

ST ELPHIN'S MERCURY

A SPECIAL FOUR-PAGE FEATURE

Cathedral service to celebrate anniversary

SPEAKING in Derby Cathedral on January 15, at a service to commemorate the school's 150th anniversary, Headmaster Mr Peter Pollard, outlined the following history of St Elphins.

As most of you know, the school began in Warrington, Cheshire, and takes the name of Elphin (which it shares with Warrington Parish Church) from an obscure 7th Century Saint killed in battle in Mercia.

In our earliest years, we were inextricably linked with the Church of England and with teacher training. We were established to give a boarding education to the daughters of clergymen in the Archdeaconry of Chester; we were also set up to train elementary school mistresses within the same community.

OPENED

January 15, 1844, saw the school open with only five pupils: three clergy daughters and two aspiring teachers.

Horace Powys, Rector of Warrington and later Bishop of Sodor and Man, was the moving spirit in those early years and is honoured as our Founder.

Ultimately, of course, the two sides of the foundation diverged. A teacher training college, St Katherine's, was established in Liverpool after fire destroyed the Warrington building in the early 1920s. The girls' school had previously moved to Derbyshire.

Why Darley Dale? Because by the turn of the century, not only had Warrington become a busy industrial centre, making a change of environment desirable, but an outbreak of scarlet fever in the early 1900s also

spurred the School Authorities into action.

Darley Dale Hydro near Matlock was for sale and in 1904 - when Richmal Crompton of 'Just William' fame was a pupil - the School moved lock, stock and barrel to the Derbyshire countryside as it then was.

Its ability to adapt to changing circumstances has always been a crucial factor in the School's success.

The narrow confines of one Archdeaconry developed into a catchment area for several Anglican dioceses.

Lay pupils were admitted as boarders after the 1933, weekly boarders and day pupils were

welcomed. Nowadays, the school is truly international in character.

Miss Catherine Kennedy and Miss Margaret Flood, those great Headmistresses who guide the School's destiny from 1896 to 1933, were noted educators in their time and established a reputation for scholarship which other girls' schools must have envied.

A steady stream of pupils won scholarships or places at Oxford and Cambridge, most often in the Classics: a tradition we still maintain with pride.

They encouraged excellence in music, drama and games (including cricket) and this continues.

Skill in technology and

business enterprise, the development of Duke of Edinburgh activities and outdoor pursuits are recent developments enjoyed by today's pupils.

Whereas in the past only a privileged few, perhaps, had the benefits of higher education and a range of career opportunities, in addition to those followed in teaching, nursing or the secretarial/commercial fields, it is now the norm for Sixth Form leavers to take degrees and enjoy fruitful working lives, both in England and abroad.

CHURCH

In recent years the governors have built new buildings and provided magnificent facilities. Our association with the Woodard Corporation since 1987 has extended and strengthened the church links from which we sprang.

My role as Headmaster since 1979 serves as a reminder that in its early years, the school was under the supervision of a succession of resident married clergymen, (the Clerical Principles) assisted by ladies (be it noted!) designated as Chief Governesses.

I hope that this sketch may give you some idea of the ways in which St Elphin's has evolved since 1844.

The school undoubtedly has an interesting, unusual history and now stands ready to face new challenges as the 21st Century approaches.



St Elphin's young author

MASSEE Toure, a 14-year-old St Elphin's pupil has just had her first book published.

Entitled 'Mariamah's Good Fortune and Other Stories', it is a collection of tales set in her homeland of Sierra Leone which she wrote when she was only 13.

Her writing was praised by Headmaster Peter Pollard who said that her work showed remarkable maturity and he should know, because as head of English at Tonbridge School in Kent, he taught the Indian novelist Vikram Seth.

St Elphin's has a long tradition of famous writers. Richmal Crompton, creator of the 'Just William' books was both pupil and classics teacher at the school.

Penelope Mortimer, author of 'The Pumpkin Eater' is another old girl.

Pupils are also involved in journalism, with correspondents regularly writing for local newspapers.

Opera House date

ST Elphin's drama department plan to take-over Buxton Opera House on June 24th for one rumbustious, rip-roaring, riotous night, when they stage an Old Time Music Hall to celebrate the school's 150th anniversary.

Head, will provoke the audience to paroxysms of mirth as he presents acts of melody and magic, mystery and melodrama.

And as pupils, past and present, parents, staff and governors, rap-out old time song and dance routines, the drama department will celebrate its own glorious successes, both old and new.

Academy awards Under Kate Caryl, the drama department has gone from strength to strength, and offers dramatic experiences for all, from nursery to 'A' level students.

Last September three 'A' level theatre students took up places at top universities/drama schools with Sarah Chambers B.A. at Royal Holloway; Sarah Strivens - Theatre Studies B.A. at Kent University; and Kelly Margetts - B.A. in Performing Arts at Bretton Hall.

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Best wishes to all staff and pupils on your 150th anniversary

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