

Congratulations to
Greenford High School
on their 50th Anniversary



Teamwork in
Property, Housing and Construction

GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Ruislip Road, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 9RX 01-578 9152

1939

Headteacher: Maggie Oliver

Jubilee Committee: Sheila Rees,

1989

Kelvin Meredith, Robin Walton, Mair Ingram

Commemorative Book published at the School, November 1989



From Mrs Maggie Oliver

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Greenford High School Golden Jubilee Commemorative book. Whatever your association with Greenford, I am sure you will find it an interesting insight into the history of the school. For some readers it will provoke nostalgic memories, for others it will offer an intriguing glimpse of school life during the past five decades.

As a result of the research that has gone into the compilation of this book, I have learnt a great deal about the events and circumstances which governed the lives of my four predecessors and I discover that we have had much in common. I think of the appalling circumstances under which Mr Withrington, the first Headteacher presided over the opening of the school in September 1939 coinciding with the outbreak of World War II. How the second Headteacher, Mr James, died in office, how Miss Smith's Headship was dogged by proposals for reorganisation and how Miss Illott was confronted with the traumas of amalgamation. In 1985, my start at Greenford was no exception bringing with it the tragic news of the death of our Senior Master Bernie Beach, still sadly missed by all who knew him. Now 1989 brings the upheaval of the new Education Act.

The good news is that Greenford survives and thrives and is a noticeably friendly and cheerful school. Perhaps

the wartime spirit of camaraderie into which it was born lingers on. We have been overwhelmed by the response to our jubilee celebrations and greatly look forward to playing host to the many past staff and pupils who will visit us. We hope they enjoy renewing acquaintances with the school and with each other.

Greenford's success as an educational institution is witnessed by the many achievements of its past pupils from all walks of life and who are now scattered across the globe. We have been contacted by former pupils from as far afield as Brazil and America.

Few youngsters leave Greenford without settled career prospects and this year has been no exception. The Sixth Form in particular has excelled, and more students than ever before will be taking up places in Polytechnics and Universities including Oxbridge.

I feel proud and privileged to be the current Head of Greenford High School which I look forward to leading into the nineties. I have a fine team of staff and governors and a supportive community of parents and pupils. I have no doubt that our achievements will be even greater as we move together into the school's second fifty years.

An especial thank you is due to Kelvin Meredith (Head of Modern Languages) and Sheila Rees (Deputy Head) who despite the rigours of their already over-stretched lives have put so much time and effort into producing this book.

M. M. Oliver



Michael Elliott

Member
of the European Parliament
London West Constituency.

The Golden Jubilee of Greenford High School provides an opportunity to review the dramatic changes that have occurred in the character of the school over the past fifty years. In many respects they mirror the social changes that have taken place in Britain and especially in the local community in this period. No school could have had a more traumatic start, opening as it did in the same week as the commencement of the Second World War. In the 1960s administration of education locally passed from the Middlesex County Council to the London Borough of Ealing and a decade later the school transformed from a small grammar school to a much larger comprehensive high school with an accompanying major building development on its site. The pupil population has also

transformed from a selective, almost entirely English make-up, into a broad, all-ability, multi-ethnic community. The greatly enlarged school with its new sports centre and adult education facilities, now provides an expanded and valuable resource for the local community.

As a former pupil of the school (1943-1951), present Chair of the Governing Body and Member of the European Parliament for this area, it always gives me great pleasure in my work to meet other former pupils of the school in so many different walks of life, many of whom still live locally. I have always appreciated the fact that as a Governor of the school for over twenty-five years, I have had the opportunity of being closely involved with its life. It is remarkable that so many ex-pupils have entered the teaching profession and indeed when in the 1970s I was Chair of the Education Committee in Ealing, no fewer than five former Greenford High School pupils were Heads of schools in the Borough.

The level of formal activities involving both old scholars and former staff of the school has varied greatly over the years but I hope that the Golden Jubilee will provide the stimulus for a revival of such contacts, especially now some of the first pupils are nearing retirement and may have more time to reminisce about their schooldays.

Michael Elliott MEP,
Chair of the Governing Body

COVER DRAWING is a pen and ink rendering of the front entrance by Wendy Case, a former pupil (1981-85) who is now studying art at the Farringdon College, Clerkenwell. She has worked at the Grange Museum, Neasden, producing graphics, postcards, and publicity material. She hopes to continue as a commercial artist.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following organisations for permission to reproduce copyright material in their possession:

The British Architectural Library (Royal Institute of British Architects): photos, plans and extracts from *The Builder*, *The Architect* and *Building News*, *Architecture Illustrated*.

Aerofilms Limited for the aerial photo.

Public Record Office, Kew: two letters on Middlesex County Council headed notepaper and quotations from letters concerning the purchase of the site. (ref. ED35 5407)

The British Library, Colindale: cartoons, articles and photos from the Middlesex County Times.

London Borough of Ealing, Local History Collection for the 'can you guess the date' photo of the school also for valuable help and advice from Miss Terre.

Middlesex County Press: Photo of the Insect play

We wish to acknowledge with gratitude help given to us by the following: Mrs Dorothy Ewins for documentation storage and retrieval; Mrs Avril Harper-Smith for her time and expertise in using the Public Record Office; Mr Brian Rees for several visits to The British Library; Mr Neville Ward, Mrs Ann Dawes, Mr Geoffrey Evans, Mr Philip Mison, Mr Vic Coleman, Mrs Helena Harrold, Mr Richard Bellairs, Mr Michael Elliott for their contributions of memorabilia; Mrs A Dillon, Research Officer at Ealing Town Hall; Mr Robert Gordon, Technical Services Department; Peter Nex and Geoff Benge, Planning Services; Jean Baxter, Dave Cotterell and all contributors to the 'End pages'; Angela Lount for the maps.



Best wishes from The Royal Navy
and Royal Marines.



CONGRATULATIONS
on the
GOLDEN JUBILEE
of
GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL



MICHAEL ELLIOTT MEP (Strasbourg Office)

As Chair of the Governing body of Greenford High School, Member of the European Parliament for the area and a former pupil of the school, I and my wife Councillor Julia Clements-Elliott, also a governor of the school, would like to take this opportunity to wish all pupils, former pupils, staff and friends of the school, success and happiness for the future.



STAFF PHOTO

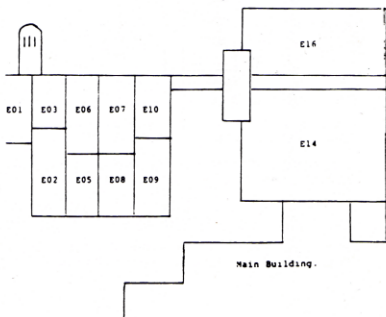
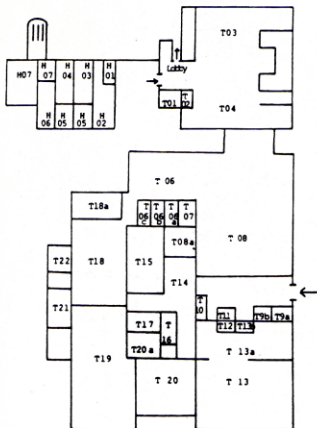
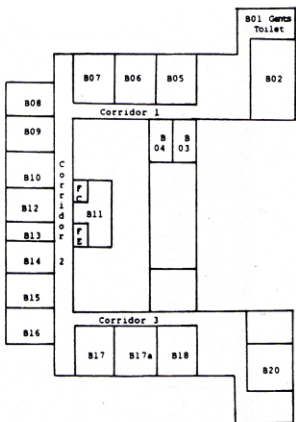
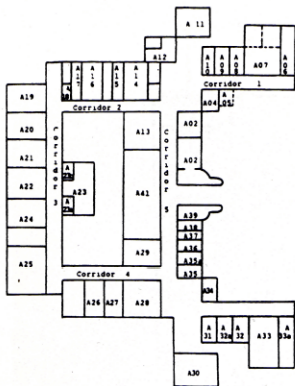
BACK ROW: (left to right) Janet Payne, Mair Ingram, Jerry Arthur, Evan Rule, Alex Bielinski, Hadrian Lewell, Nigel Hill, Jo Slater

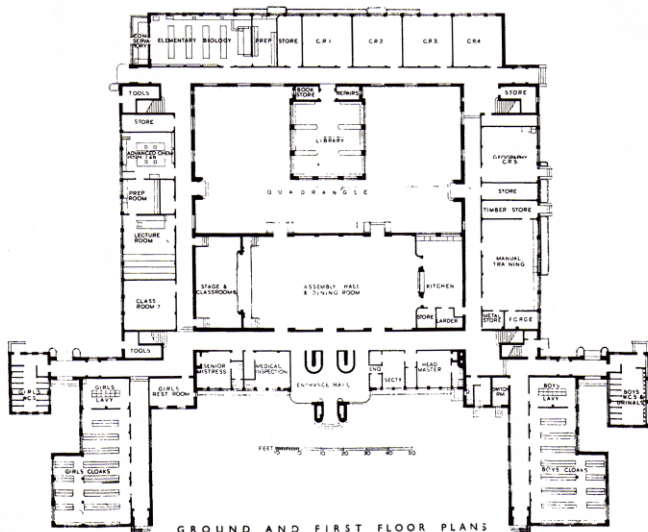
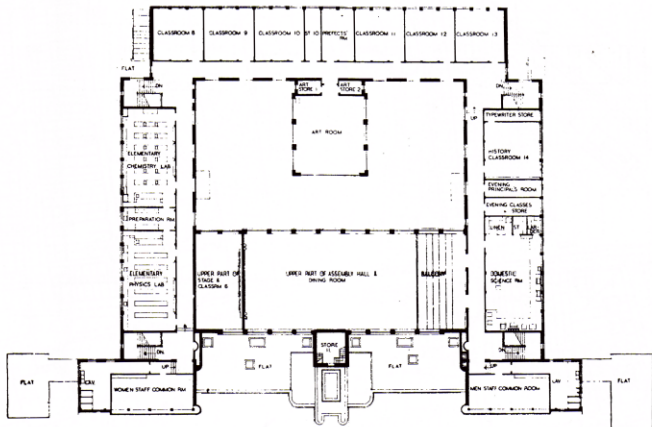
FOURTH ROW: Marie Hicks, Cathy Davies, Helen Gough, John Elliott, Dave Cotterell, Peter Gieler, Harpreet Osahn, Geraldine O'Donoghue, Michael Sohotra

THIRD ROW: Doug Brown, Tony Heaps, John Honeybul, Malcolm Tribe, Tony Couldrey, Kelvin Meredith, Tom Cain, Colin Horsley, Robin Walton, Dave Dee, Roy Drage

SECOND ROW: Vanessa Hindmarsh, Sue Batt, Leonora Davies, Andrea Wordsworth, Chris Sydenham, Jean Baxter, Sawhoon Teah-Lui, Rosemary Maguire, Angela Lount, Susanna Orton, Sophie Badham

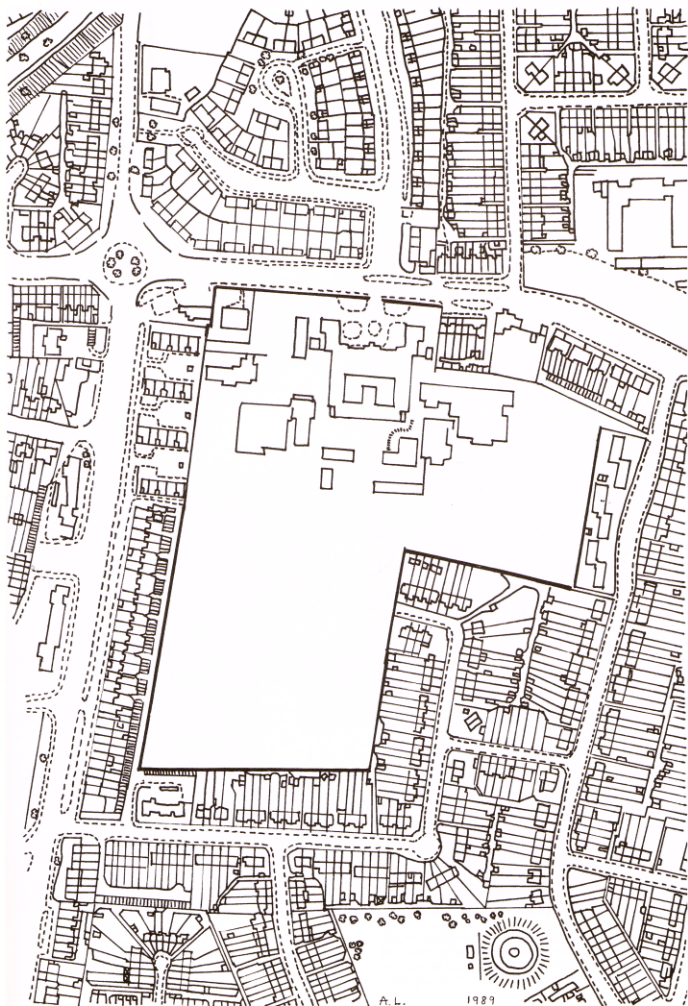
FRONT ROW: Babli Shahi, Diti Mukherjee, Ann Meredith, Brian Reeves, Sheila Rees, Maggie Oliver, Peter Woods, Dinah McAulay, Carol Walls, Carole Palmer, Bev Bell





GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR PLANS





A. L.

1989



HSL GLC 8137

1310 81

6,000' amsl approx.

6" F/L

RUN

71 20

This is part of a 9 by 9 inch contact print (indicating the large negative size used to obtain high definition) taken in October 1981 at an altitude of 6,000 feet. The scale is 1:12,000. A slightly different angled shot would also have

been taken to allow 3D viewing. Subsequent aerial surveys of London (1987 for example) had to be taken from a higher altitude to conform with stricter low-flying regulations. (Hunting Aerofilms Ltd.)

Greenford, Ealing & Middlesex

Our school is only just in Greenford. The boundary for postal purposes runs along the pavement outside the main gates putting the Ruislip Road in Greenford but leaving our buildings in Southall. (Kensington Road is in Northolt, Lady Margaret Road is in Southall, Gosling Close and the shops opposite are in Greenford) Matters were even more confused in the past. The 1940 Ordnance Survey map had the border about twenty feet further south leaving the front corridor and hall in Greenford and the rest of the school in Southall. An entry in the Victoria County History of Middlesex (Vol. III, 1962) states quite clearly that *The Greenford County Grammar School in Ruislip Road does not lie in the old parish of Greenford*. And yet a document drawn up in connection with the purchase of the land in 1935 says that the land was *formerly in the Parish of Northolt*! Another document states that the land lies in the *Sanitary District of Southall/Norwood*.

Another potential source of confusion concerns the administrative relationship between the district of Greenford, the Municipal Borough Ealing and the County of Middlesex and it is worth taking a little time to sort it out. Luckily we don't need to go back further than 1894 when the Urban District of Greenford, Perivale and West Twyford was created from existing parishes. In 1926 this council very reluctantly agreed to be absorbed into the Municipal Borough of Ealing, as did Hanwell the same year followed by Northolt in 1928.

Ealing also started the century as an Urban District but in 1901 successfully applied for the status of municipal borough of which it became very proud, its charter being the first to be granted in the new century, the first to be signed by King Edward VII and the first to be granted to any district in Middlesex. As already stated, Greenford, Hanwell and Northolt were added to it in the 1920s. To bring the story up to date, in 1965 Southall and Acton (both boroughs by then) joined with the Municipal Borough of Ealing to form the new London Borough of Ealing. And it was at this time that the County of Middlesex was abolished as an administrative unit.

Middlesex still exists as a postal area and in the organisation of certain sports, notably rugby, cricket and athletics, but as an administrative county it was abolished in 1965 and its powers transferred to nine Outer London Boroughs, including Ealing and Harrow, overseen, until its abolition in 1984, by the Greater London Council. This was not the first mishap to befall Middlesex, the 'Little Home County' second smallest after Rutland which suffered a similar fate in 1974. In the 19th century the boundaries of Middlesex extended into central London as far as the Thames with the City of Westminster falling within its jurisdiction. In 1888, however the London County Council was created thereby robbing Middlesex of a considerable area of land. Brentford became in theory at least the county town of the now much reduced county, but when the siting of a new Middlesex Guildhall was under consideration in 1912, the extraordinary decision was made to build it outside the existing county boundaries, in Parliament Square, opposite Westminster Abbey. (The lawyers no doubt couldn't face the idea of commuting to Brentford!)

What relevance has all this, you may ask, to the story of Greenford County School, opened in 1939? The fact is

that the school was designed for Middlesex County Council by the County Architect W.T. Curtis, Education Department, 10, Great George Street, Westminster SW1.

If Greenford was firmly part of Ealing in the 1930s why was the new school built by the County architect? Under the 1902 Education Act, Ealing was what was known as a Part III authority and was responsible for *elementary* education. Elementary schools could take pupils up to the school leaving age (14) and as a result of the Hadow Report of 1926 were encouraged to extend schooling in higher elementary, central or modern schools. The County on the other hand retained overall responsibility for *higher* education, this term including technical, vocational and secondary education. The term *secondary* was not used as it is today. A secondary school was a selective one — what was to be known after the 1944 Education Act as a grammar school.

A County School

So the new school was called Greenford County School and the term County would have carried considerable prestige as the school was definitely selective. It is not quite true to say that the County of Middlesex was responsible for all aspects of Higher Education. In 1919 a scheme for the establishment of local higher education committees was approved by the County Council and Ealing Higher Education Committee was formed and took over the day to day running of county secondary schools. However the County retained the authority to:

1. *erect any necessary buildings after consultation with the local committees.*
2. *approve all schemes and estimates of local committees.*
3. *settle scales of salaries for all teachers.*
4. *award County Scholarships other than free places, and deal with all matters which generally affect the whole county, but which are not peculiar to any one district.*

So this explains why in the 1930s when there was a rapid explosion of the population of Greenford, in the Municipal Borough of Ealing, the decision to build a new school was taken by the County of Middlesex.

The growth of Greenford was indeed dramatic, with industries such as Peerless Wire Fencing, British Baths, Lyons, Rockware Glassworks attracted by the canal, the railways, and more particularly new roads such as the Western Avenue, Greenford Road and Whitton Avenue. Between 1911 and 1951 Greenford's population grew from 1,000 to 47,000. Between 1926 and 1939 Greenford's school population increased from 218 to 7,768. (At the time of the Domesday Book there were only 27 people at *Greneforde*, including a Frenchman!)

It must also be remembered that this population explosion was happening at the same time as national and international financial crisis in the form of the General Strike of 1926 and the depression that followed. The building of much needed schools in Middlesex took place against a background of economic stringency. The County was forced into the position of pioneer. Confronted by an almost insatiable demand for school places, it decided that the cost of school building should be drastically reduced according to the standards of the time.

Need to Economise

The County Architect, W.T. Curtis achieved a very satisfactory solution involving steel framed buildings, in brick, with reduced ceiling heights and flat roofs. Approval of the Board of Education was obtained for a reduction of one foot in the height of teaching rooms. To maintain standards of ventilation and lighting, wider windows were needed, tending to make the whole of the outer walls of classrooms glazed areas with narrow supporting pillars in reinforced concrete. The new type of design consisted of a reinforced concrete skeleton with floors, roofs and staircases also of concrete, filled in externally with a minimum amount of brick cavity walling. The inevitable result was that his schools assumed a predominantly horizontal appearance, offset to some extent by the central towers which were invariably a feature of his designs (not purely decorative for they always housed water storage tanks!) Greenford's tower is one of the highest of the 30 or so schools that Curtis designed.

The demand for economy was most clearly reflected in the assembly halls of his schools which were designed to fulfil several functions. At the stage end, the proscenium arch was fitted with folding doors so that the stage could be used as a classroom (a wasted resource at GHS). At the other end was a kitchen enabling the hall to double up as a dining area.

The new school was well thought of at the time of construction as shown by this review by J.R. Leathard, FRIBA which appeared in the journal *Building* in May 1939:

No current architectural commentary is complete without a Middlesex County Council School — a large number of new ones being opened per month, I have been informed. In the process of transforming the whole of the county of Middlesex into a vast suburban appendage of London, the jerry builder has created a pretty problem for the county educational authority; a problem which it has solved in a manner which redounds to the credit of all concerned. There must be more school towers in the County of Middlesex today than in any other county in England. THE SECONDARY SCHOOL AT GREENFORD conforms to the established and now familiar character of the modern Middlesex school. There is some small departure from precedent in this instance, however which is noteworthy. Some experiment with curved plan-shapes has been carried out, the results of which can be observed in the bastion-like treatment of the entrance porch, in the tall flanking buttresses, in the rounded terminals to the projecting window features on the end projections and in the semicircular tower window. These surface undulations modify the monotony of straight-line insistence and are an innovation which appears to possess a fairly promising future after further study. As an example of axis architecture, this balanced composition possesses many points of interest; it is notable for its inventiveness and the verve with which the original conception has been brought to its conclusion in terms of bricks and mortar.

Another critic who admired the Curtis buildings was Nikolaus Pevsner, compiler of the exhaustive *Buildings of England* series. Writing in the Middlesex edition published in 1951 he wrote: 'The County Council is responsible for a number of soundly planned schools, chiefly in the west part of the county. These were designed between the wars by W.T. Curtis & Burchett and after the war by C.G. Stillman.' He described Evelyns Secondary Modern School (1936) as 'a typical example of the progressive Middlesex C.C. schools of the thirties.' and he used this same phrase to describe several other Curtis buildings.

It is interesting to place Middlesex County building within the context of 1930s architecture in general. The Hoover building in Perivale (Wallace, Gilbert and Partners, 1930) is often cited as a good example and the term Art Deco is associated with it. Its rounded projecting windows are not dissimilar to those of B02 (careers) and B20 (Special Needs). Another type of building generally thought highly of were the London underground stations built by Charles Holden. Arncliffe Grove is the most often referred to example but closer to home, Acton Town, Chiswick Park, Sudbury Hill and Sudbury Town are good examples. Park Royal Underground Station (Day, Welch & Lander, 1936) has a tower quite similar to Greenford's!

The School Expands

The 1939 building served the needs of the Grammar School admirably until 1970 when three huts (P17-19) were erected to cater for expansion in numbers due to increasing Sixth Form students. The first major addition to the site came when Government funds were made available to cope with the raising of the school leaving age to 16 in 1969-70. As a result two new laboratories (E14-16) and two Domestic Science rooms (T03-4) were completed in 1974 (still sometimes referred to as the ROSLA block), but by this time their original raison d'être was perhaps overshadowed by the overwhelming need for new accommodation to cope with Ealing's change to comprehensive education in 1974. The use of the ground floor of the ROSLA block by Modular Studies since 1984 is happily in keeping with the funding's original intention.

The Arts/Technical Block was completed in September 1975 and provides splendid facilities for all aspects of the Creative Arts. Its design is open plan, with inevitable drawbacks. There not being any corridors, movement between certain areas disturbs others, the Art Department in particular suffering in this way by being on a main thoroughfare.

The English and Humanities (originally History) block was completed in September 1977. Interesting aspects of this design are the movable partitions between the central classrooms and the social areas at either end. These features conform very much with the philosophy of the Newsom Report (*Half our Future* - 1963) which advocated flexibility of classroom design to allow for teaching groups of varying sizes and also stressed the importance of communal activities, hence the social areas which have tended to be wasted space in the past but are now being used more imaginatively by the departments involved. It is fair to say that the partitions remain closed most of the time and do not provide effective sound-proofing between the rooms. So much for educational theory!

The final major addition to the school was of course the Sports Hall completed in February 1981. Reference to its excellent facilities shared by school and community is made elsewhere.

We must not forget the huts or relocatable units as the Technical Services Department describe these temporary structures. Surely false economy considering what must be the high cost of maintaining them and replacing them after frequent fires. Not ideal classrooms either, being too cold in winter and too hot in summer. The Sixth Form Suite is larger and perhaps an exception to this generalisation providing on the whole a pleasant working environment. The original 1975 prefabricated building was burned down on 9th November 1983 but was fortunately replaced in September 1984 by a larger unit incorporating a hitherto separate hut.

What might have been

Sorting through plans of our site, it is interesting to note various schemes that never quite got off the ground. What happened to the 60 by 30 feet covered way linking the gym with the main building? Where is the separate music suite crossed out on another plan or the caretaker's house removed from yet another? Our boys are still waiting for inside toilets and individual shower cubicles. For the future, it must make sense surely to replace the huts by sounder structures and if Ealing is serious about community education, funds will have to be found to improve our facilities and to maintain our existing buildings so that they last at least another fifty years.

Points of interest

Notice that the entrance hall was originally much larger than it is today. It was reduced in size in 1974 to produce extra office space on the right (as you go in) and on the left an Evening Institute Office. This has now been further divided to make a waiting lobby and a small store room. The Evening Institute now uses the main office.

Connoisseurs of wood veneers will be interested to note that the assembly hall is panelled in sapeli mahogany with narrow strips of Sebrano dividing it into a bold rectangular pattern. The radiators are recessed in wooden frames of the same wood.

The bricks used are known as multicoloured reds supplied by the Dorking Brick Co. It is also worth noting that all the exterior corners of the building are rounded using two and a quarter inch bull nosed bricks! Compare them with those of the newer buildings which are not.

An interesting exercise for pupils new to the school would be to look at the 1939 plan and to find out the present usage of the following rooms, all now differently employed:

GROUND FLOOR

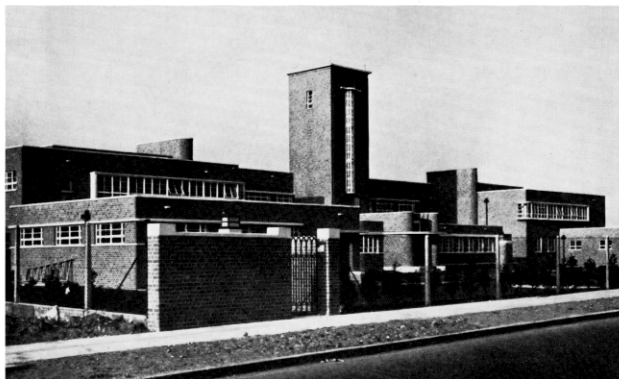
- a) Classroom 7 and Lecture Room
- b) Library
- c) Geography, Classroom 5
- d) Store next to (c)
- e) Timber Store
- f) Manual Training
- g) Forge
- h) Medical Inspection
- i) Senior Mistress

FIRST FLOOR

- a) Women Staff Common Room
- b) Prefects' Room
- c) Art Room
- d) Typewriter Store
- e) History C.R.14
- f) Evening Principal's Room
- g) Evening Classes Store
- h) Domestic Science Room
- i) Men Staff Common Room

Architectural Journals

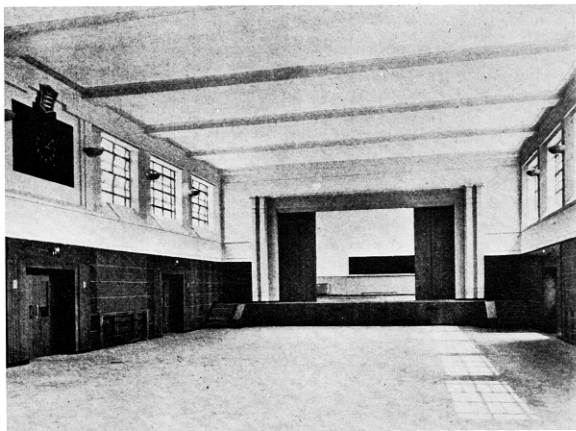
The following pages have been professionally photographed from publications housed in the British Architectural Library (Royal Institute of British Architects). No fewer than four journals published articles about the new school building in 1939 which underlines the importance of the project and its architect. Look out for the trees on the north side of the Ruislip Road, the immature hedge separating the school from the pavement, the beautifully planted flower beds in the south playground, the Entrance Hall in its original spacious form and finally the Assembly Hall without suspended fluorescent lighting.



W.T. Curtis FRIBA was born in 1897, educated at Allyn's School, Dulwich and the Royal Academy Schools. He was County Architect for Middlesex from 1929-1945 having been Deputy from 1920.



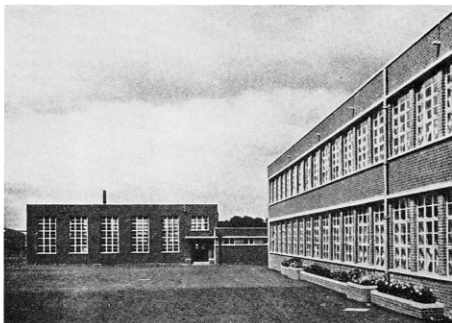
THE MAIN ENTRANCE HALL.



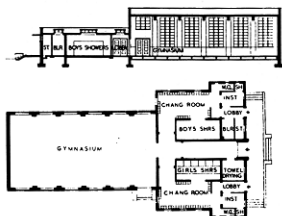
THE ASSEMBLY AND DINING HALL.

GREENFORD SECONDARY CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR MIDDLESEX C.C.

MR. W. T. CURTIS, F.R.I.B.A., COUNTY ARCHITECT. MR. H. W. BURCHETT, F.R.I.B.A.,
ASSISTANT ARCHITECT FOR EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS.



GREENFORD COUNTY SCHOOL



The gymnasium is contained in a separate block so that the changing rooms can also be used in conjunction with the playing fields

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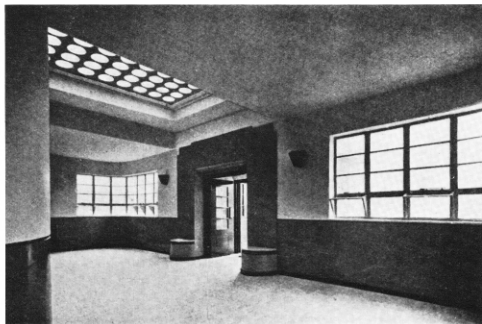
TARPAVING AND TARMAC

Constable Hart & Co., Ltd.

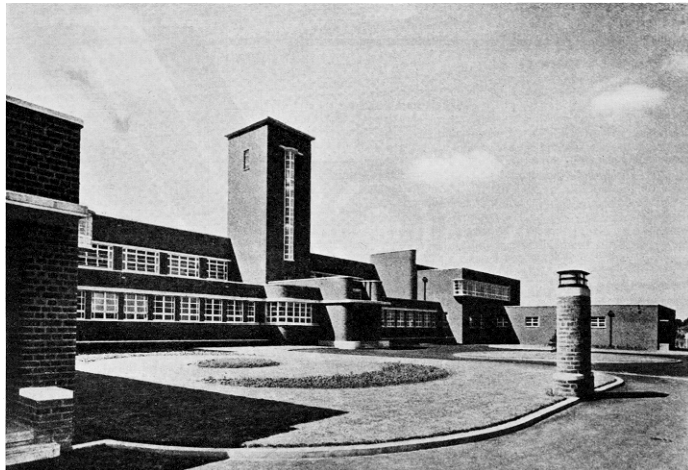
MIDDLESEX COUNTY ARCHITECT: W. T. CURTIS
ARCHITECT FOR EDUCATION BUILDINGS: W. H. BURCHETT



Left: a detail of the main entrance. Beyond, on the ground floor are the windows of the headmaster's room, while on the first floor is the curved projecting window of the men's staff common room.



Left : the interior of the entrance hall ; natural lighting is increased by the glass and concrete roof light. Artificial lighting is from wall brackets. The windows are designed to open horizontally above the bottom row of panes. In the bottom row alternate lights are arranged as hoppers which are protected by glazed draught screens.



GREENFORD COUNTY SCHOOL

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ARCHITECT

W. T. CURTIS, F.R.I.B.A.

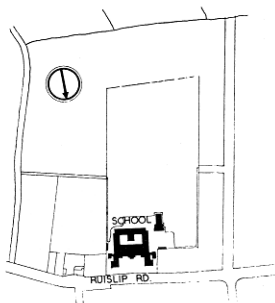
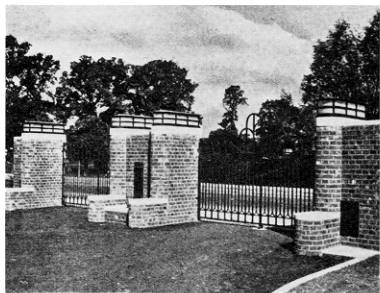
ARCHITECT FOR EDUCATION BUILDINGS

W. H. BURCHETT, F.R.I.B.A.

The school, a mixed school with 533 places, cost approximately £54,000. It is a three form entry taking 90 new students each year. Above is a general view showing the main front. The tower above the main entrance houses tank rooms.

Below: left, the entrance gates and right, a plan of the site showing the separate gymnasium, plans of which are given on page 204.

Accommodation is provided on two floors (see facing page) planned round a central courtyard on one side of which is the assembly hall and on the other the library.



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**Congratulate
Greenford High School
On 50 Years of Achievement
1939-1989
Geoffrey M. Evans, B.A.(Econs)
1952-1959**