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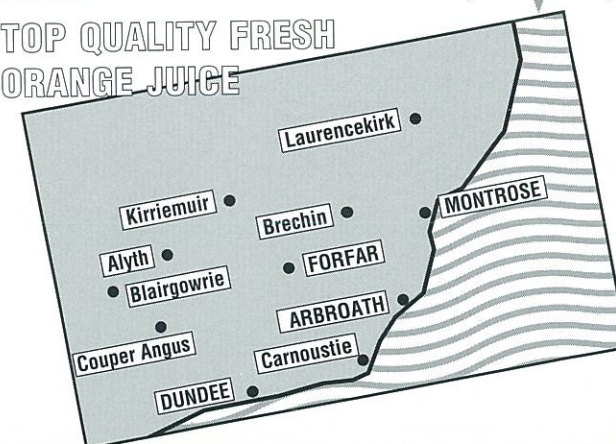
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will go from strength to strength and continue to provide a first-class educational experience for all those who attend."

Finally, as the school celebrates its first hundred years, a perhaps inevitable glance into the future is appropriate. Certainly there will be changes. As well as new playing fields, further accommodation changes seem likely if plans for a new Laurencekirk Primary School site come to fruition. Similarly probable is that educational reforms will continue and lead to further modification of the school curriculum. Whatever happens, it can be predicted with confidence that the Academy will retain its reputation as a challenging, progressive yet friendly and welcoming school. Here's to the next hundred years!

Acknowledgements

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Mr Arthur Bruce, Mrs Kath Crabb, Mr Willie Low, Mr Ian Ridge,
Mr Adam Robertson, Mr George Watson.

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Written and compiled by
Ian Parkin, April 1995.



Foreword

This Centenary booklet is a fascinating account of the varied history of this school. It begins with a description of how the school was opened in 1895 for the purpose of serving the young people of this community, and takes you to the present day, from a school with chalk and slates, to the one we know now with computers, word processors, videos and C.D. ROM. The progress has been relentless and in this, our Centenary Year, the pace and nature of change is as rapid as ever.

Throughout all the changes, the school has enjoyed the support of the community and the commitment of the staff. This school is, and always has been, about people. Many people have contributed to Mearns Academy's rich history and have assured the school's long tradition of caring for all those involved. This is evident from the anecdotes and pictures compiled in this booklet. As you read it, you will cast your mind back to your own special memories of your teachers, your class mates, your classrooms and your achievements.

Mearns Academy is a school which can look back with pride and look forward with optimism. It is a living, growing institution with a positive future; one which will continue to have the same major influence on all those associated with the Howe o' the Mearns.

J.A. Fraser, RECTOR.



The raising of the Centenary Flag - February 14th 1995. The oldest



The History of Education in Laurencekirk

14 FEBRUARY 1895:

"The formal opening of this school as a Centre for Secondary Education took place this day at noon".

Thus is recorded in the school log book, the occasion when Laurencekirk Public School first gained the entitlement to deliver secondary education. The significance of this event was not lost on the then Chairman of the School Board, Mr J.B. Greig, who spoke of "the great importance of the steps now being taken." The large attendance of the public at the ceremony and the thorough coverage in the local press, also bear witness to this far-reaching development.

Surely a previous minister of Laurencekirk, the Reverend John Cook, would also have been delighted. He had commented in 1843 that "the inhabitants in general show a desire to avail themselves of the advantage of education". Furthermore, the prospect of the youth of Laurencekirk being more fully engaged in educational activities, as opposed to other adolescent pursuits, would have appealed greatly to his view that:

"Young persons are supposed to have received sufficient education to preserve them against the influence of the varied temptations among which they are to be speedily thrown".

14th February 1895 was, however, far from being the start of educational provision in Laurencekirk. Schools have been in existence in Laurencekirk since at least 1670. A famous literary scholar, Thomas Ruddiman, was parish schoolmaster from 1695-1700. James Beattie, the Scots' poet, was a pupil in Laurencekirk about 1740 and throughout the eighteenth century the availability of local education increased considerably. By 1849 Laurencekirk could boast having at least eight schools. The Parish School was attended by some seventy pupils, seven of whom received free education. Here was taught English, Reading, Grammar, Arithmetic, Writing, Mensuration, Geography, Latin and Navigation. The teacher's salary at the Parish School at that time was "£20, 10 bolls, 1 ferlot and 3 pecks of meal".

The seven other local schools were private and fee-paying. Three, run by male-teachers offered a variety of subjects to around 100 pupils. The four others, run by female-teachers, tended to focus on aspects of "female handiwork". No equal opportunities then! Twenty years later Laurencekirk still had several schools:

The Parish School

(Soon to become Laurencekirk Public School) - 162 pupils

The Free Church School - 105 pupils

The Episcopal School - 72 pupils

and The Venture School - 20 pupils

Also by this time a separate Infant School had emerged in Laurencekirk.

The Staff of 1994.





marked contrast to instructions issued to Local School Boards in the 1890's which stated that:

"Children are expected not to speak until spoken to, to address the teacher with humility and to sit and stand with straight backs".

Expectations of pupils today remain high in all aspects of school life, but are now placed in the context of the school as a caring community. To this end, one of the present school aims is:

"To create an environment which is stimulating to all pupils and in which they feel safe, secure and valued as individuals".

A wide range of national and local educational initiatives have also greatly influenced the school over recent years. These have included new Standard Grade exams for fourth year pupils, the government - funded Technological and Vocational Education Initiative and, more recently the phasing in of a new approach to the teaching of the 5-14 age group.

However, if the areas of learning and teaching have seen on-going and significant change, then, as alluded to previously, the importance placed upon links between the Academy and the local community has always remained a key feature of the school. Indeed, the 1995 School Prospectus states:

"The educational process at Mearns Academy is seen as a co-operative effort in which teaching staff, parents, education authority and local employers are all contributing to realising the school aims".

Certainly the existence of an active School Board and Parent Teacher Association, the involvement of parents in a range of school functions - especially their support of parents' evenings - and the linking of the school with a range of local employers are all illustrative of a thriving partnership between the school and those keen to support it. It is with a sense of some pride that the school has excellent relationships with several Associate Firms which provide opportunities for pupils and staff alike to gain an insight into the wider industrial world. At present these Associate Firms include the Royal Bank of Scotland (Laurencekirk), H.M. Theatre (Aberdeen), Ardhartach Training (Drumlithie), Baker-Hughes Inteq (Aberdeen), Aberdeen-Considine (Stonehaven), Macphies (Glenbervie), Hunting Oilfield Services (Aberdeen), Duthies (Montrose), Labtech Services (Portlethen), Ardoo House Hotel (Aberdeen) and Classic F.M. (London).

This business partnership is also indicative of the Academy trying to ensure, that though it remains a rural, and a relatively small secondary school, the opportunities available to its pupils are as rich and as varied as at any school. Certainly this appears to be the case. Regular exchanges take place with French and German schools, trips to a whole variety of locations are commonplace, recreational and sporting activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme feature regularly, and wider educational opportunities including Work Experience, an Industrial Awareness Programme and a range of courses and conferences, are also available. All this, and many other examples, suggests that the school is continuing to develop and to build on the many successes of the last century. Mr John Fraser, the present Rector, clearly supports this view:

"The school has a long and proud tradition. With the commitment of the present staff, and the support of the community, I have no doubt this school



By 1875 Laurencekirk Public School and the Infant School together were attended by some 274 pupils. There were three certified teachers and two pupil-teachers. Issues regarding the size of class are not a new phenomenon it appears!

Clearly then, educational provisions before 1895 had been developing steadily and by then demand for local secondary education was considerable. As we have seen, this demand was duly met and for more than a century now secondary education has been a consistent feature in the village of Laurencekirk.

Developments since Laurencekirk Public School gained its status as a centre for Secondary Education can be summarised as follows:

- 1895** - Laurencekirk Public School becomes a centre for Secondary Education. (Free, compulsory education for all local 5-13 year olds. Secondary pupils still fee-paying).
- 1912** - New Science, Domestic Science and Woodwork rooms added to main (north) site.
- 1918** - Education Act - free secondary education now available.
- 1920** - Laurencekirk Public School based on three sites - (the present north site, the former Episcopal School, and the Infant School).
- 1923** - Laurencekirk Public School officially recognised as a Higher Grade School.
- 1934** - New buildings opened on the main site. (Five classrooms, two staffrooms, clinic).
- 1937** - Four more new classrooms opened. Gymnasium added.
- 1939** - School renamed Laurencekirk Junior Secondary School. (Pupils who passed a qualifying exam at age 12 would usually go to a Senior Secondary School).
- 1948** - House system introduced (Conveth, Johnston, Thornton).
- 1954** - New Science and Homecraft rooms added.
- 1966** - Further extension to the school, new wing added, and dining hall.
- 1972** - Comprehensive Education system introduced.
- 1974** - School granted Senior Secondary Level status.
- 1977** - (June) School officially recognised as providing education through to sixth year.
(November) School renamed as Mearns Academy - Rector to be official title of head teacher of now separate secondary department.

Rectors Past and Present

1. Mr W. Lang - 4th October 1880
- 29th November 1918 (died)
2. Mr W. J. Gordon - 17 March 1919
16th January 1948 (retired)
3. Mr D. L. Stewart - 2nd February 1948
- 2nd February 1968 (died)
4. Mr I. M. Frain - 5th February 1968
- 21st December 1988 (retired)
5. Mr B. J. Wood - 30th January 1989
29th October 1993
(now Rector, Hazlehead Academy)
6. Mr J. A. Fraser - 13th January 1994
- Present

*The three most recent Rectors of Mearns Academy:
Mr. Brian Wood, Mr. John Fraser and Mr. Iain Frain.*



Mearns Academy Today

Clearly then, much has changed in the hundred years since secondary education came to Laurencekirk. At the same time certain features of the school have remained very consistent. Mr David L. Stewart, former headmaster, referred to the importance of links between the School and the community it serves when writing in the 1950 School Magazine.

Such sentiments could in fact have been expressed by any one of the school's six headteachers, for the desire to achieve a real community involvement has remained an on-going aim of the school.

A similarly consistent dimension of the school has been the commitment shown by the staff, both teaching and non teaching, past and present. The school report for 1936 showed how the school was "supervised with energy and care", while the 1952 report was full of praise for the "well-developed range of extra classroom activities". The enthusiasm and time given by successive teachers has resulted in opportunities for pupils that have included foreign travel, sports fixtures of every kind, supporting various charities and over recent years involvement in a series of hugely successful musical productions. In 1993 for example the musical *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* was received with great acclaim by audiences totalling over three and a half thousand people.

Back in February 1895, at the formal opening of the school, the Chairman of the School Board expressed the hope that the school would become of "great use to many". Surely he would not be disappointed with developments since that time.

In 1995 the Academy is fortunate to be witnessing a significant rise in the school roll. Already over four hundred pupils are in attendance and as well as drawing children from primary schools in Laurencekirk, Auchenblae, Fettercairn, Luthermuir, Marykirk, Redmyre (Fordoun), and St Cyrus, increasing numbers of pupils are choosing to attend the school from outwith its officially delineated zone. The introduction to the 1995 School Prospectus comments on this development suggesting:

"The increasing roll of Mearns Academy reflects the increasing confidence shown by parents in its work".

It is not purely a larger school, however. It is now, for instance a school with greatly enhanced technological facilities, including widely used computers and recently purchased C.D. Rom hardware. Simultaneously, it is also a school now able to offer a remarkable choice of subjects to pupils in S3 and above. The third year course choice booklet for example runs to some fifty five pages and on the present S5/6 course choice form a staggering seventy eight different options at Higher or Module level are on offer - this not including a range of choices at the level of Certificate of Sixth Year Studies!

Another recent development has been the extension of the Guidance System within the school. All pupils are now allocated a First Level Guidance Tutor, a move designed to build up trusting and positive relationships and reinforced through the teaching of a programme of Personal and Social Education.

Within this programme pupils are encouraged to participate in lessons, and indeed, across a whole range of subjects teaching styles today have changed considerably. More and more, pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, certainly a



The Staff of 1979

A Changing School



The last century has witnessed many changes in the delivery of secondary education in Laurencekirk. Not least of these changes has been the near constant increase in the school roll:

1895	- Primary Department (Standard)	: 112 pupils
	Secondary Department	: 25 pupils
	Total	: 127 pupils
1933	- Primary/Infants Department	: 275 pupils
	Secondary Department	: 81 pupils
	Total	: 356 pupils
1953	- Primary/Infants Department	: 316 pupils
	Secondary Department	: 186 pupils
	Total	: 502 pupils
1995	- Laurencekirk Primary	: 230 pupils
	Mearns Academy	: 409 pupils

Huge demands on accommodation and resources have resulted from this increased roll but simultaneously the school has responded to a wide range of other developments. Many of these changes have related to a nationally-changing political and social context: (for example the raising of the school-leaving age, the coming of comprehensive education and changes in curricular provision for girls) but also the school has always tried to adapt itself to meet the changing needs of the local community it serves.

Accommodation

As previously illustrated, the school roll has shown steady growth and, as a consequence, for much of the last century there has been consistent pressure to see the accommodation of the school expand. The present, north site of the school has witnessed major building developments in 1912, 1934, 1937, 1954, 1966 and 1986.

Such developments were often focused on alleviating the considerable overcrowding in the school; an issue highlighted on several occasions in the School Log Books and Annual Inspection Reports:

September 1924

"The classes in the Intermediate Department are too great for the size of the school".

January 1926

"The attention of the Education Authority is called to the overcrowding in the school".

September 1933

"It is unacceptable to have 37 Advanced Division pupils in a classroom designed at a stretch for 30".

The additional classrooms provided in the 1930's and 1960's were in many ways long overdue and their creation was a key aspect in the school being able to provide a thorough and modern education. Whilst building was in progress, school life continued of course - not always in perfect conditions! Mrs Kath Crabb, a former long-serving teacher at the school, recalls having to teach for several weeks during 1965 in a classroom with only a tarpaulin as a back wall. In the same year, the annual review in the school magazine aptly commented:

"We look forward to re-opening in August with the main part of the building programme completed. The absence of a background provided by cement-mixers and bulldozers will be a welcome relief to all!"

Whilst the lack of classroom space had obviously been a major problem it is clear that other difficulties concerning the building had been persistent. Before its closure in 1934 the former Episcopal School site was noted for its coldness. It, however was not unique in being cold, the School Log Books, for instance, recording on several occasions that cookery lessons had been cancelled due to the pipes being frozen. In 1911 the School Board highlighted various defects, describing the accommodation as "classrooms surrounded by dark corridors - noisy, cold and draughty". Twenty years later the Inspector's report painted an equally grim picture:

"During the recent cold weather very low temperatures were recorded in the classrooms and the children suffered severely.... The rooms and passages are below the level of the surrounding ground and in consequence are very damp, having water oozing through the flagstones".

Best days of your life? Perhaps not. Certainly such descriptions help explain why illness amongst staff and pupils was so prevalent and perhaps remind us that the "good old days" were not as pleasant as we would like to believe.

The Staff of 1954.





Given this reminder of the privations of war and the hardships of extremely severe winters of 1940 and 1941 it is easy to comprehend the relief and subsequent celebration when war in Europe ended in May 1945. In mid August of that year victory over Japan was also marked by the closure of the school for two days. Indeed in school today there is still a physical reminder of the conflict with Japan - a Japanese Imperial Army sword remains interred in the foundations of the school buildings.



One thoroughly pleasant development to note, however, is the creation of the school gardens during the 1930's. Inspired by the former teachers Mr Willie Low and Mr George Watson, ten plots were created for the production of vegetables and the growing of flowers. This excellent use of the land behind the school is fondly remembered, but sadly in 1939 most of the plots were dug up for trenches as a precaution against possible air-raids.

Even as late as 1953, however, pupils were requesting that the gardens be returned to their former glory as illustrated in a letter to the school magazine:

"Why can't the old flower garden be restored to its original beauty?"

Yours faithfully

"Dissatisfied".

If perceptions of the school gardens were very positive, memories of the school playground do not appear to be so happy. Indeed, throughout much of last hundred years adverse comments on the state of the playground are numerous, including this reference from the School Log Book in 1896:

"The playground is in a very unsatisfactory condition. It should be rebottomed, and re-gravelled - the surface soil being first removed".

In due course a tarred playground became a reality - for the boys at least! As several letters to 1950's school magazines illustrate, the girls' playground remained something of a quagmire:

"Dear Editor,

I hope by next winter the girls' playground is tarred. When the wet weather comes along it always looks like a bog".

Georgina McWilliam 2B 1952.

"Dear Editor,

I think it would be a great improvement to the school and to the health of the pupils if the girls' playground was tarred instead of having a pool of mud".

Paul Berridge 2A 1954.

Thankfully, although space remains limited, tarred areas are available for all pupils today as are facilities such as social areas, common rooms for senior students and a first class school canteen. Some pupils however still manage to find pools of mud!



Attending School

Particularly in the early years of the school, consistent attendance by pupils was always liable to disruption. Bad weather, lack of transport, illness and involvement with farmwork all took their toll on school attendance figures. This was all the more significant because the headmaster and his staff had to bring classes up to standard before the Inspector arrived in June each year. On the result of the inspection of the pupils' competence, depended the extra grants given to the school.

It appears to be true that past winters were generally more severe. Many references in the School Log Books illustrate how greatly attendance was affected by adverse weather. Examples include:

24th March 1899 *"Great storm prevailing - school dismissed for the week and attendance cancelled".*

22nd January 1945 *"Only one pupil was present today as all roads are still snowbound".*

Today, bus transport is provided for pupils living outwith the Laurencekirk area. Previously, many pupils either walked to school or came by bicycle. Indeed if a pupil lived more than three miles from the school the authorities would provide a bicycle free of charge for travel to school. One other individual often seen on a bicycle was the janitor. Otherwise known as 'The Whipper In' he would ride out to the homes of reluctant scholars to persuade them to follow him back to school!

The most serious factor adversely affecting attendance was, and still is, illness. The School Log Books regularly recorded epidemics of scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles and influenza. The following extracts are adequate testimony to the seriousness of these outbreaks:

November 18th 1912 *"School closed for two weeks owing to prevalence of scarlet fever, this by order of the medical officers".*

November 25th 1918 *"Owing to influenza epidemic the attendance has been low and the school will now close until 2nd December".*

June 15th 1920 *"The school will require careful disinfecting during the vacation after the measles epidemic this summer term".*

The 1920's saw the beginning of immunisation against measles and later a diphtheria vaccine also became available. However, even in the 1930's epidemic diseases often led to disruption in school and sometimes to personal tragedy:

November 14th 1934 *"The attendance is poor with many children suffering from colds. Within the past three weeks, three pupils have died, two of them belonging to the same class".*

Another disease, polio, struck the school in the 1950's. Once again this resulted in the compulsory closure of the school to all pupils. However it is noteworthy that teachers, as well as pupils, suffered from the prevalence of disease. Many members of staff were recorded as

Shortly afterwards a fifth name, Peter Hay, was added to the list of former pupils killed in the conflict.

Personal tragedy was also to overtake members of staff. The brother of the teacher Miss Abernethy was killed in action in August 1916, six months after the second son of Mr Lang had died whilst serving in Egypt. Such hardships in the local community were made worse by the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918, a development which ultimately led to the death of Mr Lang himself on November 29th of that year. Not surprisingly, for many years afterwards the school was strongly represented at local Services of Remembrance and to this day the British Legion Poppy Appeal is always well supported by the pupils.

Further disruption to school life was caused by the Second World War. At the onset of the conflict the school, like all others, was instructed to close. The School Log Book records for September 1st 1939:

"All schools were supposed to be closed today owing to evacuation of school children".

In fact the school was closed for an entire week following the declaration of war with Germany as arrangements were made for receipt of evacuees from the Scottish towns and cities. To Laurencekirk came ninety two children and two teachers from St Joseph's School Dundee. As a result the school roll climbed to four hundred and ninety and severe problems regarding accommodation were evidently caused. Solutions to the overcrowding included organising the Infant pupils into a double shift - locals in the morning and Dundee pupils in the afternoon, and arranging for attendance on Saturday morning. The headmaster Mr Gordon also saw that all evacuated children were examined by Health Visitors before being enrolled and he was pleased to mention their improved cleanliness after a week in their new homes!

In the end the evacuees did not remain long in Laurencekirk. By January 1940 many had returned home to Dundee along with one of the teachers, Miss Coyle, and certainly by June of that year, few were left in the village. Happily, the predicted heavy bombing of Dundee had not fully materialised.

The departure of the evacuees did not, however, mark the end of the war's influence on the school. Two teachers, Mr Frank Carnie and Mr George Watson, were called up (thankfully both survived their war-service) and further disruption was caused by the regular air-raid drills. The Chief Constable had visited the school to explain the procedures and importance of Air Raid Precautions, and as previously mentioned the much-loved school gardens succumbed to the need for air-raid shelters and trenches. The shelters themselves tended to fill with water and consequently the response of pupils to the warning siren was frequently to simply hide under tables in the school! Another distraction from usual study is alluded to in the School Log Book reference for 29th May 1942:

"Little work has been done this week, the teacher's time being employed in connection with ration books".



The School During The World Wars

School life was affected to a considerable degree during the two World Wars and, furthermore, several former pupils lost their lives in both conflicts.

Shortly after the start of the First World War a group of Belgian refugees visited the school. Mr Lang the headmaster recorded:

November 6th 1914

"A most interesting and unique event, worthy of record, took place today. Six of the Belgian convalescent heroes visited the school, and were enthusiastically greeted by the scholars and staff. An exhibition of physical exercises was given followed by the singing of Belgian, French and British songs".

Such enthusiasm for the war effort was also reflected in the consistent support the school provided for the Red Cross Hospital service. Frequently money was raised, but the headmaster was also able to comment on October 22nd 1915 that ten dozen eggs had been collected by the scholars for delivery to the local hospital. Additionally, there were regular collections for those fighting abroad. On the 11th June 1915 (Empire Day) the School Log Book includes a typical reference:

"Classes assembled - scholars subscribed 314 pennies to send some comfort and happiness to the brave Soldiers and Sailors of the British Empire fighting in the Great War".

Later in 1915 the school offered its services in a rather different way, this after Major Turnbull of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had visited the school in September with a view to inspecting the premises for possible billeting of soldiers. On the 31st January 1916, the Infant Department was commandeered by the Military Authorities as a base for troops stationed in Laurencekirk. Happily, this use of the Infant buildings was shortlived with the children returning to their normal classrooms before Christmas of the same year.

Equally pleasing to pupils would have been a circular from the Department of Education in October 1918, requesting that economies be made in the heating and lighting of all schools. After meeting with the School Board, Mr Lang agreed that the only option was to reduce the length of the school day and, for a while at least, school closed at 3 p.m. daily.

Such developments may have lifted temporarily the gloom caused by the war but the reality of the Great War was never far away. A member of staff, Mr McLeod joined the forces on the 28th January 1916 as part of the Derby Scheme for War Service and on his departure he was presented with a wristwatch paid for by pupil donations. Thankfully Mr McLeod returned to school after the war but not all those who went to fight were so fortunate. A poignant reminder to this end is the School Log Book entry for 7th May 1915:

"This afternoon the scholars attended the funeral of David Callendar, age 19, Corporal 7th Gordon Highlanders - a former pupil on the Roll of Honour. He is the fourth to have succumbed, the others being W. Slaker, died of wounds, S. Blacklaws, killed in action, and W. Mony died in hospital".



absent in the School Log Books and indeed Mr William Lang, headteacher, and Mr James Johnson both died while in post from influenza and pneumonia respectively.

National legislation raising the school leaving age to fifteen in 1947 and to sixteen in 1972 was designed to ensure pupils' secondary education was compulsory and more complete. Such moves did not please all pupils! This letter to the editor of the 1952 School Magazine was a typical response:

"Like many boys of my age I am very much against having to attend school until I am fifteen. I feel it is a waste of time when I could be working myself and making my parents' burden easier".

George Thomson 2C Age 14

The letter also raises another long-standing issue, namely the clash between pupils' duties to their parents and their legal obligation to be at school. Absences caused by potato planting, potato picking and harvesting were very frequent. The frustration caused by such disruption is clearly expressed in the headmaster's comment in 1919:

"The irregular attendance at this school is a serious matter - quite a number of pupils have not attended school for two months".

In response to this situation the School Board introduced a scheme allowing temporary exemption from school during the potato harvest. This applied to twelve-to-fourteen year olds. Some farmers, however, employed children under twelve years of age, despite the law forbidding this. Yes, there were the 'Tattie Holidays' covering at least some of the harvest period but even this provoked difficulties for the headmaster. Principally this was because the holiday dates were never set in advance. Instead a local farmer would intimate to the school that his potatoes were ready and simultaneously the 'Tattie Holiday' would begin. A surprise announcement "Holiday begins today at 4 p.m." would always have been good news to pupils but for those running the school it must have been trying - especially in 1897 when it transpires that the whole school was dismissed without the headmasters' knowledge!

Finally it should be noted that, in spite of the problems indicated, many of the schools' pupils, both past and present have had exemplary attendance records. During the present session attendance has averaged over 93% for instance, with several classes recording weekly attendances of 100%.



Multiplication of Decimals

23

A gentleman has 83125 £ a-day. How much is that a-year?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 83125 \\
 \times 365 \\
 \hline
 498750 \\
 498750 \\
 249375 \\
 \hline
 30340625 \\
 \hline
 20 \\
 \hline
 812500 \\
 \hline
 12 \\
 \hline
 130000 \\
 \hline
 300000
 \end{array}$$

Division of Decimals

Rule. Divide as in whole, and point off as many decimals places in the quotient as the dividend has more than the divisor.

Note I. if there are not as many decimal places in the quotient as required supply the defect by writing cipher on the left hand.

II. If there is a remainder the quotient may be carried to any degree of exactness by annexing ciphers or if the decimal places in the divisor are more than those in the dividend ciphers may be annexed to the dividend.

III. If the dividend will not contain the divisor annex ciphers or suppose them to be annexed to the dividend.

Over the years many sports teams and individuals from the school have performed with great distinction. It is not possible to list them all here but mention of two particularly significant achievements can be made. Firstly the winning of the Mann Cup in 1937 by the Secondary Football team, this following a 12-4 victory over Montrose South Esk. The victory was all the more remarkable because Laurencekirk were 4-0 down at half-time, and South Esk had Gordon Smith, the future Scottish International, playing for them.

More recently, during the 1970's, the school made a tremendous impact on the Scottish basketball scene with both girls' and boys' teams winning the Scottish cup. The boys reached three national finals in successive years, winning in 1975 and

1976. The girls then picked up the title in 1978 and

also reached the final the following year. Several pupils also achieved recognition at international level. Not surprisingly therefore the Evening Express Sports Section for February 21st 1977 featured the headline:

LAURECEKIRK - COUNTRY SCHOOL THAT'S TOPS IN SCOTS BASKETBALL

ABERDEEN schools' basketball may be booming, but it has a long way to go to catch up with the example set by country cousins Laurencekirk.

The Kincardine school may be small, but it certainly packs some powerful talent on the basketball scene.

The present boys' under-15 side, for example, has won the Scottish Cup for the last two years in a row, and the school has three sides in Scottish Cup semi-finals at the moment.

A tremendous record for such a small school, and a lot of the credit must go to PE teacher Ian Ridge.

A real basketball enthusiast, Ian has developed a great interest in the game among his pupils, who turn up at school in their spare time for training and instruction.

"I run six teams at the school, and I also take primary pupils in the secondary basketball close-season", says Ian.

EDZELL BASE

The school are lucky to have the US Navy base at Edzell near hand, and Mr

Ridge often takes a party of pupils there to see a senior basketball match.

With Laurencekirk gymnasium being on the small side, the school's big games are often held at the base, from where several of the school's pupils come.

"We have got a few Americans in our basketball teams, but very few of them played organised basketball before they came to Laurencekirk," stressed the PE teacher.

"Of course living at the base, they get plenty of opportunity for practice," he added.

Americans in the team or not, Laurencekirk sides have produced some stunning form this season.

The boys' under-15 and under-17 sides are unbeaten in their respective Aberdeen and District Leagues, and a Laurencekirk girls' team won the Grampian Region schools basketball tournament recently.

SCOTTISH SQUAD

Two Americans, Gene Kissener and Steven Grace, have also trained with the Scottish under-17 squad.

Taken from the Aberdeen Evening Express of Monday February 21st, 1977.

LAURECEKIRK - COUNTRY SCHOOL THAT'S TOPS IN SCOTS BASKETBALL.

Finally, to return to the issue of the lack of school-owned playing fields and to show that Laurencekirk pupils have often been ahead of their time, reference must be made to a letter which was included in the 1954 school magazine.

Dear Editor,

Don't you agree that the school should buy part of the neighbouring field to use as a football and hockey pitch, as nearly half of the period is wasted in going to the park?

Anonymous 1A.

Happily 1995 is not only the centenary of the school, but is also the year in which Anonymous of 1A finally gets his or her wish -the new playing fields are to be officially opened on September 23rd.



Sport

Throughout the century since 1895 sport has been a prominent feature in school life. Initially the focus was on Physical Training and Drill rather than team games but particularly since the creation of the house-system in 1948 football, hockey, netball, basketball, athletics and rugby have featured regularly in school calendars.

In the 1890's various forms of drill were taught. The Inspector's report for 1897 however highlighted certain deficiencies in this area:

"Drill is taught to all the boys but much too little Physical Education is given to the girls. Also the playground is so muddy that Military Drill taught there is very trying and uncomfortable."

Indeed the lack of easily accessible and appropriate sports fields has been a consistent problem faced by the school. Similarly, before the construction of the gymnasium in 1937 and the Sports Hall in 1986, indoor activities only proceeded after clearing desks from normal classrooms. Predictably the winter weather often greatly restricted field sports. In 1952, for example, the Secondary football team only completed one match.

Despite problems of accommodation and weather the school has maintained a range of sporting activities. These have included the annual inter-house sports day in June and for many years an Inter - School Sports Tournament. This potentially chaotic venture saw Laurencekirk pupils go by train to other Kincardine schools, including Banchory, to participate in the sports or to support the school. Mr George Watson, a former teacher at the school in the 1930's, reflected on this mass exodus of hundreds of pupils commenting, *"You never saw the like of it!"*

Often a cause for similar excitement has been the regular staff versus students sports fixtures. Research suggests that these events were highly competitive! A clear case of this was the time when the students kindly offered the tiring staff basketball team a refreshing bottle of orange juice - laced with a powerful laxative. Thankfully for all, the staff 'hung on' to achieve a notable victory and were presented with a suitable memento: a small cup in the shape of a toilet still today in the possession of Mr Ian Ridge, the Principal Teacher of P.E. Flushed with success on the basketball court, staff teams have also maintained an undefeated record on the hockey pitch. The report on the 1961 hockey fixture in the school magazine gives a pupils perspective of the action:

"The staff v pupils match was played again this year with its usual gusto. The staff team were lucky to bulldoze their way to a 1-1 draw".

The article also suggested that the staff fielded 14, rather than 11, players!



Staff Hockey Team: 1959.



Lessons

The timetable followed by pupils in 1895 would have been very different from that of present— day Mearns Academy pupils. Some 'old favourites' such as Mathematics, English, Reading and Drawing have featured considerably in some way or other throughout the last century, but Drill, Navigation and more recently Latin have faded from the timetable.

Today, as far as is possible, a wide breadth of curricular opportunities is offered to all pupils. This was not always so. For much of the school's history, streaming led to pupils of different abilities following completely different programmes of study. Simultaneously the curriculum provided for girls was often in marked contrast to that provided for boys. Domestic Subjects were for a long time delivered exclusively to girls - they included cooking, cleaning, baking, laundry and budgeting. Clearly this is reflective of prevailing attitudes at the time, and indeed, as illustrated by this letter to the school magazine in 1953, many girls appeared happy with this discrimination:

"As we girls will soon be leaving school don't you think it would be very useful if we could at least have two periods in the week of laundry work?"

Anna Davidson 3B

It would be naive to think that throughout the school's history all pupils have enjoyed all lessons but what is clear is that, since 1895, relationships between staff and pupils have generally been very positive and behaviour of pupils at school very good.

More recently, the introduction of a Guidance System in 1972 has further helped develop an atmosphere of co-operation. Certainly the School Log Books make exceptionally few references to pupil's suspensions and serious misdemeanours. Yes, there have been incidents and pranks - for instance boys blowing into the science bunsen burners to blow out cookers in Home Economics appears to have been a craze in the 1930's - but many former teachers recall with fond memories the pupils they taught.

Perhaps such good behaviour was all due to the belt! Two errors in spelling meant a strapping for instance. The termination of use of the belt in 1985 does not seem to have led to anarchy however - rather, just like the change from using slates to using jotters, the school successfully adapted to changing times.

For much of the last century the school has seen annual reports published by Her Majesty's Inspectors. Their comments on lessons delivered have been largely complimentary, the following example from 1930 being typical:

"Pupils are taught with marked vigour and intelligence; results of high quality in all branches are achieved."

The first years of secondary education at Laurencekirk did, however, witness some difficult times. The School Log Book reflects in 1897 that secondary numbers were declining and the report for that year commented that little work carried out in the school was sufficiently advanced to be called 'secondary'. Furthermore by 1899 the school was in danger of losing its recently gained secondary status altogether. The Inspectors commented grimly that:

LAURENCEKIRK Public School

CONCERT

A Cantata--"Parliament in School"--

AND EXHIBITION OF

DRILL, SONGS, RECITATIONS, AND SPEECHES,

WILL BE GIVEN BY THE PUPILS, IN THE

ST LAURENCE HALL,

ON FRIDAY EVENING, THE 7TH MAY,

At 8 O'CLOCK.

PATRICK DICKSON, ESQ.,
Chairman of the School Board, will Preside.

Admission, 2s, 1s, 6d.

Proceeds to Provide a Piano for School.

Tickets may be had from Mr LAING, Chemist.

Advertisement for School concert 1897.

"I am to state that my Lords are unable to recognise the higher classes of this school as a secondary department. The number of secondary pupils has fallen to eight and the work professed is so elementary as to make it difficult to describe as secondary".

Thankfully, both the number of secondary pupils and the quality of education provided for them increased over the following years. One other issue, however, did remain and indeed become more problematic as this century progressed, namely, the difficulty of having suitably qualified teachers to deliver a growing range of subjects. Regularly school inspection reports mention that teaching of several subjects was undertaken in whole or part by teachers without necessary qualifications. Mrs Kath Crabb commenting on her experiences in the 1950's and 1960's confirms this:

"I didn't know anything about French - but I still taught it! The only things I didn't teach were Art and Homecraft".

More recently this issue has been largely resolved with the timetable being delivered by subject specialists.

Since 1976 the timetable has been based on an eight - period day. Today it is constructed painstakingly, using computer assistance to achieve the best provision. Not so in the past, when only one hand-written copy of the timetable existed. Usually this was posted in the corridor, but on one occasion in the 1930's this unique and important document was inadvertently lost at a football match at Johnshaven. History records that both teams suspended play to search for the vital paper - rumour has it that some pupils did not actually search too hard!

