

CELEBRATING 180 YEARS OF OUR SCHOOL (1842-2022)

Each day, discovery.



ELTHAM COLLEGE





Headmaster's Introduction

It is wonderful to mark our school's 180th anniversary this year. While the school has changed immeasurably since its foundation as a school for the sons of missionaries in Walthamstow in January 1842, our roots and traditions remain strong while we also adapt to the needs and aspirations of students and staff in the twenty-first century.

This year, we are marking this great anniversary in a number of ways: we have held special commemorations, we are planting trees and time capsules, and we have relaunched the *Elthamian* magazine.

Eltham College is now a leading London day school achieving outcomes for young people that match those of the very best schools in the country, but we remain a school that is fully committed to developing the interests and talents of students at every level.

I hope you enjoy reading this short history of the school for which my thanks go to our archivist, Andrew Beattie, and the Communications department, for producing it.



Guy Sanderson

Headmaster

September 2022

Front cover photograph: a classic 1930s shot - the visit of "Wallsie", the ice-cream seller; the building in the background, now housing the Music School, along with the school office, the Learning Support Department and a Deputy Head's office, was at that time the Junior School.

Foundations (1842-1857)

The school's origins lie in a meeting held at the headquarters of the London Missionary Society in the City of London on 26th November 1841 (a date that has been marked by the school as "Foundation Day" at times in its history).

It was at this meeting that a decision was made to open a boarding school to educate the sons of the society's missionaries who were serving overseas in the Far East and Africa. A school for missionaries' daughters had opened in Walthamstow four years previously, so it was decided to site the new school there. (In 1882 the girls' school moved to Sevenoaks and is still in existence today, as Walthamstow Hall.) A large house was acquired in the town, which at that time was situated in the Essex countryside some six miles outside London – and, on January 1st 1842, the Boys' Mission School opened its doors for the first time, charging annual fees of £12 and £15 for boys under and over the age of 12 years respectively. By October, there were fourteen boys on the school roll.

The following year, at the behest of the Baptist Missionary Society, the school was opened to the sons of all evangelical protestant missionaries. However, the premises in Walthamstow were soon deemed unsuitable and in 1847 the school nearly merged with the School for the Sons of Congregational Ministers at Lewisham (now Caterham School). After that fell through, pupils were dispersed to a number of schools until in 1852 new premises were found and the school was essentially re-established at 1, Mornington Crescent in Camden, North London.

W.G. Lemon was appointed as the school's Headmaster and ensured that boys followed a wide variety of subjects including English Literature, physics, singing, German, drawing, algebra and trigonometry. Robert Livingstone, the son of the missionary and explorer David Livingstone (after whom one of the school's houses is named), enrolled as a pupil in the same year as W.G. Lemon took the helm.



W.G. Lemon, Headmaster 1852-67.



| The School for the Sons of Missionaries at Blackheath (1857-1912)

In the school's reception area is a bust of former Governor (and Chair of Governors 1865-74) Nehemiah Griffiths. It was he who was instrumental in moving the school to Blackheath after it had outgrown its Camden premises.



The school building in Blackheath in 1904 - and how it looks today (it's now a hospital run by Circle Health Group, formerly known as BMI Healthcare).

The foundation stone for the new building, situated beside Blackheath railway station, was laid on 25th November 1856, and the school was occupied by pupils and staff on the same date the following year.

Non-missionary boarders were admitted to the new school almost from the start – a significant change – and in 1880 the first day boys were accepted. Under Headmaster W.B. Hayward, whose tenure began in 1892, the school gained a Sixth Form, new science laboratories, access to proper sports pitches (though rugby and cricket continued to be played on the Heath, as they always had been) and an Old Boys' Association (founded in 1907 and still going strong today). Nonetheless, Mr Hayward described the school's premises as being "a sombre building of four storeys. The playground is below the level of the road and is not inappropriately termed the 'bear pit'. Within, the building is inconvenient, cold and dark, and much too small for the number of boys it accommodates." Complaints were often made by the railway company that boys made a practice of climbing out of the windows and onto the station roof to retrieve errant footballs.

Two notable pupils of Hayward's era were Tom Pearce (1896-9), a tremendous all-round sportsman who later donated the Blackheath Cup to the school to commemorate the "Blackheath era" (the trophy is still awarded annually to the school's best sportsman or woman); and Fenner Brockway (1898-1905), who became a Labour MP and a founding member of War on Want and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Both attended the school too late to have been taught by William Balgarnie, who was on the teaching staff from 1890 to 1893 and was the inspiration for the fictional schoolmaster Mr Chipping, immortalised by James Hilton in his famous 1934 novel, *Goodbye Mr Chips*.



The bust of Nehemiah Griffiths in the school's reception area.



The school and its staff at Blackheath in 1904. Headmaster Hayward is in the middle of the third row from the front.



| The Move to Mottingham and the Great War (1912-1920)

With the premises at Blackheath increasingly cramped and antiquated, it was clear that the school had to move if it were to prosper: and in 1912 it did, to its current site – the buildings in Mottingham just over a couple of miles away that had been vacated by the Royal Naval School (RNS) which had closed (owing to financial and other difficulties) two years previously.

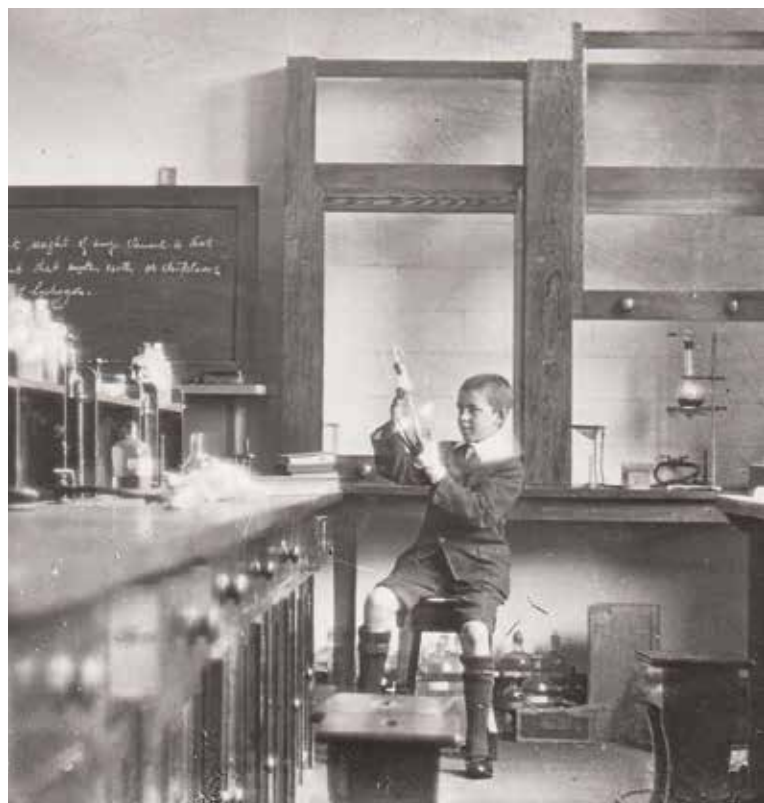


During the First World War older pupils at the school formed a cadet force. This photo was taken during their first parade, in 1916.

The RNS, which had catered mainly for the sons of naval officers, had developed the site of Fairy Hall (see p.13) considerably with a chapel (built in 1904) and new ranges of buildings for classrooms and dormitories; it had called itself Eltham College and over time this name was also adopted by the School for the Sons of Missionaries. (The old school building at Blackheath remains and is now a private hospital run by Circle Group.)

On 31st January 1912, a dedication service for the school's new home was held in Central Hall, with the "inspiring singing rising to the dome" according to the *Eltham College Magazine* (the forerunner to the *Elthamian*); a formal opening ceremony was later held in King George's Hall on 4th March. One of the pupils present at both would have been Eric Liddell, the future Olympic sprinter and the school's most famous old boy: he was a pupil from 1908 to 1920 so was part of the cohort of pupils that moved from Blackheath to Mottingham.

The Great War dominated the years after the school's move. 120 former pupils went off to fight and only 86 came back: those "Old Boys of this School who fell in the Great War 1914-1918" are remembered by a plaque in the chapel.



The chemistry lab in 1914, photographed for a publicity brochure for the school; this room is now one of the ground floor classrooms on the north side of the quad.



The Memorial to the Fallen of World War One in the school chapel.



| The 1920s, the Second World War and the Turberville Era (1920-1959)

In 1922, an arrangement was made with local education authorities which allowed day boys to attend the school at the authorities' expense, saving the school from closure by increasing the number of pupils (shortly afterwards there were 77 boarders and 208 day boys in the school).



Junior School boys in the 1920s - this room is now the percussion studio, on the ground floor of the Music School.



This small lake, photographed in the 1920s, was originally an ornamental pond in the grounds of Fairy Hall; in 1932 it was filled in, and the running track now occupies the site.

The following year, the current house system was introduced with houses named after missionaries active just before the school opened or during its early years – (William) Carey (d.1834), (David) Livingstone (d.1873), (Robert) Moffat (d.1883) and (James) Chalmers (d.1901). Carey were the winners for the first four years, with Livingstone winning in 1928. In 1927, the Parents' Association was formed (it's still going strong today) and in 1934 the Headmaster was elected to the Headmaster's Conference and the school became an "HMC School".

In 1937, in recognition of the growing pupil numbers, a new classroom block was opened (then known as the "New Extension" or "New Block" but today known as the Science Centre). The chemistry labs were downstairs and the physics labs upstairs – an arrangement that remains the same over 85 years later – while the "woodwork shop" was at the north end of the ground floor (and "morphed" in the late 1980s into the Design and Technology studios we know today).

For almost thirty years, from 1930 to 1959, the school's Headmaster was Geoffrey Turberville. During the Second World War, he faced the major challenge of holding the school together while boarders were evacuated to Taunton School and day boys who lived towards the centre of London were evacuated first to Folkestone and then South Wales. In 1947, the war memorial on the exterior wall of the chapel was unveiled. This shows the names of the 79 "Old Boys and Staff of Eltham College who gave their lives in the Second World War of 1939-45". In 1955, cherry trees were planted along Grove Park Road to commemorate Mr Turberville's 25 years at the helm – they still yield vibrantly pink blossom every April to this day – and it was around this time that the school purchased the Grange on Nottingham Lane and started developing it as a home and teaching base for the younger pupils.



The Memorial to the Fallen of the Second World War on the exterior wall of the school chapel.



An early 1930s shot of the front field, with ivy covering the chapel and - as yet - no Science Centre.



Geoffrey Turberville, who led the school from 1930 to 1959 and is the school's longest-serving Headmaster.



The 1952 Summer Fete, photographed from what are now the history rooms.



Independence, Transformation and Co-Education (1959-90)

The 1960s were a time of national renewal after the austerity of the 1950s – and they were a time of renewal for the school too, with a new Headmaster from 1959, in the form of Mr Christopher Porteous, while Mr Guy Hughes was appointed the first Master of the new Junior School the following year.



Mr Hughes, the first Master of the Junior School, showing prospective pupils around the new Junior School in 1965.



Junior School pupils in a form assembly in 1971.

The sense of renewal was marked by the construction of a new classroom block at the Senior School, opened in 1963 and known as the “Arts School” or “Jubilee Block”, with music classrooms and practice rooms along with classrooms for geography, history, modern languages and English (in 1968 a language laboratory was added).

But it was the mid to late 1970s that were to bring the most profound changes: with the ending of the Direct Grant scheme (introduced by the government in 1944), the school moved towards full independence while declining boarding numbers saw dormitories in the upper floor of the main school buildings turned over to classrooms for geography, history and art (which they remain to this day). Boarding provision at the Junior School also ended, and the old dormitories there were converted into classrooms. In 1979 the new swimming pool was opened, paid for primarily by a generous OE, Dudley Witting, after whom it is named, and at around this time the first girls were introduced into the Sixth Form. Only a handful of girls attended the school at first but Headmaster Christopher Waller, who took up his post in 1983, was able to oversee a developing and successful co-educational Sixth Form from his first year; during the latter part of his tenure, in 1988, the school opened a fine new Performing Arts Centre, principally for drama productions (though also for music), named the Antony Barnard Hall after a long-serving English and Drama teacher who had sadly died whilst in post in 1982.

It was during this era, too, that the school’s travel ambitions began to reach far and wide: the first European journey had been to Brittany, in 1914, and in the years either side of the Second World War there were annual school trips to Switzerland, but in the late 1970s formal exchange links (that lasted until 2016) were developed with schools in France (Laval) and Germany (Minden), while 1982 saw the first major overseas rugby tour, to Canada. Skiing trips, educational Mediterranean cruises, geography field trips and other sports tours completed a busy schedule, all of it overseen by the school’s Travel Club.



The prefects in 1973, with Headmaster Christopher Porteous.



The travel programme became increasingly ambitious in the 1970s, and exchanges were established with schools in France and Germany. These pupils are on the 1980 French Exchange to Laval.



The creation of a co-educational Sixth Form was one of the major achievements of the 1980s. The first ever netball match took place in 1984, appropriately enough against Walthamstow Hall (see p.2). This photo shows the 1990 netball team.



| Into the 21st Century (1990-2022)

In 1990, Malcolm Green succeeded Dr Waller as Headmaster and was soon presiding over a series of events to celebrate the school's 150th anniversary, including the formal opening by Prince Edward of the Antony Barnard Hall and new Design and Technology studios.



The formal opening of the Antony Barnard Hall by Prince Edward in 1991, with Headmaster Malcolm Green third from left.



One of the many building projects in this period underway - the Gerald Moore Gallery under construction in 2011.

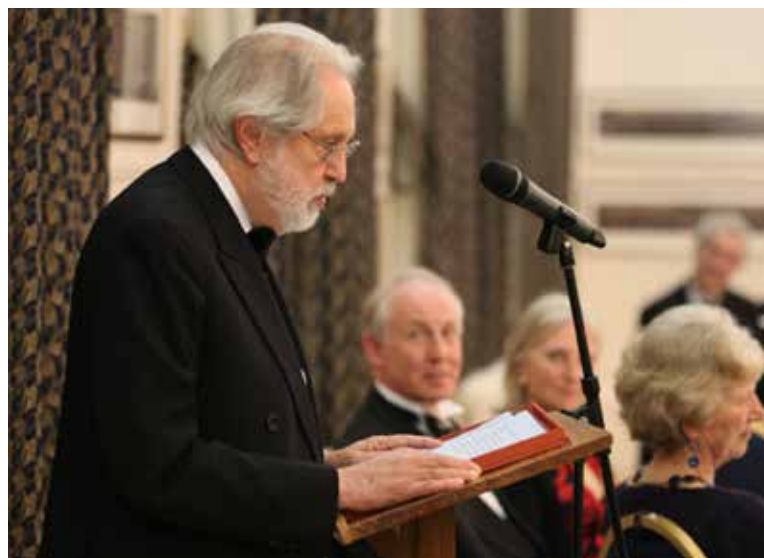
The construction of new buildings, as well as the expansion of the grounds, characterised the remainder of Malcolm Green's headship, and those of his successors, Paul Henderson (2000-2014) and Guy Sanderson (from 2014). The new facilities included a Sports Hall (replacing the old gym built in the 1930s, and financed primarily by a grant from the new National Lottery; 1996); a new school library (named after the author and illustrator Mervyn Peake who attended the school in the 1920s; 2000); a new teaching wing and hall at the Junior School (2004); the expansion of the Dining Hall (originally built by the Royal Naval School; 2008); and the Gerald Moore Gallery (named after and partly funded by a generous OE who was an artist and art collector; 2012). In 2019, a stunning three-storey classroom building incorporating a new Sixth Form centre replaced the demolished Jubilee Block and was named after the school's longest-serving Headmaster, Geoffrey Turberville.

A major change came in 2004 when boarding ended and the school became wholly a day school (124 years after the first day pupil was admitted). The old boarding accommodation was converted into a new music school, opened in 2005 by the Duchess of Kent. Meanwhile, the acquisition of the College Meadow (2004) and London Marathon (2010) playing fields created a considerable expansion of the school's grounds. Aside from new buildings, this era saw considerable development in the school's IT provision, with the establishment of a school-wide network at the turn of the millennium, email addresses for pupils in 2013 and, from 2018, widespread use by pupils and staff of laptops and Microsoft Surfaces in class.

The most profound change of this era, however, came in September 2020, when the school began its move to full co-education by admitting girls to the lower years of the Senior and Junior schools for the first time. This came at a time of school closure, remote learning and exam disruption caused by the Covid pandemic – but as the school celebrated its 180th anniversary in 2022 and the co-curricular programme of trips, performances and clubs began to restart, its future began to look brighter than ever, with an excellent inspection report published in April of that year paving the way for the next stage in its development. This is the latest chapter in the school's evolution, and no doubt there will be many more to write in the coming years. The school will celebrate its bicentenary in 2042.



The mosaic at the Junior School, photographed in 2012 shortly after its installation to celebrate the centenary of the move to Nottingham.

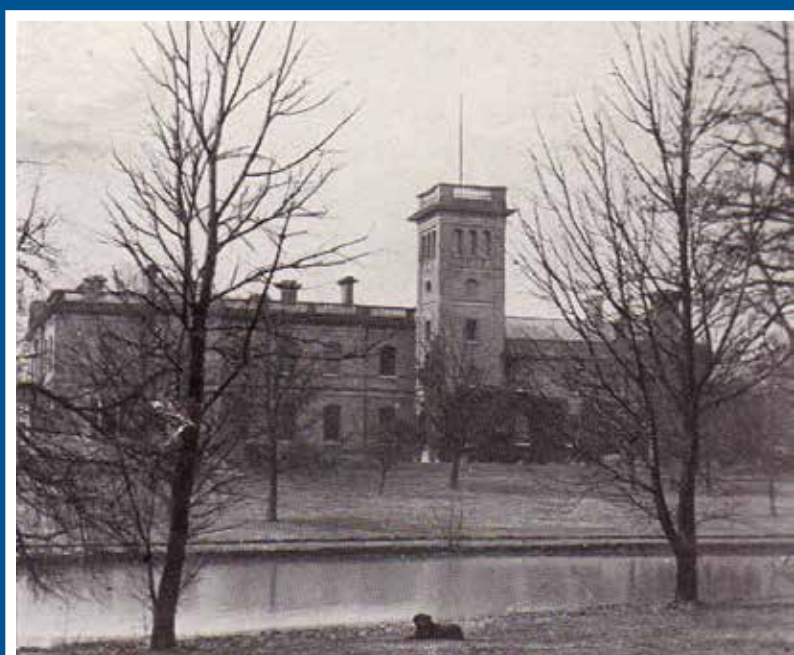


David Puttnam, the producer of the film *Chariots of Fire*, speaking at the Dinner held in 2012 to celebrate the centenary. The film portrayed the triumph in the 400 metres at the 1924 Paris Olympics of Eric Liddell, the school's most famous former pupil.



| The Historic Buildings Occupied by the School

Fairy Hall, the building that now forms the heart of the Senior School, was built as a country house around the year 1700.



The East Range of Fairy Hall. The ornamental lake, which had a boathouse at one end, occupied what is now the site of the New Quad, the Antony Barnard Theatre and Gerald Moore Gallery.

The plane tree, one of the oldest and largest in England, was probably planted at the same time, though it might date from slightly earlier. In 1771, the house came into the ownership of Baron Apsley of Apsley, the second son of the First Earl of Bathurst and a member of one of the country's great Tory families. He had a distinguished career as a lawyer and a Member of Parliament, and served as both Lord Chancellor and Lord President of the Privy Council. Fairy Hall served as his country residence when he needed time away from London.

The house later passed through a number of owners, one of whom, in 1855, added the main staircase that leads up from Central Hall. In 1889 the estate was sold to the Royal Naval School, which occupied the site for the next twenty years until the School for the Sons of Missionaries took over the buildings in 1912.

The Grange, the building that now forms the heart of the Junior School, was built as a three-storey villa in 1863 and has been a listed building since 1973.



This photo, taken around 1900, shows the yard outside the stables once attached to the Grange when it was a private residence. The stables were situated where the pavilion is now. The tree-lined path on the left is the one linking the Junior with the Senior School. The Senior School's tower can be seen in the background, centre.



The front of the school in 2010, showing the plane tree and the frontage of what was once Fairy Hall.

Gloria Filiorum Patres



Eltham College

Grove Park Road
London SE9 4QF

+44 (0)20 8857 1455
mail@eltham-college.org.uk

www.elthamcollege.london