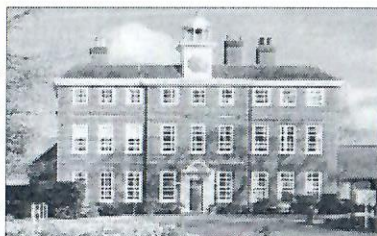


## Sarratt Local History Society

For those of us who live and drive locally, York House School conjures up a stunning 18C house, rumoured to be by Sir Christopher Wren, traffic jams along the lanes and groups of chattering small boys in purple blazers.



But like most impressions, only parts are true. Firstly, it now seems that the Wren connection may be apocryphal. A 'Hall' on the site was replaced in the early C18 by the present building, then owned by Charles Finch, and the distinctive cupola added in 1743. The architect is unknown but it is unlikely that so perfect a design was made by 'someone local' as has been suggested. Nor was the school originally local.

One hundred years ago, a Rev Cambridge set up a small school for young boys in Hampstead. A Mr Turner was the first headmaster of the 31 boys. In 1928, the school moved to a house nearby in Maresfield Gardens but in 1939/40, on the outbreak of war, the then headmaster, Mr Harold White, and his wife were directed to evacuate the school to Cedars Avenue, Rickmansworth. From there they moved to Meadway and then to the large house, now demolished, called Money Hill House. (One of its previous owners was the designer of the Titanic! He went down with the ship.)

In 1951, a further move to Great Sarratt Hall was considered but instead the school acquired its present site, up to then known as Redheath. The glorious house had been threatened with demolition in 1946 – no 'listing' then – but was saved at the last minute. The school paid £70,000.

Today, a century from its start, the school flourishes, taking girls as well as boys and periodically adding the numerous buildings and facilities now deemed essential for a modern education. And as the school flourishes, so too does the central beautiful house, a credit to that unknown architect whose education in proportion, construction and style would surely have brought praise from St Christopher Wren himself.

**Angela Colman**

*The next Local History Society meeting is the AGM on 25 January in the Village Hall at 7.30 for 8pm. A talk will be given on The Battle of Britain.*