

# Newlands Girls' School 1905 - 2005: a centenary in pictures

Edited by Susan Kidd and David Wills

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## Introduction

### Mrs Susan Benton, Headmistress 1990-2004

The history of Newlands both reflects the changes in the education system over the past hundred years and at the same time highlights the essential values which have always been at its core.

The original admissions book records the occupations of the fathers of the pupils. These range from those, such as auctioneer, accountant and schoolmaster, with which we are still familiar to those which reflect a bygone age such as coachman, kiln setter and hop trade. As a comprehensive school our current pupils come from a similarly wide range of backgrounds reflecting the context of the twenty-first century.

From the outset staff have been keen to encourage girls to gain the best possible qualifications. In the early days these included Junior and Senior Oxford passes and certificates from the London Institute of Plain Needlework. In 1918 the first pupil from the County High School gained her London Matriculation certificate and pupil number 23 was the first to gain entry to university.

It may seem strange to those of us used to the current size of the school to learn that it was 1909 before the admission of the hundredth pupil was recorded. From the outset the school had a Pupil Teacher Centre as an essential part of its foundation and the records show some girls worked as pupil teachers whilst completing their own education, for which they received some remission in fees. Many of them went on to become teachers when they left the school. Today we retain this strong commitment to the training of teachers through our work in the Reading University partnership scheme for Initial Teacher Training and through our programme of continuing professional development for staff.

The first inspection of the school took place in 1909. By this time the curriculum included English, History, French, Mathematics, Science, PE, Latin and Singing. The inspectors expressed some doubts about the junior department since it contained so few pupils. They were generally positive about the standards of teaching. They also told the governors they should set aside money to build up a library and commented: 'There is no covered entrance to the offices. This should be remedied.' They were, however, positive in their summary: ' . . . the school is being efficiently conducted. The general spirit of the school augurs well.' The OFSTED inspection report in November 2004 similarly has points for action and a positive summary: ' . . . an effective and improving school. The standards of work are above average.. . . good teaching . . . high aspirations . . .willingness to learn. Leadership is very good . . . clear vision . . . good value for money.'

A consistent feature of our ethos has been the commitment to charity work. The account of the school bazaar in 1922 records: 'When the accounts were settled up we found we could send £40 to the Mission, £18 to the Nursing Association and £18 to Maidenhead Hospital.' During the Second World War pupils were encouraged to bring in surplus fruit from home and they then helped to can and bottle it to sell for the war effort. More recently pupils have raised thousands of pounds each year for a wide range of charities and in this, our centenary year, it is fitting that part of our effort should focus on raising money for breast cancer research.

Extra-curricular activities have always been a feature of the school; from the earliest years there are mentions of school trips, a Drama Society and a Choir. The record of the school's first fifty years comments 'Miss Burn had no narrow view of education and always felt that school life should do much more than enable a girl to pass an examination.' This belief remains part of our school culture and the annual report to parents now includes an account of the wide range of activities undertaken each year.

As we look forward to the next hundred years we can be confident that the school will continue to provide an education which helps girls to achieve their potential, to develop into confident young women and to contribute to the society in which they live.

The Centenary Committee have worked hard over the past two years to put together a programme which we hope will contain something to appeal to everybody. We look forward to seeing pupils past and present, staff past and present, parents and governors at the different events. Our main aims are to celebrate our successes and to enjoy ourselves. At the same time we hope to raise some money for the school and for our chosen charity.

It has been an enormous privilege to lead such a wonderful school and to work with so many talented colleagues and pupils. I enjoyed my fourteen years at Newlands and feel we can be proud of what we achieved together. Under the leadership of my successor, Mrs. Briggs, I am certain the school will go from strength to strength.

## An outline history of the school

1904: Berkshire Education Committee and Maidenhead Town Council approved the foundation of a school for (fee-paying) girls. Miss Mary Burn was appointed Headmistress.

1905: the school opened at the Technical Institute, Marlow Road.

1907: the school moved to 'The Elms', a large house on Castle Hill. Pupil numbers were then forty.

1919: pupil numbers having reached 100, additional accommodation on the opposite side of Castle Hill to 'The Elms' was rented. This building, Queen Anne House, housed the Preparatory Department, for boys as well as girls aged from 5 to 9.

1934: Miss Burn retired as Headmistress, and was succeeded by Miss M. M. Towne

1939: wartime evacuation of the Barrett Street Technical College to Maidenhead. The girls' school staff, acting as Billeting Officers, found homes for the staff and pupils of the London school.

1940: St Joseph's Convent School, Abbey Wood, evacuated to Maidenhead, shared the teaching accommodation on Castle Hill. During the war the girls' school also served as a centre for blood donation and for the canning of locally-produced fruit.

1941: Miss Towne resigned as Headmistress, and was replaced by Miss Wingate.

1944: school fees for the pupils were abolished.

1946: Miss E.M. Costello became Headmistress, in succession to Miss Wingate.

1959: the school - now called Maidenhead High School - moved to purpose-built premises on a new site on Farm Road. Its official opening was attended by Princess Alexandra.

1973: School was renamed Newlands School when it became Comprehensive.

1976: Miss Costello retired, and was replaced as Headmistress by Mrs J. Leighton.

1990: Mrs Leighton was succeeded as Headmistress by Mrs Susan M. Benton.

1998: became Newlands Girls' School, upon the changeover from Berkshire County Council to the unitary authority of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

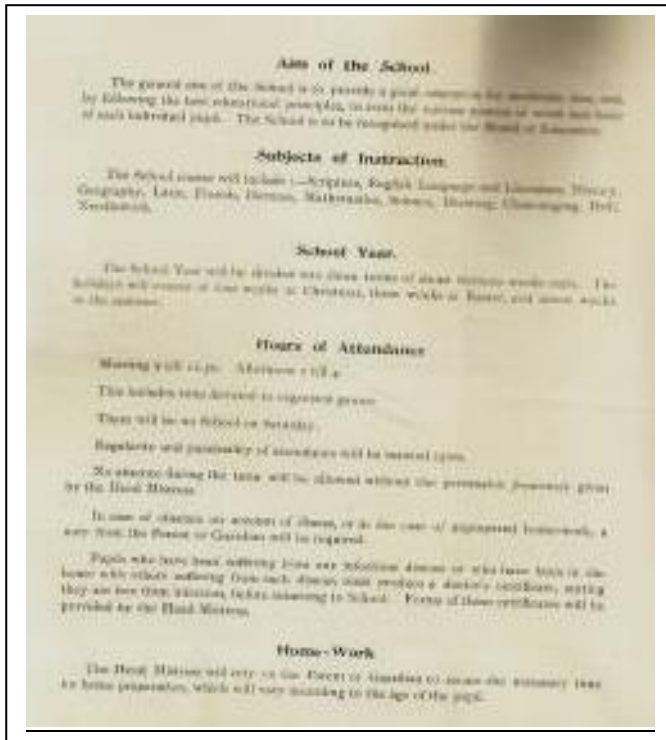
2002: school was granted specialist school status in Technology.

2004: Mrs Benton retired, and was succeeded as Headmistress by her then deputy, Mrs Tracey Briggs.



*The School will no doubt have a long history before it, and will outlive the youngest amongst us, to say nothing of our elder ones.* (School governor Sir George Young, Maidenhead Advertiser 1909)

Our intention in presenting this insight of the last hundred years is to try to portray the experiences of pupils who have been educated at this institution. We hope to be able to illustrate the changing face of the school through images of the educational environment, academic activities and the pupils and staff who have passed through and left their mark.



The post of first Headmistress was filled by Miss Burn. Under her tenure (1905) the first set of rules and regulations were drawn up. Later generations of pupils may find some similarities.



List of rules from before the school moved in 1958, when it was still the County Girls' School, illustrating the uniform requirements then in force. Fifty years before, the opinion of the town Mayor had been that 'not a single girl would go out without the new hat and hat-band' that had recently been introduced, because they were 'exceedingly smart' (Maidenhead Advertiser 1908).

The Elms, taken from an early photographic brochure of the 'County Girls' School, Maidenhead'.



The Cookery Room at The Elms, taken from an early photographic brochure of the 'County Girls' School, Maidenhead'. Miss Burn reported in 1911 that she was 'very glad to be able to add cookery and laundry to our timetable, as I think it is so essential for girls to know how to perform household duties.' (*Maidenhead Advertiser* 1911) In June 1915, an official inspection noted that 'too much time is devoted to the copying of recipes which can be obtained from a cookery book'. This seems unsurprising when, as late as 1936, there was no electric light or power in this room (Building Inspector's report).



Pupils at The Elms. In 1918, 'the Governors noted that there was now a waiting list for pupils for admission to the school' (minutes 29/5/18). In 2004, there were 312 applications for 186 places. The earliest volumes of the school's Admissions Registers (1905 onwards) included not only 'Place of Residence' (e.g. Henley, Cookham, Twyford, Wooburn, Shiplake, Waltham St Lawrence), but 'Occupation of Father'. Examples of the latter included: railway signalman, general labourer, silk merchant, butler, 'retired planter from Fiji', and 'private soldier (deceased)'.

Below: a later classroom scene from the old school building. The teacher here is Miss D. Smith, who was later to become Deputy Head.





Left: staff photograph, including Miss Mayne and Miss Bridger (on back row); and Miss Burn (front row). Miss Olive Margaret Mayne was appointed to the school in 1908, teaching Art, Singing and English, as well as taking the 'preparatory class'. Headmistress Mary Burn also taught Modern Languages and Literature. Miss Ellen Agnes Bridger joined the school in 1908, teaching Mathematics and elementary drawing. She later wrote the publication, called Maidenhead County Girls' School, 1905-1955: a record of the first fifty years.

Right: Miss Costello, Headmistress from 1946-1977.



Left: Miss Costello (in academic dress) accompanies HRH Princess Alexandra back out of the school at the end of her visit to officially open the new school site on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1959.



Mrs Leighton, Headmistress from 1977-1990. Picture by Peter Brown for the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 3/2/78



Mrs. Sue Benton, Headmistress 1990 - 2004  
with the Head Girls, Louise Oliver and Ellie Lewis



Mrs Tracey Briggs, Headteacher 2004 -





The new buildings of the late 1950s were designed for 540 pupils and actually admitted 480 as the first cohort. Since that time the expansion in pupil numbers has necessitated the construction of a range of new buildings and facilities, some more permanent than others. The latest of these additions has been the new Music block, which opened in September 2004. In 1978, the Maidenhead Advertiser commented that 'there has scarcely been a term when the school complex has been free of cement mixers'.

Below - the school library.





Gym and Dance on the Castle Hill site had begun as early as 1908. A report on a garden party held there that year said that 'the machine-like movements of nearly the whole of the pupils dressed in a very becoming uniform greatly pleased the audience.' (*Maidenhead Advertiser*)





Science facilities at Castle Hill and Farm Road (above and below respectively).



(Picture by Peter Brown for the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 3/2/78)




(Picture by Peter Brown for the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 3/2/78)

In the late 1970s it was noted that ‘as it is a girls’ school, Newlands has not been allocated workshops’ (*Maidenhead Advertiser*, 3/2/78). This was something that Mrs Leighton was keen to change. In 1990, the school opened a new design technology centre (later known as WS2) equipped with Archimedes computers, air brushes and a vacuum forming machine. It was described at the time as ‘better equipped than many further education colleges’ (*Advertiser* 20/7/90).

Below: a recent Technology Day, led by Mrs S. Livesey the Head of Design Technology and Senior Teacher (back to camera).



County  Girls' School,  
MAIDENHEAD.  
REPORT.

Name: *Wilson Frances E.* For: *Admission Term 1928*  
 Place: *Junior V* No. of Form: *23* Position in Form: *3*  
 Average Age of Pupil: *15 yrs. 2 mths* vs *15 yrs. 8 mths*

SCRIPTURE	Age	Days	Remarks	
SCRIPTURE	13	7	6	Good when she is thoughtful. A.B.
HISTORY	23	9	4	Good generally. A.B.
ENGLISH	23	8	3	Very good generally. F.L.
LITERATURE				
COMPOSITION	23	11		Good. F.L.
READING				
DICTATION				
ARITHMETIC	13	4	7	Very good. D.C.
ALGEBRA	13	3	5	
GEOMETRY & TRIGONOMETRY	13	4	3	
FRENCH	23	7	6	Very good generally. G.A.P.
LATIN	19	6	2	Very good. H.
GEOGRAPHY	23	7	5	Has improved. D.C.
SCIENCE	23	7	4	Very good. D.C.
DRAWING	25	2		Really good.
NEEDLEWORK	23	15		Very good generally. H.B.
CROCHET	23	4		Very good. H.B.

Holidays Absent: *89* Late: *0*

Character: *Very good.*  
 G.A. Patten Class Monitor Mary Dixon Head Monitor  
 Date this report made: *September 19<sup>th</sup> 1928*

1928 report sheet, illustrating the scope of the curriculum, and the brief nature of the comments made. Around the same time, the Governors agreed to Miss Burn's suggestion that 'Shorthand and Business Methods' be introduced, as 'a considerable number of her girls on leaving school entered business' (Governors' Minutes 4/10/27). A decade earlier, Miss Burn had replied to a criticism that many of her pupils were leaving the school at too early an age: 'among the fee-paying parents the general opinion seems to be that 15 is quite old enough for a girl, who does not need to earn her living.' (1/7/14) This was an idea with which the Headmistress strongly disagreed: 'if parents would only realise that a year longer at school would make all the difference at 16, I should not have to lament so much unfinished work, and the lives of their girls would have a very different outlook.' (Miss Burn's report of 1912).



Sixth form artists at work in the Art Rooms at Farm Road.



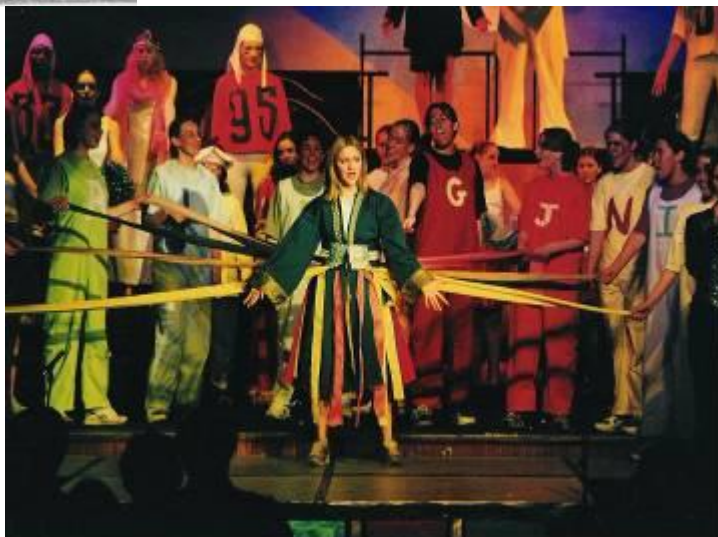
Headmistress Jessie Leighton commented in 1990 that 'Education in a school is all that goes on, not just in the classroom. It is the clubs, it is what is in the corridors.' (*Maidenhead Advertiser* 20/7/90). Back in 1908, C.A Ferard, a school governor, gave a similar opinion that education should not merely be 'stuffing them with knowledge with the view of examinations.' (*Maidenhead Advertiser* 1908)

The first recorded piece of drama presentation was of 'The Mad Tea Party', from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, at a prize-giving ceremony of 1908 (*Maidenhead Advertiser*). The attractions of the 1939 garden fete included two performances of a play 'The Mighty Mandarin' (*Maidenhead Advertiser* 2/8/39).



Production of "1066"  
(1960)

"Joseph and his  
Amazing  
Technicolour  
Dreamcoat"  
(December 2000)



"Oklahoma" (March  
2002)



Above: hockey team, c.1921. Edith Marjorie Steel (at the school from 1917-22), Marjorie Annie Jennings (1916-24), Edith Emily Mitchell (1917-24), Bessie Grace Minnie Reed (1917-22), Helena Maud Harris (1920-2), Winifred Ellen Jones (1916-22), Elsie Barbara Marsh (1909-21), Hilda Mary Ingamells (1915-22), Mildred Mary Claydon (1915-22), Doreen Elizabeth Cleare (1913-21), D. Cleere.

Below: indoor championship winning hockey team, 1987-88. Back row: Miss N. Sandom, Christine Perkins, Claire Jarvis, Liz Goodliffe, Nicole Romilly, Mrs E. MacBean (who became Head of Sixth Form in 1988). Front row: Sarah Cooper, Debbie Hannam, Kelly Johnson, Karen Treloar, Julie Skelton.





European trips. Who says that life was harder in 'the old days'?

Above: 'on a glacier on Mont Blanc'.

Below: recent ski trip led by Mrs K. White, Miss J. Goodchild, Miss D. Du Pre, Mrs B. Lumley, and Mr S. Holland.







Madrigal Choir 2004

This has been but a fleeting glimpse of the past and present of this great school. Many students and staff have contributed over the last one hundred years to make our school a centre of excellence. We look to the future with pride and in excited anticipation for the many changes yet to come.

### Editors' acknowledgements

We have made use here of the information gathered in E.A.Bridger, [1955], Maidenhead County Girls' School, 1905-1955: a record of the first fifty years.

Photographs of the new buildings built for the move to Farm Road in 1958 were taken for the firm of architects, Howard V. Lobb and Partners.

Pictures taken by the *Maidenhead Advertiser* are used here with permission and have been acknowledged in the text.

The editors have endeavoured to ensure that information in this book is accurate. However, they would be glad to receive any corrections, which will then be recorded in the school archives.

The editors would like to thank especially: Tina Agrell (formerly Armstrong) and Clare Wright for supplying and preparing photographs in their possession; Gill Evans, School Librarian, for scanning images; and Sue Benton for initiating the project and for writing the introduction.