

# McLEOD, Arthur W. (1885-1956)

School teacher and friend of D.H.Lawrence

Arthur W. McLeod began his teaching career as a pupil teacher at Whitehorse Manor School in 1900. He obtained his BA degree in Greek at Kings College London before joining the staff of Davidson Road School in 1907. In 1913 he moved to Stanford Road School (later called Norbury Manor).

From 1919 until his retirement in 1946 he served as head teacher to a number of different Croydon schools:

1. His first headship was at Ingram High School for Boys between 1 September 1919 and 31 October 1922.
2. Head teacher of Winterbourne Junior Boys 1 November 1922-31 December 1928.
3. First Head teacher of the newly opened Heath Clark High School 1 January 1929-31 August 1934.
4. Headteacher of John Ruskin High School 1 September 1934 – 5 April 1946. During WWII, he oversaw the evacuation of the school to Shoreham on Sea and later to Woking.

His retirement on 5 April 1946 was reported at length in the *John Ruskin School Magazine* of July 1946 pp.3-9. Tributes were paid by past and present colleagues and the Education Officer of Croydon CB. The article includes a copy of a portrait which had been commissioned to hang in the school.

McLeod did not marry. He lived in Carew Road, Thornton Heath until his death on 25 July 1956 age 71. He was buried at Mitcham Road Cemetery, Croydon. Obituaries appeared in the *Croydon Advertiser* and the *Croydon Times* on 3 August 1956.

McLeod was a popular and inspirational teacher to his pupils. One such pupil was Cyril F. Derrick (1903-1987) who was taught by McLeod at Stanford Road School (later Norbury Manor) c.1913. He developed a love of English literature and other cultural subjects due to McLeod's teaching and continued to correspond with McLeod until his death.

For example, in a letter dated 28 December 1945, McLeod looks back over his career, with special mention of Stanford Road, and discusses his forthcoming retirement.

In 1983 Mr Derrick also recorded his memories of Stanford Road School for Norbury Manor's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and in which he mentions McLeod and his 'capability and love of teaching' at length: 'We were told by the Head, Mr Philip Smith, that he (McLeod) was the finest teacher within 30 miles of Croydon and I am sure that this was no over-statement; indeed I have since averred that he could have taught a stone'.<sup>1</sup>

His long service to the Education Department of Croydon County Borough Council notwithstanding, McLeod is often remembered for his close friendship with the writer D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) who served alongside McLeod as a teacher at Davidson Road school between 1908 and 1912 (although ill health prevented Lawrence from attending his post after 1911).

McLeod was a studious man who became Lawrence's best friend in Croydon. They shared an interest and enthusiasm for literature and Lawrence later wrote to McLeod reminiscing about 'walking, talking books with you'. McLeod and his colleagues bought Lawrence

books as a gift when he left Davidson Road school. (Letters I, p.382). McLeod received one of Lawrence's five author copies of *Sons and Lovers* (Worthen, *Early Years*, p.555). McLeod's reminiscences of Lawrence as a teacher are recorded in pp.89-91 of E. Nehls, ed., *D.H.Lawrence: A Composite Biography Volume 1, 1885-1919* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1957).

Lawrence used many of his Croydon circle of friends in his second novel *The Trespasser* (1912) and McLeod was the inspiration for the character of MacWhirter. McLeod also appears in Helen Corke's novel *Neutral Ground* (1933) as Howard Phillips 'the one man among his colleagues with whom Derrick (based on DHL) found anything in common'.

In her autobiography, Corke described McLeod thus: '...his imperturbable manner and tone of quiet authority make him a power in the school. Outside the school he would seem to have two interests only – his mother, with whom he lives, and his growing library. His fancy is for the latest and best in poetry, philosophy and fiction; and he will loan generously to those few friends who appreciate his taste and can be depended upon to return borrowed books in good condition..' (Helen Corke, *In Our Infancy: An Autobiography 1882-1912* (Cambridge University Press, 1975)).

After he left Croydon, Lawrence continued to correspond with McLeod until his death in 1930. Following McLeod's death in 1956, his sister presented Croydon Corporation with a collection of over 50 letters and postcards sent by Lawrence to McLeod.

However financial circumstances meant that she soon came to regret this decision and asked the Corporation to return the documents. This was done in 1959 but not before photocopies were made. These copies are held in the Archives store and are viewable on request. While the quality of the photocopies, made in 1959, is poor, microfiche copies are also available in the LSL.

Transcripts of the letters also appear in the eight volume Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence* edited by J. T. Boulton et al. (1976 onwards). The first three volumes covering 1901-1921 are held in the LSL.

The originals were subsequently sold to the University of Austin, Texas, and are held by its Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre. For more details, see <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/manuscripts>

For good introduction to D. H. Lawrence's time in Croydon see the following books in the LSL:

E. Nehls, ed., *D.H.Lawrence: A Composite Biography Volume 1, 1885-1919* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1957).

John Worthen, *D.H.Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912* (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

See also close friend and fellow teacher Helen Corke's memoirs:

Helen Corke, *D.H.Lawrence: the Croydon Years* (University of Texas, 1965) and *Helen Corke, In Our Infancy: An Autobiography 1882-1912* (Cambridge University Press, 1975). Corke was the inspiration for the central character of Lawrence's *The Trespasser*.

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of McLeod's letter and Mr Derrick's memories were kindly donated by Mr Derrick's son, Mr A. F. Derrick of Upminster, Essex in June 2003 and are included in this file.