

# **CHETHAM'S SCHOOL: FROM POOR BOYS TO MUSIC STUDENTS**

## **INFORMATION NOTE 2**

*This Information Note tells visitors to Chetham's Library about the school set up by Humphrey Chetham. It is designed to be read together with Information Note 1.*

### **HUMPHREY CHETHAM – CHARITABLE GIVING AND THE IDEA OF FOUNDING A SCHOOL**

In the later part of his life, Humphrey Chetham gave part of his accumulated wealth to several charitable causes. He contributed to the costs of repairing the Collegiate church in Manchester and churches in several villages nearby, with which his family had connections. Whilst holding positions of responsibility within Manchester and the surrounding area, he influenced the policies and practice of giving assistance to poor people in the town. He was also generous to members of his family. He gradually redirected his charitable interests towards education and learning. He gave sums of money to local towns and villages to finance the teaching of skills to boys such as weaving, working in wood and building. Only able boys of poor families were included: through the training for which he paid, they would escape poverty. He paid for a small number of poor boys in Manchester to live with suitable families and to receive an education. These were orphans or boys whose parents could not afford to look after them. It was a natural evolution of his charitable giving to establish an institution which combined residential accommodation and school (a "hospital") and which had its own buildings. He was enthusiastic about purchasing for this purpose the old College associated with the Collegiate Church in Manchester. This was to accommodate both his school and library. He died before the purchase was completed and his 24 legal representatives ("Feoffees") had responsibility for putting his proposal into action.

### **THE BOYS AND THEIR LIFE IN THE SCHOOL**

The 40 boys selected for the school had to show that they had the ability to learn. They had to live in Manchester or particular villages with which the Chetham family had links. Their parents had to be of good character and be unable to pay for the care and education of the boy concerned. The boys came to the school when they were 8 or 9 years of age. They were interviewed by the 24 Feoffees and were required to say from memory three statements from the Christian religion – The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed. The boys wore a uniform of tunic, flat cap, stockings and buckled shoes. Little documentary evidence is available from the early days of the school about their lessons, recreation and welfare. The boys stayed at the school until they were 14. At that age they became trainees in local enterprises, where they would be taught a skill and have paid employment.

The school gradually increased in size and in the late 1800s, there were around 100 boys. Novels of the period and the photographic record give insights into their lives. The entry requirements and procedures remained unchanged and the boys continued to wear the same uniform until 1954. An Education Act was passed by the Government in 1952 changing the status of the school and combining it with another charitable school in Manchester (Nicholls School). In 1954 the boys from Nicholls School joined their Chetham's School colleagues in the buildings of the old College. The school became a secondary school funded by the Government. It enjoyed a fine musical tradition because for many years the choirboys from the former Collegiate Church (by now Manchester Cathedral) had been educated at Chetham's School. The new secondary school continued until 1969. At that time the Government wanted to establish a specialist music school for boys and girls in the north of England and Chetham's School was a natural choice on which to base its plan.

Today Chetham's School of Music has around 290 students and is the largest school of its type in the United Kingdom. It is funded from the Government's Music and Dance Scheme and bursaries are made available to students whose parents cannot afford the fees. There are also talented students from overseas, who are privately funded. Prospective students are selected on the basis of an audition to identify exceptional musical talent and potential. Although a few students are admitted around the age of 8, the majority come at 11. The choristers of Manchester Cathedral continue to be educated at the school until the age of 13.

## **THE SCHOOL AND ITS BUILDINGS**

When you visit the Library, you may be able to visit some parts of the buildings which have played a part in the life of the school in the early years. This cannot be guaranteed, since the buildings are frequently in use for concerts, booked group visits and meetings.

Originally, the boys ate their meals in the Baronial Hall, formerly used as a dining room by members of the earlier religious College. The kitchen (now Association Room) continued to be used. Lessons and sleeping accommodation would have been in other parts of the pink, sandstone buildings and in associated buildings no longer in existence. The Audit Room was formerly used by the religious College as accommodation for the Warden. Boys applying to be students in the school had their interviews with the Feoffees in that room.

The courtyard, which you cross when arriving at or departing from the library, was originally a space used for recreation by the boys. In the late 1800s, additional accommodation was required. A new, free-standing building was erected in the courtyard to provide extra classroom space. It was built in 1877 from the same sandstone as the original buildings. It is known as the Waterhouse Building and there are plans being made now to convert it into a centre for visitors. The building was designed by Alfred Waterhouse, the architect responsible for Manchester Town Hall.

The high, red brick building you see behind the library was bought in two phases by Chetham's School of Music, starting in 1969. It provided space for boarding accommodation and also music teaching and practice rooms. Originally it was the Palatine Hotel, designed for passengers using the nearby railway stations. Permission has been granted for this to be demolished.

The building opposite the library, on the Cathedral side of the arch, is also owned by the school. It formed part of Manchester Grammar School, which was attended by Humphrey Chetham as a schoolboy. This school was for boys of wealthy families. The present building dates from 1877. The students of Chetham's School and Manchester Grammar School shared the courtyard space and according to novels written at that time, enjoyed rivalries which were not always friendly! Manchester Grammar School moved to new accommodation in 1930 and Chetham's School bought the building in 1955.

In 2012 many parts of the school moved into a new, state-of-the-art building nearby. You may get a brief glimpse of it on leaving the school if you look to the left just before the security barrier.

*You can find out about all aspects of Chetham's School of Music at [www.chethams.com](http://www.chethams.com) This website is available in several languages.*

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