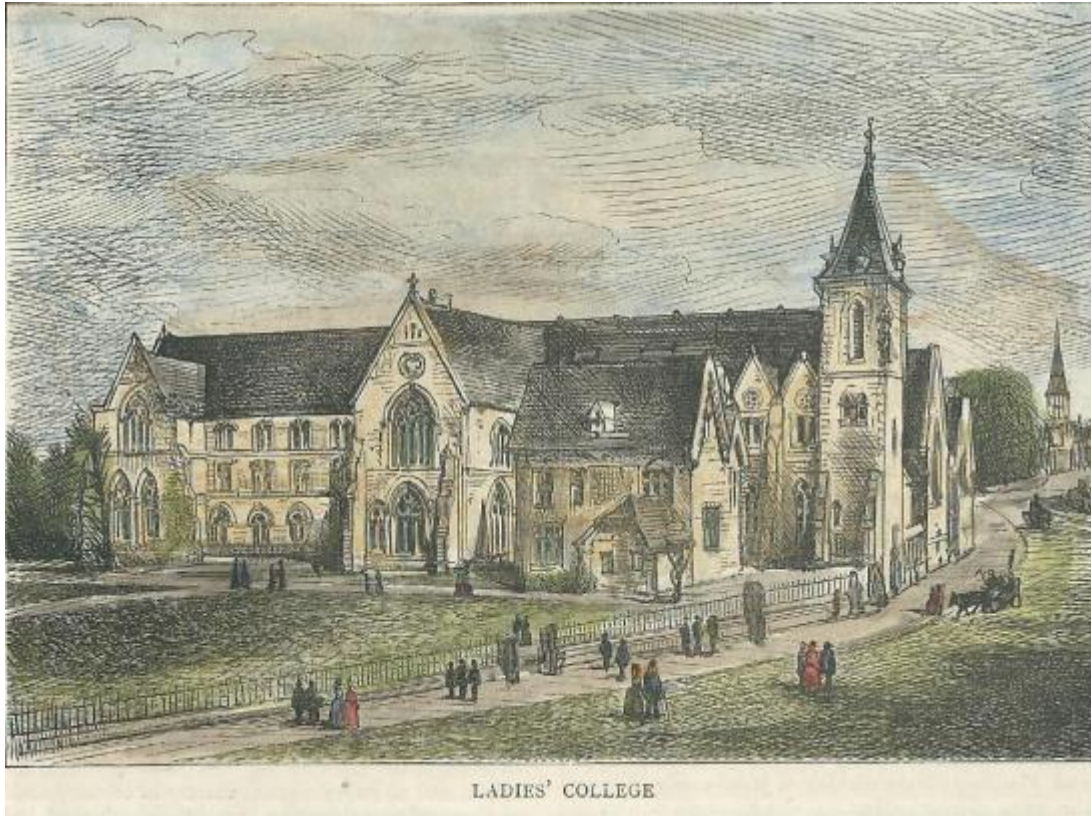

Cheltenham Ladies' College – Development of the Bayshill Site

by Brian Torode (2006) (Copyright Cheltenham Local History Society)



CHELTHENHAM LADIES' COLLEGE

1854 Original College at Cambray – mostly day girls. Miss Annie Proctor Head Mistress until 1858.

1858 Miss Dorothea Beale appointed. (Died 1906. College now had over 400 boarders.)

By **1870** numbers had increased dramatically, and space at Cambray was inadequate.

1870 College purchased part of present site at Bayshill, consisting of Fauconberg House as a boarding house, with gardens adjoining.

1871 Old Well Gardens next to Fauconberg House were purchased for £800. John Middleton commissioned to draw up plans for a new school.

The plot of land purchased was an area of grassed land enclosed by quickset hedges and crossed north to south by an avenue of tall elm trees with a pathway between them. (Old Well Walk). The site stretched west/east from the middle of the present St George's Road archway to the corner of Montpellier Street. On the west it was separated from the gardens of Fauconberg House by a hedge. In depth, it stretched from St George's Road to the present Tower entrance in Montpellier Street and from that point, the southern boundary ran along a pathway towards Bayshill Road.

The site purchased was only a small part of a much larger site which stretched continuously from today's St George's Road to the top of Bayshill Road and which formed part of the Bayshill Estate. In the 1820s-1830s the Bayshill Estate was a green oasis in the midst of the vast amount of building development taking place in Cheltenham at that time.

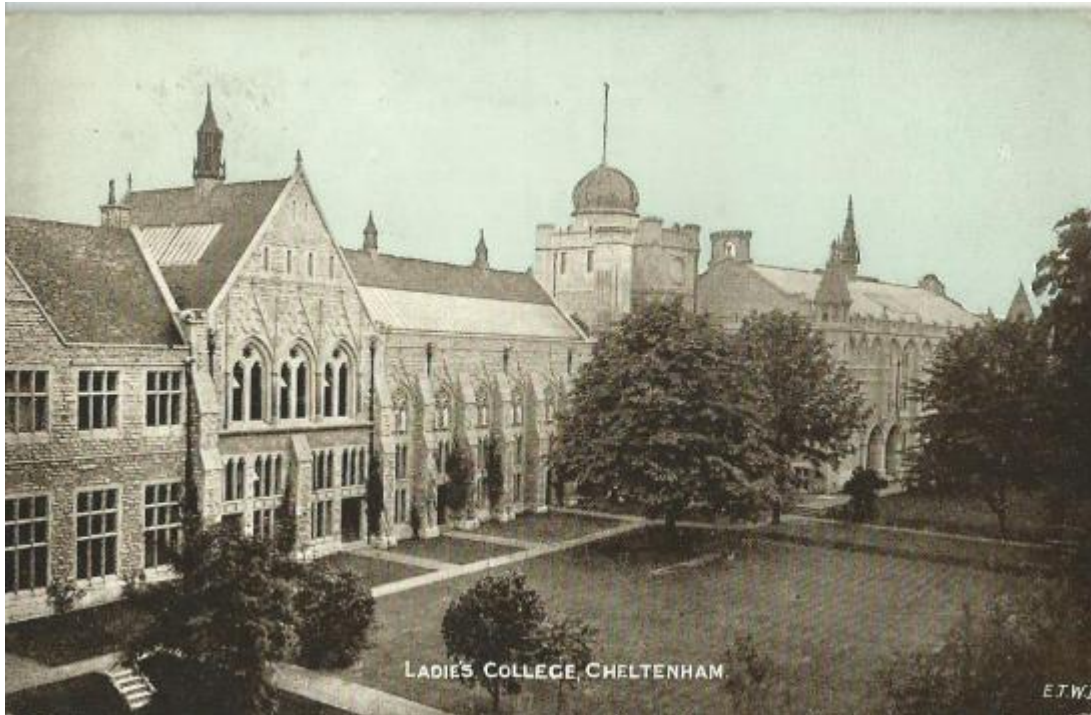
In 1837 plans were drawn up to develop the Estate by building large, impressive detached houses, such as can be seen today. Through the middle of the site, ran the Old Well Walk leading to the Original Spa Well and the Pump Room which George III had frequented. Today's Montpellier Street was Well Lane and led to the first Sherborne Well approximately where the Gordon Lamp is today. This Well failed and the second Sherborne Well was sunk where today's Queen's Hotel stands.

From 1838 George Rowe, printer, and Samuel Onley, property developer and architect, both shareholders in the Bayshill Company, restored the Pump Room and the Old Well. Inside, the roof was supported by impressive columns, there was a stage at one end and the waters could be taken from an attached conservatory. Financial difficulties reared their ugly head and some of the site had to be sold. The first plot was at the corner of Bayshill Road, on which Fauconberg House was built in 1848 to Onley's design.

In 1850, Rowe and Onley purchased the remainder of the large site and attempted to renew interest in the Well. The new Pump Room was soon renamed Royal Wells Music Hall and eventually the Theatre Royal. It was functioning in this way when the College was begun in 1871 but when the College leased the property in 1887 its days as a theatre were long gone.

1871 saw the purchase by the College of the part of the site, described above. Miss Beale recorded, rather abruptly perhaps, "Mr Middleton attended with plans." Other parts of the site sold at the same time fronted Bayshill Road, and on them were built six detached villas – Fauconberg Villas, and Fauconberg Terrace, the latter at least, to Onley's design.

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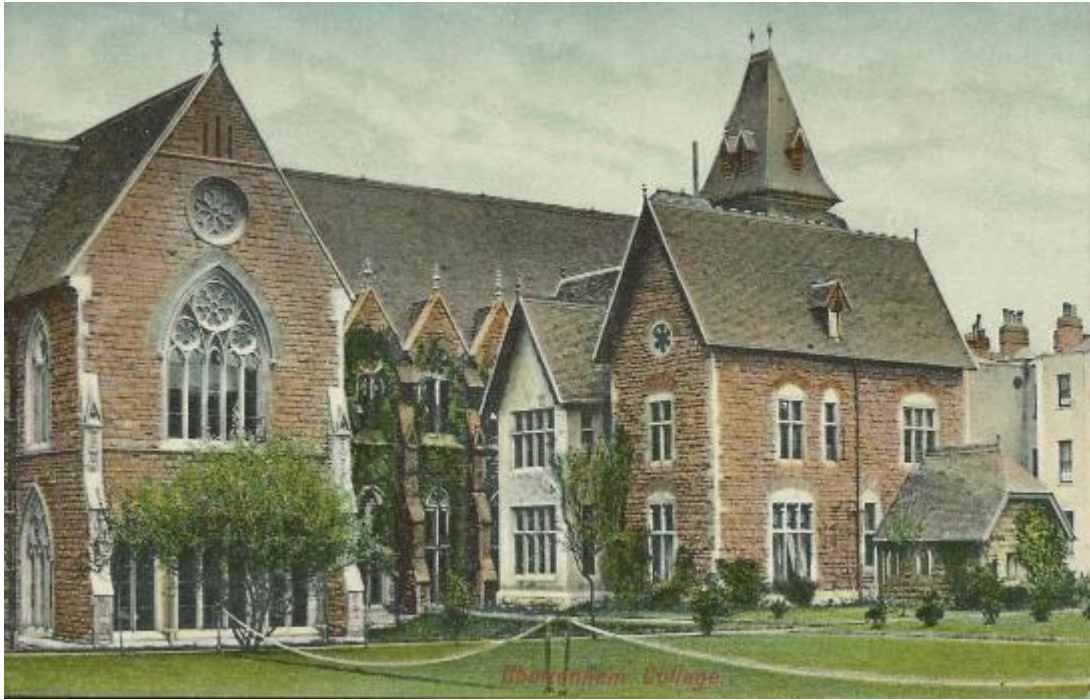


MIDDLETON'S COLLEGE

The design for the new buildings proposed accommodation for 220 pupils and a house for the Principal

Jan 1872-March 1873 the new school was built and opened, consisting of a large hall with six classrooms leading off it. The building was very ecclesiastical in design. In the main hall, Miss Beale could teach the whole school as well as use the room for worship. In the apse-like large alcove room, her scripture lessons were taught.

1874 the Principal's house was built, just to the south of where the tower is today, and was connected to the school by a wooden cloister.



1875-76, another floor added within the main building and the Tower erected and additional classrooms were added.

The latter were built on to the east wall of the original 1873 building.

A new Music and Art wing opened stretching from the Tower towards Bayshill Road. (The dormer windows added 1898)

1884. The Science Lab on corner of Montpellier Street was built.

1885. Middleton died in February
The old Theatre Royal was purchased by College.

1891. Fauconberg Terrace purchased.

The land to south of the original buildings was purchased and the Marble Corridor and Library 'New Wing' was built along the Montpellier Street overlooking the Old Well Walk. (Middleton, Prothero and Phillott) The Observatory forms part of this development. The Principal's house had been demolished and a new residence incorporated in the new building and later in one of the Fauconberg Villas.

1895-97. On the actual site of the old Theatre Royal, the Princess Hall (Alexandra) was built and today's stage is on the same site as the original Theatre's stage. (E. R. Robson)

1904. Present frontage on to St George's Road built as Science Wing. (F. W. Waller.)
Present Montpellier Street frontage altered and original entrance on this side was enlarged.

1927. The Gymnasium building constructed. (An Oxford firm)

1930. The stone bridge was built to join the two wings. (L. W. Barnard)

1933 Fauconberg Terrace and one Bayshill Villa were demolished and the West Wing was constructed in 1937 to form a Junior School. (Stanley Hamp)

1933 College owned five of the Fauconberg Villas.

1937 Cotswold House built as Principal's official residence. (Stanley Hamp)

1970. One of the Bayshill Villas was demolished to allow for the new Bayshill Road entrance.

1971. Stretching from the north end of the Princess Hall towards Bayshill Road a Sixth Form Wing was added. Astam Partnership – Brian Tait.)

1996. The main entrance in Bayshill Road was reconstructed. (Dyer Associates) Coat of arms above door adopted in 1931 to mark centenary of Miss Beale's birth. Combines College Daisy, elements of Beale family arms and Cheltenham's armorial bearings.

Three of the Fauconberg Villas are used for administrative purposes and there is a modern 1998 Art and Technology Wing attached to the south of Fauconberg House.(Oxford Architects.)

