



A Short History of Bury Grammar School

Bury Grammar School Boys was founded in about 1557.

Henry Bury, a founding benefactor, endowed Bury Grammar School in 1635.

The school was originally in The Wylde: the area behind the present Parish Church. The stone dated 1625 in the wall fronting Bridge Road (The Boulevard) is from the building on The Wylde; at this time only boys were admitted!

1630 – 1640. Henry Dunster: Headmaster lived at Bolholt in what is now the Bolholt Hotel.

1649 Henry Dunster emigrated to America and became First President of Harvard University.

1634 Henry Bury left £300 to the school.

1663 Roger Kay was born at Woodhill in Bury. The house is no longer there but a road nearby has taken the name. Roger Kay was educated at BGS and went up to Cambridge in 1684; took a BA Honours degree in 1687 and was then appointed Rector of Fittleton in Wiltshire. He returned to Bury for his final years and died at Woodhill in 1730.

In 1726 Roger Kay bequeathed money for the re-founding of the School. With regard to girls, he said in his will of 1729, “I charge my Estate called Warth in Ratcliff with the payment of £5 yearly in order that ten poor girls born or to be born in the parish and town of Bury might receive an education.....to make them perfect in Reading The Bible, to teach ’em to write well and to be good accountants to fit ’em for Trades or to be good Servants.”

The pulpit in the Parish Church is a memorial to Roger Kay, he is said to be buried underneath it. He said that the Trustees were to meet on 6th May every year to inspect the School – this is our Founders’ Day. The Master (Head of School) had to be an Oxford

or Cambridge graduate – hence the reason for the dark and light blue in our school colours and our uniform.

Roger Kay gave us our school motto - **Sanctas Clavis Fores Aperit** – and crest featuring a swan with a key in its beak.

His Coat of Arms, also featuring the swan is incorporated in a window in the Roger Kay Hall.

1783 The School was rebuilt in The Wylde. This building still exists and is called The Blackburn Hall.

22nd January 1884 Bury High School for Girls; as our School was first known; opened. It was from the start fee-paying.

1884 – 1919 Miss Jane Penelope Kitchener, cousin of Lord Kitchener, was the first Headmistress.

The school was in Bolton Street in a building since demolished, on a site opposite the Bury Leisure Centre.

Miss Kitchener had two assistant teachers, her sister Miss Ellen Kitchener and Miss Ramsey.

There were 23 girls in attendance and lessons were from 9.00am to 1.00pm each day with a half-hour break. Latin, French, Science, Mathematics were taught as well as English, Music, Needlework and Games.

1900 Bury High School for Girls was taken over by the Grammar School governors in 1900 and the name changed to Bury Grammar School for Girls.

17th December 1903 The Boys School moved from The Wylde into our present school buildings.

2nd November 1904. Henry Whitehead laid the foundation stone of the girls building. He was the High Sheriff of Lancashire and a descendent of Roger Kay.

December 1905 The Governors accepted Mr Henry Whitehead's offer for the building of a hall, the foundation stone to be laid in

the masonic tradition; the hall to be used by both the girls and the boys thus joining the two halves.

17th January 1906 The girls moved into the other half of this purpose-built shared building.

26th June 1906 The foundation stone of the Roger Kay Hall was laid.

1906 Boys and girls were admitted from a young age.

7th March 1907 The New Hall was opened was opened by Lady Alice Stanley with a golden key.

April 1908 The new hall was called the Roger Kay Hall.

1919 School uniform was introduced.

1920 The House system started.

Each girl in the School was placed in one of five Houses dependent on the area in which she lived.

The Houses were:

Lord Kitchener (Bury)

Sir Robert Peel (Walmersley)

Lord Robert Clive (Prestwich & Whitefield)

Lord George Byron (Rochdale)

Samuel Crompton (Ainsworth & Bolton)

All these men had a connection with the specified area.

1927 The Preparatory Department was established for girls and boys between 4 & 11 years of age. The first Head was Miss Elizabeth Farrow.

1950. The House system was changed due to the fact that some Houses had many more members than others and when inter-House competitions were held, it was not a fair contest!

The new Houses were called after Women of Note:

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (red)

Francis Mary Buss (green)

Edith Cavell (blue & white)
Elizabeth Fry (orange)
Octavia Hill (turquoise, later purple)
Florence Nightingale (yellow)

Headmistresses:

1884 -1919 Miss Jane Penelope Kitchener
1919 -1940 Miss Nellie Neild MA
1940 -1954 Miss Grace Perigo BA
1954 -1979 Miss Dorothy Lester J.P., BSc
1979 -1987 Miss Joyce Batty MA
1987 -1998 Miss Janet Lawley BA
1998 -2002 Miss Caroline H Thompson MA
2003 - Mrs Roberta Georghiou BA

- 1892 The first name on our Honours Board is that of Sarah Alcock BA Victoria University, now renamed Manchester University, later a member of staff. She died in 1973 aged 102.
- There is an enlargement of the 1884 timetable and a photograph of the original girls' building by the Head's study.
- The chaise longue that belonged to Miss Kitchener is still in school.
- The mirror engraved "HMS Ajax" was from Commander Kitchener's ship.
- And many more interesting items in our Archive.

- In the Roger Kay Hall we can read the words on Miss Kitchener's memorial –

"To whose inspiration and work this school is a living testimony."