

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday 7th June 1919

**FIFTY YEARS A TEACHER
CHAT WITH MR. H. D. WILLIAMS.**

Many of our readers being interested in the announcement of the pending retirement of Mr. **Harry D. WILLIAMS**, the popular and respected Headmaster of the St. John's-road Boys' School, we took the opportunity on Thursday of having a chat with him on his long experiences in the educational world. Mr. WILLIAMS has a good memory for dates, and in the intervals of his gardening work (for he is a busy man even when out of school), he related the different positions he had filled from his earliest years. He was born in Gosport, where he received his early training, and remembers accompanying his mother, who was a teacher, with reading cards and when 12 or 13 years of age assisted the small staff of the old British School in the evenings, when they initiated the soldiers and sailors into the mysteries of decimals and vulgar fractions. He recalled the introduction of the Education Act of 1870 when there was such a rush for senior boys and girls to help in the schools, and his parents persuaded him to study for the profession. "I was almost thrown into it," he remarked. It was terrible drudgery the first two or three years, instructions having to be given under very primitive conditions amid a ceaseless din, and it was a case of reading, writing and arithmetic from morning till night, almost everything being done by means of the slates, books and pens and ink being almost unknown. Having worked as pupil teacher in the Wesleyan Day School, he completed his time there in December 1874, and anxious to gain a London experience, Mr. WILLIAMS in February of the following year commenced as assistant master in the Middle Class School, Kingland, N. E., where he taught a class of 50 boys, for the magnificent sum (his own words) of £50 per annum out of which he had to pay £4 a month for board and lodging. He stayed there for three years and having in the meantime become certificated, was selected to take charge of All Saints' National School in Ye Merrie Islington where he began in 1877. He found it very hard work, and struggled on with only lads to help him for some time but an assistant master was subsequently appointed, the school consisting of about 130 boys. In July 1880, Mr. WILLIAMS came to Ryde Holy Trinity as Headmaster. He found a school of about 125 boys, and no staff except a pupil teacher in his second year. It was a Voluntary school in those days with no help whatever from the rates, being dependent entirely on the Government grant on what was known as per centages, and voluntary subscriptions. Despite many difficulties Mr. WILLIAMS was able to obtain excellent reports and turn out some smart lads. The Vicar and Correspondent at that time was the Rev. A. J. WADE and he was also brought into pleasant association with the late Alderman GROVES, one of the managers, and Mr. Jonathan WORSLEY. He spent a very happy time there and almost regards Holy Trinity as his Alma Mater. The school, however, drifted into great financial straits because as the old subscribers died out it was difficult to get new ones, and there was some talk of closing it. Accordingly when the headmaster ship of St. John's Road Boys' School was vacant in 1887 (Jubilee year) he applied for and obtained the appointment and has been there ever since. He is proud of the fact that he has turned out some smart pupils many having gained scholarships at Sandown whilst not a few have entered the teaching profession. "And they are holding higher positions than I am at the present time," smilingly observed Mr. WILLIAMS. A considerable number joined the Army and Navy and all succeeded in gaining rank of some kind or other, old boys frequently writing or coming to see him.

A personal note is not out of place in concluding this brief sketch of Mr. WILLIAMS' career. His wife died four years ago, and one of his daughters is settled in Canada and another is keeping house for him. His three sons have all followed in their father's footsteps, his eldest son being a trained certificated teacher at Portsmouth, as is also the second son Ernie (the well-known cricketer and footballer) who has served in India and Mesopotamia, whilst his youngest son Dudley who is just home from Palestine was about to enter college when war broke out and joined up immediately, serving in the I. W. Rifles and being wounded in the Battle of Gaza. Mr. WILLIAMS himself was

27 years in the I. W. Rifles where he did some excellent work. All his many friends will join in wishing him many years of happiness and success on the retirement which he has so well earned and it is gratifying to know that the Education Committee intend making a tangible recognition of his long services.

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