

***Shincliffe Local History Society***

# **SCHOOLDAYS IN SHINCLIFFE**

RESIDENTS OF A DURHAM VILLAGE RECALL THEIR  
SCHOOLDAYS

# ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***

'Schooldays in Shincliffe' was one of several booklets published by Shincliffe Local History Society as a record of memories of local people.

At a society meeting on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003, a panel of seven people met to share their memories of going to school in Shincliffe:

**Olive Stainsby** – who started Shincliffe School in 1929 and left in 1935

**Charles Brooke** – 1933 to 1942

**Eileen Coxon and Margaret Wise** – 1940 to 1945

**Richard Hopps** – 1947 to 1948

**Susan Lister** (nee Wilson) – 1962 to 1968

**Ruth Rayment** – who taught from 1964 to 1998

Additional comments are made by society members in the audience.

The meeting was chaired by **Kevin Eddy** after an introduction by **John Lightley**.

The meeting was recorded in front of an audience of society members by Trevor Carter, and subsequently transcribed for publication by Thea Burdus, Elizabeth Morgan, and Alwyn Priestnall.

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For this online edition, a few amendments have been made and footnotes added.

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# ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***

## **Introduction**

**John Lightley:** We're trying, as an experiment, to involve members in sharing their memories. We are going to be very informal. On my right is Kevin Eddy, who will chair the meeting and who will introduce it.

**Chairman:** The theme, as you know, is *Down Memory Lane – Schooldays in Shincliffe*. We are in a unique situation, in so much as we are living in a little village, in which there are still three existing school buildings.

The first one, as some of you will know, was built up on Shincliffe Bank Top in 1841 and was converted into two cottages after closure in 1866.



**Fig 1** *The first Shincliffe School. Built in 1841 at Bank Top, now private houses.*

The second was built at Bank Foot in 1860-61 as a girls' school and in 1865 a boys' school was added. There was also Shincliffe Colliery School which opened at the Bank Top in 1874 having been promoted by Joseph Love the colliery owner. The present school (Shincliffe CE Primary School) was built in 1968.

The main school we will be talking about – which all of the people here at this table went to – was the school at the bottom of the bank, which is no longer a school, but has been converted into a house. What we aim to do is hear every panel member in turn, and talk maybe about school memories, the curriculum, and what you did there, the teachers you remember, and things like that.

Charles, I don't know if you have anything you want to offer on your memories of the school, teachers, and what time you started, anything at all, and then we can just bring anyone else in.

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## **Pre-War Memories**

**Charles Brooke:** Well, I started on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1933, and that photo shows Miss Chapelow, Mr Appleton was headmaster at the time and there was Miss Dazley. There were three classes at the time. Miss Chapelow taught the infants, Miss Dazley took the second class, and Mr Appleton took the third class. If you divide it into the six years that you went to that school, the infants went from five to eight, then from eight to eleven and eleven to fourteen. Mr Appleton was the headmaster for them all.

...I can't remember a great lot, but I do remember Miss Chapelow well, because she used to come from Durham every morning on the bus at quarter to nine and walk up the bank.

School started at nine o'clock in the morning. If you look at the photograph, which was taken in 1955, you can see the main road coming up there, and the lead up to the school, and there is another photo showing Mr Appleton and Mrs Appleton. Her name was Elfrida. I think the photograph may have been taken after he retired.

**Margaret Wise:** I remember her father. They called him Mr Brodie. He used to sit in the garden. There were just three teachers in my time, Miss Chapelow, Miss Dazley, and Mr Appleton.

**Olive Stainsby:** It was different when I was there; then there were four. Miss Barrass, Miss Dazley, Miss Marriott, and Miss Galliphant. They each had a class. All the rooms were used as classrooms then.

**Margaret Wise:** Miss Marriott came before the war, but during the war she came back as Mrs Morgan. She got married to Noel Morgan and came back during the war, when some male teachers were in the Services.

## **The war and post war years**

**Charles Brooke:** When the war came, a lot of evacuees came and that meant a lot more children attending the school. There would be about 30 children in a class at the time, because at the time, there were only four classes, but the classes could be divided, and there could be two age groups together in one class. There was a partition.

**Margaret Wise:** I started Shincliffe School in 1940. Heating was by coal fires. We had electric light, but not any form of central heating.

**Richard Hopps:** They still had coal fires in 1947 when I started.

**Olive Stainsby:** The only people who were warm were the people at the front, but if you were at the back, you were frozen.

**Charles Brookes:** Mrs Stout was the school caretaker, and she lived in the little house at the bottom of the bank.

**Richard Hopps:** Well in 1947 when I started school the caretaker was Mr Stapleton.

**Chairman:** What about the type of lesson the children had then? I have heard that children didn't read as well then as they do now. I don't know if that is true. I always thought that writing was good in the old days.

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**Fig 2 Teaching Staff in 1933.** (Left to right): Alice Chapelow, Harry Appleton, and Lottie Dazley

**Margaret Wise:** Everyone had to write, you had to. You had to do rows and rows forming letters. A whole row of 'A,' then a whole row of 'B' and so on.

**Jim Milburn** (*from the floor*): Although I'm not on the panel, I went to (*Shincliffe*) school from 1947, and I always remember Harry Appleton used to have competitions for writing, and I always used to win the competitions for good writing. They used to pay a penny for a composition, and that was one of my earliest and only remembrances of Harry Appleton.

**Charles Brooke:** Harry Appleton used to send me down to Blackett's shop in the town, where the Post Office was, and I always used to have to get cigarettes for him. Gold Flake, in those days. It was all he smoked, Gold Flake. He used to send me about playtime, and about 3 o'clock in the afternoon I would go down. I think they cost a shilling a packet then.

**Margaret Wise:** I remember him helping us infants across the road at the *Seven Stars*, piggyback, after school.



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**Eileen Coxon:** I remember someone mentioning the heating. We had open coal fires, with a high fireguard around, and old Mrs Stout, who lived in Wayside Cottage, opposite the school, who was the school caretaker for many years, used to put all the little milk bottles (we got little bottles of milk, and in the winter, it had ice on the top) to stand all around inside the fireguard to melt, so we could drink our milk at milk time. She was also very kind to the children who walked from Old Durham, who had walked in deep snow, and often arrived wet, and she used to take their clothes off and hang them round the fireguard to dry as the steam rose up.

**Charles Brooke:** And I remember that milk bottles had cardboard tops, with a little circle in the middle, and you pressed them, and the milk sometimes used to jump out.



***Fig 3 School photo c1947/48. Harry Appleton headmaster with Alice Chapelow (left) & Lottie Dazley (right).***

**Ruth Rayment:** We were talking about the heating. When I went there in 1964, they still had the same stoves in the old school, a lovely big fire in the infant room, and Miss Chapelow used to have her desk right beside it, and then you had to go and stand at the other side.

I went into the room where there were two stoves one morning, and when I went in, the place was just covered in soot. The caretaker couldn't get the fires to go, and of course, all the smoke had come back down the chimney and it was dreadful. Eventually she got one to go, and we all had to sit round this little flame, with our coats on trying to get warm.

**Richard Hopps:** I started in 1947, after the war, and in my memory, it was a very big school, with lots of people around, but actually, there were only 15 to 16 people per form, and three forms. 1947 was the last year when boys stayed there to age 14.

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At that time, there were three or four boys left at the school to complete their education. We could never fathom that out, as Whinney Hill had been built in 1933 so why were there older boys at the school?

They did all the odd jobs, like the gardening, carrying coal in, and one thing and another, and they left in 1948, and there were none of the older boys left after that. The school would only be about 50 children, and three teachers.

The age at which compulsory education ceased was 14 when I started school, but after 1948, people left Shincliffe at 11. Prior to that, the people who got 11-plus, left at 11, but not many got 11-plus from Shincliffe, funnily enough, compared to other schools in Durham.

**Pat Hudson** (*from the floor*): Can I perhaps ask why not? I heard from Ted Dawes, who died recently, that Mr Appleton actually divided the class into, shall we say, the gentry and the non-gentry. According to Ted Dawes, basically, he decided who were going to go into the mines, and who were not. That would be in about 1934.

**Jim Milburn** (*from the floor*): My father was a miner, and we lived at Houghall. I passed the 11-plus (*from Shincliffe school*) in 1951 and then went to Durham Johnston School, so I don't think there was any kind of bar against working people going to the grammar school.

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**Richard Hopps**: When I look back at the photograph, it was interesting that in one form, there was a three-year age range. How they ever taught them, I don't know. There was this three-year age gap, and of course, the people who were likely to get the 11-plus, would very often get into the top form sooner than others, because they would have three years just concentrating on the 11-plus.

Strangely, looking back, was that Shincliffe Village was a depressed village at that time. There were a lot of empty houses, and nobody wanted to live here. Next door to the Church Hall here, Forge Cottage was derelict, where Rosie Taylor was, round there was derelict beside The Mews. There were a number of empty houses, we used to play in them, and in my year, in Shincliffe School, there were only two people from the village who went to the school. Most of the school children came from the Bank Top. There were only two village children, and it was a rare occurrence to have a birth in the village.

The other child was named Sharpe. Since then, incomers have come. The Police Houses at Low Green were built. St Mary's Close was not there at the time. When the houses were built, they brought the children with them. This was in the 1950s, and the school would increase a bit. Hill Meadows was a lot later.

Funnily enough then, in 1947 to 48, looking at the photograph, a large proportion of the children were from farming backgrounds, because the main industry in Shincliffe was farming.

The Milk Marketing Board employed a lot of people, and so did Morgans, the Agricultural Merchants, and there were three farms in the village, and Brookes' Market Garden<sup>1</sup> down at the end, so the main employment was farming.

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<sup>1</sup> Now Poplar Tree Garden Centre

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**Chairman:** It's funny how that has been because, you know, we are concentrating on the second school, but so far as the first school if concerned, I don't know if anyone has read this history, but it says in here, that a Mr Hazel, a schoolmaster in the 1850s at the top school, says: *'...in classes of 140, it is impossible to keep order, the hot weather and the full school are beginning to tell upon my health, I feel a break is needed.'*

After that, as you say, the numbers fell and the time when the numbers increased again came when the top estates were developed in High Shincliffe.

**Richard Hopps:** All the time we were there, Harry Appleton was an older headmaster, and there were no sports at school, you just played. You did it yourself. You went out in the playground and played your own game.

**Susan Lister:** I was there from the early sixties. Ruth's daughter Jill is just a year younger than me, and I was there a year before Ruth started, with Laurence Philips, Paul Addison, Keith Herron, Diane Moody, and Caroline Jackson.

**John Hudson (from the floor):** I understand that there was talk of closing down the school in 1964? When we came here in 1964 and Susan our eldest started school it was very debatable whether the school would survive. Certainly, the upsurge at the top of the hill had not occurred at that time.

**Ruth Rayment:** There was a petition to keep the school going. I don't think the houses at High Shincliffe were projected to be going to start at that time.

**Olive Stainsby:** It was St Mary's Close that kept it going.

**John Lightley:** When we came it was still a category D village.

### **The cane**

**Chairman:** Getting back to schooldays, was anyone ever caned? I used to get the cane at school, did you?

**Charles Brooke:** I can remember Harry Appleton, and I got six on each hand, for playing in the laurels on the way to the school, one dinner time.

**Richard Hopps:** I have only been caned once in my life, by Harry Appleton, and it was for playing in the school field, which was our field. I was digging sand holes, digging in the sand, and he got us down, and I remember. You never forget it, do you?

**Olive Stainsby:** I remember Miss Marriot came to Durham. She gave me the cane.

**Margaret Wise:** I remember Miss Chapelow giving the cane to George. You did what you were told or else. There were no lines or anything. I got the cane twice, and it was enough for me. One was for talking, and one for playing the piano on the desk.

**Richard Hopps:** Harry Appleton was an educated fellow. I think he was at York University and did English, and really, he should have progressed a lot further than Shincliffe School. He served in the war as well. Miss Chapelow took over while he was away.



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When I started in 1947, Miss Chapelow had various illnesses, she had back trouble and eye trouble, and she hardly ever taught me the whole time I was at school. I would think that if she taught one year out of the four, that would be all the time she was there.

### **Gas masks and barley sugar**

**Chairman:** What do you remember of the wartime? Were there any air-raids?

**From the floor:** Sitting under desks with our gas masks on, to practise.

**Eileen Coxon:** I remember the jar of barley sugar sticks. They were kept in a cupboard in case we ever had to go into the air-raid shelter if there was an air-raid on, the barley sugars were still there at the end of the war.

**Olive Stainsby:** The air-raid shelter was in the school garden.

**Richard Hopps:** It was in the field actually.

**John Hudson** (*from the floor*): You mentioned the evacuees. How many came to the school? Did you have another school deposited on you?

**Margaret Wise:** There were quite a lot. The teacher who came with them from Newcastle was called Miss Maine, I remember.

**Charles Brookes:** The children were billeted in different houses, a lot of them at High Shincliffe. People took them in.

**Richard Hopps:** You never saw any parents at school in those days. I remember my first day at school, Beth Driver's son, Bill, about three years older than me, collected me from home, and took me to school; today that wouldn't happen.

**Susan Lister:** My big brother Alan took me. No, my mam and dad would not have taken me.

### **Church or Chapel?**

**Richard Hopps:** The only pre-school then was the Chapel, and the Sunday school, so all the children at the Bank Top came to Chapel, and the Chapel was well attended, and the children had a good grounding in performing arts.

They were taught to play, which was a very good thing, and the Shincliffe children went to Sunday School, which was taken by Mrs Moody. She was the wife of Arthur Moody who taught at Bowburn. She had been teaching in school all week, and then she used to come and take the Sunday School. It was a big thing, that. If you were in the choir you went in the morning, and to Sunday School, three times a day, and nothing else happened in Shincliffe on a Sunday. It was just dead. It was Chapel or Church, and if you ever played, you were reported. The priest, Sammy Moore, was chairman of the Governors.

**Question from the floor:** Which Sunday School was better?

**Richard Hopps:** Well, I think Chapel, probably. I just used to get stamps every Sunday.

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**Charles Brooke:** The Chapel used to have a prize every year for good attendance. I've still got mine.

**Olive Stainsby:** The Chapel had a trip every year, and the church did not, so occasionally we went to Chapel.

**Richard Hopps:** You didn't get your rations, did you, if you didn't go to the Chapel?

**Charles Brooke:** I can remember walking in the garden, with Mr Appleton.

**Chairman:** There was a garden there, wasn't there? Who kept the garden?

**Charles Brooke:** What we called the big boys. Produce was sold.

**Susan Lister:** The garden was no longer there when I was there.

### **Music Lessons**

**Charles Brooke:** I think one of Mr Appleton's favourite subjects was music. One of his favourite songs was *Drink to Me Only*<sup>2</sup>. That was his favourite, and he used to have us singing that week after week, every music lesson, we sang it every week.

**Richard Hopps:** Kathleen Ferrier<sup>3</sup>. He loved Kathleen Ferrier. He used to leave us all afternoon with Kathleen Ferrier. The only time you could leave the classroom, as I think he had been in the desert during the war, was if you wanted a drink of water then you could go, but for anything else you could not.

**Margaret Wise:** In music lessons, if you were in Miss Chapelow's class you played the piano and if you were in Miss Dazley's class you maybe dropped the tuning fork, because she could not play the piano.

**Richard Hopps:** I was thinking of the famous people who had been to Shincliffe School. Mark Hughes became shadow Minister of Agriculture; but I can't think of anybody else, who went right to the very top, from the school, apart from Brian Lander, who was Captain of Durham County Cricket Club when they beat Yorkshire in the final.

**John Lightley:** Were there any games?

**Richard Hopps:** The games were Sunderland v Newcastle with a small tennis ball in the back playground. Just soil, it was not tarmacked. Boys played football, just cricket and football. You could go out into our field. There was a stile into the field and the boys played Bulldog, you know British Bulldog.

**Ruth Rayment:** It was tarmacked when I was there.

**Olive Stainsby:** We used to go into those fields when it snowed, you know, we went right to the top and sledged right down.

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<sup>2</sup> The lyrics and history of this song may be found here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drink\\_to\\_Me\\_Only\\_with\\_Thine\\_Eyes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drink_to_Me_Only_with_Thine_Eyes)

<sup>3</sup> <https://kathleenferrier.org.uk/kathleenferrier/>

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**Margaret Wise:** They had beautiful outside toilets. There was one especially for the teachers and the rest of the staff to share, and a special boys' sort of watery gymnastics. Eileen, you will remember when Peter Driver and Keith Smith were doing that over the wall, and they hit Miss Chapelow. Everyone was in tears watching. Mrs Stout, the caretaker, had to clean those toilets, but the council men came once every so many weeks, to shovel them out.



***Fig 4 The school at Bank Foot.** Built in 1874, this photograph shows the school in 1968 shortly before the new school at High Shincliffe opened.*

### **School dinners**

**Charles Brooke:** We had to take our own sandwiches. There were no school lunches in my time.

**Richard Hopps:** There was when I was there.

**Chairman:** So, there were no school diners when you were there?

**Olive Stainsby:** Everyone went home.

**Charles Brooke:** We stopped for dinner at twelve o'clock, then started at one, finished at half past three, then everyone walked home.

**Susan Lister:** I had one school dinner. After that, I went home every day, I walked up the bank.

**Ruth Rayment:** School dinners were available when I was there. How long they had been, I don't know.

**Chairman:** What about Christmas? Did you have any special things?

**Olive Stainsby:** Oh yes, there was a lovely Christmas tree, and every child got a present, and there was always a village pantomime in the hall, the W.I. did it.

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**Richard Hopps:** The only things we used to do in my day, I remember we used to have a maypole, on the bottom garden, and we used to have to come down and perform at the summer garden party at the church garden.

**Margaret Wise:** Here are some photographs, taken before one of the garden parties, where we were all dressed up; the boys were dressed in elves things, which came out every year, made of yellow and green, sort of muslin; and the fairy dresses were always the same too, but we were privileged, we had ballet dresses at home, mine was my sister's.

One belonged to Miss Chapelow's niece. This would be about 1941, because my sister is not on the photograph, and she started school two years after me. It was always held in summertime, on the Vicarage lawn. We used to have country dancing, too.

**Eileen Coxon:** There was a gramophone.

**Olive Stainsby:** Yes, Miss Dazley's with all the steps.

**Eileen Coxon:** I can remember dancing in the yard.



***Fig 5 School children in fancy dress at Rectory garden party, c.1941***

**Chairman:** What sort of days did you get off? Did you get any special days?

**Margaret Wise:** Half day pancake day, all day Ash Wednesday, we had to go to church first.

**Eileen Coxon:** Did you do Country Dancing?

**Margaret Wise:** Timetable was you did your arithmetic first, about an hour.

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## **The Shincliffe bomb**

**Eileen Coxon:** We were not allowed to use the main road, the big bank. We used the back lane, I don't know what it is called now, and the bomb dropped in the middle of it. Shincliffe's only bomb dropped in the middle of it, and we could not go to school.

**Olive Stainsby:** It was in Peter Driver's garden more or less, wasn't it?

**Charles Brooke:** No, it was in the field, just behind the hedge, exactly in the middle of the little bank, just where the dividing part is. I can remember going and having a look at the crater.

**Eileen Coxon:** They extended the garden of Mr Matthews' house. He fenced it in, and that fence never came down, so the first house in Hillcrest has a longer garden than everyone else.

**John Lightley:** How long did the evacuees stay for?

**Margaret Wise:** Not long. The odd ones, like Mary Blackburn, were here a long time, she was there, more or less, throughout the war, she came from Guernsey, but the ones from Newcastle were only there for a short time.

**Charles Brooke:** Her mother and father used to have a shop next to Maynard's in Durham. It was like a NAAFI, and the Army used it. They used to sell sweets and so on to the Army people. Her mother was in charge of it.

**Olive Stainsby:** They used to serve teas and things for the soldiers.

**Charles Brooke:** Was that not at the Shakespeare Hall?

**Olive Stainsby:** Yes, it could have been.

**Chairman:** Did they have a register at the school? Say you were off, or anything?

**Margaret Wise:** Well, they kept attendance. A Mr Hall came around, and we used to be frightened of him, and all sit up straight, so he could count your heads.

**Charles Brooke:** There was no absenteeism in those days. Parents were too strict.

**Chairman:** I think there seemed to be some good excuses in the early days. There were public hangings, so we went down to Durham to see public hangings. Kids of 9 and 10 were taken.

**Susan Lister:** If a class got full attendance during the week, you got an attendance, but often they'd let you off on a Friday 10 minutes early, and you used to run up that bank.

**Margaret Wise:** I can't remember anyone in the years that I was at school who could not read or write. They might not be able to do it very well, but everyone could read and write, couldn't they? And tables every day.

**Eileen Coxon:** There would be little private lessons to help them read and write.

**Chairman:** What about spelling? I notice from work that spelling can be unbelievably bad, 35-year-olds, and somebody said it is because of the way they have been taught. Phonetic or whatever.

**Richard Hopps:** You have to remember that a lot of the children at Shincliffe would leave at eight or nine to go to prep school. Ten spellings and maths, that would be the entrance exam, so spelling was very important. You know "beautiful," everyone had to be able to spell "beautiful", because you know that you were going to get it.



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**Eileen Coxon:** In wartime, if your feet were over a certain size, you got an extra clothing coupon, and that was decided at school, and mine were not long enough, and I was terribly disappointed, trying to reach to the line with my big toe, and I never did get that extra clothing coupon.

**Margaret Wise:** We used to get the nit nurse regularly as well. The same families were called out every time. It was not done in front of the class; it was just a routine.

**Richard Hopps:** One of the major operations I remember when I was at school was mixing the ink. When we went from pencil to ink, we got this blue stuff in a jar, and a monitor had to mix it, every day, so we could write, and I think we used a nib pen. Initially we would use pencil, and then we used ink pens until we left.

**Ruth Rayment:** They changed to ball-point pens.



***Fig 6 The class of 1968 at the Bank Foot school. The new school at High Shincliffe opened the following year.***

**Margaret Wise:** And the girls were all taught to knit – dishcloths, to start with.

**Olive Stainsby:** And sewing. I remember doing seaming and run and felled seams.

**Susan Ledger:** We took embroidery home, we learned embroidery stitches as well.

**Eileen Coxon:** The teacher would do the cutting out.

**Richard Hopps:** We also had two lessons a day from the radio, we had, definitely, two lessons a day, maybe exercises, in 1947 to 1948.

**Chairman:** I wonder whether anyone else has any suggestions?

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## **Houghall**

**Question from the floor:** While on holiday, I met a lady from the south of England who claimed that her grandfather had been headmaster at Houghall. I tried very hard to find someone who could give me any information at all about that school at Houghall, but I could not find anyone, and in the end, we just had to let the matter drop.<sup>4</sup>

**Olive Stainsby:** There was a school and a chapel at Houghall. You know the little village that used to be at Houghall, well there was a chapel there, and there used to be a school too.

**Jim Millburn** (from the floor): The school would be there around about the 1930s, and the Chapel itself. The person who made the bell at the chapel was called Stout. I was told by an old woman who lived at Whitwell, who was born in the 1920s, that this Mr Stout, who made the bell, for the church at Houghall, which is on the other side of the road as you come along.

The village was on the left-hand side, with the pit, and on the right-hand side of the road, before you went down to the isolation hospital, the school and chapel were down there.

The only person who was allowed to ring the bell was a woman called Elizabeth Stout, and I have a photograph of Elizabeth Stout who lived in the house that I lived in, 5 Garden Street, which was in the 1930s, and I think that this Mrs Stout was related to the caretaker who lived at Wayside Cottage; but there was a school and church in the 1930s.

**Chairman:** So which children went there? The children from Houghall?

**Olive Stainsby:** If you go to that old village, and you walk through the woods, there is an illustration, which shows you where those things were, but we didn't go into the wood, if we went along the lane, we went right into the village bit. Those illustrations are on the right-hand side of the road.

**Chairman:** Who did the school cater for? Just for Houghall children?

**Jim Millburn** (from the floor): In the 1930s, there were three streets in Houghall. There was John Street, Garden Street, and Cross Street. I lived there, and by the 1950s, there was only Garden Street and Cross Street left, but at that time there were three streets at Houghall, so the children there would have gone to that village school.

When I was about eight years old, I used to walk to Shincliffe school on my own, from Houghall, but I cannot remember very many other people who lived in the village who went to the same school as me. I think that there were quite a few of them who went to school somewhere in Durham.

**Richard Hopps:** The farm manager of Houghall's children, the Thompson children, went to Shincliffe school. Four or five of them.

**Margaret Wise:** There was one brilliant girl from along there, who came on the bus. She got distinctions in all her subjects.

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<sup>4</sup> Houghall village school was built in the 1870s to serve the children of mining families in Houghall and Elvet. By the late 1880s with the mines closed, it was no longer required and was converted to serve as Houghall Isolation Hospital. It opened in 1893 and continued to be used as a hospital for infectious diseases until 1949, when Durham County Council began using it as a hostel for agricultural students at Houghall Agricultural College. The buildings were finally demolished in 1965. [See Houghall Isolation Hospital by Robin Simpson, published by Shincliffe Local History Society.]

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**Ruth Rayment:** When I was about 10 years old, I went to stay with a friend, and we went to the Chapel on a Sunday afternoon, but I can't remember any school being there.

**Richard Hopps:** I can't because there was an Isolation Hospital along there and no school. They wouldn't put a school next to an Isolation Hospital.

**Jim Milburn** (from the floor): No, the Isolation Hospital was built after the school had gone. You are talking about 1930, aren't you?

**Olive Stainsby:** Not the school, I think it had gone long before that.

### **Assemblies**

**John Lightley:** Was there a big hall in the school here, where you could hold assemblies, and so on? Did you sit in pairs, or at long benches, or what?

**Margaret Wise:** There were assemblies. There was a partition, two classrooms which could be joined together. We sat at long benches, where two or three sat together, and there was an inkwell, and seats which tipped up.

**John Lightley:** I remember carrying things up, chairs and things up the bank.

**Richard Hopps:** I remember, in summer, when you had assembly, it was outside, in the yard, and every form [was present] it was a military sort of operation, you lined up, but in winter, I don't think that happened.

**Susan Lister:** You made a semi-circle in your class, you stood in your form, with the bigger ones at the back, obviously, and the little ones at the front, but you just stood. There was no check, you just stood at the back, in a semi-circle.

**Ruth Rayment:** When I was first there, they had the old-fashioned seats, with hinges. When I went back permanently, they had got tables by that time, with lids in, and of course we had free milk in those days, and if a child knocked the milk over, the milk would pour inside.

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**Question from the floor:** Is there anyone here who remembers celebrating Empire Day?

**Olive Stainsby:** Yes, we used to celebrate Empire Day, Mr Appleton was very keen on that sort of thing.

**Intervention from the floor:** We used to take a daisy into church and pull off the white petals, they were the subsidiary countries, and reflected how the Empire was the centre of the daisy. I'm afraid I am giving away my age, here, but it seems that I am the oldest person here, anyway.

**John Lightley:** I remember it anyway. We went in our Cub uniforms, Rhodesia, Australia...

**From the Floor:** And the flag, as well, we walked around with the flag. I started my teaching career in exactly the same conditions as you have described, with an open fire, and a fire guard, and I remember being terribly appalled by the conditions.

The first two years of my teaching, I got very fond of the children, although I did not want to stay there, I got out as soon as I could. It wasn't a very welcome situation for a newly appointed graduate.

# ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***

## **Harry Appleton**

**Richard Hopps:** One thing about Harry Appleton, there were a lot of deprived families at Bank Top, but he kept them all clothed, and in shoes. He had a cupboard that he kept stuff in, and if anybody had shoes that were worn through, he would provide the shoes. He was very kind with that sort of thing. He kept the community together; he was a prominent member of the community. He would be there until Miss Chapelow took over. He retired, and he went to live with his daughter, Beth. He went to live in Surrey, and he joined Surrey Cricket Club, and after about five years, his wife died, and he came back to Sherburn House Hospital, so he was always wandering around the village, I mean, he was a likeable rogue.

**Jim Milburn** (from the floor): I remember he was still there in 1955. I have a photograph of Harry Appleton looking as though he had been some kind of coach or representative for a Shincliffe Recreation Football Team, that won the cup in 1928, and Harry Appleton is on that photograph.

**Richard Hopps:** He ran the cricket team.

**Olive Stainsby:** The Recreation field was well used. Where St Mary's Close is now, we had a cricket team.<sup>5</sup>

**Richard Hopps:** Well, Harry Appleton captained the Cricket team, he wanted to be chairman. Most of the village did. It was all anti-rector; a lot of people opposed the rector. He was all for it, because of course the tithes would increase on that land at the time, but Shincliffe Village didn't want it, they wanted to keep the playing field.

You see, the Milk Marketing Board took over during the war, the Dean and Chapter land, they may have got it compulsorily, probably, they had that field and they had the field at the other side of the road, so when they gave it up, all the village were objecting to it and wanted the playing field back, and it probably would have been better to have kept the playing field, and to build on the other side of the road.

**Olive Stainsby:** It was a social centre. It just all went when the recreation ground was taken over.

**Richard Hopps:** There was no heart in the village, you know when I said that in 1948 or 1949, there was just nothing. I was one of the few children. I remember my sister today saying there was nobody to play with, and it was true, there was nobody.

**John Lightley:** Harry Appleton's son used to come and help to teach.

**Richard Hopps:** He was called Roger, and Harry Appleton also had an adopted son called Dick Sissons. They were both home on leave, and with Miss Chapelow being off all the time, I think they would have been student teachers.

**Olive Stainsby:** As you say, he looked after his family as well. I can remember, in that house, and it was just a small house, there was old Mr Brodie, his wife's father, and Dick Sissons, who was his nephew, Roger and Beth, and Mr and Mrs Appleton. It was a small house, next to the Old School.

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<sup>5</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s the Dean and Chapter and Ecclesiastical Commissioners, together with the Church, proposed to sell the playing field and allow housing development. This was opposed by the cricket team and its Captain, Harry Appleton. Nevertheless, the Church prevailed and in 1962 St Mary's Close was completed, winning a prestigious award for its design.

## ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***



***Fig 7 Harry Appleton in uniform.** Harry Appleton became head teacher at Shincliffe school in 1921. Apart from military service during the second world war, he remained in this post until his retirement in 1955.*

**Richard Hopps:** But in Shincliffe village, and I am thinking of the Temples, there were about three families in a two-bedroomed house, and now you would be thinking, how did they manage? Where would they sleep?

And their uncle was the last of the Brethren; you know, the Brethren at Sherburn House. I think he was one of the last of the Brethren. Do you remember them?

**Olive Stainsby:** The village always seemed to me to be full of Moodys. There was butcher Moody, there was teacher Moody, there was farmer Moody, and there were five children in one of the families. They were in that little cottage, next door.

**Richard Hopps:** They were all related.

**Chairman:** They tended to be bigger families; I don't know whether they were at Shincliffe.

**Richard Hopps:** I think Miss Dazley was a kind teacher at Shincliffe school. Miss Chapelow was a hard sort of woman, and Mr Appleton was dominating, everybody was terrified of him, but Miss Dazley was a kind, loving person in the middle. She lived opposite us, in Rose Acre.

**Margaret Wise:** You were still frightened of her in class. If she said 'Jump,' you asked, 'How high?'

**Olive Stainsby:** I thought that she lived at the station. Her parents were at the station, in those houses that were pulled down when they widened the bridge.



## ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***

**John Hudson** (From the floor): I was going to say that today, the school has 20 or 25 percent of its pupils from all over the place near Durham City. Did people come in from outside then?

**Margaret Wise:** Then only person I can remember was a boy called Bobby Fawcett whose parents went to live in Durham, and he travelled to school on the bus rather than change.

**Susan Ledger:** Was there not a catchment area in those days? Did you not have to go to a certain school?

**Ruth Rayment:** Yes, you did.

**From the Floor:** They have gone the other way now, choice.

**Chairman:** Was it a strictly religious school? What I mean by that is, were there no Catholics?

**Olive Stainsby:** You started school on your birthday.

**Richard Hopps:** There was no junior Catholic school in the neighbourhood.

**Charles Brooke:** Stan Sharp went to a Catholic school in Durham. He was the same time as me. His brother went too, was that after? After Shincliffe school?

**John Lightley:** Were there any days out? Trips anywhere?

**Richard Hopps:** I never remember going on a school trip.

**Chairman:** Eileen, do you remember any trips out at all? Nature trips?

**Richard Hopps:** Sunday School trips.

**Charles Brooke:** I remember bringing them back from a school trip. (produces picture)

**Richard Hopps:** And the governors appointed the staff.

**Olive Stainsby:** There were a few families who were sent to Bowburn, to Mr Holmes' school. I can remember that, because he had a very, very good reputation.

**Chairman:** Was it because of the numbers, though, or what?

**Olive Stainsby:** I don't know, but it had a very good reputation. They had no chance of getting to Durham Grammar school from there, because there were only the Durham schools, and they went Spennymoor way. They did not come to Durham.

**John Lightley:** There was a regular bus service, was there?

**From the floor:** Yes, there was a bus service.

**Olive Stainsby:** Not in my time.

**Jim Milburn** (from the floor): When I passed for the grammar school, in 1951, at Shincliffe School, I went to Durham Johnston. The following year, I moved to live at Bowburn with my parents. If I had gone to Bowburn initially, I would have had to go to Alderman Wraith School at Spennymoor, as there were very few who went from Bowburn to Durham Johnston, and I think the area must have stopped somewhere at Bowburn end, before they came into Durham. Certainly, the other end of Bowburn went to Alderman Wraith.

**Olive Stainsby:** And Alderman Wraith had a very good name indeed.

## ***Schooldays in Shincliffe***

**Eileen Coxon:** But children were not transported to school. My Mum was very busy, so she caught some of the girls from the school who were passing, and said, 'Eileen starts school today, will you take her with you?' And I just trotted along with them, very happily. When you think now that they are taken, and brought back, and taken, but it was quite safe then. It was the same at lunch, too.

**Richard Hopps:** I started in 1947, and I left when I was eight and a half. The interesting thing is that when I left Shincliffe, and went to prep school, as some did, I went to the Chorister School, because we were on a Dean and Chapter farm, and the fees for my first term at the Chorister School were £11.00, and a ton of potatoes cost £11. So, a ton of potatoes paid my school fees. Now look at the comparison today. Imagine if they cost £100.00 now.

**Chairman:** I was born in 1937. I went to Ushaw College, which was a school, a seminary for priests, for the priesthood, but we went as lay students.

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