

FROM THE ARCHIVES

PAXTON HOUSE

Paxton House was opened in early 1958 and built at a cost of £17,000, including furnishings, and was used specifically as a dining room and a residence for domestic staff. With the construction of Parker Hall in the mid 1990s the building known as Paxton House was re-modelled into a Performing Arts Centre with some boarding on the top floor.

The last occasion any demolition of buildings took place in the Quadrangle area was in the mid 1950s when many of the facilities built after Cyclone Leonta in 1903 were deemed to be unsuitable.

All lessons took place in what is now known as School House but was then called **Big School**. The main room was set up for all the Junior Classes while the room through the two doors was for the Sixth Form classes. The Honour Board at the back of the room is the Honoris Causa which is now to be found in the foyer of the Blank Building. Although school enrolment numbers would never have been much more than a hundred, the rooms must have been rather tightly packed. As a side issue during the Great Influenza of 1919 Headmaster Rowland made all senior students sit no closer than three feet from each other while all junior students had to take their classes out of doors and under the trees.



This photo is of the **Boarders' Common Room and the Gymnasium**. Girls were not allowed into the Common Room at any time and were punished severely if found to be there. Note the primitive equipment in the Gymnasium which had a roof but the floor consisted of sand only. The equipment displayed in the photograph seems fairly simple and would certainly not be in use today due to health and safety issues. These two structures were both demolished in 1956.

Until 1956 there were only two **Science rooms**. The photograph on the right shows the then Science room and through the door at the back was a small room where chemistry experiments would take place. The building was made of iron sheeting and would have been rather hot in the summer months. This building was situated in an area between Big School and the Gymnasium.



The recently demolished Paxton House was originally built to replace the existing school dining room which, for many years, was attached to the Headmaster's house. Note the formality of the **dining room** in those early years: beautifully laid out tables with folded serviettes. The traditional bench seats, so common in schools at that time, are also to be seen. The dining room became a central part of school life where the Headmaster and staff attended all meals. Mail was handed out at lunch and it allowed the headmaster the opportunity to talk to the students. Sunday night meals were particularly looked forward to because on these occasions Mr Rowland, in particular, would regale the boys with stories from the classics or he would read them a short story from one of the great authors. With no television or other distractions these occasions were welcomed by the boys.



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