

Martindale Schools

by

NINA JENNINGS

The author describes two former schoolhouses of the remote Lake District village of Martindale, formerly in Westmorland, now Cumbria. Martindale is a township of widely scattered farmsteads on the south shore of Ullswater and is bounded by Boardale Head in the west and Swarthbeck in the east. Originally it was part of the parish of Barton (one of the most extensive in the country), but it acquired a chapel-of-ease in 1633. Excerpts from the Memoranda and Minute book, 1834-95, of the Trustees of the school give a view of a remote rural school in Victorian times.

According to Brierley¹ the first mention of a school at Martindale is an entry in the Carlisle Episcopal Registers dated 17 May 1699,² when Jonah Walker was licensed as 'Schoolmaster and Reader'. Brierley suggests that this was probably due to the extreme old age of the Reverend Richard Birkett, then Curate, who died later the same year. He had been ordained deacon and licensed on 16 June 1633, ordained priest 13 March 1635,³ served at Martindale for the whole of his career and was probably schoolmaster as well as curate. He married Anne Browne on 23 November 1685⁴ but there are no children recorded in the baptism registers or mentioned in his will, perhaps not surprisingly in view of his age. He died on 25 December 1699 and was buried in the churchyard at Martindale two days later.⁵ His epitaph reads as follows: 'Here lyeth interred Richard Birkett Clerk who procured this Chapell to be consecrated with parochial rights. As Curat he remained here 67 years and as a benefactor he gave to the Chapell One hundred pounds. As a most affectionate husband he left to his wife a comfortable subsistence who in token of her gratitude and to perpetuate his memory caused this tomb to be erected. He dyed on the 25th of December in the 95th year of his age Anno Domini, 1699'. His will⁶ bequeathed 'towards the better maintenance of a godly sober and religious minister at Martindale Chapell the sume of £100 and my meaning is that the Interest thereof be yearle paid to him according to a Deede made by me dated the 21 day of July 1682 and left in trust in the hands of Mr John Child, Vicar of Penrith, and in case they cannot agree of a good minister then my will and mind is that it shall goe to the maintenance of a good Scholemaster, one that is a good schollar, will take paines and bring up their children in the feare of the Lord ...'. There is no record of a will of Anne Birkett, and no record of her marriage in the parish records of Martindale or Barton. However in the Barton register⁷ there is an entry showing

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that Lanc: Sisson married [illegible] on 17 May 1700. This may account for the later attribution of the endowment to Sisson rather than to Anne Birkett. It might appear prompt for a re-marriage, but at a time when widowed farmers, in urgent need of a wife's participation in the farm and house, commonly re-married with what would seem to us like indecent haste, it may not have appeared strange.

In a conveyance dated 19 February 1735, Robert Walker of Coate How^b conveyed to Robert Richardson of Boredale Head and Francis Sisson of Swarthbeck as Trustees for Martindale School 'the messuage and cottage situated at Coat How to the only proper use, benefit and behoof of Martindale School for ever'. The purchase money was £25 and the witnesses attesting the deed were William Green and Edward Harrison.⁹

The Charity Commissioners' Report of 1822-35¹⁰ found that the endowment of the school was attributed to Sisson who was supposed, about one hundred years previously, to have left £20 for that purpose. It appears by indenture, dated 19 February 1735, that Robert Walker, in consideration of £25, conveyed to Robert Richardson and Francis Sisson, their heirs and assigns, trustees for Martindale School, a messuage and cottage, with the appurtenances, at Coate How, for the use and benefit of Martindale school, to be held according to the custom of the manor, paying a yearly rent of 1s. 1d. And by an agreement, dated 16 February 1735, it appears, that the sum of £21 was paid for the purchase, and that the rest of the £25 was to be paid out of the yearly rents. This property consisted of a small house, used as a public house, with a school adjoining, and about two acres of land. It was let by the trustees, to Sarah and John Sisson, under an agreement to hold the same from 26 April 1821, for the term of five years, at the clear yearly rent of £6. 6s. The tenants were to have the use of the school-house, in case it should not be wanted for a school. This was a high rent.

It was recorded that a schoolmaster had been appointed at the previous Whitsuntide, there having been before that time a vacancy of about a year and a half. As in former years there had been considerable expense incurred for repairs, which the trustees were obliged to deduct from the salary of the master. The rents which accrued during the vacancy were reserved to answer future expenses. In this way, a small stock was raised, amounting to £8. 12s. 6½d. It was in the hands of the trustees, and the interest was to be paid to the schoolmaster. Previous to the vacancy, the surplus of the rents, after deducting incidental expenses, had been paid over to the master, and the rents were in future to be paid to the present master. He took all the children of the township, boys and girls, at a quarterage, according to what they learnt; some paid 5s. and others 6s. There were, on average, fifteen or sixteen children in the school, who were taught reading, writing and accounts. The endowment was considered only as an encouragement to the master, and not for any of the children to be taught free. The master was appointed by the township. The overseers of the three several estates, which belonged to the persons to whom the property was conveyed in 1735, were considered as being in succession, the trustees of the school. The successor, however, of Francis Sisson, who had resigned his share of the trust, was John Hodgson.

The Tithe Return of 1838 gives Martindale School as the landlord of Joseph Smith.¹¹ An admittance, dated 19 June 1858, indicated that the Revd Thomas Hattam Wilkinson (Vicar), Richard Mounsey, Henry Wilkinson, Joseph Wilkinson of Bonscale and John Sissons were Trustees for the school and were tenants in respect of an enclosure in front of the Star Inn (Coate How) containing five acres, formerly part of the common land of the Manor at the yearly free rent of 1s.¹² The visitation of Samuel Waldegrave, Bishop of Carlisle, in 1867 recorded in a terrier:¹³

‘CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS

IMPRIMIS: ONE SCHOOL HOUSE WITH PRIVY AND COAL HOUSE

Item: One messuage and tenement called Cote How consisting of one Dwelling House, one Barn, one Cowhouse, one stable together with eight acres, one rood, three perches of land in the hands of Trustees, of whom the Lord of the Manor for the time being and the Incumbent for the time being are two, abutted on the North by an estate called Anne Garth, on the South by an enclosure called Hebscrag Intack marked 25 on the East by the Common, and on the West by the High Road. Edward Williams Hasell Esq. makes the fence adjoining Hebscrag Intack, John Nanson Esq. that adjoining Anne Garth, and the rest by the Trustees of Martindale School.’

According to Parson and White (1829), the free school was endowed by the widow of Richard Birkett with an estate with an annual rental of £13.¹⁴ This was land and the house at Coate How (NY 435 189) in which the teacher was still living in 1943.¹⁵ In a Terrier of 1829 it was noted that the endowment by Anne was ‘about £10’.¹⁶ Mannex states that the bequest was £20 and that there was a subscription of £5.¹⁷

Forster’s Education Act of 1870 made elementary schooling (to the age of twelve) compulsory and free. A survey was to be carried out, and in a place where there were not enough schools the local authority was required to form a School Board and build a school. Previously the main providers had been the National Society (Church of England) and the British and Foreign Bible Society (non-conformist). From the middle of the century they had been eligible for grants and subject to HMI inspections.

Since 1943 Martindale has not had its own school, but two former schoolhouses survive. The older schoolhouse (NY 450 205) is nearly two miles from the village, being reached by a fell footpath only. It is not known whether this building functioned as a schoolhouse from the time of its endowment or possibly even earlier, or even whether the building is as old as that. Certainly the present upper windows are eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and domestic not agricultural. The dressings of the southernmost window are of a later style than those of the other, with a projecting sill. The building belongs to Bonscale Farm and appears to have been built as a ‘bank barn’, a two-storey construction which takes advantage of the slope by having independent entrances to the two floors.¹⁸ In this type of building the upper floor is a threshing barn and granary while the lower houses cattle. Here the

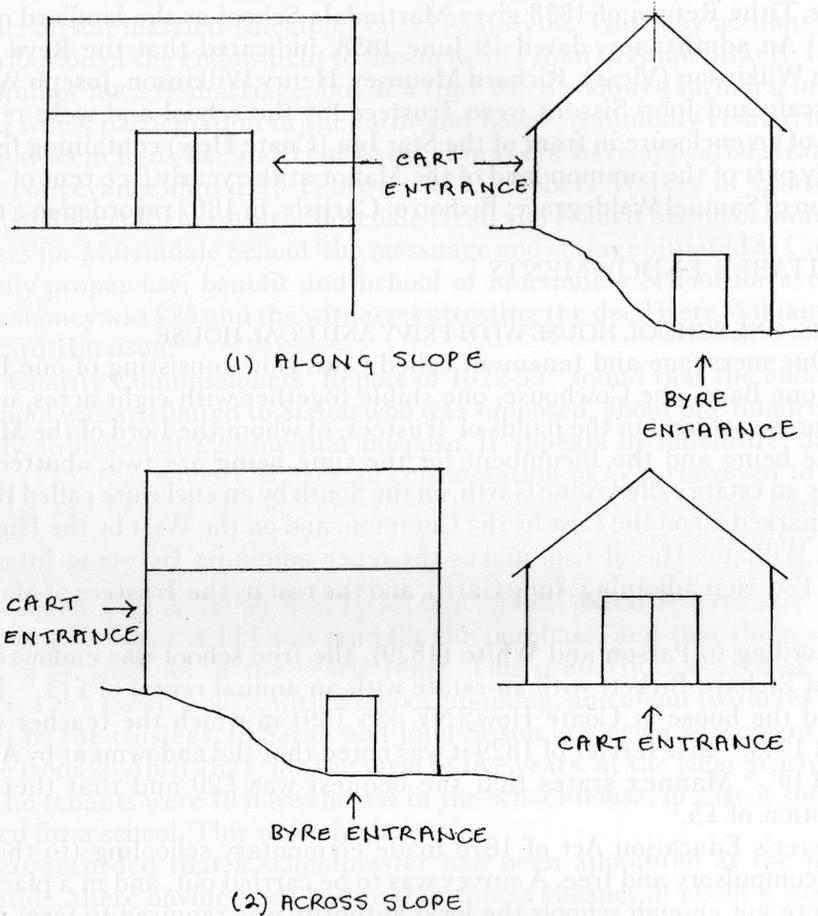


Fig. 1
Bank Barn

upper floor has been modified, although there is still a wide cart entrance at the rear. There is a hearth with an iron grate in one corner, while vertical twelve-pane sash windows look out over Ullswater. Some whitewash remains on the walls, but as this goes up only to side wall height on the gable it was probably formerly ceiled. On both gables it can be seen that the roof has been raised by almost a metre without a change of pitch; previously this upper storey must have been just a loft. It would appear likely that this change was made when the barn became a school. Outside, rough steps lead down round the corner to the gable entrance to the lower storey, which also retains some whitewash. Here there is an earth floor, and two window openings with wooden lintels. The building is of stone rubble with walls 0.5m thick. Two triangular trusses rest on the walls. The purlins are staggered and only the rafters are sawn. The slates are graded and are torched underneath.¹⁹

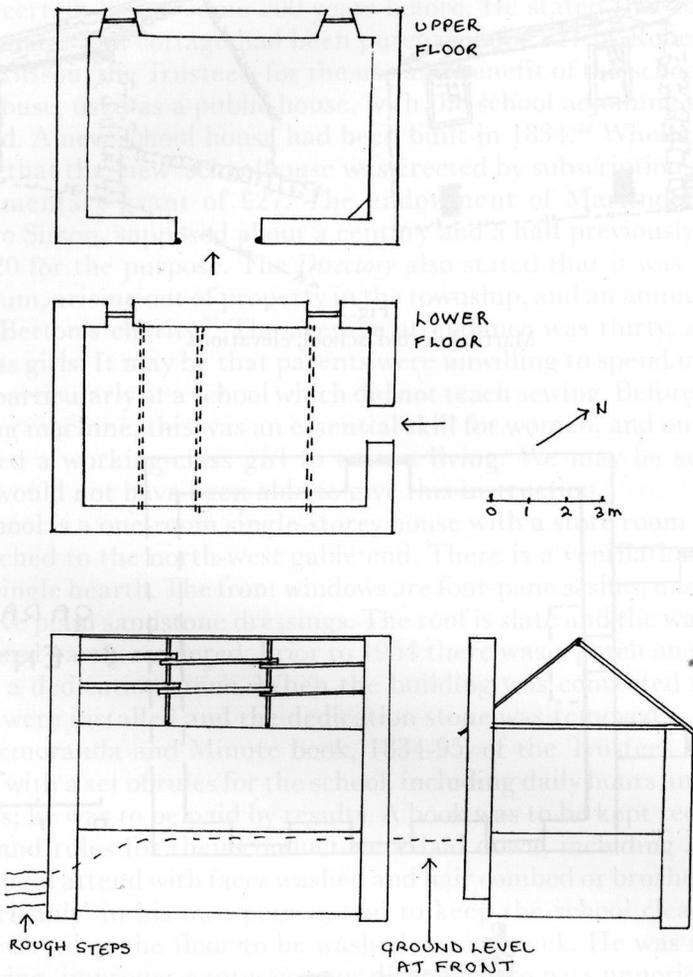


Fig. 2
Martindale 'old' school, plans and sections

It must originally have been built for agricultural purposes, the upper floor being later adapted for the school. In maps of around 1880 in the Parkin papers it is shown as a hoghouse (a shelter for first year ewes).²⁰ It is known locally as 'the old schoolhouse'.

The newer 'old schoolhouse' is rather more central to the scattered farmhouses which make up the township (NY 434 190). Mannex states that in 1846 a piece of common land had been added to the endowment, by the consent of the landowners and the lord of the manor. Further, that the then schoolhouse had been erected in 1834, by the National Board.²¹ John Curwen attributed the endowment to a £20

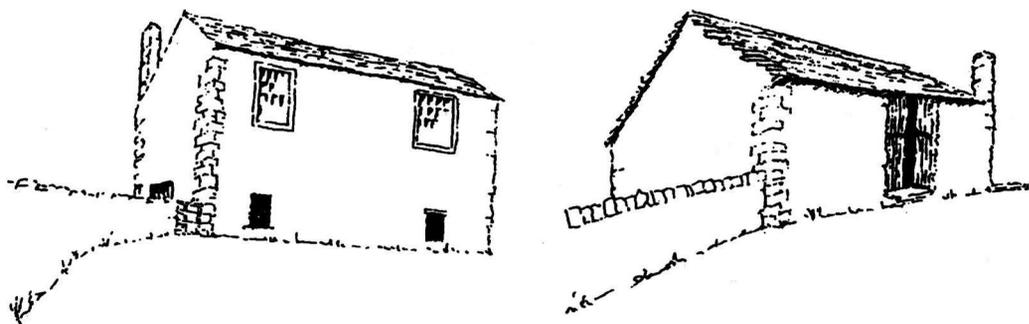


Fig. 3
Martindale 'old' school, elevations

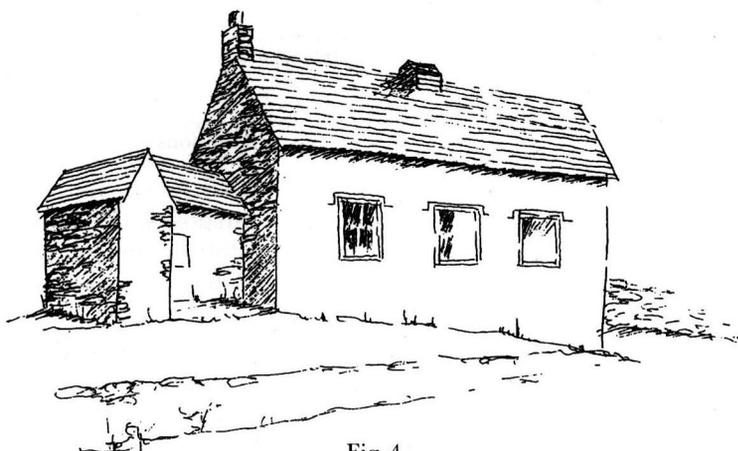
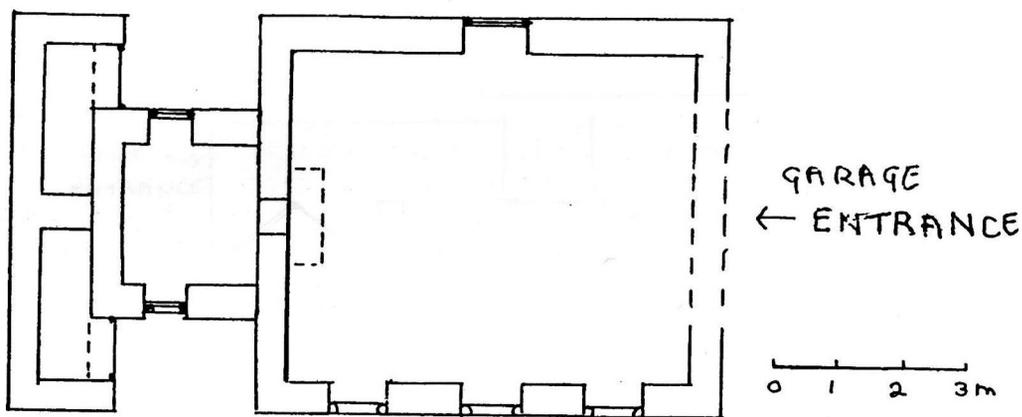


Fig. 4
Martindale 'New' school, plan and elevation

legacy by a certain Sisson some 200 years before. He stated that on 19 February 1735, a messuage and cottage had been purchased for £21 by Robert Richardson and Francis Sisson, the Trustees, for the use and benefit of the school. It consisted of a small house, used as a public house, with the school adjoining and about two acres of land. A new school house had been built in 1834.²² Whellan's *Directory* of 1860 stated that the 'new' schoolhouse was erected by subscription in 1834, aided by a Parliamentary grant of £27. The endowment of Martindale School was attributed to Sisson, supposed about a century and a half previously to have left a legacy of £20 for the purpose. The *Directory* also stated that it was endowed with £14 per annum, arising out of property in the township, and an annual subscription of £5 from Betton's charity.²³ The average attendance was thirty, about twice as many boys as girls. It may be that parents were unwilling to spend money on girls' education, particularly at a school which did not teach sewing. Before the invention of the sewing machine, this was an essential skill for women, and one which would have enabled a working-class girl to earn a living. We may be sure that male clergymen would not have been able to give this instruction.

The school is a one-room single-storey house with a store room and two earth closets attached to the north-west gable end. There is a ventilation louvre in the roof, and a single hearth. The front windows are four-pane sashes, under dripstones, and they have plain sandstone dressings. The roof is slate and the walls are rubble, 0.5m thick and partly rendered. Prior to 1954 there was a porch on the south-east gable, with a dedication stone. When the building was converted into a garage, large doors were installed and the dedication stone was removed.

The Memoranda and Minute book, 1834-95, of the Trustees also survives.²⁴ This begins with a set of rules for the school, including daily hours and the Master's emoluments; he was to be paid by results. A book was to be kept recording pupils' behaviour, and rules for their conduct were laid down, including a requirement that they should attend with faces washed and hair combed or brushed. The Master was to be 'cleanly' in his own person, and to keep the school clean by having it swept out every day, the floor to be washed once a week. He was never to allow swearing, lying, improper expressions or dishonesty to pass unnoticed, but was to punish with sufficient severity to prevent repetition by any scholar guilty of such serious offences.

In 1836 a public meeting decided that the keeping of a public house was incompatible with John Mounsey's duties as Master and he was required to choose between them. He resigned from the school. At that time there were thirty-seven scholars and Mrs Hasell of Dalemain is recorded as giving Christmas presents to the children.

In July 1837 there were thirty-eight scholars on the roll, but owing to haymaking only twenty-four attending. E. W. Hasell, the lord of the manor, who was to make a twice annual report on the school, gave out prizes for reading, writing and accounts. In 1843 the pupils were found to be deficient in religious knowledge – the Sunday School was re-established.

At an 1844 inspection the school had twenty-two boy and only eight girl pupils.

Miss Woodley's four scholars were also present (presumably she kept a dame school). The December 1847 report remarked that 'The girls seem to be better informed than the boys'. In 1863 it was decided that a certificated Master should be recruited. He was to have £35 per annum, made up of an endowment, 'quarter pence' (probably brought by the pupils) and subscriptions; if industrious he could increase this. There is a list of subscriptions, which total £15 5s., and an agreement with the farmer of the school's eight acres to pay £18 per annum rent.

In 1876 the Trustees decided that it should become a Public Elementary School, and that a Mistress be appointed at £50 per annum with an unfurnished house. The tenants were to pay half and the landowners the other half. Mr Parkin was the Treasurer. In school hours nothing in needlework was to be taught but plain sewing and knitting. In 1877 Mrs Bonscale was reminded to pay her share.

In 1878 the Mistress' resignation was accepted. Her successor was to have £45 per annum and half the Government grant of £15. The school was to be provided with towel and soap. In 1880 parents were to be permitted to buy their children's work. All farmers, landowners and owners of cottages to pay 4d. per week school fees, others 3d. In 1881 the Mistress was to be responsible for opening the building for Sunday School, and she was awarded a bonus of £1.

In 1884 Mrs Crampton was given a bonus for satisfactory work but three months' notice because of unpleasantness with the tenant of the school land. Miss Woodward took charge on 18 October, but left on 27 December. Various repairs were agreed, including two bedrooms in the dwelling house to be ceiled and put in order. The bedrooms would have been open to the roof and thus cold in winter.

In 1886 it was resolved 'That on the complaint of the Mistress ... the Boy J. W. Watts be severely censured and expelled immediately unless his conduct from this day forth be in conformity with the rules and regulations ... and that the other boys complained of be censured and informed that they must amend their conduct or expulsion from the school will follow. That the correspondent be empowered to take such steps as she may consider necessary for the restoration of discipline ... That a copy of the said resolutions be sent to the Parents of the said children with a request that they will aid the Trustees in maintaining the discipline of the school'. When more than one child from a family was attending the fee for each of the other children was to be one penny. In 1892 the Mistress was warned that they might not get a grant next year, as she could not teach drawing. The following year she resigned, and a successor was advertised for at £60 per annum.

It was decided that the income of the school was inadequate to keep it going in an efficient manner and a voluntary rate of 6d. in the pound was agreed. For 1894 there is a copy of a letter from Mr Parkin to the Department, giving reasons why the school had only opened 331 times in the past year. He explained that they had had difficulty replacing their teacher on account of small funds, the distance of seven miles (actually eight) to the nearest market town, with no regular communication in winter (there was a coach and steamer in summer), a small population and therefore a small number of children. Suitable candidates had withdrawn when they learned these facts, and the Trustees had no success until 7

November. The annual salary was raised from £45 to £60. Moreover when the weather was bad in winter the school could not open at all. In spite of the idyllic situation, it must have been a lonely life for a young unmarried woman.

We have already seen that in 1822-35 there were on average fifteen or sixteen children in the school and that in 1860 the average attendance was thirty. William Wiseman has compiled a list of the number of scholars in Martindale chapelry, using the census records:

| | | | |
|------|----|------|----|
| 1851 | 43 | 1881 | 27 |
| 1861 | 14 | 1891 | 15 |
| 1871 | 23 | 1901 | 13 |

At this date there were thirty-one inhabited houses, with 128 inhabitants. In view of the distance to be walked, it is unlikely that children could have come from other parishes.

Mrs Pears was the teacher when William Robinson²⁵ arrived in Martindale with his family in 1933. Later she was succeeded by Mrs Fletcher. William's older brother was the only Martindale pupil who ever passed the eleven-plus examination and went on to grammar school. He used to board with his grandparents at Greystoke, Monday to Friday.

There is a copy of Miss Black's letter²⁶ applying for the post of Certificated Mistress, under the Martindale School Board. She states that she is fully certificated, and competent to teach drawing, music and needlework. She was twenty-nine years of age, and claimed to have the experience necessary for managing a school, as she had taught upper and lower standards in mixed schools, also infants. She asks, if she should be considered a suitable candidate, for details of the following: average attendance, staff, whether good lodgings are to be obtained near the school and whether near a railway station. Four excellent references were attached.

The school continued until 1943, when William Robinson and two of his friends reached leaving age. Only five pupils remained, including William's younger brother, and they were transferred to Pooley, later to Yanwath, travelling on the private mail coach. At that time the Mistress' house and the school lands were at Coate How (NY 435 189), above the 'new' schoolhouse.

In 1950 the Clerk (of Westmorland County Council) reported that this school had not been used by the Council for any purpose since it was closed in 1943, and that two offers to purchase the property had been received. It was resolved that the Council be recommended to retain possession and for the time being to let the property.²⁷

At a meeting on 8 March 1952 the Public Health Committee of North Westmorland Rural District Council read a letter from Westmorland County Council stating that Martindale School had been closed and asking for comments as regards the future of the premises. A letter was also read from the Clerk to the Martindale Parish Meeting suggesting that the School should be used for Parish purposes. The Rural Council resolved that, as the future depended to a large extent on drainage facilities, the lord of the manor, Major Hasell, be approached on the matter.²⁸

Thus the story of Coate How school comes to an end. The surviving detailed

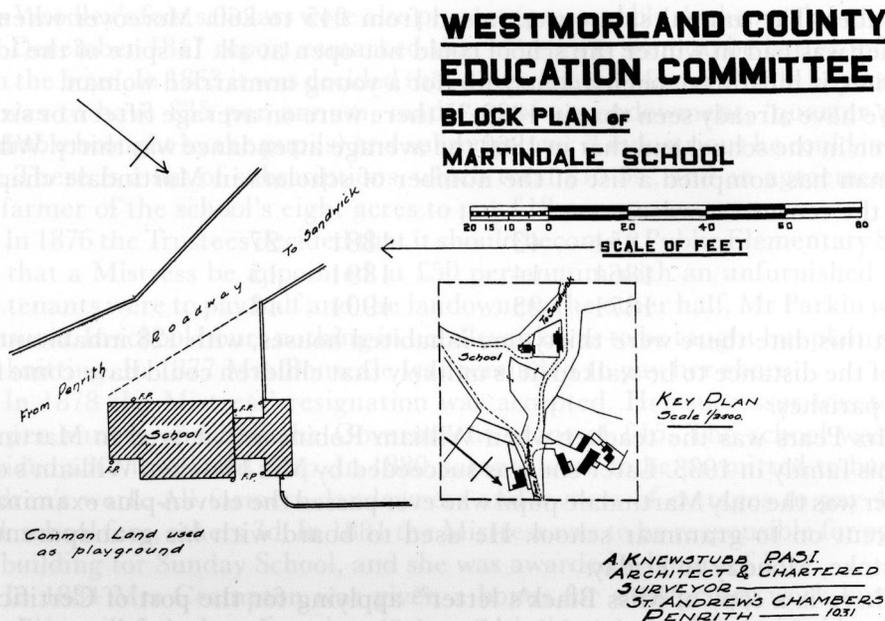


Fig. 5
Martindale School, block plan

documentation gives an illuminating insight into the life of a small rural school in the Lake District of the nineteenth-century. It is a story that could be repeated for many upland areas of the British Isles.

APPENDIX

William Wiseman has compiled a list of Masters and Mistresses:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Richard Birkett | probably 1633-1699 |
| Jonah Walker | 1699-1700 (he was licenced on 17 May 1699 but only remained in office until William Brownrigg was ordained deacon on 26 March 1700 and licenced as Schoolmaster at Martindale three days later) |
| William Brownrigg | from 1700 (buried Martindale 1747) |

A search of the Bishops transcripts²⁹ shows deacons licenced to the perpetual curacy of Martindale; presumably they were also the schoolmasters. Most are described as 'a literate person' or in later entries 'a clerk'. The curacy of Martindale does not appear to have been attractive to Oxford and Cambridge graduates. We find:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| William Townley | 26 June 1748 |
| Joseph Gilbanks | 8 June 1755 |
| Edmund Wills | 13 June 1756 |
| David Wray | 9 July 1758 |

| | |
|--|---|
| John Hayton | 12 September 1762 |
| Thomas Cookson | 8 September 1763 |
| William Grisedale | 16 August 1772 |
| Thomas Martindale | 17 August 1774 |
| John Robinson | 14 July 1776 |
| John Roay | 31 August 1777 |
| William Sisson | 9 July 1780 |
| Henry Johnson | 18 August 1782 |
| William Docker | 10 July 1817 |
| Joseph Docker | appointed 13 October 1818 after William Docker resigned |
| Joseph Thwaites | 9 November 1821 |
| Henry Robinson | 17 August 1824 |
| William Poore King | 4 January 1828 |
| George Woodley | 27 January 1843 |
| Samuel Golding, clerk, M.A. | 6 July 1858 |
| From other sources: | |
| John Mounsey | 1829-36 Memorandum Book |
| John Jackson | 1841 Census (aged fifty-five) |
| ditto | 1851 Census (aged sixty-nine, widower, born Martindale) |
| John Elliott | 1858 <i>Directory</i> |
| James Burn | 1861 Census (unmarried, boarder at Annie Garth) |
| ditto | 1871 Census (married with children, living at Coate How, born Redesdale) |
| Mrs Moss | 1876-7 Brierley |
| It was at this point that the Trustees decided that women teachers would be preferable. They were probably better trained and certainly cheaper. | |
| Miss Mary Jane Beaston | 1877-8 Brierley |
| Miss Birkbeck | 1878 Brierley |
| Mrs M. J. Crampton | 1878 Brierley |
| ditto | 1881 Census (born London, husband George, unemployed, also his stepdaughter and nephew) |
| Miss Eliza Jane Woodward | 1884 Memorandum Book |
| Mrs M.J. Crampton | 1884 Bulmer Directory |
| Miss Janet Malcolm | 1891 Census (born Edinburgh 1848, living at Cow Garth, probably from at least 1889) |
| ditto | 1894 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Mrs Ann Anson | 1893-7 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Miss Scott | [no date given] Brierley |
| Miss Margaret Black | 1901 Census (aged thirty, born in Edinburgh, boarded in the village) |
| Miss Margaret Atkinson | 1905 Bulmer (living at Hause) |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Miss Mary Atkinson | 1906 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Miss Edith Mounsey | 1910 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Miss M. Sutcliffe | 1921 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Miss Edith Pears | 1925 Kelly's <i>Directory</i> |
| Mrs Fletcher | after 1933 |

NOTES AND REFERENCES

My thanks are due to Mr Robinson and to Mrs Parkin and Mrs Headley, the owners of the two former school buildings, to William Wiseman and to the staff of Kendal (K) and Carlisle (C) Record Offices.

1. CRO(K) Brierley, H., *Notes on Martindale – its Church and Parish* (1907), 102.
2. CRO(C) DCR 1/3 Carlisle Episcopal Registers.
3. CRO(C) *ibid.*
4. CRO(K) Martindale Marriage Registers WPR, 92.
5. CRO(K) Martindale Burials WPR, 92.
6. CRO(C) Brierley, P. (1692).
7. CRO(K) Barton Marriage Register.
8. Various spellings of the name appear in the documents and Coate How is used here throughout, except in direct quotations. The modern spelling given on the 1982 Ordnance Survey map is Cotehow.
9. Brierley, *op. cit.*, 102.
10. CRO(K) Charity Commissioners' Report, 1822-35, 574.
11. CRO(K) WDRC/8/ 170.
12. Brierley, *op.cit.*, 103.
13. CRO(K) WPR 92.
14. Parson and White, *Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1829, reprint 1984), 580.
15. William Robinson, pers. comm. Mr Robinson is now a joiner. Also he used to drive the school bus, and was for a time a governor of Yanwath school until the paperwork became too much for him. He expressed surprise at pupils' bad behaviour. 'If you played up at school you'd have got a hiding from your father when you got home.' None of his schoolmates still lives in Martindale.
16. CRO(K) WPR 92.
17. Mannex and Co., *History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland* (1851), 207.
18. Brunskill, R. W., *Traditional Buildings of Cumbria, The County of the Lakes* (2002), 104-8.
19. Torching is the stuffing of the cracks between the slates with moss, or more recently mortar. Lake District graded slates are rough and uneven; the smoother ones were sold around the country and the rougher ones used here. They are much more beautiful than the thin, regular Welsh ones, but the Victorians probably would not have thought so. In the days (only a few decades ago) when many bedrooms were not ceiled, water could easily get in. This is also the reason for ceiling the school mistress' house; slates have very little insulation. The other common 'home improvement' was flagging the earth floors.
20. CRO(K) WDX 884 A1081.
21. Mannex, *op.cit.*, 207.
22. Curwen, J., *Later Records of North Westmorland* (1932), 261.
23. Whellan, *History and Topography of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1860), 784.
24. CRO(K) WPR/92.
25. See note 15.
26. CRO(K) WPR 92/school.
27. CRO(K) Westmorland County Council Minutes of Proceedings, 1949-50, 340.
28. CRO(K) WSRD/NWS, 20, Minute Book North Westmorland Rural District Council.
29. CRO(C) DRC 1/617.