

**St Peter and St Paul Roman Catholic School,  
Leyburn, North Yorkshire.**

**The Early Years  
1836 – 1872**

As well as having one of the oldest churches in the Diocese of Middlesbrough, Leyburn also has one of the oldest schools. The first school of St Peter and St Paul was built along with the church and presbytery in 1835/6 and remained open until about 1872. After being closed for 23 years the existing school was enlarged and upgraded to conform with the then current requirements and opened again in 1895. It has continued to provide Catholic education for children in the area until the present day. Although log books are extant for this second period, unfortunately none have survived or were kept prior to 1895.

In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there was no organised educational provision for the children of the working class. Dame schools provided an education of sorts for younger children and older children went to Common Day Schools (run by a man), or in some areas, to Factory Schools. Sunday Schools and Charity Schools offered free education to others but on a very patchy basis. Hence in 1810 the non-conformist churches set up the British and Foreign Schools Society with the aim of building more schools and in 1811 The National Society established by the Church of England followed suit in establishing these voluntary schools. Catholic parish schools - 'day' or 'poor' schools were usually established by the joint efforts of the religious orders, the clergy and the laity.

**Establishment and building of the School**

The Leyburn Catholic School appears to be unusual in that, other than a very small endowment from the Riddells, both its establishment and support seem to have been funded by the people of the area. In addition, its teachers during this early period were members of the laity rather than of religious communities. It appears unlikely that the Scrope family of Danby initiated the building of the Leyburn Catholic church and school in 1834 as has been suggested<sup>1</sup> since Simon Thomas Scrope (1758-1838) had gone bankrupt in 1832 and had had to close down Danby Hall and move his family to his wife's family home in Yarm<sup>2</sup>. It seems more likely that the trades people of the town provided the impetus for the establishment of the school in addition to the church in Leyburn soon after the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and that their establishment were not dependent on initiatives from the Catholic hierarchy or a religious community.

The imperative to build Catholic Schools to cater for the children of the immigrant Irish population, which was the case in the larger towns such as York and which was later given priority over the building of churches by Bishop Cornthwaite, did not apply in Leyburn and its surroundings. The Leyburn school was conceived prior to the major influx of Irish immigrants as a result of the famine in the 1840s, and examination of the

census data for 1851 (the first census that a place of birth was requested) showed that only two residents of Leyburn had been born in Ireland – Mary Goldsmith age 80, the widowed mother of Mary Yarker, and their parlourmaid, Anne Boak age 16.

The land off the Richmond Road on which the church and school complex stand was part of the Thornbrough Hall Estate which in 1835 belonged to Frederick Riddell who lived at the hall with his family and was one of the largest landowners in Leyburn after the Duke of Bolton. In a lease dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 1837<sup>3</sup> Frederick Riddell entered into an agreement with the Right Rev. John Briggs (the Bishop), the Rev. William Riddell, and the Rev. Thomas Whitham relating to ‘.the plot of land and the chapel thereon erected..’ for a period of 200 years at an annual payment of £5 – the church to be used for the celebration of divine worship according to the rites of the Church of Rome and the dwelling house to be occupied by the priest of the church. Later in 1919 the agreement was changed from leasehold to freehold.

The construction of the church was completed in 1835 and it was opened for worship on 14<sup>th</sup> October that year. It is believed that the school and teacher’s house was built at the same time or soon afterwards and indeed the school carries a stone plaque dated 1836 high on the gable end. The total cost of all the buildings was about £2000. The building work on the church and school was carried out by the firm of Chapleo and Sons, whose head at the time was Christopher Chapleo<sup>4</sup>.

### **Legislation, and Founding of the Catholic Poor Schools Committee**

In 1835 the Leyburn school would have been one of the 86 ‘poor’ or ‘day’ schools listed in a government select committee report on Catholic Schools in England. Two years earlier the government had started to make grants available for the education of the poor, and, although the grants were small, Catholic schools were eligible to apply. But from 1839 the acceptance of a grant automatically gave the right of official inspection by the newly-appointed HMIs. Such inspections were unpopular and many schools did not take advantage of the financial help available. It is not know whether the school in Leyburn received any government monies during this early period of its existence.

In 1838 the Catholic Institute was founded by Charles Langdale of Houghton Hall, Market Weighton, who gave the lead to English Catholics to provide free schooling for all Catholic children. In 1845 a survey of Catholic Schools was undertaken and was published as part of the 1849 annual report of the Catholic Poor Schools Committee (see below). The return for Leyburn describes the ‘Deficiency in School Accommodation’ as follows

School: ‘ *a small room over a stable. Some Catholic Children attending Protestant Schools for want of means. Number of children requiring gratuitous education 20*’.

No replies were offered to the questions relating to source of income, number of boys and girls, and whether boys and girls were in separate rooms<sup>5</sup>.

At about the same time (1846/7) the Bishop made his Visitation to the parish and after listing the very sparse furnishings in the priest's residence he noted the even more limited equipment in the school:

School: *Six desks with forms. One black board & a few books*<sup>6</sup>

Langdale went on to found the Catholic Poor Schools committee in 1847 to raise funds and make grants available towards the establishment of Catholic schools, or to improve facilities where they existed already. The Poor Schools committee must have immediately initiated a survey of the schools in the Diocese and this is the reply it received from Father Bolton, the parish priest at Leyburn in 1847<sup>7</sup>.

*Catholic Chapel House,  
Leyburn,  
May 1<sup>st</sup> 1847*

*Dear Rev. Sir,*

*In reply to yours of the 29<sup>th</sup> instant, I beg to state that there are in my congregation 70 children of fit age to go to school, and most of the above number are very poor. F. Riddell subscribes £4 per annum, which is all I have towards carrying on my school.*

*I am Dear Rev. Sir,*

*Yours truly*

*R. Bolton*

Seventy children seems to be quite a large number for the Catholic population at that time and it is clear that the facilities, had they all attended, were totally inadequate.

### **Other Surveys of Schools**

As well as the census of population which was taken in 1851 there was also an Ecclesiastical Census and an Education Census, although both of the latter were voluntary. There was a return for the Catholic Church in Leyburn showing that on Sunday March 30 1851 125 attended the morning service and 50 in the afternoon, but no specific information was recorded for the school<sup>8</sup>.

In 1854 the Bishop's Visitation also included various questions about the state of schools. For Leyburn the priest, somewhat complacently, submitted the information that the school was a mixed day school, purpose-built, presently self-supporting, and that its

capacity was 'quite sufficient' to 'contain all the children of (*his*) flock that ought to attend'<sup>9</sup>.

During the 1860s the government started to make plans to make school attendance compulsory for all children – a move welcomed by Catholics. Although religious bodies were to be given time to bring existing schools up to standard these schools were not to be financed by the local rates as were the board schools. The only grants available for them were small, and discretionary on the quality of the school. Hence the Catholic Poor Schools Committee intensified its efforts to bring schools up to standard and in 1868 circulated a detailed questionnaire to all parishes. From this we learn that Leyburn with a Catholic population of 211 had 36 children in school, 22 of them between the ages of 3 to 11 years old<sup>10</sup>.

Soon after this a religious inspection of schools was organised by the Catholic Poor Schools Committee which reported in 1870-71. Although the Catholic population of Leyburn is now given as 110 (an error?), half the level of that in 1868, the figures for the school are consistent with those in the 1868 report in that there were 34 children on the school role, with 31 children present at school<sup>11</sup>.

### **Financing of the School**

In Pigot's Directory of 1841 Richard Chapleo was described as the master of the 'Catholic Free School' in Leyburn<sup>12</sup>. What 'Free' in this context means is by no means clear – possibly that certain parts of the curriculum such as reading and catechism were taught without charge, and that payment to the teacher for other subjects had to be made. In view of the fact that the endowment from the Riddells was so small – only £4 per year, the education provided by this must have been extremely rudimentary. Certainly the response to the 1845 survey for the Catholic Poor School Committee i.e. '*Some Catholic Children attending Protestant Schools for want of means. Number of children requiring gratuitous education 20*' does imply that a charge was being made for Catholic education, whereas education at the National School was more affordable. There was no standard rate of elementary school fee at this time and although in general the catholic schools charged the lowest fees, usually only a few pence a week, even this would have been too much for some families, particularly where there were several children of school age.

### **The Curriculum**

No records exist to tell us what the children were taught in the school. Although they may have provided a basic elementary education, Catholic schools existed - as far as the church was concerned - to teach the Catholic faith, and the church and school together instilled a distinctively Catholic culture. Schools which subjected themselves to government inspection after the introduction of the Revised Code in 1862 (Payment by Results) received grants based upon average attendance and performance in the examination. The subjects tested were reading, writing, arithmetic and plain needlework for the girls. No doubt repetition and rote learning resulted in a dull, mechanical grind

and corporal punishment was common in state schools but hopefully the children at St Peter and St Paul were taught in a more caring atmosphere, whatever they were taught.

In view of the school's very small endowment from the Riddells, salaries paid to the teachers must have been extremely low. Each teacher would have had to make up his salary to a living wage (some £30 to £40 per year) by taking on private pupils or by some other kind of activity. Richard Foss's teaching activities were clearly secondary to his role as organist and singing teacher, and from the 1845 advertisement in the Wensleydale Advertiser (see below) it appears that his patronage was expected to be from the neighbouring nobility and gentry. The local trades people of Leyburn might also have been willing to pay for the teaching of additional subjects to their children – the teacher being free to pursue this whilst the monitorial system was in operation in the school.

### **Teachers at the school.**

#### **Richard Chapleo**

The first recorded teacher at the RC school in Leyburn was Richard Chapleo who is listed in 'Academies' in White's 1840 Directory although the school itself is not mentioned<sup>13</sup>. In the 1841 census Richard Chapleo, 'Schoolmaster, aged 25 years' appears to be lodging with the family of William Atkinson a lawyer living in Millgate, Leyburn. Richard was born 4 June and baptised 6 June 1813 at St Peter and St Paul by the Rev. Richard Bolton. He was the son of John and Martha Chapleo *nee* Yeoman and a younger brother of Christopher Chapleo who built the church and school. If he was indeed placed in charge at the time the school was opened in 1835, he would have carried a lot of responsibility as a young man then of about 22 years of age. Richard appears to have left the school by 1845 and in 1851 was working as a schoolmaster in Wokington, Cumbria. He was still teaching in Wokington at the time of the 1861 census but died there the following year. His death on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May 1862 was recorded by Agnes Chapleo, his younger sister, in her prayer book – a book which is still in the possession of her descendants<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Richard Ireland Foss**

Richard Foss was well established in the parish by 1845 and first acted as a baptismal sponsor on 2 February that year. In 1849 'Richard Foss - Master' is listed in Slater's Directory under 'Academies and Schools'<sup>15</sup>, and in 1851 he is actually lodging with the Rev Richard Bolton next to the church and has the splendid title of 'Organist, Professor of Music and Schoolmaster'. He was 28 years old and had been born in Huddersfield. He was the son of Richard Foss and Harriett (*nee* Eastwood) who on 5 Jan 1832 had three children, including Richard, baptised at St Patrick's RC church in Huddersfield. Richard Foss the elder (baptised in 1790 at Tanshelf RC church, Pontefract) had moved to Bulkeley near Malpas in Cheshire where in 1841 he was innkeeper of the George and Dragon inn. At the same time his son, Richard age 18, was lodging in Ayton Street, Manchester, his occupation given as 'music apprentice'.

Indeed, it was for his musical ability that Richard Foss was most noted. On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1845 the Wensleydale Advertiser<sup>16</sup> made the following comment:

*Leyburn: Pianoforte and Singing: Our musical readers will certainly be glad to observe that Mr Foss, the talented organist at St Peter's, has commenced giving instruction on the pianoforte and singing on the Wilhelm's Improved System. No doubt Mr Foss will receive from our neighbouring nobility and gentry the patronage which he deservedly merits'.*

The paper had reported previously on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1845 that a Grand High Mass had been celebrated on Christmas Day in St Peter's Chapel and '*a selection of music from Mozart, Hayden, etc., ably performed by a select choir*'.

On January 19<sup>th</sup> 1847 the Advertiser reported on Mr Foss's concert which had taken place in the school house '*Indeed the brilliance and accuracy of Mr Foss's execution on the piano-forte with his chaste style of singing could not fail to command applause*'.

Richard Foss continued to act as baptismal sponsor at St Peter and St Paul until the end of 1851 and was still listed in Slater's Directory of 1855<sup>17</sup> as master of the Catholic School in Leyburn. Sadly this promising young man died of pulmonary tuberculosis in Chester on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1855 at the age of thirty two. His occupation was given as 'Professor of Music' and his death was registered by an Elizabeth Bordessa, the wife of Pietro Bordessa, a dealer in toys and fancy goods, whose family had originated from Lombardy. Richard Foss was buried in Overleigh Cemetery, Chester, on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1855.

### **James Holland or Matthew Hind**

Both James Holland and Matthew Hind were recorded as schoolmasters in Leyburn in the 1861 census. James Holland was born in Middlesex in about 1836, and although he acted as sponsor at St Peter and Paul in 1860, 1861 and 1863 so was probably a Catholic, he appears to have been running his own school in Market Place, Leyburn, as he had two boarders living with him. Later, in 1871 he and his sister, Julia, also a school teacher, were proprietors of a school in Newbiggin, Richmond and their household included ten scholars and two servants. Hence Matthew Hind, born in Newsham in about 1835, is another possible candidate to be the schoolmaster at St Peter and St Paul. In 1861 he appeared to be living on his own in Peter's Gate, Leyburn, just three doors away from the Catholic Church. He was married but his wife, Elizabeth, was staying with her parents Joseph and Mary Clarkson in nearby Harmby. In 1871 Matthew and Elizabeth were both living in the 'School House' at Kirby Knowle.

### **J. McArdell**

White's Directory of 1867<sup>18</sup> is very complimentary about the Roman Catholic Church in Leyburn and mentions that it has 'a school for boys and girls in connection with it'. Under 'Schools, Roman Catholic', is listed 'J. McArdell' as teacher but other than suspecting that he or his family may have come from Ireland we know nothing more about him.

### **Patrick Culliner/ Cullinan**

Similarly, we have little information about the master who probably took over from

J. McArdell and who was probably in charge when the school was closed in the early 1870s. The 1871 census lists 'Patrick Culliner, age 33, schoolmaster, born Ireland who is lodging in Leyburn with Christopher Chapleo, joiner and cabinet maker. (St Peter's School House itself was inhabited by 89 year old Elizabeth Dobson and her daughter, Annie). In 1872 the Post Office Directory<sup>19</sup> states that 'There is Roman Catholic School for boys and girls, opened in 1838 (*sic*) which is self-supporting', and Patrick Cullinan is listed as master.

### **When did the school close?**

Clearly the school was still open at the time that the census was taken in April 1871 when Patrick Cullinan was master. It also appeared (from White's) to be open in 1872, although information in trade directories was often a year or more out of date. In the next available directory, that of 1879, there is no mention of the school and in the 1881 census return the school house is listed as uninhabited. We have no information about the precise date of closure but must assume from the statement at the beginning of the Log Book for the re-opened school in 1895 that the school 'after being closed for upwards of 23 years' was wound up about 1872/3 soon after the passing of the Forster Education Act of 1870.

The aim of the 1870 Act was to provide enough school places by filling in the gaps in school provision. As well as various small private schools in Leyburn, the National School (also known as the Thornborough Charity School) had been built in 1864 at a cost of £400 and by 1876 had 100 children on the roll, although attendance averaged about 78. So it appears that there may have been sufficient school places in the town to satisfy government requirements.

In 1862 the Government had introduced the 'Payments by Results' system and the inspectors' reports for the Leyburn National School<sup>20</sup> run from soon after its opening until its transformation into the Board School in 1896. Reports from 1868 to 1875 given only average attendance numbers but the numbers do show a slight increase in 1872 and 1873 indicating that some Catholic children may have gone to the Thornborough School when St Peter and St Paul's closed.

Examination of the Log Book from the Thornborough National School does not throw much further light on the issue. In 1867 there is a reference to the admittance of three boys 'who have been at the Roman Catholic School' (C. Scott, F. Holmes and R. Auton) but on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1870 the master wrote the following rather puzzling entry 'Four boys have left the school and gone to a *Catholic School which was opened this morning*. The parents gave as a reason for taking the children away that they were bound to send them to a school (if possible) of their own denomination'. Does this imply that the school had been closed for a time, and had then re-opened, or that a local private Catholic School had been established? In 1876 when the actual names of pupils were listed in the inspection reports, there were two children of the RC Blenkinsop family attending, and in 1893 the register of 79 children included 7 Chapleo and 3 Blenkinsop children.

In 1892 the National School Log Book<sup>21</sup> records that Canon Pearson visited the school and asked for the number of children on the register belonging to the Roman Catholic

persuasion. He received the answer 'there are at present on the register 27'. Clearly plans were in preparation at this time for the re-opening of the Catholic School which took place in August 1895 only a few months after the National School became the Board School in February of that year.

The entry for 6<sup>th</sup> August 1895 in the Log Book of the Leyburn Board School<sup>22</sup> notes that 'School reopened this morning with an attendance of 103. This reduced no. is caused mainly by haytime being protracted by stress of weather and by the opening of a Roman Catholic School in the town this morning. About 30 of our children appear to have left to attend the new school'. Interestingly, even after the Catholic School re-opened in 1895, the Catholic community maintained an influence in the running of the Board School with the election of Fr Joseph Dodds as a representative on the Board.

### **Reasons for the School's closure**

Nor do we know the precise reasons for the closure of the Catholic School in 1872/3. A major factor may have been the failure to achieve a high enough standard to benefit from 'payment by results' resulting in lack of finance to continue – if the school had ever subjected itself to such inspection. A major problem with the system was the requirement for a minimum numbers of attendance (250 half days in the year) before the tests could be taken. This could have been an important issue for the children who would have been living in the small town of Leyburn itself and also on the farms in the surrounding area. Many of the children would have been so poor that lack of shoes or boots would have prevented them getting to school in wet or snowy weather, and their insanitary housing and lack of food would have made them susceptible to the many epidemics of disease such as measles, scarlet fever and whooping cough which occurred almost yearly. The necessity to stay at home to look after younger siblings or to help with seasonal work on the farm would also have been a factor in their attendance at school.

From 1868 Catholic schools were also subject to an annual Ecclesiastical Inspection by the diocese, and only those who reached a high enough standard would receive a grant from the Catholic Poor Schools Committee.

Another factor may have been the inability to retain teachers - those in board schools which were being established elsewhere in the country were paid more than denominational schools could often afford, although many Catholic schools, but not Leyburn, were staffed by members of religious orders who accepted much lower salaries than the teachers in state schools.

In 1883 Emily Jane Scrope (nee Berkeley) financed the opening of a school in the grounds of Danby Hall where she personally supervised the education of about twelve local children, mainly, but not exclusively from the estate. It is believed that this school closed in about 1896 when she moved to Hove. It is possible that this was an attempt to provide some Catholic education for a small number of the local children during the period when the St Peter and St Paul School was closed<sup>23</sup>. Entries in both the National School and Board School Log Books, however, both demonstrate that most of the

Catholic children in the town attended these non-Catholic schools during the period of closure.

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, A. *The First 100 Years. A History of the Diocese of Middlesbrough 1878-1978* Middlesbrough Diocesan Trustees 1978

<sup>2</sup> Doyle, Sally. *The Catholic Missions of Danby Hall and St Simon and St Jude* 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Middlesbrough Diocesan Archives

<sup>4</sup> Notes made by Arthur Chapleo, descendant of Christopher Chapleo, for the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the church and also published in *Catholic Voice*, October 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Appendix C to the *Second Annual Report of the Catholic Poor Schools Committee 1849. Statistics of Catholic Schools from Returns of 1845.* Published in *Catholic Ancestor* November 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Leeds Diocesan Archives

<sup>7</sup> Leeds Diocesan Archives

<sup>8</sup> Abstract from 1851 Religious Census Report. The National Archives

<sup>9</sup> Visitation Return 1854 Leeds Diocesan Archives

<sup>10</sup> Poor School Committee Returns 1868 Reported in *The First 100 Years*

<sup>11</sup> Ecclesiastical Examination of Schools 1870-71 Reported in *The First 100 Years*

<sup>12</sup> Pigot and Co's Directory of York, Leicestershire & Rutland, Lincoln, Northampton & Nottingham.

<sup>13</sup> White's Directory of Yorkshire North and East Ridings 1840

<sup>14</sup> Personal Communication Chapleo family

<sup>15</sup> Slater's Directory of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire 1849

<sup>16</sup> Wensleydale Advertiser 1845

<sup>17</sup> Slater's Commercial Directory of Durham, Northumberland & Yorkshire, 1855

<sup>18</sup> White's Directory North and East Riding 1867

<sup>19</sup> Post Office Directory of North and East Riding of Yorkshire. 1872

<sup>20</sup> Leyburn Thornborough Charity School Inspection Reports. North Yorkshire County Record Office.

<sup>21</sup> Leyburn Thornborough Charity School Log Book 1865-1894.

<sup>22</sup> Leyburn Board School Log Book 1895-1922

<sup>23</sup> Doyle, Sally. *The Catholic Missions of Danby Hall and St Simon and St Jude* 2008