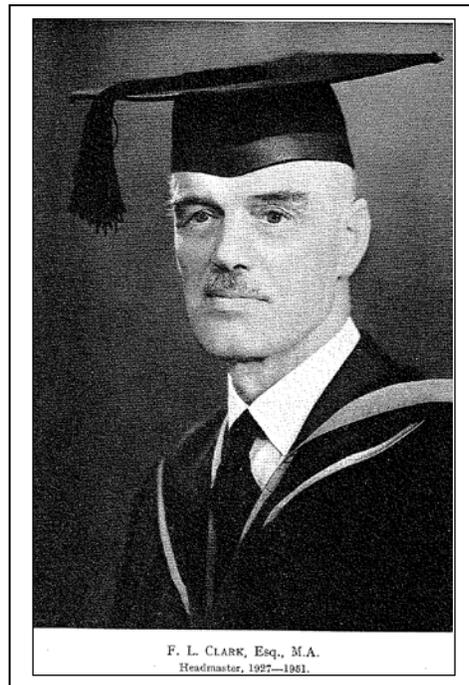


SECTION 1 THE FOUNDATION YEARS (1927 – 1930)

The lack of appropriate boys' senior schools in some major towns in Surrey in the early 20th Century led to many parents having to send their sons to schools some distance away. Rosebery County School for Girls already existed and so there was inevitable clamour for an equivalent Boys' school leading to the foundation of Epsom County School in September 1927. As an interesting side note Wallington County School for Boys opened just one month later with three more boys!

Unsurprisingly there was great interest in the post of Headmaster of the new Epsom school and eventually FL Clark, from Priory School Shrewsbury, was appointed to the position on an annual salary of £150.



On the first day there were 43 boys present and a staffroom consisting of the following masters:

EWJ Neave, effectively the second in command
WK Dawkins
AE Dale
WG Turner.
as well as two 'visiting' staff who taught Art and Music

The first two members of this pioneering group spent their entire career working at the school and, as might be imagined, they all had to teach a variety of subjects including games, whilst also starting up clubs, organising school plays and trips and keeping classrooms in good order.

For the first decade of its existence the school was housed in what was then the Technical Institute found in Epsom at the junction of Depot Road and Church Street.



Without a purpose-built base there was inevitably the need to adapt where necessary and some of the privations suffered then seem unthinkable today.

Morning assembly was held in a room which doubled as the gym. The only playground was where the Fire Station is now and when that was built the playground was moved across the road to where the Health Centre stood.

Speech Night was held at Rosebery, 'by kind permission of the Headmistress', and Sports Day was at Alexandra Recreation Ground. School plays, which were introduced from the very beginning, were held at any available hall!

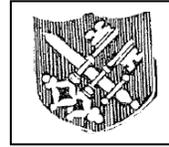
The playing field deserves especial mention. Some land called 'half mile bush' was used for games and all equipment had to be lugged from Epsom to this site which was between Hesse Grove and 'Snakey Alley'. Early minutes of Governors' Meetings and the Headmaster's address at the 1928 Speech Day repeatedly refer to this as the ideal site for a future dedicated building but realisation was a long way off. Changing facilities were restricted to a tin shack, the other half of which was occupied by a groundsman who, as will be mentioned later, became something of a school celebrity. Drainage at the playing field was so bad that no games could be played from October to May. Consequently all games against other schools had to be played away during these months!

Epsom County School was initially fee-paying and entry was on the basis of performance at tests involving reading, comprehension and the four simple rules of arithmetic as well as an interview with the Headmaster. Because of the need for the school to expand rapidly it seems unlikely that many boys who applied were not admitted. Fees were £4 a term for boys resident in Surrey and £10 a term for those resident outside Surrey. These fees covered games, stationery and the use of books and apparatus.

Two houses, Abbey and St Benet, were established from the outset and competition between the two was keen, the former seemingly more successful in the first year. With numbers growing it was decided to expand the house system and Tudor was formed in 1928 with Carew appearing a year later. Colours were associated with the houses at this stage and whilst we can identify with the light blue of Abbey it appears rather exotic to use violet for St Benet, gold for Tudor and crimson for Carew!

It seems appropriate now to mention the original rationale behind naming the school houses. They were all picked because of their association with local history and to reflect ancient landowners of the Epsom area. The crests were introduced a number of years later.

ABBEY takes its name from Chertsey Abbey shown as owning the Manor of Epsom in the Domesday Book. Later they also owned the Parish of Ewell.



ST BENET (BENEDICT) founded in AD 500 was the order to which Chertsey Abbey belonged.



In 1537 following the Dissolution of Monastries the lands of Chertsey Abbey were surrendered to the King and so Epsom and the surrounding area came under the ownership of Henry VIII, of the House of TUDOR.



During that same year the King disposed of the land to Sir Nicholas CAREW.

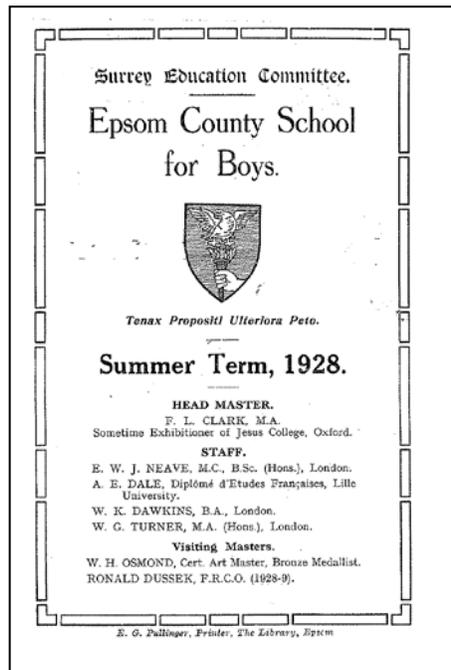


Apparently when a new house was formed it was started from the bottom of the school rather than adopting the modern approach of asking for volunteers from all years. This had inevitable consequences in house events and a rather mournful entry in the Tudor House report of 1929 talks of how its Form II football team had tried hard but had lost to Abbey's Form IV team 23 - 0. The report ended by trusting that they would do better in subsequent years. They did!

Clearly there was now felt to be the ideal number of houses because, despite the increasing number of boys, there was not to be a fifth house until DERBY was formed some 50 years later!

The first year showed modest if unspectacular growth and by the end of 1928 60 boys were on roll with 40 from Epsom and the others from Cheam, Ewell, Worcester Park, Tadworth and Ashted. It's interesting to compare the demography with that of today where students from Ewell are of course far more prevalent than those from elsewhere. Clark made it clear that he felt the school's main competition came from Freeman's School in Ashted which was firstly more established and secondly had enviably superior accommodation. Nevertheless the next year showed a surge of applications and by 1929 there were 100 boys, necessitating the appointment of a new junior master, HR Richards. He also was to serve all his days at the school becoming a few years later the first Head of Mathematics a post held by only five others to this day.

The school curriculum was laid out in the prospectus which was issued to parents at the end of each year.



Boys were prepared for the General School Certificate of the University of London which was taken after four years with an extra two years available for those wishing to proceed to University via the Higher Certificate.

Subjects studied were Scripture, English, History, Geography, French, Latin, Mathematics and General Science. Notable amongst these were the requirement of three Shakespearian plays for Form IV, Durell's algebra, arithmetic and geometry, standard texts for years to come and, appalling thought, French songs for Form IV Remove and Form III! This curriculum changed little in the early years although Science was expanded to Chemistry and Physics in Forms IV and V and Handwriting was introduced in Form II.

Morning school ran from 9 to 12.30 and included prayers and four 45 minutes periods whereas afternoon school was from 2 to 4.15 with three 45 minute periods. By 1930, however, the first of many changes to the school day was made when the morning was extended to run from 8.50 to 12.40 with prayers and five periods of 40 minutes with a 20 minute break between periods 3 and 4. Afternoon school was shortened to three periods between 2 and 4. Designated days for games viz Tuesday pm for the Lower School and Thursday pm for the Upper School were introduced.

Frighteningly for the modern teacher four short progress reports had to be sent to parents each term and a full report at the end of each term. Even more frighteningly for the modern student was the fact that in the prospectus the name of each boy was listed in order of how well he had fared in the end of year exam. Thus not only did your parents know if you were bottom of the class but so did all your friends and their parents! An incentive to improve indeed!

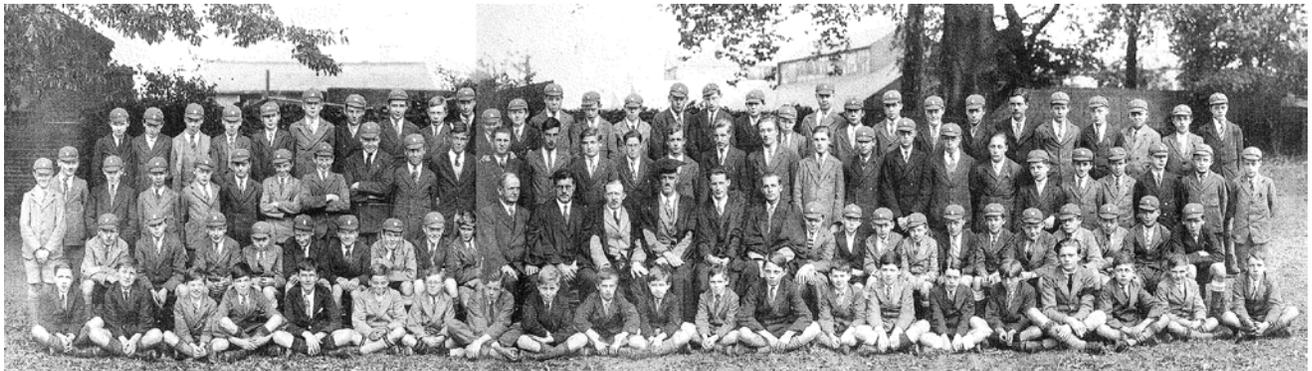
Homework was of paramount importance and the Headmaster clearly spelt out that it 'must not be neglected for social engagements or amusements'. Remarkably forward-looking was to provide each boy with a homework notebook for noting homework and how long it should take.

Sanctions were after school or Saturday morning detentions for poor work or behaviour with the ultimate deterrent of the dreaded cane for severe misbehaviour. Lest it be felt that behaviour was always immaculate these entries from 1930 and written by the Headmaster should prove otherwise.

"These two brothers persistently neglected homework. After writing to their father they came to school the very next day with a definite piece of work, which they had been specifically instructed to do by me undone, saying they had been to the pictures". This response was not well received by Clark!

"I accepted this boy at the age of 13 because his parents wanted to send him to a 'real boys' school'. Assuming that we are within that definition a real boys' school has been no use to him. In moral stature he is about 6 years old and is incapable of following an order. Moreover he is possessed by an infantile spirit of mischief that makes him a perpetual nuisance" No punches pulled in 1930!

Uniform was surprisingly not rigidly enforced in that whilst the school cap was compulsory other items such as ties, blazers and 'stockings' did not have to be of the prescribed type although they were encouraged to be so. This was probably a concession to the not insignificant number of parents who struggled to meet the fees.



1930 Photo

Extra-curricular activities were encouraged as far as means allowed. Visits which appear unspectacular by today's standards were organised to the Epsom Sewage works and the Ashted Artificial Silk factory. A dramatic society and stamp club were set up from the outset soon to be followed by the chess club and debating club.

An amusing entry from the Governors' records speaks of the first tentative steps towards an orchestra. The Headmaster writes "I wish to make special mention of Mr Martin's courage and initiative in starting an orchestra with three fiddles and a piano. Every other Friday afternoon these four boys are allowed to spend last period in practice. They are incredibly bad!"

To exemplify the corporate spirit of the school a home-made magazine was produced for the first time in July 1928. Possessing a somewhat archaic printing press a combination of boys and masters managed to learn how to set type producing an initially humble publication called Ebba's Scrip to reflect a saint of local importance and to include an oblique reference to a quotation from Caxton, the founder of the printing press. It continued as the voice of the school until 1990 when production costs became prohibitive. Users of the Internet will not be surprised to hear that Googling Ebba's Scrip results in the question 'did you mean EBay?'

EBBA'S SCRIP.

'He clad him with the habit of a pilgrim---a scryppe on his shoulder and a pilgrim's staff in his right hand.'
(Caxton, Golden Legend, 1483)

AVE!

A Foreword from the Head Master

We are a civilised community and must immediately set down the main events of our history. Until we have the means of doing this we cannot rightly regard ourselves as School.

The necessity for this magazine is absolute. Just as Aristotle after two centuries was able to recognize Solon as the founder of Athenian democracy, so future generations must be able to look back on us as the originators of institutions that they value. They will be glad to know who the first Captains of Cricket and Football were, and who the first House Captains. They will read eagerly of our earliest struggles against our rivals. They will learn of our patch in the middle of the field at Half Mile Bush and will smile, but, who knows they will say, "Well, there was spirit in those fellows." So we shall hand down to our successors traditions of endeavour in sport and scholarship which it will be their duty to enrich.

Let them not think, however, that we took life over seriously. We have had some fun in our first year. Singing periods, for example have not been without their humours. And our successors when they read of the abundance of good things that we enjoyed at our first Christmas party, may well find the word of envy in their hearts. I hope Ebba's Scrip will contain these things. And with them the fruits of our intellect imaginations, essays and poems.

My final word is to remind you of our School Motto- "Tenax propositi ulteriora peto." The printing staff to whom with Mr. Neave be all honour have set a fine example of sticking to their task, and builded better than perhaps they know. They have carried the School very far towards that further goal which we as a school must seek. If every boy uses his talents to the utmost in work, games and every other way that lies open to him, he will be proud of the School that he has helped to build and the School will be proud of him.

Head's article in first Ebba's Scrip 1928

Sport against other schools was beginning to develop and the first ever football match resulted in a 2-2 draw with Sutton who not only played an appropriately weakened team but also welcomed Epsom in 'a most gentlemanly manner'. That was the first and last time!

Cricket was initially less successful with numerous defeats against strong opposition although the first win was against Wallington in 1929.

By the time 1930 came there was a small but regular series of fixtures and Epsom were beginning to compete on an equal level.

Perhaps the most significant development of 1929 was the formation of a Governing Body which supported the Headmaster in the running of the school and which was instrumental in pushing through schemes for a new building. Its Chairman was Sir Arthur Glyn whose major legacy was to come but whose contributions to the boys included giving 'tea parties' at his home, entertaining sporting teams after matches and sponsoring and accompanying school trips.

The first few years of the school's history had shown struggles but also huge development. Early problems had been overcome, the seeds of future success had been sown and the school was ready to enter the next decade, a decade that would eventually see the construction of a new school completed under the shadow of war.