

CHAPTER 2

Schools Old and New



Prince George, later the Duke of Kent, opening the new school buildings in May 1931. He's accompanied by Frank Potter, Art master and aesthete, who had been a Hussar in the First World War. The visit didn't quite go according to plan...

Only a suburban architect and builder would make the first building you came to at the top of the drive a toilet block. I think you'd call the 1931 school's style 'Gaumont Tudor'.

AN OPINION OF THE NEW SCHOOL FROM ONE OF
THE FIRST BOYS TO MOVE FROM NORTH END.

The site is superb, the basic structure is sound and, whatever one may think of its 'Gaumont Tudor' style, the school has a character which inspires some awe and every affection.

DAVID RAEBURN, WHITGIFTIAN, JANUARY 1972,
DESPITE SUPPORTING A MOVE TO CROHAM HURST.

The first school was in theory designed for 300 pupils, and the first four terms between May 1871 and May 1872 brought in 232. It had good playing fields alongside, open fives courts, and a parade ground.

The new [1871] building was regarded variously as a distinguished ornament to the town or as an ostentatious and palatial edifice, according to the eye and inclination of the beholder. Designed in 'the popular Perpendicular Gothic Collegiate style', it comprised Big School, 85 feet by 35 feet, with clouded glass windows, a hammer-beam roof above a five-foot wainscoting; a library 43 by 22 feet, six classrooms, a headmaster's room, a waiting-room, a tower, and cloisters affording a dry playing-space in wet weather. Percy 130.



A map of Croydon of 1914. The vantage point of the photo in Chapter 1 is the junction of George Street and North End at the bottom of the map. To the right of North End as you go north are the almshouses, then Allders, then the old school, with its playing fields behind. Note the new cricket pavilion in the north-west corner.

The Whitgift Foundation consisted at that time of the Grammar School, which occupied a large area in the very centre of the town, an Elizabethan 'hospital for pensioners' perched on top of Crown Hill, its beautiful quadrangle of flint and brick already