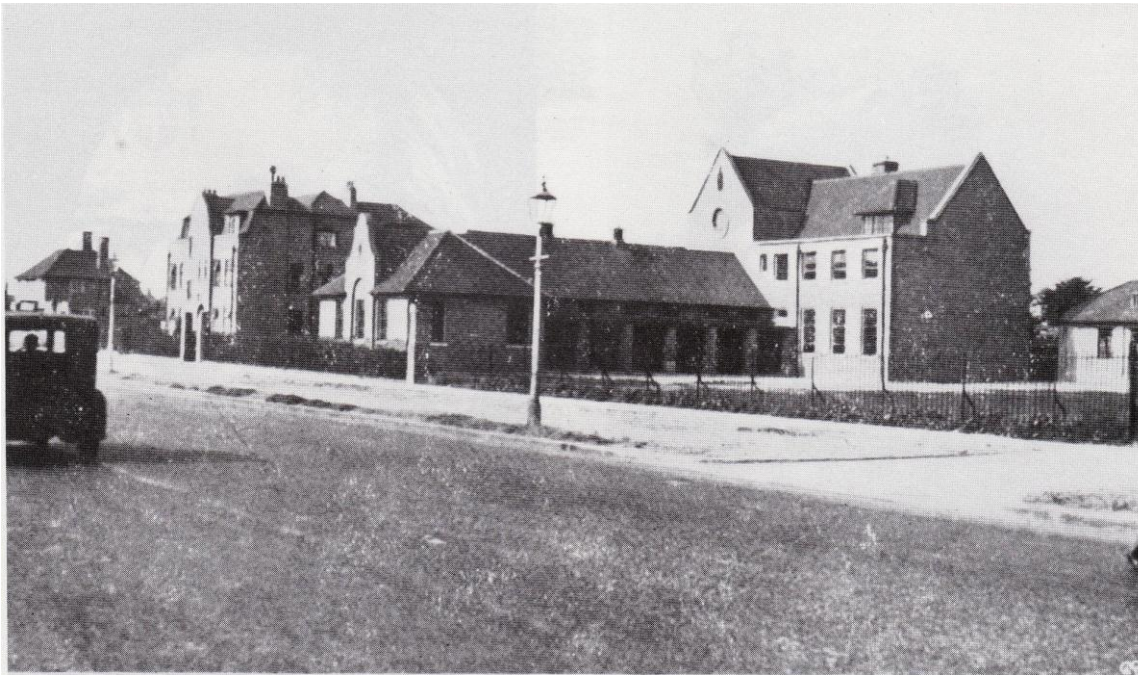


The history of Gunnersbury Catholic School

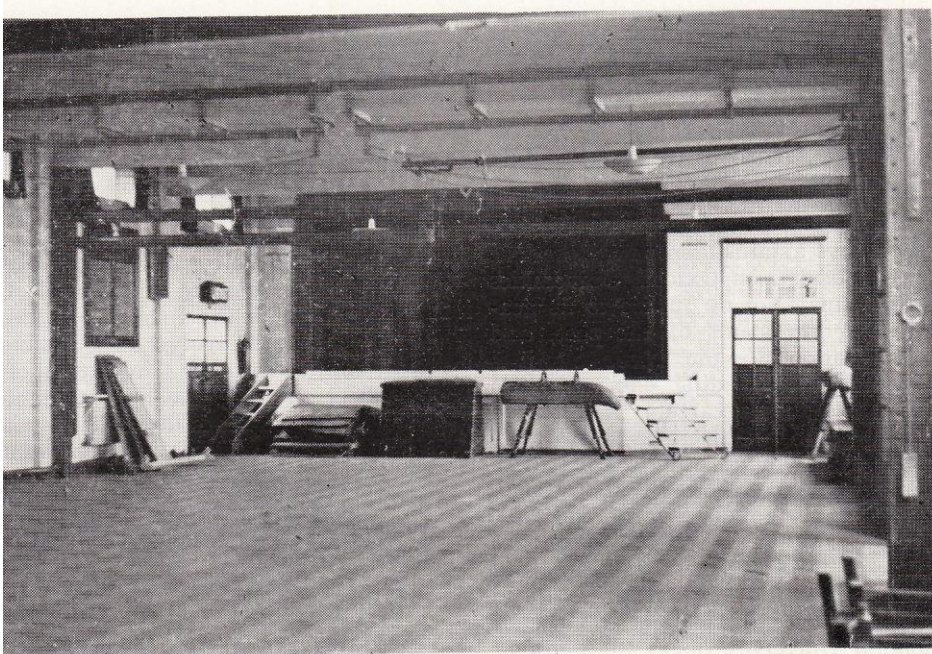
The history begins in 1919 when Father William Roche made the decision to establish a small school at St. John's Church Hall in Brentford. He began with only 5 pupils, but by 1926 the number had risen to sixty-five. In that year when Father Roche was transferred to Marylebone, Father Daniel Roche took over. Due to the increasing number of pupils the school was moved to a house, "St. Dunstan's", near to the church. The name St. Dunstan's is given to the Old Boys Association and Dunstan House within the school.



THE SCHOOL, 1932—1937

Further pressure on space spurred on the search for larger, permanent premises and the Avenue Site was secured. Unfortunately the sudden death of Father Daniel on the 1st August 1931 prevented him from seeing the conclusion of his work when the postponed opening of the school took place on 21st January 1932 by Cardinal Bourne. Father Joseph Warren became Head of the new school of 105 boys in a building finished at a cost of £8,827.

It was always intended that the school was to be expanded when funds became available, but for three years it was not possible to provide the Science accommodation that would secure Board of Education recognition for the school. In 1935, Father Warren retired and Father Robert McCliment became Headmaster. At this point the House system began to encourage friendly competition. The first houses were Bourne and Pole, followed by Warren and Roche. (At present we also have Newman and Dunstan Houses). The chance to finish the school came from the residue of the estate of Mr Patrick Murphy, a former Chairman of the Brentford Board of Governors.



THE SCHOOL HALL



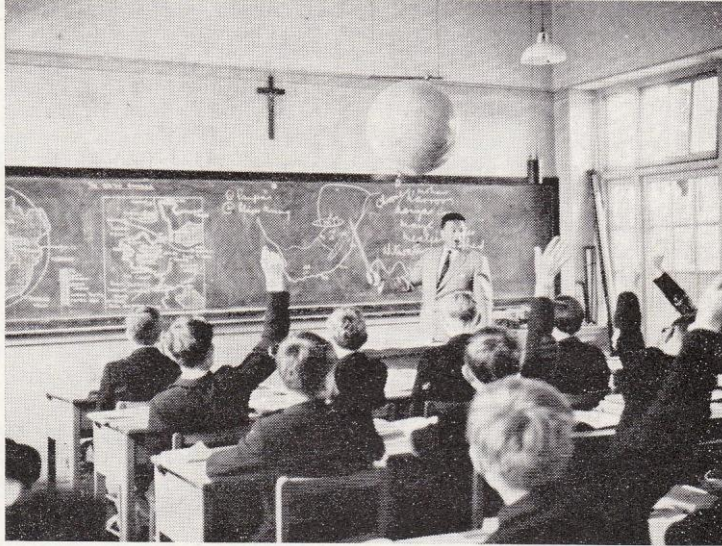
THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Under the leadership of Canon McCliment the school flourished as an Aided School in 1939 and then as a Voluntary Aided School in 1949. Thousands of boys from Ruislip, Uxbridge, Harrow, Wembley, Hayes, Richmond, Acton, Hounslow and Ealing travelled to the Avenue site. In 1955 soccer was superseded by Rugby as the main winter sport and Gunnersbury's XV's were known as formidable opposition.

After the retirement of the Canon in 1957 Father Alex Groves drove the school into the 1960s and was an inspiring and authoritative figure. He was succeeded by Father Chapman in 1962. It was Father Chapman who faced the challenge of comprehensive education.

THE SCHOOL IN SESSION



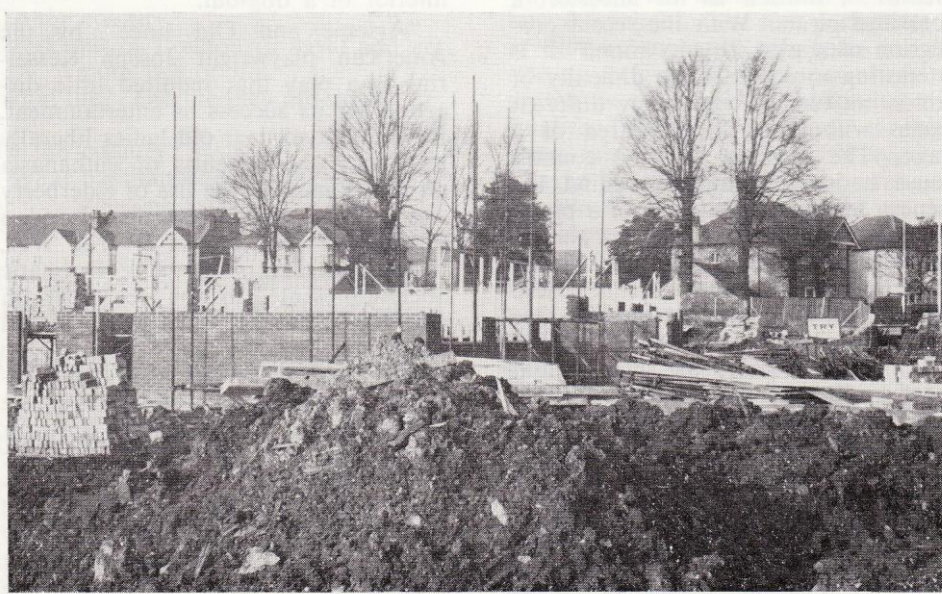
Even though the character of the school remained the same, the structure had to change. The school operated as a split site from 1972-1984, far longer than planned. The original idea was that a new purpose built school be opened on the Ride site in Brentford to accommodate the newly enlarged comprehensive school. The new buildings were to be opened in three phases to accommodate the 1100 pupils. Unfortunately the Department of Education were unable to fund the second and third phases which left the school having to still use the Avenue site as well.



By 1983, the beloved Avenue Site will probably be closed. (Photo By J. Ross).

Father Chapman retired in 1977 and Michael Bovill became the first lay Head. It was under his leadership that Gunnersbury became a single site school again. In 1984 new classrooms and labs were completed. On July 4 the Avenue buildings were closed following a Mass to celebrate fifty-two years of use.

In 1985, after a term of Jack McGrath acting as Headteacher John Rourke was appointed. Mr Rourke's knowledge and understanding of the academic change of the time, the National Curriculum and GCSE, allowed him to place Gunnersbury in a position to continue its success into the 1990's.



11th JANUARY, 1971

Photo : Richard L. Dapre

John Heffernan has been in office since 1989, first as acting Head and then substantive Headteacher from 1990. The early part of his leadership was marked by the introduction of the local management of schools and the development of ICT. The school governing body became responsible for the financial running of the school. A great deal of money was spent developing a centralised school network to enable the school to meet the demands of the nineties and the third millennium. The development of ICT continued to be a high priority for Mr Heffernan and he ensured that nearly all of our classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and is dedicated to driving our school to even greater success through the use of ICT.

In 1993 the parents voted for Gunnersbury to become a self-governing Grant Maintained School, but with the onset of a Labour Government reverted to Voluntary Aided Status and rejoined the Local Authority in 1998. The new millennium has seen a dramatic building programme which has greatly improved the experience of Gunnersbury students. Firstly a new Music Centre which accommodates a thriving Music Department and then a new purpose built Sixth Form Centre that has enabled the school to expand its highly successful Sixth Form.

Since achieving Specialist Science Status in 2003, three laboratories have been refurbished and Science and Mathematics have gone from strength to strength in the school. Our school also uses this status to help partner schools and the community.

Sadly in 2009 John Heffernan passed away. As well as being a much loved and respected Headteacher, the quality of his leadership is marked by the outstanding Ofsted of 2009 and fantastic examination results. His commitment to the whole Gunnersbury community will always be remembered. In July 2010 the newly constructed "John Heffernan" stage was opened. This was a project conceived by Mr Heffernan and the outstanding opening concert would have made him proud.

Kevin Burke was appointed as Headteacher in November 2009 after two terms as acting Headteacher. He continues Gunnersbury's tradition of continual improvement and ensures the school will always strive for further success.