

# *Kibble - A Lasting Legacy*

## *Care*



*1859 - 2009*



**Kibble**

[www.kibble.org](http://www.kibble.org)

# Introduction

Although Kibble was originally designated a reformatory school, the care and protection of children was also part of its remit and a concern from the beginning, as our early records demonstrate. Admission records have numerous cases of children being admitted for care and protection, rather than because of any serious wrongdoing on their part. Although there are many cases of deliberate maltreatment or neglect by parents, in some cases this was due to very difficult circumstances such as the death of one or both parents, poverty, or very large families, resulting in overcrowded and sometimes squalid home conditions; in some instances there was a combination of several of these factors. The care aspects of the service developed gradually over the years as understanding, attitudes and policies changed, and the service moved increasingly from a justice-based model to one grounded on a welfare basis.




# Early Care

Kibble's first Admissions Register (1859-1880) provides some insight into the difficulties and poor home conditions faced by some of the boys who were sent here during the nineteenth century:

- Parents very poor but honest and well conducted. They have five children. (Alexander Cameron, age 12, admitted 20th August 1860, 15 days in prison and 4 years in the reformatory for stealing biscuits)
- Parents both dead. Boy has been for five years an inmate of the Barony Poor's House, Glasgow. (George Bond, age 13, admitted 4th February 1861, 14 days in prison and 3 years in the reformatory for stealing money)
- Father dead, mother deserted her family and went to America. The boy has been brought up in the Abbey Poor's House. (William Tonnar, age 14, admitted 15th February 1861, 14 days in prison and 4 years in the reformatory for obtaining goods on false pretences)
- Father is a labourer breaking stones on the road and earning about 10 shillings a week. (Modern equivalent would be worth approximately £33.) Has seven children. (Samuel Allison, age 10, admitted 27th January 1862, 15 days in prison and 4 years in the reformatory for stealing 13 shillings)
- Father is a calico printer. Is very irregularly employed and his earnings small. Has a family of ten. (Alex McCluskey, age 15, admitted 9th March 1865, 14 days in prison and 3 years in the reformatory for stealing brassbrushes)
- Mother a widow and washerwoman. Industrious and respectable. Has six other children. (Thomas Brown, age 13, admitted 7th October 1867, 14 days in prison and 3 years in the reformatory for breach of trust and embezzlement)
- Mother dead. Father a bad character. (Malcolm Hassan, age 9, admitted 30th October 1867, 30 days in prison and 4 years in the reformatory for theft of money)
- Last Residence: Gipsy Tent near Bridge of Weir. (Alexander MacKenzie, age 12, admitted 9th June 1871, 10 days in prison and 5 years in the reformatory for theft of a canary)

# Early Care

Although these records give an indication of the poverty and hardship that some of the boys faced at this time, unfortunately, there is little documentary evidence in Kibble's early archive of what attempts were made in the reformatory to address these issues. We do know, however, that the boys were fed, clothed, taught to read and write, and trained in a trade: an improvement on what was available to many of them in their home lives. A daily timetable from an 1881 Board of Trustees Report illustrates the structure of a typical day in Kibble at that time:



5.30 – 6am	Rise; wash; dress
6 – 9am	School; worship
9 – 10am	Breakfast; play
10am – 1pm	Work
1 – 2 pm	Dinner; play
2 – 6pm	Work
6 – 7pm	Wash; supper; play
7 – 8.30pm	School; worship
8.30 – 9pm	Prepare for bed
9pm	Bed

The routine seems fairly rigid. Nonetheless, it provided some structure and stability in the lives of the boys, something that had been lacking in many cases. Work and training was clearly prioritised over education; seven hours in the day were given over to work but only four and a half were devoted to schooling, and 'worship' was also incorporated into that time. Although some time was allowed for play, this was only three hours per day, which included time for meals and for the boys to wash. The overall impression is one of a busy and tiring day with little free time. However, clear provision was made for regular meals and sleep. Time was also allocated for personal hygiene, although written records and later oral histories indicate that facilities were very basic and the boys were afforded little privacy in this respect.

# Early Twentieth Century

Improvements to bathroom facilities were recorded in the minutes of Kibble's Property Committee meetings in October 1908. The lavatory and bathroom were enhanced, with the ceilings being taken down and lined with wood and the whole place painted. This same minute goes on to say that 'each boy now has his own towel hung separately on a rack from the ceiling', which appears to suggest that they didn't have their own, individual towels prior to this! By 1912 'daily baths were taken by each boy'.

The same minute book recorded in December 1914 that inquiries had been made into the possibility of extending electricity cables to the school. Almost two years later, the Committee agreed that hot water would be supplied to the upstairs boys' lavatory. Although these are indicative of fairly primitive facilities, this would not have been unusual in the outside world of the working class population at that time. In many cases, conditions would have been better for Kibble boys than those available to them at home. Improvements in the school were ongoing, as reflected in this minute book, which records maintenance work such as new boilers and 'improvements to cooking apparatus'.

Apart from these more practical aspects of residential care, early twentieth century records highlight that even then some attention was directed towards boys' welfare when they were ready to leave Kibble. In 1910, for example, in the case of one boy who was proposed for licence it was recorded in the Education Committee minutes that this would only be agreed 'on condition he gets a situation away from home'. This was due to the mother's alcoholism and the father's 'unsteadiness'. Another boy's proposed licence was delayed due to overcrowding at home.

# Early Twentieth Century

Kibble's Medical Book (1897-1966) records medical examinations for boys on their admission and discharge, as well as quarterly medical examinations. Reports on these were sent to the Home Office and monitored the general health of the boys and the sanitary conditions of the school. This book also records incidences of illness or injury and treatment. The Medical Officer visited at least once a week and illnesses were similar to those we would see today, such as influenza and tonsillitis; however there were more cases of pneumonia than would be expected today as well as those that we rarely see in this country now: tetanus, tuberculosis and scarlet fever among them.

So there was some provision of medical care for the boys under the auspices of the Medical Officer. However, dental healthcare seems to have been rather more lacking. Mr Bulley, H.M. Inspector, recommended in 1911 'the use of toothbrushes and the appointment of a visiting dentist for the school'. When the boys' teeth were examined six months later the dentist estimated that an average of two extractions and 1.7 'stoppings' (fillings) were required for each boy.

# Later Twentieth century

Mark, a former Kibble boy admitted in 1948, has told us that he was glad to be sent to Kibble; for the first time in his young life he was well clothed and fed, had proper footwear and some money to his name, from the wages he received for farm work. Mark's care extended beyond his time at Kibble, largely due to the professional and personal dedication of Peter Gardner who followed his father, George, as Headmaster from 1952 till 1982. Peter was also a guest at Mark's wedding to Isa fifty-one years ago. Mark is just one of many examples in our records of this extended, informal after care. Some former pupils continued to visit Kibble as much as fifteen years after their discharge and were provided with clothing, footwear, accommodation and/or money when necessary. Joe, one of Mark's friends from Kibble brought his laundry to be done in the school for many years after he left to take up farm work. (Mark and Joe remain friends to this day, keeping in regular contact by letter.) We also know, from records and oral histories, that former Kibble boys were regularly welcomed at Christmas dinners and celebrations.

## Development of Through and After Care

The development of formal through and after care was a lengthier and more gradual process, as highlighted in minutes of Approved Schools Association meetings. These minutes document the heavy workload of After Care Officers and the Association's calls for recruitment of more officers and a more highly structured system of after care. Concerns were raised at the Association's Annual General Meeting in 1935 that after care visiting could not be carried out efficiently 'unless and until an adequate staff is provided in each school'. However, concern was still being expressed as late as 1952 at the 'serious overloading of the Welfare Officers'.

As early as 1932, the Association members expressed the view that home conditions and environment 'play a very material part in the welfare and conduct of ex-pupils' and that their after care could be improved by the provision of grants to provide food and clothing for 'deserving, necessitous cases'. Subsequent moves to develop liaison and collaborative working between the Probation Service and Welfare Officers from 1954 were welcomed unanimously by all parties.

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# Development of Through and After Care

Alex Calder, a Welfare Officer at Kibble between 1961 and 1969 went on to become a Social Worker. His memories illustrate the increasing emphasis placed on boys' home conditions and its significance to their development and care planning. He also provides a further example of unofficial staff efforts to support families:

'I used to carry out home visits to see what sorts of home the boys came from and in the evenings I would get help from my brothers to take furniture to them that they perhaps needed. The furniture would come from family and friends of mine that had no use for it any more.'

*(Alex Calder, Interviewed 2nd July, 2008)*

## Development of Psychological Service

Implementation of specialised psychological services in the Approved Schools system was also a lengthy process. There was recognition of the need for such services as early as 1947; however the first dedicated Approved Schools' Educational Psychologist was not appointed until 1952. This service was expanded in 1961 with the appointment of two regional psychologists, followed shortly afterwards by a third. Robert Vallance was appointed as Area Psychologist for West of Scotland Approved Schools in 1961, having worked previously in Polmont Borstal. Robert was based at Kibble but had responsibility for Psychological Services in all Approved Schools in the West area, giving him a unique overview of all of the schools in his designated area and the differences in how they operated. Some, for example, were more liberal in their approach than others. Robert recalls that Kibble's Headteacher at that time, Peter Gardner, was mixed in his approach: partly "old school" whilst having the ambition to be as modern as he could. One of the aspects that Peter was keen on was ensuring that boys were provided with proper clothing to wear when they went out on leave.

# Development of Psychological Service

As well as variations among schools in his area, Robert identified differences between Scottish and English approaches to Psychological Services:

'There were psychologists who worked in the English Approved Schools Service, which was attached to the Home Office, but all the input from psychologists in the English service was at the assessment side. In England a child went to what was called an Assessment Centre first and then, after a fortnight's assessment, he was allocated to what was called a Training School. Our two inspectors, Mr Petrie and Mr McPherson, didn't like that idea at all because with all the input being at the assessment side all the expertise went into the assessment report, and they discovered that nobody read them. Each Training School liked to deal with the child as they found the child and they often deliberately avoided reading the case notes, because they thought the case notes were biased by...you know...the police or Probation Officer, etc. So when it came to introducing psychologists to the Scottish system, they both thought it was important that the psychologists were to be involved in the actual training side of the regime. So it was set up that we would visit schools regularly and get involved in the whole aspect of the regime in each school.'

*(Robert Vallance, Interviewed 15th June, 2005)*

Robert's professional experience during the 1960s and early 1970s coincided with some key changes in policy and practice, most notably the introduction of the Children's Hearing system and of Social Work departments. These developments followed on from the Kilbrandon Report (1964) and the Social Work (Scotland) Act of 1968:

'And then the whole attitude towards residential care changed, with the introduction of the Hearing System and the Social Work. The Social Workers as a profession always seemed to be very hostile to residential care. I think it had something to do with the training and the way that attitudes developed towards separating children from their own natural family.'

*(Robert Vallance, Interviewed 15th June, 2005)*



# From Institutional Care to Residential Units

These changes paved the way for a shift away from institutionalised residential care and towards smaller, family-style residential units, as pioneered at Kibble by the late Peter Gardner. Robert Vallance explained some of the problems associated with the former approach to residential child care:

‘And then of course, one of the concomitant problems was, since the regimes were so institutional and the children, being vulnerable - of a vulnerable age, were more easily institutionalised, hence, when it came to them being released back home they had problems because of their acclimatisation to being institutional.’

*(Robert Vallance, Interviewed 15th June, 2005)*

Morag McLean, a Care and Education worker at Kibble from 1974 -1999, was horrified at conditions in Kibble’s original Victorian building when she first began working there:

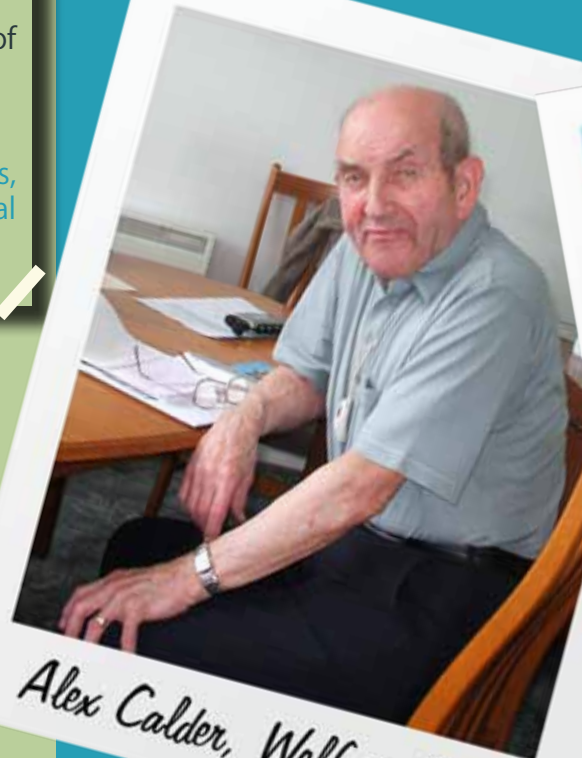
‘It was such a Dickensian building. The dormitories were so vast with a lot of beds.’

*(Morag McLean, Interviewed 24th July, 2008)*

Fortunately, Morag would witness the demise of the old Victorian buildings, which were demolished in the 1980s, and the development of smaller residential units during her time at Kibble.

# Conclusion

One hundred and fifty years after Kibble first opened its doors, Miss Kibble’s founding principles remain central to its operations. A key change during the thirteen years since it became an independent social enterprise is that Kibble’s care services have become increasingly diverse and specialised. It now offers an interconnected array of preventative and rehabilitative specialist services for young people at risk. These services span community outreach, residential care, social welfare, intensive fostering and through care (support in transition to independent living for care-leavers). Kibble also has a Safe Centre, which is a secure children’s home with education.



Alex Calder, Welfare Officer



Current Residential Unit buildings



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If you are interested in finding out more about the care history of Kibble, or perhaps you would like to contribute to it by telling your own story, please contact:

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