

The original charter,
featuring Queen Elizabeth I



1583

It was likely that in 1583 that Sir Thomas Cokayne and 4 other men petitioned for a free school in Ashbourne, on the grounds that the lack of education meant people were “given over to wickedness and vices such as swearing, drunkenness, whoredom, idleness, and such like”.



Original site
of the school

1603

Main school building was finished in 1603, and opened fully for the first time under the headship of a Mr Ward.

1608

The entire school was finally completed in 1608, after 24 years, and at a cost of £400 – which would the same as £50,000 in 2013.

1600

Although considered the first school in Ashbourne – there is evidence to suggest that there were Chantry schools beginning in the 14th century – provided very basic education, with a strong religious base as they were related to the Church.

1585

Started in 1585 on Church St. near the centre of Ashbourne, founded by Queen Elizabeth I and a Royal Charter, which dates to 15th July 1585. It comprised of 3 governors who can be seen in the School Seal beneath the Queen, the most famous of which was Sir Thomas Cokayne (1520-1592).



1606

The plague hit Ashbourne, leading to 62 deaths in the town, sadly including 2 of the Headmaster's children

Sources:

- Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School 1585-1985 by Adrian Henstock
- History of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School Ashburne by N.J. Frangopulo
- <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>
- <http://www.visitashbourne.co.uk/queen-elizabeth%E2%80%99s-grammar-school-1585>
- <http://www.queenelizabeths.derbyshire.sch.uk/brief-history.php>

Early 1600's

During this period, money was an issue for the school. Often not gaining enough income to pay its 4 members of staff. This often meant a guarantor had to pay off the deficit. This was such a problem as it was a Free Grammar School, so got little to no money off its pupil's families.

1608

The school was finally completed in this year. Situated on Church Street it was built as close to St. Oswald's Church as possible, as part of the specification – this of course caused strong religious influence within the school. This may have been strengthened later by the large number of Reverend Headmasters.

Religion was a large part of the school in the 17th century, after the reign of the protestant Queen Elizabeth. At every Grammar school across the country, lessons began in the morning and ended with religious exercises (anything from a few prayers to a full service). It was the one key qualification for a school master.



At this time the Headmaster, Mr. Ward, only received £20 yearly salary – even at the time this was far less than other larger schools. However, he was granted a house, an orchard and a garden. Thanks to this he was much better off than his predecessors.

1613

A new endowment of land needed to be secured by the school, in order to gain the Earl of Shrewsbury's support, the governors of the school paid out enough money to buy claret and sugar to make cake. All in order to bribe the Earl to gain his support of the school.

1616

In this year Rev. William Hull became the new headmaster of the school, and continued to be until 1618, he later passed in 1627. He is significant as it is his name that the name of the house of Hull originates. Hull is still one of the four house at the school today.

1618

There was hiatus here, where the school was interrupted for the following 3 years. On return in 1622, it can only be assumed that a Mr. Fox returned to be Headmaster

Definitions:

Endowment – a property that has been given or left to an institution (school)

Curriculum

As well as religion being hugely important in the school, the language Latin was too, as it was in many other schools across the country. This was because at the beginning of the 17th century, all works of importance were written in it, as a result the school's curriculum looked something like this: children's Latin talk, Latin conversation, books in Latin and Greek, Latin Grammar, Latin translations etc. It comes as no surprise that discipline was undertaken in Latin.

1622

Believe it or not, it was only now that the governors decide it best that money should be deducted from the pupil's beer drinking allowance, in order to create the bell ringers salary. All be it a measly 6 shillings and 8 pence.

1640

Although known as the "Free Grammar School" – as said on the charter. In order to put it in line with others in the country, the governors of the school began to impose an entrance fee. However, this was only for entrants from outside the parish of Ashbourne.



King Charles I, 1625 - 1649

Even the school's ethos to this day is Latin – "En bon espoir", meaning "in good hope."



Punishment

It may come of no surprise to you that discipline was seen as being one of the primary methods of "teaching". Although merits were given to those who excelled, it was believed the whipping of a pupil with a cane was the best way to create a strong moral fibre. It was intended to make misbehaviour unpleasant.

1626

Following Rev. Hull's death this year, Reverend Joseph Taylor took his place as Headmaster. However this was only until a better placement could be found. Saying this, Rev. Taylor actually continued in his post at the school until 1633.

1645

The middle of the 1st English Civil War, between King Charles I and the governments "New Model Army". After the King's defeat at the Battle of Naseby, King Charles stayed in the Hall and attended a service at the parish Church. During this time, the minutes from meetings with the governors are missing, having been ripped out, it can be assumed that they may have been damaging to either side in the war. This was simply down to high tensions in the country at the time.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_era -
Picture of King Charles I

Mid Seventeenth Century

At this point a sort of educational renaissance was happening in Britain after the end of the first civil war. People began to see the failures of the schools and universities in preparing the British youth for the new conditions for life. This led to number of propositions for a change in the curriculum to teach more applicable and modern skills. They wanted to reduce time spent teaching Latin and Greek, in place of subjects we teach in all schools today. History, Geography, Writing, Arithmetic and modern languages were all proposed.

Throughout the next few years the school went through Headmaster's a rapid speed. This was most likely due to the change in the way the government wanted the nation's schools to teach its pupils.

1672

In this year a Bill was drawn up stating that all teachers must fulfil their duties to their best ability and follow guidelines on how to do their job. This follows an Act in 1662 that says all schoolmasters must have a license to teach. This eventually led to the fact that schoolmasters became purely there to enforce the governments wants, as any deviation would cause consequence. Previous to this Headmasters had a certain freedom to teach what they saw fit, so it was one of the first cases of control over how schools were run.

1700

1651

After the Civil War, and under the Headmastership of Mr. Henry Mellour, the school began repairs to the building. In total, the costs amounted to £153, just over ten times Mr. Mellour's yearly salary.



1671

The new Lords of the Manor were the Boothby's, after having purchased the town hall of Sir Aston Cokayne. They have a longstanding relationship with the school, their name is still in use as the name of one of the 4 houses today.

Ashbourne
Town Hall

1676

Following the government acts, one of the first periods of prolonged service of Headmasters occurred at QEGS. Until now they had tended to be replaced every 2-5 years, some not even staying for a year. In 1676 Mr. William Hardestee was elected "Head Schoolmaster", and continued at the helm until 1713.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/derby/content/articles/2006/08/11/ashbourne_history_walk.shtml?page=2
– Ashbourne Town Hall

1710

Nicholas Spalden, a wealthy townsman, left in his will money to build 2 junior prep schools, for 30 “poor young boys” and 30 “poor young girls”. The boys were taught until they were ready to go to the Grammar School, whereas the girls were taught “reading, knitting and sewing”. The 2 schools were built on the site on what is now, Ashbourne Methodist Church Café.

1732

After a shortage of funds, a Mr Samuel Johnson, was forced to return from Pembroke College, Oxford, back to his home in Lichfield. He then applied for a job as under-master at the Grammar School in Ashbourne, but was in fact turned down.

He later went on to become Dr. Samuel Johnson, writer of the First English Dictionary in 1755.



Dr. Samuel Johnson

1751-53

After the two longest spells of a continuous Headmaster, the school goes through 2 years rapid replacement of its Headmasters. Until they finally appoint Rev. William Langley in 1751, who provided countless troubles for the school and its governors.

It is Mr. Spalden’s name that is taken for the 4th and final house at the school today.

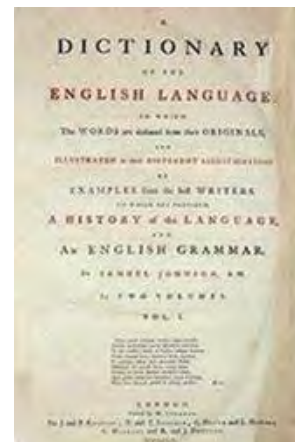


Ashbourne Methodist Church Café – the site of the old prep

1725

The headmaster at the time, Reverend Samuel Burnett was punished for allowing things, other than what was considered correct to happen within the school. “Dancing, Music, Gaming and other interludes” apparently happened on a frequent basis within the school (pretty much anything fun!). The schools governors made sure that no such ‘fun’ should happen in future.

Had Dr. Johnson got the position at the school, it is a possibility that he may have never written the dictionary!



1754

It appears Mr. Langley had a furious temper, as a result got through many Usher’s during his time at QEGS. His first instance was in 1754, when he broke a table, simply because he was displeased with the fact the pupils were learning to improve their “Writing and Accounts”. Not long after, he was reported of refusing to teach certain pupils and even beating them in an “inhumane manner”.

Pictures -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Johnson

1757

The ordeal was even worse for the school than just an unfit Master, because in 1757, after his attempted removal, Langley filed a case against the governors of the school. Which he later won in, resulting in the governors being forced to pay out a large amount of money, and caused them to go into a debt of £402 10s 5d. In 2005, this would have been worth £25, 515 – not a small sum of money! Which shows what a detriment Langley really was.

1796

After the hugely troubled, period of Langley, the governors replaced him with Rev. Paul Belcher. They had soon rectified the lacking of pupils, and the Reverend's Headship proved to very stable, with few drama's. It also helped to renew the lost enthusiasm by the governors to help the school excel.



Old School Yard

1837

Shortly after dismissal of Mr. Gibbs, the usher, for being incapable of teaching with competence at the Headmaster's wish. A complaint by a parent was filed against the Headmaster for beating a child too harshly. This was something that had occurred more than once, and was accordingly dealt with by the governors.

1800

1760's

Although I am sure the Governors wished to remove Langley, as they found him unfit for position. However, there was huge difficulty in removing a Master at that time. They couldn't remove him because they "insufficient grounds", so Reverend Langley simply refused to leave house appointed to him on his appointment.

1794 - 95

In the year before his death, it was reported to the Bishop of Lichfield that Rev. Langley had been neglecting the Free Grammar School in that there was now only 1 pupils at the school. Due to the issues in removing a School Master, Langley stayed in his position until his death in 1795.

1796 - 1836

During his time as Headmaster, Belcher greatly improved the school, by increasing the number of boarders to 35 at one point. He also helped diversify the curriculum, as well as the traditional Latin, the pupils were now taught: English, History, Geography and on occasion, Arithmetic taught by the Usher.

1836

The next significant Headmaster of the school came later in 1836 in the form of a previous Harrow assistant master, Rev. George Edward Gepp. He wanted to make considerable changes, including the requirement that pupils be of a certain academic ability before coming to the Grammar School - a sort of admissions test.



The main punishment for a pupil at that time was the cane, where a Master would strike the pupil. It was intended to act as a deterrent for the pupils, and was used right up until 1987, when corporal punishment was banned in school.

1840's

The term "Free School" came under question at this time. It may be instantly assumed that this meant free of charge, so all students, rich or poor, could attend. However, others suggested it meant "free from the control of a superior body". This eventually led to certain, non-required subjects, such as Writing and Arithmetic being charged for at the school. It was considered that Classics (Latin and Greek) and Religion were more important at the time.

1861

After the first examination – the examiner suggested that the boys of the school should be rewarded for achievement. The governors took this on board and for the next exams in 1861, four prizes were arranged:

- First – The Spectator (a conservative magazine)
- Second – Macaulay's Essays
- Third – Life of George Stephenson
- Fourth - Shakespeare's Works

1870

After Mr. Gepp resigned in 1872, the school only had 2 regular pupils. The governors then received a petition signed by townsfolk, willing for better future management of the school.

1876 and 1879

The junior Schools set up as a result of Nicholas Spalden were completely closed down now, having not had any pupils attend for several years.

QEGS was closed in 1879, partially due to loss in numbers of students, once again. But mainly because the building was in need of repair.

1885

In 1885, the school celebrated 300 years since the signing of the royal charter by Queen Elizabeth. There was an award ceremony along with a church service at St. Oswald's.

1856

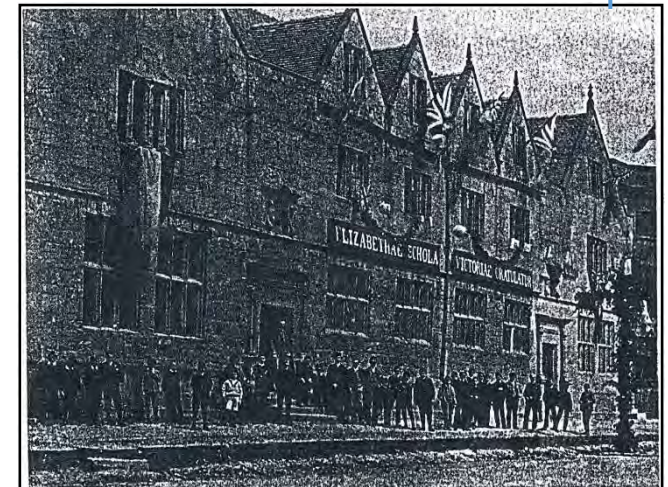
A snowball fight broke out on the streets between the pupils of the school and St Oswald's church choir singers. It resulted in 2 broken windows!

1859

In 1859 the pupils of the school were examined. It was found that many of the pupils were excelling in Classics, however tended to fall short in the other subjects. The examiner remarks that History, Geography, English and Maths were not being taught as separate subjects – and that the Classics were taking too much time in comparison.

1867

In 1867, the Commissioner of the North Midlands section came to inspect the school – similar to an Ofsted report of the day. As found previously, the school was too focussed on Classics, and not enough emphasis was put on modern subjects. The commissioner found that Arithmetic and Writing was poor throughout the school. He even thought that prizes and rewards should not be given for achievement.



In 1887, the school celebrated Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

1892

For the first time they began to teach technical education, science and art at the school, under the headship of Rev. William Reed. This was because of the act 3 years previous and the promise by the government they would financially aid the school if they began to teach these subjects. It was necessary at the time because the number of pupils had dropped to 13, and the school needed the money.

1904

In 1904, the school needed to expand to accommodate 120 pupils, 60 boys and 60 girls. The first time girls would be allowed to come to the Grammar school. The architect E.M Lonsdon stated that in order to do so, the entire building would have to be demolished in order to start again. However, it was thought to be shame to get rid of the old building entirely, as it had stood for over 300 years. They instead decided they should build an entirely new school on Green Road.

1914 - 1918

During World War 1, under the new headmaster Mr. Legge, the students of the school made a number of contributions to the war effort. Including the donation of money to the certain charities, including: Public School's Hospital Fund, War Saving's Scheme, the Cripples Home and Dr. Barnado's Homes. As well as sending a large number of socks to the troops which were made in the girls' sewing class. By the end of this period, the school needed further expansion, as it was already 70 pupils over the buildings intentional capacity.

1922

By this time a new Chemistry lab was installed, and tennis courts and a playground were built.

A group of 72 former pupils got together and created a former pupils of QEGS society. A year later after contacting a large number of previous students, the "Old Ashburnian Society" was formed.

1900

1894

In 1894, the Headmaster W.J. Butcher introduced the school badge still in use today – the Cokayne family arms, the 3 cockerels. He also introduced the school houses, which each of the pupils would be sorted into.

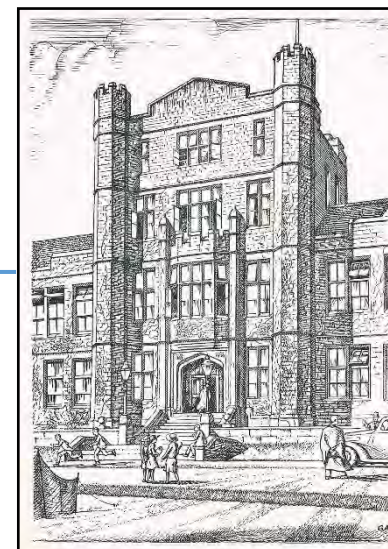


1907

After deciding to build a new school, the foundation stone was laid. Underneath it was placed copies of "The Times" newspaper, coins of the time, local newspapers and a list of the school governors.

1909

The school was completed and open to student in 1909, under the Headmaster William James Butcher. The school started with 71 student – 16 of them girls for the first time, most of the students were aged 12-16. In total the school cost £13,356 – which is around £750,000 in today's money. There were now tuition fees for each pupil that attended, of between £6 and £12 per year.



1932

The old school building was still being used as a house for the boarders of the school, as well as the Headmaster and his family. In this year, "The Ivies" not far from the old school was purchased as a house for the girls who boarded at QEGS. It was needed, as the site on Green Road was completely full.

1959

QEGS briefly made national news after a schoolboy prank. A 13 year-old pupil sent a letter to the Russian space programme offering to be a part of the next "Sputnik" satellite flight. Some rather cruel older pupils convincingly replied to his letter, as if they were the Russians, as they offered him a place to go and train in Siberia.

1985

The school celebrated 400 years since the signing of the royal charter in 1585. The school was visited by the Queen Elizabeth II, where she unveiled a plaque at the Old School on the Green Road.

2003

The upper site on Derby road was closed in this year, as the Green Road site had a number of new classrooms constructed, in order to accommodate the growing number of students. The Headmaster Dr. A.R. Wilkes conducted a final assembly on the Derby Road site.

2000

1935

The school celebrated its 350th anniversary with an award ceremony and church service where all students and parents, as well as past pupils and guests from the Board of Education were invited.

1973

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School merged with Ashbourne County Secondary school, under the name of the first. They formed two sites, upper and lower, on Green Road and Derby Road respectively. They merged after the County Secondary School had been there for 20 years.



Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School Ashbourne 1585-1985, Adrian Henstock

<http://www.ashbournenewstelegraph.co.uk/News/Farwell-to-old-school.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:QEGS_ashbourne.jpg

2009

In 2009 the school celebrated 100 years on the Green Road, with a Church Service and a commemorative assembly in the Main Hall.

2013

After 18 years at the helm, Headmaster Dr. A.R. Wilkes retired in 2012. He was replaced by the current Headteacher, Mrs A. Martin, who is the first female Headteacher Queen Elizabeth's has ever had. The school also now has over 1,000 students, ranging from ages 11-18 – quite a difference from the few that started there, 400 plus years ago.

