



St. Catherine's Lodge,

Situate close to Maidenhead Village, in the Parish of Windsor.

A Delightful
COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

Build of Red Brick with Stone Dressings, in the Tudor style of Architecture.



Approached by a
CARRIAGE DRIVE,

Bordered by Rhododendron Clumps.

In Contain—
On the Top Floor—

BEDROOM, with fireplace and cupboard.

An exceedingly choice Residential and Agricultural Holding

KNOWN AS

BEAR WOOD FARM

COMPRISING IN ALL ABOUT

487 A. OR. 1 P.

Situate about 1 1/2 miles from Wokingham, and comprising



"Avenue House,"

A GENTLEMAN'S RESIDENCE.

Built of red brick with stone dressings and slated roof, occupying a very pleasant position, approached by carriage drive, bordered by rhododendrons, and containing

On the Top Floor—

Two large Box ROOMS.

TANK ROOMS.

TWO ATTIC BEDROOMS, one with fireplace.

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The Particulars OF A COMPACT & VALUABLE FREEHOLD ESTATE,

MOST DESIRABLY SITUATE,

ABOUT A MILE AND AN HALF FROM THE TOWN OF
WOKINGHAM,

On the South-west Side of the Turnpike Road leading from thence towards Reading:

AND LYING AND BEING IN THE PARISHES OF

WOKINGHAM AND HURST,

In the County of Berks;

CONSISTING OF

A newly-allotted Parcel of Land,

COMPRISING

BEAR WOOD,

With FOREST LAND adjoining, and contiguous thereto:

CONTAINING ALTOGETHER

Three Hundred & Sixteen Acres, One Rood, and Two Perches:

WHICH

(By Direction of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Woods and Forests)

Will be Sold by Auction,

BY MR. WILLOCK,

At GARRAWAY'S COFFEE-HOUSE, in 'Change-Alley, Cornhill, London,

On WEDNESDAY the Thirtieth of OCTOBER, 1816, at Twelve o'Clock.

IN TWO LOTS.

BY THIS ESTATE, which is situate very near the Thirty-four Mile-stone from London, through Reading, is Five Miles from Reading; Two from Maidenhead; and Two from Windsor, and is generally well-planted for an ornamental Park, or for a country Park, without the necessity of planting.

Printed Particulars, with a Plan of each Lot, may be had at the Office of His Majesty's Woods and Forests; of Mr. Hume, in the County of Berks; Land-urveyor, No. 2, Great St. Martin's Lane; of Messrs. Wood and Son, Stationers, at Windsor; at the Home-Office, Whitehall; at Messrs. Swan, at Reading; at Messrs. Atkinson, at Garsington; at Messrs. Gurney, in 'Change-Alley, Cornhill; of Mr. Willock, No. 42, Golden Square, London; and of Mr. Murray, at Maidenhead, near Wokingham, who will show the Premises.



N.B.—The Estate will first be offered as a whole, but if not sold in that manner, then in Lots as under. Should Lot One not be sold, the other Lots will be withdrawn.

LOT ONE.
(Coloured Pink on plan.)

"BEAR WOOD"
Near Wokingham, Berks.

THIS RENOWNED AND DISTINGUISHED
FREEHOLD
COUNTY SEAT,
Formerly part of the Royal Forest of Windsor,

Occupies one of the most delightful situations in the Home Counties, in the centre of a very favourite social district, with excellent sporting amenities. It is approached and intersected by excellent roads, whilst the contour of the Estate is beautifully undulating and adorned with well-placed tracts of forest and woodland, presenting a landscape of great charm and highly diversified.

It comprises portions of the Parishes of NEWLAND, WINNESH, WOKINGHAM WITHOUT, FURNHAMPTON, and BARKHAM, in the COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE, and is situate about two and a half miles from WOKINGHAM TOWN and STATION, with its services on the London and South Western and South Eastern and Chatham Railways, about four miles from TWYFORD and about five miles from READING, respectively about 40 and 45 minutes from LONDON, by an unsurpassed service of express trains on a well-laid line with six tunnels.

The Estate is of considerable Historic Interest.

Kelly's Berkshire Directory states—
"Bear Wood was formerly an outlying part of Windsor Forest, and still retains much of its primitive wildness of character. Its name is supposed to be derived from the Saxon word 'Bere,' signifying a fermented in a wood. Hedges and junipers flourish here in great perfection, and the gardens abound with rhododendrons and other exotic plants. Most varieties of the "2" tribe, including a large number of Cedrus Deodars, are to be found

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Situate well away from the mansion
and pleasure gardens are—

The Walled Kitchen Garden,

MOST PRODUCTIVE

and

Planted with exceptionally choice varieties of

Wall and Standard Fruit

and well supplied with water.

IT INCLUDES

A First-class range of Glasshouses

comprising

SIX VINERIES, PEACH, NECTARINE, FIG,
AND STRAWBERRY HOUSES.

Adjoining is an excellent

Brick-built & slated range of Buildings

including

GARDENER'S OFFICE, COAL STORE, STOKEHOLE,
LOFT, VEGETABLE ROOM, MESS ROOM, IMPLE-
MENT SHED, POT SHED, MUSHROOM HOUSE,
STORE, MAN'S ROOM, POTATO STORE, AND
PACKING ROOM.

Opposite is a spacious square on which stand

The Plant Houses,

consisting of

TWO RANGES OF FORCING HOUSES, THREE RANGES OF PLANT
HOUSES WITH SERVICEABLE PITS, LARGE STOKEHOLE, ROOMY
FRUIT STORE, AND PACKING ROOM.

23

— THE —

Grandly Timbered Parklands



COMBINE

THE CHARACTER OF JUDICIOUS BUT UNOBTRUSIVE CULTIVATION
WITH NATURAL WILDNESS.



They are gently undulating, and with their rich
green lands, extend in all to nearly

500 Acres.

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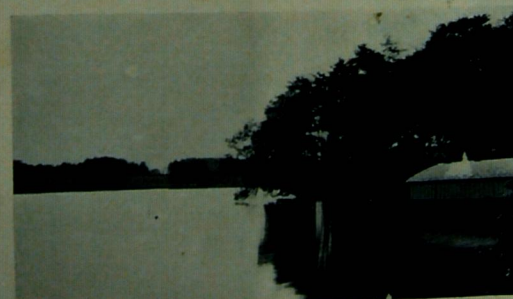
The Unrivalled Lake



IN THE FOREGROUND

Bedecked with water lilies, and reflecting upon its border
and timber with which it is verged. masses of foliage

THIS LAKE



Extends to some 42 acres, exclusive of the islands, one of which covers over an acre,
has large boathouse and landing stage, and affords exceptionally

FINE FISHING, BOATING, AND WILD FOWL SHOOTING

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THE CARRIAGE DRIVES

converge on to a

Large Open Gravelled Courtyard

with

Roomy Porte Cochere.



summarised, the remarkably well-arranged

ACCOMMODATION

comprises some Fifty to Sixty Bed, Dressing, and Bath Rooms, Splendid
Suites of Reception Rooms, together with a full complement of Domestic
Offices, as follows—

On the Top Floor—

LARGE ATTIC PLAYROOM, lighted on three sides.
EIGHT SPACIOUS ATTICS of Store Rooms, with concrete floors, all heated by hot-water pipes.
LAVATORY BASES, with cold water supply; W.C.

LABORATORY.

STUDIO, fitted with combustion stove, tiled hearth and sides and stone mantel.
A CIRCULAR FLIGHT OF STONE STEPS leads to roof, from whence is unobscured

An almost unrivalled panoramic view of the surrounding country.

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have, but the third attraction is the magnificent lake, which covers a space
of about 42 acres, and contains several islands, one of which is over an
acre in extent. This fine sheet of water yields to some in the country but
—Tropica Water is great of use, and perhaps not even so that in beauty
the upper lake covers over three acres.

The District

is remarkably favoured from a residential point of view. Windsor is within about
10 miles, and amongst the many important

County Seats within an easy drive

WINDSOR CASTLE	—	H.M. the King.
RAGSHOT PARK	—	H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Marquess of Downshire.
EASTHAMSTEAD	—	Sir Anthony Cope, Bart.
BEAMHILL	—	Duke of Wellington.
STRATFIELD SAYE	—	Lord Brougham.
BELLINGHEAR PARK	—	Mrs. Harcourt.
ARBORFIELD HALL	—	Mrs. Lovell's Guest.
BILL HILL	—	Lord Phillips, Esq.
TYLSNEY HALL	—	Sir Geo. A. C. Russell, Bart.
SWALLOWFIELD	—	Chas. Ed. Keyser, Esq., J.P.
ALDERMANTON	—	S. B. Joel, Esq.
MAIDEN ERLEIGH	—	

SNOUT RACE COURSE and SEVERAL OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
SPOTS ON THE THAMES.

such as
HENLEY, SWINDON, CLAREMONT, MAIDENHEAD, MARLOW, PANGBOURNE, &c.,
are all within an easy drive by motor or otherwise.

Hunting

CAN BE ENJOINED WITH THE GARTH AND THE SOUTH BERKS FOXHOUNDS;
ALSO WITH THE BERKS AND BUCKS FARMERS' STAGHOUNDS.

Golf Links and Polo Ground near.

The Shooting

is excellent. The woods and plantations, which are well placed, extend to about 1,000
acres, and will hold a large haul of pheasants, whilst a really good bag of partridges,
hens, and rabbits can be obtained, as well as wild duck.

Fishing and Boating

can be enjoyed on the beautiful lake of some 42 acres, besides on the lower lakes.

Altogether the Estate is one of quite exceptional and fascinating character, at the same
time it undoubtedly possesses great potentialities as a

Sound and Improving Investment.

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The PRINCIPAL FRONT faces South,

And commands most

Lovely and Extensive Views

across the



Park and Lake

to

Rising Woodlands in the distance.

Whilst on the NORTH or ENTRANCE FRONT the view extends

Across the Thames

to the

CHILTERN HILLS.

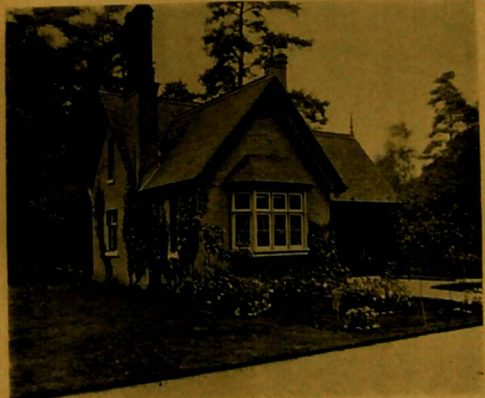


The Stately Mansion

Erected some 45 years ago, on the site of an old residence, in the Tudor style of architecture, of red brick with Mansfield stone dressings, occupies a most happily chosen position on high ground, and is surrounded by its

BEAUTIFUL PLEASURE GROUNDS
AND
GLORIOUSLY WOODED PARK,

Of nearly 500 acres.



THROUGH WHICH IT IS APPROACHED BY
FIVE PRINCIPAL AVENUE CARRIAGE DRIVES,
EACH GUARDED BY AN
ENTRANCE LODGE.



On the west side of the walled garden is a
WIDE BORDER WELL PLANTED WITH FRUIT TREES,
whilst on the south is a
MOST PRODUCTIVE ORCHARD.

Frame Yard,

Having Stabling for Two Horses,
Fodder Store, Harness Room,
Coachhouse, Cart Shed, Piggery,
Coal Store, &c.

Gardener's Residence

Containing Seven Rooms, with
Outbuildings and very pleasant
Garden adjoining.

Bothy,

Containing Four Bedrooms, Mess
Room, Kitchen, Foreman's Room,
Lavatory, &c.

Capital Laundry,

With spacious and well-equipped Washhouse and Ironing Room, Coal and Wood Store.

LAUNDRY MAIDS' COTTAGE ADJOINING

Containing Three Bedrooms, Sitting Room, Kitchen, W.C., &c.

LARGE DRYING GROUND.

Gas Works,

including
BRICK AND SLATED COTTAGE.

Having Four Bedrooms, Sitting Room, Kitchen, &c., and excellent Garden attached.
Gas House, with Five Retorts, Gasometer, Coal Stores, Meter House, Pumping House,
Governor House, Lime Sheds, &c.

The Estate Workshops.

Comprise Wood and Slated Timber Store, Plumbers' Shop, Saw House with
Workshop over, Two Engine Rooms, Machine Room with Carpenters' Shops over, Office,
Store Room, Masons' and Painters' Shops, Blacksmiths' Shop with Shoeing House and
Iron Store, Stable for four, Stable for five, large open Waggon Shed, Wheelwrights' Shop
and Store.

Mole Farm,

Including Yard with Open Shed, Range of Five Piggeries, Cow House, Bull Pen, Fodder
Store, Dairy Washhouse, Poultry Runs, &c.

COTTAGE CONTAINING FIVE ROOMS.



9.—THE FIRST HOUSE AT BEAR WOOD IN 1835. It was built shortly after 1816.





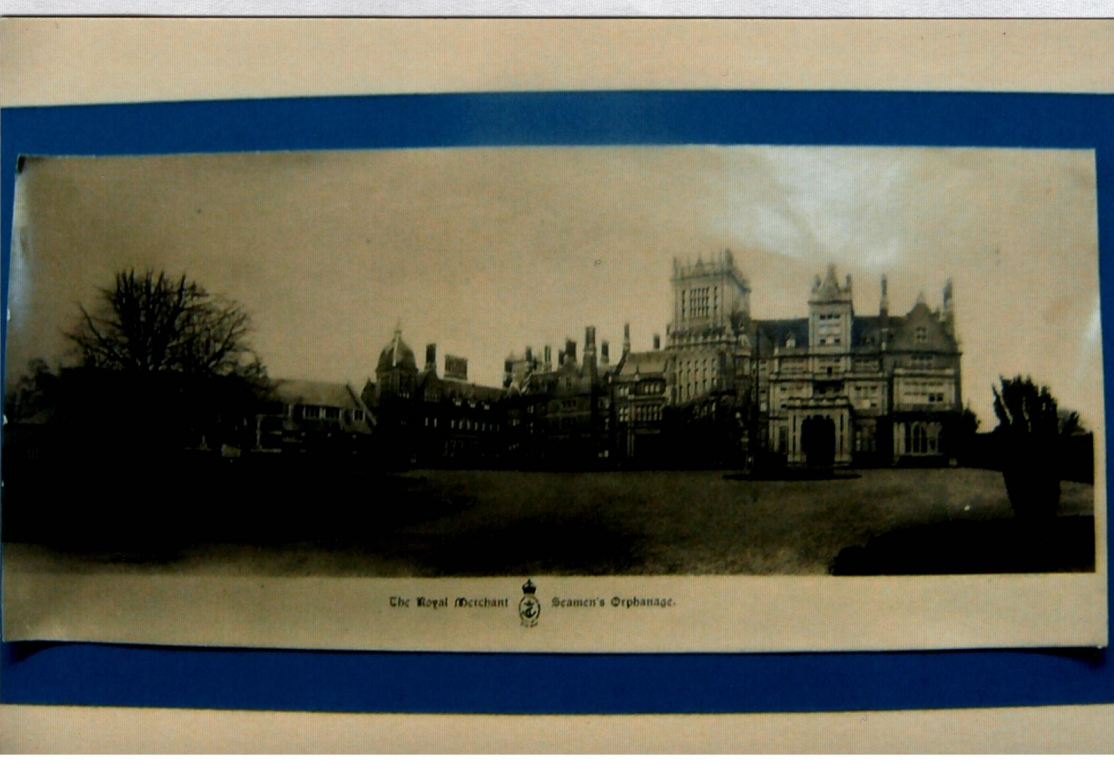
BY ROCK AND TOLL



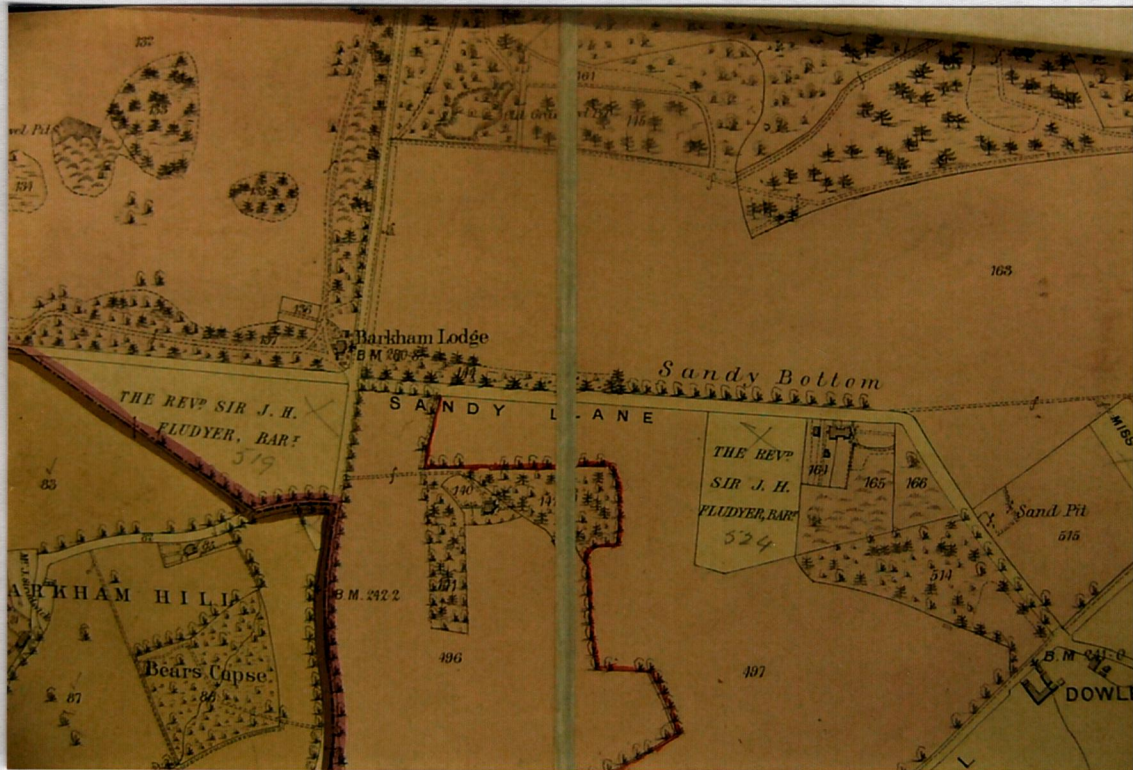
London Convalescent Hospital, Bearwood



1047 VIEW FROM CENTRAL TOWER R.M.S.O. BEARWOOD



The Royal Merchant Seamen's Orphanage



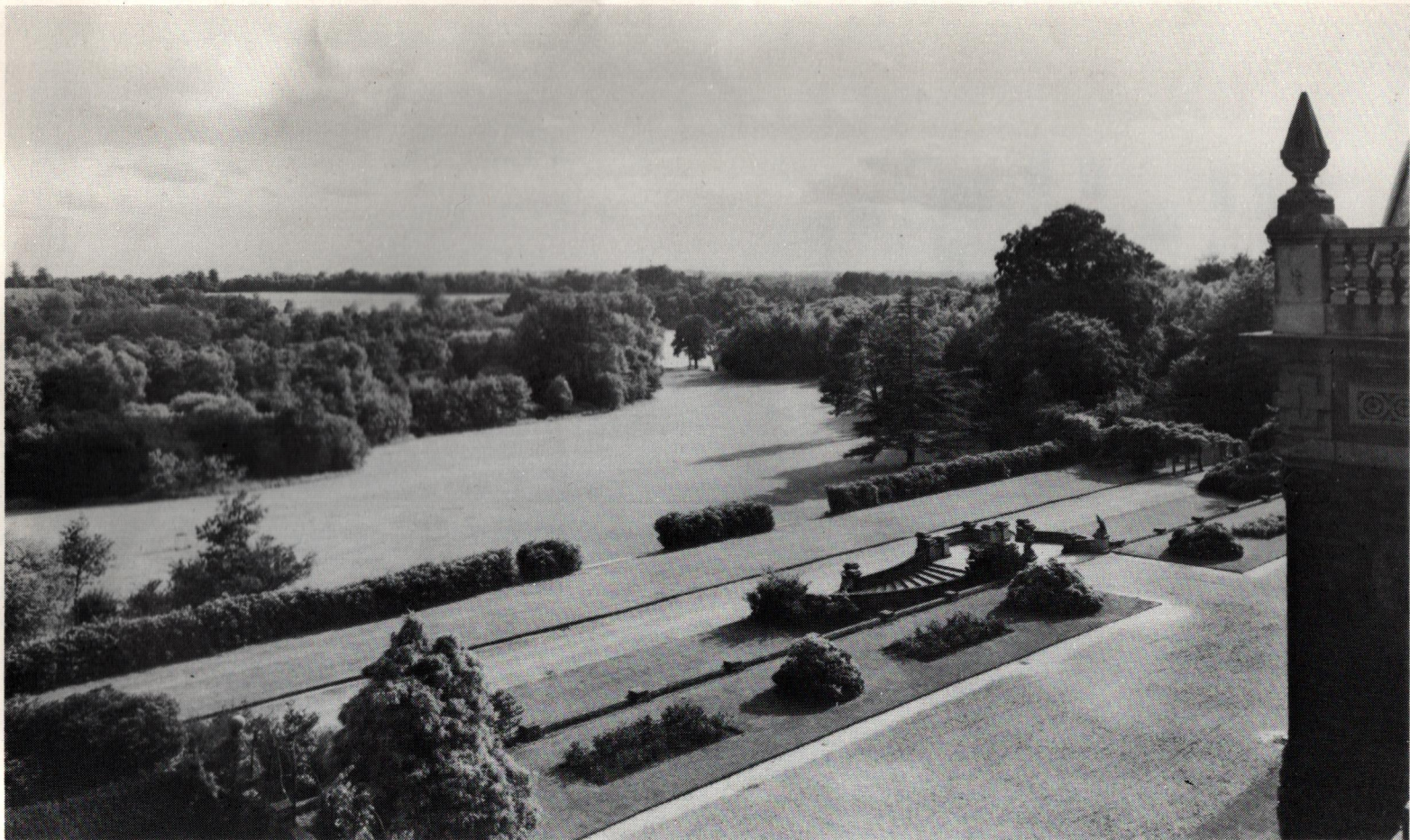
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**ROYAL
MERCHANT
NAVY
SCHOOL**



**BEARWOOD
COLLEGE**

1827-1977



View of South Field

**THE ROYAL MERCHANT NAVY SCHOOL
BEARWOOD COLLEGE**

An historical outline by W H HICKTON



Bearwood, south-west aspect

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The main sources of information are the minutes of Board meetings and other committees, the writings of Mr Rawlinson (secretary) and many old scholars who have shown great interest, particularly Mrs A Ebbs, Mr S Thew, Mr N A Forde and Mr Basil Brown.

I have to thank the Garnstone Press for permission to quote from "Ellen Buxton's Journal," the "Illustrated London News" for the drawing of the Prince Consort laying the foundation stone of the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum, "Country Life" for the picture of the South Field, the Headmaster, Mr P M Cunningham, for supplying much needed encouragement and the Board of Management for making the whole project possible.

W H HICKTON



Bearwood, north aspect

1827



1977

**OFFICIALS AT BEARWOOD
1921-1977**

**Chairmen of Board of
Management**

T L DEVITT
R J LESSLIE
J HERBERT SCRUTTON
EUSTACE ERLEBACH
J W A BURNES
F W SAUNDERS
P K DEVITT
G C TOZER
CAPT L A HILL
SIR DAVID HILL-WOOD, Bt.

Headmasters

Rev R E LANGDON
A H J FLETCHER
MAJ A CHILD
T C P BROOK
W A HILL
C W S AVERILL
P M CUNNINGHAM

Secretaries

F W RAWLINSON
CAPT G E TUNE
MAJ C PARNELL
MAJ G W BEAZLEY
W E N NORTHCOTE-GREEN
MAJ V J HOWELLS

Chapter 1. The Foundation 1827-1834

The battle of Navarino in 1827 earned the distinction of being the last fought between sailing ships, and began a period when change and development became the order of the day. The *Sirius* was soon to conquer the Atlantic, although the era of the clipper was not yet. Then came the big Atlantic liners which stole the limelight, while the smaller cargo ships were busy carrying the products of the Industrial Revolution to the four quarters of the world.

Much labour was needed to man these vessels, and the seaman's calling was a dangerous one. The coasts throughout the world were poorly charted; hours of work were long and safety measures often ignored. This was before the days of the Plimsoll line, and aids to navigation were few. Accidents were common, and death at sea was one of the risks accepted by seamen. Causes of death were varied — "died from injuries suffered in a severe gale — left eight children"; "drowned at Odessa while trying to cross from one ship to another — four children"; "fell from rigging on to deck of ss *City of Venice* — mother a stewardess in the British India Co."; — "ship foundered in the Bay of Biscay — six children — father washed overboard"; — and so on. In most cases abject poverty and distress faced the widow and her children for there were but few organisations prepared to give help. It was in 1827 that the "Merchants' Seamen's Orphan Asylum" was founded.

On September 5 a meeting of gentlemen concerned with shipping was held at No 18 Aldermanbury, in the City of London, when it was resolved that an orphan asylum should be started to look after the children of deceased seamen, and that a public meeting should be held to carry this into effect. The appropriate venue for such a public meeting was the City of London Tavern on a site in Bishopsgate Street and long since taken over by the Royal Bank of Scotland. It was here that the City did honour to Lord Nelson; that the National Life-boat Service was started; and it was here that "The Merchants' Seamen's Orphan Asylum" was instituted on October 25, 1827. It seems somewhat strange that it should have been Lieutenant-General Neville, RA, who took the chair when there were four admirals among the vice-presidents. The school still has that chair. This young institution was administered by the Port of London and Bethel Union Society, now part of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, but started its independent life in 1833. The object of the Asylum was to look after the destitute orphan children of seamen in the Merchant Service. They had to be seven years of age and were looked after until they were 14. The institution sought to rescue them from vice and profligacy; to inculcate in them the tenets of the Church of England; and ultimately to place them in suitable positions.

Premises were acquired at No 4 Clark's Terrace, Cannon Street Road, St George's in the East, and five boys were looked after by Mr and Mrs Fisher. The boys were taken to Wapping School where they were instructed by Mr and Mrs Fisher, although it was soon decided that they should be instructed on their home premises, and they have been ever since.

In 1829 five girls were admitted and premises for them were acquired at No 11 St George's Place, New Road, St George's in the East. By 1830 the Board had also acquired No 3 Clark's Terrace, and were looking after 29 boys and girls. Life at the Asylum at this time was rather grim. There was little in the way of luxuries and the children were not allowed to forget that they were the objects of charity. Food was monotonous, though those who were in poor health were sometimes put on "luxurious living," which meant having some wine or porter. Other sick children were boarded out at Plaistow, Essex, for seven shillings a week. Those who suffered from "cutaneous irruptions" were sometimes sent to Margate for sea-bathing.

MERCHANTS' SEAMEN'S ORPHAN ASYLUM.

INSTITUTED OCTOBER 25, 1827.

President.
The Right Honorable Admiral LORD GAMBIER, G. C. B.

Vice-Presidents.
Sir JAMES SAUMAREZ, Bart. G. C. B. Vice Admiral of England.
The Rt. Hon. the EARL of NORTHESK, Rear Admiral of England.
The Rt. Honorable LORD VISCOUNT MANDEVILLE, R. N. M. P.
The Honorable JOHN JAMES STRUTT, M. P.
Lieut.-General NEVILLE, R. A.
Rear Admiral ROBERT MURRAY.
Rear Admiral SAMUEL BROOKING.

Treasurer.
ROBERT HUMPHREY MARTEN, Esq.

Honorary Secretaries.
GEORGE S. CLARKE, | THOMAS PHILLIPS,
ROBERT G. MARTEN, | THOMAS THOMPSON,
Rev. JAMES VAUTIN.

A PUBLIC MEETING was held at the City of London Tavern, on Thursday the 25th October, 1827, for the purpose of forming this Institution, in connexion with the Port of London and Bethel Union Society, for promoting Religion among British and Foreign Seamen. The Chair was taken by Lieutenant-General Neville, R. A. in the absence of the President who was prevented attending by indisposition, when the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted, and a Subscription commenced.

First Resolution—Moved by Rev. Dr. STYLES—Seconded by Capt. GEORGE DOUGALL, R. N.
That among the various calamities and deprivations to which the human race is liable, there are none which call more for the sympathy and benevolence of Christians than the numerous orphans abounding throughout this highly favored country; but more especially of those amongst the maritime classes of society, rendered so by the frequency and suddenness of their bereavement, at one stroke, in many instances, reducing them from a degree of comfort to the depths of penury and distress.

Second Resolution—Moved by Capt. GEORGE GAMBIER, R. N.—Seconded by Rev. Geo. CLAYTON,
That it appears from the public journals, and other sources of information, that hundreds of children of seamen annually become orphans, by wrecks on our own coasts, and by other casualties at sea, most of whom are left dependant on their widowed and distressed mothers, or become utterly helpless and destitute, wandering about, the outcasts of society.

Third Resolution—Moved by Rev. G. S. EVANS, A. M.—Seconded by Rev. SPEDDING CURWEN,
That in order to rescue, from vice and poverty, this interesting portion of the rising generation, an Institution is now formed, in connexion with the Port of London and Bethel Union Society, for promoting Religion among British and Foreign Seamen, to be denominated THE MERCHANTS' SEAMEN'S ORPHAN ASYLUM, for the board, clothing, and education of the children of seamen in the merchant service, particularly those whose fathers shall have died by shipwreck or other accident,—the funds to be distinctly appropriated for the object; and that a commencement be made with Ten children.

Chapter 2. Bow Road 1834–1862

Right from the beginning, the institution depended entirely on voluntary subscriptions and contributions and was never in receipt of public funds. Money was always in short supply; staff were poorly paid and the children had to make do with the barest necessities. There was always another orphan seeking help, and larger premises had to be found. In 1834 the institution moved to New Grove, Bow Road, where there was accommodation for 120. At last the school could settle down, and it was during this next period, 1834–1862, that it discovered its true identity.



North front of Bow Road Orphanage

The aim of the Board of Management was to supply the bodily needs of the children and give them such an education as would allow them to earn their own living and improve their position in life. This they thought could best be achieved in a country atmosphere and under a disciplined regime. Of course, much would depend upon finances being available.

At Bow Road and Snaresbrook the school enjoyed rural surroundings as it has since at Bearwood, but towns have a knack of catching up with it. At Bow Road we read of the Board letting out the field for cows at £20 per annum, and the same cows seem to have had the habit of trespassing in the garden and the thatched summer house. The children attended Bromley Church and the Board ordered “the pew opener to be presented with 10 shillings for her trouble in cleaning the seats of the children.”

Everyday conditions varied according to circumstances, and usually we only get a glimpse of what things were like when something went wrong. The ladies of the committee, for example, “asked for 12 more quarts of milk being of opinion that water is not sufficiently nourishing for the children’s supper”—there were 101 children in 1840. And later on in that year three gentlemen inspected the Asylum and reported on the boys “that they found their everyday clothing in a deplorable state. Many of them without either jackets or waistcoats and their trousers and shoes in very bad order.”

It is difficult to get a true picture of what life was really like for the children at this early period, and although it may have been tough it was probably worse outside. In 1834 the committee ordered “12 pewter plates; six iron table spoons; six doz. steel pen holders; 1 doz. slates”. One intriguing committee resolution allowed the matron “to purchase a tin can”. We long to ask the question: “what for?” And then one’s sense of proportion is restored when the “matron complained greatly of the destruction caused by the boys. In one morning after breakfast 50 spoons were missing of which they could give no account.”

Arithmetic, reading, writing, geography, catechism and needlework seem to have been the regular subjects taught. The annual examination was quite an occasion. Some public figure, such as Vice-Admiral Lord Radstock, would preside, and “a large assemblage of ladies and gentlemen would meet on the occasion and listen to the correct answers given by the children.”

Around 1850 the school consisted of 69 boys and 40 girls; two masters, a mistress, a matron and a nurse making up the teaching staff. An ex-soldier looked after the boys during out-of-school time and also carried out the duties of porter. Discipline was strict and at one time the house committee resolved “that a solitary box be ordered for the purpose of confining those boys whose conduct is disorderly”. It was placed “at the corner of the dust bin in the front yard”.

During the 60s quite a number of changes took place in the general routine. For example the house committee requested that the children might be allowed plates to use at breakfast and tea time, the current custom being not to allow any at those meals to the detriment of cleanliness and habits of order at the meals. It was also suggested that slippers should be provided as “for long past it had been a rule for the children to take off their boots in the school and go to and from their bedrooms without shoes”. And it was resolved “that for the future the boys be provided with night-shirts”.

Finance was always the problem, and one valuable source of supply was the anniversary dinner. This was probably held at the London Tavern and



Boy and girl of 40s

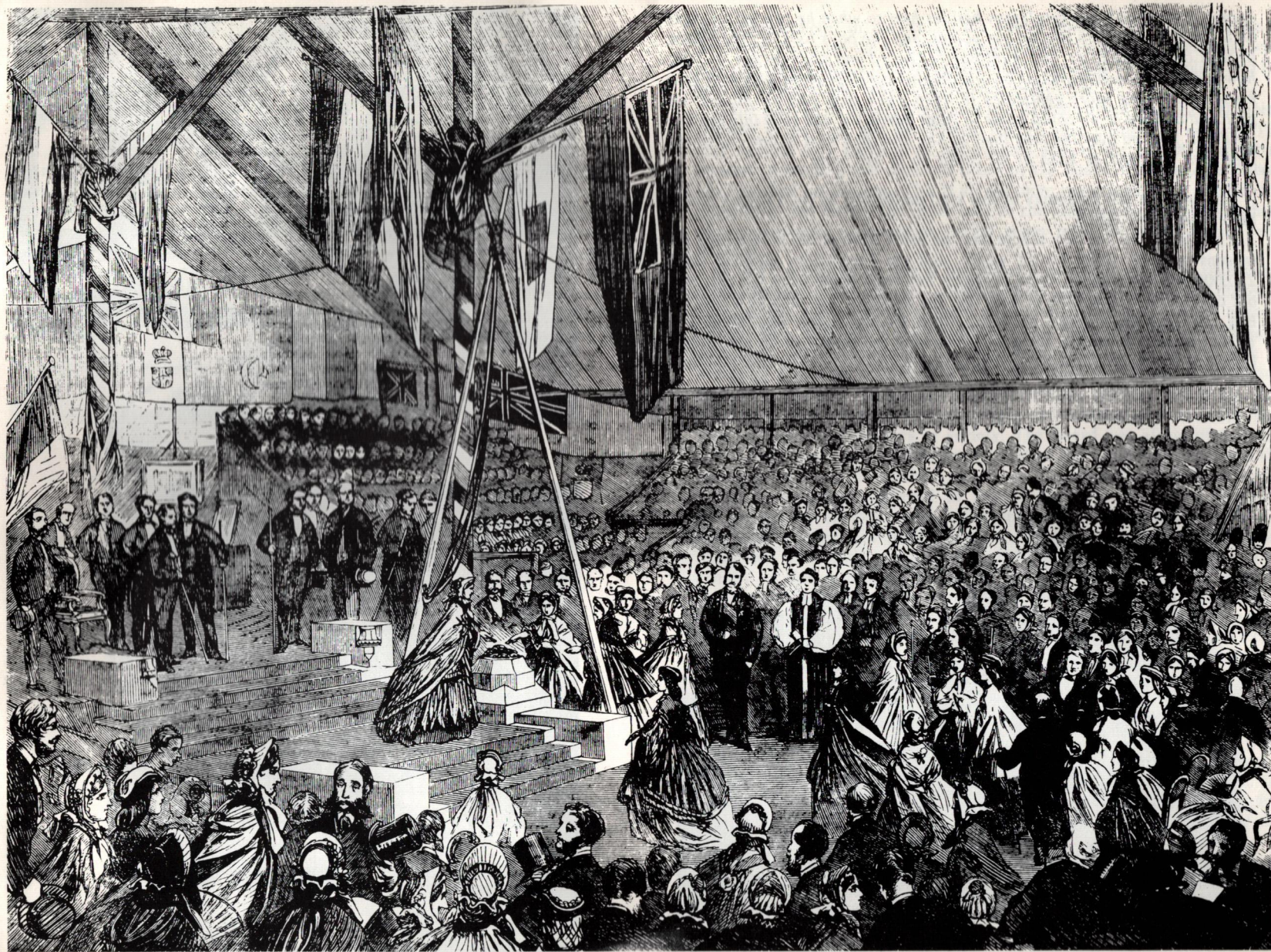
presided over by some well-known public figure: The Hon Sidney Herbert; The First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Ellenborough; or The Earl of Hardwicke. A meal was enjoyed, and "the children, in the course of the evening, were introduced by the hon sec, and passed, as is the rule on these occasions, between the tables". An appeal was made, and contributions were requested. The result was usually at least £500. On one occasion the treasurer, Duncan Dunbar, offered 100 guineas if nine other people did likewise. An additional round was started. In the end, 43 guests gave their 100 guineas. F W Rawlinson, Esq, CBE, also tells the story that when Duncan Dunbar presided on another occasion, he wound up his address by placing his cheque for £500 on the table and challenging anyone present to cover it with another of the same amount. There was no response. His comments were pungent: he declared that as nobody appeared willing to take up his challenge, he would himself, and thereupon drew another for £500 and laid it upon the first. "That's better, Duncan," came a quiet voice near him, "and here's one to cover them both", as Richard Green passed one for £1,000 along to the chair. Duncan Dunbar had a fleet of small but very smart ships, and sometimes held fetes on board in aid of the institution. Firework displays were other popular social functions which were used for fund raising.

The "Illustrated London News" in 1851 reported that "the display was held in the grounds of the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum, Bow Road, in aid of the funds of the institution. The grounds were illuminated after the fashion adopted at Vauxhall and a band of music engaged. In the rear of the premises was a gibbet to which was suspended an effigy and around it were several barrels of tar which at the proper time were consumed in the most formidable blaze." The previous year the set-piece had been a wreck with "God protect our Orphans".

It was in 1840 that Capt Pelly, Deputy Master of Trinity House, presided at the anniversary dinner and it may have been as a result of this that it became the custom for the children to visit Trinity House every Trinity Monday to attend chapel with the Elder Brethren, headed by the Duke of Wellington. Another custom already well established was for the leaving children to be presented with a bible and prayer book.

Such was life at Bow Road until 1862 when the lease expired. The institution now looked after about 120 children and the Board of Management decided to acquire a site and build a school more in keeping with its national importance, and we get a shaft of light thrown on events by a young girl, Ellen Buxton of Snaresbrook, near London. Ellen wrote up her diary every day, and this is an extract from what she wrote for June 28, 1861:

"This afternoon at four o'clock we rode to see Prince Consort (Albert) laying the foundation stone of a new 'Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum'; Papa went to see the stone laid with Uncle Barclay. So at four Johny Geoff Taffy and I got on to our ponies and rode to Aunt Barclay's where we found Edith, Hugh, Ada and Alice going to ride with us, we went directly to the Whipps Cross corner and there on the grass we drew up our ponies all in a line and so waited for about a quarter of an hour, then at five minutes to five we saw all the people's heads turn towards London and Aunt Barclay called out to us that Prince Consort was coming first came two people on horseback then a carriage with four bay horses and postillions, in which was



Prince Consort laying the foundation-stone
(*Illustrated London News*, July 1865)

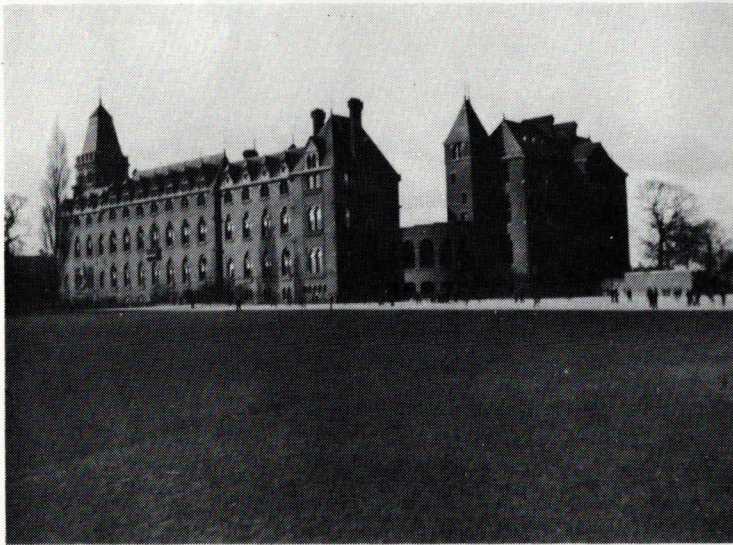
Prince Albert, with two gentlemen besides him so when he saw all us eight children drawn up in a line on our ponies, and the boys took off their hats, he took off his hat to us, and Aunt Barclay heard and saw him say — "Oh, how pretty" —, then he passed on and another carriage came with four grey horses with some more gentlemen in, then when they had all passed, we galloped as hard as we could home to Aunt Barclay's, and rode into the hay field and jumped over the long lines of hay and then went to one end of the field and galloped as hard as we could go to the other . . .

This was the last ceremony of this kind performed by the Prince Consort before his tragic death.

The builders of the new school had the usual difficulties: at one time the masons were on strike for 11 weeks, and the contractors supplied some 250,000 defective bricks, some of which had been made from the clay dug out of the site. It is worthy of note that the architect was George S Clarke, Esq, who was an honorary secretary when the institution was founded in 1827, and ever since then had given the school the benefit of his advice and loyalty. He died on his way to a Board Meeting to discuss the new building.



Dormitory — boys



Snaresbrook — exterior



Dining Hall

Chapter 3. Snaresbrook 1862–1920

In 1862 Earl Russell opened the school at Snaresbrook and a new era began. During the time that the school was at Bow Road it made its mark on London life and now its financial resources took a more hopeful turn. Gentlemen such as Richard Green and Joseph Somers gave £1,000 each to the building fund; the Lord Mayor and Trinity House were regular contributors and more funds became available from shipping interests in general. Now that ladies were allowed to attend, the anniversary dinner acquired something of the nature of a society event and royal patronage was of



Snaresbrook — Chapel interior

considerable help. In particular, the school enjoyed the bounty of Lady Morrison who gave the Chapel at Snaresbrook, including a memorial window to Richard Green, and invested money to provide for a chaplain and for help in apprenticing boys to a trade or profession.

Quite early in its history the school had its main office among the shipping interests in the City, and for different reasons often changed its position. This may explain why there is an unfortunate gap in the school records: all minutes of meeting and decisions taken by the Board of Management from 1873 to 1904 are missing. This is all the more regrettable since one has the impression that during the latter part of the nineteenth century the school was experiencing a formative period when many of its traditions were founded.

In 1871, it was stated that at the end of their school career — that would mean nearing 15 years of age — half the boys went into offices and places of business and three-eighths of them went to sea. The girls usually became dressmakers, milliners and governesses. Only those with no home to go to went into domestic service. The Board of Governors had the task of providing a suitable education, a task which was carried out with varying degrees of success. Catechism, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and geography were the main subjects taught and complaints were made from time to time about the lack of variety. The Board was afraid of teaching music as it “may lead children astray in after life”, and then there was the thorny question of the teaching of science. In the early 1860s there was a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the curriculum of public schools, and the members spent much time listening to a defence of Greek and Latin studies. The head master of Winchester hotly opposed the introduction of scientific studies. The 1870 Education Act produced little change in this respect as the inspectors were usually imbued with the classical tradition. It was not until the turn of the century that the teaching of science made much headway. From the 1860s the school was inspected by officials of the British and Foreign School Society, and by the 1890s mechanical drawing, French and shorthand had been added for the boys, and drawing and typewriting for the girls. In 1905, “the inspectors’ reports on the schools were read and it was decided as to a change of inspectors”. That is one way of dealing with the situation but it is annoying that those reports are not available. In 1910 the head master expressed the desire to introduce science teaching “involving the use of apparatus”, which was a source of great trouble to the school treasurer. But soon after this, the educational work of the school was geared to the Cambridge Local Examination and an examiner was appointed to report on the work of the school. One such official was appointed because “he had had much to do with educational matters in China”. But he did advocate the teaching of science.

There is very little information as to what the children did out of school hours.

There is the occasional reference to football and cricket but there seems to have been little organised sport. With no radio or TV they were thrown back on their own resources and no doubt cultivated various hobbies. But when the school acquired an indoor swimming bath, this activity became very popular and many of the children passed the Royal Life Saving Society’s examination. Swimming became a well-known and successful feature of the

school and on at least four occasions pupils of this school were awarded Royal Humane Society's Awards for saving life.

During the 1890s, the band was another activity which appealed to the children, and I quote from what a member of the band who joined the school in 1892 has to say: *"the pride of the school was the military band of 40 and I had the good fortune of being selected for the clarinet, and eventually became the soloist and played in the orchestra pit in the operas. It had been a cloistered existence with very little opportunity of seeing the outside world. Now engagements took us to garden parties; a visit to the Royal Navy Exhibition in the 90s when we won the prize for the best boys' band in the UK; trips up and down the river on chartered steamers. It was a sad occasion when we played the Dead March at the funeral of my friend, Billings. Sporting activities were considerably curtailed owing to continual band practices. The biggest prize was that with a select band of about 12, we played at two annual festival dinners in the West End Hotel.*

"During the speeches we were lined up behind the chairman and well applauded. The fruit passed to us from the tables was well received and thankfully applied."

The trips on chartered steamers already mentioned are a reference to the water excursions organised for fund-raising around the turn of the century.



Girls' classroom



Girls at swimming pool

The usual run was to set off from Greenwich Pier about 10 am; have lunch on the trip down to Blackwall and Tilbury. Tea would be served on the way back arriving about 8 pm. Six hundred tickets sold at 10 shillings each brought in a profit of £150-£200. In 1904 the excursion in ss *Eagle* embarked at Fresh Wharf; called at Greenwich and Tilbury Piers and proceeded to Margate. The return was made by special train to Fenchurch Street. In 1907 the steamer broke down at Southend Pier and in 1909 there was no steamer available; and so this event ceased to be.

Some of the children appeared at these events and often gave some form of entertainment, and so their dress had an important bearing on their public image.

An officer type of uniform was favoured for the boys, although this proved to be rather expensive. At Snaresbrook the boys' No 1 uniform was of the cut-away jacket type. The girls in the 1840s had an ankle length full-skirted dress with apron and quaker collar, long white mittens, and a bonnet tied under the chin with a big bow. In the 1880s they wore an ankle



Girl's costume 1880s

length slim woollen navy skirt, tight long-sleeved jacket with a pastel bow at the neck and a straw sailor hat with a ribbon.

The institution started life as the Merchants' Seamen's Orphan Asylum, but soon changed to the Merchant Seamen's Orphan Asylum. In 1902 King Edward VII granted the school the attribute of "Royal" and the opportunity was taken to bring the name of the school more into line with modern usage, and so the school became known as "The Royal Merchant Seamen's Orphanage". Then it became obvious that the children were at a disadvantage with other children because of the word "orphanage" which in some way seemed to denote a second-class citizen. This was brought to the notice of the Prince of Wales with the result that King George V ordered that the school should be known as "The Royal Merchant Navy School".

As the name was modernised, so was the organisation. Now the school was responsible for some 300 children, but the administration was fundamentally the same as had sufficed for 30: everything depended on the secretary and the headmaster. From 1908, the Board of Management decided that there should be five departmental heads — headmaster, headmistress, matron, doctor, and clerk of works, with a governor ultimately responsible. The new system took time to be accepted. Commander Montenaro, RN (Ret), was the first governor to leave his mark on the

school, and this in spite of his being part-time in the early stages of the 1914–1918 war. He attended the Officers' Training Establishment at Southampton during the week and returned to Snaresbrook at the week-ends, but when he was transferred to Greenwich he was able to sleep at the school every night "in case of air raids".

The headmaster, The Rev R Langdon, joined the French Ambulance Corps. Captain H E Inskip became governor in 1917 but soon died. Captain W J Jenks took his place.

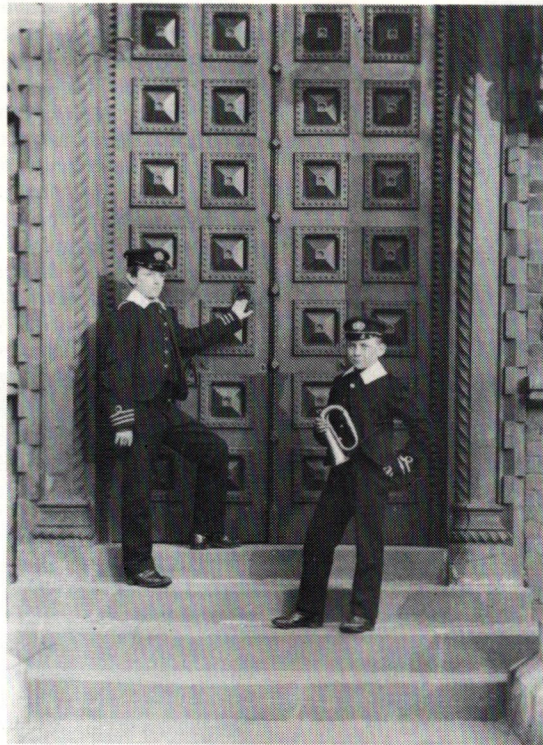
We have the reflections of Mr H W Gibson, at Snaresbrook during the war (and now a member of the present governing body).

"When I arrived at the school, my hot hand clutching the hand of my mother, I felt I was about to be 'abandoned' for life." However, he survived very much a school-boy: *"The girls and their building was completely out of bounds. We had, however, two of our more adventurous youths who defied authority and decided to explore the female sleeping quarters in the early hours of one morning with disastrous results. They were caught in the act and, in consequence, had their stay at Snaresbrook abruptly terminated . . . The visit of old boys always gave us great pleasure . . . I am sure it was through one of them that I learned to smoke! . . . Mr Dougal Nichol (6th form and navigation and seamanship master) was a great asset. He was interested in us and helped a lot out of school hours. His wife, who also taught, was also most kind and helpful."*

Looking back some 58 years, Mr Gibson recalls that it was a cloistered existence, enlivened perhaps by the odd outing such as to St Paul's Cathedral for the annual seafarers' service, where the school was led by the band — a very good one. As with many another Old Royal he recalls his last day, the friends he made and the feeling that all that happened to him was worthwhile, fitting him for his career (a most successful one in the shipping community in Cardiff).

The 1914–18 war did not make the same impact on the life of the school as the 1939–1945 war. It was not until 1916 that "stations of refuge from hostile aircraft" were organised but were rarely needed. Six boys per week worked full time in the garden, and the football field was dug up in order to grow potatoes.

When the war ended, a troublesome time began. The Board of Management was faced with the fact that at Snaresbrook the dormitories were overcrowded; there was lack of staff accommodation; the classrooms were now inadequate; and the drains were obsolete. There was also criticism that numbers were falling because of the low standard of education, and the loss of the old uniform. In addition, the Office of Works, the Ministry of Pensions, and the American Red Cross began to be interested in commandeering the building; furthermore, ever since 1908 there had been talk of "crumbling bricks"! The governor's report was that the cheapest estimate to put things right was £13,800, so there began a search for other premises. Eventually, in September, 1919, Sir Thomas Lane Devitt, Bart, and Sir Alfred F Yarrow, Bart, bought the estate at Bearwood, some 500 acres in Berkshire, and offered it to the Institution. Bearwood had been the seat of the Walter family which owned and managed "The Times" newspaper founded by the first John Walter at the end of the eighteenth century.



Snaresbrook, Commodore Boy and bugler

Chapter 4. Bearwood 1921-1939

The school at Snaresbrook closed for the summer vacation to open at a future date at "Bearwood".

That date was March 1, 1921.

Of course, much needed to be done to prepare Bearwood for the advent of the school, and how exciting it must have been. A house had to be built for the governor; a dining hall was needed; the stables had to be converted into an infirmary; the top floor converted into dormitories; central heating to be installed; and the whole place wired for electricity. Messrs Heelas of Reading, made 63 journeys from Snaresbrook to move all the furniture and equipment.

When the school moved into the Berkshire countryside, some customs and habits were uprooted, and others never transplanted. When the poet Pope wrote:

"For forms of government let fools contest, Whate'er is best administered is best,"

he was wise and not only in his generation. In Bearwood's case the success or otherwise of the governor system depended on harmonious relations, and during the period from 1921 until well into the post-war period, the school lost its sense of direction, fumbling and clutching at straws in an attempt to make the system work. From about 1925, the numbers of boys and girls were steadily falling. The methods by which candidates were admitted to the school had always been that of election by a majority, the voters being the subscribers. But after 1921 the number of candidates rarely exceeded the ac-



Uniforms of the 1920s



Uniforms of the 1920s

commodation available, and so elections were abandoned. The normal leaving age was also raised to 16.

The curriculum was taken in hand by the new headmaster, Major A Child. The idea was that all the boys and girls should acquire a fair knowledge and ability in such basic subjects as English, mathematics, French, religious knowledge, history and geography, so that specialisation could easily follow on. He advocated two changes to raise the standard of education: the introduction of science and of special classes for boys intending to join the Mercantile Marine or the Royal Navy.

The headmaster's views prevailed and £300 was granted for scientific equipment. However, frequent changes of staff vitiated any consistent policy. The teaching of domestic science for the girls was a thorny problem, as it was most important that nothing should be done to give the impression that the girls might be "directed" into domestic service. In the event they were instructed in simple domestic duties and "hand laundry". Thus improvements were gradually made but the situation altered considerably when it became known that the Board of Management was to seek "recognised status" from the Board of Education.

Organised school games did not have much of a chance, mainly because of shortage of staff. Soccer was played in the two winter terms with, maybe, a little hockey. Hockey and netball were played by the girls. The one or two groundsmen did what they could, but the task was beyond them. In the summer term, the girls had three tennis courts, and rounders, and the boys had the cricket field — but not before a crop of hay had been taken! At half-term the athletic sports took place. Then swimming started and good use was made of the time available. By the end of term it took more than a day to deal with the Royal Life Saving Society's examinations.

Discipline was strict. There was much marching: to and from the playing field, on to the dining hall and back, upstairs to bed and down again to breakfast.

Boys and girls soon learned the areas out-of-bounds both in the building and out. Some of them never saw the grand staircase or the farm, and they knew little of the grounds. However, each autumn a popular excursion for the boys was to Chestnut Avenue to the south of the lake. Route marches about the neighbourhood were an all too frequent means of occupying time either on Sundays or at times when the pitches were not available.

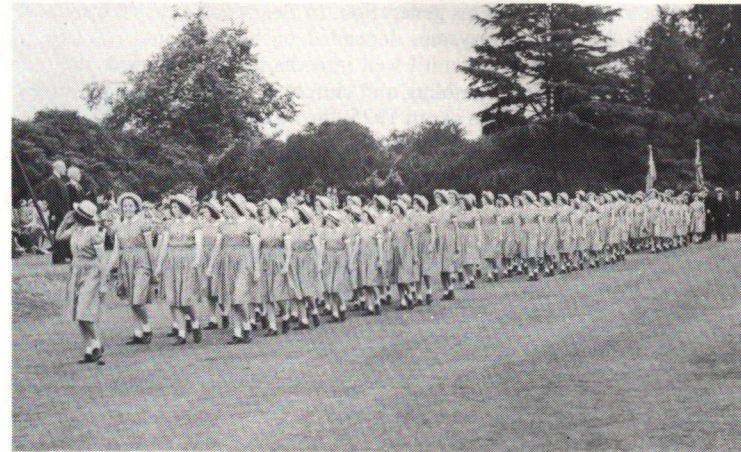
Until the school acquired a chapel, a service was held in the morning in the big school room (now the library). A temporary altar and lectern were rigged up against the northern window and forms were brought in. In the afternoon there was a full dress church parade at St Catherine's Church. The school marched there headed by the band. Before this parade brothers and sisters met at some appointed place and spent about an hour, under supervision, in each others' company — otherwise they had no opportunities of meeting.

The memories of Old Royal Mr N A Forde were unhappy: *"to a nine-year-old boy arriving at Bearwood in 1921 life appeared compounded of instant terror, and the environment seemed totally and implacably hostile. . . . Food was probably the most important aspect of life: meals were starchy and dreary. Only at Christmas was our perpetual hunger assuaged for a few days. . . . In 1921 we 'fell in' for all occasions and marched everywhere we went, in the building or (with few exceptions) outside, for meals, classes, bed, books, inspection, pocket money. . . ."*

There was another Bearwood custom in the dining hall that may have come from Snaresbrook along with the flags of the shipping companies



The band



Girls on parade — 1960s



Swimming pool

hanging from the beams. When the school had marched into the dining hall, and the boys and girls were standing in their allotted places in silence, the duty master would say "Grace", whereupon there would be silence for a few seconds, and then one would be conscious of a humming sound, and eventually, when a note had been mutually accepted, the school would launch forth into a recital of the "Grace". What the "Grace" was, no one seemed to be sure. Some boys recited a ribald version while others mouthed gibberish. One morning the whole school was told to write a copy of the "Grace", with pitiful results, and so a fresh start was made. In the course of time, everything reverted to previous custom.



Signalling

One veteran of the 20s made the following statement:

"Whatever pranks we had to our discredit were quite minor. For a while a group of boys regularly raided the headmaster's study to pinch his cigarettes, which they smoked in the urinal on the playing fields, which resembled the scriptural pillar of smoke by day. It wasn't that that betrayed them, however, but the unfortunate circumstance of the head being in his study when the raiders arrived."

The 30s was the period of Captain Edwards, RN (Ret). He based the school routine on that of the Royal Navy, movement regulated by the duty bugler. Friday saw the beginning of the build-up towards the climax on Sunday morning.

On Friday morning, the "ship" was inspected by the captain, followed by the headmaster, the headmistress, matron, the chief engineer, the duty bugler and the captain's messenger. Saturday morning was devoted to "clean ship". When all was ready, the bugler sounded "clean guns", and there followed a mixture of dusting, sweeping, polishing, and white-washing as was never seen before. The captain appeared. Everything shone like a new pin, if not it had to be done again. Saturday evening saw the band boys polishing their drums, cornets and euphoniums. Come Sunday morning, the school paraded first on the Upper South Terrace to make sure that everything was as it should be, and then on West Lawn (in summer), or on the North Court (in winter). The bugler sounded "markers", and then followed a most admired display of inspecting, marching and counter-marching. Finally, the band marched off the parade into oblivion to leave one solitary bugler to sound the "disperse". If you think that you have



Gym



F W Marten Memorial Dining-hall



The Incape Memorial Chapel

earned a rest, there is now chapel-matins, and a sermon preached by the captain. Next you write out the collect for the day, before there is any question of lunch.

All this was part of the effort to improve the public image of the school, based on the pride in it felt by the girls and boys. As the school had both "Royal" and "Merchant Navy" connections, it was unique, and no one was allowed to forget it, nor the due deference that was expected. If there was a Royal Wedding, The Royal Merchant Navy School would be outside Buckingham Palace. It formed a guard of honour at the opening of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, and at the Merchant Navy Week at Southampton. On the occasion of the annual service for seafarers the school marched from the Merchant Navy War Memorial on Tower Hill to St Paul's Cathedral with drums playing and flags flying. A detachment from the school was at Southampton dockside to welcome the King and Queen back from their Canadian tour.

This publicity was good for the school and for its finances, and in this the school band of some 30 players played an important part. Its main purpose was to provide the musical honours at school parades, of which there was one every Sunday morning, but it was also in constant demand to play at garden parties, to head processions, and to provide music for events at the Albert Hall, the Waldorf Hotel, Reading Theatre, and, it is said, at Bertram Mills Circus, although in this case it is not quite clear in what capacity!

In the early 30's regimentation was still the order of the day, and the boys and girls were kept apart except for seeing each other in the dining hall and chapel, but a combined dance was held every other Saturday evening. As time went on, this segregation was gradually eroded, until both sexes attended the same lessons.

As in the past, the school benefited from the generosity of its many friends and supporters, and the dining hall, capable of seating the whole school at one sitting (about 300), was built as a memorial to Mr F. W. Marten, a popular Lloyd's figure. Thus, subsequently the Chairman of Lloyd's became an ex-officio member of the Board of Management.

The official opening of the school at Bearwood, and of the dining hall, was performed by the Marquis of Graham, and not, as is carved in the stone work, by HRH The Duke of York, who was called to represent his father at the wedding of the King of Serbia. The gymnasium, of large capacity, was presented by Captain Herbert A Taylor in memory of his father, Mr Jenneson Taylor, a prominent Sunderland shipowner. Lord Inverforth gave the sports pavilion as a memorial to Old Royals who gave their lives in the 1914-1918 war, and in the entrance hall there is a Roll of Honour of those Old Royals who were lost in the 1939-1945 war.

When the school moved to Bearwood, the old stables were converted into the sanatorium and subsequently Lord Nuffield gave an extension of isolation rooms.

In the old Snarebrook days, the girls and boys were organised in Houses named after school benefactors, but at Bearwood the names of famous merchant seamen were used. The girls' houses were Junior, Hawkins, Drake and Raleigh, and the boys' had the same names with the addition of Frobisher because of the increased numbers. In 1943, it was considered that the change in the tempo of life from the juniors to the seniors was too abrupt and so a new house, Grenville, was formed to cope with the transition period.

It has been explained how Sunday morning matins took place in the big school room, but all this was altered in 1934 when Lady Incape gave to the school the present chapel and organ as a memorial to the late Lord Incape. This filled a long-felt want and this handsome building has since played an important part in both the corporate and private life of most of those who dwell or have their being at Bearwood.



Front Hall in wartime

Chapter 5. Bearwood 1939–1945

The 1939–1945 war had an immediate effect on life at the school, and straight away sandbags, gas-masks, stirrup-pumps and black-outs were much in evidence. To a generation brought up to believe that Britannia did rule the waves, our early losses of capital ships made a profound impression.



Lt-Cdr R B Stannard



A London fire service vehicle at Bearwood

Before long the school was receiving children who had lost one or more parent as the result of enemy action. And at the upper end of the school, boys were leaving, going to sea, and maybe on their first voyage being in vessels torpedoed. The Merchant Navy was in the front line, and so our band and senior girls and boys were in constant demand to put on a show at “War Weapons Week” parades.

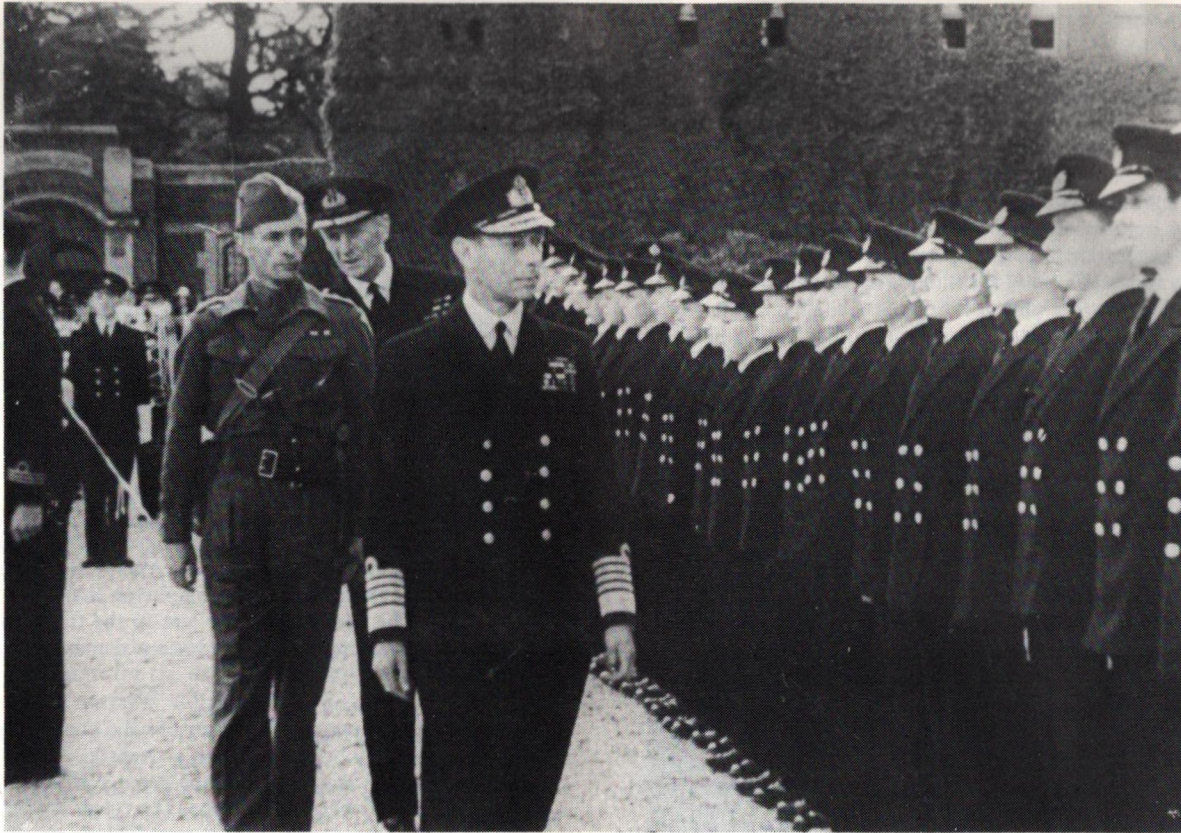
After the German “blitzkrieg” in Western Europe in 1940, there was the danger that the enemy might invade the country with airborne troops, so Bearwood main tower was used as an observation post, and was connected by telephone to the masters’ common room and by a direct line to Arborfield Garrison. The senior boys manned the tower during the day and the Home Guard took over during the hours of darkness. The garage at Winnersh crossroads was the headquarters; the school secretary was the officer in command; and there was a .22 rifle range in the gymnasium.

As regards air-raids, the school was fortunate. Only once did the school suffer any enemy action, and that was when a German bomber dropped a stick of fire-bombs around the building but not one on it.

When the air-raid alarm was given — and it was often at night — the boys and girls would grab their bundles of clothes and go down to the cellars where they would remain, maybe for hours, until the all-clear was sounded. Continuous repetition of this proved wearying and so the school was turned upside-down. Boys slept on the ground floor, girls on the first floor and the classrooms were on the second floor. Thus, when the air-raid alarm was heard two staff went outside as observers, and only when enemy action developed in the neighbourhood did people descend to the cellars.

Of course old scholars were always appearing at odd times, and many were stationed in the vicinity. They all had tales to tell, but the school was really very proud when Lt-Cdr R. B. Stannard, RNR, an old scholar, was awarded the second naval VC of the war for his “outstanding valour and devotion to duty” in command of the *Arab* (HM trawler) at Namsos.

There was one special occasion. Because of the important part being



School Guard of Honour being inspected by King George VI

played by the Merchant Navy, visits by important people were frequent, and so no one was impressed when it was announced that an important visitor would be arriving on the morrow. On the Friday evening, there was a special clean ship. On the Saturday the school was assembled in the gymnasium and given one hour's notice of the arrival of our distinguished visitors — none other than the King and Queen. From the early years, the school had enjoyed royal patronage, but to be honoured by this visit was taken as a special recognition of the vital work of the Merchant Navy.

Early in the war the Merchant Navy Comforts Service was formed to

supply Merchant Sailors with books, games, clothes and any other help, and all sorts of events took place to raise money from the public.

A joint committee was set up with the RMNS (later a trust) to deal with the money raised, so during the war the RMNS suspended its public appeals.

Celebration of victory was with a bonfire and fireworks near the boathouse and of the peace with the chartering of two Thames steamers which took the whole school — engineers, ground staff, the lot — for a trip up the Thames to Wallingford. All enjoyed themselves but for one snag — it rained all day.

Chapter 6. Bearwood 1945–1977

The period following the 1939–1945 war was a time of shortages to a greater or lesser degree in both materials and manpower and there were many instances of square pegs being pushed into round holes in order to keep the ship afloat. An adequate staff was eventually acquired by trial and error but many staff changes were to be expected.

There was also a management problem. Who was to be the Board's representative? In 1939, Mr Rawlinson had retired, after 51 years, and it was he, as secretary, who ran the school during this period. No one thought of challenging his position of influence. When Mr Rawlinson retired, Captain Tune became secretary but Captain Edwards put in a claim that he, and not the secretary, should represent the Board. This the Board rejected, and decided to abolish the position of governor. As this was 1939, Captain Edwards rejoined the Royal Navy. The Rev Archdeacon A D Gilbertson, who had recently become chaplain, was also appointed warden to replace Captain Edwards, and Major A Child became headmaster of both the boys and the girls. But this was not the kind of retirement that Archdeacon Gilbertson was hoping to find and he resigned his appointment as warden and was replaced by Captain Tune. Major A Child resigned as headmaster. The Rev T C P Brook was appointed headmaster, and Archdeacon Gilbertson resigned from the chaplaincy.

There was then a disagreement between Captain Tune and the Board of Management with the result that Major C Parnell became secretary. In April, 1945, Mr T C P Brook resigned, and Mr H O Green, the senior master, became acting headmaster. Unfortunately, Major Parnell died in

May, and when a full inspection by the Ministry of Education started at the end of June, it was to find no headmaster, and Captain A L Jackson as resident superintendent. Again a verbal report was made and there must have been several adverse comments. Now Mr W A Hill took over from Mr Green in September, 1946, but owing to the strains and stresses involved, he left in July 1947, and the Board again called upon Mr Green.

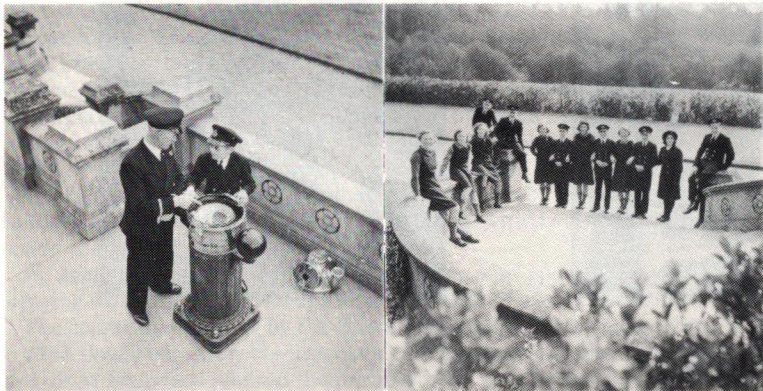
By now the situation was clear. The Board of Management was of the opinion that "the superintendent must remain the principal officer." The Ministry inspector would accept none other than the headmaster, and at least one member of the Board resigned on this issue. But when the chairman raised the question of the "future organisation of responsibility at Bearwood, pointing out that the dual control system had failed," the Board of Management gracefully accepted the facts of the situation. Mr C W S Averill became headmaster and occupied the "governor's" house; Captain Jackson became estate manager; there was a full inspection; and the Ministry gave the school official recognition and blessing in 1951. Tribute should be paid to the part played in all this by Mr H O Green, always ready to step in when things went wrong, and almost equally important, ready to step out again when the crisis was over.

A further post-war problem was numbers. They had begun to decline as far back as 1925 when there were about 320 boys and girls. When the war began numbers increased and the Board of Management thought that there would be a considerable increase in number in the years following the war, and as it was, the school was already short of space. Therefore the Board, with financial help from the Merchant Navy Comforts Service, bought a property at Bexhill-on-Sea and started a junior school for 45 boys and 27 girls. In two years, this junior school, under Mr J J Pritchard, was recognised by the Ministry of Education as "efficient." This junior school was successful from the educational point of view, but numbers were not maintained.

These difficulties were not peculiar to Bearwood; other institutions of similar type and foundation were in trouble and were not always able to deal with them. In 1949, The Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution, a place of similar origin to Bearwood, could no longer finance its activities, closed its premises and sent 24 children to Bearwood. Also the committee of the Southampton Seamen's Orphanage, which was an institution formed to look after "the children of seamen who have served in ships trading from Southampton, or who reside in the neighbourhood of Southampton," sent 23 children and agreed to maintain them at Bearwood. (In the late 60s the Southampton Orphanage was incorporated into the RMNS).

The post war years brought slow but significant changes in the academic sphere. Until now the school curriculum had been aimed at taking the Oxford Local Examination at junior level, but from 1939 the senior level was to be the future target.

Ever since the boys and girls had been under the same roof, they had been kept separate as far as possible. In 1939, they were taught together until the age of 10. As the idea of coeducation was accepted, it gradually spread upwards and downwards throughout the school. Recognition by the Board of Education was discussed in 1938, but little seemed to happen until 1941, when there was a three-day inspection followed by a verbal report, which presumably would make recommendations. Among other innovations there



The binnacle

A social group

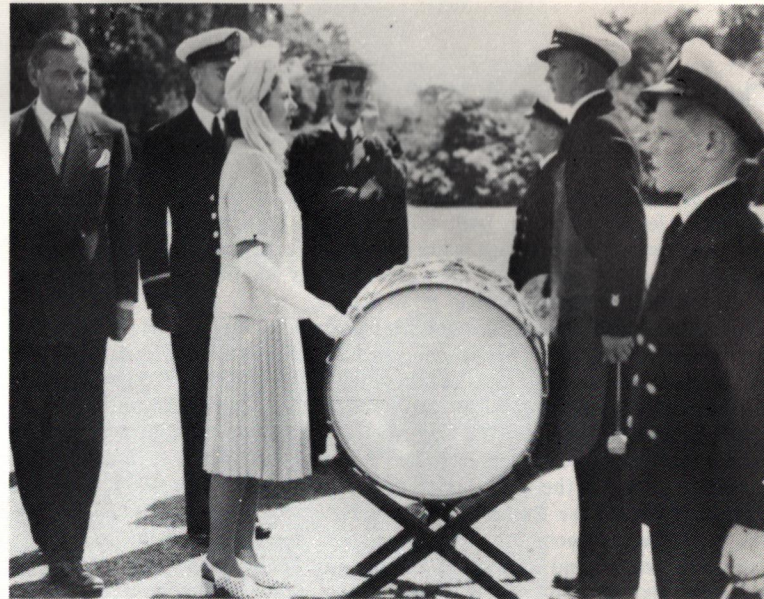
was a pilot estate training school for those boys who wished to take up farming, but for various reasons, this did not prove successful. In 1944, the "temporary" classrooms were built east of the dining hall (how long is "temporary"? They are still being used as the woodwork room, and the sixth form club room.) At last, the new outside classrooms and science block programme began, financed by the school share of the winding-up of the Merchant Navy Comforts Fund.

The years 1955 to 1968 were a momentous period for the school. During this time what appeared to be the end proved to be the start of a new era. There had been many changes in the senior administrative staff prior to and during the early years of Mr Averill's headmastership. There had been no estate manager since 1954 which had added to the responsibilities of the headmaster. His request to the Board of Governors for administrative assistance resulted in the appointment of Mr Northcote-Green as bursar in October 1955.

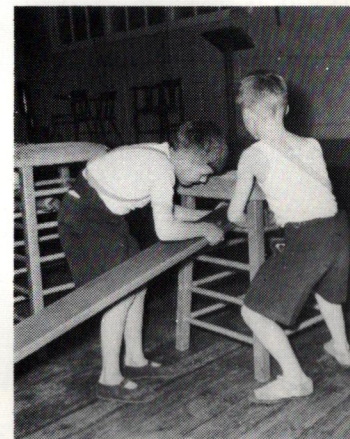
From 1955 to 1959 the Board were faced with many problems brought about by the falling number of pupils at the Bexhill junior school and Bearwood. In 1955 there were only 80 girls and 149 boys at Bearwood and at Bexhill 24 places unfilled. The forecast revealed that numbers would continue to fall with the closure of both schools inevitable.

There followed a period of three years during which the Board was engaged in debating the most satisfactory method to care for those eligible for education within the aims of the constitution. Numbers continued to fall especially at Bexhill with the result that in 1958 the junior school, together with the headmaster's house, were sold.

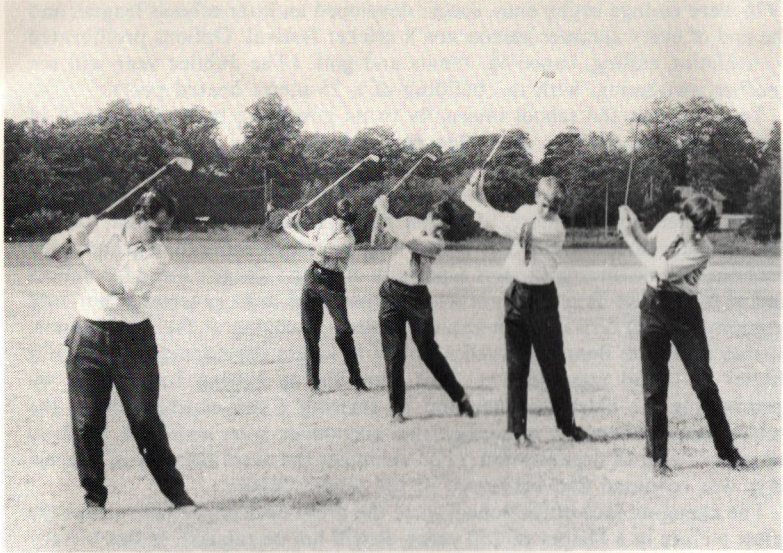
In 1959 the Board of Governors finally made their decision to retain



Princess Elizabeth at the school in 1947



Memories of Bexhill-on-Sea



Golf

Bearwood for boys, the girls to be found places at other suitable schools, to accept full fee payers from the Services, and in 1961 from any other source prepared to pay full fees. The Royal Merchant Navy School was now an independent boarding school with foundationers having priority.

The transitional period from 1960 to 1962 was ably undertaken by the headmaster, Mr Averill, who then retired. The history of the school would not be complete without mentioning Miss Fox, who had been in charge of the girls from 1948 until 1960, when the few remaining girls were accepted by Sawbridgeworth. She continued with her teaching until retiring in 1966.

In order to attract fee-paying parents, improvements in the amenities and standards in all departments of the school were necessary, the most important being a higher level of education and games, together with improved living conditions. Money was short, legacies and donations had fallen as the years after the two world wars receded. Economies were necessary. The London office was closed on the retirement of Major Beazley, and the posts of secretary and bursar were combined and operated at Bearwood. Eighty acres of the estate were leased to the Forestry Commission and the Jersey herd was sold. The sale of the junior school at Bexhill and two house properties outside the estate at Bearwood enabled funds to be made available for a building and improvements plan commencing with two married quarters beside the main drive.

In January, 1963, Mr P M Cunningham was appointed headmaster, bringing with him the knowledge and experience of a boys' boarding school.

The course had been set by the Board's decision in 1959 so that from 1963 to 1968 slowly but surely the improvements required took place. Having now no girls at Bearwood allowed the previous boys' area to expand and the four houses to be self-contained. New changing rooms, five married quarters for masters, a new sanatorium (the old being converted into a junior house), the

Cook library, two laboratories, 11 acres of new playing fields and housemasters' flats within the main school adjoining their respective houses, all these were completed.

The school was most grateful to the Joseph Strong Frazer Trustees for their great interest and financial aid during this period, making possible many of these improvements by the donation of no less than £63,000.

In 1965 HM inspectors visited Bearwood. The contents of their report were most satisfactory and a credit to all concerned. The improvements attracted not only masters of the required ability to improve the standard of education to 6th form level but also those skilled in the coaching of athletics, cricket and football.

For the first time the full use of the natural amenities of the estate were made available for many activities, with regular use of the lake for sailing and fishing. With these assets and helped by the contact made with local preparatory schools, numbers began to improve and a higher standard in classroom and on playing field was achieved.

In 1968 Mr Northcote-Green retired, Major Howells being appointed secretary/bursar.

The decision back in 1959 to open the school to all took on its own dynamism; change begot change, and as the numbers grew towards 300 there



Sailing

created beside the library and study-bedrooms in each house (to be followed in 1971 by a licensed club!). At the same time the previous picture of large dormitories, double-bunked, and day-rooms, moved towards the idea of personalising each boy's living area with bed, desk and wardrobe. This move being costly, took some years to complete. Costly also was the introduction of self-service in the dining-hall, but needful too for larger numbers and for economy.

By 1970 increased numbers and classes and teaching staff meant a need for more classrooms. In consequence parents and Old Royals responded generously to an appeal for funds, with the result that when, on April 29, 1971, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited Bearwood, he was able to open a new teaching block, together with matrons' quarters. (He was also able to meet foundationer girls from other schools assembled for the occasion.)

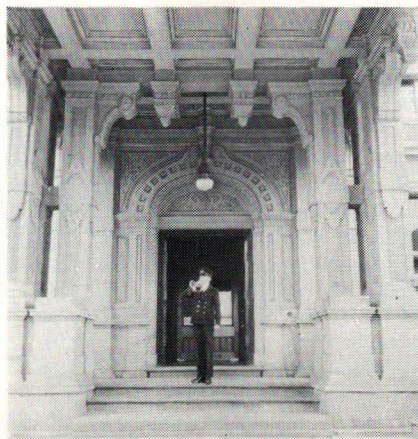
A picture of the school in the mid-70s must portray more than bricks and mortar. In line with these came new teaching methods (like a theatre workshop), allied with the tried discipline of "pluses" and "minuses" well-remembered by generations of Old Royals. House plays each December and the school play in March, music with its termly concert (the house competition died in 1974), the choral society, the Devitt society and the Captain Hill public speaking competition — all these gave life to the bones.

In 1976 the school numbered 335 boys, 28 teaching staff, a junior house, four senior boarding houses and a day house. The sixth form numbered 55. Extra-curricular activities once a week ranged widely from archery and chess to squash and war-games (the squash court was put up in 1972). A second afternoon was devoted to the combined cadet force and community service. Team games were on three other afternoons a week. The years 1971 and

1976 were vintage rugby ones, soccer developed an inter-schools league, and the end of every summer season saw a cricket festival. Options proliferated — athletics, sailing, canoeing, tennis and golf. (The Jubilee year will see another, swimming, with the building of a 25-metre heated pool).

To turn from the school internally to its governing body, the period of growth since the decision of 1959 increasingly found the governors exercised by the consequences of their decision, namely, the calls of expenditure needed for change on the one hand and the shortage of income for the Trust on the other. Furthermore, inflation as experienced in the mid-70s hit educational charities hard. The Board was, therefore, more than grateful for the firm and continuing support especially of King George's Fund for Sailors and of the Frazer Trust, both of whom subscribed most generously not only annually but, on occasion, for capital projects. Looking at their own assets, furthermore, the Board pursued a policy of estate development, in itself a matter of sound management. This they did by raising beef cattle, by resurrecting the market-garden and by starting a golf-course open to the public. Simultaneously, administrative economies were enforced, both in manpower and in organisation. (For example, the farm laundry of the old days was rehoused and harnessed to the school boiler).

The changing face of the school since the great decision of 1959 is but the latest picture in a history of 150 years. It will not be the last. If this history has a message, it is that while the face may change, the heart remains the same. Born in Bow Road, nurtured at Snaresbrook, and now renewed to face the modern world as Bearwood College, the school has an abiding trust, firm in its foundation, to serve its generation as the past served theirs. These pages stand, hopefully, as a record of that service.



Front door

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FAMILY

How Bearwood Mansion became a school

Last week STEVE BACON provided us with the story of the Walter family, owners of the Bearwood Mansion. This week, the story of this great old house continues after the First World War

AFTER the Canadian medical staff left in mid-1919, Bearwood Mansion was much emptier. How could it survive the 20th Century?

With so many rooms it was grander than the fictional Downton Abbey.

With a bit of lateral thinking, one institution realised that Bearwood was the perfect place to relocate its orphanage. John Walter V sold the property in January 1920 to the Royal Merchant Seamen's Orphanage.

It was funded by two main donors, namely Sir Thomas Lane Devitt, senior partner of the firm of Devitt & Moore, ship owners, and Sir Alfred Yarrow, head of the Clyde engineering and shipbuilding firm.

The Orphanage dated back nearly a century. In 1827, five boys, the orphans of merchant seamen, had been placed in the charge of a Mr and Mrs Fisher in a private house in St George's-in-the-East, London. This grew over the years to care for nearly 3,000 children, latterly at Snaresbrook. By the 1920s the Orphanage had outgrown its premises and relocated to Bearwood, many miles from the sea - but with a magnificent lake, highly suitable for training young sailors.

A grand opening ceremony took place in 1922.

Although the Duke of York was unable to attend, the Commodore the Marquis of Graham CB CVO performed the honours in front of 130 guests. A new refectory had been built ready for the opening ceremony; the Commodore acted as stand-in to unveil a plaque above the mantelpiece: "This hall was presented in memory of Frederick William Marten by his friends at Lloyd's, and was dedicated on the 27th day of May, 1922, by his Royal Highness the Duke of York".

A newspaper report says that after the ceremony, "the guests were entertained

to tea on the lawn, during which the children gave a very smart display of gymnastics and physical drill. Graceful national dances were performed by several of the girls and hornpipes by the boys, followed by school singing".

There was plenty of time in ensuing years for Princes and Princesses, Dukes and Duchesses and even Kings and Queens to attend Speech Days and to open facilities. The Patron of the HMNS, King George VI, visited for the first time in late July 1941, accompanied by Queen Elizabeth; the newspaper report noted that "300 excited, delighted children cheered themselves hoarse" in welcome.

Various other buildings were dedicated by different donors. According to its

plaque, the Gymnasium was erected in 1930 in memory of Jenneson Taylor Esq. of Sunderland, who had been President of the Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom in 1908.

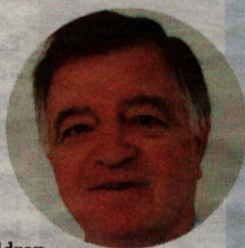
The school gained its own chapel in memory of James Lyle Mackay, first Earl of Inchcape, treasurer of the RMNS from 1917 to 1932.

In 1934, it was dedicated for the school by his widow Jean.

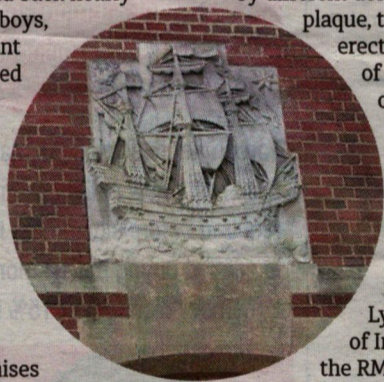
Former pupils from the school played a prominent part in the Second World War.

In the early days, there were plenty of deserving cases for the orphanage, including a couple of sisters. Sunderland was a major shipbuilding centre and seaport, with a large coastal trade in coal. John Chisholm Colling was a master mariner working in the collier trade; he married Elizabeth Potts in 1911 and they had three children. Sadly, Elizabeth died in childbirth in 1920, leaving John and his mother to bring up the family.

John Colling died in January 1922 during the influenza outbreak - and his mother also died from the epidemic, on the day of his funeral. Thus, the daughters were admitted to the



Left: Bearwood as it is now - the school is now known as Reddam House. Below left: the on-site chapel and below, Jellicoe House.



Above: Bearwood Theatre and inset: the Chapel ship emblem



seafarers such as Drake and Jellicoe.

The site continues to have a sporting theme which it can trace back to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital days: first a nine-hole golf course; then an 18-hole course. Now the nine-hole golf course will be replaced by the Reading FC Sporting Academy, adapting many of the gardeners' cottages and outbuildings from over a century ago to a new use.

The wartime Bear Wood Canadian FC would be proud.

It is of note that the planning applications for the new football academy are in the name of the 'Royal Merchant Navy Foundation', the charity that still looks after the interests of seafarers' orphans.

■ My daughter Becky celebrated her wedding reception at Bearwood Mansion in June 2013, and her aunt Joyce was able to enjoy the reception where the Colling orphans, her elder cousins, had spent so many years when not in Sunderland with her.

Orphanage in the year it moved to Bearwood, and in the holidays they stayed with their grandparents and cousins in Sunderland. It's a small world, because my wife's mother was one of the cousins, and was able to visit Bearwood in recent years.

After the Second World War, the number of potential orphans declined partly because merchant shipping was safer, and partly because so many ships now carry flags of convenience. The school adapted to change, becoming an independent day and boarding school, but continuing with a nautical flavour; the Houses are named after famous