

St. Marylebone Grammar School (The Philological School)

In 1792 Thomas Collingwood and other charitably inclined gentlemen founded a school in Mary Street (later renamed Stanhope Street, N.W. 1). Here they gathered to read lectures, the boys being required to listen and then to write essays. The object of the school was to afford relief 'to the heads of families, who by unexpected misfortune, have been reduced from a station of comfort and respectability', and who consequently could not provide an education for their children 'which would qualify them for those respectable situations to which their connexions in life may still entitle them to look up'. There were 40 boys-10 destined for the Church, 10 for the Navy, and 20 for mechanical occupations. Subscribers might nominate pupils, and the whole institution was called the Philological Society.

Collingwood's organization seems to have been unsatisfactory. A bogus collector was allowed to rob the society of £1,000 before he was detected, and the Revd. Basil Wood, a vigorous member of the board, resigned in disgust at the conduct of the school, although later he returned. In 1800 there was reorganization and retrenchment; a new prospectus was issued which stated that the aims of the school were to instil the principles of religion and habits of industry, so that 'boys of good capacities may not be buried in obscurity, but may, by the plan of education which the Society adopts, receive that assistance which may fan the latent sparks of genius'. Nine years later the school removed to King Street, Edgware Road (later renamed Nutford Place). Standards of discipline and learning were low.

In 1827 the school moved to its present site in Marylebone Road and its fortunes improved. This was largely through the efforts of Edwin Abbott, who for 45 years proved an able and efficient headmaster. The school enjoyed the patronage of George IV, the Duke of Wellington, the Bishop of London, and other notables, and was admitted to union with King's College, London; it was described by the historian of the parish as a 'most respectable and valuable institution' with 127 boys, but the governors regretted the embarrassment caused by the nomination of boys who were socially unacceptable by reason of their parents' lowly estate.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation the board made a special appeal for the enlargement of the school. Already, it was claimed, nearly 2,000 youths had received a liberal and Christian education and had gone forth 'fitted to regain by honest exertion that station in society which their parents once filled'. Only sons of clergymen, officers, professional men, merchants, and 'the higher order of tradesmen' were to be admitted; every subscriber of five guineas was entitled to

nominate a boy for admittance, but he was warned that his nominee would be excluded should his subscription not be renewed. Other boys were admitted at a fee of eight guineas a year, which included the cost of books and stationery. In 1852 there were 83 foundationers (listed by their parents' social status), 51 fee-payers, and a staff of three assisted by writing and French masters. In 1857 the older part of the present building in Marylebone Road was opened. By 1864 there were 240 boys and a staff of six assisted by three visiting masters. The senior master took boarders. Although no boy had recently gone to the university, several had passed on to the City of London School, of which Abbott's son became a distinguished headmaster.

By the end of the century the financial position of the school had deteriorated, and in 1908 it was accepted in trust by the London County Council and renamed St. Marylebone Grammar School. After the First World War the building was extended and during the headmastership of P. A. Wayne, in many ways the third founder of the school, a playingfield was acquired, a country base established near Leith Hill (Surr.), and artistic activities were developed. During the Second World War the school was evacuated to Cornwall. As part of the 1947 London County Council education plan it was proposed that the school, now numbering about 500, should be incorporated in a comprehensive school, but the governors successfully petitioned for voluntary controlled status. In 1954 Dr. H. Llewellyn Smith became headmaster. New laboratories and workshops were added by the London County Council in 1964-5 on a neighbouring site.