

Suffolk stately home all 75 years as a much-loved

PAUL GEATER
paul.geater@newsquest.co.uk

Brandeston Hall, near Framlingham, is one of Suffolk's finest stately homes - and for the last 75 years it's been part of one of the county's top schools.

Parts of the building date from Tudor times. Much of the hall was destroyed by fire in the 19th century, but it was rebuilt in its previous style and you need to be an expert to spot the join!

During the Second World War it was an army headquarters - but after the conflict it became surplus to requirements and was soon snapped up by Framlingham College to be its new junior school for boys aged from eight to 13 before transferring to the main school four miles away.

It was bought for the school by the Society of Old Framlinghamians as a permanent memorial for those from the College who had lost their lives in the war.

The first pupils arrived in September 1948 and next week there is a special celebration to mark its 75 years as a school.

Former pupils who arrive at the school for the event will instantly recognise the place - its approach hasn't changed over the years. But behind the scenes things are very different.

I know. I was a pupil at Brandeston Hall for four years from 1968 to 1972 and



Jonathan Egan at Brandeston Hall

this week was the first time I had set foot in the place for more than 51 years! The first thing I noticed was

that when I was there the identity of the place was very much Brandeston Hall. "Framlingham College Junior School" was very much in

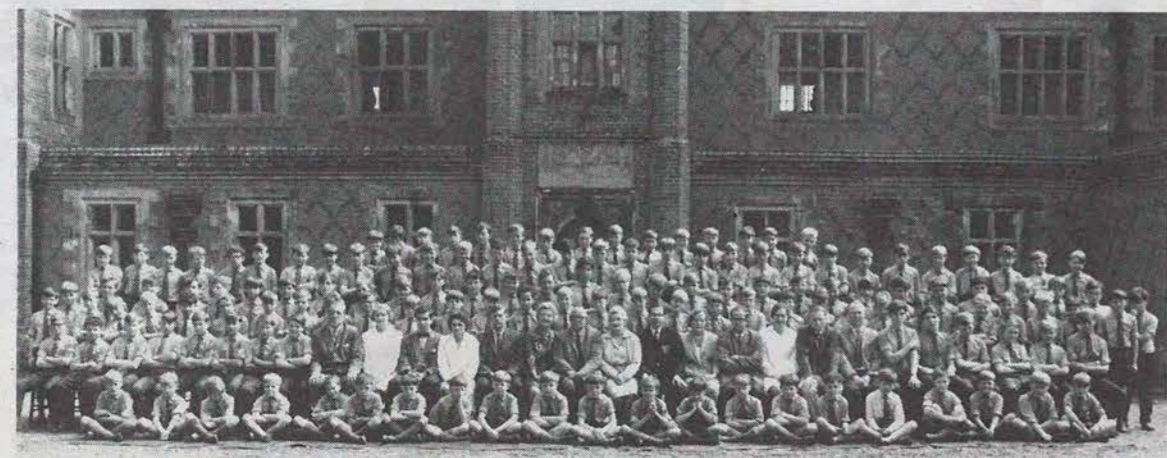
smaller letters underneath. Now it's much more integrated with the senior school - that was a process that started during my days there during the 1970s.

Today's Head of the Prep School is Jonathan Egan - and the place has a much more relaxed feel than the rather traditional public school I remember from my time there.

For a start it's fully co-educational - and it offers children education and care over a much wider age range.

There are nursery facilities for youngsters as young as two years old which are stepped up through to pre-prep and prep school education until the youngsters are ready to transfer to the College itself at 13.

One significant change is that when I was pupil there about three quarters of the boys were boarders. Only a



A school picture of Brandeston Hall in 1968 - the term before Paul Geater started at the school

Image: SOCIETY OF OLD FRAMLINGHAMIANS

ready to mark school



Princess Alice of Athlone opened Brandeston Hall in 1949, a year after the first pupils arrived
Image: FRAMLINGHAM COLLEGE

Image: FRAMLINGHAM COLLEGE

quarter went home at night.

Now there are 200 pupils at the school, but only 45 are boarders - and while in my day boarders were there seven days a week for a whole term apart from occasional "exeat" weekends, now there are flexi-boarders and occasional boarders as well.

Mr Egan said there wasn't the divide between day pupils and boarders that I remembered.

And to him the relationship with the children and their families is very important: "We are in constant contact with parents and they can keep up with pictures we post of what activities they are doing."

Framlingham College and the junior school are participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme - and members of the school have just been away on field

trips.

Mr Egan said: "Many schools go on field trips at the end of the school year. We like to do this at the beginning so it gives pupils the chance to bond together - it seems to work well."

Sports have always played a big part for pupils - but the range of activities now is a world away from what it was 50+ years ago.

There are forest classrooms, an adventure playground for younger pupils and zip wires. There are even a few golf holes.

One change is there is now a fence beside the River Deben which runs behind the school - as I remember there were always one or two incidents a term when someone "fell in" to it although, of course, no boys were ever pushed into the river!



There is now an adventure playground outside the Brandeston Hall Nursery
Image: PAUL GEATER