

The Rathmell Tutor at College Fold
Richard Frankland M.A. 1630-1698

Frankland is a name long associated with farming in Rathmell but in the 17th century it became renowned in the field of education. Rathmell was home to the first Dissenting Academy in the North of England at College Fold. When the only Universities in England were Oxford and Cambridge Rathmell hosted a College teaching-in Latin-to the same high standards as those centres of excellence.

Richard Frankland who set up this Academy was born in Rathmell in 1630, son of John Frankland. Richard entered Giggleswick school when he was 10 years old. Charles the first was on the throne and upholding his "divine right of kings"-he was also trying to levy taxes without Parliaments consent a struggle which culminated in the civil war in 1642. Richard grew up in an area where the rival armies marched to and fro and supporters of the royalist and parliament sides lived around him and no doubt went to school with him. The Catteralls and Nowells of Rathmell supported the King but Anthony Foster again of Rathmell was for Parliament. We don't know which side Richard and his family supported but when he went up to Cambridge University he was admitted to Christ's College which had Puritan reputation - Puritans of course being strong supporters of Parliament.

A year later Charles I was beheaded Oliver Cromwell came to power and the period of the Commonwealth began. Richard left University and went up to the North East of England. He was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister by elders of that Church and not by a Church of England Bishop but this was quite legal under the Commonwealth. He must have had outstanding abilities and powerful connections as Oliver Cromwell wanted him to be Vice-President of Durham college-later Durham University.

Unluckily for Richard, Cromwell died before he took up this post. He carried on, however as Vicar of Auckland St. Andrew but with the restoration of the monarchy and Charles II on the throne he would have had to swear to uphold the rules and liturgy of the Church of England and be ordained by a bishop. This he refused to do incurring the risk of fines and imprisonment. Eventually he was thrown out of his church and returned with his wife and family to Rathmell. He had inherited a small estate there, part of it being a mill or interest in a mill. He continued to fight for the right to worship according to his beliefs and convictions - the laws of the time forbidding meetings in a house of more than five people. Breaking these Laws meant fines, imprisonment or even transportation. Frankland felt "a great compulsion to speak to the King" to argue for the rights for Non-Conformists to have freedom to worship. Through his powerful connections he managed to have an audience with the King, in London, but to no avail and Richard returned to Rathmell.

As Non-Conformists could not meet, preach or teach or send their sons to Oxford or Cambridge there was no way they could get the qualifications and training for the ministry. So some ejected ministers like Richard Frankland began taking one or two students into their homes. In 1669/70 Richard began to take students into what we assume was his home in a building now known as College Fold. This is what became the first Non-Conformist Academy in the North of England. The Academy is reputed to have provided a university standard of education but this was against the law and the clergy and magistrates of Craven kept a careful watch on him. In 1674 he moved with his students to Natland where he had been asked to go and preach - this put him out of reach of the Craven authorities. He had to move his college around the North West until the passing of the Toleration Act allowed him to return to Rathmell in 1689. His house in Rathmell was rebuilt or enlarged around this time and the

Academy flourished as between that time and his death in 1698 he enrolled 146 students.

What Rathmell villagers thought of these students we don't know but it is recorded that out of school hours the students "ran foot races, jumped fences and played tricks on the villagers". James Clegg a student of the time reported that the day started at 7am with prayers but he and some friends got up at 4am so they could devote 14 hours to study daily, but his health broke down and he started to smoke and waste time talking to Frankland's daughters which led him to 'read poetry, novels and such like trash.'

James Clegg witnessed Richard Frankland's death, in front of his students, in 1698. He spent his last breath taking leave of his students and no doubt his family and James wrote of him that 'he was a man of great moderation, of a truly charitable disposition and studious to do good in all relations.' His daughters set up a plaque to him in St Akelda's Church in Giggleswick and dedicated it to "a very good man and loved by very good people."

The Academy did not stay long in Rathmell after Richard's death and moved around the country before being established at Oxford University where it is now known as the Harris-Manchester College and where a picture of Richard Frankland hangs today. In 2005 a plaque to commemorate Richard Frankland was erected on the College Fold building largely due to the efforts of Jim Nelson of Settle.