

BURLINGTON DANES ACADEMY

a history

Burlington Danes Academy is proud to be one of the oldest schools in London.

It began its life as a charity institution. The academy was originally two schools, Burlington Girls Grammar (founded on Christmas Day, in 1699 in the Parish of St. James, Piccadilly) and St Clements Danes Boys Grammar (founded in 1701 by the Church Wardens of St. Clements Danes Church).

Burlington School was most probably the first of the girls' charity schools. Its original title was 'The Girls Charity School of St. James' and it was located in Carnaby Street in central London. The school was founded in the reign of King William III and overseen by the Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Its stated purpose was to teach *"sixty poor girls (whose parents could not afford them education) to read, write and cost accounts...and instructing them knowledge of the Christian Religion..."*

The main source of income in its early years was annual subscriptions; the school could not accommodate boarders so operated as a day school. Another source was the charity sermon, usually on Palm Sunday and Advent Sunday, with collections made at the church door. A pewter collecting plate is in the possession of the academy. The girls were paraded in the streets on public occasions to also raise funds; one such occasion was Queen Anne's procession to St Paul's to give thanks for the Treaty of Utrecht. St James was a wealthy parish; the average collection at St James was £100 – a considerable sum of money at the time.

In 1725 the school was renamed the Burlington Charity School; named because the Earl of Burlington had provided land (formally used for grazing his horses) at the end of his garden between Hyde Park Corner and Charing Cross, north of Boyle Street and on Great Burlington Street. Objections were raised by 'persons of quality' that a school be built in so fashionable a neighbourhood!

The Earl was an architect and helped to design the school. He evidently disregarded the window tax as the original school had large and numerous windows with tall ceilings.

In 1725, 110 girls – mostly children of poor housekeepers of the parish – were admitted between the ages of 8-10 years old. They remained until they were 15 and 'were entirely maintained and clothed'.

Students boarded at the new school. The boarding school had been built partly to remove girls from their parents influence so holidays were rare: two days at Christmas, and only a day at Easter and Whitsun. In the summer the school day was from 6am to 6pm, in the darker winter months 7am to 6pm.

On leaving school the girls were usually provided with jobs 'in service or apprenticed to the sewing trade', and ex-students were given two full sets of clothing, a prayer book and a copy of 'Nelson's Festivals'. After a year in service, if they had received good reports from their master or mistress, they received a Bible, other books and more clothes.

In 1744 the Trustees organised a system of taking in needlework for profit; pillowcases, for example, were made for William IV. This was so successful that it lasted for over a hundred years; indeed at first, sewing, it would appear, seemed to surpass education.

In spite of the privilege of free education, the girls were not always well behaved. Occasionally they ran away and had to be brought back again; a typical punishment for this was being locked in a room and living on bread and water for a length of time. For telling a lie the punishment was to live on bread and water for one day; students were punished for three days for swearing and theft and indefinitely for wilful conduct. Girls could not wear earrings, necklaces nor 'have lice on their linen'. Handcuffs – there is a pair in our Visitor's Reception - were used for fidgets!

In 1861, with a falling roll, the school allowed paying scholars and in 1892, with numbers again falling, boys under eight years of age were admitted. The timetable included French, natural Sciences and Body Exercise. The school was renamed 'Burlington Middle Class School' from 1876, but dropped the 'Middle Class' at the turn of the century and became 'Burlington School for Girls'.

In December 1906 the school required more classrooms and thus stopped boarding altogether. The building could now accommodate 250 girls and the role began to grow. A new site was sought and in 1936 Burlington School moved to a new building in North Hammersmith, on Wood Lane. The building was designed by architects Sir John Burnet, Tait and Lorne Ltd. under the influence of the 'international style' of contrasting verticals and horizontals. Facilities were stunning at the time: science labs, a gym with showers, a domestic science kitchen and a model flat. A particularly modern feature, the green 'blackboards' were thought to be more restful on the eye.

The formal opening was planned for December 9th, 1936 and was due to be performed by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York (later to be Queen Elizabeth) but it was cancelled owing to the constitutional crisis leading to the abdication of King Edward VIII on December 11th.

History again intervened in September 1st 1939 when all West London Schools were relocated forty-eight hours before war was declared. The whole school boarded a train at Ealing Broadway and found itself in Oxford, sharing with Milham Ford School, on a reduced "dovetailed" timetable for the next four years. Students stayed with host families who were paid 10 shillings a week. A portrait of the headteacher at the time, who led the girls down Wood Lane to the station, holding a banner aloft saying 'Follow me Girls', is in the academy's staffroom. The banner is in Hammersmith's archives.

The Burlington School was commandeered during the war by the Office of Works for possible use as a Government department. Trenches were dug at the top of the playing fields but the school was never used save for being a soup kitchen for the local area. North Pole Road had been built by the army to bring troops from London barracks for manoeuvres. Indeed, it is still owned by the war department.

War took its toll. An oil bomb in Wood Lane damaged walls and the entrance gates; an incendiary bomb did some damage to the schoolkeeper's house. St. James Church, one of the school's foundation partners, was seriously damaged by bombs and fire, as was St Catherine's Church in Westway, the school's parish church. Burlington School was lucky to escape unscathed and the whole school reunited in September 1943 in the Burlington Building, though sandbags, gasmasks and blast walls were a feature of the school at the time. The nearby Linford Christie Stadium was the site of anti-aircraft guns and an Italian prisoner of war camp.

Prayers were said in the schools air-raid shelters every morning and often classes and dinners were served there. On 28th June 1944 a flying bomb (a pilotless aeroplane laden with explosive) landed not far from the school during an examination – windows shattered, doors blown off hinges, curtains were torn, plaster damaged but students continued their paper regardless.

In 1976 Burlington School amalgamated with their near neighbours, Clement Danes and became a mixed comprehensive school. The Danes School relocated to Hertfordshire.

During its history St Clement Danes School has been located, at various times, on three sites. Houghton Street 1844-1928, DuCane Road 1928-1975 and Chorleywood , 1975 to the present.

The Church of St Clement Danes in the Strand was established with the blessing of the Saxon King Alfred outside the walls of the City of London for the use of the growing Danish Community. In 1551 the Churchwardens of the Parish paid £160 to buy land in what was then rural Holborn, with the intention that the income would be used 'for the relief of the poor' in the Parish. So the St Clement Danes Holborn Estate Charity (HEC) was established. By 1664 there was sufficient money to build Almshouses in the Parish and to support elementary education for poor parishioners.

By the early 18th Century the Parish was densely populated and two of the earliest Charity Schools established by the SPCK (one of which became Burlington) were flourishing in the Parish.

By 1844 the income of HEC had grown sufficiently for the Trustees to request the Court of Chancery to approve a scheme to establish a Grammar School for Boys and a Middle Class Girl's School. So the Old Peacock Inn and some houses in Houghton Street and New Inn Passage were purchased and the new schools were erected. The boys' school opened on 4 August 1862 with 75 boys attending in the first term. Following new Education Acts in 1873 and 1874 a separate Board of Governors was established but with HEC still providing substantial financial support.

By 1900 boys were being drawn to the School from an increasingly wide area and it was also able to foster a variety of talents. It was during this time that the School's most distinguished 'Old Dane' attended the school. Giovanni Barbirolli (later Sir John Barbirolli, after whom the Barbirolli Hall is named) played a 'cello solo at Speech Day in 1908.

Rumours of possible merger with other central London schools were quelled by World War I during which 27 Old Danes were killed. By the early 1920's the declining population in inner London and the growing need for good schools in the 'suburbs' led the Governors to accept a proposal that the school move to Hammersmith. The Houghton Street school was sold and subsequently demolished to accommodate the growing London School of Economics.

The school moved from Houghton Street WC2 near the Aldwych to Ducane Road in Hammersmith in 1928. The 'new' school was bigger and much better equipped. It also had a sports field which enabled sport of all sorts to flourish. As well as local boys, some boys travelled by train from central London to attend the new school. One of the few items brought from Houghton Street was the Memorial commemorating the staff and boys who had died on active service in World War I. This is now in the courtyard at Chorleywood. Also from the old school were the names of the Houses: Temple, Dane, Clement and Clare, all with associations in the ancient Parish of St Clement Danes. By 1938 the school had grown to a size where more houses were needed so Burleigh, Lincoln, Exeter and Essex were created, also with associations with the ancient parish.

Soon afterwards World War II broke out and most of the school, like Burlington School, was evacuated to Oxford. Staff 'joined up', some to lose their lives, some to return to teaching at the school once the war had ended. The Ducane Road building was taken over by the ARP authorities and was bombed in March 1941. Later in the war some teaching began back in London.

A large number of 'old boys' served in the forces during the war. Those who lost their lives are listed on the original memorial, housed in Visitors

Reception at Burlington Danes Academy. The current St Clement Danes has a replica.

The school flourished in the post war years and became one of the most academically successful Grammar Schools in West London, also excelling in sport and in music.

By this time the winds of change were blowing through the education system and national and local politicians had plans that would have changed the school in a way that the Governors and the Trustees of the St Clement Danes Holborn Estate Charity found unacceptable. The invitation from Hertfordshire County Council to establish a new co-educational comprehensive school in Chorleywood was accepted and in 1975 St Clement Danes Holborn Estate Grammar School for Boys transformed into St Clement Danes School. The Ducane Road buildings were taken over by Burlington Danes School. They were sold to the nearby Hammersmith Hospital in 2002 and were eventually demolished in 2004 to make way for accommodation for medical staff.

The Trustees of the St Clement Danes Holborn Estate Charity secured the removal of the stones from above the entrance bearing the school's name and these are now outside the entrance of the school at Chorleywood.

In the late nineties the school was in a sad state of academic decline and in 2004 was placed in special measures by Ofsted.

In the same year ARK Schools was established to help break the cycle of underachievement in schools in the UK's most challenging urban areas. As part of the Academies Programme, established by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2000, ARK Schools is developing a network of academy schools providing high quality education. Burlington Danes Academy became the first ARK Academy, opening under a new Principal, in September 2006, and Ark's involvement has revitalised a failing comprehensive. Sally Coates, formerly headteacher of an outstanding school in Peckham, was appointed in April 2008 and is orchestrating a revolution which is returning the academy to its former glory.

We are generously resourced. In November 2008 The Stanley Fink Building, named after our Chair of Governors and current Chair of the Trustees of ARK, was opened to house English, Maths and Science lessons and 2010 witnessed the opening of The Dennis Potter Building for performing arts.

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With acknowledgements