

School days at...

WOODFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

WOODFORD County High School, a former neo-Palladian manor, was originally the site of Highams Manor. In 1768, Anthony Bacon engaged the architect William Newton (1735–90) to build a 'square brick house with wings'.

The building was originally symmetrical, but has changed with each owner. It was at first called Higham Hill but later became Higham House, Higham Hall, or Highams.

Previous owners included William Hornby, a former Governor of Bombay, who in 1790 sold it to John Harman, a wealthy banker, who employed the famous landscape designer, Humphry Repton in 1793 to improve the grounds.

Later it was occupied by the Warner family for many years and Highams has also been let to several tenants including Dr Edgar Jacob, the Bishop of St Albans, who made Highams his Bishop's Palace.

Just before World War I, the Bishop moved to St Albans, in time for the house to be used as Highams Military Hospital

to help wounded soldiers. When peace returned, Highams became established as a school in 1919. The building is now stuccoed and has been much extended to the north and south, mainly between 1928 and 1938.

Despite air raids in 1941, and V-1 rockets interfering with the public examinations, lessons continued although some girls evacuated to Bedfordshire for a while. Despite the school having virtually no windows left, the school building, which was painted green and khaki for camouflage, survived another war.

The late Miss Satchell, a former head mistress at the school, commented: 'I like to think that the house is happy being a school and that we retain something of every phase of its existence. It is no longer, it is true, a private house, but we are, in our own way, very much a family.'

To this day, Woodford continues to maintain its high standards, being one of the most successful schools locally and nationally. There is an opportunity to visit the building on Sunday, June 28 from 11am to 4pm, when the school stages its annual Summer Fair.

• This history of Woodford County High School was summarised by Emma Duffett, 14, a Year 9 student



Sir Winston Churchill, opens the school fete in 1925



A view of the school's front lawn in the 1920s



An aerial view of the school taken in 1926



Sir Winston Churchill visited again in November 1954 to receive a portrait of Lady Churchill in honour of his 80th birthday