The Elizabethan Calendar

Written by Sister Patricia Ainsworth

1899

His Eminence Cardinal Herbert Vaughan wrote to Reverend Mother Marie Augustine, the Superior General of the Daughters of the Cross of Liege. He requested that some sisters start a residential school for children with epilepsy.

Mother Marie Augustine replied in the affirmative and the wheels were set in motion.

1900

Mr E. Ingress Bell, architect, submitted a map and report concerning the proposed site for the school.

A cottage and land were acquired at Perry Green, £200 being paid for the cottage and £2.21 per acre of land.

1901

The purchase was completed at £1,253. Building commenced.

1902

Mr Dempsey, handyman, and his family took possession of the cottage. Reverend Mother Marie Augustine, Sr Candide and Sr Iphigenie took their first tea in Much Hadham.

1903

The first mass was celebrated in the newly built chapel, on 23rd September.

1904

On 1st March, the school opened with the first three children.

24 of the Catholic guardians accepted an invitation and spent the afternoon at St Elizabeth’s. The ladies and gentlemen seemed highly pleased with everything.

1905

In April, his Eminence Cardinal Bourne visited the school.

There is first reference to adults at the Centre. Many children had been orphans, so had nowhere to go once they grew up.

Sisters were running the ‘Night Monitoring System’. This consisted of peering out of a window during the night which gave them view of the children.

1906

On 1st October, the school re-opened after the holidays with 22 children, 10 boys and 12 girls.

The first death occurred in the Home. A little boy of 11, who had come to them only a few days before, in a state of agony, blind, deaf, paralysed and having constant seizures.

Work on the new extension commenced. This was in order to accommodate more children and especially to separate the boys’ quarters from the girls’.

1909

Dr Russell, specialist for epilepsy, visited the school and consulted the medical attendant on the condition of the children.

In November a certificate for the school was received from the Secretary of State.

1910

Princess Clemence Bonaparte visited the school and seemed very interested.

1911

Bamboo curtain work, rug-making and plasticine modelling were introduced.

In June, the school was closed for three weeks on account of an epidemic of mumps.

1916

There was a half day holiday for Empire Day.

1917

In February, the school was closed again due to an epidemic of measles.

In November, a concert was given and wounded soldiers attended, with many friends.

1919

Peace celebrations took place and ended with the planting of an oak sapling as a token of thanksgiving for mercies received and to the memory of those who died in the War.

1920

Print-writing copy-books were introduced into all classes.

1922

In February the school closed for Princess Mary’s wedding day.

Dr Crowley, HMI, visited the school in order to discuss plans for the new school.

1923

On New Year’s Day, the new school was opened by his Eminence Cardinal Bourne and lessons commenced.

1928

A statue of Our Lady was erected on the lawn in front of the School in thanksgiving for 25 years of St Elizabeth’s. The School was closed for a week of jubilee celebrations.

1935

In May the children celebrated the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. In the evening, they adjourned to the classroom to hear the King speak on the radio.

1936

The children assembled to hear the funeral ceremony of King George.

1940

In the 1940s, an Inspector said there shouldn’t be older men at the Centre. As a result, boys were only allowed to stay until they were 12 years old.

1943

A 16mm Gaumont British film projector was bought for the school and home.

A half-holiday was taken in order to allow the children to support the ‘Wings for Victory’ concert given in the village hall.

Girls over 12 went potato-picking for a neighbouring farmer who was unable to get village children as they were employed elsewhere.

1944

The Education Act was brought in, which gave entitlement to children with special needs.

1948

There was an eye inspection. Twenty children suffered an eye infection owing to the ointment used to prepare for the inspection!

1949

Twenty-two violinists played in the Hertfordshire Rural Schools Musical Festival. This was the first big concert in which the children played with ‘normal’ children, and was quite successful.

1953

The golden jubilee of St Elizabeth’s was celebrated with a solemn high mass presided over by his Eminence Cardinal Griffin. Later an orchestral concert was given, and a display of Irish dancing. The day ended with solemn benediction given by the Cardinal.

1954

The junior drama team won the Challenge Cup at the Bethnal Green Arts Festival.

A party of girls from the Young Farmers’ Clubs went to the Royal Show at Windsor. Three girls passed with ‘Excellent’ for needlework from the Royal School of Needlework. The Irish dancing team secured a first place in a competition.

1955

The school drama team won two cups at the Bethnal Green and East London Festival of Arts. The Irish dancing team secured a second and third place in the English Championship for Irish Figure Dancing.

In the Hertfordshire County Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs Rally, St Elizabeth’s Young Farmers’ Club, not yet one year old, entered for the rally and was awarded the shield.

1956

St Elizabeth’s won the Young Farmers’ shield for the second year running.

1957

In the Junior and Intermediate Public Speaking competition held at St Albans, St Elizabeth’s won the cup.

St Elizabeth’s won the Young Farmers’ shield for the third year in succession.

A Chinese water-deer arrived from Whipsnade Zoo after being won by one of the boys in a competition organised by the Sunday Graphic.

1958

Yet again, St Elizabeth’s School won the Young Farmers’ School shield.

A BBC cameraman came to film the Young Farmers’ Club which was later shown on television.

One of the girls gained the first prize in the County Essay Contest and won £7 10s 0d!

Actor and Radio Presenter Wilfred Pickles and his wife Mabel visited the School and the Home. They spoke well of the place and Mr Pickles said he was willing to make a radio appeal if desired.

Work on the new sitting-room for the adults began by taking down the old building.

1959

Six of the girls went with the Handicapped Childrens’ Pilgrimage Trust to Lourdes.

The Young Farmers won the County School shield for the fifth year.

1960

St Elizabeth’s won the Young Farmers’ shield for the sixth year in succession.

The adults’ new sitting room and staff accommodation were blessed and opened by his Eminence Cardinal Godfrey.

1961

The Children’s Irish dancing team gained first place for the eight-hand figure dance at the Bethnal Green Festival of Arts. They also gained second place in the four-hand reel. Some time later the drama team were successful in winning the cup for a one-act play at the Young Farmers’ Drama Competition.

At the Young Farmers’ Rally held at Oaklands Agricultural Institute, the team succeeded in winning the school shield for the seventh year running.

1963

The School building was started which would provide a domestic science room, infants classroom and a playroom.

1964

Sr Mary Elizabeth finished teaching and relinquished her post as head after 20 years. She left to go to California and take up catechetic.

1965

The new four-term year was put into operation.

1968

Sister Patricia Ainsworth arrives at St Elizabeth’s.

1969

A new classroom was completed and the children moved into it after the summer holidays.

1970

Sister Maureen arrived at St Elizabeth’s, with an Occupational Therapy qualification. She gave the first idea of a Day Centre.

1971

The inaugural service for the launching of the £50,000 appeal was held in St Andrew’s Church, Much Hadham. It was attended by two Catholic Bishops and two Anglican Bishops.

1972

Broadcaster Eamonn Andrews made a radio appeal for the School and Home building fund.

A thanksgiving service was held in St Andrew’s Church, Much Hadham, for the success of the appeal. His Eminence Cardinal Heenan preached at the service.

1973

Work began on the site for the boys’ new dormitory, and the site for the two new playrooms for the girls.

1974

The St Elizabeth’s Pilgrims led by Bishop Guazzelli made a six-day pilgrimage to Lourdes.

1975

The first-ever ordination took place in the chapel, of Fr Gerard Quigley, younger son of Mr and Mrs Quigley.

The official opening of the new work centre for the residents, by local Councillor Sir Percy Rugg, took place.

1978

The National Curriculum was introduced. The curriculum had to apply to everyone, but St Elizabeth’s had to adapt it for many of the children in the School so it was achievable.

One hundred and forty children, helpers, nurses, doctors and friends, including ten adult residents, formed the second pilgrimage to Lourdes.

1980

Entitlement to education was raised to 19 years old. This was on a co-educational basis so it was offered to boys also. Entitlement to education was for a further three years, so the College was introduced.

Work began officially on the new school extension.

1982

His Eminence Cardinal Basil Hume came to bless and open the new school extension.

1983

A special mass of thanksgiving was said for the 150th anniversary of the congregation, and 80 years of St Elizabeth’s. An exhibition was set up in the hall depicting the work of the Daughters of the Cross.

A solemn sung mass was celebrated by Bishop James O’Brien, Frs John Kearney (a former chaplain), Gerard Quigley, Michael McGreevey CSSR, Vincent Lucus CSSR, Vincent Cooper OSB.