

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 29

Records of Christ's Hospital and Bluecoat Schools



Background

The original Christ's Hospital, also known as the "bluecoat school" because of its distinctive uniform, was founded by Edward VI in Newgate Street in the City of London in 1552 for the education of poor children. Following the dissolution of the monasteries the City of London sought to obtain possession of the royal hospitals from Henry VIII and Edward VI. Agreements were reached whereby control of Christ's Hospital, amongst others, passed to the City.

The age of admission of pupils has varied at different dates. It has always admitted both boys and girls. In the early years of the school, those too young to receive full-time education were "put out to nurse" in the country, usually in Essex or Hertfordshire, or else remained with their parents, who received a weekly allowance. Branches of the school existed at Hertford from at least 1653, at Hoddesdon, Herts., from 1666 to c.1690, and at Ware, Herts., from about the same period until 1760. From 1778 the Hertford premises were used as the girls' school and as a preparatory school for boys. The Royal Mathematical School, founded in 1673, was an integral part of Christ's Hospital, from which its pupils, all boys, were chosen at the age of 11 or 12. They were educated in mathematics and navigation, and were intended for service in the Royal Navy. Christ's Hospital moved from the City of London to Horsham in 1902, and at the same time the boys' preparatory school also moved from Hertford to Horsham. The girls' school remained at Hertford until 1985, when it also moved to Horsham.

Children are admitted to Christ's Hospital from a wide variety of social and geographical backgrounds. From its origins as a foundling hospital to help relieve poverty, and to educate children born in the London area, it has developed into an independent school which admits pupils from all parts of the country. A substantial proportion of pupils' parents contribute towards the cost of their child's education according to their means, with over 80% of costs being met by the charitable Foundation. Such assistance to parents applies where the child is in need, be it financial, social, educational or other forms of need. From 2010 a further opportunity has been provided for a limited number of academically able students whose parents wish to pay an inclusive fee without the usual examination of need or means testing to join the school through Direct Entry full fee paying places.

About 60 schools, modelled wholly or partly on Christ's Hospital but otherwise unconnected with it, were founded in different parts of the British Isles between the mid 16th and late 18th centuries. A number of these foundations, where pupils wore blue, were also known as "bluecoat schools" and a few were also known as Christ's Hospital.

The Records

LMA holds the older records of the original Christ's Hospital. These include minute and account books; estate papers; and a single series of admission and discharge registers for children admitted between 1563 and 1911 (boys only from 1891), and to the Royal Mathematical School between 1673 and 1911 (CLC/201/F/003/MS12818). Admissions for the period between the foundation and the first register are recorded in the earliest court minute book, 1556-62. These have been published in *Christ's Hospital Admissions*, vol.1, 1554-1599 (London, 1937). There is also an incomplete series of presentation papers, containing petitions submitted by parents, guardians etc., which provide some personal and financial details of children's families, up to 1911 for boys and up to 1890 for girls (CLC/210/F/004/MS12818A).

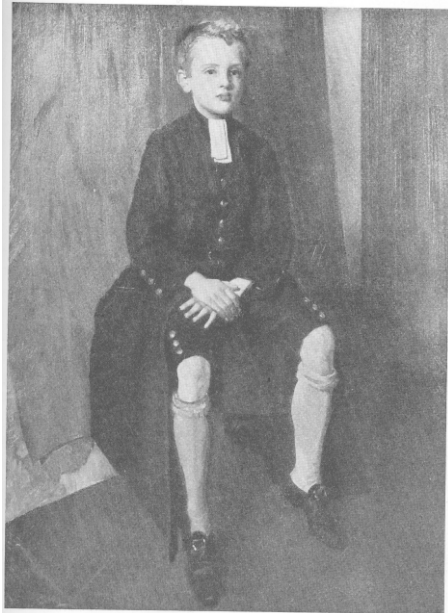
Information about boys admitted after 1911 and girls admitted after 1890 should be sought from the Clerk of Christ's Hospital, the Counting House, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 7YP.

Orders for the general management of Christ's Hospital will be found in the Repertory Books of the Court of Aldermen (COL/CA/01/01). Also in the City archives are papers relating to general administration, finance and estate management 1535-1971 (CLA/067) and further records of property transactions 1760-1920 (ACC/0746). Some 20th century photographs believed to be of Christ's Hospital can be found in SC/PHL/02.

Thomas Guy, the founder of Guy's Hospital, died in 1724. His will directed the governors of Guy's Hospital to make an annual payment of £400 to Christ's Hospital for which they were to receive the right to nominate 'Four poor children, Boys or Girls, whether orphan or otherwise, or the children of Freemen of the City of London or Unfreemen, not less than seven or more than ten years of age . . . with preference to my relations, as often as any such shall offer themselves'. The archive of Guy's Hospital at LMA include records of children presented to Christ's Hospital 1725-1975 and pedigrees and copy certificates of Thomas Guy's relations (H09/GY/E/057-068).

Building Act case files relating to Blackheath Bluecoat School and Bluecoat School in Westminster survive in records of the Greater London Council Architects' Department (GLC/AR/BR) and some photographs of the Bluecoat School in Westminster can be found in SC/PHL/02. However, records of other bluecoat schools may not be easy to trace. LMA has no information about any surviving records of other bluecoat schools in Greater London. If the school was outside Greater London and its locality is known, enquiries about its records can be made to the appropriate local record office. Addresses of record offices can be found in the current edition of *Record Offices in Great Britain: a Geographical Directory* (HMSO, London), or in *Record Offices: How to Find Them*, by J. Gibson and P. Peskett, published by the Federation of Family History Societies. These books may be consulted in most record offices and reference libraries in the United Kingdom.

The “Bluecoat Uniform”



PORTRAIT REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

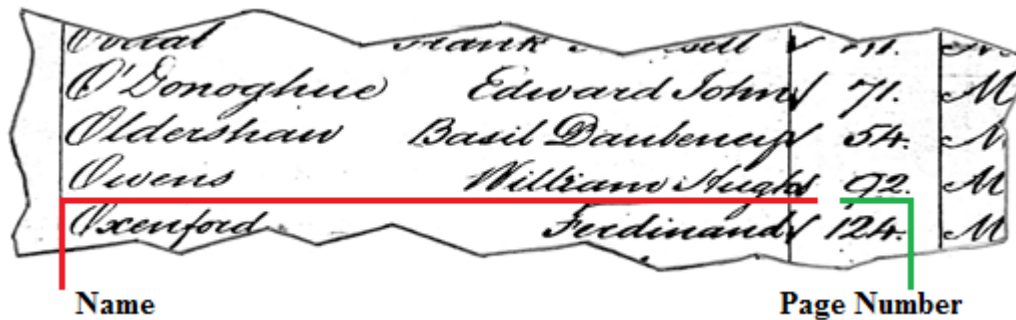
This portrait of the composer Constant Lambert shows him during his time at Christ's Hospital wearing the famous "bluecoat" or "housey" uniform. The long, blue ankle-length coats cover knee high yellow socks and knee breeches and are topped by "bands" similar to those worn by barristers. A leather belt is worn around the coat and denotes a boy's standing within the School; a "broadie", a belt with a silver buckle, is worn by seniors, while juniors wear a plain "narrowie". Those boys destined for Oxbridge wear a special coat with eighteen silver buttons and velvet cuffs and are known as "button grecians". The uniform has been worn in something approaching this form since the School's foundation. Some parts have been adapted or discarded; yellow petticoats to the same length as the coats were worn, legend has it, to ward off the plague, while blue berets were carried, but not worn, until the early nineteenth century. The four hundred girls of the foundation wear a modern variation of the uniform with skirts replacing breeches and coat.

Published Sources

LMA holds many published works about Christ's Hospital, including *Christ's Hospital*, by G.A.T. Allan, revised by J.E. Morpurgo, 1984 (22.13 CHR).

How to use Christ's Hospital Children's registers and Presentation Papers on microfilm

1. To find an entry relating to a named individual in the children's registers (CLC/210/F/003/MS12818), check the name index at the front of the relevant volume (all volumes are indexed except CLC/210/F/003/MS12818/001):



Left side of page

Date of issue of presentation papers

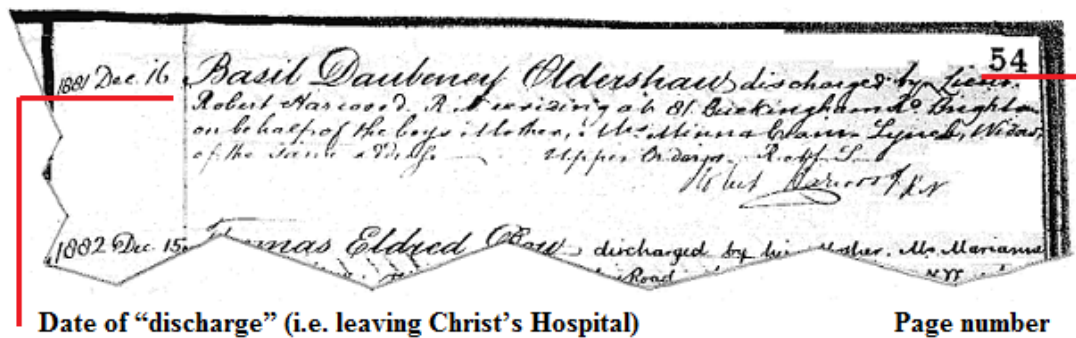
Date of clothing and admission



Presentation paper file number

Then, within the same volume, turn to the page number given in the index. The left side of the relevant page will give details of the child's admission to Christ's Hospital:

Right side of page the page



The right side of the page will give details of the child's "discharge" (i.e. when he or she left the school):

Published in March 2010 (rev. February 2013) by

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