



Bradford College

# A short history of Bradford College

## Genes from the past



The past holds the secret to the genetic ingredients that have created the unique institution that is Bradford College today...

Bradford could be said to succeed on its ability to utilise four resources: its Broad Ford beck and tributary streams of soft water, which contributed to the cottage industry of weaving within its natural valley; its largely poor people who from five years of age upwards were the backbone of its labour resources within that industry; its pioneers who led the country in welfare and educational reform; its “useful men” – with the capital to captain industry and the foresightedness to maximise on and develop the potential of canal, rail, steam and power machines that galvanised the industrial revolution.



But there is much more to “Worstedopolis” as Bradford was known when it was the capital and centre of the world stage in the production of worsted textiles and the story of its College is not rooted in textile enterprise alone.

Bradford had other resources from the outset– stone from its quarries and iron from its seams at Bowling and Low Moor, to the extent that the “Best Yorkshire” iron was in full use at Trafalgar, Waterloo and the Crimea. Bradford was ripe territory for engineers and inventors who automated the production of the woollen processes. Bradford has also made its name in areas that range from automobile production to artificial limb design. All of these strands are evident in the very earliest portfolio on offer – and many survive today.

Once technical training emerged, it began – then as today - to deliver the skills that employers and markets require - but whilst Bradford buildings in their locally quarried golden stone rose around the slums, a world of financial “haves” and “have nots” poured into the town. For some of the more enlightened reformers, it was too much to take – and wave upon wave of protest and change began to emerge in the prospering town. The

Bradford “firsts” put the town into the educational spotlight and the portfolio of today reflects the continuation of this work and focus too. It is the “softer skills” together with “getting on” that has made Bradford’s College not just an historic force within its city - but also a leading contributor today to the national and international skills agenda that outline the key future issues of the 21st century.

## Putting down roots



The roots of the College are to be found in Bradford Mechanics Institute. The first Institute was founded by radicals as early as 1825 and quickly collapsed due to the unpopularity of their views amongst the middle classes. In order to advance the working classes, non-conformists and businessmen successfully revived the Institute in the 1830s. Led by the 26 year old Baptist Joseph Farrar, along with James Acworth and Dr Steadman, Quakers, John Hustler and Henry Harris and Congregationalists, Titus Salt and Robert Milligan, it opened its first premises in March, 1832 in Piccadilly and by 1839 moved to larger premises in Wells Street.

Teachers were voluntary and funds depended upon fees raised from lectures, exhibitions, excursions and concerts. The focus was on essential skills – writing and arithmetic with evening classes in literature, history and the popular sciences. The textile industry did not support the Institute noticeably in its early days, preferring to keep trade secrets in the family, but it was recognised by a stuff merchant John Goodman as early as 1859 as contributing to the furtherance of many working class people within their employment. Successful, though struggling from the start, by 1863 it had its own School of Industrial Design and Art – the nucleus of technical education - and was employing its first paid, fully qualified teachers.

## Awakening the industrialists



Bradford’s industrialists began to come on board in the years following the 1867 exhibition, which popularised French fashions and demanded greater artistry. Local industrialists joined forces with the Council of the Mechanics Institute and the Chamber of Commerce in 1877 where Henry Mitchell was instrumental in his recommendations for technical education to feed the local industry. The sub-committee recommended the establishment of a weaving school to form “an elementary class for instruction in weaving; the providing of looms for the use of students attending the class; the formation of a higher class in which designing and harmony of colour should be taught; and an appeal to the merchants and manufacturers of the town and neighbourhood for

subscriptions in maturing such a scheme.”

The funds began to pour in, starting with £2000 as a guarantee sum, and boosted by Henry Mitchell, Ripley, Salt and local industrialists. A new “Italianate” building was erected at the corner of Tyrell Street, Bridge Street and Market Street, and the foundation stone was laid in 1870. The Technical School was born. Its total cost was £23,500 and on 2nd October 1871, Bradford MP Mr W.E. Forster led declared it open. It had classrooms for over 700 students, an art room, a lecture room with 1,500 seats, a saloon seating 350 for sales, meetings, exhibitions and speakers, a library with 9,935 books and a permanent paid teaching staff. The first Council President of the Mechanics Institute in its new premises was Mr Henry Mitchell, who was later knighted for his services to education in Bradford.

Free scholarships were available to able students, with free elementary evening classes continuing. The day portfolio included applied mechanics, bookkeeping, chemistry, music, drawing, modern European languages, metallurgy, literature, political drawing, history and geography. By 1874 a small building trades School had moved in from Godwin Street – to be recognised as the Weaving School in 1877.

## The wave of educational “firsts”



Bradford pioneers were not only manorial lords, industrial investors, innovators and inventors like William Rawson, Abraham Balme, the Mann brothers, John Hustler, Samuel Cartwright and Samuel Cunliffe Lister, but pioneers of the people who rose up in protest. Making Bradford a unique city of many “firsts” in education and child welfare. It’s also a city that led the models of change across the UK and in some instances for the world.

These pioneers brought about the acts that improved hours and conditions for working children. They shaped the future of education and child welfare. They introduced day schools; the first higher grade school at Feversham Street in 1895; the first school baths at Wapping in 1897; the first school medicals at Usher Street in 1899 that gave birth to the school health service; the first school meals at Green Lane in 1901; the first model for comprehensive education – and the first middle school at Delf Hill. The statues, street names, city areas and College building names resonate with the pioneering spirit of the times: Richard Oastler, John Wood, Henry Heap, William Scoresby, George Stringer Bull, Jonathan Glyde, Henry Mitchell, William Forster, Titus Salt, James Hanson, Margaret McMillan, Miriam Lord.

Art, textiles, engineering, construction, science, child welfare, teacher training, commercial enterprise and business....These were the early influences that evolved into the highly relevant and responsive College of today.

## Expansion on a grand scale



250 students were enrolled at the outset and the council realised that a building worthy of the new quality provision was now required. The Mayor of Bradford, Mr Briggs Priestley, rallied key industrialists who raised £17,000 towards the building fund – soon boosted by a further £3,000 from the Clothworkers’ Company of London and by local sums raised. The individual sums from Henry Mitchell, W.E. Forster, Ripley, Holden, Illingworth, Priestley and others were significant –and testify to the passion the founders had for the new institution.

A year later Bradford Council bought an acre of land at the junction of Great Horton Road and Carlton Terrace and close to one of the main tributaries to the Bradford Beck – the West Brook. As a former quarry, the land was a challenging, sloping site that had been converted back into meadow. Designs were invited from architects for a new Technical School and, from 16 entries, Mr Thomas C Hope of Messrs Hope & Jardine was appointed. In June 1880, Lt. Col John Britten, the Master of the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers of the City of London, laid the memorial stone. A prospectus, published at the same time, defined technical education as “general instruction in those arts and sciences the principles of which are applicable to the various employments of life”. The design of the building was creative and “state of the art” – with public grand rooms at the front of the building to serve the city – and large, airy teaching and learning areas with leading edge ventilation, heating systems and the new patented flushing toilets. It was completed at a total cost of £37,000.



There were “technical” institutions beginning to appear in Europe but the Bradford Technical School was unique in its direct relevance to the textile and mechanical industries associated not only with Bradford – but the country as a whole. With its leading citizens behind it, Bradford notched up another “first” in its educational and reform crown. The Technical School required a grand opening – and it was inevitable that its birth would make a huge media splash – and it did.

## 1882 - The Grand Opening of the College



On June 23, 1882, the then Prince and Princess of Wales (later King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra) came to open the new Technical School and were given a welcome today's Royals would envy: "From Saltaire Station to the Technical School, a distance of four miles, was one continuous avenue of Venetian masts, streamers, and many coloured banners, while at appropriate points triumphal arches of great magnificence were erected."

No expense was spared. Ceremonial arches were erected along the processional route from Saltaire where the royal couple were to stay with Mr Titus Salt at his house, Milner Ing. Caterers were despatched as far as London to source the best strawberries for the grand lunch hosted by Henry Mitchell. An exhibition of the finest art, textiles and machine innovations was mounted in the museum opposite the upper floors of the great hall. Bradford craftsmen produced their best examples of wood and soft furnishings for the reading rooms and public rooms on the ground floor that were to form the retiring apartments for the Prince and Princess of Wales on the day of the ceremony.

Bradford people packed the processional route and Great Horton Road outside the College. Diaries of the day record the mounting excitement and the weeks of planning and activity that marked the arrival of the grand organ on the stage, the erection of arches and bunting – to culminate in the sight of carriages, gun salutes – and street parties that went on long into the night, whilst the hills of the towns were ringed with bonfires to mark the end of one of Bradford's biggest days.



Sir Henry Ripley gave the Prince a ceremonial gold key to mark the opening of the building. The address to the packed audience in the main hall referred to the "Institution, this new school of learning, erected by voluntary contributions, to place within the reach of those engaged in the various branches of the trade for which Bradford was famous the invaluable aids, which Science and Art can render them".

Local and national newspapers of the day ran the story – many of them as front cover articles with pictures of the occasion – and the name of the Bradford Technical School was promoted widely as a great innovation within technical education. A London magazine spoke of the new School in the heart of the worsted district as "the erection of a building on a scale of completeness which will throw into the shade any previous attempts made in this direction in the country."

### Early days and a new name

Mr Henry Mitchell was the first president of the representative council, which governed the new institution. He and his fellow founders undertook their responsibilities with no financial assistance – and in the early days largely financed the institution and its expansion themselves. The minutes of monthly meetings reflect the focus on building maintenance

and growth, new land for extension, appointment of staff, wages and building maintenance. In 1883, Day Schools, with independent Heads were established to offer daytime classes in textile industries, engineering, dyeing and art. Evening classes in technical subjects launched at the start of term that year, in September. By 1884, demand was so high that a second chemical laboratory was provided and as growth continued further, an additional floor had to be added to the side wing of the building.



Local residents were not altogether enamoured with the “youth” of the day, who entered the College teaching areas via the side door, rather than the door to the grand public areas on Great Horton Road. College Balls led residents to protest about the noise of cab traffic opposite their houses on Carlton Terrace and to request that when Balls were held, the public door might be used. The Council obviously felt strongly about the two entrances and compromised by engaging a police officer to control the

cabs and the noise in Carlton Street.

Financially, however, the Technical School was struggling and following the 1889 Technical Instruction Act and the 1890 Local Taxation Act which raised Customs & Excise monies (known as “whiskey money”) to subsidise technical education and provide some free scholarships, the Council provided some grants to assist the School. The Trust Deed was amended to include representation of the Bradford County Council on the Council of the College.

### Hard times and the Great War



The Technical School was renamed Bradford Technical College – and continued to expand throughout the 1890s – but also to struggle with space and finances. In 1891, the College’s annual report and accounts showed a total income of £7,822.3s.2d.

By 1899 when control of the College passed to Bradford Corporation, the priority was to extend accommodation, which the College was rapidly outgrowing – and provide much needed financial assistance. It wasn’t the most flourishing move for the portfolio. The Day Science School closed and the Department of Art became a separate College of Art in 1904, and settled in the



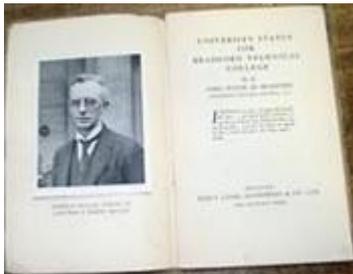
Mannville New Connection Chapel (currently the Grove Library) on the other side of the main road. Planned new buildings for the Textile Department and boiler, engine, power and plant house progressed slowly, and it wasn’t until October 1911 that Lord Rotherham opened these premises on Carlton Street. State of the art once more, they included teaching areas for washing, carding, combing, spinning, weaving, dyeing and finishing.

The First World War intervened and students and staff served, with the loss of hundreds. As early as 1915, a cheerful, Patriotic Concert at the College nevertheless was already commemorating the earliest losses. After the war, expansion continued to serve the employment needs of a recovering

country. Land was purchased for a new Engineering block in 1920 and by 1922, a further state of the art building was opened, with Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering making up two separate departments. Departments of Electrical and Botany swelled the prospectus offering, followed by the Department of Commerce and Banking in 1925 and the Department of Pharmacy in 1927.

### Early plea for university status recognition

In 1927, recognition of the higher technology work of the College and in a bid for equal status to Leeds, who had obtained its University Charter in 1904, Alderman Conway, Lord Mayor of Bradford, supported University status for Bradford Technical College.



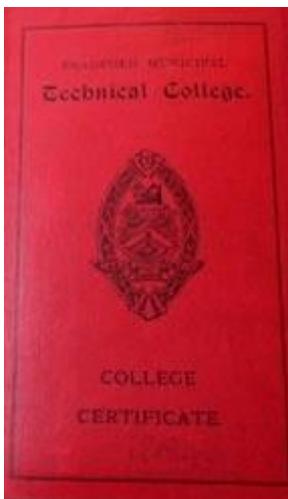
In a series of articles for the Yorkshire Observer, he argued that in everything but name and status the College could already claim to be a University. He proposed either independent status or the alternative of Leeds affiliation, naming the College 'University College', so that students could remain in Bradford and take a degree awarded by Leeds.



In 1928, accommodation remained the biggest concern, and after land was cleared on Lister Terrace, work began in 1930 to extend the main building by erecting a three storey adjoining large wing and add a two-storey building at the back of the College. In 1933 – a year when the College celebrated its Jubilee to mark its beginnings in the 1830s, - the Earl of Athlone contributed to the celebration by formally opening what became known as the Athlone Wing.

The 1930s ended – just before war started in 1939, with the provision of further extensions to house classrooms and workshops for the Mechanical, Electrical, Chemistry, Dyeing and Physics Department.

### World War II, day release & adult education



The prospectus, handbooks and calendars issued during the war years testify that study continued to be as popular as ever and the 1944 Education Act, which called upon local authorities to provide adult education facilities added to demand.

Senior Technical Institutes existed at Belle Vue, Carlton and Hanson, along with other domestic and evening institutes but these were boosted in 1946 by day release classes for young employees to include vocational courses in industry and commerce. Local employers supported the new scheme.

## Amongst the first CATs



The Government proposed the introduction of CATs (Colleges of Advanced Technology) in a 1956 White Paper. The CATs were to deliver expanded technical education aligned with plans to expand technology provision within certain university departments. One of the first 8 CATs in the country was created at Bradford Technical College in 1957, to train technologists bound for responsible industrial positions in design, production, research and administration. This College – the nucleus of the University

that was to come - was still administered by the local authority. By 1962, it was to receive its funds through the University Grants Committee and pass from the local authority to the Ministry of Education – and in 1966 it was to receive its Charter as a University, with the Rt. Hon Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister, becoming its first Chancellor.



The Technical College remained its own entity, continuing its own expansion in order to deliver its programmes. By 1959, the College had absorbed the three Senior Technical Institutes, Belle Vue, Hanson and Carlton and had applied to build new premises in Great Horton Road. Approval was granted and Alderman Revis Barber opened the Westbrook extensions in 1965. By 1967, the next phase of the Westbrook extension had begun and opened to students in 1969. It was named the Kent Wing when the Duchess of Kent formally opened the new premises in 1972.

## Merging and more “firsts”

In September 1973, the Bradford Technical College and the Regional College of Art united to form a new college, the Bradford College of Art and Technology, with a single Principal for both institutions and larger premises for the Art College. Alderman Doris Birdsall unveiled a plaque in the Westbrook building to mark the occasion and the new name – but it was soon to be followed by another new name, another plaque and another first for Bradford.



In April 1975, the College of Art and Technology and the Margaret McMillan College of Education merged, the latter being named “Trinity Building.” The merger was the first in the country to combine colleges of art, technology and teacher training. The student numbers of over 20,000 and staff numbers of over 400 underlined the significance and size of the merged provision. When Lord Crowther-Hunt, Minister of State for Further and Higher Education, unveiled the further plaque, it announced the opening of the newly named “Bradford College.”

## Into Wharfedale, Airedale and the community

In 1974 the new Bradford Metropolitan Council had been formed, to take in neighbouring Ilkley in Wharfedale and Shipley, Keighley and Bingley. Names such as “Aireville”, “Greater Bradford” and “Wharfeaire” were rejected and the city status and lord mayoralty remained



with the new district named “Bradford.” Bradford College delivered courses to the Wharfedale area, creating “Bradford & Ilkley College” with bases in Burley in Wharfedale and Ilkley.

Historic Bradford bases formed main adult education centres at Joseph Nutter House (the former orphanage for boys set up by Christopher Pratt’s apprentice, Joseph Nutter) Bolton Royd (house built by the Horsfall brothers of the Chartist riots and extended to an elaborate family

home), Burley Grange (original home of the Hodgsons) and Wells House, Ilkley (an original 1859 hydrotherapy spa).

## 1990s and incorporation



By the 1990s, Bradford College was one of the largest FE & HE institutions in the country boasting enrolments of up to 36,000 students and offering a portfolio across a wide range of provision from Sixth Form Centre, to vocational and adult courses with a part and full time further and higher education provision across several schools of education. International links were growing with College partnerships extending to the Pacific Rim and students from all over the world attending summer schools and further and higher courses.

On the 1st April 1993, the College became incorporated under the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 and once again was governed by its own body of governors, drawn from local businesses, the local community and representation from students and staff. As distance learning began to grow, central funding changes began to re-shape adult education and the new agenda for skills became a priority, the College retained smaller bases in Wharfedale and began to launch new city centre facing education centres in Bradford and district, still delivering its large portfolio from its city centre base and still working with its partners internationally – and once again using its simple and best known name (after the familiar Bradford “tech”) of “Bradford College.”

## A 21st century lead College

Bradford College emerged in the 21st century with a bold new “big B” brand that is proud to be a part of Bradford, and the first of a series of landmark buildings that will inspire its students for many years to come. Our first female Principal, Michele Sutton, joined us, working with partners in Bradford and beyond to raise our profile, extend our international markets and develop our educational offer still further to match the needs and interests of a wide variety of students and employers. An exciting building programme is ensuring we have sustainable buildings built for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning. Once again the

College is seeking its own degree awarding powers. We continue to value our links with many different communities.



Just as the Mechanics Institute attracted students from a world-wide audience to learn the techniques that were required of the woollen trade, today Bradford College delivers a portfolio that attracts students from 14 years of age to post graduate level from all over the world, with courses delivered to employees across our city's workforce and to our community in key city venues.

An article written for the Record of Technical and Secondary Education in 1894 said: "This then is a brief description of the work carried on in this extensive educational establishment which, from a mere weaving school, has grown to be a technical college of the first rank. Bradford has just reason to be proud of its Technical College ... The institution was conceived, erected by public subscription and has been maintained under the conviction that the way to commercial supremacy lies through the avenue of technical education. It will pay a thousand-fold if it should, by its intellectual influence, contribute to the commercial prosperity of this great centre of industry. To other towns and industries, the example of Bradford and what it has accomplished may be a source of help and inspiration."

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2007

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