

# Ayton School – the later years



- 1841      Established as the North of England Agricultural School
- 1891      50 year celebrations, publication of first school history
- 1941      100 year celebrations, publication of second school history
- 1997      School closure and conversion of buildings into apartments

The Friends' School was an important part of village life for over 150 years. The first hundred years of its history, from its establishment as the North of England Agricultural School in 1841 are well-documented:

*History of Ayton School* by George and Ralph Dixon, 1891

*Ayton School Centenary History 1841-1941* by G Alston Watson, 1941

The text of both books is available on the Ayton Old Scholars' Website.

The history since 1941, up to the closure of the school in 1997, is less well recorded. This presentation goes some way to correct this, but with a brief introduction to the school's founding and its first hundred years.







The earliest view of the school circa 1842 (from *Ayton School, the Centenary History*)





## Why was the school started?

- To cater for the children of Friends who had married out of the Society and were hence barred from the existing Friends' Schools
- To address Friends' concerns over the education of the "industrial classes"



## Isaac Sharp on the founding ethos of the school

“The view of Friends is to embrace what may be termed the labouring classes of those who are in any way connected with our Society; combining labour with learning ...”

“To fit young people of both sexes to be useful and happy in those circles in which an unerring Creator has placed them, rather than to prompt them to aspire after more elevated walks of life ...”

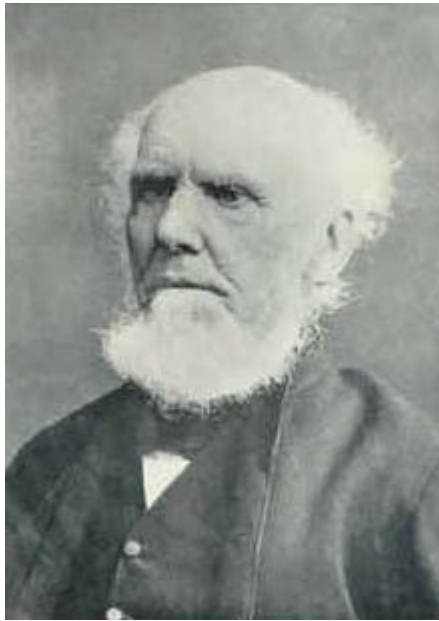


Isaac Sharp, Darlington accountant, Middlesbrough Commissioner, and first secretary of the Committee set up to establish and manage the North of England Agricultural School.



North of England Agricultural School from *History of Ayton School* published 1893





## **The Dixon superintendents 1841-1895**

George Dixon (superintendent 1841-1865) and his son Ralph Dixon (superintendent 1865-1895) ran the North of England Agricultural School in accordance with these founding principles.

School time was divided 50/50 between work (farming for the boys, domestic service work for the girls) and academic learning.

## Ayton School Jubilee Medal 1891





## Boy scholar's day in the 1840s

6:00am	Rising gong. Dress and wash at outside pump.
7:00am	Bible reading and mental arithmetic.
8:00am	Breakfast, bible reading and spelling lesson.
9:00am	One class to farm work, the other class school.
12:30pm	Dinner and recreation period.
1:30pm	One class to school, the other class to farm work. School work included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, natural history, Latin and French.
4:30pm	Free time.
6:00pm	Supper and recreation time.
7:00pm	English grammar and scripture lessons.
8:00pm	Retire for the night.

Teaching was by the Lancasterian plan using older scholars as monitors to relay the teaching down to the younger scholars.

Scholars went to the school for four years; there were no holidays.



**Frank Rivers Arundel (headmaster 1896-1913)**

Separation of school farm and garden, more emphasis on academic learning , new buildings and electric lighting

**Herbert Dennis (headmaster 1913-1940)**

Married George Dixon's grand-daughter.

Change to "The Friends' School, Great Ayton"

**Moves to a more  
academic school**

**Sophia Wells (headmistress 1902-1938)**





**Evelyn Nicholson**  
1939-1967



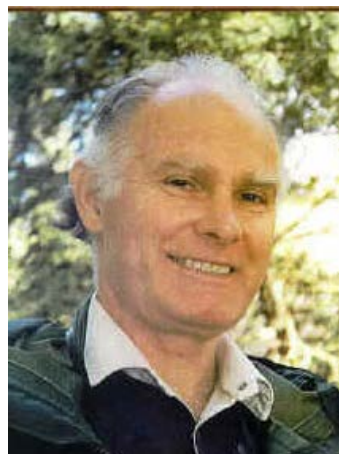
**Stanley Carr**  
1940-1953



**John Reader**  
1953-1975



**Fred Sessa**  
1976-1984



**David Cook**  
1985-1994



**Chris Scaife**  
1994



**Alice Meager**  
1994-1997

**Ayton School  
Heads from  
1941**



**Views from 1903**





Class in 1903 being taught  
by Mr. Arundel



Girls from 1903



## WW2

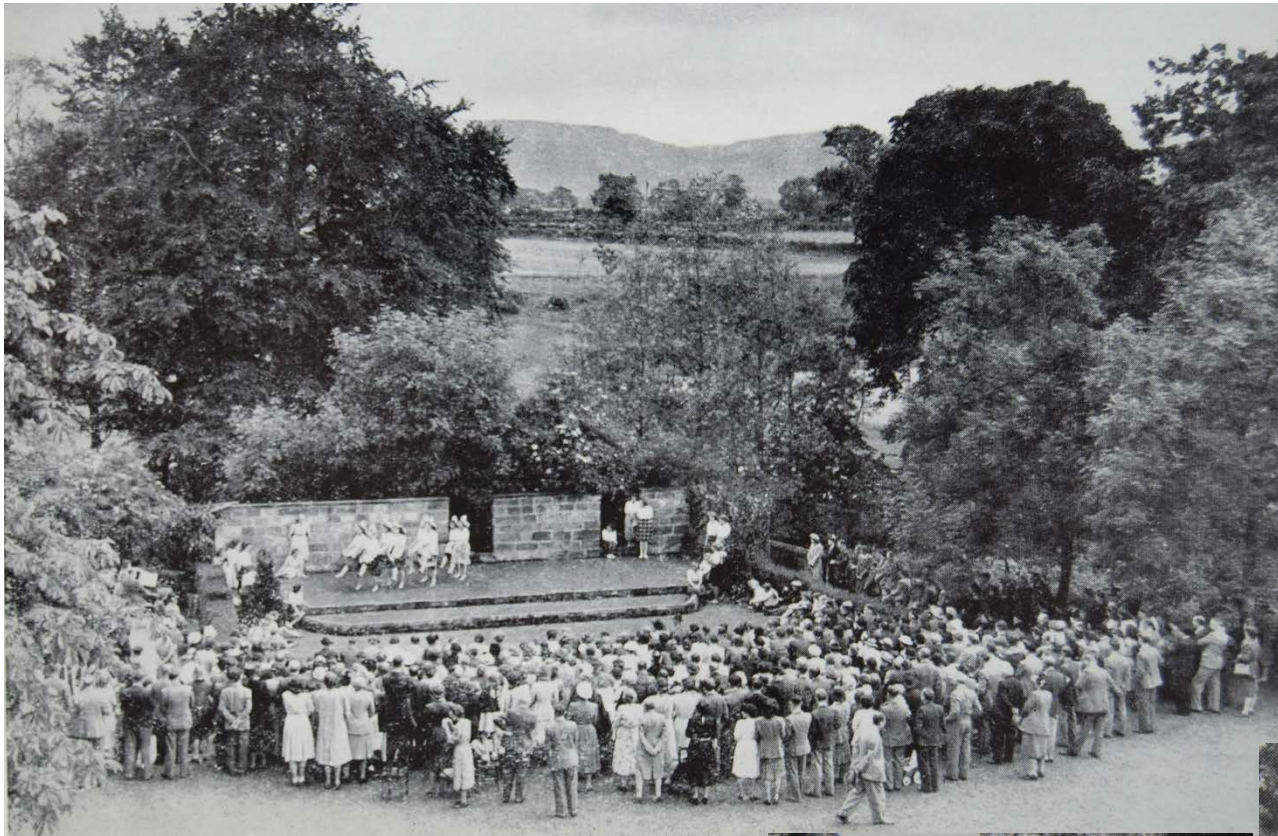
- 1940 34 refugee pupils from Austria, Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
- 1941 Severe weather damages buildings and grounds.  
Compulsory swimming lessons introduced in the summer.
- 1942 Severe winter again.  
With the increase in numbers, twelve girls slept at Cleveland Lodge.
- 1944 Construction of open-air theatre.
- 1945 587 lb of rosehips collected.
- 1946 Huge copper beech tree outside the Meeting House felled.
- 1947 School entertains 40 German prisoners-of-war from Undercliffe.



## School photograph 1940

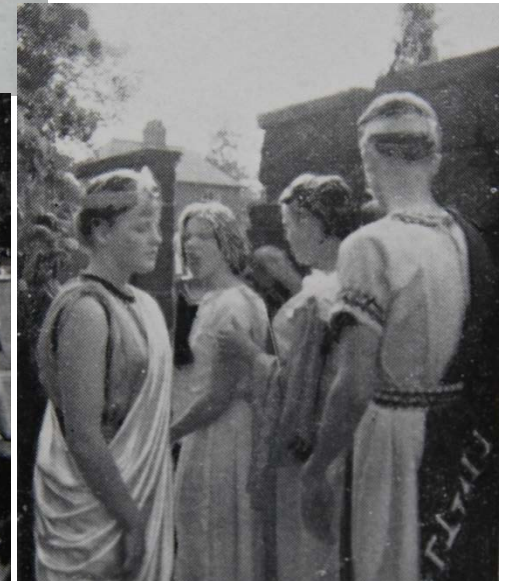
Headmaster Herbert Dennis  
Headmistress Evelyn Nicholson





## Open-air Theatre 1944

On the right are a couple of behind-the-scenes look at the school's production of Dido and Aeneas







The “Tin Tabernacle” was originally a chapel in Stockton. It was bought and moved to Great Ayton in 1890, by Jonathan Backhouse Hodgkin, as a Village Hall.

In the 1930s the family sold the building to Ayton School for a school hall and gymnasium.

It was requisitioned in WW2 and briefly housed troops from Dunkirk.

It was sold in 1986 and the site made into a car park with the Tourist Information Point office.

## The Tin Tabernacle

Many prefabricated corrugated iron “Tin Tabernacles” were erected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This example is at Deepcut Barracks, Surrey, and is still in use as St Barbara’s Church.



# AYTON SCHOOL

## BOYS' LIST OF CLOTHING DURING THE RATIONING PERIOD

Parents are asked to use their own discretion with regard to this list, bearing in mind the essential requirements of a child at school. Everything should be strong, plain and useful. Each article must be distinctly marked with the boy's name (not initials). A charge of 3d. will be made for each unmarked article.

Clothing must be sent back to school in good repair, and a complete list, stating the number of each article, returned with the luggage at the beginning of each term.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Raincoat (lined) and/or an Overcoat.</li> <li>3 Suits, or their equivalent, i.e., Sports Coat or Windjammer and Flannel or Corduroy (good quality) Trousers. One suitable for Sunday wear.</li> <li>3 Ordinary Shirts with detachable collars, or 4 Shirts with collars attached.</li> <li>2 White Flannel Cricket Shirts.</li> <li>1 Warm Games Sweater.</li> <li>2 Pullovers.</li> <li>3 Pyjama Suits.</li> <li>3 Vests.</li> <li>3 Pairs of Pants.</li> <li>3 Pairs strong Boots or Shoes.</li> <li>4 Pairs Stockings or Socks.</li> <li>3 Small Bath Towels with tape loops.</li> <li>12 Handkerchiefs.</li> <li>1 Pair strong Slippers.</li> <li>1 Pair Rubber-soled Shoes or Sandals (for gymnastics).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Pair Boots for Football.</li> <li>2 Pairs Braces.</li> <li>3 Neck Ties.</li> <li>1 Rug.</li> <li>White Flannels for members of Cricket XI.</li> <li>Bathing Costume (Summer term).</li> <li>Dressing Gown, Brush and Comb in bag, Small-tooth Comb, Tooth-brush and Paste, Flesh Glove, Sponge Bag, a few Studs.</li> </ul> <p><i>The following articles are supplied at School, provided that the requisite number of coupons are sent in advance:—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Football Stockings.</li> <li>Football Shirts (red or white).</li> <li>Football Knickers.</li> <li>Boiler Suits.</li> <li>School Cap.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

N.B.—Parents are requested not to purchase the following as part of the School outfit—

(a) Plus-four suits.

(b) Navy blue suits.

It would be helpful if all washable garments were fitted with linen buttons.

# AYTON SCHOOL

## GIRLS' LIST OF CLOTHING DURING THE RATIONING PERIOD

Parents are asked to use their own discretion with regard to this list, bearing in mind the essential requirements of a child at school. Everything should be strong, plain and useful. Each article must be distinctly marked with the girl's name (not initials). A charge of 3d. will be made for each unmarked article.

Clothing must be sent back to school in good repair, and a complete list, stating the number of each article, returned with the luggage at the beginning of each term.

- 3 Pairs combinations or vests.
- 3 Pairs navy blue knickers.
- 3 Pairs black or grey gym. stockings, or knee socks.
- 2 Pairs fawn lisle stockings.
- 3 Pyjamas or nightdresses.
- 1 Dressing gown.
- 1 Gym. tunic.
- (This must have 3 box pleats touching each other, and the length should be 4 ins. from the ground when kneeling.)
- 3 White gym. blouses with square necks and elbow length sleeves.
- 18 Handkerchiefs.
- 2 Pairs black-laced shoes (low heels).
- 1 Pair plain brown shoes.
- 1 Pair quiet bedroom slippers.
- 1 Pair gym. shoes.
- 1 Pair Wellingtons or goloshes.
- 1 Navy raincoat and/or navy winter coat.
- 1 Waterproof hood.
- Hair-brush, comb, and 1 bag, small-tooth comb, toothbrush, nail-brush and sponge.
- 2 Small bath towels with tape loops.
- 1 Pair scissors, thimble, etc.
- 1 Navy blue woollen cardigan.
- 1 School blazer\* (optional).

### WINTER TERMS ONLY.

- 1 Warm navy dress with white collar for Sundays.
- 2 Other warm dresses (or skirts and jumpers).
- 1 Red jersey\* for use with gym tunic.
- 1 Navy beret.

### SUMMER TERM ONLY.

- 1 Pair sandals.
- 3 Gingham dresses, with sleeves to the elbow.
- (Uniform now unobtainable, but alternatives supplied by Messrs. H. Binns, Ltd., Middlesbrough.)
- 3 Pairs knickers to match.
- 1 Cotton games dress.\*
- 4 Pairs ankle socks (not white).
- 1 Regulation navy blue bathing costume and white cap.

\* Articles marked thus are uniform and are supplied at school, if coupons are sent in advance.

Rug and hot water bottle (optional).

## Clothing Lists from WW2

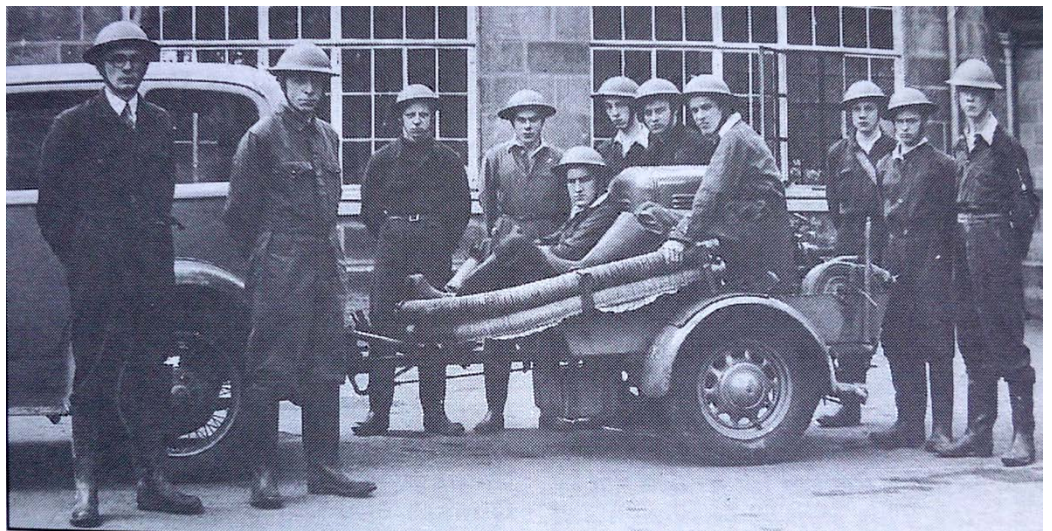




## Ayton School Fire Brigade

As part of their preparations for WW2 the Fire Squad was set up in 1940. It grew into the School Fire Brigade, with a Vauxhall 16 and a trailer mounted pump (shown below in spring 1943).

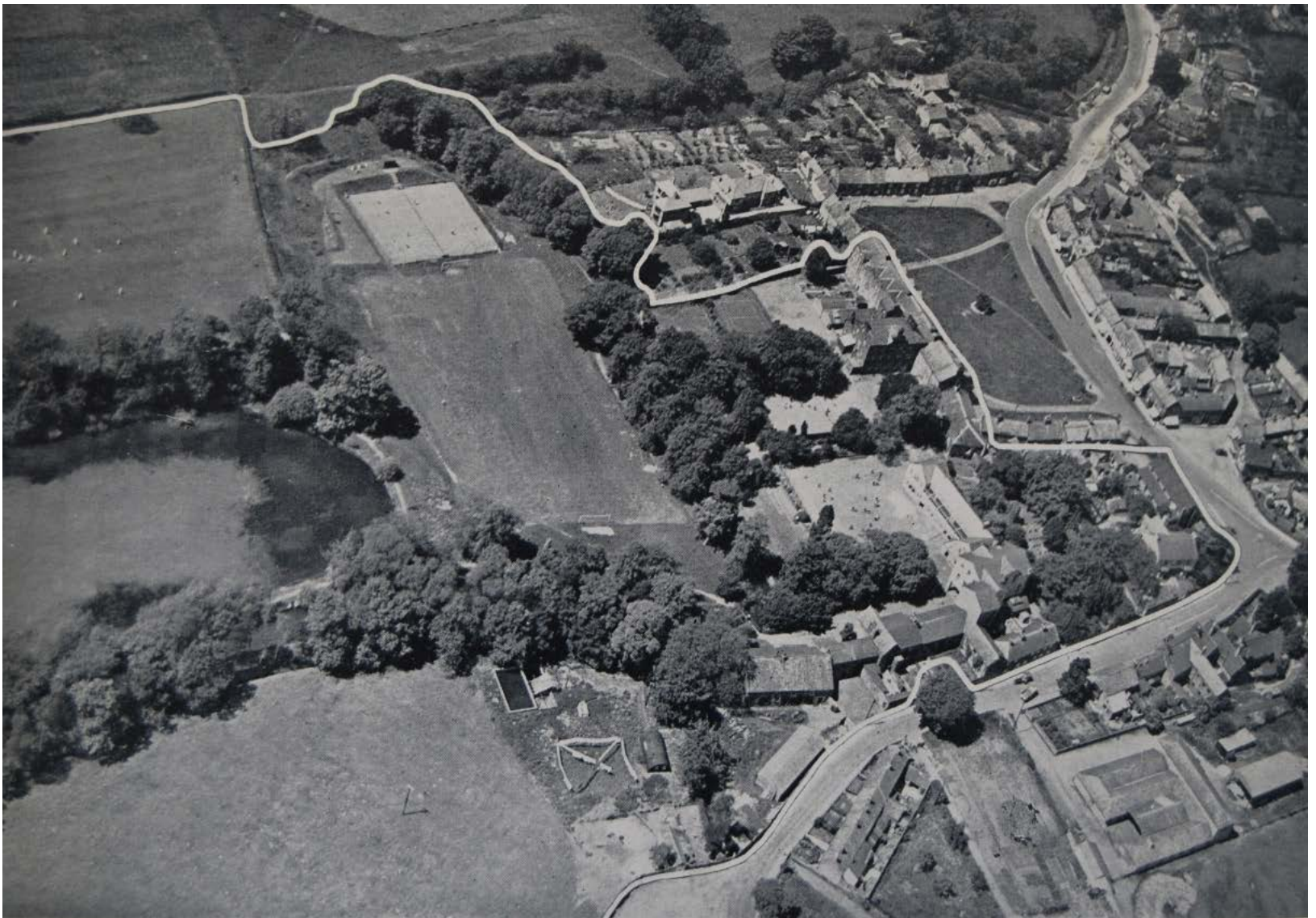
They took part in joint exercises with the NFS and tackled fires at the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Ayton School, and School Farm.



## End WW2 to 1960

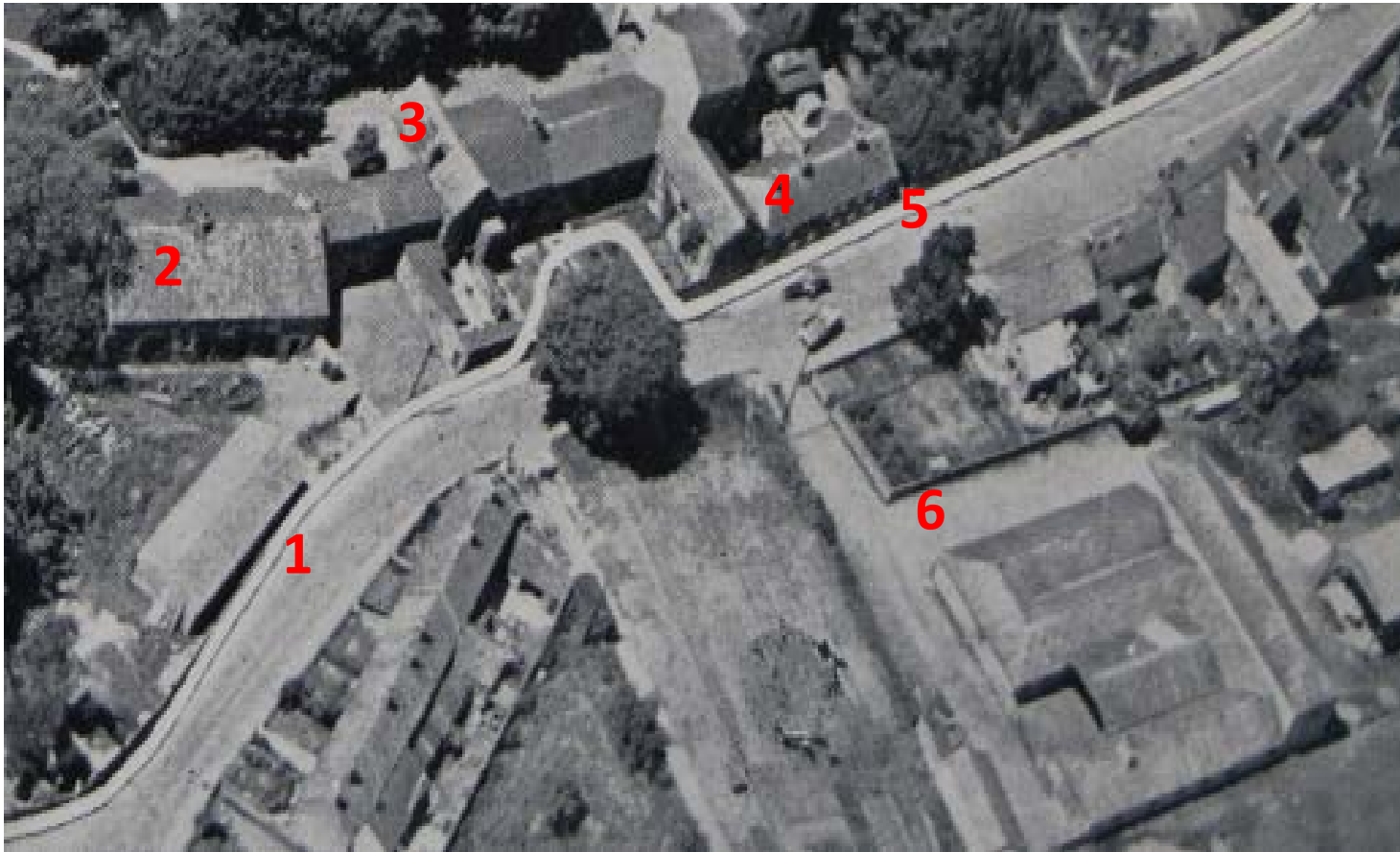
- 1947 *The Waltons* built for staff accommodation on Little Ayton Lane.
- 1948 Four oak benches and two armchairs commemorated the 15 scholars who lost their lives during the war.  
New sunken garden.  
Improvements to outdoor swimming pool.
- 1949 Tees Valley water supply replaced piped spring water.
- 1950 Tanner Jackson's ghost appeared in the Main School Building.
- 1952 School laundry in the Mill closed, building converted to biology laboratory and four craft rooms.
- 1953 Attics of *Ivy Cottage* and *Nutshell* converted for female staff accommodation by adding dormer windows.  
Lake drainage started; it would eventually become a playing field in 1959.
- 1955 Completion of the new classroom block.
- 1956 Purchase of *Crook Cottage* and *Dixon House* on High Green.
- 1958 Replacement of 110 volt electrical supply with 240 volt supply.
- 1959 Purchase of *Raby* and *Meynell* cottages on Station Road.  
New biology lab opened.





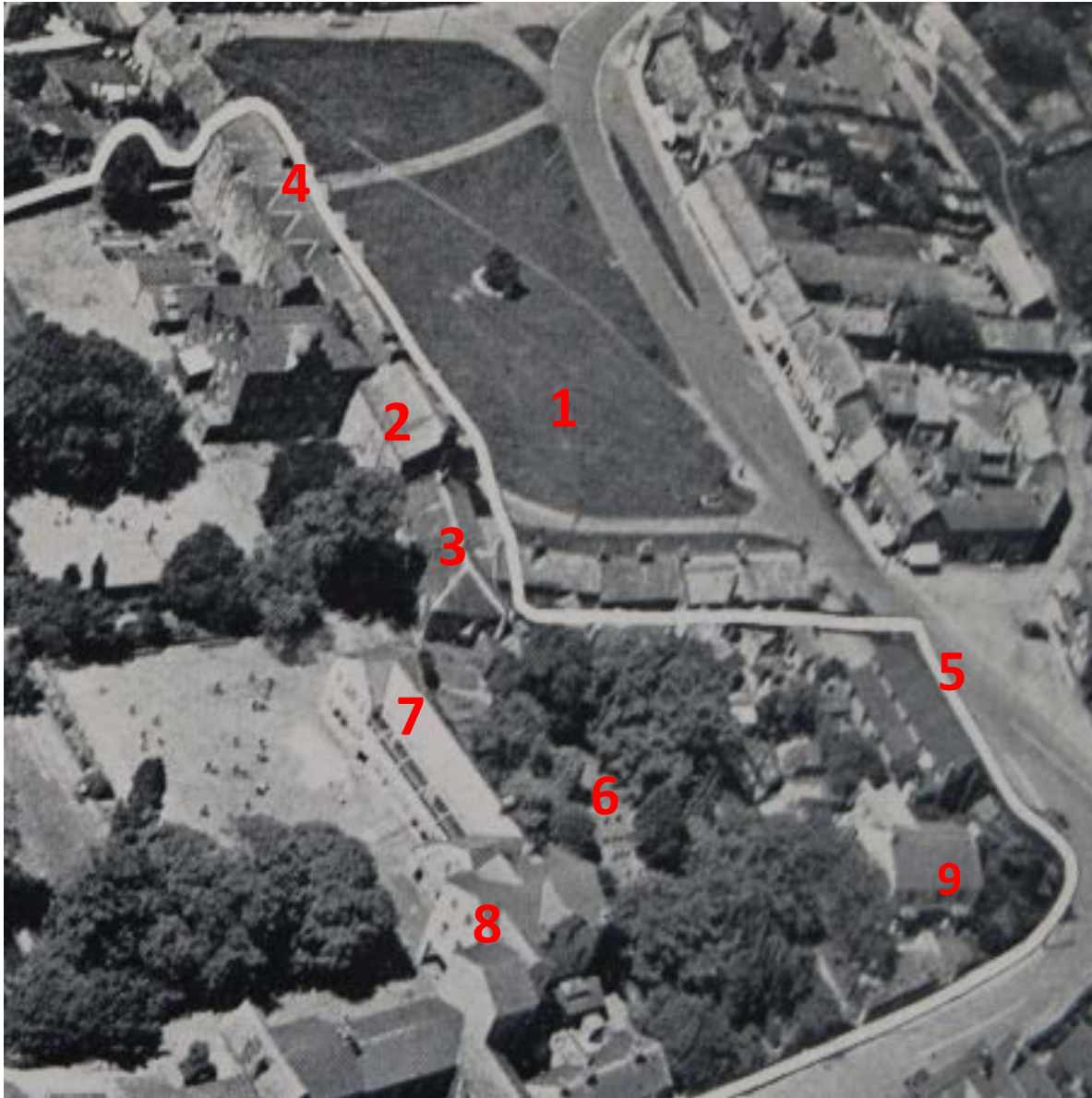
**Aerial view, probably from the late 1940s**

The next three slides show details from this aerial view.

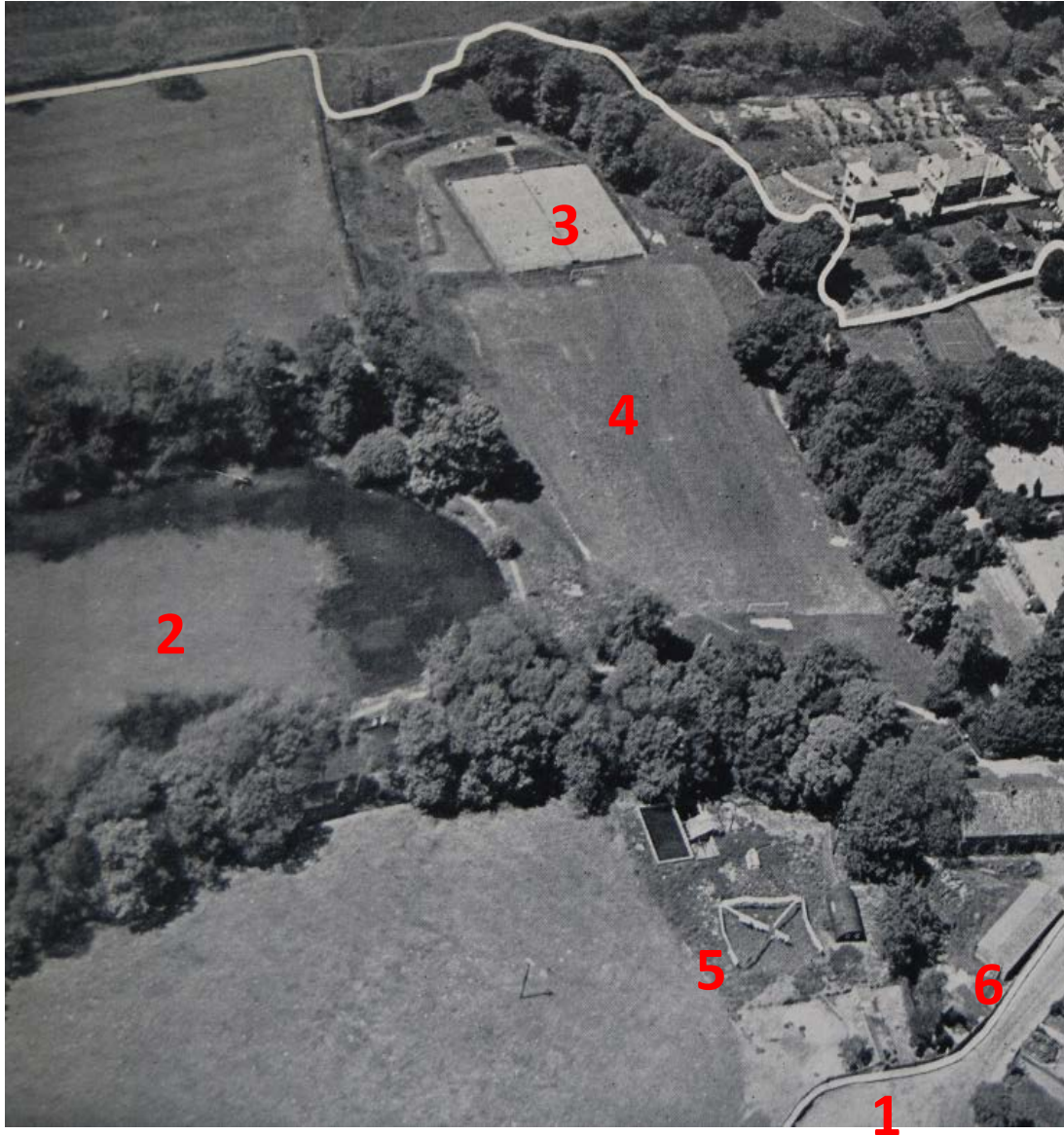


- 1 Station Road
- 2 The Mill, used as a craft block, with electricity generating equipment at rear
- 3 Chestnut House, later Rawdon House, now apartments
- 4 School Farm House, now converted into cottages
- 5 Entrance to Coach Road, now closed off by oak gates
- 6 School Farm; the present farm house was built after WW2





- 1 High Green
- 2 Original school house
- 3 Friends' Meeting House
- 4 Later school buildings
- 5 Tin Tabernacle
- 6 Quaker Burial Ground
- 7 1938 classroom block
- 8 School Hall
- 9 *Raby and Meynell cottages*



- 1 Station Road, site of mini roundabout)
- 2 The lake, drained in the 1950s and a playing field created on the site.
- 3 Tennis courts
- 4 Bottom playing field
- 5 Lines of washing
- 6 Urinal (now in Waterfall Park)





## The School Orchestra

Restarted in 1942. Choral Society in 1948. Productions included works by Gilbert and Sullivan and Handel.

Jazz Band formed in 1963.

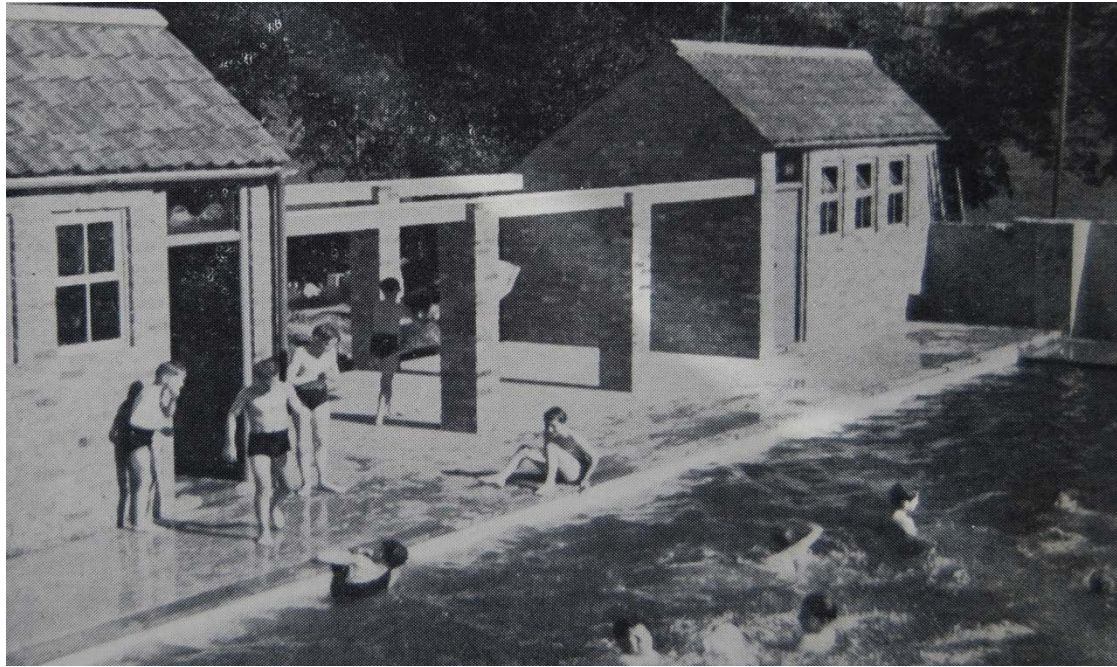




## Sunken garden 1948

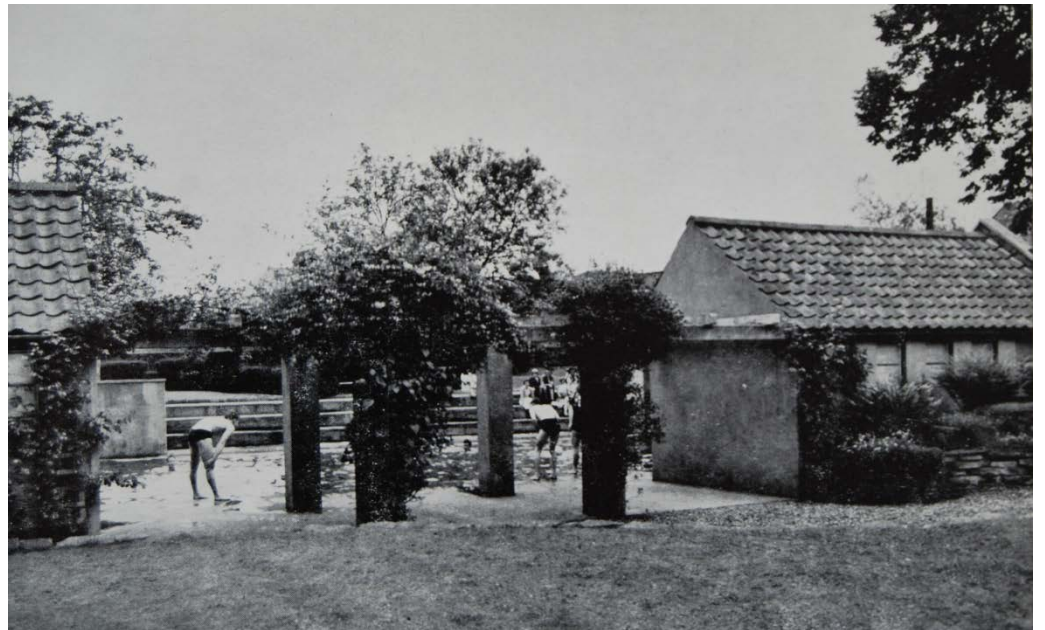
Filled in in 1991 because of safety requirements.





## Outdoor swimming pool

New changing rooms and a pergola were made in 1948.



THE CROSS COUNTRY, MARCH, 1948.

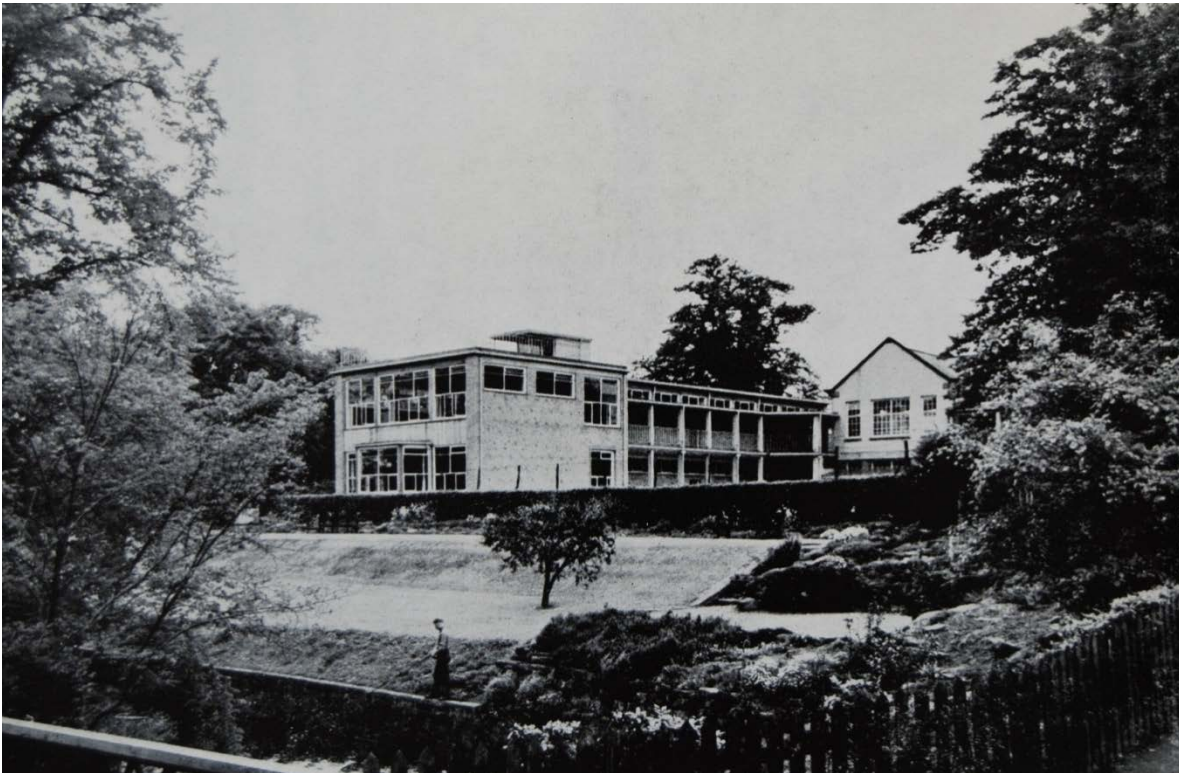


THE WINNER, DEREK DOWNEY, CROSSING EASBY FORD.

## Cross country

The first cross-country race held since 1943 over four and a half miles.





## The Classroom Block 1955

Above: View from the bridge over the River Leven.

Right: The new Library.



## 1960-1980

- 1960 Horse chestnut tree felled and two tennis courts made in its place.
- 1963 *Millfield House* built for the headmaster.
- 1964 Rosehill chapel purchased, later converted to a theatre.
- 1965 Friends' Meeting House renovated and extended.
- 1969 Only 9% of pupils have a Quaker parent.
- 1970 Leven Hall completed.
- 1971 Richardson Hall interior re-modelled.  
Nissen Hut from 1918, previously staff room, now a Pet Hut.
- 1976 Rosehill Theatre extensions.
- 1977 Sanatorium and associated land sold for building.
- 1979 Sports Hall appeal started.





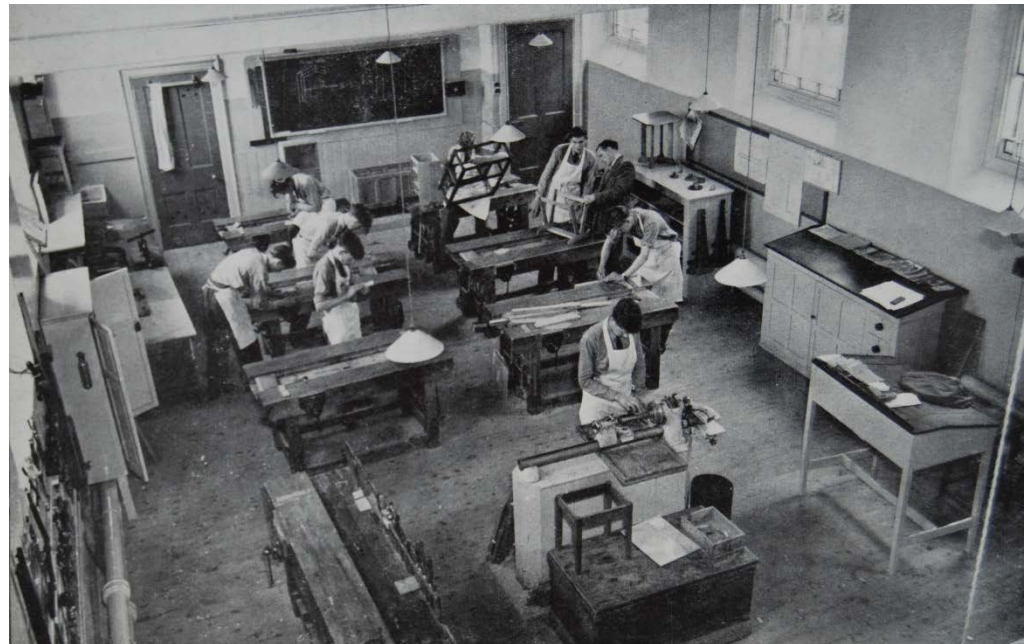
The Weaving Room in the 1960s



Chemistry Laboratory in the 1960s



Cookery lesson in 1960s

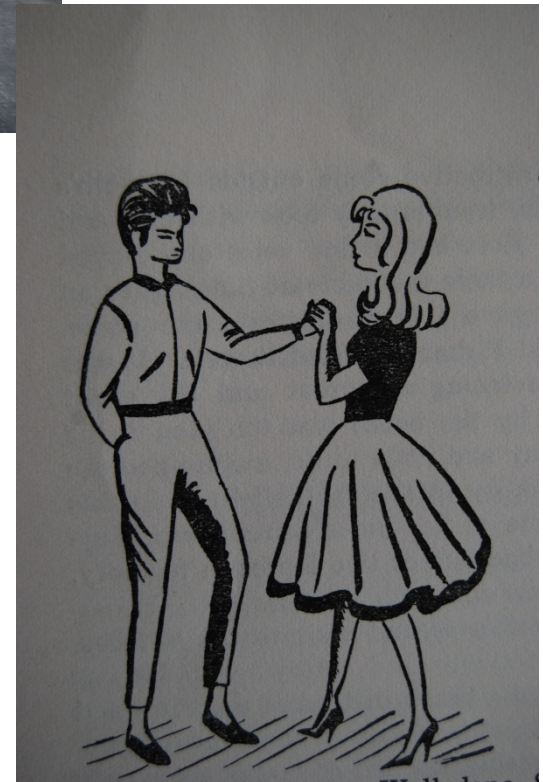


Woodwork in the 1960s





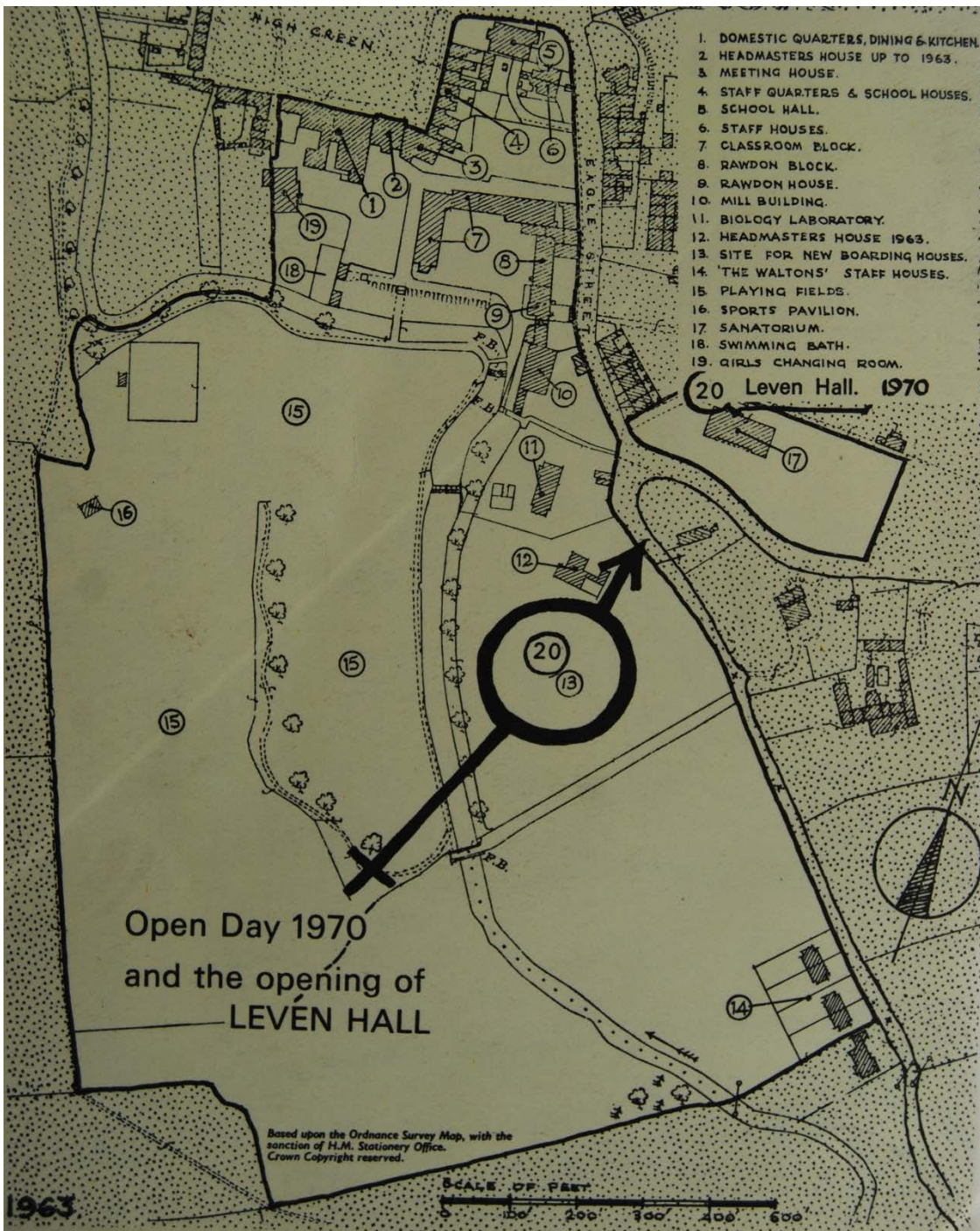
1960s' dress





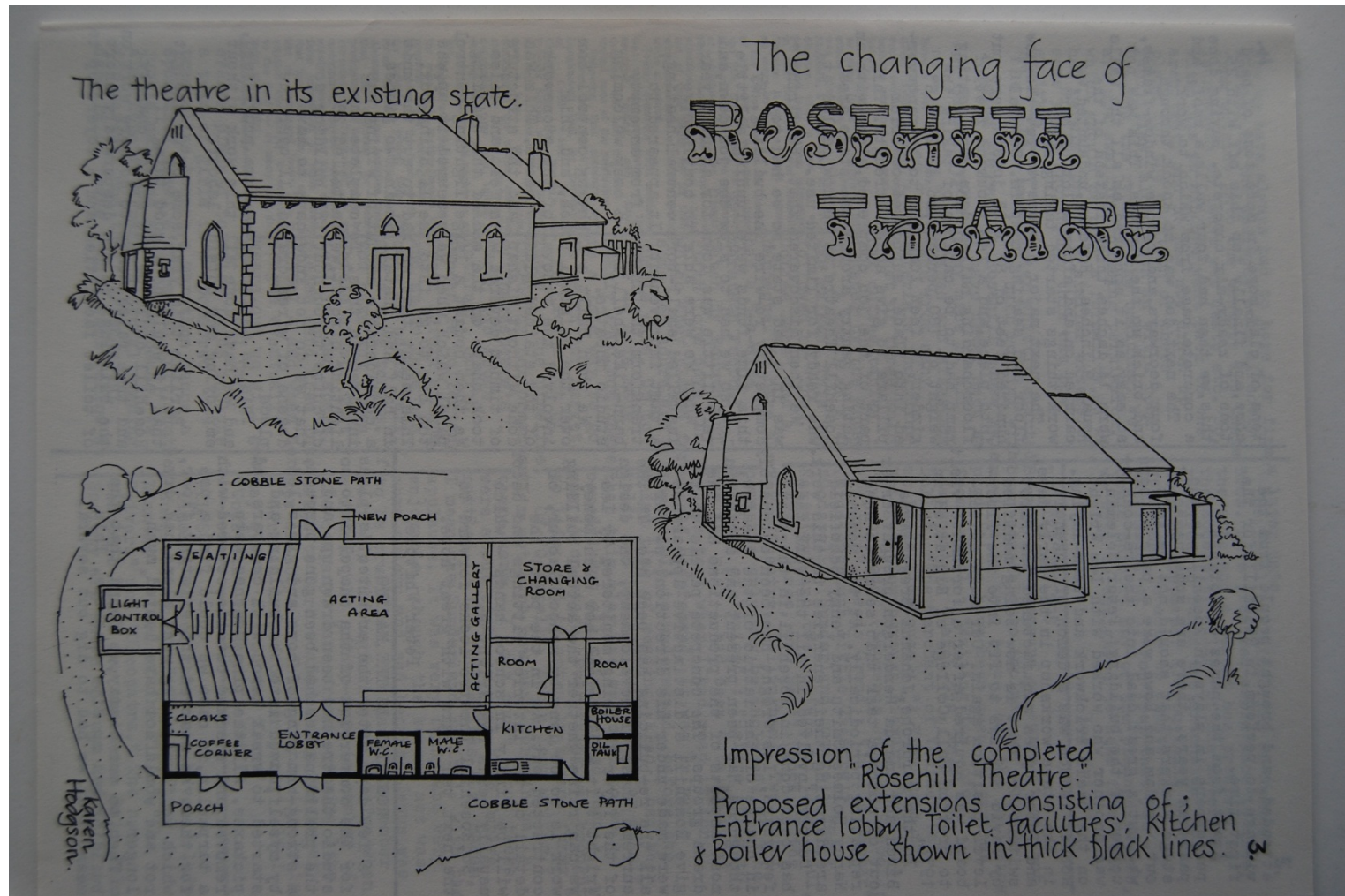
**The Mill in the 1960s**





School Plan from 1963

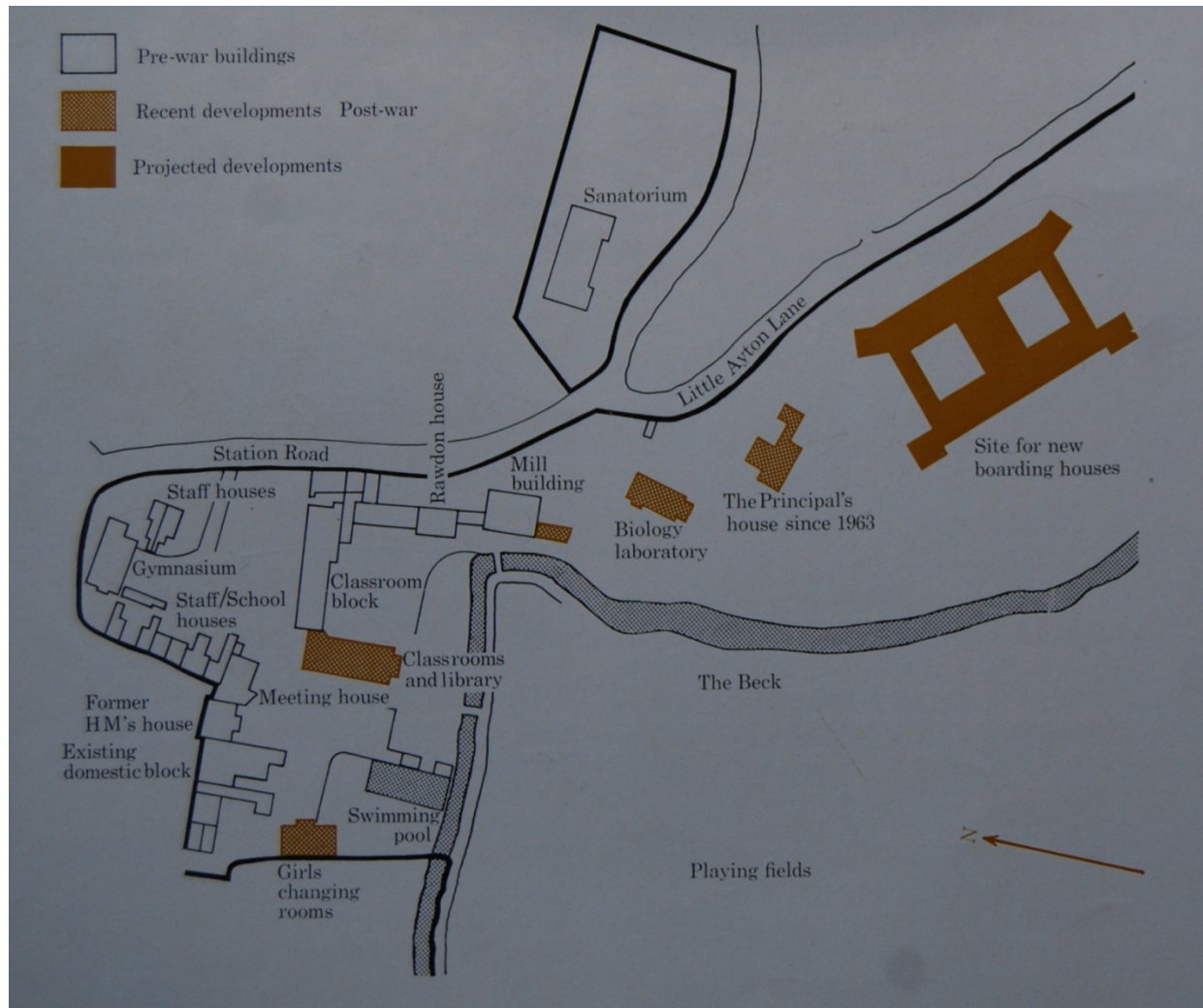




## Rosehill Theatre

This was converted from the Primitive Methodist Chapel built in 1895 to a theatre for the school. It was later converted into apartments.





## Proposal for Leven Hall, 1960s

An HMI inspection of the school criticised the standard of accommodation for boarders, so plans were made for an ambitious new accommodation building. This early plan shows a building with traditional quadrangles, quite different from that eventually opened in 1970.



## Leven Hall, 1970

Opened in 1970, cost £120,000. Designed along the lines of a university hall of residence.

Study-bedrooms on upper floors "The boys' side is divided from the girls' side only by two doors and a minefield!" Common rooms and study rooms on lower floor.

After conversion proved too costly, it was demolished in 1991 and the new Leven Hall apartments built.



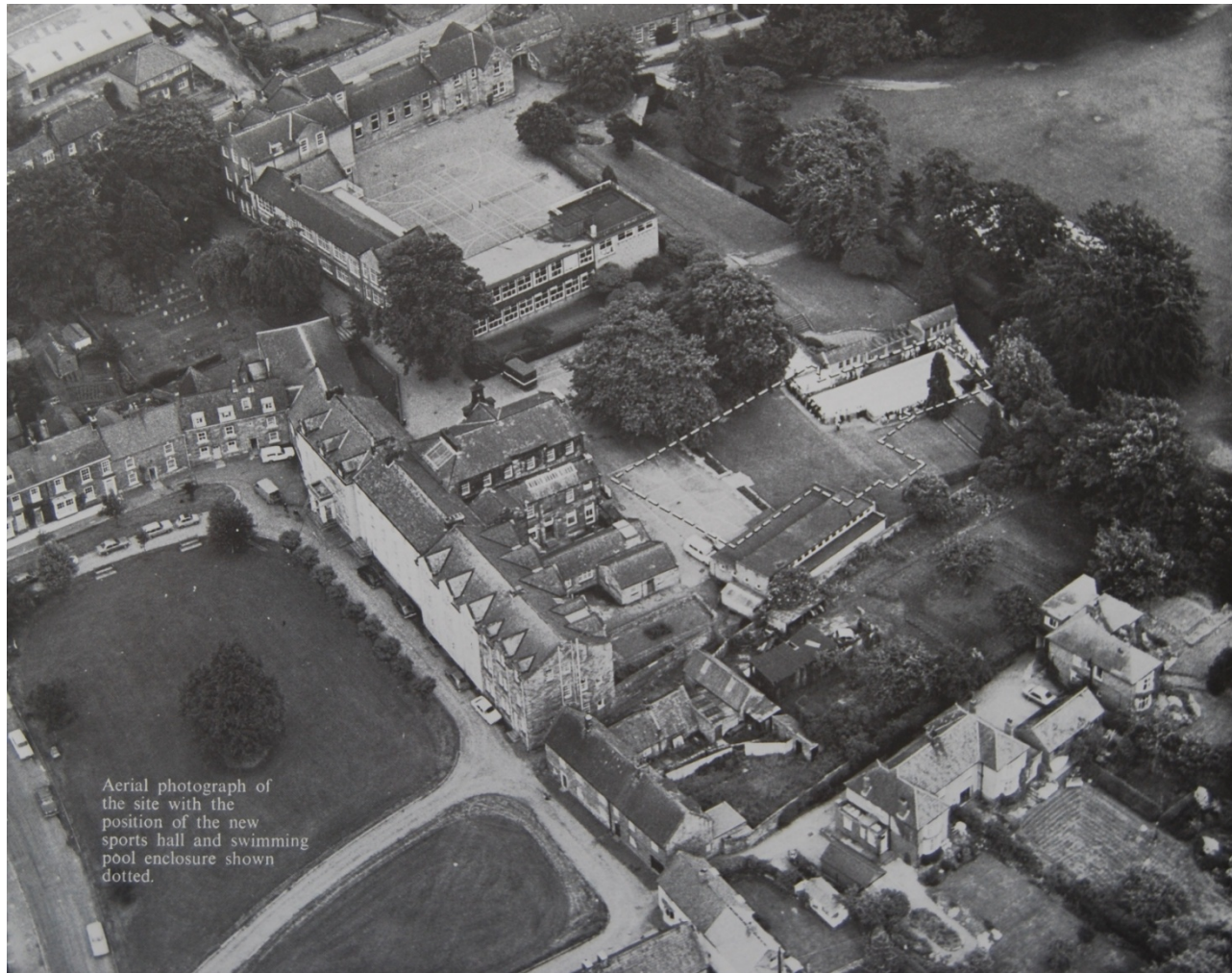


## The Sanatorium

“Temporary wooden building” erected in 1921-22 by Arthur Pearson and George Wilson on the site of the old gas works on Station Road. It replaced the old sick bay in Chestnut House (later Rawdon House).

Boys' end on the south side, girls' end to the north, with the kitchen and sister's room in the middle. The two small rooms at either end were for staff. Next to these were the day rooms which could hold up to twelve beds of convalescing children. The rest of the rooms each had two beds in them.

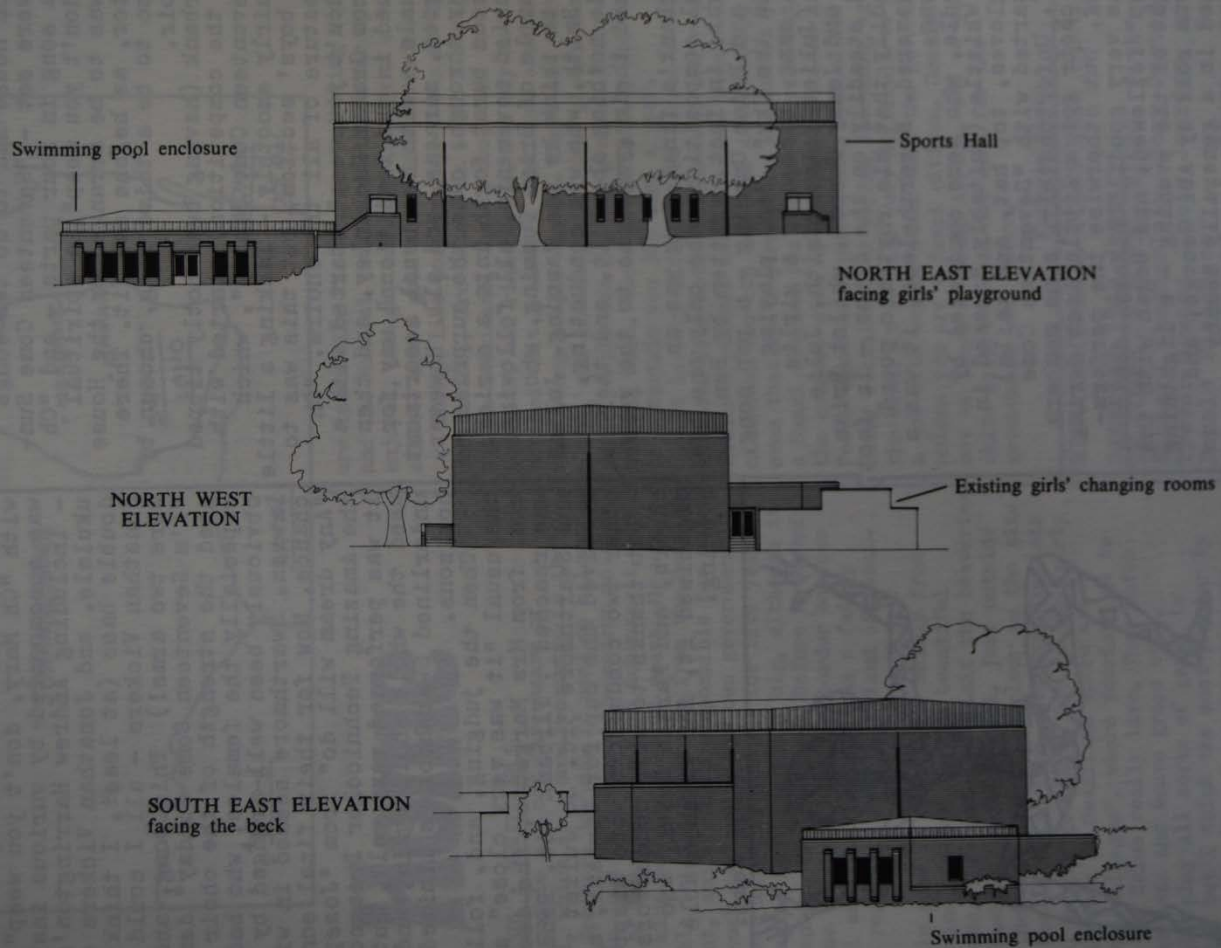
By the 1990s the sanatorium was no longer required, and it was sold in 1977 for housing development.



**Aerial view of location of new Sports Hall, 1979**



## Artists Impression of the New Sports Hall



## 1980-2000

- 1981 Sports Hall opened.
- 1983 *The Waltons* sold to members of staff.
- 1984 New Junior School opened.  
Computer room made in the teaching block.
- 1986 *Crook Cottage* sold.  
Tin Tabernacle sold and car park constructed on site.  
*Meynell* and *Raby* sold.
- 1987 *Dixon House* sold.
- 1991 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary appeal for £300,000.  
*Ivy*, *Nutshell* and *Acorn* sold.  
Name changed to "Ayton School".
- 1994 *Millfield House* sold.
- 1997 Closure of school.
- 1999 Official opening of Wimpey apartments by William Hague.



## Successful appeals in the past...

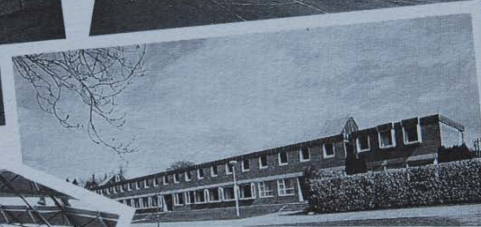
GAMES PAVILION



NEW TEACHING BLOCK



LEVEN HALL



SPORTS HALL



BIOLOGY LAB

## 1991 Appeal

Extensions and improvements were financed by appeals. This was the last appeal, for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to raise £300,000. This was for computer equipment, music centre, updating boys' changing room, and junior school entrance.



Dining Hall







## The demise of the school

In April 1997 it was announced that the Ayton School would close on 31 August due to financial pressures. The 28 teachers and 22 staff employed would lose their jobs and the buildings and land would be sold.

Until the 1970s the school had been successful, with increasing numbers and new buildings. However the school's finances then began to deteriorate. An inability to raise fees and to attract more scholars meant that properties belonging to the school began to be sold off in the 1980s. The writing was surely on the wall, but no decisive management action seems to have been taken.

It is not appropriate to attempt here any detailed analysis of the school's financial situation, but some background data is relevant.

School income was from fees (day scholars and boarders) x numbers of scholars. The next slides show some data on fees and scholar numbers.



## **Fees for Ayton School boarders £ pa (with 2011 equivalents)**

1942	100	3,870 in 2011
1948	148	4,420 in 2011
1954	216	4,850 in 2011
1958	300	5,780 in 2011
1972	696	7,530 in 2011
1991	6,843	12,050 in 2011

## How did fees compare with other schools?

In 1991:

Ayton School boarding fees	£6,843
Typical boarding school fees	£14,000

Inflating to 2011 values:

Ayton School boarding fees	£12,050
Typical boarding school fees	£25,150

Sources: 2011 fees from Daily Telegraph 15 September 2011  
Inflation of average boarding fees 1991-2011 inferred from  
Institute for Fiscal Studies Paper 10/22)



## Pupil numbers

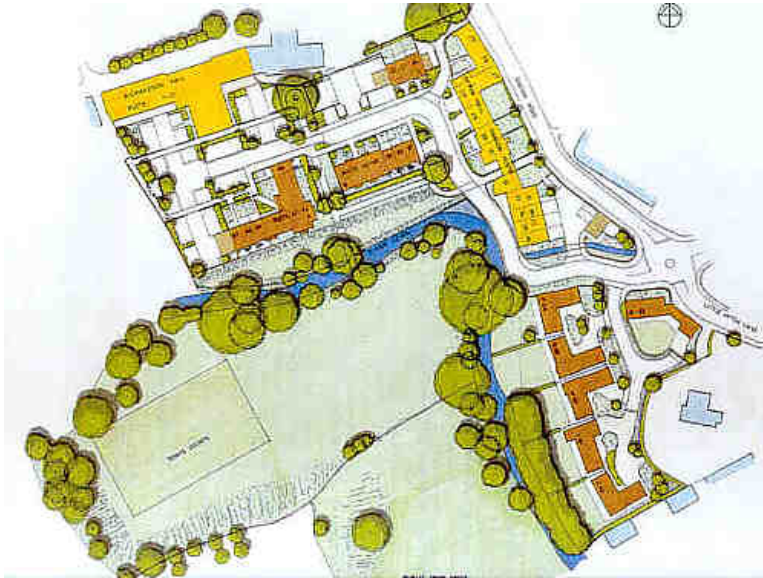
1939	192
1942	215
1954	219
1970	300
1991	212
1997	200

It can be seen that scholar numbers had fallen significantly since the 1970s, and within this the proportion of boarders had greatly decreased. At the closure announcement it was said that there was only a handful of boarders. The traditional source of Ayton School boarders, from the families of British servicemen and officials posted overseas, had diminished.

There was increased competition for day scholars from other private schools in the area, such as Yarm School and Teesside High School. The rounded education and development offered by Ayton School seems to have been less-valued than the more academic approach of the competition. At a time when private education was expanding, Ayton School was unable to attract scholars.

Falling numbers, far fewer boarders, fees which were far too low, and rising operating costs made the closure inevitable. The position had been allowed to deteriorate for too many years and was now irretrievable.

There are 8 Society of Friends' schools in England. Four more have closed, including Ayton School.

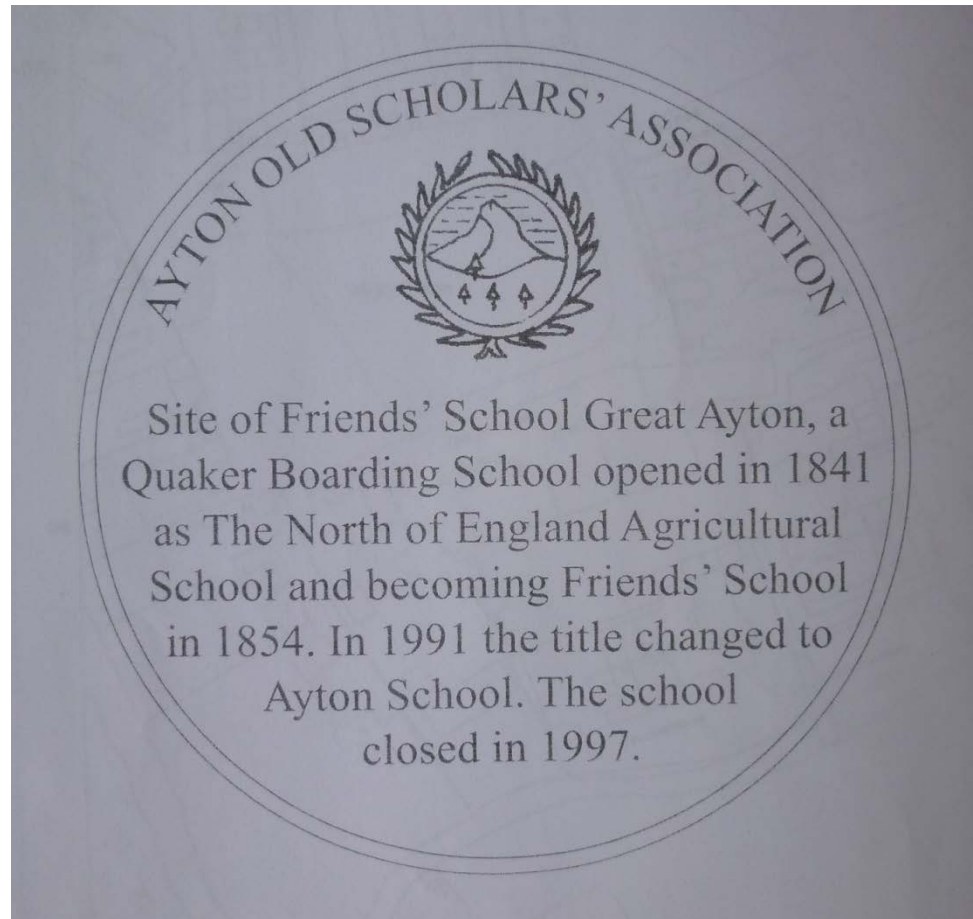


## Wimpey apartments 1999

Following closure of the school in 1997, the entire site was redeveloped by Messrs Wimpey. Existing buildings were converted into apartments, with some new buildings at the rear. The old mill was completely rebuilt.







Design for Blue Plaque to be mounted on the side of the old school on High Green

## Sources and acknowledgements

Ayton Old Scholars' Association website  
North Yorkshire County Records Office  
"History of Ayton School" 1891  
"Ayton School Centenary History 1841-1941"

Rachael Marsay (research)  
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