

# History of 'James Gillespie's'

## by Elaine J.C. Cochrane, (Form 3.c.) 1953

### Chapter Four

#### The Third School (1914-1936)

On 7th April, 1914, the old 'Boroughmuir' became the new 'James Gillespie's'. At last 'we' had a comfortable and well-situated school on Bruntsfield Links, on the historic Burgh Muir<sup>1</sup>. This building was a 'dream' school compared with the old building in Gillespie Crescent. It is probably the highest [above sea level] school in the city. From the window on the middle floor and upwards there is a significant view to the north and north-east of the city. The building itself has many long corridors, and big airy classrooms with large windows.



In the same year an experimental class on the Montessori System<sup>4</sup> was started in the Infant Department.

Two years later in 1916, Mr Blacklaws, B.A., was transferred to Broughton School and Mr T.J. Burnett became the new headmaster of James Gillespie's in his place. The school continued to grow and in September, 1923, an important step was taken. This was, that a Post-Intermediate Course was added. In addition, 'James Gillespie's' was combined with Warrender Park School. At that time, both boys and girls attended each of these schools and when the two schools were joined, the Infants went to Gillespie's and the Juniors went to Warrender Park School [on Marchmont Crescent]. The Seniors attended 'James Gillespie's'. But the two were one school, now known as 'James Gillespie's Secondary School', though it was not yet a complete Secondary School.

Founder's Day was instituted in 1926 to commemorate the birth 200 years before (i.e. in 1726) of James Gillespie. The celebration of Founder's Day was to be observed each year on the second Friday in June. During the war, however, this was changed to Commemoration Day and each year it is now held on the most convenient date in the Session. In 1926 also, the 'House' system was introduced. The names of the Houses are Gilmore, Roslin, Spylaw and Warrender. The colours representing these Houses are blue, yellow, red and green respectively and every pupil works hard to gain points for their own House.

On the 10th June, 1927, a replica of the 'Burn' bust of James Gillespie<sup>5</sup> by Mr H.S. Gamley<sup>4</sup> (a distinguished former pupil of 'James Gillespie's') was unveiled in 'our' School. The Lord Provost, Alexander Stevenson, unveiled the bust.



Later, the same year, a new school badge and motto was adopted. The badge was a unicorn's head with the motto – 'Fidelis et Fortis' i.e. 'Faithful and Strong'.

In the next year (1928), an important date was 8th May, when 'James Gillespie's' was recognised by the Scottish Education Department as a complete Secondary School. In 1929, the school became a secondary school for girls only. The Warrender Park School became James Gillespie's Boys School. It was now a preparatory school for boys entering secondary schools and it no longer had any connection with the Girls' School. In May 1930, 'our' school reached its full position as one of the leading schools of Edinburgh, with the title of 'James Gillespie's High School for Girls'.

During the next few years there was a need for more room and some property immediately next to the school, (Swan Watson's Photographic Studio) was bought and pulled down. An Infant Department and gymnasium was built where the studio had been. This new Annexe was opened in September, 1934. Even this did not give all the room that was needed and on 22nd June, 1936, the Rev. W. Guthrie proposed to the Education Committee that a new high school for girls should be built in the grounds of [the recently acquired] Bruntsfield House. He also proposed that the existing 'James Gillespie's' High School should be converted into a Primary Department. Plans for this alteration had just been completed in 1939 when war started, and they could not be carried out.

This period in the school's history was brought to an end by the retirement of Mr Burnett on 5th October, 1936. He had been Headmaster of 'James Gillespie's' for twenty years. During his appointment at 'our' school he brought about many changes from which the school has benefitted greatly. The new school badge, the 'House system' and the 'Prefect system' were all brought about by Mr Burnett. He did not live very long to enjoy his retirement, however, but died on 17th November, 1937.

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#### Notes:

1. Many interesting and romantic events took place on the Burgh Muir. King David I is believed to have gifted it to the City in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and at that time it was almost entirely covered by the Forest of Drumaelch. It was on the Burgh Muir that James IV assembled part of his army before marching to Flodden, in 1513, where his army was defeated and he himself was killed. Where the Meadows are now, there used to be a loch called the Burgh Loch. About 1597 the Magistrates formed a company for the brewing of beer, using the water from this Loch which was pumped to the brewery by means of a windmill. This company has a very grand title - 'The Fellowship and Society of the Ale and Beer Brewers of the Burgh of Edinburgh'. After about 20 years it broke up. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the plague broke out very often and Edinburgh people who had it were sent to the Burgh Muir to prevent it spreading in the City. The Burgh Muir was also known as the Tyburn of Edinburgh because a gibbet had been erected there for nearly 100 years. Many criminals were hanged there, including six English pirates, a member of the Clan MacGregor and some Egyptians (gypsies). It was also under this gibbet that the Marquis of Montrose was buried, in 1659. In days gone by, quarry men were allowed to take stone from Bruntsfield Links – part of the Burgh Muir – and what 'we' call 'Tumbler's Hollow', used to be the City quarry. Bruntsfield Links has also been used for golf, for centuries, and was the home of the Edinburgh Burgers' Golfing Society. This Society claims to be the oldest Golfing Club in Scotland. Nowadays the Links are only for putting. They are also used occasionally by the Royal Company of Archers – The Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland – for practising Archery.

2. The Main building (1914-1966).      3. The West entrance (1914-1966).

4. The Montessori method is a system of education originated by Dr Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor of the University of Rome. She was born near Ancona, in 1869, and died last year. [1952]

5. The replica of the 'Burn' bust of James Gillespie by Mr H.S. Gamley

6. Mr Henry Snell Gamley, R.S.A. - Among his more important works were the statue of St Andrew above the door of the Freemasons' Hall and a statue of King Edward VII in the courtyard at Holyrood Palace.

7. I had much difficulty in finding out about the unicorn crest. The Court of the Lord Lyon King of Arms calls it 'a non-armorial device' and not a 'coat of arms'. In Fairbairn's 'Book of Crests of the families of Great Britain and Ireland' there is the following information:

'Gillespie, Scotland, a unicorn's head argent (silver) armed (with a horn) or (gold). Motto - 'Fidelis et in Bello Fortis'. There is also a plate of a unicorn's head which is almost identical with 'our' school badge. The words 'in Bello', in the motto, were left out since they were not suitable for a school motto. Just as a matter of interest, there was an old superstition that a unicorn's horn was a good antidote against poison.