

ROBERT HUNT & SCHOOL

during the Great War

Robert Hunt was Head Teacher of Bleasdale National School from 1st September 1910 to 30th September 1920. He was born in Preston, the youngest son of Heys and Nancy Hunt and his father was a cotton worker. He married Minnie Woods in 1905 and may have taught in Burton-in-Kendal before coming to Bleasdale where his daughter, Nancy Blackstone Hunt was born in 1910. They had a second child in 1918 - possibly the baby in the photo on the right?

In 1915 Robert spent two weeks of his summer holiday in munitions work before enlisting in the Royal Flying Corps as a motor cyclist. He transferred to the reserve but went to France in 1916 with the Liverpool Scottish Regiment. He was on the Somme front line at Sailley from 10-15th December 1916, where he contracted trench foot and trench fever. He was hospitalised until May 10th 1917 and resumed duty at Bleasdale in the following September.



Bleasdale School August 20th 1914



Garden of School House. Is this Robert and Minnie Hunt in approx. 1919?



Backyard of the school - exact date unknown

From the School Log Book

- SEPT. 21ST 1914 "A portion of the time allotted to Needlework will be spent in making up 'pillow slips' for hospital use."
- FEB. 3RD 1915 "This week's collection of eggs for the wounded per the School children totals to 120. Last week 110."
- FEB. 13TH 1915 "Money raising social in aid of the National Relief Fund. PG."

The National Egg Collection was officially started in August 1914 with its patron Queen Alexandra. It is worthy of note that Bleasdale and the surrounding areas were collecting eggs for the wounded in 1914. It aimed at first to collect a total of one million eggs but actually achieved one million per month. In February 1914 during a special children's week 300,000 eggs were collected. By January 1918 the scheme had sent over 7 million eggs to hospitals at home and 25 million eggs to hospitals abroad.



The school was the focus of the community war effort during the Great War for both social and fund-raising activities, as extracts from the School Log Book and The Preston Guardian show.

CONCERT AT BLEASDALE.—In aid of the National Relief Fund a capital concert, presided over by the Rev. J. F. H. Parker, was given by local artistes in the Bleasdale School on Saturday evening. The programme, which was of a miscellaneous character, included the quartettes, "Wake, wake the morning bells," "The dear little shamrock," and "Alice, where are thou?" which were effectively rendered by the Misses P. Kelsall, J. Malley, and Mossra. H. Malley and Leo. Lord. Miss Jennie Malley sang the popular airs, "When Irish eyes," "Bravo! Territorials," and "Farewell, Isabella," and for all three was enthusiastically recalled. Miss I. Wills met with much success with her items, "When you're alone," "Down the Vale," and "When I lost you." Mr. G. Bullock sang, "The only bit of English," "Soldiers of the King," and "The empty sleeve," and received hearty applause. Mr. T. Wills evoked much merriment with his comic song, "Shirts" whilst Mr. L. Lord was a great success with his contributions, "I do like a s' nice s'mance 'spie" and "How are yer?" Mr. E. Longton recited "The runaway wedding" (humorous) in masterly fashion, and a dialogue with his sister thoroughly merited the hearty applause accorded it. Mr. R. Hunt accompanied the singing. The concluding farce, "My turn next," did the individual artistes great credit. Mr. T. Wills, as Teraxicum Twitters, made an ideal village apothecary, and excellent character representations were given by Miss E. Longton (Peggy), Miss M. Brewer (Cioley), Miss E. Daniel (Mrs. Twitters), Mr. J. Daniel (Tim Bolus), Mr. E. Yates (Farmer Wheatear), and Mr. W. Brown (Tom Trap). The proceedings closed with the National Anthem, prior to which the vicar thanked the artistes and organisers, and called for "three cheers for Belgium and our men in the trenches," which met with a rousing response.

- JUNE 10TH 1915 "Sent out circulars respecting the holding of ambulance and home nursing classes for females, to be held during the winter months."
- DEC. 16TH 1915 "School closed. Local farmers' Red Cross sale at Garstang - many children attending the same with their parents."

Preston Guardian Saturday December 18 1915



The British Farmers Red Cross Fund mainly raised money through agricultural sales. The proceeds were earmarked for particular schemes, such as providing motor ambulances, cars and lorries to the various battle-fronts. More than 150 ambulances were provided in this way. Hospitals, known as British Farmers Hospitals, were supported by this fund in Belgium, France and Serbia. The fund received a total of £1,024,808 19s 2d.

A National Relief Fund was set up with Edward, Prince of Wales, as treasurer, to help the families of serving men and those suffering from "industrial distress". In a message in national newspapers, he said: "At such a moment we all stand by one another, and it is to the heart of the British people that I confidently make this earnest appeal." Within a week, donations to the fund had reached £1m.

- MAY 7TH 1916 "Children brought 71d (36p.) for Prebendary Carlile's Church Army Effort" (PREB. WILSON CARLILE FOUNDED THE CHURCH ARMY)
- NOV. 16TH 1917 "A Social in aid of War Charities was held in school this evening (Friday)."
- JAN. 25TH 1918 "Whist Drive in school this evening in aid of the Lancaster Munitions Workers' Hostel." (ON 1ST OCT. 1917 THERE WAS A MASSIVE EXPLOSION AT THE MUNITIONS FACTORY AT WHITE LUND, LANCASTER IN WHICH 10 PEOPLE DIED.)
- AUG. 24TH 1918 "Blackberry gathering - Replied to letter from Dr. Snape to the effect that I would act as Local Agent." (BLACKBERRY COLLECTING WAS A GOVERNMENT SCHEME TO ASSIST IN JAM-MAKING FOR THE FORCES.)
- SEPT. 5TH 1918 "Packed 10lbs blackberries for dispatch to Messrs. Thomas E. Dyke & Son, jam manufacturers, Preston."
- NOV. 11TH 1918 "Armistice signed at 5 a.m. today, hostilities ceased at 11 am - peace bells rang and St. George's flag 'run up' in Church Tower"



Photo from the internet



Money raised at the British Farmers' Red Cross Fund Sale at Garstang in 1915 would have contributed to this Postal Van purchased by the Lancashire Branch.