

HY6001 History Dissertation

Devonport High School for Girls: How did education
for girls change between 1930 and 1950?

161269

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Abstract

This dissertation will look at Devonport High School for Girls, in Plymouth between 1930 and 1950. It will be focusing on what educational changes happened during this period, and how they affected the education of the pupils of D.H.S.G. It will also look at specific educational changes that happened to girls during this period and will see if these changes had any impact on the school. This dissertation will also examine the need for a new school, which D.H.S.G. was provided in 1937, by comparing to the previous building whilst discussing the changing attitudes towards education for girls at the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, this dissertation will also be looking at how D.H.S.G. was affected by the Second World War. It will discuss how pupils, teachers and families coped with the disruptions that the Second World War had on the girls' education, by looking at personal accounts of pupils who were evacuated and those who remained in Plymouth. It will continue to discuss the adjustments to education after the Second World War and why they were so important in context to gender debates of the time. In particular it will look at the Butler Act of 1944 as an example of an educational act that challenged both opinions on female teachers, but also the acknowledgment for equal education regardless of class or gender, as well as the understanding for the need for both domestic and academic studies.

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Introduction

This dissertation will focus on the question of how education for girls had evolved and changed in Britain between the years 1930 to 1950 at Devonport High School for Girls. Although the school has been open for over a hundred years, this period was specifically chosen as it was a particularly interesting time for not only the school, but for the education of girls. It will be looking into detail about what girls were taught in this time period, where they were taught and how the girls and teachers coped with many difficulties. It will predominantly investigate the changes to secondary education for Girls before, during and after the Second World War as well as the changes in building and the attitudes towards girls attaining an academic education.

This is primarily a study on education in reference to gender history. It will look at educational acts throughout 1930 and 1950 and what positive changes these made first to education, and then to the pupils of D.H.S.G. as an all girls school. It will explore how the pupils, teacher and families coped when the school was divided, during the Second World War, between the evacuees and those who remained in the city of Plymouth, where the school is based. Furthermore it will look at historical debates about education from both recent studies and debates that were happening at the time, to compare how girls' education was viewed.

Throughout this dissertation, the most important primary sources that will be used are the responses from anonymous questionnaires that were sent to former pupils who attended the school anytime between 1942 and 1952. As the responses were anonymous they are referenced in an alphabetical order, for example Questionnaire Response A. Several other primary sources will be used in accordance with the questionnaire responses, such as letters, newspapers and school documents.

The first chapter will look at the period 1930-1937 when D.H.S.G was moved to a new building. It will debate the importance of providing an all girls school with a modern and larger building, whilst comparing to its previous building. It will look at the new building in terms of the education it could provide and whether it focused more on a domestic or academic curriculum. Furthermore it will discuss the attitudes towards girls' education before the Second World War.

The second chapter will look at the period between 1938- 1945. It will discuss the difficulties the pupils of D.H.S.G. had to face to maintain their education during the Second World War. With the use of primary sources from both written accounts and anonymous questionnaire responses, this chapter will explore the problems and successes the pupils had during this period of time, both from girls who were evacuated, to those who remained in Plymouth at an alternative emergency school.

The third and final chapter will focus on the period 1945-1950. It will consider the changes to girls' education after the Second World War in relation to the debates of the time. In particular it will discuss the Butler Act of 1944 and the breakdown of class barriers to education, as well as arguments on the issue of education being gender specific in connection to women's roles.

Brief introduction to girls' education before 1930

It was a common belief before and during the 20th century that men were superior to women¹ and thus education was only needed either as a tool to attract a husband², or for the working class girl to be taught the necessary skills for basic employment.³ As Jane McDermid states, 'all women were expected to conform to the ideology of domesticity, which disapproved of working women and which located feminine virtue in a domestic and familial setting.'⁴ As most girls were taught at home or at charity schools, McDermid continues to point out that there was no need for grammar schools for girls, as their function was only to prepare middle-class boys for service to Church or state.⁴ It is clear that education differed for girls between classes, but both were only taught basic education and would have reinforced their gender stereotypes.⁵

There many religious, medical and economic reasons why women were forced to have little and such gendered education before the 20th century. Religiously, there was the argument that Eve was made from the rib of Adam and it was thus believed that God intended women to be inferior to men⁶. Medically, 'it was believed that too much education could result in infertility through overstraining the female constitution'⁷ and economically

¹ Davidoff L., and Hall, C., *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* see also Jalland, P., *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914*; Vickery, A., 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history, *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993) PP 383 – 414

² Jalland, P., *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914*, see also, Burton, A., 'Rules of Thumb: British history and "imperial culture" in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain', *Women's History Review*, Vol 3 (1994)

³ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women's Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p82 see also, Purvis, June, *Hard Lessons: the lives and education of working-class women in nineteenth-century England*; Hunt, F., (ed.) *Lessons for Life: the Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950*

⁴ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p107 see also, Moore, L., 'Education for the "woman's sphere": domestic training versus intellectual discipline', in Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach (eds.) *Out of Bounds: women in Scottish Society, 1800-1945*

⁵ Burstyn, J., *Victorian Education and the ideal of Womanhood*

⁶ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women's Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p82, see also,

⁷ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p108

education for women would result in competition amongst the sexes and was generally considered an unsound investment.⁸

However, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century there were many people, women especially⁹, who believed the poor education that girls were being taught, was not acceptable and one of those women was Mary Wollstonecraft:

Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the first and most influential women educationalist to point out that 'a false system of education' for girls was injurious to the progress of society. The infantilisation of falsely educated women meant that wives and daughters behaved like slaves, and this made their male relations in effect, the slaves of slaves.¹⁰

Wollstonecraft argued that women should be provided a decent education in order to better educate their families. Although her argument still accepted gender specific education, her work was one of the first to highlight the need to provide a better education to women. Through women like Wollstonecraft and other feminists like Hannah Moore, Britain started to take notice to women's education and slow progressive changes began to take place¹¹.

By the beginning of the 20th century, few women were beginning to be accepted into universities¹² and after the First World War the Fisher Education Act of 1918 stated that secondary education was compulsory to the age of 14¹³. This led to more grammar schools being built in the 1920s and as the birth rate declined it became easier to get in, even with

⁸ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p112

⁹ Banks, O., *Becoming a feminist: the social origin of 'first wave' feminism*

¹⁰ Hilton, M., and Hirsh, P., ed., *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790-1930*, p16
see also, Taylor, B., 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Wild Wish of Early Feminism' *History Workshop Journal*, 33 (1992) pp. 197-219

¹¹ Bryan, M., *The unexpected revolution: a study in the history of education of women and girls in the nineteenth century*, see also, Fletcher, S., *Feminists and Bureaucrats: a study in the development of girl's education in the nineteenth century*

¹² Dyhouse, C, *No distinction of sex? Women in British Universities, 1876-1939*

¹³ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women's Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p82

having to pay fees.¹⁴ By 1930 Britain had accepted that more girls should be provided with a better education, however, there were still many struggles and problems to overcome, as this dissertation will explain; education was still to be governed by gender and class¹⁵.

¹⁴ Pugh, Martin, *We Danced All Night – A Social History of Britain between the Wars* p211

¹⁵ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p120

Chapter One

What were the benefits towards girls' education, of gaining a new building for Devonport High School for Girls?

Having looked at the background to girls' education before 1930, this chapter will now discuss the shift in how girls' education was perceived in the first half of the twentieth century. As it will become clear, through newspapers and reports of the time, the first building Devonport High School for Girls had was old, dysfunctional and unfit for a place of learning. This chapter will look at how a new building embodied the growing concern over girls' education just before the Second World War. It will also highlight the small changes made since the First World War, as well as the problems girls had to face in order to gain a decent education.

Devonport Secondary School for Girls – The Problems

Before September 1937, Devonport High School for Girls was set in a smaller and unsuitable building in the then borough of Devonport, just over a mile away from the current site on Lyndhurst Road in Peverell. D.H.S.G. was established 'as a girls' secondary school from September, 1908, the first school to be recognised in Plymouth'¹⁶ It was in this year the school was titled Devonport Secondary School for Girls after its previous title Devonport Municipal Secondary School for Girls.¹⁷ It would not be until the opening of the new school in 1937 that it would be titled Devonport High School for Girls.¹⁸ Before its formal recognition as a girls' only secondary school, the building was a host to many other roles, from its first in 1893 as Pupil Teachers Centre to a Technical School in 1898 comprising of

¹⁶ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956' 1960

¹⁷ Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History – Devonport High School for Girls*, <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Schools-LEA-Unified-Devonport%20High%20Girls.htm>

¹⁸ Letter from A. Clayton, Former Pupil, to J.R. Elliot, 24th October, 1984

both girl and boy pupils.¹⁹ Although it was one of the first secondary schools to solely teach girls, the building lacked the physical amenities to provide a good education. Former pupil, Mrs Mayner stated:

For the first twenty-seven years of its existence, the school was accommodated in the most unsuitable and noisy of premises belonging to the Devonport Technical School. In some cases, the pupils sat on one side of a piece of machinery and the teacher on the other. As the school was built on a triangular site, trams ran past it on three sides, sometimes making it impossible for the teacher to be heard.²⁰

As the school shared the building with the Technical school, the space was limited, the noise was intolerable and until 1908 the pupils and teachers could do nothing but struggle. In 1925, *The Western Evening Herald* published several articles highlighting the problems of the building for a place of education, with titles such as, 'Devonport Secondary School Complaint', 'Inadequacy of Premises' and 'Unsuitable Buildings'²¹ In one of these articles, the headmistress of the time, Miss Moore, reported her concerns over the poor conditions:

In her report, Miss D. Moore (head mistress) drew attention to the difficulties under which the school was, and has been for many years labouring. The interests at stake were so important, and the matter was, to her mind, so urgent that she felt justified in bringing it definitely to the notice of the public. The Technical School building... were excellent for the purpose for which they were intended, but they were most unsuitable, for a girls' secondary education²²

The report continues to state that 'the school had developed and was attempting to fulfil its function, and to provide for the children of the town an education comparable to that

¹⁹ Letter from A. Clayton, Former Pupil, to J.R. Elliot, 24th October, 1984

²⁰ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956' 1960

²¹ Anon, 'Inadequacy of Buildings – Devonport Secondary School Complaint', *Western Evening Herald*, 1925 see also, Anon, 'Inadequacy of Premises', *Western Evening Herald*, 1925

²² Moore, D., 'Unsuitable Buildings' *Western Evening Herald*, 1925

to be obtained in any secondary school in the country, but it was handicapped in every direction by the unsuitability of the accommodation provided, and that was most felt in connection with the work of the post-matriculation standard.²³

It would appear that up until 1925, D.H.S.G. was fairly happy with their accommodation because the school was able to provide girls with an education that was so difficult to gain elsewhere²³. However, as time passed and the push for better education, not only for girls but within the whole educational system improved, Devonport was becoming unsatisfied with the position it was in. In 1908, when the school was established as the first girls secondary school in Plymouth, it gave the impression that D.H.S.G. and the city were at the forefront of advancing girls education, but as time went on many people, pupils and teachers alike, were disappointed with their situation and the effects it was having on their work.

What is interesting is the passion that the headmistress Miss Moore, conveyed in the article in *The Western Evening Herald*. The article stressed the importance of providing a more suitable building for the sake of the city as well as maintaining its respectability amongst the other secondary schools across the country. This acknowledgement that education was important for all children, regardless of sex or class, highlights the advancing ideas that girls should be provided a good education, and that an inadequate building was detrimental. What is also positive in Miss Moore's report in *The Western Evening Herald* is the acknowledgement that it was important to provide a better education at secondary level so that the girls at D.H.S.G. could continue their education at a higher level, at university.

Although there was a drive for a new school, the pupils and teachers of D.H.S.G. stayed in that building until 1937. According to Miss Moore's final headmistress' report in

²³ See McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p107-130

the school newsletter of 1945, the school had been told that they would require a new building not long after she became a maths teacher in 1911. The reason, however, for the long delay, was not due to indiscrimination towards girls' education, but due to other larger political and economic problems:

At my interview in 1910, six months after the School's conversion to a Secondary School, I was told that the School would be working in temporary premises for a short time only, until more adequate accommodation could be provided. I believe I am right in saying that the plans for a new building were definitely approved on several occasions but building was deferred in 1914, on the outbreak of the First World War and following the amalgamation of the Three Towns and, again, in 1929, as a result of the world Economic Crisis.²⁴

The amalgamation of the Three Towns, as stated in the Miss Moores' report was the uniting of the boroughs Plymouth, Devonport and East Stonehouse into the city of Plymouth which took place from November 1st 1914.²⁵

The support for a new school building did not just come from headmistress Miss Moore, but also from the Lord Mayor, H.M. Medland and the Alderman, R. Macdonald, who were fundamental and understanding towards the progression of girls' education. This interest in the development of girls' education at secondary schools is seen in a piece written in a school newsletter in 1935-36:

The Lord Mayor said in 1915 there were 1,520 pupils attending secondary schools, representing 7.2 per 1,000 of the population. By 1927, when the

²⁴ Moore, D., 'Devonport High School for Girls Speech Day 12th December, 1945 - Headmistress' Report', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, July 1946

²⁵ Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History- Amalgamation of the Three Towns, 1914*, <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Amalgamation%201914.htm>

Plymouth Education Authority approved of their scheme for the development of higher education, the numbers had risen to 3,078, an increase of 100 per cent.²⁶

Lord Mayor, H.M. Medland's endorsement of better education reflects a growing awareness of the importance of education in the first half of the twentieth century.²⁷ There were many educational acts which meant that more children were required to gain an education and for a longer time. An example of this is the 1918 Fisher Education Act which made secondary education compulsory up to fourteen and made the state responsible for secondary education schools.²⁸ Another example was the 1936 Education Act which proposed raising the school leaving age to fifteen²⁹ although it was postponed due to the outbreak of the Second World War. If the figures the Lord Mayor provided in the school newsletter of 1935-36 are correct, then educational acts such as these were working. This means that D.H.S.G.'s inadequate building was only going to become more of an issue if the improvement of girls' education was going to follow in such a positive trend.

The point to make from all of this is that D.H.S.G., before 1937, had an inadequate building in terms of size, structure, layout and situation. There were several delays into being granted a new building but they appear to be because of political and economic events of the time. Nevertheless, through educational acts and changing attitudes towards education for girls at secondary schools, the numbers attending Devonport were growing. On the other hand the growth in girls' attendance in secondary schools was not necessarily common around the country, suggesting that the school was ahead of its time²⁹. It was now fundamental for D.H.S.G. to gain a new building to continue such good work.

²⁶ Anon, 'The School Magazine', *Devonport Secondary School Magazine, 1935-36*, p7

²⁷ See Pugh, M., *We Danced All Night – A Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, p212-213 see also, Hunt, F., (ed.) *Lessons for Life: the Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950*

²⁸ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women's Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p82

²⁹ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women's Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c.1770-1970*, p86-86

Devonport High School for Girls – The New Building

On December 9th, 1935 the plans and the application for a loan for the new building were passed by Plymouth City Council and work on the site started soon after Christmas. On May 6th 1936, the foundation stone of the new building was laid.³⁰ *The Western Evening Herald* was keeping continuous reports on how the school was being built, which can be seen by the image of the school under construction in 1936.



PLYMOUTH'S NEW SCHOOL.—Good progress is being made with the construction of the new Corporation school at Montpelier, Plymouth. This "Western Morning News" picture shows the front of the building, facing the Devonport-Tavistock road.

22-12-36

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By looking at the picture of the new building being constructed, it is clear just how quick it was happening. That after seven months since the foundation stone was laid, the building was already at this stage. What is also clear is the size of the building, which can explain why the pupils and teachers were so anxious to move in:

³⁰ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956' 1960

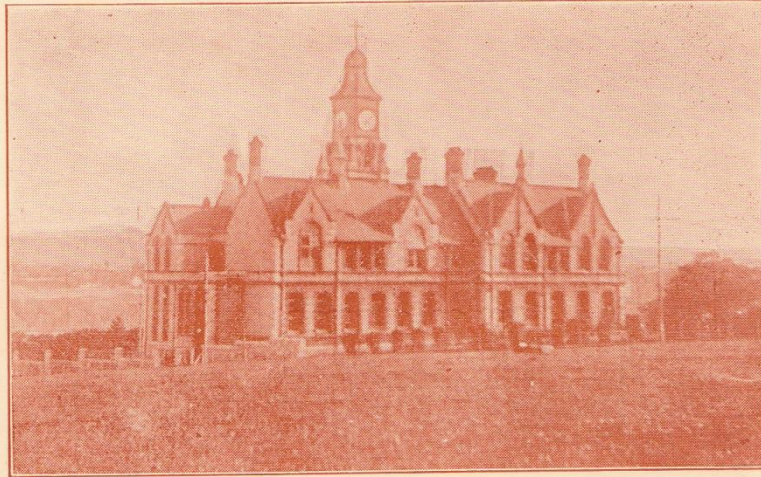
³¹ Anon, 'Plymouth's New School' *Western Evening Herald*, 1936

The girls no longer had to take their cookery lessons in a cramped and inconvenient kitchen. Unlike the old building, the new school stands in its own grounds, overlooking the largest park in Plymouth. It is built of red brick and encloses two quadrangles. Only the front of the school has two storeys and all the corridors are open.³²

After 27 years of waiting, on 'September 10th, 1937, the new School was formally opened by the Lord Mayor, Alderman W.R. Littleton, J.P., and what for years had seemed a fond imagining became a glorious reality.'³³ The opening was celebrated with many social gatherings and a house-warming party where new girls and old girls, teachers, governors, parents and the new Lord Mayor came to inspect their new premises. By comparing images of both schools, the first building and their new building, provided in the 1946 Headmistress Report, it is clear why such a change was needed to provide a better education for their pupils.

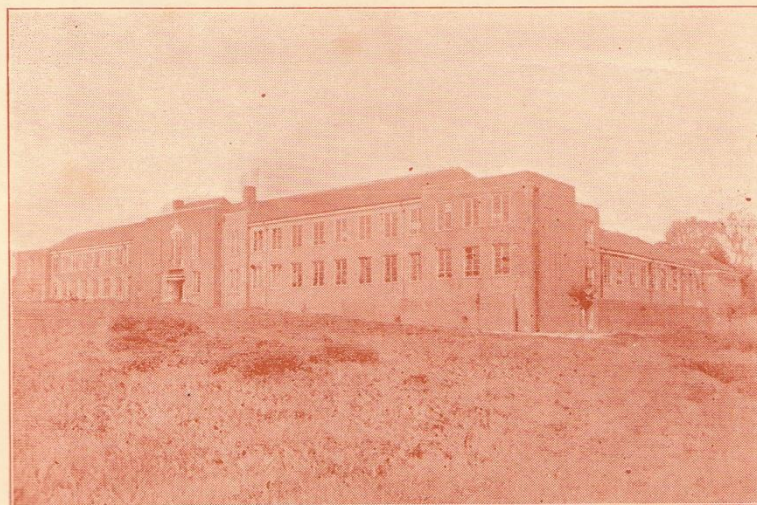
³² Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956' 1960

³³ Anon, 'The School Magazine', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 1937-38, p4



OLD SCHOOL

DEVONPORT SECONDARY SCHOOL
1909-1937



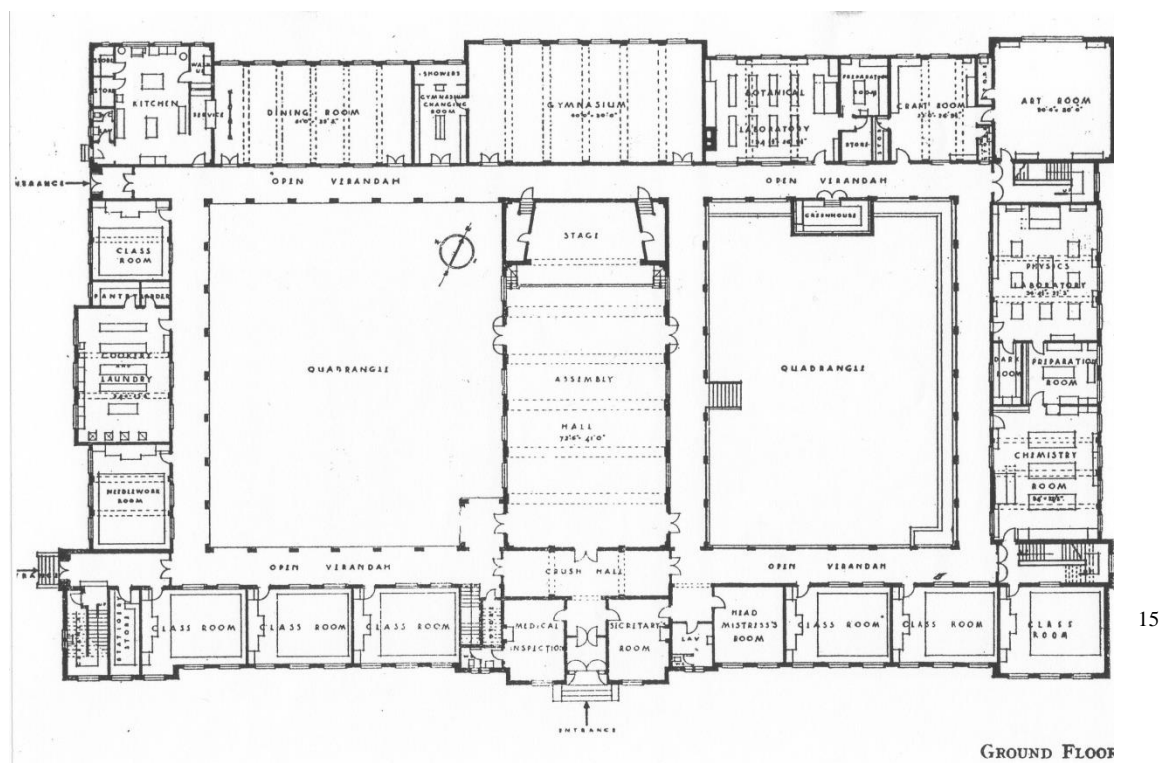
NEW SCHOOL

DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
OPENED 1937

³⁴ Moore, D., 'Devonport High School for Girls Speech Day 12th December, 1945 - Headmistress' Report', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, July 1946

From these two pictures it was obvious that the new building was much larger and illustrates modern architecture of the time. The new building could easily provide more girls a chance at gaining an education, where the location was quieter and in a much calmer and more beautiful setting. In a special newsletter celebrating the opening of the new school there was a large description identifying some of the special features which would make the school a better place to learn:

The accommodation comprises fourteen classrooms, including the needlework and geography rooms, all planned with a sunny aspect. In addition, there are three laboratories for chemistry, physics, and botany, with preparation rooms, dark room, etc., an art room 30 feet square having a large window on the north side; a school library 42 feet by 20 feet; a gymnasium 60 feet by 30 feet with changing room and shower annex; room for domestic science; and a dining room 25 feet by 51 feet with kitchen adjoining for the preparation of meals.³⁵



³⁵ Anon, 'Devonport High School for Girls – Opening of New School Special', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 10th September, 1937 p12

A look at the blue-prints clearly identifies the individual rooms for learning and therefore the improvement of space.

Although the rooms described were providing designated rooms for learning, compared to their previous location where there was a 'lack of adequate class-room accommodation consequent on the increased number of pupils'³⁶, it has to be pointed out that the curriculum at the new school was still only providing a gendered education. There was no mention of a room devoted for mathematics, but instead needlework rooms and domestic science rooms were more openly praised. It was unfortunately the norm for girls' education in the early twentieth century to provide an education that emphasised a woman's role during her time at school and afterwards³⁷.

On the other hand, the gender orientated education that was perhaps on offer at in the new school was the only negative aspect of a rather positive move. When comparing the celebratory magazine of the opening of the new school in 1937, and a report of inspection in 1913 it very clear that the building has already made vast improvements. In 1937 the school had 22 regular staff³⁸, compared to the 10 according to the report in 1913³⁹ and the report of inspection also states that during 1911-1912 only 179 girls attended the secondary school²¹, compared to the new school which now 'has accommodation for five hundred girls.'⁴⁰

These positive outcomes did not go unnoticed by the public. On September 11th, 1936, *The Western Morning News* quoted the new Lord Mayor saying; 'I express the fervent hope that this building will be of tremendous advantage in the education of girls of the city of

³⁶ Board of Education, *Report of Inspection of the Municipal Secondary School For Girls, Devonport, Devonshire*, (p. 1-11, July 1913).

³⁷ See Purvis, June, *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945, An introduction*, p120-121 see also, Hunt, F., (ed.) *Lessons for Life: the Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950*; Moore, L., 'Education for the "woman's sphere": domestic training versus intellectual discipline', in Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach (eds.) *Out of Bounds: women in Scottish Society, 1800-1945*

³⁸ Anon, 'Devonport High School for Girls – Opening of New School Special', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 10th September, 1937

³⁹ Board of Education, *Report of Inspection of the Municipal Secondary School For Girls, Devonport, Devonshire*, (p. 1-11, July 1913). p2

⁴⁰ Anon, 'Devonport High School for Girls – Opening of New School Special', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 10th September, 1937, p12

Plymouth.⁴¹ The article continues to acknowledge the benefits the new school would have towards girls' education by stating under the title 'Women's Greater Part': 'Women would play a part in the next generation to an extent and degree as hitherto contemplated, as wives, mothers, and as voters and citizens.'²³ Miss Moore, the headmistress continues to say that the school would 'endeavour...to turn [out] women, who will be equipped spiritually, and physically [have a] share of the world's work.'²³ Although these two quotes conflict in ideas on the role of women, they both represent an understanding about how important a new building, such as D.H.S.G., could be for the education of girls now and in the future. This vision for girls' education can be summed up by the previous headmistress of the school, Miss Hill; 'Miss Hill emphasised the fact that although the building was important, it was what was achieved inside it that mattered most.'⁴²

What is surprising is reading the reactions of the pupils who moved from the old building to the new one. It appears that some were sad that they were leaving, as the other building represented many of the struggles they had to face, not only physically but also in their attempts at bettering their education: 'dare we confess that on entering our beautiful new premises some of us felt that they were a little large and, shorn of tradition and association, a little cold? Even the numbers of rooms in the old building stirred innumerable memories, humorous or grim.'⁴³ On one hand this could simply be showing the girls' anxiety and nerves into moving into a new building, it could also show a small hint into just how overwhelming the whole experience was.

However positive this move was for enhancing the girls' education of D.H.S.G., it was short lived in the new building on Lyndhurst Road, as two years after it opening, in 1939, the Second World War started. As the headmistress Miss Moore mentions in her final report:

⁴¹ Anon, 'New £50,000 Girls' School Opened at Plymouth' *Western Morning News and Daily Gazette*, September 11th, 1937

⁴² Anon, 'The School Magazine', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 1937-38 p4

⁴³ Anon, 'The School Magazine', *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 1937-38p5

‘before we could really become accustomed to our spacious and beautiful surroundings, another World War was upon us and our building had to be shared with Stoke Damerel High School, and finally abandoned.’⁴⁴ The Second World War plays an enormous role in yet again changing education for the girls of D.H.S.G., both positively and negatively, and becomes an extremely important chapter in the school’s history.

To conclude, this chapter has looked at the positive changes that Devonport High School for Girls achieved by gaining a new building, compared to the unsuitable building the school had previously inhabited. It highlighted that although education for girls was still very much gendered, opportunities for girls’ in Plymouth to gain a better and longer education were increasing. The change in building also drew attention to a shift in public reaction; for once an education for girls was becoming accepted and widely acknowledged.

⁴⁴Moore, D., ‘Devonport High School for Girls Speech Day 12th December, 1945 - Headmistress’ Report’, *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, July 1946

Chapter Two

How was Devonport High School for Girls affected by the Second World War?

On the 3rd of September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. Although the news was disappointing, it was not a surprise to the people of Britain. The city of Plymouth had been preparing for the outcome of war at least a year before it was declared; ‘At the end of September 1938, more than 400 men were employed in digging some six miles of trenches. Plymouth City Council had ordered 300,000 sandbags and the digging was done in two shifts during daylight.’⁴⁵ The reason behind Plymouths early preparations for war is because the city was and still is an important naval dockyard, and was therefore a possible target for attack.

For Devonport High School for Girls, the knowledge that war was upon Britain was scarcely mentioned in any of the schools sources. The only formal recognition, before the declaration of war in 1939, that the school was aware of the issues in Europe, appeared in the 1938-1939 school magazine. Here it seems that the school set up fundraising to help a German boy, Helmut Soloman, live in England⁴⁶, ‘The European crisis of September made evident the plight of refugees abroad, and we responded to the appeal for relief by raising a sum of £20. Since then we have started a school fund which is providing for a little boy from Germany.’⁴⁷ The lack of documentation was perhaps due to the fact that after the announcement of war there was a lull of activity across the country. For nine months no air raid occurred and the people of Britain appeared to continue their daily routine as normal.⁴⁸ One former pupil of D.H.S.G., Frances Stanaway, reiterates this: ‘War was declared, and we

⁴⁵ Wasley, G., *Plymouth A Shattered City – The Story of Hitler’s attack on Plymouth and it’s People, 1939-45* , p50

⁴⁶ Anon, ‘The School Magazine’, *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 1989-39, p4

⁴⁷ Anon, ‘The School Magazine’, *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, 1989-39, p2

⁴⁸ Wasley, G., *Plymouth A Shattered City – The Story of Hitler’s Attack on Plymouth and it’s People, 1939-1945* p62

all thought that was it, but nothing much happened. I mean, rationing came in, and we had to collect gas masks and carry them everywhere with us. But for a little while, everything just carried on as normal.’⁴⁹ It is therefore of little surprise that the girls of D.H.S.G. suffered any real changes to their education immediately after the declaration of war. The curriculum appeared not to have changed and neither did the length of day.

The first change to the school was the building of the fortified air raid shelter. Joan Hassall, another former pupil, describes the physical changes to the school: ‘it was decided that our cloakrooms would be used as shelters in the event of an air raid. They were single-storey construction with thick concrete walls and no windows, which were reinforced with sandbags, as was the flat roof.’⁵⁰ The fortified air raid shelters were in the basements on the bottom right of the building as seen below.



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⁴⁹ Stanaway, Frances Margaret, *It was hell on earth – The Plymouth Blitz 1941* (Mathsmal, Plymouth, December 2005) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/00/a8091100.shtml>

⁵⁰ Hassall, J., *A Fascinating Adventure*, p46

⁵¹ D.H.S.G., 1946

Alterations to the school and the introduction of air raid practices were the first affects of war on D.H.S.G: 'It was hard to concentrate on learning at this time... Any break from routine and schoolwork was a giggle. There was a feeling of nervous excitement in the air as if waiting for something to happen.'⁵² Practices were put in places that if girls lived within a three minute radius of the school they were allowed to go to their own shelter, the rest of the girls were required to stay in the air raid shelter in the school.⁵³

Other than the air raids the most apparent sign that the Second World War was now affecting Plymouth was when another girl's school, Stoke Dameral, were forced to leave their building and share with D.H.S.G. 'Stoke Damarell school was requisitioned by the navy to house extra personnel called into service, which included the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). So their pupils now came to share our school – we attended on mornings or afternoons only, on alternative weeks.'⁵⁴ For the first time the pupils of D.H.S.G now had to compromise their education, by dividing the week up between the two schools. However, the worst disruption came when a landmine hit the school grounds in 1940⁵⁵ and both D.H.S.G. and Stoke Dameral were forced to share a small cricket pavilion opposite the school for their classes.⁵⁶ In the summer of 1940 the school building was closed and afterwards received the worst of its damage from bombs, as seen in the image below.

⁵² Hassal, Joan, *A Fascinating Adventure*, p47

⁵³ Letter from Betty Dyer, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'D.H.S 1939-46', 1st June 2008

⁵⁴ Hassal, Joan, *A Fascinating Adventure*, p46

⁵⁵ There is no exact date for when the landmine hit the school, but it is presumed to be in July of 1940, as this was a time when Plymouth was badly hit, before the 1941 Blitz, and before the school was officially closed in the summer of 1940. See, Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History - 1941* <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941.htm>; Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History – Plymouth Blitz, The March Raid* <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941-Blitz.htm>

⁵⁶ Stanaway, Frances Margaret, *It was hell on earth – The Plymouth Blitz 1941* (Mathsml, Plymouth, December 2005)



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In the 1946 Head Mistresses Report, Miss Moore, reveals that the school ‘had been badly damaged on three separate occasions.’⁵⁸ This photograph taken in 1941, shows how the school had been severely hit, with damage to the roof and the surrounding grounds and walls.

As the girls were forced to leave, the school was used for other purposes during the war: ‘At first the building was occupied by members of the Fire Service who came from all over England to fight the fires caused by constant aerial bombardment...later it was taken over by the Dockyard Authorities and remained in their hands until the end of the war.’⁵⁹ On March 20th 1941, the day that King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited Plymouth⁶⁰, the city was blitzed⁶¹. With many fires in the city it was vital that buildings such as D.H.S.G. became a vital resource to the Fire Services and thus benefitting the city. According to a few

⁵⁷ Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, *Devonport High School for Girls – 1941*, <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/CalmWebserviceImage?doc=P000079144.jpg>

⁵⁸ Moore, D., ‘Devonport High School for Girls Speech Day 12th December, 1945 - Headmistress’ Report’, *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, July 1946

⁵⁹ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956’ 1960

⁶⁰ Wasley, G., *Plymouth A Shattered City – The Story of Hitler’s Attack on Plymouth and it’s People, 1939-1945* p86

⁶¹ Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History - 1941*

<http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941.htm> ; Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History – Plymouth Blitz, The March Raid* <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941-Blitz.htm>

of the questionnaire responses, the Dockyard Authorities used the school as a machine shop⁶². It is understood that the Dockyard Authorities were responsible for the internal damages to the school such as leaving holes in the walls and leaving the gym with only a concrete floor.

Evacuation to Tiverton Grammar School

Whilst the school was being used for other means, it was in the period between 1940 and 1944 that the education of the pupils of D.H.S.G. was most disrupted. The girls had several options; leave school completely, go to the Emergency High School based in the city or be evacuated to Tiverton. A majority of the girls tried to continue their education however it appears that the girls who decided to leave school did so to assist in the war effort.⁶³

The girls who were evacuated went to Tiverton in North Devon where they were accommodated in the grounds of Tiverton Grammar School.⁶⁴ At first it appeared that all the girls of D.H.S.G. were given the opportunity to move to Tiverton Grammar School, however the decision of which pupils went to Tiverton was quite selective and out of the pupils hands. Frances Stanaway states that 'it was decided that those in the top class could be evacuated, and take our exams away from Plymouth.'⁶⁵ There is no clear reason given why only the top of the class were allowed to be evacuated to Tiverton. Some possible reasons could be due to lack of space in the Tiverton Grammar School⁶⁶, there could have been a preference to the girls who needed better accommodation for their examinations, or perhaps these girls paid the higher fees⁶⁷ to go to school, as fees were still a requirement to go to D.H.S.G. until 1944⁶⁸.

⁶² Questionnaire responses A and D

⁶³ Letter from B.D. Goodman, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 9th June 2008

⁶⁴ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956' 1960

⁶⁵ Stanaway, Frances Margaret, *It was hell on earth – The Plymouth Blitz 1941* (Mathsmal, Plymouth, December 2005) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/00/a8091100.shtml>

⁶⁶ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947', 1980

⁶⁷ Scholarship exams were taken by some pupils which meant they paid less fees to still attend D.H.S.G. see, Questionnaire Response B



Devonport High School girls billeted at Mt. View Hotel, Tiverton.

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For the girls who were evacuated to Tiverton Grammar School they faced many difficulties in order to maintain their education. Former pupil of D.H.S.G., Ruth Woollons' account of her time evacuated to Tiverton, highlights both the positive and negative changes to her education and lifestyle. The first issue that the girls from D.H.S.G. encountered was the size of the school accommodation: 'the school day was complicated by the fact that school house was far too small to accommodate the whole school. We numbered about 120 girls.'⁷⁰ This caused a significant disruption as different classes had to be put on in different buildings sometimes at large distances from another: 'for needlework we went to a large room in Castle Street. This meant that we were constantly being walked in long crocodiles from one end of

⁶⁸ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p123

⁶⁹ Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys' Middle School 1940-1945* p45

⁷⁰ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947', 1980, p4

the town to the other.’⁷¹ This issue seemed to be common as many other pupil accounts expressed their dislike of walking the long distances everyday for lessons.⁷²

The most significant disadvantages that Woollons describes at Tiverton Grammar School were the compromises on their curriculum and the lack of teachers:

As only approximately one quarter of the total number of the D.H.S. pupils had been evacuated to Tiverton, we were allowed only a small staff. Some had been transferred to D.H.S. for boys to replace men away at war, others had remained in Plymouth at what was known as the Emergency High School... We had about ten teachers but between them they taught the full range of subjects...We had no specialist teachers in Latin, Art and English, and only one Mathematician, but every member of staff took on additional subjects to keep the timetable going.²⁴

According to Woollons, the teaching of only one subject was affected: Eurhythmics. Due to the small accommodation and numbers of girls, it was only taught to first, second and third formers, whereas before the war it was a subject taught to all.⁷³

The girls in Tiverton dealt with many other problems. Some suffered from cramped living conditions, sometimes up to fourteen girls sharing three bedrooms,⁷⁴ constant moving from one living accommodation to another⁷⁵ as well as the rationing of food, books and fabric for uniform: ‘Miss Moore toured the Plymouth shops, inspecting all the materials...these rolls of material were then reserved for the pupils of D.H.S. Limited clothing problems made uniform a problem.’⁷⁶ However the most obvious challenge for the pupils of D.H.S.G. was living away from home for such a long period of time. Accounts from former pupil at

⁷¹ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p5

⁷² Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p43

⁷³Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p6

⁷⁴ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p7

⁷⁵ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p7 see also Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p43

⁷⁶Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p6

Tiverton express their feelings of anxiety and fear; ‘I remember we were all very upset once because local children had spread rumours that Plymouth had been flattened.’⁷⁷ One girl even recalls running away from Tiverton back to Plymouth, only to be told by her parents to return for her examinations⁷⁸. This highlights just how upsetting it was for the pupils but it also proves just how important the girls’ education was, and how lucky they were to still have a fairly stable one during such a disruptive time.

However hard it was to leave home and compromise on space and distance, the D.H.S. girls who moved to Tiverton had the better educational opportunity compared to those who stayed back in Plymouth. Many former pupil accounts talked very nostalgically of their time spent in Tiverton, with the excitement of being mixed amongst boys from Tiverton Boys Middle School⁷⁹, to having dancing lessons⁸⁰ and as well as making the most of living out in the countryside by sometimes enjoying classes outside.⁸¹ The most positive acknowledgement out of the accounts of the time at Tiverton Grammar School states that ‘there were many compensations! We were hardly conscious of the horrors of the war.’⁸² The only obvious mentions of the war coming to Tiverton were through the small war effort several girls described through potato picking: ‘we felt this was our share of the war effort. We were ‘digging for victory’ as the posters urged us to do!’⁸³ There were also visits from American soldiers, which turned out not to be a reminder of the troubles of war, but instead counting them became an exciting game.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p43

⁷⁸ Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p44

⁷⁹ Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p43

⁸⁰ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p3

⁸¹ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980 p9

⁸² Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980 p8

⁸³ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980, p4

⁸⁴ Rugg, Derrick V., *Some Memories of a Secondary School in Wartime – The Girls of Devonport High School at Tiverton Boys’ Middle School 1940-1945* p44

On the whole, the girls who were given the opportunity to be evacuated to Tiverton Grammar School were very lucky. On reflection their education was stable and appears to have been maintained to a good level, as examinations were still continuing. There were a few disruptions such as the lack of teachers and space, but compared to the pupils of D.H.S.G. who were not able to move to Tiverton, they were very lucky. Many former pupils appreciated this and in their accounts there is an overwhelming level of gratitude and nostalgia to the teachers and the people who took them in.

Plymouth Emergency High School

Those who were not eligible or able to be evacuated to Tiverton still had the opportunity to continue their education in the city. As the Devonport High School building was out of use, the girls were sent to the Plymouth Emergency High School, which was, and still is, Plymouth High School for Girls situated on North Hill close to the city centre. P.E.H.S. accommodated the Plymouth High School girls who could not be evacuated to Fowey in Cornwall⁸⁵, as well as the Devonport High Girls and the Stoke Dameral Girls, and was run by Head Mistress Miss Violet Turner⁸⁶.

According to some former pupil accounts, not all Devonport High girls took the opportunity to be evacuated, instead a few expressed that the reason behind staying in Plymouth was due to family members, mothers in particular, who wanted their children to stay close: 'although I was a D.H.S. pupil, my mother did not want me to be evacuated so I spent the first year plus one or two terms at what was then and still is Plymouth High.'⁸⁷ What is interesting is that this former pupil joined D.H.S.G. in 1943, and even though Plymouth had faced the worst of its aerial bombardment, families still risked the dangers of

⁸⁵ Tucker, J., *Memories of Life and Plymouth High 1940-1945*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a3927972.shtml>

⁸⁶ Questionnaire response B

⁸⁷ Questionnaire response A

living in a targeted city. In hindsight it shows the unity of families during such difficult times, but it also highlights that those who attended the Plymouth Emergency School were fortunate to still have the option of continuing their education.

The most immediate concern towards the education of the girls during the Second World War in Plymouth was that being a naval city simply trying to attain the education would have been difficult. There are many accounts of how tough life was living in Plymouth at this time, as Joan Hassall remembers:

‘As it became apparent that the terms of the Munich Agreement were being broken and that ‘peace in our time’ could not be sustained, it brought a scurry of activity: checks were made on blackout curtains, ration books were issued, barrage balloons were installed on various parks or open spaces in the city and anti-aircraft guns were erected...it was cold sitting and waiting and hoping it would soon be over. I would press my fingers in my ears to try to block the noise from the guns, particularly from any naval warship in the Sound.’⁸⁸

In Plymouth alone, the city had 602 ‘Alerts’ and 59 raids bombs were dropped, which lead tragically to 1174 civilians dead and 1092 people either injured or detained in hospital.⁸⁹ It is therefore not surprising that education was affected, although in this case, P.E.H.S. was lucky to have survived the war without any damages⁹⁰, unlike several other buildings close by in the city centre.⁹¹

However, like the girls evacuated to Tiverton, those who attended the P.E.H.S. had the issue of space for learning. Several former pupil responses mention overcrowding leading

⁸⁸ Hassall, Joan, *A Fascinating Adventure*, p46-53

⁸⁹ Wasley, G., *Plymouth A Shattered City – The Story of Hitler’s Attack on Plymouth and it’s People, 1939-1945* p167

⁹⁰ Questionnaire response B

⁹¹ Wasley, G., *Plymouth A Shattered City – The Story of Hitler’s Attack on Plymouth and it’s People, 1939-1945* p110 see also, Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History - 1941*

<http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941.htm>; Mosley, Brian, *The Encyclopaedia of Plymouth History – Plymouth Blitz, The March Raid* <http://www.plymouthdata.info/Second%20World%20War-1941-Blitz.htm>

to lessons in other locations which were quite a distance away from the main building.⁹² One response even mentions that due to numbers they were only taught half days having to alternate between the other schools for morning and afternoon lessons⁹³. Furthermore like the evacuee girls, P.E.H.S. also had issues with rationing and the effect it had on school uniform. However the pupils in Plymouth felt a pride at doing their best to wear the uniform, until rationing made it impossible. One reason was to distinguish themselves from the other schools at P.E.H.S: ‘all three girls’ Grammar schools were there but we were careful to keep to our own uniforms. It was a matter of pride! I remember one morning being shocked because one girl had come to school wearing white shoes and socks! Her home had been badly damaged over night and she hadn’t been able to get in to change them.’⁹⁴

The most interesting change that took place at P.E.H.S., in reference to what was happening outside of the classroom, related to the school dinners. As one former pupil remembers, ‘I think the big change must have been to school dinners, practically everybody took them as they supplemented the food rations and more mothers were working and not home for lunch.’⁹⁵ This is the first reference to how changes to life at home during the Second World War, were affecting the pupils whilst at school. Unlike before the war, both parents could possibly have been involved in war work⁹⁶, and the change to school diners is a small example of a few possible affects this change had on pupils.

Another small positive change to occur during the Second World War is that for the first time, both boys and girls were treated equally. Both sexes were provided with the chance for evacuation, and if not an alternative option in the city. It is clear that there could be no

⁹² Questionnaire response A

⁹³ Questionnaire response F

⁹⁴ Letter from Betty Dyer, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘D.H.S 1939-46’, 1st June 2008

⁹⁵ Questionnaire response B

⁹⁶ Anon, *The Role of Women 1900-1945*, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/women%201900_1945.htm see also, Summerfield, P., *Women Workers in the Second World War, Production and Patriarchy Conflict*; Marwick A., *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century*; Braybon, G., and Summerfield, P., *Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars*

preference to who is granted education at this time. Both boys and girls would have had the opportunity for war work instead of maintaining an education, but what this highlights is that up and down the country a small change had taken place in the understanding that both sexes should still be provided an education as best as the situation would allow.

To conclude, the most obvious and disruptive change to the pupils of D.H.S.G. during the Second World War was the move from their school either to Plymouth Emergency High School or evacuated to Tiverton Grammar School. Both shared similar issues with space and compromises on the subjects being taught and when, but both had different experiences of the war. Although they were away from home pupils in Tiverton were fortunate enough to be away from any scenes of the war, whereas the girls left in Plymouth, had to deal with the difficulties of war nearly every day. On the whole the most positive point to take is that the girls' education was never put last. In both schools, the curriculum was maintained to a high level with a massive amount of work done by the staff in order to achieve this. Although the subjects taught were still gender orientated, it appears that during the Second World War, gender did not define who was eligible to continue their studies, and it would seem that after the war, the issue of class would be the next barrier tackled.

Chapter Three

1945-1950: The Aftermath of the Second World War on the Education of Devonport High School for Girls

On returning to the school in the summer of 1945 many changes had occurred, both to the building and to the education of the girls. This chapter will look at what these changes were, how the teachers and the girls felt about them and what changes to education for girls happened up to 1950.

The first difficult situation that Devonport High School for Girls faced was the uniting of the evacuee girls from Tiverton and those who stayed at the Plymouth Emergency High School:

The one hundred and twenty girls who had returned from Tiverton were now outnumbered by those who came from the Emergency High School and other who had been evacuated privately. Staff whose names we had heard but whom we had never met also returned. Obviously, we were pleased to be home but somehow, something had gone.⁹⁷

The introduction of old and new pupils with new and returning staff caused a certain level of anxiety. In Betty Dyers account of her return to D.H.S.G. it appears that the school made some small effort to try and restore order and calm to those who felt uncomfortable: 'in 1945 when we all returned to our own building, the Tiverton girls didn't know me nor did the Plymouth girls know Joan, so Joan Bennett and i were made joint head-girls.'⁹⁸ Over time this was not an issue anymore and school life returned to the norm. This goes for many other factors that the Second World War had

⁹⁷ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947', 1980 p11

⁹⁸ Letter from Betty Dyer, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, 'D.H.S 1939-46', 1st June 2008

changed, for example, for the first couple years immediately after the war rationing was still in place and therefore the set uniform was not compulsory⁹⁹, however it did return by 1950. Similarly both the house-books¹⁰⁰ and school magazines were able to start again after being on hiatus during the war, due to the fact the school was split and rationing meant paper and books were in short supply.

The change with the biggest impact on the pupils of D.H.S.G. was the physical and structural alterations that happened to the building and the grounds:

The gym was unusable as it had a concrete floor into which machines had been clamped. In fact four years later when I left in 1949, the concrete floor was still there. We did gym in the Assembly Hall and the gym was used as a second dining room and an examination hall.¹⁰¹

Another account explains how one room was left with only two internal walls and how when they ‘returned to D.H.S. in 1945 the front field was still in use for a crop’¹⁰² which meant that games had to be moved to Central Park. Although the internal damages came from the Devonport Dockyard machines, the worst of the damage to school were from landmines. In 1946 Miss Moore sums up that the damage on the school was unavoidable but in no way impaired the girls’ education:

Our consolidation on leaving was that we were taking the children to safety; our consolation on our return was that the building had played its part in the national effort. A further comfort is that it is repairable...bearing only honourable scars.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Questionnaire response B

¹⁰⁰ The school was split into four houses; St Joan, St Margaret, St Ursula and St Monica. Each house had their own book in which they noted down classes successes, sports results and ‘house days’.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Ruth M Woollons., Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Pupil of D.H.S. 1941-1947’, 1980 p11

¹⁰² Questionnaire response E

¹⁰³ Moore, D., ‘Devonport High School for Girls Speech Day 12th December, 1945 - Headmistress’ Report’, *Devonport High School for Girls Magazine*, July 1946

A small encouraging point from a majority of the responses is that ‘everyone was used to accepting its different uses and inconveniences’¹⁰⁴, in fact some didn’t even remember there being any problems.

One of the more substantial changes to D.H.S.G. affected the teaching staff. The first change, a year after returning to the school: ‘Miss Moore, headmistress, retired in 1946, and it was the task of Miss Vale, her successor, to guide the school through the difficult period when war damage repairs were being carried out.’¹⁰⁵ An encouraging point to take from this, is that the school continued to be run by a female head teacher, which in this period of time was still uncommon: ‘within teaching, women were not equal to men... equal pay may have been introduced in 1956, but most women teachers did not attain the position of head; even in primary schools, this was usually the preserve of men.’¹⁰⁶ Devonport High School for Girls had always been run by a series of female head teachers and after the War this continued in the same fashion.

Another transformation to the teaching staff at D.H.S.G. was the introduction of male teachers. One former pupil recalls that ‘in 1949/50 there were two male teachers... they had their own staff room separate from the women.’¹⁰⁷ There are no concrete sources to state what they taught other than one response expressing that one male teacher might have taught maths. Another pupil expressed that ‘it was very unusual to have a male teacher then’¹⁰⁸, which is understandable after nearly half a century of being taught only by women. Even if it was just one or two male teachers it clearly made a significant impact in the girls memories as most accounts noticeably remember them.

One change to the teaching staff that was a direct outcome of the Second World War was the introduction of younger members of staff. ‘What changed in 1947 was that we had

¹⁰⁴ Questionnaire response E

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Mayner, Former Pupil, to E. Wiltshire, ‘Devonport High School for Girls- 1893-1956’ 1960

¹⁰⁶ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women’s Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p86

¹⁰⁷ Questionnaire response B

¹⁰⁸ Questionnaire response A

new young teachers just out of college. Previously they had been rather old, as the younger generation had been doing war work.’¹⁰⁹ The reason for this according to Ina Zweiniger-Bargieowska was that:

The war allowed many of these women access to employment, training and experience that would not have been available to them in peacetime. Women had been urged to regard teaching as a form of national service during the war and were specifically targeted in the emergency training programme that followed it.¹¹⁰

Although this, to a certain degree, is one of the many factors in which younger women were now joining the teaching staff of D. H.S.G., an alternative reason could be due to the Butler Act of 1944.

Even though this act came into existence during the Second World War, its impact and results of the act could only be seen afterwards, for example, the introduction of younger female teachers entering D.H.S.G. The Butler Act was significant as it established that non-married women could teach for the first time.¹¹¹ While this was a hugely positive move for women, it came with some unsavoury and negative comments. One man in particular who was against un-married women teaching was John Newsom:

Newsom believed that the unmarried career schoolmistress was a poor role model. He advised that female teachers should be attractive, to give their girl charges the impression that they were not spurning marriage, so that any with

¹⁰⁹ Questionnaire response C

¹¹⁰ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, p123 see also, Braybon, G., and Summerfield, P., *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*

¹¹¹ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p124

“strong homosexual impulses” should be excluded. He recommended a mixture of unmarried and happily married teachers.¹¹²

Unfortunately, Newsom was not the only person in Britain at this time that held this opinion. After the Second World War there were feelings of anxiety about the changing roles of women.¹¹³ The ideas and beliefs that a women’s primary role was to be a mother and a wife were still predominant and in terms of education ‘for girls this meant a stress on domesticity; and once again, women were to be educated, not for self-improvement, but to promote social cohesion.’¹¹³ In contrast to this one former pupil argued that the change in new teachers did nothing detrimental to the girls’ education; ‘many new teachers came over the years but I think the ‘good values’ stayed.’¹¹⁴ What is more interesting when looking at The Butler Act and the introduction of unmarried women to the teaching staff, is that according to many sources all the teachers at D.H.S.G. were titled ‘Miss’ not ‘Mrs’¹¹⁵, therefore highlighting that act could either have been irrelevant to the school as none of the teachers were married, or the teachers were titled ‘Miss’ but some were in fact married and just not stated.

On the other hand, the Butler Act of 1944 did more than allow unmarried women the opportunity to teach, it more importantly ‘provided all children, to the age of 15, with the right to a free secondary education.’¹¹⁶ This is one the most positive outcomes towards education as for the first time class barriers were being challenged as all children were now eligible for an education. Previously, many schools, D.H.S.G. included, only granted entry by payment of a fee. As one former pupils recalls, ‘I think it was 8 guineas a term for me and 4

¹¹² McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p124

¹¹³ McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p123, see also, Moore, L., ‘Education for the “woman’s sphere”: domestic training versus intellectual discipline’, in Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach (eds.) *Out of Bounds: women in Scottish Society, 1800-1945*

¹¹⁴ Questionnaire response E

¹¹⁵ Letter from A. Clayton, Former Pupil, to J.R. Elliot, 24th October, 1984 , see also, Anon, ‘Devonport High School for Girls – Opening of New School Special’, Devonport High School for Girls Magazine, 10th September, 1937

¹¹⁶ McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p123

guineas for my sister as the second pupil. I think there was a reduction for the scholarship girls... all fees ceased in 1944.’¹¹⁷ As highlighted here, there was a scholarship that girls took in order to receive entry at a smaller fee, however, it still meant that some girls who would have been able to attend the school on intelligence could not because of financial constraints. D.H.S.G like most other grammar schools before the Butler Act was therefore predominantly catering for the upper and middle classes.

Although this act was an educational milestone, not everyone was granted entry into any school they liked. ‘The Butler Education Act established the Tripartite System, splitting primary schools and secondary schools up at the age of eleven¹¹⁸ and therefore the eleven plus examination where passing led to grammar school and failing to the secondary modern.’¹¹⁹ For D.H.S.G, being a grammar school this could only be deemed as good news as they could now provide more spaces to girls who would previously not had the opportunity. However, girls appeared to perform better than boys at the 11+ examination, and therefore caused somewhat of a problem for the educational authorities.¹²⁰ The solution, to provide more spaces to boys by weighing girls outcomes differently. This does not explain how they weighed the outcomes of the girls’ results, but it does demonstrate that boys’ education was still put before girls. There may be small advances but the overall system and attitude towards an equal education did not change and would not for several years. What has to be taken into consideration however was that this act was not designed to improve the education for girls, but to provide a better opportunity into education for all children.

Nonetheless Newsom, like many others, went further and argued that the 11+ was wrong for girls. He perceived that girls were being directed away from domestic subjects into academic ones which directed them away from their main roles:

¹¹⁷ Questionnaire response B

¹¹⁸ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women’s Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p82

¹¹⁹ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women’s Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p86

¹²⁰ McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p123

Newsom advocated a separate curriculum for girls, firmly grounded in domestic subjects. He criticized grammar schools for girls because they placed too much stress on public examinations and success in obtaining professional careers. He lamented that the “clever” girl was being encouraged to give up domestic subjects in favour of academic ones. Newsom did not deny that girls should get equal opportunities in education with boys; instead, he insisted that girls had different needs, to prepare them for homemaking and motherhood.¹²¹

In light of these views, one of the questioned asked to the former pupils in the questionnaire was whether they felt that their education at this time was in anyway gendered, and the responses were interesting but mixed. It appears that some former pupils did not think that their education at this time was gendered in anyway.¹²² When looking at the list of subjects that they took it could be assumed that their education was balanced, one respondent even states, ‘I think as I went to take maths and physics, they are more boy orientated.’¹²³ The girls of D.H.S. at this time were able to take a wide variety of subjects from Physics, Chemistry and Biology to History, English and Maths, as well as many others.

However, some former pupils believe otherwise, and state that they were in fact taught, ‘purely ‘girl’ orientated’¹²⁴ subjects. What has to be considered when asking these former pupils whether their education was gendered or not is by understanding what they believed to be subjects for girls and subjects for boys. The best answer for this comes from a former pupil, who explains: ‘I guess that the boys in D.H.S. for boys were not taught sewing and cookery, and we certainly were not offered woodwork.’¹²⁵ This statement therefore sheds

¹²¹ McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p124

¹²² Questionnaire responses C,D,E

¹²³ Questionnaire response C

¹²⁴ Questionnaire response A

¹²⁵ Questionnaire response B

light onto the types of different education, which Newsom believed as being fundamental to the different needs of girls: ‘Women possess certain particular needs based on their psychology, physiology, and their social and economic position... the fundamental common experience is the fact that the vast majority of them will become makes of the home, and that to do this successfully requires the proper development of may talents’¹²⁶. The different subjects between the two schools, although there were few, relate back to the different gender roles and how children were being prepared for life after school. On one side, Newsom was correct in believing that a majority of girls would still become mothers and wives before career women, but he fails to recognise that women still had the right for a balanced education and would continue to take it. In fact the school was, ‘far more interested in academic studies and status rather than practical abilities.’¹²⁷ It was these academic studies which led the girls at D.H.S. to receive a balanced education which provided them with the career opportunities which Newsom believed unrealistic. On the other hand the academic education these former pupils took, was due to the fact they went to a grammar school, other schools at the time were not as willing or perhaps able to provide the girls with the same prospects.

A further change after the Second World War was the length of time pupils were staying at the school for their education. Previously, it was only compulsory for children to remain in education until the age of fourteen, according to the 1918 Education Act.¹²⁸ Before the start of the Second World War there were discussions to raise the leaving age to fifteen, but this only came into practice in 1947¹²⁹. Although this was a small step in recognising the education of children was important to continue, it appears that girls in D.H.S. remained in

¹²⁶ Newsom, J, ‘ The Education of Girls: Faber and Faber (1948) In: Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women’s Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970*, p112

¹²⁷ Questionnaire response B

¹²⁸ McDermid, J., ‘Women and Education’ In: Purvis, J., *Women’s History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*, p122

¹²⁹ Montgomery, Fiona A., *Women’s Rights – Struggles and Feminism in Britain c. 1770-1970* p82

education up to the age of eighteen after the Second World War: 'I was just 10 when I went to D.H.S. and stayed until I was 18... 8 years at D.H.S. did seem quite a long time but I must say, looking back, that it did gradually expand with different teachers into a broader education as methods changed.'¹³⁰ According to Roy Lowe,

'there is clear evidence of an increase, particularly in the later phases of the War, in the numbers staying on at school beyond the minimum leaving age and in those entering for, and passing external examinations. This development, although perhaps surprising at first glance, was undoubtedly part of a long-term trend, and was probably stimulated by the increased affluence of wartime. More jobs for women and the greater availability of overtime meant more families that did not need to get their children into the labour market as fast as possible to boost the family income.'¹³¹

Being a grammar school, it was perhaps less likely that the pupils of D.H.S.G., would have been taken out of education to assist in providing income for the family, as even after the Butler Act of 1944 ceased fees the school probably catered for a majority of middle class pupils.

It is no wonder that with pupils spending more time school in combination with the academic subjects being taught, that many of the girls at D.H.S. wanted to continue their studies in higher education or to gain a career. The questionnaire responses illustrate a variety of different options the pupils had once they left D.H.S.G. One went to the University College of the South West in Exeter, where external London university exams were taken and she studied Botany and Chemistry.¹³² Two went to teacher training colleges,¹³³ another to the

¹³⁰ Questionnaire response E

¹³¹ Lowe, R., *Education and the Second World War: Studies in Schooling and Social Change* p10

¹³² Questionnaire response B

¹³³ Questionnaire responses D, E

Central School of Speech and Drama in London¹³⁴ and one pupil stated she continued on at D.H.S.G. as a laboratory assistant, 'earning twice as much as other who left at the same time in other jobs.'¹³⁵ It appears that both the school and parents were strong reasons into why these girls continued their studies, as pupil states: 'my mother had not been able to carry on with her education and was determined that her daughters should have a chance. School was another determining factor, there was strong pressure to get girls into University and other form of continuing education.'¹³⁶

However, positive this may appear, one former pupil who went to Plymouth College, (now Plymouth University) to take a crash course in Business studies, identifies a difficult reality of continuing her education after school, which was the issue of cost: 'I would have liked to have gone to University but ones parents had to have money to support you and pay for everything and my parents were unable to do that. Girls didn't move away from home in those days if they were from and 'ordinary' (working class) family.'¹³⁷ Although there are many sources to prove that entry for women into university was on a very gradual rise after the Second World War,¹³⁸ it seems that not everyone was able to further continue their studies¹³⁹. The Butler Act may have allowed free education for all in schools, but university still appears to have been a privilege for the few. Nevertheless, all former pupils who completed the survey did not stop their education; they all continued in one form or another to gain qualifications and jobs that twenty years previously would not have been possible.

To conclude, the Second World War brought many change to the pupils of Devonport High School for Girls and their education. There were a few negative changes through the

¹³⁴ Questionnaire response F

¹³⁵ Questionnaire response C

¹³⁶ Questionnaire response B

¹³⁷ Questionnaire response A

¹³⁸ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina, *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*,: 'the numbers of women entering the universities continued to rise, although it is interesting to note that they still represented only 24 per cent of the university student population in 1958: the same proportion as in 1920.' P124

¹³⁹ McDermid, J., 'Women and Education' In: Purvis, J., *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945 an introduction*,: 'Secondary Schools remained very much middle-class institutions designed with university requirements in mind. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, few working-class women entered university.' P121

physical damage to the school, and the loss of headmistress Miss Moore, however there were more positive changes that outweighed these, from the introduction to new and younger teachers but most importantly education as a whole was at the start of a transformation. With the Butler Act of 1944 and the Education Act of 1947 more girls were allocated a place at Devonport High School for Girls for free and for a longer period of time, being taught a combination of domestic and academic subjects, in the hope of a good education.

Conclusion

Between 1930 and 1950 Devonport High School for Girls witnessed three major changes: the introduction to a new building, the evacuation of the school due to the Second World War and finally the beginning of a new era of education with the introduction of the Butler Act of 1944.

These three issues caused both disruptive and positive changes to the education of girls in this period. The opening of a new modern school highlighted the differing and adjusting attitudes that both the local and national governments were having about the importance of allowing girls to be provided with an academic education. Previously girls grammar schools were frowned upon as they promoted the choice of academic studies over domestic studies, which was considered inappropriate as it was seen to provide women with the incorrect education for their roles after school.

Naturally, the Second World War was the most disruptive period of time for the pupils of Devonport High School for Girls, but the many different accounts illustrated the handwork and determination from many people, pupils, teachers and parents alike, that went into maintaining an education for the girls. D.H.S.G. had been through both World Wars and came out the better at the other end, but the Second World War was truly a turning point of accepting that education was vital for all children regardless of gender.

The Butler Act of 1944 was one of the first acts to show this positive change to education. Providing free education to all children at secondary level was the initial step to breaking class barriers and although it was not its main aim it led to a larger group of girls to gain an academic education who before would not have had the opportunity. In fact this dissertation has provided sound evidence that after the Second World War education for girls was starting to transform, not only in terms of their curriculum but at all levels at the school,

from the introduction to younger and male teachers to the positive acknowledgement that the pupils of Devonport High School for Girls had the opportunity to careers and higher education after school.

Overall this dissertation has provided an insight into girls' education during a turbulent period of time, but in particular it has provided an insight into girls' grammar schools. It appears that the only research that has been done on girl's grammar schools between 1930 and 1950 are on the negative attitudes of the academic education they provided. This discussion however has shown more than that. Through the numerous accounts from former pupils, this dissertation has been able to unveil some of the more personal opinions on what they thought of the education they were gaining, as well as revealing a small part of Devonport High School for Girls history. All the former pupils acknowledged a fondness to the school and nostalgic memories. For them at the time, going to a grammar school wasn't a protest against women's roles and rights, but just an opportunity to get a good education.

This dissertation might not necessarily disprove many other historical debates on education for girls between 1930 and 1950, but it will support the many studies on women's history, the history of education during the Second World War and perhaps new studies into girls grammar school in particular, Devonport High School for Girls.

Appendices

Questionnaire Response A

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1943-1949

2. What subjects were you taught?

As far as I can remember Maths, English Lit, English Language, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, French (until the end of 2nd year) P.E., Games, Art, Cookery

- 2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

Purely 'girl' orientated. (Barely able to mention 'boy' in those days)

- 2c. Did these change after the war?

No

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

Really can't remember but seemed much the same as now

- 3b. In a single class?

About 27-30

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

Just one male teacher (I think teaching maths) who didn't stay long and it was VERY unusual to have a male teacher then.

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

I think 9am till 4pm with a lunch break of either 1 hour or 1 and a quarter as i was able to go home and back.

6. What was the uniform like?

Summer dress had short sleeves, white cotton collar, buttoned at the neck and the material was cotton with an overall pattern of flowers using brown, yellows, greens mostly on a pale background and white socks. Worn with a blazer and hats were not compulsory. In winter we wore skirts in brown (no trousers then) brown socks, cream blouse and brown v-necked sweater and brown felt hat.

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

I was still 10 when I started in September and left in December just before I was 16.

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

I took the 11+ and was allocated the school of my choice but only because my results were suitable too.

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

I seem to remember even if you passed your 11+ fees still had to be paid as I can remember my parents having to pay £4 a term but only for one or two terms when they were abolished (perhaps in 1944?)

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

By the time I went the raids were over so things were reasonably settled other than below (question 11)

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

Although i was a D.H.S. pupil, my mother did not want me to be evacuated so i spent the first year plus one or two terms at what was then and still is Plymouth High School at North Hill which server as teh school for all the pupils from their school,

plus non evacuated from D.H.S. and Stoke Dameral High. The staff were all P.H.S. staff and because of overcrowding we had to take some lessons during the week in an old building Durnford Street, Stonehouse where the atmosphere was much happier (P.H.S. staff were strict, very very strict on discipline!) During the war years D.H.S. was occupied by workers from the dockyard.

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

The school was evacuated to Tiverton

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

It opened when I moved over

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

No but it was probably repaired before I returned as the dockyard had used heavy machinery in the building and although there were still signs of holes in the walls, poor decoration in the main hall etc the main structure was fine.

14a. Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

Only in decoration, internal repairs as I remember

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

I would have liked to have gone to University but ones parents had to have money to support you and pay for everything (just like it is going to change to again but then there were no bank loans, credit facilities whatsoever) and my parents were not able to do that. Girls didn't move away from home in those days if they were from an

‘ordinary’ family either! The best available to me was to take a course in Plymouth College as it was then (later to be Plymouth Polytechnic and subsequently Plymouth University). I did a 1 year ‘crash’ course on Business Studies which was very good and was my stepping stone into the working world, firstly as Secretary, later as a Business Administrator and eventually to running my own Accounting Services Business.

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

I don’t think so, more by the class system whereby if you came from a working class background your parents were not able to see outside their lifestyle and it was difficult to change it without knowing the ‘right’ people and moving in the ‘right’ circles. One didn’t even have a bank account unless you were ‘recommended’ by an influential person (nor get a job in a bank).

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention it in the box provided.

The school years were referred to as Year 1, Year2, etc and after Year 5 you went into the 6th Form and then the Upper 6th. In the 5thYear, much as now when one takes G.C.S.E.’s, we took School Certificate, usually in about 5 to 7 subjects and you had to get a pass having chosen your subjects at the end of the 3rd Year. I took Maths and English (Lan and Lit) which were compulsory, together with Geography, History and Art. There were 3 pass levels, Pass, Credit and Distinction and I got 3 Credits.

There was only one occasion in my time at D.H.S. when we were allowed to bring a boy friend to school, that was in the 5th Year (or perhaps it was the 6th) when one had to wear a long dress and the whole evening was supervised by teachers!

I have returned to the school just once in all the intervening year to now and that was about 8 years ago to an organised small group all of ‘my’ year. It was very

strange as so much surprisingly the same about the building and the chairs on the stage and the main hall, even many of the classrooms. What was so different was to see the activities and classrooms allocated for what would have been unheard of i.e. classes in electronics (I think it was welding and such) and male teachers. Much more relaxed atmosphere now, but I was happy during my years at the school and remember it with affection.

Questionnaire Response B

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1942 - 1945 at Plymouth Emergency High School for Girls

1945 – 1950 reunited with DHS in Peverell Premises

2. What subjects were you taught?

Yr 1 Eng, French, Maths, History, Geography, Art, General Science, Cookery, Sewing, Gym and Games (we went on the tram to the Farley's field to play Hockey), music and singing. There were peripatetic teachers of piano. In Yr 2 Latin, was added for those deemed to be more able. Known as form 2L...3L etc., about a third of the year group. Cookery was not taught to this group, but I think we continued sewing until Yr 3. Think we must have had R.E. throughout but have no recollection of this. The girls who were evacuated learnt netball and eurhythmics, the later discontinued after the two parts of the school were reunited. In years 5+ quite a good school choir. For a brief period, 1949, ballet, I think there was a problem with P.E. teachers I took Eng, French, Latin, History, Geography, General Science, Maths at School Certificate level in 1948. I started 6th form with Eng, French, Latin and History, but decided that the girls in the Science 6th were having a more interesting time, so switched. This meant I had 3 years in the 6th form before taking Higher schools Certificate in Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology.

2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

I guess that the boys in DHS for boys were not taught sewing and cookery, and we certainly were not offered woodwork etc. But both schools were far more interested in academic studies and status rather than practical abilities. There were also practical

constraints, timetabling in particular on the subjects available, I went through a period of wanting to do maths, pure and applied, and history but that was not possible.

2c. Did these change after the war?

Not as far as I know

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

3 classes in each year group, about 25 girls in a class, plus 25 or so in the 6th form

About 400 girls

3b. in a single class?

25 in years 1-5, in 6th form 6 or 7 in the Science side, rather more in the Arts subjects

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

1949/1950 there were two male teachers, I do not remember what subjects they taught. They had their own staff room separate from the women, it had previously been the prefects' room.

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

I think was 9am till 4pm both at PEHS and the reunited DHSG

6. What was the uniform like?

Uniform was not compulsory due to clothes rationing, none the less I was thoroughly 'told off' for wearing a plaid Viyella blouse on one of the coldest days in the very cold year of 1947...I had spoilt Miss Moore's day!

Winter, brown gymslip, then skirt for older girls, white shirt, can't remember what the tie was like, brown shoes, socks or stockings (can't remember what colour) 'pudding basin' hat with elastic under the chin, or brown beret, green t-shirt and knickers for gym and games, guess we must have had plimsolls, hockey boots.

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

I was 10 years and 4 months at start, 18 and 2 months at end.

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

No, we took the 'scholarship' exam. About a third of children in Plymouth 'passed' it and could go to one of the six grammar schools, 3 for boys, 3 for girls. It was generally understood that Plymouth High School took only girls in the first 100. My mother however wanted us to go to DHS. The results were published in order in the local newspaper. There was an unstated pecking order.

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

Yes, I think it was 8 guineas a term for me a 4 guineas for my sister as the second pupil. I think this was a reduction for the scholarship girls, I do not know what the full fees were. All fees ceased in 1944, though I do not know whether the non-scholarship pupils continued to pay.

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

There were very few disruptions of which I was aware. Just a few air raids in the first year when we went down into the shelters. I think the big change must have been to school dinners, (lunches) practically everybody took them as they supplemented the food rations and more mothers were working and not at home for lunch.

They cost 2s/ 3ha'penny a week (five pence ha'penny a day) I guess that was pretty cheap and I have no idea whether anyone had free lunches, or whether that possibly existed.

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

I do not know whether any pressure was put on parents re evacuation. In any event, my mother would have been adamant about keeping us with her.

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

N/A

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

Not while I was a pupil

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

I cannot remember, but think it must have been likely there was some damage to the Peverell school building, I saw no sign of damage at the PEHS buildings.

14a Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

I understand that the Peverell premises were used by some other organisations. There must have been some enhancements over the years after the school returned, i do remember one room with a concrete floor.

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

Went to University College of the South West in Exeter, where external London University exams were taken. Studied Botany and Chemistry, married, had two children and discovered that what i really liked doing was teaching young children, so taught in primary education for thirty years. After retirement I did 13 years as a

voluntary adviser for CAB, also a Master's degree in Local History and still work in that field on a small scale.

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

No I wanted to go to university from age 12. My mother had not been able to carry on with her education and was determined that her daughters should have the chance. School was another determining factor, there was strong pressure to get girls into university and other forms of continuing education such as Teacher Training Colleges. So was a combination of personal, family and school aspirations.

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention it in the box provided.

I think we were fortunate in having the last change of the traditional school teachers, many of them spinsters who had lost their chances of marriage in the Great War.

These ladies had time to develop their own interests as well as time to devote to their jobs.

Several were good musicians and nearly all we 'good sports'; they could get up a hockey team to play the girls, put on an orchestral performance and even do a eurhythmic version of 'Spring cleaning'... All with pink silk bloomers well in evidence!

They were also vulnerable to 'red herrings', having things to talk about outside the school life... one who had been Mayor of Saltash could often be distracted by questions about her farmyard poultry, another was involved in the early years of T.V. The head teacher of PEHS was a large lady, Miss Violet Turner, very kind and very confident. Miss Moore at DHS was a small lady and could be a bit waspish.

Although I recognise in later life that teacher who were also parents had special insights to offer, I think we did very well with these ladies.

Questionnaire Response C

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1945-1952

2. What subjects were you taught?

English, French, Art, Geography, History, Math, General Science (i.e. biology, physics and chemistry) advanced Maths.

- 2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

I think as I went to take Maths and Physics they are more boy orientated. I actually want to take Maths and Art in the Sixth Form but the timetable would not allow that.

- 2c. Did these change after the war?

What changed in 1947 was that we had new young teachers just out of college – previously they had been rather old (my age now) as the younger generations had been doing war work.

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

I think around 3-400

- 3b. In a single class?

30

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

Only female

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

09.00 – 16.00 with I think 1 hour for lunch.

6. What was the uniform like?

Brown skirt and blazer, a brown beret with a school badge – and a telling off if we were seen outside of school without the latter item. In the summer a yellow or brown check dress.

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

11-18

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

You would have to ask my mother about choice of school – and that would be difficult! I did take the 11+

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

N/A

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

I believe the school had been evacuated to Tiverton, Blundell's School during the War. We were the first intake after that.

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

N/A

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

N/A

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

N/A

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

It was fine when I went there in 1945

14a. Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

N/A

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

Continue studies i.e. university and went into employment – I actually worked as the laboratory assistant at the school for a year, earning twice as much as others who left at the same time in other jobs.

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

NO

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention it in the box provided.

N/A

Questionnaire Response D

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1945-1952

2. What subjects were you taught?

English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, French, History, Latin,
Geography, Science, Biology, Art, R.E., P.E., Sports

- 2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

Not gendered at all

- 2c. Did these change after the war?

Don't know

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

Between 300 & 500 I think

- 3b. In a single class?

About 30 per class I think

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

There was at least one male teacher – maybe two. Biology teacher was female, very old! Science teachers hard to find presumably

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

9am to about 4pm but can't remember detail. Morning break and lunch break but can't remember if there was a break in the afternoon.

6. What was the uniform like?

Brown tunic, white blouse, school tie, brown cardigan in winter. Check cotton dress in summer. Punished is seen not wearing brown beret on way to and from school. In sixth form could wear brown skirt and white blouse and tie.

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

Start 11 end 18

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

I took 11+ and then was offered either Plymouth High or Devonport High

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

N/A

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

N/A

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

N/A

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

N/A

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

Building used as factory I believe and must have reopened either 1944 or 1945

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

The gym was not usable as a gym for quite a few years – first used as dining room before being refitted as gym.

14a. Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

The grounds were eventually used for sports but the tennis courts were very much later

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

I went to Teacher Training College

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

No

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention it in the box provided.

Just out of interest during 3rd and 4th form we had rotas for washing a drying the cutlery use in school lunches. (Horrible job – I can remember the greasy smell now)

We were not allowed into the quadrangles at any time.

We couldn't use the front door.

The first years we had to walk along the main road for sports in Peverell? Park.

Questionnaire Response E

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1944-1952

2. What subjects were you taught?

English, Maths, Art, History, Geography, Science, (Biology, Physics, Chemistry),

P.E. and Games, French, Dance, Needlework, Music, R.E.

Later there was a choice of Latin or Cookery and Needlework) I did Zoology in the 6th form: Anatomy and Physiology and English.

- 2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

No, I don't think we thought we were taught 'girl' subjects

- 2c. Did these change after the war?

No, I think we had a wide range of subjects

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

I think about 500-600

- 3b. In a single class?

About 30 - and each year had 3 streams

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

Female teachers

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

From about 9am – 4pm

6. What was the uniform like?

Gym slip (had to be a regulation length when kneeling!) Brown. Brown blazer, Hat or Beret with badge cream blouse, Brown shoes. Summer, there was a different dress each year but a brown yellow or green striped dress was introduced in about 1947 or 1948. Brown skirts were allowed in the 4th form.

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

I was just 10 when I went to D.H.S. and stayed until I was 18 and going to college

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

It wasn't the 11+, then I took the 'scholarship' as it was called as I took the exam just before I was 10 (in the may) I was able to go to the school of my choice (my sister was already)

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

I don't think you could pay to go to D.H.S. but there was an 'overage' scholarship chance at 13 to try again.

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

I'm, sure it was as many schools were evacuated to places like Tiverton

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

As a family we stayed in Devonport prior to going to D.H.S. We had gone to Brixham when our house was bomb damages but were back for rest of the war and to take the scholarship.

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

N/A

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

During the war D.H.S. children were either evacuated or you went to Plymouth Emergency High (wearing your D.H.S. uniform) The Emergency High also had premises at Durnford Street and part of the school went there. I started there but went back to P. High as my sister was there. The Emergency High also had pupils from Stoke Dameral.

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

When we returned to D.H.S. in 1945 there was still evidence of war damage. The gym wasn't in use for a few years (only concrete floor) and it was used from the overflow diners. Opposite room 14 was a 'flower' room. It had only 2 internal walls and when i was in the 6th form we used it as a 'classroom' to keep our books etc. It was very small and over run with mice! By 1952 the gym was refurnished – so we didn't need to use the hall for P.E.

14a. Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

I don't think the school changed physically in any way as everyone was used to accepting different uses and inconveniences! When I was in the 3rd year our 'class area' was the conservatory in the quadrangle and books were kept downstairs in the games changing room when we had to use the physics lab for a form room.

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

I went to college to train for teaching

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

No, I always wanted to teach from a young age.

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention it in the box provided.

When we returned to D.H.S. in 1945 the front field was still in use for a crop! I can't recall what it was but it wasn't in use until harvested! We went to Central Park for games!

Miss Daisy Moore was headmistress and when she retired (I think 1947) Miss May Vale took over. Many of the teachers were elderly. Miss Watts – English. We didn't dare lift the lids of our desks during her lessons but she did bring poetry alive for me! Miss Jago – French. Miss Bodmin – History – was a delightful and interesting teach. The Misses Bates (Marion and Florence) were sisters. Miss Ley, Latin and Miss Purves, Biology. Many new teachers came over the years but I think the 'good values' stayed.

Text books were in short supply and we often shared them and we were careful in our use of writing books and paper.

There was a dining room and also the bombed gym used for lunches and the cost per week was 2s 3 ½ d. I enjoyed the meals as we were used to rationed food in the war (and afterwards). When the gym was being refurbished to its original state we were asked to go home if it was possible. (It was an hour and half lunch time) I was able to go home as my grandmother was the one who cooked meal (Mother worked and Dad in Navy).

I felt it was very cold with the 2 open quadrangles as the rain and the wind beat in. I don't know if that was rectified or it's still the case.

We went on 'house' outings once a year and had our house meetings. Field trips were unusual. Our Zoology group visited Dartington – they also went to Flatford Mill.

Younger staff of course made a difference. Music was the one thing which influenced me. In the 3rd year I was able to join the choir, and then I was in the special choir.

Each year we sang in the Festival of Candles in the Central Hall. In 1950ish 6 of us sang for Children's Hour! We had the chance for Violin lessons with Mrs Hamilton – at Easter once a week.

Wet days, we did modern dancing in the hall for which I played. Dancing lessons, with the boys from D.H.S. for boys 6th form taught us all the modern ones of the time! Quick step etc... and we had a session of sex education with them!

All the music we had a D.H.S. really set me for the future as I took this subject at college. It's enabled me to fall into jobs and also in my personal life.

8 years at D.H.S. did seem quite a long time but I must say, looking back, that it did gradually expand with different teachers into a broader education as methods changed.

Games: hockey, athletics, netball, badminton (dinnertime) tennis, when the courts were built on the field.

We had a good, well stocked library.

Questionnaire Response E

1. When were you a pupil at Devonport High School for Girls?

1942-1949

2. What subjects were you taught?

Usual curriculum – 3 R's plus History, Geography, Scripture. Also Needlework and Cookery in the early terms.

- 2b. Do you feel the subjects were gendered, for example, were you being taught 'girl' subjects or 'boy' subjects, or were you able to take a wide range of courses?

No obvious "boy" subjects e.g. woodwork etc. Good sports facilities. Adjacent playing field.

Courses – choice of "arts" or "science". Difficult to arrange combination of both, e.g.

I was taking botany and zoology but also need English for my college course.

- 2c. Did these change after the war?

Don't know

3. How many pupils were there in the school?

Don't know

- 3b. In a single class?

30 +

4. Were there male and female teachers, or just female teachers?

Female only

5. How long was the school day? This can be answered differently depending if you were at D.H.S.G. during the Second World War, or after.

Half days only, alternating morning/afternoons at emergency premises. When in main school building at Peverell – 9- 3.30ish

6. What was the uniform like?

Brown tunic and light coloured blouse. Brown blazer

7. What age did you start and end your time at D.H.S.G?

Age 11-18

8. Did you take the 11+ which was introduced with the Butler Act of 1944? If so, were you allocated to the school suited to your results, or were you allowed to go to the school you wanted to go to?

At first allocated to evacuated school but re-located to Plymouth town school due to health problems.

9. If you did not take the 11+, did you have to pay a fee to go to D.H.S.G.?

N/A

10. Was the routine of the school disrupted during the Second World War?

Mostly due to using different premises

11. Were you forced to evacuate, or were you allowed to remain at D.H.S.G.?

Allowed to remain – see question 8

12. If you were evacuated where did you go?

N/A

13. Did the school officially shut for any period of time? If so, when did it open again?

New building at Peverell, eventually. Emergency High School – Mutley, during the evacuation years.

14. I have found a picture of the school with part of its rood destroyed, unfortunately I cannot show you as it is owned by the Plymouth Record Office, but I was wondering if you knew of any damage to the school during the war?

New building – no damage

14a. Did the school physically change after the war in anyway?

Only regarding premises – see question 13.

15. What did you do when you finished school?

- a. Continue studies i.e. university
- b. Go into employment
- c. Other, please elaborate

Continued training – Central School of Speech and Drama, London- Speech
Therapy Course

16. Was the above decision (in 15) influenced by the war?

No

17. If there is anything you wish to add, or feel I have left out, please feel free to mention
it in the box provided.

N/A

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