

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

This fascinating book tells the story - in five chapters - of the 11,632 boys (mostly) and girls who were admitted to Christ's Hospital during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and of the School they attended.

The first chapter provides background material about the history of Christ's Hospital from its founding in 1552 and through the building and re-building of the School on sites at Newgate Street in London and at Hertford. The history then concentrates on the last 30 years or so of the Victorian era, a period which saw the (at times) acrimonious discussions related to the establishment of the Scheme of Administration for running the School which became law in 1890, and the difficult financial position of the early 1890s. The chapter also covers the long debate on the need for a move out of London; the events surrounding the choice of the 1,200 acre site at Horsham (with a map showing the area of the land); the construction of the new School there, including how financial considerations led to changes in the initial plans of architects Aston Webb and Ingress Bell; the sale of the London site and where some of the statues, parts of buildings and artefacts ended up; and finally the move from town to country in 1902. Many of these aspects have not been covered much hitherto in other histories of Christ's Hospital.

The next three chapters follow a logical time-profile of the pupils' education and subsequent life. Thus, Chapter 2 provides information about admission into Christ's Hospital including the role of Donation Governors; the presentation process (with examples of some disputes and abuses of it); the nature of the main benefactions which essentially provided the funding which, up to near the end of the 19th century, enabled children to be cared for and educated without charge; the admission arrangements, with the Victorian boys going first to Hertford before moving to London (the girls went to Hertford where they stayed); how and from where (a detailed geographical analysis is given) and at what age (the youngest being just seven) the Victorian children entered the School; the circumstances of their families, particularly their income; and sibling entrants.

Next, Chapter 3 covers aspects of the children's life at the School including an insight into the conditions obtaining at both Hertford and London, with some information about the School's rich traditions, in particular the public suppers and the loyal address to the Sovereign, these last events yielding two very interesting Victorian stories. The chapter then provides information about the pupils' discharge from the School, including by age (the oldest boy was 20) and length of time spent at the School (over 20 boys were there for 12 years); academic achievement, for example those being awarded exhibitions to Oxbridge. Also given is an assessment of the incidence and causes of death of scholars who passed away at CH, and information about the School's burial site at Ilford; and details of those who were expelled. There is also a list (as far as can be prepared) of Victorian Senior Grecians (the School's Head Boys).

Chapter 4 then looks at features of the erstwhile pupils subsequent employment and life, providing information on future careers (including long-serving CH masters and officials), further education and intended destination, to which they would be going on leaving School. The chapter then goes on to give details about the lives of famous and not so famous Old Blues (as the pupils are known on leaving Christ's Hospital), including about 120 Victorian children who were later to die in the first World War and some 200 whose names appeared in Who's Who, as well as those on the Foundation's own list of Victorian 'Worthies'. Mention is also made of Old Blue Institutions, in particular the CH Club and the OBRFC, both of which were founded in the Victorian era.

Lastly, Chapter 5 gives information about how the School was financed, including details about an extensive property and land portfolio, and the pattern of its expenditure; about the main officials who governed the School, including the story of the election of the first Royal President in 1854; and on the Head Masters and Head Mistresses and teachers who educated the children and the staff in whose care they grew up. Information on how Christ's Hospital was recorded in the decennial population censuses is also shown, this providing, amongst other things, an insight into the ages of the children at the London and Hertford establishments.

There are also two Appendices which provide (i) a description of the data sources used, in particular the records at the Guildhall Library, the books and similar material, and the decennial population censuses, and (ii) a directory of the names of the 11,632 children who were admitted to Christ's Hospital during the Victorian era, with their years at the School.

In addition to the narrative content of the book which, at certain points, endeavours to bring the reader up to date by describing the present-day position, the directory of names, the many brief biographies and the statistics in some 50 tables all combine to make the book an important reference source.

The book, which is published by Ashwater Press and printed by Ian Allan, runs to 440 A4 pages and has nearly 100 illustrations and 50 tables. Printing and publication is financed entirely by the author who will give a donation of £5 from each sale to the School's Museum. Price £32 (excludes p&p). For further details please contact Ken Mansell at ken.mansell@btinternet.com or on 02086687075. Collection can be arranged from Purley or Whitton - please contact Ken.