

THE  
ALEXANDRIA  
SCHOOLS TRUST





Laying the foundation stone of Victoria College, 25 April 1901.

From left to right: Sir Charles Cookson, E.W.P. Foster, J.A. Tarrel, Lord Cromer, Sir George Beeton Alderson, R.J. Moss.



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

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*In 2011 the Alexandria Schools Trust merged with  
CfBT Education Trust.*

The Alexandria Schools Trust is a charity set up in the 1950s, with investments valued in 2011 at around £4.5 million. It was created to promote and maintain the teaching of the English language and culture in schools in the Middle East, and these essential purposes will continue to govern the use of its funds in the future.

This booklet explains the origins of the Trust in the Egyptian city of Alexandria and describes the main ways in which it has pursued its aims for schools there and throughout the Middle East over the past fifty years.

I am grateful to the last President of the Trust, Ralph Carver and to Romilly Lyttelton, Robert Frost and Owen Rees – all governors of the AST – for background information and for access to records of the Trust’s activities. Owen Rees kindly allowed me to illustrate the text with some of his splendid pencil sketches of Alexandria. Therina Mulder of Worldwide Education Service (which merged with CfBT in 2006) also provided essential information drawn from her long experience of working with the Trust. Clare Davidson of CfBT provided indispensable organisational assistance, for which I record my thanks here.

**Chris Taylor**  
August 2011

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# T H E O R I G I N S O F T H E A L E X A N D R I A S C H O O L S T R U S T

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## *The British Community in Alexandria*

Alexandria in the first half of the twentieth century was extraordinarily cosmopolitan. Its mixture of cultures made it a city like few others in the Middle East. Lawrence Durrell and E.M. Forster, among many others, made their fascination with the city the subject of their writing. Over the previous hundred years it had developed as the centre of commercial and maritime expansion in the region and had attracted generations of settlers from all over the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Greeks, Italians, French and British were among the nationalities represented in the city, each with their own networks of business and commercial associations.

The British contingent comprised the owners and managers of a number of industrial and trading concerns. The Barker family, for example, was a prominent part of the British presence in the city. The brothers Frederick and Henry founded Barker and Company in 1850, which became a successful shipping and transportation business and remained so under the direction of three subsequent generations of the family. Other firms, such as Carver Brothers and Peel & Company, were involved in the very successful cotton business. These leading families formed a social and commercial elite, a 'British Community' able consistently to articulate its interests and wielding considerable political influence.



It was the British Community in Alexandria – this association of British business families – that between 1900 and 1940 founded the schools on which the Alexandria Schools Trust came eventually to be based. Their motivation for doing so was to provide for the children of prominent Egyptian and other residents of the city a British style of education, and thus offer the benefits of British culture to the local society.

In this they received strong encouragement from the Foreign Office, who saw British schooling as a means of countering the influence that the French, Italians,

Greeks and Germans had already established in the city by providing schools for their nationals and other local citizens. The French government had founded and was supporting *lycées*, many of whose students went on to study at universities in France, yielding, it was believed, significant cultural, commercial and political advantages to French interests in Egypt and the wider region. In similar fashion, it was felt that the influence on the Egyptian middle classes exerted by the education provided at schools run by the Jesuits and other religious orders was in need of challenge.





Photograph: AAHA

Victory College



*The schools***Victoria College, Alexandria**

Victoria College for boys opened in November 1902. A prime mover in its foundation was Lord Cromer (formerly Sir Evelyn Baring of Barings Bank), who served as the leading British diplomat (Consul-General) in Egypt for many years from 1883. The money to set the school up was raised mainly through subscriptions from wealthy British residents, several of whom served on its governing body, including ex officio the Consul-General himself. Sir Henry Edward Barker was its Chairman from 1912 to 1942. Sir George Beeton Alderson, the head of an engineering concern, donated the land on which the college was built.

The school was created ‘with the object of providing a liberal education for the sons of Egyptians and residents in Egypt on the lines of the English public schools’. It had an English headmaster, most of the teachers were from the UK and all the lessons were taught in English.

Right from the beginning the student body reflected the cosmopolitan nature of the city and the school

was scrupulously non-denominational in character. It opened with forty-five pupils of all ages and grew rapidly. Of the pupils enrolled in 1906 when it moved into new premises, ninety were described as Christians, sixty-seven as Jews and thirty-nine as Muslims. By nationality they were Egyptian, Turkish, Syrian, Armenian, Maltese, Greek, British, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Swiss and Belgian.

The school buildings were converted into a military hospital during the First World War and the school returned temporarily to its former premises, moving back in 1919. The British authorities requisitioned the buildings again at the start of the Second World War, during which it was once more turned into a military hospital. The school moved into temporary premises at the Hotel and Casino San Stefano until 1944, during which time more than a sprinkling of displaced Romanovs, Hohenzollerns, Glucksburgs and Saxe-Coburgs attended.

A boarding branch of the school opened in Cairo in 1940 because enrolment at San Stefano was restricted to residents of Alexandria and it took only day pupils.





Victoria College schoolboys, 1905. From left to right: H. El Masri, Abd El Sattar, J. El Masri

The Cairo branch, at first sharing its headmaster with the school in Alexandria, continued after the end of the war. Known as Victoria College Cairo, it became fully independent of its parent institution in 1948. The writer and scholar, Edward Said attended Victoria College Cairo and describes it vividly, and not altogether approvingly, in his 1999 autobiography, *Out of Place*. According to Said, Rule 1 in the School Handbook stated categorically that English was the language of the school and that anyone caught speaking other languages

would be severely punished. ‘So,’ writes Said, ‘Arabic became our haven, a criminalised discourse where we took refuge from the world of masters and complicit prefects and anglicised older boys.’

A rather more sanguine view was expressed by Mohamed Rifaat Bey of the Egyptian Ministry of Education in an address he gave at the Cairo school’s speech day in 1950: ‘It is because Victoria College has given... prominence to freedom, to individual reading and character building that it has won its high reputation among schools... It has created a harmonious whole imbued with a sense of cooperation and mutual understanding worthy of a properly constituted United Nations.’

Over the fifty or so years of existence in their original form, the Victoria Colleges became the school of choice for the sons of prominent Egyptian and other Arab families throughout the Middle East. The accommodation was regularly improved by the addition of dormitories, science laboratories and sports facilities.





Famous old boys include King Hussein of Jordan and the actor Omar Sharif. By the time it celebrated its golden jubilee in 1953, the school in Alexandria had 684 pupils of 28 nationalities, including 252 boarders. Many students went on to study at British universities and became leaders in their fields in their home countries.

### **The British Boys' School, Alexandria**

The British Boys' School opened in October 1928, again thanks to donations and sponsorship from members of the British Community in Alexandria, including the Barker, Carver and Alderson families. The school's constitution declared its intention to 'provide an English education for boys of British nationality and, in so far as there may be vacancies, for boys of other nationalities'. Like Victoria College, the British Boys' School was to be a secular institution, but 'religious communities may, at the discretion of the Board of Governors, provide religious instruction for boys belonging to their cult'.

The school opened with eighty-four pupils and grew in numbers to around 350. Most of its pupils were from families that had originated in the British-held islands of Malta and Cyprus. The majority came from the very large Maltese community in the city. There were also a few pupils of Greek, Levantine and Armenian origin. With more modest facilities and lower fees than Victoria College, its pupils were typically the sons of office workers and junior officials resident in Alexandria. The school's headmasters and most of its teachers were from the UK.



*Photograph: AAHA*

British Boys' School staff, Alexandria, 1953





El Nasr Girls' College (EGC)

Welcome from kindergarten children to a party from the Alexandria Schools Trust, 2008



### The English Girls' College, Alexandria

The English Girls' College was founded in 1935. By that time the British Community in Alexandria had become convinced that a school for girls was needed, similar in nature to Victoria College for boys. They were aware that girls' education in Britain, and the opportunities available to girls generally, had developed considerably over recent years. They were concerned that what was on offer in Alexandria should not lag behind.

Once more, local British residents and others were persuaded to raise the necessary funds. Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, the British Consul-General in Alexandria for more than twenty years, and Sir Henry Barker were instrumental in securing financial backing for the school.



El Nasr Girls' College (EGC), 2007

The school was at first housed in a villa that had been used as the British High Commissioners' summer residence. In 1938 it took over prestigious new buildings, designed by the architect George Grey Wornum in a Spanish-influenced style. The facilities included a sports field, a large gymnasium, a full-sized swimming pool, science laboratories, an art room, an 'elegant dining room', a fine library and a large assembly hall fitted with a stage. The headmistress lived in a villa attached to the campus. A Junior School and a Staff House were added in 1948.

The English Girls' College was a British school, in all respects. It adopted the character of a contemporary British private school and it educated a highly selective group of girls. The first headmistresses all had strong links with equivalent institutions in England.





El Nasr Girls' College (EGC), 2007



Academic standards were high. Ninety per cent of the teachers were graduates recruited in Britain; foreign languages were taught by native speakers. The aim was not only to prepare pupils for examinations but also to make them ready culturally and morally to become prominent members of the society they lived in.

The English Girls' College became well known as one of the foremost schools for girls in the Middle East, especially for boarders. In the early years more than half

the pupils were British, drawn from families resident in Egypt and neighbouring countries. Many other pupils came from the cosmopolitan mix of families in Alexandria, Cairo and other Middle Eastern cities. There was a strong contingent of diplomats' daughters. One of the most well known former pupils is Queen Sofia of Spain who, as a member of the Greek royal family, lived in Alexandria during the last years of the war.



### *The Suez Crisis, 1956*

On 26 July 1956 the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal; life in Alexandria was never the same again.

From the sixteenth century Egypt formed part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. In 1882 a British expeditionary force intervened to crush a revolt against the Ottoman rulers, marking the beginning of British occupation and the virtual inclusion of Egypt within the British Empire. The purposes of the invasion were to restore political stability to Egypt and protect British commercial interests, particularly the Suez Canal, which had been opened in 1869 and was owned by an Anglo-French company.

In 1914 Britain declared war on Turkey, an ally of Germany, and made Egypt, which was still nominally under Turkish rule, a British Protectorate. After the war in 1922, in deference to growing nationalist feeling, the British granted Egypt independence and created a

monarchy out of the 'Khedives' or hereditary Ottoman viceroys, although British influence continued to dominate and a British military presence remained until 1954.

During the Second World War, British troops used Egypt as a base for operations throughout the region. Nationalist, anti-British feelings continued to grow after the war and in 1952 a group of disaffected army officers led by General Naguib and Colonel Nasser overthrew King Farouk, whom the military blamed for Egypt's poor performance in the 1948 war with Israel. They declared Egypt a republic on 19 June 1953.

In late 1956, following unsuccessful diplomatic attempts to regain control of the Suez Canal, Britain and France secretly prepared military action. They found a ready ally in Israel, whose troops invaded Egypt and advanced towards the canal. Britain and France, following a pre-arranged plan, demanded that Israeli and Egyptian troops withdraw from the canal, announcing that they would intervene to enforce a cease-fire ordered by the



United Nations. In November 1956 British and French forces landed in Egypt and began occupying the Canal Zone. The invasion met growing opposition at home and in the US, in the face of which British and French troops withdrew in December.

The Suez Crisis was short lived, but its effects were devastating for the British community in Alexandria. The Egyptian government seized all British-owned businesses, assets and property in the country. Many British residents in Alexandria were placed under house arrest. They were allowed to leave their homes to perform essential tasks only at a certain time and for a limited period each day – referred to locally as *la promenade des Anglais*. Within a few weeks virtually the entire British business community in Alexandria had been expelled from Egypt.

This calamity transformed the fortunes of the Victoria Colleges, the British Boys' School and the English Girls' College. Most of the British citizens on the staff of the schools were dismissed and left the country. The schools themselves were sequestered and came under the

direct control of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Their independence extinguished, the schools were incorporated into the Egyptian state education system.

The Ministry of Education classified the schools as 'English medium' language institutes: lessons, as far as was practicable, were to continue to be taught in English and the schools were to retain governing bodies, now mostly comprising parents of students who attended. The schools were renamed. Victoria College became Victory College; the British Boys' School became El Nasr (meaning 'Victory') Boys' School; and the English Girls' College became El Nasr Girls' College.

Naturally enough, the schools have come to bear little resemblance to their former selves, although something persists of their original status as leading places for English language teaching. They have remained fee paying, with those selected for entry and the amounts charged determined by the Ministry. Fees are held at much lower rates than those of private schools in Egypt, which brings them within the reach of a far wider sector of parents than was the case before 1956.





*Photograph: AAHA*

El Nasr Boys' School (EBS), 2001





The number of pupils has risen dramatically: by 1994 Victory College had around 6000 on roll, El Nasr Girls' about 5000 and El Nasr Boys' 4000. Classes with fifty students are not uncommon.

The principals of the schools and the teaching staff are appointed by the Ministry, not always transparently on merit. Victory College has undergone a particularly rapid succession of principals and other senior staff, and has, in the opinion of many, suffered the consequences of the resulting instability. The other schools have been more fortunate in this respect. El Nasr Girls' College was led for many uninterrupted years by two principals of outstanding quality, recognised nationally as among leading educators of their generation: Mrs Ann Khalafallah (1959-1982), a British-born teacher married to an Egyptian, and Mrs Enaam Defrawi (1982-2006), herself a former pupil at the English Girls' College. The El Nasr Girls' and Boys' schools remain popular with parents; pupils at all three achieve results in Egyptian and IGCSE examinations that compare well with those gained in similar local schools.

### Creating the Trust

Following the Suez Crisis the expelled school governors began the task of claiming compensation. Most of them had incurred substantial financial losses as a result of the sequestration of their businesses. Among the compensation they sought was restitution for the seizure of the assets represented in the grounds, buildings and equipment at the British schools.

Compensation was eventually paid in 1960 from Egyptian government funds held at the Bank of England. Each exiled governing body received from the Foreign Office's Compensation Commission an amount calculated precisely according to a valuation of the assets of each school:

Victoria College Alexandria	£659,898
English Girls' College	£429,883
British Boys' School	£93,899
Victoria College Cairo	£85,029



There was clearly no hope of regaining possession of the school properties in Egypt and so each governing body used these sums to establish charitable school trusts with very similar objectives: to promote and maintain the teaching of the English language and British culture in the Middle East. At first they operated separately, although several of their trustees (governors) served on more than one of the trusts' governing bodies. Largely to save administrative costs, a process of amalgamation began in 1972 when the Victoria College Alexandria and English Girls' College Trusts combined to form a single Alexandria Schools Trust. The British Boys' School Trust joined in 1980 and in 1987 the assets of the Victoria College Cairo fund, held by the British Council, were also transferred.

One further fund was added in 1989: the Calleja Trust. Michael Calleja was a very wealthy Maltese businessman who lived in Alexandria and died there in 1940. Having

bequeathed his guns and shooting equipment to his brother and his house and its contents to his wife, Calleja made provision in his will for a trust fund to be set up to pay the fees required of poor Maltese families to send their sons to the British Boys' School in Alexandria. The will stated that the trust's aim was 'to spread the teaching of the English language amongst Maltese families and to inculcate a love of the mother country, to which all men should be proud to belong'.

Barclays Bank administered the Calleja Trust for many years, with assistance from the British Council. In 1989 the Bank, which also acted for the Alexandria Schools Trust, transferred to it the remaining sum of £25,486. Because of its highly specific terms of reference, the Calleja Trust has recently become separate once more. Its funds, supplemented by a generous donation from the AST, are controlled by a group of Maltese governors.



## THE WORK OF THE ALEXANDRIA SCHOOLS TRUST

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For more than fifty years the Alexandria Schools Trust has pursued its purpose to promote and maintain the teaching of the English language and culture in the Middle East and so encourage mutual interests between those countries and the UK. It has used its funds to support non-profit-making schools, charities and individuals. There was little thought at the beginning that the Trust would be so long-lasting. At their early meetings the Governors even discussed whether they should donate their entire funds to other organisations; and they have set up committees at regular intervals to consider the Trust's future.

The membership of the Trust's governing body has remained remarkably stable over the years. The names of the leading families in the British community in Alexandria appear with striking consistency throughout the records of the Trust's activities. Successive generations have played key roles in determining in detail how the funds should be used. As time has gone on and first-

hand links with the region have inevitably weakened, attempts have been made (not always successfully) to recruit new governors with current experience of education in the Middle East. From the start the Trust has enjoyed a close relationship with the British Council, which has been represented on the governing body and has provided professional and administrative assistance of various kinds.

The Trust rapidly developed activities in more than twenty countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The funds have been used in several ways:

- 'Suez Grants': sums given to individuals to compensate them for hardship suffered as a result of the sequestration of British assets in Egypt. Recipients have included members of the staff of the schools and their dependants and parents of pupils who attended them. With the passage of time the proportion of expenditure devoted to these grants has naturally dwindled to nothing.



- Bursaries to individual students to enable them to attend fee-paying schools in several countries in the region.
- Grants to organisations, including VSO (to sponsor volunteers teaching in schools in the Middle East) and, in the 1960s and early 1970s, OPOS – a body responsible for placing sixth-form students from Commonwealth countries and British territories where no equivalent provision existed, in public schools in the UK. Starting in the year 2000, the Alexandria Schools Trust made regular allocations to the Lambeth Trust, a fund set up to allow the Church of England to take initiatives outside its regular remit. In line with the AST's mission, the money has been used to support projects at inter-faith schools in Jordan and Palestine.
- Subsidies given to supplement the salaries of teachers whose mother tongue is English to enable them to work as expatriates in schools in the Middle East.
- Courses for teachers to improve their skills, particularly in teaching English. From the mid-1970s the Trust paid for the attendance of teachers at summer courses in the UK run by the British Council and two senior teachers were funded to read for further degrees at English universities. In the 1990s, the Trust paid for its volunteer expatriate teachers to attend British Council Arabic language courses. In more recent times the Trust has financed training in Egypt for local teachers.
- Grants and loans to schools to help pay for books, equipment and facilities to improve their provision for English teaching.





Victoria, Alex  
3/89

Victory College



## *Support provided by the Trust*

The following list is not exhaustive, but it gives the flavour of the range of schools and their locations that the Trust has supported and the kinds of assistance that it has provided:

**Egypt** The hostility between the British and Egyptian governments in the immediate post-Suez era made it impossible for the Trust to engage in any way with the successor schools in Alexandria and Cairo. However, beginning in the late 1960s, the Trust has established firm links with Victory College and with the El Nasr Girls' and Boys' Schools, still also known as EGC and EBS respectively. Besides grants to improve facilities and equipment, the Trust has subsidised the salaries of numerous British expatriates working in the schools and, latterly, has provided programmes of in-service training for their teachers and managers.

**Malta** has featured prominently in the Trust's activities, thanks to the British Boys' School's strong connection with the Maltese community in Alexandria. The Trust has provided regular grants to schools in Malta, including Stella Maris College and St Edward's College. They have been used to pay for equipment and large-scale improvements at the schools, including a new science block and assembly hall. The Trust has also provided scholarships to enable students from all sections of the community to join the schools' sixth forms.

**Sudan** The Trust has over many years supported the Clergy House School and the Unity High School for Girls in Khartoum with grants and interest-free loans for books, a school building, the employment of administrative staff and supplementing the salaries of expatriate teachers of English.

**Ethiopia** The Sandford School in Addis Ababa was a long-term recipient of assistance in the form of interest-free loans.



**Jordan** The Trust has committed funds, both directly and via the Lambeth Trust, to improve teaching facilities at the Ahliyyah Girls' School and at the International Community School in Amman, where they have been used to subsidise the salary of the headmistress. It has supported the Bishop's School in Amman by providing bursaries and subsidising the salary of an expatriate teacher of English.

**Palestine** Students at St George's School in Jerusalem have received help in the form of bursaries, and grants, via the Lambeth Trust, have been made to the Bishop's School in Jerusalem and the Arab Evangelical School in Ramallah to help upgrade the teaching of English through the purchase of books and IT equipment.

**Turkey** The Trust has supported the English Boys' and Girls' High Schools in Istanbul and Ankara College, the latter through subsidies to employ expatriate teachers

and assistance with travel to the UK to recruit members of staff.

**Syria** The Trust has made grants to Al-Amal School at Hassake and to other English language school projects under the leadership of Archbishop Matta Roham of Jezira and the Euphrates, Syrian Orthodox Church.

The selection of projects to support was mostly the result of the personal contacts made between individual Trust governors and schools in the countries they visited, usually on business, although the British Council also provided advice. Whilst serendipitous in origin, certain rules were applied strictly to determine whether, and to what extent, the Trust could support the proposals put to it. True to the multi-faith character of the British community schools in Alexandria and Cairo, the Trust has been scrupulous in avoiding support for the inculcation of any specific religious denomination.



It has been similarly concerned to steer clear of any connection that could be interpreted as lending support to any specific shade of political opinion in the countries in which it has been active. In recent years the Trust has abandoned its original commitment to making grants for the benefit of boys and girls according to prescribed ratios: although legitimate in the light of the origin of the funds, the governors have opted for a freer hand in determining the causes deserving their support. They persuaded the Charity Commission that strict gender ratios for grants were no longer appropriate in an era of growing gender equality.

Once made, the Trust's governors have been keen to monitor how the beneficiaries have used the grants and loans. The records demonstrate a recurring concern, despite the difficulties inherent in measuring educational impact, to secure value for money. Particularly in the earlier years of its existence, governors made regular visits, often combined with business trips, to the schools that had received support from the Trust. These visits

resulted in the production of conscientious, highly professional, and frequently very perceptive, reports.

In the 1980s and 1990s the bulk of the Trust's expenditure was devoted to subsidising the salaries of English-speaking teachers at schools in the Middle East that could not otherwise afford to employ expatriates. Schools in several countries were supported in this way, but most of the teachers were assigned to Victory College and El Nasr Girls' College in Alexandria.

Two levels of teacher were recruited on contracts lasting two years, although in practice the schools deployed them in virtually identical ways. The first group were trained teachers with some years of experience working in UK schools, capable of supervising and advising colleagues. The second group were volunteer teachers, usually new graduates not necessarily aiming at a teaching career. The Trust paid for the volunteer teachers to take a one-month TEFL course before taking up their posts.





Although it made a great deal of sense to use the Trust's funds in this creative way and in response to genuine need, the scheme ran into increasing difficulties. The aim was to have two or three experienced teachers and between three and five volunteer teachers at each school. This was rarely achieved, however, owing to poor responses to advertisements, late withdrawals, uncertain communication with the schools and broken contracts. Many of the teachers found the schools too different from their previous experience to adapt successfully. They received no welcome or planned induction when they arrived and little social support thereafter. Perhaps most important of all, the schools failed to make optimum use of the teachers who joined them. Having visited Victory College in 1991, a Trust governor reported that, 'Trust expenditure over the years has had little impact on the quality of the school... This year we have six trust teachers but, without imaginative direction, their influence is likely to be limited.'

For these reasons, from the mid-1990s the Trust began to reduce its commitment to supplying English teachers in favour of making grants to the schools and leaving them to suggest how best to use them. No further teachers or volunteers were recruited, although the Trust continued to support a few of its veterans. One (David Thomas, now at El Nasr Boys') is still there in 2011. In order to help maintain their emphasis on the English language and their British character, the governors decided that the grants would be conditional on the schools' maintaining their accreditation to offer courses leading to IGCSE and Cambridge A Level examinations.

In the last several years the emphasis of the Trust's work in Egypt has shifted to providing training for local teachers. This represents a significant change in approach. Rather than attempting to work through institutions and organisations, by way of the training programmes it sponsors the Trust now invests mainly in the professional development of individual teachers in the three original British Alexandria schools.



THE ALEXANDRIA SCHOOLS  
TRUST AND CFBT

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The Corniche, Alexandria



The Trust has always worked in partnership with other organisations. It operated in close association with the British Council for many years. The Council was represented on the Trust's governing body and ran training on its behalf for expatriate and local teachers in Egypt. Until 1976 the British Council handled the recruitment of teachers for service in Egypt and elsewhere on the Trust's behalf.

Following a period during which the governors took over this responsibility, relying on those among their number with experience in education, in the mid-1980s the Trust began to engage the assistance of Worldwide Education Service (WES). WES was a charity with a similar outlook to that of the AST, having developed out of the work of Charlotte Mason, the Victorian education pioneer. At first WES performed only administrative duties and provided facilities for interviewing candidates in London. From 1993 WES, chiefly in the person of Therina Mulder,

began to provide the Trust with professional support for recruitment and the pastoral oversight of teachers overseas.

WES ran annual pre-service induction days for new recruits, at which they met members of the Trust's governing body as well as teachers returning from placements in Egypt. They were given a comprehensive briefing on what to expect, including the sage admonition, 'Don't think you can drink too much and not have a hangover – that would not be viewed favourably in a Muslim country.' WES helped organise the hand-over of accommodation, provided immediate emergency contact and dealt with any difficult issues on their behalf. Therina visited the teachers twice each year to check their progress and to take up any professional and pastoral issues requiring resolution. It was partly as a result of the first-hand experience gained through these visits that the Trust took the decision to scale down its commitment to supplying short-term expatriate



teachers in favour of investing directly in the support of individuals already serving in the schools in Alexandria.

Starting in 2004, WES began an ambitious programme of training and advisory visits on behalf of the Trust. The training, which continues to this day, is organised over a two-week period each year when the schools are closed to students and the teachers are under contract. Although voluntary, attendance is high. Training for school managers promotes teamwork and concentrates on developing understanding of teaching quality and how to recognise and assure it. The courses and follow-up advisory visits for classroom teachers focus on the practicalities of dealing effectively with large classes and on developing a common understanding of what good lessons look like. WES also provides training to improve the English language proficiency of teachers of mathematics and science in these English-medium schools.

Because it is highly practical and planned in response to the real needs of the participants, the Trust's training in recent years has been well received. It has so far equipped several cohorts of teachers with effective techniques and the confidence to apply them, irrespective of the surrounding environment of the schools in which they work.

The Alexandria Schools Trust's first direct link with CfBT developed in 2006, when the company merged with WES and assumed responsibility for its activities. By this time the AST's governors were finding it increasingly difficult to recruit new and active members. Fifty years had passed since the Suez crisis and, inevitably, the governors' sense of connection with the schools in Egypt had weakened considerably. The time seemed right to look for a partner organisation that, while respecting the Trust's original mission, could take over its direction and administration.



The governors went about their search in a deliberate fashion. They considered several other possible partners before concluding that CfBT offered the most congruence with their aims, allied to a strong track record of work in the field of education worldwide, including the Middle East and North Africa. Discussions took place over an extended period to enable the two charities to get to know and understand one another and to explore how they could operate together. As a result, an agreement to merge was made.

The Alexandria Schools Trust remains a separate entity within the CfBT family. The income derived from its funds will be ring-fenced so that it can be used solely in accordance with the purposes for which the Trust was created. Two of the Trust's governors have become CfBT Members and an informal sub-committee of CfBT's Trustees will monitor the use of its funds.

An early proposal is to use AST funding to establish a Centre of Excellence for English language teaching in Alexandria. The centre would provide:

- Training courses for teachers of English in local primary schools
- Outreach work in local schools, observing English teachers at work and offering practical advice
- Courses in the English language open to members of the local community, leading to recognised qualifications.

The aim would be to create a thriving institution to promote English teaching and learning and truly serve the needs of the local community. The original members of the British Community in Alexandria at the turn of the last century would surely have approved!



## A P P E N D I X : T H E A I M S O F T H E A L E X A N D R I A S C H O O L S T R U S T

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**The purpose of the Trust is to promote and maintain the teaching of the English language and culture in the Middle East and through such work to promote mutual interests between the United Kingdom and the countries concerned.**

The 'Middle East' is considered to extend from Morocco to Afghanistan, including Turkey in the North East and Ethiopia in the South East.

The focus of the Alexandria Schools Trust has been on schools, i.e. primary and secondary education, rather than adult or tertiary education. Clearly English as the medium of education has been vital. Use of grants has predominantly been targeted at improving English language teaching by enhancing teacher capability and / or the facilities and equipment needed for delivery. Projects with specific end targets, even where these are spread over several years, have been preferred to rolled-over general subsidy grants.

Traditionally the governors have taken the view that non-profit-making schools or institutions that provide the Trust with properly audited accounts as well as Egyptian state schools qualify for grants in addition to charities and deserving individuals.

FROM THE SCHEME DATE 1972

15. (1) The Governors shall apply the residue of the net income of the Trust and may apply capital for the advancement, in accordance with British educational principles and practice, of education in Egypt in other countries in one or more of the following ways:-
- (a) the provision of teachers;
  - (b) the training in the United Kingdom of persons intending to be teachers in Egypt or other countries;
  - (c) the award to teachers in Egypt or other countries of bursaries tenable for the purposes of enabling them to undergo courses of further training in the United Kingdom;
  - (d) the award to young persons resident in Egypt or other countries who, in the opinion of the Governors, are in need of financial assistance, of scholarships, exhibitions or maintenance allowances tenable either –
    - (1) at any school, university or other educational establishment in the United Kingdom approved for the purpose by the Governors; or
    - (2) for the purpose of enabling them to study music or other arts in the United Kingdom or to undergo training for any profession, trade or calling;
  - (e) the making of grants to schools and other educational establishments; and
  - (f) such other ways as the Governors may from time to time determine.







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