

SCHOOL PERSONALITIES

The Revd H G Bonavia Hunt (1847-1917)

The Revd Henry George Bonavia Hunt MusDoc FRSE FGS, holds the most important of all positions in the history of KGS, for it was he who, realizing the need for such a school in the Willesden district, founded in 1897 that institution he called Kilburn Grammar School. In the words of Mr Luke, “while KGS might have, and in the course of its history probably would have, many headmasters, there can only be one Founder.

The Founder of KGS was born of English and Maltese parents in 1847 and was educated privately and at King’s College, London. He afterwards became a student in music at Christ Church, Oxford, where he succeeded in obtaining his MusBac in 1876. Later on, at Trinity College, Dublin, he received his MusDoc.

In 1872 Dr Hunt founded the Trinity College of Music, London, where he remained First Warden until 1897. Around this time he became convinced during his parochial work at St Paul’s, Kilburn, that the district much needed a Grammar School, and accordingly he set to work to put his plan into practice. The Deed of Foundation was drawn up in 1897, and early in January 1898 he had the satisfaction of seeing a very small school established in premises at 1 Willesden Lane. During his office as Warden of KGS, which post he held until 1904, he saw the school grow out of all recognition, and, moreover, move into what were then quite comfortable premises in Salusbury Road.

Dr Hunt was ordained in 1878 by the Bishop of Winchester to the curacy of Esher. Afterwards he was curate of St Philip’s, Regent Street and later of St James’, Piccadilly. In 1887 he became the Minister-in-charge at St Paul’s-at-Kilburn, and he was appointed its first Vicar in 1897. His eloquent preaching and the splendid choir music always drew large congregations. In 1905, when he resigned from the living of St Paul’s and went on to St John’s, Burgess Hill, Sussex, a farewell meeting was held in the Creighton Hall, when Dr Hunt was the recipient of a magnificent illuminated address and of a cheque for two hundred guineas.

Dr Hunt was in his day one of the most prominent men in Willesden, for, in addition to his ecclesiastical labours, his work as a member of the Willesden Technical Education Committee and, from 1900, as Chairman of the Willesden School Board, was most valuable, although at times the Liberal Mr W B Luke did not quite approve of Dr Hunt's private venture school.

In the literary field, Dr Hunt is chiefly remembered for his "Concise History of Music".

His death on the 27th of September, 1917, at Brighton, was deeply lamented by all who knew him; on the day of his funeral at Burgess Hill, Sussex, a solemn assemblage of the masters and boys of KGS was held in Creighton Hall, where Mr Luke, Dr Hunt's old opponent, endeavoured to voice the sense of loss universally felt by all those connected with the school. In dealing with the many fine points of Dr Hunt's character, Mr Luke, now a Chairman of the Governors, laid particular emphasis on Dr Hunt's fine work on the problems and awkward controversies that arose while holding this office was outstanding. Mr Luke stressed the fact that Dr Hunt, though a lover of peace, never shrank from upholding the line of policy which he considered right, yet in doing so made no permanent enemies.

In conclusion, Mr Luke stated that the great feature in the character of the man who founded KGS was his idealism, for Dr Hunt was constantly looking forward and upward. As a token of the esteem in which Dr Hunt was held by all of those connected with the school, a handsome wreath was sent to Burgess Hill, where rest the remains of the Founder of Kilburn Grammar School.

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