



WRAXALL AND FAILAND SCHOOLS

PENNANT REPRINTS N^o 6

WRAXALL & FAILAND

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WRAXALL AND FAILAND SCHOOLS

When the Rev. E P Vaughan was Rector of Wraxall he wrote a diary with many interesting items including:-

"There was a small dame's school in 1801 kept by Betty Bowles, in a cottage below the rectory. She taught the Criss Cross (the alphabet in the shape of Christ's Cross) and to sit still. Later, another school was kept by a Mrs Dyer, again in a cottage below the Rectory."

Wraxall's first real school is the building in the churchyard known as the library. Mr Richard Vaughan of Wraxall Lodge (now Wraxall Court) had it built at his own expense in 1809, the builder was Mr John Weeks. The oak timbers used for the joists and the beams came from an old "man of war" which had been broken up in Bristol.

The school teacher's cottage at the entrance to the churchyard was built on waste ground by the Rev James Vaughan with money left by the will of Richard Vaughan and partly at the Rev James Vaughan's own expense.

The boys' school was built in 1856 on a piece of ground given by Sir Greville Smyth of Ashton Court, the expenses paid by Mr William Gibbs.

The present school, once the girls' and infants' school was built more or less on the site of the village pound in 1886. Once again the land was given by Sir Greville Smyth and expenses paid by Mr Anthony Gibbs. Extensions were added at a later date.

The first school master was a Mr Knight and the Rev James Vaughan sent him to be trained at a school near Bridgwater. In 1813 it would seem that Joseph Crane had taken his place as master, whilst John Allen was a school usher.

During the 1820s Samuel Gallop and George Down [who by 1832 was at Wrington] were mentioned as masters. James Jones appears in 1838 and in 1841, according to the census for Wraxall of that year, George Goff was a master.

Probably just before 1840 Jesse Talbot opened a school for boys of middle class parentage at Failand Lodge and this continued for 41 years. There was a schoolroom of some kind at Failand as early as 1839 but the main school building at Failand was erected by Wraxall Church in 1847. [Failand Church was not built until 1887] During the 1840s and into the 1850s Moses Curtis was the school master.

Back to Wraxall. In 1846 and into the 1850s the schoolmaster was John Hill and from 1858 to the mid 1860s Thomas Carne who died September 1866 aged only 41 years. His wife Mary A Carne was school mistress at Failand by 1871.

The first mention of a school mistress at Wraxall is from the 1851 and 1861 Census returns. This is Mary Hartwell classed as "National School Mistress". It must be mentioned that

some of the school masters' wives were termed teachers, sometimes of the infants.

By 1870 Maynard Colchester had taken over and from 1872 onward George Tidcombe. He taught well into the 1890s. Then came "Banger Brown" followed by William A Haining.

At Failand, again during the 1890s was Henry Adams.

Quite probably there were others whose names are unknown. As the known names are taken from the registers and the Census Returns, the persons who have been named could have been in office before and after the dates given. Unfortunately up to the 1890s one cannot know at which school one person was teaching.

At the girls' and infants' school during the 1890s Mrs Cook was head mistress with one or two assistants. Later Miss Baker was head mistress with her sister Winnie Baker and Mrs Darby [infants teacher].

By the 1930s Mrs Cowles was headmistress, with Mrs Long and Miss Davis [later Mrs Stevens] as infant teacher. There were supplementary teachers after Mrs Long retired two of whom were Miss Loney and Miss Gold.

The information given is only up to the second World war and so now many more names could be added to the list.

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