

Education The Challenge

The Victorians valued learning, but the majority of children received only a basic education. Few schools were free. For many, the only school was the Sunday school. Children who did go to school learned reading, writing and arithmetic, studied the Bible and memorised the catechism.¹ Children usually learned by rote. Paper was expensive so there were few books and only slates to write on. Lessons were in English, Welsh was restricted to Sunday schools.

Religion was an important issue in nineteenth-century education. The Church of England supported the National Schools in Chirk, Ruabon, Rhos and Wrexham. Nonconformists² sent their children to the British Schools, such as the one on Brook Street in Wrexham.

In 1847, the Government set up a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales. The commissioners had many prejudices about the Welsh language and nonconformity.

"The scholars are very dirty and ragged, uncouth... and being altogether uncivilized, appear to require discipline even more than instruction."

Report on Rhosllannerchrugog British School, 1847.

The commissioners' report on the schools around Wrexham revealed a desperate situation: barely trained teachers and run-down ill-equipped schools. The report caused an outcry, but locally it was seen as a challenge. In Wrexham and Ruabon, new National Schools were opened and the local gentry paid for a Ragged School in Wrexham to provide free education for the poor.

¹ The catechism is a series of questions and answers, detailing the beliefs of the Christian church, which children learned by heart.

² Nonconformists, also known as Dissenters, included Christians such as Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. They were known as nonconformists as they would not conform to the beliefs of the Church of England.

Addysg Yr Her

Roedd y Fictoriaid yn rhoi bri ar addysg, ond dim ond addysg sylfaenol iawn a dderbyniai'r rhan fwyaf o blant. Roedd ysgolion rhad yn brin. I lawer, yr Ysgol Sul oedd yr unig ysgol oedd ar gael. Roedd y plant oedd yn mynd i'r ysgol yn dysgu darllen, ysgrifennu a rhifydddeg, yn astudio'r Beibl ac yn dysgu'r catechism ar eu cof.¹ Fel arfer roedd y plant yn gorfod dysgu popeth ar eu cof. Roedd papur yn gostus, llyfrau yn brin oherwydd hynny, a dim ond llechi ar gael i ysgrifennu arnyn nhw. Saesneg oedd cyfrwng y gwersi. Dim ond yn yr Ysgolion Sul y ceid y Gymraeg.

Roedd crefydd yn fater o bwys yn addysg y 19eg ganrif. Cefnogai Eglwys Lloegr yr Ysgolion Cenedlaethol yn Y Waun, Rhiwabon, Rhos a Wrecsam. Roedd yr Anghydfurfwyr² yn anfon eu plant i'r Ysgolion Prydeinig, fel yr un yn Brook Street, Wrecsam.

Yn 1847, sefydlodd y llywodraeth Gomisiwn i Ymchwilio i Gyflwr Addysg yng Nghymru. Roedd gan y Comisiynwyr lawer o ragfarnau ynghylch yr iaith Gymraeg ac Anghydfurfiaeth.

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Adroddiad am Yr Ysgol Brydeinig, Rhosllannerchrugog, 1847.

Dadlennodd Adroddiad y comisiynwyr ar yr ysgolion yng nghyffiniau Wrecsam pa mor ddirifol oedd y sefyllfa; athrawon nad oedden nhw wedi derbyn fawr ddim hyfforddiant ac ysgolion prin eu hadnoddau. Achosodd yr adroddiad gryn gynnw, ond fe'i gwelwyd yn lleol fel her. Agorwyd Ysgolion Cenedlaethol newydd yn Wrecsam a Rhiwabon a thalodd y teuluoedd bonheddig lleol am Ysgol i'r Tlodion yn Wrecsam i ddarparu addysg i blant o deuluoedd tlawd.

¹ Cyfres o gwestiynau ac atebion yr oedd plant yn eu dysgu ar eu cof, yn manylu ar greddau'r Eglwys Gristnogol, yw'r catechism.

² Roedd yr Anghydfurfwyr, a adnabyddid fel 'Sentars' yn cynnwys Cristnogion fel y Beddyddwyr, y Methodistiaid a'r Presbyteriaid. Fe'u gelwid yn anghydfurfwyr am eu bod yn gwrthod cydymffurfio a chredoau Eglwys Lloegr.



Engraving from the prospectus for Grove Park School. This school offered the best education in Wrexham according to the 1847 Report. Engrafiad o lawlyr Ysgol Grove Park. Yn ôl adroddiad 1847 hon oedd yn cynnig yr addysg orau yn Wrecsam.



Pupils of Berse Court Charity School. Disgyblion Ysgol Eiddoedd Berse Court.

"We found the master in a public house, the hour was 10am. The boys were in the school meanwhile playing with all their might."

Report on Gresford Church School, 1847. Adroddiad am Ysgol yr Eglwys, Gresford, 1847.

"The apparatus consist of a few books and cards, which are tattered and scarcely legible, and there is a small dirty map of Palestine fixed to one of the walls."

Report on Ruabon Free School, 1847. Adroddiad am Ysgol Rad Rhiwabon, 1847.



The teaching staff of the British School, Brook Street, Wrexham. Left to right: Miss Morgan, Mr Jennings, Mr Fagan, Miss Jones. Not known, Mr Alexander Fyle (Headmaster), Miss Jones, Mr Charles Dodd. Not known, Miss Fyle, Miss New, Mr Harrison.

Staff dysgu'r Ysgol Brydeinig yn Brook Street, Wrecsam. O'r chwith i'r dde: Miss Morgan, Mr Jennings, Mr Fagan, Miss Jones. Anghysbys, Mr Alexander Fyle (Prifathro), Miss Jones, Mr Charles Dodd. Anghysbys, Miss Fyle, Miss New, Mr Harrison.



"Brymbo Church School is a miserable cottage. I did not see a Bible in the school. There is not a whole slate or a book for the children to read."

"Bethlyn di-nod yw Ysgol yr Eglwys, Brymbo. Welais i'r un Beibl yn yr ysgol. Does yno ddim llechen gyfan na llyfr i'r plant ei ddarllen."