

Mr Halstead - Melling School Headmaster

Village life very often revolves around the village school, and Melling is no different.

This story is about Mr. Halstead,(Albert Theodore Halstead BA), who was Principal Master at Melling School for 39 years.

He was born in Lytham in 1898, and died in 1983. His family moved to Bootle and he attended Secondary School in Bootle in 1910. He was an outstanding student, but in that period in history his future was to be completely taken over by World War 1.(See below)

After the war,in 1919, he attended Liverpool University for a BA Degree.

Later he went on to do a teaching qualification.

He married his wife Amy Hart in 1923 at The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Bootle.

They had both been members of the Church Choir, and he played the organ.

His first appointment as a teacher was at Poulton School, Wallasey.



His second appointment was as Principal Teacher at Melling With Wrayton Church of England School. He took up his duties on 1st October 1926.

He retired on the 4th July 1964, after 39 years service.

Apart from his service as Senior Teacher he also played a full part in Lunesdale society.

The photograph (left) is taken in his capacity as Chairman of Hornby Rural District Council.

He was also the Conductor of Melling Glee Class, and became famous for a broadcast they did in 1932.

They made their debut at the Morecambe Festival in 1927, when they won the 'Best Village Choir' prize.

They also won prizes at the Lancaster Music Festival, winning altogether seven first and three second prizes.

The photograph below shows The Choir on the occasion of their broadcast. Mr Halstead was also the Choirmaster at Melling Parish Church, and a Lay Reader, always reading the first lesson.



Mr. Halstead was Clerk to the Parish Council, and he was also the Chairman of Lunesdale Parish Council. He and his wife attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace in 1962. He also served on Lancaster District Council.

He was a qualified cabinet maker and would teach woodwork. He made many items of furniture for the house. He was also a gardener, photographer and water colour artist.

He also had considerable acting skills. On one occasion he played 'Lord Fancourt' in "Charlie's Aunt" at Tunstall.

When he retired they moved to Gressingham, and later to Hornby, where he became choirmaster at Saint Margaret's Church.



After he retired from Melling School, he sometimes taught at both Hornby schools.

Albert died in 1983 and is buried in Saint Margaret's Churchyard. His wife Amy Sarah is also buried there. She died in 1992.

The gravestone is instantly recognisable in the churchyard, it being the one with a passage of music engraved on the back!



A devotee of choral music would recognise it as the opening bars of "All on an April Evening" - his favourite hymn.



These are the pupils and staff of Melling School, taken in 1951. Mr. Halstead is standing on the left of the picture. Front left, kneeling, is Miss Collins. Extreme right of the picture are Annie Tallon, with Mrs Culpin, dinner lady, behind.

Further research in the school logbooks might show who the children were. Below is a picture of Melling ('new') School taken about 1910. This building replaced the "Old School House" situated across the road which became, and still is a private house.



The Great War

The advent of the Great War devastated many young lives, and Albert was no exception. He was born in 1898 and became of military age during the progress of the war. (ie 17 at that point).

He was living in Bootle at the time and enlisted at Seaforth Barracks in December 1916. He was posted for duty in May 1917, to The 2nd Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers. (Rgt. No. 69837), his previous occupation being registered as 'Student'.



It is thought that he was sent to France in March 1918. On 10th October 1918, he was at Ypres on the Western Front, when he sustained a gunshot wound to the right of his neck, exiting his right shoulder.

He was admitted to the Barrington War Hospital in Shrewsbury for treatment. He was discharged in March 1919.

The wound left him with his right hand locked, as though he was holding the butt of a rifle.

He never recovered the full use of the hand and arm. He restarted his studies at Liverpool University in 1919, going on to obtain his BA Degree.

My thanks go to Philip Halstead, Albert's son, who provided the story and photographs.

G.E.K. Feb.2017