

Education and schools

Supper for the school cat

'Mrs Trueman was the teacher that was there when I started at Windyhaugh School. Her and her sister lived in there with her two cats. Sometimes we got sent to the river to try and catch a little minnow for the cat, Blackie. Lovely ladies they were. She had to retire because she was too old. Then we got an amazing new teacher. She was only 24 and, oh, she was great! All these new ideas.'

Jean Foreman, who started at Windyhaugh School in 1948

A sweet story

As children at Windyhaugh School, we were allowed at playtime to go down the bank to the farmyard at Barrowburn to buy sweets from Jimmy Davidson's travelling shop – and see his lovely Alsatian dog, which he always had in his lorry.

Mona Baxter, who lived at Uswayford Farm

A bit of black and white pudding

Everybody round about got a bit of the meat after a pig killing. I remember getting into trouble after I went into school. The teacher said 'Where were you yesterday, Pringle?' I said 'Pig killing, sir.' I was just going to get caned and I said 'It's alright, I'm just coming. I've got a bit black and white pudding for you'. It was the only time in ten years I never got the cane!

Jimmy Pringle, who went to school in Rothbury in the 1960s

An apple a day

Mrs Anderson of Milkhope visited the School in the afternoon and heard the children sing etc. She very kindly brought a basketful of apples for the children.

Kidlandlee School Logbook 2 November 1916

Bit of blether

Who was the clattergob in ya class?
Who was the chatterbox in your class?
Did ya teacher tell them to 'Had ya wheest?
Did your teacher tell them to be quiet?

You couldn't use any dialect words at school back then. You weren't even allowed to say 'aye' [yes]. You were told off basically. Even the teachers who were from around here frowned upon it.

Richard Mason, who was at school in Rothbury in the 1970s and 80s

Chilling times at Alnham School

5 Feb 1917: This morning at 9am, the school was at a temperature of 30F (-1C) and the heat did not reach above 44F (6.5C) all day. Each inkwell contained a block of ice and had to be thawed before written work could be done.'

6 Feb 1917: At 9am the school temperature was at 28F (frozen inkwells again)

Health and welfare

Going to school affected the health of children and teachers, for good and bad.

The local schools were a good place to gather the children for treatment – from dentist visits to inoculations – but childhood illnesses could also spread quickly in the chilly classrooms.

Kidlandlee School

19 Jan 1921: Captain and Mrs C D Leyland had arranged to have a Christmas Tree and Tea for children and parents at Kidland House today, but Scarlet Fever has broken out at Milkhope so the Treat is again postponed.

12 Nov 1923: Besides the children who have Whooping Cough and Chickenpox, Robert Brown of Milkhope and Archibald Bertram of Wholehope have severe colds and Mabel Bertram has to attend her mother who is ill.

25 Jan 1929: Mary, Alec and Jean Tait (The Heigh) are still away from school owing to measles. Poor attendance due to heavy snowstorms.

5 Feb 1930: Two children are away with colds, two are recovering from measles and one little boy lives too far from school to come on stormy days. Six pupils present.

30 Jan 1931: Yesterday (Jan 29) at his home, Rookland, the death of Thomas Dagg occurred from diphtheria. He was seven years of age and had attended school since Easter of last year. Great sympathy is felt for his parents by the scholars and teacher of the school. There was a heavy snowstorm this morning.

An autumn ritual

Every year there would be the ritual of looking for rosehips. In autumn you were encouraged to collect them from the hedgerows and take them into school. You got so much per pound of rosehips and they went off to be made into syrup. We made a few pennies, and everyone had their favourite spot. We were given rosehip syrup at school once or twice a year [for the Vitamin C] and we also got a half a pint of milk every morning in class at primary school.

Andrew Miller who went to school in Rothbury in the 1970s

Tea and a piece

Seventy children (ages ranging from 5 to 14) attended the school and were taught in one small room. Each child carried food known as a 'piece' and a tin bottle containing tea. The tin bottles were placed round the fire to warm.

Lizzie Robinson remembers Harbottle School