
HOWELL'S SCHOOL, LLANDAFF (GDST)

A Historical Guide





Howell's School, Llandaff, is the oldest girls' school in Wales. It was founded on a charitable bequest of a Tudor merchant, Thomas Howell, who left 12,000 ducats in trust to the Drapers' Company in London to provide dowries "for four maidens, being orphans . . . each year for ever". As a result of wise investment by the Company, of which Thomas Howell was a member, there were sufficient funds by the mid-19th century to build two girls' schools in Wales.

Howell's School, Llandaff, was opened in August 1860 for sixty boarders, of whom thirty were orphan girls, their board and education provided completely free. The architect was Decimus Burton, though the design was completed by Herbert Williams, the Drapers' Company surveyor. Day girls were first admitted in 1863.

Over the years the school has flourished and steadily increased in size, both physically and numerically. The Junior Department was phased out by 1952 to allow more senior girls to join the school, but a revived Junior School was set up in 1984.

In 1980 Howell's became a member of the Girls' Public Day School Trust, re-named the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) in 1998. Boarding ended in 1994 and boys were first admitted to the Sixth Form College in 2005. More than 800 young people aged from three to eighteen are now educated at Howell's.



Architect's drawing, 1859



The school in the 1880s



Aerial view of the school, 1960

1. Bryntâf and Oaklands are mid-Victorian buildings. Oaklands was bought by the school in 1925 as a boarding house. It had previously been owned by Mr J T Duncan JP, whose four daughters attended Howell's. Bryntâf came into the school's possession in 1953, when the lease on The Rise (Howell's first boarding house) expired. David Morgan, who founded the well-known former department store, lived there from 1893 to 1919, and the house was bought from his family. It was used primarily by sixth form boarders. As boarding gradually came to an end, Bryntâf (in 1993) and Oaklands (in 1994) were converted for use as Sixth Form classrooms and common rooms.

2. The Lodge was built in 1859 as part of the original school, with a narrow gate to the side for pedestrians and a wider one for horse-drawn vehicles. Slightly remodelled over the years, it has always provided accommodation for the school porter, caretaker or one of the groundsmen.

3. Above the entrance to this wing, which is part of the original building, is the Drapers' Company Coat of Arms. The dining rooms and kitchens have been in this location since January 1985. Previously most of the ground floor was occupied by the big Schoolroom, which was later divided into two smaller classrooms, and the Day Room or Play Room. Upstairs was the East Dormitory, which was used until the boarders were accommodated in houses outside the main school buildings in the 1920s and 1930s. This area now houses the Staff Rooms and the Careers Library.

4. Above the main entrance is an inscription summarising the founding of the school as a result of Thomas Howell's bequest. The statue in the niche above depicts St Mary of Bethlehem, the patron saint of the Drapers' Company, who is shown with orphans at the bottom of her skirt. It was the gift of an anonymous donor, an Old Girl, to celebrate the school's centenary in 1960. High on the facade to the right is Thomas Howell's crest.

5. The splendid Great Hall is the main feature of a new wing added in 1900, which also included a suite of music practice rooms and offices below. The designer was the diocesan architect, George Halliday. The Great Hall was built to seat 450 girls and staff. The art reviewer, printer and political cartoonist J M Staniforth was commissioned to paint the murals of Shakespearean scenes on the walls, and these were completed in 1905. The stage was added two years later. The floor is of Danish oak.

6. This wing is also part of the original building, which was essentially designed around a courtyard. Downstairs were a second Day Room and the Dining Room, and the main room upstairs was the West Dormitory. This whole area was completely destroyed by a great fire in February 1932, which led to the building of a library and new classrooms on the first floor. The large Dining Room benefited from new French windows and, in time, the former Day Room became a second Dining Room. When the dining rooms moved to the side wing in 1985, the Little Dining Room (known as LDR) reverted to use as a Day Room. The Big Dining Room (BDR) was converted first to two classrooms and then to a Drama rehearsal room.

7. The Sports Hall, and the whole of the sports complex, was designed by the GDST's architect, Mrs Pauline Farrow. The Fitness Suite, staff office and changing room are situated on the site of the old Gymnasium, which had been built in 1906. The new area was opened in 1997 and includes an upper storey. The huge Sports Hall easily accommodates the whole school and is used not only for sports but also for a range of other purposes, such as assemblies, shows and concerts. The locker rooms nearby were originally built as air raid shelters.

8. This wing was originally one storey high and was known as the steward's wing, as it provided accommodation for the house steward and members of the domestic staff, plus stores. It was raised to three storeys in 1914. The upper storeys originally provided staff accommodation and were later used for the sanatorium and as classrooms. The ward of the sanatorium was converted for use by the History Department in 1979. This wing now houses the Geography, Classics, History and ICT departments.



Key:

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|---|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| 1 Sixth Form College – Bryntâf and Oaklands | 7 Sports Hall | 12 Swimming Pool | 17 Junior School – Hazelwood | 22 Nursery Garden |
| 2 The Lodge | 8 History, Geography, Classics and ICT | 13 Junior School – Tŷ Hapus | 18 The Workshop and School Uniform Shop | 23 Tennis and Netball Courts |
| 3 Dining Hall and Staff Rooms (above) | 9 New Building – Maths and Modern Foreign Languages | 14 Cumberland Lodge – Nursery and Music Department | 19 Junior Play Area – KS2 | 24 Visitors' Parking |
| 4 Senior School Main Entrance | 10 Science Department | 15 Junior Library, Music, ICT and Music Practice Rooms | 20 Junior Netball Court | 25 Playing field |
| 5 Great Hall | 11 Art Department | 16 Music Recital Hall and Junior Hall | 21 Junior Play Area – KS1 | 26 Staff Parking |
| 6 Drama Room, Day Room and Library (above) | | | | |

9. The so-called "New Building" was designed by the Trust's architect, Mr E W Bestow. It was opened in 1982 and provided much-needed extra classroom space on three floors, together with a new laboratory. It necessitated the demolition of School House, which had been built in the 1887 as the school Sanatorium. This was located at the end of a Covered Way, which linked it to the main building. The Covered Way still exists and underwent improvements in 2012.

10. The Science Department now consists of eight laboratories and two teaching rooms, plus preparation rooms and a Science Staff Room. Two of the current Chemistry Laboratories were built in 1958, after the school was awarded a huge grant from the Industrial Fund for the Advancement of Scientific Education in Schools. The third was opened in 2002 and linked the existing ones to the two Physics Laboratories which were opened in 1974 by one of the school's most distinguished former pupils, Jean McFarlane, England's first Professor of Nursing. A General Science Laboratory and two Biology Laboratories were added in 1982, as part of the New Building programme.

11. The Art Department has steadily grown over the years. The oldest, and the largest, Art Room, was built in 1904. Since then, it has expanded into a former laboratory, an old air raid shelter and the school's original stables block. On the ground floor of the latter there is now

a pottery, and on the first floor are studios for A Level Art and Design students. This upper floor, which originally served as a waiting area for grooms while Governors were in their meetings, and as a bacon loft, housed the school's first science laboratory in the late 1880s.

12. The indoor swimming pool was opened in July 1937, on the day of the retirement of Miss Trotter, who was Headmistress from 1920 to 1937. It was built largely as a result of donations by the Hywelian Guild (the Old Girls' Society) in memory of Miss Kendall, who was Headmistress from 1880 to 1920. It has been refurbished on more than one occasion and is used by the whole school and outside groups.

13. Tŷ Hapus ("Happy House") is the most recent addition to the Junior School. Designed by Mrs Pauline Farrow, the GDST's architect, it was built in 2004 to cater for the increasing number of pupils when the Junior School expanded to two-form entry. The girls helped to create the stained glass window designs and the building was formally opened in 2006.

14. Cumberland Lodge, with its splendid staircase, was another Victorian building bought for use as a school boarding house in 1956. It was a childhood home of Roald Dahl, who lived there from 1921 to 1927. After its purchase, it was known for many years as Taylor House after Miss Hilda Taylor, a member of the teaching staff at Howell's from 1924 to

1955 and Second Mistress for 22 years from 1933. Cumberland Lodge was converted for use as part of a new Music School in 1989-90 when it was no longer needed for boarders. Together with the adjacent Junior School Hall, it was formally opened in January 1991 by Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester and Patron of the Girls' Day School Trust. Today the ground floor houses the school Nursery, which was completely refurbished in 2013.

15. This building, popularly known as "The Wing", was originally one storey high and was built in 1990 to provide individual music rooms for practice and for tuition by the peripatetic music staff. With the expansion of the Junior School, the building was extended to two storeys in 2004. The upper floor contains the Junior School library, music and ICT rooms.

16. The Music Recital Hall, known as the Octagon, and the Junior School Hall below, were built as part of the conversion of Cumberland Lodge to a Music School in 1990. The Junior School links Cumberland Lodge with Hazelwood House. The new development was officially opened by Princess Alice in January 1991.

17. Hazelwood House was bought by Howell's as a boarding house in 1930. An elegant Victorian house, it was liked by Miss Trotter so much that she used part of it as her sitting room and bedroom in the 1930s. After extensive adaptation and refurbishment, in September 1984 it re-opened as Howell's Junior School.

18. This building, at the end of the lane leading to Howell's Crescent, has been extended and modernised to provide a store for school equipment not in current use, and a school uniform shop, which is open one afternoon a week. The lane was gated at the Howell's Crescent end in 1996.

19. This area, for use by Key Stage 2 girls, was completely refurbished in the summer of 2012. It includes an outdoor classroom, a raised stage, attractive seating and raised beds for flowers and vegetables. There is a variety of different surface textures, including rubberised bark and tarmac, brick sets, artificial and real grass, wooden decking and coloured "soft pour" safety surfaces. The play equipment includes a large climbing tree house and jungle climber with ropes.

20. The sports court was completely resurfaced in the summer of 2012 with a hard rubberised tarmac, and has line makings for short tennis and netball.

21. The Junior Play area for girls in Key Stage 1 had previously been Cumberland Lodge's Edwardian garden. It was developed as a playground in 1995 and now has a safety "soft pour" surface and a variety of play equipment and seating.

22. The garden for Nursery girls was completely redesigned in the summer of 2013 as part of the Nursery refurbishment. It includes a Wendy House, two enormous giraffes, a pod in which the girls can sit and a sensory woodland garden.

23. The tennis and netball courts were previously grass tennis courts, which had been in use since the late 19th century. At the opposite end from the swimming pool is the tennis pavilion, which was built in 1901. During World War II this building was used for rearing rabbits.

24. To cater for the growing demand for parking spaces, this area, which was originally a grassed area and subsequently tarmacked for tennis and netball, has been developed as a visitors' car park.

25. The extensive playing field incorporates what were previously two distinct fields, named "School Field" and "Trotter Field". The latter area was acquired in 1947, the result of two land purchases by Hywelians and Governors respectively, and came into use in the autumn of 1950.

26. The staff car parking area abutting Pencisely Road, with its automatic gates, was created in 2004 in response to the increased amount of parking space required, with the development of the Junior School to two-form entry. Staff parking spaces are also available adjacent to the tennis and netball courts.



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