

# High School Buildings



This topic covers School Buildings along with associated locations, including Sports Ground through the ages.

During the course of its lengthy existence the School has occupied a variety of locations that has included several different sites within the precincts of Holyrood Abbey, the first purpose-built home in the garden of the former Blackfriars Monastery. Cardinal Beaton's Palace, Infirmary Street, Thomas Hamilton's wonderful classical building on Calton Hill and, since 1968, at the Barnton campus. While several other locations are mooted in various Histories, the following are the established sites.

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## Timeline

**Holyrood Abbey** 1128-1578

**Cardinal Beaton's Palace** 1555-1569 ??

**Collegiate Church of St Giles** or **Collegiate Church of St Mary in the Fields** 1569-1578

**Blackfriars Monastery** 1578-1777

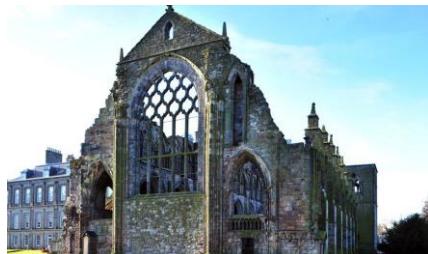
**Infirmary Street** (High School Yards) 1777-1829)

**Regent Road** 1829-1968 (Junior School at Regent Road until 1931)

**Northfield Broadway** (Junior School) 1931 – 1973 (when the school continued without connection to Senior School)

**Barnton** 1968 - today

## The Buildings Timeline – in images



*Holyrood Abbey 1128 - 1555*



*Cardinal Beaton's House,  
Blackfriars Wynd (1555-1569)*



*Blackfriars Monastery (1578-1777)*



High School Yards (1777–1829)



Regent Road, Calton Hill (1829–1968)



Barnton (1968 – the present)

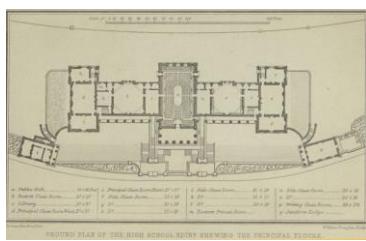
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## The Regent Road Campus

The buildings on the Regent Road campus started with the 1829 construction which created the familiar edifice, containing the principal building and two classroom blocks in wings to the South. Over the years, many other buildings were added within the perimeter walls, including:

1. The Science block - 1895
2. The Gym and Swimming block - 1895
3. The Classroom block in the West playground – circa 1950 (1934 *History*, 1949 2nd edition p39)
4. The Grubby in the East playground – 1935 (1934 *History*, 1949 2nd edition p38)
5. Temporary Classrooms in the North playground which housed the Junior School between 1887 and 1931
6. Air Raid shelters in playground - 1939
7. Regent Terrace houses, numbers 1, 2 and 4, 1947 onwards

A comparison of prices between 1829 and 2019 shows that the cost of the original building, at £34,000 would translate to £3.7 million today. Curiously, the advertised sale of No 1 Regent Terrace in 2019 indicated a price of £2.85 million. The cost of property has evidently skewed dramatically in the 190 year interval.



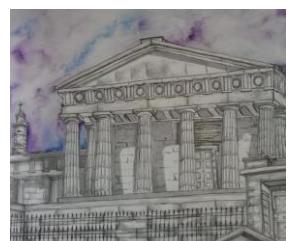
The Regent Road Site Plan, 1829



A contemporary engraving circa 1830



Boys leaving Regent Road for the last time, 28th June 1968



An original artwork by pupil  
Tessa Minshull 2018

## This entry is from John Murray's 1997 History

What does emerge clearly from the sparse material that remains is the extremely nomadic nature of the school's existence until it occupied its first purpose-built construction during 1578 at a site in the churchyard of the former Blackfriars monastery, a site that it was to occupy, except for a brief spell during the Civil War, for the next two centuries. Initially, it seems probable that the school occupied several sites within the precincts of Holyrood Abbey. The first reasonably precise location is in a 1503 Instrument of Sasine which makes reference to the school being situated "in the Vennel of the Church of Saint Mary in the Fields". Thereafter, at some point between 1516 and 1555, it was based in a schoolhouse in the Kirk O' Field Wynd, although rumours circulated that that building had fallen down by 1552! Between 1555 and 1569 classes took place in Cardinal Beaton's palace at the foot of Blackfriars Wynd and for the next nine years the young boys were educated in the provost's lodging of either the collegiate church of Saint Giles or the collegiate church of Saint Mary in the Fields.

## The following is an extract from the Wikipedia entry.

Through the centuries, the school has been located at many sites throughout the city, including the Vennel of the Church of St. Mary in the Fields (c. 1503 – c. 1516); Kirk o' Field Wynd (c. 1516–1555); Cardinal Beaton's House in

Blackfriars Wynd (1555–1569); the Collegiate Church of St. Giles or St. Mary in the Fields (1569–1578); Blackfriars monastery (1578–1777); High School Yards (1777–1829); the famous Regent Road building on Calton Hill (1829–1968); and Jock's Lodge (1931–1972). The Jock's Lodge site is now the Royal High Primary, and is no longer associated with the secondary school.

For many years the school maintained a boarding facility for pupils from outside Edinburgh. The boarders ranged in age from six to eighteen. The House, as it was known, was located at 24 Royal Terrace and in later years moved to 13 Royal Terrace. When the boarding house was closed the records of all boarders, the artefacts such as the board with the names of head boys, and the memorial to boarders killed in the 1939–1945 war, were lost.

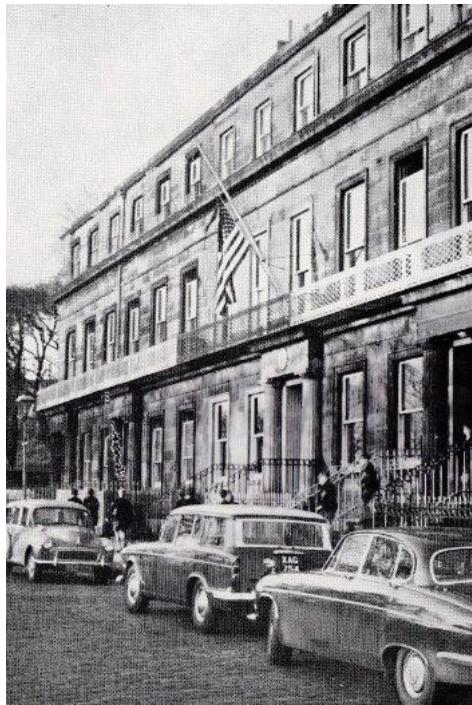
### **Proposals for alternative uses for the Regent Road building**

Various attempts have made by the Town Council over the years to purchase the Regent Road building, compulsorily if necessary, for purposes including a National Gallery. Rector Marshall in 1903 was one individual who thwarted these efforts. A move was afoot however, prompted by lack of space and facilities, but also politically on the grounds that the school should be able to support comprehensive education. Plans for the Royal High site to become home to a new photography centre emerged in 2001, inspired by the fact that David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson – widely recognised as the founding fathers of modern photography – developed their skills at a studio at Calton Hill. The venture, was backed by Sir Sean Connery and celebrity snappers including Albert Watson, but foundered due to lack of Council funding.

The latest proposals include conversion to a Hotel, or alternatively to a new St Mary's Music School. The building is apparently aiming to be the longest running abandoned public building in UK, and possibly in Europe and the rest of the World.

### **Regent Road classroom accommodation**

Numbers 1, 2 and 4 Regent Terrace were acquired individually from 1947 onwards to accommodate the increasing school role. Many pupils fondly remember the accommodation, despite draughty and cold learning environment.



*This historic picture shows the USA Consulate (No 3 Regent Terrace) with the flag flying at half-mast following the assassination of President John F Kennedy on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963. (pupils abound).*

*The school used 1, 2 and 4 Regent Terrace.*

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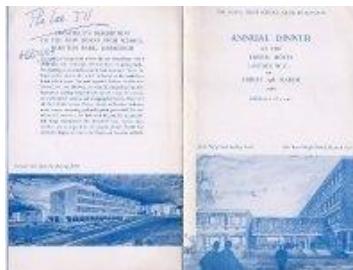


*This 2019 photo shows No 1 Regent Terrace – the single four storey property on the left. It is on sale at £2.85 million, its value contrasting curiously with the cost of the 1829 building, which at £34,000 would cost £3.7 million if translated to today's prices. This shows just how much property prices have skewed over time. Note the USA flag still flying over No 3.*

## The Barnton Campus



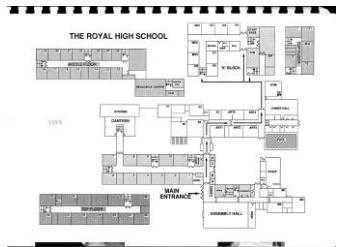
1931 Ordnance Survey (showing the Barnton railway line)



The architects plans of 1966



1969 aerial view



School buildings plan 1995

Many readers of this document will know only Barnton as their school, so their detailed history may well start here. The document link below seeks to describe the lifecycle of the Barnton building, from the decision taken in 1961 to proceed with the construction of the new school.

Click [here](#) for the account of 'The evolution of the Barnton Campus'.

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## Sports Grounds

(This entry from the Royal High School Club website)

Royal High Pupils have played on many grounds during the School's history. This item records the history from early days at Holyrood, a Sports Field. The locations marked with an \* are those used solely by the Former Pupils

1870-1971 Holyrood

1873-1874 Raimes Park Bonnington \*

1874-1877 Warrender Park \*

1877- 1878 No ground

1878-1879 Warrender Park \*

1879-1880 Old Merchiston Castle Ground \*

1880-1887 Old Carlton Ground at Grange Loan \*

1887-1897 Newington \*

1897-1920 Union Field Corstorphine

1920-1987 Jock's Lodge \*

1987 -1999 Dunfermline College Campus Cramond \*

1987- present day - Royal High School Campus Barnton



The Club's first ground was at Holyrood which was a small area of the Royal Park and was shared by the Royal High F.P. cricket club, and laterally by the Athletic Club. This relationship has lasted through the many moves but the different uses of the grounds lead to many an argument between the sections, mainly centring on how to protect the wicket. Although the rugby club moved many times trying to find a more suitable ground, the club retained the use of Holyrood for the Regent road school and as a training area until 1971 when the ground was handed back to the Royal Estates. It has in the last few years been absorbed into the ground used for the Scottish Parliament, and the site of the debating chamber is very close to the' footprint' of the pavilion and changing rooms. *Has its use been improved one asks?*

The search for a suitable ground continued from 1873 until 1897. The six moves were motivated by the demands of finding a ground that had space for a large size pitch, a pavilion and accessibility. The last factor was helped by the suburban railway which made the grounds that were used on the north side of the town more accessible for matches and training which was not a great feature of Victorian rugby. Although the club only played at Newington for a short time, it was agreed at the S.R.U.'s 1895-1896 A.G.M. that the club's ground at Newington would be used for the Trial and District matches.

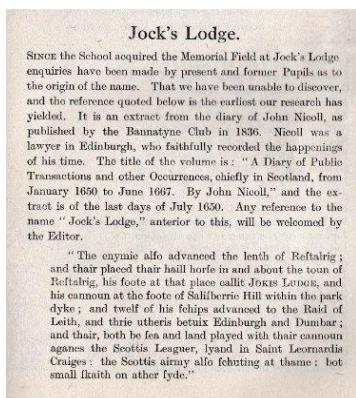
The Newington ground was considered too small and another search for a suitable ground was started in 1896. At this time an opportunity to lease the ground at Corstorphine, which had been leased by the University, who were

moving to their new ground at Craiglockhart. A large Bazaar, supported by the P.P.s and F.P.s, was held to raise the finance to lease the ground at Corstorphine. The S.R.U. even considered buying the land and building a new International stadium, but before they made up their mind the ground was taken over by the City. Royal High might have played at the international ground, very much the same as Stewarts who's Inverleith Ground was Scotland's home until 1925 when Murrayfield was opened.

It was decided on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1919 that a purchase of a playing would be part of a memorial for the F.P.s who gave their lives in the 1914-1918 war. Dr. James Watt purchased the ground and access at Jock's Lodge and sold it on to the School and F.P.s at a sum less than the original purchase price. Jock's Lodge was to become the home of the club for the next 70 years. A pavilion was built in 1925 and in 1932 a stand was added. Jock's Lodge featured in the sporting life of thousands of High School P.P.s and F.P.s until the school moved to Barnton 1968. The fact that there were playing fields at Barnton meant that the City's support for Jock's Lodge was withdrawn. This event plus the stopping of an athletic fee meant that the Club could no longer support the finances needed to run Jock's Lodge. As the club's debts increased it was reluctantly agreed to sell Jock's Lodge and move to the School's grounds at Barnton. The money from the sale was used to build at Barnton a pavilion, a bowling rink and an all-weather hockey pitch in the hope of developing a community sports complex.

The rugby club moved yet again with a brief stay at the Dunfermline College Campus while the pavilion was being built at Barnton. The Barnton campus, which was opened in 1999 with a game against the Co-optimists, was to be the latest Royal High Rugby Club ground.

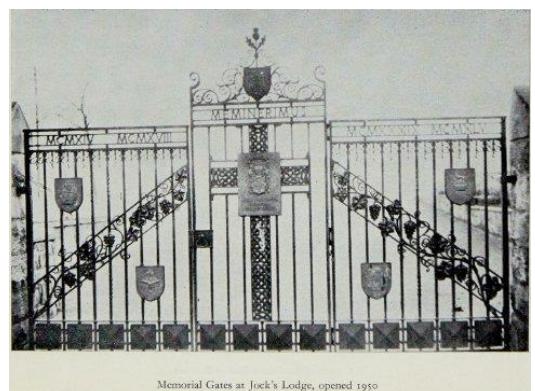
The images below are a selection of Sports ground images from club archives. . *Lest anyone ask why Jock's Lodge was so named, the panel on the left contains an extract from a vintage Schola Regia explaining one possible explanation.*



*The derivation of Jock's Lodge (or at least one version of it...)*



*Photo of dedication in by Prince Henry in 1925*



*The Memorial Gate, installed in 1950, moved to the Barnton campus playground in 1968*

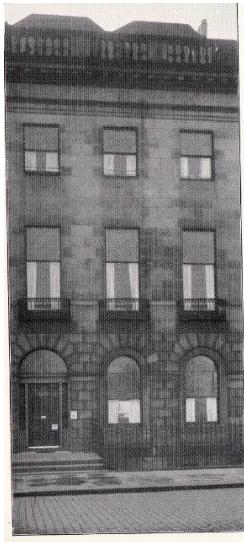
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## School House

For many years the school maintained a boarding facility for pupils from outside Edinburgh. The boarders ranged in age from six to eighteen. The House, as it was known, located at 24 Royal Terrace, was acquired in 1927, and in later years moved to 13 Royal Terrace. When the boarding house was closed, the records of all boarders, the artefacts such as the board with the names of head boys, and the memorial to boarders killed in the 1939-1945 war, were lost.

Famous pupil residents included a number of Polish evacuees during the Second World War, one of whom, Andrzej T. Falkiewicz, became Dux in 1946. Robin Cook, later MP and Foreign Secretary boarded there in the early 1960's. An RHS Club President (Robin Boog) boarded around the same time as Robin Cook, and was displaced from his superior accommodation by the older boy !

The photos below show the Boarding Houses at 24 and 13 Royal Terrace.



SCHOOL BOARDING HOUSE, 24 ROYAL TERRACE

1927 – First School House opens at No 24 Royal Terrace

## Royal High School House

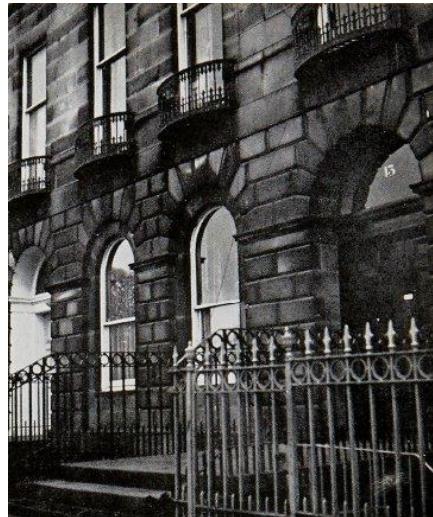
24 ROYAL TERRACE

FIVE years ago the School House, beautifully situated in Royal Terrace, was opened under the care and supervision of Mr and Mrs Dawson. Starting with six boys, we have seen our numbers gradually but surely increase until, at the beginning of this year, we had thirteen boys in the House. Unfortunately, however, of the twenty boys who have been there, only three were the sons of old boys of the School.

There is accommodation for some twenty boys, and we look for, and would welcome, the support of our old boys abroad, as we should then feel that the House was fulfilling its true function—to be a Home for the sons of former pupils resident overseas.

One of the privileges granted to the House is that the boys have at any time the use of the field at Holyrood for football or cricket.

While the House is closed during the School holidays, suitable arrangements, if necessary, are made for boys whose parents are resident abroad.



The House at 13 Royal Terrace which closed in 1970. The Watson's Headmaster generously promised to give 'sympathetic consideration' to any boarding pupils who wished to transfer school.

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