

"GLEDHOW SCHOOL - Gledhow Lane 1872 -1959"

© by Barbara Barr



Photo of Gledhow School January 2001 - now Stepping Stones Nursery.

The school is situated on the left hand side of a slight bend on Gledhow Lane after leaving Old Park Rd. junction and before Thorn Lane cross-road. A central reservation of grass and large trees furnish the scene, and children would run through the narrow footpath on their way to school. Of course very little traffic was prevalent until after 1945, and the atmosphere was quite peaceful and countrified. Some deliveries were made by horse and cart. Mr. Laycock, the Greengrocer at Oakwood and Mr. Addy, Lidgett Lane farm, in handsome horse and trap with large milk churn aboard, and smaller cream, were regularly to be seen.

Opposite the school frontage was the hockey field to Roundhay High School for Girls, later to become the site of the Kerr Mackie Primary, which opened on the 2nd July 1993. The Headmaster of Roundhay Boys' School's house was built directly opposite the little church school (Gledhow School) and a house for the Headmistress was built close to the entrance gate at Thorn Lane junction.

The school was built about 1872/3 with money raised by public subscription, following a gift of land to the Diocese of Ripon by a descendant of Jeremiah Dixon of Gledhow Hall - John Dixon. It was intended for the education of the poor in the locality, first regulated by, and belonging to St. Matthew's, Chapel Allerton, and later to St. Edmund's, Roundhay from 1903.

The school was built in stone with Gothic style windows and a bell on the roof ridge which tolled to bring the children on the trot if they were on their way. The Infant class on the right hand side of the frontage, was divided simply, by a revolving easel blackboard and the teacher sharing herself between the two sections in the 30's.

A number of children lived in the lodges at the gates of the large residences - some with four children - Roundhay Hall, Oakley House, Gledhow Hill - later to become the mansion to Roundhay School. Children from Gipton, Gledhow and Oakwood area were pupils and multiplied as the housing increased. Pupil numbers grew from 27 in January 1874, to 58 in 1886. One uncertificated teacher sufficed in the early years, but in 1882 an assistant was necessary and the teacher certificated. Punctuality and good manners were taught. Writing was poor due to the use of slates in the early years until 1883 when writing on paper was practised

A larger Infant room was built. Small grants for maintenance and increase in salaries were necessary in 1902. Pupil numbers were now 120 and the school overcrowded. The staff grew to three by 1907, a Head, an Assistant and Pupil Teacher. Cloakroom facilities were inadequate with only 70 pegs, and the heating stoves gave constant fumes, even in the 1940's.

In the 30's reading was taught by Miss Rice in the Infant class, counting beads, subtracting, paper cut-outs, plasticine shapes, playground activities, reading and stories.

Standard 1 and 2 - Miss Brown, taught times-tables, spelling, grammar, simple arithmetic, some geography and reading. Mrs. Stead taught Standard 3 and 4, poetry, history, drawing, painting, knitting, needlework for girls and crafts for boys, and of course, arithmetic, English, reading and writing - Nature Study lessons on Friday afternoons on a small garden alongside the school and walks in Roundhay Park and Gledhow Valley examining trees and later drawing leaves and acorns etc. on return to the classroom.

Milk was given out each morning in third of a pint bottles with cardboard disc tops and punch holes for straw. Teachers had a small stove in the senior cloakroom to cook their lunch, and a delicious smell of baked potatoes pervaded the classroom. Children hurried home for lunch on foot. Team games were played with coloured braid bands hung over the children's chests. Visits to Meanwood Road Swimming Baths each week for the older children part of the year, with a walk to the tram at Oakwood, and a monotonous walk up Meanwood Road passed a leather works with its distinctive smell. Toilets were across the playground, and a pile of coke stood against the school wall.

The Headmistress taught the top class, Standard 5, and kept the records. The Vicar visited regularly, and the pupils learnt prayers and hymns and went to St. Edmund's on Ascension Day. The school Boardman called, and visited parents if children were absent from school. The Nurse also visited, and the Dentist, to inspect the children.

A limit of 106 pupils was set by the Education Authority. Pupils who did not continue at Secondary School (High School) could stay on until the age of 14 years, and some won scholarships to the Technical, Commercial, or Art College. Scholarships were also awarded at the age of 10 -11 years for High School, and children worked towards this goal, but I believe only 5% were given out by the Education Authority in the 30's.

The classrooms between Standard 1 and 2, and classrooms 3, 4 and 5 were divided by a wood panelled partition with glass panes in the upper part - too high for children to view through! Broad beans and cress were grown on wet blotting paper on a saucer, the beans in the neck of the bottle - for observation and learning, on the window ledge. Classrooms were heated by coke stoves.

In History class - dates and events were learnt.

Reading - Rudyard Kipling, Dickens, R.L. Stevenson, Charles Kingsley, Walter de la Mare.

Arithmetic - Adding, subtracting, long division, percentages, decimals and fractions.

English - verbs and nouns, good writing practice and punctuation.

Geography - countries, rivers, capitals, memorised.

Sewing - made a pyjama case embroidered down the seams and initials. Later a night dress, magiar style.

Knitting - squares for blankets.

A Sports Day was held annually on the Soldier's Field, with egg and spoon race, three-legged race (two children with arms linked and a leg of each tied together) and, of course, running and relays.

The school had its first uniform about 1936, a maroon blazer with St. Edmund's crest badge on the pocket. The school was vacated by the City Council in December 1959 as pupil numbers grew and the facilities became inadequate, but shortly re-opened as North Leeds Preparatory School, run by a Headmaster and his wife. The pupils wore very smart striped blue blazers and caps, socks etc. It later changed to a Nursery School called Stepping Stones and still functions today in Millennium Year.

Pupils also took part in the annual singing contest for Leeds Education Schools at Leeds Town Hall. Three boys and three girls from each school were selected and practised with other schools at Cowper Street School, Harehills on this side of town.

Various charitable collections were made over the years - on one occasion eggs for hospital use in 1932. The children received an oblong "silver" tin box embossed with a picture of the King and Queen for the Silver Jubilee in 1935 containing chocolates. The habit of saving was introduced with the Yorkshire Penny Bank Book - a card, to mark the amount and date, of linen type blue cover, which the teachers implemented. In 1941 the school roll was 135, and 17 children gained scholarships to Leeds Grammar School, Roundhay School or the Commercial School.

In 1948 electric lighting was installed, the cost being borne by the parents.

A full Government inspection in 1949 reported :- "High standards in spite of cramped conditions and old and insanitary toilets.... The Headmistress demands, and maintains high standards. The children are well mannered and considerate".

It was a happy and successful school which had grown from small beginnings.

It is interesting to note that the teachers' salaries in 1931 were - Miss Hearfield (headmistress) - £318 per year, Miss Rice £288, Miss Brown £174 and Miss Stead £186. Miss Hearfield was later to be followed by Miss Rutter and Miss Wilkinson.