

From Healing Waters to a Font of Knowledge

The story of Queen Elizabeth High School and the 'Hexham Hydro'
told through social history and built heritage survey



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with Scott Vance, Graeme Atkins, Madeline Brydon and Keda Norman

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The School Song

Hope of our sires!

Gleam yet more brightly the older you grow;

Send forth your children and watch them, maternally,

Keeping the spirit of kinship aglow.

Long may you flourish and prosper exceedingly,

Lighting the future with torch of the past;

Ever may trouble pass by you unheedingly,

Long may the hope of our ancestors last.

Words by J. Corbett

Foreword

It is a bright, sunny morning in November 2021, and I am sitting at my desk in my office in the Hydro building having just taken a visitor around the new facilities of Hexham Middle School and Queen Elizabeth High School. The schools, having come together as a 'federation' of schools in the mid-2000s and then as academies within Hadrian Learning Trust in 2016, physically came together in September this year as co-located yet distinct schools on the redeveloped high school site at Whetstone Bridge Road.

As with all tours over these past few weeks, my guest was hugely impressed with what she saw: two calm, purposeful schools accommodated in attractive (and, in the case of the Hydro, iconic) buildings amidst beautiful, leafy surroundings with the most wonderful classroom, library, assembly, performance, sporting and social spaces.

This coming together of our two schools has an appropriateness that speaks well to our shared histories. As you will discover in this fascinating, entertaining and informative booklet, the Queen Elizabeth Grammar schools (the boys' grammar and the girls' grammar), whose roots go back to 1599, were established at Wanless Lane – the site recently vacated by Hexham Middle – in 1910, becoming a single co-educational grammar in 1958. In 1976, as a consequence of changes to the education system in England, 'QEGS' as it had become known fully departed Wanless Lane to become Queen Elizabeth High School on the Whetstone Bridge Road site. The two middle schools that were established on the Wanless Lane site at that time – Fellside and Beaumont – combined in 1984 to become Hexham Middle School, which remained at the site until the move to co-locate with the high school in the summer.

So, the schools have a shared, proud educational heritage. However, the history of buildings on our current site covers much more than education. Since the establishment of the private residence Westfield House in 1849, the story of the development of buildings over the decades provides a wonderful insight into aspects of Britain's social, cultural, economic and political history, and introduces us to many interesting and, in several cases, remarkable characters along the way. It is a real privilege for us – the present custodians of the site and its buildings – to be part of this story and to do our bit to fulfil the call made to us by those gone before, captured in the schools' motto: *spes durat avorum* – let the hope of our ancestors endure!

Graeme Atkins
Executive Headteacher
November 2021

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The Hexham Hydro at the time of the built heritage survey. (PCA)

HEXHAM



The Groundskeeper's cottage

The Walled Garden

Playing field

Pavillion

Air raid shelter

Westfield House

The Winter Gardens

The Hexham Hydro

The Lower School

WHETSTONE BRIDGE ROAD

ALLEDALE ROAD

Cockshaw Burn

0 100m

Introduction

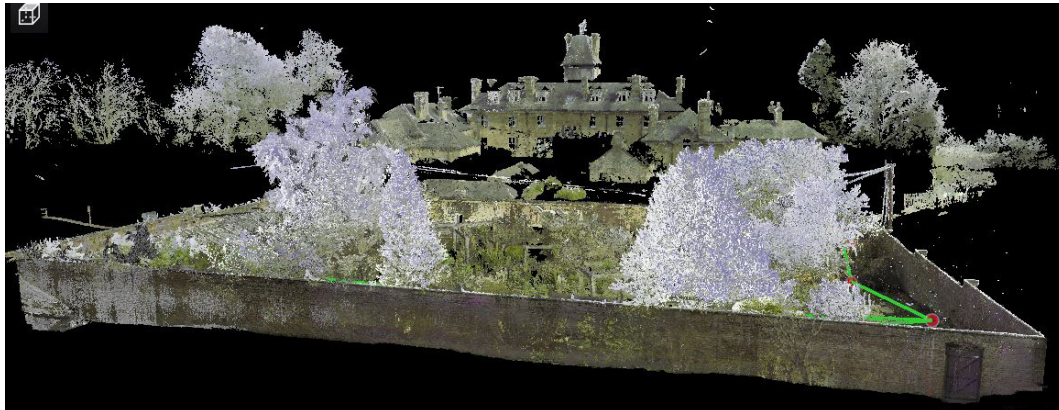
Between 19 March and 17 July 2020, Pre-Construct Archaeology was given a unique opportunity to investigate one of Hexham's most important historic buildings: the former hydropathic hotel, known locally as 'the Hydro', which has formed part of Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS) since 1974. To satisfy planning conditions for the construction of new school buildings for QEHS and Hexham Middle School, and for the renovation of the Hydro building, a programme of historic building recording was undertaken. The redevelopment scheme involved demolition of some elements of the buildings and the adjoining walled garden, and these were meticulously documented. The project was commissioned by Galliford Try Building (North and East Yorkshire) who were awarded the contract to construct the new school buildings and refurbish the Hydro building by Northumberland County Council, and this booklet presents the exciting findings of that study.



Queen Elizabeth High School today looking north-east; the new buildings can be seen in the foreground, with the Hydro behind and Hexham in the distance. (© Galliford Try)

Historic building recording, or built heritage survey, uses various techniques to record standing structures prior to demolition or alteration. As stipulated by the local County Archaeological Officer techniques used may include photographic surveys, written and drawn records or even, as was the case in the walled garden at QEHS, a laser scan survey. Further context to the findings is provided by historical research, including examination of primary sources held in local and national archives. This recording and research preserves 'by record' (i.e. via paper and/or digital recording) the fabric of the historic structure prior to its modification or demolition.

Queen Elizabeth High School is situated on the edge of the historically important town of Hexham, the ancient core of which can be found just over 1km to the east. It is positioned towards the top of the southern side of the Tyne Valley, from where a commanding view of the river and the surrounding countryside would have been possible when the oldest part of the building was constructed in 1859. The building started life as a grand residence for a leading Victorian entrepreneur and industrialist, before being transformed into a luxurious hotel and spa later in the 19th century. The 20th-century history of the building is equally remarkable as it played a key role in the Second World War as a sanatorium for sick children, later becoming home to a variety of educational establishments during the post-war period.



Before the walled garden and groundskeepers' cottage were demolished to make way for the new school buildings, they were recorded in detail with a survey instrument known as a laser scanner. This uses a laser which, when set up at a distance of 10m from the target, can record up to two million points per second, each accurate to within 1mm. The resulting 'pointcloud' data can be used to produce a high-resolution digital reconstruction that can be rotated in three dimensions. The static image shown above has been extracted from the digital record and shows the walled garden in the foreground with the Hydro buildings behind. (PCA)

The landlord and tenant of Westfield House and the rise of the upper middle classes in 19th-century Britain

The industrial age in Britain was a period of remarkable opportunity for anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit, a phenomenon that intensified during the first half of the 19th century. This resulted in the formation of a new elite consisting of up-and-coming industrialists, merchants, traders and bankers, some of whom accrued vast amounts of personal wealth that far exceeded the fortunes of many of their aristocratic contemporaries.

William Angus Temperley (1820–98) and the Temperley family

In keeping with this, William Angus Temperley, the individual responsible for the construction of Westfield House (which now forms the earliest part of the QEHS campus), was the head of a wealthy family of merchants, grocers and importers. The family initially made their fortune as grain and feed merchants but went on to consolidate their wealth through the establishment of a successful shipping company. Other eclectic ventures followed, a particularly noteworthy and financially shrewd example of which occurred in 1884 thanks to the endeavours of William Temperley's son, John Ridley Temperley.

JR Temperley was heavily involved with the production of the Brennan Torpedo (patented 1877), which is considered by many to be the world's first practical guided missile. He largely took control of his partner Louis Brennan's financial affairs, rejecting (against Brennan's wishes) the £40,000 sum initially offered by the War Office. Temperley then went on to negotiate an incredible £110,000 for the adoption of the weapon, which equates to almost £14 million today.

The Temperley family are commemorated locally by this memorial, which can be found in Hexham Market Place, and in the name of a nearby street, Temperley Place. The memorial originally functioned as a drinking fountain. (PCA)



Christopher Thompson Maling (1824–1901)

Christopher Thompson Maling took up residence in Westfield House shortly after its completion, as William Angus Temperley's tenant. Like his landlord, Maling demonstrated his entrepreneurial spirit throughout his life.

Maling took the helm of his family business, the Maling Pottery Works in the Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle upon Tyne, in the early 1850s, moving into Westfield House shortly thereafter. He greatly expanded the reach and profitability of the business through the introduction of a new mechanised technique for producing jars for a variety of products that included meat paste, marmalade, ointment and ink. Major clients included prominent marmalade producers Frank Cooper's of Oxford and Keiller's of Dundee, with the latter ordering as many as 1,500,000 jars in a single year. From the late 1850s onwards Maling pottery became a global export.

Such high levels of demand led to the construction of the Ford A pottery works in 1859 and the Ford B works almost two decades later. The latter was reputedly the largest pottery manufactory in the world when it opened for business in 1878.



Portrait of Christopher Thompson Maling,
tenant of Westfield House.



A Maling pottery marmalade
jar manufactured for
Frank Cooper's of Oxford.
(Photographs courtesy of The
Maling Collectors Society)

A grand design: Westfield House (c.1859–74)

Construction of Westfield House

Westfield House, the oldest part of what is now Queen Elizabeth High School, dates to 1859 and was designed in the style of an Italian country villa. This aesthetic was highly fashionable in the 19th century and had become *de rigueur* in Britain and northern Europe by the time Westfield House was built. Most examples were either public buildings or middle to upper-class private residences, famous examples of which include King's Cross Station in London and Cliveden House in Buckinghamshire.

The original layout of the property

Westfield House was a grand two-storey residence with a basement below and attic above. It was built from finely dressed ashlar stone blocks that were (and continue to be) surmounted by hipped roofs clad with Welsh slate, a popular roofing material in the Victorian period. The main façade of the property faces southwards and incorporates a grandiose main entrance. For the most part, the exterior is remarkably well preserved, having changed little since it was constructed in 1859, the only exception being the north elevation, which is now concealed from view by later masonry.



The main façade of Westfield House faced southwards towards Allendale Road. The grand entrance consists of a double wood panelled door surmounted by a beautiful ornamental roof (a parapet) supported by pilasters. Other original features of note recorded at the time of the built heritage survey included the original sash windows, some of which had been modified through the insertion of new glazing and modern vents. (PCA)



The eastern façade of Westfield House incorporated large windows through which expansive views of Hexham and the Tyne Valley could be enjoyed. Other surviving original features include a balcony above the bay window, which would have allowed that same view to be appreciated from outside during clement weather. (PCA)

The internal layout of the ground and first floors of the house largely reflects the original arrangement of rooms. The grand staircase, door architraves, moulded skirting boards, timber panelled doors and two decorative bedroom fireplaces (both at first floor level) are all original features. The decorative plaster cornices and ornate ceiling roses in Westfield House are also impressive period details.

Doorways at the north-west corner of the building would have provided the domestic staff access into the back of house rooms, which would have included pantries, larders, kitchens and other service areas. These are now blocked, as the servant’s range was demolished during the construction of the Hydro Hotel. A relatively modest doorway in the western façade of Westfield House would have been the tradesman’s entrance.



Most rooms in Westfield House retain their original features, such as this decorative plaster ceiling in the entrance lobby. (PCA)



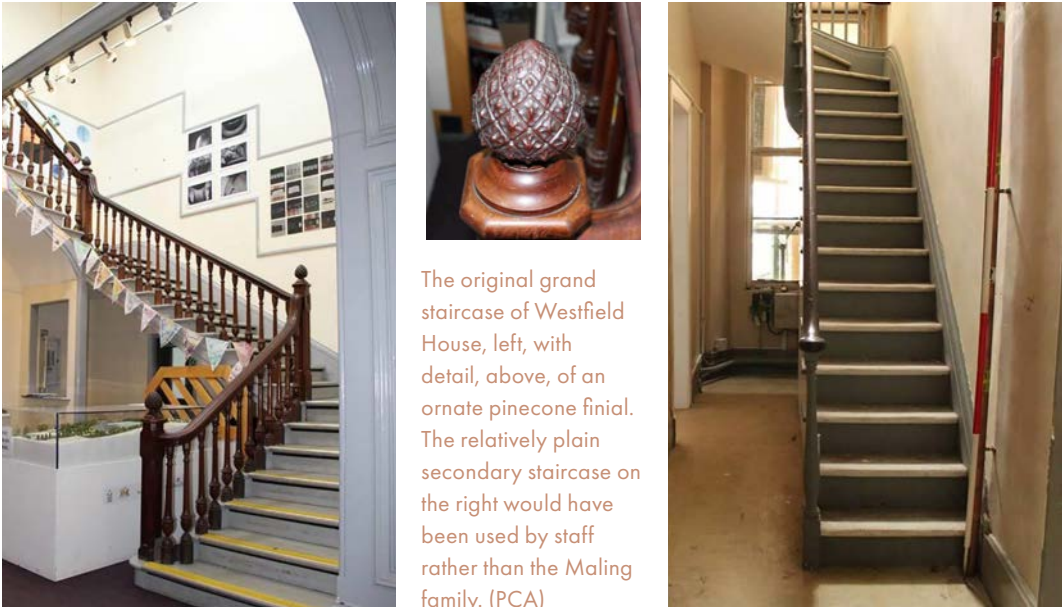
This elliptical archway, with half-round overlights and etched glazed panels, is an original feature at the entrance to Westfield House. (PCA)

William Angus Temperley (1820–98) constructs Westfield House

1859	1879	1895	1906	1924	1941-5
Westfield House constructed	Hydro opens	Baths opened to non-residents	Winter Gardens built	Ramsey Macdonald visits the Hydro	Stannington Sanatorium

The doorway to the basement, used to store, wine, beer or food, was in the service area; this too would have been the domain of servants, whose names and occupations are listed in the 1871 census, along with the Maling family.

The document lists the occupants of Westfield House in 1871 as follows: the head of the household, CT Maling, aged 46, is described as an Earthenware Manufacturer employing 350 men, women, boys and girls in Newcastle. Mary Maling, his wife, is 43, and his son Frederick FT Maling and daughter JEE Maling are 5 and 3 respectively. Eleanor Maling, 59, Christopher’s sister is also listed, along with four servants: Jessie Roles (Nurse/Domestic Servant, aged 35), Ann Smith (Housemaid, aged 20) and Jane Murton (Cook, aged 21). A fourth servant C Mills aged 25 appears on the next page of the census record listed as a Nurse/Domestic Servant. The 1871 census lists George Flint, coachman, aged 33 living in Westfield Lodge with his young family. The lodge was located at the entrance to Westfield House on Allendale Road and is shown on an 1874 plan as forming part of the estate (see page 8); Flint presumably worked for the Maling family.

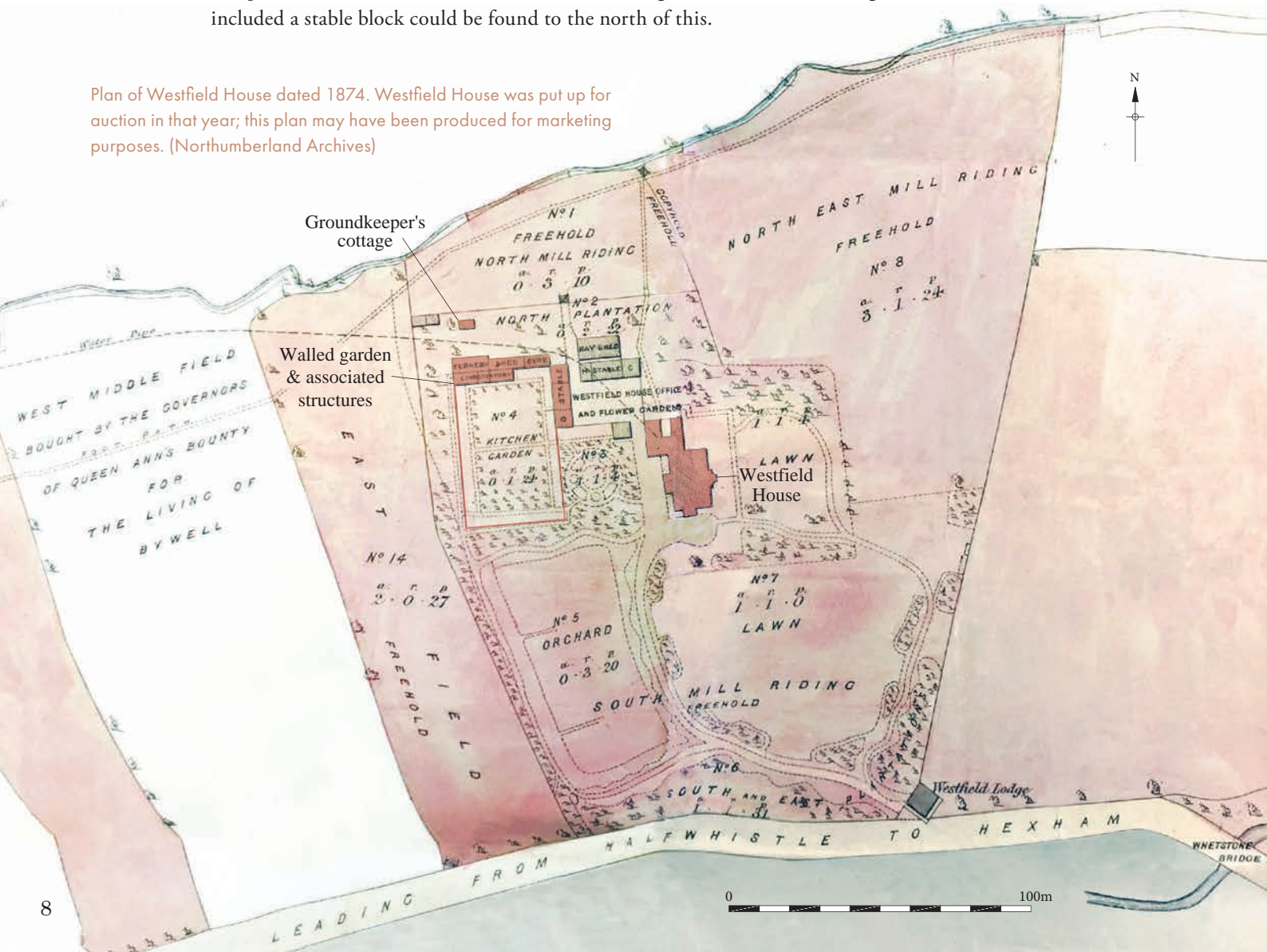


Late 1940s	1965	1976	1997	2020	2021
College of Domestic Science	QEGS opens in the grounds of the Hydro	QEGS becomes QEHS	Pupils renovate the walled garden	PCA investigates	QEHS and HMS co-locate on site

The grounds of the property

Westfield House was surrounded by 27 acres of landscaped grounds with lawns to the east and south-east, and a grand, looped carriageway leading to the main entrance of the property from Allendale Road. The grounds included a highly desirable walled garden, situated c.20m to the west of where Westfield House was located, and an orchard, situated to the immediate south of the walled garden. A flower garden that appears to have included a large, decorative circle of planting was present between the main house and the walled garden, while outbuildings that included a stable block could be found to the north of this.

Plan of Westfield House dated 1874. Westfield House was put up for auction in that year; this plan may have been produced for marketing purposes. (Northumberland Archives)



A growing fashion for ‘taking the waters’: the growth of spa resorts in Britain

In Britain and Europe, the tradition of consuming and bathing in natural spring water for therapeutic reasons is centuries old. Some argue that the practice can be traced back to prehistoric and Roman times, a view that is supported by the archaeological record. Springs and other watery contexts appear to have been regarded as special places during those periods, into which offerings, for example valuable metal objects, were thrown. Roman bathhouses, in which communal bathing occurred, sometimes made use of spring water, however such places may also have possessed otherworldly attributes within the worldview of Romano-British people. This is clearly illustrated by the famous example of the Roman bathhouse complex at Bath in Somerset, where a temple to the Romano-Celtic goddess *Sulis Minerva* was established to venerate the clean, hot water that naturally flowed from the ground.

The earliest clear documentary references to medicinal springs are medieval in date. These include a mention dated to 1326, when the iron-master Collin Le Loup, from Liège in what is now Belgium, claimed that water from his spring could cure a variety of diseases. Indeed, the origin of the term ‘spa’ originates from the name of Le Loup’s spring, *Espa*, which means ‘fountain’ in the Walloon language.



The famous Georgian spa resort of Bath in Somerset was built around a thermal spring, an ancient Roman bathhouse, and the temple of the goddess *Sulis Minerva*. (Wikimedia Commons)

In the late 16th century, Englishman William Slingsby visited *Espa*. The trip inspired him to encourage visitors to sample the waters of a similar chalybete (meaning iron-rich) well in the Yorkshire village of Harrogate in 1596, thus creating the first ‘spa’ in the British Isles. During the centuries that followed, this auspicious event caused Harrogate to grow into a prosperous spa town.

In the 18th century, ‘taking the waters’ continued to be seen as advantageous for invalids and those suffering from a wide variety of ailments, but by then the activity had grown into a fashionable one that placed greater emphasis on bathing and spas were often visited for pleasure alone. In addition to Harrogate, other famous spa towns of the Georgian era included Bath, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Royal Leamington Spa, to name just a few of many examples. In London, ‘pleasure gardens’ and tea rooms where spring waters could be taken developed around the edges of the city, most famously at Vauxhall but also at Sadler’s Wells and Bagnigge Wells in the Fleet Valley. Terms such as ‘wells’, ‘bath’ or ‘spa’ in a placename often belie the fact that a place was once a spa resort.

Over time, urban springs declined over time in cleanliness and popularity as cities expanded but in contrast, dedicated spa towns remained popular into the Victorian period and beyond. As at Harrogate and Bath, such towns were typified by grand spa hotels, which were often found in association with Turkish baths, tea rooms and glass houses, the latter being used for relaxation during colder times of the year (these were often referred to in such contexts as ‘Winter Gardens’, a good example of which survives in Harrogate).



The grounds of Westfield House in Hexham contained a ‘chalybete’ spring, and it was the presence of this coupled with the Victorian obsession for ‘taking the waters’, that would dictate the future life of the site for the next 62 years.

A 1910 postcard of the Winter Gardens in Harrogate, which opened in 1897. (Wikimedia Commons)

A stay in the lap of luxury: the Hexham Hydropathic Hotel (1879–1941)

The founding of the hotel and spa and the establishment of the Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company

Westfield House was put up for auction by William Angus Temperley on Tuesday 25 August 1874, however the £12,000 reserve price was not met, and the property was withdrawn from sale. This provided an ambitious local businessman with the opportunity to negotiate its purchase for £11,000 (over £1 million in today's money). Like Temperley, the man in question, John Hope Jnr, made his money in the grocery and wholesale business, also vending tea, seeds, fertilizers and cattle feed. By 1872 Hope also owned a shop, a warehouse and a small candle factory in the Hexham area, but nevertheless did not have the resources to transform Westfield House into a hydropathic hotel on his own, an undertaking that would cost more than £20,000. The solution was the founding of the Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company in February 1877, based in Mosley Street, Newcastle, which issued shares to investors for £10 each. The venture generated £30,000, which was more than enough to cover the cost of the planned works. Key players in the venture included John Hope Jnr himself, the Company Chairman, Mr George Charlton, and the Company Secretary, Mr Robert Amos.

Built heritage recording of the front (east facing) façade of Westfield House and the Hydropathic Hotel highlights how the structure was expanded between 1859 and 1907. (PCA)

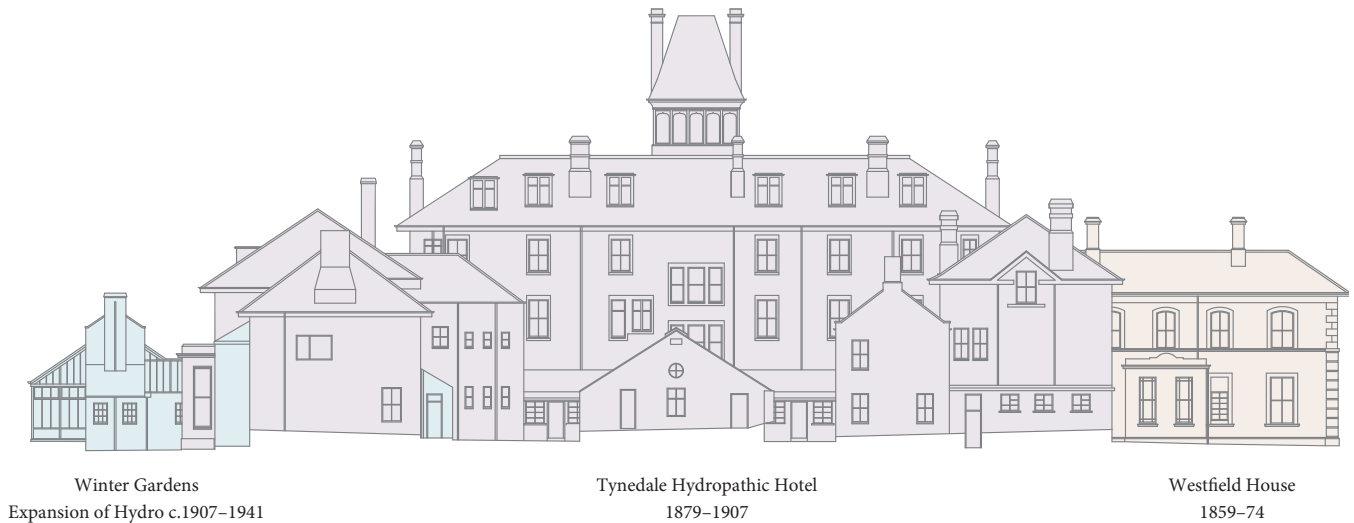


Westfield House
1859-74

Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel
1879-1907

Winter Gardens
Expansion of Hydro c.1907-1941

An enormous Italianate extension was designed to complement the existing property by the architect W Lister Newcombe of Newcastle. It was built and completed in 1879 by the builders N & R Reed, also of Newcastle, and overseen by the Clerk of Works, Mr James Aiston of North Shields. The new building was three storeys high and included an attic with dormer windows, and a basement. It extended north from Westfield House with the new principal wing of the hotel facing east towards the town. The fact that it represents a later addition is made clear by the presence of a 'straight joint' between the brickwork of Westfield House and the new hotel (a straight joint in brickwork means that all bricks in a façade abut each other rather than being bonded together). The main entrance was situated centrally on the east facing side of the East Wing, which also housed the larger communal hotel rooms such as the dining room and ballroom. Seventy bedrooms were present, as was a rooftop observatory within an imposing central five-storey tower in the main façade. Further north, south and west wings were constructed around a central courtyard, all of which were built in stone with Welsh slate roofs.



In contrast to the symmetrical front façade, the rear elevation of the property (the west facing elevation) was relatively asymmetrical. Presumably, its appearance was less important in this location as this part of the hotel was less visible to guests. This asymmetry may also have been necessary to better accommodate the more practical elements of the complex, all of which were situated towards the rear, such as the kitchens and the boiler room. (PCA)

Beautiful stained-glass windows survive above the main entrance to the former hotel. (PCA)



Decorative plaster pilasters adorned several of the communal areas of the hotel, including the entranceway and at least one entertainment area, examples of which were observed during the built heritage survey. This is the internal doorway from the grand communal room south of the hotel reception leading to the hallway. (PCA)

The entrance to the Hydro featured sandstone steps leading into the main hallway of the hotel. The entrance hall was designed with grandeur in mind, hence the large, semi-circular stained glass fanlight above the double entrance doors, the ornate cornicing and pendant fittings on the ceiling and the decorative timberwork for skirting boards, picture rails and door and window frames, all of which still survive. At the far west end of the hallway was the grand staircase, which climbed up the building, becoming less grand as it made its way to the third floor. Much of the decorative timberwork and plasterwork within the Hydropathic Hotel replicated earlier designs previously incorporated within Westfield House, which was retained to form the most southerly section of the hotel.

The Hydro opened to much fanfare on 7 August 1879. Horse-drawn carriages and buses ferried attendees to the event from the nearby railway station as the bells of Hexham Abbey pealed in celebration. A speech was given by Colonel Joicey of nearby Newton Hall, extolling the virtues of the establishment, after which a substantial luncheon was served to the attending guests. This was followed by yet more speeches and dancing until 10pm, after which many visitors stayed overnight.

The mastermind behind the enterprise, John Hope Jnr, was unfortunately not in attendance. From 1873 onwards, his business ventures began to suffer as a phenomenon that was known (until a second financial crisis struck in the 1930s), as ‘The Great Depression’ began to take hold. This was an international issue that many historians consider to be the first global financial crisis, in which stock exchanges across the world experienced sudden and significant depreciations. The Hexham area was far from immune, and many businesses folded as a result. John Hope Jnr’s debts were significant but manageable before the onset of the crisis but proved far too much in its wake. To appease his creditors, Hope was forced to file a petition for liquidation at Newcastle Crown Court on Thursday 3 August 1879, just four days before the Hydropathic Hotel opened its doors for the first time.

A late 19th-century engraving of the Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel. (QEHS)

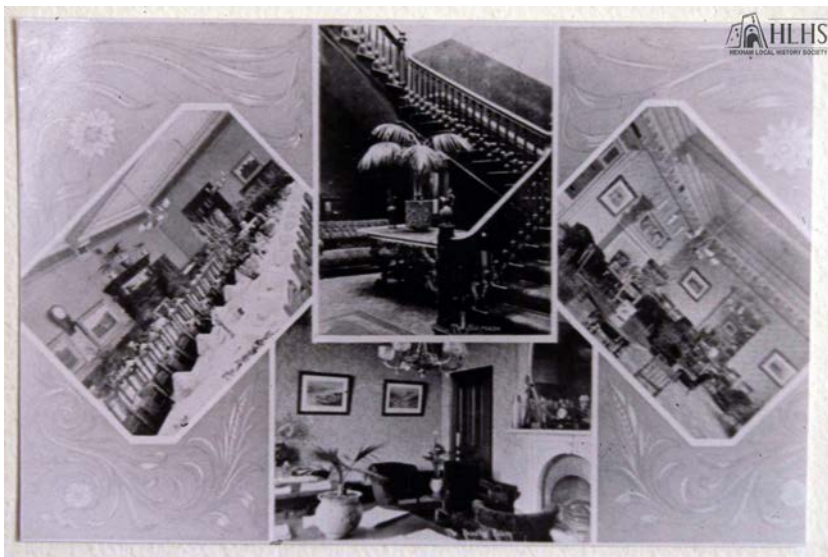


Clientele

When it opened for business in 1879, the Hydro marketed itself as a retreat for rest and recuperation, the Victorian equivalent of a modern health spa. It catered for wealthy visitors that included, in the words of the Chairman of the Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company, those wishing to 'repair from the bustle and business by which so many at present were oppressed' as well as 'invalids' and 'families wishing to spend a quiet and healthful holiday'.

As time marched on, the hotel accommodated not only guests who were trying to 'get away from it all' but also an increasing number of businessmen, who could easily commute to and from their appointments in Newcastle via the railway station. Better-off families continued to frequent the establishment, particularly at weekends and during holidays, while wedding receptions were also catered for. The hotel was also popular with guests over the Christmas and New Year holidays, when lavish meals, music and dancing were laid on nightly.

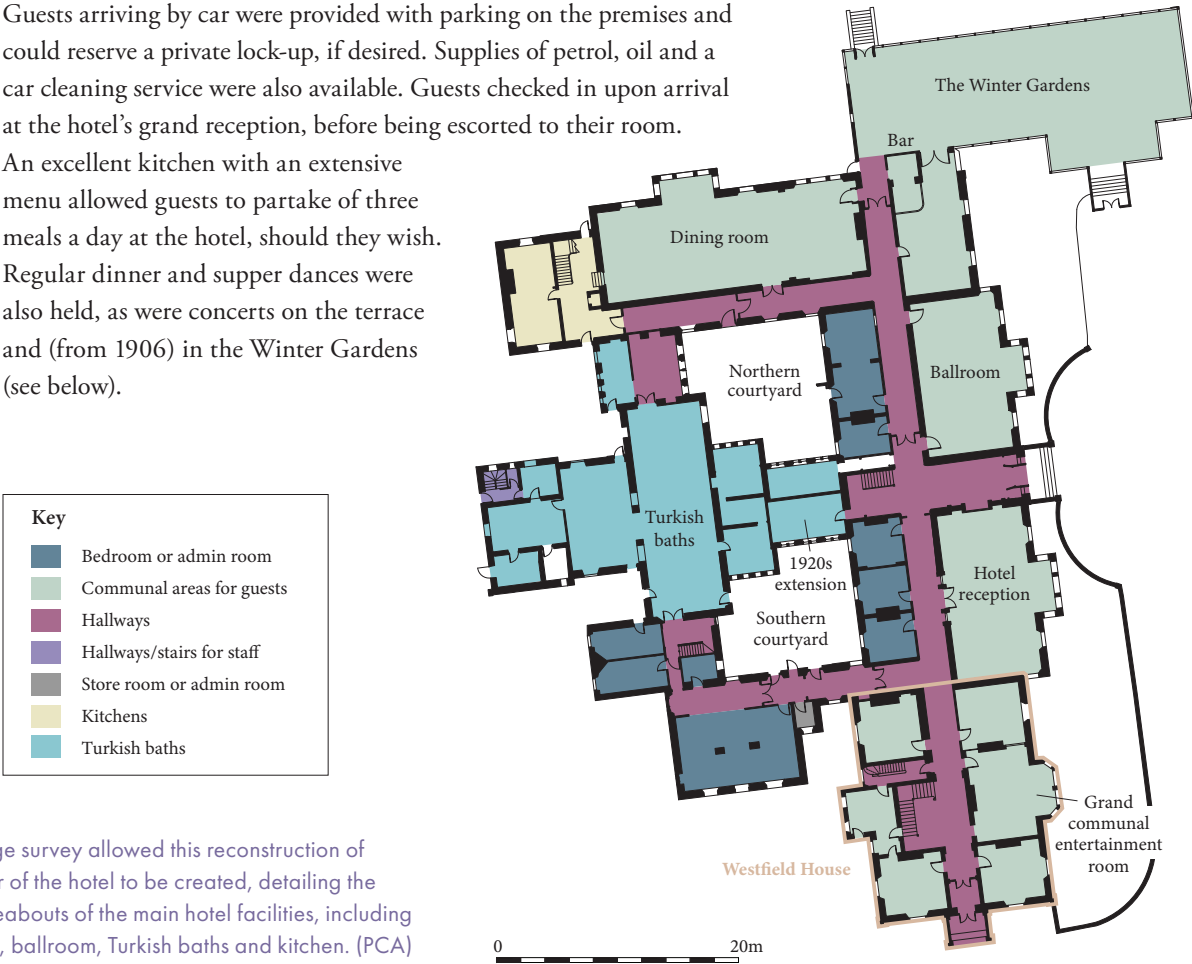
Famous guests included Hollywood actors Douglas Fairbanks Jnr and Charles Laughton as well as local actors Brodie Cochrane and Esther McCracken, who regularly attended the annual Boxing Day fancy dress ball during the 1930s. The Sunderland football team also spent a 'quiet time' of recuperation at the Hydro in January 1936. Yet perhaps the most famous guest to grace the establishment was Ramsey Macdonald, the first Labour Party politician to rise to Prime Minister, in 1924.



Four interior views of the Hydro taken in c.1920 showing (clockwise from top) the grand staircase, two lounges and a dining area. (Hexham Local History Society)

Hotel facilities

From the very beginning, the Hydro provided a private shuttle for patrons between the railway station and the hotel. At first horse-drawn carriages were used for the purpose, however these had been replaced with a motorised bus by the 1930s, specifically a beige Fiat. Guests arriving by car were provided with parking on the premises and could reserve a private lock-up, if desired. Supplies of petrol, oil and a car cleaning service were also available. Guests checked in upon arrival at the hotel's grand reception, before being escorted to their room. An excellent kitchen with an extensive menu allowed guests to partake of three meals a day at the hotel, should they wish. Regular dinner and supper dances were also held, as were concerts on the terrace and (from 1906) in the Winter Gardens (see below).



1879–1941 the Hexham Hydropathic Hotel

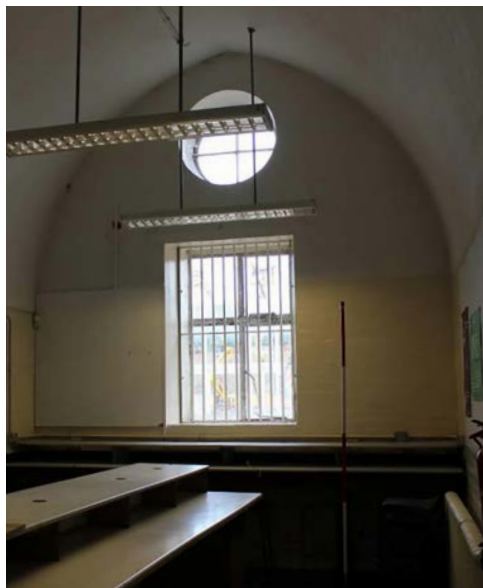
1859	1879	1895	1906	1924	1941-5
Westfield House constructed	Hydro opens	Baths opened to non-residents	Winter Gardens built	Ramsey Macdonald visits the Hydro	Stannington Sanatorium



This fountain with the Latin phrase 'DEI DONUM' ('gift of God') is at the centre of the stained glass window above the main entrance to the Hydro, shown on page 13, in homage to the importance of spring water at the former hotel. (PCA)

A stay at the Hydro was further enlivened by a variety of entertainment options: the hotel was furnished with a billiard room, smoking room and writing room and outdoor pursuits were provided by tennis courts, croquet and bowling lawns, as well as a putting green (all of which were present by at least the early 20th century). Pleasure could also be gained from exploring the well-kept and extensive gardens. Yet what made the establishment stand out from others in its class were the spa facilities, namely the Turkish baths, which were housed in the west wing.

To add to the ambience, the complex incorporated some exotic decorative elements, notably a Moorish arch, which still survives, and circular clerestory windows.



This Moorish arch and circular clerestory window are among the few remaining indicators for the Hydro's original appearance, many of the original features having been removed when the building was converted to other uses. (PCA)

Late 1940s

College of
Domestic Science

1965

QEGS opens in
the grounds of the
Hydro

1976

QEGS becomes
QEHS

1997

Pupils renovate the
walled garden

2020

PCA investigates

2021

QEHS and HMS
co-locate on site



The hotel's dining room, which seated 200 guests, was lavishly decorated and the walls were lined with half height Wainscot oak panelling with a decorative upper frieze. The room was heated by two fireplaces with decorative wooden surrounds. (PCA)





Remnants of original floral printed wallpaper were partly painted over during renovation works in the mid to late 20th century. (PCA)



Stained glass windows in the central tower in the east wing. This was open to hotel guests as an observatory or Belvedere with views over Hexham and the surrounding countryside. Some of the original timber window seating remained, reflecting its previous use as an observatory. (PCA)



An electric lift was installed in the centre of the stairwell for the convenience of guests. This was in place by the 1930s as it's referred to in advertisements from that time. The elevator comprised an iron-framed shaft with an internal wooden panelled lift. (PCA)



Two original stained glass sash windows survive in what was an east–west hallway within the former hotel. Perhaps in homage to the ancient Roman ritual of communal bathing, the western window features a woman in a toga taking fruit from a branch (left), while the easternmost window depicts a second woman in a toga holding a flower (right). (PCA)

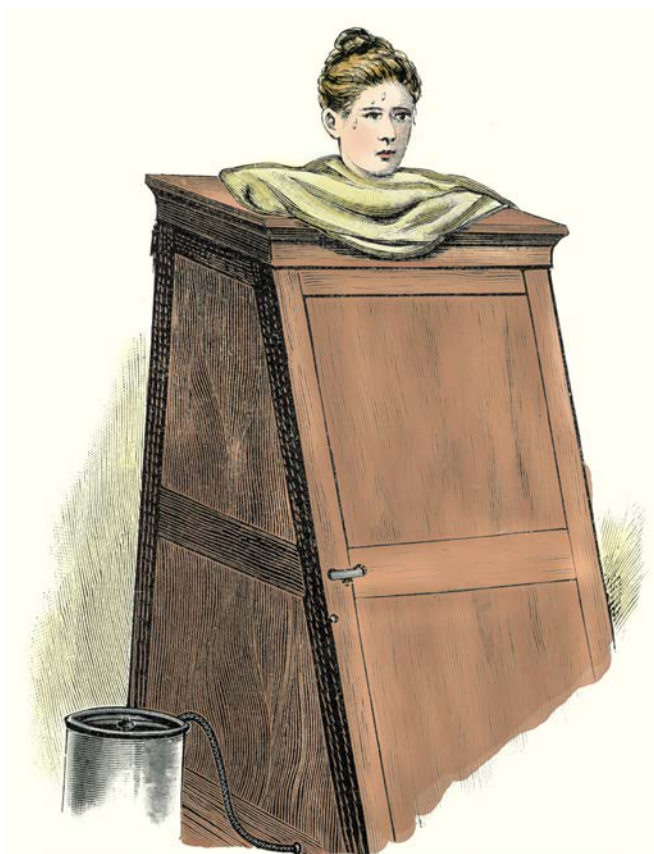


The Hydro's interpretation of a Turkish bath involved sitting in an armchair-shaped box, which would be closed around a bather so that only their head remained visible. This would then be flooded with steam, to open pores and allow any impurities to be sweated out as in a sauna. A somewhat shocking cold-water plunge was the next thing on the agenda, which was undertaken in a small pool that was lavishly decorated with beautiful tiles.

Use of the baths was extended to non-residents, who were permitted to use the facility at specific times of day by 1895 if not earlier. To uphold public decency, different days of the week were assigned to men and women, who entered the baths through separate entrances. In the 1920s a new extension block was built in the central courtyard providing further bathing facilities including new Turkish baths, steam baths, massage tables and a cold plunge pool.

This Victorian Turkish bath plunge pool at Craggside, Northumberland, gives us an idea of how lavish the pool at the Hydro may have once looked.

(Richard Findlay - FotoFling Scotland)



This 1903 depiction illustrates the type of Turkish steam bath that would have been used in the Hydro (Anna Fischer-Dückelmann/Alamy)

A brochure for the hotel printed in 1939 demonstrates that the bathing facilities by then included:

'The Turkish Baths with its Spray, Shower and Plunge Baths' as well as 'Needle and Sitz Baths' and 'ordinary Slipper Baths with an abundant supply of hot and cold water. Skilled attendants are employed to minister to the needs of visitors. Hot saltwater baths are also obtainable'.

A needle bath is an antiquated name for a shower, while a sitz bath resembles a bidet. A slipper bath has a high end to recline against thus making it look a little like a slipper. For modesty, the lower end can be covered over.

In addition to the Turkish Baths, visitors were encouraged to partake in the longstanding British tradition of 'taking the waters' from a well in the hotel grounds. In keeping with that tradition, the well yielded spring-water marketed as being of therapeutic value owing, in this case, to its unusually high iron content. Water rich in iron is known as 'chalybeate' water (from the Latin word for steel, *chalybs*), which is why the well in the hotel grounds was known as the Chalybeate Well. From 1909 onwards, a small fountain in the Winter Gardens (see below) also provided a constant supply, while bottled water from Haydon Spa, six miles away, could also be found on the drinks menu.

As well as holiday makers and businessmen, the hotel also offered respite to patrons suffering from long and complex ailments (referred to in the opening ceremony as 'invalids'). A resident doctor thus became necessary, the first appointee being Dr Scott of Melrose. Dr Scott was replaced after 18 months by a local 'consulting physician', Dr Daniel Jackson, who attended the hotel daily.

The Winter Gardens

In 1906, the proprietors of the Hexham Hydro made a prudent decision to construct a large glasshouse, known as the Winter Gardens, the purpose of which was to increase the desirability of the establishment for guests during the colder months. The Winter Gardens were primarily used as a supplementary lounge, in which flowers and tender plants could be appreciated out of season. An esteemed Edinburgh firm of glasshouse builders were chosen to construct the facility, MacKenzie and Moncur Ltd, who had recently finished constructing the famous Temperate House at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The sun alone was not relied on to heat the Winter Gardens, which were warmed by a cutting-edge low-pressure system of piped hot water. This allowed exotics that could not normally be appreciated in the frigid Northumberland climate to be grown, including oriental palms, eucalyptus trees, cacti and even banana plants.

As is typical of Edwardian-period glasshouses, the building was constructed using vertical timber framing, while the wall plinths at the base of the structure were built using a mixture of ashlar quoins and randomly coursed dressed stonework. The change in building styles was probably made to reduce costs with the more expensive ashlar blocks being used only on the more visible principal elevations to the south and east. At the time of the built heritage survey, the gabled roof of the Winter Gardens was clad with mineral felt and artificial slate, which was installed during the 1980s to replace a Welsh slate roof from the 1940s. Originally, the roof would have been made entirely of glass to provide the plants in the Winter Gardens with plenty of light.



The front (south) facing façade of the Hydro in 1907. The recently constructed Winter Gardens can be seen to the right. (Hexham Local History Society)



This postcard shows the interior of the Winter Gardens at Hexham Hydro in 1928. Guests would have been seated on cane furniture and provided with smart wooden tables on which tea could be taken. Planting beds were present around the edge of the glasshouse while large pots containing tall specimen plants were situated in the central isle, where the ceiling was at its highest. Goldfish were kept in ornamental pools, seen here on the left, and a small fountain supplied the supposedly therapeutic ferruginous water from the spring. (Hexham Local History Society)

Historic images also show that decorative finials adorned the exterior apex of the roof on the southern and eastern sides of the building, however these were removed during the 1980s. At a similar time, the original doorway and entrance porch with its glass gabled roof were replaced, the latter being changed to the flat roof that surmounts the entrance today. A second entranceway also exists in the western end of the northern face of the structure, from where guests could access the gardens. Iron boot scrapers were built into the lower piers flanking the sandstone steps, which would have allowed guests to clean their shoes before entering. To the right of the northern door was the entrance into the boiler room of the Winter Gardens that would have housed the heating system for the glasshouse.



As well as visitors from further afield, the Winter Gardens attracted local clientele from Hexham itself, who were encouraged to purchase 'Shilling Teas' of fancy French pastries at the weekend. A relaxed ambience was provided for the 'Shilling Tea' by the Hydro's resident musicians, then known as the Palm Court Orchestra in honour of the Winter Gardens themselves.

The decorative ironwork of the central arcade of the Winter Gardens at the time of the built heritage survey. (PCA)

The Hydropathic Hotel and the Temperance Movement

The Temperance Movement advocated for the reduction or abolition of alcohol consumption. It gathered a great deal of momentum in Britain during the 19th century, remaining popular into the early 20th century.

Champions of temperance were variously motivated by religious, moralistic, or political beliefs. For example, some Christians, particularly those subscribing to the growing Evangelical movement, supported temperance, as did advocates of secular philosophies like Utilitarianism, which deemed an action to be right if it promoted happiness (ideally the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people). Some women's activists and early feminists also embraced the concept of temperance, arguing that men were more likely to abuse their power over their wives if intoxicated.



As illustrated by this early 20th-century poster with a quote from Winston Churchill, some advocates of temperance claimed that the consumption of alcohol imperilled industrial productivity while contributing little to the economy. (Fine Art America)

A certificate awarded by The Order of the Sons of Temperance to members for their help and support. The Order was founded in the United States in 1842, with the first British branch opening in Liverpool in 1849. It continues to exist in a modified form today.

Although primarily a middle-class movement, some working-class organisations also supported temperance for political reasons, for example some Chartists believed that refraining from drink would demonstrate that working-class people were responsible and worthy of the right to vote. However, the diverse nature of the movement meant that it never possessed a clear direction nor goals, and as a result it had a limited impact upon the political stage in 19th and early 20th-century Britain.

In that context, it becomes less surprising that the proprietors of the Hydropathic Hotel chose not to serve alcohol on their premises for the first 47 years of the establishment's existence. John Hope Jnr, the visionary founder of the Hydro, had long made his temperance principles publicly known, however it fell to the Chairman of the Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company Ltd, Mr George Charlton, to announce the specific reasons behind the decision to keep the Hydro free from alcohol. In a speech given to shareholders in September 1878, Mr Charlton declared:

'As a Christian and a philanthropist, I consider it my duty to do all I can to stem the tide of intemperance. The establishment will be conducted on temperance principles.'

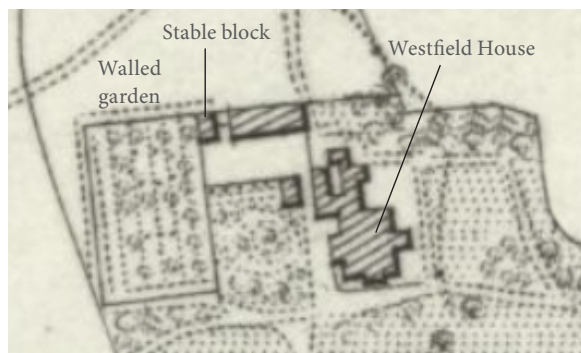
In addition to John Hope Jnr and George Charlton's Christian beliefs, the Hydropathic Hotel was founded first and foremost as a health spa, which further explains why alcohol was not on offer.

As time went on, the proprietors of the Hydro proved not to be as moralistic as their forebears and by 1921, an application for a licence to sell alcohol had been made. This was refused, however applications continued to be made for a further four years until one was finally accepted in 1925. From then on, alcohol was served at the hotel, although continued concerns about drunkenness

meant that it was only available with meals in the dining room and Winter Gardens. The manageress at the time, Margaret B. Blake, declared in the successful application that 'we do not want people to come here [only] for a drink'. The hotel company were in complete agreement with their manageress, viewing themselves as a very different establishment to a pub or bar, thus barring patrons from attending the hotel purely for the purposes of drinking.



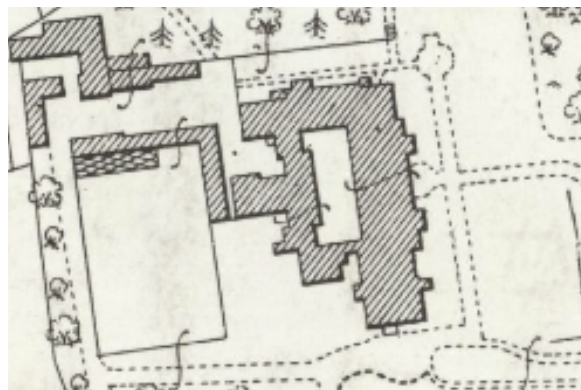
This bar was perhaps installed after an alcohol license was granted in 1925, hence the art deco style of the bar and the room in which it sat (art deco was a style which became popular during the interwar period). (PCA)



The Ordnance Survey map of 1865.



Detail from plan of 1874.



The Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel on the Ordnance Survey map of 1896.

The gardens, kitchens and service rooms

The walled garden

Kitchen gardens, such as the one that graced Westfield House, were highly desirable additions to any Victorian country estate. They were usually designed according to a formulaic pattern, being divided by regularly arranged paths into segments that were easier for the gardeners to access and tend. In keeping with this, the original layout of the kitchen garden of Westfield House comprised two large rectangular planting areas that were surrounded by perimeter paths adjacent to the walls. The borders would have been edged by herbaceous perennials or box shrubs, while espaliered fruit trees would have been grown against the walls. As time marched on and Westfield House was transformed into the Hydropathic Hotel, the kitchen garden came into its own, providing the establishment with a bounty of fresh produce.



Original entrance in the centre of the eastern garden wall. (PCA)

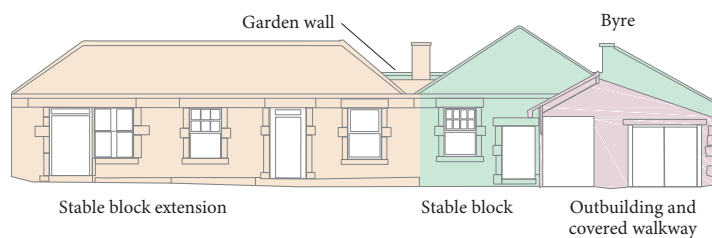
Plan of the walled garden showing the three phases of construction seen during the built heritage survey. (PCA)

The earliest elements, shown in green on this plan, comprised the walled garden and stable block as depicted on the Ordnance Survey map of 1865, both part of Westfield House. The garden is shown with paths around its perimeter, with a central east/west path separating the northern and southern planting areas.

By 1874, the fernery, shed, byre, conservatory and southern part of the stable block had been constructed (shown here in yellow). The plan of 1874 shows the newly built structures along the northern and eastern walls of the Kitchen Garden. Additional entrances are noted in the western, northern and eastern walls.

Westfield House was enlarged substantially in 1878–79 with the construction of the Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel. The stable block was extended between 1874 and 1896, presumably because the Hydropathic Hotel's transport needs were considerably greater than those of Westfield House, and a covered walkway was added to the east elevation of this structure between 1896 and 1922. Additional 20th-century alterations include the conversion of the fernery into a garage (including raising the roof height), the installation of a modern entrance in the south-east corner of the walled garden (replacing an older doorway within the wall) and another in the eastern wall into the former stables.

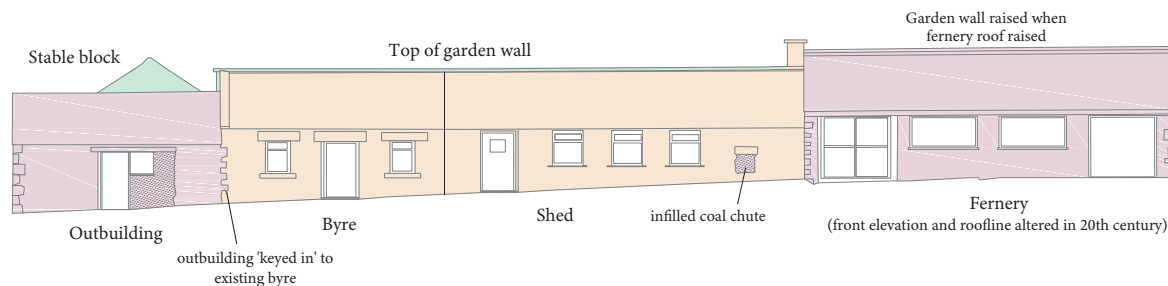




Elevations of the structures associated with the walled garden. (PCA)

- The original stable block and walled garden
- Additions made by 1874
- Enlargements with the construction of the Hydro/ 20th century alterations

East facing elevation of buildings along the eastern wall of the walled garden.



North facing elevation of buildings along the northern wall of the walled garden.



The covered walkway between the oldest part of the stable block (left) and the Hydro (right). (PCA)

The built heritage survey revealed that the boundary walls of the garden were constructed from a mixture of sandstone and brick. Interestingly, brick was used exclusively in the eastern and southern walls, which were heated by the sun for most the day. Brick absorbs and retains solar heat during the day and then slowly releases it at night, thus raising the temperature fractionally inside the garden. This would have allowed fruit trees and other more tender plants to be grown that would not otherwise thrive outdoors in Northumberland. The northern and western external walls perhaps used more sandstone to better insulate the garden from colder northerly and westerly weather, which may also explain why the north wall was fractionally higher than the others.

Decorative sandstone quoins at south-east external corner of the walled garden. (PCA)



As demonstrated by this plaque on the back door of the conservatory, above, both it and the fernery were designed and constructed by W. Richardson & Co. Ltd of Darlington. Richardson began designing glasshouses in 1855 and was noted to be supplying the top of the market. In 1889, The Northern Echo noted that Richardson built not just greenhouses, but also hothouses, palm houses, orchid houses and cucumber houses all over Europe. (PCA)

An interesting historic feature of the walled garden was the hothouse (variously termed a ‘conservatory’ or ‘greenhouse’ in historic documents), situated in the north-west corner on the brighter internal side of the boundary wall, and the fernery, situated in the same location but on the opposite, darker external side of the wall (these different locations having been chosen to suit the needs of the plants that they once accommodated). The former was used to grow seedlings and tender plants, some of which were reared within a series of raised beds and watered by an irrigation system of piped water, while the latter once housed a collection of ferns that required somewhat darker and damper conditions. A coal-fired boiler was positioned in an adjacent shed, which would have been used to warm the conservatory and fernery. At the time of their construction in the late 1850s, glass structures such as greenhouses, conservatories, ferneries, and vineries were the height of fashion.

The presence of the fernery and ‘conservatory’ are particularly noteworthy as they represent yet more high-status elements of the property. During the mid- to late 19th century, Britain was gripped by *pteridomania*, otherwise known as the fern craze or ‘fern fever’, in which wealthy Victorians amassed diverse collections of the flora, that included both indigenous and exotic species. Similarly, glasshouses for tender exotics were by then the height of fashion. The presence of these structures at Westfield House therefore further demonstrates the upper-class nature of the residence as the Maling family strove to keep up with the latest trends.

Animal husbandry and market gardening at the Hydro

By at least the 1920s, the grounds of the Hydropathic Hotel effectively incorporated a small farm, the purpose of which was to provide the establishment with the freshest possible produce. Two cows were on hand to give fresh milk, a flock of chickens provided eggs and pigs were reared for their meat. A team of gardeners attended the grounds every day, not only to keep the ornamental sections prim, but also to grow fresh fruit and vegetables for the hotel kitchen in the walled garden and the associated greenhouses. In addition to this, two shire horses were kept on site, which were used for ploughing and for hauling carts and wagons around the premises as well as to and from the station.



The cows would have been kept in the byre that abutted the northern exterior boundary of the walled garden, while the shire horses were housed in the stables along the eastern wall. In a memoir of life at the Hydro recounted in the *Hexham Historian*, Christopher Bradley (grandson of the former Chairman) described life in these outbuildings during the 1920s. As a boy Christopher would watch the cows being tended to by the cow keeper, Hannah, who would sit on a three-legged stool and milk the animals by hand. The shire horses were taken care of by their groom, Dick, who was responsible for feeding, grooming, mucking out and tacking up the animals.

The byre in which the cattle were kept. (PCA)

The walled garden

Animal husbandry & market gardening at the Hydro

1859 Westfield House constructed	1879 Hydro opens	1895 Baths opened to non-residents	1906 Winter Gardens built	1924 Ramsey Macdonald visits the Hydro	1941-5 Stannington Sanatorium
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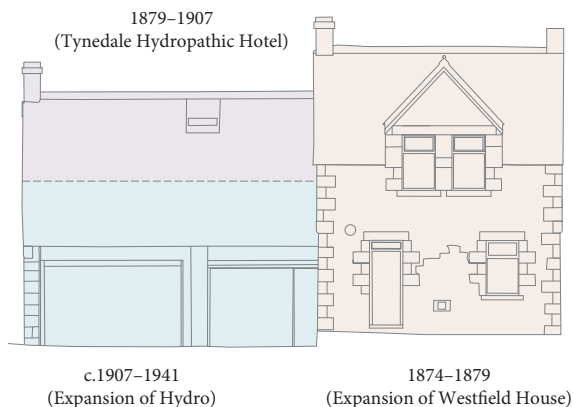
The groundskeeper's cottage, with the L-shaped extension visible behind the cottage, on the left. (PCA)



The hayloft in the extension to the groundskeeper's cottage. (PCA)

The groundskeeper's cottage

A groundskeeper's cottage opposite the walled garden, to the north, provided living accommodation for the groundsmen of Westfield House. The original, square, cottage dates to the expansion of Westfield House, and is contemporary with the fernery, shed, byre, conservatory and stable block extension constructed by CT Maling during his tenancy. An L-shaped range was added to the rear of the cottage by 1896 as part of the Hydropathic Hotel, and this was subsequently extended southwards during the expansion of the Hydro between c. 1907 to 1941. The upper floor of the extension was used in part as a hayloft, and the remainder as accommodation for the increased number of gardeners required to tend to the grounds of the hotel. The ground floor was used for additional stabling for horses and as a storage area for carts and wagons.



This south-facing elevation from the built heritage survey shows how the cottage was extended over time. (PCA)

Late 1940s

College of Domestic Science

1965

QEGS opens in the grounds of the Hydro

1976

QEGS becomes QEHS

1997

Pupils renovate the walled garden

2020

PCA investigates

2021

QEHS and HMS co-locate on site

The hotel kitchen, laundry and stores

The hotel naturally possessed a top-class kitchen and a large laundry in which towels, clothes and linen were cleaned. The kitchen could be found on the ground floor, while stores for food and wine were located in the basement immediately below.

The childhood memories of Christopher Bradley again paint a vivid account of what these facilities were like in the 1920s. Christopher and his cousin, Mary, were occasionally permitted by their grandfather to collect home-made ice cream directly from the hotel kitchen, which provided them with the opportunity to sneak around areas that were normally reserved only for the staff. Regarding the kitchen and basement areas, Christopher recalled the following in an article for the *Hexham Historian*:

‘The kitchens always smelled of roast beef and asparagus. The hotel served a fine menu, prepared by an army of chefs with tall hats. The back premises also had the laundry full of steam and the floor flooded with water. The laundry staff wore wooden clogs with iron ‘horse-shoes’ nailed to them, which made a special noise when they walked. Round there was also the boiler house and coke store for the central heating and baths, and dark mysterious storerooms.’



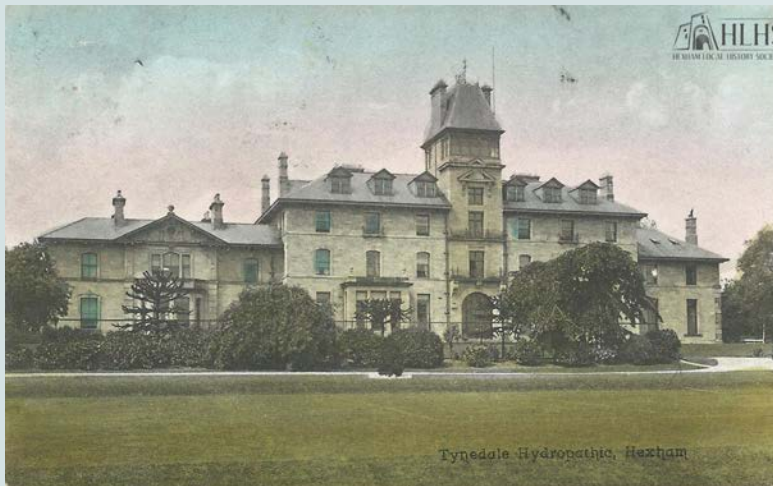
A dumbwaiter was a small, mechanised lift that in this case was used to move ingredients between the basement store and the kitchen immediately above as well as up to the first floor, presumably for the purposes of room service. Remains of the dumbwaiter shaft can be seen in the eastern wall of the basement storage area, continuing up to the second floor, where the mechanism is located. From left to right: the dumbwaiter shaft in the basement, an internal view of the dumbwaiter shaft from the second floor and a view of the mechanism. (PCA)

Financial trouble at the Hydro

Unfortunately for the Board of the Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company, their hotel did not yield anywhere near as much revenue as anticipated when it opened for business in 1879. Although it could hold up to 100 guests, it was rarely booked to capacity and was expensive to maintain, leading it to be described in a local directory of 1886 as 'a financial failure'. The Tynedale Hydropathic Establishment Company were forced to liquidate, and on 12 July of that year, the hotel was put up for public auction as an ongoing concern (40 guests were staying at the time of the sale). The property sold for £7,700 (just over £1,023,000 in today's money) to a consortium formed by a Mr Coward of Durham, Mr Wilson of Newcastle and Mr Hall of Derbyshire, who are all thought to have been directors of the recently liquidated company.

The consortium leased it shortly thereafter to a group of experienced hoteliers led by Mr Frank Gibb Grant and Mr John McPherson, who had respectively managed a hydropathic hotel in Cumbria and the Cockburn Hotel in Edinburgh. Grant's familiarity with running a hydropathic facility led him to purchase the establishment for himself within months of taking on the lease, after which the Hydro's financial problems abated somewhat.

The hotel's finances remained stable until 1931, when the property was again sold at auction to a syndicate that came to be known as Hexham Hydro (1932) Ltd. The hotel managed to continue trading as such until the advent of the Second World War, when wartime pressures caused it to be repurposed to perform an entirely different role: that of a hospital for sick children.



This hand-tinted postcard dated 1906 shows the hotel during a time of financial stability. (Hexham Local History Society)

A refuge for sick children:

the Second World War & the Stannington Sanatorium (1942–5)

A brief history of the Stannington Sanatorium

The Stannington Sanatorium, near Morpeth, was the first purpose-built children's sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis in Britain. It was founded in 1907 by an organisation known as the Poor Children's Holiday Association and became remarkably effective at treating and often curing what would otherwise have been a deadly disease. After war broke out in 1939, operations at Stannington continued until 1942 when the children were evacuated due to the construction of an RAF base, which made the area a target for enemy action. The sanatorium was therefore temporarily relocated to the Hexham Hydro in 1942 for the remainder of the conflict.

The dangers of 'consumption'

Tuberculosis, or 'consumption' as it was once commonly known, is a debilitating bacterial infection. Tuberculosis was once potentially deadly, but scientific advancements have drastically improved the prevention and curability of the disease. Staff at the Stannington Sanatorium were at the forefront of the fight against the disease, which began in earnest in the early 20th century.

Tuberculosis is unusual in that only around 10% of individuals who contract it become symptomatic, but for those that do the potential consequences are grave. If left to advance untreated, the lungs

can become prone to the formation of lesions and calcifications, causing breathing difficulties, coughing fits, fevers and haemoptysis (coughing up blood). Bone weakness and deformities, particularly around joints, are also common. Inflammation of the glands, particularly in the neck, abdomen and skin, are less common but can also be severe. Before the development of antibiotics however, one of the biggest killers at Stannington was bacterial meningitis affecting the brain.



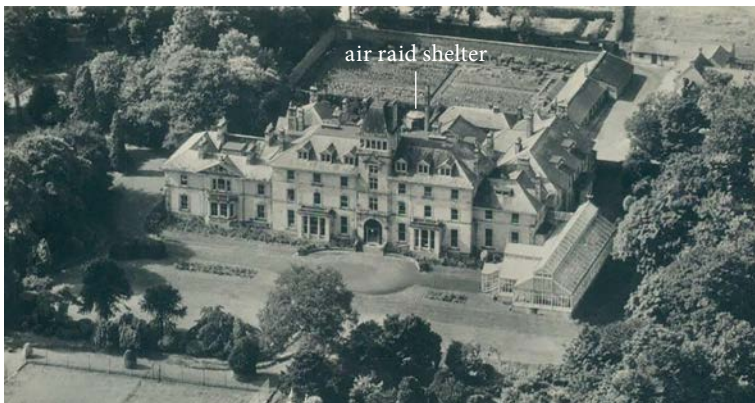
Bandages are applied to a young patient by Dr Elsie F. Farquharson and her team. Dr Farquharson was Resident Medical Officer at Stannington from 1921 until she retired 23 years later; as such, she would have been amongst the staff during the temporary move to Hexham. (Northumberland Archives HOSP/STAN/9/1/1)

From hotel to sanatorium: the conversion of the Hydro

After the Hydro was purchased for use as a sanatorium in 1941, various improvements were instigated to make it fit for purpose, including alterations to the central heating system: the former ballroom was only heated by two gas fires, which were considered inadequate. The engineers Wallace & Sons were instructed to strengthen and extend the existing chimney and to build a new boiler house. In the end, two were constructed against the outside of the building, in the west and south wings. Sanitary accommodation was also inadequate, so three new ground floor baths were provided, as were two new toilets on the first floor and an additional one on each of the other floors.

During the sanatorium's occupation of the Hydro at least 95 staff were employed to care for around 200 children. The Winter Gardens were to be used as a dormitory, despite being made almost entirely of glass and thoroughly unsuitable for the purpose, suggesting that the Hydro must have been somewhat short on space for the needs of the sanatorium. This decision was abandoned, however, as meeting minutes from the Stannington Sanatorium committee reveal concern about the susceptibility of the glass to bomb damage. They urged that the Winter Gardens be put to an alternative use as a school and dining room instead of a dormitory. Instructions were also given to cover the roof with small mesh wire netting and linen to prevent glass raining down in the event of an airstrike. Other measures included the construction of an air raid shelter in the grounds of the Hydro.

The air raid shelter measured just 3.5m in diameter and may have been constructed for Air Raid Wardens who would have sounded the alarm prior to incoming bombing raids. It was built with 0.25m thick concrete and was provided with air vents. Iron plates strengthened the internal walls and ceiling and it had a thick steel door. (PCA)



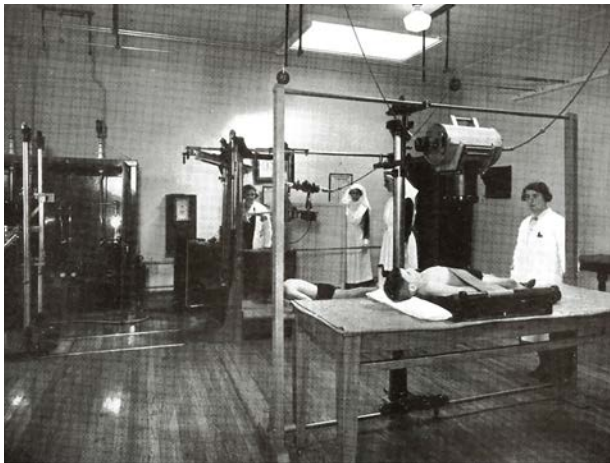
Aerial view of the Hydro showing Westfield House, hotel extensions and kitchen gardens. The date of the photo is unknown, but the tennis court in the foreground only appears on historic maps between 1922 and 1962–63. The WWII air raid shelter can be seen to the right of the Hydro's observatory tower's roof.

Hospital facilities and life as a patient

Hospital facilities included a sunroom in the Winter Gardens, an X-Ray department, operating theatre, laboratory and dispensary. In addition, the former Turkish baths were gutted and transformed into a school. French windows were broken through to allow installation of a ventilator in the plunge bath section, pipework was removed, and repairs were carried out to the roofs, floors and walls throughout.

Four opening skylights and a sliding partition were also installed to improve access, ventilation and light within the new school rooms.

Holidays and events were celebrated; the hospital was decorated lavishly for Christmas, and other, more personal occasions were marked too. On 25 March 1944, the Bishop of Newcastle presided over the confirmation of nine girls at the Hydro. A temporary altar was set up in a bay window of one of the wards, after which the ceremony began, with two of the nine being confirmed in their beds. Such events must have gone some way to relieve the monotony of life in the sanatorium.



X-ray plant at the Stanington Sanatorium (Northumberland Archives HOSP/STAN/9/1/1)

A happy ending for most

Mercifully, the recovery rate for children that passed through the temporary sanatorium at Hexham Children's Holiday Association, who stated:

'During the past year the average daily number of patients in residence was 203. Of the 214 children discharged, 182 returned home restored to health... In only six cases no improvement was recorded and there were six deaths, all cases which were too advanced on admission to respond to treatment'.

Hydro used as a sanatorium

1859	1879	1895	1906	1924	1941–5
Westfield House constructed	Hydro opens	Baths opened to non-residents	Winter Gardens built	Ramsey Macdonald visits the Hydro	Stanington Sanatorium

The move back to Stanington

During the post-war period the sanatorium transferred back to Stanington, becoming part of the newly formed National Health Service (NHS). This move roughly coincided with huge advances in the treatment of tuberculosis thanks to the ready availability of antibiotics and other revolutionary medicine. The resulting decline in the frequency and severity of cases meant that a sanatorium dedicated purely to the treatment of the condition was no longer needed. The Stanington facility was therefore transformed into a general children's hospital in 1953, functioning as such until it closed its doors in 1984.



Treatment at Stanington included regular exposure to fresh air and sunshine. (Northumberland Archives HOSP/STAN/11/1/1)

Late 1940s	1965	1976	1997	2020	2021
College of Domestic Science	QEGS opens in the grounds of the Hydro	QEGS becomes QEHS	Pupils renovate the walled garden	PCA investigates	QEHS and HMS co-locate on site

Feeding the forces: the Stannington Sanatorium and the mobile army bakery

In addition to accommodating the Children's Sanatorium, a less publicised aspect of the war effort in Hexham was a curious facility known as a mobile army bakery. As the name suggests, the bakery could be set up almost anywhere and could be moved if necessary, a feature that enabled it to provide a flexible service that was less likely to be impeded by enemy action.

The Hexham bakery came to be staffed entirely by women, specifically four female drivers from the Transport Company of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women's branch of the British Army during the Second World War.

The mobile bakery at the Hydro formed an important part of a supply chain that primarily serviced the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) supply depot at Fenham Barracks, Newcastle, although other depots were supplied as and when necessary. The Royal Army Service Corps mainly dealt with logistical issues generated by the war, including the supply of food, water, fuel, clothing and military equipment to soldiers at home and abroad.

The bakery and the administrative blocks associated with it were situated to the north of the hotel in the various outbuildings that could be found between the main building and the walled garden. During earlier times they had been used as stables and storage areas but were now put to good use to boost the war effort. Accommodation for the soldiers was provided by a collection of temporary structures, known as Nissen huts, which were instated in the gardens. One such hut functioned as a Navy Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) canteen and recreation facility, serving tea, coffee and food as well as hosting concerts and church services for the troops. The boundary between the area of the grounds that was set aside for army use and the children's hospital was defined by the groundskeeper's cottage.



A recruitment poster for the ATS, who played a vital role in the war effort on the home front. (Wikimedia Commons)



A NAAFI canteen in 1941. (Wikimedia Commons)

Education and learning:

a brief history of Queen Elizabeth School from 1599

From the Free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth to Queen Elizabeth High School

Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS) has a long and interesting history. The first incarnation of the institution came into being over four hundred years ago on 18 July 1599, thanks to a Royal Charter issued by Queen Elizabeth I in response to a request by the people of Hexham. The school was originally known as the free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth in Hexham, educating boys only. Despite being described as 'free', the school was a fee-paying institution with parents from the Parish of Hexham paying four pence per year (about £2.30 in today's money), while outsiders paid the far heftier sum of six shillings (about £41.36 today; the equivalent of five days wages for a skilled tradesman at the dawn of the 17th century), the rest of the funding being received from the church.

The location of the earliest school is unknown, however premises at Bank Head, completed in 1688, housed the school until the end of the 19th century.



A 19th-century photograph of the school building of 1688 at Bank Head. (Northumberland Archives)

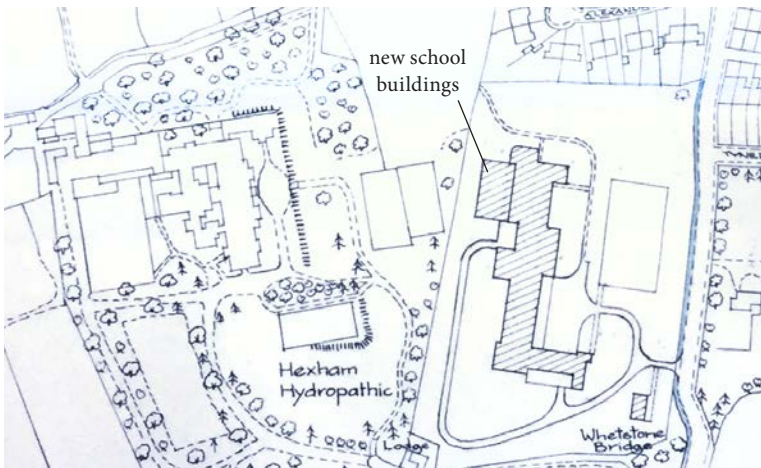
In the late 16th century, a ‘free’ school simply meant the lowest level of schooling, in other words an elementary school.

Elizabethan school life would have been unrecognisable to modern pupils; lessons were taught exclusively in Latin, until Greek was introduced in the sixth and seventh forms.

School rules banned swords, staffs and cudgels, as well as less lethal objects such as dice and cards. Remarkably, cockfighting was allowed and was used to determine the ‘captain’ or ‘victor’ of the school (the head boy) until it was banned in 1719, not because of animal cruelty, but because it distracted boys from their lessons and proved too expensive for some parents.

A major change occurred in 1888 with the creation of the county council administrative system, which provided state money for educational institutions. The Governors of the school, now known as Hexham Grammar, applied for a grant from Northumberland County Council in March 1891, but the grant was insufficient to pay for the entire project and it was nineteen years before all the funds were found. A new establishment, built at Wanless Lane, comprised separate girls’ and boys’ schools, housed in a shared building. The new schools, which opened on 13 September 1910, were

overseen by the Council rather than a charitable organisation and pupils had to pass an entrance exam for admission. The curriculum included English language and literature, history, geography, mathematics, elementary science, French, Latin, drawing (later termed art), music, Bible instruction and physical education. A house system, introduced for the boys in 1914, and for the girls in 1926 allowed inter-house competitions to be undertaken, for example at the annual sports day.



Plan of 1964 showing the new campus buildings at Whetstone Bridge.
(Northumberland Archives)

1599 foundation of the free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth in Hexham

1910 Hexham Grammar at Wanless Lane

1859	1879	1895	1906	1924	1941-5
Westfield House constructed	Hydro opens	Baths opened to non-residents	Winter Gardens built	Ramsey Macdonald visits the Hydro	Stannington Sanatorium



On Wednesday 2nd November 1910, the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School officially opened in Wanless Lane. (Hexham Local History Society)

When the schools first opened, they accommodated 86 boys and 66 girls, but pupil numbers rose rapidly over the years as Hexham grew in size and prosperity, increasing to a combined total of 339 pupils by 1920 (well over the maximum number of 250 originally envisaged). To accommodate this, temporary classrooms were set up in ex-army huts, which due to financial constraints and the advent of the Second World War and its aftermath, remained in use until 1965; a situation that was mirrored by schools nationwide.

Although merger of the two schools to create a single co-educational institution was agreed in June 1939, this did not happen until May 1958, with the first mixed classes being taught that September. As well as making better use of the available space within the school, the merger allowed the girls access to a wider array of subject choices and provided them with far better provision for tuition in the sciences.

The Hydro as the College of Domestic Science and the Northumberland Teacher Training College (1945–74)

Meanwhile, towards the end of the 1940s, the Hydro was purchased by Northumberland County Council and converted first into use as a College of Domestic Science and then into part of the Northumberland Teacher Training College which relocated in 1974 retaining only a few rooms in the Hydro for a time after that date. Yet the most significant development in the life of the building during the latter half of the 20th century was the relocation of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School to Whetstone Bridge, a move that finally provided the school with the space that it needed to grow and thrive.

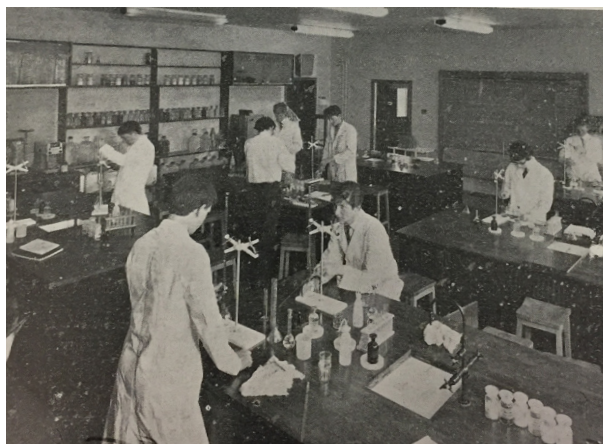
QEGS opens in the grounds of the Hydro and becomes QEHS in 1976

Late 1940s	1965	1976	1997	2020	2021
College of Domestic Science	QEGS opens in the grounds of the Hydro	QEGS becomes QEHS	Pupils renovate the walled garden	PCA investigates	QEHS and Hexham Middle School open

QEHS at Whetstone Bridge

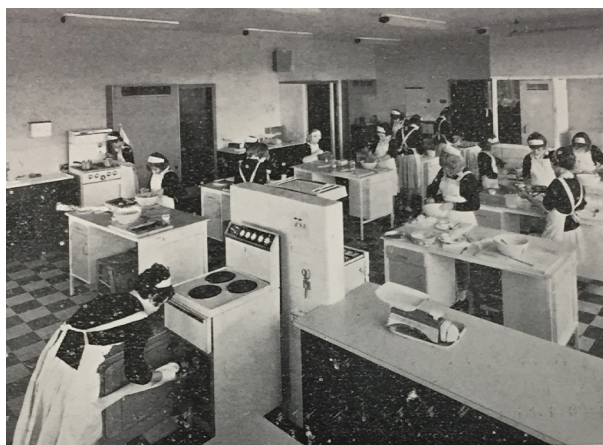
Construction of a new campus in the grounds of the Hydro began in July 1962, to the design of architect Mr CC Brown, and opened to pupils in 1965 after the Easter holidays.

The official opening did not take place until several months later, when the Duke of Northumberland attended the school on Monday 12 July 1965 to officially open the new buildings. A souvenir pamphlet, prepared by CL Mellowes, Director of Education presented a brief history of the school and a description of the new buildings. Production of the pamphlet was clearly inspired by the school's proud history and bright future; values and aspirations which are maintained by staff and pupils today.

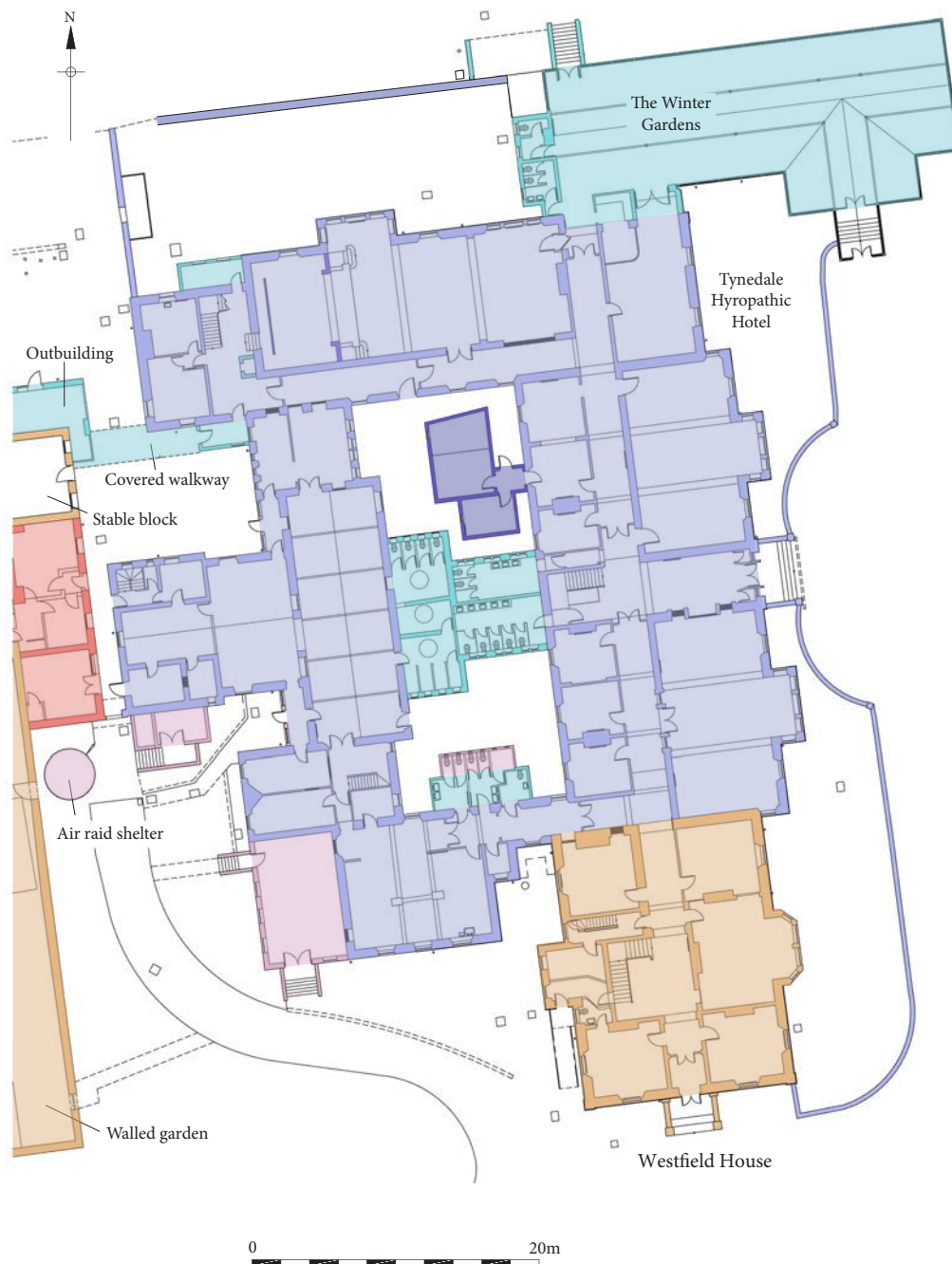


Although the school was bigger, a substantial increase in the yearly intake of pupils meant that space remained a problem, and the 'Junior Department', the first and second forms, were housed in the old building at Wanless Lane from September 1966.

During the 1960s and 70s the grammar school system in Britain was steadily replaced by non-selective comprehensive schools, for which no entrance exam was required. Consequently, Queen Elizabeth Grammar School became Queen Elizabeth High School (QEHS) in September 1976, which is also when the Hydro began to be used by the school. Becoming non-selective, the school's catchment area shrank, as it was limited to the Hexham area only. As a consequence, the boarding houses that had previously accommodated pupils from further afield closed their doors in 1977. Despite this radical change, academic standards at the school remained remarkably high, a trend which continues today.



Facilities at Whetstone Bridge included chemistry labs and a classroom for domestic science. (QEHS)



Plan of the ground floor of the Hydro, showing the extensions and changes made to the building over time, including new partitions and other modifications that were inserted prior to September 1976 in order to convert it into a school. (PCA)

- Westfield House c.1859–1874
- Expansion of Westfield House 1874–1879
- Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel 1879–1907
- Expansion of Hydro (Winter Gardens & Courtyard Building) c.1907–1941
- Conversion of Hydro Hotel to Sanatorium, construction of Boiler Houses & WWII Air Raid Shelter c. 1941–1949
- Conversion to the College of Domestic Science, Teacher Training College and then Queen Elizabeth High School c. 1949–present

School's out: unexpected school closures and emergency arrangements for QEHS pupils

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a series of unprecedented challenges for QEHS students and staff. Two long periods of home working had to be endured during the spring of 2020 and the winter and early spring of 2021, during which lessons had to be taught remotely via online learning for the majority of pupils. Quarantine measures for families affected by the virus, as well as those potentially exposed, led to further time off school and yet more home learning. Masks were worn in class, social distancing measures were put in place and disruption was caused to the examination system. Yet this unprecedented period of national crisis was not the first that the school had endured. Over the decades, certain pupils had previously dealt with prolonged periods away from education due to the development of critical situations beyond the school's control.

Due to the low population density of the area in which Hexham sat, the catchment area for pupils attending Queen Elizabeth Grammar School was reputedly the largest in the country during the early to mid-20th century. Many scholars had to commute from very remote, rural areas and were therefore heavily dependent upon a fully functioning public transport network. Any disruption to the train and bus timetables therefore meant that certain pupils were unable to attend every single day of the school year. This became acute during the turbulence of the General Strike of 1921, when the North Tyne pupils were unable to come to school for a total of twelve weeks due to the lack of a train service.



This photograph, taken in 1963, shows the impact of one of the coldest winters on record on a remote rural village in Northumberland, where roads would have become almost impassable. (Newcastle Chronicle)

Other significant crises unfolded during the severe winters of 1940 and 1947, when many pupils in rural areas were snowed in for weeks. Some took refuge in Hexham itself, where they lodged with local families. Other, shorter strikes and bouts of inclement weather similarly prevented certain pupils from receiving education throughout much of the school's history.

Unusually for a state school, such logistical problems meant that provision for a small number of boarders existed from 1910 onwards, however between then and 1950 only eight boarders were recorded, thus demonstrating that this was either an unpopular option or one that was hard to arrange in practice. It is likely that these children stayed with local families, until a former residential house, 7 South Park, was purchased to function as a dormitory for the girls in 1952, followed by a house for the boys, 'Eastburn', one year later. The number of boarders then dramatically increased, with eighteen girls and twelve boys henceforth boarding in Hexham under the supervision of the Senior Matron, Mrs Margery Armstrong (affectionately known to the children as 'Matty'). Demand for boarding places was such that a third house, 5 and 6 South Park, supplemented the existing properties in 1962, with the option to board continuing into the 1970s. Although 'Matty' and her dedicated team of carers tried to make the boarding houses as homely as possible, some of the children must have found these prolonged periods of time away from their families difficult. It is reasonable to assume that this was particularly acute during the exceptionally cold winter of 1963, when it must have been difficult for many of the boarders to get home during weekends and winter holidays.

In 2020 and 2021, this situation was inverted. The majority of QEHS pupils found themselves with only their families for company for months at a time, with many missing the structure and friendship provided by school. At the time of writing, the country is hopeful about gradually returning to something approximating normality and that a better balance between school and home life is slowly being restored.

Attending school during a pandemic: a pupil's perspective

by Madeline Brydon, former QEHS student (2016–2021)

The lockdowns, mask-wearing and disruption the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it made for a time at school that was unlike any other. After spending the last year mostly out of school, working from home, it has brought a greater sense of appreciation for the value of communicating easily with others in the same room. Returning to school after the first lockdown, it was especially clear how excited pupils were to finally be able to interact with their peers in a classroom, despite the new barriers of masks and social distancing. After the uncertainty that plagued the year, whether it be the state of our health or our exams, students have returned acknowledging the privilege it is to have the structure and community that school provides.

Leading a school during a pandemic: a head teacher's perspective

by Graeme Atkins, Executive Headteacher

What was it like leading a school (or in my case, two schools) during a global pandemic? Several words spring to mind: surreal, disorienting, challenging, frustrating, at times stressful yet at other times hugely rewarding!

The first lockdown, in March 2020, involved teaching staff, at our schools and across the country, pedalling very fast to adapt to the new requirements of enabling young people to learn well at home. Despite a distinct lack of familiarity with the new ways of being and relatively poor IT equipment, QE and HMS staff did a remarkable job supporting pupils' and students' ongoing learning and pastoral needs, whilst juggling their own domestic pressures and demands at a very challenging time for the country.

The most stressful period for me came in the summer term of 2020 when some on-site face-to-face provision was approved for certain year groups, in addition to the in-school support that had been provided for key worker and vulnerable children throughout the lockdown. The complexity of enabling this in a safe way, in accordance with the Government's guidance around control measures, whilst ensuring good provision for those continuing with remote learning at home and taking into account the understandable anxieties of parents and of staff, was challenging to say the least! Considerable anxiety was also experienced by students in years 11 and 13 with the protracted uncertainty around grades in the absence of examinations, however things were eventually resolved in a way that did justice to their ability and commitment.

The most rewarding part was undoubtedly the welcoming of all pupils and students back to school in September 2020. It was a genuine joy (and relief!). Although there were certain aspects of lockdown that many of them had enjoyed, particularly in the early period, too many of the things that bring colour and pleasure to a young person's life, including learning and developing in school, had been absent.

Needless to say, the associated logistics of enabling a 'covid-safe' environment that September were not straightforward, with new school day timetables, movement routes, cleaning and hygiene routines, distancing expectations and so on. However, the senior leadership teams at both schools did a phenomenal job in designing and then implementing plans that worked extremely well, with staff, students and pupils responding superbly to ensure a remarkably smooth and successful return.

More frustration followed in Autumn 2020 when covid cases rose with associated high numbers of contacts having to be identified and then isolate. The staff, having developed their own confidence and expertise in the provision of remote learning since the first lockdown, responded magnificently with live access to lessons for those not able to be in school, then, when the second lockdown took effect in January 2021, full live online tutoring and teaching for all.

Following the subsequent return to school in March 2021 things went relatively smoothly for the remainder of the academic year, with ups and downs in covid numbers along the way and the demands of processing teacher-assessed grades in light of another summer without public examinations. There was also of course the whole issue of packing up and preparing two schools for the move to our new facilities. But that's another story...

Attending an historic school

by Madeline Brydon, former QEHS student (2016–2021)

Attending school in a building with such a significant history was a unique experience, as it keenly demonstrated the importance of the past to the present. This exemplified the relevance of history, as learning about the Second World War and the temperance movement in a building so impacted by the events made the teaching all the more poignant. Particularly, it was easy to forget that while we were eating lunch in the Winter Gardens, we were doing so in a place the wealthy were once consuming three course meals after a spa break, or children were recovering from TB, yet the features

gave subtle reminders of the long history of which we were now a part. While studying in the Hydro we were simultaneously enveloped by history yet often unaware of it, giving a certain weight to the knowledge we gained and a drive to continue the long legacy of such a historic school.



This postcard shows the interior of the Winter Gardens in c.1908, just two years after they opened. (Hexham Local History Society)

‘Let the Hope of our Ancestors Endure’:

histories and memories of school life in Hexham over the centuries

Today, QEHS is one of the best performing high schools in Northumberland, with students regularly obtaining excellent GCSE, A-level and vocational results. In its last official inspection, the school was praised for its leadership and teaching standards, with a high-quality educational experience being provided for all. Yet the quality and even the safety of schooling in Hexham has varied dramatically over the centuries.

The perils of Thomas de Wervelton (master from 1294 onwards)

The first grammar school in Hexham was not the Elizabethan forerunner of QEHS but a medieval institution that was attached to the Priory. The first mention of the school dates to 1 May 1294, when Archbishop Romayne visited to appoint the unfortunate Thomas de Wervelton as master.

De Wervelton’s most significant problem was the geographical location of the institution that he now presided over. Medieval Hexham was situated in ‘border country’, a notoriously remote and lawless area that straddled the English and Scottish frontiers that neither country could truly control. The instability was caused by a recurring series of conflicts between the two countries over ownership of the borderlands, which resulted in numerous wars between England and Scotland.

In 1296, just two years after de Wervelton was appointed as master of Hexham’s grammar school, the Scots launched a devastating raid on Hexham. This was followed just one year later by an even worse attack, in which the Priory and its school were sacked and burned. Tragically, 200 of de Wervelton’s pupils had barricaded themselves inside for protection and they perished in the blaze. De Wervelton’s fate remains unknown but, should he somehow have survived the inferno, there would have been little of the school left to preside over.

The worst teacher ever? Mr George Busby (master from 1771–99)

Surely the worst teacher to rise to the rank of master in the free Grammar School of Queen Elizabeth was George Busby, under whose leadership the school at Bank Head fell into disrepair and disrepute, before nearly closing completely. Busby was underqualified, lacking the correct university degree

that was normally required of head teachers. He also possessed a foul temper as highlighted by a letter to the Archbishop of York from John Bell, one of the Governors, which stated, ‘by Warmth of temper [Busby] frequently corrects too severely’ and that a rebuke from the Archbishop ‘may induce Mr Busby to check the warmth of his temper and be a means of rendering the School more useful in the future’. Another letter written in 1791 and signed by ten of the Governors describes how Busby’s failures as a teacher led to two rival Masters offering lessons in Hexham; together they poached 24 potential scholars. Meanwhile, pupil numbers at the Grammar plummeted to just two children, one of whom had to be sent home with ‘his Face and Eye much swollen by the Master’s throwing of a Book at him in a violent manner’. Despite these huge failings, the Governors were neither able to remove Busby from his post, nor could they persuade him to voluntarily resign. As such, Busby eventually lost all his pupils, and is recorded as spending most of his time in an ale house. Yet he continued to live in the masters’ house and receive his allowance from the Church, while using the empty school as a pigsty.

The inspirational Miss Alice Ellis (headmistress from 1910–39)

At the opposite end of the spectrum was Miss Alice Ellis, the very first headmistress of the Girl’s School at Wanless Lane, described upon and after her retirement by pupils and Governors as ‘small in stature but great in scholarship, wisdom and heart’. Miss Ellis worked hard for the duration of her



time at the school to make it ‘a tremendous influence for good in the whole area which it served’. Under Miss Ellis, academic standards were incredibly high, with 100% examination pass rates for pupils occurring with regularity.

When Miss Ellis retired in 1939, she received an unusually expensive array of gifts that demonstrate the high regard in which she was held by one and all. From the Old Girls alumni, she received a silver rose bowl, silver candlesticks and a cheque; the pupils gifted a Pyrex dish in a silver stand engraved with the school badge and a cut-glass condiment set, while the Governors gave a mahogany bookcase and a nest of tables.

Portrait of Miss Alice Ellis. (Hexham Historian)

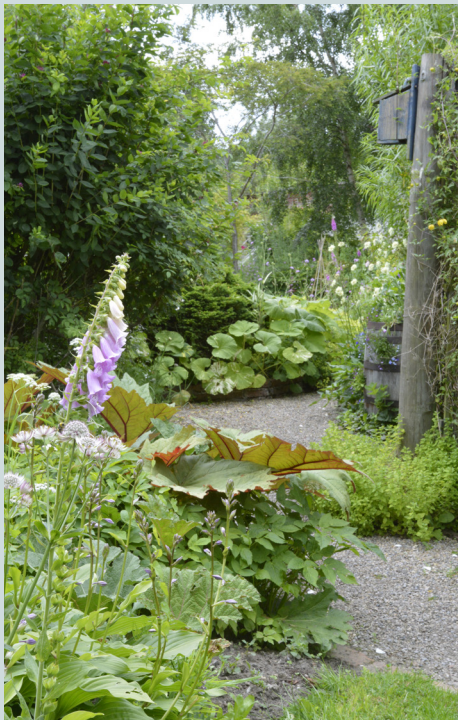
The walled garden blooms again

by Keda Norman

In 1997, the Walled Garden, then overgrown and neglected, was rediscovered by a new generation.

Led by Emma Thompson, then only 19 but a keen gardener, the garden grew into a thriving community project supported by the youth and community department and a dedicated group of volunteers. The aim was to engage young people in gardening and help them to explore the environment. Emma was especially keen to reach young people who needed some extra support and who could benefit from the special environment the garden could offer – a peaceful oasis and calm retreat.

Emma trained as a youth and community worker and then as a teacher so that horticulture could become an alternative curriculum option. The school offered NVQ horticulture, ASDAN Awards, Small Animal Care and GCSE Land Based Environmental Science between 2003 and 2017. Many former students now work in horticulture and associated trades.



Students developed the beds and borders, planted fruit trees, dug ponds which teemed with wildlife and grew vegetables. Small grants and support from parents helped to build an outdoor classroom and partly renovate the Victorian greenhouse. Plants were donated and young people brought plants back from visits to other gardens and propagated seeds. Everything seemed to thrive in the beautifully-built Victorian microclimate: a cottage garden medley with twisting paths; a willow tree house and a bench dedicated to our much-loved Mr Curry; quiet seating areas and productive patches – something different at every turn.

The garden opened many times in these years as part of the National Garden Scheme and Hexham Open Gardens to raise funds. It also offered opportunities for special classes, Go Global sessions and other community groups.

A shady path through the garden was brightened by *Astrantia major*, foxgloves and the structural leaves of *Gunnera*. (© Susi White)



Foxgloves, roses, delphiniums and giant scabious complemented box hedging in the walled garden. Edibles as well as ornamentals were grown, such as broad beans (bottom right). (© Susi White)

When Emma became too ill to teach she volunteered in the garden, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers and the Hexham Youth Initiative. The garden continued to support students on a one-to-one basis and opened at lunch times as a base for environmental learning, relaxation and gardening. Chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs proved popular, as did growing vegetables and ‘doing jobs.’ Many young people who participated in these sessions are now keen gardeners themselves.

Popular holiday sessions were held in the garden and the Jack Charlton Memorial Orchard. Environmental work developed, supported by the Groundwork Trust. Over 80 young people attended the last event in the summer of 2019.

Perhaps this last incarnation of the garden has been the most productive and its footprint, memory and legacy live on.



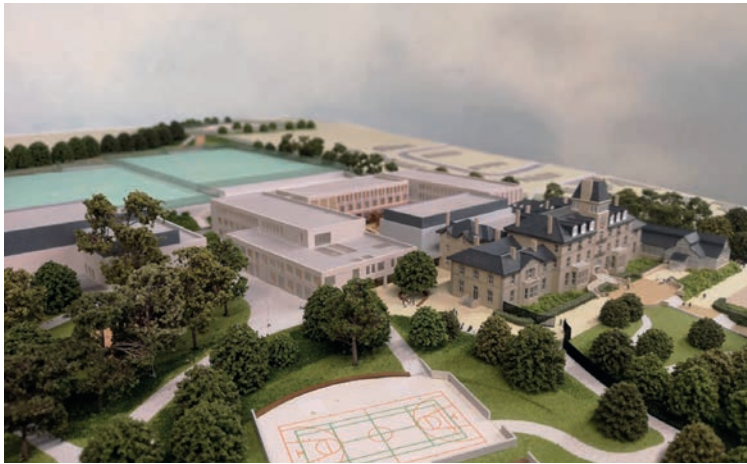
‘Lighting the future with torch of the past’: the new buildings at Queen Elizabeth High School

The new campus at Whetstone Bridge is a remarkable achievement. Most significantly, it allows QEHS and Hexham Middle School (HMS) pupils to be accommodated on a single site for the first time, the rationale being that this will ease the transition between schools while facilitating communication and collaboration between the two institutions. It does far more than this, however. The demolition of the 1960’s campus will allow the majestic and historic core of the school to be fully appreciated from Whetstone Bridge Road for the first time in decades, not only by pupils and staff but also locals and visitors to the area.

In addition to providing accommodation for HMS pupils, new teaching facilities have replaced the now antiquated 1960’s school building (formerly known to QEHS students and staff as the ‘Lower School’). This structure had fallen into poor condition and could no longer meet the school’s 21st-century needs. At the time of writing, the ‘Lower School’ is scheduled for demolition and will be replaced by a sports pitch, parking and an additional access route. Once this is complete, west-facing sightlines towards the former Hydropathic Hotel’s main entrance will be artfully re-established.



Artist's impression showing the courtyard, devoted largely to ornamental planting, that forms the heart of the new redevelopment using the footprint of the original walled garden. (© Galliford Try)



Artist's impression of the site looking north-west, showing sports pitches and pedestrian access routes through landscaped grounds (foreground), while the new school buildings can be seen to the rear of the former Hydropathic Hotel (where they delineate the footprint of the former walled garden). (© Galliford Try)



The north elevation of the school post-redevelopment, showing the relationship between the new school buildings on the right and the former Hydropathic Hotel and Winter Gardens on the left. (© Galliford Try)



The south elevation of the school post-redevelopment, showing the relationship between the new school buildings on the left and the former Hydropathic Hotel and Winter Gardens on the right. (© Galliford Try)

Thanks to the scheme, the upper year groups of HMS are now provided with regular access to specialist spaces within QEHS thus allowing them to transition more easily from middle to high-school life. Yet the design of the new wing also ensures that each school and age-group possess their own distinct spaces or ‘homes of their own’, thus establishing a sense of identity for pupils that allows them to better engage with their journey from one educational stage to another. This has been achieved in various ways, including establishing separate pupil entrances into QEHS and HMS and providing independent sports facilities and spaces for dining, socialising and recreation for each school. Additionally, the development allows sixth formers at QEHS to be provided with their own spaces for socialising and study that reflect their status as role models for younger pupils. The new facilities are also made available to the wider community outside school hours, thus boosting the financial benefit and social impact of the scheme. As of September 2021, a grand total of 225 teaching staff and up to 1,908 pupils can attend Whetstone Bridge, 600 of whom are accommodated in the Middle School, the remainder being high-school pupils.

The designs of the new buildings together provide a secure, calm and welcoming environment for pupils in a modern setting. Yet this state-of-the-art development reflects and respects what went before. The core of the redevelopment delineates the former footprint of the walled garden of Westfield House (later the Hydropathic Hotel), the spirit of which is evoked by ornamental planting within a central courtyard seating area incorporating reclaimed bricks from the walled garden. This is crossed by walkways and studded with seating areas that permit the planting schemes to be enjoyed. In addition to this, important historic features of Westfield House and the former Hydropathic Hotel, such as the principal eastern and southern façades and the historic coach loop that once conveyed guests in and out of the hotel grounds, remain unaffected by the development, while the demolition of the 1960’s campus buildings will vastly improve their setting. The historic buildings have also undergone a sympathetic programme of restoration, which will preserve them for decades to come.

A line from QEHS’ school song, ‘lighting the future with torch of the past’, perfectly captures the spirit of the new campus buildings at Whetstone Bridge. The new development will no doubt provide a bright future for staff and pupils of HMS and QEHS alike, while better illuminating and improving the pre-existing historic buildings through their restoration and presentation.



The new school buildings, showing the central courtyard at the core of the new redevelopment, which evokes the spirit of the former walled garden incorporating bricks reclaimed from the walled garden. (© Galliford Try)

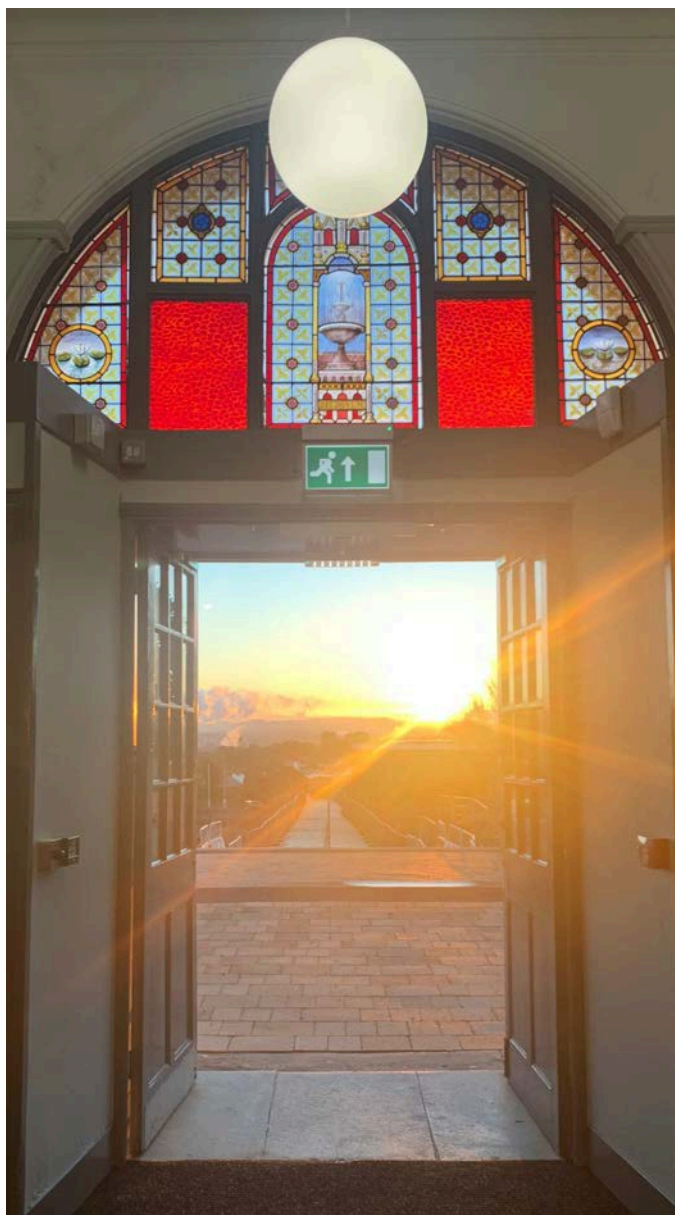


Acknowledgements

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The dawn of a new era – the new view from the Hydro on the opening day of term, September 2021. (QEHS)

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The new campus at Whetstone Bridge in relation to the old buildings. (PCA)



HEXHAM

car park

car park

WHETSTONE BRIDGE ROAD

sports block

ALLEDALE ROAD

Cockshaw Burn

- Westfield House 1859–74
- Tynedale Hydropathic Hotel 1879–1907
- Winter Gardens - expansion of Hydro c.1907–1941
- Former location of the 'Lower School'
- New school buildings

0 100m

PCA

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

The decision to relocate Hexham Middle School to the Whetstone Bridge Road site with Queen Elizabeth High School, and to provide both schools with new buildings, offered the opportunity for a detailed examination of the historic core of the site.

Heritage surveys of the buildings and documentary research were undertaken, revealing the site's rich and varied history.

This booklet opens the door to the story of how the school complex evolved; from its foundation as a lavishly-decorated 19th-century villa, through its years as the iconic Hexham Hydropathic Hotel and subsequent use as a children's sanatorium, into the centre of teaching excellence it is today.



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**Hexham
Middle School**
speculat arborum



**Queen Elizabeth
High School**
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