JOHN RUSKIN 1970-1999 – GRAMMAR SCHOOL, COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, SIXTH-FORM COLLEGE

Boys' school, mixed school and college; 11-18, 14-18, 16-19 (and adults too)

by Anne Smith, former JRGS/JRHS teacher, serving as Senior Mistress, Deputy Head and then Principal

I should start by saying that this is an entirely personal recollection, and while I do not intend to lie, I am aware that truth can appear very differently to different people – as I had occasion to say often to pupils whose interpretation of what had happened in their classroom differed radically from that of their teachers. When I went to John Ruskin as a comparatively young woman of 32 I had no idea that I should retire from the same establishment; however, it was never the same from one year to another, so the motivation to move for a change was simply never there.

I started my teaching career in a girls' independent boarding school, leaving it when I became pregnant; after the birth of my son I taught part time in a boys' grammar school in south London, and then full time in a girls' grammar school before moving to Croydon to teach English at Selhurst Grammar School for Girls. I left Selhurst in 1969 when I became pregnant again, intending to take time out of teaching or to go back to work part time for a few years. However, the job at John Ruskin was advertised and I realized that I would be able to make more than satisfactory arrangements for childcare on a deputy head's salary. So I applied. I should add that although I was paid as a deputy head I was what the regulations called a second mistress, but what was referred to in Croydon as a senior mistress – compulsory at that time in mixed schools with only one deputy, though of course the post might be that of second master if the deputy were a woman.

Why did I get the job? I was by far the youngest candidate, and was by no means sure that I wanted the job, which always means that one is relaxed and interviews better than if one is desperate to be appointed: but mainly, I am quite sure, it was because Mr. Lowe saw me as young and malleable. This was important to him as he was strongly opposed to the whole idea of comprehensive education. In my first term I attended a PTA meeting in which he assured the parents that the arrival of secondary modern pupils would not influence their sons and their education in the slightest, and indeed he did his utmost to keep the grammar pupils and the secondary modern pupils as far away from each other as possible, in a kind of benign apartheid.

My impression, appointed as I was the year before the transition from grammar to comprehensive school started, was that very few people were in favour of the change. My form certainly weren't: it was explained to me that John Ruskin, situated between Trinity – the snobs – and Shirley – the yobs - was a perfect school, and needed no alteration at all. Mr. Lowe's preparations for the new entry were concentrated on physical details such as the design of the girls' uniform, and he was much concerned about the completion of the girls' lavatories before they should enter the school, though he seemed less worried about the fact that the home economics suite was not finished until the spring term after the girls had joined us. So although I was only teaching part of a timetable so that I could 'prepare' for the arrival of girls, it didn't seem as if anyone wanted me to do much preparation. I spent much of my preparation time out of school, making contacts with those who might, I thought, be useful contacts for the future. So I met education psychologists and welfare officers, and the health education team – I had a strong impression that as boys can't get pregnant there was seen to be no need to bother with health education or indeed sex education. Later I was to teach some of the new intake the sex education part of their social studies course, and realized that often boys know – or knew then anyway – less about sex than girls did.

But I digress.

Second Round of Educational Reorganization

When the borough came to reorganize for a second time in the eighties, all teaching jobs in the reorganized schools were advertised and the existing teachers had to apply for the jobs they felt themselves to be suited to. No such stresses were imposed on staff in this first reorganization. Teachers who had made a career of teaching clever boys in academic disciplines were simply kept on as the school changed to accommodate girls and less clever pupils. In the first year after reorganization started Dai ('Rhino') Rees was seen to step over two boys fighting on the floor in a corridor, saying 'I am a teacher not a social worker', and he left shortly afterwards to go to St. Dunstans, which had clever boys and a bar in the staffroom. A girl was sent out of art with Pat Gee for having 'lost' her drawing board, and a male teacher explained to me in all seriousness that he could not ask girls to pick up litter as they might cry if he did. The girls, of course, exploited this situation as fully as they could, rather as the boys had done the previous year when faced with women teachers (there were three of us in the first year). The younger boys were especially insulted to be taught by women, as they associated them with something you had to put up with in primary school but not when you went to the big school.

Apropos of trying it on, I vividly recall the boy who kept asking if he could visit the toilet in a lesson in my first term. I refused to allow him to leave, and he finally threatened to wet himself. I expressed the view that this would embarrass him more than it would worry me, and he subsided, and did not wet himself. I still remember his name, but it would be unkind to name him. I also recall the boy whom I was taking in a low grammar school English set in the fifth year – I was not given any higher ability classes for some time as the then head of English seemed to regard top sets as the perk of the Head of Department – who gave in execrable essays which were clearly not going to earn him a language pass, and who one week signed his essay Lance Corporal whatever his name was. I put C- and signed myself Major-General Smith and that stopped that. I hadn't taught before in a school with a prominent cadet corps and was enchanted when I met some very naughty boys whom I should have expected to be in the corps but who weren't; when I asked them why not one of them said 'Oh we're Germans, Miss' and they went on their way. Not only was there the corps, but there was also corporal punishment when I first went to John Ruskin. Joe Lowe asked me what I felt about administering corporal punishment to girls and I said that I was not prepared to do so. That, combined with a public movement towards abolition which was presently enshrined in law, foreshadowed the end of corporal punishment at John Ruskin, and the end too of the crimes of tomfoolery and horseplay for which boys were often beaten. Nowadays I don't think pupils would know what those terms meant.

Another major change, which took place quite quickly after girls entered the school, was that the smell changed. Coming into Ruskin for the first time I was acutely aware of the smell of socks and blazers, the latter particularly pungent after a wet break and also as the half term progressed, since for the most part blazers had to be dry cleaned and were cleaned only in holiday periods. This damp and often noisome aroma disappeared within the first year of reorganization. I never felt that I wanted to go too deeply into what had happened.

Imagine if you will, that you are a member of a school with a grammar school intake of boys in the second and third forms, and also in the upper forms, but with two streams of mixed pupils added in to the fourth form, and about half a dozen female sixth formers who had entered from local 11-16 schools as the secondary moderns had now become. Many of the girls were so seriously overcome by the gender imbalance that they took their breaks and lunch hours in the girls' cloakroom for the first year. Some of them, however, saw a whole new meaning to the phrase 'playing the field' now that the field was so large, and in no time had stopped going out with boys of their own age and were vying for the attentions, sometimes successfully, of the more mature sixth formers. This didn't help the feelings between the Shirley boys and the Ruskin boys; there may have been some compensations for the girls who were prepared to exploit their new situation, but there were none for the boys from the secondary modern school, who were now at the highest in the second 'band' of three, the first being reserved for the grammar school boys.

And you must add to that the fact that reorganization coincided with ROSLA, the raising of the school leaving age from 15 to 16, so that many of the least able pupils arrived to face two years more of school instead of the one and a bit which they might have expected if the law had not changed. Nor was Ruskin very prepared to deal with the pupils who, for the first year at least, were to be Easter leavers, and go without finishing their fifth year. There was no concession in the curriculum for those pupils, although staff were not very concerned to get them back to school if they absented themselves for much of their last two terms.

Actually ROSLA was almost certainly one of the reasons for the timing of the reorganisation. Comprehensive education had to come if Croydon was not to suffer financial penalties from the government. But there was no land available to allow for massive rebuilding so the reorganisation had to take place for the most part within the footprint of existing schools. What was available however was building money from the government to allow for the raising of the school leaving age. At John Ruskin, for example, the sixth form centre was built with ROSLA money, for the sixth form were only on the upper floor and the new art studio and the domestic science centre were on the ground floor. It was the lack of land as well as the lack of real commitment to comprehensivisation which led to the pig' s breakfast of having 11-14, 11-16 and 14-18 schools in the same borough, not to speak of the three church schools which remained 11-18. And that in its turn made it easier to inaugurate the second reorganisation of secondary education in the borough into 11-16 schools and sixth form colleges.

No one could have foreseen that only a few years later the sixth form colleges would be caught up in the reorganization of further education and would join the further education sector, which meant that they would no longer be colleges 'deemed secondary' and subject to all the regulations of secondary schools, but would be ' deemed tertiary' just like the further education colleges such as Croydon College. Not only would their regulatory framework change, but the colleges themselves would become independent of the local education authority, and the ownership of the land and buildings would pass to the colleges from the council – a bit hard on Croydon which had spent some £8 million in rebuilding John Ruskin alone to make it a flagship college for the area, as well as a lesser sum on the combination of Purley Girls' and Purley Boys' Schools to become first Purley College, and later Coulsdon College.

Reorganization of Croydon Secondary Schools

The first reorganization of Croydon secondary schools that I experienced lasted for six years before it was fully implemented. This is how the transition starting in 1970 transformed the school - renamed John Ruskin High School - from a three-form entry at 11, to offering four forms for boys and girls aged 14, the latter transferring from Shirley High School, eventually to became a 14 -18/year 4 through 7 co-educational comprehensive school:

1970
year 1 - Grammar school boys/GSBs
year 2 - Grammar school boys
year 3 - Grammar school boys
year 4 - Grammar school boys
year 5 - Grammar school boys
year 6 - GSBs and boys from sec moderns
year 7 - GSBs and boys from sec moderns

1971
year 2 - Grammar school boys
year 3 - Grammar school boys
year 4 - GSBs and mixed secondary modern
year 5 - Grammar school boys
year 6 - GSBs and mixed intake from 11-16s
year 7 - GSBs and boys from sec moderns

1972
year 3 - Grammar school boys
year 4 - GSBs and mixed from Shirley High School/SHS
year 5 - GSBs and mixed from sec modern
year 6 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 schools
year 7 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 schools

1973
year 4 - GSBs and mixed from Shirley High
year 5 - GSBs and mixed from Shirley High
year 6 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 & SHS
year 7 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 school

1974
year 4 - Mixed comprehensive intake from SHS
year 5 - GSBs and mixed from Shirley High
year 6 - GSBs and mixed from SHS and 11-16
year 7 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 and SHS

1975
year 4 - Mixed comprehensive intake from SHS
year 5 - Mixed comprehensive intake from SHS
year 6 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 and SHS
year 7 - GSBs and mixed from 11-16 and SHS

1976
year 4 - Mixed comprehensive intake from SHS
year 5 - Mixed comprehensive intake from SHS
year 6 - Mixed intake from SHS and 11- 16 schools
year 7 - GSBs and mixed from SHS and 11-16s

1977
All pupils came from comprehensive high schools into
year 4 into the sixth form

The above pattern may be tedious but it is the only way to show what was happening – and it needs some notes, especially on curriculum and numbers. To take numbers first of all.

>> In 1970 there were about 520 boys in the school. The number coming into the sixth form from secondary moderns was small, as they had to be able to benefit from an academic course aimed for the most part at university entry.

>> During 1971 to the 90 boys in year 4 were added 120 from Shirley, in place of the 90 who did not enter the school in the first year. Sixth form numbers increased a little but not much; the school was therefore running at about 550.

>> In 1972 we had the same increase again making the total about 580; numbers were also starting to increase in the sixth form.

>> In 1973 it was the same pattern again, making over 600, not counting the increase in sixth form numbers as all 11-16 pupils except those from the three church schools had to look to the 14-18 schools for sixth form education.

School grows to 800 pupils

By the time the changes were complete the numbers had reached about 800, of which 300 were in the large sixth form. This growth in numbers stemmed partly from the fact that Ruskin had maintained the high academic reputation it had had since at least the early 60s when I first came to Croydon; indeed the numbers of pupils who were achieving a creditable number of O Level passes and therefore qualifying for the sixth form courses then on offer was far greater once the school was fully comprehensive. When I joined the staff I was interested to see how many boys were leaving with one or two passes only. When pupils of equivalent ability were in the high school they did not see themselves as the rump which they would have been in the grammar school; and they were of course joined by pupils who would have failed the 11+ but proved quite able to develop into academically respectable achievers in a school which expected it of them.

Two further points may be of interest. In the early years, when we were learning to develop a comprehensive school, the pupils we failed most were those who were not quite of 'grammar school' standard, but who were not worrying enough to

require intensive remedial concentration. We set up a setting system under Joe Lowe' s promise of segregation. There were three bands, known as G (for grammar), M (for middle) and C. (For at least a couple of years the G band boys were called by their surnames, whereas the boys in the other streams were called, like the girls, by their first names. It was the boys themselves who asked for this to be changed). I can't remember what C stood for, but it contained the lowest performers as well as the lowest ability pupils (not always the same thing) and labelled them the bottom of the school. As one boy said to me when I reprimanded him for behaving in a less than wholly committed way in class: "Look, Miss, I'm black and I'm thick. I'm not going to get a decent job, so why should I work?" It was hard to argue with this as it was almost certainly true. For some of the C band one could see that they would develop a career in stealing cars or working down Surrey Street. One of my memories is of seeing a boy who often truanted, when I was shopping in Surrey Street. He was holding up a tray of oranges and calling out loudly 'Lovely ripe oranges, only a shilling for ten'. When he saw me he lowered his voice. "Don't buy them Miss, they' re rubbish," he hissed.

But the middle band, who were less academically challenging than the C band, did not do well out of the system. They had become the equivalent of the grammar school C stream, and little was really expected of them although they were expected to work for their CSEs, which neither they, their parents nor many of the staff thought were a patch on O-Levels. Those who made good despite this, and gained a number of CSE grade 1s, often did very well in the sixth form, simply because they had learned to work hard for themselves. In any case, it was often the case that it was harder to get a grade 1 at CSE than a C at O-Level. Certainly if you had a CSE grade 1 in French for example you would be able to speak some French, whereas you could do well at O-Level French without being able to say a word when you were in France for fear of making an elementary mistake and a fool of yourself.

The other point I wanted to make at this point is that we never were at this stage in the school's life a fully comprehensive sixth form. It took years before we offered anything other than a straight A level course in the sixth form, and since for a long time we had the original grammar stream entering the sixth form we continued to have good results and to send many of the sixth formers to university. This in itself added to the reputation of the school, and led to our being oversubscribed quite early on, which was to influence the eventual decision to make John Ruskin one of the two sixth-form colleges to be formed from nine 14-18 schools. Being oversubscribed meant that we did not have to provide a wide curriculum, although we were able to provide a wider choice of subjects as our numbers grew. So although we did not select according to ability, we did not attract applications from pupils unlikely to benefit from what we were offering, and if we did, we could divert them to other establishments which would better suit their needs. Later this attitude was to change, but at that time we were honestly doing our best.

Major changes in education during the past several decades

For the benefit of those whose secondary education took place well before 1970, it may be as well to summarise the great changes that took place during my teaching career and indeed before that.

In the early years of the last century, there was a limited number of secondary school places in Croydon. There were the two Whitgift schools, Whitgift and Trinity Middle School, the "Middle" standing for Middle Class rather than middle in age range, and there were the Selhursts. For all other boys – let' s ignore the girls for the moment – there were elementary schools, which were free and which had a school leaving age of 14. John Ruskin School was founded to accommodate those boys who had not passed the entrance exam for the grammar schools, or whose parents did not feel that they could afford to send them to those schools. Even if the tuition was free, as it was in the Selhursts, the cost of uniform was too expensive for many parents. John Ruskin was to take boys to the age of 16 and was a commercial school; that is to say it was created to prepare boys for a business career. It opened with 200 boys, many of whom felt throughout their subsequent careers that Ruskin had given them a second chance, and many of whom went far beyond the commercial careers for which the school was intended to prepare them.

After the end of the second world war, secondary education was radically altered. State education guaranteed all pupils a free secondary education until the age of 16 – even though many did not choose to take advantage of this and the Raising of the School Leaving Age had to become compulsory 25 years later. Secondary schools became grammar schools, technical schools or secondary modern schools. The old elementary schools were closed, and all pupils attended primary (or infant followed by junior) schools until the age of 11. The grammar schools continued to offer the traditional academic fare that they had been offering for ever. The technical schools were intended to offer a different kind of curriculum for pupils who would benefit more from technical drawing, metalwork and so on than from the study of say Latin. They were to become engineers rather than doctors or lawyers. Secondary modern schools were never fully described and were clearly for the rest of the population.

Although this system had many advantages over the previous arrangements, and was for its time a step forward in offering children more educational advantages, it had signal failings. First of all, whether or not you were deemed to be likely to benefit from a grammar school education depended on how many places there were in the grammar school or schools in your area. In Rutland, for example, only 15% of school pupils went to the grammar school, whereas in Croydon about 30% did.

This was not because Rutland was full of thick hayseeds so much as because it simply did not have the same number of places. Every year the grammar school places were filled and the rest of the children had to go elsewhere. The development of John Ruskin School has to do with this number, since it might well have become either a technical or a secondary modern school, but Mr. Lowe steered it successfully towards grammar school status, which meant that it had a sixth form and became a desirable secondary school within Croydon.

For another failing of the new tripartite system was that there was no parity of esteem between the different kinds of school. From the first the grammar schools were seen as those which would educate the leaders of tomorrow in the best paid jobs, and the others were less valued. The 11 plus, designed to be merely an aptitude test, became a test of academic worth, and parents often offered their children elaborate and expensive rewards for "passing" this examination. Add to this the third reservation many people had, which was that the successful sorting of children at 11 depended entirely on one's ability to predict accurately at that age what the children's attainment might be at 16 or 18. This is not the case; all parents are aware that a norm in, for example, cutting teeth, means that some children cut their teeth early and some late, and that that is how you arrive at a norm. Few people grow up without having cut any teeth at all, nor would you be able to tell from looking at them as adults that they had had no teeth at the age of three.

There is considerable educational research that shows that teacher expectation affects student achievement, so that if two classes of mixed abilities are labelled as "A" and "B", even if only the staff are told of the labels, within two years the A- stream will be achieving better results than the B-stream. This is compounded if the pupils and their parents also know that they are expected to do well or not to do well. Even in this climate, there were always pupils who were clearly misplaced at 11, and John Newnham Grammar School took pupils who had failed the 11+ and later passed the 13+. And all the grammar schools took in pupils from the secondary moderns who had taken and passed a number of O-Levels and were therefore suited to sixth-form education.

How many there were who simply lived down to their own and their teachers' expectations of them could only be seen later when the new comprehensive system was introduced. There have been and are reservations about the comprehensive system; the trouble is that many people have now forgotten, or never knew, the shortcomings of the system which preceded it.

"Nature versus nurture" in secondary education

After that historical diversion, back to the development of John Ruskin School, for so it continued to be for some years. I have suggested that the tripartite system of education introduced after the war had some failings, which is not to say that the comprehensive system has entirely succeeded either.

For a start, there existed in politics some idealists who felt that if all children were treated equally and given equal opportunities to succeed, they would do so. I certainly have always agreed that all children and indeed all people should be treated as being of equal worth. But I think it was as simplistic to assume that all children would benefit from the traditional curriculum as it had been to assume that in Croydon 30% and in Rutland 15% of children would, and that identifying those who needed this type of education could be identified at the age of 11.

Furthermore, it is clear that nurture has much to do with development and success, and nurture is not confined to the school. A child who has never seen an adult pick up a pen except as a chore, if then, and who has never seen an adult read a real book, will have some perceptual ground to make up when he or she joins the children who have learned to read even before starting school, simply because they saw their elders doing so and taking pleasure in doing so. And there are still children to whom the luxury of giving much time to their education is denied: the child carers, for example, and those who suffer from debilitating diseases and have to miss school; and those suffering from child abuse of whatever kind. For these and others life is not supplying equal opportunities whatever the schools try to do.

Less sociological than this is the fact that children learn in different ways, although they are often taught by teachers who all learn in much the same ways and have entered the profession after a successful transition from school to university and back to school again. A traditional education "never did them any harm" so why would it be bad for others? But the child who suffers from the attention deficit disorder is not going to benefit as much from the sitting still and listening approach as from the getting up and finding out method. Schools are now seeking to ensure that different teaching methods are used so that those who learn aurally hear what they need to learn as well as reading it, which suits the visual learners better, and that those whose preferred method of learning is kinaesthetic are also advantaged by the pedagogic techniques used by their teachers.

We didn't have any old malarkey like that when I started teaching, or indeed for many years afterwards. We didn't bother too much about appropriate ways of teaching the disabled because we didn't accept them or didn't recognize them if we had them. For a long time Croydon didn't recognize dyslexia, so we didn't have that either. Now the borough does recognize it but I never knew why they had changed their minds. So we failed to teach the core skills which employers value so much: problem-solving, working in groups, taking control of own learning. We didn't encourage initiative, which in our experience usually led to naughtiness of one kind or another, and we looked, not for enterprise, but for pupils who exercised their brains in relevant debate of an academic kind.

Of course human nature is a wonderful thing, so there was all the same a lot of initiative and imagination exhibited by the boys of John Ruskin. For example, early in my time there the school was advertised as a country estate, complete with windmill and staff, and put up for sale in *The Times* one April Fool's Day, and there were several enquiries from potential purchasers. Later on we established a no-uniform day on the last day of the first summer half-term, the proceeds of which were to go to charity. This was never exactly what had been envisaged: I have never forgotten one Martin Howarth sitting in assembly with a fixed expression of attention – fixed because he was wearing a gorilla's head. Later there were interviews for a deputy headship on the same day of the year; the candidates were entertained by being taken round the school without any mention' s being made of the group of male nuns who were approaching down the corridor. It all had to end the year the police were called three times as a bus from Purley approached the school bearing six apparent terrorists in balaclavas. In order to identify them all those who had brought guns to school were summoned to the hall; their numbers included lots of cowboys with obviously plastic guns as well as the culprits. They wouldn't do anything like that today – that kind of innocence has vanished.

Anyway.

Not very long after the first reorganization had slowly worked its way through the system, it became apparent that there would need to be another and more radical change to the secondary education in Croydon. The first had, as I have said, bowed to the political diktat of comprehensivisation, used ROSLA money for rebuilding where necessary, and had maintained the original schools for the most part where they had been. The grammar schools became 14-18 schools and the secondary moderns and technical schools became 11-14 schools; the staff remained in post unless they chose to move.

However, it became clear that demographics would lead quite soon to a reduction in the need for school places in the borough; indeed the reduction had started at primary level before the first reorganization was properly embedded. So there would need to be fewer places and perhaps fewer secondary schools in the long run. You may or may not know that the whole idea of sixth form colleges had started in Croydon as a product of the brains of the Director of Education in the late 1940s, one Dr. Waring King. So persuasive were his ideas that there were by the 1980s over 100 of these colleges in England. But there were none in Croydon, and this one can attribute variously to the fact that Croydon has rarely been in the vanguard of change, but also that Dr. Waring King had a serious drink problem and so his ideas passed with him. But one of his more tangible legacies was the building of John Newnham Grammar School, at about the same time as the Shirley site of John Ruskin, as a mixed grammar school which admitted pupils at 11 and 13, and which became in good time a 14-18 school in Selsdon. John Newnham was deliberately built with the idea of its being adaptable as a sixth form college if that were ever to come about.

But why it was not chosen to be, therefore, the sixth form college for the area when it became clear that only one was needed, is to be explored in next section.

The second reorganization of Croydon secondary schools

Demographics decided the second reorganization in Croydon. The 11-14 schools were to become 11-16 schools, and the eight (I thought there were nine but I can' t remember more than eight; if I remember another I shall let you know!) 14-18 schools were to be abolished. From them were to be formed two sixth form colleges and two tertiary 16-19 centres as part of an expanded Croydon College. In such circumstances it would not be possible to leave staff in post as had been done before, since some establishments would disappear, so an extensive period of applications, interviews and appointments took place over a longish period.

As before, the new system was to be introduced gradually. The 11-14 schools would first keep a fourth year, and the 14 -18 schools would lack one; the next year they would become 11-16 schools and the 14-18 schools would become 16-18 schools; but they would not become colleges until the next year, when they would have their first intake of all the pupils from the 11-16 schools who did not apply for and get places in the 11-18 schools (faith schools in the borough, and non- denominational schools in surrounding boroughs).

So the staff jobs were allocated gradually too, with the staffing of 11-16 schools – the new ones only; the schools which had been 11-16 throughout were not affected – taking place first and the staffing of the new colleges second. Naturally there was some anxiety since the total number of school places was scheduled to fall, and no-one's job was safe anyway. In the end there was less fallout than was expected since natural wastage, either through age or departure from the borough for fresh fields, took care of a large number of people. However, not everyone was happy about the reorganization from a personal point of view, and not everyone had the job they wanted at the end of the process.

Of the 14-18 schools, the two Purley High Schools were to be amalgamated to become Purley College (later to be renamed Coulsdon College) and to take care of sixth form pupils in the south of the borough. There was to be a tertiary outpost of Croydon College at Selhurst Girls School, to take care of the north of the borough, and another at Heath Clark, to take care of the west of the borough. So of the 14-18 schools, the two Purleys would become one and the two Selhursts would become one. Lady Eldridge School would also close as its site was nowhere near large enough for a college.

Geographically this was all fairly straightforward, though the allocation of sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges to particular areas was another bone of contention, However, John Ruskin and John Newnham were too near each other, and collectively had too many places for both of them to exist; but they were too far apart for amalgamation as they stood.

There was much political infighting about the relative merits of the two schools, but undoubtedly John Ruskin had a larger sixth form and better academic results than John Newnham, as well as a weightier fighting force for its retention as the sixth form college for the area. So it was to be, and all maintenance budgets were withdrawn from the Newnham buildings in Selsdon, while numbers of applicants diminished as they do in these cases. Indeed it became so pronounced that Newnham was scheduled for closure before the appointments to the colleges were made. This would have meant that the staff had no ring fenced right of application as they would have been redundant the previous year; the then head, Alan Grace, made it his business to keep the school going for the extra period so that the staff would be able to apply for jobs on the new colleges. He did this by creating a rump 16-18 school offering exclusively the CPVE qualification: the Certificate of Pre-vocational Education which was the precursor of the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification). Going into all this curricular stuff in detail is of interest only to educationalists; however, by dedicating the school to this qualification Alan Grace ended up with the largest CPVE contingent (some 200 students) on the country – unlike its successor it was not a qualification which was adopted in the further education sector, so in most schools it had to take its place beside the academic curriculum. John Newnham remained open for a time and then amalgamated with John Ruskin so that all its staff had a right of application for jobs in the college.

Choice of Selsdon versus Shirley site for the Sixth Form College
So that is why the college in the east of the borough was to be John Ruskin. The original plans were, of course, for it to be located on the Shirley site where it had been since 1955, and plans were accordingly drawn up. But the state of the buildings and their inadequacy for even the 14-18 school were not in its favour. The sixth form centre had been built in a hurry; the flat roof had leaked ever since it was opened, and the link with the original building contained steps and a slope because the drawings were out of true and this was not discovered in time for it to be adjusted. To the demountable building which was on the mill pitch in 1970 and indeed before that had been added others. Optimistically named temporary buildings by the powers that be, they were linked by very permanent looking paths, and connected to the electricity supply. The only land the school had on site was eaten into by this village of demountables. Games took place on Oaks Road which was a distance away and could not be used for casual fraternizing in warm lunch hours. Adapting all this to a state of the art college would prove exceedingly expensive. And down the road was a building which was still inhabited by some students – for it had been impossible in terms of numbers to move them all to Shirley – but which would lend itself much more easily to adaptation as indeed it had been designed to do if necessary.

Another couple of factors sealed the fate of the Shirley site. John Newnham had been built on a site donated to the council under the terms of an educational covenant. Although most covenants can be broken eventually, it might have been a costly and protracted business to create a situation in which it could be disposed of. Disposing of extra land was of course essential to help fund the new building works needed for the new colleges. Secondly, John Ruskin was not located on covenanted land, and also land for development in the favoured Shirley area could be expected to bring in top prices.

Sadly, the idea that this would save the council a great deal of money proved more of a delusion than was expected because of the neglect of the Selsdon site's capital maintenance since it had been decided to close John Newnham and during the period when it had been intended to build the college on the John Ruskin site. But that is another story. It was decided to build the new college at Selsdon and to run both sites during the building period before evacuating Shirley and knocking the school down, a process that took a great deal less time than it had taken to erect it.

The period of operation on two sites was extremely stressful; the only alleviation to stress for staff who taught on both sites was that they were able to disappear on Gravel Hill, and could never be found when needed as they were always said to be on the other site, or even better travelling between sites. One colleague who was caught speeding down Gravel Hill was let off by the police when she explained that she was late for her next lesson. Travel could also be quite good for thinking. Driving back for an A-Level lesson I thought of a good analogy to explain the difference between knowledge and understanding: to a bemused group I said that I knew that if I left the choke out for too long the carburetor would flood and the car stop. However, I hadn't the least understanding of what a carburetor was or what it did or why it was liable for flooding.

Carrying on with lessons on the Newnham site, even though Ruskin was now expanding rapidly as it approached college status, was a disaster once the building work started. Flooding was discovered in all the pipes beneath the floor on the ground floor; heating was often turned off for days at a time; and the noise and disturbance was incessant. At that time the daughter of a councillor was in the sixth form, and her mother chose to air the problems in the council chamber rather than with us; had she come to us we would have explained that it was not our decision to operate on two sites but that of the council of which she was an elected member. As it was the complaint was taken up by the press and Ruskin was described in a Croydon Advertiser headline as 'Strife-torn college'. As a direct result of this the council shipped in more demountable buildings and built even more permanent paths to link them, and the field at Shirley was finally abandoned in favour of a village of temporary buildings. And this time they were indeed to be temporary as we moved towards the abandonment of the Ruskin site and the move to the Newnham site.

In 1988 the school finally became a college, almost indistinguishable at this stage from the 16-18 school of the previous year. Informally we had begun calling it John Ruskin College rather than John Ruskin Sixth Form College, as we already had a diversified curriculum having inherited the CPVE courses from the old Newnham. The other difference was that the new staff and staffing structure came into being, though of course most of the staff were from the old school. At first, for some unknown reason, we had the only head teacher in the sixth form college sector, as all other colleges had principals; later the council was to bow to our arguments and allow us to have a Principal and Vice-Principals like other colleges. The next year Bill Patterson had a small heart attack and I became acting head for a time. Bill came back to work but sensibly decided to retire while he was still fit and well; it is not possible to take the job of head teacher or principal more easily as the doctors always ask one to do following a heart attack, and the proof of the pudding is in the eating as Bill lived for some considerable time in retirement, enjoying his gardening and golf.

In 1990 I became Principal and was faced with the end of the building programme, including the pleasant duties of choosing colours and materials for decorating the new college as well as spending the refurbishment budget which enabled us to have new furniture throughout. More contentiously I had to decide which rooms would be allocated to which subject areas, when some rooms were clearly more attractive than others. I attempted to be fair and logical and was for the most part successful, though I do not advise anyone who wants to be popular at work to take on the job of running an educational establishment.

Much more alarming to me was the prospect, a bare term after I had taken on the post, of LMS, or the Local Management of Schools. This meant that schools would become responsible for more than the small amount of the budget they had hitherto had responsibility for, which merely allowed them to allocate money between the departments and such sundries as stationery. It was still true that the council would decide on the staffing owed to the schools and colleges and pay the staff, and that this took care of over 75% of the budget. The council would also continue to look after capital and grounds maintenance; so the extra responsibility was in one sense derisory taken against the whole cost of running and maintaining a college. Nevertheless, it was a new area of responsibility and one for which I was quite untrained. In fact, I had never even managed a departmental budget as I had not been a Head of Department. Had anyone who was interviewing me for the post of Principal known anything about the ways in which LMS was likely to work I would not have got the job; as it was, there wasn't a single question about financial management and there I was, expected to be able to manage the budget by instinct. In the event, I and the administrative assistant who had made the returns to the council about the departmental capitation, and who was to become Bursar, operated the budget with such caution that at the end of the first year we had a surplus of 4%. We were pleased with this although later on we learned that we should aim to budget for actual expenditure not maximum expenditure.

It was as well that we did have LMS for a few years, since in April 1993, only three years after the introduction of this limited responsibility, we were to take over the whole ownership and financial management of the college, including staffing, buildings, curriculum and maintenance. But that was in the future as I took over in January 1990. More immediately, in January 1992 we were to move from the Shirley to the Selsdon site, and to the luxurious surroundings which had taken

£8m of the council's money, and in exchange for which we abandoned the windmill and the site which we had occupied since January 1955.

Physical move from the Upper Shirley Road to Selsdon site

Packing up and moving the college was a nightmare. Lockers that had been abandoned and closed for years were opened to reveal revolting collections of old trainers and towels. Books that should have been disposed of years before were thrown out, and some which had survived since the days of the grammar school were offered to local secondary schools. A large collection of classics books was discovered in the armoury (as it was still called, though no arms had been kept there in my memory at least), the connection being Ken Maggs, who had taught classics and run the cadet corps, although both of them ceased before he retired.

We had an expert to look at the organ that had been presented to the school by the Parents' Association when the school was built at Shirley. He said that it was too old to move, and that anyway the hall at Newnham was too low to accommodate it. We tried to give it away, hampered slightly by not knowing to whom one should give something of this size. Anyway no-one wanted it, so we were reluctantly about to abandon it when there was a break-in, and the lead was stolen from the pipes. As that was the only part of the organ that might have had a use we put in an insurance claim. The assessor who came to look at it was sceptical, but we produced our tame negotiator who settled on our behalf for £16k, which came in well for the setting up of the new music department and recording studio.

We were mainly concerned not to have destroyed anything that anyone might find useful and which we should not want ourselves on the new site. So I now have a bookcase made from the mahogany bookshelves in the head's office, and some of the desks from the chemistry lab made excellent kitchen worktops for a colleague. We had the pictures and framed letters of John Ruskin reframed, and a charming painting of a French building – I think Chartres – valued. I'd have liked to have kept that when I came to leave but as it had been valued at £1,500 felt that it would be better not. Later I was given the opportunity to buy it by the governors and gladly accepted.

We also of course took the war memorial plaque, and I am happy to say that, although there have been many changes to the college since my day, it is still there at Selsdon, hanging in the entrance foyer. The large photograph of John Ruskin that used to hang on the stairs, and which on my first visit to the school I thought looked just like Willie Rushton, hangs prominently half way up the stairs

There had also been a closing down of John Ruskin School party, organized by the last upper sixth of the school for themselves and any past pupils and staff who cared to come. It was a good evening and we met a lot of people whom we had not seen for a long time. Then it was loading up the cars with personal stuff and leaving the site looking really tatty and moving down to Selsdon and the new college. Where, in due course, there was a grand opening with all sorts of civic dignitaries coming to see what had happened to all the public money which had been poured into this project. Even the sale of the Shirley site and part of the back of the Newnham field cannot have covered the cost of the new college. But it was beautiful, and stayed that way for some time, as the students were a bit overcome with the loveliness and newness of it all.

The decision to move the college to Selsdon was clearly a good one when one noticed the speed with which the Shirley buildings were demolished, leaving the developers to build the windmill estate, and The Mill to be restored and opened to the public every so often. John Rowlands used to travel to Selsdon past the old buildings but once the wreckers moved in took a different route until the buildings were completely demolished; it certainly was odd to see them with a great hole in the side of the main corridor.

Before the newness had had time to wear off, and before the opening party, there was a political bombshell which none of us had expected. The government, in an admirable attempt to rationalize the dog's breakfast that was education post 16, decided that while 11-18 schools should remain, in areas with colleges they should all join a further education phase to follow on from the primary and secondary phases. So sixth forms in schools would remain in the care of the secondary sector, but colleges would join the further education sector and be subject to a standardized funding regime. In fact, the sixth form colleges entered this sector by mistake: the sad fact is that they were overlooked by the planners, although at that time there were over a hundred of them in England and Wales. When they were remembered it seemed necessary to include them in the new White Paper and in due course in the Bill. The House of Lords made a spirited attempt to have them excluded but were bought off by the continuing requirement for a daily act of religious worship as in secondary schools, a requirement which is not kept in over 99% of state schools, excluding the faith schools which have their own rules in such matters.

The most important part of the new Bill, which was to be enacted in April 1993, was that colleges were to take over their assets, land, buildings, staff and all, from the local authorities. They would become independent corporations, funded by the Further Education Funding Council and any other funds they could lay their hands on. This was the period of central government's hatred of local government and the steady reduction of their powers, which started with the Conservative government but which continued under the Labour government. The period of preparation was hard, since everything had to be valued and the value agreed with the local authority. We were lucky in Croydon that there were no battles or attempts to keep power where that was not acceptable; the education department and the councilors were simply sad that they were to lose the assets they had spent so much time and effort in planning and launching. But as I said to the then- director of education, they had built the college for Croydon students, and that was the use to which it was being put, so they could still be proud of what they were handing over. In some boroughs, the local authorities stopped spending money on their colleges the day the White Paper was published, and handed over assets that were in effect liabilities – but not in Croydon.

A total of 820 students moved to the Selsdon site in January 1992. By the time the colleges had been incorporated for three years, in 1995, there were 1,350 students on the same site. The college had increased its numbers by some 50% and had had its funding reduced by 3% a year – not exactly the "Brave New World" we had been led to expect. The college was also offering evening classes for about 200 adults, and IT classes for parents at Castle Hill primary school in New Addington. For a time a class of students, who, it was felt, might not have been able to make the move from their secondary school, was offered a one-year course at Addington High School, but their numbers fell and those that were left expressed a readiness to join the college proper, so that experiment was not repeated.

A number of things had helped us to prepare for independence and straitened circumstances. First of all, of course, we did not have to spend a lot of money on maintenance in our new college – just as well as we had to keep buying new furniture for the increased numbers, as well as constantly changing the room use to accommodate more classes. Secondly, we lost an excellent Vice-Principal to the headship of a neighbouring school just as the School Teachers' Review Body relaxed its requirement for us to have two deputy heads or vice-principals. This happened before we were incorporated, and had the rules not been relaxed we should not have moved nearly as easily into the new phase of our existence. For we were able to replace the vice-principal with another, but one who was not a teacher but whose background was in finance, and public- sector finance at that. Without him I think we might not have survived as successfully as we did. Even so, we had to restructure the staff and seek for more efficient ways of doing things continually for the rest of my time at Ruskin.

POSTSCRIPT: John Ruskin – finally …

I had nearly finished my personal account of my years at John Ruskin, but there is room, I think, for a summing up.

First of all, I do nail my colours to the comprehensive mast, but I do not wish by that to denigrate the great deal that the grammar schools accomplished for many of their pupils. I too am proud of all that has been achieved by the Ruskin Alumni; much of the school's reputation rested on what the old boys had done after they left the school, and their preparedness to accredit this to their education. But I am also aware of those who were less successful in the grammar schools, and those who suffered from failing the 11+. In some cases, the latter never really recovered from the loss of self-esteem that such a failure brought about, especially if they had anxious and ambitious parents. Our aim in John Ruskin comprehensive was to sell pupils and parents the idea that all pupils matter and all pupils have value: less idealistically, that all pupils can achieve if the education offered is broad enough.

We started at one point to attract a small but significant contingent from the independent sector. Often these were extremely intelligent boys who felt that their intelligence was not fully appreciated even at highly selective schools. I think that where they settled down and became a credit to us it was because they had joined a school which was used to looking at each child individually; most of such individual attention was given to pupils with particular needs of different kinds, and extremely bright young people often have special needs as much as the extremely academically limited. Being inclusive meant that we had to become flexible. Not, of course, that we were always successful; but education is about offering people choices, and not about deciding for them what kind of life and aspirations they ought to have. We had a signal failure when we accepted into the college one of those boys who starts taking GCSEs at about 9; we took him to study A-Levels at 13, but he was unable to adapt to life in a college for 16-19 year olds, and discovered that A-Level was much harder than GCSE. His father wanted us to keep him indefinitely, but when he was found to be setting light to all the noticeboards as he passed through the college, we interpreted this as a cry for help and asked him to leave.

In due course the CPVE vocational qualification died, to be replaced by GNVQ. We had a lot of prior experience and introduced GNVQ as soon as possible in a number of vocational areas: Travel and Tourism, Health and Social Care, Business, IT, Art and Design and, later on, Science. These were variously popular and later on we subsumed Travel and Tourism with Business; but in its early days the travel course adopted Hever railway station near Hever Castle, and had an engine on that line named the John Ruskin – it probably still is. But the teacher who had initiated this left, and the railway companies changed, so as often happens with initiatives, it died out. In those days, though, all the students taking that course got good jobs in the travel industry, which was what it was all about.

When GNVQ was introduced, the government made much use of the phrase "'parity of esteem" although I have never felt that the high-flying civil servants at the Department for Education and Skills (as it became) had equal esteem for, leave alone understanding of, the new course they had not followed themselves. Again there was a press reaction suggesting that these would turn out to be courses for the hewers of wood and drawers of water and not for the business tycoons of the future.

But we insisted that GNVQ was concerned with different ways of learning rather than specific vocational preparation; the subject areas were very broad, leaving the more specific training to the NVQs in different employment areas. But all the courses asked for assessment in and development of skills which employers ask for – not only literacy and numeracy, but problem-solving, working with others (known in academic studies as cheating), and taking control of one' s own learning.

They all had a work experience component as well, and most of them had visiting speakers from business and industry.

GNVQ could be offered at different levels: Foundation (or Level 1) was below GCSE A*-C, and was appropriate for slow learners and also those who for whatever reason had not performed well at school, and needed to retake English and Maths as well as undertake some other study. Intermediate Level (2) was equivalent to 4 GCSEs, and Advanced (Level 3) was equivalent to two A-Levels. Although we had students coming in for one of these courses and leaving, usually for employment, at the end of a year, or two after the advanced GNVQ, some stayed on to move from level to level. It was rare but not unknown for a student to progress from Level 1 to 2 to 3, and in very rare cases indeed to university.

A GNVQ course did not need to take up all a student's time, although they soon discovered that the courses were extremely demanding of their own study time. So at Levels 1 and 2 students could take new GCSEs or retake those which were really important; at level 3 they could take an A Level beside the GNVQ. In Health and Social Care where a number of students wanted to enter nursing, and at a time when nursing was becoming a graduate profession, many students took A-Level Biology as well as Level 3, and then went off to university. Those who went off to read Nursing or indeed Business, or who went to Art College having followed the Art and Design GNVQ, did well, and the universities and colleges increasingly accepted them on the basis of their vocational qualifications.

Of course we kept on with Advanced Levels and added to their number as our own numbers grew. Students could also for a time retake their GCSEs, though the demand for all except English and Maths fell alarmingly over time and eventually this route was discontinued. We allowed students with four GCSE A*- Cs to start A-Level courses, where some schools and colleges insisted on five or even six; and when we analysed the tail end of the results we found that those with only four were by no means the only or even the main group of students who ended up with only one or no passes.

So we were taking students that the schools didn't want to keep even if they had a sixth form, and were refusing to accept that they were sows' ears. So a number of them became – or showed that they had been all the time – silk purses. One student I remember, who came with only 3 O Levels, gained 2 Advanced Levels and went to university, where she gained an upper second. She later took an MA and started a PhD course, discontinuing this only because the time needed to complete it was interfering with her career.

I loved teaching; I enjoyed running the school and college; I am proud of the fact that I never got up in the morning and wondered whether what I was going to do that day was worthwhile. I am very proud of those students who did so well in life after they left Ruskin and who feel that they owe all or some of their success to their education. Writing this memoir for you has reminded me of those years and that I am sure that I chose the right career for me. If there are any questions I haven't answered and may be able to, do ask them. Once a teacher, always a teacher.

Finally, an unusual recollection. In the 1990s, when we introduced GNVQs - General National Vocational Qualifications - to the college, the teacher in charge of Travel and Tourism made contact with Network SouthEast. As a result of this we offered some basic skills tuition to rail employees and we were offered an unmanned station as a tourist office and study area. We took over Hever Station near the castle for a time, and the students thoroughly enjoyed their time there. Indeed a number of them worked for the railways after leaving the college, one of them for Eurostar in its initial phases. Several of the rail employees who worked at East Croydon Station also elected to study French, and several of us had the experience at that time of being spoken to in French at the box office.

Anyway that is all background - what I wanted to say is that during this period a locomotive which ran on the Hever line through Kent to London was named John Ruskin College. Yesterday a friend whom I was meeting in London asked me whether I knew that a locomotive named after the college was running on the Kent line, as she had seen it from the window of the train on which she was travelling! I had not thought of it for ages; but perhaps those of your readers who live in the area might like to keep an eye open for the loco.

Memoirs of John Ruskin College continued - 1999-2019

It was less easy to shake off the years spent at John Ruskin than I had supposed. I had little contact with the college immediately after I retired as I think that this is rarely a good idea. From afar, I realised that it was developing problems and was becoming less successful than it had been; in due time, my successor left and a new Principal was appointed. I met him one day and he invited me to come to the college and see what he was doing; I went and was impressed with his vision. 'For where there is no vision the people perish' (Proverbs 29:18) has always been a favourite quotation of mine, though not, it seems, of a number of current world leaders. So when he flatteringly asked if I would like to become a governor, I accepted.

I found a college which had retained the warm atmosphere I remembered, and on which many visitors had commented in my day, but one which had changed enormously in curricular terms. GNVQs having now disappeared, a large number of students were pursuing BTec courses; and Advanced Levels having plummeted in popularity were attracting fewer outstanding teachers, earning less good results, and thus becoming even less popular. So before I became a governor it had been decided that they must be discontinued altogether, and John Ruskin was advertised as the only sixth form college with a wholly vocational offer. An attempt was made later to reintroduce A Levels in a different and imaginative way. This might have had some success but for external decisions which, as so often, ploughed through perfectly good planning.

Croydon is surrounded by boroughs which have 11-18 schools, and for many years a large number of students left at 11 to go to these out of borough schools. So it was decided that all Croydon secondary schools should have sixth forms. Of course this was welcomed by the schools as enhancing their status, even when they were too small to develop a reasonably diverse curriculum offer; but it certainly reduced the number of academic applications to the college. The schools did not seem to mind too much if we continued to take their lower ability students at 16, or those who wanted to follow a BTec course. So we reluctantly decided for the second time that Advanced Levels should go. I do not think that the creation of school sixth forms influenced to any great extent the parents' decisions to send pupils out of the borough at 11, and some of the schools have now closed their sixth forms since they are unable to provide the breadth of subject choices which are necessary to meet student needs. However, the decision affected our ability to recruit from the schools – and, in addition, numbers were still falling demographically and would do so until at least 2020.

In the meanwhile, the government had altered the pattern of secondary schools beyond recognition: there were now academies and free schools and maintained schools, those initiated by tycoons of industry and those opened by disaffected parents. Faith schools continued to be part of the pattern, including Muslim and Jewish schools. (Some of the latter were quite recently 'discovered' to be educating young people outside the National Curriculum and even further outside the compulsory promulgation of British Values – but that is another story). The local authorities had statutory obligations towards the pupils in their care but no easy way of seeing that they were carried out; so when young people arrived in the borough seeking a secondary school place the academies could not be forced to take them, and had no wish to do so if they were of an age to be on a GCSE course. John Ruskin thus developed a contract with the local authority to take a number of 14 year olds and offer them an appropriate curriculum until the age of 16, when they would either stay on at the college or not. Most of them were ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) students, and they have done well. In due course, the local authority decided

that they should diversify this provision; as the college was not consulted and had no warning that this was to occur, we have to this day no idea why the decision was taken. Overnight a profitable contract was reduced to a quarter of what it had been.

Successive governments' interest in skills education have often been expressed but rarely, it seems, fully understood or pursued. There is a deep historical emphasis in this country on general academic and professional studies, and it is still true that most senior politicians and civil servants have pursued the academic path through school and university with some success. The taint of 'trade' has attached itself to vocational studies to the detriment of what in the 90s was called 'parity of esteem'. However, the present regime seemed to have become aware of the skills deficit in the British workforce when it set itself the high target of achieving three million apprenticeships and funded (or bribed) further education colleges to help them in this aim. John Ruskin entered into this with enthusiasm and shortly boasted more apprentices than any other college in the local area; but because of its size it could not accommodate in-house apprentices but had to outsource them to local employers. Soon the government decided to change the way in which apprenticeships was to be funded, so that employers carried far more of their cost. This was equally unpopular with small businesses who could not afford to take on extra expenditure of this kind, and large businesses who were to have part of their income sequestered to be spent on supporting apprenticeships. Many of the latter decided to conduct their own apprentice schemes to retain the funding for themselves, and as a result the number of apprenticeships nationally did not grow as planned but fell.

Although numbers began to rise again quite soon, it was not soon enough for John Ruskin. Hit by several financial blows at once, we became aware that in a few years' time we would be in serious trouble and might even have to close. Although the recent Local Area Review of colleges had decided that we should be allowed to remain a standalone college, we realized that we should have to seek a partner. A survey was set up and a number of colleges and college groups, one academy group and a university expressed an interest in becoming our partner. We invited representatives of these to visit the college, following which the academy group withdrew, and the remaining candidates arrived at the college in due course to make presentations to us. From them, we selected East Surrey College at Redhill for a number of reasons. Meetings were held, due diligence was carried out, Surrey and Croydon Councils were involved, and finally on 1 February 2019 the merger took place. We must emphasise, as East Surrey has too, that the merger is not a hostile takeover; we are not a college that has already failed, and have been able to carry over positive assets, as well as the fact that we are part of Greater London and can allow the merged college access to funding through the Mayor of London.

We retain our buildings and location, and most importantly our name and logo; Ruskin and East Surrey are now constituent colleges under the name Orbital South Colleges, as is the Reigate School of Art, which has been a partner of East Surrey for some time. East Surrey also works with the Academy of Contemporary Music in Guildford. The Art College already takes on students from East Surrey for degree courses on the recommendation of their tutors, and this is to be extended to Ruskin students. Staff and students have been to East Surrey, and staff and students from East Surrey have visited Ruskin; members of the Ruskin governing body, now defunct, are on the joint board, and meetings are held at the colleges alternately. So far, all of a month and a half after merger, all is going smoothly, and we are optimistic that this is an opportunity for both colleges to expand and move onwards.

For me, having been associated with John Ruskin through its different phases since 1970, changes are what I have come to expect. I never intended to spend most of my teaching career at the same establishment, but it was impossible to be bored and in a rut in a school/college which changed almost every year. Since 1970 and before, ex-students have looked back on the school/college with affection for the good education it gave them, and the friendship of staff and other students. It retains an atmosphere which is seen by visitors – and often commented on – as warm and welcoming, and it has faced all difficulties with a determination to offer its students the wherewithal for a successful career in the world beyond.

This year is the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Ruskin, who saw himself primarily as an educator. He wrote a great deal on education, promoting education for girls as well as boys, and emphasizing the practical rather than simply the academic approach. His emphasis was on the education of the whole person, and on the value of morality in all walks of life. He said:

"On the whole, it is patience which makes the final difference between those who succeed or fail in all things. All the greatest people have it in an infinite degree, and among the less, the patient weak ones always conquer the impatient strong," and

"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives, the cumulative experience of many masters of craftsmanship. Quality also marks the search for an ideal after necessity has been satisfied and mere usefulness achieved."

We are asked by the government to support British Values: at this stressful and divided time it is hard to say what these might be, but I am confident that John Ruskin Values will see it through the next hundred years, whatever they may bring.