

Western Mail, 9 October 1896, p.1

EDUCATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

County Intermediate School for Girls, Cowbridge

The Governors are prepared to receive applications for admission to the school, which will be opened for the half-term on Tuesday, November 3rd, 1896. Girls between the ages of 10 and 17 years are eligible for admission.

Fees - for the whole school course (exclusive of instrumental music, books, and stationery) £3 per annum.

The Head Mistress will receive a limited number of Boarders at the School Hostel, at a charge of £20 p.a. (exclusive of laundry).

All fees are to be paid for each term in advance.

The School Prospectus and Forms of Application for Admission may be obtained of the Head Mistress, Miss C.M.Gladdish BA (London), Elm House, Bridgend; or of Wm. T. Gwyn, Clerk to the Governors, Town Clerk's Office, Cowbridge.

7 Oct. 1896

Western Mail, 17 November 1896, p.6

Intermediate School for Girls, Cowbridge

The head-mistress, after conferring with the local governors, has appointed Miss Maud Ogier, assistant mistress in the County Intermediate School for Girls, Cowbridge, there having been 65 applicants for the post. Miss Griffiths, of Cowbridge, has also been appointed head teacher in music.

Over 40 were present at the first demonstration in cookery, on Friday, and, judging from the large number enrolled, there is every prospect of success for the evening classes, which will be conducted by Miss Linbergh, in this subject during the winter months.

Cowbridge High School 1896-1971

Today, when "anything goes" in dress, present pupils of Cowbridge High School, would have seen that of the early years of the school merely as a variant of modern fashions; midi-skirts, white blouses tucked in neatly under a leather waist belt and "sailor" hats in stiff straw with navy bands. Most of the girls had hair down to their waists, shining after vigorous brushing morning and night. In class, this had to be plaited neatly with a black or navy bow at the ends. I remember that when I was thirteen, "Alice bands" were fashionable, but our Headmistress preferred us to draw the hair back to another bow at the back of the head. She herself was majestic in a black silk dress with high collar and a skirt that fell to the floor in heavy folds.

Uniforms were not introduced until about 1910 and that was, in part, an effort to eliminate the obvious difference in dress according to the status or good taste of the parents, for whereas some girls had beautifully made frocks in good material, others had to make do with inferior cut and quality. Another purpose was to make the girls proud to be known as pupils of the Cowbridge Intermediate School for Girls.

That title "Intermediate" was part of the romantic story of Welsh education. The first University College of Wales was founded on the pennies collected from quarrymen, farmers and other patriotic Welshmen. It struggled on for ten years before it was helped by a government grant; it was truly a university of the people for the people. One difficulty was that apart from the old grammar schools in market towns like Cowbridge there were none to prepare students for university studies apart from certain private schools, so, by the Welsh Education Act of 1889, new schools were to be set up to provide an education intermediate between primary schools and university. To Glamorgan were allocated thirteen, one to be at Cowbridge as centre for the Vale. Already, John Bevan, a native of the town, now at 90 living in Lombardy, had been busy with plans for a girls' school that should be the equivalent of the Boys' Grammar School and a long correspondence with his friend, Edward John, survives. Now he threw himself into plans for the new Intermediate School, providing a site and paying for a hostel for twelve boarders (e.g. your library was the original junior dormitory). He asked Edward John to secure a site which should face South with a grass plot for flowers and shrubs. He even thought of tennis nets, balls and racquets. So one school owes much to local initiative and generosity.

The architect was a native of Ystradowen with wide experience. You have to imagine a school minus the long corridor, gymnasium and kitchen (added in 1908), providing for forty girls. A brass tablet commemorating Mr. Bevan's gifts is above the Headmistress's room.

At the opening in 1896 eighteen girls were admitted, seven from village primary schools, the others from the various private schools for which Cowbridge was famous, especially those of Great House and Plas-hên. They paid £3 a year plus the cost of stationery, but there were a few scholarships. The subjects were English, History, Geography, Mathematics, French and Latin. Soon Needlework and Cookery were added (I can see myself at fourteen struggling to finish an elaborate chemise in fine nainsook with insets of lace and feather stitching, while the first Cookery mistress bewailed that in the smoky range provided raspberry buns took so long to bake as to be inedible). The only Science was Botany—and did we know the rich flora of the Vale!

The first headmistress was Miss C. M. Gladish and, after a dispute over the fact that she accommodated a somewhat merry brother on the premises, Miss E. L. Renant (1899-1913). Their salary was £150 a year plus capitation fees and the assistants' £90. Miss Renant was an enthralling teacher and set a high standard in scholarship and the girls were encouraged to aim at a University course. In 1908, when the number had grown to eighty, five of us went up to University. Can you maintain that proportion today?

In 1912 an Intermediate School became necessary for the Mountain Ash area and to obviate the delay which would be involved in amending the 1889 Act Cowbridge, as the smallest of the original thirteen, was given separate status so the Cowbridge Intermediate School became Cowbridge High School.

You can be proud of the history of your school. See to it that you uphold its record in your own day and generation.

Maud Gunter.

Cowbridge Girls' High School – written as a school exercise by former pupils

1896 Appointment of a Headmistress

An advertisement was placed in the South Wales Daily News, the Western Mail and the South Wales Spectator, reading –

‘The governing body are prepared to appoint a headmistress of the Girls School of the above district. The scheme provides for 40 girls. Salary £150 p a with capitation fees varying from £1 to £3, according to the ages and attainments of the scholars.

Attached to the school is a hostel for the accommodation of about twelve boarders, and the headmistress will preside there and be entitled to the fees paid by boarders, according to a scale fixed by the scheme.

Candidates must be graduates of the United Kingdom, and have passed examinations that would proceed to graduation, must have had teaching experience in secondary or high schools, and previous training will be considered an important qualification.

Copies of the scheme giving full particulars may be obtained from W E R Allen Esq., County Offices, Cardiff, price one shilling each....’

Nine applications were received, although one was immediately rejected on the grounds she had lied about her age. A shortlist was drawn up consisting of a Miss Gladdish, Miss Lawe and Miss Atkins, but the latter was obliged to withdraw because of her forthcoming marriage. Miss Gladdish was appointed and chose an assistant mistress, Miss Ogier, at a salary of £90 p a.

Initially there were eighteen pupils. From 1899 to 1913, the headmistress was Miss Edith Renault B A, followed by Miss Forrester.

The curriculum included mathematics, English language and literature, history, geography, Welsh, French, Latin, science, botany, gardening, cookery, art (twice a week), P. E. (twice a week), tennis, croquet and basketball. Once a week there was singing with the only male teacher, Tom Price from Merthyr. In the third form, girls chose between Latin and maths. Or extra gym and cookery.

They wore grey serge tunics with three box pleats, butcher blue blouses, black stockings and lace-up black shoes. Straw hats were worn in summer, and in winter navy berets embroidered with ‘C.H.S.’

In 1896, £5 was allocated for the purchase of books to be awarded as prizes for good students. In December 1899, the Central Welsh Board Examination was introduced, and scholarships could be awarded as a result of the examiners’ report. School fees were £3, exclusive of instruments, music books and stationary. Boarders paid £20, exclusive of their own laundry. Tennis courts were built in 1897, but Miss Gladdish’s proposal for a hockey field to the north of the hostel was rejected.

Cowbridge High School for Girls

By the late 1800s, this little town of Cowbridge had its long-established Grammar School for boys (concentrating on the classics), re-built about 1850.

It had the Eagle Academy (now The Little Shop of Calm) which had operated for several decades, a private and highly acclaimed private school mainly for the children of landowners and agriculturalists. This closed in 1880 however.

There were private or 'dame' schools such as that in Great House, run by the Misses Culverwell – advertised as an 'academy for young ladies'.

'Poor' children had the national or church school on Cardiff Rd from 1839, and then in 1876 an elementary or board school opened on Broadway (251 children were attending in 1895).

And Maindy school was also opened around this time.

In 1889, the Welsh Education Act allotted to Glamorgan 13 intermediate schools (intermediate being between elementary and university) and Cowbridge, the centre of the Vale, was chosen to have one.

The following year, 1890, Mr John Bevan, a prominent Cowbridge solicitor and landed proprietor, who lived in 41 High St (now Lloyds pharmacy) but who spent part of each year in northern Italy, expressed a desire to help further the education of girls, who he felt had missed out in favour of boys in studying the classics, for example. He gave a sum of money for a hostel or small hall, on the lines of Aberdare Hall in Cardiff (on a humbler scale), and additional money for the venture came from another local businessman, Alderman Edward John (who lived at the former Spread Eagle, 1-3 Westgate). They realised some girls would need to travel some distance to the school and would require boarding provision.

John Bevan obtained a site for the school; he entirely furnished a hostel to accommodate 12 girls, paid for the layout of the grounds with flower beds etc, paid for tennis balls and racquets, funded a school library, and gave financial help to poorer pupils from the outlying districts. The architect was Robert Williams of Ystradowen, who made a world-wide reputation for himself in London and later in Egypt.

The Cowbridge Intermediate School for Girls opened on November 3rd 1896 with 18 girls aged from 10 to 17. Seven were from village primary schools and others from the private schools at Great House and Plas Hen, 81/83 Eastgate. There were a few scholarships, but otherwise the pupils paid £3 a year, plus the cost of stationary. The headmistress was a Miss Gladish, and she had one assistant, with a second assistant employed the following year. There was apparently some dispute over the fact that Miss Gladish accommodated a somewhat merry brother on the premises, and so she was quickly followed in 1899 by Miss Renaut, BA London – who was apparently an enthralling teacher who encouraged

girls to aim for university. Subjects taught were English language and literature, history, maths, French and Latin, tennis, croquet and basketball. Science was thought unsuitable for girls at this time. The girls were accommodated in 2 forms, an upper and a lower.

By 1908, 5 girls, including Maude Gunter, went on to university. By then there were 80 pupils in the school.

In 1909, two more classrooms were added, plus a cookery room, a gymnasium, a laboratory and a dormitory (total cost of £4000). Maude Gunter wrote later that the girls wore 'midi skirts', white blouses tucked in neatly with leather belts and sailor hats of stiff straw with navy bands. Most girls had hair down to their waists and this had to be plaited and tied with a black or navy bow.

Uniforms were introduced in 1910 to avoid class distinction – navy gym tunics, white blouses, black stockings, and always gloves for formal occasions.

The County felt it necessary to open an Intermediate School in Mountain Ash in 1912 because of the increase in the population there, and Cowbridge was selected to lose this status and became the Cowbridge County Secondary School, but locally it had always been known as the 'High School' (– and this name was agreed officially in 1950).

By 1918 there were 150 pupils, still some boarders, some coming from within Glamorgan and others from various parts of England.

In the 1920s, the headmistress was Miss Forrester. There was strict discipline throughout the school; silence was expected in lessons. Memories recalled school plays like 'A Christmas Carol' being performed, with the spotlight coming from a motorbike; there were excursions into the surrounding countryside to study the flowers. Contact with Grammar School boys was strictly frowned upon and after one particular incident a barrier was actually erected to keep them out of the school. Apparently Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen was delivering his Speech Day address when to his horror he spied boys sitting on the school wall, trying to catch the girls' eyes, and the wall was immediately raised by at least 5 feet.

Boarders remained in the school till 1939. Boarders slept next to the matron's room upstairs, and the headmistress had her office and sitting room downstairs. Many girls came in on the Pontyclun railway, and one came by pony and trap from Colwinston. The town's railwaymen were especially keen to further their daughters' education by attending the school.

It wasn't until 1942 that the school was able to link with the boys' Grammar School and a tennis match between them was arranged. There were a good number of academic achievements amongst the former girl pupils – one became a Harley St surgeon, for example. The headmistress, Miss Bennet Jones, kept a pet monkey, which wore a little jacket and hat, and was allowed to roam everywhere and spent a lot of time in the boarders' dining room, where the day girls had their lunch. Elgeva Thomas, who tells this story, was bitten quite badly on the hand, and the monkey had to go (rumoured to Bristol Zoo).

In 1950, further expansion took place (and this was when the school took the name officially of High School). The former boarding house was converted to additional teaching space, and there was an Art room plus other specialist accommodation. In 1955, two forms were admitted, instead of the usual single one, because of the increase in numbers attending. In 1956 the number of pupils was 240, a biology lab was added, and in the following year a geography room and 2 further classrooms.

More development on the site was difficult, and there were plans for a bypass to go overhead, so adjoining land was purchased, and the first section was developed of what became the new school buildings. Meanwhile in the old school building, extra dining facilities were provided and a new library furnished – there were now 360 girls in total. There were new playing fields and a new gymnasium. Until 1955, it had been necessary to send VIth form girls to Bridgend or to Barry for some of their work in certain subjects. Now the VIth form could be contained properly within the High School, and the girls studied both Arts and Sciences as well as practical subjects. At a cost of £57,500, the ‘new school’ buildings were officially opened on December 1st 1960. They had been built by Tudor Jenkins and Co. Ltd of Pontyclun.

March 1959 saw the tragic death of the headmistress Miss Walker, who had come to the school from Treforest Girls G S in 1950; Miss Smith followed on seeing a considerable expansion of the VIth form, and then around 1974 comprehensive and co-educational schooling brought the Girls’ High School to its end.

Talk by B Alden to High School old girls ca 2014

'Miss Bennet-Jones was Headmistress. She kept a monkey called Jacko in the school, which roamed free and caused much destruction. The girls in the needlework class used to make clothes for him'.

Information from Elgeva Thomas (pupil 1931-36)

In 1918, the Headmistress was Mrs Forrester. Later was Miss Chrystal Bennet-Jones, until about 1949.

Information from another former pupil.

Old Letters Tell Story Of A Famous School

1956
By J. Silvan Evans

I HAVE been reading this week some remarkably well-preserved letters written in 1892—documents that will soon be available in the Glamorgan County Record Office.

They were written from Italy by Mr. John Bevan, a retired Cowbridge solicitor, to Alderman Edward John, who was five times mayor of that town.

Mr. Bevan had enlightened and advanced ideas on a subject his contemporaries viewed with contempt and unconcern—women's education. When boys alone were thought worth educating, he was intent on founding a school for girls!

It was through his determination and generosity that the Cowbridge High School for Girls was founded 60 years ago; but from Italy he could not supervise the work. Hence his long and full correspondence with Mr. John, whom he could trust to execute his wishes.

★

Ever since, the John family has been associated with the school and the present Councillor Edward John—also a former mayor—has endowed a prize in memory of his grandfather. His daughter, Kay, is a pupil there.

The family has also taken care to keep Mr. Bevan's letters intact, and when a new headmistress, Miss Enid Walker, arrived some seven years ago Mr. John took them to show her.

She was immediately interested but too busy to do much about them at the time. With the diamond jubilee of the school this year, interest in them revived with the idea of producing a handbook on the history of the school.

This has not been possible yet but the letters are not to be left unused: They will, as I said, go to the Record Office.

Miss M. Elsas, the County Archivist, told me she would be very pleased to take over the care of the letters. They would be put on deposit with other Cowbridge records, and research students would have access to them.

She thought they would be particularly useful to anyone working on a history of Cowbridge parish.



Councillor John and Miss Walker
The letters they are looking at
are more than 60 years old.