

After the Great War...

HEALTH ISSUES

The School Logbook tells a fascinating story of the childhood illnesses in the early years of the twentieth century. Details were required to explain the reasons for absences. The most common complaints were coughs, colds and 'sickness', attributed frequently to bad weather and the state of the footpaths, as many children had a long walk to school across the fields.



They also had all the usual childhood infectious diseases to contend with, such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, whooping cough and scarlet fever. On occasion the school had to be closed and complications could occur. Before the school was shut for four weeks, Mrs Parkinson wrote:

11th Dec. 1910: 'Fields paths under water. Many of those absent are suffering from winter colds.'

25th Apr. 1921: '13 only being present. This is generally due no doubt to the wet morning and the changeable weather last week, resulting in many children taking a chill.'

21st Nov. 1921: 'I had one child absent today suffering from severe chilblains.'

1st Mar. 1929: 'With the exception of four children, all the children are suffering from severe colds, I tested the temperature of several at 3pm and found above half of the school nearly 100 degrees - 2 were just under 102.'

4th June 1928: 'Only ten children present (out of 32). Nearly all the rest are suffering from whooping cough. Two are ill with congestion of the lungs and one with pneumonia and whooping cough. Only one infant present.'

Mr Hunt reported a case of diphtheria to the Garstang Clerk in 1919:

23rd Jan. 1919: One of my pupils (John Kelsall of Fair Snape) certified by Dr. Birtwell to be suffering from Diphtheria. Reported to Mr. Thornton'



John Kelsall, and the Kelsall family around 1918



Sadly, James Keighley in Standard IV died of appendicitis in January 1926 - the only death in two decades. He may be one of the children on the photograph at the top.

THE LOCAL INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC SITUATION

The so-called 'Spanish' 'flu epidemic first hit the country in early 1918. Up to a quarter of a million people may have died from it in the UK. The first record in the School Logbook was on 24th Oct. 1918. Mr. Hunt, the Headteacher, recorded that a child was excluded because of 'influenza at home'. More families were affected in November and on 2nd December he wrote: 'Closed under order of the M.O.H. (in Garstang) owing to Influenza epidemic.'

Two weeks later the school reopened, with 10 absentees but the worst of the epidemic may have been over by then as there are no more entries about it. No records of any deaths from the disease in the farming district of Bleasdale have been found. However, the Preston Guardian on 9th November 1918 had reports of the deaths of 3 local people within 3 days. Mrs. Sarah Corless (39), wife of Richard Corless, died on 2nd November at The Row, Oakenclough, and at Roughmoor Farm, Barnacre the 11- and 18-year-old sons of Mr. Eli Taylor died on the 2nd and 4th November 1918.



The Row, Oakenclough



Roughmoor Farm, Barnacre

(Photos by John Nelson 2016)