





---

## DISCHARGE REGISTER – ISAAC WILSON

---

When he entered Netherton, Isaac was sentenced to stay at the school until he was 19 years old, like most of the boys that were sent to the school.

When a boy left the school, the staff of the school kept in touch with them for a period of 3–4 years afterwards. The staff recorded their contact with Isaac in the pages that you can see here. We often think of reformatories as harsh places, but it is interesting to note that Isaac wrote to the staff at Netherton and even visited the school once he left. This was not unusual.

In 1913 Isaac left the school to work at the farm of Mr Nicholson; a job that the school found for him. On 21 May 1915 he started work at Armstrong Whitworth Company in Byker, probably to make munitions.

He then joined the Northumberland Fusiliers in December 1915. He seems to have been in France in March 1916 when he sent the school a postcard (PC). He visited the school while on leave from the army. His entry for 1918 records that he was a prisoner of war for two weeks, but that he escaped.

---

### RELATED DOCUMENT

---

NRO 00820/B/10 p. 1742 Admission register entry for Isaac Wilson.

---

### OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

---

The National Archives website, page on “Victorian Children in Trouble”: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-children-in-trouble/>

Infed.org website, page about Mary Carpenter and her ideas about education: <https://infed.org/mobi/mary-carpenter-reformatory-schools-and-education/>

Northumberland Archives blog, page about Netherton Reformatory

<https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2015/03/30/netherton-reformatory-one-mans-first-world-war-story-david-eckstein/>

Children’s Homes website, page with history of Netherton Reformatory: <http://childrenshomes.org.uk/NethertonRfy/>

Children's Homes website, page with general information about reformatories: <http://childrenshomes.org.uk/Rfy/>

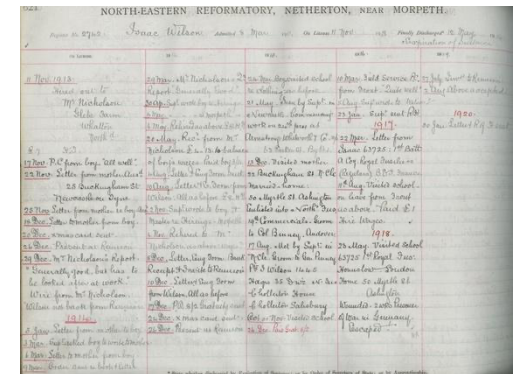
Children's Homes website, page with model rules and regulations (1890): <http://childrenshomes.org.uk/rules/Rfy.shtml>



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES – DISCHARGE REGISTER ENTRY FOR ISAAC WILSON, 1913–19

**TOPIC:** CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD, WW1

**SUBJECT AREAS:** HISTORY, LITERACY, GEOGRAPHY



| Background   | Activity   | Resources  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>When a boy left the school, the staff of the school kept in touch with them for a period of 3–4 years afterwards. The staff recorded their contact with Isaac in the pages that you can see here. We often think of reformatories as harsh places, but it is interesting to note that Isaac wrote to the staff at Netherton once he left. This was not unusual.</p> | <p><b>See:</b> How old was Isaac when he left Netherton?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Where did Isaac go when he left Netherton?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What major world event was about to begin when Isaac left Netherton?</p> <p><b>See:</b> How long did the school keep in touch with Isaac after he left?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Did Isaac continue to commit crimes after he left the school?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What work did Isaac undertake after his time at Netherton?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> Why did reformatories keep in touch with the boys after they left the school?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What can you learn about Isaac’s attitude towards the school from the discharge register?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What can we learn about the effectiveness of reformatory schools from discharge registers?</p> | <p><a href="https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2015/03/30/netherton-reformatory-one-mans-first-world-war-story-david-eckstein/">https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2015/03/30/netherton-reformatory-one-mans-first-world-war-story-david-eckstein/</a></p> <p><a href="http://childrenshomes.org.uk/NethertonRfy/">http://childrenshomes.org.uk/NethertonRfy/</a></p> <p><a href="http://childrenshomes.org.uk/rules/Rfy.shtml">http://childrenshomes.org.uk/rules/Rfy.shtml</a></p> |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p><b>Think:</b> What was the purpose of sending child criminals to reformatory school?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> Was this purpose achieved with Isaac Wilson?</p> <hr/> <p><b>Do:</b> Imagine you are Isaac. Write a series of letters to the reformatory to update them on your life between 1913 and 1919.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Research some of the other boys from Netherton, along with other reformatory schools. Create a presentation showing how effective reform school was as a form of punishment and rehabilitation.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Create a map showing the different places that Isaac visited after he left Netherton.</p>  |   |
| <p>At the beginning of the nineteenth century a child who committed a crime was tried in the same court as an adult. If the judge or magistrate sentenced them to prison, they would be sent to the same prison as adult criminals. Pressure from campaigners led to Parliament passing the Reformatory Schools Act in 1854. The Act allowed reformatory schools to be set up and for them to be officially inspected. Magistrates could send</p> | <p><b>See:</b> How were child criminals tried and sentenced in the early nineteenth century?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Why did campaigners want to keep child criminals separate from adult criminals?</p> <p><b>See:</b> What did Mary Carpenter say children should be given, rather than being sent to prison with adults?</p> <p><b>See:</b> When was the Reformatory Schools Act passed?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Who could be sent to reformatory school?</p> <hr/> <p><b>Think:</b> What were Mary Carpenter's education principles and methods?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> How were Mary Carpenter's education principles and methods different to the general principles of the time?</p> | <p><a href="https://infed.org/mobi/mary-carpenter-reformatory-schools-and-education/">https://infed.org/mobi/mary-carpenter-reformatory-schools-and-education/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2015/03/30/netherton-reformatory-one-mans-first-world-war-story-david-eckstein/">https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2015/03/30/netherton-reformatory-one-mans-first-world-war-story-david-eckstein/</a></p> <p><a href="http://childrenshomes.org.uk/NethertonRfy/">http://childrenshomes.org.uk/NethertonRfy/</a></p> <p><a href="http://childrenshomes.org.uk/rules/Rfy.shtml">http://childrenshomes.org.uk/rules/Rfy.shtml</a></p> |



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| children under the age of 16 to these schools, instead of to prison. | <p><b>Think:</b> What was the purpose of reformatory school?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What were the conditions like in reformatory school?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What were the rules and regulations of reformatory school?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What would the children have spent their time doing at reformatory school?</p> |  |
|  | <p><b>Do:</b> In small groups, debate whether or not introducing reformatory schools was the right way to punish child criminals.</p> <p><b>Do:</b> Using the information provided by the Children's Homes website, draw up a plan of Netherton.</p>   |  |