

# Woodard Voice

September 2021

Sharing news of development and achievement from schools throughout the Woodard community.

## Welcome to the September edition of the Woodard Voice



**Mr Richard Morse**  
Chairman

### Dear friends and colleagues,

I hope that you and all within the Woodard community have had a good opportunity for rest and recreation over the summer break. As we look forward to the start of a new academic year, I am writing to wish all our school communities every good wish and blessings for the new academic year. This also allows me to bring you a news update.

Last summer Denstone College and Denstone College Prep School at Smallwood Manor announced they were to merge onto the Denstone College site.

The schools had operated as separate entities from sites a few miles apart. The process to bring the schools together has been an example of how such a combination should work, and it is of great credit to governors and staff at both schools that the new prep school at Denstone College will open with an encouraging roster of pupils in new premises in early September. The site at Smallwood Manor has been sold to a provider of specialist residential care for children and young people and the net proceeds will be applied to support Denstone College Prep School in future. The Woodard Board thanks all involved and wishes all parties continued success in the future.

After several years of running successfully on a very tight budget, the impact of the Covid pandemic was such that the governors at St James' School, Grimsby had to look for a different solution to resolve the pressure on funding and address the strong competition in the local market. Working with the Woodard Board, a deal was negotiated allowing a local competitor (St Martin's, part of the Alpha Schools group) to acquire the school and to merge it with their

existing prep facility in Grimsby. The deal completed in early May 2021, and the Woodard Board thanks all the governors and staff at St James' for their help and understanding in the process of transition.

The outcome is the most beneficial that could have been achieved, allowing for continuity of education and ongoing employment of staff. Again, the Woodard Board is incredibly grateful for the support it received from the governors of St James's who performed admirably in challenging circumstances.

As you will recall, the school operations at Abbots Bromley ceased in 2019 after many years of losses. We initially signed an agreement to sell the school buildings to an overseas educational buyer, and this should have completed in July 2020. Having agreed to an extension, we anticipated completion in January 2021, but this did not occur as the buyers said they had not secured all funds. We have thus re-marketed the site and are working to sign an agreement with a development partner. The costs of maintaining the school site in the meantime have been met from the substantial deposits forfeited by the buyer that failed to complete the acquisition. We are very grateful to



all of the governors who have stuck with the school company during what, at times, has been a very difficult period. Earlier this year, Pauline Norvall (Custos) and Heather Graham (governor and long-term benefactor of the school) stood down from the Board. Both individually and through their roles with the Guild, Pauline and Heather have provided strong service and support for the school and we are very grateful for their contributions.

Woodard students are celebrating GCSE and A-Level successes following a uniquely challenging year. We have all learnt new ways of working and being together during the past year and half. Instead of physically visiting our schools as often, we have met more regularly as communities online, sharing experience and learning as we all face new challenges. This has enabled us to provide more forms of professional learning through webinars involving national and international speakers, professional development workshops for middle and senior leaders as well as continuing with our new leaders' courses. This coming year we intend to move some of these back into the face-to-face setting.

As you may be aware we are in the process of rolling out a common finance system across all Woodard schools. There have been significant but not insurmountable teething problems. The problems do not relate to the ability of the system to operate as a modern accounting system, but to the way in which reporting was specified and a technical problem relating to necessary links within the system and to school management information systems. These issues are being addressed and we will provide a further update in due course.

Woodard schools and the WAT continue to benefit from the work done to bring about savings through procurement. Beyond sourcing and specifying cost saving arrangements for Woodard schools, Jeremy Allardyce the Woodard Procurement Manager, brings considerable expertise in forming contractual relationships, and a number of schools, and the family of schools as a whole, continue to benefit from Jeremy's involvement in advising in this area.

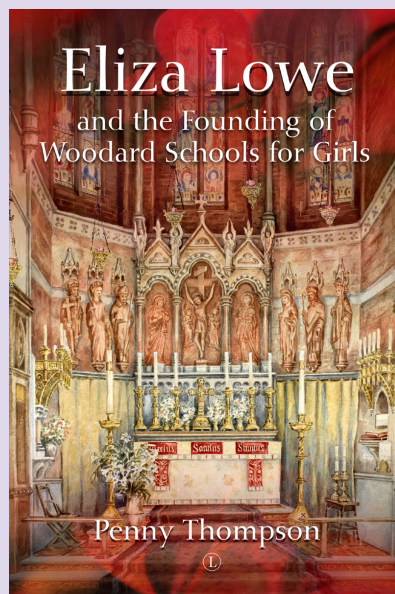
Turning to the Board of Woodard, we have welcomed Howard Dellar, a solicitor with considerable knowledge of education and of Woodard in particular, onto the Board. Earlier this year, Brendan Clover, Senior Provost for many years, announced that he was stepping down to take the reins at a local parish. Brendan has been magnificent in the role of Senior Provost and we are delighted that he is staying involved by becoming Provost of our two Taunton schools and also The Cathedral School, Llandaff. The process for identifying and appointing a new Senior Provost has been started and we will provide a further update in due course.

This comes with my best wishes for the new academic year and for continuing good health to all associated with Woodard and its schools.

With kind regards

**Richard Morse**  
**Chairman**

## Eliza Lowe and the Founding of Woodard Schools for Girls



This book, written by an old girl of the recently closed Woodard school in Abbots Bromley and based on original research, tells the story of Eliza Lowe, the older sister of Edward Clarke Lowe who founded S. Anne's in 1874, then S. Mary's and S. Winifred's in Bangor, the first schools for girls in the Woodard tradition.

To us in the 21st century the teaching of girls is taken for granted but in the era when Nathaniel Woodard, a penniless curate who had had to leave his first post in London, was promoting his master vision for middle class education for boys such thoughts were far from his mind. Woodard vehemently opposed extending his scheme to girls, thinking it a waste of time and entirely inappropriate. So why did his closest colleague Edward Clarke Lowe, as soon as he was made Provost of the Midland Division, set up S. Anne's in an old house in Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire?

Eliza Lowe and the Founding of Woodard Schools for Girls is the story of a gifted woman who ran a private school for girls firstly in Liverpool and then in Southgate Middlesex. A chapter on Woodard is followed by one on the education of girls in the 19th century, thus contextualising her story.



Penny Thompson and The Lutterworth Press  
in conjunction with the Woodard Corporation  
request the pleasure of your company to celebrate the launch of

## Eliza Lowe and the Founding of Woodard Schools for Girls

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

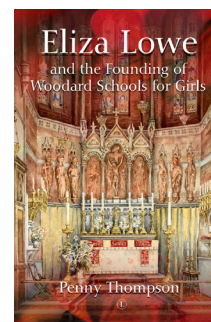
Guild Office 3pm; Book Launch 4pm  
St Marylebone's Church  
17 St. Marylebone Road  
London, NW1 5LT

RSVP: [penelopethompson@btinternet.com](mailto:penelopethompson@btinternet.com)

Please note: No car parking; short walking distance from Marylebone and Baker Street stations.

"This masterly study of Victorian women's education – taking as its focus Eliza Lowe, her brother Edward and their circle – will resonate with a wide audience."  
Susan Willmington IVO OBE PhD

Nathaniel Woodard founded an educational system 'firmly grounded in the Christian faith,' and the establishment in 1874 of the first Woodard girls' school lies at the heart of his legacy. However, the role of one remarkable woman in securing this legacy has until now been obscured. *Eliza Lowe and the Founding of Woodard Schools for Girls* is her untold story.



Published in Hardback and Paperback by The Lutterworth Press  
[www.Lutterworth.com](http://www.Lutterworth.com)

Letters from pupils describe Italian lessons, swimming in the sea, sailing, discussion of politics at breakfast and complaints from pupils wanting to leave: 'Now Mamma I don't ask you to answer very soon, but do consider whether it is worthwhile staying here to be tormented and crammed both with learning and rice pudding...' wrote Cecilia Landor. In addition to teaching girls from wealthy families Eliza Lowe also educated her younger siblings, including Edward seeing to it

that he went to Oxford and on to a successful career as Headmaster of Hurstpierpoint.

The book concludes with moving tributes to her given by Edward Lowe when dedicating the chapel at S. Anne's to her. Eliza's education had been his passport to success and now he intended to extend the benefits of a Woodard education to girls.

**Woodard Voice is published regularly.  
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