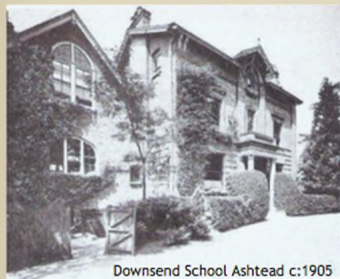


Leatherhead & District Local History Society  
Potted Histories No 36  
Downsend School, Leatherhead Road, Leatherhead



Downsend School Ashted c:1905



Ermyrn Way (rear view), Grange Road c:1915

The oldest existing private school in Ashted is *Downsend*, in the west corner of Grange Road and Leatherhead Road, noted in the 1871 census for Ashted as Leatherhead Road Boarding School. At that time open only about three years and operated by the Rev Edward T Scudamore, it had 14 boys aged from 8 to 13, looked after by a matron, a cook and two housemaids. The premises were in the residence called *Gateforth House* on the present site.

By 1890 this establishment had become Gateforth House Preparatory School under Sydney Herbert Johnson, and two dormitories, two classrooms and a gymnasium were added at this time. The name changed to Downsend in 1895. Although large enough to house 25 boarders and 25 day boys, the school was run down in World War I and had only one boy when A H Linford acquired it in 1918, but by the following year when Linford's son, Cedric joined the school to help his father numbers had increased to about 20 pupils. In 1923 the school acquired a sports field and four years later built a swimming pool. Numbers had doubled again by 1934 and a 'junior school' was built to accommodate the growth. A house called *Ermyrn Way* was bought in 1939 to provide a nursery department, but the war intervened and it was occupied by Canadian Troops until 1944. The house was destroyed by a V1 rocket; it was rebuilt after the war and in due course became the school's administrative offices. In 1968 the school discontinued with the practice of taking boarders.

Downsend was one of the first preparatory schools in the country to have science laboratories, built in 1964, and later, in 1983 the school again led the way with the opening of its first computer laboratory. The coming of the M25 allowed the school to acquire more land and to double its acreage to 15 acres, and also double the number of pitches available for sports. The cricket field in Taleworth Road was sold in 1988 and the funds generated enabled a Sports Complex to be built with a swimming pool and sports hall.

*Goff Powell - Extracted from A History of Ashted - L&DLHS 1995 with additions*

**For information regarding Membership, Lectures and Museum opening hours contact:** Leatherhead & District Local History Society,  
Leatherhead Museum, Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street,  
Leatherhead, KT22 8DP  
**Tel:** 01372 386348  
**mail to:** [staff@lheadmuseum.plus.com](mailto:staff@lheadmuseum.plus.com)  
**Website:** [www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk](http://www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk)