

A Brief History of Education in the Parish of Lasswade

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Introduction This pamphlet was produced with the aim of disseminating the results of research undertaken by the Society into educational development in the Parish from the early 17thC until the mid20thC.

In the 16th C the Roman Catholic Church following the First Council of Trent in 1549 reminded of the need for a school in every parish. Following the Reformation, the reformers were keen that the laity should be able to read the Bible and a school should be established in every parish. In 1616 an act in Privy Council commanded every parish to establish a school "where convenient means may be had", and when the Parliament of Scotland ratified this with the Education Act of 1633, a tax on local landowners was introduced to provide the necessary endowment. By the 17th Century a considerable proportion of children in Scotland was literate compared with England and other countries in Europe.

Developments in local education can best be ascertained through investigation of the Kirk Session records. In Lasswade the first documented school was that run by



Mouth of Spout Burn near St Anne's House in Lasswade today



Site of Old Church today

Andrew Watson from 1615. It was based in a cottage situated at the mouth of the Spout Burn, which is now the location of St Anne's House in the village. There is conjecture that prior to this some education may have taken place in the church premises located in the original graveyard at the top of School Brae.

Throughout the remainder of the 17th century a succession of schoolmasters was recorded undertaking the role in close collaboration with the Kirk Session. They included Henry Meane, Daniel Blacklaw, James Trotter and James Law. Pupils tended to enroll at five years of age and attend school for ten to twelve hours per day six days per week. Poor children may have to leave by the age of eight but others might progress through burgh schools to attend university. Private or 'Dame schools' often complemented the Parish School.

Throughout the **18th Century** details of activities are less clearly defined. James Pinkerton is noted as being the school master and his wife is recorded as having given birth to twelve children between 1706 and 1725. There was also a note of his accommodation needing care in 1706 with which the session assisted. Schoolmasters who are identified without the provision of much details and are a focus of current research include John Hair, Patrick Gordon, Alexander Morrison, John King and John Henderson. By 1776 James Hume had been appointed and performed the role of schoolmaster until 1816. In 1795 the *Old Statistical Account* states that *"there is a thriving school in the village of Lasswade, English, Latin, writing, arithmetic and mathematics are taught with success. The schoolmaster's salary and fees as session clerk, etc. amount to £16 and the profits of his school to about £20 per annum. He has a good house, which enables him to keep boarders"* He died in 1836 and is buried in the Old Kirkyard with his wife and four children.

In 1816 William Tennant, a Scottish Poet and Scholar born in Anstruther, was appointed. He studied at St. Andrews University, and in 1812 published a mock-heroic poem, Anster Fair. He moved in 1819 to become teacher of Classical and Oriental Languages at the newly - opened Dollar Academy. He was appointed to the Chair of Oriental Languages at St Andrews University in 1834. Other poems by Tennant were the Thane of Fife (1822) and Papistry Stormed (1827); also, dramas Cardinal Beaton (1823) and John Baliol (1825).

He was followed by the infamous disciplinarian and one armed James Muir son of a school master from Penicuik. He was feared by the pupils and held the role for twenty years.

By 1843, the School moved into the two-classroom school and master's accommodation on School Green, which is currently used as a children's nursery. The first master at this location was **William Young**. At this time, there were around 85 children between four and ten years of age living in the village. In the *New Statistical Account*, June 1843 it is noted that;

"there are eight schools in the parish. they are all in an efficient state. The ordinary branches of education are taught in all the schools. an excellent education may be received at the parochial school, where, besides the usual branches, are taught Latin, Greek, French and mathematics. The parochial schoolmaster has the maximum salary, and accommodation for several boarders. The school is numerously attended, and the fees are very considerable in amount".



School on School Green today

In 1848, a visitor on his way up to visit the old kirkyard observed, " keeping parallel to the Esk, we passed the parish school. This building was erected in 1843, and consists of two spacious rooms, well aired and lighted, and capable of containing one hundred and fifty scholars. the school-house is two stories in height. beyond the house, we gained

the summit of the rising ground." *"Lasswade Church and Burying-Ground" in The Edinburgh Topographical, Traditional, and Antiquarian Magazine (1848),*

The Imperial Gazetteer of 1857 records the Schoolmaster's salary was £34 4s 4^{1/2}d with £48 fees. It was also noted that *"There are in the parish 12 non-parochial schools" as the area included Loanhead, Roslin, Rosewell, etc. & private & other denominational facilities would be in the count*

Around this time. the number of teachers associated with the school started to increase. One of the most notable teachers was **John Hislop** who was born in Pentland and was educated at the Edinburgh School of Arts (now Heriot-Watt University). After teaching at Lasswade, he subsequently became the schoolmaster at Colinton, Cults and Kirknewton before leaving for a teaching post in New Zealand with his family in 1856 aboard the SS Strathmore. He became the key figure in establishing the education system for the country based on the Scottish educational model. He was subsequently honoured by the University of Edinburgh with an LLD and the Royal Society of Edinburgh with a Fellowship.

During the nineteenth century, several **private or dame schools** were established around the village of Lasswade complementing the offerings of the parish school. The Dame School run by Frances Margaret Brocklehurst, 'an English lady' in the 1820 and 1830's was one such facility. It is a rather complex situation as there were a mother and daughter of the same names residing in Lasswade at the time.

The mother was from the Gray family, farmers in Neidpath Road, Peebles. She had married Thomas Brocklehurst from the largest silk manufacturing family in Macclesfield, England. They appear to have separated after having two daughters Catherine and Frances. The mother returned to Scotland, residing in Lasswade with the two daughters. They established the school on a site between the Laird and Dog Inn and the Esk. Frances the daughter was born and baptised in Macclesfield, Cheshire on the 13th August 1811. The father remarried and remained in Macclesfield.

On the 24th February 1841, Frances, the daughter, married James Purves of Earlston, Berwickshire who had become the schoolmaster at Forteviot, in Perthshire. He returned to teach in Inveresk. She died and was buried in Inveresk Churchyard in 1888.

Alexander Mutter and his wife Anne were farmers at Wester Melville. Four of their daughters became teachers namely Christian (b 1788). Euphemia (b 1802), Eliza (b 1804) and Helen (b 1807).

Their School was established in Lasswade Cottage (often referred to as Sir Walter Scott's House) at Wadingburn. In the 1841 census, Christian and Euphemia were teaching there and had six pupils between the ages of 8 and 14 years.

By the 1841 census, Christian had returned to live with her mother at Wester Melville



Mutters' Family Grave in extension to Old Graveyard



Free Gardeners Hall opposite Laird and Dog inn

with Helen listed as a teacher of French and English. Euphemia was teaching French and Italian at Lasswade Cottage with Eliza who taught music. There were 6 pupils aged 10 to 17 years from Scotland, England and Trinidad. There were several additional private schools in the village at various times. They included one held in the Free Gardeners' Hall between around 1850 until 1870. Others included one in

Strathesk Church Hall Building and one in a thatched cottage in Westmill, which was destroyed by fire around 1900.

"On 1 October, 1867 **Robert Marshall**, one of the very best of all Lasswade teachers", replaced Mr. Young. "He raised the reputation of Lasswade school higher than it had ever been and laid the foundation of its excellence as a higher-grade school and a senior secondary school.

During Mr Marshall's headship, there were several important national changes with the *1872 Education (Scotland) Act* making schooling compulsory, the introduction in 1883 of a leaving certificate and the 1890 Act made schooling free. The major change during his tenure was the building of the handsome new building at the top of School Brae. The school was originally build as a single storey and an upper storey was added later. In July 1881 the new school was opened with Sir Charles Umpherson Aitchison KCSI, Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab (previously a pupil of Mrs. Brocklehurst); Mr. W Tod, Chairman of the School Board (Mill owner); Rev Messrs. Burdon and Loudon; and members of the Board all present.

Lasswade Community High School still presents the James Young and the Robert Marshall medals annually to the top pupils in memory of their contribution to education in the parish.

The first schoolmaster in the 20th C was **James Gall** born in Perth 1868 and he held the post from 1899. He was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and assistant English and classics master at Tain Royal Academy. He maintained the high reputation both of Lasswade



*Lasswade Senior Secondary School
opened in 1881- now converted into flats*

Secondary and Lasswade Elementary Schools during his 30 years' service. He did much to popularise sport at Lasswade and throughout the county. He assisted in raising a large sum of money by pupils to provide gifts to those on service in the Great War.

James Copland was appointed as the new headmaster during 1929. He was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and graduated from the University of Aberdeen. For some years, he taught mathematics and science in Dresden, Germany. He was assistant at Lasswade before being promoted. He led the School through the difficult years of the Second World War retiring in 1950 after a period of illness.

During his headship, a primary school was built behind the original school on School Green and adjacent to the Secondary School in 1931. This provided teaching classrooms and a gymnasium for six classes prior to transfer to the Secondary School for the 'qualifying' year. A school garden was also established behind the school where fruit and vegetables were propagated by the pupils and sold at low costs to families. This helped to provide nutritious food for families suffering the effects of post-war rationing.

During this period the catchment area for Lasswade stretched from Leadburn through Penicuik, Roslin, Loanhead, Rosewell, parts of Bonnyrigg and many small villages. In the early years of the brightest pupils coming to Lasswade many walked very considerable distances. However, coaches were eventually provided by William Hunter Coaches of Loanhead, coordinated with services by other operators collecting the children from outlying districts and depositing them on the main routes for uplift.

His deputy **William Binnie** was appointed as his replacement. He was a graduate of mathematics and natural sciences educated at Peebles High School. He was a teacher of mathematics and Science at Roslin School before moving to Lasswade as an assistant and then principal for 13 years.

In 1955 the school moved to a custom-built campus at Poltonhall, which was subsequently demolished and replaced with a modern community school in 2016.

Over this period many pupils became eminent in their chosen careers. They included **Colonel Richard Baird Smith** born in Lasswade in 1818. He was a British engineer officer in the East India Company, who played a prominent part as Chief Engineer in the Siege of Delhi of 1857.

Sir James Arnot Hamilton, aircraft designer born in Penicuik in 1923, educated at Lasswade Secondary School and the University of Edinburgh. He became head of project assessment at the Royal Aircraft Establishment. In 1966, was project director for the Anglo-French Jaguar tactical fighter aircraft and became Director General for the Concorde project.



Sir James Arnot Hamilton with Princess Margaret at the Farnborough Airshow in the 1950s

The Bonnyrigg and Lasswade History Society hope you find this pamphlet of interest and as this is a continuing project would like to hear of any corrections or complementary information which would assist the project.

Please send any comments via

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