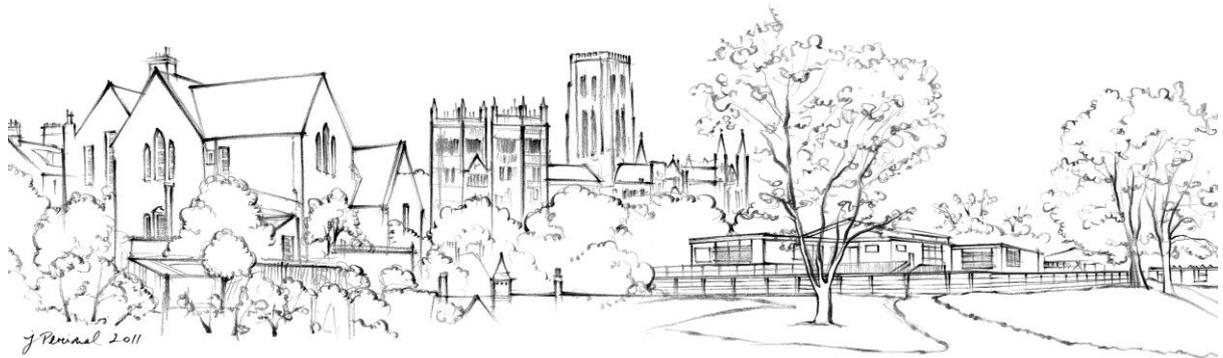


St Margaret's C.E. Primary School

Celebrating 150 Years



1861 - 2011 ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL, DURHAM. 1861 - 2011

1861 - 2011

Mrs D Motobray-Pape
Head Teacher

The Story of St Margaret's School 1861 to 2011

July 20th 1859 – The Beginning of Our School.

The Dean of Durham, Dr George Waddington, granted a piece of land, formerly known as West Orchard, to Revd John Cundill (incumbent of the parochial chapelry of St Margaret's) and to Thomas and George Coxon (churchwardens)...*'upon trust to permit the premises and all buildings thereon erected or to be erected to be forever hereafter appropriated and used as and for the education of children and adults or children only of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the said parochial chapelry and for no other purpose'*.

The original building comprised of the master's house, together with a large room and a small room downstairs and similar rooms upstairs. The materials used and the workmanship were both of the highest quality (and can still be seen in the building now used as St Margaret's Centre).

January 1861 – The School Opens.

St Margaret's church records show no information about the opening of the new school however the Durham Chronicle, dated January 25th 1861, contains the following item:- *'On Sunday last, after an admirable sermon by the Bishop of Durham, the sum of £10. 0s. 10d was collected for the St Margaret's week-day and Sunday schools. The former, which is a new school, and has been open a fortnight, already numbers 86 scholars'*.

The school proved to be very popular, (as it remains so in 2011) and by the end of 1861 numbers had reached 192 and 75 were transferred to the girl's school. This appears to have been the beginning of separate departments for boys and girls. In the early years the boys occupied the rooms downstairs and the girls and infants those upstairs.

The School is Oversubscribed!

They say that history repeats itself and in 2011 St Margaret's School is hugely oversubscribed, as it was in 1888. By then the combined total of children attending the school was almost 400, of whom 239 were in the boys' department. Due to this overcrowding it was found necessary to refuse the admission of children from Neville's Cross. How 400 children were accommodated in the two large and two small rooms is difficult to imagine!! Teaching must have been difficult and discipline most rigid. It is recorded that one old scholar who attended the school at this time, remembers the children sat so close together on their forms that they kept each other warm and were not aware of the coldness of the school, even in the depth of winter. (There was no central heating until 1957).

In 1889 extra rooms were added on the west side of the building. A classroom on the Margery Lane side of the school was erected to accommodate the infants at that time, with the girls' school now downstairs. A gallery was installed in the new room with the children's seats arranged in tiers.

The Old St Margaret's School Buildings:

Cold in Winter and Hot in Summer.

The school was always inadequately heated and before 1875 there was not even a storehouse for coal. When coal arrived from Elvet colliery (on the site of the Science Labs) it had to lie outside and was often too wet to burn, or it generated more smoke than heat. There are frequent complaints in the school records of cold classrooms, with ink frozen in inkwells, of classrooms full of smoke and of lack of coal. Pupils were sometimes sent home because there was no fuel in winter.

Summer heat waves also brought their trials and there are references to throwing open all doors and windows and spraying the floors with water or taking classes in the yard or on the stairs to escape the heat. Overcrowding was probably the main reason why the heat was felt so badly.

Central heating was finally installed in 1957.

Lighting.

In addition to the inadequate heating of the school, lighting difficulties also occurred from time to time. Until 1869, when gas was installed, the school was presumably lit by paraffin lamps. Gas lighting does not appear to have been a complete success as on numerous occasions children had to be sent home because they could not see or be seen sufficiently well! Electric lighting was introduced in 1934 and it is interesting to note that half of the cost was met by the teachers. They raised the sum of £37. 16s. 6d. for the new lighting.

Overcrowding.

The continual overcrowding was partly due to the fact that in the early days the school catered not only for children in the parish but also for those living as far away as Bearpark and Framwellgate Moor. These children and those from Neville's Cross were referred to as the children 'from the country' and they attended very spasmodically - in summer and autumn they were often busy helping with the harvest and bad weather often prevented them attending in winter. In 1876 Bearpark School opened and in 1877 Framwellgate Moor School opened, so that children from the villages no longer needed to make the long walk to St Margaret's.

The Playground.

Playground space was never very plentiful at the old school site. In the days when the hillside where Summerville, Nevilledale, Brierville and Beech Crest now stand, was just a sandy slope, the flooding of the school premises by water rushing downhill was quite a frequent occurrence. It was mainly to prevent this that a wall was erected on the western boundary. In 1875 the school records refer to the playground as like a duck pond, with access to the toilets (at the end of the yard) almost impossible.

The Infants' School

In 1900 plans were drawn up for a separate Infants' School. This was to have been a stone building at the south end of the main building and looking up to Margery Lane. This school did not materialise and a 'temporary' wooden Infants' School was opened in March 1908 by the Bishop of Durham and expected to last for ten years. Forty two years later, in 1950 it was closed on the advice of the Medical Officer of Health until improvements were made to the roof, the floor and the sanitation. During this period from 1950 to 1953 all pupils were once again accommodated in the main school building.

The First World War.

During the First World War the school premises were commandeered by the military. On 8th December 1914, the boys' school was transferred to the Bethel Chapel and the girls' school to the Primitive Methodist Sunday School. They occupied these temporary premises until May 1916.

1932. St Margaret's no longer takes pupils after age eleven.

In April 1931 Miss Marris retired as Head of the Girls' School and the boys' and girls' departments were combined under Mr Yockey's leadership. The senior classes occupied the upstairs rooms.

In 1932 Whinney Hill Central School, as it was then known, opened to cater for children over the age of eleven and all children over this age transferred to either grammar schools or the new central school.

1945. St Margaret's becomes a Church 'Controlled' School.

On 3rd January 1945 St Margaret's ceased to be a purely Church of England School and came under the control of Durham County Council. There continued to be church managers (or governors) and the church retains certain rights but the upkeep of the school was undertaken by the County Council.

A New Building for St Margaret's School

1964. New Site Approved for St Margaret's School.

On 7th February 1964 The Durham Advertiser reported that it was proposed to transfer St Margaret's Junior School to a new site at Beech Crest. The proposal was approved by Durham City Council for inclusion in the 1966-7 major building programmes. The proposed site included land on which the City Council Parks Department nurseries were established but the local authority had agreed to relinquish its tenancy of the land when the school was built and it was suggested that the nurseries were re-established at Wharton Park.

1967. Problems and Protests.

Everything obviously did not go smoothly, as on 17th February 1967 the Advertiser reports the completion of the purchase of a site for the proposed new Durham St Margaret's Junior and Infant Schools, which were to be included in the County's 1968-69 building programme. It said that:

'The 5½ acre site is adjacent to the Durham Archery Tennis Club and flanked on two sides by Clay Lane and Blind Lane (better known perhaps as Clarty Lonnen).

It is at present leased to Durham University until the end of March 1968 and this lease is to remain operative because work on schemes approved in the 1968 -69 building programme cannot start before April next year.

When a new two form entry junior school has been built and the transfer of pupils completed the existing St Margaret's School will be adapted to the needs of the infants until such time as the new two form entry infants' school is built.'

Then on April 14th 1967 a 'bitterly disappointed parent' wrote to the Advertiser to complain that the school had once again been omitted from the building programme. Mrs Steiner complained that the old building was by now, *'totally inadequate for present day educational needs. Toilet facilities are ancient, unhygienic and freeze up during cold spells; the infant department has no staff room, nor a proper assembly hall; there is a lack of modern teaching equipment due to lack of space- just to mention a few points'*.

Many parental complaints followed and the matter was raised with Durham Central Divisional Education Executive by Councillor Beswick. He highlighted that the staff were doing their best from an educational viewpoint with the available resources but the main concern was over the extremely poor outdoor toilets which he described as *'pretty squalid'*. Another factor was the dining accommodation, as the increasing number of children having a school dinner meant that the four classrooms and both halls were being used at lunchtimes.

Mrs Duncan reflected the views of many parents when she wrote that, *'the plans of new buildings have been drawn up for some time but the starting date is still unknown. In*

the country as a whole there will be an increase in the numbers of children needing primary school places in the early 1970s. The new houses being built in and near the city will aggravate the position for all Durham schools. Will the new St Margaret's building when it comes be large enough?'

In 2011 a rise in the birth rate and additional housing are once again putting pressure on the number of places available at St Margaret's School.

By June **1969** it had been decided to build the infant school first, followed by the junior school. The Deputy Director of Education said in June of that year that, St Margaret's Infants School had been included in last year's minor works programme and plans were prepared but extreme difficulties arose over the drainage at the site and it was not possible to make a start. The project was now in the current year's programme. St Margaret's Junior School had climbed to third in the priority list of primary schools in the county needing replacement but there was no immediate prospect of a start being made.

By 5th June **1970** the Advertiser featured a picture of the new St Margaret's C. E. Infants' School taking shape. The cost of the school is reported to have been somewhere in the region of £53,000 to £60,000.

The Infant School was officially opened in October 1971 by Councillor Mrs M. J. Hirst. The opening was also attended by Durham's MP Mr Mark Hughes and the Mayor, Councillor T. W. Leonard. The Headmistress was Mrs Eunice Brown.

The Junior School was officially opened in March 1974 by Councillor G. W. Davidson.

Amalgamation. In February 1981 consultation about the proposed amalgamation of the infant and junior schools began. Durham Local Education Authority and the Durham Diocesan Board of Education, issued notice in December of that year that they would cease to maintain the separate infant and junior schools from the end of the summer term in 1982.

From the commencement of the **Autumn Term in 1982, the new 'DURHAM ST MARGARET'S C. E. (CONTROLLED) JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL'** was established, on the existing premises of the old schools. This subsequently became known as St Margaret's C. E. (Controlled) Primary School.



Life at St Margaret's School 150 Years Ago.

Teachers. For the first thirty or forty years of its existence the school had only one trained teacher in each department, namely the Head teachers, or as they were then referred to, the masters and mistresses. They were helped in their work by 'monitors', each of whom had charge of a class or standard. (Remember that in 1888 there were 400 children in the school!). The monitors took a yearly examination and could qualify as pupil teachers. Paid monitors received 2s. 6d. (12½p. per week) and if they qualified as pupil teachers this could rise to £15 per year!

The masters and mistresses instructed the monitors and pupil teachers as to what their lessons would be and also prepared them for their own exams. This instruction usually took place from 8 to 9am and from 5 to 7pm.

Classes were tested daily by the masters and mistresses to see that the pupil teachers did their work efficiently. Over all the work in the school hung the shadow of the annual examination by Her Majesty's Inspector, usually held in October or November, because those were the days of 'payment by results', and a poor result meant a withdrawal of the government grant.

In 1866 it is reported that a girl was expelled '*for not attending the annual examination which she would have passed, thereby augmenting the grant of 5s. 4d.*'

The rector was responsible for paying the salary of the master and mistresses, who in their turn paid the monitors, pupil teachers and caretaker. They also bought the coal and paid for minor repairs etc. For the first 30 to 40 years the master bought his school requisites such as ink, inkwells, chalk etc from Mr Richardson's shop in Silver Street.

Caretakers, seem to have come and gone frequently. In 1867 their weekly wage was 2s. 6d. plus 6d. for firewood and by 1874 this had only risen to 3s. (15p). By 1903 the wage had jumped to 11s (55p) a week!

School Pence. Children took amounts ranging from 1d. to 4d. each week to pay for their schooling and brought their own slates, pencils etc. The collection of the school pence often caused problems, as pence were lost or otherwise spent and parents became heavily in arrears. When the school week was broken by holidays, such as Regatta week, parents often kept children off school for the rest of the week rather than pay pence.

Absenteeism. This was prevalent for many years and until the appointment of 'wardens' it fell to the monitors to go out and hunt for absentees. This was a regular Monday morning activity! Older girls were often absent on Fridays as they were kept at home to help mothers with their housework.

Discipline. Tight control was necessary in the overcrowded classrooms and discipline was strict. The masters' influence on behaviour out of school was considerable. In February 1863 teachers were cautioned to see that, 'every boy carries his cap rightly and has his bag in its proper place'. In 1865 some girls

misbehaved in a Sunday Church service and missed all their playtimes for the following week. In the nineteenth century it was an unpardonable offence 'to blot one's copy book'!

In a time when we often hear people complain about the deterioration of children's behaviour, it is interesting to note that in October 1871 a five year old pupil at St Margaret's was reprimanded for bringing a clay pipe and tobacco to school, hidden in his boot!!

Homework. This was set from the earliest days and severe punishments administered for failure to do it. An example of homework is for the boys to write an essay on, 'How to lay out a small piece of land'.

Music. Some of the titles of songs which had to be learnt for the annual examination do not sound very exciting compared to the music at St Margaret's in 2011. Titles included, 'Awake Weary Sleeper', 'Drive the Nail Aright, Boys', 'If I were a Sunbeam', 'Oh Teamster Spare that Horse' and 'Ring the Bell, Watchman'.

The Church. As might be expected in a church school the clergy played a considerable part in the instruction. Visits by the Rector and curates were almost a daily occurrence. They took scripture lessons and also lent a hand in teaching music, drawing and arithmetic. The rector's wife often helped the girls with their needlework lessons.

Mrs Cundill (the rector's wife from 1842 to 1889) set up 'The Clothing Club' at the school in February 1866. Parents who wished to paid a shilling a fortnight (5p). This money was brought to school, collected by Canon Cundill or his wife and invested in the bank. It was repaid immediately after Christmas, with interest and a holiday was usually given when the money was repaid.

Bede College. There was a long standing connection between St Margaret's School and Bede College. From 1864 students came from the teacher training college to the school for practice and sometimes took part in entertainments held in the school.

Health. From time to time Durham City was smitten by epidemics of one kind or another. The school records refer to epidemics of smallpox in 1871 and 1884. In 1880 and 1887 there were epidemics of scarlet fever, which seriously affected school attendance. During the country wide influenza epidemics in November 1918 and again in February 1919 the school had to be closed.

School Visits. School outings are recorded as early as 1865! In that year the pupils from the day and Sunday schools, their teachers and the Union Band went to Ryhope and '*spent a very pleasant day at the seaside*'. The cost of the visit was 6d. per child (2½p) and 1s. for an adult (5p). They walked to Shincliffe station and back to catch the train to Ryhope.

Entertainments and Holidays. There were also entertainments such as the Panorama, Diorama, Shakespeare evenings and magic lantern lectures. (Current pupils were very interested to see an original magic lantern during our recent Arts week in May 2011). May Day concerts were given for parents in May and on 5th November nuts were distributed amongst the pupils.

Holidays were granted by the master in the early days and requests for holidays on Royal Oak Day (29th May) or when the circus visited the city were usually refused! Holidays were given for the Regatta, the Durham Flower Festival Show and for the annual Volunteer Review.

On September 27th 1895 a holiday was given for the laying of the foundation stone of **St John's Church, Neville's Cross.**

Other notable holidays were:

1st November 1900 -for the unveiling of a window in St Margaret's church in memory of Lieut. Shafto who was killed in the South African War.

2nd March 1908 -for the opening of the new Infants' School by the Bishop of Durham.

2nd October 1912 - for the laying of the foundation stone for the new parish hall

7th June 1919 - to allow pupils to watch the tank awarded to the city go to Wharton Park.

9th November 1943 - Alderman William Shepherd, an old boy of the school, became mayor.



Celebrating 100 Years to 150 Years.

When St Margaret's School celebrated being 100 years old, the Head teacher, Mr W. B. Robson, wrote of the changes to the school from 1861 to 1961. *'Improvements in school amenities have been marked, while teaching has been freed from the rigid codes which so limited a school's activities. Fortunately during this period of change a constant factor at St Margaret's has been the aim of successive head teachers and their staffs to maintain a healthy tone of the school. Conducive to this end have been the close links between the school, the parish church and the home. In serving to strengthen the bond the occasional special church services for children and parents, as well as the annual school outings have played a useful part.'*

It is gratifying that the traditions built up over the first century of the school have been well maintained by subsequent head teachers and their staff. In 2011 the academic excellence attained by the school is complimented by the strong musical tradition and commitment to all aspects of the Arts and to Sport.

We are proud of our very special and distinctive Christian ethos and there continues to be close links with both St Margaret's and St John's churches, with the Rector and other members of the church visiting at least once every week and services held in St

Margaret's church every term. The school also continues to value the strong home-school partnerships that exist with families of children at the school.

Since the centenary in 1961 a new school building has greatly improved the facilities and environment for pupils. The school is now set in beautiful and extensive grounds, which would be the envy of many city schools. Resources have also continued to improve, particularly in recent years, with the rapid developments in technology. Who could have imagined in 1861, or even 1961, that there would be almost 100 computers networked across the school? Or that interactive whiteboards would replace blackboards and chalk?!

Class sizes have reduced dramatically and children experience an even greater number of visits and visitors than 50 years ago. The many international pupils at the school in 2011 enrich the pupils' language and cultural experiences.

There is one constant factor in the many changes to the school over its 150 years history and that is the wonderful children of St Margaret's, who bring joy to the school every day and give us hope for the future.

Over 150 years St Margaret's School has been held in high regard by the local community. Many of its former pupils have gone on to achieve excellence in a wide range of careers and to contribute to helping and influencing the lives of many people across the world. We all hope that this will continue into the future, maintained and developed by subsequent generations of head teachers, teachers and children.

Dianne Mowbray-Pape. July 2011.
(Head Teacher of St Margaret's from 1999)

This information was compiled from various archives including school records, newspaper articles and a book written about the school by Mr Robson, the Head teacher at the time of the school's centenary in 1961.

