

ADMINISTRATION AND ORDER EDUCATION

Education has a long history in Scotland. It remains a source of pride as it is one area in which Scotland does things differently to its southern neighbour – and better. Evidence of its history is to be found in every parish.

There is a good reason for every parish having had a school, in that, in its early years, education was provided for through the Kirk, itself organised on a parish basis. Not until 1872 was legislation passed to bring it under Local Authority control.

Evidence of pre-1872 schools is still widespread, though it is unlikely that many, if any, are still in use. This building, at **Corstorphine village** (now



part of Edinburgh) is an example of the simple but formal school buildings of the mid 19th century. It should be added that many parishes had more than one school, catering for different religious denominations. These would have been sponsored by particular landowners or run by private individuals.

The transfer of control to local authorities, in 1872, brought the beginnings of a standardisation in design and appearance. This school in **Muir of Ord, Ross-shire** is typical of its genre: separate entrances for girls (plus infants)



and for boys; a formal architectural style, and high, as well as high-set windows. The adjacent playground is also a common feature, a place where children could be contained during play-time. As the school-leaving age crept up, so also did the age range catered for.

The main dissenting groups, both before and after the 1872 Act, were the Catholics and the Free Church of Scotland which had broken away from the

Church of Scotland in 1843. **The Free Church School at Laggan, Inverness-shire**, pictured here in 1854, may have been typical of its time in having the look of a cottage about it, there being as yet no distinct architectural vocabulary for schools. The 1872 Act perpetuated the Catholic/Protestant division, but within Protestantism different sects were taught together.



The complex of school buildings also included a school-master's house, generally adjoining or close to the school itself, and in a similar architectural style. There might also be a **school garden**, as here at **Lilliesleaf, Roxburghshire**, where country boys could develop their horticultural skills. The girls, meanwhile, would be closeted indoors, learning needlework or other domestic skills.



Employers, both estate owners and industrialists, had been amongst those providing schools and schooling. Possibly the most impressive building of this kind in Scotland is the **Institute for the Formation of Character**, at the cotton mill village of **New Lanark**.



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Dollar Academy was founded in 1818 under the terms of the will of a local man who had become a London ship-owner.

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Another form of separate provision was the fee-paying boarding school, to which the rich or landed could dispatch their children for months on end.

When, during the 20th century, children at the age of 12 were bussed off to town secondary schools, the viability of rural, now primary, schools was reduced. Added to falling birth rates, the mechanisation of farming and the decline of the country estate, this led to the closure of many of the smaller country schools. Most of these buildings have found new uses, but something of the life of the rural Scotland has been taken away.

To find out more:

Devine, T.M. *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*. London, 1999

'Education' in Keay, J. and Keay, J. (editors) *Collins Encyclopaedia of Scotland*. London, 1994

Looking at schools

The school was an important part of village life. Some old buildings survive, sometimes in use as village halls rather than as schools, and some have been converted into houses or workshops. *Ask yourself these questions:*

- **How** big is the school compared with other buildings of the same age?
- **How** big is it compared with other public buildings like the Church, which were also central to parish life?
- **Does it have** the name of the School Board on it, or the date when it was built?
- **Why** might disused country schools have had to close?

Education – THEN and NOW

1. Before 1872, who organised education in Scotland's parishes?

- (a) The wealthiest landowner
- (b) The Kirk (Church)
- (c) The Government

2. Which two of the following statements are true for schools in Scotland, after 1872?

- (a) School buildings were standardised in design and appearance. There was also the addition of an adjacent playground and school masters' house.
- (b) After 1872, formalities such as; separate entrances and subjects for boys and girls, were adopted.
- (c) After 1872, formalities such as; separate entrances and subjects for boy' and girls, were abolished.

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- (d) All schools were to have a unique appearance – giving a sense of identity to each building, parish and the children who attended.

3. Look at the picture of the school in Muir of Ord, Ross-shire (on page 1).

Describe the building. What do you notice? What is different from your own school/a modern school building? Why do you think such changes have occurred?

Find out about the differences in schooling, **then and now**.

Answers

1. (b) Yes, the Church was in charge of education until the Government took responsibility in 1872. There were also private schools.

2. (a) and (b)

(a) School buildings were standardised in design and appearance. There was also the addition of an adjacent playground and school masters' house.

(b) After 1872, formalities such as; separate entrances and subjects for boys and girls, were adopted.

3. *(Own responses)*