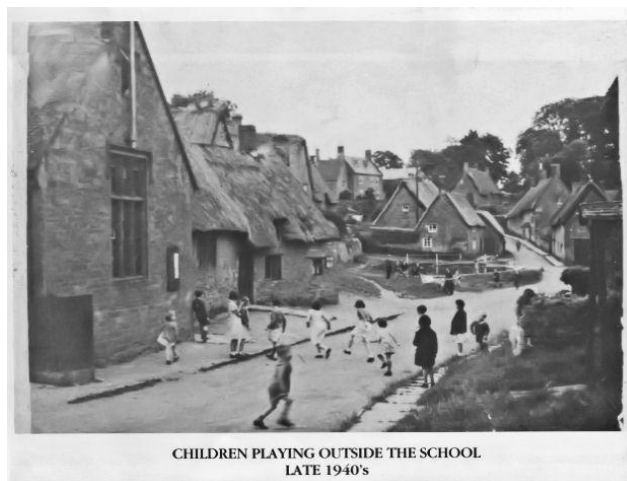


Wroxton School 1867

Wroxton Village has had a school since 1709, when the schoolmaster, according to Dr Perry Buckley, was paid £20 per annum by Lord Guildford. There were three schools by 1815 and by 1868, 112 children were receiving some education. The majority of these attended Wroxton National School, a partly thatched building in Main Street where there is now the Village Green.

Wroxton's was one of the National Schools established by the Church of England to rival the nondenominational ones of the British and Foreign Schools Society. By 1851 there were 17000 schools throughout the country using a monitorial system whereby older pupils taught the younger ones.



Progress in education at this time though real, was very slow. Thousands of children still had no schooling and fewer than half of those who did were in state-inspected schools. In an attempt to improve the situation, Robert Lowe, head of the Education Department of the Privy Council, introduced a system of "payment by results" known as "The Revised Code." Grants were given to schools on the basis of the number of pupils who attended regularly and passed each stage of their education after examination by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. While this secured more attention for slow learning children it also put pressure on staff to concentrate on memory work to push pupils through their exams.

It was this that prompted Forster's Education Act of 1870, which initiated an entirely new system of State Schools. Wherever there was no adequate provision for schooling, a Board was to be elected by the ratepayers and made responsible for the building and running of a school or schools. Such schools were forbidden to carry out religious teaching and observances of a denominational character. Board Schools, however, remained in the minority for many years, as the Education Act also increased grants to existing Church Schools. Fortunately for Wroxton, one of the Church Schools, this encouraged its survival and expansion.

On January 7th 1867, Miss Sarah Anne Smith took over in Wroxton, charged with the task of preparing the school for the changes needed to qualify for the Government grant. It must have been a daunting task; to begin with she was following a headmaster who had gained an impressive reputation over 46 years. Mr Goldby had been appointed principal teacher in 1821 and, according to the Rev. West, under his charge the school had become "noted," attended by boys from the neighbouring villages. A newcomer, and a young woman at that, she was only 21, would have had a hard time making her mark.

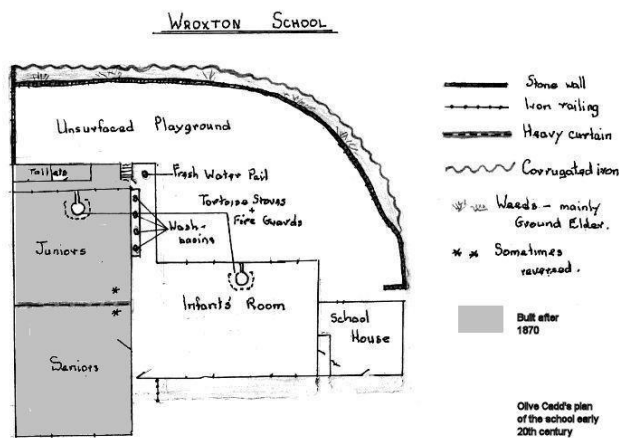
Miss Sarah Ann Smith

All that we know of Miss Smith comes from the school logbook which she assiduously completed twice a day throughout the year, but the rules of the Revised Code of Regulations at the front of the book strictly limited what she could write. She was required to make the "briefest entry" which was enough to specify the programme, no personal reflections were allowed and no entry once made could be altered or removed. Despite this, it is possible to see glimpses of the person behind the

formality of the writing. Her first impression of the school monitresses and children suggest that she was a gentle teacher. She observed the lessons of Sarah Anne Neville (14) and Mary Gregory (12) and found them *“too dry and their voices too loud with a rough manner of speaking to the children. But they seem anxious to improve.”* She found the pupils *“Affectionate, respectful and without deceit.”*

She began with a description of the schoolroom which was *“a comfortable one, oblong with a wooden floor.”* It was quite large, 27ft long, 14 ft wide, with a height of 18ft. The teacher’s residence was attached to one side and there was a lobby on the other with a porch. One end of the room could be separated by a curtain so that it could serve as a classroom for the infants. The ventilation was *“very efficient, pure air admitted and impure ejected.”* Miss Smith noted that there were three rows of desks of *“Windsor”* shape and three rows of *“old shape desks”* all with inkwells, but she criticised the benches for being too short. There was a gallery in the infants’ room which had very low seats and a passage on one side only and also a good cupboard with sliding doors, a work table and a desk for the teacher. There was only one blackboard for the whole school and there was no ball frame for the infants. The paper and copybook pens were satisfactory, but while there were several good maps, the scripture prints were unacceptable, there were no natural history pictures

and the reading books were not suited to the standards.



Miss Smith began working at the school on *“my own plan from a timetable drawn up by myself.”* The curriculum included arithmetic, reading, writing, geography and needlework, but the emphasis was on the church liturgy and the catechism. It seems that the children were able to bring their own work (sewing?) in the afternoons, but she found the standard poor and decided that *“the rule of keeping the children to School work during the greater part of the week is perfectly just*

as it will be far more beneficial to the children.”

The management of the monitresses took up a good deal of her time. She was responsible for seeing that their education continued and improved, so they were given private lessons which began at 7am before the rest of the school arrived. They also had to perform their teaching duties adequately in class which could not have been easy to ensure. The girls were still very young. They learned much of their teaching skill from trial and error, and it was not surprising that Miss Smith found it an uphill task.

There are numerous references to the girls’ harshness when dealing with the infants. On May 17th, Mary Gregory was reprovved for showing *“too much authority – A little more kindness in speaking to the children is required.”* Yet the monitresses were children themselves and quite often misbehaved. Sarah Anne Neville, for example, was reprovved for disobedience several times and spoilt the good answers she gave when questioned on the catechism by the School Inspectors by giggling. Mary Gregory and a new monitress Elizabeth Taylor were also reprovved for being idle and inattentive. Again and again the words *“scarcely gentle enough”* and *“wanting in kindness”* occur in the reports on their progress. It is clear that Miss Smith set great store by these attributes and when the girls responded she was quick to show appreciation, noting that they were less rough and

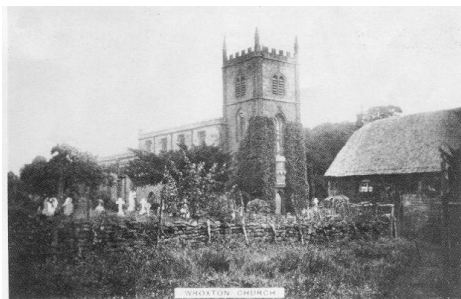
impatient in manner and kind to their classes. She was also willing to make allowances for them. When she, as she wrote, “*kindly*” reproved Sarah and Mary for having neglected their duties she also acknowledged that this was “*partly through ignorance.*” When the girls squabbled over who was to do the domestic work which was part of their responsibilities, Miss Smith reprimanded them, but then observed that afterwards a better feeling had sprung up between them and “*the work has been rather better attended to.*”

Throughout the year the education and the teaching of the monitresses fluctuated, sometimes being reported as good and sometimes, careless. On a good day Miss Smith could happily write: “*Both S A. Neville and M. Gregory worked better and appeared to be teachers*” and it must have been a great satisfaction to her, when the Rev. Compton examined the school on December 20th and found the two senior monitresses “*much improved.*”

While she was a stern teacher, Sarah was also honest enough to acknowledge her own mistakes. In April she reported that the work of the standard III boys was very untidy- “*Some blame resting on me; their work having not been properly superintended through having to give more attention to the Needlework.*” Much of the writing in the logbook is concerned with analysing the progress of the pupils, but it is still possible to see her delight in some of their responses. In March, she reported that the children were “*much amused*” at seeing a map drawn on the blackboard. “*Sarah Hemmings said she had never seen one drawn before.*” And in June “*the marching in the school-room during the recreation time pleased the children very much.*”

The Rev Daniel Compton

Although Miss Smith was the principal teacher, it was the vicar, the Reverend Daniel Compton, in his capacities as vicar and a manager of the school, who controlled its day to day activities. He had been inducted as vicar in 1864 and come to live across the road from the school at what is now the “Old Rectory.” Sarah records that Mrs Compton also took an active interest in school affairs. It is likely that this was the Rev. Compton’s mother, as the vicar was not to marry for another year. The log book for 1868, records that on 21st October “*the children marched with flowers in their hands along the road to the vicarage in order to show respect to the Rev. DG Compton and his Bride who were returning from their wedding tour.*” The vicar and his wife, Louisa, then moved to a new vicarage, which he helped finance, on what is now the A422 road to Stratford. Before the vicar’s marriage, however, his mother regularly visited to supervise the girls’ needlework and give lessons



CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS, WROXTON
CIRCA 1910

in darning, buttonholing, and shirtmaking. There was also a lighter side to her activities when she came in to teach dancing.

Decisions on the running of the school were the Rev. Compton’s province. Scarcely a day passed when he did not visit and he frequently attended both morning and afternoon sessions. He taught everything from singing to arithmetic, as well, of course, scripture and the catechism. In addition to teaching, he made the Quarterly Inspections

of the school and accompanied the Diocesan Inspectors when they came. He granted holidays for church events

such as St Valentine’s Day and Ascension Day and allowed the older children “*to follow the remains of Fanny Taylor to the grave.*” Village activities were also celebrated, with day or half day holidays

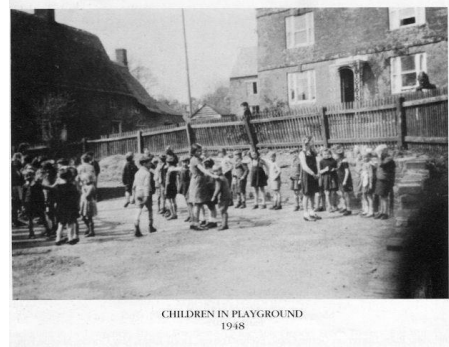
sanctioned for “The Cottagers’ Show” or May Day, or even for good exam results. He was also happy to shut the school early when required, for such events as the “Singers’ Supper” or in preparation for a tea and Magic Lantern Show.

The Rev. Compton and his mother seem to have been generous to the children. Mrs Compton provided each pupil with a new handkerchief as a New Year’s gift and later “*very kindly presented each child in the School with a packet of sugar plums.*” The vicar made the school’s apparatus “*more complete*” by providing a new blackboard and easel and ball frame. He also arranged a Magic Lantern Show and tea in February, and later in the year he paid for the four upper standards to attend a lecture on Astronomy.

Discipline

The enforcement of discipline was another of the vicar’s duties. One of the most serious events took place in July when Miss Smith called on him to investigate the affair of the missing halfpence, wrapped in paper, which had disappeared from her desk. The vicar enquired “*most earnestly*” into the matter, but to no avail. “*No clue was obtained.*” He tried again the following day to make the culprit own up, but when no-one did, he punished the whole school by suspending all privileges. It is interesting, however, that the half day holiday he had granted for 17th July to enable the staff to attend the opening of Balscote School was not rescinded.

The vicar’s authority over the children spread outside the school itself. He reprimanded them all for such misdemeanours as being noisy in the village and destroying the grass. When Mr Gardiner complained to him that one of the boys had broken his window, the vicar went to school to demand that the culprit confess. When no-one did, he kept all the boys in for an hour. He also made several visits to the school on a Monday morning to complain about the behaviour of the boys at Sunday School the previous day. Trouble with high spirited boys in church seems to have been an ongoing problem; even two years later Miss Smith recorded that the Rev. Compton had visited the school and spoken to the children about repeating the responses in “*a more subdued tone.*”



Absenteeism

One of the major difficulties for the school was that of ensuring that children attended regularly. General education for the poor was still a fairly new concept and for many families of far less importance than the day to day struggle to survive. In an attempt to rectify this, the 1862 Revised Code had adopted a system of “Payments by results”. This gave grants to schools on the basis of the number of their pupils who attended regularly and passed a brief examination in the three Rs at the end of each stage of their schooling. This perhaps explains the importance given to the attendance figures at Wroxton School and the frequent rather worried comments on the low numbers by Miss Smith.



She was particularly anxious on her very first day when only 29 children turned up, suspecting the reason was the new rule on fees. It seems possible that the weekly charge had been increased and understandably many parents would have found this difficult. They had to agree to pay 2d a week for each pupil, though the amount would be reduced if there was more than one child in the family. Children had to register on Monday morning by 9.00 am; they were to come with hands and faces well washed and never without a handkerchief. Those at Wroxton School provided their

own slates. At some schools such as Brooke and Kirstead National School, Norfolk, half the money paid by the children could occasionally be returned to them at the beginning of a quarter *"in useful articles of clothing and rewards in books &c"*, but only if the pupils obeyed the school precepts. It is not clear whether this system was followed at Wroxton.

It was with some relief that Miss Smith recorded an attendance of 61 pupils at the end of January, *"the highest since the holiday,"* but the numbers fluctuated considerably at certain times of year. It could not have been easy to ensure regular attendance of pupils in farming communities. The highest on the register in one week was 80 on July 19th, but as many as 26 were absent in the third week of June and in one of the weeks leading up to Harvest average attendance was as low as 33.9%. The children were working at home and in the fields. On 18th June, a great number were absent *"in consequence of an old custom of going into the fields to pluck a certain plant from the wheat."*

Miss Smith did not specify the plant, but twenty years later the teacher records that pupils were kept away to gather dandelions. Even though five weeks were allowed for the Harvest holiday, absenteeism before and after this time was very high. In 1868 on July 24th for example, there were only 14 present in school while the bigger children were helping with gleaning.



High days and Holidays



1st Oxfordshire Light Horse under the command of Captain W.H. North, far more interesting for the children than lessons in school.

In the same way,

Banbury's Michaelmas Fair in October with its Fortune Telling Pony, Talking Fish, Peep Show and Fiddling Monkey would have been too good to miss. Indeed Miss Smith seems to have recognised this and

While help in the fields was the principal reason for absenteeism, it was not the only one. Numbers dropped when there was a Review of the Troops on the Downs on 7th June and when the Wroxton Review took place on 7th August. These were parades, in full Review order, of the



sometimes given into the inevitable, granting leave tickets for special occasions such as these.

There were also a surprising number of half and whole day holidays. On 29th April the girls went round the village with their garlands, rather than on 1st May, and in the afternoon all the children marched to the Abbey grounds “where tea and amusements were kindly provided for them by the Lady and Colonel

North.” There was a whole day holiday for the Cottagers’ Show, and another to allow the head teacher to go to Banbury to a Confirmation held in the Parish Church. Another whole day holiday was granted when Miss Smith had to take some children to the Diocesan Prize Scheme Examination in Banbury, and half a day to enable the teachers to go to the opening of Balscote School. In addition there were days off for good examination results and from 27th to 30th September the school was closed for repairs. All these holidays were in addition to the week granted at Whitsun and two weeks at Christmas.

The children attended church regularly on days honouring the Saints, marching there and returning for lessons. They were given a whole day off and a tea for St.Valentine’s day and additional time off for Ascension Day, Whitsun week, and Christmas, but interestingly no break for Easter, although Good Friday was treated as a Sunday. The older children also went to the Baptism of the daughter of A. Tawney Esq, and to the funeral of Fanny Taylor.



MAY DAY
CIRCA 1930
May King Bill Palmer, Queen Mary Roberts.

Examinations and Inspections

As a National school, Wroxton was subject to examination both by Her Majesty’s and the Diocesan Inspectors. The Rev. Compton also regularly inspected individual classes and oversaw the Quarterly examinations of the whole school. The academic year started on 1st March when a new register was begun with the children in their new standards. Four days later the Diocesan Inspector, the Rev. P. Hoste of Cropredy visited the school. He examined the standards in reading, writing, arithmetic and needlework and heard the children say their “private prayers.” He questioned them on the catechism and rewarded Elizabeth Hawkes with a book. The Rev. Hoste. reported that the school in general and the discipline had improved, and asked the Rev. Compton to grant a half day holiday.

No sooner was this examination over than the Rev. Bellairs, H.M. Inspector of schools arrived. His inspection seems to have been more rigorous covering the same areas as the Rev. Hoste but more critically. He drew the attention of Miss Smith to the cramped writing of the Standard III pupils and found fault with some of the reading and mental arithmetic. He told her he considered the children backward for their age with only a few in their proper standards, yet his written report expressed approval in the improvements he saw. “*The Discipline, needlework, methods of teaching attainments and intelligence of the children in secular and religious subjects are very good. There is a remarkable improvement in the condition of this school since my last inspection.*”

While half day holidays might have been an incentive to the children to work hard , there were others during the year. Lady North offered a prize to the best workers in the each of the two upper classes which were won by Anne Fox and Fanny Carpenter. In May, six children were entered for the Diocesan Prize Scheme Examination and were coached by the Rev. Compton.. When the results were announced in October, three pupils obtained 2nd class certificates for General Proficiency and Needlework, one for General Proficiency alone, and the others were not mentioned.

On December 20th The Rev. Compton issued his Quarterly Inspection Report:

“Examined the School. Present 46 children in Standards and 10 in infants; of the former 37 passed in Reading, 31 in Writing and 21 in Arithmetic. A manifest general improvement. The Arithmetic however was inaccurate especially in Standards II and III and there was a marked lack of care and neatness in slate and paper work. There appeared a want of readiness in the arithmetical tables. The tone of the reading was of better quality than in previous examination. Geography more extended and well known. The two senior monitresses much improved. With hard work done in the infants, there is a prospect of a good examination in March.” Daniel G Compton, Manager.

What a good way for Miss Smith to end her first year at Wroxton National School.

Early Closures, Holidays and Church Visits

Early Closures

18.01.1867	For “Singers’ Supper.”
28.02.1867	Preparation for tea and Magic Lantern Show.
15.05.1867	Children “taught Marching” in playground.

Church visits in School time

25.01.1867	In remembrance of the conversion of St. Paul.
07.02.1867	Standards 111 and 1V to a service for the baptising of the daughter of A.Tawney Esq.
06.03.1867	111 and 1V to church, reason not recorded.
12.04. 1867	111, 1V and V to church for 5 th week in Lent.
18.04.1867	111, 1V and V followed remains of Fanny Taylor.
19.04.1867	Good Friday, kept as a Sunday.
22.04.1867	Easter Monday, 111, 1V and V to church.
25.04.1867	111, 1V and V for St. Mark’s Day.
01.05.1867	111, 1V and V for St.Philip and St. James’ Day.
30.05.1867	Whole school for Ascension Day.
24.06.1867	1V and V for John Baptist’s Day.
28.10.1867	111, 1V and V for St. Simon and St. Jude’s Day.
01.11.1867	Upper Standard for All Saints’ Day.
14.02.1867	Holiday and tea for St. Valentine’s Day.
07.06. – 18.06. 1867	Whitsun Week.
20.12.- 30.06.1867	Christmas Week.

No time off for Easter.

General Celebrations

29.04.1867	Girls engaged in going round the village with garlands, instead of on 1 st May. The children of Wroxton and Balscote marched to the Abbey
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grounds where “tea and amusements were kindly provided” by Lady and Colonel North.

23.09.1867 Whole holiday for the “Cottagers’ Show.”

Administrative Closures.

06.03.1867 Exams in the morning followed by afternoon holiday.

20.03. 1867 Rev. Compton gave the children a half day holiday in order to allow the Head teacher to go to a Confirmation Service in Banbury Parish Church.

23.03. 1867 Rev Compton and Rev Bellairs granted a whole holiday following School Inspection.

24.05.1867 A whole day holiday to enable Miss Smith to take some children to the Diocesan Prize Scheme Exam in Banbury.

16.07.1867 Half day holiday so that teachers could go to the opening of Balscote School.

27.09.-30.09. 1867 School closed for repairs.

Attendance figures for 1867.

This shows the numbers of pupils registered by Miss Smith at the beginning of each week together with the number of pupils who were absent at some time. This was recorded as the average daily attendance in the log book. The figures were not supplied for the first month.

W/E	No. On Register	No. Absent	Attendance Average
15.02.1867	69	5	53.2
22.02. 1867	71	9	58.5
01.03.1867	69	5	not recorded
08.03.1867	68	5	59.1
15.03.1867	69	8	59.7
22.03.1867	69	5	56.5
29.03.1267	60	4	59.9

05.04.1867	60-71 (sic)	7	59.8
12.04.1867	71	5	65.6
19.04.1867	71	8	62.8
26.04.1867	73	7	65.8
03.05.1867	72	6	65.0
10.05.1867	73	7	64.2
17.05.1867	78	11	61.8
24.05.1867	77	11	63.0
31.05.1867	77	12	59.6
07.06.1867	76	13	52.5
09.06.1867	to	18.06.	Whitsun Holiday
21.06.1867	77	26	46.7
28.06.1867	77	19	52.8
05.07.1867	77	22	not recorded
12.07.1867	77	23	52.7
19.07/1867	80	14	58.0
26.07.1867	79	10	64.4
02.08.1867	77	9	61.5
09.08.1867	74	11	48.6
16.08.1867	74	15	53.9
16.08.1867	to	23.09.	Harvest Holiday
27.09.1867	not recorded	not recorded	not recorded
04.10.1867	73	4	31.9
11.10.1867	72	17	51.7
18.10.1867	72	18	41.6

25.10.1867	74	17	52.6
01.11.1867	73	14	52.4
08.11.1867	not recorded	not recorded	not recorded
15.11.1867	72	12	51.5
22.11.1867	67	9	51.7
29.11.1867	68	12	50.7
06.12.1867	70	13	54.5
13.12.1867	69	11	52.4
20.12.1867	71	9	56.1
20.12 1867	to	30.12.1867	Christmas Holiday

Pupils mentioned in 1867 school logbook		
Surname	Christian Name	Comments
Bartlett	Frederick	Took great pains with Arithmetic
Bartlett	Mary	Did very fair amount of needlework.
Bartlett	James	Expelled from class.
Barton	George	Kept in for extreme forgetfulness.
Berry	William	In the Infants, fell down and broke his thigh.
Berry	Henry	Sent from class and lost his mark.
Berry	Elizabeth	Sent out of class by Rev. Compton.
Bonner	Sarah Ann	Punished for pertness
Carpenter	Fanny	Commended for the pains she took with her darning.
Carter	James	Punished for using bad language.

Cearle (?)	William	Commended for taking pains with his writing.
Cross	Charles	Commended for his Arithmetic.
Elford	Fanny	Commended for answering .
Elkington	Sarah	Commended for taking pains with her needlework.
Fox	Anne	Did a good Darn for which she was commended.
Francis	Gertrude	Reproved for bad work.
Grant	Emily	Read inaccurately.
Gregory	Mary	Monitress aged 12
Hancox	David	Weak Arithmetic in Standard 1V
Hancox	Lucy	"Formerly a monitress in Tyso National School, now in my employ." (Miss Smith)
Hancox	Gertrude	Commended for good answers on Catechism.
Hancox	Amy	Sat very still and did her work nicely.

Hawkes	James	Kept in for disobedience in Sunday School the previous day.
Hemmings	Elizabeth	Sent from class for bad behaviour.
Hemmings	Sarah	Commended for the answers she gave during the Catechism Lesson
Hemmings	William	Took pains with Arithmetic.
Heyter	Henry	H M Inspector considered him to be the best scholar in the school.
Hiet	Jane	Did only moderately well in Arithmetic.
Hiet	Richard	Commended for neatness
Hughes	Norah	Did well in Arithmetic.
Hughes	Sarah Ann	Read very badly.

Jakeman	Anne	Punished for being repeatedly disobedient and obstinate.
King	F	Lost marks for inattention
Markham	Jane	Commended for taking pains with her needlework.
Mills	James	Given leave ticket for being unable to come to school through broken chilblains.
Mills	Anne	New admission
Neville	Sarah Anne	Monitress aged 14
Neville	George	Attempted playing truant; he was brought in but was rather troublesome in class.
Neville	Lewis	Reproved for calling Elizabeth Hawkes an improper name.
Newman	Louisa	Reproved for talking.
Ping	Frederick	Did Arithmetic very fairly.
Slatter	Maria	Commended for attention and answering carefully.
Taylor	George	Reported to the Rev. Compton.
Taylor	Fanny	Commended for Mental Arithmetic. DIED in
		April
Taylor	Elizabeth	Commended for her work.
Taylor	S	Lost marks for inattention
Taylor	Anne	Lost marks for inattention
Taylor	Henry	Work very untidy.
Taylor	Mary Ann	Punished for disobedience.
Taylor	William	Punished for disobedience.
Taylor	Elizabeth	Not sufficiently energetic to improve.
Taylor	Charles	Reproved for carelessness.

Upton	Martha	Inattentive to needlework.
Ward	R	New admission
Ward	Kezia	Read inaccurately.
Warren	George	Kept in for ill temper.

With thanks to April Guinness Head Teacher of Wroxton C.E. School for the loan of the school logbook.

Maureen Woollacott