

ST CHAD'S CHURCH, BAGNALL —NEWSLETTER 04.02.24

Bagnall Primary School in the 1940s and early 50s by Anne & Brian Lewis

The school was built for the Stoke School Board in 1873 on a road that was subsequently named, not surprisingly, School Road. There were three classrooms and a medical room which eventually became the dining room. The largest of the classrooms was for the infants and was the domain of Miss Stanistreet. Behind her desk was a coal fired stove which was useful for roasting potatoes in the days before school dinners. There were geraniums on each window ledge. On the wall were two large wooden boards on which were listed those pupils who had passed the scholarship exam, the 11+, and gone on to grammar schools.

The other two rooms were separated by a large removable wooden partition. Miss Brassington occupied one room with the 7 to 9 year old pupils. On one wall there was a row of six cupboards and on each door this short verse, 'January brings the snow, makes our fingers glow. February brings the rain, thaws the frozen lake again etc.'

Mrs Billington, the headteacher, was in the other room with the 10 and 11 year olds. She ran a competition which encouraged her pupil to polish their desk tops. It saved the caretaker a job! The toilet facilities at the school were antediluvian with earth closets which were emptied every few weeks by the 'Brandy Barrel'. Least said the better! There was no secretarial help and no telephone. There wasn't even a headteacher's office. The air raid shelters were in the caretaker's garden, just under the present village hall. There were two caretakers, Mrs Edge and her daughter Annie who lived on site in the house that was previously the head teacher's residence.



The curriculum was very limited with the emphasis on the 3Rs with no geography, no history, no science and no games or PE! There were compensations with needlework, craft, radio programmes and art was only for the boys. One of the girls embroidered a tea cosy with a crinoline lady surrounded with hollyhocks. Miss Brassington would take her whole class on nature walks, through the Houghwood and down to the Springs. Mrs Billington read to her class daily with favourites such as 'Black Beauty' and 'Treasure Island' and encouraged everyone

to learn poems off by heart. The lower juniors must have been some of the last pupils to do their writing on slates with charcoal sticks. Teachers seldom had cars and usually lived close by or on a bus route. Miss Stanistreet lived in Milton. Miss Brassington lived in School Road just a few yards from the school gates. Mrs Billington had a long and difficult journey from Nab Hill Avenue in Leek. She would walk into town, catch the Hanley bus at the cattle market, get off a Stockton Brook and walk up through the Hough Wood, what a journey!

During the war years 1939/45 and beyond all pupils had a free $\frac{1}{8}$ of a pint of milk but had to make their own dinner time arrangements. Many children took the bus from school to Light Oaks and back at the cost of $\frac{1}{2}$ d each way. By the late 1940 hot school dinners were served in school at a cost of 5d per day or 2/1 (two shillings and a penny=10p). The meals were cooked at Baddeley Green School (now Greenways) and brought to school in large aluminium containers. Serving the meals were Annie Edge, the school caretaker, and Mrs Haywood from Light Oaks Avenue.



Bagnall school class of 1947

This quaint, isolated and old fashioned school was to be transformed in the early 1950s when Mrs Billington retired and was replaced by the new headteacher Mr. Doug Gibbs. Changes came thick and fast with the enhancement of the school curriculum in which sport and PE were now important. Adults were encouraged to take a greater part in school life with the formation of a PTA, a drama group and a cricket club. A youth club, run by Albert Wood, opened two evenings each week to cater for the growing number of teenagers in the village. Tuesday was for football training and table tennis and Friday was for country and modern dancing which were taught by Edith Deaville and Joe Pratt. The school was now an important part of village life.



A painting of Bagnall School and the school house by Michael Bond

Sadly, a fire destroyed the school in March 1969 and the village of Bagnall lost a very valuable asset.

Bagnall Primary School in the 1920s and early 30s

I'm adding my bits to Anne and Brian's article. My Dad, John Glover was a pupil at Bagnall when the headmaster was his uncle Charles Anthony Hargreaves. Great uncle Charlie was headmaster from 1920 to 1944. Miss Effie Stanistreet joined the school in 1920 and eventually retired in 1962. Dad never talked much about his school days, I don't think having your uncle as headmaster was a great boon to school life, especially as he was very strict and the cane was used!!!! No doubt uncle Charlie would then report back to his sister and Dad would be in trouble at home!



Charlie

Bagnall Primary School in the 1950s and early 60s

I started to school in 1955 when Mr Fred Ballington was headmaster. We caught the bus from Light Oaks to Bagnall for 1d. My mum paid my cousin Jenny Sutton 3d a week to make sure I was on the bus morning and afternoon. This meant grabbing me by the coat and plonking me on the front seat as far away from her and her friends as possible. (she's 4 years older than me!) Amazingly we're still friends! When I was older and wiser we used to walk home, save our 1d and spend it in the shop at Light Oaks on sweets.

I can't say that I loved my school days at Bagnall but I did survive. Miss Stanistreet's class had a big chair by the fire and if you didn't feel well you could go and sit there for a little while. I remember the toilet block being in the ground behind the school building and I remember the awful sports day on the field behind the school (I was never any good at sports). All the equipment was kept in the air raid shelter. I also think I remember that the cane was still in use but only on the boys, who, of course, were much more naughty than us girls! Next was Mr Godman's class and then on to Mr Ballington. I remember being sent to the Stafford Arms to get change when I was in the top class. (Who knew I'd be a regular there in later years) I passed my 11+ a year early in 1961, so at the tender age of 10 I was shipped off to The Orme Girls' school in Newcastle. And so I'd left before the fire but can remember it well.



BAGNALL SCHOOL 1959

Candlemas Day (the Christian festival of lights)

The 2nd of February is Candlemas Day.

This ancient festival marks the midpoint of winter, halfway between the shortest day and the spring equinox. Candlemas is a traditional Christian festival that commemorates the ritual purification of Mary forty days after the birth of her son Jesus. On this day, Christians remember the presentation of Jesus Christ in the Temple. Forty days after the birth of a Jewish boy, it was the custom to take him to the temple in Jerusalem to be presented to God by his thankful parents.



In pre-Christian times, this day was known as the 'Feast of Lights' and celebrated the increase strength of the life-giving sun as winter gave way to spring.

It was the day of the year when all the candles, that were used in the church during the coming year, were brought into church and a blessing was said over them - so it was the Festival Day (or 'mass') of the Candles. Candles were important in those days not only because there was no electric lights. Some people thought they gave protection against plague and illness and famine. For Christians, they were (and still are) a reminder of something even more important. Before Jesus came to earth, it was as if everyone was 'in the dark'. People often felt lost and lonely. afraid, as if they were on their own, with no one to help them. Then came Jesus with his message that he is with his followers always ready to help and comfort them, as if he is a guiding light to them in the darkness. Christians often light candles during church services to remind Christians of this.

Candlemas is a day which holds many different customs. The Romans had a custom of lighting candles to scare away evil spirits in the winter. One of the most interesting custom took place in Scotland. In the olden days, Candlemas was the day when children brought candles to school so that the classrooms could have light on dull days. As time went on, gas lighting took over from candle light. The children took money to the teacher who was suppose to spend it on sweets and cakes for the children to eat. The boy or girl taking in the most money were declared Candlemas King and Queen and they 'ruled' for six weeks. They had the power to make one whole afternoon a week a playtime and they could also let anyone they wished off punishment.

People believe that Candlemas Day predicted the weather for the rest of the winter. The weather proverbs express the idea that a fine bright sunny Candlemas day means that there is more winter to come, whereas a cloudy wet stormy Candlemas day means that the worst of winter is over.

*If Candlemas Day be fair and bright
Winter will have another fight.
If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain,
Winter won't come again.'*

Candlemas Superstitions:

A candle which drips on one side when carried in church on Candlemas, denotes a death during the year of someone dear.

If the Christmas decorations aren't taken down on the 12th day of Christmas (the day when the wise men brought presents to the baby Jesus), then they remain up until Candlemas, according to tradition.

Snowdrops (*galanthus nivalis*) are known as Candlemas Bells because they often bloom early in the year, even before Candlemas. Some varieties bloom all winter (in the northern hemisphere). The superstitious used to believe that these flowers should not be brought into the house prior to Candlemas, as they represented a parting or death. However, it is also believed in more recent times that these flowers purify a home.



According to folklore, an angel helped these Candlemas bells to bloom and pointed them as a sign of hope to Eve, who wept in repentance and in despair over the cold and death that entered the world. Many Christians see the flower as a symbol of Jesus Christ being this hope for the world.

The Leprosy Mission Trust India:

Guy Willcock from The Leprosy Mission will be joining us for our service of Praise and Prayer next week, 11th February. As a church, we have faithfully supported The Leprosy Mission for many years. This service gives us the opportunity to once more show our support and help with the amazing work The Mission is involved in.

Serving the least, the last and the lost in His name.

The Leprosy Mission's Muzaffarpur Hospital is in Bihar, India's poorest State. This is a forgotten place where people live in extreme poverty with few resources and sparse medical care. Leprosy rates are very high.

Living in the shadows of society are the least, the last and the lost. People affected by leprosy who are ignored and excluded.

Without Muzaffarpur Hospital these precious people would be left without hope. More than 600 queue at the Outpatient Department each morning knowing this is their only chance to see a doctor. Many have travelled for days. They wait outside in the stifling heat as there is no room inside the current cramped Outpatient Department. And in the monsoon rains, they stand soaked, desperate for their turn to be treated.

To find out how we can help to ensure this hospital stays open by building an Outpatient Department fit for the future, please come along next week and listen to Guy.

Muriel F.

Prayer Corner

- Lord,
- teach us to trust you in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves.
- Help us to pray in all the times and places of our lives where we can make a real difference.
- Help us with our families and friends to establish better relationships.
- And help us to be assured of your presence with us always.
- Amen.

Muriel

The Leprosy Mission Trust India celebrated its 140th anniversary in 2014. What was started in 1874 for giving shelter to persons considered as 'outcasts' at a time when there was no cure for leprosy has become India's largest leprosy-focussed non-governmental organisation (NGO). Presently, TLMTI has around 900 staff working in various capacities in its institutions and projects. It is a member of The Leprosy Mission Global Fellowship.

It's aim is to achieve transformation of society, communities, and people affected by leprosy, so that leprosy, as a disease, and its associated deep-rooted, age-old fear and stigma are overcome. And because of this, people affected by leprosy are included in the development process and live as valued and useful members of society.

They work with individuals and communities disadvantaged by leprosy, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, by addressing their physical, mental, social and spiritual needs to uphold human dignity and eradicate leprosy.

They take time apart as an organisation to retreat into God's presence to find direction, wisdom, and ability to move forward in their service to Him.

