

# WALLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

1888-1998





This booklet was prepared to celebrate the school's 110th birthday. We are grateful to Mrs. Jennifer Foulsham, our ex Head of History, for the work done in acquiring and collating the information. She, in turn, expresses her thanks to old girls and ex members of staff for sharing their memories of their time at Wallington High School for Girls.



On the right, Miss Treen Hunt  
(Headmistress) 1904 - 1913 and on the  
left, Miss Sharpe  
(Visiting Music Mistress).  
Photo taken: 1908





## **THE HISTORY OF WALLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

**1888 - 1998**

**Heirs of the past**

**Makers of the future**

"Although the world has now existed for several thousand years, the notion that women have minds as cultivable and worth cultivating as men's minds is still regarded by the Ordinary British Parent as an offensive, not to say, revolutionary paradox."

[James Bryce: Schools Enquiry Commission, 1864]

On January 18th 1888 a group of excited girls of assorted ages congregated in the white-washed cloakroom of the old 'National School' in West Street, Carshalton. Hanging up their outdoor clothes, the girls climbed the narrow stairs to the schoolroom above. There they were to meet the headmistress of their new school, which had been especially created for them. So began the first day of the Church High School of Carshalton, Beddington, Wallington and Sutton (St. Barnabas).

It is not recorded what Miss A. Smith had to say to the twenty-five girls on that first morning but they could not have been very impressed by the premises or its facilities, in spite of its grand title. The original building dated from 1820 and when the National School moved out in the 1880s the building was leased to the Church High School by the Beynon Trust, a local charity.

Writing in 1927 Miss Brightling, one of the first pupils, described the accommodation:

"The upstairs classroom was furnished with a folding desk and chair for each girl and these desks were folded up to leave a clear space for drilling lessons."

"Nobody," she goes on to say, "can possibly realise what it meant to teach two classes of varying ages, in one room, which was used for absolutely everything and to have no ground at all outside the school door."

Here for the first time, the theme that has run through the school's history is highlighted: the inadequacy of accommodation for the increasing number of girls.

The inspiration for the foundation of the school had come from the Rev. T. W. Sharpe of Beddington, then Senior Chief Inspector of Schools and Training Colleges. With Mr. G. B. Brighting, a Carshalton resident, he gathered together a committee of twelve clergy and local residents. The Bishop of Winchester was its patron and the Rector of Carshalton, the Rev. Lord Victor Seymour was its chairman.

Initially, the school was financed by a fund provided by the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education "for use as loans to schools with fees of £6 per annum". The original school was "an adventure in the direction of lower middle class education, of which, pray observe, it is not intended to involve the Board in a penny of additional expenditure."

[Letter of Bishop Thorold of Rochester - Diocesan Chronicle, Jan. 1888]

The building in West Street was in a conveniently central position for the parishes concerned. At that time there was no similar school in the county, except the Girls' Public Day School Trust and Roman Catholic schools in Sutton. It was not surprising that within the year, the school had expanded to cope with the number of girls wanting to attend. A second classroom was acquired downstairs in the building and then a third, the last in the building. Even this was not available every day.

However difficult the teaching and learning environment was, by December, 1888, the Rochester Diocesan Education Committee was able to report that "the need of such a school has been amply proved by the great advance in intelligence and attainment of the scholars since their admission". This must have been a pleasing report for the first headmistress, Miss A. E. Smith, who had only one full time assistant and two visiting mistresses for music and arts. Religious instruction was given three mornings a week by the local clergy.

By 1895, and with 60 pupils on the register, the West Street schoolroom was already proving inadequate. In that year Surrey County Council took it over, renamed it the Wallington County High School for Girls and in 1896 it was moved to Manor Road, Wallington. The premises had formerly been used for a Church of England Elementary School. There were four classrooms, a small Headmistress's room, a girls' cloakroom, a tiny kitchen and a small pantry used as a Staff cloakroom. One of the first innovations introduced by the third headmistress, Miss Williams, who had been appointed in 1894, was to equip a science laboratory. Teachers of technical subjects were paid £100 a year. Modern languages were taught on only one day a week.

Early in the twentieth century the school took over two houses in nearby Queens Road, for use as a hostel, providing boarding facilities for "scholarship" girls anxious to avail themselves of Wallington's growing reputation. The hostel was placed in the charge of Miss Treen Hunt, the second mistress, who was a strict disciplinarian. They had two dormitories (each with eight or nine beds), small rooms for the prefects, two bathrooms, a dayroom, a dining room and a kitchen. A garden lay between the hostel and the main building.

One pupil, Phyllis Hatcher, recalled those days as a boarder. Breakfast was an ordeal because only French could be spoken. The food was monotonous as invariably ham was served. Everybody had to help with the chores including bedmaking and potato peeling. She vividly remembers being threatened with the loss of her scholarship if she did not eat her rice pudding. Fearful of such a consequence she devised a plan; surreptitiously, she manoeuvred the stodgy pudding into her handkerchief and later buried it in the garden!

Girls boarding at the hostel were expected to complete 2 and a half hours homework supervised by the prefects. Bedtime was 7.30 p.m., regardless of age, after the inevitable snack of five water biscuits. There was some relaxation at weekends when they were allowed to go out for a walk but the girls were strictly forbidden to look in shop windows because this was 'unladylike'!

School began at 9 a.m. with scripture taken by the local clergyman but he had to be chaperoned by the headmistress. In painting lessons, the girls were strictly forbidden to use more than one palette or to squeeze out more than a quarter of an inch from the tube of paint. If it rained at break everybody had to stand still in the corridor, in complete silence, though they were allowed to munch the two water biscuits supplied.



The Art Room

In 1900, Miss H. Newton was appointed an assistant teacher and supervised the physical activity of the girls. In fine weather drill was taken on the asphalt but when it was cold they wore coats, hats, scarves and gloves. To keep warm they learnt Morris dancing though there was no music to accompany them except their own humming. In bad weather, junior drill classes had to be done in the low roofed cloakroom, ruling out jumping or arm stretching.

The school continued to grow; following the death of Miss Williams, Miss Treen Hunt became headmistress. The discipline of the time was very different from that of today. The headmistress frequently visited classes, sitting at the back of the classroom to keep an eagle eye on pupils and teachers alike. Anyone who dropped a pen or pencil was not allowed to disturb the class by picking it up before the end of the lesson. No window might be opened without sending a note to the headmistress to ask permission.

Miss Treen Hunt is remembered as one who "respected that which was conventionally proper, regarding the school as 'an establishment' for the daughters of gentlemen". She could be suspicious of girls: two girls engrossed in conversation together were likely to be interrogated so the girls tried to keep in groups. It was said the sight of her appearing from her room, her long skirts sweeping the floor, soon cleared the corridors. Nevertheless, Miss Treen Hunt contributed a great deal towards the progress of the school, increasing the number of staff especially graduate appointments.

It was at this time that the governing of the school changed. The original Articles of Government set up a governing body of nineteen Governors representing Wallington, Carshalton and Beddington Councils, the University of London and eight co-opted Governors appointed by the County Council. Now, at least one of the Representative Governors, appointed directly by the County Council, had to be a member of Surrey Education Committee, and at least two Governors should be women. Provision for entrance and Scholarships was made; no pupil should be admitted to the school except after being found fit for admission in an examination under the direction of the headmistress, graduated according to the age of the pupil. Alternatively, entrance was possible through the award of a County Council or other Scholarship tenable at the school, or a free place awarded under the regulations of the Board of Education.

Local Scholarships were to be awarded, one each by Beddington, Wallington and Carshalton. Surrey County Council approved these articles on July 27th, 1909 followed by the Board of Education in March 1910. The salary of an assistant mistress, a graduate or equivalent was initially a minimum of £110 per annum with an annual increment of £5 rising to a maximum salary of £200 per annum. Within a few years, to meet the requirements of the Board of Education, the main buildings in Manor Road had to be enlarged. The first form classroom was divided in order to enlarge the cloakroom and to provide a corridor giving access to two new classrooms and a science room. The former science classroom became the staffroom.



The Science Laboratory

The spartan discipline of 1905 - 1911 became more relaxed after the visit of the Board of Education Inspectors who suggested that extra-mural activities should be encouraged. Miss Treen Hunt allowed a choir to be trained to take part in the Festival of Empire Concert at the Crystal Palace in 1911. Fearing that some of the fifty girls might be lost on that expedition, she made them form a crocodile, each girl holding the end of the skirt of the girl in front, as they made their way from the train through the grounds of the Palace.

The School Inspectors also decided that the girls needed more exercise. So, between lessons, some very simple arm and leg exercises were introduced. On arriving in the classroom to give a lesson, whether it was scheduled as Geography, History, Maths etc., the mistress had to say "Arms, 1, 2, 3, 4 - and do the exercises herself in front of the class. This was followed by leg movements.

1911 also saw the introduction of Sports Days and weekly swimming lessons at Sutton Baths. Cricket was added to the games timetable together with netball and rounders. Inter-school matches began to be played though Wallington lost its first inter-school netball match against Peckham County School, 27 goals to 3. Later, when Wallington entered the Surrey Secondary Schools Shield Competition it came first and held the shield from 1922 - 24. Many sporting successes were to follow through the years both for teams and individuals, an increasing number being chosen as representatives in international, national and county events.

The first school uniform was also introduced in 1911 which was welcomed by the staff and girls because it helped eradicate the distinction between the Scholarship and paying pupils. The girls even made their own patterns for tunic and blouse and the finished product was modelled by the headgirl, Roberta Ames. She appeared in a "cream winceyette blouse with high collar, a green



tie and a gym tunic, only about six inches below the knee". How many times this uniform has been modified over the years, the length of the skirt rising and falling according to fashion trends!



The Sixth Form at the beginning of the Century

Other schools were now springing up throughout the county and the Scholarship holders could attend these near their home. With the numbers of boarders dwindling to three, the boarding house in Queens Road was closed and the girls were boarded out in private lodgings. The Junior playground was separated from the main one by a row of almond trees. The girls loved the mulberry tree nearby because they were able to keep silk worms! The Queens Road building became the Junior School where it remained until 1944, when the Education Act of that year introduced far-reaching changes in the provision of education.

In 1913, with the appointment of Miss K. Wallace as headmistress, many innovations were introduced. She acknowledged the already high standard the school had achieved but she wanted her girls to aim not only at academic excellence but to develop a sense of community and service to others. She introduced a more liberal environment but she insisted on good manners and a consideration for others. She was to give the school its first motto: "Self Reverence, Self Knowledge, Self Control". A Prospectus from Miss Wallace's time shows that there were twenty two assistant mistresses and four visiting mistresses for music and elocution. It states: "The aim of the school is to provide a sound, broad, practical, useful and progressive education for girls and to train them to make intelligent use of their opportunities in whatever kind of work they may afterwards engage".

Miss Wallace began to build up a staff of specialists usually appointing young graduates with a few years' teaching experience. Her method of interview was often unusual. She would invite a candidate to meet her on the steps of the National Gallery or at Victoria Station and then proceed to discuss matters strolling round the lions in Trafalgar Square or up and down Buckingham Palace Road. Perhaps this was because she feared that her candidates would be put off by the school buildings, though she did warn them that these left something to be desired. She hoped staff would settle down and help her to build the school she wanted and many did, staying on until retirement after more than twenty years service. The staffroom was a friendly and welcoming environment and everyone was prepared to make the best of cramped quarters and poor equipment.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 inevitably led to some changes in school life; Zeppelin raids interrupted lessons and the school had to cope with coal and food shortages. The girls raised money for the war effort through form competitions, sales of their craft work and small musical events. Many were involved in sewing splint pads which were sent to France to the war

wounded. There were shortages of books, paper and pencils and the usual Prize-Giving and School Concerts were postponed until better times. Suddenly, in 1918, the Armistice was declared on November 11th and the Great War was over. The school had a half-day holiday and the Governors provided a treat by arranging a picnic in Carshalton park. The celebrations were subdued and the food was sparse and unappetising but there was general relief that life could go back to normal.

The school continued to grow and the curriculum with it. Physics and Latin were now taught and a commercial class had been started in 1914 so that girls had the opportunity to qualify for the Civil Service which was considered to provide a secure job with a pension. From the earliest days the school entered girls for the London Matriculation examination and was very successful. When this examination was phased out, the girls worked for the Junior and Senior School Certificate. A Sixth Form was evolving by 1917 made up of an Art Group of about twelve girls and a Science group of about six or seven. They could take the Higher Certificate or stay at school for three years to gain exemption from the first set of University examinations by taking the London Intermediate.

Marjorie Pillow, as a future Physicist, remembers the beginning of "the scientific teaching of Science" introduced by Miss Rayner who she said was able "to devise experimental arrangements from odds and ends". Marjorie described her time as a member of the small Science Sixth in 1920:

"We read widely and voraciously - scientific books and magazines, novels, plays and poetry. We gave lectures to each other and the rest of the school. We were the property men and scene shifters of all the plays."

Roberta Everett (Hatcher) recalls taking the new School Certificate examination in 1919:

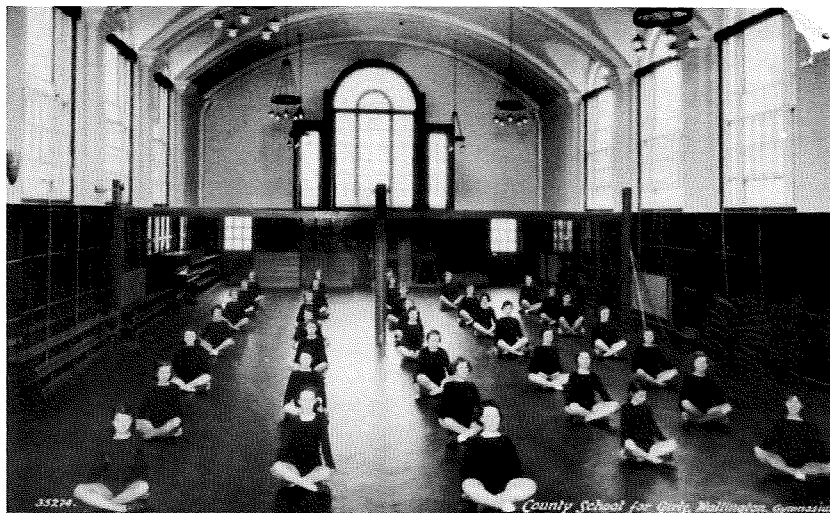
"Miss Nicholl invigilated, looked at us encouragingly and knitted a woollen stocking."

The crowded accommodation made study difficult; there were no extra facilities for the Sixth Form so the girls often had to work in the cloakroom or an attic room in the Junior School. Extra-curricular activities like the School Orchestra, drama and dancing flourished, though school excursions were restricted. Once a year a group of girls were taken to the Old Vic; in 1920 a Rambling Club was formed and a Literary Society. The school was encouraged to support the League of Nations and many girls became members in 1921. The school was renowned for its involvement in the community. Collections of 'farthings' were made for Dr. Barnardo's Homes, an infant school in Hoxton, Shoreditch was adopted and visited regularly and each Christmas a coachload of the children came to the school for a Christmas party.

One of the school magazines of these years gives this account of one such event. At Christmas six "fairies" (Wallington Girls!) went to the Hoxton House Christmas Party. All the children were wearing paper hats and laughing at the marionette show, which was no sooner over than a conjurer came to see them. They then went back to their classrooms where there were little Christmas trees, bearing gifts. The teachers had illustrated nursery rhymes on the blackboard and had made the rooms generally festive. The gifts were distributed and then back went the children to the hall to sing popular songs until their big sisters or 'mummies' came to take them home.

Meanwhile, the school was expanding rapidly and the extra buildings provided from 1918 were sorely needed. A corrugated iron hall was built connected with the main building by covered ways. This made school assemblies easier and provided facilities for Gymnastics. With the steady increase in numbers, rooms were hired in the Baptist Church Hall opposite the Junior School in Queens Road and in the Church Institute in Manor Road. By 1920, when there were about three hundred pupils, army huts were attached to the main building providing a Physics Laboratory and three classrooms. The hut classrooms were hot and stuffy in summer but cold

and often full of coke fumes in winter; fumes sometimes intensified by practical jokers feeding the stove with rubber patches from cycle repair outfits!



The Gymnasium

Miss M. Lester (who taught maths 1919-1958) recalled her first impression of the school.

"A dark Church Hall; 'Watch & Pray' looking down on me from the opposite wall seemed to strike a note of warning as I entered but the thirty four girls dressed in frocks of various colours and wearing bows in their hair looked friendly enough..... In the classroom, in the main building, there was one huge fire in front of the class and the blackboard stood on the mantle shelf above it. One large hole burnt in front of my new tweed skirt cured me of the fault of spending too long working on the board.

In 1920, the School magazine was published for the first time since the Great War. It reflects the keen competition and pride in the school's achievements. There is also unselfconscious humour and a little dismay expressed in some of the form reports; as this from D. Webb, Form Upper IVa:

"At the beginning of the Spring Term we were surprised and sorry to hear that we had lost one of our best shooters, Kathleen Portch. Kathleen had been shooter in the team during the whole year in which she had been in Lower IVb and, as she is a very tall girl, it was a great disadvantage to our team to lose her.

Altogether our team has a great many disadvantages to cope with. Many of the girls are small, although they are sharp, but they have no chance against such tall and experienced girls as those in the teams of Forms Lower Va and Upper V."

Prizes were awarded not only for academic achievements but there were also form awards for good behaviour and tidiness. There was great competition between forms for the best garden. Failure to do well could be blamed not just on the weather but its disadvantaged position:

"The garden of Upper IVa is just outside the entrance to the Assembly Hall and it is quite a large plot. There is nothing brilliant about our garden but we have several rows of fine healthy cabbages. A border of pinks surrounds the garden and alongside are crocuses. It was rather obvious, however, that the flowers nearest the netball court were trampled down, thus spoiling the scheme, much to our gardeners' disgust."

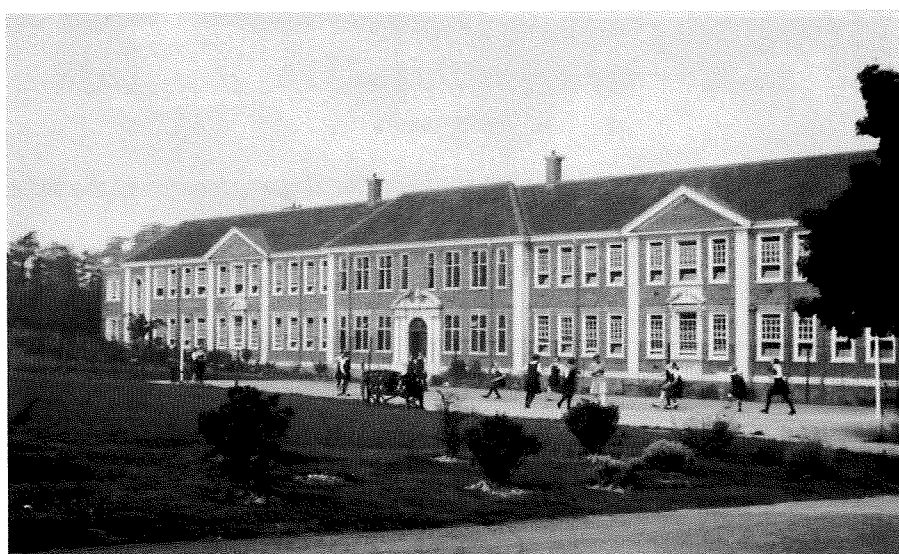
The promise of the "New School" was a perennial joke, according to a member of staff, Miss Biggs:

"Year after year at Prizegiving we were told it was to be built, until at last any mention of it was greeted with roars of laughter."

Mr. Meller, Chairman of the Governors, spoke of the promised school which was to house four hundred; the site had been bought; the ground had been railed in; it was hoped to start building next year; the playing fields could now be used. Finally, as the School Magazine of 1925 reported:

"A long awaited event took place in May, the foundations of the new school were laid. As we go to press the litter of bricks and mortar on the site becomes daily more conspicuous."

During the Summer term several girls and some staff moved plants from the old to the new gardens. There was a procession of girls carrying tools and trundling wheelbarrows full of plants. One of the Governors arranged the layout of the shrubbery and the girls then planted the shrubs and trees which they and their parents had given.



Wallington High School For Girls on the premises in Stanley Park Road

Finally, in 1926, the school moved to the purpose built premises in Stanley Park Road, Carshalton and the official opening took place on October 23rd 1926, in the presence of Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education. The 410 girls now had a panelled assembly hall, a library, an art room, science laboratories and proper sports facilities. The event was recorded in the School magazine for that year in a variety of comments. The Senior School comment is quite succinct, even dismissive: "Moving into the new School upset the regular School routine at the beginning of the School year, and it was difficult to become accustomed to the new conditions, but by the end of the term everyone had settled down." The Middle School was far more appreciative: "In the September of 1926, the dream of every girl in the Wallington County School came to life. Our wonderful new School was completed and we started our year's work in it amidst great excitement." The Juniors had rather an unusual present to celebrate: "In September we came to the new School and we are all now comfortably settled in our cosy classrooms. Forms IIb and I were presented by Miss Wallace with a stuffed crocodile from British Guinea and by Miss Rayner with a dead snake in a bottle. These are of great interest to us all."

The standard of teaching was high and staff and girls joined together in extra curricular activities. The curriculum expanded with the new facilities but by today's standards, was still restricted. Prefects took an active part in supervising the school. They were appointed by the headmistress and staff and each form had a form prefect to help the form mistress in her duties. Discipline

was good without the girls feeling over-restricted and each year form trophies were awarded for good behaviour and neatness. In 1931 a new school badge was adopted. It incorporated the wings from the crest of Lord Victor Seymour, one of the original founders and the chequers part of the arms of Surrey. The present motto, "Heirs of the Past; Makers of the Future", was chosen by Miss Wallace.

In 1937 Miss Wallace retired. She was fondly remembered by Staff and girls for her quiet dignity and kindness. She had gathered round her a staff of great ability which she fused into a happy and harmonious fellowship, winning from them an affectionate loyalty and co-operation.

She was replaced as Headmistress by Miss Amy Bull. She was to become one of Wallington's most revered headmistresses. She had been educated at Roedean and Somerville College, Oxford, graduating in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. Previously, she had taught history at Cheltenham Ladies College and then the Northern Grammar School for Girls in Portsmouth. She was also outstanding in the sports field having played cricket for her school, University, County and finally for England. She took a great interest in activities beyond Wallington; she served on many committees including Surrey Education Committee, several hospital boards and the National Youth Employment Service. Finally, she became President of the Association of Headmistresses.

Miss Bull was determined that the school would be as normal as possible during the Second World War. Miss Theakstone, who taught German, recalls vividly life at the time:

"The girls had to carry their coats with them if the weather was at all bad and wear reasonably warm shoes. Each form had its own trench and when the alarm sounded, whoever was teaching them at the time took the form to their trench, immediately took the register, then carried on teaching. It was even possible to put in one or two blackboards and electricity. The most frightening disruptions were the flying bombs which started very suddenly. I remember vividly being on duty in Mount Park when there was a sound like a train roaring, then a silence as if the engine had cut out, then an explosion."

Though this began two or three days before G.C.E. examinations, Miss Bull decided it was best that all pupils should continue at school: this turned out to be a lucky decision since many bombs fell in the area but none directly on the school.

Daphne Brown (a former pupil who was later to become a much respected and loved School Secretary) remembers what it was like for the pupils then. "Every girl had to carry her gas mask and her iron rations which consisted of a tin with two biscuits and cheese, a few sweets and even a piece of chewing gum - for use in emergencies only! When the 'All Clear' went after an air raid Miss Bull was always on the steps to welcome us out of the trenches."

The school building remained undamaged though timetables were badly disrupted by air raid alarms. GCE examinations continued in the hall but the many warnings meant that sometimes the girls spent as few as ten minutes in the hall. The teachers had to get the girls to give their word that they would not discuss the paper they were doing as they sat in the trenches. One paper, the Geography paper, went on until nearly 6 o'clock and the little post office in Carshalton telephoned the school to say they would stay open specially. One girl was doing A-level Geography in the trench nearest the kitchen, used for the kitchen staff. After many interruptions the All-Clear sounded and the candidate was able to finish her exam but not until the kitchen staff had plied her and her invigilator with tea and left-over lunch pudding.

For a while, girls were evacuated for safety to various parts of the country but gradually most returned and by the end of the war the school was again bursting at the seams. The school had been built to accommodate 410 girls but numbers increased to 650. There was still an entrance examination but fees were to be abolished after the 1944 Education Act, which proclaimed "Education for All".

Besides the shortage of classrooms there was no gym, so the hall was used whenever possible. The playing field was undersized and not level so nearby Mellows Park was often used for games. The dining room, where subsidised lunches had been provided for 6d a day during the war, could not cope and girls were encouraged to lunch at home if they lived near enough. Finally a new canteen was built in 1957. There were some mechanical aids to teaching: The Parents' Association presented the school with a tape recorder and there was a radiogram and television set, but no language laboratory. The Parents' Association, throughout the school's history, has been unstinting in its support, donating gifts and money to provide a variety of much needed equipment.

In spite of these restrictions, both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities were extended. There were visiting foreign assistants in French, Spanish and German and exchange visits were arranged. Educational visits, theatre trips and musical events were organised. There was a great interest in the Council for Education in World Citizenship and in the International Friendship group. Music developed rapidly and by the end of the 1950s there were three choirs and two orchestras. Girls could enter for 'O' and 'A' level examinations in Music and many went on to study music at University.

Social service work continued, developing from the early years when the school supported Hoxton House Infants' School. After its evacuation to Cambridgeshire, the school began to entertain elderly people instead, at the Union of Girls' Schools for Social Service Settlement in Peckham. Except for the period of the Second World War, the School magazine continued, changing in size and the colour and design of the cover. The girls also enjoyed cultivating the small gardens each form had in the school grounds and a competition was held in the summer to judge the best.

In 1963 the school's 75th Anniversary Prizegiving was held in the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. Sir Edward Boyle, then Minister of Education, presented the prizes. Miss Bull, in her final year, presided. It was a landmark for the school but also the end of an era. Change was inevitable once more with the appointment of a new headmistress and the move to a modern school now assured. In the following year, 1964, Miss Bull retired and in the Birthday Honours it was announced that she had been awarded the C.B.E. This caused great joy and excitement in the school. Miss Bull's room was full of flowers and each girl was invited to see the medal after her return from Buckingham Palace. She has been remembered by her staff and girls as "a remarkable headmistress, outstanding in her generation. She made a lasting impact because of her vitality, her optimism, her enthusiasm and her dynamic personality.

Miss Bull's successor, Miss Agnes Mark, became headmistress in 1964. She had been educated at the Mary Erskine School in Edinburgh and at Edinburgh University. Her teaching career began in Wakefield and before coming to Wallington, she had been Deputy Head at Croydon High School. Miss Mark was to supervise the school's move to its present site in Woodcote Road. Though the staff and girls were excited at the prospect of the new school, they were sad to leave the attractive building with its virginia creeper and pleasant grounds. Since the school was to be taken over by Stanley Park Secondary School, the girls could not move the plants as they had done in the previous move, but each class collected enough money to buy a young tree to be planted in the new school's grounds. It was hoped the area, having been desecrated by the builders, would one day have grounds equal to the school that had been left.

In summer 1965 the staff and girls moved into the new purpose built school at Woodcote Green. It was considerably larger than the old school, having six laboratories, a lecture room, a full size music room with practice rooms, an art room, a craft room, a history room, a large library and a new addition - a commerce room. A commercial sixth form was to exist alongside an academic sixth form. A sixth form common room was built, with easy chairs and coffee tables as well as tables to work at.

In the School magazine of that year the Seniors are even more terse about the event than their



predecessors had been on the move to the Stanley Park site. The new building gets only a casual mention in the Calendar under "Prizegiving" which is referred to as an historic occasion as it was the first in the new school building.



The side view of the new building

But a pupil of the Middle School, Christine MacNaughton, describes the building and the new conditions this way:

"The new school is a miracle of modern architecture and I find it practically impossible to criticise the interior. I much prefer the light, airy classrooms with windows on both sides to the dark old school. The dining room is cheerful and I like the effect of the curtains, while I can find only one word to describe the food and that is "fabulous".

Christine was not as effusive about the grounds:

"In winter the fields remind me of bleak moors. When we were reading "Wuthering Heights" I only had to think of the fields and I had a perfect picture of the moors - only perhaps not so ruggedly beautiful - to sum up I find that I preferred the grounds of the old building but like the interior of the new. How I wish that they could be combined to make a perfect school.



The front view of the new building

In the School Calendar for 1966 Yvonne Rayment (Upper VI) described the opening of the new school on July 20th.

"The new school was officially opened by Dr. Kathleen Ollerenshaw. The morning was spent in hectic preparations as form rooms were arranged and a wilderness of tropical foliage appeared in the hall. After lunch, the School assembled: the platform party, mostly governors and friends of the school, filed on to the stage and took their seats ..... Dr. Ollerenshaw gave a lively and stimulating address on the subject of girls' education and officially opened our school. The rector of Beddington formally asked God's blessing on the school and the ceremony was brought to a close by an anthem sung by school and choir.

The move saw many changes and some of the old traditions, of necessity, died; the marking of form rooms stopped because girls spent less time in their own rooms and more time in the specialist rooms provided. Games were more varied, with the larger field, more tennis and netball courts as well as lawn tennis courts. A well equipped gym had been built at last. One change was instituted immediately by Miss Mark; Sixth form girls no longer had to wear uniform except for special occasions like concerts and Prizegiving. This was welcomed by the girls as nearly everyone was staying on in the Sixth form, which was being seen more as a bridge between school, university, college or work. Tutorial groups were established in which girls were encouraged to consider further education and careers, how to apply for colleges, hospital and jobs and to discuss current events and issues of the day. A School Council was eventually introduced giving the chance for girls to air their views.

There were other changes too. The prefectorial system was abolished in 1970 at the request of the girls and to the delight of Miss Mark. It gave the chance to all girls in the VI form to share in the responsibilities previously undertaken by the Prefects. Miss Mark reported in 1971 that the transition had taken place smoothly and well, recognising that the duties were time consuming, tiring and relatively unrewarding, while some are downright unpleasant.

The change from family service school meals to a cafeteria service was welcomed by the girls as Miss Vanstone recorded:

"To begin with, it was not quite "chips with everything" but almost. Fairly soon, however, common sense together with a certain amount of thought for waistlines prevailed and rather more balanced meals were bought..... There is also the added advantage of a daily dose of mental arithmetic which is required in order to avoid embarrassment at the till.

The new school's facilities gave birth to an Art Club, Animal Club, drama, more music and poetry and even jazz. There were also opportunities to participate in field trips for Geography and Biology, educational cruises and skiing trips. Girls continued to undertake work in the community and to support charities, raising money by lunchtime record sessions. The 1960s were the years of the 'mini' skirt and the girls tried to conform to the prevailing fashion rolling their skirts over at the waist to make them shorter and shorter to see how far they could go before being told sternly to let them down again. Summer skirts, made of yards of pleated cotton in saxe blue with stars, were remade into the latest 'A' line style, ten inches above the knee. No make-up was allowed but "pan-stick" was much in evidence giving deathly white lips and a pale complexion. By the 1970s a more relaxed attitude to uniform was introduced; school hats were now optional and the uniform was changed completely. Coloured shirts were introduced, ties were no longer worn and in the summer a floral dress in a choice of styles was adopted.

The reputation of the school continued to increase with the numbers, based not solely on academic achievement but also on sport, music, public speaking and social service. The school celebrated the fact that not only were girls accepted into Oxbridge but also into other universities and colleges; into further education, into nursing, physiotherapy and radiography.





The new premises of Wallington High School For Girls

In 1965, with the formation of the London Borough of Sutton, the school had come under its jurisdiction. Soon after, its name changed officially to "Wallington High School for Girls". All other local schools changed their names to "High" schools while remaining grammar and secondary modern temporarily in preparation for "going comprehensive". It was the start of a long campaign by parents and Governors to keep Wallington Boys' and Wallington Girls' as grammar schools. The issue was not resolved until 1974 when the then Secretary of State for Education, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, approved plans for a three tier comprehensive system but ruled that the two schools would remain as selective grammar schools. The history of education in Sutton was to become more complex but this decision was never overthrown.

Under the guidance of Miss Mark and then Miss Charity Vanstone, who became headmistress in 1980, the school was to see a broadening of the curriculum in the 1970s and 1980s. Miss Mark's work at Wallington was characterised by a determination to get the best out of each girl and she was quick to recognise genuine hard work as generously as great ability. She worked unstintingly to provide a curriculum which would allow the girls to have a broad based education. Miss Mark encouraged the girls to take part in all the activities the school had to offer and was herself a faithful supporter of the public presentations of music, drama and art. Staff and pupils of that era remember her with affection, not only because of her professionalism, but also because of her warmth, kindness and sense of humanity.

The broadening of the curriculum meant that it became increasingly difficult to accommodate subjects within the constraints of the timetable. To remedy the lack of Home Economics in the first year it was included in a 'circus' where the girls had four ten week courses of Art, Craft, Textiles and Home Economics in addition to the double period of Art. Careers Education was extended and the school joined in the computer based course organised by the local authority. Work Experience was established and there were further opportunities for the girls through 'Link' courses with Carshalton College of Further Education. Joint 'A' level courses in some subjects were arranged with Wallington High School for Boys. Nuffield Science was introduced with its increased emphasis on experimentation.

Technology began to have an impact on all areas of school life, as Miss Vanstone has recorded. There was an increased use of audio-visual equipment, transistor radios, cassette recorders and video cassette recorders allowed teachers to widen the scope of their lessons tremendously. A new language laboratory was bought second hand from Surrey University which was not only larger than the original laboratory but much more sophisticated. In the Commerce Room, girls were given the opportunity to use equipment they would meet when they went out to work with

the introduction of electronic typewriters and computers. These engaged the interest of the girls and illustrated their use in the modern world. It became as usual to find pocket calculators in pencil cases as it had once been to find pens and pencils. There were changes in the School office too. The manual typewriter was replaced by an electric one and the Gestetner machine gave way to a photocopier. Only in the Staffroom did time stand still and the spirit duplicator continue to stick on every other sheet!

Computer Studies were introduced and gradually computers were used in departments other than maths. Staff became more confident in their use in the classroom when they took advantage of training sessions arranged by the Borough's advisory teachers. Physical Education also broadened its scope to include modern dance, keep fit and aerobics while continuing with team games and gym. The tradition of competing with other schools and in Borough and County competitions continued and Wallington recorded many successes. While Drama continued to form part of English lessons it also became an examination subject at 'O' and 'A' levels.

Departments now had numbered rooms allocated to them to go with their specialist rooms in the annual room timetabling. This was intended to give the departments a visible identity, to encourage the display of relevant material and to make the use of specialist equipment easier. It was difficult to work in practice because the school was so large that 100% occupancy was necessary and on many occasions, the 'rightful owners' were denied the use of 'their' room to avoid breaking up a double period for some other class.

Some major structural alterations also took place: the enlargement of the Language Laboratory; the conversion of the History Room and the Art Room into one big Art Room; the conversion of a cloakroom into a second Home Economics room. A mobile classroom was erected in the grounds, first used by the Maths Department and then becoming the Drama Room. The Lower Sixth gained their own common room by extending the wall along the main corridor and hanging a curtain over the area next to the stairs. Declared a fire hazard some years later, it was replaced by a wall which Miss Vanstone records the Art Department commandeered for a display space only seconds after the plaster was dry!

The syllabuses of departments were systematically revised to make them more relevant and to satisfy the requirements of the examination boards. The overlap between departments increased as in Home Economics with its greater emphasis on Food Science or in History and Economics. The revision of the English syllabus brought about the study of modern authors, playwrights and poets. Nevertheless, even revised syllabuses were to be out of date very soon with the introduction of GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education).

Some of the happiest events in the school's history took place in the school year, 1978, when the school celebrated its 90th Birthday. The first, in September, was a Thanksgiving Service, which was held in the morning in a marquee of staggering size. It needed to be as it had to accommodate a thousand people, including the whole school, with the choir and orchestra and its guests. It was a family occasion with all aspects of the school's life represented: the Chairman and Governors, the Mayor and Mayoress of the London Borough of Sutton, the Leader of the Council and the Director of Education as well as Miss Bull, representatives of the Old Girls, Parents and colleagues from other schools. The Thanksgiving Service was conducted by the Rector of Carshalton and thus the guest list also reflected the history of the school from the days of its inception in 1888 as a Church school. The service was followed by a Celebration Luncheon in the school hall prepared and presented superbly by the Home Economics department. In the evening, the festivities continued with a special Old Girls dinner attended by more than 200 Old Girls with ages ranging from 18 to 85, ending a long and memorable day.

Daphne Brown (née Hood) School Secretary and Old Wallingtonian recorded the preparations for the day in the School Magazine 1979:

"Friday 22nd September 1978. This was the day on which we held the first of the events to commemorate and celebrate the School's 90th Birthday year. As we had hoped, the weather was perfect for the Thanksgiving Service which was held in a large marquee in the school grounds in the morning. The hiring of the marquee was achieved only after endless correspondence and many telephone calls. Miss Mark had been adamant from the start that the accommodation should be adequate to take the whole school as well as guests and friends. When Miss Vanstone suggested a marquee to seat 1,000 people, someone asked "What if it rains?". "It won't rain," replied Miss Mark confidently, and, of course, it didn't."

The seating was arranged in rows facing towards the centre. In the centre and to one side there was a dais with altar and lectern and a beautiful floral display. Facing the altar, choir stalls and seating for the orchestra had been arranged. The marquee was cool inside as the sun still had to make its way round to the back of the school. There was a sweet, grassy smell and an atmosphere of complete peace and calm."

The other spectacular event was the day trip of the 750 girls and 50 staff to the Isle of Wight for which a British Rail train was specially hired. Sixteen coaches were waiting at Ryde, where the excited girls were divided into various age groups. The 1st and 2nd Year classes were taken to Carisbrooke Castle and Blackgang Chine; the 3rd and 4th Years to Alum Bay and Carisbrooke Castle and the 5th and 6th Years went to Osborne House and Sandown Bay. The fine weather helped make the day a huge success and was fondly remembered by all who took part.

In February 1984, the 1st years, with the help of Staff and Prefects enacted 'A Day in the Life of a Wallington Girl in 1911' - chosen because many school traditions such as uniform and Sports Day were introduced that year. The comments of the girls taking part were recorded in the School Magazine:

"On February 1st we dressed in 1911 uniform and had to treat our elders with much more respect than usual. We sat alphabetically in class. We were not allowed to speak unless spoken to as it was considered most unruly behaviour. We had to sit up straight with our hands in our laps. It was difficult to sit still for the day.

"After Maths, we had Geography. We were taught about the Great British Empire; India, the Jewel in the Crown and its capital, Delhi. By this time the novelty was beginning to wear off. I wished I was back in 1984.

"At break we were allowed one water biscuit each; compared to crisps they were foul.

"After break we had French. It was boring and if they did teach French like that it's a wonder any old lady can speak a word of it.

"All I can say is, boy, am I glad I live in 1984!"

In 1985 Miss Vanstone retired. She had come to Wallington from Nonsuch High School, Cheam, as Deputy Head in September 1969. In spite of this increasingly demanding role, she continued to teach Latin promoting and maintaining the highest standards in her subject. Miss Mark paid tribute to "her skill, her energy and her commitment to the needs of the school; a person of ideas and penetrating mind. Above all, a generous and caring person, always giving thought to the needs of others in small ways as well as large".

Dr. Dorothy Atkinson, her successor, had previously been Deputy Head at Croydon High School. A graduate in Chemistry at Oxford, her teaching career had begun at Sheffield High School. After bringing up her three sons, she returned to teaching first at Croydon College and then at Selhurst School for Girls. She was to guide the school through perhaps some of the most far-reaching changes in educational provision that the country had seen since the Butler Education Act of 1944. There were also to be radical changes in the administration of Wallington High

School which would prepare it for a new and exciting phase in its history.

The first challenge staff and pupils had to meet was the introduction of the new examination, the General Certificate of Secondary Education. New teaching skills had to be learnt to meet its requirements; problem solving skills rather than rote learning, more independent learning and initiative in the production of coursework and an emphasis on oral work both in foreign languages and English. Girls have to be prepared not only to work on their own but co-operate in group work.

The introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (T.V.E.I.) into a selective school caused some surprise and trepidation but again staff and girls were prepared to make full use of the advantages it offered in providing funds to enhance the curriculum. One particular area was the pastoral care which is regarded as a crucial component in supporting girls through their adolescent years. This was developed further by the introduction of profiling resulting in a "Record of Achievement". Profiling meant that girls could discuss their work individually with a teacher and outline their achievements. The emphasis is on self-assessment and the girls setting themselves new targets. At the end of their school career the "Record of Achievement" includes not only their examination certificates but also a record of skills which are shown right across the curriculum, including personal and social development, work experience and extra curricular activities.

Helen Comber, a 4th year pupil, recorded her experience following a T.V.E.I. course:

"The emphasis is on building self-confidence, group participation and finding things out for ourselves through a wide variety of sources. We assess ourselves with the help of a teacher every few weeks and learn through this which skills we most need to develop.

"In T.V.E.I. we are much more independent than in ordinary lessons. If we are convinced our opinions are right, we are encouraged to argue without trying to force our ideas on other people and to learn to accept others and ourselves for what we are."



The 100th Anniversary cake being cut

But the 1980s were not all change; continuity was also remembered when in January, 1988, the school celebrated its 100th anniversary by a Special Prizegiving Centenary Celebration at the Fairfield Halls, following the precedent established for the 75th anniversary. In her address Dr. Atkinson gave a brief history of the school, emphasising its past and present achievements. There were now 700 girls in the school and the Sixth Form had increased considerably. The girls had a choice of twenty different 'A' level courses. She spoke of the sense of community that

existed: the Sixth form who gave their time to run Art, Drama and Science Clubs, helping in the Library and in Sport; the support for the Christmas and Summer Music Concerts; the drama productions; the team effort in a range of sporting activities. The support and interest of the Parents' Association and Governors was emphasised and the continuing link with Industry and Commerce such as British Petroleum and British Telecom providing expert help in such initiatives as the Technology project and Enterprise Day. There was an echo of previous prizegiving through the years - the need for more accommodation. More space was needed for the Library and for Drama and Music, as well as a proper Sixth Form Centre. These were projects that the school was soon to discuss and make plans for.

In the summer a "Fun Day" for the whole school was organised in the grounds of Polesden Lacy. Heavy rain marred the day but everyone was determined to enjoy themselves with true 'British grit'. The year's events ended in December with a Carol Service of Thanksgiving in Wallington Parish Church, a fitting end to the celebrations.

At the end of the 80s, the staff were beginning to grapple with the implications of the 1988 Education Act. This provided for "the establishment of a National Curriculum, comprising core and other foundation subjects to be taught to all pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, for each of which there are to be appropriate attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements".

The teaching profession again took on an enormous workload involving revised syllabuses, new methods of teaching, recording and assessment. It was a stressful time as teachers struggled to cope with the masses of paperwork and long planning meetings. It was to take several years of further consultation and constant revision before it was felt that the National Curriculum had satisfied the majority of its critics.

1990 was to usher in a decade of unprecedented and significant changes which would prepare the school for the challenges of the 21st Century. During her last year as headmistress, Dr. Atkinson oversaw the implementation of the Education Reform Act for Local Management of Schools which came into force on April 1st 1990. Control over the school's budget of over one and a quarter million pounds passed for the first time directly into the hands of the Governing Body. The first year was very successful with even a surplus of funds reported.

It led to great expectations of what a school could achieve under Local Management but a setback followed in late 1990. To avoid being charge-capped by the Government, the London Borough of Sutton had to impose cutbacks across the borough which inevitably affected school budgets over the next two years. Though Wallington suffered cutbacks in several areas, the Governors managed to protect the delivery of the curriculum to the girls and in the 1993-94 Budget the Governors were once again able to report a surplus for the first time in three years.

After seven years as headteacher, Dr. Atkinson announced her retirement. These had been eventful years for the school and she had overseen the changes calmly and efficiently. She combined a first class analytical mind with a great capacity for taking pains and she gave her time unselfishly to girls, staff, parents and governors alike. Following her retirement, Miss Margaret Edwards was appointed headteacher, taking up her duties in September 1992. A graduate in Chemistry at King's College, London, she had previously taught in Kenya and had been Head of Chemistry, first at Reigate County School for Girls and then at Tiffin Girls School. She had come to Wallington as Deputy Head in 1988 and had worked closely with Dr. Atkinson and the staff implementing the many changes in educational provision. In addition to her new responsibilities, Miss Edwards faced the task of overseeing the transition from Local Management to "Grant Maintained" status. Supported by a parental ballot in favour, this took place on April 1st, 1993. Following on from three years of Local Management, "going Grant Maintained" gave the Governors and Senior Management yet more flexibility to manage resources. This was coupled with the ability to effect decisions much more quickly than was possible with the L.E.A., though it meant increased responsibility and workload. It brought

immediate benefits with the additional music accommodation and a new computer network. These were to be the first of many improvements to the school's facilities in the following years. With some ingenious re-vamping and extension of the existing building a new Drama Studio was provided as well as extra office accommodation and an extended staffroom. This helped relieve congestion together with the provision of a mobile classroom for staff use as a marking and preparation room.

January 1994 witnessed the visit from Her Majesty's Inspectors, OFSTED. Sixteen Inspectors were in school for a week to report on every aspect of the school environment. It was a stressful time for everybody but the final report was very complimentary concluding:

"This is a very successful school which provides a high quality all-round education equipping its pupils to flourish as lively and confident individuals in the adult world."

In 1995, the school was listed in the Top 100 State schools and, after a visit by reporters from the national press, summed up as "a forward-looking academic school; state education at its best". It cited its broad curriculum offering a wide choice of GCSE options, including Latin, Business Studies, Home Economics, Psychology, three languages and the Humanities as well as Maths, English and Science. Social Biology, Media Studies and Technology were included in the range of 'A' level subjects as well as a number of A/S subjects. It referred to its excellence in Art and Music provision as well as the well planned careers advice, work experience and pastoral care. It listed the varied sports offered. netball, tennis, hockey, cricket, rounders, athletics, gymnastics and even football. Finally, the girls themselves were described: "Lively, bright, friendly; noticeably self-possessed and confident; encouraged to be articulate and hardworking with a respect for others".



The new art room

With this sort of recommendation it is not surprising that the school's popularity continued to grow and the numbers on the roll increased especially in Year Twelve and Thirteen. Girls from other schools without sixth forms were applying, wishing to take the opportunities offered in the various sixth form courses. This steady increase in pupil numbers coupled with much curriculum innovation meant that the accommodation was severely overcrowded and inadequate for a modern curriculum to be delivered or developed, so it was with considerable relief and jubilation that the school's bid for additional science and technology rooms was successful. After some initial frustrating setbacks work began in July 1994. An exciting stage in the school's history had begun, for this was the first time since the school had moved to the Woodcote Road site that significant improvements were able to be made to its facilities. The building of the new Technology and Maths blocks and the alteration and redecoration of other parts of the school

made an enormous difference to the accommodation. The Technology block provides two workshops, two I.T. rooms, a Graphics room and an Electronics/Textiles room. The Maths block has five classrooms and the alterations within the original school building provide two more science laboratories and a Business Studies room. A major sum from the school budget was devoted to networking the top floor of the school to the I.T. Rooms.



Surfing the Net at Wallington High School For Girls

British Telecom also donated £20,000 towards setting up a Communications Centre, incorporating video conferencing facilities to enable students to talk to pupils abroad and see them at the same time.

The beginning of 1997 brought further news of additional accommodation to be built. Nearly £240,000 was allocated towards a six classroom Humanities block to be built next to the Maths block.

Wallington High School now has more than 900 students and a hundred staff, supported by its Governing Body and Parents' Association. As the school looks forward to the 21st Century it can also look back with pride and gratitude to the vision of a group of Victorian gentlemen, to the dedication of past Governing Bodies, headmistresses and staff whose efforts have enabled the school to attain nationally recognised standards of excellence. The notion that women have minds "as cultivable and worth cultivating as men's minds" is no longer an offensive or revolutionary paradox but a concept proclaimed and celebrated throughout the history of the school. As the millenium approaches, the girls can justly be proud of their motto: "Heirs of the Past; Makers of the Future".

