

The Old Grammar School of Penistone, 1392 – 1893

by Kevin Neill



Aerial view of Penistone, c1930.
Penistone History Archives.

*'Perhaps a plaque may one day be placed on the wall
to remind the townspeople of the original home of their
secondary school.'*

– Wilfred Burgess Simms, Headmaster 1958-1976.

Introduction

The inspiration on which this article is based comes from the scholarly historical essays written by a former Headmaster of the school – Wilfred Burgess Simms.

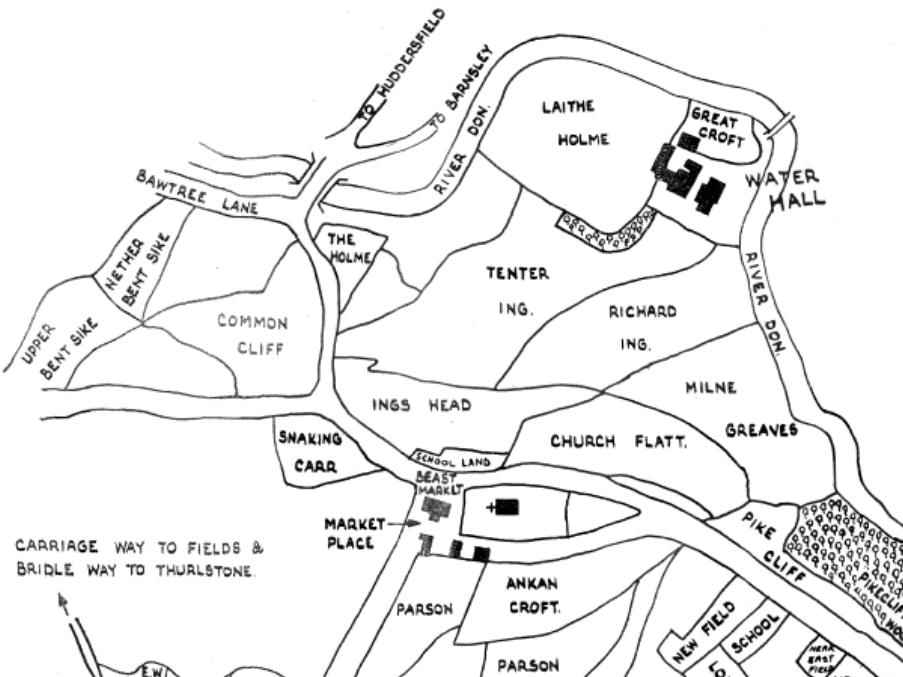
The article is concerned with the historical development of school land situated in the middle of Penistone and is in four parts:

Part 1 – the early development of the site

Part 2 – the building of School Terrace

Part 3 – the construction of the shop frontage of St Mary's Street

Part 4 – the demolition of the old school.



Addey's land map showing the position of the school land at around 1800. Snake Ing Carr was added in 1826.

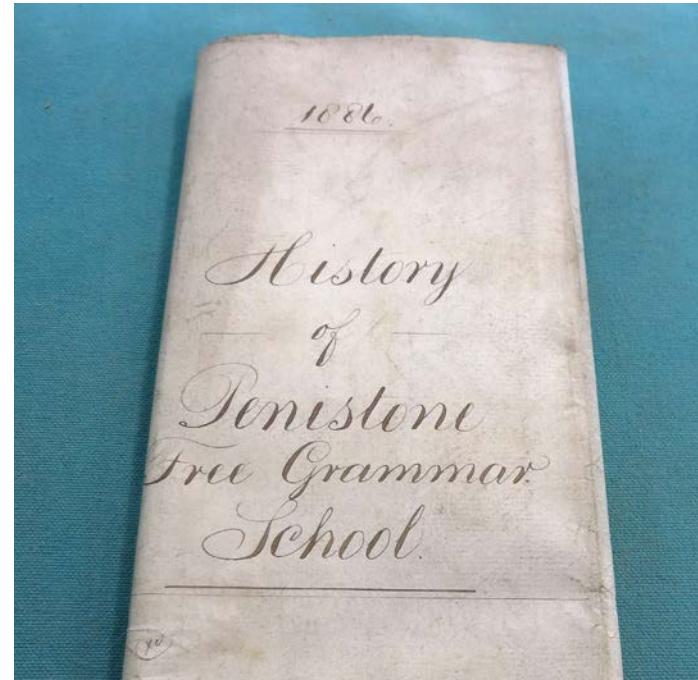
A Further History of Penistone.

Simms describes the extent of the endowment land of Kirk Flatt:

"It appears that the school curtilage was a small narrow piece of land about 260 feet long and a 100 feet wide, hemmed in on the south by Church Street, the Beast Market and St Mary's Street, and by the middle of the 19th century, by the railway which was about 75 feet beyond the northern boundary of the school site."

"The buildings were in three groups; to the east were the school cottages which were largely re-built in 1856 as the 'School Terrace'.

"On the west a narrow lane (Cock Pit Lane) leading to plots not belonging to the school and then the grammar school jutting forward into the curves of the turnpike road which separated the school from the Beast Market and Cloth Hall (or Shambles). Further to the west where there were



Dransfield's original copy of the talk he gave on the history of the school on Dec 16 1886 at the schools presentation of prizes.
Kevin Neill.

one or two old cottages and gardens, the Governors granted a building lease in 1876 for 99 years as a consequence of which a terrace of shops and houses were erected in the westernmost part of the school property in St Mary's Street.

"The sale of the school site has led to a separation of the two remaining pieces of school land"

Background

Apart from the various websites and publications that give some insight and detail into the founding and development of the school at Penistone, there are only three accounts in existence that track the finer detail of the rich history, not only of the school, but the development and shaping of a very strategic area of the town itself. The authors of these works are: John Ness Dransfield, John Addey and Wilfred Burgess

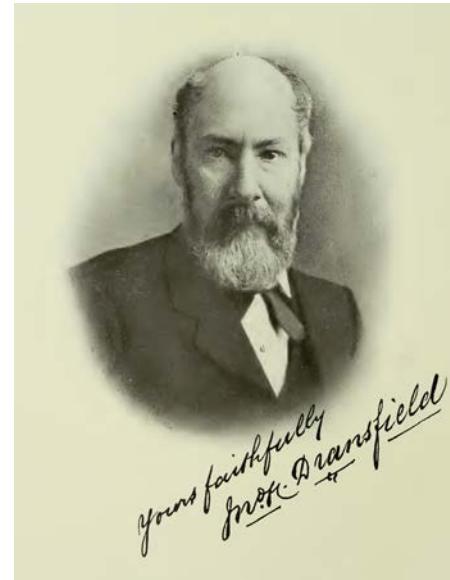
Wilfrid Burgess Simms,
Head of PGS 1958-76.
PGS Archives.



Simms. Perhaps the most accessible of these is that of Dransfield, first written in 1886 and then reproduced in his book *History of Penistone* published in 1906. Addey's work consisted of three detailed essays written in 1958. These were published in the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal for a very narrow audience and fortunately, can now be accessed online. Both the works of Dransfield and Addey have a heavy emphasis on the documentation and people supporting the origins and development of the school endowment. The material produced by Simms in 1975 differs from these as his focus is on the physical development of the site, tracking the changes in the buildings that have occupied this area over the centuries. His work has never been published and has remained virtually unknown for over forty years.

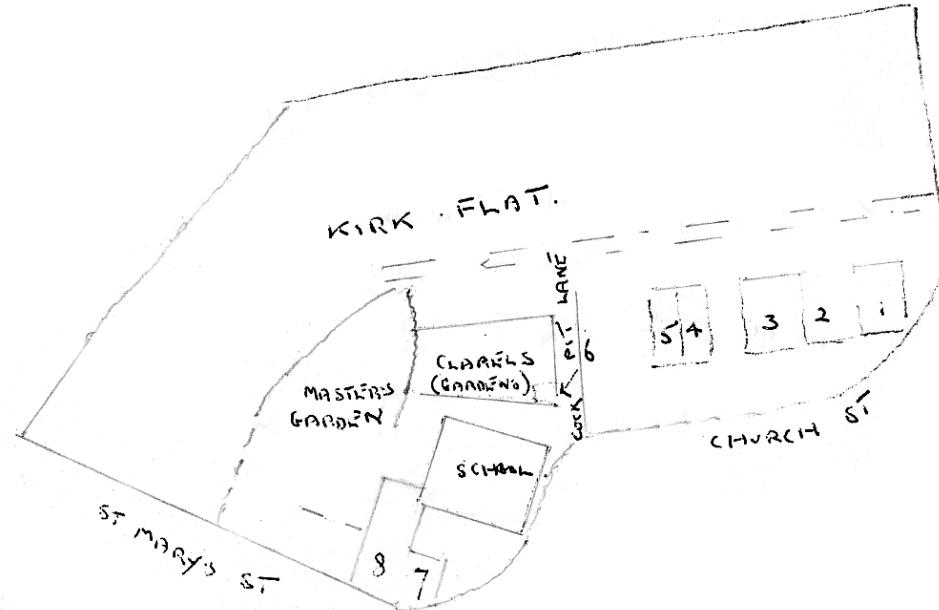
Much of the accessible historical reference material to be found regarding Penistone can be attributed to John Ness Dransfield, whose formidable scrapbook collections and writings have provided historians with a wealth of material on which to base their work. Dransfield himself was placed in a pivotal position

John Ness Dransfield
as portrayed in his
book, *A History of the
Parish of Penistone*
(1906).



regarding the amassing of this material, as he was not only a partner within the premier solicitors of the town, but also Clerk to the Governors of the Grammar School, and of the Local Board formed in 1869. The minute books, of both these institutions of the time, are still in existence. Dransfield was fortunate to have at hand most of the source material on which to base his work. This archive material was kept in Penistone and more than likely at his father's office. Addey on the other hand, had the hard shift, as some aspects of his source material was scattered across archives in Yorkshire. In 1974 Simms was handed the school archive material by Sir Alex Clegg of The West Riding Education department. This was due to the boundary reorganisations which saw Penistone into the newly created county of South Yorkshire. Simms was sceptical, at first, of a new archive service based in Sheffield and kept hold of the material until he was sure of its safe keeping. During this time he became interested and familiar with this source material and wrote his essays on the history of the school, detailed biographies of the Headmasters from Sunderland to Fulford and an in-depth study of the endowment at Netherthong.

Left: 1803 Tithe map.
Kevin Neill.



Tenement occupation 1630. Simms' diagram based on the 1630 parishioner's survey.

1. James Marsden 2. Margaret Woodcock 3. Matthew Roebuck 4/5. William Carter/Widow Rhodes
6. Barn & beast house 7. Butcher's shop 8. Stable

1. The Physical Development of the Kirk Flatt Endowment

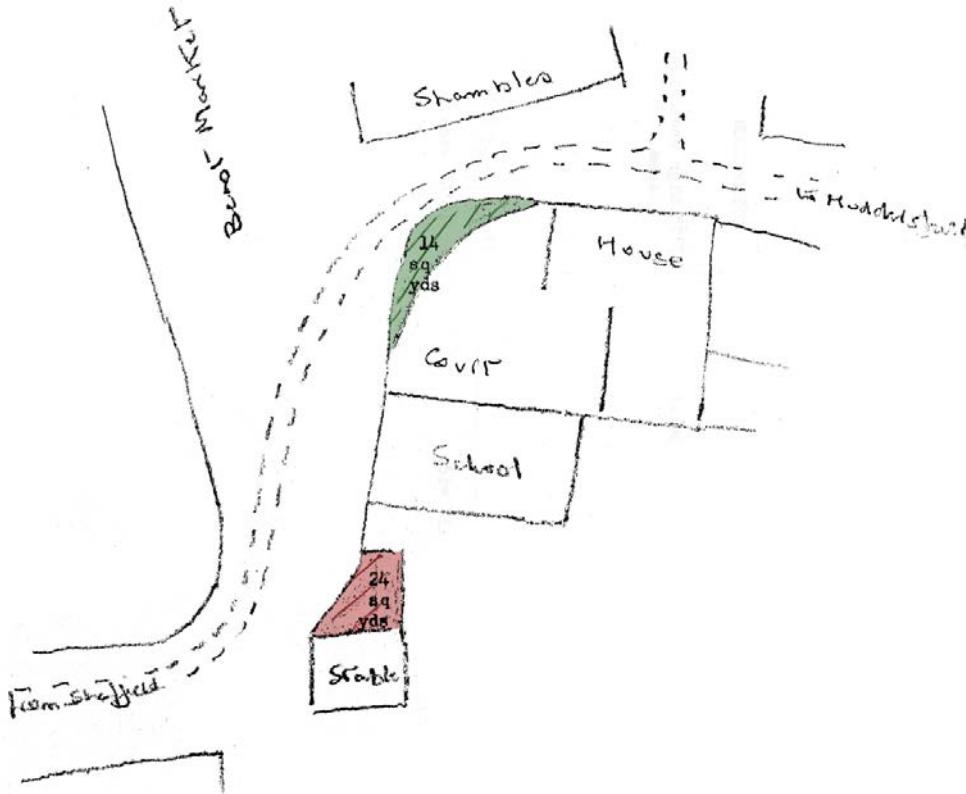
Simms deals with the origins of the endowment in 1392 in one swift paragraph. He then moves on to the 1604 Chancery Decree that gives accurate details of the buildings that existed at the time. However, he considers a survey taken by the parishioners in 1630, to give the finer details so as to be able to imagine the actual layout of the tenements.

The diagram clearly shows the development of cottages on the eastern side. In time, further building would be added, one in particular, next to Cock Pit lane, was to become an ale house called the Three Travellers as shown on the 1803 Tithe map and the 1854 ordnance survey map. Additional buildings had also been added fronting St Mary's Street.



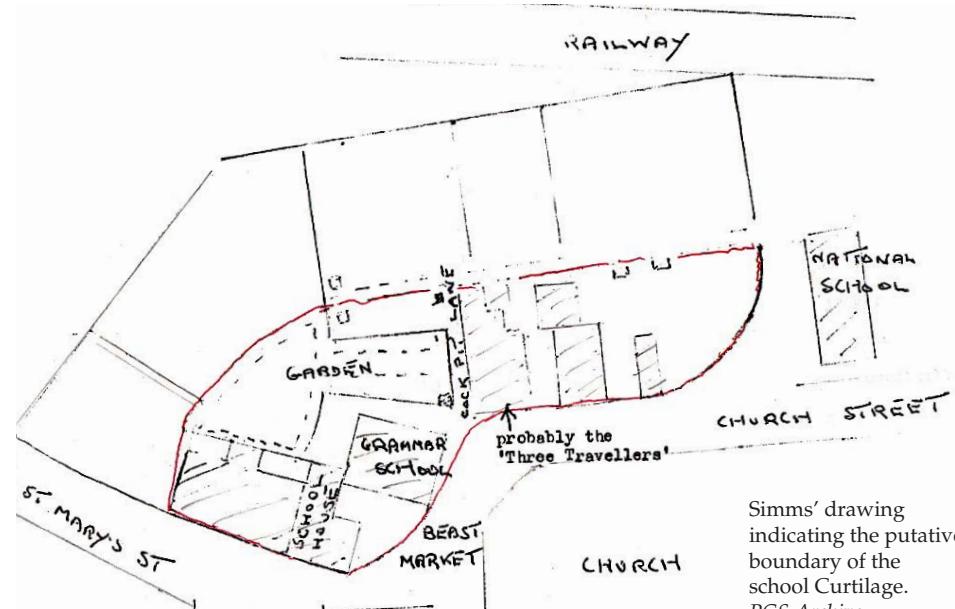
Below: 1854 ordnance survey map





8 Nov 1806. Indenture between Sir Charles Kent, Bt etc, "Trustees of Penistone School" and James Burbeary of Sheffield, clerk to the Trustees on 3rd district of Turnpike road leading from Halifax to Sheffield. From Trustees of School to Turnpike Trust coloured green. From Turnpike Trust to trustees of school coloured red. Graphic from Simms' essay, courtesy of PGS Archive.

Interestingly, the tithe map, when compared with the ordnance map, shows a different curvature of the wall surrounding the school yard. What is also evident, from these copies, is that the school yard had a building that was almost parallel to the school. When the Cloth Hall was constructed in 1763, the curvature of the school wall and the position of this building must have severely restricted the road between the Beast Market and St Mary's Street, causing a pinch point.



Simms' drawing indicating the putative boundary of the school Curtilage.
PGS Archive.

In 1806, according to Simms, there was an agreement reached between the Trustees of the school and the Trustees of the 3rd district of turnpike road leading from Sheffield to Halifax. The agreement was an exchange of lands. The school would allow the widening of the road by bringing the boundary wall in and giving the turnpike trust 14 square yards. In return, the turnpike Trustees gave the school an area of land outside the stable block amounting to 24 square yards.

Apart from the alterations of the school boundary wall in 1806 as a result of the exchange of lands agreement, there were to be no further developments upon the endowment land for another fifty years. 1856 saw the development of School Terrace, 1876 further road widening and the pulling down of part of the school house and finally the complete demolition of the school in 1893. Above is a diagram by Simms showing the extent of buildings on the endowment around 1850.



Inscription stone, School Terrace. *Penistone History Archives*.



School Terrace today. *Kevin Neill*.

2. School Terrace 1856

Simms took care in considering the development of each aspect of the endowed lands. East of the school were cottages possibly not generating enough revenue out of the land they occupied.

"On Sept. 12 1854 the Governors set up a committee to consider the replacement of these cottages with new building. It is clear from the later specifications and the appearance of the buildings that two old cottages were retained and five new cottages were attached to the west as a continuous terrace. A sum of £331 had been paid by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway... and the Governors decided to spend this money on 15. Oct. 1855 on the new cottages."

One of the buildings demolished stood on the eastern

side of Cock Pit Lane. Simms talks of a voucher submitted in 1855 revealing that it had been a public house and the landlord was named as Joseph Shaw. Simms gives a further description of this build:

"It is almost certain that the original Church ale-house of Penistone parish did not disappear until 1856, when an old yellow-washed building known as the 'Three Travellers', with some old cottages adjoining, was pulled down. This property, which is mentioned in some document of the 17th C connected with the Grammar School, may well have been in existence in the 14th C. The floor of the inn itself was paved with stone cobbles, and tradition says it was the oldest inn in Penistone. It stood at the top of Cock Pit Lane on the north side of the church and there was a path to it from the church. Joseph Shaw was the last tenant."



The top end of Church Street. Photos: Jenny Hurt.

1. The narrow path between the buildings is Cock Pit Lane. The building on the left of the Lane is where the old Grammar School stood. To the right of the lane was the site of the Three Travellers. entrance to the church leading to the school and the ale-house.

Photos: Jenny Hurt.



2. The entire block of five cottages built in 1856 known as School Terrace. The whitewashed wall is part of the remaining two cottages that were not demolished. They are distinguished by a lower roof line and can certainly be ranked amongst the oldest buildings in Penistone.



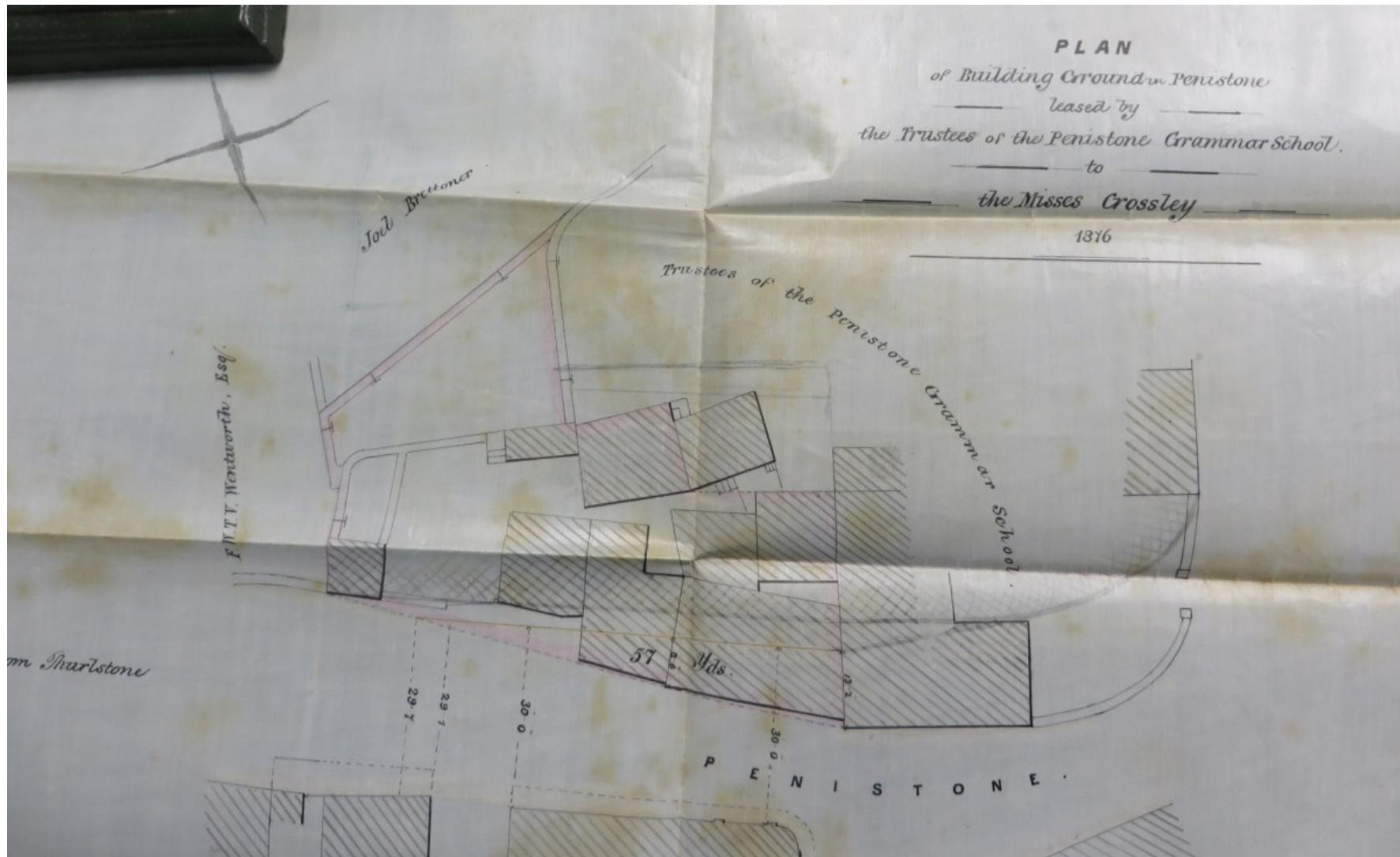
3. The blocked entrance to the church leading to the school and the ale-house.

Whilst the footpath leading to the inn is no longer distinguishable, the gateway or entrance most certainly is. This was also the route used by Sunderland, who was both Headmaster and vicar, before his untimely death in 1855, in leading the school boarders into church on Sundays. Interestingly, the inn could also have provided the small beer which was consumed by the school boarders at meal times due to the uncertainty of drinking water at the time.

Since the construction of the terrace, the properties have been utilised in a variety of ways both as private residences and also for business and educational purposes. At one point, the attic space ran the entire length of the properties. It is possible that this may have been to accommodate school boarders who had certainly been housed in the school house until its demolition in 1876. Samuel Sunderland's widow occupied part of the build as did also Theophilus

Jackson who was appointed Headmaster in 1877. This could have continued with those in charge of the school until the appointment of Lionel Ernest Adams in 1889, he broke with tradition and was housed at Rose Hill on Green Road, his rent paid for by the governors. There was a continuation of school staff occupying the premises whenever a vacancy arose, which includes the author of this article who was possibly the last staff member of the school to do so. Simms points out that some of the cottages were used as classroom extensions in subjects such as Design and what was then known as Home Economics. In 1970 one cottage was used for home maintenance lessons for nearly a decade and was known as 'Clarels'. Two cottages in the 1930s were combined and became the Penistone telephone exchange until it was relocated to Talbot Street. This building has now become the Art House coffee shop.

Existing build on
St Mary's Street
prior to the 1876
redevelopment
Source: Dransfield
Documents.

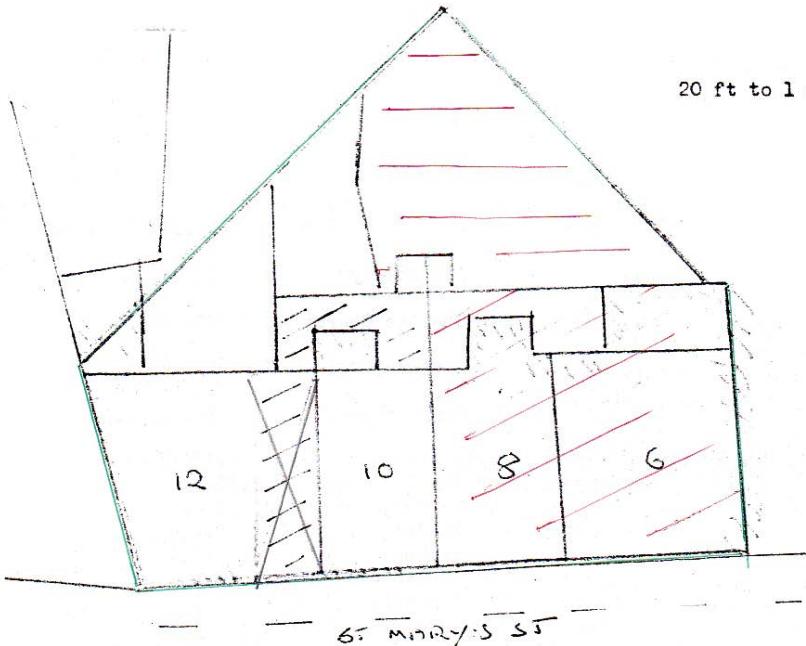


3. St Mary's Street

On the west side of the school buildings stood two cottages, which, by 1867, according to Simms, were in a poor state of condition. The trustees however, were taken up by the appointment of a new Headmaster and surprisingly their attention did not return to matters

until 1875. This was probably prompted by a new road widening scheme which necessitated the demolition of part of the school house to relieve the pinch point. This would in itself tidy up the entire frontage of the street. Simms explains:

"It was not until 7. Aug. 1875 that they turned again to



Simms provides details in diagram form of the buildings the Misses Crossley built.
PGS Archive.

George Ramsden's cottage and the adjoining buildings which were occupied by James Whittaker, all much in want of repair, said the Clerk who suggested whether such premises might not be let on lease to advantage rather than be repaired at considerable cost. After Greaves had surveyed the property, it was resolved that the said premises be offered by Tender on Building Lease for a term of 99 years.

"On 4.Sept. Greaves reported that tenders had been submitted by:-

"Misses M.A. and M.C. Crossley - 6d per yard. They stated that they would build a good dwelling house and shop thereon and expend at least £600 on the buildings.



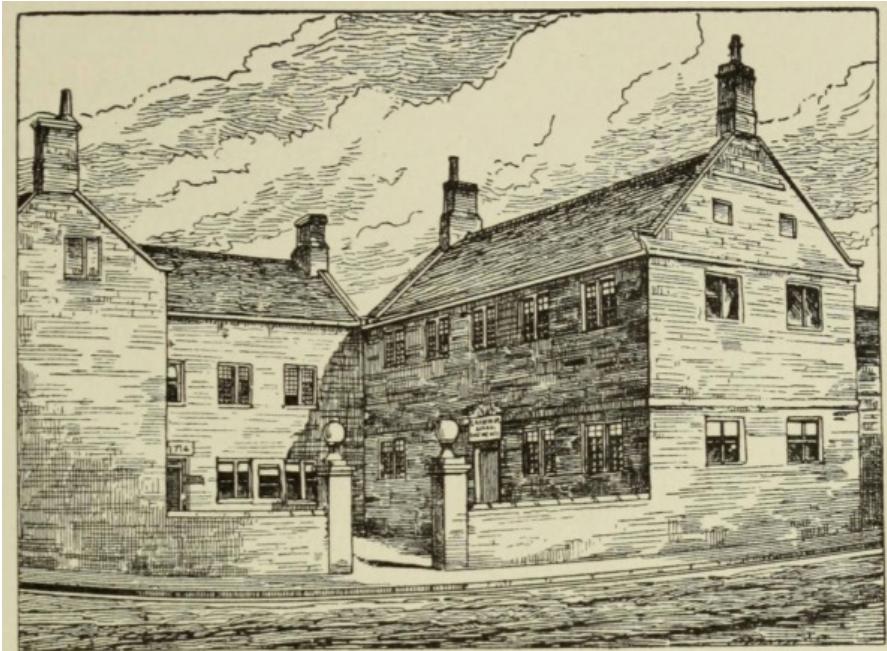
The demolition work came seven years after the pulling down of the old Rose and Crown Inn. Major alterations in Penistone town centre. Jenny Hurt.

"Joseph Birks - 3d per yard. He stated he would erect a dwelling house shop and three cottages thereon and would expect to expend from £700 to £1000 on the buildings.

"The Misses Crossley were offered the lease on condition that they pay the sum of £20 towards the rebuilding a scullery for the schoolmaster. A curious condition but was probably connected with the demolition of part of the masters house at the time for road widening. Pull down the old buildings and erect the new ones according to plans approved of by the trustees and if required at a distance of 15 feet from the centre of the street. This proviso arose from the need of the Local Board to purchase a strip of 100 yards for road widening. The Misses Crossley agreed and were allowed a strip at the rear."

The document on the preceding page, which is a recent discovery, gives a precise picture of the buildings which occupied the land to the west of the school and of the school itself. These were the plans drawn up for the 1876 road widening scheme which necessitated the demolition of the major part of the school house and the shortening of the remaining part which became a shop with offices above.

The demolition work came seven years after the pulling down of the old Rose and Crown Inn. Major alterations in Penistone town centre.



The engraving used in Dransfield's book showing all of the 1714 build and a Biltcliffe photograph taken after the 1876 demolition and remodelling.



4. The Demolition of the Old Grammar School

The buildings which replaced the Tudor school were intended to be more spacious, specifically to accommodate boarders which, it was hoped, would bring prestige to the town. They were U-shaped in design with a shortened south wing more than likely to allow light into the school itself. This shape facilitated a courtyard with a curtain wall opened by two gate pillars surmounted with stone ball finials. The building on the right housed the school with a central entrance supported by a large stone lintel. The lintel was engraved circiter 1397, Grammar School, Disce aut Discede (Learn or Leave). The school itself was based on the ground floor. The floor above had two chambers which were used for teaching the very youngest boys. The central block facing the gateway is attached to the school and in the photograph,

clearly showing a passageway leading round the side and rear of the buildings. This passageway is not evident shown on the engraving. The central block was the Headmaster's house which, as shown on the engraving, was much larger as it contained the shortened south wing with its gable end facing the church. This part of the building was used to accommodate the boarders. It was this part of the build together with the boundary wall that narrowed the road near to the corner of the Cloth Hall, bearing in mind that the boundary wall had already been moved back in the 1806 exchange of lands. The 1876 road widening took out a substantial part of school property and would have drastically changed this part of the town.

Simms includes an extract in another of his essays which was written by a former pupil and published



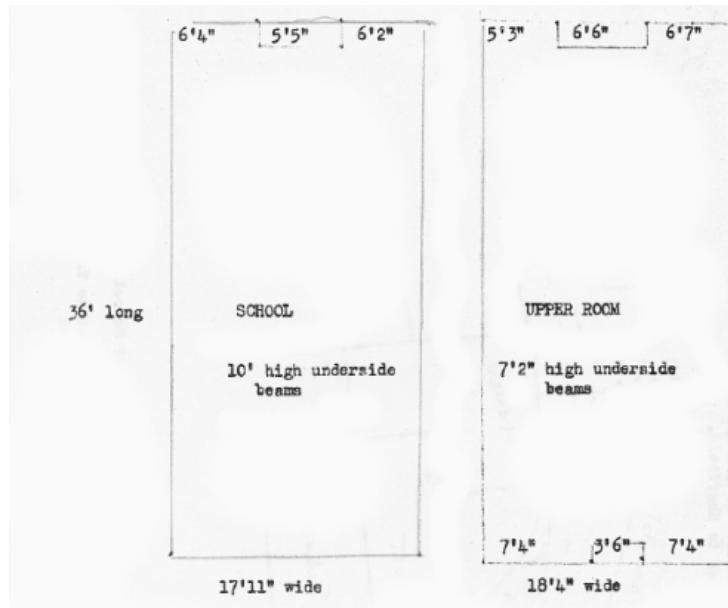
Possibly the oldest surviving photograph of the school pupils together with the Headmaster Lionel Adams seated and his assistant Harry Hardy who himself had been acting head before the appointment of Adams. The picture was certainly taken before the resignation of Adams in 1892 and that the group were assembled around the back of the old school.
Courtesy of PGS Archives..

in the school magazine '*The Penistonian*'. These were published for each of the three school terms from 1910 – 1913. Whilst Simms does not give specific details of the precise date of publication it is clear that the narrative concerns the school under the Headship of Lionel Ernest Adams who was Master from 1889 – 1892.

"Somebody ought to have said that as we grow older we do not recall with the keenest of pleasure the wisdom of our youth; but rather its follies; and this is my excuse for dwelling upon the lighter side of some memories of the Penistone Grammar School twenty years ago.

"It was an oblong two storied building of the barn type of architecture, which had its long wall, lying east and west – whether because the architect had modified a plan of a

Below: this diagram is an appendix used by Simms. 'The schoolroom was measured and a plan of both floors was stuck on the fly leaf of the Governors' Minute Book (see Appendix 2). The lower room called 'the School' was 36 ft x 17ft.11.ins- 10 feet high to the underside of the beams and had a fireplace at one end. The Upper Room 36 ft.4ins x18ft.4.ins- 7ft.2.ins high to the underside of the beams. It had a fireplace at each end which suggests that it was once two rooms. Were these the Chambers- Great and Little- rented out in 1756? In the same rental John Ibbotson paid 13s for use of the cellar.'



church which he had been unable to dispose of otherwise or because of the exigencies of the space at his disposal, I do not know.

"To our then untutored minds the fact that its situation enabled the head master to obtain an uninterrupted view of the church clock explained everything.

"Above the doorway was the stone-with the inscription "Disce aut Discede," which now occupies a similar position at Weirfield. The two stories were connected inside by a flight of steps lying open within the lower storey.

"The head master taught the upper school in the lower room; and the second and only other Master taught the lower school in the upper room."



Courtesy of PGS Archives..

Opposite top:
Engraving of the
newly widened road
from *Remarkable
Occurrences and
Interesting Dates*.

Opposite bottom: the
new shop front from
The Penistone Scene.

Both date from around
the same time.

The above picture is the iconic photograph taken by Joseph Biltcliffe around 1890 shortly before these buildings were demolished and the school relocated to Weirfield. Simms' interrogation of the picture aptly describes the changes:

"The building which is dated 1717 in Dransfield's engraving has clearly been shortened. The doorway has been filled up; new stonework can be seen where the wall was built; there is a shop front to the lower storey. There is no sign of the building to the left of the engraving. The surviving part of the old schoolhouse was rented out as a shop and offices."





Green House
Penistone
photographed by
the author with kind
permission of Lionel
Clark.

The survival of the school and its buildings were dealt a blow under the Charity Commissions Scheme of 1886 which came into force by 1887. This focused on the accommodation and all-round 'fit for purpose'. Under the Scheme, the old Trustees resigned and handed over to a newly constituted Board of Governors, seven of whom were to represent the old foundation of Thomas Clarel. During the author's time at the school they were known as the Foundation Governors, they administered the monies accrued by the endowment. Simms reveals that another report of 1894 showed a distinct lack of sympathy for the old site.

"For five years after the establishment of the Scheme (1887) the school was carried on in the old premises, a building situated in the middle of town..and not only undesirable from its proximity to the cattle market, but also quite inadequate to the requirements of the school."

The position of the site in a central and quite advantageous position in the town drew the attention



Weirfield House.
Original photo by
Biltcliffe.

of the Sheffield Union Banking Company who in April 1892 asked the Governors if they would sell. The Governors agreed but at a very high price of £3,000. The price, which was negotiable, clearly was intended to give time for the governors to find a more suitable site for the school.

One site that was considered which is worthy of mention is that John Ness Dransfield offered to the Governors the sale of Green House with land for the sum of £2750.

By December 1892, the governors had decided to accept the Bank's offer of £2300 and to negotiate the sale of Weirfield House. By January of 1893 Joseph Fulford the new Headmaster had moved into the new premises. Simms concludes the demolition of the old school with:

"Dransfield (p.209) states that the old building was last used as a school on Sat. May 20. 1893. On July 31 the demolition began. Some of the materials and adornments



This picture was taken by the author from a similar position of the Biltcliffe photograph below. The architects for the Sheffield Union Banking Co were sympathetic to the old school, in the sense that the entrance to the shop, which is now the Vault Bistro, is at the exact location of the entrance to the school yard. The offices of Dransfield and Hodgkinson, before the move to Pennine Law, occupied the site of the old school itself. Dransfield was a former student.



were brought to Weirfield... It variously was called Bank Buildings or St Mary's Chambers and the link with the former school not entirely broken as Messrs Dransfield and Hodgkinson found offices within. Perhaps a plaque may one day be placed on the wall to remind the townspeople of the original home of their secondary school."

The building that was constructed on the school site was owned by the Sheffield and Union Banking Trustees and was now nothing to do with the school endowment. This is what Simms meant by a separation of the school land. (see page 2) St Mary's Street to the west and Church Street to the east.

Materials and adornments that were brought to the new school

"One of the conditions for the sale of the old school building was that the material should be used by the contractors for the alterations at Weirfield. The scroll plaque with circiter 1397 was placed on the stone infilling of the original side entrance. The lintel with 'Grammar School, Disce aut Discede' over the entrance to the attached wash room must surely have been adorning the old school. The entrance piers with ball finials were also brought up the hill."

It is a pity that the door lintel showing 1717 to the old school house was not saved. However, the gate piers and stone ball finials occupied numerous positions during the development of the school. For many years their final resting place was in close proximity to Weirfield House. One was placed at the front of the building and one was placed at the rear. Unfortunately, the finials were stolen in the late 1990s. The gate piers have been re-sited on the new premises.

The scroll plaque and lintel positioned at Weirfield House. PGS Archive.



Conclusion

As Penistone continues to grow with new housing and the inevitable influx of people best described in the local vernacular as 'comerinners' it becomes imperative that local history is clearly defined so as not to become confused or lost with the passing of time. The Penistone Historical Archives and its lively facebook site has its part to play but surely a bigger authority, possibly a representative committee of the Town Council, needs to take steps to ensure that the rich history of the town or at least a knowledge of that history is not consigned to a narrow audience out of sight on various websites. Simms' call for a plaque to celebrate the founding of Penistone's school is still to materialise forty years after he first suggested this notion. Information like this, not necessarily limited to just one build or place, will ensure that new people to the area as well as those more familiar with it can have ready access to the detail as well as giving possibly, a much needed boost to the tourist industry. Not only is information regarding local

history essential in this respect but so too is the preservation of the physical character of the area and in particular designated Conservation Areas. A recent post on the archive facebook highlights a need for information, which buildings are listed Grade I or Grade II, and what does this mean? Equally, how are buildings within a Conservation Area protected? My last article highlighted the situation of a grade II building that had its stone roof replaced by blue slate despite the building being given Grade II status well before the work was done. Although School Terrace is not a listed building it is within the Conservation Area. If one looks at the roof which was originally all blue slate, the cottage nearest to Cock Pitt Lane has a roof completely out of character with the rest of the build (See page 5). It is concerns over issues like this in which the bigger authority needs to step forward, to protect and preserve the rich heritage that Penistone possesses, for future generations.

Grateful thanks for help in the completion of this article to Julie-Ann Neill, Jenny Hurt and Stuart Gibbins.