St John's Church. You can still read the words "Girls" and "Boys" on the entrances. The schoolroom was between the two entrances. Various improvements occurred in 1877 when gas lighting was installed, a coke-burning stove added and piped water was supplied. Also at this time part of the school room was divided off to make a classroom for the infants. In the main schoolroom, steps were added so that the Master could have a better view of pupils during the many oral lessons. The large hall at the front of the building was added in 1906.

Numbers in the school varied over time. In 1880 there were about 70 juniors and 36 infants. Weather and illness affected attendance as did the need for girls to help with younger children and boys to help at harvest time. Some older children went to school for half a day and worked the other half. This was allowed if they had achieved a satisfactory standard in the three R's.

1887 - 1894 Menston Board School

The Board school took over the premises of the Church school. The children from the Wesleyan school moved here to join those from the Church of England school. At the end of 1888 there were 160 children. To alleviate overcrowding the 65 infants moved to the old Wesleyan Chapel (next to the present Methodist Chapel). Summer 1889 saw an outbreak of whooping cough and school closed for a month. In December

1890, the school was closed again for four weeks due to measles.

1894 New Board School

Infants and juniors moved into the present school premises on Main Street. Stone date plaque still evident - MDCCCXCIV. The infant school occupied the little hall and two classrooms The juniors had the main hall and four classrooms opening from it. Both schools were lit by gas.

Further epidemics of whooping cough, scarlet fever, measles, smallpox and diphtheria continued to lead to school closures and reluctance of parents for children to attend.

Attendances were very variable but by 1905 juniors had about 200 children on the roll with only three teachers and a pupil teacher. The infant school had about 100 pupils with three staff.

The population of Menston had grown a lot at this time with the opening of High Royds in 1888. In 1881 the population was 662, 1891 it was 1,742 and in 1901 the population was 3,137 but nearly 2,000 of these lived at High Royds.

Many former pupils were killed or wounded in the Great War. There were shortages of fuel. School was

cold. Gardening became of economic importance. Shortages continued after the war. School numbers fell with the drop in birth rate. Juniors in 1923 had 140 pupils. School leaving age was raised to 14 in 1918.

1967 New Infant School opened in St Peter's Way

References:

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