

Castleton School Days Remembered by Joe Hallam



“My schooldays began in April 1914 at Castleton Church of England School. Then, there was the “Little Room” and the “Big Room”. The floor was rough, unpolished, dusty wood. The heating was by open fires with guards, one at each end of the building. In winter, it was sometimes so cold we were allowed to keep our coats on and some scholars wore woollen mittens. The lighting was gas which was only used when it was too dark to see. Each bench seat accommodated several pupils and had a round slot for the inkwell. The ink was made by the headmaster from powder and water and we wrote with steel pen nibs. During the Great War of 1914-1918 there was a shortage of paper so we used our parents’ slates and pencils.

In the “Little Room” we were taught simple script, addition, multiplications and division. Later, in the “Big Room” we had to write in “copperplate” and do mental arithmetic. There was scripture every morning, sometimes given by the Vicar, and some of us came to know the Bible well. There were few books in the cupboard. I remember some tatty, poorly printed copies of Shakespeare’s plays. But we did enact scenes from “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and had to lie on the dusty, grubby floor.

There was a cane for the naughty pupils, usually across the hand. Very bad boys were made to bend over and were caned on the bottom. We all walked to school but, if the snow was deep, the children from Rowter Farm (above Winnats) lodged in the village.”

Joseph “Joe” Aston Hallam

22 March 1909 – 15 September 2001

Joe was born in Eades Fold, Castleton and lived all his life in the village. He moved house only once - to Goosehill - in order to “get a better view”. He served in the RAF during the war under Wing Commander Leonard Cheshire. After the war he returned to his banking job in Sheffield and later in Hathersage. He had a wide knowledge and interest in local history and was a founder member of Castleton Historical Society.