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BRITISH EMBASSY IN YEREVAN

TEKEYAN TRUST LONDON

TEKEYAN CENTRE FUND YEREVAN

THE LORD BYRON SCHOOL

GYUMRI, ARMENIA



Perfect example of British-Armenian Friendship

History of the Lord Byron School

The Lord Byron School was founded in Gyumri following the 1988 Spitak earthquake that devastated the city thanks to the funds provided by the British Government as well as donations raised by the British people and business following the appeal from the late Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Initially the school was built in 1950 and was named after the Armenian playwright Gabriel Soundukian. Since 1961 the school has been specializing in English and brilliantly accomplished with responsible mission of bringing up the young.

Unfortunately, the disastrous earthquake didn't spare the school burying 44 teachers and students under ruins. The total death toll from the quake was 25,000.

The rebuilt school was opened by the UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on June 10, 1990 on her first trip to the Soviet Union. The school replaced one of the 34 out of 37 schools destroyed in the 1988 earthquake. It was named after Lord Byron to commemorate the link between this famous Britain and Armenian culture, since Byron was a wonderful example of British-Armenian friendship. And the street where the school is located was named after Margaret Thatcher.



Activities

When the school opened it was in such great demand – great teachers and the state-of-the-art building with modern facilities and furniture – that it used to teach children in three shifts, using all available corridors and open areas to make makeshift classrooms. To this day, the school continues to have a very strong reputation, particularly for English. Among the school alumni are Governmental officials, civil society activists and graduates from the UK universities.

The school successfully integrated into various international educational projects, like the USA ACCELS and IREX, and has been participating in a number of projects: American “Narod” /later “3 Pomegranates”/, Scottish “International Achievements”, “Junior Achievement of Armenia”, “Peace Education & Conflict Resolution”, “Step by Step” and “Development of Critical Analysis through Writing & Reading”, “Socially Active Schools”, “Armenia – School Connectivity” implemented by Project Harmony, etc. Due to the latter the school is internet connected free of charge, which provides access to different kinds of information, as well as workshops are organized for schoolchildren, the staff and the community.



Byron schoolchildren are involved not only in educational projects but also in handicraft: making ikebana, carving on glass and wood, making compositions with egg-shell and rice, etc.

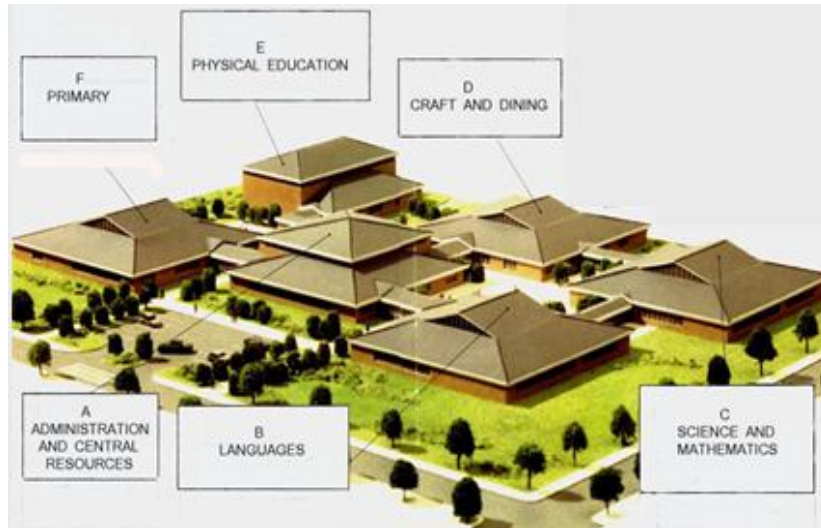
The school keeps British traditions alive and carries out activities to promote British culture by organizing events (British Days, Christmas and Easter celebrations) and celebrating Byron Day every January 22. A partnership was also established soon after its opening between the Lord Byron School and the Holgate School near to Byron's resting place near Nottingham. The 13th Lord Byron, Lord Robin, visited the school in April 2012.

Building

The Lord Byron School was originally designed for 400 children – with different blocks linked by open areas which could act as play areas in the winter months. But the school was in such great demand that these open areas were converted into classrooms.

The school was designed to use all the latest cutting-edge technology – copper-wire around the water pipes to stop them freezing, solar panels to power the Acorn computers.

The design for the building was by British architects. Work started on the site in May 1989. The local state constructors constructed reinforced concrete foundations, the outer skin of the external wall of local tuff. The rest was done by British experts. The labour, materials, furniture and equipment for the school, together with on-site living accommodation for the expert workforce came from the UK.



There are six low rise buildings, arranged in a two by three grids. Behind the central building which is the “Administration & Central Resources” (Block A) is the “Craft & Dining” (Block D).

To the left of the administration building is the “Primary” (Block F) and behind that the “Physical Education” (Block E).

To the right of the administration building is the “Languages” (Block B) and behind that the “Mathematics & Science” (Block C).

Heating System

The central heating system at the Lord Byron School has not worked for sixteen years now and it is beyond economic repair. The cutting edge heating system included solar panels to power computers and a computerized brain to modify temperatures. The design was carefully thought through to provide large covered atriums for children to exercise in during the winter.

Unfortunately, the oil-fired heating system proved too complex and expensive to maintain and run in newly independent Armenia, which suffered a terrible energy and economic crisis in the 1990s.



Gyumri has sub-zero temperatures (sometimes -25°C) from December to March and 438 students have to sit in coats, hats and gloves with old-fashioned, expensive and pretty ineffective portable electric fires heating the classrooms, and use only the classrooms that face the sun, as it is impossible to conduct lessons on the other side of the building. Without proper heating, the water is switched off in winter to prevent it freezing and then bursting the British-spec copper pipes in spring.

The Lord Byron School is the only one in the region without adequate heating, and there is a real danger it will be closed if the problem can't be solved this summer.

Meanwhile, despite the cold, Byron students stand out for their academic achievements: diplomas and certificates of honor from various academic olympiads and competitions cover the walls in the school principal's office.

School Supporters

The heating problem has been raised for many years and never got solved. The efforts that were made came up against different problems. For a start, the whole system was a British one with parts based on British imperial measurements [not metric]. That's why all the parts had to be imported from the UK – they couldn't be sourced in Armenia.



*D.Dowell, G. Harutyunyan
/Byron School Principal/*

David Dowell, a good friend of Armenia and a British businessman, was concerned about the school. He paid 54 visits to Gyumri; 37 from them were aid trips starting with just two bags which turned into containers. Dowell's construction company roofed the school in 1990 (for "love", i.e. not for profit).

Today he tries to find solution to the school heating problem. David Dowell addressed a letter to the UK Prime Minister David Cameron describing the critical situation. Fortunately, Cameron's office heeded the warning and instructed the British Ambassadors in Armenia Kathy Leach and Jonathan Aves /spouses, taking 4-month shifts of ambassador duties/ to take up the issue.

The Ambassadors visited the school, discussed with the principle the possible options for solving the problem and decided to turn to *Tekeyan Centre Fund*, which had an experience of realizing heating projects in Tekeyan Schools.

Tekeyan Centre Fund, chaired by Vartan Ouzounian, aims at serving to the Armenian nation by contributing to the development of culture, education and science. Since 2010 the Fund has initiated a sponsorship of five Tekeyan Schools in Armenia and Karabagh and has already implemented a number of educational, cultural and sports projects involving more than 1,000 students.

The TCF was founded by the *London Tekeyan Trust*, a charitable organization, a part of the family of Tekeyan Associations. The LTT supports the Diaspora-Armenia cooperation and preserves the national identity through various cultural, educational, community life activities.

Problem Solution

To be helpful to the Lord Byron School, Tekeyan Centre Fund together with the London Tekeyan Trust offered a simple and cost effective heating project, according to which five separate small boiler houses are to be built. This should allow the school to decide flexibly which areas to heat to make the building sustainable. To save costs and to be able to cover expenses the school will not heat the seven-meter-high corridors. The planning and budgeting which is around £25,000 was drawn up by "Nor Tun".

Thus, the British Embassy, London Tekeyan Trust and Tekeyan Centre Fund are now fundraising through various functions to be able to install a new, economical heating system in the school.



British-Armenian friendship



*UK Ambassador Kathy Leach,
Vartan Ouzounian /TCF Chairman/*

In the meantime, the school has also organized a fundraising among schoolchildren's parents who can afford to make donations, even such symbolic amounts as 1,000 drams (about £1.7). Teachers and alumni have joined the fundraising.

Thanks to the generosity of benefactors both in Armenia and the UK, some part of £25,000 required for the heating project, has been collected. Fundraising is still in progress.

The Lord Byron School was a wonderful gift from the British people to Armenia at its moment of greatest need. This gift should be saved for the children of Gyumri and we would like to ask for your help in raising the required amount to heat the classrooms and save the school.

Donations

The British Embassy in Armenia, the Tekeyan Trust London and Tekeyan Centre Fund invite you to support the project

“Heating System for the Lord Byron School in Gyumri”

Please make your donations (by cheque / cash / transfer) to the *Tekeyan Trust London* or *Tekeyan Centre Fund* (and label the payment “Byron School”):

In the UK

Bank: Barclays Bank PLC
Account name: THE TEKEYAN TRUST
Sterling Account No: 50773093
Sort code: 20-68-79
SWIFT BIC: BARCGB22
IBAN: GB35 BARC 2068 7950 7730 93

In Armenia

Bank: HSBC Bank Armenia CJSC
Account name: TEKEYAN CENTRE FUND
USD Account No: 001-008820-101
AMD Account No: 001-008820-002
Swift code: MIDLAM22

THANK YOU

***for contributing to the improvement of Armenian schools
and the promotion of education!***

DONATION FORM

Yes, I would like to support the Byron School heating project
_____ and make a donation of:

£ 50 £ 100 £ 150 other £ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Please return the completed form with your donation to
the Tekeyan Trust London.*

Make your gift more valuable with “Gift Aid”

GIFT AID

I wish to make a gift to the Tekeyan Trust London
under the Gift Aid Scheme.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post code: _____ Telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

I am a United Kingdom tax payer, resident in the United Kingdom for tax purposes, and will advise TTL if the situation changes. I would like TTL to reclaim the tax on all donations I make.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Please return the completed form with your donation to
the Tekeyan Trust London.*