

# The Houses (Past and Present) of Loughborough Grammar School



The different House vests in 1996

**Roger Willson**

## THE HOUSES AT L.G.S. *[Past and Present]*

New buildings in a Tudor style; uniform; the adoption of a school badge; the introduction of school sport and matches with other schools; a cricket field and a first XI; masters wearing gowns and mortar-boards; science coming into the a curriculum which was still geared to the Classics; prize and speech days: all these were typical of old-established grammar schools such as LGS in the second half of the Victorian period taking on many of the characteristics of the major public schools which themselves were undergoing a revival and re-launching after Royal Commission enquiries into the use of educational endowments in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. And along with these features came Houses as a way of introducing competition in sports internally.

The 1891 *Loughburian* magazine, one of the first we have in the school archives, mentions a tripartite division of the School: School House [the boarders who lived in with the Headmaster, Colgrove at this time, in School House], Burton House [a second boarding house situated in Gregory Street which was demolished in the 1960's], and Day Boys. Captains of each were elected at a 'committee meeting held at the beginning of the Michaelmas term' [1890]. We have to remember just how small the school was at the time compared with nowadays: less than 100 pupils was the norm.



Burton House Football Team 1897

The magazine also mentions that the school football team had been 'decked out once more in the old School colours – blue and white: the shirts are quartered', colours which were to become very relevant when the first re-arrangement of School Houses took place eighteen years later. Challenge Cups between the Houses seem also to have been introduced in 1890 ['after much deliberation, the inscriptions and the cups themselves have been determined on. Ingenious members of the committee even made designs after their own heart in which figured a pair of legs in deadly collision over a ball'], so perhaps this was the start of competitive House matches. The next page of the magazine records Challenge Cup football matches, the names of team members, reports on the first and second round matches, and victory in the Challenge Cup for Football for the Day Boys, who were undefeated in all their matches.



School House (The Boarders) Cricket 1890's

Reports on inter-House cricket and tennis follow in *The Loughburian* for December 1891 when it appears that the Day Boy House had already been divided into South and North Day Boys, presumably reflecting where local boys lived.

The first major change in the organisation of Houses took place in 1907 under Headmaster Turner, when we learn from *The Loughburian* that there was to be a 're-arrangement of Cup Ties', proposed by the Games Committee. The School was to be divided into two Sections: at first it was suggested that these might be known as Burton and Hickling, but it was soon decided that 'the names of the sets should be Blue and White: 'shirts and jerseys of these colours to be worn by the respective sets....In future the 1<sup>st</sup> XI must wear the blue **and** white shirt in School matches, the school badge to be worn on the shirt as soon as any member of the XI has received his colours'. Inter-'Set' competitions were to be held at senior, middle and junior levels.



The School magazine soon begins to report on Cup Tie matches between Blues and Whites: football, swimming sports, which took place in the town Memorial Baths, now the Museum in Queen's Park ['The team race between the Blues and the Whites was splendidly fought out amidst deafening shouts from the onlookers'] and cricket [interestingly, a two innings match played on a Saturday and a Wednesday] in the summer of 1907, and by 1908, rifle club matches which continued to take place up till the First World War.

Post-War, a new Headmaster, Captain Stinton, and the next re-arrangement of the Houses at a time when the School had begun to increase in numbers. *The Loughburian* of May, 1920, records that 'with a view to providing better games for those not playing in either of the elevens, we have divided the School into four Houses, according to where the boys reside. The plan has so far worked well; and very good games have resulted. Most half holidays [that is Saturday and Wednesday afternoons] have witnessed keen inter-House contests.' The four Houses were to be known as North, South, East and West, and this remained the House system until the 1960s, so plenty of O.L.s will remember it. By the summer of 1920, *The Loughburian* was reporting that 'the wisdom of returning to the old system of dividing the School into Houses North, South, East and West, has been fully justified by the increased keenness of competition which has been displayed on the cricket field, the tennis courts, and at the Athletic Sports. There are signs of the same healthy spirit invading the classrooms, and we hope the day is not far distant when a House will be no less proud of the distinction gained by its members there'.



Evidence of different house vests, despite the black and white photo.

The same magazine also records the start of the inter-House Challenge Cup for the school Sports, the Purnell Cup, in memory of an O.L. who was killed during the First World War: South House trounced the opposition the first year [perhaps not surprisingly because South House included the boarders in School House]. During the 1920s inter-House cricket, football, tennis, swimming and athletics are regularly reported.

At Easter 1933 we hear that a new scheme had been introduced for an overall House Championship to include all the existing competitions. Christmas 1936 saw the overall House Championship points listed for the first time, and this now became a regular fixture of the magazine.



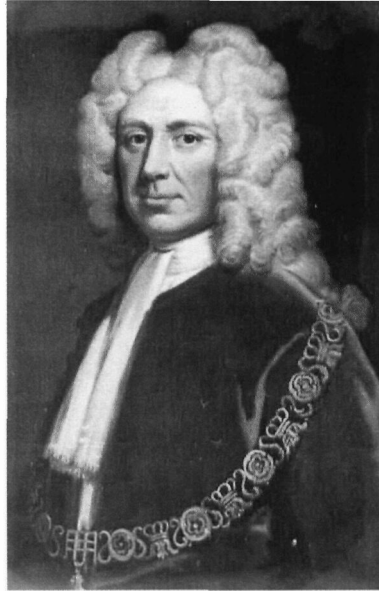
It was not until 1961 that a major change was made to the House system. Headmaster Walter decided that, as in many public schools, the Houses should be named after House Masters. *The Loughburian* for July 1961 reports that ‘the re-naming of the Houses has been a long-awaited innovation, but has given rise to a certain amount of confusion, especially on touch lines, when the cry “Come on South – I mean Murray’s!” has frequently been heard. There is also the unfortunate fact that Redden’s House, once North, still retain their green braid, which is a contradiction in terms. For those who wish to know the new names, they are – South becomes Murray’s [and continued to include the boarders]; North becomes Redden’s; West, Bowen’s, and East, Foxon’s.’ Thus four long-standing stalwarts on the School staff became the first House Masters after whom the Houses were named. The inevitable result of this system was changes in House names as members of staff retired or moved to other schools: thus Redden’s became Haynes’s in March 1974; Murray’s became Griffiths’s in September 1969; Foxon’s soon became James’s in September 1961 and then Moretti’s in 1964; Bowen’s became Cullingford’s in September 1975. Because of the continual increase in school numbers, two new Houses were created in 1965: School House for the boarders, and Wood’s [named after Mr. Don Wood].

Perhaps it was the confusion that could arise from this system of House names changing whenever a staff change occurred that led to the decision to have a complete re-naming at the start of the September term in 1978. House names now went back to being permanent. School House remained to include not just boarders in all three boarding houses [School, Red and Denton] but a number of day boys who lived in Loughborough; four Houses were now named after previous Headmasters [Hence Haynes's became Colgrove, Griffiths's became Wallace, Moretti's became Turner, and Cullingford's became Kaye], and the sixth House [Wood's] was named after Canon Briggs, author of the School Hymn, 'Our Father, by whose servant'.

In the Autumn Term of 1991, despite still increasing numbers of pupils, the School reverted to a four-House system. This was to enable a much wider range of boys to represent their Houses, and it was decided that what was by then a much greater diversity of competitions [ranging from rugby and cricket to chess and the general knowledge quiz] should take place on a year group basis instead of the broader junior/intermediate/senior categories. This meant that house matches could now take place during year games periods. The names of the new Houses, and it was the brainwave of Mr Bob Griffiths to suggest this, were chosen to reflect the centuries of the School's history and the variety of careers occupied by eminent Old Loughburians. Thus **Abney** was a financier and Lord Mayor of London, who died in 1722; **Pulteney** was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Fellow of the Royal Society; **Davys** was tutor to Queen Victoria and Bishop of Peterborough, while **Yates** was the son of a cobbler and was an outstanding linguist who worked in India for the Baptist Missionary Society. This House System has, of course, been continuous till the present day, and it has had the great advantage of an inter-House championship which has, apart from a period in the 2000's, not been dominant by a single House, so that each of the four Houses has had turns at winning the championship.

We now consider each of these distinguished OL's in more detail.

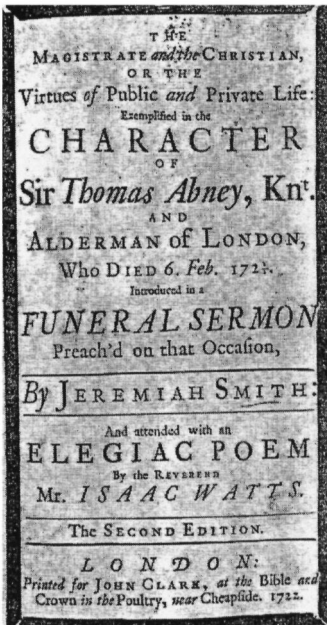
## WHO WAS ABNEY? SIR THOMAS ABNEY



Sir Thomas Abney was born in 1639 into a Derbyshire family [Abney is a hamlet in the Peak District moorlands near Eyam from which the family probably originated], the fourth and youngest son of James Abney. Though there is an element of a 'Dick Whittington' story, Thomas Abney's career was not exactly a 'rags to riches' one because the Abneys were an established county family, holding their estates since the Norman Conquest. He came to Loughborough sometime in the Civil War period when his mother died, and was brought up by his aunt. So he arrived at L.G.S. at what must have been a traumatic time politically [Civil War and Interregnum]. We know nothing of him at L.G.S. [The school at the time was situated in the churchyard of All Saints Parish Church where it remained until 1826], but his aunt's serious and religious attitude to life certainly had an impact on him and, according to the oration at his funeral, "were the happy means of a serious and religious turn of mind which continued throughout his whole life."

A London career followed: again, we know no details of this, but his marriage licence to Sarah Caryl in 1668 describes him as of Old-Hallows-in-the-Wall, citizen and fishmonger – which means that by then he was a member of the prestigious Fishmongers' Company, meaning that he had become a successful merchant/financier, so in Abney L.G.S. can claim success in the City in the seventeenth century! Abney will have lived through both Plague and Fire. He had seven children by his first wife, who died in 1698.

By the 1690s he was one of the City's leading merchants and characters: not surprisingly by 1692 he was a City alderman, and in 1693 he became Sheriff of London and Middlesex. One of the earliest promoters of a Bank of England in William of Orange's reign, he was one of the Bank's original directors named in the charter of 1694, in which year he received a knighthood for his financial services to City and Crown. His portrait still hangs in the Bank of England museum. Elected Lord Mayor of London in 1700, just about the time when Wren was completing St. Paul's Cathedral, he sat briefly as Whig M.P. for the City. In 1700 he married again, Mary Gunston, a much younger wife, by whom he had four more children. In the last years before his death in 1723 he spent much time at Abney House, Stoke Newington, which his wife had inherited, and at his summer residence in Hertfordshire. He was President of the Board of St. Thomas's Hospital during his later years, and was also a considerable benefactor of that foundation. Sir Thomas and Lady Abney were also well known for their hospitality and kindness, particularly to Isaac Watts, the great English hymn writer, to whom they gave a home, so perhaps hymns like "O God, our help in ages past" were written in Abney's garden!



In Thomas Abney L.G.S. has an old boy of whom it may be proud, and although we have no original records connected to him at school, in London we may see his portrait, his coat-of-arms and the funeral sermon preached in 1723. Allowing for the eulogistic element in this, we are still left with the portrait of a remarkable and likeable personality : "The duties of the second Table, in which he was careful and exact were all performed in virtue and pursuance of those of the *first* ; the love and fear of God, and the desire of pleasing and honouring him, were the spring and very life and soul of every action, consecrating as it were his whole life, and in a sense making all his works to be worship. That motto well agreed to him: Non magna loquimur sed vivimus, We don't talk great, but live so."

His second wife, Mary, gave his name to Abney Park in Stoke Newington in the east of London, a park which was to become home to one of the 'famous five' garden cemeteries created in the London suburbs in the 1840s. There is also a nearby primary school named the Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.



## WHO WAS DAVYS? GEORGE DAVYS, BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH



George Davys was born in Loughborough in 1780 in a house opposite All Saints Parish Church, and, after attending the Grammar School [just across the road for him in those days; the Elizabethan Grammar School stood within the churchyard] under Headmaster Edward Shaw, he was admitted as a sizar to Clare College, Cambridge in 1799, graduating in 1803. In 1806 he graduated as a Master of Arts from Christ's College, became elected a fellow of the college, and, not unnaturally entered the Church, being ordained deacon at Norwich. During those days of pluralities, he was soon holding livings in several parts of the country and quickly established himself as a scholar with an interest in history, education and the liturgy of the church. On his marriage in 1814 he had to give up his college fellowship, and he was presented to the small vicarage of Willoughby on the Wolds, which he held until 1829. He wrote a number of theological works for the instruction of village readership in the liturgy and doctrine of the Church of England, and in 1824 he wrote *On Savings Banks*, an encouragement to savings in which the sensible William Wise encourages his friend Ralph Ragged to give up spending on alcohol and instead to save regularly.

But his principal 'claim to fame' comes from his appointment in 1823 as tutor to the young Princess Victoria. Her mother, the Duchess of Kent, was evidently having a good deal of trouble from her daughter, described at the time as a 'spoiled, self-willed, little exhibitionist'. Rev. George Davys was recommended and, as 'preceptor and tutor' held this position until Victoria came to the throne in 1837. Davys was charged particularly with Victoria's religious education. Apparently, after some early rebellion and traumas, Victoria was shamed into some effort, though she still had to struggle against inattention! Davys seems to have been a fairly conventional contemporary teacher: Victoria found him a rather monotonous and soporific preacher! Extra stress was laid on English History, and this in preference to literature remained Victoria's main reading matter through life.

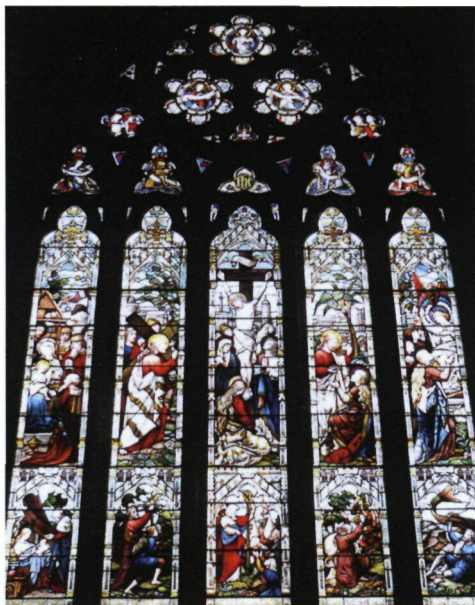
In 1832 Davys was appointed Dean of Chester and in 1839, two years after his 'pupil' had ascended the throne, on the rather reluctant recommendation of the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, Davys was appointed and consecrated Bishop of Peterborough. He remained at Peterborough until his death in 1864. As a bishop, he took no active part in politics or in religious controversy.

From the Loughborough point of view the appointment was doubly relevant because, in 1840, the Diocese of Lincoln was 'carved up' and, as a result, Leicestershire, including Loughborough, now came within the Diocese of Peterborough. So, as the Right Revd. George Davys, old boy and diocesan bishop, he returned to Loughborough on Friday 9<sup>th</sup>. August 1850 to lay the foundation stone of the new school buildings on the Burton Walks site .

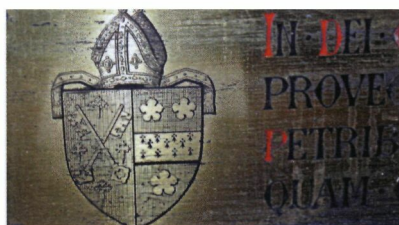


A grand procession took place from All Saints Parish Church to the building site, preceded by a military band. The party entered the site underneath a triumphal arch with 'Burton's Charity' picked out in dahlias, and the Union Jack on top. After Davys had made a speech, expressing his belief that the new 'Grammar and Commercial School' would bring benefits to all classes of boys and to girls as well [LHS can claim to be the oldest-established girls' grammar school in England], prayers were said, psalms were sung, and the foundation stone was laid. Pies, lobster salads, chickens, tongues and other tempting offerings were then served in an elegantly decorated pavilion.

At his burial in Peterborough many mourners were present and a royal carriage was sent by Victoria with servants in state liveries, a mark of her respect and affection for him, just as he apparently had bothered to stand on the platform of Peterborough station as a mark of respect to his sovereign every time the royal train passed through. At Loughborough the minute bell of All Saints and Emmanuel churches was tolled for the whole day. Davys comes across as being of a quiet, kindly, serious and self-effacing nature, not a man of ambition or self-advertisement. The *Illustrated London News* spoke of his "retiring nature.... Kindness, gentleness and sympathy had been the qualities which had endeared him to his city and diocese." The tribute in *The Times* was rather bland: 'His ambition through his life was rather to be good than great. Higher praise it is impossible to bestow.' There is a memorial east window to Bishop Davys in All Saints Parish Church [shown below] and there is also one at Barnack, a village between Stamford and Peterborough.



Davys Memorial Window in  
Loughborough Parish Church



Davys Memorial Plaque in  
Loughborough Parish Church

## WHO WAS PULTENEY? RICHARD PULTENEY



The son of Samuel Pulteney, a tailor but a man of some property, he was born in 1730 and was the only child of thirteen in the family to reach maturity [Does this perhaps account for his desire to be a doctor?]. The Pulteney family belonged to a nonconformist sect called the Old Anabaptists [They believed in the Baptism of Conscious Believers – that is, adult rather than infant baptism.] and they were regular attenders at the Shepshed meeting-house. What kind of academic distinction Richard achieved at the Free Grammar School in Loughborough we do not know, but as a religious dissenter in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he would not have been allowed entrance to Oxford or Cambridge even if his ability had merited it. So, after leaving school, he was apprenticed to an apothecary [a dispensing chemist] in Loughborough and then in Mountsorrel.



It seems to have been his uncle who directed the young man's taste to natural history and especially botany, and by the age of 17 he had already completed a study of the flora of Charnwood Forest with 57 water colour plates.





His apprenticeship served, he began to practise as a surgeon and an apothecary in Leicester, it appears with little success. However, he clearly had ability and the gift of making contacts, and at 20 he contributed his first literary work on botanical subjects to the Gentleman's Magazine and to the Royal Society. In 1764 at last he graduated M.D. at Edinburgh University, and then came to London where he secured the patronage of William Pulteney, the Earl of Bath who acknowledged him as a kinsman. [If you have been to Bath, you will know of Pulteney Street and Pulteney Bridge, and may have wondered about the connection.]

XXXIV. *A Letter from Richard Pulteney, M. D. F. R. S. to William Watson, M. D. F. R. S. concerning the medicinal Effects of a poisonous Plant exhibited instead of the Water Parsnep.*

DEAR SIR,

Read July 9, 1774. **S**OME circumstances having lately come to my knowledge, relating to the effects of a poisonous plant, I thought them rather soo remarkable not to merit further notice; and, I address them to you with the more propriety, as you have already laid before the publick some observations \* concerning the deleterious qualities of the plant in question, which holds a distinguished place among the poisonous ones that are indigenous in Britain.

Mr. H——n, an attorney of this place, now upwards of forty, at the age of fifteen, began to be affected (after taking cold upon violent exercise, as he thinks) with what is usually called a scorbutick disorder, which shewed itself more particularly on the outides of his arms, about the elbows, and on

\* See Philosophical Transactions, Vol. XLIV. p. 227. and Vol. L. p. 85b.

the:

Eventually, Richard Pulteney settled at Blandford Forum in Dorset where he practised as a physician until he died in 1801. Hard to think that he long pre-dated knowledge of germs and bacteria, and that, no doubt, he adhered to the long-established practices of bleeding, blistering, purging and vomiting his patients!

It was during these thirty or so years that he followed the interests and abilities that were to make him famous. Spending his leisure time with botany and conchology, the study of shells, and with regular correspondence with well-known naturalists of his day, many honours were conferred on him, especially his Fellowship of the Royal Society and his Fellowship of the Linnaean Society. After his death, his extensive collection of shells and minerals and his herbarium were bequeathed to the Linnaean Society in London: his herbarium is still in the British Museum, and an oil painting of him still hangs at the Linnaean Society Building next to the Royal Academy in Piccadilly. Pulteney's writings and works on botanical subjects are simply too many to mention.

A fitting epitaph is the tribute written in 1801: *'His works evidence a mind stimulated by an ardent passion for the pursuit of physical science; and that was in an eminent degree adapted, both by original genius and habitual activity, for promoting its diffusion and advancement amongst mankind. The conscientious, attentive and cautious manner in which, during a long, useful and highly reputable career, he discharged the important duties of a responsible profession secured to him the confidence and regard of all who were fortunate enough to be within reach of his assistance and advice.'*



Pulteney's Memorial at Blandford Forum



Pulteney wanted no elaborate memorial at his death. The monument to him in Blandford Church is simple and adorned only with a sculptured plant of the Australian genus of papilionaceous named Pultenoea in his honour. The inscription on the monument states: *That modesty for which he was remembered through life forbade any vain eulogium on his tomb; but he will long be remembered with gratitude and affection both as a physician and as a friend.*

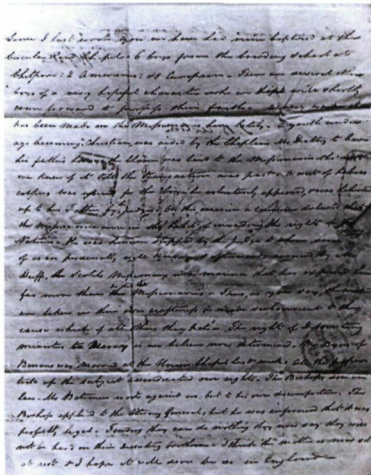
## WHO WAS YATES? WILLIAM YATES



Born in 1792, his background – his parents William, a shoemaker, and Ann were keen members of the Loughborough Baptist Chapel in Woodgate – was all-important. William left LGS at the age of 11 almost certainly to start earning a living. So, he spent his early teens training with his father as a shoemaker ; but at the age of 14 he became a convinced Christian and was baptised, and this was followed by a desire to preach and teach the faith : “I felt a most ardent desire to do something for the welfare of my fellow creatures and for the glory of God,” he recorded. Preaching led to him feeling that he ought to be able to read the Bible in the original language ; so developed a thirst for literature and a special passion for language and grammar. He therefore went back to his studies ‘part-time’, tutored by his old Headmaster, Edward Shaw. There was a brief period teaching at Quorn [Rawlins Grammar School] which he did not enjoy because, by now he had realised that what he wanted most in life was to follow the path of the Christian ministry. He was admitted to Bristol College in 1812 to train [n.b. Like Pulteney, the impossibility of a nonconformist attending Oxbridge when admission to the old universities was exclusively Anglican] and was accepted as a missionary student in 1814. He wrote to his parents : “I am going on in my studies as far as I can, and feel a decided attachment to the study of languages....I am now reading the Bible in Arabic.”



By now he had decided on missionary work in the East, and having arrived in Calcutta on board the 'Earl Moira' in 1815, he spent the greater part of the last 30 years of his life working in India where his facility for languages bore immense fruit. He became fluent in Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindustani, Bengali, Hindi, Khasse, Munipore, Persian and Arabic. In his early years he worked with one of the most famous of English missionaries, Dr. William Carey, a fellow Baptist from Leicester ; together they worked on many translations. While on honeymoon in 1816 Yates witnessed suttee for the first time and he went on to write an essay to arouse consciences about the custom [the Hindu custom for a widow to throw herself on to the funeral pyre of her dead husband]. His literary undertakings can only be described as Herculean....at one point he even learnt off-by-heart Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary complete with every example !! Meanwhile he was preaching, developing a school in Calcutta [interestingly for Indian girls as well as boys] and translating all sorts of texts, including his most lasting achievement, the Bible into Bengali.



A letter written by William Yates

After his first wife's death, he married again, but the years in India increasingly sapped his physical strength. There was one visit back to Loughborough in 1827, arriving with his son on market day "like two royal tigers newly imported from Bengal". Persuaded to make one more visit to Loughborough in 1845, he died of dysentery on board ship on the way home, three days from Suez ; no doubt he was buried at sea.

William Yates' death produced innumerable tributes both to his qualities as a Christian and his ability as a "sincere and conscientious" translator. The Bengali newspaper *Hurkadu* alluded to his selflessness : "We have heard many speak of this good man with respect and honour...He was a learned, humble, pious man, and was eminently a public benefactor." Certainly one of the finest alumni of our school.