



# In the Beginning

## The Foundation of the Schools

About the year 1856 John Crossley had purchased land at the top of what is now Savile Park, with the intention of erecting upon it a Congregational Training College. The foundations of this building had been laid down but for some reason the scheme was not proceeded with and it was while the matter was still in abeyance that Frank Crossley wrote the following historic letter to his brother Joseph:

**Bellesfield,  
Bowness on Windermere,  
May 7th 1857.**

I have long had a scheme in my head for establishing an Orphanage School and Home for boys and girls – I know of no greater good money will do than to be a father to the fatherless, and a mother to the motherless, to lay hold of a number of these orphans, to whom God has given good natural abilities, but who want “training up in the way they should go.” I believe that there is a great power lying dormant in them, and that God is giving us the power, and, I trust, the will, to develop this power, and to raise up some good men and women from these children.

When I reflect and look back at the immense means that our Heavenly Father has placed at our disposal, I am often almost overcome with the responsibility. Depend upon it, God works by means, and when means fail to accomplish His Will, he casts them off, and raises up other means to accomplish it. I am firmly convinced He will uphold us to carry them out.

I happened to tell brother John what was in my mind, and that I proposed at some future time to erect such a building on the spare ground facing the Park, when he said: “I should like it done by the Firm.” My reply was: “And so should I; but do you think brother Joe would not object to join in it?” His reply was: “I believe he will enter thoroughly into it.” Having said this much, I only wish to add that I don’t wish it to be done till it can be done comfortably, and unless you see eye to eye with brother John and myself in the matter, I would not press it for a moment, but if you do, I shall rejoice exceedingly. Every loom and every wheel will work all the more merrily and joyfully when their profits are consecrated to such worthy objects. Time is on the wing; twenty years have passed away since our father died, and, as brother John said, “twenty more will make him an older man than our father was,” so that I don’t think that I am too soon in mooted the question; and I must say that without some such outlet as this, I see no societies, etc., that we could do half the good by with that portion of our profits we have already decided to give away.

We should come down upon the Management bringing to bear all the business qualifications we are possessed of, which societies very much lack, because parties are dealing with other people’s (not their own) money, and so much form and ceremony has, of necessity, to be gone through, whereas those who own can appoint and discharge and remedy radical defects wherever they find them.

Yours very truly,  
Frank Crossley.

The brothers being in cordial agreement, the building operations were resumed, with the new scheme in view, and early in 1864, when the building was nearing completion, a circular was issued to their “friends and neighbours” which so clearly reveals the intentions of the Founders that we reproduce it in full:

Requests for admission at once flowed in, and when the day’s work was over, the brothers would take home with them batches of these applications, to consider at leisure by their own firesides.

On January 29th 1864, the first six boys entered the School. Their names are:  
J.L. Plint, W.P. Jackson,  
T.R. Henshaw, J. Rayner,  
J. Hoatson and A.H. Hutchinson.

Of this memorable opening day, J.L. Plint (No. 1) writes:

“Six little fellows were admitted to the great building as its first scholars. I remember the day well. My mother and I were received by the Principal, Mr. Bithell, and his wife, and were ushered into the drawing-room, where we little chaps sat on the raised platform in the window; and if all felt as I did, we must have looked a woe-begone lot.”

“The School was not finished when we arrived. The whole of the west side from the playground wall to where the west lodge now stands was not enclosed. Where the round garden bed now is, on the Girls’ side, the



J.L. Plint (No. 1)

watchman’s house stood. The large corridor was neither tiled nor painted, and the same with the dining hall. The work on all this was watched by us with great interest. The clock was in the tower, but no bells. These were hoisted up and placed in position during the second half-year I was at School.”

“For the first half we dined and studied in the Reception Room, and slept and studied overhead.”

On February 3rd, 1865, the first girls arrived. Their names were: E.E. Clarke, and M.E. Clarke. On Feb. 13th nine more followed, and at the end of 1865 there were fifty-nine children in residence.

Halifax, 1864.

Dear Sir,

You are probably aware that we have erected a building upon Skircoat Moor, near Halifax, for an Orphan School and Home.

The premises will, we expect, be ready for occupation in June next, and are adapted to receive about 450 children. In opening the Institution, however, we wish to commence with a limited number of inmates. These we shall be happy to select from cases introduced to us by some of our friends and neighbours. If you know of any really deserving and eligible cases, will you name them to us without delay?

To guide you in this, we copy from the Rules we have drawn up, the following:

**(1) Object:** To lodge, board, clothe, educate, apprentice, or otherwise place out in life, orphan children of both sexes, between the ages of two and ten years, and, under special circumstances, up to twelve years of age. The time of remaining in the Orphanage not to exceed fifteen years of age for boys, and seventeen years for girls.

**(2) Qualifications:** The children admitted upon the foundation of this Institution must be such as have been deprived by death of both parents, or of their fathers, and whose mothers, or other surviving relatives, are unable to provide means of subsistence and education.

In addition to the orphans to be admitted on the foundation, a portion of the whole number may be orphans whose relatives or friends can afford to pay a portion of the cost of their maintenance.

**(3) Disqualification:** No child shall be admitted who is blind, deaf, dumb, helplessly lame, or in any other respect seriously crippled, paralysed, or suffering from any infectious, contagious or incurable disease, and no child who has not been born in wedlock, or has been a resident pauper in a workhouse.

**(4) Preference:** A preference shall be given to the following cases, but only when all other circumstances shall be equally urgent:

1. To orphans born in the County of York.
2. To children who have lost both father and mother.
3. To the orphans of parents who are in full communion with Nonconformist churches, or regular communicants with the Church of England.
4. To orphans of families who have been reduced in their temporal circumstances.

We are, dear Sir,  
Yours truly,  
John Crossley, Joseph Crossley,  
Francis Crossley

