

Earls House School on the Lanchester Road Hospital site

Earls House Industrial School opened in 1885 on the site of Lanchester Road Hospital, Durham. A memorial plaque unveiled at the school in 1919 marked the memory of those pupils and staff who went on to give their lives for their country during the First World War.

A chance finding in a skip in 2012 led to the plaque being rescued and finding its way back to its rightful place at Lanchester Road Hospital in 2014.

Life at the school

As can be seen from the 1913 timetable, life was not easy at the school. Every minute of the day was accounted for with an emphasis on vocational schooling and physical exercise. Parades and inspections gave the schedule a militaristic tone.

Industrial schools tended to encourage their pupils to take up music. In 1897 the managing committee of the school even "... proposed to treat the band as industrial occupation with a view to enlisting boys into army bands". The next year saw them voting to spend the sum of 'not more than £25' on eight clarinets, a piccolo, a pair of cymbals and a triangle. Other occupations that the boys trained for included shoemaking, tailoring and gardening. The school also ran a farm where agricultural and animal husbandry skills could be learnt.

EARLS HOUSE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

MULTIPLE.

Weekdays.

6.30 a.m.	Rise and make beds.
6.40 - 7.30	Clean dormitories; house work; &c.
7.30 - 8.0	Boys wash; clean boots.
8.0 - 8.20	Breakfast.
8.20 - 8.45	Recreation and preparation for inspection.
8.45 - 9.0	Inspection, parade and prayers.
9.0 - 10.0	Schoolroom and shops.
10.0 - 10.15	Recreation and preparation for dinner.
10.15 - 10.45	Dinner.
10.45 - 11.0	Physical exercises and recreation.
11.0 - 11.15	Wash.
11.15 - 11.30	Schoolroom and shops.
11.30 - 11.45	Preparation for tea.
11.45 - 12.0	Tea.
12.0 - 12.30	Physical exercises, recreation, recreative classes (mainly winter months).
12.30 - 1.0	Wash, supper, prayers and to bed.

N.B. Physical Exercises. Boys to be taken in squads of 30 to 40 each squad to have three lessons per week. Lessons to be of not more than 40 minutes duration; with a five minutes interval in the middle.

Wash. There will be 3 "inspection" washes each day, but the lavatories will always be open so that boys may wash at any other time when necessary.

Wednesday and Saturday afternoons to be observed as half-holidays, such holiday to commence as soon as dinner is finished i.e. 12.45 p.m. and continue to 5.0 p.m. - bedtime.

Bedtime. Boys under 10 may retire earlier.

Sunday.

6.45 - 7.30	Rise, make beds, dormitory and house work.
7.30 - 8.0	Wash and boots cleaned.
8.0 - 8.20	Breakfast.
8.20 - 8.45	Preparation for inspection parade; recreation.
8.45 - 9.0	Inspection parade to Church.
9.0 - 10.0	Recreation to Church.
10.0 - 10.15	Dinner.
10.15 - 10.30	Recreation.
10.30 - 10.45	Wash.
10.45 - 11.0	All boys to Churches.
11.0 - 11.15	Recreation.
11.15 - 11.30	Tea.
11.30 - 11.45	Sunday School.
11.45 - 12.0	Supper and wash.
12.0 - 12.15	Prayers and to bed.

Approved
Charles H Ford

Earls House Industrial School daily routine, 1913
Durham County Record Office, CC/X 91

Industrial schools

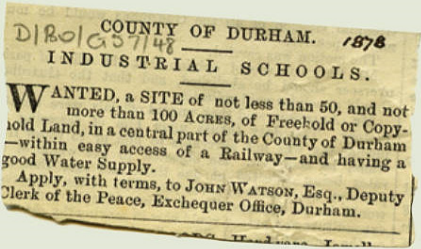
The Victorian administrative and ruling classes were greatly preoccupied by the behaviour of the 'lower orders'. Much ink was spilt, many charities set up and institutions founded in the hope that the working poor could be encouraged to develop healthy and productive habits rather than descend into drunkenness, licentiousness and crime. The desire to create a physically and morally healthy populace was one of the main driving forces for the foundation of industrial schools.

During the 1850s a number of reformatory schools were set up, firstly by individuals and then officially sanctioned by the state. These were, in effect, prisons for children who had broken the law. The industrial school served a slightly different purpose aimed at younger children who had not yet committed a crime.

The first Act relating to industrial schools passed into statute in 1857. It gave magistrates the power to send children aged seven to 15 to an industrial school if they were convicted of vagrancy. Later acts added the offences of frequenting with thieves, living in a brothel or with prostitutes and being beyond parental control.

The grand opening of Earls House Industrial School

Earls House School was some time in the planning. According to the newspaper report of its opening in 1885, Reverend Charles H Ford, vicar of Bishopton and Justice of the Peace, had been advocating for such a school for the past seven years at the meetings of the County's Quarter Sessions Court.



Newspaper advertisement, 1878
Durham County Record Office,

The magistrates of County Durham eventually bought Earls House Farm, after having advertised for a suitable site, and built what was to become the industrial school in the farm grounds. According to the glowing description in the Durham Advertiser the school had all the latest mod-cons including an integrated steam heating system and 'Moule's Earth Closets', a type of composting toilet.

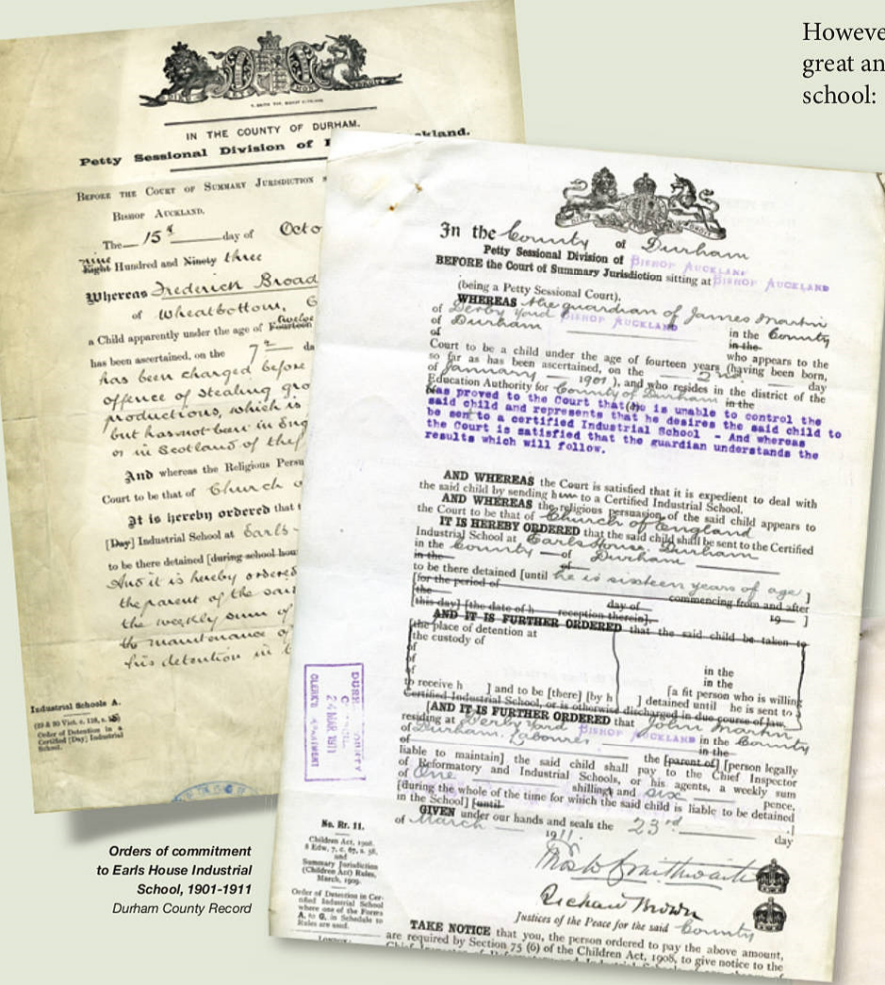
However, some encouragement was needed to attract the great and the good of the county to the opening of the school:

"In order to interest as many gentlemen as possible in the new schools, the committee had decided to provide a luncheon on the occasion of the opening ceremony... The flowers and wines for the luncheon had been generously given by a gentleman ... whose name he was not at liberty to disclose."

From the newspaper report of the event, it seems as if the mysterious benefactor's generosity was greatly enjoyed. The Bishop's speech, which took place after the meal and wine, was rather exuberant and was received with much merriment.

CHILDREN ACT, 1908.

In the County of Durham Petty Sessions Division -
(Being a Petty Sessions Court.)
Before the Court of Summary Jurisdiction sitting at the Guildhall Durham.
(Being a Petty Sessions Court.)
Mary Maurice Herdake of the said City, a person duly authorised by the Chief Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools to take proceedings in this behalf, having made a complaint that one Thomas Curry, residing at the County of Durham, is the parent of (one person liable for maintenance) a certain child named John William Curry, who is now detained in the age of twelve years, or thereabouts, who is now detained in the County of Durham, in pursuance of an order daily made under the provisions of the Children Act, 1908, directing his detention therein until he attains the age of sixteen years (or for the period of commencing from the day of the said child, and that the said child is of sufficient ability to contribute to the maintenance of the said child.
On hearing the said complaint it is adjudged that the matter thereof is true, and it is ordered that the said Thomas Curry do pay to the said Chief Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools or his agents a weekly sum of £10-0-0 for the whole of the period of the said child.



Orders of commitment to Earls House Industrial School, 1901-1911
Durham County Record

From the accounts that survive it does seem as if 'they were trying to make a real home' (The Durham Chronicle, 2 January 1920). When the school was opened, Reverend Charles H Ford stated that his hope for the boys was that "... they would be kindly treated, no one could ever stigmatise them as being prisoners in any sense of the word."

Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the case. In 1914 Joseph Bolton, one of the boys from the school, tried to emigrate to the United States but was refused entry because he had been an 'inmate' of an industrial school. (DRO, Education Committee minute book, CC/A26/1/20)

After the school

By 1928 the school was no longer seen as fit for purpose. In April of that year the first patients of the newly established 'Earls House Sanatorium' were admitted. The sanatorium's mission was to care for children with tuberculosis (TB). By the 1950s, the increasing availability of antibiotic treatments meant that TB could be more effectively treated and cured, making the sanatorium obsolete. Since 1953, the site has been used as a hospital for the care of those with mental health issues or learning disabilities. (DRO, Brochure of Earls House Hospital opening, H/Du 134)

The re-housing of this memorial plaque marks the centenary of the First World War but also the continuing evolution of this site.