

## LEEDS POLYTECHNIC - BECKETT PARK LIBRARY

## JAMES GRAHAM

The Great Hall, in the main teaching block at the Polytechnic's Beckett Park Site, came into use once more at the beginning of last month. It was severely damaged by fire in the autumn of 1978, and the repair work took more than two years to complete.

According to Mr Arthur Nicholas, Head of the Polytechnic's School of Education, the Hall has been fully restored and now looks "very fine". The entire roof and floor of the Hall were destroyed in the fire, although much of the wooden panelling on the walls survived. The former pipe organ, which was also destroyed, is due to be replaced by a new electronic organ.

The Great Hall was regularly used for student examinations, as well as for drama, concerts, Christmas Carols and other events. It is intended that it will accommodate all these functions -- and more -- in the future.

It will not be known as the Great Hall, however, but has been officially renamed the JAMES GRAHAM HALL, after the Leeds Director of Education who was responsible for the building of the former City of Leeds College of Education.

James Graham, who has been described as "a key figure in the history of educational administration", was appointed West Riding Inspector of Further Education at the remarkably early age of 26. Shortly thereafter, in 1905, he moved to Leeds, where he was made Secretary of Higher Education. According to John Taylor, former Chairman of Leeds Polytechnic's Governors, "a palace revolution took place... The arrival of Graham must have hit Leeds like a tornado."

By 1908, he was Chief Education Officer, a post which he was to retain until his death in 1951. "The Higher Education Committee was quickly assailed by a series of long and powerful memoranda: schemes for scholarships, for secondary schools, for taking over the Leeds Institute of Science, Art and Literature, for the coordination of the work of the Technical Day and Evening Schools of the City with that of the University of Leeds... Such was the volume of business that for a time the Sub-committee had to meet twice or three times a month instead of, as normally, only once."

Mr Taylor's valuable article (published in Education, 5th September 1975) continues: "These memoranda and reports throw light on the essential Graham. One must remember that he had no qualified staff, and that he must have done all the thinking and writing himself. They are thus products of the tremendous zest and energy which he displayed all his life, and which, when he had organized education in Leeds to his satisfaction, led him to throw himself into the national work of the AEC, the AMC and the Association of Directors of Education and to identify himself annually with the North of England Education Conference..."

"The story of City of Leeds Training College illustrates Graham's qualities at their most characteristic. From the time he came to Leeds he was determined to establish a teacher-training college, and when in spite of criticism on the grounds of wasteful expenditure the college opened in its magnificent setting (Beckett Park) it became his pride and joy. Naturally he kept a tight personal control. The principal, Parsons, was a pliant protégé, and Graham played an active part in all appointments, academic or administrative. Once a week he had tea with one of the matrons of the hostels, to ensure that he was kept aware of what was happening on the campus."

After James Graham's death, a new institution at Farnley for the training of mature entrants to the teaching profession was named the James Graham College. This ceased to exist in 1976 when Leeds Polytechnic merged with both the City of Leeds and Carnegie College, at Beckett Park, and the James Graham College of Education. It is only appropriate that the Polytechnic, which owes so much to the founding efforts of this extraordinary Edwardian gentleman, should now name its Great Hall after him.