

extracts from George Thompson's tapes relating to his education: recorded on 17 & 20 May 1999

I started at Naburn School in 1908. Miss Burns was my first teacher. The first thing she did was to give us each a white chalk and a 9" by 6" slate. You did your sums on that. There was also an abacus in the class though we rarely used that. Miss Burns seemed very tall and wore a long skirt. She was OK.

The school had a small room and a big room. I started in the small room where there were four desks built up, right up to the window. You'd sit up there and after so long you'd move down to the little desks at the front. We were in the small room for a year. Boys and girls were segregated. Boys were in the front seats, girls in the second, then boys again. Boys and girls did not play together. There were two yards with toilets in each yard. A good thing that we were segregated as the boys used to fall out with each other and fought a lot. If Mr. Calvert (the schoolmaster) caught you he'd give you a good hiding.

Mr Wilson was the first schoolmaster. He had a daughter. They lived in the school house. There was a big apple tree in the next garden. Apples used to fall into Mr Wilson's drive. One day he made his daughter return an apple that had fallen into their drive. Regimental were the schoolmasters, as were many men at that time.

Mr Calvert came to live in the schoolhouse, replacing Mr Wilson after two years. He was from Sheriff Hutton and was a real devil. He gave us the cane. He didn't half lay it on! We were punished for talking in class or acting the fool. I was punished for talking to the next boy. Mr Calvert could see everybody.

It was more like the military. The bell would ring in the morning and you used to fall into line. Left turn, right turn, and march into school. No mucking about or you got the cane. I didn't like going to school.

At 9am there were prayers and we sang a hymn. Then there was an hour of arithmetic, then history. You used to be banged into history. I used to think of the rubbish they'd push into your brains. Marvellous nation, won everything, beat everybody. The middle aged and older people were very patriotic in those days.

I went home for lunch. Some children lived one or two miles away and brought lunch to school. I'd run home. We had meat, potatoes, Yorkshire pudding. There was always lots of meat which was cheap.

Boys would sometimes be taken out of school to take cows down the side roads to eat the grass. They'd go off for half days. 2 or 3 boys in my row would be taken off. It was illegal and went down on the school attendance record. But their parents got away with it. If they had been prosecuted they'd have said that they had no money to pay fines. The kiddie - catcher (school attendance officer) as we called him came every so often to interview the schoolmaster to take details of absentees.

I was taken out of school a few months before my 13th birthday and sent to Naburn Hall. I had no option but leave school. Other boys were sent to farms. Most of the young men of the village were off in the Forces. I thought it was marvellous to leave school. Grand.

NOTE: Labour certificate no. 1(A) for total exemption after 13 years of age for George William Thompson