

## Henrietta Barnett School to fight threatening demands

The Henrietta Barnett School will fight the Institute's official ultimatum that the school either pays fees for the use of the premises or vacates the building by the end of the year. The girls' state grammar school, one of the top schools in the country, has been located in the Central Square buildings in Hampstead Garden Suburb for over 80 years and will fight to stay there.

The school has the unequivocal support of Barnet Council, Barnet Education Authority, John Marshall, the local MP, and of course the girls themselves, their parents and their teachers.

The Institute and the school were both founded by Dame Henrietta Barnett to provide education for adults and children and the Institute is the Foundation body which owns the buildings. The Henrietta Barnett School is at the forefront of education for women and provides a first class education for girls. The school is non-denominational and serves both the Hampstead Garden Suburb and the wider community. This is in accordance with the wishes of Dame Henrietta Barnett.

According to Jane de Swiet, Head of the Henrietta Barnett School, "both the school and the Institute provide an invaluable service to the local community and the destruction of one would not benefit the other". The Institute's actions, which are prompted by its alleged current financial problems, are regrettable as the school has always believed in maintaining good relations between the two institutions.

The Adult Education Institute is totally unjustified in blaming the school for its present financial problems. The Henrietta Barnett School is a Voluntary Aided state school and through this status the Institute has benefited from substantial monies provided by the state to improve and refurbish the buildings.

The Institute Council has for some time been operating with an increasing deficit. This has been made considerably worse due to the declining value of the Grant from the London Borough of Barnet, the increase in costs incurred in the past few years by the Institute in common with all professional educational institutions and the outlay by the Institute of over £460,000 towards the refurbishment of the Institute buildings which is not recoverable. At the same time, the Institute is severely handicapped by being forced to operate much of its daytime provision from rented accommodation, some of which is unsuitable, thereby sacrificing much of the potential profitability. Some 150 of our 400 courses are always full at any one time and potential students are therefore denied access and the potential fee income is sacrificed due to The Henrietta Barnett School's occupancy of the buildings.

Efforts have been made to redress the problems by cutting costs and increasing fees well above inflation but these measures will not solve the problem due to the price sensitivity of courses in the recession. Further cuts will make it impossible for the Institute to operate without destroying the quality and range of courses and facilities offered to the Community. Cuts in staff have been made and the current staff of the Institute have themselves taken on more work in order to save additional costs. The Institute is indeed fortunate to have such a professional and dedicated team of teachers and administrative staff. Clearly if these problems are not addressed the deficit will grow putting at considerable risk the adult education facilities available at the Institute and which are highly regarded and considered an extremely valuable contribution to adult education. Additionally the Institute is of course a focus for community life within Hampstead Garden Suburb;

# The HGS Institute and The Henrietta Barnett School



nearly 50% of its students come from the Suburb and some 90 Suburb teachers serve the Institute on either a full time or part time basis with another 140 staff living in Barnet.

For the above reasons the Institute has considered it necessary to examine ways of generating more income from its resources on a regular and secure basis. Its Grant from London Borough of Barnet is too uncertain, may even cease and cannot be relied on as a means of regular income. The Grants which have hitherto been made have been insufficient; if inflation is taken into account the current level of Grant over that paid in 1976 should be £250,000 whereas in 1992/3 the Institute only received £116,000. The Institute's main assets are the buildings which comprise the Institute itself. These must be made income producing if the Institute is to survive. However the Institute buildings have in the main been occupied certainly during school hours by The Henrietta Barnett School. Whilst the School makes some contribution towards running costs and, through Grants made to the School, monies have been made available towards the cost of refurbishment of the buildings, the Institute has still had to bear a considerable amount of expenditure on the running costs, repairs and maintenance. However the School has not at any time made

any payment to the Institute for the School's use and occupation of the premises, which use and occupation has therefore been considerably subsidised by the Institute for many years. There is no reason why the Institute as an independent charitable body should continue to subsidise a State School by providing free accommodation which should otherwise be provided by the Local Educational Authority. Both the School and the Local Education Authority have been aware of the Institute's precarious financial position for some considerable time. Whereas the Institute has until now, as an expression of its charitable functions, permitted the School to use and occupy the Institute's premises, in view of the serious financial difficulties which the Institute faces it has been forced to review the position. With this

in mind the Institute therefore consulted Legal Advisors to examine and advise upon the nature of the School's occupation and the rights of the Institute in regard thereto. This advice has now been obtained and it is very clear and can be summarised as follows:-

1. That the School uses and occupies the premises as bare licensee only and has no legal right to remain in occupation.
2. The Institute may terminate the occupation of the School without notice and should the Institute agree to the School continuing in occupation of the Institute's premises for any period the Institute may impose such terms as it thinks fit.
3. Notwithstanding the above, it is recognised that in bringing to an end the School's occupation the Institute should nonetheless give a period of notice and has been advised that in view of the Institute's deteriorating financial situation this should not exceed six months. Nevertheless the Institute has decided that notice should be given to the School expiring at the end of 1993. However the Institute is prepared to discuss further, albeit without prejudice, the basis upon which the School might be allowed to continue in occupation beyond the end of this year but this would have to include an obligation on the part of the School to

make payment of a reasonable fee for such use and occupation.

4. The Institute's Legal Advisors have stated that having regard to the position of the Institute and its financial difficulties, it should not give permission for the School to construct its proposed new technology laboratory unless and until the School's occupation of the Institute's premises is put on a proper footing, providing income for the Institute.
5. It is pointed out that unless the Institute Council takes such action to regularise the School's use of the premises without delay the Institute Council could be held responsible for the consequences.

Notwithstanding the clear advice which has been given the Institute wishes to stress that it is their sincere hope that a way will be found for both the Institute and the School to continue their respective use and occupation of the Institute premises such that both the Adult Education Centre and the School can both survive and flourish for many years. However the Institute cannot risk endangering its primary charitable activities for the sake of the School and the joint survival of both organisations can only be secured on the basis that the School makes a reasonable payment for its use and occupation of the Institute's premises.

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## A short history of the Institute and the Henrietta Barnett School

The Institute and the School have effectively been joint developers and inhabitants of the site from the beginning. Henrietta Barnett, the founder of the Suburb, originally envisaged them as separate institutions on separate sites, but lack of finance, initially for the School, thereafter for the Institute, frustrated those aims and led to the present intertwining.

The Institute Hall was opened in 1909 and the North Wing completed in 1911. It had cost the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust (which also provided the site) £7,500. As Mrs Barnett could not raise sufficient funds for a separate secondary school it was agreed (in 1909) to allow her intake classes (initially infant) to "use the Institute Hall by day; there was nowhere else for them to go." The adult classes used it in the evening. Thus was the pattern set right at the start.

During the First World War both expanded: the Institute increased the number of classes; in 1914 the School (for girls - and also initially for boys up to the age of ten) extended the age limit for girls to fifteen - temporary accommodation was built for it in the form of huts. By 1920 girls up to the age of 18 were admitted.

The South Wing and central blocks were built in the twenties. The money for them had been promised to Mrs Barnett by private sponsors before the War, but after the War only £6,000 materialised, so she determined to get the money from public sources instead, and eventually turned to Middlesex County Council, who promised £20,000 provided the buildings were constructed and used "as the Barnett Secondary School for Girls" - to which end Middlesex replaced the original architect with one of their own with experience of school interiors. The new buildings were, as before, also to be used for adult students in the evening, and would also serve as an enlarged community centre (which hope was never realised).

In 1918, as another of the MCC's conditions, the Institute had been formed into a company so as to be able to obtain money in its name. The newly formed company bought the North Wing from the Trust for £7,500, promptly mortgaging it back to the Trust for £8,000, interest free and not repayable till 1988. The rest of the site (the freehold on the North Wing had already been given) was leased to the Institute by the Trust for 999 years at a fixed rental which was always modest and is nowadays negligible. The Institute had thus effectively been given the site.

The final phase of the buildings facing Central Square was completed by 1930. In all, the Institute's two wings and central block cost about £34,000, of which the MCC provided £20,000 (technically on permanent mortgage loan, still outstanding, at 1/240% interest), the Trust £7,500 and the Institute itself £7,000 (original £6,000 plus an extra £1,000 raised by the Building Committee). In 1924 the School Governors were persuaded to give the Institute Council responsibility for the buildings of which the second phase was nearing completion and to relinquish financial control of its affairs to the Council, and the necessary changes were made in the Articles of Government. Thus, for technical expediency, all the land and the buildings remained in the name of the Institute. In 1926 the Institute Council adopted a resolution "re-affirming the Principle of the Unity of the Institute".... "that all its activities, though organised each for its own purpose, should be interrelated and interconnected as parts of a larger unity, and that while each should discharge its own function, each should be united in the common services and should recognise themselves as parts of the larger whole, the Institute, which gives to each its status and its duties". In 1955, nearly thirty years later, after the School had become voluntary-aided with the Institute becoming its foundation body, the Institute

issued a Declaration of Trust which sought to regulate the control and management of the buildings and grounds used for the purposes of the School.

Bigwood Hall, at the east of the site and opened in 1938, was purpose built as a school to provide room for the junior section of the School, at a cost of £23,000. Half the money was provided by Middlesex County Council, half was borrowed by the Institute. For many years the borrowing was serviced out of junior school fees and inflation eventually reduced its burden.

In sum, the bulk of buildings at both the western and eastern ends of the site were designed for school use and the bulk of the finance for these buildings came from the School, both junior and secondary, and its education authority. The pattern was still the same as before: the Institute was responsible for and shared in the use of the buildings, largely paid for by the MCC as School provision.

Capital expenditure has continued to depend on the existence of the School. The recent programme of rehabilitation of the buildings has cost about £3 million, the great bulk of which has been provided by the DES and the LEA because the buildings are school buildings. Most of the donations to the public appeal, which raised £250,000, were also from school supporters.

Overall, it seems fair to say that, but for the presence of the School, only the North Wing of the present buildings would have been in existence. Without the School most of the buildings would not be there at all; without the School the present buildings would certainly have fallen into disrepair. In effect, the Institute is asking the School to pay rent and/or vacate the buildings the School itself brought into being.

CB  
Carol Boulter an RA Council Member has lived on the Suburb for sixteen years. She has been a part time teacher, and a student, at the Institute and has two girls at Henrietta Barnett.

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