

## **GEORGE STABLER - 3rd September 1839 to 4th January 1910**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the life of George Stabler who was born over 170 years ago in 1839. George became the school-master in our village Boys' School in Levens in 1861, and remained so for nearly 40 years.

While researching for this biographical note I have grown used to George and almost come to regard him as a neighbour and contemporary. This familiarity tends to foreshorten my view of the vast amount of history that has happened in those 170 years. To restore this perspective, just increase the period by the same term again, and you will find that Charles II was on the English throne; a 170 years further back and the last rebellions of the Wars of The Roses had only just petered out. Three stages into the past have carried us to a very foreign landscape indeed.

Big changes on a smaller stage don't need such a span. Education has altered a great deal since George's time and a lot of this change has happened quite recently. To those, like me, whose primary schooling took place in the 1950s, the picture that emerges from the late nineteenth century school log-book is still just recognisable: to my parents' generation, born in the 1910s, it would merely look old-fashioned, and to my Sunday school-teaching grandmother, born in 1878, it would be completely unremarkable. To anyone under 40 it will be as alien as the world of Charles Dickens.

A man's place in time is not his whole story. What we find about his life often strikes more contemporary chords.

### **ORIGINS AND CHILDHOOD**

George Stabler was born in the village of Crayke<sup>1</sup> (pop then c550 and in most of the records of the time spelt "i" rather than "y"), now in North Yorks., but up until the 1871 census always referred to by George as in County Durham. This seems peculiar as Crayke is at least 10 miles from anywhere in County Durham. The anomaly is explained by the following extract from "a brief history of Crayke":-

"In 685 the Parish (*and all the land within a circuit of three miles round it - see Bulmer's Directory 1890*) was given to St.Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne, by Ecgfrith, King of the Northumbrians, so that the Bishop could use it as a resting place on his journeys to York. Legend has it that he founded a monastery here, and the present church, which bears his name, dates from 1436. As an outlying part of the County of Durham, Crayke became a haven for those 'outside the law', as a local magistrate had no jurisdiction over them, a point finally remedied when Crayke became part of the North Riding of Yorkshire in 1844.....It was not until 1844 that Crayke was formally transferred from the control of County Durham to the North Riding of Yorkshire. Prior to this date the village formed an anomalous area of exempt jurisdiction which was not liable for North Riding rates"<sup>2</sup>.

Stabler seems to be a fairly common surname in North Yorkshire and County Durham in the mid nineteenth century, and according to Baine's Directory of 1823 there was a shoemaker called Thomas Stabler in Craike. This man was probably George's grandfather, for when George's parents, James Stabler of Craike and Elizabeth Jefferson of Henderskelfe were married<sup>3</sup>, their fathers' names and occupations were recorded, one was "Thomas Stabler, Shoemaker".

A Thomas Stabler aged 55, occupation agricultural labourer, born in the same county, i.e. County Durham, is shown living alone in Craike in the 1841 census, close by in the same row of cottages as James, and there don't appear to have been any other Stablers in the village. I have not been able to identify Thomas in the 1851 census, but in that for 1861 there is a widower called Thomas Stabler, aged 77, Shoe Maker, in the workhouse at New Malton. The death of a Thomas Stabler was registered in Malton in the 3rd quarter of 1864<sup>4</sup>.

Elizabeth Jefferson's father John was a gamekeeper at Henderskelfe. For the curious, Henderskelfe was a small hamlet within the Castle Howard Park, so John Jefferson was one of George Howard, the 6th Earl of Carlisle's, gamekeepers. Henderskelfe township was then a detached part of the parish of Bulmer (described as extra-parochial<sup>5</sup>). It was a parish by 1861.

James Stabler, Shoe Maker, of Craike, "of full age" (he was c24 years old) married Elizabeth Jefferson (also "of full age" but actually about 22) on 17 December 1838 in the parish church of St. Michael, Malton. George was born at Craike on 3rd September 1839, so James and Elizabeth evidently didn't waste much time.

It appears that James, Elizabeth and their infant son moved to the village of Welburn by 1842, for in the 1851 census George's sisters Hannah and Mary were recorded as having been born in Welburn, and as being 9 years and 5 years old respectively.

George was therefore no more than 3 when his parents moved to Welburn. It has been suggested that he attended the school at Ganthorpe for a while before moving on to the Boys' School at Welburn, but I have no evidence for this and it might well be his association with the famous botanist Richard Spruce (1817 to 1893) that has given rise to this notion. Richard's father (another Richard Spruce - c1782 to 1851) was schoolmaster at Ganthorpe before, in 1841<sup>6</sup>, becoming master at Welburn school, which we know George attended. As James Stabler and his family were residents of Welburn by 1842, it is unlikely that George would travel the 3 miles or so to Ganthorpe each day: in any case he was not old enough to go to school.

George recalled in later years that Spruce the elder was "a very good mathematician, but less advanced in the classics, and that he was a wonderfully fine penman"<sup>7</sup>. The trouble was that he did not enjoy good health and there were, as he grew older, fairly frequent periods when Richard Spruce the younger, who had taught mathematics at the Collegiate School in York from 1839 to 1844, had to take over at Welburn school, notably in April 1845 (when 4 of his step-sisters died in a scarlet fever outbreak), again in April 1846, and in several weeks from January and May 1848. Already, from his pioneering work on mosses in Yorkshire, Ireland and the Pyrenees, a well-known botanist, Richard the younger escaped by departing to South America on his 15 year exploration of the Amazon basin. He left Liverpool for Pará (now Belém) in June 1849 and did not set foot in England until 1864, returning in poor health to live in Welburn in 1867. He was 50 years old by this date and had suffered a stroke in 1860 whilst in Ecuador.

Spruce the younger had been an active botanist since his late teens, when we believe he may well have been a Pupil Teacher in his father's school at Ganthorpe. Though it is unlikely that he knew the much younger George very well at that time, he would have met and taught him during the periods in which he stood-in for his father at Welburn. It is possible his example encouraged George's interest in botany, specifically mosses.

In 1894 George wrote that he had known Spruce the younger "on terms of intimate friendship for over a quarter of a century"<sup>8</sup>. This would date the beginnings of their association to the late 1860s, after Spruce returned from South America and after George had moved to Levens. This supposition is confirmed in a letter to George from J.A. Martindale, dated 3rd August 1869<sup>9</sup>, in which Martindale wrote "I am sorry that Dr. Spruce is not so well...". In addition, George's own letters to the veteran bryologist William Wilson in the period 1868 to 1870 clearly demonstrate his friendship with Spruce. Before he was married, George would spend all of his month's summer holiday in Welburn (letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 1868) where he was "frequently with Dr. Spruce where it was a pleasure & privilege to be in the company of so accomplished a scholar & so great a botanist...He was always excellent company..."<sup>10</sup>

Without access to Welburn school records or Church Baptismal records we can only speculate about George's childhood and early teenage years.

The 1851 census records that two more children had been born, or at least had survived until then, Hannah aged 9 and Mary aged 5. We know there were relatives in Welburn, because an Elizabeth Compton, born in Craike, a widowed former servant at Castle Howard is recorded as being Mary's aunt in the 1861 and 1871 censuses, and Elizabeth herself had a nephew named Thomas Jefferson. Coincidentally, there was another family named Stabler living "3 doors" along the road. The head of this family was another George Stabler, a gamekeeper, aged 40 in 1851, with his wife Sarah and their 5 children.

Was gamekeeper George a relative of James' after whom he named his son? He very likely was related, because as mentioned earlier, Stabler was a fairly common surname thereabouts, and in the archipelago of hamlets and small villages in the Castle Howard estate.

Next but one lived Robert Bielby (also spelt *Beilby*), a joiner, with his wife Ann, sons Thomas, John and William, aged 6, 4, and 2 respectively, daughter Mary Jane, and niece Emma Bielby. More of this family later.

As far as we know, James and his family stayed in the same small cottage throughout George's childhood. The present (as at Dec. 2008) owner of the cottage who has lived there for about 60 years, remembers that there was once a building behind which was known as the cobbler's shop<sup>11</sup>. The presence of a tannery in Welburn meant there were, in consequence, usually 2 or more shoemakers in the village<sup>12</sup>.

We know from letters in the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9) that George habitually returned to Welburn in the school summer holidays where he presumably stayed with his parents. This was both before and after his marriage when he appears to have taken his wife and, one assumes, his children, with him. His parents probably still lived in the same cottage.

The Levens school log-book tells us that his mother died in June 1878. George's father survived her for 16 years. He was still shown as a shoe maker in the 1891 census, a widower, aged 77, living on his own in Welburn. James Stabler was buried in Welburn on 5th January 1894 aged 80 years<sup>13</sup>. James had pursued the same occupation all his adult life, though in the 1861, 71 and 1881 census' he described himself as a "cordwainer", a term often used instead of shoemaker but strictly speaking, a person who makes shoes from fine, soft, leather, from the Spanish, Cordoban, Was this a higher class of trade or a mannerism to distinguish the craftsman from the mere cobbler?

## **BECOMING A SCHOOLMASTER**

The route to becoming a Certificated (qualified) schoolmaster in the 1850s was well defined. As a general rule this is what happened. As a schoolchild, at about 12 or more years of age, instead of leaving, you probably became a Monitor, one of the older or better scholars teaching the younger pupils. Then, aged about 15 and usually still at the same elementary school, you were apprenticed as a Pupil Teacher. In addition to a full day's teaching in school, for which you were paid, you received 1 to 1½ hours of instruction a day from the schoolmaster, either before morning school, at lunchtime, or in the evening<sup>14</sup>. Pupil Teachers were examined annually at the school inspection by the H.M.I Inspector. After five years, and subject to satisfying the Inspector, you qualified as an Assistant Master. At the end of this apprenticeship you could sit the Queen's Scholarship examination, and if successful, would be awarded a place at a Training College. After two years at College, and another two years as a probationer in school, you qualified as a Certificated Teacher.

George was presumably a Pupil Teacher in Welburn until he reached about 18 years of age. We know that he won a Queen's Scholarship to St. John's College, York (now York St. John University), and was in residence there in 1860 and that after qualifying in the Second Class, he was appointed to Levens Boys' School. The correspondent regarding that appointment being General Upton M.P., nephew of Fulke Greville Howard (born Upton), the late husband of Mary Howard of Levens Hall<sup>15</sup>.

The 1861 census was held on 7th April, and by that time George was occupying the Levens School House. He probably took over at Levens school at the beginning of the school year, which was not September as nowadays: to quote his entry in the Levens School log-book on February 28th 1868, "Today ends the school year (1867-68)". From training college to his first job as a qualified teacher of 20 years of age, where he was expected to single-handedly run a school with 80 or 90 children on the roll (though usually a third of them were absent). A challenge indeed, but then they all did it, they'd already been teaching for 5 years.

### **ARRIVES IN LEVENS - THE SCHOOL AS IT WAS THEN**

We have no idea how he got the Levens job but perhaps there is a clue in the identity of the "correspondent." Had General Upton advised the college of a vacancy, or was there some other connection? The Howards of Castle Howard were patrons and benefactors of Welburn schools in the same way as the Howards of Levens Hall were for the Levens schools. Knowing the difficulty that Fulke Greville Howard had in finding suitable candidates for Levens earlier in the nineteenth century, it is tempting to speculate that questions were asked of Castle Howard. It is only speculation because the connections between the Howard families in the two places were pretty attenuated.

At the time many elementary schools were being put under the Government's subsidy scheme<sup>16</sup> which required the Schoolmaster to be qualified. George's predecessor at Levens, William Hiscock, who I believe was not formally qualified, was only 35 years of age when George was appointed in late 1860 and within a few months was in Kendal, having become a "Relieving Officer"<sup>17</sup> (1861 census). I wonder if he had been found this official position to compensate him for having to make way for the first Certificated teacher in Levens Boy's school?

What did George find when he got to Levens? The township had a population of about 940 (936 on 1861 census) of whom about 55% lived in the area nowadays regarded as Levens village, then comprising the physically separate areas of Causeway End, Cotes/Cinderbarrow and also Beathwaite Green, which is the heart of the modern village and where the Girls' and Infants' schools and the Schoolmistress's and Schoolmaster's houses were situated. The Boys' School was down near the church in the area now occupied by Church Close. The rest of the population lived in the outlying farms and hamlets around Whitbarrow, Foulshaw, Bridge End/Bridge Row, Low Levens, part of Leasgill, Ninezergh, College Green and Halforth, Mabbín Hall, High Barns, Force Cottages, Sizergh and part of Brigsteer.

William Whellan in his "History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland", published in 1860, commented on the healthiness of the district, the absence of unemployment, with average wages for labourers of approximately 12/- a week and the relatively recent "considerable improvement in husbandry". He then expressed an opinion about the state of the people, "peat moss labour is not favourable to domestic comfort or cleanliness; but intemperance is the prevailing evil with its moral and social consequences". The writer's wife, who is the granddaughter of Robert Newall (George's successor at Levens Boys' School), recalls a village legend that the female inhabitants of Main Street were afraid to cross the street at night to use their privies due to the presence of drunken men in the vicinity of the Royal Oak public house.

It is possible that Levens insobriety persisted, otherwise why do George's papers in the Stabler collection at Kendal Museum<sup>18</sup> contain a newspaper cutting of a speech attacking drink? It is the inaugural address, given by Sir William B. Richmond R.A., at the opening of the North British Academy of Arts exhibition in Newcastle. This would be in 1908, the year the N.B.A.A. was founded. Sir William spoke in favour of encouraging village industries which "check the greatest evil in the country - the increasing traffic in poisonous drink".

The only published reference to the state of the school at about the mid nineteenth century is in Mannex and Co.'s "History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland....." of 1851, which says "...now very effi-

ciently conducted by William Hiscock"; but then Mannex was hardly likely to say it was a rubbish school, anyway, he wouldn't know. The earliest surviving HMI report is for the inspection in March 1863 which gives a positive view of all-round improvement in the 1862/63 school year, but it doesn't reveal anything about previous years.

Of the building itself, it only dated back to the first quarter of nineteenth century, but it was very basic. Stabler noted in the school log in January 1868 that Mrs. Howard had had the school "boarded" during the Christmas holiday. The Inspector's report for that year states that it was the floor that was boarded, adding "materially to the comfort and health of children" so previously it was probably stones or earth. The school had chimneys, so there must have been some heating. George wrote in the log-book on 4th December 1865 - "On Saturday (2nd.) fire grates were put in the school"<sup>19</sup>, but it wasn't until 1869 that the HMI Inspector commented "...there should be guards to the fire places". The school was dark, (8th October 1863) - "commenced second session at 1:15 and closed at 3:45 PM. My reason for this is the shortness of the days and also the great distances which some boys have to go home". 1st February 1864 - "Eight trees felled in the playground of the school which made the school much lighter"; 17th November 1884 - "set the home lessons in the middle of the morning - it being too dark to see the writing on the board at the latter part or end of the session". In the surviving accounts (for the period 1868 to 1883), coal and/or peats are paid for several times a year and in most years comprise the biggest school expense, other than George's salary, but the first mention of paraffin was not until December 1879 (2/8d). They can't have been very profligate with its use in lamps for on 26th November 1891 George wrote, "Yesterday afternoon the drawing lesson was taken first owing to the darkness of the day".

On March 20th 1867 the day of the annual HMI Inspection and examination, the Inspector, The Revd. Claude H. Parez noted that the building "admits a great deal of rain in behind the chimneys" (this was fixed in December 1867).

By our standards, the school was insanitary, and to some extent this was inevitable due to the absence of a proper mains water supply (before 1880, any sort of piped water) which did not come about until 1931/32. The HMI report, by the same Inspector, received on 3rd May 1872 stated "A urinal should be made for the use of the boys". What had they been using for 50 years? This was the first mention in the log-book of a recurring theme in which the development of standards in British hygiene is detectable: or perhaps we should say we detect that the sensitivity of officialdom increases. In the 1880 HMI report - "the offices should be divided by partitions"; 1893 - "disinfectant should be frequently used in the offices". On 2nd December 1895 the Inspector of Schools "found the out-offices unsatisfactory and considered them insufficient". On the 28th of the following month, another Inspector "recommended the removal of the ashes out of the office, and also a new admissions register".

On an Inspection visit on 23rd February 1898 - "...the closets ought to be whitewashed and kept locked when not in use and the urinal must be improved in the manner advised". The instructions were carried out during the Whit Week break. On 2nd of December of the same year the school was visited by H.-Grime Esq. Sub Inspector who complained of the leaves that had blown into the urinal and directed that there should be a thermometer in the school. On the HMI report for the 1899 inspection "...at my visit the urinal was very offensive. It needed swilling and some disinfectant". Very little money was spent on cleaning the school. In the 1870s the most ever paid was £1-16-6d for a whole year. Similar issues re-occurred throughout the next half century.

The school must have looked fairly decrepit, little money being spent on repairs. In the whole 12 years 1868 to 1879 (inclusive), the total spent on furniture, repairs and cleaning was, in decimal pounds, £47.54. Of that, about £26.60 was on repairs, around £18.40 went on cleaning, and the balance, which left the princely sum of c£2.50 spent on furniture (forms) in 1872, though to be fair, some of the £8.68 spent on furniture/repairs in 1874 was for new desks, but what proportion is unknown. Expenditure on "books, apparatus and stationery" wasn't lavish either. Again, in the period 1868 to 1897, the total spent was

£57.04.

In spite of this parsimony, the school's income was always inadequate, and balancing the books required large donations from the Howard family. Surviving school accounts, rather fragmentary, show that the Howard's subscriptions amounted to between 62% and over 72% of school income in the five years 1868 to 1872.

### **GEORGE THE SCHOOLMASTER**

What we know about George as a schoolmaster is what the HMI reports said about his school, what was written about him in his obituaries, the odd scrap of reminiscence and what we can deduce from the records of his school.

George started at Levens in 1861, and it was in 1862 that the government introduced the Revised Code for the conduct of elementary education. This produced a much more prescriptive regime in elementary education than had hitherto been the case. The politics behind this were controversial and what was enacted in the Revised Code tends now to be regarded as having produced a narrow-minded and very utilitarian education for the children of the English working-class, designed to fit them to be the factory, farm and office workforce and for no other purpose. We won't argue the politics here, suffice it to say that government had got very worried that education was an apparently bottomless pit, swallowing taxpayers' money and not giving value in return. Governments in the first half of the nineteenth century had thought elementary education vital but had not realised the scale of costs involved in providing it. The situation is a very close analogy to that of the NHS in its first 40 years (see also the Martindale notes).

Unwelcome though it might have been to some schoolmasters to have part of their pay dependent on the results their pupils achieved in annual examinations, and more onerously, because they had no control over it, by the consistency of school attendance of those pupils, the Revised Code of 1862 did at least benefit me by making them keep log-books and other records without which I could not tell you the following:-

Our surviving Levens Boys' School records start in April 1863 and according to the entries made at the time of the 1864 inspection and annual examination on 9th March, average school attendance for the preceding year was 36, whereas 52 children turned up on exam day, of whom, 28 were "presented" for the annual exams in the Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. 79% of those sitting the exams passed them. The same records were kept until the mid 1870s, when presumably it ceased to be prescribed that the schoolmasters had to enter them in the log-book, and schoolmasters being normal people who will only do the bureaucracy they are made to do, no longer did so.

The entries tell us that the school roll of that period was nominally about 80 children and that, usually, about 57 of them turned up (c71%). Further study of the log-books indicates that the lowest attendance in George's time was 27 and the highest 92. In the period for which data is available (nothing recorded before 1867), the exam pass rates were always over 85% and mostly 90 to 95%. In 1865, 29 children were presented for examination and by 1879, it was 70, although the roll seems not to have increased in proportion. Wouldn't any schoolmaster claim this as a success?

The biggest obstacle to success was irregular attendance, caused by high levels of ordinary epidemic diseases, chiefly scarlet fever, measles, mumps, diphtheria and whooping cough. You'd expect typhoid to be an important one given the absence of a modern water supply, but it is hardly ever mentioned in the log-books: similarly, influenza is not blamed as much as we might expect, but of course "bad colds" and "sore throats" are.

In an age before mass vaccination and medication, these diseases recurred more often and were more threatening than they are nowadays. The Infants' School-log recorded the death of Mary Butterfield from

diphtheria on 8th August 1890, that of Eliza Dixon from the same cause on 19 March 1894, and the Boys' School log that of James J. Dobson from measles on 20th January 1895. In other cases, recovery took a long time, William Hart Milne was absent from the boy's school for 6 weeks with measles from late September to early November in 1893, and Esther Penny was absent from the Infants' School for 5 weeks with whooping cough in February/March 1891.

There were plenty of other reasons for absence. There was inability to pay the School Pence that the School Board allowed the school to charge (28th May 1880). School Pence always brought in a paltry income to Levens School and were abolished in 1891 when the Education Act made elementary schooling free<sup>20</sup>. Then there was the ever-present "peating", farm work at haytime and harvest, turnip thinning and potato planting and picking. At Martinmas, farmers' children would be roped in to work; the days around 11th November being the traditional date for hiring-fairs for farm workers, and also by custom their holiday week (see 10th November 1863 and 12th November 1867).

Also there was a feature of house tenancies, "Skifting (Shifting)", which George noted in the logbook on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1863, when he felt it necessary to explain it was "changing houses".

As well as absences caused by illness and the demands of farming, there was plenty of plain bunking-off, for example, to see a "menagerie of wild beasts" pass through Milnthorpe (13th April 1864), Levens Radish Feast and Milnthorpe Fair (12th May 1869), Kendal Gala on 6th August 1872 "not 30 boys left in the school", more wild beasts at Wombwell's Menagerie (26th August 1869), passing distractions like the Oxenholme Harriers (12th January 1877) or chasing the "Hare Hounds" (14th December 1877) and the peculiar and repeated temporary removal of children to attend dancing schools.

One family, the Hoggarths of Sizergh Castle Farm, took their 3 boys out of Levens School on 11th January 1870, to attend "the Dancing School at Heversham" and did not return them until 13th May 1870. Henry Prickett was absent from 21st February to 14th November 1870 for the same reason. When something similar happened in 1892, George tried to get the authorities to disregard the missed attendances in the calculation of the school's annual grant, but to no avail "My Lords...have ...no power to pay the grant except on the actual average attendance" (HMI report received 11th May 1892).

I was taken aback by these events and wondered if the "Dancing Schools" provided ordinary education as well, and if not, what was the point of going to them? We know that dancing was a valued social accomplishment, but why take your children out of normal education to gain it? It seemed a great mystery, I consulted Mr. Roger Bingham, the Bede of Ackenthaite, but the solution even seems to have eluded him. What I eventually discovered says a lot about the priority many parents, in the era before compulsory school attendance (1880 Education Act), attached to the acquisition of an essential lifeskill, and how prominent dancing was as the lubricant of social interaction in the countryside. Any reader of Jane Austen will know this.

I found a direct echo of Stabler's predicament in the local village of Witherslack where "Dancing has been, and still is, a favourite occupation. During the first half of the 19th century, classes for teaching dancing were held during the winter at the local inn. The older boys and girls were allowed to stay away from the Elementary Schools to attend these classes...."<sup>21</sup>. A report of a meeting of the Lakeland Dialect Society (Whitehaven News, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007) recalled that "The tradition of dancing masters (often dubbed Professor) goes back a long way. It is recorded that a Mr. Lishman of Ambleside taught dancing to the children of William Wordsworth. The traditional style of step dancing, in clogs, was taught by dancing masters who plied their skills around the districts, schools were known to have closed when the dancing master was in the district, to allow the children to attend the classes".

George's friend Joseph Anthony Martindale also encountered this phenomenon at Staveley National School in 1866 when "Several children in the three upper classes have left school to attend a dancing

school for ten weeks". He, like me, thought it peculiar, "I did not notice it at the time, not thinking so many would be attracted by it...It will have a bad effect"<sup>22</sup>.

The popularity of dancing classes wasn't confined to the early nineteenth century era of Jane Austen, or what we think of as "folk" dances. I'm indebted to the website of Folk Northeast for this summary of the situation, "Not so long ago, certainly within living memory, it was the case that children of a certain age would be expected to learn to dance. In the more remote areas this practice was facilitated by traveling teachers, or dancing-masters, who would set up temporary schools in the villages. The youngsters were taught to dance and entertainment would be provided for the adults in the form of night time dancing. The whole affair would conclude with a Grand Ball at which the children would show off their newly learnt steps in a series of vignettes. Such items as the jockey dance, tambourine dance, Highland fling and other costume entertainments would be presented, often with the two youngest children dressed as the king and queen.

There are records of dancing schools and of children's balls in England and Scotland from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. However, in the South, the activities of the old style dancing master ceased at an earlier period than in the north.....". The same source records the prominence of the "ball-room" as opposed to the "barn dance" in the curriculum, featuring the Circassian Circle, Circular Waltz, Highland Reel, Lancers, Polka, Quadrille, Schottische, and the waltz Cotillon. In the village of Clifton the dances performed at village "merrymakings" were "a mixture of traditional country dances and some more modern ones.." the traditional included the "Circassian Circle" while "Sir Roger, Maxina and the Polka represent the more modern ones"<sup>23</sup>.

There is a letter (see endnote 18) written to George by J.W.Hoggarth of Sizergh on 13th June 1870. "Would you please allow the boys to have a holiday tomorrow as it is the sheep shearing. In doing so you will greatly oblige". This was only one day but they had already been off at the dancing school until mid May. They had some history of absence: in April 1869 when entering the details of the grant earned for attendance in the year 1868/69 in the school logbook, George wrote "932 attendances were deducted for the three Hoggarths". This means they missed school on over 155 days.

In the case of the Hoggarths and Henry Prickett you might say that it was only their education that suffered, but there was a continuous high level of absence fluctuating greatly from week to week, and involving more or less everybody randomly, and this made it very difficult to keep all up to the same level.

It wasn't just the pupils' absences that affected the attendance statistics. In a single-handed school, the illness of the schoolmaster or an emergency in his family would usually lead to the school being closed, for example, 17th March 1873, "this day (Monday) was the only one on which the school was open this week owing to the Master's illness", or, 1st July 1878 "The school was closed during the last four days in last week so that the Schoolmaster might attend his Mother's funeral".

It seems illogical that the school depended on attendance statistics for part of its (and George's) income, as it wasn't until 1870 that the education act of that year created local School Boards that had the option to compel attendance. In fact, although successive Acts gradually squeezed out anything avoidable about attending elementary school, it was not until 1918 that full-time education, between the ages of 5 and 14, was unequivocally compulsory. Perhaps *My Lords* at the Education Department in Whitehall thought that the mark of a successful school was its ability to attract pupils. In addition there were exemptions allowed so that children could work.

From the early nineteenth century onwards there was legislation affecting the employment of children, and as the century wore on the acts were passed with greater frequency. To start with, the preoccupation was with factories, specifically in the textile industry, which was a major employer of child labour.



The 1873 Agricultural Children Act made it unlawful to employ any child under the age of 8 and up to 12 years old in agriculture, unless the parent possessed a certificate from the child's schoolteacher verifying that the child had attended school for 250 times in the preceding 12 months (or, if 10 years and over, 150 times). This did not guarantee a huge amount of schooling as morning and afternoon counted as separate attendances. The school year would probably contain about 210 schooldays, i.e. a possible 420 attendances per child, so c60% attendance qualified an under 10 to work and 36% an over 10. Even then there was an exception which allowed children younger than 8 to work (for their parent on land in that parent's occupation). It was also permissible for the local magistrates to suspend the operation of the act for a period of up to 8 weeks in any year, as they did in 1877 (see below).

The 1873 Act possibly accounts for the appearance in the Levens Boys' School logbook in 1874 of the term "Rurals" to describe some pupils in the annual grant allocation entries. They tended to be the older children who might be doing part-time agricultural work. There was also a system by which children went before a Board to determine if they had had sufficient education to receive a Labour Certificate, in order to allow them to leave education early.

It is hard to believe, but in 1874, George wrote that he thought the Act had actually increased his attendance (logbook entry of 17<sup>th</sup> July).

The 1844 Factory Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) improved on earlier regulations affecting the textile mills (and eventually all industries) restricting the under 13s to a 6½ hour working day, the intention being that they would spend half their time at school and half doing paid work, and (I think) that the employers using them would pay for the schooling at a rate of one penny a day. It certainly affected Joseph Martindale, Stabler's friend and schoolmaster at Staveley, for there was industry in that village.

Local educational bye-laws certainly affected Levens. On 29th June 1877 George copied into the logbook a circular he had received in the form of a "public notice" issued by the Kendal Union School Attendance Committee<sup>24</sup>. "That for the necessary operations of Husbandry and the ingathering of crops, the Employment of Children above the age of 8 years during 6 weeks between the 1st day of July and the first day of Oct. next, (exclusive of the Summer Holidays of the respective Schools which such children attend), shall be exempted from the operations and restrictions of the above mentioned Act". He commented on 6th July; "The attendance has again been unusually low - this I attribute partly to the circular...which I mentioned in my remarks last week". It might have proved to be difficult to keep the farmers to the 6 week allowance as on 11th July 1879 "a notice was issued last week, relating to the allowance of 6 weeks holiday to Children over 8 employed in ingathering of crops".

Having made education compulsory, the government needed to create some means of enforcement, so local school boards were empowered to set up Attendance Committees and employ Attendance Officers. The first mention of these in the Levens log-books is in 1880 and George was not slow to complain to the Attendance Officer, writing to him on 14 May of that year about several boys "absent from school who ought not to be", and first recorded visit from that functionary, to go over the registers, was on 7th October. These visits soon became regular but it was several years before George named the individual: on 28 October 1884 he recorded the first visit of the newly appointed Mr. Arkwright.

The existence of a mechanism for enforcing attendance didn't mean the problem would go away; it never did. Eventually George got fed up with filling in his returns for absentees, as he wrote to the Attendance Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1882, "Sirs, For the last few weeks I have returned through the attendance officer, numerous cases of bad attendance, and I am now informed that they are all to be passed over. I therefore refuse to fill in any more attendance forms as it is a waste of time. I am Sirs, yours etc."

It must have been both a thankless task and an uphill struggle to overcome the ingrained habits of generations. On 16 June 1899 the log-book records - "The School was visited by the Grayrigg district attendance

officer to make enquiries after bad-attenders. Mr. Arkwright the late attendance officer has drowned himself in Levens Park".

The children's' age range was different from that in a modern primary school. The village had an Infants' School which catered for children from 3+ to about 6, but not all children who entered George's school had been to an Infants' School, and many started with the comment "does not know his letters". Most pupils left school at 13+ but some stayed on a little longer. In 1871, before he had a Pupil Teacher, George had a school roll of 83 children ranging in age from 6+ to 14+, grouped into 5 classes, as much by attainment as age. A brief example, Class II (the top class was Class I) contained boys ranging in age from 9+ to 13+, whereas Class III had a range of 7+ to 14+ and Class V had boys from 6+ to 11+.

If you substitute the modern expression *teaching to the targets* for *obeying the revised code*, you will see that there is very little new in this world. During the part of the HMI inspection on 17 April 1885 in which the boys had to sing one of the previously prescribed songs, the Inspector noticed "that all the boys were not singing, as those which had no ear for music or could not sing had previously been told not to attempt to on the day of the examination. In future all have to sing at the Exam. Hitherto a few (*of*) the boys had been stopped about a week before the examination".

More seriously, fairly early in George's career, the Inspector pounced on what he probably thought was an attempt to skew the exam results by only entering the best pupils. In 1868 the Inspector reported, "...55 children qualified for examination, but only 33 presented, the inference is that those that were withheld could not have passed and the success of the remainder does not furnish a satisfactory test of the general instruction in the school - My Lords will expect a far larger proportion to be presented next year". There was a rather similar comment in 1873. Inspectors were on the lookout for other dodges like presenting pupils for examination at a standard they had already achieved. In 1873 there was one such challenge about William Routledge, but George was able to show that there were two William Routledges, and it was the other one who had passed in 1872.

We have already seen how attendance statistics played a major part in determining the school's annual grant, and the Inspectors could not routinely scrutinise the registers, so officialdom felt exposed to the possibility of schoolmasters massaging the attendance figures to their advantage. The rules were explicit, attendance registers had to be completed in ink and the register had to be taken twice a day at times which allowed a full session of 2½ hours to take place afterwards, hence on 6th December 1872 George wrote "The Roll was called half an hour late, consequently the boys were kept half an hour longer". If he hadn't kept the boys for that extra half hour he would not have been able to count them as having attended the morning session.

He could plead *force majeure*: on 26 May 1874, "The Roll was called at 9:50 A.M. instead of 9:30 because the head-teacher was engaged with Mr. Smith, one of the Managers, on School matters".

He could be caught out. On 13th January 1890, the first day after the Christmas holiday, the Inspector made an unannounced visit "at 2:35 ("2:40 School clock"). The class registers had not been marked for the afternoon meeting". George wrote "...This afternoon the marking of the register slipped my memory and that of the who had to prompt me". On 23rd January a formal notice was issued to the Education Dept. no less "The Attendance Registers of the Boys' department were not marked at 2:35 p.m., the time fixed on the time-table for closing registers being 1:30.". There doesn't seem to have been any come-back as a result, no doubt the Education Dept. had plenty of similar cases.

The time-table itself was prescribed and explanations had to be made for any departures from it. On 13th January 1879 due to bad weather affecting attendance "I have suspended the time-table for the day that the work, under the circumstances may be carried on with the greatest advantage to the boys present".

Those who are interested in the curriculum can see a contemporary document in Appendix 2 which outlines what each child needed to achieve to pass the successive Standards in the the basic elementary subjects. It is not from Westmorland, but is what the Education Department laid down, it would apply to George.

Just as today, in the late nineteenth century, the children were subject to a regime of continuous testing, with at least one test each week, but in the lead up to the annual HMI exam the pace hotted up according to what George felt needed most attention. Here is what happened in January, February and March 1876 after the school re-opened on 10th January, after the Christmas break:-

- 14 Jan. - Physical Geography exam, Dictation on paper Standard III (unprepared)
- 21 Jan. - Writing exam, Standard II on paper. Writing exercise (this would be on slates), Standards VI, V and IV. Dictation on paper (unprepared), Standards VI, V and IV. Exam in Physical Geography, Standards VI, V and IV. (a busy week!)
- 28 Jan. Exam in Physical Geography.
- 1 Feb. - Arith. exam. Standards VI and III
- 4 Feb. - Arith. exam, Standards VI, V and IV, Physical geography exam for same groups
- 10 Feb. - Arith. exam, Standards VI and III
- 11 Feb. - Exam in Physical Geography.
- 18 Feb. - Arith. exam, Standards VI, V, IV and III, Physical Geography Exam, Standards VI, V and IV
- 23 Feb. - Arith. exam, Standards VI, V, IV and III
- 24 Feb. - Arith. exam, Standards VI, V, IV, III and II
- 25 Feb. - Exam in Physical Geography, Standards VI, V and IV, Arith. exam, Standards VI, V, IV, III and II

And then, for real

- 3 Mar. - Exam in Physical Geography
- 6 Mar. - Drawing Exam
- 8 Mar. - Exam in Literature
- 9 Mar. - ANNUAL GOVT. EXAMINATION

59 boys were presented for the Government Exam. of whom 59 passed in Reading, 54 in Writing and 53 in Arithmetic. In addition, 17 boys were presented for the "Special Subjects" which a school could apply to the HMI to be allowed to teach - passes in them earned extra grant. All 17 passed in both subjects, Physical Geography and Literature. Hurrah, job done, all boxes ticked! and a total of £61-4-0d claimed in grants.

Occasionally external events had unforeseen effects: 8th March 1871, "The Drawing Examination....All the boys were examined in Freehand Drawing" (*instead of practical geometry as well*) "as owing to the Franco-German War we could not procure compasses etc. like those we got last year". Didn't they make any in England?

George was reputed to be a strict disciplinarian. One of his early acts, on 2nd March 1864, "sent William Holme home because of his impertinence". On 24th March 1864, "I have forbidden any one to be absent from school to go 'a jolly boying' ". And on 9th June 1864, "severely punished Alan Mackereth for playing truant. His Mother the informant".

For those who wonder what George had forbidden, "jolly boying" was a Westmorland form of pace-egging at Easter. A troupe of boys would go from farm to farm performing a mummings show containing a cast of characters which included Tosspot, King George and the Hunchback, expecting some form of hospitality in return. Whellan (op. cit. 1860) wrote that pace-egging was "the only old custom still pre-

vailing in the township". The custom seems to have once been widespread in Westmorland, being reported in Old Hutton, New Hutton, Preston Patrick, around Ravenstonedale and in places further afield e.g., Clifton and the Warcop area<sup>25</sup>. The play was also performed at Hawkhead<sup>26</sup> and is mentioned taking place in Witherslack<sup>27</sup>. W.T.Palmer in his book "Lake Country Rambles" (published 1902) devoted a whole chapter to this Easter Custom. He stated that, by the time he was writing, the custom was mainly restricted to the "Kent Vale" and that people regarded it as savouring of begging. Trick or Treat?<sup>28</sup>

George also kept the Pupil Teachers on their toes. 14th March 1878, "Edward Wilson, the pupil teacher, did not come to his lesson this morning, and his excuses were unsatisfactory". On 23rd April, "Edward Wilson very attentive to his School duties and industrious in his studies". The reason that George would be annoyed is that he was prepared to get up early to teach his Pupil Teacher from 6:30 in the morning, or to extend his own day from 6:00 to 7:30 P.M. (see 13 January 1893). George's obituary in the Westmorland Gazette<sup>29</sup> stated that he was an early riser, often, in old age, taking his walk and returning at the time workmen were going to work.

It must have been 1883 before some ordinance obliged teachers to record punishments in the log-book for the first reference was on 20th April 1883. In the following twelve months he "punished" on 77 different occasions. I assume that "punished" means the cane. In all, he appears to have "punished" 39 different boys during that year, the majority only once. Henry Tyson and James Alderson seem to have been the greatest miscreants, appearing 7 times each with James Hornby close behind on 5. On only two occasions did George enter a reason. On 7th January 1884, 3 boys were punished for talking during examinations, and on 6th February, one was punished for the "second offence this week" of copying.

I assume that the punishments were for misbehaviour rather than poor work, for he seems to have dealt with this differently. On 17th October 1873, "During this week boys who have had more than one mistake (*in dictation*) have had to do their dictation over after school".

We noted above that George emerged from St. John's College with a "Second Class" certificate, and we can see how things developed once he settled in at Levens.

The Inspector's annual report was copied into the Levens school log-book by one of the School Managers (usually the Vicar) and the first one that survives is from 1863 when it read. "This school is evidently improved both in order & attainment". On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1864, the date of that year's Inspection, the Inspector wrote in the logbook "The master is George Stabler: Certd. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Class. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Div.", and when the report was received, it concluded that "Considering the age and attendance of the children, the condition of this school is satisfactory" - Not exactly over-enthusiasm, but 1865, 1866 & 1867 show steady improvement, and comments become more generous.

On the occasion of the 1868 inspection, the Master was stated as being "... George Stabler, Certd. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Deg., 2<sup>nd</sup>. Div.". (the entry was made by the same Inspector as before so I think "Deg" for "class" was just a change of terminology). In his report, received on 6<sup>th</sup> April the Rev. C.H.Parez (HMI) stated "The School continues to be conducted with skill and carefulness....".

The inspector's report for 1869 was quite fulsome, "the school is in very good order and the children have passed a particularly good examination....". By the date of the 1870 Inspection, the description had changed to "1st Deg. 3rd Div" and the subsequent report stated, "Mr Stabler's oral teaching is more than usually suggestive and intelligent. The school is in excellent order and the attainments of the boys in both the religious and secular branches of instruction are decidedly good". In 1871 "The discipline is excellent and the instruction continues as careful and thorough as formerly...".

The 1872 Inspection was on 25 March and on the 17th April George noted "Received my certificate from the Inspector". The same event occurred in several subsequent years. On April 12th 1875 he noted, "re-

ceived certificate from the Inspector with the following report on it - 'the instruction is markably (*sic*) sound and intelligent throughout.' ". What was happening was that the Inspector endorsed George's teaching certificate each year with a comment on his performance. If George had decided to apply for another teaching post he would have this as evidence in his favour; of course, comments could be adverse, which must have been a powerful incentive to perform.

When the report of the 1873 Inspection was copied into the logbook, the words "First Class of First Division" were entered beside George's name, and remained so from then on, whenever the classification was mentioned. I inferred from these changes that not only was performance noted on the teaching certificate, but, the qualification itself could be upgraded, subject to sustained good performance. We will see proof of this when we meet Joseph Martindale in Staveley.

A few examples from later years. In 1875, "Mr Stabler deserves the highest credit for the industry & ability with which he conducts this school..". In 1876, "the school is admirably taught". In 1878, "The boys are in admirable order and have *as usual* (my italics) passed an excellent examination....".

George didn't always maintain this consistent progress and in the 1880s the HMI reports are less effusive. In 1882 - "The boys are in good order and on the whole their attainments are very satisfactory...". In 1883, "The school does not appear to have been conducted with the same zest as it used to be...". Bearing in mind that the period 1872 to 1877 was that in which George' was assisted by his best ever Pupil Teacher. This was Joseph Hartley Bateman (son of Isaac Bateman, shoemaker, of Beathwaite Green) who went on to Battersea College and later took a degree, eventually becoming a private school master, working on his own account in Cowes, Isle of Wight (1901 census).

The Pupil Teachers who followed probably didn't have Bateman's commitment or parental support. The next was Edward Wilson who completed his apprenticeship (1876/7 - 81) but didn't stay in teaching. He was succeeded by a Richard Prickett (1881/82 - 1886) who followed the same course, and then there was a gap until 1891 when a George Richardson was appointed. He lasted until 1894 when he departed to be an assistant master at Preston Patrick School. He seems to be untraceable in the 1901 census.

On performance in 1884, the HMI report stated, "the three lower classes seem to have been left too exclusively in the charge of the Pupil Teacher. In 1885 " ...the attainments on the whole are somewhat disappointing...". In 1886 things looked up, "the boys are in good order and have passed a fair exam on the whole...". 1887 was reasonable as was 1888, but 1889 was rather better and the standard achieved in that year continued until 1894 when the Inspector commented, "This school is in fairly good condition..." .

The 1895 report said, "The results of instruction are generally satisfactory", and in 1896 the comment, for the inspection carried out on 14 April 1896, was, "The unfortunate accident to the Master and the appointment for a time of an unsatisfactory substitute.....no doubt account for some falling off in attainments. The teachers appear now to be working well...". In both 1894 and 1895 there were periods when the school was in the hands of temporary masters, but that is another story which we will return to later..

Nowadays we might jump to the conclusion that George was a man who stayed in the same job too long, who started with vigour, ability and enthusiasm and rapidly got results, then plateaued and eventually wound down. It's at least arguable, but due to changes in what was recorded in the log-book, the attendance data for later years is not as clear as it is for the first half of George's tenure, and the details of the exam results are not included.

Robert Newall, who only met George in 1895 when he was appointed to the Boys' School and who took over from George in 1900 and knew him for the remainder of his life, is known to have had a high opinion of him, both professionally and as a man and a friend.

During his career George was appreciated by the pupils, School Managers and parents. On 15 September 1876 the logbook records, "Half Holiday - Presentation. On the 14th yesterday afternoon the boys had a half holiday that the school - room might be got ready for the evening concert. Presentations were made to Miss Mason the schoolmistress [*of the Girls' School since about 1852*] and myself. These presents consisted of - 1st. To Miss Mason - a time piece and a purse containing 25 sovereigns. 2nd. To myself - a gold watch and Albert chain with compass as appendage. This was the result of a subscription originating among the parents of children attending the schools but also liberally supported by the Managers and others who are interested in the success of the schools. The concert was given gratuitously by a number of ladies and gentlemen, mostly from Kendal, and the Presentation was made during the interval by Alexander Milne Esq."

There still exists (see endnote 18) the list of subscribers for the presentation and on it is inscribed, "...by the following Friends, as a token of their esteem for his valued labours as Master of Levens School, for 15 years". There follows a list containing 143 names, their order reflecting the hierarchy of the time, starting with The Honourable Mary Howard, descending via her nephew General The Honourable Arthur Upton, then William H. Wakefield Esq. and the other landowners, then the clergy, followed by ordinary people and ending with "A Friend".

What were his "valued labours" worth? We only have figures for the period 1868 to 1883 (though the 1883 figures may not be complete). For all those years, except for 1868 and 1869, they identify what was basic salary and what extra was earned by way of performance, where he received Govt. "Drawing Grant" (from 1869 onwards) and, from 1870, half the exam/attendance grant, and then, where relevant, a grant based on the success of the Pupil Teacher. During the 13 years 1870 to 1882 (inclusive) his total pay was £1,516.74 of which £466.79 (31%) was performance related. Although I have not found a definitive authority, I believe that the payment-by-results system was discontinued in the late 1890s.

When George retired on 31st December 1899, The local correspondent wrote in the Westmorland Gazette "Much regret is felt at the loss the Boys' School is sustaining by the resignation of Mr. Stabler, the much respected headmaster, who, for the long period of 39 years, has most efficiently and conscientiously presided over the school....".

In the edition of 8th Jan 1910 the Westmorland Gazette carried an obituary which stated "...Mr. Stabler came to Levens about 1860 and was for 40 years the highly respected village schoolmaster, and many of his old scholars have been remarkably successful - at least two.....became M.P.'s, another is the King's Factor at Balmoral and many others have distinguished themselves in various callings.....Expressions of sorrow are heard on every hand, and great sympathy is felt with his widow, three sons and daughter....".

The writer of the obituary in the Kendal Mercury and Times of 14th January 1910, who had started at George's school in April 1870 aged 6, paid this tribute, "He was a fine specimen of what a village schoolmaster can be and of how far-reaching and beneficent an influence he can wield.....In School he was a strict but kindly disciplinarian, exact in method and thorough in results. He widened our outlook by continual reference to the topics of the day.....he set a high-toned and inflexible standard of morality by personal conduct and enforced it not only in the school but outside.....It was only after one had passed from his control and left the village, that one realised how potent a force he had been for good....Among all who passed through his hands....there is not one but will feel he has lost a friend...."<sup>30</sup>.

The MPs mentioned above were Thomas and John Bethel, two of the five Bethell brothers who attended the school in the 1870s. They both achieved Knighthoods and John entered the House of Lords as the first Baron Romford in 1922. The Bethells' story was the subject of Levens Local History Group Newsletter no. 5 in 2008<sup>31</sup>.

The King's factor was John Michie, one of the sons of David Michie, an itinerant Scottish gamekeeper

and former poacher. David Michie was gamekeeper at Levens Hall for a period in the 1860s<sup>32</sup>, and John was one of George's pupils, along with his three younger brothers. George and John corresponded in later years, with George visiting John's home at Balmoral on at least two occasions. One of the other Michie brothers, David, became a tea-planter in Ceylon and is known to have travelled to Levens to visit George in 1889, on one of his rare home leaves<sup>33</sup>.

## GEORGE'S SIBLINGS

George had two sisters, Hannah (b1842) and Mary (b. c1845)<sup>34</sup>. He had no brothers.

As Hannah was part of his life as a schoolmaster and Mary appears to have gone a separate way in her own life quite early on, we will deal with the little we know about Mary first.

By the time of the 1861 census Mary, aged 15, was staying with her aunt Elizabeth Compton in Welburn. I assume Mary lived with Mrs. Compton because she was still there at the time of the 1871 census, aged 25, along with her aunt's nephew the 72 year old cabinet maker, Thomas Jefferson<sup>35</sup>.

Mary's next appearance in the census is something of a puzzle. In 1881 a Mary Bielby, schoolteacher, aged 35, born in Welburn, is recorded in James Stabler's house as his daughter. Also in that house is "son-in-law" John G. Bielby, builder, aged 36, born in Welburn. The enumerator's writing is clear. However, John wasn't her husband, he was called Tom.

Although a John Gray Bielby existed<sup>36</sup> and was probably Tom's younger brother, research carried out by Angela Cox in Welburn parish records suggests that the census enumerator mistook the name and wrote "John" by a mistake. The records show that Tom Gray Bielby, aged 35, builder of Welburn, son of Robert Bielby, joiner, married Mary Stabler, spinster, daughter of James Stabler, shoemaker, on 1st July 1880. The witnesses were George and Hannah Stabler.

Tom and Mary had one son, Laurence Stabler Bielby, baptised on 5th November 1882<sup>37</sup>.

The 1891 census records Tom, Mary, Laurence and Tom's brother Harry Webster Bielby, a joiner aged 28 at the same Welburn address.

In the 1901 census the same group of Bielbys appear as a household and by this time Laurence, aged 18, was described as a Pupil Teacher.

Tom Gray Bielby was buried in Welburn on 20th March 1902, aged 57, By 1911 the widowed Mary had moved to Levens and the census for that year shows her living in Woodside Cottage, next door to her sister Hannah. Mary lived to the age of 79 and was buried in Welburn on 24th July 1924<sup>38</sup>.

Hannah Stabler came to Levens with her brother, and in the 1861 census is recorded as being 19 years of age and "housekeeper" at the School House. For the rest of her life she lived in Levens, and in late 1869 became Infants Teacher. The surviving school accounts<sup>39</sup> show her as having collected the school pence from the infants, for the first time, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The last person to collect them before Hannah was Sarah Wilson, on 13th July 1869. The accounts record Hannah as being paid an annual salary of £25 on 30th December 1869.

The surviving log-book for the Infants' School starts in March 1880<sup>40</sup>, by which date Hannah was a certificated teacher (third class), but where she qualified is unknown.

Hannah remained as Mistress of the Infants' school until she retired on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1906<sup>41</sup>, when she was presented with a basket of flowers by Theodosia Bagot. It is rather touching that a photograph of this present was turned into a postcard, a surviving copy of which Hannah inscribed to her nephew Edgar. In

September 1907, when the boys', girls' and infant's schools combined in the present premises, the infants mistress was Maria Just, who in her turn, remained until 1947.

George was married on 14th July 1869, and by the time of the 1871 census Hannah was living in the cottage provided for the Mistress of the Girls' School (now Beech Cottage). Here she was described as "partner", the head of the household being Miss Margaret Mason, aged 53, who had been mistress of the Girls' School since c1852. In 1881 Hannah was still there as a "boarder", and in 1891 as "joint" (head?). In the Girls' School log-book<sup>42</sup> there is an entry on 13th November 1891, "The schoolmistress (*Miss Margaret Duff - 1890 to 1895*) was obliged to go to Kendal to buy some requisites for the school house, as the Managers have assigned the house, with coals, to her so long as Miss Stabler lives with her; failing which she is to pay a rent of £5-0-0d".

By 1901 Hannah lived on her own at No. 2 Hill Top (later known as 2 Woodside Cottages and now called Appletree Cottage) and the Girls' Schoolmistress' house was occupied by Annie Owen<sup>43</sup>. Miss Mason had died in October 1891, having only retired in 1890, at the age of 74<sup>44</sup>.

The 1911 census shows Hannah, a "Teacher's Pensioner" living on her own in a four roomed house. She gave her address in the old manner, merely "Levens, Milnthorpe, Westmorland", though doubtless it was still Hill Top.

We have precious little information about Hannah Stabler but hope to make a more thorough attempt to give a proper account of her life. For the time being, here are a couple of extracts from the HMI reports recorded in the Infants' School logbook - From the 1901 inspection, "The school is fairly well managed. The Mistress works hard and uses intelligent methods of instruction, but is quite alone". Actually, that wasn't quite true as Sarah Stabler regularly took the singing lesson, and from June 1894 Miss Smith made more and more frequent appearances in the log, taking classes for reading and arithmetic. Miss Smith was one of the two daughters of the Vicar of Levens, The Revd. Arthur Smith, she does not seem to have been a certified teacher and it appears that her time was given voluntarily. From the 1903 HMI report, "The Infants are bright and happy, and, except in number which is weak, have made as much progress as could be expected".

Hannah outlived her brother by over 17 years. Her death, aged 75, occurred at her sister-in-law's home, South View, on the 23rd June 1917. A short obituary in the Westmorland Gazette of 30<sup>th</sup> June recorded that at her funeral "many of those present were old scholars", and that "the choir attended out of respect for such an indefatigable church worker". Her grave is in Levens churchyard. Her death was registered by her sister, Mary Bielby, recorded as residing at Hill Side, Levens<sup>45</sup>.

### **GEORGE'S WIFE - SARAH STABLER**

On 14th July 1869 George Stabler (Bachelor and Schoolmaster aged 29) was married to Sarah Wilson (Spinster, age 22, with no occupation stated) of Beathwaite Green at St. John's Church, Levens, by the Vicar, the Revd. Arthur J. Smith in the presence of Hannah Stabler and Joseph A Martindale (whom we will meet later).

The Marriage Certificate<sup>46</sup> records the name and occupation of George's father, but the spaces for Sarah's are blank. This was no help to me in finding out who Sarah was, and both her Christian and Surnames are common for the period and the area.

In searching censuses for a Sarah Wilson born about 1847 I came up with two possibilities: there was a Sarah Wilson, aged 4, born in Heversham (the parish that Levens was in at that time), in the 1851 census, living at the Royal Oak Inn, granddaughter of John Wilson of that address. She wasn't there in the 1861 census, but in that one a Sarah Wilson, aged 14 and born in Heversham, was living as a "boarder" in the household of Miss Mason (the Levens Girls' Schoolmistress). We know from the school cash book that a



Sarah Wilson was paid as an "assistant" (£25 per year) in the Girls' School in 1868/69, and that her last appearance in that book was on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1869 when she collected the school pence from the infants and handed them over to the School Managers.

No Sarah Wilson can be found in Levens in the 1871 census so the logical assumptions were that she gave up her job when she married George, and that she was the same girl who lodged with Miss Mason in April 1861 and who lived with her grandfather at the Royal Oak in 1851. But were these assumptions safe, and who was her father?

The situation was complicated by the fact that in the second quarter of 1847 the births of two children named Sarah Wilson were registered in Kendal. The other one was presumably the child listed in the 1851 census as the daughter of John Wilson, a farmer living in Helm Side, Stainton, Crosscrake, which is not far from Levens. Might she have been the Sarah Wilson "boarding" in Miss Mason's house, and the Assistant at the infants' school?

The clues to unravelling this were in the later censuses for Levens, which in 1881, recorded an Agnes Wilson, aged 57, born in Levens, and the unmarried daughter of a retired farmer, at George Stabler's house as an "aunt". Tracking back to the 1851 Levens census, we find Agnes at the Royal Oak as John Wilson's daughter. Ah! I thought, here we have a bit of hypocrisy, Sarah was Agnes' "natural" child.

At this point I paid for the birth certificates of the two Sarah Wilson's<sup>47</sup>. When they arrived, one of them was for Sarah Wilson, daughter of Agnes Wilson and John Wilson, born Stainton 31st March 1847 and the other was for Sarah Wilson, born 22nd February 1847 at Levens, daughter of Margaret Wilson of Levens, father's name not recorded - back to the Royal Oak in 1851; no Margaret Wilson. But there was one in the 1841 census aged 19, as well as Agnes aged 17. I was unable to follow Margaret through any subsequent census, but Agnes is unstained and I'm confident we have the right Sarah Wilson. Her date of birth is borne out by the inscription on her gravestone. The other Sarah Wilson was still unmarried in 1871, employed as a storekeeper, by her uncle, Henry Douglas, the Governor of Leeds Workhouse (1871 census). Subsequent research has revealed that Margaret Wilson went on to marry a local husbandman, one Leonard Clement, a former employee of her father, on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1850<sup>48</sup>.

There is very little information to glean about Sarah's married life. George and Sarah had 5 children. The firstborn son, James, born in the third quarter of 1870, died on 12th November 1873. His father made this poignant entry in the school log-book on 14th November, " Since Monday of this week the school has been taught by the Pupil Teacher (J.H.Bateman) owing to the illness and death of my eldest son, James". The cause of death was recorded as "Cynanche Trachealis 3½ days"<sup>49</sup>. In modern terms, he succumbed to an acute attack of Croup. He was buried in Heversham churchyard on 15th November 1873 (Heversham Burials Register, KRO). There is no record of a stone or inscription.

Harold Stabler was born on 10th June 1872; another son, Edgar, on 11th September 1874; the final son, Oswald on 27th November 1875, and a daughter Bertha Elizabeth on 23rd May 1878<sup>50</sup>. After obeying the familial conventions of the time with naming James, George and Sarah seem to have followed the late nineteenth century fashion for using names from English history before the Norman conquest.

We get domestic glimpses of Sarah almost by accident. George's friend Joseph Anthony Martindale was an almost exact contemporary and also had a wife and, altogether, seven children. Martindale was a frequent visitor at Stabler's house and vice-versa as they shared a passion for botany. Phones not yet being invented, they wrote to each other frequently and although we don't have George's letters, we do have some of Martindale's (see endnote 9). Other letters quoted below are from the same collection.

We don't know what Sarah looked like, but John Michie, a former pupil of George's, writing on 28 December 1882 thanked George for "Mrs. Stabler's portrait, which must be like, the expression is so de-

cided, and we shall be careful to preserve it as well as your own, I have not yet got taken in the Highland dress but when this takes place you must have a copy. My wife.....sends with the mosses the recipe Mrs. Stabler desired." I wonder what "expression so decided" meant?

Michie had become Queen Victoria's Forester in Scotland and was later Factor (business manager) for the Royal estates in Scotland for Edward VII and subsequently George V<sup>51</sup>.

More tangibly, edibles were exchanged. On 28th February 1892 Michie wrote, "The Plums did come, were a great treat....", and Michie repeatedly sent salmon and venison to George via the parcel post. It was quick in those days.

Martindale wrote on 20th March 1875, "Mrs. M. begs me to thank Mrs. Stabler for the eggs. They all arrived safely and were much enjoyed". Other consumable items were sent - On 8th April 1889, "P.S. Thank Mrs. Stabler for sending the honey, it arrived safely". On illness' of their children, on 1st November 1880, "How is your little girl (*Bertha*) I hope that by this the disease has begun to go back." The school log for 3 Dec. mentions the presence of (scarlet) fever.

Sarah seems to have impressed the botanist William Henry Pearson when he visited George in June of 1881 and went on a collecting excursion with him, which seems to have been the occasion of the discovery of Stabler's Rustwort, a world first, on Bow Fell. Afterwards he wrote (15th June). "I hardly know how to thank you sufficiently for your kindness to me and the kindness of your dear wife".

Did Sarah just put up with George's botanical enthusiasm or did she actually take part. Prof. Ian Hodgkinson thinks that one of the 9 varieties of ferns whose discovery is attributed to George Stabler was actually discovered by Sarah<sup>52</sup>.

Sarah was George's amanuensis when his eyesight problems left him unable to write letters as on 2nd February 1889, Martindale wrote to George, "...please ask Mrs. Stabler to let us know how you are", and she did.

Like Richard Spruce's father, George sometimes turned to his family for help in the school when illness prevented him from carrying out all his duties. On 15th February 1895 he wrote in the log-book "....Mrs. Stabler and Bertha Stabler have lately been giving considerable assistance in school".

Sarah also helped regularly in the Infants' School where it seems she was more musical than her sister-in-law - 4th February 1881, "This week the usual singing lessons have not been given owing to Mrs. Stabler having a cold." On 13th September 1881, "Taught words of school songs instead of Singing lessons". The same again on 3rd November and 24 November with the reason confirmed on 18th November, "No singing this week. Mrs. Stabler unable to come through sickness". Similar entries show that Sarah regularly took the infants singing up to at least April 1900 and then as a stand-in for her daughter Bertha, who had been assisting since May 1898. Sarah's last recorded appearance in this role was in September 1905.

Sarah also helped in the girl's school. The log-book entry for 8th October 1883 records her as taking a class in needlework. The entry for 6th March 1885 notes that "Owing to Mrs. Stabler being sick there has been no singing the last three weeks", an absence which also affected the infants' school.

In pursuit of his botanical activities, George kept contact with John Michie, persuading Michie to collect specimens on his behalf. George made at least two field trips to Balmoral, staying with Michie and his family at their home "Danzig Sheil" in July 1884 and again in 1894. The tone of Michie's 1884 letters might just suggest that perhaps Sarah had accompanied George on that trip: at any rate, Sarah sent, perhaps made, a garment for Michie's daughter Annie - 6th January 1885, "My wife in Annie's name returns Mrs. Stabler her best thanks for the kind present....".

In August 1889, Michie visited George at Levens and was evidently presented with some souvenirs, for he wrote on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August that following his safe arrival home at about 8 p.m. the previous Saturday, "...the precious ferns were carefully 'heeled' in that night".

On 4th June 1890, Michie wrote enclosing some bird' eggs and fungi "for your young folks collection....please open the box carefully" and on 31 May 1893, "'My eldest boy David is just home from school and deep in Master Oswald's list of eggs.'" Evidently Oswald Stabler had compiled a list of birds' eggs in his collection and GS had sent it onwards.

It is due to Michie that we know that Sarah suffered from rheumatism (letters of 4th April and 8th May 1885).

In his will dated 10th April 1908, George made legacies to "my Daughter" and to each of his "said Sons" but the provision he made for Sarah was to "my dear wife". It is a conventional enough expression, but we have nothing else with which to gauge the warmth of their relationship.

Sarah outlived her husband by 13 years: she died on 18th June 1923. She was 76 years old<sup>53</sup>. She is buried in Levens churchyard, unlike her husband who died before 1913 when St. John's, Levens, was licensed for burials.

## **GEORGE'S CHILDREN**

All the surviving four went through the Levens schools, starting, between 3 and 3½ years of age, in the Infants' School.

We know next to nothing about their childhood years and that the census of 1881 records them all, except Bertha, as "scholars". We know from the John Michie letters that Oswald at least was interested in collecting bird's eggs. In 1888 Levens started an annual flower/horticultural show and doubtless George was one of the driving forces. A newspaper report of the 1890 event shows all members of the family winning first or second prizes, George for "British ferns" (first of course) as well as hardy perennials, his wife for red currants, the boys for various fruits and vegetables, and the 12 year-old Bertha also winning the classes for "cress on Flannel" and "Wild flowers (greatest variety). This report gives a rare glimpse of the life of George's sister, Hannah; she won the parsley class and was second in "brown eggs"<sup>54</sup>.

All three boys went to Heversham Grammar School, and all seem to have been able scholars, as is recorded in the reports of the annual prize-giving published in the local press, Oswald being commended for Arithmetic, Algebra and R.E (then termed Divinity), Edgar for Latin and English, and Harold for Maths and Latin (see Anon- Prize Day at Heversham Grammar School, Lancaster Gazette 4<sup>th</sup> August 1888, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1890, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1891. On the last of these occasions the report includes George and Sarah as among those present at the ceremony).

The 1891 census has them all still at home, but by this time Harold, aged 19 was a "Woodcarver's Apprentice", Edgar, aged 16, a "Chemist's Apprentice", Oswald, 15 was a "Scholar", as was Bertha.

In 1901 Bertha was the only one of the four still in her parent's home, which was now at the house then, as now, named South View (Levens) as George had retired in 1900 and vacated the School House.

George had bought the two, tenanted, semi-detached, cottages at South View in November 1895 for £213 from Mary Ann Fawcett (born Mary Ann Thexton in Wisconsin U.S.A., a resident of Beathwaite Green by 1878, and by 1895 emigrated with her tailor husband to Gisborne, New Zealand) and had them knocked into one<sup>55</sup>. South View was to remain in the Stabler family for over 60 years and was the residence of Oswald Stabler at the time of his death in 1956.

## Oswald

In the 1901 census we find Oswald, a single man, living as a "lodger" at Milton Moor Farm, Preston Richard, John Inman (Farmer) head of household. Oswald, 25 years old, is described as being a "Highways Superintendent and Sanitary Inspector", We know that in 1899 he was working as a surveyor for South Westmorland District Council, because the minutes of Holme Parish Council, as reported in the Westmorland Gazette on 14th January 1899, referred all question regarding the "improper condition of the roads" to "the District Council's surveyor, Mr Stabler"<sup>56</sup>.

The 1911 census (at [www.1911census.co.uk](http://www.1911census.co.uk)) recorded Oswald Stabler, aged 34, born "Westmorland, Levens" as a "boarder" at an address in Moss Side in Manchester. His occupation was given as "Land Agent, Surveyor, Student" but the columns for recording his employment status and whether working at home were not filled in, presumably he wasn't working. This situation, together with the contrast in occupations recorded in the 1901 and 1911 censuses, suggests a man who had the misfortune of finding it difficult to settle to anything.

There are numerous anecdotes in Levens about Oswald's eccentric behaviour and appearance. Larry Walling, who had known Oswald in the late 1940s and 1950s, used these terms, "an eccentric...and if Oswald ever got a bee in his bonnet he stuck to his guns"<sup>57</sup>. This terrier-like attachment to an issue is exemplified by the fact that he seems to have been the only person who who objected to South Westmorland Rural District Council using Sizergh Quarry as a source of roadstone for use anywhere in their district, when it was supposed only to be used within the parish of Levens. Oswald repeatedly raised the issue with Levens Parish Council and eventually attended a Westmorland County Council meeting to complain, all to no avail<sup>58</sup>.

Anne Clarke recalls him as "a funny old man" and that as a little girl she was frightened of him<sup>59</sup>. and Gillian Wood told me that he used to have his trousers held up by binder twine and sometimes had a sack over his shoulders instead of a coat<sup>60</sup>, and would stand shaking his stick when we "used to go over the wall to nick his apples".

Tony Elliott of Levens<sup>61</sup> remembered him as an old man of slightly intimidating aspect, who went around in a long black coat or cape, who had a great interest in all sorts of wildlife especially birds' eggs, and who was also diligent in ensuring footpaths were kept clear of any obstructions.

John Taylor, who, as a child in the 1950s, lived across the road at Grey Mists, paints a similar picture. Though not frightened or alarmed by him, John was struck by Oswald's oddness, "...both in appearance and conversation. He walked in a very ungainly way, always in a large dark overcoat, summer and winter, with binder twine as a belt, and often with no trousers". Oswald had a habit of singing, "...very tunefully, to the birds, on summer evenings, and my parents often gardening, would stop and listen". He would frequently talk to John's mother about natural history and gave her a white foxglove plant, which she treasured. As a reciprocal kindness John's mother would cook Oswald small meals (he particularly liked black-currant pasties) and send him over to deliver them, whereupon he was witness to the case of stuffed birds and birds' egg collection chest looming out of the dark and damp interior of the house<sup>62</sup>.

Oswald's interest in birds and the state of the roads, and his occupation as a surveyor were confirmed by Marjorie Walkey, formerly Prickett, now of Evesham, but as a child living at Ivy Cottages, Levens. Mrs. Walkey thought that in the time that George Stabler was still alive, birds of prey were kept in the garden of South View, and she remembered that Oswald used to go bird-watching with Mr. Barnes of Earnseat School, Arnside. She also remembered that her mother was another who used to send meals over to him at South View and that he was very particular about what he ate, although living a somewhat "hermit"-like life in an unkempt house with an overgrown garden. It appears that it was not just food about which he was particular, Gill Wood told me that he used to go and get water from the public trough down oppos-

ite Spout House Farm as “he wouldn't have the water that came through the tap”.

Mrs. Walkey did not remember Oswald as intimidating, probably because he was a familiar figure in their household, entertaining the children with imitations of birdsong and drawing pictures of birds and bringing mice for the family cats. Other accomplishments are remembered: Anne Clarke's mother, the late Mary Steele, told her that Oswald was a very good pianist and singer, and that she used to play the piano for him so he could sing. Gill Wood remembers him as being well spoken and my wife remembers that Oswald frequently visited and conversed with her grandfather, Robert Newall (George Stabler's successor as schoolmaster), in the latter's retirement.

Looking for public sources of information more recent than 1911, I trawled, as a long-shot, the British Army First World War records available via Ancestry.co.uk. I found a Medal Index card, recording the service medals awarded to an Oswald Stabler, a private in the Liverpool Regiment who served in the Labour Corps. I felt confident that this was “our” Oswald for his experience as a road surveyor might have been relevant and although he would have been nearly 39 when the war broke out, the maximum age for conscription crept ever upwards as the manpower shortage intensified. Also, because of the rarity of his name, as the 1901 and 1911 censuses each contain only one Oswald Stabler. In later years this name was unusual enough to prompt enquiry, Mrs. Walkey remembered her father saying Oswald had told him that George Stabler had given his children the names of English kings<sup>63</sup>.

As it turned out, Oswald must have volunteered because conscription began in early 1916 and he attested (undertook to enlist when called upon) on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1915. The two attestation forms he signed then are proof positive of his identity: he is the same person as the one on the Medal Index card (the regimental numbers tie up). The forms record him as a single man aged 40, “Estate Agent & Surveyor”, living at 96 Lloyd St., Chorlton-on-Medlock. The occupation ties this Oswald Stabler to the one in the 1911 census, but more conclusive is a barely discernible address, “71 Wilmslow Rd Didsbury”, scribbled in a corner of one of the forms. This is an address that was occupied throughout the relevant period by his brother Edgar.

Of his eccentricity there is no doubt, of its causes we can only speculate. Gill Wood thinks that her father told her Oswald had been invalided out of the army due to shell-shock, a view which is echoed in the memories of a family who were closely associated with Edgar Stabler - “Oswald returned from the 1914/18 war mentally battered and became a recluse”<sup>64</sup>. Perhaps though, the war was not the whole cause. Anne Clarke thinks he was “almost over the limit, he was brilliant and it tipped the balance...they were a very intelligent family”. With the death of his mother in 1923, Oswald had no close family still living in Levens and the life of the recluse and hoarder seems to have gradually accreted to his persona. When he died South View was “...full of accumulated bits and bobs. His clothes were circa 1900, and the place was crammed with what would have been valuable antiques if it had not been for the wood-worm, wet rot and rust.”<sup>65</sup>. This description of the state of affairs at South View is echoed in reminiscences of the Stabler family written by Mark Pond, a relative of Edgar's wife Mabel, which I reproduce in full in Appendix 1.

John Taylor knew Oswald as a “...slight acquaintance, but one which nevertheless stays with me because of his strangeness and eccentricity, his kindness and the fact that even then, he seemed to me very much a man from a 'bygone era’”<sup>66</sup>.

Oswald Stabler, died on 5th August 1956 at South View aged 80, his occupation was recorded as "Retired Road Surveyor" and his death was registered by "Jane Looker, Cousin, The Square Levens"<sup>67</sup> (Jane Looker was born Jane Clement, she was a granddaughter of Leonard and Margaret Clement).

Oswald left an estate valued at £541-11s-11d. gross. In his will, he left £5 each to his two executors, J.A.G Barnes of Earnseat School, Arnside, and William Bush, £10 to the Bay View Hospital, Lancaster,

towards the provision of headphones for "wireless reception in the male patients wards", and directed everything be sold and the proceeds put into trust for his niece Phyllis Stabler. J.A.G. Barnes was a grandson of George Stabler's friend, James Martindale Barnes. The family friendship had outlived, by over half a century, those who had originally formed it.

It was a consequence of Oswald's death that brought George's vast collection of botanical material to Kendal Museum. Amongst the mass of possessions cramming South View were the precious brown envelopes containing the specimens. South View passed into the hands of Annie Chadwick (née Auken, see notes on Edgar Stabler below). Mrs. Chadwick had no interest in owning it and sold it to her daughter Daisy Pond, who in 1957, on clearing the house, donated the collection to Kendal Museum, on whose behalf it was gratefully received by Alfred Wainwright, Kendal Borough Treasurer and prolific author of ramblers' guides to the Lakes.

### **Harold**

In the 1901 census, Harold, aged 28 was recorded as a "boarder" at 37 Northumberland Terrace, Everton, in the household of Richard B. Rathbone whose occupation was recorded as "Design Art in Metals", "Employer". Harold was recorded as having the same occupation, but he was a "worker".

In his childhood Harold must have displayed a considerable artistic interest and ability for after leaving Heversham school, he had been apprenticed to the Kendal wood-turner Arthur Simpson, and trained in stone and wood carving at Kendal School of Art, where he obtained his Teacher's Certificate.

In his letter of 25th February 1892, John Michie had asked George "how does your son take to his wood carving?.....". Evidently quite well. Harold's skills were recognised early and he ran the Simpson's summer school at Gill Head, Windermere. At some time he became known to John Ruskin. In 1898 he came to the attention of Mrs Edith Rawnsley, the wife of Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, a founder of the National Trust, who had also founded and managed the Keswick School of Industrial Art.

Harold left Simpsons and became the Keswick School's first permanent Director. He stayed less than two years, but was highly influential in its metal work and designs, raising the public profile of the School, and continuing to promote it after he left.

In early 1900 he went to join Richard Llewellyn Rathbone at the metalwork department of the Liverpool School of Art, where he met his wife, Phoebe McCleish<sup>68</sup>, the daughter of one of his pupils. He followed Rathbone to London in about 1902 where he taught and became head of the Department of Arts and Crafts at the John Cass Technical Institute (1907-1937), and also at the Royal College of Art (1912-1926). Harold married Phoebe in 1906. they had no children, but left a large legacy of artistic and design achievement. Phoebe was already a noted ceramic figure modeller when they married, and in 1912, they set up a business in their home, The Mall, Hammersmith where they became a very successful design partnership, working together on many projects<sup>69</sup>.

Whilst Harold's skill was, primarily, in working metals, including gold and silver, and in producing jewellery, their pooled skills meant that they became one of the most prominent and important design partnerships of the early and mid twentieth century, but they also maintained their individual artistic applications. Among Harold's commissions was the Ascot Gold Cup.

Phoebe is best known for her figures and the business skill she demonstrated by franchising her designs to the mass-producers of the day. Her 'The Picardy Peasant' was licensed to Royal Doulton from 1911 to 1938 whilst being produced by Poole Pottery during part of this period. Again 'The Madonna of the Square' was licensed to Royal Doulton in 1913, and again to Poole Pottery in 1920, where it was named 'The Lavender Woman'. Her model, 'Shy', was simultaneously produced as a ceramic, and as a lead statue by the Bromsgrove Guild. She obtained similar agreements with the Ashted and Royal Worcester potter-

ies. They were leaders in the movement for better British design and founders of what became famous as Poole Pottery.

I do not know if, or to what extent, Harold inherited his father's botanical interests, so perhaps it was Harold's prominence in the the arts, as much as George's enduring reputation, that caused the minutes of the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the British Pteridological Society (held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1939, at the George Hotel, Chard, Somerset) to record that "Mr. H. Stabler attended as a visitor"<sup>70</sup>.

Harold Stabler, "Artist", at 34 Upper Mall W6 (Hammersmith) was in the London phone book until 1945. For the curious, his phone number was RIVerside 3301.

Harold died on 11th April 1945. Phoebe lived until 1955<sup>71</sup>.

I did not see Oswald Stabler's will or the 1911 census until 2009. Until then it was only from Phoebe's will (made in 1952) that I knew that George and Sarah had a grandchild. Phoebe left £500 to "my late husband's niece Phyllis Stabler". Phyllis got more than Phoebe's brother-in-law Oswald, who was to receive £25. When Harold made a new will six days before his death, he had left everything (valued for probate at £11,675) to Phoebe with the proviso "I hope that she will ultimately dispose of the rest of my property in the way that she knows I would like".

Phyllis was Edgar Stabler's daughter.

### **Edgar**

We left Edgar as a "Chemist's Apprentice" in the 1891 census for Levens. He was elsewhere on the occasion of the 1901 census for there was an Edgar Stabler, "Chemist's Assistant", aged 26, a "boarder" in the household of John R. Barrett, "Chemist and "Employer" of Leamington Spa. This Edgar Stabler was the right age but his birthplace was recorded as Leamington.

According to the Museum of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Edgar passed the 'minor' examination of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain in 1896 and the 'major' examination in 1898<sup>72</sup>.

Ancestry.co.uk's database can't come up with another Edgar Stabler in the 1901 census, so I thought that "our" Edgar might well be the one in Leamington. I think the chemist connection is confirmation. An Edgar Stabler, "Pharmaceutical Chemist", of 71 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, had a phone number from 1910 onwards (Didsbury 1186). The entries continued until 1951 although the address became 727 Wilmslow Rd. This Edgar was definitely George's son. In George's will, Edgar, of "71 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury...Chemist and Druggist" was named as Executor, together with Harold, but not Oswald. In 1923, when Edgar registered his mother's death, his address was given as "Langdale, Beaver Road, Didsbury".

Edgar may have taken after his father in having an interest in botany as there is a report in the "Naturalist" journal of March 1896, contributed by George, to the effect that a "beautiful specimen" of the Butterfly orchid was found on 16th June 1895 by Edgar Stabler in Brigsteer Wood.

Edgar married Mabel May Whitby on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1908 at St. James', Wardleworth, in the centre of Rochdale. Edgar's address was recorded as 253 Wellington Road, Stockport and his occupation as "Pharmaceutical Chemist". Mabel was 27 and lived at 5 Elliott Street, Rochdale. Her occupation was given as "Stewardess" and that of her father, John Whitby, as "Road Foreman"<sup>73</sup>. The censuses help us piece together Mabel's background. Three years later, in the 1911 census we find Edgar Stabler, Pharmaceutical Chemist, aged 33, living at 71 Wilmslow Rd. with his wife of two years, Mabel May (29 years old), his daughter Phyllis aged one, and his niece Ellen Whitby Auken aged 18. Both wife and niece are shown as having been born in Norfolk, Mabel in Harpley, and Ellen in West Rudham. 1891 census records for

Harpley, Norfolk show a Mabel Whitby aged 9 in the household of her parents John and Rebekah Whitby: John worked as a railway labourer. The 1901 census places Mabel aged 19, as a domestic servant in Stockport in the household of her uncle and aunt John and Catherine Beckham. John Beckham was described as a “club steward”, hence the 1908 description of Mabel's occupation as “Stewardess”. Catherine Beckham was probably John Whitby's younger sister.

Phyllis who was born in late 1909<sup>74</sup>, seems to have been their only child, and George Stabler's sole grand-child.

Until I made contact with John Chadwick, a relative of Mabel Stabler<sup>75</sup>, the only other scrap of information I had unearthed was a report, in the Westmorland Gazette of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1920, of the 27<sup>th</sup> Levens Flower Show held in Levens Hall grounds. Oswald Stabler won 2 firsts in the Horticultural section and Edgar won the bowls competition. John Chadwick (see endnote 64) wrote that Edgar was a very good shot and once won a barrel of beer in a shooting competition at a country fair, and being a teetotaler, swapped it for a pig; he also related that all the Stabler brothers maintained contact with the Chadwicks, to the extent that Harold made a silver model of the Coronation chair (presumably 1937) as a wedding present for John's mother, who knew Phoebe Stabler well.

Edgar Stabler, retired Pharmaceutical Chemist, aged 82, died at 45 Scarisbrick New Road, Southport on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1958. His death was registered by his great niece Elsie Chadwick<sup>76</sup>. The probate document gives his home and former addresses as respectively, 17 Westbourne Road, Birkdale, and 68 Cambridge Road Southport. The will, dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 1956 gives Edgar's address as 68 Cambridge Rd.. Edgar left all his estate (gross value £9,650) to Phyllis, who evidently lived with him. Her own will, signed on the same day as her father's, has the same address for her residence.

John Chadwick's recollections paint a sombre picture of the later years of Edgar's life. Phyllis, he says, was well-educated and a fair pianist, but was very unstable, deteriorating as she got older, and that after Mabel died Phyllis became “difficult”, Edgar found it increasingly difficult to cope, and became very withdrawn and solitary. He gave up driving about 1946, by which time both his house in Didsbury and his appearance were unkempt, and soon afterwards Phyllis and he moved to Balmoral Drive Southport. It was at this address that he collapsed, suffering from a strangulated hernia, in 1955 at which date the house was “virtually unfit for habitation as no housework had been done for years, if ever.” At this point, after Edgar had come out of hospital, the Chadwick's took him and Phyllis in to their home at 68 Cambridge Road, Southport, and Edgar, although he had been extremely ill, did recover. Phyllis' condition deteriorated and becoming violent towards Mrs. Chadwick, she was confined to a secure nursing home in Hastings. Edgar continued to be looked after by the Chadwicks and moved with them to 17 Westbourne Road where he remained until his death. John Chadwick relates that it was during this period that Edgar taught him how to make gunpowder, with dramatic results, John blew off the shed roof. It is quite moving to hear that, even when afflicted by dementia, Edgar could still “identify any obscure plant, and give you full details of its history”.

Phyllis' death certificate gives her occupation as “pharmacist”, but the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has no record of her being qualified. I am left to assume that she remained at home with her parents and possibly helped in her father's shop until he retired sometime in the mid 1950s<sup>77</sup>. Her mother had died in late 1938<sup>78</sup> aged 57. Other than what John Chadwick has related I know virtually nothing about Phyllis' life, but she seems to have had a love of music. In her will (written in November 1956) she left her Bechstein piano, her piano stool and her music to Peter Pond, a cousin of John Chadwick, but her “freehold cottage South View Levens” was to go to an Annie Chadwick<sup>79</sup>. Phyllis died of a stroke, on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1978, at Barrington House Nursing Home in Hastings.

## **Bertha**

We have a little knowledge about Bertha Elizabeth. The censuses record her in her parents' home in 1901,



and her widowed mother's household (together with her 87 year old great aunt, Agnes Wilson) in 1911, when she was 32 and her occupation was given as "living at home". We must suppose, that like many daughters before and since, she stayed at home to look after her parents.

We have seen that she helped Hannah in the infants' school, and there is an entry in the Girls' School log on 29th March 1903 which states, "Bertha Stabler took charge of the school from today, because I was obliged to be absent owing to the illness of my little girl". I don't know who made this entry as it was a temporary teacher who did not record her name in the log book. Whoever it was had taken over the school on 26th February after it had been closed for three weeks owing to the illness of the schoolmistress Miss Eleanor Davies, whose resignation was noted a few day's later. Annie Owen took permanent charge on 18th April.

Bertha is also recorded as having helped out at the boy's school in an absence occasioned by George's poor health. In the log-book entry for 15th February 1895 he recorded, "...Mrs. Stabler and Bertha Stabler have lately been giving considerable assistance in school'. On 5th December 1899 George wrote "...during this period Mr. Newall, the Assistant Master was assisted by Bertha E. Stabler".

In Kendal Museum (see endnote 18) there is a cutting from an unknown newspaper, regarding a case at the Ulverston County Court in which a Miss Edith Clegg, Church Organist, sued the Churchwardens of Bardsea Church, with the Vicar, the Revd. J.T.Hindley as third party, for the payment of salary and services rendered during a period when, after the expiry of the wardens' term of office, no new wardens had been sworn in. I presume that George was interested in this because Bertha was herself a church organist. Her gravestone attests to the fact that she was organist at St. John's, Levens, for fourteen years. The organ had been "opened" on 8th November 1883 with a half holiday for the infants and girls, the Boys' School already being closed due to an outbreak of measles.

Bertha Elizabeth Stabler, of "Levens, Milnthorpe, Westmorland, Spinster, Organist and Music Teacher", aged 38, died from Tubercular Peritonitis on 16 February 1917 at the Liverpool Royal Infirmary<sup>80</sup>. She is buried in Levens churchyard.

Her obituary in the Westmorland Mercury is worth quoting in full as it gives an insight into an otherwise undocumented life.

"The death took place at the Royal Infirmary, Liverpool, on Friday of Miss Bertha E. Stabler, aged 38, only daughter of the late Mr. George Stabler and Mrs. Stabler of Levens. She had been in poor health for a considerable time but her indomitable spirit had kept her up and she managed to get about until just before going to the infirmary. She had been organist at Levens Church for a good many years, but latterly this duty had been done for her by Mr. J. D. Pennington. Like her late father she was a keen nature student and took a great delight in birds and flowers of all sorts. At one time or another she had as a pet a magpie and an owl and now her clever pet raven "Ralph" looks in vain for her return. For many years she was a member of Leasgill Choral Union, and much enjoyed the practices for the Festival. Though it was known she was very ill, the death came as a great shock to the village where she will be greatly missed. The funeral took place at Levens on Tuesday afternoon, when, in spite of the wet weather, there was a large number of mourners. The service was conducted by the Rev. E. U. Savage. The choir chanted the 90<sup>th</sup> Psalm, and the hymn "Now the labourer's task is o'er" was sung. As the body was carried from the church the choir sang the Nunc Dimittis. There were many floral tributes, including a beautiful wreath from the past and present members of the Levens Church choir"<sup>81</sup>.

## **GEORGE THE MAN**

What do we know about George beyond the factual detail of his origins, education, career and family?

The most complete and contemporary description of George was given by Joseph Anthony Barnes in his

obituary in the Kendal Mercury and Times on 14th January 1910. J.A.Barnes, the elder of the two sons of George's friend James Martindale Barnes of Greengate Cottage, Levens, had been a Wesleyan Methodist Minister and had instigated the building of the "new" Methodist Chapel in Levens, which opened in 1891. Although this concentrates on George's qualities as a schoolmaster and as a botanist, it does describe a man of broad interests and a wide ranging outlook, "He possessed a distinction of manner and speech and a range of interest that marked him as a cultured gentleman. His memory for personal details was remarkable. Mention the name of any public man or well-known scientist, and he could at once give you a complete outline of his career. I have rarely met a more interesting conversationalist.....In school.....He widened our outlook by continual reference to the topics of the day...".

It was not only former pupils with whom George could "get on with" in conversation. The rather cantankerous<sup>82</sup> Richard Spruce, writing to his friend Matthew Slater on 28th November 1880 said "Stabler gets on with parsons better than you or I can".

Although acknowledging that George was a disciplinarian, J.A.Barnes shows him in a rather different light, "In the playground he was a boy with his boys, taking the lead in cricket or any sport that was going". Cricket appears more than once in the log-book. On the 20th August 1869 there was a half-holiday for a school treat given by General Upton at Levens Hall. Obviously there was an "excellent tea" followed by games and "twenty two of the boys also played the Levens Club a game at and thereby won a ball. The boys won easily". George probably played for the boys, for in a similar match reported in the Westmorland Gazette on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1871, his absence was noted, with the hope that he would be "at his wonted place" in the return match "when there will be a probability of the boys coming off victorious". George had also taken the major part in the Levens Boy's School victory over Heversham Day Boys a week earlier. On that day, Mr. Milne, the Levens Hall Land Agent turned out for the Heversham team. George also played for Levens Club. The 7<sup>th</sup> October 1871 edition of the same paper carried a report of Levens losing to a team from Beetham. George didn't bowl and was out for a duck in the first innings: in the second he did better, not out 0.

I think he was quite a sociable character for I have noticed in the Westmorland Gazette a couple of reports of amateur concerts in Levens in which he sang both solo and in glees<sup>83</sup>. The Lancaster Gazette of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1874 records George as helping to supervise the sports which took place at Levens Hall on the occasion of the Milnthorpe Fair. A very well lubricated event, it sounds to have been.

George also took his pupils on the first recorded Levens school trip when, on 22nd September 1891 (school log-book) he "Took about 45 of the boys to the Kendal Arts and Crafts Exhibition. They were admitted at 1d each. In the afternoon - in addition to the paintings there was some excellent instrumental music". I wonder if the boys liked it better than Wombwell's Menagerie?

This seems to have been the exhibition at which George was awarded a medal for a collection of dried mosses, as John Michie mentioned when, on 25th February 1892 he wrote in response to George's letter of the end of the previous November. "...Very pleased to hear of your success at the late Kendal exhibition .....one thing I am certain of...that medal has been well deserved".

He was also interested in antiquities. The Westmorland Gazette reported in March 1867 that nine human skeletons had been discovered near Levens on Levens Hall land. Investigations had been made on behalf of the Rev. Canon Greenwell of Durham, by Mr. Barnes of Beathwaite Green and Mr. G.Stabler of Levens and "there seems no doubt that a very fine group of British burials in walled cists has been most wantonly destroyed...by the workmen.....". In the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9) there are 3 letters from Canon William Greenwell written between 24th December 1867 and 29th February 1868 concerning his desire to buy ancient British stone axe that George had told him about, with Greenwell writing on 27th December, "you can give Mr. Jones 10/- for the axe which seems a good specimen from your drawing. He certainly has good notions as to profit..."<sup>84</sup>.

As well as antiquities, there was history. Amongst his papers in Kendal Museum there is an envelope containing an undated manuscript of 14 quarto pages on "The Covenanters from 1630 to 1688". I have no idea why Stabler wrote this essay on the the seventeenth century Scottish political and ecclesiastical group's views, was he going to read it to some organisation?

There is also the undated newspaper clipping of Sir William B. Richmond R.A. giving the inaugural address at the opening of the "North British Academy of Arts exhibition in Newcastle, encouraging village industries which check the greatest evil in the country – the increasing traffic in poisonous drink..". I wonder what that tells us about George's opinions?

We know George had a garden in which, as well as his collection of ferns, he grew vegetables, as did most other people, but he was also keen on flowers.

Another undated scrap of paper in the same box is basically a 'things to do list' which got reused for botanical notes. It puts school duties in their place. Here is the order of tasks to be done, judging by some of them it would have been in very early spring, before anything was in leaf.

Clean and put mosses away,  
Work up the Registers and Log Bk,  
Prune Gooseberries and Fr. trees  
Clean the walks and beds.  
Smoke the Calceolaries  
Set up the potatoes to sprout  
Prune Roses and transplant  
draw out a new time-table.  
Write for portraits

The last item probably refers to the habit of many botanists of exchanging photographs of themselves with other botanists with whom they corresponded. It was a bit like collecting the autographs of people one admires. Amongst other matters in a letter George wrote to William Wilson on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1869 was a request for "your portrait" for his "small album containing a collection of botanists and botanical friends". Alas, that album has not survived, but perhaps a photo of George lies unseen in some other botanist's album in an archive somewhere. (*Note - subsequently one did turn up. Taken by J. H. Hogg of Kendal, in 1880 and kindly given to Levens Local History Group by Mark Pond (see Appendix 1)*).

We gather that George was interested in politics. A further undated newspaper clipping (see end-note 18) reports a speech of Joseph Chamberlain, the Liberal politician and opponent of free-trade, advocating that the House of Lords should oppose the Liberal government of Herbert Asquith in its tax reform programme and thereby force a general election. This was a hugely important issue in British politics and polarised opinion. Unfortunately although parts of the report are underlined in pencil this doesn't tell us where George's sympathies lay.

According to J.A.Barnes (op. cit.) George and his close friends Martindale and J.M.Barnes would meet, and after botany, "often drifted into arguments on political topics which lasted far into the night. Scraps of politics enter into some of the letters in the Robert Walker papers in the Kendal Record Office. On 6th June 1886 Martindale wrote, "The Home Rule bill has gone to limbo – let us hope it may be a long time before such another is presented to Parliament." Evidently Martindale was a Conservative.

John Michie also wrote to George about political events. On 20th November 1885, "Politics are in possession of the men of Deeside....I do not think for a moment the people of this quarter incapable of seeing the shortcomings of the late Govt, it is their dogid (sic) refusal to look – Having once espoused the Whig

cause they seem contented to follow Gladstone wherever led.” On 3rd December 1885, before he told George that he had bought a horse, "I congratulate you on the success of Lord Bective (*Thomas Taylour, MP for Westmorland, who lived at Underley Hall near Kirkby Lonsdale*) being returned to Parliament", and then, ".....for West Aberdeen.....a liberal as usual has gone in against, you may not doubt, the will of your humble correspondent”. On 11th May 1891, “You mention that Captn. Bagot was accepted Conservative candidate for S. Westmorland...”. This suggests that George was also a Tory.

That view is supported by the statement of J.A.Barnes (op. cit.) that George differed from J.M.Barnes "in politics and religious opinions". We know from his own obituary in the Kendal Mercury and Times of 16th May 1890 that Barnes was a Wesleyan Methodist. Methodism, particularly of the Wesleyan variety was closely allied to the Liberal party at the time so we may deduce Barnes's affiliations. In any case, Martindale's obituary in the same paper (10th April 1914) states that Martindale was a "staunch Conservative and Mr. Barnes a Liberal". George was a Conservative.

We do have some idea what he looked like. We have four photographs, one is in old age and appeared in his obituary in the Journal of Botany, two, of which one is barely reproducible, are school photos which appear to have been taken in the 1870s., and the fourth was the portrait of 1880. All show a man with a moustache joined to a long, pointed, beard. In the Robert Walker papers there is an undated, whimsical poem written by George's friend and fellow schoolmaster Joseph Anthony Martindale entitled "The Man of Bxxthwxxte Gxxxxn" which includes the following (immortal?) words:-

"There was a man of Bxxxxxxxx Gxxxx  
Who used to keep a school  
He wasn't the wisest eer was seen  
Nor was he quite a fool  
A Handsome Man you now must know  
Was this same schoolmaster  
His height was tall, his breadth so-so  
Like some gaunt Philister (*or Philaster - word unclear*)  
He had two eyes set in his head  
And a nose came down between  
And on his chin a beard of red  
And dangling down was seen .....etc.

So, now we know, George had a nose and two eyes and Martindale seems to have likened him to either, a philistine, or to the eponymous hero of a Jacobean tragi-comedy by Beaumont and Fletcher. This probably tells us more about Martindale's sense of humour than about George. But at least he tells us that George was tall, not burly and had a red beard.

George's closest friends were Joseph Anthony Martindale and James Martindale Barnes.

Martindale was just two years older than Stabler, and was the schoolmaster at Staveley. We don't know when they met, but they were close enough by 1869 for Martindale to be one of the witnesses recorded on George's marriage certificate. They came from different parts of the country, George from North Yorkshire and Martindale, born in Stanhope, County Durham, was brought up in Sunderland. Whereas George received his teaching certificate from St. John's College, York, Martindale attended Battersea College. Before coming to Staveley in 1859, he had taught briefly at Stanwix, Carlisle. Whenever they first met, it is most likely that it was a mutual interest in botany that was the cause. When George took up the Levens schoolmaster-ship he could hardly fail to meet J.M.Barnes who lived within 50 yards of the School House, but maybe they were already aware of each others botanical existence.

James Martindale Barnes, who was born in Selside near Kendal in 1814, was 15 years older than George

and, after living in Liverpool moved to London. There, he where he worked as a Customs official and there he met and married his first wife, Elizabeth Read, in the third quarter of 1845, in Southwark. Elizabeth was more than ten years older than James and it would appear that she had some money, because, when poor health impelled James to leave London, he was able to come to Levens in 1847 and first rent, then buy, Greengate Cottage, and describe himself in the 1851 census as a "Proprietor of Houses, Fund Holder & Annuitant".

We learn that once in Levens, he developed into a serious gardener, before, around 1859, the year of Elizabeth's death, turning his attention and energies to ferns, for the study of which he is best remembered, although he was also heavily involved in mosses during the late 1860s<sup>85</sup>. In 1863 Barnes married his housekeeper Mary Ann Crosby (aged c27). All his children were with Mary Ann.

In one of the letters in the Robert Walker papers, written on 18th July 1868 to Welburn where George was on holiday, Barnes, quite a direct man, seems to be warning George to be careful not to give the young ladies in Yorkshire the wrong impression of his intentions. The writing is fiendishly difficult to read. In the manner of an earlier generation, Barnes saved paper by writing over previous sentences at right angles. However, the words "to think it when you do not" are perfectly clear. The friendship between the two men evidently extended to the two families. Oswald went bird-watching with J.M.Barnes the younger (as we have learned above), and was also reported as attending the funeral of William Atkinson, an uncle of Barnes's<sup>86</sup>. An article written in 1903 by J.M.Barnes on the "Ancient Corduroy Roads near Gilpin Bridge" included a photograph of the tree-log causeway taken by Edgar Stabler<sup>87</sup>.

I cannot say which man first interested which in the study of ferns or mosses, as all three of the friends studied and collected both families of plants and met frequently to study each others' collections and to go on collecting trips in the locality and further afield. Eventually they seem to have specialised, Stabler on mosses, Martindale on lichens, with Barnes remaining as the authority on ferns. Martindale facetiously called them "the three-legged society"<sup>88</sup>.

According to the obituary which appeared in the Westmorland Gazette on 8th January 1910, George was one of the longest serving members of the Levens (men's) Institute, of which he had been Secretary for many years. He was also, for many years, the local correspondent of the Westmorland Gazette.

The main organisation which absorbed his time when not at work was outside the village. There had been a natural history society in Kendal since the 1810s<sup>89</sup>, but it had repeatedly fizzled out and been reformed. By 1868 though the society still flourished it had lost the character of a natural history society, i.e. the members liked hearing lectures but didn't do any science themselves.

An attempt was made in 1868 to revive the hands-on scientific character of the Society. "The Kendal and District Microscopical and Natural History Association" was formed with, as President, the prominent local surgeon, Thomas Gough. Thomas was the son of John Gough the celebrated blind schoolmaster, philosopher and botanist, who had at one time tutored the famous chemist and physicist John Dalton. George, along with Barnes (whom George described as a founder member of this incarnation of the society) and Martindale read papers at the meetings of this group.

Several of the letters in the Robert Walker collection are from Gough to George, and in a couple of them (19th August and 29th December 1870) Thomas invited George to his home, once to discuss "the work of our association" and the second time, to dine and to "chat".

In his second paper on the "Hepaticae and Musci of Westmorland" published in the "Naturalist", May 1896, George wrote, "It was my privilege to have the friendship of the late Dr. Thos. Gough of Kendal, a student of many branches of natural history...".

After Gough's death in 1880, the Association wound down gradually until the hard core re-founded it as The Kendal Natural History Society in 1885. Both George and Martindale were founder members.

George was also a member of The Northern British Pteridological Society. He was elected, together with J.M.Barnes elder son Joseph Anthony, at its second meeting, on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1891<sup>90</sup>. This body, rapidly dropping the provincial adjective, became The British Pteridological Society, Britain's main society for Fern enthusiasts.

## **BOTANY**

As we have seen, George undoubtedly met Richard Spruce when the latter acted as a locum in his father's school in Welburn, and that it is possible that Spruce inspired George to take up botany, particularly mosses. It could be significant that George specialised in mosses and hepaticae (liverworts) and that the best known of Stabler's discoveries was a liverwort, *Marsupella stableri*, because liverworts were a particular favourite of Spruce's.

We don't know when George started to take botany seriously but we do know that he was active by 1856 (the date of the earliest specimen in his herbarium in Kendal Museum which he collected himself - on Cronkley Fell in Teesdale).

If we assume that the dates of the specimens in the herbarium reflect his level of activity, major moss collecting started in 1867, but he must have been quite involved by 1865, because W.J.Linton wrote to him on 27th November (Robert Walker papers) of that year re. his "little fern book" ("The Ferns of the English Lake Country", published in 1864) - "I am much obliged to you for your corrections...which I will be glad to use in a second edition". On 5th July 1866, Linton wrote to George asking for his help in identifying a specimen.

When Spruce returned to live in Welburn in 1867 a younger generation of botanists was active in his old stamping grounds, which, in Welburn Moor, provided very good moss hunting. Spruce wrote to Sir William Hooker on 6th April 1868, "some of my old pupils in this region have become very fair botanists". He enquired of Hooker if the latter could advise where suitable and inexpensive microscopes might be bought for them<sup>91</sup>. Hooker, though not very active as a plant collector, played a highly important role in British and Irish bryology. He was Regius Professor of Botany at Glasgow University, and later, director of Kew Gardens.

As previously stated, in 1868 George was involved with the Kendal natural history societies with his friends Martindale and Barnes, so it seems that by that date he had been an active botanist for some time. He certainly had the equipment for on 8th December 1868, Martindale wrote asking to borrow his camera lucida (an instrument containing a prism by which image of object is projected onto flat surface, where it may be traced), because "Mr. Chaplin's" (presumably the Rev. W. Chaplin, vicar of Staveley from 1858 to 1896) would not fit onto his microscope.

In July 1868, Spruce wrote to Daniel Hanbury (Hanbury, a Fellow of the Royal Society, was a pharmacist, botanist and pharmaceutical plant collector & explorer). Spruce explained, "We have another botanist in this little Welburn just now – a young man of the name of Stabler, who lives among the Westmorland lakes, and is an enthusiastic student of wild plants, especially mosses" (see endnote 90).

George spent the month of July on holiday in Welburn, as he explained to the leading bryologist William Wilson on 14th August (see endnote 10).

By the following year, George was working on Hepaticae (the relatives of moss known as liverworts) and in his letter of 26th June, he confessed to William Wilson that he felt "very much the want of an active adviser .... we are much in want of a work on the subject". After Spruce's return to Welburn in 1867, he

had the most able mentor there was.

On 23rd February 1869, George was admitted to the Natural History Society of Glasgow as a corresponding member. Enthusiasm had obviously taken hold. Later the same year George was elected as a member of the Largo [*Fife*] Field Naturalists Society. Largo's other claim to fame is being the birthplace of Alexander Selkirk (a.k.a. Robinson Crusoe). Oddly enough, George was elected again, as a corresponding member, in 1871, perhaps his membership had lapsed in the meanwhile<sup>92</sup>.

At some point in his visits to Welburn, George must have got his father interested in botany. In a letter to George dated 4th August 1871 (Robert Walker papers), James Martindale Barnes congratulated James Stabler on his success in the (Welburn?) flower show and commiserated with his failure to be "first for ferns". Is it just possible that James Stabler's example had aroused George's interest in plants at an early age? An unprofitable question, because it can never be answered.

Eventually George became mainly involved with mosses and particularly with their relatives liverworts, but he was interested in all British plants and according to J.A.Barnes<sup>93</sup> had studied grasses, fungi and ferns. Notes in various editions of the Naturalist journal include his observations of butterflies, birds and natterjack toads.

He and his two friends, Barnes and Martindale went on many botanical excursions round Lakeland, Furness and Amounderness collecting specimens, "spending a weekend in turn at each others' houses. Saturday would be devoted to a long botanical ramble: in the evening they reviewed the spoil...."(see endnote 92). George and Martindale were quite prepared to walk over from Staveley to Mardale, do a day's collecting and then walk back. They would also tackle more distant collecting grounds, travelling, for example, to Mallerstang or Wild Boar Fell or over to Warcop, but Mardale remained George's favourite valley<sup>94</sup>.

George did field trips further afield, many in Yorkshire during the summer holidays. He collected in the Isle of Man in 1873 (an occasion on which he appears to have been accompanied by Martindale), in Wales in 1883, and in the Balmoral area on at least two major collecting trips, in 1884 and again in 1894.

George not only corresponded with Richard Spruce but also with many other prominent botanists, including one or two outside the UK. Amongst them we can number Dr. Benjamin Carrington of Eccles, William Wilson of Warrington, Robert Braithwaite of Manchester, William Henry Pearson of Pendleton, Professor Sextus Otto Lindberg of Helsingfors and Dr. Carl Warnstorf of Neuruppin, Brandenburg (Prussia), a leading authority on Sphagnum mosses.

He also appears to have had contacts with Franz Stephani of Leipzig the hepaticae enthusiast who later became notorious for his "Species Hepaticarum", a 6-volume treatment of the species of Hepaticae of the whole world which holds the reputation of being one of the most inaccurate publications in bryology. In 1917 Stephani suffered a stroke, which left him in a half paralysed condition. His mental powers became very poor, he was no longer able to recognise his children, yet continued to describe liverworts<sup>95</sup>.

In some letters George shows considerable familiarity with the activities of leading botanists, as well as an unpartisan attitude to their disputes. In a letter to William Wilson on 14th October 1869, George counsels Wilson regarding Wilson's no longer corresponding with Dr. Schimper, "I regret it very much. It is not the first time I have heard of it" and states that neither Schimper nor Wilson were altogether to blame "a great deal of it may arise from the misrepresentation on the part of others". Note, Wilhelm P. Schimper was a moss expert from Strasbourg and author of "Bryologia Europaea".

George seemed to be in-the-know about Schimper, in the same letter, "... I know that Schimper was in England in 1865 and visited you....". George reported that Dr. Stirton had enquired of him if he knew any-

thing about Schimper's death and he had replied that he had heard a rumour that Schimper had died, but it had turned out to be a relative of Dr. Schimper's connected with Abyssinia. "Indirectly, I know the following....Schimper was alive on July 14th last and well, but much harassed with work...after the examinations...he was proposing going into the mountains for two months...It is his intention when time permits to bring out a new...edition of his Synopsis Muscarii. He says that the great amount of work he has to do causes his correspondence to suffer very much, and complains of failing sight caused by working so much with the microscope". How did he know all this?

We know of occasions when George went plant collecting with prominent botanists. On 19th August 1874, in a letter to Benjamin Carrington<sup>96</sup>, he mentioned that on the 14<sup>th</sup> he had been collecting with Dr. Braithwaite at Saltersgate near Pickering. From the letters in the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9) we learn that Pearson invited George to join him in a trip to Killin in Scotland (Pearson to Stabler, 23rd May 1881). In the event, Pearson visited George and stayed at his home in June 1881, and together they botanised in the Langdales (Pearson to Stabler 1st & 15th June 1881), and might well have been present when George discovered *Marsupella stableri*. In the Stabler Herbarium in Kendal there are specimens jointly attributed to Binstead (in Barbon, 1885), Pearson (Llanberris, 1883) and Slater (1881, Malton & 1898, Strenshall Common). Strenshall Common was an old stamping ground of Richard Spruce.

The Stabler herbarium suggests the most prominent of all such collaborations. I have found four occasions where the catalogue gives Spruce and Stabler as the collectors of specimens in the same general locations, in the same months; In January 1872 in Dent. In November of the same year in the Naddle Forest (overlooking what is now Haweswater in Mardale). In July 1875 in Little Langdale, and in May 1883, both men, and Pearson as well, are credited with specimens from Llanberis. Spruce and Stabler are recorded as the collectors of *Byrum Concinatum*, Pearson with *Jungermannia Bantviensis*.

This might be surprising, given Spruce's state of health as described by Alfred Russel Wallace, "the other Darwin", (see endnote 7). What is certain is that Richard Spruce provided George with many specimens: the catalogue lists over 350 as collected by Spruce, with another 90 bearing Slater's name.

A field-naturalist par-excellence, George supplied many other botanists with specimens for their private and published collections. Dr. Braithwaite asked him to help in collecting specimens for a set of "all forms of British Sphagnum". With the bait of a free copy. George also supplied Pearson, who kept requesting them, with hepaticae specimens "for the book" (presumably his "Hepaticae of The British Isles"). Note, over the whole period of the correspondence George and Pearson were exchanging specimens and drawings and giving/taking information. I conclude that George was a major 'collaborator' in Pearson's work and that Pearson appreciated it. Pearson wrote on 9th July 1881, "...should be glad if you could write on one side of paper. I value your remarks & insert them in my herbarium with the different species you remark upon."

And again, on 9th November 1880, "I am always very glad to hear from you, but do not put yourself about to answer my notes, I am always willing to wait your time".

The material on which I base this conclusion is the correspondence from Pearson in the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9).

Thomas Rogers, Hon.Sec. of the Manchester Cryptogamic Society of which Carrington was President, wrote on 11th October 1878, "I hope however that he (*probably Mr Weld [name slightly unclear] of the MCS*) will be able for his own sake to interest as well known a botanist as yourself". Note, "cryptogams" are non-flowering plants e.g. mosses, ferns and lichens.

This was about forwarding a letter from George to Mr. Weld, presumably enquiring about acquiring specimens. The MCS was resolved to make a collection of British mosses to present to the Manchester Free



Reference Library, so they approached George for specimens. "we shall be much pleased to see your name & species amongst the general contributors". George duly obliged them and also appears to have facilitated their contact with Dr. Spruce.

The following examples are convincing evidence of George's reputation amongst bryologists (moss and liverwort specialists).

The premier Natural History organisation in the North of England was the Yorkshire Naturalists Union, which published the "Naturalist" journal.

The "Naturalist" of September 1887 contains an account of the YNU's Field Trip to the Sedbergh area on 1st August of that year: it states, "The Kendal Natural History Society had cordially accepted the Union's invitation to participate in the excursion, and, being represented by several of their ablest members, the Yorkshiremen present benefited much by the skilled knowledge and genial companionship of their friends from over the border amongst whom were the Rev. G.Crewdson, president, and Mr. J.Severs, secretary of the Kendal Society, together with Messrs. J.A.Martindale, George Stabler and John Watson".

The article continues, "...no excursion of the Union was ever more successful or fertile in discovery. It was particularly enjoyable too for other reasons--the elements were propitious, and the spirit of fellowship in science was fostered by the presence of the Kendal naturalists.....with their cryptogamic specialists, Messrs. Martindale and Stabler, famous for their painstaking, original labours amid the Bryophytes and Lichens, who added not a little open-air instruction to the other pleasures of the day....". Martindale found at least ten species of Lichen not previously known in the West Riding, but George found a Liverwort, *Grimmia commutata*, which had never before been found anywhere in Yorkshire.

George was also present at a field trip to Kirkby Lonsdale made by the Scottish Alpine Botanical Club on 31st July 1899, and in that club's report he was described as "a well known authority on mosses"<sup>97</sup>.

George was elected to the membership of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh (now the Botanical Society of Scotland) in November 1883, and it was for this society that George wrote an obituary of Richard Spruce which was printed in their Transactions and Proceedings issue of 8th February 1894. This article demonstrates the intimate knowledge that George had regarding Spruce's life, and it is hardly surprising that it was to George that Alfred Russel Wallace turned when he needed information for his introduction to Spruce's "Notes of a botanist on the Amazon and Andes", published posthumously in 1898. Wallace quoted extensively from Spruce's letters to George. None of the Spruce letters are in the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9) which is surprising. I suspect they were in Kendal Museum once, with the rest of the letters now in the Robert Walker papers, but were removed, by person/s unknown before Walker catalogued the contents of the Stabler collection in 1958.

I believe that Spruce recognised George's botanical abilities. In addition to mentioning him as a friend in his will (see below), Spruce was prepared to entrust no less a visitor than Prof. Lindberg to George's care. On 17 June 1872 Spruce wrote to Daniel Hanbury, "I hope Lindberg may stay with us for at least a week....my friends Slater and Stabler will accompany him into Teesdale or to the Westmorland hills"<sup>98</sup>.

In the Kendal Museum (see endnote 18) there is part of a proof of Spruce's paper "Hepaticae Amazonicae et Andinae", dated 1883. The title page is marked "Dr. Spruce's copy". Many of the 96 pages are annotated with proof reading correction marks. It is in a wrapper addressed to "G.Stabler Esq., Levens, Milnthorpe, Westmorland" & postmarked "York Jan 25 83" Amusingly the sender didn't put enough stamps on it and it was stamped "More to pay 1d". Was this document a souvenir, or was George proof-reading for Spruce?

In an auction of natural history books on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2010 at the Bloomsbury Auctions, London,

Dreweatts (Valuers and Auctioneers) offered as lot 428, a corrected proof of Spruce's "Notes on the Valleys of Piura and Chira, in Northern Peru, and on the Cultivation of Cotton Therein" (1864). The proof was described by Dreweatts "as bound with 9 other papers by Spruce, some inscribed to George Stabler.... The others include papers on the botany of the Pyrenees, Amazon trees, Mosses of the Amazon and Andes, marked by Stabler 'A fragment, never to be completed', 1859 and Catalogus Muscorum...in Terris Amazonicis, annotated with Stabler's herbarium holdings".

It strikes me that the proof and other papers had been in George's possession, as we know other documents were, i.e. the now missing letters and the "list of plants from near Ganthorpe" (?1834) that Spruce had compiled as a teenager. It appears that the collection of Stabler papers in Kendal Museum is incomplete. I wonder if the material in the Kendal Museum and the Cumbria Record Office (Kendal) is the tip of an iceberg, the dark waters beneath concealing the full extent of the friendship of Stabler and Spruce and the scale of their collaboration?

George was close to Spruce as the correspondence demonstrates. Writing to William Wilson on 26th June 1869, George wished him 70th birthday greetings (info passed on from J.M.Barnes). He updated Wilson on Spruce's health – about to undergo an operation for piles. Spruce having 4 teeth extracted and Spruce's joke to George about developing a double peristome by the time George next sees him". "Double Peristome" refers to the fringe of teeth round the orifice of the capsule of mosses. Alfred Russel Wallace wrote of "a continuous series of letters to his life-long friend Mr. G.Stabler" (see endnote 7). That Wallace's information had come from George himself does not challenge its veracity.

I suspect from the correspondence I have seen that George acted as something of a gatekeeper to Richard Spruce in that man's latter years of declining health. On 29th July 1869, George wrote to William Wilson, reporting on Spruce's condition, "often suffering acute pain and able to do little or no work. He desires to be excused from writing to you at present..." .

I suspect this happened by force of circumstance. Many people wanted some form of access to Spruce, but he wasn't well enough and, was, I think, rather cantankerous (see endnote 81). Many people knew that George had ready access to Spruce, who counted George as a friend, which was how he described George when he wrote his will in 1881; "my friend George Stabler of Levens, Westmorland". George was the first legatee mentioned, before Dr. Braithwaite or Spruce's half-sisters, and George was to receive "the two volumes of Müller's Synopsis Muscorum and all the unbound nos. of the Bryologica Europea". Spruce's labours had not made him rich, he left a total estate of £878-17-0d when he died in December 1893.

George must have been delighted to be bracketed with his mentor to hear that on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1883, in a meeting chaired by Dr. Carrington, both he and Richard Spruce were elected to honorary membership of the Manchester Cryptogamic Society<sup>99</sup>.

George's publications and his botanical achievements have been thoroughly researched by Prof. Ian Hodkinson<sup>100</sup>, and the following paragraph is derived exclusively from his work.

George's first-published paper, was a series of notes on 'Yorkshire' mosses and liverworts collected around Dent (now Cumbria) (Stabler 1879). A second short paper recorded the presence of Heller's notchwort 'Jungermannia helleriana Nees' (now *Anastrophyllum hellerianum*) in Britain for the first time (Stabler 1882). Following lengthy consultation of the extensive botanical library of Harry Arnold of Arncliffe, he next drew together the published information on the historical records of mosses and liverworts in Westmorland from the time of John Ray's (1696) "Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum" onward. His list of sources include many of the luminaries that graced British botany over the preceding two hundred years and later, including William Hudson, William J. Hooker, Richard Spruce, William Wilson, Dr. Robert Braithwaite, Edward Morrell Holmes and William H. Pearson, who included Westmorland material in their works. Following the historical introduction, a further eight consecutive papers

completed the comprehensive list of the 375 moss and 126 liverwort species found in Westmorland. Locality data and collector were given for each species and the taxonomic status of the problematic taxa discussed. In compiling the list Stabler drew heavily on the moss collection of his by then deceased friend and fellow collector James Martindale Barnes. These studies, later formed the foundation for the manuscript chapters entitled 'Mosses' and 'The Liverworts, Hepaticae', now kept in the Local Studies Department of Kendal Library, which were written for inclusion in the ill-fated Westmorland volume of the Victoria History of the Counties of England but never published. Three liverwort species and one moss genus have been named in honour of George Stabler, and there are at least nine varieties of fern recorded as discovered by him.

After George died, obituaries were published in the *Journal of Botany*, the *Naturalist*, *Revue Bryologique* (France) and the *Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh*. The one in the *Journal of Botany* was written by Coslett Herbert Wadell, the progenitor of the Moss Exchange Club, which evolved into the current British Bryological Society. Wadell was Curate of St. Thomas' Church, Kendal from 1884 to 1888 and a fellow founder member in the 1885 revival of the Kendal Natural History Society.

George was pre-eminently a field naturalist and as J.A. Barnes wrote of him, "one of those patient, enthusiastic toilers on the frontiers of science who, without public recognition and with no reward beyond the joy of discovery, are continually and unobtrusively widening the boundaries of public knowledge"(see endnote 92).

There was however, some local recognition, for on 25th February 1892, John Michie wrote to George, in a belated reply to George's letter of late November 1891, "...How does your son (Harold) take to his wood-carving?.....Very pleased to hear of your success at the late Kendal exhibition.....one thing I am certain of...that medal has been well deserved". George had won first prize, a silver medal, for a collection of dried mosses at the "Arts, Crafts and Loan" Exhibition in Kendal. This exhibition was opened on Thursday 26th August 1891 by H.R.H. The Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne and closed on Saturday 26th September. Prizes were distributed on Thursday September 10th by no less a dignitary than Sir Joseph Savory, Lord Mayor of London. Sir Joseph was married to Mary Caroline Braithwaite (daughter of the late Isaac Braithwaite, a wealthy Kendal businessman<sup>101</sup>). Sir Joseph was head of the Goldsmith's Alliance Limited of Cornhill, London, and also had directorships in the New River Company, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and Braithwaite & Co., Kendal. This information was taken from lengthy features in the *Westmorland Gazette* on 29th August and 14th November 1891 which are brimming with civic pride: quite justifiably, as the exhibition attracted a total of 30,824 visitors. George already knew he had won a prize when he took a party of about 45 boys to the exhibition on 22nd September, but all he entered in the school logbook was that admission was 1d each and "...in addition to the paintings etc. there was some excellent instrumental and vocal music".

There are specimens that George collected in collections worldwide, including about 500 or so liverwort specimens in the Manchester Museum<sup>102</sup>.

The vast majority of George's collection is in Kendal Museum which houses not only the two beautifully prepared, bound, volumes of his "Mosses and Hepaticae of Westmorland", but approximately 7000 other specimens of mosses and hepatics which he had collected himself or had acquired from others. A magnificent labour of love, between 2007 and 2010, by Museum Volunteers, has catalogued all of these specimens, as well as those in the Martindale herbarium.

The dates on George's specimens indicate that after 1856 and up to the late 1860s, for varieties of mosses and hepatics at least, he was only collecting a handful of specimens each year. But in 1867 the number jumped to over 100, was nearly 300 in the following year and over 260 in 1869: thereafter, the numbers fluctuate, e.g. 61 in 1870, 277 in 1872, averaging almost 60 a year for the 15 years up to 1888.

The numbers dwindled in the subsequent years with the exception of 1894 when he collected 55, of which 54 came from a single visit to Scotland. Perhaps this was a final supreme effort by an ailing man, for the collection contains just seven specimens datable to the period 1895 to 1898 and ends with a solitary example from May 1899, only months before poor health forced George to retire. Analysis of the records indicates that he had personally collected approximately 2200 specimens of around 620 species of mosses and hepatics.

## **HEALTH**

It was near-total blindness that denied George the pleasure of botany in his final years, and it is evident from entries in the school log-books that he had suffered health problems for many years.

It's quite obvious from the letters of the various botanists of the period which I have read that eye problems were quite common. Perhaps this to do with too many hours spent at the microscope in badly lit rooms.

A noticeable quantity of George's correspondents complain of illness quite frequently. I expect they did spend more of their time somewhat off-colour because of the sheer prevalence of infectious illness and a consequent inability to avoid it. Coupled with living in cold, draughty and damp houses it is hardly surprising that October to April was the sickness season, particularly for schoolteachers.

No doubt people in the late nineteenth century were more prone to worry about illness, since there was so little treatment available. Doctors cost money but even for those that could afford it, there wasn't much a Doctor could do about infectious disease, and almost nothing about chronic physical complaints, as George was able to observe in Richard Spruce's case.

Everybody has time off work sick, so it isn't surprising to find the following recorded in the school log-book:-

4th April 1864, "I felt indisposed and gave holiday in the afternoon".

23rd March 1877, "In the last two weeks I have had a severe cold producing sore throat and hoarseness, consequently the time-table has in some respects been departed from, of necessity".

1<sup>st</sup> December 1880. "I left the school in charge of the Pupil Teacher from 1.30 – 3.30 while I went to the doctor."

4th December 1881, "This week the pupil teacher did not receive his one hour's instruction in the morning (as I was unwell) on Monday and Tuesday".

6th November 1884, "The school-master being ill, the school was closed this afternoon."

26<sup>th</sup> November 1888, "Gave half holiday that I might go to the Doctor."

These incidents sound more serious:-

10th March 1873, "The school was not open on Wednesday afternoon or Thursday owing to the School-master being ill (blood spitting)".

17th March 1873, "This day (Monday) was the only one on which the School was open this week owing to the master's illness".

30th May 1873, "Today the school breaks up for a fortnights holiday- the first week is the usual Whitsun-

tide holiday and the second week is given for the good of the Schoolmaster's health."

17th July 1874, at the end of the summer term George noted "The attendance last year was somewhat affected by the head-teacher's weak state of health...".

George's correspondence with other botanists has frequent references to ill-health.

John Michie on 6th January 1885, was " sorry to hear of your indisposition".

W.H.Pearson (Robert Walker papers) on the 30th of the same month was, "extremely sorry to hear through Mr. Forster & Mr. Slater that you are seriously unwell".

It was problems with his eyesight that ended George's career and the first report we have is a letter from Richard Spruce to Matthew Slater, dated 18th July 1880<sup>103</sup>. Spruce wrote, "Last night at 8 o'clock Stabler turned up to bid a hasty adieu. He has had a troublous week at haymaking, and has got a sore eye, which I hope is nothing serious...". It sounds as if George had spent the first week of his summer holiday helping out on a farm and as is often the case got dust or a seed in his eye.

Whether or not the haymaking was the start of the problem we cannot say for certain, but by 14th April 1881 something was amiss. George recorded in the log-book for that date, "On the afternoon of the 12th I left the School in charge of the pupil teacher as I had occasion to go to the doctor, having inflammation of the right eye".

In the school log-book entry for 2nd April 1886 George wrote, "The master was, this day, in London on business...". What was he doing there, botany, or perhaps seeing a Doctor?

By 11th December 1888 there definitely was a problem. Martindale wrote to him, "I am sorry to hear about your eye. Medical names have a terrifying sound and iritis does not make one feel comfortable...". Note, iritis is inflammation of the Iris of the eye, often caused by getting something in the eye, and sometimes it is associated with the presence of other illnesses e.g. tuberculosis or psoriasis.

On 18th January 1889 the log-book recorded, "The School had holiday for the whole of last week as the school master had to go to consult an oculist in Nottingham". He appears to have been there several days and may have undergone an operation for Pearson wrote on 18th, greeting George as "My Dear Friend" and hoping that the operation would go well.

On 2nd February 1889, Martindale wrote, "'How are you getting on? I hoped to have heard something from you before now. If you do not like to write for fear of straining your eyes, please ask Mrs. Stabler to let us know how you are.'" Mrs. Stabler did answer, on George's behalf and on 14th February, Martindale wrote, "...glad to hear that the Nottingham doctor gives you hope of recovery from the present affliction of your eye. We trust that you will find everything goes favourably till the use of your left eye is perfectly restored....Thank Mrs. Stabler for writing.....try to take some rest & think of cheerful things.....we all feel much more cheerful for her news...."

Note that Martindale was referring to the left eye though in 1881 the right one was the issue. It seems that George had problems with both.

George had to go back to the Oculist and the log-book entry for 9th March was, "Holiday that the Schoolmaster might go to Nottingham".

George was back at school as usual and carrying on with botany when Martindale chased him up for a paper he was writing. He wrote on 29th June 1889 urging George to produce an instalment for the journal

(of the Kendal Nat Hist Soc) - "...without any injury to your health let me have your account of the mosses of Witherslack.....Severs says you found a new moss in Langdale. I suppose you had not recognised it till you got home, as you did not mention it.....How is your eye? I hope improving."

On 2nd August, John Michie wrote, "right glad we are to know that your eye had much improved.....".

But, in July 1890 an entry in the school log-book recorded, "On 21st July The school-master had to break up for the summer holidays owing to a bad eye...", and on 1st September, "resumed school duties today after 6 weeks holiday, one week extra being given because of the master's illness".

But, on 2nd January 1891 we hear from W.H.Pearson, re. George's letter of 12/10/1890 - "I was sorry to hear that your eyes had broken down again".

Letters commiserating about George's health continue through the early 1890s although there are no entries in the school log-books indicating major developments until the beginning of September 1894. At that point the writing in the book changes at and then reverts again to George's in the entry for 11th January 1895: this states, "Mr. Wright had the charge of the school temporarily for the last three months of the year 1894".

Other, quite revolutionary, help was provided. The annual inspection took place on 3rd May and the report noted that the "results of instruction are generally satisfactory and in many respects similar to last year. The elementary subjects have been taught with very fair success...". It goes on to state that "M.A.-Carter is specifically approved under article 68 for employment in the Boy's School in the instruction of the first, second or third standards". In the log-book entry of 27 May we see what was new. "Miss Carter gave a lesson to Standards II and III."

While this novel situation was going on, the log-book entry for 10th May 1895 records more medical consultations, "The boys had holiday today as the master had to go to the Royal Eye Hospital in Manchester".

Then, disaster: 17th May 1895, "On this day the master (G.Stabler) had a serious accident to his left eye which necessitated its removal a week afterwards" and according to the entry of 10th June, the school was closed, in consequence, for two weeks. J.A.Barnes (op. cit.) tells us that it was the weakness of the other eye that led to the accident.

10th June, "G.Stabler re-opened the school today".

11th June, "Mr. Rand took charge of the school as temporary master. He was trained at Durham."

On 19th July, Mr. Rand's appointment came to an end and on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, "G.Stabler recommenced teaching."

It must have become obvious to all concerned by the end of 1894 that George needed a second in command and one was duly appointed. George's log-book entry for 2nd September 1895 stated. "Re-opened school after Midsummer vacation. Mr. Newall commenced as Assistant Master. He has recently finished two years training in the Bede Training College Durham.". There is anecdotal evidence that Robert Newall had taught briefly at Yeadon (West Yorks.) before coming to Levens<sup>104</sup>.

George probably realised he couldn't carry on much longer as he bought himself a house. In the deeds of South View, Levens, there is a conveyance dated 11th November 1895 recording him purchasing the two semi-detached cottages there for £213.

We do not know the extent to which his eyesight deteriorated during the next few years, but there are a couple of telling entries in the log-book in 1897.

On 1st October, "Owing to the illness of Mr. Stabler the school is in charge of R.Newall".

On November 19th, George wrote, "After being absent from school for 6 weeks owing to an attack of cyclitis I resumed work on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, but was away on Thursday and Friday to go to the Royal Eye Hospital, Manchester"<sup>105</sup>.

The 1899 report of the HMI inspection carried out at the end of March stated, "..... in a year, when the school, through the ill health of the master, lost much of the advantage of his experience.....". Most of 1899 passed without remark, but towards the end of the year developments accelerated. The log-book entry of 22nd November, "This evening I determine to remain from school two days (Thursday and Friday) that I may rest my eye which exhibits a considerable amount of inflammation".

On December 5th, "The head-master resumed school work after being from school 8 days owing to an attack of iritis....My resignation for Dec. 31st 1899 has been sent in to the managers of the School, and has been accepted. Found a large pane broken (cracked) in the S.E. window of the school, it was done by Isaac Newby".

George's final entry was on 21st December when the school broke up for Christmas:-

"There has been much sickness for this week and last, chiefly colds.

G.Stabler retires from the mastership of the Levens School thus completing his 39th year as master.

Today the 1st session extended from 9 to 11:30 and the 2nd session 12:30 pm. to 3 pm.

School re-opens on 8th Jan 1900".

After retirement George's received an Elementary School Teachers disablement allowance from the Paymaster General's Office in Whitehall which was reviewed every three years; in 1903 it amounted to £43-14-11d per annum<sup>106</sup>.

George's retirement was reported in the Westmorland Gazette in January 1900 with the words, "Failing sight is the cause which has led to Mr. Stabler's retirement....and his old pupils.....hope that release from the heavy strain of school work may have a favourable effect upon his sight, and that Mr. Stabler may live to enjoy many years of improved health and prosperity".

Release from the heavy strain did not improve George's eyesight, as he himself admitted in his paper "On the Hepaticae of Balmoral", read at the Botanical Society of Scotland, on 12th June 1902. He stated, "in explanation of the long period elapsing between the collection of the specimens [*in 1884*] and the completion of this paper, I may say it has been chiefly owing to eye troubles on the part of myself. Most of the specimens were examined and determined long ago, but a few remained for reconsideration. This I was unable to carry out".

Alas, George's eyesight deteriorated further and according to J.A.Barnes, "...he struggled on, painfully trying to read and to use his microscope with one imperfect eye....."(see endnote 92).

Barnes continued, "Once, when his sight was so far gone that he could only see large print with a powerful lens, I had been reading to him from a French journal a description of a liverwort which he had gathered years before on Levens Moss, and he set his heart on my finding a specimen. The whole plant was no larger than a pin's head, and the quest seemed hopeless as that of the proverbial needle in a hay stack. But we walked out together until we reached a field beyond Bridge Row in which a luxuriant crop of seed-grass was springing. The quest seemed more hopeless than ever. 'Now' he said 'find a bare patch'. With some difficulty, I discovered a place where the growth was less rank and began to examine the soil

inch by inch under his direction. after several mistakes I found at last a few green scales each shaped like the tail of a fish, and with his lens he was able to identify these as the plant we were in search of. His joy at the discovery was only equalled by my own surprise".

Barnes related that George carried on in this way "with one imperfect eye.....until another disastrous accident robbed him of that too, and for the last two years of his life he was totally blind, groping pathetically about the roads near his home, unable to see the growing plants he loved so well".

George died in the evening of 4th January 1910, suddenly, of heart failure, after returning from his afternoon walk and while conversing with a former pupil who had called to see him<sup>107</sup>.

He left £150 each to Harold and Edgar, £100 each to Oswald and Bertha and a life interest in South View and the income from his investments to his wife, with Bertha also to have a life interest in the house. The gross value of his estate was £1,400-17-6d.

He is buried in Heversham churchyard. The inscription on his gravestone is virtually illegible now and the stone leans over, but it is shaded by a fine yew tree.

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### **Appendix 1 – Mark Pond's reminiscences of the Stabler family**

Mark Pond, of Marchwood, St. James, Victoria 3727, Australia, is a relative of Mabel May Whitby, who married Edgar Stabler, and in June 2013 he made contact with Levens Local History Group to correct a mistake on the Group's website article about Harold Stabler. The article was written when we had no knowledge of Phyllis Stabler and assumed that George and Sarah had no grandchildren. Although we knew about Phyllis by the time Mark contacted us, we had not corrected the error. What follows is reproduced from his emails of 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013 - items in brackets are my additions.

*When he [Oswald] died in 1956 his house passed by a sort of genetic default into my grandmother's [Annie Chadwick's] possession. James Stabler had died in infancy and Bertha Stabler, their sister, never had children. Only Edgar and his wife (granny's auntie Mabel) had one daughter, Phyllis.*

*She never married and was looked after for a time by my uncle and aunt, Freddy and Elsie Chadwick. Edgar also resided with them in old age. Phyllis finally ended up in permanent care in a mental hospital in Lancashire, Burnley I think [her death certificate states that she died at Barrington House Nursing Home in Hastings]. My grandmother and I went to visit her when I was very young.*

*Phyllis was hopelessly compromised mentally so there was practically no possibility of the family having any heirs. Phyllis, who was our second cousin, spent a life of desperate depression. She ended up with the exception of the Levens property, as the sole beneficiary of the Stabler's fortunes. This represented a considerable amount of money. The conception that money cannot buy happiness was never truer than in Phyllis's case.*

*As a girl she attended Merchant Taylor's school and her eccentricity was evident even then. She would flush her stockings down the lavatory rather than re-use them. Later on, when Richard and I were children, she would take us (separately) to the theatres in Manchester. She developed a set of imaginary friends and so we would have more than two seats to occupy. She used to go to Kendal Milne's in Manchester and order lunch for herself and these illusory companions. Several meals were solemnly*



*served up and she would sit there chatting to thin air. It must have been an unnerving experience for the head waiter and his staff. She bought those early transistor radios and threw them away as soon as the batteries went flat. In the end she managed to spend everything and ended up in a mental hospital in Burnley. Freddy had enlisted the help of an old RAF colleague (Sir) David Stafford-Clarke, who was a psychiatrist but even he could not do much for her. Even over fifty years later I still feel sad about her.*

*It was this chain of events which led to us spending a great deal of time travelling back and forth to Levens to sort out "South View", Oswald Stabler's old home. South View was a truly fascinating throwback to early Victorian and even Georgian times. Oswald must have been somewhat eccentric himself. It seemed as though nothing had been discarded once it passed through the little glass entry foyer to the house.*

*I have a very shadowy recollection of being told by the family that Oswald had been to the first World War and had been affected by his experiences there.*

*It took many months if not years to sort through this extraordinary miscellany of objet d'art's, antiques and domestic accretions which went back for centuries. As I recall the details of that time I believe grandma was not interested in owning property and so my mother [Daisy Pond, her daughter] bought the home from her for a few hundred pounds. It proved to be a great investment. As my brother Dick and I went through the mounds of rubbish, we discovered quite a few brown paper envelopes addressed to Oswald from his bank in Kendal. Each of these contained what must have been a regular payment from either his investments or savings. In the end these alone more or less repaid the cost of buying the old home.*

*One of the articles recovered at the time is a little collection of the children's hair which I still have in my possession... They are pinned together and so you can only see Jimmies, the son who died at the age of three, plus Harold Stabler's hair. The others are all included though.*

*We found a Victorian frock coat and top hat which probably dated back to the 1850's. In the outhouse were some homemade country wines from the nineteen twenties which turned out to be eminently palatable once decanted. All the Stablers had been discerning and cultured and this was reflected by the many treasures which were unearthed from among the accumulated rubbish....Oswald's father George had been the local schoolmaster. In addition to this he was a keen bryologist and discovered more than one species of local flora. One of them, a form of liverwort, *Marsupella stableri*, was named after him. His collection of plants was also found in the house and my mother donated them to the local museum in Kendal.*

## **Appendix 2 - The Curriculum**

### **Drawing**

Unlike the "3Rs", drawing was not a compulsory subject, but it was widely taken up by elementary schools because success in the Drawing exam would earn extra cash for the school and Schoolmaster. The Government examination in the "3Rs" was conducted by the Education Department (set up in 1856), but drawing was separately administered from the "Science and Art Department" in South Kensington, London. This organisation, set up in 1853, incorporated the Government School of Design (opened 1837), and, like the majority of the complex of inter-related academic institutions that grew up in South Kensington, was spawned by the profits of the Great Exhibition of 1851. To this amazing impetus we also owe the Victoria and Albert Museum the Royal College of Art and Imperial College.

Prince Albert was the Great Exhibition's chief proponent and enthusiast and these subsequent develop-

ments were highly influenced by his desire to unite art and science in the service of British industry.

The key to understanding the place of drawing in the curriculum is in the name "Government School of Design", not "Royal College of Art". On the rising tide of the Industrial Revolution, while there might have been a high-minded desire to infuse industry with artistic excellence, there was certainly a realisation that the nation's drawing offices demanded a workforce with graphic skills.

In 1899 the Science and Art Department was merged with the Board of Education, later to become the Ministry of Education, and is now the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

### **The "3Rs"**

The table below shows what the Inspector expected pupils to demonstrate in order to pass for each "Standard". I believe this version of the guide was introduced around 1880.

	Standard I	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
Reading*	To read a short paragraph from a book, not confined to words of one syllable.	To read with intelligence a short paragraph from an elementary reading book.	To read with intelligence a short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.	To read with intelligence a few lines of prose or poetry selected by the inspector.	Improved reading.	Reading with fluency and expression
Writing	Copy in manuscript character a line of print, on slates or in copy books, at choice of managers; and write from dictation a few common words.	A sentence from the same book, slowly read once, and then dictated. Copy books (large or half-text) to be shown.	A sentence slowly dictated once from the same book. Copy books to be shown (small hand, capital letters and figures).	Eight lines slowly dictated once from a reading book. Copy books to be shown (improved small hand).	Writing from memory the substance of a short story read out twice; spelling, grammar, and handwriting to be considered.	A short theme or letter; the composition, spelling, grammar, and handwriting to be considered.
Arithmetic†	Notation and numeration up to 1,000. Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures, and the multiplication table, to 6 times 12.	Notation and numeration up to 100,000. The four simple rules to short division (inclusive).	Notation and numeration up to 1,000,000. Long division and compound addition and subtraction (money).	Compound rules (money) and reduction (common weights and measures).+	Practice, bills of parcels, and simple proportion.	Proportion, vulgar and decimal fractions.

**Notes:**

- \* 'Reading will be tested in the ordinary class books, if approved by the Inspector; but these books must be of reasonable length and difficulty and unmarked. . .'
- † 'The work of girls will be judged more leniently than that of boys. . .'
- + 'The "weights and measures" taught in public elementary schools should be only such as are really useful; - such as Avoirdupois Weight, Long Measure, Liquid Measure, Time Table, Square and Cubical Measure, and any measure which is connected with the industrial occupations of the district.'

## Endnotes

- 1 George Stabler birth certificate. GRO ref. 1837 Jul-Sep, Easingwold vol. 24, p27 Index 1837 – 1915. Alfred Russel Wallace (see endnote 7) states that George was a native of Ganthorpe, but I assume he misunderstood what George had evidently told him.
  - 2 At [www.crayke.org.uk](http://www.crayke.org.uk) - A Brief History of Crayke, includes other points of historical interest
  - 3 Marriage Certificate. GRO ref. 1838 Oct-Dec, Malton, vol. 24, p408
  - 4 Death. GRO ref. 1864 Jul-Sep, Malton, vol. 9d, p224
  - 5 1851 Census for Henderskelfe, enumerator's sheets.
  - 6 Source of date is Angela Cox of Welburn Local History Society – personal communication, Dec. 08
  - 7 Quoted by Alfred Russel Wallace in his Introduction to Richard Spruce the younger's "Notes of a botanist on the Amazon and Andes", published in 1898
  - 8 Stabler, G. 1894. Obituary notice of Richard Spruce PhD. Proceedings and Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh. Session 58, Feb.1894, 99-109.
  - 9 Robert Walker papers in the Cumbria Record Office, Kendal, ref WDX 950. Unless otherwise stated, all letters quoted in this document are in this collection.
  - 10 9 letters from George Stabler to Wilson, August 1868 to June 1870. - William Wilson collection at the Natural History Museum – Vol II of MSS WIL in the Botany Library.
  - 11 Angela Cox of Welburn Local History Society – personal communication, Dec. 08
  - 12 *ibid*
  - 13 Welburn burials as researched by Angela Cox – personal communication, Feb. 09
  - 14 In 1881 the rates in Levens were 2s 6d per week for Monitors and £10 per half year for a first year PT, rising to £20 for a fifth year. Levens School Cash Book, covers period 1868 to 1883. Currently (Jan 2010) held by Levens Local History Group.
  - 15 Stuart Bentley, Special Collections Librarian, York St. John University, personal communications, July 09; “In the Student’s Quarterage Book for the Training School for Masters (as St. John’s College was known then) for the period 1857-65, a Stabler, G. appears under a list of Queen’s Scholars in 1860. He is listed as being in his second year, and as a student in residence, and would have paid £5 15/- for the year. There are no quarterages listed for 1859, and there is, as you would expect, no listing for a Stabler in the quarterage for 1857, 1858 or 1861. So while I cannot confirm Stabler was in residence during 1859, it seems likely that was the case”. The "Quarterage Book" records the quarterly fees paid by students in residence at the college.
- Stuart continued, "I did discover the additional information that G.Stabler achieved a second class qualification...in the report I looked at students were broken down into First, Second and Thirds and a note on the bottom of the record said that none had failed, so I imagine that there were just the three classes, which would be roughly analogous to our current scheme of university qualifications".
- Stuart also wrote, "In the York Central Diocesan Society Report for 1860, there is a list of Training School students appointed to situations for the year ending Dec.1860 and amongst these is Stabler, Geo., appointed to Leven (*sic*), near Wilnithorpe (*sic*). The correspondent listed is Gen. Upton, M.P." I have a minor quibble, as Upton was a JP at the Kendal Petty Sessions. I can't find any record of him being in Parliament, though an uncle (Arthur Percy Upton 1777 – 1855) had been M.P. for Bury St. Edmunds between 1818 & 1826.
- 16 See the biographical notes on Joseph Anthony Martindale.
  - 17 Under the terms of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, responsibility for such benefits as paupers did receive was transferred from the individual parishes to groups of parishes comprising *Poor Law Unions*, whose supervisory boards were called *Guardians*. The Relieving Officer was the official employed by the Guardians to assess all claims for, and pay out, all benefits, arrange admissions to the workhouse and keep the books of the Union.
  - 18 With the Stabler Herbarium in Kendal Museum are 2 boxes containing an assortment of papers belonging to George, mainly copies of articles (often autographed) from a wide range of contemporary botanists. There are a few items of biographical interest.
  - 19 All quotations(except from letters), unless otherwise stated are from the 2 volumes of the Levens Boys' School logbook covering the periods April 1863 to December 1890, and 1890 to 1902. Currently (Jan 2010) held by Levens Local History Group.
  - 20 See report of meeting of Levens and Beathwaite Green ratepayers, Westmorland Gazette 5<sup>th</sup> September 1891. The annual income in Levens from school pence averaged 11s 4d per child in that year.
  - 21 E.Hodgson, “Glimpses of Witherslack”, Titus Wilson, Kendal 1937
  - 22 Entry for 9<sup>th</sup> March 1866 in Staveley National School logbook – Cumbria Record Office, Kendal ref. WDS145/1/1/1).
  - 23 “Some Westmorland Villages” (ed. B.L.Thompson, Titus Wilson, Kendal 1957)
  - 24 Modern local government in the form of County and District Councils did not exist before the Local Government

## Endnotes

- Act of 1888. The Poor Law Unions were the only pre-existing administrative bodies for the delivery of services to the community, hence their involvement in school attendance
- 25 Ibid
  - 26 H.S.Cowper, "Hawkshead: (The Northernmost Parish of Lancashire) its History, Archeology, Industries, Folklore, Dialect, etc., etc." London: Bemrose, 1899.
  - 27 E.Hodgson, op cit.
  - 28 Jolly Boys. In April 2011 Ted Bowness, aged 83, of Old Hutton recalled the jolly boys acting their play in the Langdale Valley in the early 1930s, finishing with the words "We've not come a begging, we think it no crime, we're doing such things as were done in old time. Put your hands in your pockets and pull out your purse, and give us a trifle, you'll not be much worse". Westmorland Gazette 28th April 2011, p35. Other, earlier versions of the text end with a more bucolic request (demand?), "We hope you'll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer, we'll come no more nigh you until next year", Roger Bingham, Westmorland Gazette, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2009.
  - 29 Anon. Westmorland Gazette 8<sup>th</sup> January 1910.
  - 30 Joseph Anthony Barnes, the eldest son of George's close friend James Martindale Barnes of Levens.
  - 31 An online version can be found on the Levens History Group website at [www.levenshistory.co.uk](http://www.levenshistory.co.uk)
  - 32 See Westmorland Gazette of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1863 for report on the trapping of an otter by "Mr. Michie, gamekeeper at Levens Hall". An earlier item in the Kendal Mercury of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1863 reports an ambush by David Michie & other keepers on Robert Kidd & others who were shooting at hare on Levens Hall land.
  - 33 Source is John Michie letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1891 in the Robert Walker papers (see endnote 9).
  - 34 Births. Hannah - GRO ref. 1842 Jan-Mar, Malton, vol. 24, p409 - Mary, *probably* 1845 Oct-Dec, Malton, vol. 24, p414, *or* 1845 Apr-Jun, Malton, vol. 24, p416
  - 35 Formerly of 15 Barker Hill, York – see 1851 census
  - 36 Births. John - GRO ref. 1846 Apr-Jun, Malton, vol. 24, p460 - Tom, 1844 Oct-Dec, Malton, vol. 24, p395
  - 37 Welburn baptisms researched by Angela Cox.– personal communication, Feb. 09
  - 38 Welburn burials as researched by Angela Cox – personal communication, Feb. 09
  - 39 Levens School Cash Book.
  - 40 Levens Infants' School logbook, covering the period March 1880 to October 1906. Currently (Jan 2010) held by Levens Local History Group.
  - 41 Anon. obituary of Miss Hannah Stabler, Levens. Westmorland Gazette 30<sup>th</sup> June 1917. She was still in harness on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1906 (date of last entry in surviving school logbook). Postcard image kindly supplied by Mark Pond, personal correspondence 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013-- see Appendix 1.
  - 42 Levens Girls' School logbook, covering the period March 1880 to November 1904. Currently (Jan 2010) held by Levens Local History Group.
  - 43 1901 census.
  - 44 Levens Boys' School logbook - 31<sup>st</sup> October 1901.
  - 45 Death certificate. GRO ref. 1917 Jul-Sep, Kendal, vol. 10b, p721
  - 46 Marriage Certificate. GRO ref. 1869 Jul-Sep, Kendal, vol. 10b, p813
  - 47 Birth Certificates. GRO refs. 1847 Apr-Jun, Kendal vol. 25, ps513 & 514
  - 48 Marriage Certificate GRO ref. 1850 Jan-Mar, Kendal, vol. 25 p459
  - 49 Death Certificate. GRO ref. 1873 Oct-Dec, Kendal vol. 10b, p497
  - 50 Birth dates taken from Levens Schools Admissions register for the period up to November 1895 Currently (Jan 2010) held by Levens Local History Group. GRO refs. are – Harold, 1872 Jul-Sep, Kendal, vol. 10b, p674 - Edgar, 1874 Jul-Sep, Kendal, vol. 10b, p716 - Oswald, 1876 Jan-Mar, Kendal, vol. 10b, p765 - Bertha, 1878 Jul-Sep, Kendal, vol. 10b, p727
  - 51 M.Anne Agnew, "From Kinloch to King. Three Generations of Perthshire Michies" - unpublished dissertation in Scottish Family History Studies, University of Sterling, 2000.
  - 52 Ian D. Hodgkinson & Allan Steward, "The Three Legged Society". A belief also recorded in the British Fern Gazette vol. VII, no. 9, July 1949 p224, re. a Hart's tongue, Scolopendrium Crispum Stablerae.
  - 53 Death. GRO ref. 1923 Apr-Jun, Kendal, vol. 10b, p860
  - 54 Westmorland Gazette 9<sup>th</sup> August 1890. Note that a notice in the WG on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1898 announced the tenth annual show of the Levens Horticultural Society.
  - 55 From deeds of South View, Levens.
  - 56 See "Holme Victorians 1881 -1901" compiled by Geoff Pegg, 2007.
  - 57 In conversation with Allan Steward on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
  - 58 Research by Stephen Read, Secretary Levens Local History Group.
  - 59 Anne Clarke, daughter of John and Mary Steele of Heaves Farm, Levens, in conversation with Allan Steward on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
  - 60 Born Gillian Fletcher, daughter of "Artie" Fletcher, joiner, of Levens, knew Oswald when she was a child. In

## Endnotes

- conversation with Allan Steward on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
- 61 In conversation with Allan Steward on 26th January 2009.
- 62 John Taylor , personal communication to Allan Steward 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 63 In conversations with Eileen and Allan Steward in February 2009.
- 64 John Chadwick, personal communication to Mark Lawley, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2012, relayed to Allan Steward.
- 65 John Chadwick, personal communication to Allan Steward, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- 66 John Taylor, personal communication to Allan Steward 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 67 Deaths. Harold - GRO ref. 1945 Apr-Jun, Hammersmith, vol, 1a, p157. Phoebe, 1956 Oct-Dec, Hammersmith, vol, 5c, p752.
- 68 Marriage. GRO ref. 1906 Jul-Sep, Kensington, vol. 1a, p279
- 69 A much more comprehensive account of the work of Harold and Phoebe, written by Stephen Read, can be found at the Levens History Group website ([www.levenhistory.co.uk](http://www.levenhistory.co.uk)), and in the Levens History Project Newsletter 4, November 2007, written by Stephen Read.
- 70 British Fern Gazette vol. VII, no. 8, August 1948 p191
- 71 Deaths. GRO refs. Harold - 1945 Jul-Sep, Westmorland South, vol, 1b, p462
- 72 The “minor” exam was aimed at pharmacists employed assistants and the “major” was mainly for business owning pharmacists. These qualifications were mandatory w.e.f. the 1868 Pharmacy Act. Edgar's passed the “minor” on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1896 (certificate no. 11260), being registered as a Chemist & Druggist, and the “major” on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1898 (cert. no. 2933), being then registered as a Pharmaceutical Chemist. J.Betts, Museum Officer RPS, personal communication 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011.
- 73 Edgar Stabler marriage cert. GRO ref. 1908 Oct-Dec, Rochdale, vol. 8e, p50
- 74 Phyllis Stabler birth. GRO ref. 1909 Oct-Dec, Chorlton, vol. 8c. p658
- 75 Mabel Stabler was the aunt of John Chadwick's grandmother Annie Chadwick - née Auker
- 76 Death Certificate. GRO ref. 1958 Oct-Dec, Southport, vol, 10f, p614. Elsie was the wife of Stabler's executor. Frederick Lister Chadwick, also of 71 Westbourne Rd. and previously of 68 Cambridge Rd. Elsie was the mother of my correspondent John Chadwick.
- 77 Edgar had life membership of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society until that type of membership was abolished by the Act of 1954. He did not convert to an annual membership and was therefore de-registered from the Society in 1957. J.Betts pers. comm.
- 78 Mabel May Stabler death. GRO ref . 1938 Oct-Dec, South Manchester, vol. 8d, p4
- 79 Annie Chadwick was Frederick Lister Chadwick's mother and grandmother of Peter & Mark Pond. Will of Phyllis Stabler.
- 80 Death Certificate. GRO ref. 1917 Jan-Mar, Liverpool, vol, 8b, p152
- 81 Anon. Presumed from Westmorland Mercury of ? February 1917. A very similar but shorter entry, omitting the final paragraph re. the funeral service appeared in the Westmorland Gazette. Mark Pond, a cousin of John Chadwick, also related to Edgar Stabler's wife, has kindly given Levens Local History Group a photograph of Bertha with her raven.
- 82 Opinion formed by Angela Cox of Welburn Local History Society from reading Spruce's letters to his factotum Matthew Bartendale Slater and others. Personal communication January 2009
- 83 George in concert, Westmorland Gazette 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1866 & 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1867.
- 84 The axe had been found near Burton-In-Kendal in the 1840s during the construction of the Lancaster to Carlisle Railway. It was in the hands of a Joshua Jones, from whom Stabler bought it on behalf of Greenwell. In 1880 Stabler believed it was in the British Museum. G.S. letter of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1880 to Westmorland Gazette.
- 85 J.M.Barnes obituaries, Westmorland Gazette (17th May 1890) and the Kendal Mercury and Times (16th May 1890)
- 86 Westmorland Gazette, 6th June 1903.
- 87 Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archeological Society 1903.
- 88 J.A.Martindale obituary, Westmorland Mercury and Times 10<sup>th</sup> April 1914.
- 89 "A Sketch of the Kendal Natural History Societies" by Joseph Severs, in the "Natural History Record. A Quarterly Journal. Vol. 1. March 1888 - December 1889". This publication taxed the Kendal Natural History Society greatly and it only ever appeared in 1889.
- 90 J.M.Camus (Ed.), “The History of British Pteridology 1891 – 1991”, London, British Pteridological Society, 1991.
- 91 Extracts from this letter, and the one to Hanbury in July 1868, were given to me by Angela Cox of the Welburn Local History Society. The original is in the possession of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (ref. P320/202 ).
- 92 Nat. Hist Soc. Of Glasgow – Proceedings of NHS of G, Vol 1, p251. Largo FNS, from the Fife Herald, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1869 & Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1871.
- 93 J.A.Barnes, obituary of George Stabler, Kendal Mercury and Times, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1910.
- 94 As George declared in “The Mosses and Hepatics of Westmorland”. Westmorland Natural History Record 1, 165-173.
- 95 Verdoorn, F. 1934: Studien über asiatische Jubuleae (De Frullaniaceis XV-XVII. – Ann. Bryol. Suppl. 4: 1-231. as

## Endnotes

- quoted by S. Robbert Gradstein in “Stephani’s Species Hepaticarum revisited”. – Willdenowia 36 (Special Issue): 557-563. 2006 BGBM Berlin-Dahlem).
- 96 Robert Carrington collection at the Manchester Museum – GB2875 BAL/1
- 97 Transactions and Proceedings of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, Jan. 1900
- 98 Extracts from this letter were given to me by Angela Cox of the Welburn Local History Society. The original is in the possession of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (ref. P320/300 ).
- 99 Minute book (1878 – 1890) of the Manchester Cryptogamic Society, information kindly supplied by Manchester Museum, personal communication 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Also - Rogers, T. 1883 Manchester Cryptogamic Society Monthly Meeting. Naturalist, Hull, 138
- 100 Ian D.Hodkinson & Allan Steward, “The Three-Legged Society”, Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Lancaster University, 2012
- 101 The family drysalting firm was founded by George Braithwaite in 1713. It supplied the thriving local woollen textile trade with materials essential for cloth manufacture, e.g. alum, fullers earth & dyes. Their enterprises proliferated to include, among other activities, rope-making, engineering and woollen manufacturing businesses.
- 102 According to Leander Wolstenholme, Curator of Botany, in an email to A.C.Steward on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008, "It's possible we have more specimens in the collection as most of the collection is not yet on a database. These specimens seem to have come to us through two main sources. One is through Richard Spruce whose collection we acquired in the 1920s and the other is through Benjamin Carrington who donated many specimens to us in the 1890s".
- 103 Information received from Angela Cox, Welburn Local History Society (pers. comm.), The Slater letters are in archives of the Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester.
- 104 My wife, who is a granddaughter of Robert Newall says that he had studied botany as a student. Another coincidence is that Maria Just who attended Levens Infants and Girls' schools between 1893 and 1899, and was Infants Mistress from at least 1907 (when the Levens schools were brought under one roof, on the present site), until 1947, appears to be a direct descendant of a brother of John Just of Natland (1797 to 1852). John, remembered as an archeologist and botanist, lectured on Botany at the Pine Street (afterwards the Royal Manchester) School of Medicine and Surgery, and from 1848 was Honorary Professor of Botany at the Royal Manchester Institution (source Wikipedia).
- 105 Cyclitis is inflammation of ciliary muscle, which impairs the ability of the eye to focus.
- 106 Paymaster General's Office letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 1903, in the Stabler collection at Kendal Museum.
- 107 Death Certificate. GRO ref. 1910 Jan-Mar, Kendal vol. 10b, p471