

GLENWHILLY SCHOOL

(Helen J. McIlwrick's Memories) (2002)

For some time now I have been thinking of writing what I know, and what I have been able to find out, about Glenwhilly School. This one teacher, one room school, stood close to the road that runs from the village of NewLuce, Wigtownshire to Barrhill in Ayrshire. It was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles to NewLuce and just opposite Glenwhilly Farm. This building was demolished in the early 60's and a wooden bungalow Darniemow Cottage now occupies the site. I quote here from records in the Regional Library at Dumfries - "As far as can be ascertained this school was built about 1875 and was the first school in the district. Before this a teacher went from one farm house to another during the winter months staying a week or a fortnight at each centre, pupils attending wherever the teacher was stationed. The first teacher appointed to the school was John Macfadzean a native of Colmonell, Ayrshire. Unfortunately no log book earlier than 1911 exists so no details of his time there can be given. He died in 1887. Around 1890 the teacher was Miss Immes, followed by Miss Townsley, Mrs. Murdoch, Miss McConnell, Miss M. McIlwrick (my aunt, who I have heard mentioned in the family as being what was termed at that time as a pupil teacher) after her a Miss Muir and Miss Downie. In 1890 the roll was about 20 and from that date until 1910 it varied from 20 - 30, the latter being the highest it ever reached. Since then it has steadily declined".

"The above" is from information sent in by Miss J. McIlwrick the teacher and dated November 21st 1934. It is really about the time she, Jessie McIlwrick our Aunt Jess was teacher I would like to be remembered for I feel that now that the actual building has gone all that she did for teaching me, my family and others in the Glenwhilly area will like the school ~~will~~ be gone and forgotten in the years to come. She was I think what perhaps might be called a formidable figure. She could not be called a beauty, rounded face brown eyes with straight dark brown hair drawn back into a bun, at least that seem to be my picture of her. She would stand no nonsense but she was so keen to teach and pass on her knowledge of all the subject to her pupils, she spared no effort. It must have been quite a task/

a task to work out a time table to fit in lessons to be taught in one room to cover work for 5 year old beginners up to the pupils of 11+ who were preparing to sit what at the time I was at school was the dreaded 'Control Exam.' which had to be passed to go on to Stranraer High School.

Now let me describe how I remember this school. The school room proper was entered through a small porch. I think it was no more than 5ft. wide by 10ft. long (if as much). It had pegs on the wall, high ones and low ones on which to hang our coats. The opposite wall had a small window with a sill where we threw off bonnets, caps, woolly hats or scarfs, etc. In this small space however on wet days I can remember perhaps up to 10 or 12 of us jumping around, trying to jump on to the window sill and knock some one else down. We must have made some din! This was in our dinner hour for we had no outside shed to play in. There were two dry closets, one for boys at one side and the other round the back for the girls. No running water just a cold water pump which supplied the school house too. So talk about being hygenic, strangely enough we didn't seem to catch as many bugs in those days and the school had a record for very good attendance. When I speak of dinner time that did not mean School Meals, it was for most of us a piece brought from home. My brother and sisters and I all had to walk 2 miles there and back except for rare occasions when we got a lift by car or if the horse and cart might be coming to Glenwhilly station to collect feeding stuff for cattle or some other errands. Some of the children who lived in the five ~~station~~ houses that comprised the station did sometimes go home at dinner time. But I think they too brought their pieces as probably had their meal at night when their fathers finished work. The houses at the station were for station master, signal man and the railway surface men who were responsible for upkeep of a certain stretch of railway line. In the winter the teacher made us mugs of cocoa to have with our piece so this was quite a treat. Now to continue with how the school room looked when we entered the door out of the porch. I think it must have been with all the things that were in it about 10 yards long by 5 yds across. It had three windows, one at front looking out on the road and two at the back from them you had a view on to the hill we called the Fell. The left hand wall before front window was filled by a large glass fronted bookcase which had been gifted to the school by J & P Coates the thread making firm from Paisley, why I don't know maybe other country/

country schools received similar presentations. This bookcase was well filled with books, new jotters, exercise books, drawing books, pencils, rubbers, pens etc. which were given out as needed. The space under front window was occupied by the teacher's table and under it a large old tea chest held various books and items and one of the things that had a place there and was in daily use was the ball frame or abacus and all the pupils learned how to count add and subtract from lessons on it. The remaining space on this wall had a large map of England hanging on it. Then we came to a wall cupboard. I cannot remember much stored in it and I think it would be too damp for books. The brown kettle that was boiled on the open fire to make cocoa was in it, also some mugs and pots that hyacinth bulbs were planted in. Now we come to the fireplace that was all the means of heat, an open coal fire was burned in the winter with of course a sturdy guard round it. Above it hung a large map of the World. The one that was there when I went to school was all brown and faded, so it was a great event when we got a fine new one with all the countries of the British Empire in a bright red. In the corner to the right of the fireplace were the small desks for the infants. I think if I remember rightly there were four small desks. Then there were two or three rows of double desks with two or three in each row and depending on number of pupils how many were used. In the corner which the small desks occupied there were various pictures, I think perhaps of nursery rhymes though strangely I cannot remember but high up on the wall pictures representing the production of cocoa and chocolate from the seeds of the tree to the powder. Between the two windows on the back wall hung the map of Scotland and the remaining wall had a map of Europe. These maps were taken down and hung on the blackboard while we had geography lessons. I think Scotland was most often dealt with and we learned all the counties from Caithness down to our own Wigtownshire. A favourite lesson I remember was the rivers Tay, Forth, Tweed and Clyde being traced from source to mouth and the various county towns etc. they flowed through and the names of the tributaries that joined them. Sadly I have forgotten a lot of it but occasionally when I hear a river name I can place it by what I learned then. The remaining floor space beside the other back window was occupied by a table where latterly we sometimes had a gramophone and that was where the library box, which was delivered and changed either fortnightly or monthly, had a place. It was quite exciting/

exciting to me when a new lot of books was delivered - for I was a bit of a book worm. Under this table were various boxes and hampers with different materials for handwork for the boys made cane waste paper baskets and trays also stools were attempted and I think the teacher made it interesting for them. The girls got sewing and I remember trying to hem round a nightdress and it was not my favourite thing. Two blackboards were another essential part of the furnishings. One stood on an easel and was double sided and could be turned over to use both sides. The other a heavy affair with clumsy feet and wasn't too steady, some of the big boys were enlisted to move it. These blackboards too were in daily use. Sums, maybe addition, subtraction or division were written up for one class while the teacher took beginners for a reading lesson and the oldest class might be doing arithmetical problems from a book. Then there were English lessons, dividing the sentence into Subject, Predicate and Extension, parsing of words etc. All these and History and Geography were fitted in. Arithmetic some time every day, the others I can't really remember twice or three times a week. Monday morning we had Bible and we had a psalm or paraphrase to learn and the 23rd and 21st and the auld 100th were favourites also 2nd and 54th paraphrases and others learned by heart and still remembered mostly. Bible stories were read to us from Adam & Eve, Noah, Jacob and Joseph from the Old Testament and Christmas and Paul etc. and the Miracles and Parables from the New Testament. Friday if I remember was the morning we attempted singing. I don't think our Aunt Jess was very musical, in fact none of the McIlwrick family seem to be endowed, but she did her best with a tuning fork. She started us off and we would yell out "Do you ken John Peck" and "Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill". I don't think they would be very tuneful. She had the scale too and it was hung on the blackboard and we did our Doh Rae Me. We also had drawing lessons and perhaps a cup or jug set up to draw or perhaps a picture to paint. Spelling was another essential subject and a list of words in the wee red spelling book in the later years were always included in the things to be learned for home work and woe betide if you hadn't learned them. The strap which stayed in the table drawer might come out. It was applied on some occasions for various misdemeanours. We also had keep fit and were outside for exercises with bean bags and drill. I think with our walk to school and the various games of tig and rounders we had quite a lot of exercise. Other games we played were Hop the Beds for the girls and the boys had marbles. I remember also making houses, laying out stones for various rooms/

rooms along the back of the dyke on the Fell. I don't think the shepherd from Darniemow would be too pleased! Of course in the Spring we looked for birds nests in the hedges and peewits were always being watched to see if we could find their nests. We learned a lot about nature and brought flowers we didn't know to be identified in the wild flower book also birds eggs, these practices would be discouraged now by conservationists. In the Spring it always took us a long time to walk home we had so many things to look at by the way. Frog spawn in one of the ditches to see how it was developing and the various birds nests to see if we could find any more. In the winter it must have been a different story, we would be hurrying home for some hot food, soup or a fry up. We must have closed school by three o'clock in the winter for we had no lights of any kind and it would not be possible to see to read or write by that time. Maybe we had dancing then. We certainly learned the steps for Petronella and did Strip the Willow and attempted an Eightsome Reel to music on the gramophone. Friday p.m. we sometimes had a treat when teacher read us a story. I think ~~were~~ some were Rudyard Kipling's Just So stories. One I vaguely remember about the Crocodile who lived in the Great Gray Green Limpopo River. Also story of the Little Red Hen. Best of all was Kenneth Graham's "Wind in the Willows".

I think this covers a lot of what I remember, others probably have different thoughts. After sixty years some happenings are bound to escape but the four walls in that little schoolroom are still etched in my memory. I also hope that much I learned is not forgotten.

I mentioned the school house earlier and it was attached to the school and would be provided for the teacher but while Aunt Jess was teacher she lived at the farm of Miltonise with us during the week and sometimes at the weekend she went to visit her mother (our Gran) who lived with our Aunt Polly and Uncle Alex at the farm of Balmurrie near NewLuce. She used to go on her bicycle but later on she progressed to owning a Baby Austin. That was good for us too as we got a lift in it on Friday mornings. I think she just used it weekends. It wasn't daily to begin with, at least I don't think so. However I digress, I was saying about the school house. It was let and when I went to school it was Mrs. McColl who lived in it. She was white haired and quite elderly I suppose and I think she moved quite soon as I don't remember much about her. The next occupant however I remember quite well.

Mrs. Kerr/

Mrs. Kerr came from the farm of Marklaugh after her husband died there. She was a clever hard working woman who had brought up a big family of nine. Two of her sons, William and Robert, both became well known in the police force, William, Chief Constable of Kirkcudbright and Robert (Bobby) Detective Inspector in Glasgow. The other members of her family were all scattered around and she was always making off to visit them or working in the bit of garden beside the house. She was a character and would sometimes set off walking to NewLuce and took a sock to knit as she walked as she did not like to be idle. She was a great dress maker and was often busy making down items for her many grandchildren. She was real thrifty and would turn a coat or jacket outside in to make short trousers for a grandson. There are not many of her ilk around these more affluent days. She certainly had learned how to make her meagre income do so much and was usually bright and cheerful as far as I remember. I think she was the last occupant of the schoolhouse.

GLENWHILLY SCHOOL was closed for a short time (2 years maybe) about 1940 and finally closed 1945? I think.

GLENWHILLY PUBLIC SCHOOL.

As far as can be ascertained this school was built about 1875 and was the first school in the district.

Before this a teacher went from one farm house to another during the winter months staying a week or fortnight at each centre, pupils attending wherever the teacher was stationed.

The first teacher appointed to Glenwhilly School was John Macfadzean, a native of Colmonell, Ayrshire. Unfortunately no log book earlier than 1911 exists so no details of his time can be given. He died in 1887.

About 1890 the teacher was Miss Innes after whom came Miss Townsley, Mrs. Murdoch, Miss McConnell, Miss M. McIlwrick, Miss Muir and Miss Downie.

In 1890 the roll was about 20 and from that date till 1910 it varied from 20 to 30, the latter being the highest figure it ever reached. Since then it has steadily declined.

MISS J. McILWRICK,

Headteacher.

November 21st., 1934.

2nd Nov. '39.

ESS, THURSDAY, NOV EMB

GLENWHILLY SCHOOL

To be Re-opened: Nine Pupils Expected.

Wigtownshire Education Committee's decision to re-open Glenwhilly School will end a controversy which has been carried on since the school was closed temporarily in June of last year.

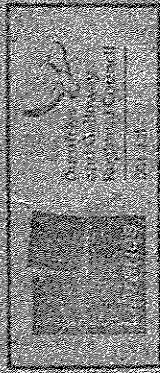
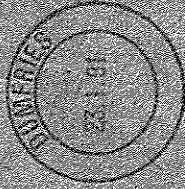
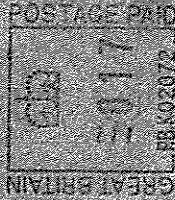
Glenwhilly, the smallest school in Wigtownshire, had at one time a roll of 25, but in recent years it dropped considerably and varied from nineteen to eight. Latterly the roll was in the region of ten. Despite the remoteness of the district, the average attendance was on a high level. In 1936 the ten pupils in attendance registered a percentage of 97.1, second only to that of Glasserton, and in the following year, when the average number of pupils was eleven, the attendance again topped the 90% mark. Last year, just before the school was closed, the eight pupils made nearly 98% attendances.

On the roll dropping to five, the Education Committee decided to close the school. Such a decision was not without its opposition. The opponents of the closure held that it was likely the school population would increase, and said that every endeavour should be made to give encouragement to the rural people to stay on in the country districts and not to flock to the towns.

Members of the Education Committee viewed the opening of a school for five pupils as ridiculous, and considered that by transferring the pupils to New-Luce it would give more opportunity for competition and would broaden the outlook of the pupils. In the end the Education Committee had its way, and the school was closed. The teacher was transferred. After the decision was made final and arrangements made for the children to travel to New-Luce, members of the local Schools Management Committee protested on the ground that considerable time would have to be spent in New-Luce by the children awaiting a train connection.

In reply to the protest, it was pointed out that the decision to close the school was made on a temporary basis, and if circumstances altered, renewed consideration would be given. That has now been done. The war, unexpected at the time of the closing, has made the re-opening of the school almost imperative. The alterations in the train service have made it impossible for the children to receive a full day's education. This, coupled with the fact that there is a probability of a roll of eight or nine pupils, caused the Education Committee on Thursday to decide unanimously to re-open the small school.

There are at present six pupils and two or three prospective pupils in the district.



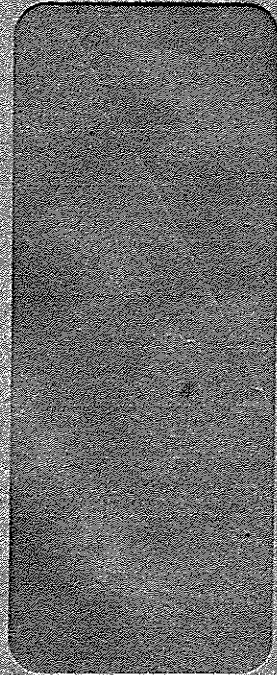
closed temporarily


June 1938

re opened Nov. 1939

closed 28th April 1944

*GLENWHILLY
SCHOOL
INFORMATION*





**Dumfries
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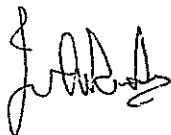
Dear Miss McIlwrick

Thank you for your letter dated 10 January 1991, which was forwarded to us from the Education Offices.

Please find enclosed a copy of a letter signed by Miss J McIlwrick giving the early history of Glenwhilly School. Unfortunately, we could trace no record of the cost of building it.

The Glenwhilly Log Book (1911-44) states that on 28 April 1944, the Education Committee decided to close the school temporarily. There are no more entries.

Yours sincerely



Regional Librarian