

BFSS Archives Info sheet No.2

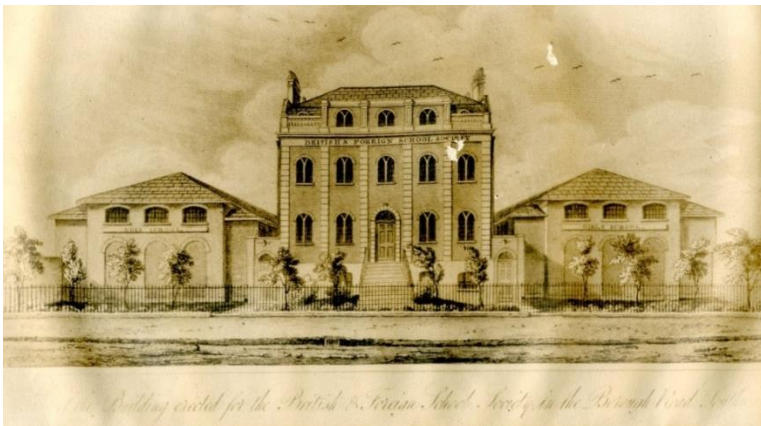
Borough Road College

Foundation

The history of Borough Road College dates back to the end of the 18th century, when Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, set up a school for the children of the poor in his father's house in 1798. Far from being a "typical" Victorian philanthropist, Lancaster was the 20 year old son of a former soldier, now cane-sieve maker, and not particularly well educated himself. His school was in Kent Street, in an insalubrious area of Southwark in London. Nevertheless, his school flourished. Pupil numbers rapidly increased and Lancaster was obliged to rent larger and larger premises, eventually establishing his school in a barn-like building close to Belvedere Place, Borough Rd, Southwark. Unable to pay for an assistant, Lancaster devised a system whereby older pupils, called monitors, taught the younger ones. This was the beginning of what was to be called the monitorial or Lancasterian system of teaching.

In 1808 Lancaster's work was formalised with the setting up of the **Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Education of the Poor of Every Religious Persuasion**. Lancaster however struggled to work with the committee and continued to pursue his own interests without the finances to back them. In 1814 matters came to a head and he was called before the committee. Lancaster however defiantly resigned. Soon after the Lancasterian Institution was renamed the **British and Foreign School Society**. A fundamental element of British schools was that religious instruction was to be completely non-denominational.

New building 1817

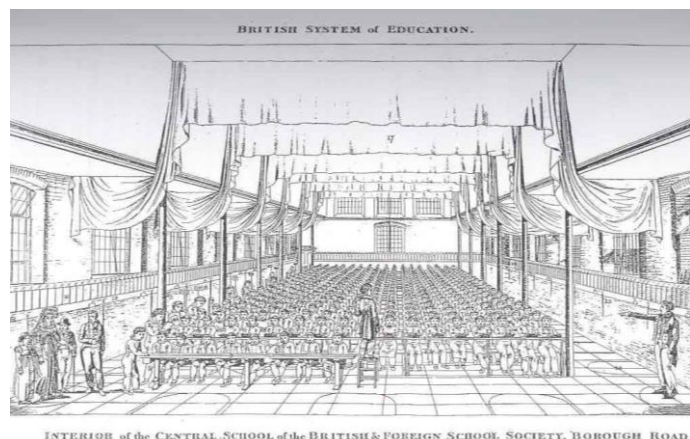


Borough Road College and model schools, Southwark, 1817

The newly constructed school buildings were large enough to accommodate 500 boys and 300 girls.

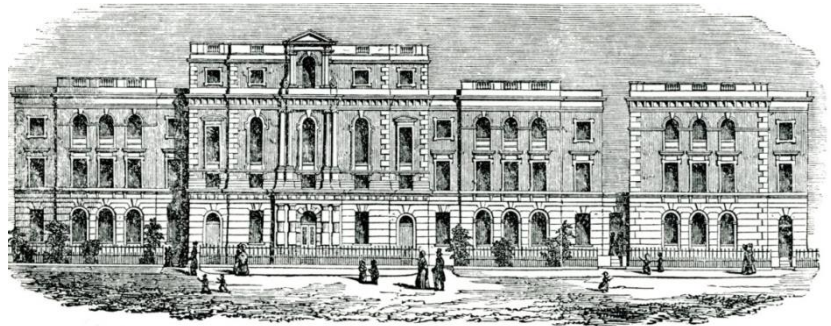
The teacher-training establishment was known as **Borough Road Normal School**. Initially training was brief – 3 to 6 months. Even in these early days, a few students each year came from overseas, including Sierra Leone, Russia and Greece. The numbers of students rose steadily from 44 in 1818 to 207 in 1840. Further extensions to accommodate the rising

In 1817 new and more spacious premises were opened in **Borough Road**, almost opposite the site in Belvedere Place which had been used since 1804 by Lancaster and then by the BFSS for its schools and training institution. The old buildings had become more and more dilapidated and new accommodation had been desperately needed. An appeal for subscriptions had raised several thousands of pounds, including £1000 donated by Robert Owen of New Lanark.



numbers were built in 1842. By now known as **Borough Road Normal College**¹, it had accommodation for 45 men and 30 women, a lecture theatre, dining room, several classrooms for the use of students, large schoolrooms for boys and girls and other offices.

The male students received instruction in teaching English, geography, history, mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Natural History, singing and drawing. The women's courses were similar but with less academic work and included needlework. Practice in the attached model schools during the day was followed by instruction in the evening.



BOROUGH ROAD 1842

Transfer of female students to STOCKWELL [See *Stockwell College Info sheet*].

A separate Women's Section had been formed in 1814 under Ann Springman, who herself had been trained under Joseph Lancaster. In 1861 the BFSS bought a site at Stockwell in SW London, about a mile and a half south of Borough Road College, and transferred the female students there. A new girls' and infants practice school was opened at Stockwell but the girls' school at Borough Road continued to exist for some years for the use of local children. It was moved into buildings outside of the college c1871.

Funding

Ground-breaking as the monitorial system was, it had been a means to an end. Gradually it was replaced by properly trained teachers. In 1846 the 'Teacher's Certificate' was introduced by the government. At age 13, promising boys and girls were indentured as 'pupil-teachers' to schools of approved standard for 5 years' apprenticeship. Pupil-teachers were examined annually by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs). At 18 the students competed for '**Queen's Scholarships**', tests assessed by HMIs and the principal of their preferred college. Successful candidates were awarded a scholarship to a Normal College for a minimum of one year's training. Annual exams were held and Certificates of Merit awarded, called the Teacher's Certificate. These gave the candidates a state-recognised qualification and entitled the college to a grant of £20 for each student who passed his first exam year, £25 if he passed a second year and £30 if he qualified for a third year. The exams were held at Christmas in a prescribed list of subjects including English grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, reading, penmanship, physical science and singing. The first Borough Road Normal College students sat for the Teacher's Certificate in 1851.

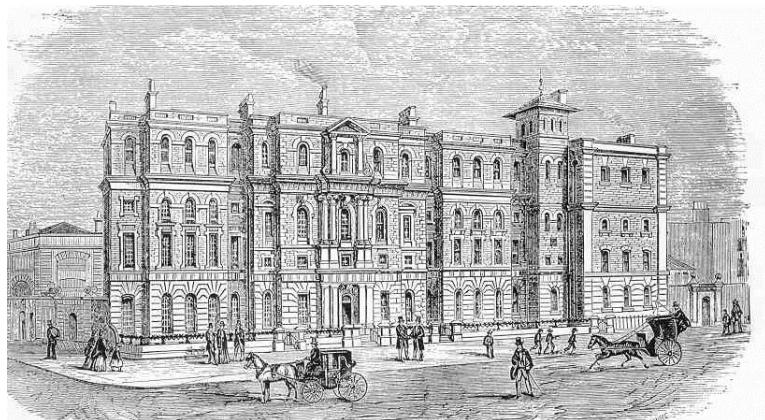
In 1858 concern in Parliament over the large number of children still not receiving schooling led to an enquiry into elementary education, the **Newcastle Commission**, which reported in 1861. It included criticism of the pupil-teacher system and the Certificate exam and it became clear that drastic changes were required in the provision of elementary education. In 1861 the Education Dept issued its **Revised Code**. Money was to be given to grant-aided schools solely on the results of an annual examination of each child in the 3 Rs by an inspector, together with the record of school attendance. In 1863 the Queen's Scholarships were suspended and replaced with retrospective (partial) grants to colleges on behalf of their students, payable only on teachers who had trained for two years and completed a

¹ *St. Mark's College, Chelsea was founded by the National Society in 1841 and took the title Normal College or Training College in a deliberate attempt to organise on collegiate lines, modelled on the ancient universities. The title 'college' was gradually adopted by other teacher training institutions but at first 'Normal School' and 'Normal College' were interchangeable. By 1860 'Training College' had been generally adopted in preference to 'Normal College'.*

probationary period of two years in the schools. This put colleges at risk of not receiving any money at all if students abandoned a teaching career during or after their training. After taking their certificates BRC graduates were given assistance in finding positions in British Schools. They were expected to 'take charge of any schools to which they may be appointed, and make no change without permission'. Reduced grants also meant that teacher training colleges were now obliged to charge fees. Student numbers at BRC declined from 95 in 1862 to 61 in 1867. Its fees were 5 guineas [£5 5s] in the 1870s and £10 per annum by 1883.

Impact of the 1870 Education Act

The passing of the 1870 Education Act saw an increase in the number of students entering college began. The establishment of **Board schools**, maintained out of State funds supplemented by local rates and administered by locally elected School Boards, was welcomed by the BFSS. In particular, the clause stipulating that religious instruction in the new Board schools was to be completely undenominational was completely in tune with the long established principles of the BFSS. The BFSS encouraged its trained teachers to take posts in Board schools as well as British schools, and even used the newly established Board School in Belvedere Place, opposite BRC, for teaching practice in addition to the model school in BRC itself. The Act created an immediate need for more trained teachers, as only certificated teachers were appointed to Board schools. The system of deferred grants was modified and **Queen's Scholarships** were revived, the term now applying to any pupil-teacher who came high enough in the exam to secure admission to a training college. The number of students applying to BRC increased rapidly. An additional story was added to the main building to accommodate them, and the girls' model school was moved offsite.



Left: A view of Borough Road College. Undated [btw 1870 – 1890] In 1892 the building became Borough Polytechnic and is now part of London South Bank University. Below: Borough Road College, Isleworth

Move to Isleworth

In April 1890 Borough Road College transferred out of inner-city Southwark to the then green and leafy Isleworth. Its new site had originally been built as "The International College, Spring Grove" in 1867, but was sold to the BFSS after financial difficulties. The BFSS was able to afford the purchase after being made an offer for the Borough Road College site by the London County Council, to create a new polytechnic. With its 8 acres of grounds surrounded by fields and orchards, the contrast between squalid Southwark and rural Isleworth must have been huge for staff and students alike.



The boys' practice school at the Southwark premises was closed, and the BFSS's offices were moved to Temple Chambers, London.

By the time of the 1890 move the **college syllabus** included “School Management”, “Writing and Dictation”, “Reading”, “Freehand drawing”, “Animal Physiology”, “trigonometry”, “Political Economy”, “Latin”, as well as most subjects commonly taught in primary and secondary schools, such as Maths, Geography, French, History, English, Music and Chemistry. Classes such as “Matriculation”, “Intermediate Arts and Science” and some subjects to Final B.A were also available for students taking their studies to University levels.

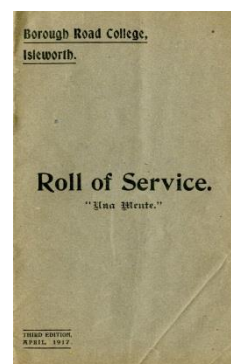


The new site with its gymnasium and playing fields coincided with the contemporary emphasis in improving the nation’s health and fitness as well as the appointment of the first Oxbridge educated principal, who maintained a firm belief in the moral worth of sport and fitness. An enormous emphasis was therefore now placed on **sport** at Borough Road College. Every student had to take part in some sport. Inter-college athletics meets were held from 1898, rugby was developing rapidly and football was a particularly prominent part of college life.

World Wars

The College buildings were taken over in 1916 by the War Office as a depot for the Motor Transport Department of the Army Service Corps. Those students who had not been called up (only 10 remaining by autumn 1917), were transferred to Richmond Theological College, as were students from Westminster Training College. In July 1919 the military vacated the College, and following extensive renovations and a payment of £3410 from the War Office for damage caused, Borough Road College reopened to 143 students on 27th October 1919. Nearly 800 students, former students and tutors had served in the forces and of these 111 lost their lives.

During WW2 the College was able to remain in its own buildings, where the students were joined by those from the College of St Mark and St John and from Westminster College. Air raid shelters were built, although on the night of 22nd September 1940 when 3 bombs landed in the college grounds, damaging the physics lab, the students had been asleep in their dorms. In 1942 the Admiralty erected a canteen and recreational building in the grounds but full requisition was successfully resisted.



The 1950s and 60s saw expansion both in student numbers and buildings. Stockwell College in Kent was sold, to fund development at BRC in Isleworth, and the women students returned to BRC after an absence of nearly a century. By 1970 the number of students was over 1000.

In 1976 Borough Road College merged with **Maria Grey College** and **Chiswick Polytechnic** to become **West London Institute of Higher Education**. This college became **Brunel University College** in 1995 before finally becoming the Osterley campus of **Brunel University** in 1997. In 2006 the Osterley campus was sold and all departments moved to Brunel’s campus in Uxbridge.