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Visionary who left his mark on Uxbridge and Mexico

What do a 200-year-old, glass-fronted building in the centre of Uxbridge, a family based in Mexico and thousands of children have in common? The answer is Uxbridge High School. Reporter **DAN COOMBS** finds out more

IN THE Greenway, Uxbridge, stands Uxbridge High School, one of the borough's oldest schools. Its roots go back to the 1800s, and some of the current school buildings to before the First World War.

This is its bicentenary year, and recently, staff and pupils held a special ceremony, converting a classroom into Victorian style, with pupils using chalkboards and wooden desks, and not a computer in sight.

The school's history began in the old Lancasterian School for Boys, and Girls School for Industry, in The Market House in Uxbridge High Street.

A special school committee was elected to supervise the new

institution, and a master and mistress appointed at annual salaries of 80 guineas and £15 respectively.

Children 'of all labouring people or mechanics' were eligible for entry, and the school contained 204 pupils during the first year.

By 1835, the Market House classrooms were deemed inadequate, and pupils moved to premises in Cowley Road, Uxbridge.

A century later, to meet rising pupils numbers amid population changes, an extensive reorganisation of education in Uxbridge was undertaken.

A school in The Greenway was specified as the perfect location, opening as The Greenway County

School in 1928, transferring pupils from the old Lancasterian School.

Local historian, Ken Pearce, explained how the old Market House, although used for market trading, also had meeting rooms for societies and for people to vote in elections.

It has been fully renovated inside, and one part of the under-storey has been encased in a glass wall and awaits retail tenants.

"At Uxbridge High, the red brick buildings near the road are among the only ones left from the previous school. Others have all been gradually added over the years," said Mr Pearce.

"As time and history change, so does the look of the area."

Back to the market house in the early 1800s. Lancasterian Schools were part of an educational movement founded by the visionary Joseph Lancaster. By the time of his death in 1838, more than 1,200 schools had been created across the world.

Their main teaching technique was 'peer tutoring', a form of learning in which pupils passed on information to each other.

The distant descendants of Lancaster now live in Mexico, one of the countries to which he successfully introduced the schools, and they recently became involved with Uxbridge High School's bicentenary celebrations.

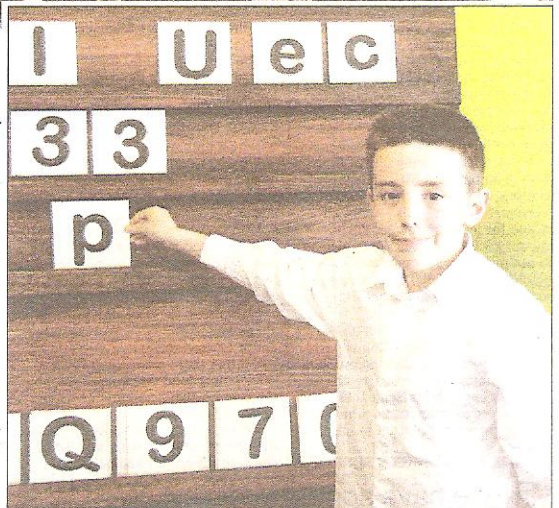
A plaque from the family, demonstrating the links between



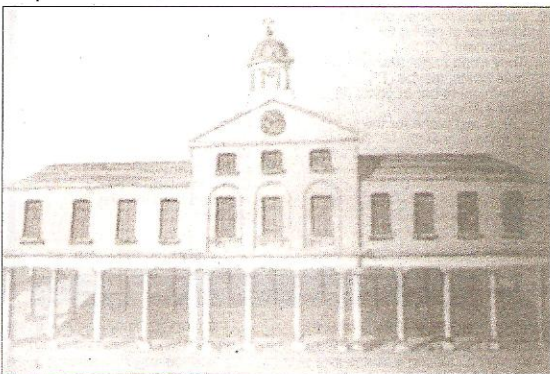
OLD SCHOOL: (Above and left) Children at Uxbridge High School go back to the Victorian era; a plaque donated to Uxbridge High School from the Lancaster family. Photos contributed

Britain and Mexico, was given to the school, to be displayed in the £6million, and appropriately named, Lancaster building, the school's sixth form block opened a year ago, complete with its landmark wind turbine.

Mr Pearce said: "The new building is magnificent, I was quite overwhelmed. It has excellent facilities."



LETTERS AND NUMBERS: A pupil uses the boards as they were in the Lancasterian era. Contributed



CHANGING FACE: (Left to right) A painting of the Market House as it was in the 1800s, situated in Uxbridge High Street; and as it looks today. Photos contributed

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