

# BROOMWICKS

Tuesday, December 28, 2010 , roughly twenty minutes to eleven in the morning.

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## —A Short History of Collyer's School—

*During my last year at Collyer's I was increasingly disappointed by the lack of a good, easily accessible history of the institution. At about that time this short history of the college came into my possession, and I decided publish it to the internet for the benefit of all who are interested. It was written in January 1964 as a preface to the programme of events for the opening of the Duckering Hall and the New Buildings. I have transcribed from the original retaining the original text formatting, spelling and capitalisation as far as was possible.*

—BEGINNING—

### RICHARD COLLYER'S SCHOOL IN HORSHAM

*"I will that my message the Sunne...in the Parish of our Lady of Bowe be sold..and the money be bestowed in buying and building of a house to keep a Free School in Horsham in the County of Sussex where I was born." (The Founder's Will, 1532)*

Thus did Richard Collyer follow the example of another London Mercer, Richard Whittington, who entrusted his bequests to the care of the "mistere of the Mercers" and of Dean Colet, who appointed the same fellowship overseers of his foundation at St. Paul's "forever". The Mercers' Company were charged with the duty of fulfilling the terms of Richard Collyer's Will, and by August 1540 an agreement was made before the Lord Mayor himself, whereby the Sunne was sold and £8 6s. 8d. of the proceeds spent on the purchase of a property in Horsham. This was undoubtedly the site of the present Chesworth Primary School, [1] and comprised then a dwelling-house easily adapted to provide a single school-room, attic dormitories and lodgings for master and usher. In 1541, Richard Brokebanks and Nicholas Bayne welcomed the first intake of Collyerians to the building. The latter half of the Seventeenth Century under the Masters Nisbet and Wickliffe seems to have been a period of expansion, boarders raising the numbers in the School from the statutory 60 free Scholars to over 100, and Nisbet was his own Clerk of Works in a programme of repair and extension costing over £250.

Various sums for maintenance were voted by the Mercers' Court of Assistants from time to time from rent paid to the Company by the tenants of Richard Collyer's former "great mansion the Keye in Chepe", but during the centuries the building gradually decayed, and in 1838 the Company surveyor pronounced it "very old and imperfect" even if £1,000 were spent on it. After inspecting the School itself and finding it "exceedingly well conducted, extremely useful to the town of Horsham and reflecting great credit on the memory of its benevolent Founder", the Master of the Company and the House Warden recommended demolition and the provision of a new school on the same site, at a cost of £2,240. Funds were not quite adequate for this, but out of its own resources the Company loaned the balance interest-free, finding nearly another £500 eventually to provide further amenities.

By May, 1840, plans were ready for building the school which we still see serving the cause of education at Chesworth School,[1] The old building was pulled down and its materials sold for £100. A year later, three hundred years after Brokebanke and Bayne opened the first Summer Term, William Pirie and Richard Cragg were able to teach in the new school house. In 1842 another Company deputation reported "gratification at the healthy and creditable appearance of the scholars" and at their work in Scripture, English, History and Geography, "all of which evidenced not merely the zeal of the teachers but the attention of the taught". For another half-century the "second Collyer's School" gave a sound education to Horsham boys free of charge, and there were said to be three times as many applicants as there were places.

By 1889, after twenty years of pargaining, the Charity Commissioners, the Mercers' Company and the Parish had evolved a new scheme of government; a Board of Governors was set up; the Company provided the money for another rebuilding and covenanted to pay a fixed annual sum to the School. The Chesworth site and buildings were sold to the Horsham School Board; the property in Hurst Road was purchased, and Dr. G. A. Thompson became Headmaster of a school once again able to give full "Secondary education", while still admitting some free scholars. The new school was erected in six months, at a cost of under £6,000, [2] and the opening ceremony took place on 29th April, 1893. The building was simply the block which still faces Hurst Road, little changed, except for the loss of its wooden belfry. At one end was the School-room with dormitories overhead; in the middle were classrooms and dining hall; at the southerly end was the Headmaster's House.



Grammar school crest



Grammar school Building



The Duckering Hall

E. Bainbridge Copnall's  
Astronomer



Humanities Staircase



History and politics corridor



Horsham Arms above the old main

entrance

Upper Quadrangle  
Little Hall

But the battle for further buildings was soon on. In 1897, a Technical School on land adjoining Collyer's boundaries closed down, and this property was acquired and converted into a Laboratory building, by means of a loan from the West Sussex County Council. By 1909, Dr. Thompson had brought the school strength to 150, and this and a high reputation for scholarship made further extensions both essential and well merited. In 1912 a further loan financed the building of a Hall and additional class-rooms, and after the First World War, when numbers soared above the 200 mark, extra teaching space was provided by the purchase of the Old Cottage Hospital (now Horsham Clinic) to serve as a hostel for the boarders and to house the Library which was established by the Headmaster, Canon W. M. Peacock. In 1931, under Mr. P. A. Tharp's headmastership, the Hall was extended and a further block of class-rooms built at a cost of over £6,000. 1935 saw the closing of the boarding establishment and the sale of the hostel, preparatory to further building instead on the school land. But the plans had to be postponed until now, when, through the magnificent generosity of Dr. W. Duckering's bequest, [3] and with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, the Governors have at last been able to provide for the School the long-needed Main Hall, Laboratories, Gymnasium, Kitchens, and all the additional accommodation and facilities which visitors will see today.[4]

The New Buildings were designed by Mr. L. H. Parsons, M.B.E., F.R.I.B.A. (Messrs. Godman and Kay, F.F.R.I.B.A.), and the Contractors were Messrs. Y.J. Lovell (Sussex) Ltd.

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END

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#### D.G.'s Notes on the Text

[1] - Chesworth School - The site on Denne Road is no longer home to the Chesworth School, which has since moved to larger premises on King's Road. Only fragments of the school building now survive, most of them incorporated into later structures.

[2] - The 'New' School - The Building today known as the Grammar School block was designed by Mr. Arthur Vernon of High Wycombe, and the foundation stone (in the west end of the front wall of the building) was laid on the 25th of July by Master of the Mercers' Company, Ralph Charlton Palmer Esq. and Charles J. Robinson, Vicar. Chairman.

[3] - Dr. W. Duckering's bequest - Dr. William West Duckering was a pupil at Collyer's School from 1873-1875, who in 1888 went to New York and became a doctor. Upon his death in 1945, his estate was left to the College, who used it to finance the building of what is now known as the Duckering building.

[4] - Main Hall - The main Hall is now better known as the Duckering Hall, now the college's main lecture theatre.

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*Lower Quadrangle*



D. GREGORY 2007

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