
Edward Betham School

Tuesday 23rd November is Founder's Day At The Edward Betham School

The Founder, The Reverend Edward Betham



The Reverend Edward Betham was the Rector of Greenford Magna between 1769 and 1783. He was well-known as a scholar and for his charitable works which included gifts to Cambridge University and Eton College.

When he died, he was buried in the churchyard of Holy Cross Church, on the north side of the church, at the east end.

Greenford in the past

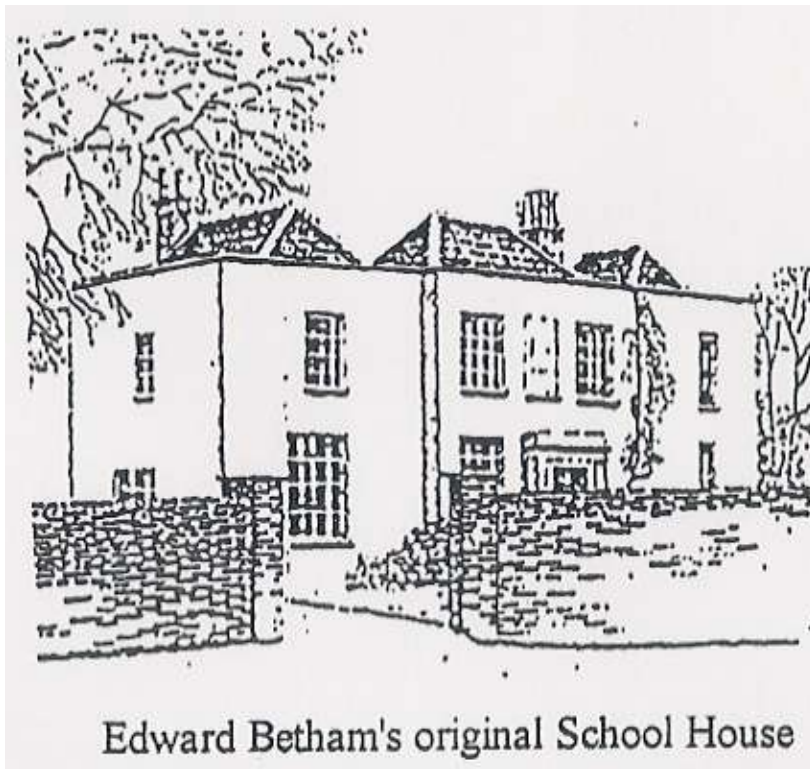
For most of the time in the past, life in Greenford revolved around the annual work of agriculture. People were permitted to grow food on the land by permission of the land owners. Each

farmer was obliged to give 10% of their crops to the owner. Before the creation of modern road systems, communication with the surrounding area and the wider world would have been through cart tracks and bridle ways if you were rich enough to own a horse or donkey. Mostly people would walk everywhere. Life in the village of Greenford must have remained fairly unadventurous and self-contained for several hundreds of years. Little by little, the influences of the outside world were to change all that. During the early Tudor period, a new Porch was added on the south face of the Church indicating the presence in the village of both wealth and interest in the Church.

At the time Edward Betham was Rector of Greenford Magna, there were very few people living in Greenford, and most of them were poor people, employed as workers on the farms which were covered the whole area. Edward Betham himself came from a rich family and attended Eton Public School and King's College in Cambridge. As he was the son of a clergyman, he was expected to learn how to read and gain the skills necessary to study theology and become a priest himself. So, Edward Betham really understood the importance of education as he himself had a very good experience at school and university. It is nice to think that he wanted everyone, rich or poor, to experience the benefits of a good education.

Edward Betham's Gift

In 1780, Edward Betham was 71 and only 3 years away from dying. For some reason which we don't know, he had a really good idea! He decided to give some of his money to found a school for the poor children of Greenford. Perhaps he was a kind man who wanted to help other people? Perhaps he had a vision of what education might do to change the life of the village children? Whatever the reason, we are all here at Edward Betham School because in 1780, Edward Betham paid for a school to be built and gave £1600 of his own money to pay the teacher so that poor boys and girls could go to school for free. In those days, £1600 was a very large sum of money indeed.



What Edward Betham wanted his school to do

The plaque on the wall of the original Betham School reads:

Latin text
 AD PAUPERUM PUEROS
 RELIGIONIS RUDIMENTIS
 IMBUENDUM FUNDATAS
 Has AEDES D.O.M.D.

E.B. MDCCLXXX

English translation
 To the poor children
 rudiments of religion
 to teach the fundamentals
 this building is dedicated
 to God, the best, greatest
 E.(dward) B.(etham) 1780

The Betham Trustees

When he died, responsibility for looking after his school, and the money that was left over after building the school, was given to a group of people called **Trustees**, people who could be **trusted** to make sure the school was doing well, the building kept in good repair and that the children were being looked after and educated properly.

Today, there are still Betham Trustees who are responsible for the residue of money which still remains from Edward Betham's original gift. The Rector of Greenford Magna is always a Trustee and he is joined by 7 other people who are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting of the parish of Greenford Magna. These people meet once a term to hear about what is happening in school and to discuss how they can support the school and which projects might be suitable for spending the money they look after in trust.

The Curriculum

The curriculum was made clear from the start. The plaque in Holy Cross Old Church sets it out. Here is a summary, but see the next page for the full text of the plaque. If you visit the Church, you will see the plaque on the south wall.

The Plaque in the Old Church

1780
EDW^D. BETHAM
Rector of this Parish, built a Charity School
with a Houfe for the Mafter & Miftrefs
& endowed it with £1600 Bank Stock.
£10 part of the Dividends to go towards
Cloathing Ten Poor aged Men & Women
of this Parifh, who fhould attend
the Sacrament on Xmas Day:
£30 to the Mafter for Instructing 30
Poor Boys & Girls, to Read, Write,
Cauft accompts, & Know the Principles
of the Xtian Religion;
the Girls to be Taught alfo
to Work, Sew and Knit;
£30 in Coals for the School;
Other part in Cloathing the Children,
& the Remainder in Repairing
the School & Houfe, & in buying
Spelling, -Prayer-Books, Teftaments, &c.
Inroll'd in Chancery Nov.16th. 1780

Greenford starts to grow and so does the School

The school worked well for many years, but slowly, the population of Greenford started to grow. For over 100 years the school continued in the house built by Edward Betham in Oldfield Lane, providing an education for the children of Greenford, Perivale, Northolt and Hanwell. In 1876 Betham's school became an Elementary Public School in accordance with the Education Act of that year. Two years later, as the old school house was becoming overcrowded, the Inspectors made further grants conditional on new school buildings being provided and these were built on Rickyard Field, a little further along Oldfield Lane.

So, on 29th April 1978 the School assembled in the New Building after the Easter Holidays. This was a building of brick with a clock tower and a bell which was rung at 8.45 a.m. This is the building which we now know as the Edward Betham Infant department. People sometimes call this building the "Clock School." This phase of building included two classrooms underneath the clock tower and a small building with two more classrooms, which we now use as the Nursery, with a large playground between them. The Boys and Girls toilets were in the playground. The other parishes now had to provide their own schools, although children still seem to have come from Perivale, Northolt and Hanwell to school in Greenford, much as they do today.

Extracts from the log books of the school give a vivid picture of life there during the latter part of the 19th century. The main subjects studied were reading, writing and arithmetic, together with composition, history and geography. Music seems to have been an important part of the curriculum, mainly in the form of songs such as rounds, carols and 'Callisthenics songs'. The girls were also taught needlework. The most significant event of the year was the annual inspection at which the pupils were examined in the basic subjects and the general condition of the school assessed. A good deal of effort went into ensuring success. For example, in 1877, "The Vacation for Christmas has been postponed for a week longer in order to prepare for the Annual School Inspection."



The school year was similar to that of today with holidays of about 3 weeks at Christmas and 1 week at Easter. The main difference was that the summer holidays (usually about 5 weeks long) were earlier, starting at the end of June. This was to coincide with the Hay Harvest, the major agricultural event of the year in which the children were expected to help. Other work such as labouring in the brickfields and helping at home also kept children away from school.

Other factors which disrupted school attendance were epidemic diseases and bad weather. The log books record outbreaks of scarlet fever, 'an affection similar to mumps, measles, scarlatina and - influenza. The floods for which Greenford was notorious frequently prevented pupils, especially those from Greenford Green and Horsenden from coming to school and the log also records instances of storms and heavy snow. The new buildings had helped with the problems of overheating in the summer but in cold weather the children still suffered. Their "...hands too cold to write on paper." In 1925 when Albert Blount was appointed headmaster, the school was still housed in the two rooms of the clock tower building. Because of the increasing numbers of pupils the school decided to hire rooms in the Village Hall.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, the administration of the school passed to the Middlesex Education Authority and then in 1928 to Ealing Education Committee,.

More schools in Greenford



The Betham School was to continue the only school in Greenford until the rapid expansion of housing in the area eventually led to the opening of another school, Coston's Mixed which opened in 1928 with 401 pupils. Mr. Blount transferred there as head and Betham became an Infants only school with Miss Eleanor Parkin as head.

The Coston School Infant Department

However, the population continued to increase and by 1938 Betham was so overcrowded that 3 classes were held in wooden huts in Coston's playground. The children who came from the other side of the western Avenue were eventually accommodated at Oldfield School. Coston School opened with 8 classes in what is now their Infant and Nursery Department. In 1930, Coston School doubled in size with the addition of the Coston School for Boys. This building is what is what we now call Edward Betham Junior Department.

More additional buildings

In 1932, a Hall was built after financial subscriptions from the Church and other organisations. This is what we now call the Infant Hall. It was built as a Village Hall and was used for dances and other social activities as well as for children.

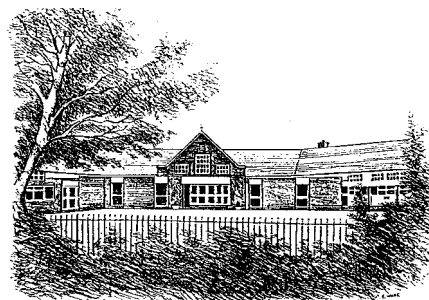
At this time, Betham School was an Elementary school, educating children from 5- 13 but soon after, it was made into an Infant School and children arrived aged 5 and then crossed the Oldfield Lane at the age of 7 to be educated in Coston Junior School, or one of the other local Junior schools. Eventually, were added on to the end of the Clock school. Before this time, toilets were outside the school building and children had to go outside into the playground to use them.

Wartime in Greenford

In 1939, as the Second World war began, Betham School buildings were taken over by the Home Office for Civil Defence purposes and the pupils transferred to Oldfield School. It was used throughout the war in different ways such as troop instruction and as a Rest Centre. Some of these uses involved structural alterations which caused some problems when the buildings reverted to school use. This took place in 1947 when, on the 10th November Betham School reopened under its new head Miss Claxton. During the war, bombs were being dropped on London from aircraft and many children went to live in country areas to avoid being hurt or killed. Those who remained in London were protected by air raid shelters. When the bombers were about to arrive, a warning signal would sound and everyone left their classrooms in a hurry and went into the air raid shelters. Here, although cramped and airless, the children and teachers were safe from flying fragments of buildings or bombs. When the air raid was over, there would be an all-clear signal and the children would return to their classrooms. The air raid shelters which were built at that time at the back on the school have provided us with an opportunity to create extra teaching space for the school. The Library and Music room are made out of old air raid shelters.

Betham House is sold

In 1975, the Betham Trustees sold the original school house, and with a loan from the London Diocese, purchased Coston School for Boys from the London Borough of Ealing. They did this in order to provide a Middle school for children leaving the First school. The Coston School for Boys was opened by the Bishop of Willesden as Betham Middle School with Mr Colin Neville as the first Head Teacher. That is the building we now call Edward Betham Junior Department.



More changes

In 1993, all the First and Middle schools of the London Borough of Ealing were re-organised. First and Middle Schools (5-8 and 9-12) became Primaries (4-11). So, the two Betham schools were united as one school, The Edward Betham Church of England Primary School, with a Nursery class with a total of about 450 pupils on the roll. We were very pleased that the Bishop of London, Dr. David Hope, was able to be present to open the school, after a service in the New Church. Following the service, all the pupils walked back to school noting the grave of the Founder in the Churchyard and noting the original school house as they walked.

In 1995, with a grant from the Betham Trustees, two new classrooms were created on the Infant Department site, using playground space which was unusable for the children of today. In 2001, an unusable space in the playground at the rear of the Junior site was identified as the site for a new teaching area for Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This building was opened by the Bishop of Willesden in October, 2001. The failure of the Governors to get the money for a completely new build school has led them to seek new ways of using the school space. By the end of October, 2010, two new classrooms will be in use as the roof space has been adapted to create a mezzanine floor and the space thereby released will become a reception, admin and office area. Exciting times!