

## SCHOOL: New refectory named after Stanley Gibbons



**STAMP OF APPROVAL:** From left, David Crocker, of Stanley Gibbons, Tony Soper, headteacher Nick Pettit and chair of governors Dr Michael Gillett

Picture Guy Channing EN72416

# Dining hall has new name licked

A NEW dining hall at Devonport High School for Boys has been named in honour of renowned Plymouth stamp dealer Stanley Gibbons.

The £300,000 refectory was officially opened by David Crocker, managing director of the London stamp division of Stanley Gibbons Ltd, with guest speaker TV naturalist Dr Tony Soper, a former pupil of the school.

The school buildings originally belonged to the Army, and were labelled A,B,C,D,E and F.

### Famous

The school renamed them after famous people with Plymouth connections: Astor, Brunel, Cookworthy, Drake, Edgcombe and Foulston, but had to find a G for the new building – and settled on Stanley Gibbons.

Everyone who has ever collected

by **GRAHAM BROACH**

stamps has heard of Stanley Gibbons, but few Plymothians know that he started his career and made his fortune in Plymouth.

As a teenager, he was apprenticed to his father, a chemist at 15 Treville Street near Sutton Pool, and began trading in stamps as a sideline in 1856.

His big break came in 1863 when two South African sailors came into the shop and sold him a bag full of triangular Cape stamps for £5.

The stamps proved a wonderful bargain, and over the years were sold for a total of £500.

Stanley Gibbons' reputation grew, and in 1872 he moved to new premises at 8 Lockyer Street, where there is still a plaque dedicated to him.

In 1874 he moved to London and

retired in 1890, selling the business for the then huge sum of £25,000.

On the proceeds, he spent the rest of his life travelling the world.

The business grew and grew, and now employs 135 people in London, Ringwood in Hampshire and two bases in Bristol. It has a turnover of £10 million a year and is one of the biggest and best-known stamp dealerships in the world, covering publishing, albums, stamp-dealing and retail.

### Canteen

Devonport High School headteacher Nic Pettit said that the previous canteen was put up in 1939 with an expected life of five years.

It has now been replaced with a purpose-built refectory seating up to 200 people in comfort and providing meals for between 700 and 800 of the school's 1,070 students every day.

The 130 guests at the official open-

ing were treated to a buffet supper prepared by the boys and by girls from Devonport High School for Girls, who study A level Home Economics at the boys' school.

They were supervised by Chris Guswell, head of food technology at the school.

The guests then enjoyed a slide show and talk by Dr Soper, who confessed that though he is an old boy of the school this was his first return visit since leaving 50 years ago.

Dr Soper was a co-founder of the BBC Natural History Unit and has presented many TV wildlife series including Bird Watch, Beside the Sea, and Nature.

He lives in the South Hams and was recently awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Plymouth for his contribution to natural history.

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