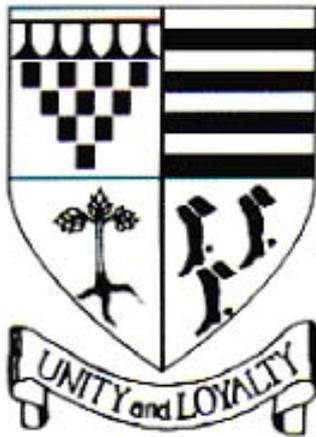


## Sheldon School Celebrates Half Century



In 2009, fifty years after Chippenham County Secondary Modern School for Boys was opened in 1959, governors, staff and pupils welcomed back more than 200 former pupils and staff to an open evening to mark the special anniversary. Visitors enjoyed viewing the numerous displays of historical information including a whole school photograph taken in 1960.

### Early history:

A medieval manor house and church used to be situated on the flat land which now forms Sheldon's playing fields. In 1707 the Colborne family purchased the estate and selected a new site for a fine Georgian house (Hardenhuish House) on higher ground to the north, probably built in 1773 or 1774. In 1779 Joseph Colborne (made the Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1777) decided that a new church should also be erected on higher ground to the west of his new Georgian house. Dedicated to St Nicholas, it was designed by the famous Bath architect John Wood and is said to contain recycled material from the earlier church. The Clutterbuck family bought the Hardenhuish estate in 1822.

In 1900 an acre of land was purchased in Cocklebury Lane where the Chippenham District County School was built (now part of Wiltshire College). All local day classes were consolidated there and pupil numbers increased rapidly. Two years later Local Education Authorities were established and Wiltshire County Council became responsible for education in Chippenham. Hardenhuish Park was purchased from the Clutterbuck family by Wiltshire County Council in 1935 in order to implement the educational requirements of the growing town.

The Secondary Grammar School moved from Cocklebury Road in 1938 to new buildings (now demolished) erected on the east side of Hardenhuish House. The Cocklebury Road premises were then used by Chippenham County Secondary Modern School, a senior mixed school taking children of eleven years of age and over from the primary schools of Chippenham and district.

In 1956 a new secondary modern school for girls was built to the south of St Nicholas Church. These buildings now form part of Hardenhuish School and three

years later a new secondary modern school for boys was constructed lower down Hardenhuish Park. These buildings now form part of Sheldon School.

The three schools occupied 40 acres of Hardenhuish Park and some 2,000 boys and girls attended from the borough and from the district within a radius of about 8 miles. The schools were integrated into a semi-comprehensive system in 1966 with all the boys and girls 11 - 13 at the two high schools and a division at 13 between the three schools. Mr Eric Minter retired as the Head Master and was awarded the OBE.

In 1967 Mr George Morgan was appointed as the new Head. He managed the difficult transition from the boys' school to the newly formed mixed comprehensive and he chose the name 'Sheldon' when in 1975, the three schools were merged into two comprehensive schools. Sheldon would take pupils from the southern and eastern areas of the town and adjacent villages. Hardenhuish would serve the northern and western parts of Chippenham and adjacent villages.

Mr Mike Stone kindly brought along exhibits from the local Heritage Centre and everyone was able to tour the school to see how it has expanded since 1959 to become one of the country's top comprehensives.



*Above right: the official opening on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1959: (Left to right)*

Mr J H Bradley - Chief Education Officer for Wiltshire  
Rev F Snow - Vicar of Chippenham  
Mr Eric W Minter - Head Master  
Mr Geoffrey Lloyd - Minister of Education  
Mrs Joan Stopford Beale - Chairman of Governors  
Ald W E Stevens - Chairman of the Wiltshire Education Committee

I have been reading through past school records at the History Centre and hope to put together a more thorough record of the school's history. If anyone has any memorabilia which they think might be of interest, or any stories to tell, please do get in touch.

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