

## Early Education in Cadishead

Prior to 1833 all education was supported voluntarily, and despite the obvious rivalry between religious factions we owe an enormous debt to the various churches and chapels for the provision of elementary education in this country. There were large numbers of illiterates who came mostly from the lower working classes. The more skilled people taught their children themselves, the upper classes bought instruction for their families.

There is very little information on the education of the local inhabitants of Cadishead. The area was mainly a farming community and in Cadishead most people were tenants on land owned by Heyes Hall. The only local industries were either farming or fustian cutting so it was difficult to find any free money to educate children.

The population in 1837 was in the region of 600 and education facilities were rather meager being mainly Dame Schools until the first Wesleyan day school was started in Irlam. Before the opening of Cadishead Wesley a number of Cadishead children were attending Irlam Endowed School. Some children, mainly the boys stayed on at Irlam Endowed as in the early years Cadishead Wesley only had women teachers and some parents thought that their boys needed to be taught by a school master.

The school started on Lords Street close to where the Wesleyan Church now stands. It started out in one room and in 1820 an extension was built adding another room onto the building, one now being the infant school, the other the junior. In 1866 there were 200 on the roll. The numbers attending school fluctuated depending on the seasons. In the summer months children would be kept away from school to help with the harvests.



In studying the school logs one of the major causes of non attendance for the children was that the parents couldn't afford the fees so they would keep their children out of school. Some children would only go to school for half a day these were called half timers and would often come to school late as they had been working in the mornings.

There are many references in the school logs about children missing from school to help their parents, one such example from 1877, "sent Martha home. She arrived at 2.00pm having been kept cutting at home. Sent out fifty notices of warning re attendance"

Scarlet Fever was a recurrent danger and the school would have to close in some instances due to the number of children off sick. A measles epidemic in November 1883 meant many children were absent, including many that were not sick but were required to stay away from school on account of someone in the household having it. In some cases children were off school for up to six weeks.



Another problem the school had was as the school was situated in a Chapel and Chapel business could interfere with the school on one occasion the school couldn't open until 10.30 am and on another occasion the school had to close early due to funerals taking place.

The Education Act in 1870 provided the opportunity to make the whole building into a school, building a new chapel at Bob's Lane.

By Deborah Yates