

Best days of your life?

If you attended the former Chesterfield Grammar School, there is a new exhibition at the town's Museum which will remind you of your youth. Deborah Wain called in to take a look



A collection of old Chesterfield Grammar School caps is inspected by Upper Newbold's Phoebe Munday

A NEW exhibition at Chesterfield Museum goes back to the classroom to tell the fascinating story of one of Chesterfield's earliest schools.

This year marks the 420th anniversary of the founding of Chesterfield Grammar School, which educated thousands of boys up to its closure in 1991, including many who went on to have illustrious careers.

The exhibition has been staged with the help of members from the Old Cestrefieldian Society and features artefacts loaned by former pupils, as well as material from the museum's own archives.

Among items on display are caps from each school house, trophies and video of school life during the 1960s.

Frank Gorman, a past president of the society who approached the museum and coordinated the project for the group, said the idea was first mentioned at one of its yearly reunions.

Frank, from Newbold, who attended the school from 1948 to 1953, commented: "The school had not been previously commemorated and we felt there was a story to tell, so we brought together artefacts and archives that, until now, have been kept in various places.

"There is still very much a warmth of feeling among old boys about their time at the school, and I know former pupils are coming from different parts of the country to see the exhibition."

The idea of a school originated from Sir Godfrey Foljambe. His will, in 1594, provided a sum of money to pay for a schoolmaster for the 'teaching and instruction of children' within the town. Its foundation was confirmed two years later through Chesterfield's Corporation Charter allowing the school to 'build, found and erect one grammar school'. Over the next century the school, on Sheffield Road, attracted further benefactors and became one of the leading schools in the north of England.

However, by 1800, it was in decline and eventually closed for 13 years, between 1832 and 1845.

After the school re-opened, in a new building, it began to thrive once again and got a new wing in 1899. Until the 1920s, the school took boarders, as well as day pupils.

1945 saw Chesterfield Grammar move from being a fee-paying school (although it offered scholarships) to one that was state-funded. It later moved to a new site, on Chatsworth Road, in 1967. Re-organisation of Chesterfield's schools marked the end of its history in 1991 when it became co-educational school Brookfield.

Well-known 'old boys' from the school include Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, Thomas Secker, the Archbishop of Canterbury 1758-1768, and Sir Robert Robinson, who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1947.



Cricketer Geoff Miller, footballer Bob Wilson and pop star Tom Bailey were among pupils in more recent times.

The museum's assistant curator, Maria Barnes, said: "The school has a very old history and always strived for excellence in its pupils and, by the 20th century, the school was trying to give a well-rounded education, including various societies, such as debating and astronomy, and of course, sports which were among its major achievements.

"Hopefully the exhibition, which is the first we've run about an individual school, will bring a lot of memories back."

It's hoped that a permanent home can be found for the exhibition in the future.

School trip to Paris in 1963



Maria Barnes, assistant curator at Chesterfield Museum, with some of the old school's trophies

CHESTERFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL



An exhibition exploring the
history and life of the school.

With thanks to the Old Cestrefeldians Trust and
members of the Old Cestrefeldian Society for their
assistance with this exhibition.

A CHESTERFIELD MUSEUM EXHIBITION

June to September 2014



THE FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The Grammar School was one of the earliest schools in Chesterfield. The idea of a school originated from Sir Godfrey Foljambe. His will in 1594 provided a sum of money to pay for a schoolmaster for the 'teaching and instruction of children' within the town. Its foundation was confirmed in 1598 through Chesterfield's Corporation Charter allowing the town 'to build, found and erect one Grammar School...'

Over the next century, the school, located on Sheffield Road, attracted further benefactors including James Lingard, Cornelius Clarke, Thomas Large and the Heathcote family.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the school became one of the leading schools in the North of England. However by 1800 the school was in decline with very few pupils. The Corporation had also been found guilty of misusing funds and had to repay these to the school with interest. The school was closed in 1832.



By 1710 the Grammar School building was dilapidated and so was rebuilt using voluntary contributions. The medieval structure was replaced with a two storey brick building.



The Elizabethan charter of 1598 established a council for the Borough. It also gave the responsibility of providing and administering a grammar school with its charitable bequests to the council.



The tomb of Godfrey Foljambe and his wife. They were wealthy land owners who lived at Walton. His bequest of £13 6s 8d per year to pay a schoolmaster began the foundation of the school.

The school taught a number of pupils during the 17th and 18th centuries who became well known and respected figures. These include Samuel Pegge (pictured) antiquarian and rector of Old Whittington, Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles Darwin) and Thomas Secker (the Archbishop of Canterbury 1758-1768)



It is thought that the original school building on Sheffield Road was the medieval chapel of St Helen. Although the official name was the Free Grammar School, it was often referred to as 'St. Helen's School' or 'Chapel School'. St. Helen is pictured on this Roman coin.



The school shield reflects its origins and the two halves represent two of the chief benefactors, Foljambe and Clarke.



THE VICTORIAN SCHOOL

In 1845, after thirteen years of closure, the old school was demolished and a new school built. It finally re-opened in 1847 with Rev. Frederick Calder as headmaster.

Under his direction attendance at the school and its reputation improved. By 1867 there were 95 boys on the role and a government report stated that "the school has risen from insignificance..."

Despite minor enlargements in 1860 and 1872, by the end of the 19th century, the school was in need of significant expansion. In 1899 a new wing was built incorporating not only new classrooms but also science labs, a gymnasium and an art room.



The newly built school opened in February 1847 with 33 pupils enrolled in the upper school.



The new art room built in 1899. The curriculum from the 1840s onwards was very limited, concentrating on Latin, maths and English grammar. In 1878 the range of subjects was expanded to include French, natural science and drawing. Entrance exams were also introduced.



Although enlarged in 1860 and 1872, the school underwent a significant extension in 1899 with a new wing incorporating a gymnasium and science labs.



The Grammar School was a fee paying school, charging £6-10 per year for day pupils in 1867 (boarders were charged more). Subjects such as Greek were taught at extra charge. There were, however, a number of foundation pupils who received scholarships.



By the late 19th century, physical exercise was beginning to be seen as an important part of a boy's education. The School's first athletics sports day was held in 1888. Shown here is the cricket team.

Until the 1920s, the School took boarders as well as day pupils. The boarders stayed with the headmaster and his wife. The profits from this supplemented his income which, at £70 per year, was relatively low at the time.

CHESTERFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL.
 HEAD MASTER—
 The Rev. FREDERICK CALDER, M.A.
 Of St. John's College, Cambridge, late Assistant
 Master in King Edward the Sixth's School,
 Birmingham.
 SECOND MASTER—Mr. George Kirkland,
 TALENT MASTER—Mr. J. Deacon,
 FRENCH and DRAWING MASTER—Mr. Alexander Vin-
 cent, B.A. of the University of Paris.
TERMS FOR BOARDERS IN THE HEAD MASTER'S HOUSE:
 For Boys under 10 years of age, 40 guineas.
 For Boys above 10 and under 18, 60 guineas.
 For Boys above 18, 80 guineas.
 The Second Master receives boarders at the under-
 mentioned terms, viz.:
 Pupils under 10 years of age, 30 guineas per ann.
 Pupils under 18 " 35
 Pupils above 18 " 40
 To include Board, Education, and Washing.
 French and Drawing, £1 each, or £1 10s. for both.
 The quarter days at Easter and Michaelmas will be
 the first Monday after April 5th and October 5th, the
 removal of a pupil.
 Pupils wishing to prepare for the preliminary ex-
 amination at Apothecaries' Hall, or for the London
 will find their peculiar studies attended to.
 The School re-opens on TUESDAY, January 1st.



A GROWING SCHOOL

1900-1940

Chesterfield's Grammar School continued to flourish as it embarked on a new century. The number of pupils more than doubled between 1908 and 1928 to just over 500, while the social life of the school prospered. A wide range of clubs and societies were formed and the school magazine, *The Cestrefeldian*, was established.

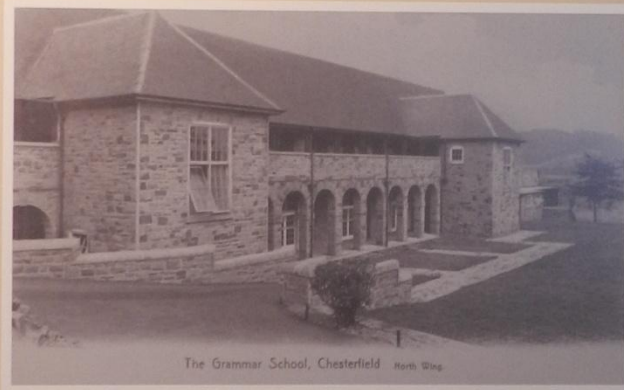
However the School faced several challenges. The increased number of the boys on the roll meant that expansion of the school buildings was necessary. The First World War not only saw teachers called up but also 83 former pupils killed in action. In addition the School's status as an independent public school changed. In 1940 it became fully administered by Derbyshire County Council.



Not just for academic learning, the School provided a wide range of extra-curricular activities according to the boys' interests. The Debating Society, formed in 1908, was one of the earliest but others soon followed: the Chess Club (1910s), French Society (1926), Hobbies Club (1927) and even a Gramophone Society (1931).



In 1916 the School appointed its first female teaching staff as several male teachers had entered the army.



The Grammar School, Chesterfield North Wing.

The increase in pupil numbers put a strain on the Victorian school buildings. In 1921 the headmaster's house was converted into extra form rooms, library and dining room while in 1929 a new wing was built.



The Grammar School Cadet Corps was formed in 1915. This was a uniformed group which trained boys in military drill and tactics. It was affiliated to the Notts. & Derby Regiment.



The chemistry laboratory. Until the 1920s the majority of boys left school before the age of sixteen (the legal school leaving age was fourteen). The School developed a 6th form and encouraged its pupils to stay on and perhaps aspire to further education. Scholarships of £15, developed in 1935 with money given by George Albert Eastwood, helped some boys to do this.



The School's Board of Governors at their last meeting in 1940 prior to the control of the school passing to Derbyshire County Council. The main reason behind the change was the condition of the school buildings and restrictions of the site for further expansion. A re-build of the school was needed but the school was unable to fund this independently.



A school trip, 1936. The school house system was formed 1908. The five houses of Foljame, Clarke, Heathcote, Large and Lingard (Bradley was added in the 1940s) were named after the chief benefactors of the School. They were represented by different colours which were shown in rings on the boys' caps.



THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1940-1991

From the 1940s onwards Chesterfield Grammar School continued its academic and sporting achievements, however it was also a period of great change.

The school finally moved to a new site on Chatsworth Road (Brookside) in 1967. The Second World War and financial constraints had delayed the development for many years despite the purchase of the land in the 1930s.

The 1944 Education Act saw the school become a state funded grammar school with pupils required to pass the 11+ exam to enter. By the 1970s, comprehensive education was being introduced and in 1976 Chesterfield School (as it was known by then) became an academic secondary school for boys, admitting pupils from the age of thirteen.

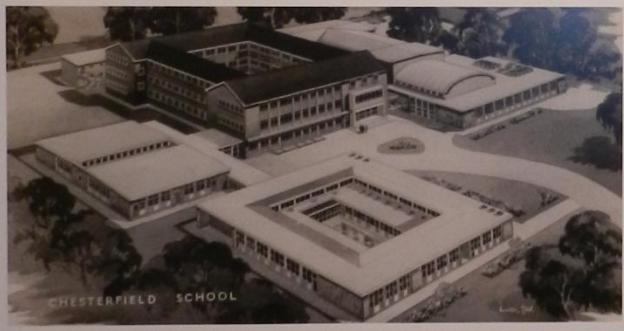
Further re-organisation of Chesterfield's schools unfortunately marked the end of the school's history. Chesterfield School closed in 1991 and a new co-educational school, Brookfield, opened on the existing site.



The bottom field on Sheffield Road (pictured) was not large enough for the wide range of sporting activities on offer. As a result, in 1953 a sports ground opened on Storrs Road next to the intended site of the new school. The site included playing fields for rugby, football and hockey as well as a cricket pitch and facilities for athletics.



The building of the new school on Chatsworth Road was done in phases. The first phase included the science and maths block and was completed in 1961. These classrooms were used by the school while the second phase was completed.



The new school at Brookside was equipped with modern facilities including dedicated language laboratories, cafeteria and a swimming pool. It also had its own laundry to provide towels for sports lessons.



Form 2SH in 1972-3. By 1975, due to changes in education system, the school no longer had a first and second year as boys were admitted from the age of thirteen.



By the 1950s, a new school was long overdue. The school on Sheffield Road had become a hotchpotch of buildings which had been added over time to meet demand. There was not enough room to accommodate all the pupils in the dining hall (shown here) and there were two sittings each for approximately 300 diners.



Mr Glister, who had been headmaster since 1947, retired in 1968 after moving to the new school at Brookside. His reasons were that he "did not wish the new school to feel his imprint too strongly". His successor Edward Geoffrey Price remained as headmaster until the closure of the school in 1991.



Throughout its history the school prided itself in providing the best education for its pupils. The purchase in 1982 of ten computers for use in the classroom and for administration was a forward thinking move.



SCHOOL LIFE



As you Like it, 1926



King Lear, 1955



Preparing the set for She Stoops to Conquer, 1970s

Grammar School pupils organised dramatic productions since the late 19th century. These were large in scale and took place in prominent locations in the town including Chesterfield Market Hall, Civic Theatre and Bradbury Hall.



Chesterfield Grammar School Air Training Corps (1088 Squadron) on training camp in Peterborough, 1945



Festival of Britain, 1951

In the 1910s, pupils who were members of the Cadet force or the school Scout troop went on camps. However by the 1920s, boys were given the opportunity to go on school expeditions. These not only included day trips within Britain but also foreign travel. A group of boys enjoyed a visit to Paris in 1928.



Trip to Paris, 1928



End of term service, 1954



School choir and orchestra at prize giving, 1960s



Prize giving photo, 1974

Each end of term was marked by a service at Chesterfield Parish Church. The school year culminated in the Annual Prize Giving and Speech Day, usually held at Bradbury Hall prior to the School moving the Brookside site in 1967.

This event had been part of school life since the 19th century. The headmaster gave a report of the school year while a visiting dignitary, usually a distinguished Old Boy or prominent local figure, gave a speech. Prizes were awarded primarily for academic achievement but also for debating, art and music.



SPORTING LIFE

Since the late Victorian period, the Grammar School encouraged its pupils to take part in a wide range of sporting activities. The highlight of the year was the Annual Athletic Sports Day, first held in 1888.

Sports Day



Egg and Spoon Race, 1913



Prizes presented by the headmaster's wife, Mrs Glaser, 1947

Football



1922-23



1955

Table tennis champions



Rugby



1926

Tennis



1934

Hockey



1968-9

Cricket



1955

Watching the action, 1982

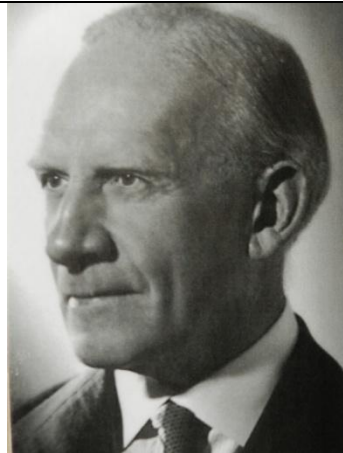


Some of the many noted Old Cestrefeldians



**ERASMUS
DARWIN**

Attended the
Grammar School, 1740s



**SIR
ROBERT
ROBINSON**

Attended the
Grammar School
c.1900

**SIR PHILIP
WIGGLESWORTH**

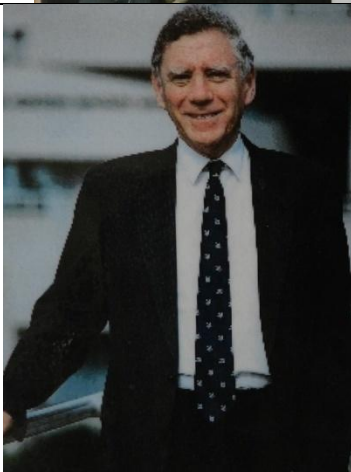


Attended the
Grammar School
1910s



**SIR
WILLIAM
McCREA**

Attended the
Grammar School
1910s & 1920s



**SIR BRIAN
UNWIN**

Foljambe House
1947 - 1953



**BOB
WILSON**

Heathcote House
1955-1960



**GEOFF
MILLER**

Bradley House
1964 - 1970

TOM BAILEY



Attended the
Grammar School
1960s



Many thanks to all who put in so much effort to stage this very successful exhibition; not least to Frank Gorman, the OC's driving force and Maria Barnes of Chesterfield Museum.

It is hoped that a permanent location will be found to display the exhibition and other material in future.