

## Harlow College A Short History

The Harlow College of today was preceded by a boys' school (boarding and day), originally known as St. Mary's College, but later as Harlow College. The college was opened by the Reverend Charles Miller on 29 May 1862, in Old Harlow. The school was situated just north of the Church of St John The Baptist, behind Market Street.

It was founded by Reverend Millar, the vicar of Harlow, "to provide a superior education for the sons of gentlemen and (when sufficient amounts have been obtained) to train at low charge, the sons of missionaries abroad, of clergymen similarly engaged at home, as well as orphan sons of gentlemen who have been reduced in circumstances".

The original buildings were built by the architect R. J. Withers. A local newspaper reported at the time that the sum of £3,500 had been obtained from a building society, repayable at £440 per year. However the whole school, as originally designed by architect (including a chapel), was estimated at £13,000. The front and chapel were never built, robbing the architect of his cloistered vision, graphically illustrated in the original 1862 ground plan.

When the school opened in May 1862, the eastern wing had been built, together with half the northern annexe. A contemporary author reported...

*"When completed, the whole will form a quadrangle, the front being lower by two stories than the rest. At the eastern end it is intended to erect a chapel, in similar style and architecture, for the sole use of students."*

These later additions were never built, the nearby church of St Johns serving as the school's chapel.

For most of its history, there were about 180 boys on the roll.

The main building comprised dining hall, class rooms, library, sick rooms, dormitories, office and staff rooms.

In addition to the main block, there was an art room, gymnasium, science lab, common room and two playing fields.

The school provided a five to six year course in mathematics, French, science, geography, history and art.

The boys played cricket, tennis and athletics in the summer term, football in the winter and cross country in the spring.

The 'Great Days' of the Harlow College, may well have been the period between 1904 and 1935, under the headmastership of Ernest Percival Horsey. Under his leadership, the College prospered and became one of the best-known scholastic establishments in the area, with pupils attending from all over the world. A pupil in the 1920's remembered...

*"It was Mr. Horsey who made the school what it is."*

Another quote, from the 1920's, sums up the genuine affection the pupils had for their Headmaster...

*"Those of us who were privileged to come under his influence, marvelled at the amount of knowledge he acquired. He had a wonderful way of imparting that knowledge and at the same time, paying great attention to the formation of character."*

A notable Old Harlovian was Herbert Marshall (1890-1966) who graduated from St Mary's and went on to become a successful actor on stage , screen , radio and television , starring in films from 1927 until 1965 - this was all after losing a leg to a sniper in 1917 during the first world war !

With the coming of Harlow New Town, things were set to change for Harlow College.

In the early 1960's, various development plans were being made for the Old Harlow area. These included a scheme for flats on the land between the school and the A11 - Edinburgh Way roundabout and the redevelopment of Fore Street and Market Street on the other side of the school.

In 1964, Harlow College was told that the site occupied by the school and its playing fields would be required for housing and the College was, therefore, due for demolition the following year.

There was a brief period when the College, under the then headmaster, Mr. Roy Purgavie, looked into relocating to Hertfordshire. However, the problems of moving, combined with falling rolls, proved too large a hurdle to overcome and Harlow College closed in 1965.

The modern housing area of Jocelyns now occupies the site on land between the church and Station Road.

The church is now St. John's A.R.C., an arts and recreation centre for the local community. It is where the Old Boys of Harlow College hold their annual reunion dinner.

## Notable alumni

- [Gordon de Lisle Lee](#) - [Clarenceux King of Arms](#), 1862-1927.
- [Herbert Marshall](#) - actor, 1890-1966.
- [George Fellowes Prynne](#) - church designer, 1853-1927.

Although [Piers Morgan](#), (*former newspaper editor, television talk show host*) is listed as an alumni of HC, he actually studied Journalism in 1964 at the "new" Harlow College which at the time was a Technical College.