

## History of Solihull School

Solihull has been in continuous existence since 1560, when the chantry revenues of the Chapels of St. Mary and St. Katherine, in the Parish Church of St. Alphege, were used to establish the Foundation. Originally, the Foundation provided for the maintenance of the Master of the Free Grammar School in Solihull. In 1615, the school moved to a house in Park Road, later re-named Malvern House. It remained there until 1882.

In 1882, the school moved to its present 40-acre site. School House is the original school building on this site, and it was designed to provide accommodation for 80 day-boys and 20 boarders.

It cost £4,345. At about the same time (in 1879) the Endowed Schools Act produced a new scheme of management. The Feoffees were replaced by a Board of 13 Governors, and it was this Governing Body that moved the school to Warwick Road.

Since 1882, the school has gradually expanded in numbers and buildings. In 1946, the school became an independent school, breaking its links with Warwickshire County Council. In 1948 the Headmaster, Mr H B Hitchens, was elected to the Headmasters' Conference and in 1949 the school was admitted to the Governing Bodies Association. The school's charitable objects are to provide the advancement of education by providing an independent day school for boys and girls in Solihull, which shall have a religious character in accordance with the tenets of the Church of England and provide a liberal education. The school is a religious foundation and is fortunate to have its own Chapel, consecrated in 1961, and its own Chaplain. Each section of the school attends a Chapel service once a week. There is also a mid-week celebration of Holy Communion and on Sundays there is a celebration of Holy Communion in the morning and an evening service open to parents, pupils and friends of the school. The singing of the Chapel Choir forms an important part of these services. The Chaplain not only conducts these services and prepares candidates for confirmation, but is also an important figure in fostering the moral and spiritual welfare of the pupils.

The school is increasingly diverse in the religious backgrounds of its pupils. It is, of course, open to parents to ask for an exemption of pupils from classes and services on grounds of conscience. However, every attempt is made to ensure that religious observance and the teaching of Religious Studies are as inclusive as possible. In particular, the teaching of Religious Studies encourages an understanding of different religions. Through these lessons and through the teaching of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) the school also encourages pupils to think about their values, their relationships with each other and their role in society. At independence, the Local Education Authority agreed to pay the fees of 15 boys from local primary schools. This number increased to 36 in 1953 and this arrangement continued until 1973 when the reorganisation of education in the Borough ended the scheme. In response to the ending of free place pupils, the Governors created a large Foundation Scholarship scheme to enable academically able pupils to attend Solihull School. At the same time it was decided to admit girls into the Sixth Form. In June 2003 the Governors decided that the school would become fully coeducational in 2005, taking girls as well as boys into the Junior School and at 11+. Major improvements occurred in the last twenty years of the twentieth century, with improved facilities for Science, Design and Technology, Modern Languages and the Junior School.

The Bushell Hall was completed in 2001 and the existing hall converted into the Kent Library. A new pavilion, The Alan Lee Pavilion, was completed in 2003 to supplement the improved PE facilities and a new outdoor activities centre replaced the CCF hut in July 2004. In 2005 a new teaching area, The George Hill, was completed, providing 16 new classrooms and additional social and study space. The Junior School was extended and refurbished in September 2005. In 2009, the David Turnbull Music School was completed, and

in 2015 the new Sixth Form centre The Cooper Building was opened. In November 2019 Solihull launched its newly refurbished refectory.

In September 2019 Solihull announced its merger with Saint Martin's School from September 2020. Solihull Preparatory School (aged 3 - 11) is located on the Saint Martin's campus and Solihull Senior School (11 - 18 years) on the Warwick Road campus. To read about the history of Saint Martin's click the tab on the right.

There are over 1,500 pupils across two campuses at Solihull. 440 at Solihull Preparatory School on the Saint Martin's campus and 1,100 in Solihull Senior School on the Warwick Road campus.

Charles B Fillingham is the Headmaster of Solihull School.

## The Badge

The Shield appears to have been instituted by Dr Robert Wilson, the then Headmaster, at the opening of the new buildings in 1882, now School House. In his book '*Solihull and its School*', John Burman refers to the device as "the school badge" as [Solihull School](#) has no arms of its own. A corporation, such as the Board of Governors of a school, may use arms only if they have been granted by the King of Arms. However, a school may display commemoratively the arms of founders and benefactors provided it does not say "These are the arms of the school". The device is used by Solihull as a reminder of its "famous men and our fathers which begat [archaic form of beget] us".

The Feoffees, as the Governors of the school were called until 1879, were presided over from the 1560s until 1601 by Thomas Dabridgecourt, Esquire, of Longdon Hall (now in the middle of Copt Heath Golf Club). This was an estate he acquired by his marriage to Alice, daughter of John Greswold. Thomas Greswold, brother-in-law of Thomas Dabridgecourt, was also one of the first Feoffees, and the name Greswold appears frequently among Governors of later generations.

In 1574 Thomas Waring joined Dabridgecourt, Greswolde and another Governor in enfeoffing the land called "Wiredrawers" and an adjoining house for, among other objects, "the use and maintenance of a school of learning within the parish".

The arms of Dabridgecourt, Greswold and Waring are displayed on the quartered shield used as a badge by the school, together with those of Odingsells. Sir William de Odingsells founded the Charity of St. Alphege in the Parish Church, the endowment of which from 1566 was also devoted to the purposes of the grammar school, as the school was known then.

The shield is blazoned (that is, heraldically described) as follows:

*Quarterly, first, Argent, a fesse and in chief two mullets gules (ODINGSSELLS); second, Azure, a chevron between three lions passant or (WARING); third, Ermine, on each of two bars humetty gules, three escallop shells argent (DABRIDGECOURT); fourth Argent, a fesse gules between two greyhounds courant proper (GRESWOLD). Motto: PERSEVERANTIA.*

For non-heraldic readers, the method of reading the shield is as follows. The quarters are read from left to right like two lines of print. In describing each quarter, the colour of the background is given first; then come the name and tincture of the principal charge (a charge being any object placed upon a shield); then the charges of secondary importance; finally, in this case, charges placed on the principle charge.

The first quarter is argent (white or silver) with a red horizontal bar across its centre (a "fesse gules"), and, at the top ("in chief") two red stars ("mulletts" from molet, meaning a spur rowel). The second quarter is azure

(blue), with a golden chevron between three golden lions walking with front paw raised ("passant"). The third quarter is ermine, represented by black ermine tails on a white background, and has upon it two red horizontal bars cut short at both ends ("humetty") and having on each of them three silver scallop shells. The humetty bars are almost certainly a canting or punning reference to the name Dabridgecourt, which could be roughly translated as "cut off short". The fourth quarter is argent, and on it is a red fesse between two running greyhounds "proper", which means "in their natural colours". These greyhounds are black, and, although there are black greyhounds, there are many others of every variety of colour, and it might be safer to blazon these dogs "sable" to avoid ambiguity.

*From the 1960 publication 'The Arms of Solihull school' by David Christie-Murray*

## **The Houses**

Writing about the 19th century, John Burman, in his book, '*Solihull and Its School*', comments, "The lamentable absence of school archives denies much knowledge to us of human interest" I say, 'Amen' to that in my attempts to arrange and catalogue material extant from the 20th Century, which, although more abundant, is nevertheless deficient in many respects. Fortunately the House system seems to have come into being relatively recently and one is able from explicit and implicit material contained in the copies of the *Shenstonian* (earliest edition in the archives -Vol VII No.4 1906) to judge roughly how it evolved.

The need for Houses grew with the steady increase in pupil numbers - 112 in 1900, c210 in 1918, 300 in 1927. Under 'School News' in December 1908 we learn that four Houses were created, named logically but, perhaps, uninspiringly, **School House** (boarders), **Solihull**, **Shirley and Knowle**, and **Acocks Green**, the last three indicating the location of the homes of their members. By 1911 they have increased to five in number - **Solihull**, **Country, Town, Acocks Green**, and **Knowle**, but it is not until 1921, coinciding with the beginning of Mr. Bushell's headmastership, that House names familiar to living Old Silhillians appear - **School House**, **Fetherston**, **Jago**, **Pole**, **Shenstone**. The logic behind the choice is as follows:-

**School House** (boarders) By 1925 the House was found to be too strong to compete on equal terms with the other Houses and it was divided into two sub-Houses, **The Wanderers** and **The Nomads**. This arrangement continued until 1933. In 1941, presumably with the effect of war, numbers of boarders fell to such an extent that the House was now too weak to compete and it disappeared from the House Competition until 1948. Then followed a period in which the House provided formidable opposition in all the games until, in the 1960s, numbers again declined and, after much heart-searching, it ceased to exist as a separate House in 1968 and the remaining boarders were distributed among the other Houses.

**Fetherston** took its name from Barnaby Fetherston, the first Usher (assistant master) to be named in documents relating to the school. In 1574 Henry Hugford, Thomas Dabridgecourt, Thomas Waring and Thomas Greswolde (the arms of the last three men are incorporated into the school's badge) gave property and land to provide for the education of orphans and young children born within the parish in an English (or elementary) school, which was almost certainly presided over by the Usher in the same premises as the grammar school. In 1612 mention of the termination of Fetherston's employment as Usher appears in the Collector's (Parish Bailiff's) accounts. How long he had occupied the position is not known.

Edward **Pole** was the school's first Headmaster. In 1560 the income from the property formerly allocated to the maintenance of the chantry chapels of St. Katherine and St. Mary in the Parish Church were diverted in part to pay the salary of a schoolmaster, Edward Pole. Although in 1566 the revenues of the chantry of St. Alphege were added to this fund, his income never seems to have exceeded £12 per annum, but this was probably a reasonable sum during his short (3 - 8 years) service.

Neither Fetherston or Pole seem to have been gentlemen of any distinction and we remember them simply because theirs are the first masters' names recorded.

Richard **Jago** (1715-81) and William **Shenstone** (1714-63) are a different kettle of fish, for both occupy honourable places in the roll of English poets, although not in the first rank. They became school friends during the headmastership of Rev. John Crompton, who seems to have considerably enhanced the reputation of the school in the 18th century with his sound classical scholarship, his love of English literature and his stern discipline. Both poets proceeded to Oxford University, Jago to University College and Shenstone to Pembroke, a college which provided us with a Shenstone Housemaster in the 1950s (Rex Thomas). After Oxford Jago returned to Warwickshire, eventually to become Vicar of Snitterfield in 1754. He is best known for his poem 'Edgehill', which contains recollections of the school and of his friend. Shenstone, the more talented of the two, left Oxford to manage the family estate, The Leasowes at Halesowen, where, living the life of a country gentleman, he devoted himself to his poetry, his widely acclaimed landscape gardening and his diverse hobbies. Colin Hey, a member of staff from 1937-46, has written a book, *'The Warwickshire Coterie'*, which includes illuminating chapters on both poets.

**Windsor** House came into being in 1959 in order to cope with the increasing numbers on the roll and took its name from the House of the Royal Family, perhaps in advance celebration of the Quartercentenary, when the Duchess of Kent in 1960 and Her Majesty The Queen in 1962 visited the school. Harry Morle became its first Housemaster.

In 1945 two additional Houses, **Wilson** and **Bushell**, came into being, but they remained in existence for only two years, closing in 1947. I cannot ascertain the reason for either their creation or demise. Although we have Bushell Fields and the Wilson Building within the school campus, it seems a pity that two Headmasters whose contribution to the school's material and academic development was so immense are not still commemorated by Houses bearing their names.

In 1923 Malvern House, the premises occupied by the school at the top of New Road until its removal to the Warwick Road site in 1882, was repossessed to House the Junior School. Its members were put into four Houses:- **Arden**, **Blyth**, **Malvern** and **Gaywood** (boarding). This arrangement continued until 1937-8 and the building was sold in 1939 at the bargain price of £2735.

*Denis Tomlin*

### **450th Anniversary of Solihull School**

John Loynton's book, *A History of Solihull School 1560-2010*, written to celebrate the School's 450th Anniversary was published in 2010. John taught History at the School for 25 years and then took over as the School's Archivist from Denis Tomlin. Copies, priced at £10, can be ordered from the School Office on 0121 705 0958.

### **Saint Martin's School**

It was during the days when the Second World War was raging throughout Europe and Britain was besieged, that two resourceful and determined ladies, Miss Christine Tucker and Miss Zelig Bull, decided to open a school for girls in Solihull at No 1 Homer Road. The school adopted as its name that of Saint Martin of Tours who was known for his piety and a particular act of kindness when he gave up part of his cloak to a beggar. The school's motto 'The Grace of God is in Courtesy' is from the poem 'Courtesy' by Hilaire Belloc.

At the very beginning in April 1942, 14 sets of parents entrusted the education of their daughters to Misses Tucker and Bull, and before long a house was purchased for boarders to live in. As the school continued to expand in the 1950s it was an important decade, and ensured the success of individual pupils such as Mimi Khedouri, Head Girl from 1954-55 and was the first pupil from Saint Martin's to go to Oxford University. Public School status was achieved on 1 September 1963 with the Founders ensuring the success of Saint Martin's by handing over their interests in the school to a Board of Governors.

With the closure of the boarding in the 1960s and under the headship of Miss Bacon, the development of the curriculum moved apace and the demand for places continued to grow. A move from the Station Road site was inevitable and in 1989 Saint Martin's purchased the site of the historic Malvern Hall.

### **Malvern Hall**

Henry Greswold, Rector of Solihull, bought Malvern farm and his son Humphrey built Malvern Hall in about 1690. The Hall passed to his brother and then out of direct line to various cousins until, in 1772, Henry Greswold Lewis inherited the property. Malvern Hall, as it then stood, did not satisfy wealthy Henry and the future Sir John Soane, surveyor of the Bank of England, was called in to remodel and enlarge the house. John Constable visited Malvern Hall and one of his paintings of the Hall from across the lake is in Tate Britain.

Henry Greswold had no children so, when he died in 1829, the estate passed to his cousin, Edmund Wigley. He took the Greswold name. In 1830, his brother, Charles, a young clergyman, after an evening of great merriment and much drinking, fell down the staircase to his death. It is Charles' ghost that is said to haunt Malvern Hall. In 1833 Edmund died unmarried.

In 1896, after years of neglect, Malvern Hall was sold to Mr David Troman, a Birmingham industrialist who reduced the hall to its present size and added bow windows and balustrading. The house was again offered for sale in 1915 to Horace Brueton, but he seems to have made few changes to the Hall. In 1926 Mr Brueton sold the Hall to Solihull's Rural District Council. In 1931, a single storey building was added at the side of Malvern Hall and Solihull High School for Girls opened. The school became co-educational in the 1970s and known as Malvern Hall.

Saint Martin's campus is now home to Solihull Preparatory School.