



A History of Crescent School

Second Edition



Contents

3	Foreword and Acknowledgements
4	In the beginning 1946
5	CHAPTER ONE: 1947-1957
12	CHAPTER TWO: 1957-1967
17	CHAPTER THREE: 1967-1977
21	CHAPTER FOUR: 1977-1987
26	CHAPTER FIVE: 1987-1997
33	CHAPTER SIX: 1997-2007
38	CHAPTER SEVEN: 2007- 2017
44	CHAPTER EIGHT: 2017 and beyond

Foreword

This updated version of A History of Crescent School for the 75th anniversary is an extension of the first edition which was produced in 2008. Credit and thanks are given to the previous author, Maria Page and her contributors, listed below, and to former Headmaster, Huw Marshall, for his assistance with the additional two chapters.

In any work which claims to be a 'history' of a subject there is always a fine balance to maintain between what information to include and what to omit. We hope that we have managed to select enough information, from the archival material loaned, to achieve an accurate history of Crescent School to the present day.

Acknowledgements

The original author gratefully acknowledges the help and contribution of the following people:

Mrs C Barratt, Headteacher 1971-1992; Mr Eric Batchelor; Ms Helen Beniston, former pupil; Mrs Gill Bennett; Mr Charles Beresford, former pupil; Mr John Evans, former Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Professor Mary Garson, former pupil; Mr Gerry Meek, former Bursar; Mrs Sarah Papworth, former pupil; Mrs Sarah Roer, former pupil; Mr James Stuttard, ICT Teacher Crescent School; Mrs C Vickers, Headteacher 2000-2002; Miss A Wren.

Special thanks must go to the Friends of Crescent School and Mr Huw Marshall, Headteacher.

Extra special thanks go to Mr Mark and Mrs Flick Furber (née Mortimer, daughter of Mrs Eve Mortimer) for their kind hospitality, proof reading and patience during the production of this booklet. Without their invaluable assistance much of the history of the school would be lost.

Maria Page
November 2008

Every reasonable care has been taken to provide an accurate history of Crescent School. However, the authors acknowledge that some inaccuracies may remain. If you know of any corrections which could be made to a subsequent printing of this booklet, please notify them to the School Office.

This second edition of the booklet has been updated by The Princethorpe Foundation Archive and Marketing Teams.

November 2023

In the beginning - 1946

The School started life in Troy House, 12 Hillmorton Road, Rugby which, at that time, was the 'waiting house' for boys entering Rugby School with Mr Channon as the Housemaster. This was also the home of Mr and Mrs Charles Mortimer and the School was founded with four pupils: Patrick Channon, James Chase, Fiona Loughery and Sarah Willans.

On the occasion of Crescent School's 60th Anniversary Celebration, Saturday 28 June 2008 Mr Christopher Mortimer, the Founders son said,

"My mother attended Norwich Grammar School, from where she attained a scholarship to Oxford University in about 1926. She declined this scholarship, choosing instead to attend the University of London, where she did very well indeed. It was during this time that my mother worked in the East End Missions and, from that time on, developed an empathy with socialist teachings. It was whilst teaching at Poole Grammar School in Dorset that my mother and father met. My father was also a teacher at the same Grammar School.

"During the war my father was drafted to work in an aircraft factory in nearby Somerset. In 1945 my father applied for the position of wood and metalwork teacher at Rugby School. At the time he was impressed by the rather large workshop situated underneath the gym! He was successful in obtaining this post and my parents duly moved to Rugby. In 1946 my mother took over the teaching of a small group of Rugby School staff children who were meeting in a room of Troy House in Hillmorton Road.

"In 1947 Rugby School 'adopted' this group and the small school moved into premises in Horton Crescent - hence the name of the school. My mother had been a founder member of the School Library Association and, consequently, purchased a lot of books for the school. She believed passionately in education for education's sake - an element which I can still see present in the curriculum at Crescent School some 60 years later. She felt education was not just about what you learned but about questioning everything.

"My mother ran the School on a shoestring and, indeed, it was only placed on a proper financial footing upon her retirement. Up until then she, and her staff, had managed on very small salaries indeed. Of course, this meant that the fees had to be increased but it meant that lots of other opportunities became possible.

"After a short period of time the school outgrew these premises and, following the receipt of a grant from Rugby School, relocated to the Old School Sanatorium building on the corner of Horton Crescent and Barby Road, where it initially occupied one large room on the ground floor. This room was soon added to by another one above."

Mrs Eve Mortimer,
founder and first Headteacher
of Crescent School, 1946-1971



CHAPTER ONE

1947-1957

Mrs Felicity Furber (née Mortimer) the founder's daughter writes:

"The school consisted basically of two rooms - a large one upstairs for the 'top class' and downstairs another one which for the first few years was separated into two classes by a full length heavy maroon curtain. Presumably each side could be heard on the other but I can never remember being told to keep the noise down! The first class had brightly coloured furniture of suitable size and had Mrs Ward as its teacher for many, many years - a lovely lady and a great favourite. The two floors were separated by a huge, cold staircase at one end, only used by the teachers as it joined on to Rugby School classrooms and had to be kept quiet at all times. The other end, which all of us used, was a brilliant circular staircase in the tower. Under the stairs was a cubbyhole where the really 'big' boys and girls hung their coats. It was the pinnacle of greatness to be able to use this tiny space! This all disappeared when the new classrooms were added.

"Concerts took place every year, probably in the autumn term, in the Rugby School music rooms. Somewhere upstairs in the building was a small concert hall overlooking the Sanatorium gardens. To us it appeared enormous as we performed to a full house of parents. Obviously there was no stage, it was all acted out on the large flat floor, but father made some 'flats' which moved on castors and these were covered with the appropriate scenery. All of the term before the play the middle and top classes painted the scenery on huge pieces of paper under the guidance of Mrs Withers, the art teacher for many years. She drew out the scenes which were duly painted in by us and, the night before, she and father would attach the paper to the screens. Scene changing i.e. turning the right 'flat' round at the right time, was usually the job of a couple of the non-acting children. It was terrific fun and seemed to have gone on for years. Many years later the School started using the Rugby School theatre with lighting etc. done by father.

"Swimming was undertaken at The Tosh (roughly the site of the Rugby School Sports Centre today). In the winter we walked down to the Regent Street Baths where the Rupert Brooke statue is now. Here we were taught by Mr Dick and then Mrs Curtis.

"Both boys and girls did ballet classes to begin with in the upstairs room with Mrs O'Bierne, all the girls in white dresses and ribbon tied shoes. She took it very seriously and terrified many of us, but it was considered the 'right thing to do'."

Several former pupils have contributed their memories of the early days of Crescent School.



Fiona Douglas (née Loughery) was interviewed by the then Foundation archivist Janette Ratcliffe in 2021. Her father was a master at Rugby School from 1934 until 1961 when he retired. She was one of the oldest pupils at the school and remembers being part of a group of about eight children that made the move to Horton Crescent when it opened.

In the early days, class sizes were small with around 10 children in each class though Fiona remembers that the numbers would decrease each year when the boys left to go to Prep School. Her cohort were taught by Mrs Mortimer for the majority of their lessons and what an incredible teacher she sounds. Under Eve Mortimer's tutelage, alongside the traditional subjects taught to Primary School pupils, they were taught French from the age of 5 and Latin from the age of 8 and were well set to achieve good results as the first pupils at Crescent School to sit the 11+ exams.

It was while talking about her memories of her classroom that Fiona really helped bring the school to life. Based in the upstairs classroom at Horton Crescent, Fiona remembers that there was a paraffin stove in the centre of the large classroom during particularly cold weather and that the pupils got up hourly for some exercise – well needed in the depths of winter! She recalls the great excitement that the children felt when they listened to the weekly radio programmes – from Charles Chilton's 'How Things Began', Fiona learned all about dinosaurs, and 'Music and Movement' formed an integral part of the school's PE programme.



^ Photograph of the Crescent School pupils circa 1950

Taking on roles of responsibility was a key aspect of life at Crescent School, being the ink monitor meant taking charge of refilling ink pots and handing out pens. Whilst for Assembly, the chair and hymn monitors were responsible for converting the classroom into a 'hall' quickly and sensibly. While Fiona doesn't remember religion featuring particularly heavily in the school day, it appears that the Rugby School chaplain who led the weekly service for children of the Rugby masters must have told Mrs Mortimer what songs were in the upcoming Sunday service as she spent the week practising them with the children.

Little details like copying lines of letters into their handbooks whilst practising cursive writing and learning to count using cowrie shells that were stored in milk tins are the sorts of details that are not captured in official records but are what embody the spirit of a school.

As well as renting one of Rugby School's buildings, Crescent School also had the opportunity to benefit from other Rugby School facilities. Fiona remembers walking as a 'Class Crocodile' to the field for school sports day and performing concerts or plays in the Music School.

Whether there was quite the same enthusiasm for benefitting from swimming in The Tosh is to be debated as every pupil ever spoken to remembers how bitterly cold it could be.

The children may also have spent time together outside of the normal school day. They might have seen each other at the Saturday morning woodworking classes that Mr Mortimer led or at the weekly service that was held in the Memorial Chapel.

Mrs Sarah Roer (née Willans) writes:

"(A group of us all) Rugby Schoolmaster's kindergarten age children were started off at the Channon's house on Hillmorton Road, with Eve Mortimer as our teacher. When it was time for us to do more than make paper beads. We were found a place in the Old School Sanatorium on Barby Road. By then the school had a first grade and kindergarten. The seniors, we were always in this category, had the upstairs classroom. Mrs Mortimer taught us until we graduated to the High School; It was at the other end of town, near Lodge Plugs, then. Some boys went to prep schools when they got to the grand age of 7. Mrs Ward was the name of the first kindergarten teacher I think. Being post war kids we all had younger siblings and the school grew very fast.

"Our classroom had a spiral staircase from the ground floor and our cloakroom was on the landing at the top of the staircase."

Professor Mary Garson writes:

"I never forget my first day at school when I cried all the way along Hillmorton Road and then into the road leading to the Crescent School, possibly since my twin sister Helen was sick and was unable to come along. I remember being annoyed with her. My father was unimpressed with my behaviour and consequently I cried even louder. On that first day, when I sat at the back of the class, I recall we had a spelling class and I was comforted at being able to spell 'walk' but unnerved by being asked if I could spell 'chocolate'. One of my strongest memories of Crescent School were the swimming lessons in The Tosh - especially standing up to our waists in freezing cold water. I am quite sure that the early days of school set the scene for what follows, so I appreciate that the commitment and dedication of the Crescent School teachers, and the scholarly discipline that they instilled in me at such a young age, helped to create the thirst for knowledge and achievement that has led to the many highlights of my career in science to date. The core principles and values that you acquire as a very young person never get forgotten."

Mrs Helen Papworth (Professor Mary Garson's sister) adds:

"I gather my (younger) twin sister, Mary has written about how I refused to start at the Crescent School for several days, until she came home and told me how much she liked it. I must get my own back! The picture of the outdoor swimming gala at The Tosh brought back vivid memories of how she was responsible for my one and only experience of corporal punishment.

"The Tosh in April was COLD, really cold and often rainy... why else would the adults in that picture be sitting along the side, in thick overcoats with umbrellas? The vast changing areas, with the decking type curtains did nothing to encourage you out onto the algae covered, cold concrete to meet your fate. Once in the water, there was no easy way to climb out, and I would cling onto the rail with chattering teeth, only slightly heartened by the fact that I was coping better than my (skinnier) little twin sister. The hypothermia induced was so bad one session that she was unable to even attempt to dry herself, and the teacher (was it the formidable Miss Rose?) nearly rubbed the skin off her back, drying her with the non-absorbent sandpaper like towels that Mum supplied us with.

"Now, if you were ill on swimming day, it was very different. You stayed behind in the comfort of the classroom reading a book at your desk. You did not have to get undressed into those ruched swimming costumes we had passed down from our elder sister, or to squeeze your head into those smelly rubber swimming caps. My sister was supposedly the cleverer of the two of us, and it was definitely her idea that we told the teacher (Miss Rose) we had colds, and our mother would not let us go swimming. I do not remember any requirement for a letter from home, as would probably be required now and which, as six-year-olds, would have been difficult to forge. It was all so easy and warm, sitting reading, with the occasional nose blowing! We contentedly walked home at lunchtime and, so as not to get found out, handed over our swimming bags to Mum for the ritual hanging out of costumes on the washing line.

"I have no recollection of what was said when she asked why our costumes were still dry, or what I did to my sister, all I remember is that when Dad came in for his lunch, we were sent into the front room and smacked in floods of tears at the disgrace!

"Miss Rose taught us beautiful copper plate handwriting, copying sections from the *Wind in the Willows*, and nurturing my early animal instincts with tales of Ratty and Toad on the Riverbank. She would make the class, seated in order of age, recite the times tables. So it was that, at the age of six or seven, I was a master of the 11 or 13 times table because as the second youngest/smallest in the class all the older children had recited the easy Two and Three times tables, and Mary and I had no choice but to tackle the remaining difficult ones. It is also why, in Music, Mary and I only ever got to play those boring triangles, looking enviously at the bigger children at the other end of the wide classroom upstairs who were allowed drums. Unfortunately, the family moved away to Manchester before we progressed to the cushy life at the top end of the class. All trace of copperplate was eradicated from our handwriting, but we coasted for a year or two in arithmetic." (Mrs Papworth went on to become a Veterinary Surgeon.)

Mr Charles Beresford writes:

"Names and images of many friends' faces come flooding back from almost sixty years ago, remembering playground games beyond the air raid shelter. Sensory memories include the smell of the soggy cardboard bottle-tops on the midmorning milk and playing conkers among autumn leaves. During one school holiday the curtain across the downstairs room changed into a wall or was it a folding screen? With about ten in each class Mrs Ward and Mrs Ritchie became less worried about our exuberance disturbing others. Upstairs Mrs Mortimer worked wonders with the older ones. Mrs Tallon and Mrs Ritchie accompanied rousing folk songs such as the *Raggle Taggle Gypsies*. Many of our parents taught at Rugby School, and some had known each other since bachelor days before the war. We performed Christmas plays in the new music room, games and sports days on Caldecott's and had woodwork lessons with Mr Mortimer and Mr Fell. We swam in the huge outdoor Tosh, having learnt with Mr Dick at the heated Town Baths in the winter. We flourished in this little world created by Mrs Mortimer and a few dedicated staff and parents."



◀ Photograph of the old Crescent School building in Horton Crescent

The first School Prospectus in existence. Dated 1950.

The Crescent School was founded in January, 1948, with the aid of the Governing Body of Rugby School, primarily to provide a place of education for the young children of the Assistant Masters of Rugby School. Other children are, however, welcomed within the limits imposed by accommodation. This comprises part of the building known as the Old Sanatorium, at the corner of Horton Crescent and Barby Road.

The School maintains three classes only, with about twelve children in each class, and with age groups approximately as follows :

Infants I. 5-6 years. Infants II. 6-7 years.
Juniors. 7 years to 11 plus.

Individual teaching is given by a fully qualified staff of three full-time teachers and one part-time art teacher. A thorough grounding is given and the curriculum extended in the Junior School. Music and class-singing, art and craft are taught throughout the school in addition to the usual form subjects. Provision is made for children over eight to learn Latin and French if required. Those who stay till the age of eleven can take the entrance examination to State Schools if they wish.

Games are played on the Rugby School Playing Fields and in Summer the school has the use of the Rugby School Swimming Bath. A swimming class for the older boys is held in the winter term at the Corporation Baths under expert tuition. A dancing class for the girls and younger boys is held each week at the school under the direction of Miss O'Beirne.

SCHOOL HOURS.

Morning School—All Classes : 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

Afternoon School—Infants I. Tuesday and Thursday 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Infants II. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 2 to 4 p.m.

Juniors. Monday to Friday 2 to 4 p.m.

It would be appreciated if parents would ensure that their children arrive at and leave school punctually and quietly since classes of Rugby School are in progress in the same building.

TERMS. The year is divided into three terms of about twelve weeks duration, the dates being approximately those of Rugby School terms.

FEES.

Under 5 years of age on first day of term	7 Gns. per term
5 years of age on first day of term	10 Gns. per term
6 years of age on first day of term	12 Gns. per term
7 and upwards on the first day of term	14 Gns. per term

It is a condition of entry to the school that a term's notice of withdrawal should be given or a term's fees paid.

SCHOOL DRESS AND EQUIPMENT.

Messrs. Overton of Rugby supply uniform in the school colours of grey and green at moderate cost. It is important that all articles of clothing should be clearly marked.

Children are required to bring with them—

1. A Shoe Bag.
2. House Shoes (soft-soled).
3. A pencil box and/or
4. A box to contain plasticine scissors, etc.
5. Aprons for art and craft (for painting it is desirable that these should be of the overall type).

SCHOOL HEALTH.

It is assumed that in all cases of contact with infectious illness, parents will assure themselves that the child can safely be sent to school. In case of epidemic the Committee, acting on medical advice, will decide the period of quarantine.

CHAPTER TWO

1957-1967

With the continued success of the School and the expansion in the number of pupils on roll the building underwent its first extension in the 1950s. This consisted of a large new classroom annexe facing Horton Crescent, built at right angles to the main building. By 1960, with numbers still increasing, an application to further extend the building was made. This involved adding a further storey to the large classroom annexe which necessitated the provision of an alternative staircase. In order to build the staircase the floor of the tower containing the existing spiral staircase, toilets and cloakroom facilities, had to be lowered. Once the floor was lowered the new straightened staircase gave extra space to re-provide the lavatory and cloakroom facilities and a further new room on the second floor. According to the School records the work took place sometime during the 1960s.

Mrs Christine Barratt, former Headteacher of Crescent School from 1971-1992 writes:

“When I joined the Crescent School in September 1965 there were approximately 60 pupils in the school, rather more girls than boys as, at that time, many of the boys would go to Preparatory Schools at the age of 8 or 9. We had five classes. In the oldest part of the building facing Barby Road were three classrooms two downstairs for the youngest children; Mrs Ward took Class I and Mrs Baldock Class II. Above these rooms was one large room, mine, housing Class III, 6-7+ year old pupils. While they were with me the children developed their muscles as the room was used for Assembly each morning, so that after school all the desks had to be set against the wall, with the chairs lined up in a row in front of them (the older children had the privilege of sitting on them while the younger ones sat on the floor!)

“More often than not, the process of moving the desks took place after lunch as the room was also used for music, dancing, play rehearsals and so on, in the afternoon. I do remember too having a very large white painted wooden desk with a mottled green Formica top, which was very useful.

“The two older classes, Class IV with Mrs Smith and Class V with Mrs Mortimer, were housed in the new annex built at right angles to the main school facing Horton Crescent. These were pleasant classrooms, very light and airy. In the early days I remember teaching in the upper one of these rooms when one of the older boys brought in a large bunch of rosebay willow herb after lunch and, much to everyone's delight, the seeds floated around the room for the rest of the afternoon. (Whether this was a deliberate ploy I never knew!) In the lower of these two rooms the staff had their coffee breaks, there being a convenient long cupboard at the back on which the kettle and cups could be placed.

Mrs Christine Barratt,
Staff member 1965-1971
Headteacher 1971-1992



“Pupils were admitted to the school in Class I at the beginning of each term which meant that there was a corresponding number who would move up a class. This required careful consideration as to which children were ready both academically and socially.

“Every part of the building was used; the two entrance halls were used as cloakrooms, the older pupils' outer clothing, shoes and gym bags were crammed into the space under the spiral staircase, there were pegs too at the back of Class IV where the staff had their coffee.

“My class was privileged. Behind a yellow partition at one end were pegs on both sides so that their possessions could be stowed out of sight. Another advantage was that the girls' toilets were handy, situated outside on the stone staircase separating our part of the building from the Rugby School classrooms. The boys' toilets were across the playground, just inside the gate on Horton Crescent.



^ Pupils from circa 1961

“I remember sometime in my Headship in the 1970s when these were redecorated. I asked the Works Department to paint the doors of these navy blue. Somehow this was misinterpreted and, to my horror, the whole of the inside was done out in this colour and this had to last until the next time they came up on the painting schedule!

“Leading down from my classroom were two flights of stairs. The broad stone stairs were rarely used for the movement of classes in consideration of the Rugby School masters teaching on that side of the school. Most generally used was a tricky spiral staircase on the other side. This meant strict regimentation, single file only. Looking back, Health and Safety would surely have not allowed it! Everyone was surprisingly sensible and careful, I cannot remember a single accident, apart from only one, when a boy running up the stone stairs tripped and chipped a front tooth.

"In 1970 Warwickshire changed from an 11+ transfer to secondary schools to a 12+ system, which meant creating another class. Two more classrooms were thus added, one above the other, to the far side of the school facing Bradley House, a staffroom was attached to the rear backing onto the garden of 2 Horton Crescent, and the spiral staircase was somehow transformed into a straight flight of stairs. The pressure on numbers was great and by the time I became Head in September 1971, we had a complement of eight classes, one for each school year.

"We were fortunate to be able to use many of the Rugby School facilities, the gym, the music room for school productions, The Tosh for a short while in the Summer Term (it was not heated in the early days!), the playing fields and the Chapel for our Christmas Service. Some of the masters were also generous with their time and the children went to the Science Schools, the Language Laboratory and the Rugby School Workshop (for woodwork). I remember in 1967, Rugby School quatercentenary year, going with the whole school to the Rugby field to see the Queen who came for a visit. It was a chilly May afternoon, and the Queen wore pink!

"Until the late 1970s everyone had to go home for lunch until an arrangement was made with Town House to provide midday meals. After the meal the children were allowed to play on the Oval, the piece of ground at the end of Horton Crescent opposite Town House.

"A school tradition in my time was to start every term with the hymn 'He who would valiant be' as it was Mrs Mortimer's favourite."

Swimming

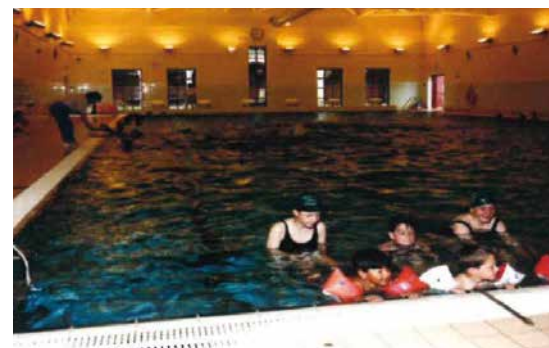
Swimming has always been a big part of school life and a strength of the school right from its early days. Memories of how cold The Tosh was (Rugby School's original outdoor pool) scar deep into the consciousness of the early pupils who 'enjoyed' their swimming lessons there. Whether those temperatures helped pupils swim faster who knows but over the years pupils won many Dolphin Awards and were even recognised in the local papers for their swimming success. Even today children from Year 1 upwards still enjoy weekly swimming lessons and every year pupils win medals and trophies in local, regional and even national swimming galas!



◀ Mrs Baker (Sports Teacher) and Mrs Curtis (Swimming Teacher) with pupils receiving a Swimming Award for the Dolphin Trophy, with a representative of the sponsors Coca Cola, circa 1970



Two views The Tosh >
(now the site of Rugby School Sports Centre) on Swimming Gala Day 1974



◀ View of an indoor swimming lesson at the Rugby School Sports Centre circa 1980's

Dolphin Trophy Award >
from 1983 or 1984





Press Cuttings from
✓ 1977 and ◀ 1978

Swimming among best in Britain

The 11-15-year-old children of Crescent School, Rugby, are probably among the best group of swimmers in their age in Britain.

Competing against middle schools in the country they scored the most points in the Dolphin Trophy, an award scheme designed to encourage schoolchildren to become swimmers.

The Crescent School third year, shown here, have won this year one of the few trophies on offer.

It will be presented at the school's middle school gala.

"It is the first time for a long time that we have won a Dolphin Trophy," said Mrs Judith Baker, athletics mistress of the school.

"It puts us in the top percentage of children in the country."

Thrilled at the award, she attributes success to the early age that Crescent children take the plunge, as from six upwards they go for a swim at least once weekly.

Rugby School helps by lending their swimming pool in summer while for the rest of the year the school uses the sports centre pool.



The Crescent School, Rugby, has won a national swimming award and two divisional awards. Long Lawford and Church Lawford schools also collected divisional awards in the annual "Dolphin Trophy" competition.

The awards, set up to encourage youngsters to learn to swim, have been given for the last 15 years. In that time, claim the sponsors, some 55,000 children have learned to swim.

The Dolphin Trophy (nationally) has gone to the Crescent School, along with divisional awards in the junior and infant porpoise classes.

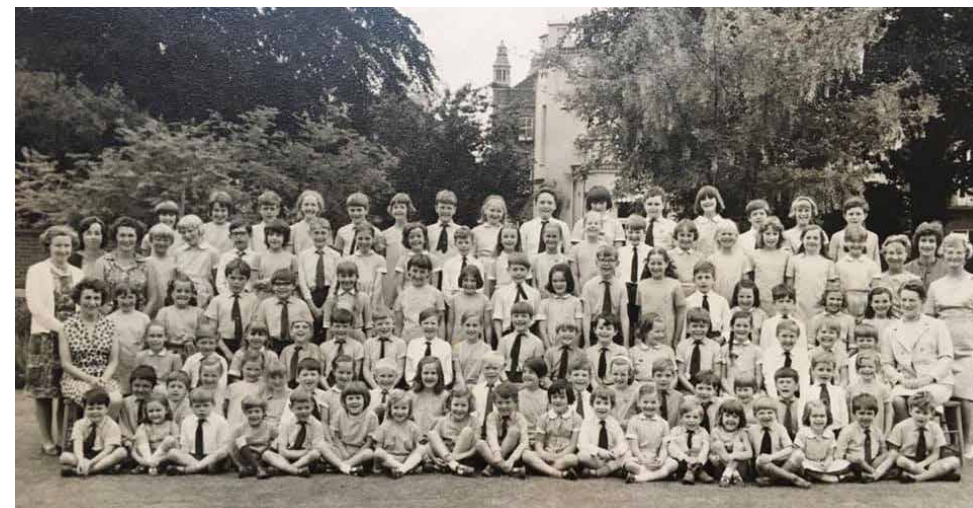
Church Lawford took a divisional junior porpoise award and Long Lawford, who have a record of successes in the competition, won a divisional Dolphin Trophy award.



◀ Rugby Town Swim Champions 2009

CHAPTER THREE

1967-1977



^ Whole school photo 1969

As stated by Mrs Barratt, the change in Warwickshire from an 11+ to a 12+ entry to secondary school necessitated the building of two further classrooms at the front of the building, a staff room in the garden at the back and further toilet facilities. At this point the school did not have a Governing Body as it was a Trust and the Trustees were the Masters, or wives of Masters, of Rugby School. There was a concession on the fees of children of Masters. A lease on the Sanatorium had been taken out with Rugby School; this lease was due to expire in the late 1980s.



^ Whole school photo 1971

Mercury/Hermes Statue



Much remembered and loved by many Horton Crescent Old Crescentians, the statue of the messenger of the gods, Mercury (Roman) or Hermes (Greek) was situated in the playground of Crescent School and it is amazing that he survived the attentions of so many small children so well.

He is pictured here with various teachers and pupils including Mrs Wright (music teacher) and Mrs Barratt (teacher and then Headteacher). He can now be found at Rugby School's Science Block.



Field Trips

During the early 1970s the practice of taking the older pupils (now Year 6) on an annual field trip began. Mrs Bradley and Mrs Baker were usually in charge of these trips. For some time the Crescent pupils went Youth Hostelling in Derbyshire, using the Youlgreave Hostel near Matlock as their base.

Practice walks were undertaken, usually during the early part of the Spring Term, in the countryside around Rugby. One former pupil recalls the practice walks:

"We carried rucksacks, which weighed up to 12lbs, and we had to finish the walks in all weathers. One day it was sleeting and snowing, and we had to put our socks on our hands just to eat our lunches!"



^ The group on Stanton Moor, the sun was shining

"School Camps... well what can I say; mucky, wet, exhausting but ultimately brilliant fun. So nothing much has changed there then!

"As a teacher of Year 6 myself now, I appreciate how much hard work and planning the annual Crescent School Youth Hostelling trip to Derbyshire took for all the staff involved. Yet, I also realise what a valuable experience they were for the children that took part in them.



^ Youlgreave 1978

At the Hostel, the rules about not leaving any food on your plate were very strict. The same pupil recalls placing a cold fried egg in her coat pocket because she did not like fried eggs but dare not leave it on her plate!

A former pupil, Ms Helen Beniston, recalls her early experiences:



^ Practice walk photograph taken in 1992

"I'm not sure everyone enjoyed them! They were certainly 'character building'; hiking for hours across terrain that many adults would find challenging and sometimes in weather conditions that were less than favourable at best. Wellies were lost in peat bogs, during one particularly thick fog we had to descend to Kinderscout tied together with ropes and Kendal Mint Cake was more a necessity than a snack when exhaustion set in. I don't think I have ever experienced or seen blisters like the ones most of us suffered from in those early days. Of course, there were more relaxing moments, back at the YHA socialising and playing. We were a very tight-knit group, having grown up together and being in a class of just twelve, and liked nothing more than plotting and planning how we could wind up the teachers next, or shirk the rules. As with all 11-year-olds, we thought we were the first ones to plan a midnight feast or sneak into each other's dorms, or run ahead and hide, so that the teachers thought they had lost us. Of course, Mrs Baker and Mrs Bradley had seen it all before and we usually just got 'grounded' for our troubles. The grounding never lasted long though, as I think they were more amused by our antics than cross. I know one thing for sure and that is that such camps wouldn't be allowed in today's society of risk assessment, which is a shame because although they were tough, they were probably one of the most enduring memories and valuable experiences that I had at the Crescent."



^ Slapton 2002



^ Slapton 2017

The practice of Youth Hostelling ceased in 1992 when the alternative venue of Slapton Field Studies Centre in Devon was used for the first time. The highpoint of each year's visit seemed to be the river walk from Aveton Gifford, through the Avon estuary mud, to Bantham!

CHAPTER FOUR

1977-1987

In the 1980s the Chair of the Trustees wrote to the Bursar of Rugby School enquiring if the lease on the building could be renewed. He was given no reason to suspect that this



^ Mrs Alright with her Class 6, 1984



^ Mrs Clayton with her Reception class, 1984



^ Mrs Newbury with her Class 2, 1985

would not be the case. However, there was a subsequent change of Headship and Bursar at Rugby School, and plans were made to take back the Sanatorium building into the School.

A Committee was set up to look at possible sites, or ways of replacing the school premises. This Committee consisted of two members of the Rugby School Governing Body, the Treasurer of the Crescent School Trust, Headteacher of Crescent School, Bursar of Rugby School and various professional people in Rugby i.e. solicitors, surveyors. Together they looked at various sites around the centre of Rugby including the Fitzjohn building near Tower Farm on the Barby Road, the old CIA building on Ashlawn Road and the possibility of erecting a new building on the old polo grounds of Rugby School. An architect was commissioned to draw up the plans, but the project was abandoned on the grounds of expense.

Around this time the old St. Mark's School in Bilton became available. However, applying to become owners of this building was complicated because it had been a church school and so the application had to be made to both Warwickshire County Council and the Diocese of Coventry.



^ Staff Photo 1987

Turrit Contractors carried out the main work on the building and the main hall, kitchen and offices were completely refurbished. New boilers, replacing coal burning to gas, were installed. The vandalised windows were repaired. The new Nursery and Reception building, which had been the Science Block of the former school, was converted and extended. A loan, totalling £20,000 was taken out to enable the refurbishment to go ahead. The School moved to its present site in 1988.

The move to Bawnmore Road

Mr John Evans, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the time, writes:

"My most dramatic memory concerns the great scare about high alumina cement! We had to take expert advice and, for a time, were in real danger of having to shut the school for a considerable time. I suppose the worst scenario was permanent closure. We managed to keep the school open only by taking soundings in the relevant beams on a daily basis with a pointed test prod!"

The move from Horton Crescent to Bawnmore Road took place over the summer holidays in 1988.

Two tractors and their trailers were purloined from Rugby School by the new bursar, Mr Meek, to move all the furnishings to the new site!

At the old site in Horton Crescent the children had been able to use Town House for their midday meal. This was not possible after the move so Crescent School provided midday meals for the first time. Children had the choice of remaining at school for a cooked lunch or going home.



^ Mrs Barrett with her class of pupils circa 1988

The Diocese wanted to sell off the playing fields for new housing, however only half the original playing fields were built on and the rest preserved. St Mark's School site was to be sold by sealed bids and Crescent School were the successful bidders.

The site had lain derelict for approximately 18 months prior to this and so, whilst structurally sound, there was quite a lot of work to be undertaken to make the building fit for its future pupils.



^ Last day at Horton Crescent

A former Rugby School cook was appointed along with kitchen staff. At the same time Mr Tansley, a former carpenter at Rugby School, was appointed the Bawnmore Road site's first caretaker.

The number of staff at the Horton Crescent site had grown steadily over the years as the number of children on the school

roll had increased. However, this number increased again after the move to Bawnmore Road. The biggest increase in staff numbers was in the Nursery.

Shortly after the move to Bawnmore Road, in 1989, a nursery in Regent's Place closed and Mrs Pratt, who had worked in this nursery, joined the Crescent staff. Some of the children from this nursery also transferred to Crescent Nursery.

The old Trust took on the form of a Governing Body after the move to Bawnmore Road. The School had applied to become a registered charity and, therefore, needed to change its constitution.

The Trustees worked alongside the Charities Commission to form a working party, and the old Trust was allowed to run down. Some of the members of the Trust became the first Governors (in title only) of Crescent School.

The old constitution had stated that the Trustees had to be members of Rugby School staff but as this was no longer the case the School strived to enlist a wide range of professional people onto this new

trust. Initially the three-yearly term of office was staggered to avoid everyone terminating at the same time. The original constitution of the Trust consisted of the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Bursar and 10 professional people.



^ Horton Crescent by Joe Douse presented to Crescent School by parents on the occasion of the move to Bawnmore Road

School to cut ties with town centre



By ALASTAIR LAW, Rugby Reporter

AN INDEPENDENT Rugby school is on the move to a bigger site after more than 20 years in the town centre.

The 160-pupil Crescent School, is to move a mile out of town from its Horton Crescent base.

From September it will take over buildings once occupied by St Mark's Middle School in Bawnmore Road, Bilton.

Crescent School's management committee bought the disused school buildings, and half of the playing fields, from Warwickshire county council last November for almost £250,000.

And thousands more are to be spent on refurbishing classrooms and corridors with work due to start this week.

The county has sold the remaining part of the playing field for housing.

Crescent School believes the move will give pupils the extra space and facilities they need.

Outgrown

It leaves its present buildings from Rugby School, which will take them over once the move is completed.

Gerry Meek, the governors' chairman, said the school had rapidly outgrown its Horton Crescent home.

Crescent currently shares many facilities - including catering, classrooms and sports - with nearby Rugby School.

The headmistress, Christine Barrett, said: "Obviously the move is a great upheaval, but we shall have our own facilities at Bilton."

"At the moment we share a lot of facilities."

SCHOOLBOY Matthew Storer's artistic talents have won him a date with the Duke of Kent.

Matthew, 11, a pupil at Crescent School, Rugby, is among 50 finalists chosen to attend a gala dinner and presentation.

His eye-catching safety poster slogan was chosen from more than 8,000 entries nationally.

Matthew will travel to London's Mansion House on May 23 to find out if he will receive a special trophy from the Duke.

Matthew's colourful entry, which caught the judges' eye, showed a young boy crossing the road without looking, straight into the path of an oncoming car.

His poster was among six of the best designs drawn by Crescent School's 160 pupils, and took him just over an hour.

Royal date for pupil

How the local press reported the move from Horton Crescent to Bawnmore Road in 1988.

Some history of St. Mark's School, Bilton

St. Mark's School started life as a church school situated in the High Street in the village of Bilton, where it remained for over 100 years. After the Second World War pupil numbers grew rapidly with new housing developments, and land known locally as Parson's Field was purchased on which to build the new school. Building commenced in 1951 and the school was officially opened by the Bishop of Coventry on Friday 28 March 1952. The Headmaster at the time was Mr A P Webster. The Rugby Advertiser described the building as a 'brick built traditional type school with the most up to date amenities'. The school, in common with the original site of Crescent School, underwent an extension in the 1970s to create a science block (now the Horton Centre).



St. Mark's School, Bawnmore Road, Rugby circa 1952

Copyright© Landmark Information Group and Ordnance Survey Crown Copyright 2002.

All rights reserved St. Mark's School, Bawnmore Road, Rugby circa 1952

The brick relief built into the wall near the entrance is of some interest. It is reputed to be a depiction of 'youth' although whether the relief is of Pan with his pipes is of some dispute. What this image is doing on the wall of a purportedly Christian institution remains something of a mystery. A history of St.

Mark's School was written some years ago, but very few copies were distributed, so the mystery remains. If anyone knows the story behind the relief, please contact the School so that the information can be inserted into any subsequent reprinting of this booklet.

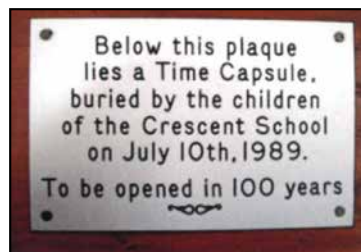


CHAPTER FIVE

1987-1997

It was shortly after the move that the library in the School foyer was created. Previously, in Horton Crescent, the use of the library had been on an ad hoc basis (mostly after school until 5.00pm) due to the cramped nature of the accommodation.

In 1989 a Time Capsule was buried beneath the floor of the Library. Mrs Chris Vickers, who was teaching at the School at the time, recalls: "As far as I can remember the Time Capsule was the idea of Alan Godfrey, father of Emma, Charlotte and Peter. He provided the metal strong box. Children were asked for suggestions for contents which they felt were typical of their school at the time. Contents included a school uniform beret and cap, children's drawings and samples of work. A copy of that week's 'Rugby Advertiser' was also included. Lots of other things will have to remain a surprise when the time comes to open it!"



◀ Class 6 of 1988 with the time capsule

During the 1990s the number of children of the staff of Rugby School attending Crescent School began to decline. A deciding factor in this was possibly the School's location further out of town. Up until 1992 the Headteacher undertook all the administration of the school ably assisted by the bursar. However, under a change of Headship in 1992 the first school secretary was recruited, this was Mrs Gilkes who stayed at the school until 1998 when Mrs Morley was appointed.



^ The whole school photo 1989

Mrs Barratt retired in July 1992 and a daytime gathering, followed by a buffet supper and dance, was held in her honour on 10 July. This was the first recorded reunion of past pupils, parents and staff. It was at this point that the School hall was renamed The Barratt Hall and an annual prize, The Barratt Prize, was instituted for the purchase of books.



^ The cake baked on the retirement of Mrs Barratt in 1992

Mr Ian Wren,
Headteacher 1992-2000



Ian Wren took over as Headteacher in 1992 and it was he who introduced individual house point cards for children from Year 1 upwards. It was also during this time that the venue for field trips changed from Derbyshire to Slapton in Devon. The facilities at Slapton were suggested because they had been used by Lichfield Cathedral School where Mr Wren had formerly been Headteacher.

Ian Wren was also instrumental in the school's plans for its Golden Jubilee.

Golden Jubilee

The Golden Jubilee celebrations of the founding of the School were held throughout the academic year of 1996-97.

The first event held was a steam journey going back in time, which proved popular with parents and staff alike. This was followed, later in the year, by a Golden Jubilee Reunion Christmas Service, which was attended by former staff members and past pupils. A very successful Christmas lunch was held back at the School after the Service. Further, well-attended events took place culminating in a production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at the end of the school year.



◀ Golden Jubilee Celebrations



A programme of events was drawn up as follows:

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS			
1996		1997	
4th October	Forties Dance	19.30 for 20.00 in the Barren Hall Licensed bar and hot supper	
4th December	"Baby Jesus"	Classes N, R, I & II in Barren Hall at 14.30	
6th December	"Christmas is Coming"	A concert by III, IV, V & VI in Barren Hall at 19.00	
10th December	"R.F.G."	Classes III & IV theatre outing to Birmingham Old Rep	
	Christmas Party	For Classes R, I & II in the Barren Hall at 14.00	
11th December	School Christmas Lunch	(at 12.45)	
12th December	Nursery Christmas Party	(pm group)	
	"The Adventures of Mr Toad"	Classes V & VI theatre trip to Castle Theatre, Wellesborough	
13th December	Nursery Christmas Party	(am group)	
15th December	Golden Jubilee Reunion Christmas Service Followed by Luncheon	Rugby School Chapel. Preacher Rev Alan Caldwell (Former Rector of Rugby & Crescent parent)	
		1st February	ISIS Exhibition Item Memorial Hall (Croche provided by Crescent School)
		8th March	Golden Ball Item Memorial Hall Dancing to the "Lakerley Lads" £25.00 per person
		26th March	Easter Fair & Egg Hunt
		2nd May	May Day Party & Balloon Race
		28th June	Open Day & Sports Day
			Evening Concert Present and past musicians
		6th July	Bar-B-Que Traditional Bar-B-Que. The Meek's are kindly allowing us the use of their farm
		9th/10th July	"Charlie & the Chocolate Factory" The Macready Theatre, Rugby School



◀ Golden Jubilee Patchwork Quilt (1996-1997). Made by teachers and parents to mark the first 50 years of the School. Assembled by Mrs D Gillias (parent of Nick and Lucy)



^ The programme cover of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* depicting some of the pupils who took part in the production

Performing Arts

Alongside music and sport there is also a strong history of teaching drama and dance at Crescent School. From the earliest years with Christmas performances through to productions, like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Pirates of Penzance*, this is a trend which continues to the present day with the recent productions of *Macbeth* and *Tempest*. The performing arts curriculum includes lessons in speech, communication and drama, and children have the opportunity to undertake the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations.



^ *Macbeth* 2022, *Bugsy Malone* 2015

^ School Nativity at St Mark's Church circa 1992

Music

Music has always played a large part in the Crescent Curriculum, and continues to do so today, and pupils are encouraged to learn a musical instrument. The School has a long-established choir and orchestra, as well as other music groups including woodwind, brass, strings and recorder. There is at least one concert or performance held each term.



^ Here Mrs Gwen Proudlock is seen conducting a rehearsal of the school orchestra in the 1990s.



^ The Choir in 1974 at the Leamington Spa Music Festival. Other First Prize Certificates followed (as evidenced above).



◀ Julie Barnes, Director of Music, with the school orchestra in circa 2012



^ School Choir at Coventry Cathedral 2021

CHAPTER SIX

1997-2007

Mrs Vickers joined the Crescent in the mid-1980s teaching Maths and Science. She was involved in the move from Horton Crescent to Bawnmore Road. Headmaster Ian Wren appointed her as Deputy Head and when he retired in 2000, she took on the role of acting Headteacher, staying on an extra year until Huw Marshall was appointed in 2002.

She was the driving force behind setting up a dedicated IT suite in the school and also the building of the Mortimer Suite which at the time was a very big project. She was an excellent teacher, Deputy and Head who is fondly remembered as firm but fair and kind too. She could always be heard coming, as her shoes clipped down the corridor, until the carpets were installed on the 'Green Mile'!

It was Mrs Vickers who was responsible for the change from plain green ties to striped ties depicting House colours - red for St. George, blue for St. Andrew and yellow for St. David. A practice which continues to this day.

Her daughter, Laura, also taught Art at Crescent School.

It was during this time that each classroom was given a computer and printer, and teaching staff were provided with training. Plans were drawn up to implement the teaching of I.C.T. (Information and Computing Technology) with the development of a special ICT classroom with a network of computers and the employment of a specialist teacher.

First, however, additional space was needed to create the new room. Various plans were mooted and drawn up. The original intention was to provide two portable Terrapin classrooms with a covered link walkway to the rest of the school.

Finally, it was agreed to add two permanent classrooms as an extension to the school and so the Mortimer Suite came to be built and was officially opened in 2000. Classes III and IV moved into their new home and the old Class III classroom became the new ICT room.

Classes V and VI also moved down the main corridor thus leaving the old Class VI classroom to become the Music Room. (The original intended use for this room was to use it as the school library/quiet room).

The ICT room was opened in September 2000 and the first dedicated specialist ICT Teacher, Mr Mark Schofield, was appointed in September 1999.

Mrs Christine Vickers,
Headteacher 2000-2002



^ ICT classroom

The Crescent Chronicle

page 6

Summer 2001



Extension works extended

The new extension is, at last, complete!!

(and a porcine mammal has been observed in aviation over Crescent School!!)

The new building, however, looks and feels superb, and the school is ready now for the exciting metamorphosis about to take place during the summer. We look forward to opening the new facility next term with much anticipation.

The new classrooms will allow new facilities to be installed in other parts of the school.

There will be a purpose-built art room, a new office/peripatetic teaching facility and an impressive new computer resource that will enable every pupil personal use of a networked workstation. There will be increased access to filtered Internet and online

...the exciting metamorphosis about to take place...

educational resources, and each child will have a personal e-mail account. There are to be specialist teaching of computer skills as well as a broad and growing range of cross-curricular activities. There will also be at least one computer club.

The building itself has a really rather spacious and airy feel to it. The entrance hall is particularly pleasant and light, and the two new



classrooms feel spacious and cheery. They will be a real treat for the children who can finally occupy them in September (how long will those pristine walls and windows resist the accumulation of little fingerprints?)

...every pupil will have personal use of a networked computer...

Staff and children at the school have been most tolerant of the long process of change, and look forward to a peaceful yet exciting return to school in September!

the new foyer



During the Jubilee year the school playground was resurfaced and over the summer holidays in 1998 it was re-marked in various colours to facilitate the playing of games.

During this time two picnic tables and benches were provided alongside the horse chestnut trees at the far end of the playground. In July of the following year the Jubilee Garden was officially opened. This is the garden which runs alongside the now Horton Centre and the main corridor.

The project was financed by events held during the Golden Jubilee year and was opened by Mr John Drake, the grandfather of a former pupil, who also constructed the



garden and a gazebo, providing the children with a place to sit and to play.

^ Mrs Felicity Furber, daughter of Mrs Mortimer, with pupils from Crescent School at the opening of the Mortimer Suite, 2000.

The gazebo was designed by Class VI children in their Design and Technology lessons. They built cardboard prototypes, and the winning design was built by Mr Drake. It was also during this year that the Jubilee Committee held a competition to devise a motto for the School. The winning motto 'To give is to receive' was suggested by a parent and, from then on, began to appear on all school stationery.



Crescent School

To give is to receive

In September 2002 Mr Huw Marshall took over the headship from Mrs Vickers, having served, for the previous six years, as a Deputy Head and Director of Studies in another independent school, Handcross Park in Sussex. Prior to that he had spent 16 years in a number of schools both private and state-maintained teaching children of all ages.

Under Huw's leadership the school went through many changes but the children always remained at the centre of it ethos.

The school promise which Huw introduced back in 2005 recognises this and 'became central to his philosophy.'

Mr Huw Marshall,
Headteacher 2002-2017



Crescent School Promise

As a member of Crescent School I will do my best to:

- treat others as I would like to be treated myself
- be kind and helpful
- share with others
- forgive others
- be gentle
- look after property
- work hard
- listen to people
- be honest and not cover up the truth

In 2010 Mr Marshall became an inspector with the Independent Schools' Inspectorate using his wealth of knowledge of teaching and schools to support the wider educational system and the school had its first ever Summer Fete, a tradition that continues to the present day. The event was organised by the Friends of Crescent committee and wholeheartedly supported by the school community.

Across Mr Marshall's time at Crescent, pupils performed extremely well in the 11+ exams and the entrance exams for local independent schools and the Class of 2010 was no exception, that year 55% of the class were offered grammar school places and all who applied for independent schools were successful with 11 pupils receiving scholarships.

The Circular Magazine

Mr Marshall introduced a school magazine, the Circular which was launched in 2008. The magazine was aimed at highlighting the fun and success enjoyed over the previous year and continues to this day.



< Circa 2002

Circa 2000s >



CHAPTER SEVEN

2007 to 2017

Sport

Sport has always played a large part in the Crescent curriculum from the earliest days of swimming lessons in The Tosh. The School has enjoyed much sporting success, with one of the highlights being the 2008 Crescent School football team's venture onto the pitch at Wembley when they represented the Midlands in an English Schools' Football Association competition. In 2017 the U11 Boys Hockey team saw great success reaching the IAPS (Independent Association of Preparatory Schools) U11 National Hockey Finals for the very first time in the school's history. That success was repeated the very next year in 2018 and then once again in 2020. Other sports regularly played at the School include rugby, cricket, hockey, netball, short tennis, athletics and, of course, swimming! There is an annual swimming gala held at the Rugby School Sports Centre swimming pool, the site of the old Tosh.



^ Year VI Football Team at the 2008 National Finals of the E.S.F.A. held in the new Wembley Stadium

Photo courtesy RWF Photography 2008.



^ 2017 U11 Hockey National Finalists



^ Mr Matt Phillips with the football team circa 2008



^ Mrs Clare Gove with the netball team

Crescent's Nursery

At this stage the school had a flourishing term time only, pre-school nursery managed by Helen Taggett, based in the Nursery and Reception building, now the Horton Centre.

Crescent's Nursery celebrated its 20th anniversary in September 2009, so it was a happy coincidence that it also saw the opening of a new and much improved outdoor play area and classroom.

The project was funded by grants made available by the government for nurseries which could show a clear idea of how to spend the money to improve facilities to greatly enhance the children's learning opportunities.

Then nursery manager, Mrs Carolyn McGrellis, spent a great deal of time and effort preparing a bid that was so impressive the nursery was awarded the maximum grant. Older children also enjoyed using this new facility and the bouncy, rubberised surface put a spring into everyone's steps.

As the decade moved on and the 2008-2009 recession started to hit, working parents were looking for year-round nursery places and the nursery now run by Caroline McGrellis, was extended to 50 weeks a year in an attempt to cater for this demand. A Holiday Club for the older children was also introduced to drive year-round income.



In 2015 with nursery numbers dwindling, the decision was taken by Mr Marshall and governors to approach a local private nursery provider, Nature Trails, who had a very successful, Ofsted 'Outstanding' nursery in Cawston. Owners Steve and Alison Dyke agreed to rent the nursery building from the school to operate a second nursery catering for children aged six months to pre-school, year-round. Prior to them moving in the nursery building was refurbished.

When Nature Trails took up residence the Reception class moved down to a new home in a classroom in the Mortimer Suite, with the move came an exciting addition to the school the Outdoor Learning Area, a dedicated space for the Reception Class with direct access from the classroom, complete with pirate ship and mud kitchen. The area was officially opened by Mark Pawsey, MP for Rugby in 2015.

My View of Sports Day 2012

With the 2012 Olympics coming we did an Olympic themed sports day; we had a procession with the oath following. We had a great time with the field events and they went very fast. While that was going on something 'different' was happening which was Pre-Prep running races. They had a lot of different races like a dressing up race and much more but then came the time for our running. It was the 800 metres first, I was not in it. Next sprints I did not win them either BUT!!! My team won the relay. Overall I liked Sports Day; it was fun, well organised and the photos were good to look at. Well done to everybody.

Luke Daniel

On Friday 1 June it was Jubilee day. There were lots of activities - some of them were making tiles, decorating crowns and we did a quiz; my favourite was making the tiles. At lunch we had a jubilee picnic -the sandwiches were yummy! After lunch we went round to the front of the school and planted a silver birch tree. We also planted some rose bushes. At the end of the day we all got a balloon - they were red, white and blue - which the FOC kindly provided. We let them go at the same time just before we went home and we all got a medallion to remember the Diamond Jubilee.

Ali Brown Class IV

Mrs Ovens Retires

The end of the summer term 2013 saw the retirement of Mrs Tricia Ovens after a sterling 29 years of teaching at the Crescent. Mrs Ovens was in charge of Speech and Drama and was responsible for all the school productions, including many memorable ones such as *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Speaking about how she became a Drama Teacher, Mrs Ovens said, "I became a Drama teacher by accident. I had done some voluntary work at my older daughters' first school after they had lost a full time Teaching Assistant. One of the students moved on to 'The Crescent'. His mother asked the headmistress if they did Speech and Drama. Her reply was 'No, because we can't find a suitable teacher'. The parent then suggested me! I was working part-time as a Maths and Computer Studies teacher and liked the idea of doing something new.

*Mrs Ovens you are so sweet.
Now all you need is a treat.
You helped me be the Snow White I wanted to be.
Any time any place you put
a smile on Everyone's face.
Thank you for the kindness you bring,
Thank you for everything.*

Abigail Monteith, Class IV



Merger with The Princethorpe Foundation

With the partnership with Nature Trails established and going well, merger negotiations began in spring 2016 with local independent, Catholic senior school, Princethorpe College, part of the Princethorpe Foundation. Crescent had long been a significant feeder school to Princethorpe and relations between the two schools were very cordial.

An announcement was made in July 2016 that Crescent School and the Princethorpe Foundation had taken the decision to merge with effect from September 2016. Crescent would retain its own identity but would become a Princethorpe Foundation school and Nature Trails would continue to operate the on-site nursery.

Commented, Pat Lines, Chair of Governors at Crescent School, "The merger brings benefits to both parties in terms of long-term security, opportunities for development and shared resources, expertise and leadership. There will also be opportunities to provide our pupils with a broader range of teaching, learning and extra-curricular activities.

"It will be business as usual for the Crescent with the same excellent standards of teaching and pastoral care, though with the backing of the Princethorpe Foundation campus developments will be brought on stream far quicker than would have been possible."



◀ Image shows from left to right: Crescent Headmaster, Huw Marshall, Crescent Chair of Governors, Mrs Pat Lines, Princethorpe Foundation Chair of Trustees, Mrs Mary O'Farrell and Princethorpe Foundation Senior Head, Ed Hester.

Mary O'Farrell, Chair of Trustees for the Princethorpe Foundation, commented "Over fifty former Crescent pupils currently attend our senior school, Princethorpe College, this and the already excellent working relationship between both leadership teams is testament to the excellent fit between us in terms of ethos and culture. We are very excited about working together for the benefit of our joint long-term futures."

Following the merger, plans to improve and develop areas of the school site such as the Library and foyer area were outlined, along with the intention to have two Year 4 classes for September 2017, the first time in the school's history that a year group would have more than one class.

Mr Marshall Retires

Mr Marshall announced his intention to retire at the end of the 2016-17 academic year after 15 years as Head. Commenting at the time, he said, "The Crescent has been a stand-alone prep school for seventy years preparing children for entry into local independent schools, the two local grammar schools and other state maintained secondary schools in the area. However, the school is now beginning a new and very exciting chapter in its history as a part of the Princethorpe Foundation. If I were younger, I would be only too happy to be involved in formulating the development plan for the next ten years and seeing some extensive refurbishment and likely enlargement of the school's facilities, but I believe that the timing is perfect to hand over to a younger person who could be involved in this planning from the outset and also stay to see it through to completion."

Following Mr Marshall's decision the Foundation began the search for his successor. In November 2016 after a comprehensive recruitment process, Joe Thackway was appointed to take over the headship in September 2017.



In July 2017 to celebrate Mr Marshall's retirement and his return to his native Wales, with wife Magda, the school organised a special 'Welsh' send off for him, an Eisteddfod, a celebration of culture, with music and poetry performed by the children, speeches and a very special film put together by the Friends of Crescent of the children talking about their memories of Mr Marshall.

Asked to reflect on his 37 years in education Huw commented, "It's about enabling people to be the best they can be, from the youngest child in Reception to your most mature member of staff, you are there for them, to support them, to help them believe in themselves."



◀ Also retiring at the end of 2017 were longstanding Reception and Year 1 teachers, Sandra Clayton and Anne Boys, with 54 years' service between them.

CHAPTER 8

2017 and beyond

Crescent's new Headmaster, Joe Thackway, was an extremely experienced teacher with a strong track record of success in school leadership and management. Prior to joining Crescent School, he had been Deputy Head at Hallfield School, an outstanding independent preparatory school, in Edgbaston, Birmingham for ten years.

A History graduate with 22 years' experience in the profession, he had taught in both the state and independent sectors and also gained valuable experience in international schools in Vienna and Prague.

On accepting the position Joe commented, "It is an immense privilege to take on the headship of the Crescent at this exciting time. I look forward greatly to meeting and spending more time with the pupils, parents and staff over the coming months and building relationships which will inform our future plans and ambitions for the school."

Joe Thackway,
Headmaster 2017 to present



Joining Joe on the staff for the 2017-18 academic year, were Mrs Claire Pullen as the school's new Reception Teacher, Mrs Lisa Emery as the Class 1 Teacher along and Mrs Amanda Yates as the additional Year 4 teacher.

Mrs Rachel McCollin was also appointed to the new role of Head of Girls' Games, to work alongside Head of Sport and Boys' Games, Matt Philips, as a result of the

school deciding to increase the amount of time children participate in sport with the introduction of dedicated Games afternoons for Year 3/4 and 5/6.



A little school with big ambitions



^ **Mrs Webb (then Mrs Lowe) in the refitted school library 2017**

With the backing of the Princethorpe Foundation and under Joe's direction, those ambitions soon started to be realised. Over the summer the hall and library were completely refurbished, and a new reception area created. A number of the classrooms were upgraded and the office areas refurbished. Behind the scenes a new server room was installed and a new school network created and integrated into the wider Foundation ICT system. Work also started on a new all-weather play area.

One of the first things Mr Thackway introduced in 2018 in consultation and development with the school council was a new version of the Crescent School Promise. The promise reflects the school community's shared core values and beliefs and was brought to life by the Foundation Marketing Team with endearing cartoon characters, who appeared on the promise leaflet, in a new school promotional film and more recently adorning the walls of the school.



Bwengu Projects

The Crescent School has supported the work of local Rugby based charity, Bwengu Projects, for over fifteen years. In fact, the school was one of the charity's first supporters back in 2007 when they donated books for use in school libraries. Each year the Year 4 children at the Crescent School study Africa and in particular Malawi and the work that Bwengu Projects does.

At the end of their topic the children organise lots of enterprising fundraising activities that the whole school participates in including the always popular sponsored silence, a challenge that their teachers very much enjoy.



^ Bwengu Projects presentation 2017



The initiative is led by Deputy Head, Bryony Forth, and over the years, the school has raised in excess of £15,000 and helped pay for renovating schools, building a Women's Development Centre, providing sewing machines, classroom furniture, a teacher's salary and nearly 100,000 meals for orphans.

Platinum Anniversary Celebrations



2018 was a big year for Crescent School, marking the 70th anniversary of the school's official forming and the 30th anniversary of its move to Bawnmore Road. Old Crescentians, the school's past pupils' association was officially launched and a series of events to celebrate the Platinum Anniversary ensued including a Family Fun Day including performances by the Bilton Silver Training Band, followed by a Black Tie Dinner Dance for over 100 guests at Princethorpe

College, an inaugural OCs Pub Meet at The Merchants Inn and a special Platinum Anniversary Carol Concert in Rugby School's Temple Speech Rooms.



At the Family Fun Day then Foundation archivist, Janette Ratcliffe, was kept busy as many provided new information and memories for her collection. Some of their memories included anecdotal insights such as 'watching the moon landing sitting in the hall', 'wearing my school beret para-trooper style and being much berated', 'being punished for scrumping apples' and 'the smell of polish whilst sitting cross legged in assembly'.

As the end of the decade approached the school continued to go from strength-to-strength with pupil numbers increasing and competition for places at an all-time high. There was a surge in early applications for Reception places, limited places or waiting groups in other years and with house-building booming in the local area and the space to accommodate the extra pupils the decision was taken to introduce a second Reception Class for September 2020 and 2021.



2020 to 2021 The Covid Years

No-one can deny the difficulty of the challenges faced during the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact of the enforced closure of schools on society in general and in particular on education and young people.

Friday 19 March 2020 was indeed a very dark day for the Crescent and the wider Foundation as parents, children and staff became aware that life and in particular school life was going to change considerably over the coming weeks and months.

Steadfast leadership and clear decision making from Joe, his Senior Leadership Team and the Foundation Team, steered the school and Foundation through this uncertain time. There was a smooth move to home learning with the teachers, pupils and parents working together in adopting the Seesaw platform for online learning and live lessons.

School life went virtual off and on for many months, from home learning tasks, live lessons and assemblies to parents' evenings and Open Events. On the return to school, thanks to extremely careful planning Covid measures were swiftly implemented and testing regimes introduced, before measures were relaxed and thankfully eventually lifted.

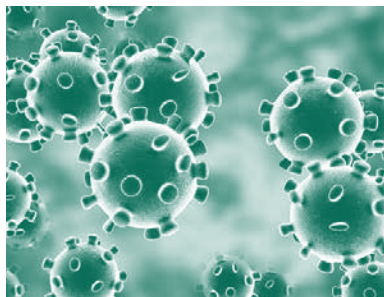
In spite of the disruption to learning of the lockdowns, independent assessments confirmed that thanks to the hard work of staff and the engagement and resilience of pupils supported by their parents, Crescent pupils were on track or exceeding expectations in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science.

- In Maths 100% of Year 1 to Year 6 pupils were meeting or exceeding expectations
- In English 99.3% of Year 1 to Year 6 pupils were meeting or exceeding expectations
- In Science 100% of Year 3 to Year 6 pupils were meeting or exceeding expectations

One of the unfortunate victims of Covid was the onsite nursery, Pathfinders. In February 2021 the owners announced that the nursery on the Crescent school site would close in April.



The business has been under sustained pressure during the pandemic and owners, Steve and Alison Dyke, who had leased the site since 2015, had reluctantly concluded that they needed to close the nursery and would wind it down over the next eight weeks.



^ Year 2 with Mr Webb 2022

The Trustees and senior team, examined the options open to them and decided that the building would be best returned for use by the school.

Commented Joe Thackway, Headmaster, "We are saddened that the nursery has been so badly impacted by the challenges of the past year and understand the difficulties the closure will cause families and

the nursery staff. By accepting the building back, we will have the opportunity to develop our campus further, particularly in terms of accommodation for Music, the Performing Arts and our Before and After School Wrap-Around Care."

Horton Centre

Planning permission was swiftly granted for the school to transform the 250m² former nursery building and work was completed by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

The building, christened the Horton Centre, to reflect the school's origins on Rugby's Horton Crescent, was officially opened in October 2021.

There were further improvements to the school's facilities around this period including a Forest School area, the installation of a high-quality natural wood adventure trail thanks to a donation from the Friends of Crescent (FoC) and the introduction of a new quiet area, the Cosy Corner, in which children can relax and take time out from the hustle and bustle of the main playground.



2021 ISI Inspection

Despite the challenges of the preceding few years, Crescent School received the highest possible ratings across all criteria from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) following an inspection in September 2021.

The report, consisted of two elements, a focused compliance inspection, encompassing statutory standards, and an educational quality inspection evaluating the achievement of pupils, including their academic and personal development.

During the inspection, the ISI inspectors observed that, 'Pupils have excellent and positive attitudes to learning', that 'They are highly curious, resilient learners', and that 'Pupils' excellent knowledge, skills and understanding are reflected in their achievements across the curriculum'. The report also says, 'Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attain well above national age-related expectations', 'Older pupils consistently exceed expectations for their age and abilities', 'Pupils are consistently successful in entrance examinations to their first-choice school', and that 'Many pupils win scholarships for music, drama, art, sport and academic achievement'.

Pupils' personal development was also judged as 'excellent' with inspectors recognising that 'behaviour is excellent', that pupils 'behave with empathy and care towards one another' and that 'the open and embedded culture of kindness underpinned by deep



mutual respect ensures successful outcomes for all'.

Headmaster, Joe Thackway, commented "We are thrilled with the report, it is a real vote of confidence for everything we do here at Crescent School and reflects a huge team effort. Every single member of staff shares the same care and devotion to the education and wellbeing of the wonderful children entrusted to our care and I believe this sentiment shines through every word of the report."

Crescent marks national events



Over the decades, Crescent School has enjoyed celebrating important national events. From Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee back in 1977, through the many subsequent jubilee and marriage celebrations.

In 2011 the school marked the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, with a special off timetable day. The school was decorated, and the children enjoyed a variety of activities with a royal wedding theme.



^ Marking the marriage of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011

Children learnt the National Anthem, danced around a maypole, decorated plates and composed wedding pictures of themselves marrying celebrities using their IT skills. The day ended with some delicious 'wedding cake' and a toast to the happy couple.

The academic year 2011-2012 proved to be packed with all the usual events plus a Diamond Jubilee Day, an Olympics Day and Crescent's very own Olympics Sports Day when all the children from Reception upwards took part

in a combined Pre-Prep and Main School Sports afternoon at the Ken Marriott Leisure Centre track. What was even more remarkable was that, in the wettest summer for decades, the sun shone on the one afternoon when it mattered most.

In 2022 Year 6 pupils were excited to play their part in marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting 30 trees in the school grounds. The trees, that included crab apples, willow, beech, rowan and field maples, were planted in the school's Forest School area as part of the area's expansion



^ Planting trees for the Platinum Jubilee in 2022

project to enable more children to benefit from outdoor learning activities. The planting was part of the Queen's Green Canopy project and the children named the new area 'Jubilee Woods' in honour of Queen Elizabeth II.

When the nation was in mourning, children and staff came together to complete activities later that year to reflect on Queen's Elizabeth's life and legacy and to give thanks for her devoted service to our nation. Children in the Upper School explored the Queen's life in their History lessons. Some created thank you cards while others completed response tasks, helping to give them an insight into her life of duty. The younger children coloured pictures of flowers and symbols and the royal family has featured in their phonics lessons.

A special day of celebrations marked the coronation of King Charles III. In 2023 staff and children came to school in red, white and blue and the day began with a special assembly with Mr Thackway reflecting on the role of the King. At lunchtime the children munched their way through a special Friday 'fish and chips' picnic out on the field, rounded off with a special celebratory cake.

Traditional games and activities were the order of the afternoon, pupils played skittles, beat the goalie, decorated flags and biscuits, played boules and darts, and guessed the name of the teddy, the older pupils mixing with the younger, encouraging and helping everyone to join in all the fun. The sun came out just in time for everyone to enjoy their ice creams and the afternoon was finished off with a wonderful parade of celebratory crowns and a magnificent rendition of *God Save The King*.



^ Kings Coronation Crown Parade 2023

School's 75th Anniversary Celebrations

The school's 75th anniversary celebrations in 2023 were kicked off in January with a new celebration in the Crescent school calendar, Founder's Day. The day began with a special assembly with the whole school



gathering together in the school hall to reflect back to Crescent School's founding back in 1948. As part of the assembly and to mark the start of the anniversary year, pupils from Year 6 performed a short play reflecting life at the Crescent School back in its early days in 1948. The light-hearted sketch highlighted some of the differences between life at the school then and now.

Founder's Day was swiftly followed by an opportunity for pupils to explore life in the 1940s in more detail with teachers leading 1940s themed lessons. Whether practising their calligraphy cursive writing, developing their 1940s programming skills, learning about the Windrush generation, or the impact rationing had on baking, exploring 1940s children's games or the dance styles

of the 1940s, the learning activities all helped pupils to understand what life was like 75 years ago.

As part of the anniversary celebrations we gathered together longstanding staff for a commemorative photograph. The ten pictured staff, from left to right, Bryony Forth, Sarah Webb, Sally Dowling, Julie Barnes, Alan Webb, Helen Morley, Steph Calder, Debbie Olnier, Amanda Noyce and Sam Stapleton, can count some 265 years of service between them.



Add to this the school's fantastic catering trio of Trudy Green, Jane Slatcher and Lesley Shallcross, with 82 years of serving school dinners and you have some true dedication and commitment to Crescent School on display.



The final 75th celebration, an anniversary fête in June, was well attended with pupils and staff from across the generations, dating from the sixties through the eighties and on to more recent years, returning to visit their old school. Many were delighted to find old photos of themselves, and fascinating memorabilia retrieved from the archives. Foundation Archivist, Catherine Lewis, was kept busy as old pupils put names to photos and shared memories and

even donations for her collection. The oral history booth was popular with all, who were happy to record their memories of life at Crescent School.



At the end of the Trinity Term 2023 Mr Thackway was delighted to congratulate Ms Forth, Mrs Webb, Mrs Morley and Mrs Barnes who between them have given nearly 100 years of service to the Crescent School community. They were each presented with flowers as a huge thank for their hard work, dedication and all the contributions they have made to the school community over the years.

Finally, a thought to end on:

“May we hold on to that which is good from the past, be aware of the joys of the present, and rejoice in the endless promise of the future.”

(Taken from a prayer occasionally used by Mrs Vickers in school assembly.)

A final word from Mr Thackway, current Headmaster



A great scientist once said that to understand the future you have to understand the past. I remember when I started here at Crescent six years ago reading through the previous edition of this school history and learning a great deal about its unique ethos and the zeitgeist that makes this place so special.

In this vein, over recent years we have built on the old tradition of the Crescent School Promise and developed it for the modern generation. We are good friends, good learners and good citizens, or we try to be, and in our own humble way hope that we can make a positive impact on all who pass through this building, whether it be as pupils attending the school and their families, teachers, support staff or visitors well as the community around us.

Academic education at Crescent has always been paramount and pupils have always performed well in the 11+ exam and in entrance exams for local independent schools and they continue to do so.

Many thanks indeed to everyone who has been involved in the writing of this new edition. I very much hope it informs and entertains you, both in the here and now and hopefully for those who are to follow in our footsteps. For those of you reading this having attended or worked here, I hope this evokes fond memories you can treasure and come back to every time you find this lying in a drawer or in a cupboard at home.

The fabric of the school has changed tremendously in recent times and whilst the geography of the building remains the same, there is a bright and modern feel about the corridors and classrooms. We continue to dream big and hope that one day we may further develop our sports, music and drama facilities and inevitably there will be changes to the way we teach and learn as the digital age really begins to get into its stride.

Whatever the future holds, I suggest now is the time to find a cosy armchair somewhere, and perhaps a cup of tea, to sit and read through our newly updated 'History of Crescent School'.

Mr Thackway

Headmaster

We encourage everyone who has a connection to the school, or who would like to share their memories and be kept up to date with news from the school, to register on Princethorpe Connect at <https://connect.princethorpe.co.uk> or to email oldprincethorpians@princethorpe.co.uk.



^ R.M. Gunstone 1976 depicting Crescent School at play in Horton Crescent. Front cover of the 1st edition of A History of Crescent School



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