

Farringtons Past, Present, and Future

The story of Farringtons can be traced back to 1908. There was already at this time a very successful Methodist boy's school, The Leys School, in Cambridge, set up with the aim of enabling Methodist boys, who wished it, to gain entrance to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. However there was no school for Methodist girls with equivalent aims. Thus a group of eminent Methodists met on 10th November 1908 to discuss the issue. A committee was formed and it was decided that they would open a new girl's boarding school – effectively a 'sister school' to The Leys.

Among these people was Sir George (later Lord) Hayter Chubb, who became the Chairman of Governors at Farringtons – a post that he held with great care and diligence for many years. Sir George was the grandson of the founder of the Chubb Lock and Safe Company, and he had been a member of the governing body at The Leys School. Other well-known members of the Board of Governors included the Revd R J Scott Lidgett, Mr T Ferens, and Sir George Wyatt Truscott.

To raise funds for the project, certain people were invited to contribute by buying shares in a private limited company. The members of the committee then started to search for a suitable piece of land on which to build their school. They stipulated that the land should be 'in a healthy and open position, near London, with sufficient ground to allow for future extensions.'

After looking at several sites, they settled on buying the land which Farringtons now occupies in Chislehurst, Kent. This land had formerly been the site of a small mansion dating back to the 17th century. Before it fell into disrepair, the house had been home to several families, including three generations of the Farrington family who lived there during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and it is from this connection that the school took its name – Farringtons.

The first school building, originally known as 'School House' but now called 'East House', was constructed and Miss Alice Hollingdrake Davies was appointed as the first Headmistress. She opened her school on Thursday 21st September 1911 with fourteen pupils and over the next few years Farringtons began to flourish. Despite a short evacuation to Devon during the latter part of the First World War, the school's reputation and its pupil numbers went from strength to strength. By the early 1920s the accommodation at Farringtons was insufficient for its needs and further building work was required to relieve the situation.

In June 1925, the school was greatly honoured when Queen Mary visited to open the new buildings – West House, Queen's Court and the Ferens Hall. Queen Mary graciously gave permission for the new central area (linking the original School House to the new West House) to be named Queen's Court in her honour and, as much of the money for the new buildings had been generously given by Mr Ferens, the new assembly hall was named after him.

The royal connection continued as Queen Mary kept up to date with events at the school via Sir George Hayter Chubb, who had now become Lord Hayter. The Queen sent various gifts to the school, including a signed book about her famous doll's house. In 1928, the school was granted a royal charter and Queen Mary gave permission for her royal cypher to be incorporated into the school's coat of arms. In 1934 our beautiful Chapel was built and in 1936 Queen Mary made a further visit to Farringtons, this time a private one, to inspect the Chapel.

At the start of World War II, the school site was commandeered by the Government for military use resulting in the school's closure until the war ended. When peace finally came, work began to clean and restore the building ready for the re-birth of the School. Throughout the freezing weather early in 1946, staff 'camped' in the building, which had very few windows left, and valiantly worked until all was ready. On 3rd May 1946, the Headmistress Miss Fisher, opened the doors once more, this time to 42 pupils and six staff. As in 1911, numbers were low at the beginning, but soon built up again.

With the war behind them, pupils and staff at Farringtons were able to nurture an ever-growing School. During the years that followed much expansion took place on the site. Several houses were built on the campus and Science Laboratories, the Music School, the Swimming Pool, South House, and the Sports Hall were all added. The Junior School, which had been situated across the road in Ashfield Lane, suffered a serious fire in 1984. It was subsequently relocated into a new purpose-built Junior School on the main site in 1985.

By the mid 1980s the school was changing rapidly. Up to this point pupils had been primarily boarders with a few day girls. However by the late 1980s this situation was reversed; most pupils were day pupils with a significant minority who were boarders. This remains the case in the school today. Farringtons is a diverse school community. Its pupils are drawn from a wide range of religious, ethnic, academic and socio-economic backgrounds. However, they all had one thing in common; they were all girls. This was about to change.

In 2004 the school embarked upon one of its most radical undertakings, boys were to be admitted into this school which had been set up specifically to further the education of girls. Initially, boys were admitted into the Junior School only, up to year 6. However, in 2008, the Governors took the decision for Farringtons to become co-educational in the Senior School from September 2010.

And so it is that in September 2010 as Farringtons begins its centenary year it embarks upon an exciting new Chapter in its history. Becoming a co-educational school will inevitably have an impact upon the school's character and ethos but its aims remain unchanged. These aims include the following :

- to promote the holistic development of each person and to provide the best education for every pupil within a supportive Christian environment
- to offer opportunities for worship in the Methodist tradition and uphold Christian values in practice and well as in theory, whilst welcoming members of other faith communities (and none) in a spirit of openness and tolerance
- to encourage pupils to examine critically the standards and values current in society and to discover and develop a personal faith to guide them throughout their lives

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