



# CELEBRATING 180 YEARS OF THE SISTERS IN ENGLAND FROM 8 DECEMBER 1842

## A SHORT HISTORY







*St Madeline Sophie Barat*

On 8 December 2022 we will begin a year of thanksgiving for the contribution that the Society of the Sacred Heart has made over the last 180 years.

Set up by St Madeleine Sophie Barat, who grew up through the tumultuous years of the French Revolution, the Society of the Sacred Heart was established in France in 1800 and its first ever school was founded in 1801 in Amiens France. In the school's early years, lessons were held in both French and English

On 8 Dec 1842, a small group of Sacred Heart sisters travelled to England from France to open a new community. This first foundation was in Berrymead Priory (West London) where a school was opened under the leadership of Mother Louise Merilhou.



*Amiens France, painting by George Arthur Fripp*



# THE EARLY YEARS 1842-1850



*Arriving at Berrymead Priory in what was then the village of East Acton, at the time of Queen Victoria*



We are part of one of the oldest schools for girls in the UK. The Society's first school in England started with six sisters and two girls.







Mabel Digby

In 1850 the school was transferred to Roehampton, on a site that has since become The University of Roehampton.

The school at Roehampton was the only Sacred Heart school in England until 1874. After Mabel Digby moved to the school in 1872 as Mother Superior, it prospered under her leadership and this was continued by her successor, Janet Stuart. Today the university still retains a 'Digby Stuart College'.

Many Sacred Heart schools were founded after this including Brighton (Hove) in 1877, Carlisle in 1889 and our own school here in Hammersmith in 1893.

During World War 2, the Roehampton school was evacuated from London as we were from Hammersmith.

The school's buildings in Roehampton were badly damaged during the war and 98 boarders were moved to Woldingham in Surrey, which remains a Sacred Heart school today, with close ties to us.



Convent of the Sacred Heart ROEHAMPTON.	
LIST OF SCHOOL OUTFIT.	
6	Chemises.
6	Night dresses.
6	Pairs of drawers.
4	Vests (if required).
4	Combinations.
6	Pairs of black woolen stockings.
4	Flannel petticoats.
2	Coloured winter petticoats.
2	" summer "
2	White petticoats.
6	Petticoat-bodices.
24	Pocket handkerchiefs.
2	Pairs of stays.
1	Flannel dressing-gown.
1	Pair of bedroom slippers.
2	Pairs of strong boots for garden wear.
1	Pair of " shoes " " " "

School Uniform list



Janet Erskine Stuart, 1882



Mother Janet Erskine Stuart

# THE ROEHAMPTON YEARS 1842-1850



The Sacred Heart Chapel at Roehampton survived the bombing but buildings all around it were destroyed. At the time (and still today) to the right of the altar there was a statue of a sister holding a model of the building that had been destroyed. We understand that after the war, architects used this model as reference for the reconstruction.

The chapel has a magnificent painted ceiling and both Mother Digby and Mother Stuart are buried here, with tombstones on the floor by the altar.

Our close association with Roehampton continues, with our school's archive held by the archivist in Digby College, University of Roehampton. We also maintain a teacher training partnership agreement with the university and work with them to deliver teacher training for schools across West London







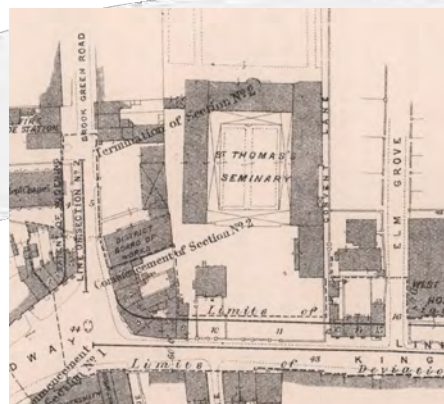
Mary Ward, 1585-1645



Cuppola House, 1600's



The Nunnery in Hammersmith, c1794



The St Thomas Seminary on an 1883 road widening map. Hammersmith Road is shown as 'King Street East', Shepherds Bush Road was 'Brook Green Road' and Bute Gardens was 'Elm Grove'.

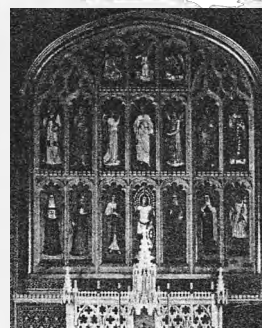


St Thomas Seminary in 1880, with perhaps a kitchen garden at the front.

The Convent of the 'The English Ladies' founded by Mary Ward, established a school in 1668 (illegal at the time) on our site in Hammersmith in 'The Great House' next to Cuppola House, the country home of the godfather of Queen Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II. Mary was an early champion of the ability of women to lead and be independent of the customary male dominance of her time –referred to be some as the First Sister of Feminism.

By 1794 The English Ladies Convent School had closed and only 5 nuns were left. In 1795, another clandestine community of English Benedictine nuns came from France and reopened the school in 1797. In 1865, the Benedictines left and successive communities took the convent.

In 1869, plans were drawn up for a new building to be used as a seminary (theological college) for monks. The architect of the St Thomas Seminary (now our school) was John Francis Bentley who later designed Westminster Cathedral.



The chapel was built in 1883 with the 'window' originally infilled with stone and painted with images of the saints.

# THE HAMMERSMITH SITE 1668 –1893



The letters S, T and a crest can still be found above The Bishop's Door. This is the crest of Thomas Becket (St Thomas of Canterbury) after whom the seminary was named.

Thomas Becket was a close friend of King Henry II but later in life, Henry became frustrated with Thomas and uttered the famous words 'Can no one rid me of this troublesome priest?'

Knights loyal to the King took it upon themselves to then murder Thomas on the alter steps in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170, an act that horrified the King.



Two coats of arms were embedded into the into the wall of the seminary's cloister garden. Look up and you can still see them in The Garth.

One with the letters **HC** for Henry Cardinal Manning who laid the foundation stone for the seminary; and one **PP IX** for the Pope at that time, Pope Pius IX







Mother Digby purchased the Hammersmith site for £37,000. On 25 March 1893 The Society of the Sacred Heart moved in, opening first a 'secondary' school (at the time we were called The Sacred Heart Rosary School) and later an elementary school, and a teacher training college.

The cloister paintings of the life of Christ (some of which were copied from well known 15th century paintings by Fra Angelico) were completed by Sister Mary Maycock in the early 1900s.

At the same time, the sisters ensured that the stone infill was removed from the chapel window and they replaced it with the stained glass that we see today. This includes repeated heart designs and it commemorates various of the founding sisters from the Society, who are named within the window.



*The Annunciation by Fra Angelico, 1450*

*Cloister wall paintings, 1906-1907*



*Sacred Heart, c1930s*



*Front Row—S. GILLEN, R. BORELLI, M. BONENTI, K. CASHOGAN, M. MUSGRAVE*

*Students 1933*



*OUR PREFECTS, 1931-32.*

MARIA BONENTI MARGARET BRITTAIN UNA GILLEN  
GERALDINE WILLIAMS KATHARINE A'HERN  
LAURA HUNT SHEILA DORRINGTON MARGARET ROGERS  
GLADYS HOSBURN CELIA GIRONI

# THE SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART MOVES IN



A copy of the 'Mater Admirabilis' fresco (original in Rome, painted by a young postulant of the Society) is installed at the school. This painting hangs in every Sacred Heart school across the world and the Feast of Mater Admirabilis is an important celebration for the Society and a special day for pray and reflection.



*Science lab 1930's*



*Reception Room with plants.*



*Evacuees arriving in Oxford 1 September 1939*

Suddenly and with only four hours notice, a day earlier than originally planned, Operation Pied Piper, evacuated our students out of London to Oxford at the start of the second world war, on Friday 1 September 1939. Students gradually returned towards the end of the war.

Our first Sixth Form Christmas Dance (inviting boys from St Benedict's), took place in 1951.

By 1959 the school was divided into three 'houses', Michael House, Raphael House and Gabriel House.





While still benefitting from our wonderful historic setting, Sacred Heart High School has developed into a 21st century school (11-18) with state of the art facilities including new science laboratories, wonderfully lit arts studios in the loft and a huge well equipped sports hall and dance studio.

We continue to champion the five goals of Sacred Heart Education which are followed throughout the worldwide network of Sacred Heart schools, and we maintain close ties with the Society—its unique philosophy and Catholic ethos permeate all we do.

We continue the tradition of Sacred Heart Education, rooted in the importance of relationships; recognition of the individual; building social awareness and the importance of standing up for others. Kindness and responsibility is at the heart of this, both towards one another and to others beyond our own community.



*"To be a joy-bearer and a joy-giver says everything." Janet Stuart rscj*

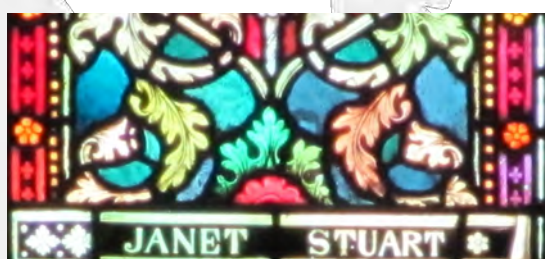
Our academic results place us in the top 3% of schools nationally but we aim to educate all students holistically, preparing them to become positive role models, agents of change and leaders who will transform the world we live in for the betterment of all.

In 2020 the school was awarded a High Performance Learning World Class Award. The heart of this modern philosophy of education was already embedded in the Sacred Heart ethos from that very first school in France - recognising the potential of every single student individually.

*"You can shine no matter what you are made of." Janet Stuart rscj*



# SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL TODAY



We continue to strive to improve further. We place great importance on the promotion of diversity and inclusion, with a rich multi-ethnic student body adding value to our understanding of true community. We seek to ensure that our curriculum reflects this.

We provide breadth in our curriculum and value the arts as much as we do the sciences. To this end, a planning application has been submitted for the development of a new theatre 'in the round' to serve as a multifunctional performing arts centre.

We are completing works on a new Sixth Form Centre and are commissioning a condition survey report as a first step towards restoration of our cloister paintings.

We give thanks for the foundation provided to us by the Society of the Sacred Heart and their continuing involvement in the trusteeship of our very special and unique school.



Headteacher, Mrs S O'Donovan

Sacred Heart Sixth Formers, 2022

*"Day by day we write the stories of our lives; no day in our life is without influence on the last, for ourselves as well as others." Janet Stuart rscj*



*A prayer of  
Thanksgiving  
and Hope*

*One hundred and eighty years,  
time to take stock.  
To look back with Gratitude  
To look forward with Hope  
To see how Sophie's desire to spread  
the Good News of the Lords Love,  
Through the education of women  
in England and Wales has fruited.*

*We give thanks for the  
dedicated lives of the sisters  
Who gave all their all for this work.  
We give thanks for the many girls  
and young women who went on  
To live fulfilled lives in the home,  
through their work in Education,  
In the Arts, in Politics, in Law, in  
the many avenues open to them.*

*We look forward with Hope as others  
take this work into the future,  
May they find strength in the Lord's Love,  
especially in dark and difficult moments.  
May they nurture each young person,  
helping them grow into courageous  
and Confident forgers of the future.*

*May each and every one of them  
draw strength from knowing  
That difficulties can be overcome,  
that others have walked the way  
Before them and came through.  
No mean achievement Lord –  
Thank you.*

Anne Hine, RSCJ



**Sacred Heart**

HIGH SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM  
HAMMERSMITH | AGES 11-18

212 Hammersmith Road, London W6 7DG

Headteacher: Mrs S O'Donovan

Tel: 020 8748 7600

Email: [info@sacredh.lbhf.sch.uk](mailto:info@sacredh.lbhf.sch.uk)

[www.sacredhearhigh.org.uk](http://www.sacredhearhigh.org.uk)