



## The Teachers



The school got off to a very fortunate start with the appointment of its first Headmaster, the legendary Mr Weymouth Wash who, along with his wife Margaret, arrived from Ashington's Bothal School to get Brown Rigg up and running. Mr Wash was an inspired choice, for he was a larger than life character who believed in the old adage that school life should be 'organised mischief'. He organised not only the school's academic programme but a whole range of extra curricular activities; the concert parties, drama group, football team, school choir, country dancing. You name it and Mr Wash gave it his enthusiastic support. Mr Wash, supported admirably by his wife, ran Brown Rigg until 1955.

In that same year he was asked by the Northumberland Education Committee to set up a similar establishment at Marton in Cheshire. Sadly, a year later he died and, fittingly, he was buried in Bellingham's cemetery just a stone's throw from his beloved Brown Rigg. Mrs Wash returned to Brown Rigg where she was Bursar for a number of years. Upon retirement she moved into a cottage in Bellingham where she was regularly visited by former 'Brown Riggers' who held her in great esteem.

When Mr Wash 'moved on' in 1955 he was succeeded by Mr Joe Raine who came to Brown Rigg from a small village school at Elsdon. Brown Rigg's only other Headmaster was Mr Stuart Walton who had the sad job of presiding over Brown Rigg's closure in 1985.

Music played a big part in Brown Rigg life, with the school choir scoring many successes at the Tynedale Music Festival. Originally it was under the direction of Mr John McKernan, a fiery Irishman with an eyesight impediment, which as one former choir member put it, "You could never tell which way he was looking, so you had to concentrate".



The choir was for many years under the direction of Mrs Mary Wilson. Mary and her husband Dennis spent seven years at Brown Rigg, with Mary heavily involved with the choir and her legendary country dancing classes. Mr Wilson was extremely active in the school's sporting activities. He coached the football team to great success, encouraging a whole stream of lads to display talents they never knew they had. Together, Mary and Dennis Wilson were responsible for a generation of 'Brown Riggers' gaining their first experience of foreign travel. Organising trips abroad to Switzerland, Germany and Holland in an era long before the advent of package holidays.

Helping Dennis Wilson organise the school's football team was his Tweed Dorm colleague Bill Robson - two great teachers whose watchword was, "Encouragement". Shinty and running, meanwhile, were the forte of Mr 'Dixie' Dean who was often seen out pounding around the country lanes, while Ken Lynn brought organised P.E. lessons to the school, involving all manner of disciplines, and Harry 'Funghi' Wetherall introduced rugby to the school.

One teacher who is well remembered is Mr Edward (Ted) Grey, a real 'Mr Chips' who served Brown Rigg for many years and left a deep impression on all the boys who came into contact with him. Born in 1915, Ted had led a quite colourful life. As a young man he travelled extensively to the United States and throughout Europe. He ended his war service as a prisoner of war. He was a teacher just made for the unique surroundings of Brown Rigg, passionately interested in the classics, drama, music and art. His teaching style was unique, every pupil of his knew Rudyard Kipling's "If" off by heart and his nightly 'Book at Bedtime' always thrilled and inspired. He led the school scout troop, organised and produced plays both at school and in Bellingham's Town Hall and he masterminded Brown Rigg's Coronation Pageant in 1953.