

# NEWMARKET GRAMMAR SCHOOL

## *OLD FOLEYANS ASSOCIATION*

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### The History of Newmarket Grammar School

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As written by Mr W J Watterson (Headmaster)

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and published in *The Foley* dated March 1958.

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The forerunner of Newmarket Secondary School was Glenwood College School, a private school, housed in premises opposite the present Newmarket Swimming Pool, a school which opened in 1885 with 29 boys, including boys with well-known Newmarket names such as Ernest Crisswell, Edgar Ennion, Robert Waugh, Charles Simpson, Charles Boccock, Alfred and Harry Sadler, Joseph Butters, etc. This school continued until July 1920, the last two names on the Admission Register of the school being Kenneth Mowl and Eric Prior, both of Exning.

The school was then taken over by the West Suffolk Education Committee and was re-opened as a Secondary School for boys and girls. On the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1920, 57 boys and girls were enrolled in the school rooms at the back of Newmarket Congregational Church under the headmastership of the Rev C J N Child, Rector of Moulton, and a former master of Cambridge County School for boys. Mr Child had one full-time Assistant Teacher, Miss Mellis, and three part-time teachers. In November 1920, Mr G B Osborne, B.Sc (Maths and Geography) joined the staff and in September 1921 Miss Wakelin (French) was appointed in place of one part-time teacher. In January 1923, with a school roll of 75, the school moved to Foley House in St Mary's Square and, in September 1923, Mr W J Watterson was appointed Head Master in place of the Rev C J N Child (resigned).

At this time, the building had two classrooms on the ground floor and three upstairs. A further room had been a combined library and billiard room and contained low gas brackets and big green shades to throw the light on to the billiard table.

The first floor rooms were reached by a wooden staircase leading out of a long wide corridor running along the outside of the building, the corridor also having doors on the left side to give access to the rooms on the ground floor. This corridor disappeared in 1931 when the outer wall of the building was taken down and the then inner wall became the outer wall.

All rooms were heated by open coal fires; there were no school buses, no morning milk, no mid-day dinners, and cyclists who travelled anything up to ten miles could dry clothes only through the kindness of the caretaker's wife in having wet coats round the fire in her large kitchen. A large stable (with hay loft above) and stalls along each wall and a gutter running down the centre to an outside drain first became a cycle shed, later to become a classroom and then the Assembly Room.

The number of boys and girls reached one hundred in January 1925 and Mr Geldard

commenced duties at the same time. By this time, the one-time library and billiard room had been fitted out as a laboratory and in December 1926 a cycle shed was built along the wall adjoining the Water Course. It was at this point that the stable was converted into the classroom/Assembly Room. Central heating was put into use in January 1927.

In June 1927 the Griffiths Cup was presented for the first time on Sports Day by Major O E Griffiths, and in January 1930 the first branch of the National Savings Association was formed in the School.

When the school opened for the Autumn Term 1931 with a role of one hundred and twenty-two (of whom exactly one half were fee-payers, the rest holding free places), the local Surveyor reported a crack in the outer wall on the Water Course side of the building. Exactly a week later, the school was closed for three days for repairs to be executed. On re-assembly, the school was again closed indefinitely as the Surveyor had condemned the western half of the building as unsafe, and a special meeting of the Governors decided to take over the Newmarket Road Council School buildings, the Newmarket Road children to be sent to St Mary's School. Parents of the neighbourhood protested and feeling was so strong that parents declared they would not send their children to St Mary's and would not allow the Grammar School to take over their premises.

During these years, Grammar Schools were frowned upon by most people, and their anger was heightened on learning that their school was being handed over to children whose parents paid fees. Suspecting trouble, the County Education Secretary (Mr F R Hughes) arrived at Foley House at 8.30 a.m. on the morning of assembly of the Grammar School at Newmarket Road and he and the Head Master proceeded along the Exning Road, to be met on approaching the school by a belligerent crowd of angry men and women, who completely blocked any approach and made clear in no uncertain way their determination to resist. No attempt at discussion or argument was even possible and, after about an hour of waiting upon events, discretion prompted an about-face on the part of the Head Master and Education Secretary, who walked away, tacitly accepting defeat.

Another Governors' Meeting was rapidly called and it was decided to hire a large dwelling, then untenanted, at Sussex Lodge in Fordham Road. Three weeks later boys, girls and teachers assembled at Sussex Lodge, having 'enjoyed' exactly a month's unexpected holiday. This building was occupied for one school year and the building and attractive grounds made the year a pleasant one. (The building is now the Convent of St Louis.)

Meantime, one end of Foley House was pulled down and rebuilt, giving new staff rooms, cloakrooms and caretaker's flat, but leaving all the classrooms intact. The new brickwork with its tiny windows seemed to take all the charm and character away from the original structure, the approach also being so much more austere and forbidding. The severity was not improved by the erection in 1949 of the 'Horsa' hut (a classroom and girls' cloakroom) to the left of the entrance gates, where previously there stood three or four majestic elm trees. The next change to the building took place in 1954, when a laboratory was erected at the bottom of the playground and the tiny laboratory next to the Assembly Room was converted into a library.

It has been mentioned that the Griffiths Cup was presented to the school in 1927, but previously a cup for games, to be known as the House Cup, was given to the school by the Rev C J N Child in 1923, and in 1924 the Governors provided two cups for

the Victor Ludorum and Victrix Ludorum for Athletic Sports. In 1932 the House Board for work was instituted and, at the Annual Speech Day in 1932, Capt. F F A Heilgers, Member of Parliament for the Bury St Edmunds constituency (which included Newmarket) offered a cup for the best all-round boy or girl in the school, the winner to be elected by a ballot of the school conducted by the Prefects.

In 1937 a flag pole was presented and erected, thanks to the generosity of Capt. King. In the same year, Capt. Heilgers again distributed the prizes and, on this occasion, offered Handwriting Prizes, to be called the Eton and Harrow prizes, for the seniors, whereupon Capt. King offered similar prizes, to be called the Oxford and Cambridge prizes, for the juniors. In 1952 the Coronation Shield was given to the school by the Education Committee for the House Swimming Championship. In 1947 Mrs Gilbert Watson gave a cup for the best all-round girl each year, leaving the Heilgers Cup for the best all-round boy. The remaining and last trophy given to the school was the Tennis Cup presented by Miss Emery in 1957.

The first Parents' Evening was in March 1938 and the parents' Association was formed in 1945. Only two caretakers have served the school since it began – Mr Currey from 1923 till he died in June 1938, and Mr Watkinson, who commenced duty in September 1938.

During the War Years, Speech Days were held either in the School or in the Turner Hall. During 1941 in particular, the sounding of the Air Raid Siren frequently interrupted school work, though no shelters were provided, except that later on the present boys' cloakroom was given a concrete roof to give some shelter from blast and fragmentation. As the siren in 1941 often sounded at or around midnight, it was an understood thing that following a night of any such alarm, morning school on the following day opened at 10 a.m.

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