



IPSWICH SCHOOL

# Ipswich School: A Brief History



# The Ipswich School Coat of Arms

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The Ipswich School arms are those of Henry VIII, the first monarch to give the school a royal charter, with greyhound and dragon supporters reversed by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and first used in 1528.

The school has no crest, as the royal crown takes the place of the helm above the coat of arms. The motto, *semper eadem*, is that of Elizabeth I, who renewed the school's charter in 1566 while the banner carries the school's name.

## The path to independence

Along with its historical and geographical journey, the school has also followed a path which in 1945 led it to full independence. Up until this time, it was a Borough School, though with a somewhat complex status; its governing body included representatives of the borough council, of the trustees of the Ipswich Municipal Charities and of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London. Its income came from fees, charitable endowments and grants from the Local Education Authority under the provisions of the 1902 Education Act.

With the passing of a new Education Act in 1944, these arrangements were not permitted to continue. The choices were to hand the school over entirely to the Local Education Authority, to go completely independent or to apply to the Ministry of Education for direct grant status. The first option, full local authority control, would mean closing the Prep School since it admitted pupils below the age of eleven. Full independence would mean support from endowments and fees alone, fees which would of necessity increase hugely. The last would mean the school would manage itself while receiving a per capita grant for its pupils direct from central government.

The governors applied for direct grant status. The application was denied; no reason was given. Not wishing either to have to close the Prep School or go independent, the governors held two meetings to ascertain parents' views. As a result, they appealed the decision to the Secretary of State. The application was denied, again with no reason. On 19 October 1945, the governors took the decision to make the school fully independent. School fees rose immediately. With endowments and fee income, the school was able to assist pupils in the form of scholarships and bursaries, up to full funding, a principle which remains firmly rooted in the school's ethos.

# Ipswich School:

## A journey through time and place

Though obscured now by the mists of time, the foundations of Ipswich School were laid at the dawn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the Anglo-Saxon port town inched its way gradually from the banks of the River Orwell.

To the east lay the North Sea and spreading inland, the feudal landscape of East Anglia, farmed by peasants and freemen and ruled by barons and knights, jockeying for power. The education of the sons of Ipswich began not far from the docks and remained close to the river for over five hundred years before moving north to the quiet of the then rural reaches. Its prominent coastal position, facing the Low Countries, meant trade and prosperity for the region over the centuries. Such were the maritime roots of Ipswich that the civic seal bears on one side a ship, similar to the small vessels of Ipswich merchants at that time.

Ipswich School has evolved over more than six centuries, remaining true to the motto adopted under Elizabeth I, *semper eadem*, (which we translate as 'always constant' - not a literal translation, but one which we feel reflects the school today) in providing the very highest standards of education whilst giving each pupil a deep foundation of self-belief from which to set out into the world. The words of Old Ipswichian Cardinal Thomas Wolsey are remembered to this day:

*"Pleasure is to mingle with study, that the boy may think learning rather an amusement than a toil. Tender youth is to suffer neither severe thrashings nor sour and threatening looks, nor any kind of tyranny, for by such usage the fire of genius is either extinguished or in a great measure damped."*



The Ipswich Civic Seal, 1200. This seal is the first known example anywhere in the world of a ship with a movable rudder, as opposed to a steering oar.

# 1200 to 1483:

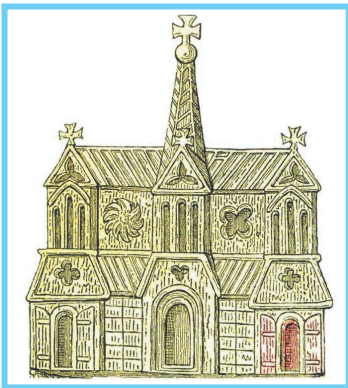
## The south aisle of St Mary-le-Tower church

In the year 1200, King John appended his royal seal to the vellum charter for Ipswich at a castle near Rouen, Normandy and dispatched his messenger across the Channel. About a month later, on 29 June, the burgesses and townsmen of Ipswich gathered in the churchyard of St Mary-le-Tower to receive the charter, which would enable them for the first time to govern their affairs free from barons and feudal authority. In the months following the delivery of this valuable document, an elected corporation was established and the governance of the borough was regulated.

It is likely that the leading burgesses appointed a chaplain of their newly licensed Guild Merchant to be responsible for their sons' schooling. In about 1325, the Guild Merchant became the Guild of Corpus Christi, its chaplain still the obvious choice for schoolmaster. The south aisle of St Mary-le-Tower church was already used as the Archdeacon's court and could also serve as schoolroom and chapel. Guild Chaplain John Squyer was a close friend of one Richard Felaw, a merchant and portman who had headed the corporation and been MP for Ipswich. Before his death in 1483, Felaw bequeathed his house for use as a school and lands to endow it. It is this link which crosses the centuries and joins our present day school to its medieval roots.

Today, at the annual service for the Commemoration of Benefactors, the headmaster thanks 'Almighty God for our founders and these our benefactors', beginning with 'the brothers and sisters of the Guild of Corpus Christi, who cared for the school in its earliest days'.

The earliest reference to a school bill dates from this period; Petty Court actions show a dispute over an unpaid bill of 1399.



*The Tower church on the Town Seal of 1200*



*The church in 1832, already over 600 years after the town received its charter*

# 1483 to 1612 or 1614:

## Felaw's house, Foundation Street

Under the supervision of John Squyer, Felaw's house in Foundation Street (then Edmund Pountney Lane) became both grammar school and the master's residence for more than a hundred years until about 1614, with a break from 1528-30 when the school moved to Wolsey's Cardinal College (see later).

Felaw's will stated that: *'I will that my mees (house) be ordeyned to be for ever a common Schole hows and dwellyng place for a convenient scole Master.....the said maister for the tyme beyng shall receyve and teche alle children born and dwellyng within the seid Town of Yppyswich comyng to the seid scole, frely without takyng off any thyng for ther techyng Except chilydrein of such persons as have londs and tenements to the yerely valewe of xxs (twenty shillings), or ellys goods to the velew xxli (twenty pounds) to be solde.....the seid maister shall kepe with the seid Children the messe of our lady be note (sung mass) at the North Awter (alter) within the seid friers (Blackfriars chapel, opposite Felaw's house) at sex of the klokke on the morrow dayly.*

The church did not survive the Dissolution.

Felaw's house was demolished in the 1960s. The site was excavated by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit in 1985. It was concluded that only the foundations of the kitchen wing remained from Felaw's own time. It is likely that as funds permitted, the building was adapted to make it more suitable for its new purpose. It was at Felaw's house that John Squyer as headmaster prepared the future Cardinal Thomas Wolsey for Oxford.



Felaw's house, prior to demolition



Tiles taken from the roof and ridge of Felaw's house

# 1528 to 1530:

## Cardinal College

**Six acres from the waterfront (now College Street) towards Silent Street, the Old Cattle Market and Lower Brook Street**

Towards the end of his life, Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor, planned to make his old school one of the finest in England. In 1528, the school moved from Edmund Pountney Lane to his grand new Cardinal College of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ipswich.

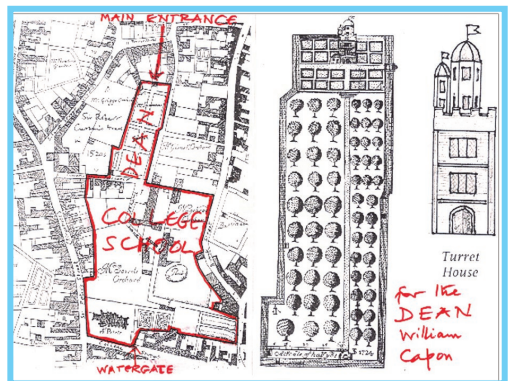
Wolsey envisaged a school linked to his Cardinal College at Oxford (now Christchurch). In order to build the school, several small religious houses in East Anglia were dissolved and he dispersed the congregation of St Peter's church, which became the school chapel. Wolsey's own grammar, the Rudimenta Grammatices, was intended for this and indeed for all schools in England.

Upon Wolsey's fall from the favour of King Henry VIII, the magnificent college, with the Dean's Turret House and orchard, was doomed. Furnishings and murals were removed and the stone taken to London where it was used to enlarge what was formerly Wolsey's York Place and which became the royal palace of Whitehall.

The school was thus obliged to return to Felaw's house under headmaster William Golding, who chose to stay on and remained in his post for eight more years. It is only thanks to Thomas Cromwell, Lord Chancellor, who persuaded the King to re-found the school, the endowment for which had fallen into the royal coffers, and to reinstate the stipends of the master and usher (second master), that it survived such a crushing blow. Not surprisingly, the school became known as the King's Majesty's School.



Foundation stone of Cardinal College of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ipswich, now at Christchurch College, Oxford



Outline of likely boundaries of Cardinal College, orchard and Dean's Turret House, by Dr John Blatchly

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All that now remains of the six acre site are the chapel, returned to its parishioners in 1537, again by Cromwell's intercession and redundant since 1973, and the watergate which opened onto the then much wider river.

This gate, though not the main entrance, is remembered in the school's present day building on Henley Road. The foundation stone was found in the eighteenth century built into a wall in the town and was presented to Christchurch, Oxford, where it can be seen today in the chapter house.

The school was given a royal charter, now lost, which Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I, regranted by Letters Patent in 1566. The school had thus become a royal school, as such our chapel choir may wear scarlet cassocks, while the reigning monarch is the school's Visitor.



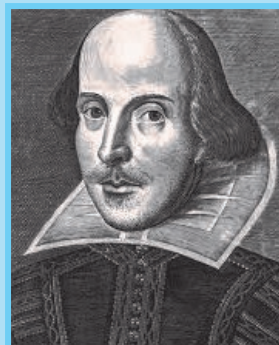
*Wolsey's watergate and St Peter's Church*

## Ipswich School and Shakespeare

Ipswich School is the only school mentioned in Shakespeare – in Henry VIII, Act IV, Scene 2, Griffith (the queen's attendant) is talking to Queen Katharine (Katharine of Aragon) about Thomas Wolsey and his achievements:

**“Those twins Of learning that he raised in you,  
Ipswich and Oxford! one of which fell with him,”**

The 'twins of learning' were the school in Ipswich, the Cardinal College of St Mary, built by Wolsey to give his old school a grand home and its sister, Cardinal College, Oxford, now Christchurch. The Ipswich college 'fell with him' and that the school survived at all was due to Thomas Cromwell, who persuaded the King to restore its endowments while it moved back to humbler premises in Ipswich.



# 1612 or 1614 to 1842:

## Blackfriars, Foundation Street

Following a dispute involving the school's endowment, eventually resolved in the school's favour through the untiring work of headmaster James Lemman, the school moved to new premises, the former Blackfriars monastery, just across Foundation Street from Felaw's house.

Built in about 1300 for the Dominican Friars Preachers, the monastery was to be the school's home for almost 250 years. While it was thought that the chapel initially housed the school, more recent research by former headmaster Dr John Blatchly has shown that it was the former refectory which became the schoolroom.

By 1764, however, the refectory roof had become unsafe and the school moved into the friars' former dormitory, a first floor room, half of which was taken up with the Town Library, a partition dividing boys from books. After sharing thus for three years, the Library was moved downstairs to the former sacristy and the schoolroom took over the entire 100 foot dormitory. The name Ipswich School has been found on a title page from this time; another, from 1722, refers to it as King Henry VIII School.

The boarders lived with the master, a stone's throw away at 19-21 Lower Brook Street; his house, still there today, had been provided for Samuel Ward, the town preacher, in 1609 but became the master's residence in 1712.

By the early 1840s, the dormitory roof leaked and given its deteriorating condition, by 1842, headmaster James Collett had reduced the number of pupils so that he could teach them in one of the larger rooms in the Master's House. In that year, artist John Sell Cotman came to Ipswich and painted one of his finest interior watercolours of the abandoned dormitory schoolroom.



*The Blackfriars ruins*



# 1843 to 1852:

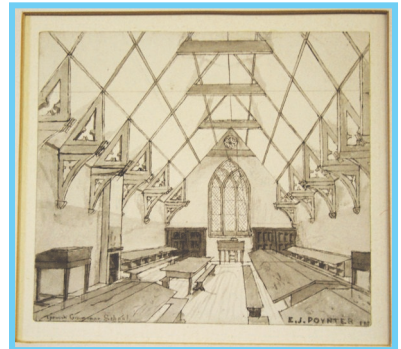
## Lower Brook Street

In 1843, a new schoolroom was built behind the Master's House in Lower Brook Street. We should know little of this had not Edward Poynter (later President of the Royal Academy of Arts) drawn two arresting perspectives of the interior while a schoolboy there.

Despite the building of the new schoolroom, pupil numbers meant it became overcrowded and for a few months in 1850 some classes had to be held in the Town Hall. Appointed that same year, headmaster Reverend Stephen Jordan Rigaud, formerly senior usher at Westminster, also had a growing number of boarders in addition to his own family. Soon convinced that the school must move, he lost no time in persuading the governors that a new site was needed.



*The old Master's House as it is today*



*One of Poynter's perspective sketches of the temporary schoolroom*

## Punch cartoon, 1872, by Charles Eddowes Keene

Keene, later Punch illustrator CK, recalls his Ipswich schooldays with a joke set in the playground behind the Master's House.

The text reads:

"LATEST FROM THE PLAYGROUND. First Schoolboy "You're the new boy, ain't you? Look here, do you collect stamps?" Second ditto (reassured) "Ye—s." First Schoolboy "Then there's one for you!" (Comes down heavily on his Toes and cuts off)."



"THE LATEST FROM THE PLAYGROUND"  
CHARLES KEENE 1823-1891  
AT SCHOOL HERE 1833 - 1839

# 1852 to present day:

## Henley Road

The site chosen was on the road, little more than a track, which led out of Ipswich towards Henley, opposite the relatively new Arboretum and Fonnereau's park, with extensive views over the Orwell to the south and the Gipping to the west. Fonnereau, who lived in the Christchurch mansion, agreed to rent the seven acre cricket ground at the corner of Henley Road and New (now Ivory) Street to the school. The schoolroom and accommodation for the headmaster's family and boarders were to be at the south-eastern corner.

Architect Christopher Fleury won the contract to design the school and despite some protests from parents that their sons would have to walk halfway to Norwich every day, the foundation stone was laid by Prince Albert on 4 July 1851. The new schoolroom ran well over budget, but took only a year to build and was occupied on 1 July 1852, by which time headmaster Rigaud had already raised the funds for an adjacent chapel, later joined to the school.

Acknowledging its Tudor past, the new school had its own tower, reminiscent of both the Dean's Turret House of Cardinal College and Christchurch's Tom Tower at Oxford, and a main entrance recalling Wolsey's Gate. Otherwise, the frontage was purely Elizabethan, in keeping with Rigaud's reliance on Queen Elizabeth's Letters Patent to the school of 1566. In his time and that of his successor, Holden, the school was known variously as Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ipswich, Queen Elizabeth's School, Ipswich and Ipswich Grammar School. From 1883, it has been known as Ipswich School.

While the traditional method of teaching all classes in one room continued for several decades after the completion of the Henley Road schoolroom, with time, new classrooms were added and laboratories built.



*Entrance to the headmaster's residence, now the staff entrance*



*Line drawing of the Henley Road facade from Christchurch Park.*

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In 1884 a swimming pool was donated by the family of old boy Rear Admiral Sir Philip Bowes Vere Broke, Bt, whose ship the Shannon defeated the USS Chesapeake in the War of 1812. This indoor pool was a rarity when it was constructed, and is still going strong today.

The 1852 schoolroom, which turned out to have been shoddily built, had to be taken down a hundred years later and a new Great School was built on the corner of Ivory Street and Holly Road in 1956, the foundation stone laid this time by the Duke of Edinburgh.

The Duke returned in 1973 to open the Leggett Technical Studies Centre, making the school one of the first in the country to have an engineering department. The following year, the first girl was admitted to the school. Starting with the Sixth Form, the school became fully coeducational under Ian Galbraith in the 1990s. Little School, adjacent to the new Great School, was opened by Princess Anne in 1990.

The cricket meadow, now School Field and belonging to the school, is today bordered on three sides by school buildings, the headmaster's house on St. Edmund's Road - the head's residence since 1972 - and various sports courts. Two boarding houses, Highwood and Westwood, were added on Constitution Hill, of which Westwood now remains, while the playing fields to the north of Valley Road have been supplemented by the Rushmere Sports Centre.

The Preparatory School, founded in 1883 and originally north of the main school on Henley Road, now occupies a building on Ivory Street which recalls Ipswich's maritime roots with its ship-like design. The Pre-preparatory school is to the south of the Prep. and borders Anglesea Road.

The school has remained on this site ever since.

## Foundations of Ipswich School

This is the mortar board used by Prince Albert in 1851 to lay the foundation stone of the Henley Road school.

The board was used again by Prince Philip in 1956 for the new Great School, along with this silver trowel, which rests on a base made of blocks from the floor of the demolished schoolroom.





# IPSWICH SCHOOL

## Masters of Ipswich School to 1800; Headmasters from 1800

Earliest: Chaplains of the Guild Merchant	1663	Jeremy Collier MA Trinity
From c 1325: Chaplains of the Guild of Corpus Christi	1664	Robert Stephenson MA Magdalene
Ante 1412: Richard Penyngton	1695	Robert Coningsby MA St John's Oxford
1412 Nicholas Scholemayster	1712	Edward Leeds MA Peterhouse
1416 William Bury	1737	Thomas Bolton MA St John's
1477 John Besett MA	1743	Robert Hingeston MA Pembroke
1479 John Squyer, perhaps Magdalen Oxford	1767	John King MA Peterhouse
1520 William Stephenson	1798	Rowland Ingram MA Sidney Sussex
1528 William Golding MA King's	1800	William Howorth
1538 Richard Argentine MA MD New College	1832	James Collett Ebden MA Caius
1558 John Scott MA 1537	1843	John Fenwick MA Corpus Christi
1567 John Dawes MA Christ's and St John's	1850	Stephen Jordan Rigaud MA DD Exeter Oxford
1582 John Smith MA later BD Magdalen College Oxford	1858	Hubert Ashton Holden MA LLD Trinity
1586 John Berkeley MA BCL New College Oxford	1883	Frederick Herbert Browne MA Wadham Oxford
1604 James Leman MA Magdalene	1894	Philip Edwin Raynor MA New College Oxford
1608 George Downing MA Queen's	1906	Arthur Kenelm Watson MA Balliol Oxford
1611 John Cottisford MA St John's	1919	Edward Charles Sherwood MA Magdalen Oxford
1612 Alexander Read MA later DD Pembroke	1933	Truman Tanqueray MA Magdalene
1613 John Cottisford MA St John's	1950	Patrick Hassell Frederick Mermagen MA Pembroke
1616 Nicholas Easton MA Pembroke	1972	John Marcus Blatchly MA PhD Hon LittD Christ's
1630 William Clarke MA Trinity	1993	Ian Geoffrey Galbraith MA St John's
1645 Christopher Glascock MA St Catharine's	2010	Nicholas John Weaver MA Jesus
1650 Cave Beck MA St John's		
1657 Robert Woodside MA Caius		
1659 Henry Wickham MA Trinity		

*All colleges Cambridge unless stated*

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## Ipswich School: A Brief History

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For more about the houses of Ipswich School and the people they are named after, please see the Ipswich School publication *The Houses of Ipswich School*.

Readers may also be interested in two books about the history of Ipswich School: *Ipswich School 1400-1950*, IE Gray and WE Potter, 1950 and *A Famous Antient Seed-plot of Learning*, Dr J Blatchly, 2003. The latter is available from the School Archives.