



kehs news

July 2008

KEHS

KING EDWARD VI
HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

125 Years of Excellence



In September 1883, King Edward VI High School for Girls opened its doors to 150 girls and 8 members of staff. Apart from linking it firmly to the King Edward Foundation, its location in a spare hall of King Edward's School, on New Street was not auspicious and it is not surprising that new, twenty seven year old headmistress, Miss Creak, was soon looking for new premises.

There were to be five other moves including evacuation in Cheltenham and emergency accommodation following a fire before KEHS settled into its purpose built home in Edgbaston Park Road in September 1940.

By that time the school had established itself as a premiere UK girls' school, with Old Edwardians having broken glass ceilings in many a male preserve.

We are using the 125th anniversary to celebrate our past and look ahead to the future. Saturday 28th June saw 200 Old Edwardians gather for a

reunion day. The oldest was 92 and both my predecessors were present, Dr Jean Wilks being herself 91. The Old Edwardians had organised an exhibition from their and the school's archives in the library, an exhibition which is continuing for the girls and other school visitors to enjoy.

As well as being fascinating in itself, it is of course a reminder of how the school has moved on and continues to do so while holding fast to some underlying values – a curriculum not merely about delivering examination results, the excellence and importance of extra-curricular activities, the commitment to social service.

We are planning a number of events during the course of next year to recognise our anniversary, the first being a celebration at St Philip's Cathedral on 23rd September next term. The centenary history of the school, written by Dr Rachel Waterhouse is being brought up to date by Miss Dovey, Old Edwardian and former member of our history department. I have already written to parents asking for recipes for the 2008 Cook Book we hope to produce that will offer a commentary on food and cookery in the 21st century just as the King Edward Cook Book published in the early 20th century reflected its time.

As the school looks ahead, two exciting challenges are already planned. We are moving forward with realising a long held dream to build on site a Performing Arts Centre to be shared with King Edward's School. We want to create a building that will be a stunning showcase for the huge talent in drama, music and dance, drawing on the latest technology and allowing the arts to blossom still more richly.

We are also mindful that for most of the school's history, it has received some funding from the public purse. Since the withdrawal of the Government Assisted Places scheme, the Foundation has provided money for means tested bursaries. But we always have more girls who would flourish here, but whose families' financial circumstances mean they cannot afford full fees, than can be helped by Foundation funds.

We are launching a 125th Anniversary Appeal to meet that need.

KEHS has 125 years of excellence behind it. We need to ensure its future shines as brilliantly.

125th ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

KEHS

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The Exhibition is just one of the many ways in which KEHS is helping to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the expansion of King Edward VI Foundation schools in the city of Birmingham. It follows in the tradition of other landmark years, like the 1933 Jubilee, the Royal visit and the last major exhibition of 1983, to celebrate the School's centenary.

The idea for this exhibition came about a year ago, from Sylvia Dicker, a member of the Birmingham Girls' Old Edwardian Club Committee (B.G.O.E.C.). Committee members have mothers, daughters and other family members, who have attended KEHS over different eras. Since its first meeting in 1887 the B.G.O.E.C has complemented the work and progress of the school and this occasion has been no exception.



The exhibition contains many aspects, memories and information on the life of the School, from 1883 to the present day. Included are photographs and artefacts from its original shared premises with the Boys' School; temporary housing in Congreve Street; its own building in New Street; the 'hut' phase on the Edgbaston site and, indeed, in Acocks Green, to its present buildings and facilities. Old Edwardians and other visitors have been delighted to see preserved pieces of stained glass, furniture and photographs from the elegant early buildings. Others have enjoyed the screen printed copies of the watercolours presented to

the first Headmistress, Miss Creak, on her retirement. More recent Edwardians and present pupils have shared their experiences of school.

Certain areas of the exhibition contain valuable documentary evidence on the headmistresses; the staff; change and continuity in the curriculum; admissions procedure and registers; exercise books and work, past and present. Included in this are very early copies of admissions examinations, registers and the list of girls first admitted into the School in 1883. There are also letters to the editors of the 'Daily Post' and 'Daily Mail' in 1883 and 1884 complaining about before and after school care and the "cramming" system for boys and girls at the King Edwards Grammar Schools! What's new?

Many thanks go to the foundation archivist, Alison Wheatley, the B.G.O.E.C archivist Geraldine Marston and to a parent archivist, Alison Laitner, for helping us to delve into the school and foundation archives and for their advice and expertise to continue to build on our collection.

Where would we be without controversy and issues concerning school uniform? The exhibits on display range from the nineteenth century school tie; the early twentieth century gymslip and black and white blouse; patterns for various gym garments and knickers and examples in 'fetching' green and blue; blazers and blouses of different eras, right up to what the Upper Fifth 'do' to their blouses when they go on study leave in the Summer Term. Photographs of many team games and aspects of physical education have been greatly enjoyed, by pupils past and present, particularly those who can identify themselves on the back row of the hockey team from the 1930's!

The display materials loaned by the physics department and others have shown different generations of syllabus, equipment, text books and technology. One 92 year old Edwardian spent some time sitting in the library reading through books on Scandinavian and other dances, enthralled to be in a building she never experienced in her own school days. Miss Creak stated "As is the Woman so is the Home; as is the Home, so is the Nation". The



importance of cookery and needlework from the school's earliest days is seen in Miss George's Cookery Book of the early twentieth century, the ASTD Cookery Book of 1940-1941 and comparisons with food technology today.

The World Wars, evacuation, community service, drama, music, Phoenix and societies all contribute to displays in the exhibition. The charity work during war time continues in the twenty first century, with examples of current projects, local, national and global. The success of groups like the debating society, field work and trips abroad continues to flourish. From its early days, the school magazine, "Phoenix" from about 1910, illustrates all aspects of school life and creativity. Particularly poignant are the handwritten copies produced during World War Two and a letter from a girl in Belsen. The space available to display music and drama belies their success and development in the school's history.

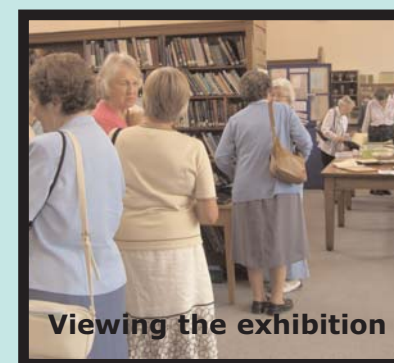


Much hard work and research has been carried out to prepare, organise and set up the Exhibition. Thanks go to the school librarian, Mrs Anna Moloney, for her help in siting the Exhibition in the senior library, together with her research on 1883 books and material. Annette Duffy, Chairman of the B.G.O.E.C, has given endless hours and effort in researching material and preparing the displays, as have teaching colleagues and support staff. None of the exhibition would have been possible without the expertise and work of Mrs Lorraine Jones.

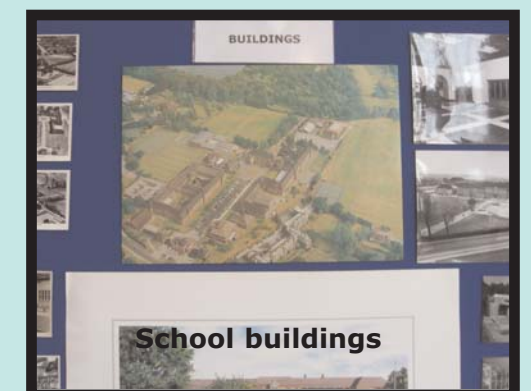
Mrs Sidgwick, Principal of Newham College, Cambridge, in opening the new building in New Street, 1896 said, "What school ought to do is stimulate that curiosity (desire to know about things) and to lay the foundations of knowledge on which curiosity can build".

Miss Sarah Evans, Head of KEHS, speaking at the 125th Anniversary Lunch, 2008, said, "What fascinates me is that these words, that view of education, is what I believe and I think there is plenty of evidence that so did my predecessors".

We trust the exhibition shows this, from the earliest artefacts to the DVDs of school life; reflecting past, present and future.



Cas Britton
pp B.G.O.E.C



Forthcoming Events to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of KEHS

Monday 5th September - Aerial school photograph

Tuesday 23rd September 11a.m. - Service in St. Philip's Cathedral

Friday 14th November 7 p.m. - Awards Evening (Old Girls Speaking)

Wednesday 17th December 11 a.m. - Carol Service (Premiere of carol commissioned for the 125th anniversary). Edgbaston Old Church

Wednesday 22nd April - Full school photograph

Tuesday 28th April 7:30 p.m. - 125th Celebratory Concert. Grieg Piano Concerto, Soloist: Jinah Shim, L6 and premiere of a commissioned piece by Stuart Johnson. Symphony Hall.

Friday 26th June - 1883 School Day followed by Victorian Tea Party.

Thursday 9th July 3:20p.m. - Victorian themed Charity Fete.



Visitors to the 125th Exhibition in the library



School uniform display



Old Edwardians' Reunion Lunch Saturday 28th June



Old girls examine the exhibits



Preparing for the exhibition