

Lithograph of Wroxall Abbey, Warwickshire

CR2527/5

The Document of the Month for August is a lithograph of 'Wroxhall Abbey' (typically spelled 'Wroxall') thought to have been printed in the 1840s. The site of Wroxall Abbey, upon which a medieval priory was founded c. 1141, has a rich history, having known many different owners and inhabitants over the centuries.ⁱ



Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2527/5

In the early nineteenth century, lithography became a popular commercial printing method as an efficient means of reproducing the work of artists and illustrators. We hold several copies of lithographs produced from drawings by J.G. Jackson, who is named as the artist on this print. It is possible that the artist's interest in his subject came from an architectural background, as the name J.G. Jackson is also associated with an agent and architect employed by Edward Willes. In this capacity, J.G. Jackson was involved in the design and development work on Leamington Spa from the 1830s.ⁱⁱ



From a drawing by J. G. Jackson.

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Religious beginnings

St Leonard's Priory was founded c. 1141 in Wroxall when the Hugh of Hatton gave the manor to an order of Benedictine nuns. The land of Wroxall thus belonged to the priory until it was dissolved in 1535, with the prioress acting as lady of the manor.ⁱⁱⁱ Of the remaining buildings, little belongs to the original priory, apart from some ruins of the convent and a section of St Leonard's church which is attributed to the fourteenth century.^{iv}

Post-dissolution Wroxall and the Christopher Wren connection

The lands of Wroxall were conveyed to Robert Burgoyne, a commissioner responsible for managing the surrender of monasteries on behalf of the king, in 1544. Wroxall was held by the Burgoyne family for several generations, with a manor house built as a residence, while they also maintained an estate at Sutton, Bedfordshire. John Burgoyne acquired a baronetcy in 1642, having occupied political positions such as MP for Warwickshire and high sheriff of Warwickshire.^v

The line of succession fell apart upon the death of Sir Roger Burgoyne and, shortly after, that of his son John, which led to sale of the estate by Roger's widow, Constance, in 1713. The sale is recorded in a document from our collections, and saw Sir Christopher Wren, renowned architect of St Paul's Cathedral, acquire the Wroxall estate.^{vi} Although it does not appear that Wren spent much time at Wroxall Abbey, the house was passed down through his family until it was sold to James Dugdale in 1861.^{vii}

Modern use of Wroxall Abbey

The building that apparently caught the artistic eye of Christopher Wren no longer stands, having been demolished under James Dugdale and replaced by a Victorian mansion. The

house was designed by the architect Walter Scott and is described as possessing a style between Tudor and Gothic.^{viii}

In 1936, Wroxall Abbey's life as a private home was left behind, with the house instead hosting a girls' school until 1995. The Laurels School began life in Rugby in 1872 and was eventually renamed Wroxall Abbey School after its relocation. Another transformation of the site occurred in 2001 when it reopened as a hotel, as it remains today.^{ix}

ⁱ 'Parishes: Wroxall', *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick: Volume 3, Barlichway Hundred*, edited by Philip Styles (1945), p. 217. London: Oxford University Press.

ⁱⁱ Michael Jeffs (2021). 'John George Jackson, Architect', *Leamington History Group*. Available at: <https://leamingtonhistory.co.uk/john-george-jackson-architect/> (accessed 14/06/2024).

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Parishes: Wroxall', ed. by Styles (1945), p. 217.

^{iv} 'Historic England Research Records: Wroxall Abbey', *Heritage Gateway*. Available at: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=333978&resourceID=19191 (accessed 14/06/2024).

^v 'Parishes: Wroxall', ed. by Styles (1945), p. 217.

^{vi} Warwickshire County Record Office, CR0113/65.

^{vii} 'Parishes: Wroxall', ed. by Styles (1945), p. 217.

^{viii} *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire*, by Chris Pickford and Nikolaus Pevsner, p. 728. London: Yale University Press. Available in WCRO library at C.720.PIC.

^{ix} *The Laurels, 1872-1972, Wroxall Abbey*. Edited by Barbara Bourke. Available in WCRO library at B.WRO.BOU (P).