THE CENTRAL LONDON DISTRICT SCHOOLS

A SHORT HISTORY

by

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CONTENTS

PREFACE 1
THE PROBLEM 2
THE SOLUTION 3
THE BUILDINGS 6
THE STAFF 8
THE CHILDREN 10
OPHTHALMIA 14
AFTERWARDS 15

PREFACE

A complete history of the Central London District Schools would fill a full length volume and would take a great deal more time to research and write than I have at present. There are over two hundred and fifty items alone in the archives at County Hall, many of which are fat books of hand written minutes or boxes containing numerous separate items. There are also references and articles about the Schools in newspapers such as the Illustrated London News, Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper and the Middlesex County Times. Poor Law Reports, London County Council minutes and local government papers form other sources. As well as the administrative records and press cuttings, there is fascinating information to be culled from old School magazines and of course the reminiscences of those who spent some part of their childhood at the Hanwell Schools.

Not least there is the evidence of the buildings and site itself. The buildings as they are today, and photographs of them as they were, tell a powerful story which adds substance to the dry words of the archives.

This short history is therefore necessarily selective. Perhaps one day a complete history may be written, but it seems appropriate at this time to get some account into print, if only as a foretaste and promise of the richness of the material which exists. For help in compiling this account, I wish to thank the staff of the Record Office at County Hall, the Haling Reference Library, the late Mr. H. Pugh who had collected a great deal of information about the Central London District Schools in his notebooks, and the records and notes already collected by the Hanwell Community Association.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of the care of the poor and infirm worried the administrators of the early nineteenth century very much. The old Poor Law dating from the reign of Elizabeth I put the responsibility for the poor fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the parishes. For two centuries, the system had worked reasonably well, and with an acceptable degree of humanity. The lot of the poor, aged, infirm and orphaned was not enviable, but at least there was an agency, the parish, upon which to call for assistance in time of distress.

Late in the eighteenth century, however, society in Britain began to undergo changes the effects of which are still with us today. For reasons which historians still argue about, the population began to increase very rapidly. From about seven million in 1780, the population doubled by 1821 and trebled to reach over twenty one million in 1851. The cause of the increase is obvious: more people were being born than dying. But just why this should happen at that period, and happen so rapidly, is less obvious. Reasons such as improved medical knowledge, better nutrition and heavier yields per acre have been suggested. Simultaneously with the growth in population, developments in technology were taking place which added up to what is called in the textbooks the Industrial Revolution, but has been better described as the take-off into an industrial society.

This did not all happen over night, but gradually from about 1780 onwards the production of goods was taken over by machines and men, women and children were gathered into larger and larger units or factories to tend the new machines. Instead of a craftsman making an object from raw material to finished product in his own home, with all the members of his family to help him, the situation developed where the worker lost his independence and lost his craft, becoming one hand among many sharing in the process of manufacture. He did not necessarily work any harder, and often the reward for his work was marginally greater, but his conditions of work deteriorated considerably.

The increase in population and the changing organisation of industry together created very rapid urban growth. Manufacturing towns sprang up where formerly there had only been villages, notably the towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands. The new towns completely swamped the original villages and the parish structure of caring for the poor broke down under the impact of sheer numbers. In the new urban areas, there were more poor to cope with and no machinery for coping. Ratepayers were called on for more and more money for poor relief and the cost of the poor to the country soared to a peak of £7Vi million. Something needed urgently to be done.

In the early nineteenth century it went against all tradition and principle for the government to interfere in a matter such as the care of the poor. Government existed to fight wars, regulate foreign affairs and trade and maintain internal law and order. More than this was resented as unwarranted interference, especially on the rights of private property. The Tories, who had been continuously in power for over twenty years, were dedicated to a policy of no change. Indeed the Duke of Wellington, victor of Waterloo and great Tory elder statesman, believed that the manner of British government was perfect and any change could only be for the worse.' He had no understanding of economics whatsoever.

The other great party, the Whigs, while being as dedicated to the principles of laisser-faire as were the Tories, did recognise that change was occasionally necessary and even desirable. In the matter of the reform of Parliament, for example, they recognised that the pressure from some radical quarters for an extension of the franchise and some redistribution of seats was justified — especially as the new voters would be Whig supporters. They also saw that the system of Poor Relief needed reform, and especially that it needed to be made less expensive.

When the Whigs came into power in 1830, they carried out a limited number of reforms, of which the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 were probably the most far reaching. The Poor Law Amendment Act was largely the work of Mr. Edwin Chadwick. Chadwick, with some colleagues, who tended to leave the work to him, gathered evidence on the

operation of the existing Poor Law and presented it in a long report, fascinating in its detail, together with his recommendations about what should be done. His findings showed that the high cost of poor relief was because money was paid out to able bodied labourers as a supplement to their wages, on a rising scale depending on the .price of bread and the size of their families. Further he saw that the parish was too small a unit for coping with the problem of the genuine hard cases. His recommendations were that all 'outdoor' relief to the able bodied should cease, that parishes should form into Unions to build workhouses, that life in workhouses should be 'less eligible' which meant nastier than life outside, and that relief should only be given to inmates of the workhouses. This would ensure that only those miserable people who were desperate and quite unable to feed themselves by any means would apply for admittance to the workhouse.

Parliament was enthusiastic about Chadwick's Report. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 embodied all his suggestions and set up a Poor Law Board with three Commissioners, and Chadwick as their secretary, to administer the new system. Within a very few years, Unions of parishes had been formed, workhouses built and the cost of poor relief plummeted down to the great satisfaction of the propertied ratepayer. As for the poor, how they suffered! No wonder they called the new workhouses the Bastilles — grim prisons from which there was no escape. Within the workhouses, men and women, were separated, and children torn from their parents. Work, such as crushing bones or breaking stones, was hard, discipline harsh, diet minimal and comforts nil. Children were given the bare rudiments of schooling often by unlettered workhouse masters or harsh old dames, and apprenticed on terms of near slavery to such trades as chimney sweeping. The sufferings of Oliver Twist and Tom in Kingsley's Water Babies are well known, and probably do not exaggerate the misery experienced by many pauper children.

THE SOLUTION

Pauper children were not entirely without friends in high places. The little chimney sweeps, for example, were to find a powerful friend in Antony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury. Charles Dickens exposed many social evils in his novels, among them the plight of orphans and paupers. Even some administrators developed consciences and it was quickly felt that a workhouse atmosphere was not the best place for a child to grow and develop. In particular, and upbringing in a workhouse environment might so habituate a child to a pauper existence that he would automatically become a pauper, and a burden on the rates, as an adult. However, government interference had gone far enough and further laws compelling action would not be welcome.

In 1845 an Act was passed which gave Unions power to form themselves into Districts of two, three or more Unions in combination. Each District would set up and finance a school to which all the children of school age in the Union Workhouses would be sent. The children would receive an education suitable for their station in life, the boys concentrating on manual and agricultural labour and the girls on domestic tasks such as laundering and cooking. They would emerge into the world as useful citizens, free from the stigma of the workhouse. The experiment would be expensive but would reap dividends in the form of a disciplined and competent workforce.

It is interesting to note that a pioneer industrial school for boys was opened in Ealing in 1833 under the patronage of Lady Byron, the poet's widow. Following the principles of a Swiss educationalist, M. de Fellen-burg, and under the interested observation of Dr. James Kay-Shuttleworth, the secretary of the first Parliamentary Committee on Education, the 80 boys from artisan and labouring classes, half of them boarders, were kept occupied every hour of the day either at their books or at handicraft and garden work. The boys were paid for their labour and learned, as an inspector reported to Kay-Shuttleworth 'the habits of work, the care of tools, the keeping of accounts, the rights of private property and the advantages of co-operative effort'. If District Schools could incorporate some of the ideas practised in Lady Byron's School, they would be valuable institutions.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that the Poor Law Unions of London were among those who took

up the optional powers offered by the new Act. The London Unions were obviously wealthy, as the City contained very many rich ratepayers. The population of London was by 1841 past the two million mark and was ever growing as people flooded into the City and its suburbs hoping to make their fortunes. As the population grew, so did the number of poor and the pressure on the workhouses. Among the poor, there were a large number of children. Some of the children were orphans, foundlings and children deserted by their relatives. Others were the children of parents who themselves applied to enter the workhouse, or who were in jail or in one of London's fever hospitals. But whether the children were likely to be in the workhouse for a long or short term, clearly a crowded workhouse in a crowded city was no place for a child.

City parishes had long been in the habit of sending their very young pauper children out to baby farms in the country — in Baling for example. Here they would have a better chance of survival and indeed well-off citizens also sent their infants out to nurse for the same reason. Children of greater age were also sent out of the city for schooling. There was one school in particular to which London Unions sent children and that was Mr. Aubin's school at Norwood in Surrey. Mr. Aubin was paid for each child he took, and no doubt made a nice business of the school. His methods of caring and educating the children were harsh and hard, and it is thought probable that Mr. Aubin may be the original for Dickens' portrait of the workhouse master in Oliver Twist. In the early 1840s Kay-Shuttleworth tried to improve the training of the children at Norwood and his efforts received much public attention.

The idea of taking the school at Norwood under their full control was a small step for the Poor Law Guardians of London to take, and an attractive one. Within four years of the passing of the Act, they took up the powers allowed to them. The Central London District was in the beginning made up of the City of London Union, the East London Union and St. Saviour's Union, Southwark. The first meeting of the Board of Management took place in the Board room of the City of London Union on April 19th, 1849.

The Board was made up of representatives of each of the Unions in the District and the first business of the Board was to arrange the purchase of Aubin's school. Aubin appears to have been very ready to sell. After all he would be capitalizing his assets and expected to remain superintendent of the school as a salaried employee of the Board. Aubin offered to sell the premises and contents for £10,000, or to let for 14 or 21 years for £600 per annum. The Board decided to offer £8,000 and to make an inspection of the site. Aubin was a hard man and a hard bargainer: he got his £10,000.

In May, the Board of Management occupied itself with appointing staff to the school. The medical officers and teaching staff already in post were reappointed and additional nursing staff and craft teachers were taken on. Aubin was offered the post of superintendant for £100 a year plus board and lodging, but he held out for £200 a year and again got his way.

In June the Board supplied a dietary for the children. Every day for breakfast each child was to have 6oz bread spread with butter or dripping with milk and water to drink. Supper was the same except that butter, dripping or treacle could be spread on the bread. Dinner, the main meal of the day, consisted of roast or boiled mutton twice a week and beef three times a week, 4oz per child, with 4oz bread and ½lb potatoes or other vegetables and % pint of broth. On Wednesdays, 12oz of suet pudding was the only item on the menu, and on Saturdays, a pint of soup with 6oz bread. In February 1850 a Poor Law Board inspector called attention to the high cost of maintenance compared with other boards. As a result the amount of food was reduced, meat from 4oz to 3oz, suet pudding from 12oz to l0oz and bread with soup from 6oz to 4oz. No wonder Oliver Twist asked for more!

In April 1850, the West London Union joined the District and St. Martins-in-the-Fields were sending children to the school on a per capita basis. Children were waiting for places at the school and it was felt by the Poor Law Board that facilities should be increased to accommodate 1200 children. Accommodation remained limited and when the Strand Union asked to join the District in 1852, the Poor Law Board refused the request. However a similar request from St. Martin's Union in 1853 was

approved, no doubt because St. Martin's children were already attending the school. Each quarter, the Unions in the District were asked to raise money to maintain the school in proportion to the number of children from their parishes attending it. The City of London had to contribute £1546, East London £865, West London £784, St. Saviours £575 and St. Martins £560, making a total quarterly bill for the ratepayers of £4270.

Late in 1853, a cholera epidemic broke out in the School. 24 children were attacked of whom 14 died. A medical report following the outbreak stated that the children seemed healthy and sufficiently fed and their clothing was warm and good. But the main criticism was overcrowding and again there was pressure for new buildings on the site.

However, rather than build on the Norwood site, it was decided to move. The reason for this was that the Crystal Palace, which had been the wonder of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1851, had been moved to Norwood and re-erected on a site in the immediate neighbourhood of the school. It immediately became a great attraction and taverns and tea gardens were built alongside. This meant that there was bustle and gaiety, and crowds even on Sundays, within sight of the school and this was felt to be distracting to the children and even to bring them into moral danger. By April 1854 the Board was urgently considering available sites in the country round London. Estates at Southgate and Ilford were considered, and Kneller Hall at Hounslow was a serious possibility as it was already a government training establishment for schoolmasters in workhouses and prisons. By July there were 1024 children at Norwood, some sleeping 3 in a bed, and the number in need was increasing owing to rising food prices and consequent distress among the poor.

The Board seemed unable to come to a decision about where or even whether to move. The unions in the District fell out and the City of London Union, claiming that it was paying "the almost incredible amount of lls.1d. per head per week" and that this was much more than the other Unions were paying, almost walked out. Early in 1855 the Poor Law Board stepped in, strongly urging the Board to find a new site for the school, preferably of 50 or 60 acres and within a mile of a railway station. In May sites were considered at Maiden, rejected at Watford and thought about at Wandsworth. Out of the blue in June, £12,000 was offered for the eastern part of the Hanwell Park estate, comprising 112 acres and the buildings on it. The offer was accepted by Mr. Millard, the owner and a further 8 acres down by the River Brent was subsequently sold to the Board for another £600.

The total expenditure to be raised on loan for the new buildings at Hanwell could be £36,000, which was one third of the average annual expenditure on the poor for the whole District for the three years previous plus the sale price of the old school at Norwood. By September 1855, 16 plans for buildings had been received and the design of Messrs Tress and Chambers of Queen Street was accepted. The plans had to be approved by the Poor Law Board and they advised some economies such as cutting down the number of bathrooms in the infirmary and -cutting out the superintendant's bathroom altogether. The builders were Messrs Brass & Son, whose estimate for the job was about £35,000. In June 1856, while the last details were being settled and the formalities completed, the tender of £712 18s for digging the well was accepted. At last all was ready for the foundation stone to be laid. The ceremony was reported in the Illustrated London News of November 1st 1856, with a drawing of what the building was to look like when completed. The account states:

The foundation stone of this extensive range of buildings now in the course of construction near Hanwell, in the county of Middlesex, was laid on Thursday, the llth September, by Mr. Deputy R.B. Whiteside, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Management, in absence of the Rev. Dr. Russell, Chairman of the Board. (There followed the list of members of the Board present at the occasion) ……There was a numerous attendance of ladies, and the boys of Harrow School were drawn up in a line to witness the ceremony; when Mr. Deputy Whiteside delivered an eloquent address. The ceremony of laying the stone being completed, the chaplain of the schools offered up an appropriate prayer; after which the Hundredth Psalm was sung by the whole assembly (upwards of 300). The usual deposit of coins, etc, was made in the stone; after which the managers and their friends retired to partake of a sumptuous

dinner, provided at their own expense, by Mr. Holt, of Radley's Hotel, New Bridge Street.

By October 9th, 150 men were working on the Hanwell buildings and the well had come to a main spring. The extra traffic of men and materials proved damaging to the local roads and in November a deputation from the parish of Hanwell asked that the roads be repaired. The Board offered no comfort — or money — to the parish of Hanwell. By April 1857 local feeling was again aroused, this time by the way the sewage for the schools would pollute the River Brent. The chairman of Greenford Nuisance Removal Committee pointed out that in summer the Brent would become an open sewer, while in winter the sewage matter would be carried to the spot from which the local inhabitants drew their water. The Board answered that they had no intention of polluting the water, but the Nuisance Committee might if it liked have the privilege of laying a pipe from the school well to the village. By May 1857 200 men were at work on the site and the slating and guttering to the roof of the main block was complete. All during the summer the work of fitting out and finishing the building went ahead, and by the autumn the building was ready enough for the great move.

On October 20th, 1857, children, servants and officers were brought from Norwood to Hanwell in horse drawn wagons. It was reported to the Management Board that the move had taken place in the finest of weather and without the slightest accident, though some of the horses were completely knocked up before the end of the journey. It is not recorded whether the children were knocked up after jolting for hours in the stuffy, darkened closed-in wagons. Nor is it recorded what their first impressions of the new home were when at last, probably long after dusk had fallen they stumbled stiff and weary out of the wagons and into a strange new world.

THE BUILDINGS

The building which was completed shortly after the arrival of the school population resembled more or less the architect's drawing. There were differences in detail, owing to the economies required by the Poor Law Board, and the tower was not completed for some time. The building, described in Cassell's Illustrated Paper in 1865 as a spacious and commanding edifice, was built almost at the crest of the slope rising southwards from the River Brent and commanded fine views towards Horsenden and Harrow Hills. It was basically a three storey block; a central administrative section with the still familiar pillared entrance and two wings, aligned to the east and west. Other lower buildings completed a square enclosing open courts. Externally to present day eyes the building looks grim and forbidding. The Italianate flavour of portico and windows does little to soften the massive bulk of the austere Victorian brickwork.

The internal design of the building was very soon found unsatisfactory. In a Report in November 1861, the Poor Law Board Inspectors found the building intolerably cold. This was because the corridors were too long and the rooms too large, because there was excessive ventilation and not enough heating. They recommended breaking the corridors with glass partitions and dividing up the large rooms into smaller ones. It was also recommended that a separate infirmary be built.

The Managers were loud in the defence of the building as it was — after all they had just raised an enormous loan to pay for it. In an emergency meeting in December, they declared that the Report was greatly exaggerated though they did quietly try to do something to warm the building up in winter. They also took note of the recommendation about the infirmary and by 1864 the plans for a separate infirmary building for 112 children were in hand and the tender of £7680 for the new building was accepted.

A stunted tower had been built behind the central block to serve as a water tower for the school. Water, averaging 40,000 gallons daily, was pumped up from the well 375 feet deep by the steam engine in the basement to the cisterns in the tower. This steam engine needed the constant attention of an engineer and was costly to run. In 1879 it was decided by the Managers that a clock should be provided in an extension above the water tower and five firms were approached for

estimates. The tender of H. & E. Gaydon of Brentford at the sum of £203 10s for the clock and £7.10s for the necessary gas fitting was accepted. The clock is a two train flat bed movement of 1880, probably made by J.W. Benson of London and only installed by Gaydons. It originally struck hours and half hours on a 4 cwt bell. It is about 90 feet above ground level and has dials each six feet in diameter.

Other additions were made to the buildings from time to time. Because of the endemic problem of the eye disease, ophthalmia, temporary iron huts for isolating the worst cases were built in 1875. The terrible scourge of ophthalmia deserves a chapter to itself, but it was the public outcry against the persistence of the disease that in the end compelled the managers to take practical steps to improve the main building. In 1890 the huge main block was converted into a number of separate houses. This was done by cutting open spaces through the main building and also by dividing the three wings from it. A detailed description of the schools was made by Mr. W. Mornington in his book published in 1898 called 'Our London Poor Law Schools'. He describes the improvements made to the school and the appearance of the school as he saw it. Nearly 20 acres were covered by the various school buildings and playgrounds. The main houses were three stories high and very alike in appearance and size. On each floor there were two large dormitories containing from 22 to 49 beds each.

The east wing had two stories, with dormitories upstairs and on the ground floor the infants' schoolroom, girls' library and two bathrooms. The west wing was one storey only and contained the technical school, day room and a schoolroom for boys. Other detached buildings contained classrooms and recreation rooms. The central wing housed the officer quarters, the large dining hall and in the basement the stores, engine house, wash house, laundry and maintenance workshops. Originally a tunnel passed right through so that deliveries of goods and equipment could be easily made by dray or cart. Much of this basement area survives, but only one tunnel entrance is left.

In 1898 there was a well equipped gym, and behind the infirmary a swimming bath in which nearly all the children learned to swim before leaving school. A new separate teaching block some distance from the main buildings was constructed in 1891. In this were seven classrooms for boys on the ground floor and six for girls on the first floor.

The Managers Report of 1901 tells of the new Infants' Department with hall and five classrooms opened in March 1900 and costing £5689 19s 8d. This new block provided up-to-date accommodation and equipment for 250 children. At this period the Managers were also reporting on new bathrooms and improved kitchen and laundry facilities and also new and better flooring for the covered corridors which linked the blocks.

The buildings lay toward the southern end of a 140 acre estate of open farmland. By the turn of the century as well as schools, infirmary and residential blocks, the estate also contained its own sewage and gas works and a lodge house at the end of the present Home Farm Road. The rest of the estate was farmed from Cuckoo Farm whose house and barns were down the hill on the Ruislip Road. The original concept was that that the farm would supply the school with milk and a herd of about 30 cows was kept for this purpose. The Farm Committee, which reported to the Board of Managers, frequently recorded the sale and purchase of cows, and such attractive names as Pretty, Rosalie and, appropriately, Cuckoo, appear in the minutes. Pigs were also kept and sent regularly to market; they do not seem to have eaten pork at the school.

In 1899 there was a suggestion that land lying idle at the gasworks be used for a poultry farm. Apparently in the previous year 47051 eggs had been bought for the school for a total cost of £158 2s. But poultry farming did not seem a proper expansion of farming activities to the Managers. The farm in the early days was useful for its supply of fresh milk and useful as a training establishment for boys at the school. But when the Ministry of Agriculture inspected it in 1931 for the London County Council they advised that it was an uneconomic proposition and farming at Hanwell abruptly ceased.

The plans made in 1927 and 1930 show the final dimensions and complexity of the school buildings. The whole campus formed a complete township of its own, with a life and purpose of its own, quite separate from the southern part of Hanwell, which by then had grown into a dormitory suburb of several tens of thousands of people.

The connecting corridors which had been such an improving feature in the 1890s in the end doomed the schools as obsolete. In 1930 all the homes and schools under the control of London Boards of Guardians were transferred to the London County Council. The final Board meeting of the Managers was held on March 31st 1930 when it was resolved that the seals be defaced. The London County Council could now rationalise the provision of schooling for its disadvantaged and orphaned children, and examined critically all the 24 homes and schools it had inherited from the various Unions. In November 1932 the closure of Hanwell Residential School (the L.C.C. name for the Schools from 1930) was announced. The buildings were condemned as almost obsolete and in particular the bridges and corridors connecting the blocks at different levels made it impossible to modernise the school. The minute reads: 'As regards Hanwell, although the estate is a large one, the flagged yards where the children play are very old fashioned and the large dormitories are connected at the different levels by bridges not completely enclosed. Here also considerable expenditure upon structural improvements would undoubtedly be necessary.'

In any case the number of scholars had fallen to about 650, reflecting the development of boarding out and the increased possibilities for adoptions. The remaining scholars were to be transferred to other L.C.C. residential schools before June 1933. The equipment was sent where it could be put to use, for example the food mincing machine was sent to Norwood children's home. The stained glass window in the chapel, erected by the Central London District Board in 1921 to the memory of old boys killed in the First World War, was presented to St. George's Church, Southwark from where many of the boys came. The great complex of building lay empty and echoing, only 76 years old, but obsolete.

THE STAFF

Staffing a residential school for upward of a thousand children was clearly a major operation — and an expensive one. Mr. Aubin, the superintendant, moved with the school and with his wife who was matron. His attitude to his job had probably been somewhat softened under the supervision of the Board of Managers, who seem to have been humane men, and it is not recorded whether his sudden death in November 1860 was greeted with sorrow or relief by his charges. His wife resigned from her post shortly after his death.

It seems likely that the Managers were not sorry to see the Aubins depart. Mornington records in 1898 that 'these events', that is the death of Aubin and the resignation of Mrs Aubin, 'took place at a time when the minds of the Managers seemed to have wakened to the fact that a distressing want of management in the establishment had become apparent'. After an interregnum during which the chaplain supervised the establishment, Mr. Hillyard was appointed superintendant and his wife Matron. But soon Superintendant Hillyard was having to write to the Managers explaining that his wife was ill from overwork and she had to be allowed a deputy at 10s a week.

At the end of 1861 Mrs. Hillyard resigned: obviously her health had completely given way and early in 1862 she died. Despite the rule that Superintendant and Matron had to be man and wife, the Managers were so satisfied with Hillyard that he was allowed to stay and Mrs. Hillyard's Deputy became Matron. In October 1862, after the shortest period of mourning that was decent, the new Matron became the second Mrs. Hillyard. Mr. Hillyard was still Superintendant twenty years later in 1882.

In the early days, the senior members of the staff included a chaplain and resident Medical Officer and assistant, an assistant Superintendant and an assistant matron. The teaching staff was made up of a senior master for the boys, who was paid £140 plus board and lodging, two assistant

masters (£65 & £50), a master (£60) and a mistress (£33) for the girls and two mistresses for the infants (each £30).Then there were the craft teachers who taught the boys and girls trades — a painter and glazier, a blacksmith, a carpenter, an engineer, shoemakers, tailors, bakers, a cook, two needle-women, laundry women, cowman and gardener. A cook, baker, ostler, pantry man, housemaid, porter and nine washerwomen were on the domestic staff, two farm labourers worked on the farm and, lowest of the low, two infirmary nurses at £13 each and 20 nurses and dormitory women at £9 19s 4d. Each supervised the children in their sleeping quarters. More staff were taken on as time passed. By 1861, possibly through the spreading influence of Miss Florence Nightingale, the Managers were advised that there should be nurses of better calibre, paid 5s per week instead of 3s l0d. The census of 1861 shows that out of 67 staff living in, 15 were officers and their families, five shoemakers, three tailors, 39 servants and 15 teachers.

Officers and servants who lived in were allowed as part of their salary a fixed amount of food per week: 7lbs of bread, 5½ lbs of meat, ¾lb of butter, 2½ - 2oz tea, 1½oz coffee, 2 ¾ pints of milk, 9oz of cheese, 7lb of vegetables, 7lb of flour, ½lb of rice with suet, eggs and currants for puddings at 1s 2d per head per week. Officer and teachers were allowed 14 pints of porter a week, pupil teachers and servants 7 pints. 13oz of loaf sugar were allowed to officers and teachers and 13oz of moist sugar for servants. Servants breakfasted at 7a.m., officers and teachers at N a.m. Dinner was at 12.30, tea for officers and teachers at 5 p.m. in summer, 4.30 in winter, for servants at 6 p.m. all the year. Supper followed at H.30. In the 1880s, the management was trying to institute a money payment instead of beer, but this was not proving a popular idea.

By 1873 there were 54 women on the pay roll and 53 men, plus farm labourers. Nurses were paid either 6s or 6s 6d per week and four were paid between 7s and 8s per week, William Robinson the gasman received £1 12s a week, Thomas Sceptre the stoker £1 5s a week, the bandmaster received £1 18s 5d and the drill master £1 6s lid per week, and William Howard a teacher only 15s 4d a week. In 1880 of 123 officers and servants, 78 were resident.

In 1888 Mr. W.H. and Mrs. Charlotte A. Hall were appointed Superintendant and matron. Mr. and Mrs. Hillyard retired and received pensions of £187 and £105 per year respectively, which were generous pensions especially considering that Mr. Hall as Superintendant received £200 and Mrs. Hall £75 as matron, though of course both had full board and lodging in addition. Dr. Littlejohn, of whom more will be heard, was Medical Officer at this time. By 1898 the teaching staff had been increased and the importance of educating the children, rather than just caring for them, was being emphasised. A headmaster with 10 assistants taught the boys; a headmistress with 7 assistants taught the girls and the infant’s school had a head and 6 assistants.

In the Managers Report of 1901 the 'sudden and untimely decease' of Mr. Hall is recorded. Mrs. Charlotte Hall had so impressed the Managers by her work that the Local Government Board (the successors of the Poor Law Board) was persuaded to make an unusual appointment. 'It was not till after most careful consideration that the Local Government Board acceded to the unanimous wish of the Managers and allowed Mrs. C.A. Hall to take the important position which had been occupied for about 12 years by her husband.' Mrs. Hall, as remembered by a pupil at the school in the early 1900s, was 'white haired, low voiced with a lovely kindly face.'

In 1901 the Managers also reported that three mistresses had been experimentally appointed as assistant teachers for the boys and the results had proved in every way most satisfactory.

Visiting inspectors from the Poor Law Board and later from the Local Government Board as well as the visiting committees from the different parishes of origin of the children kept a constant watching brief of the children's treatment, cleanliness and diet. As well as the visits from City Poor Law Guardians, the Lord Mayor of London also regularly visited Hanwell. The visit in July 1882, for example, was marred by the weather. The Lord Mayor was given a guided tour by the Chairman of the Managers, Mr. Hillyard and Rev. Edwards, the chaplain. In the engine room in the basement, Mr.

Dudley, the engineer, showed off his steam engines which raised the water from the well to the cisterns.

Voluntary workers also played their part in the care of the children at Hanwell. As early as 1861 the Managers resolved 'that believing a periodical visit of Ladies to our school at Hanwell will be of advantage to the school generally and conducive to the welfare of the children, a Ladies Committee to consist only and exclusively of the wives and daughters of the managers be allowed to visit the school.' Although in the early days these lady bountifuls may have been patronising in their approach to the children of the poor, undoubtedly their influence helped to improve the standard of care of the children.

One notable lady among those who cared for Hanwell was Miss Janet Johnson. She was the first woman Guardian of Southwark and for many years devoted her whole time to the children at Hanwell. She introduced cricket and football as competitive organised games, led a team of volunteers who taught the girls swimming and brought about improvements in the standard of clothing of the children. After the children left the school, Miss Johnson still kept in touch with them, helping them to find work and lodgings.

Other passing visitors to Hanwell over the years included a gentleman who was gleaning ideas for the establishment of a similar institution in Buenos Aires, the daughter of the Mayor of Berlin and a visitor from Zurich in 1906 who wrote in the Visitors' Book, 'I am very pleased to find in this large town where I saw such great distress among the poor, such a comfortable and really homelike home for the children of lost people who will be guided on the right path here.'

Many former pupils will remember members of the staff in the latter years of the school's existence. Miss Cole, Drill Mistress, Miss Barlow, Miss Fulcher, Matron, Miss Rogers, a teacher, Nurse Martin, Nurse Ayres, Nurse Radband and the last superintendant Mr. Arthur Pace are some of the names that spring from the pages of reminiscences and the school magazine. At the time of closure in 1933 the members of staff were drafted to other L.C.C. schools; for example Miss Fulcher took up duty as Matron of Hutton Residential School at Shenfield. Mr. Pace, the last headmaster and superintendant, was transferred to the position of superintendant of the Leytonstone Children's Home. The organ from the chapel went with him. Mr. Perks, the bandmaster, was transferred to be bandmaster at Lamorley School. With the closure of the farm early in 1932 already the farm bailiff Mr. McPherson had been paid off with compensation, as had Mr. Mossman the cowman and Mr. Watson farm labourer.

The news of the forthcoming closure of the school must have come as a shock to the staff who worked there in a closely knit and self sufficient community. As Mr. Pace wrote in his last Christmas message in 1932, 'We hope that the brightness of Christmas is going to break through the clouds which have so suddenly and unexpectedly arisen. We shall see that our large family has a good round of pleasure and happiness before being broken up.'

THE CHILDREN

In the records there are many directions about what the children should eat, wear and how they should spend their time. In the early days, however, there is little evidence about what the children felt about their lives and circumstances. It is difficult to imagine how they felt when they first saw their new home. New entrants were brought by cart from their parish of origin where they had been housed for a time in the workhouse. Then, when a vacancy occurred at the school and when the necessary arrangements had been made, they left the familiar sights of London or Southwark, left any relatives they might have still living, and arrived hours later in the middle of what was then open countryside.

On arrival the new admissions were recorded in the Admission and Discharge Register and the reason for the admission entered by each name. In the early days a variety of reasons was given —

parents in workhouse, in fever hospital or in prison, orphan, foundling and deserted were most common. The name and address of nearest relative were recorded — if it was known. Whole families of children were often admitted, such as the group recorded in April 1872 from Southwark made up of three brothers and two sisters, Daniel aged 8, John 7, James 5, Amelia 4 and Eleanor 3.

Quite a lot of children made more than one visit to Hanwell. Their mothers would come out of hospital and they would return to her. A few months later, further misfortune would hit the family and the children would be back. Some children had as many as six short stays at Hanwell in as many years and this coming and going must have been very disturbing both to their educational progress and their emotional stability. Other children, in particular orphans, and foundlings, stayed at Hanwell continuously from the time of their arrival till they reached the age to go out to work. Elizabeth, admitted in 1859 at the age of three, left in 1870 at 14 to go out to service. Ann, a foundling, arrived at the age of 4 in 1861 and left in 1872 aged 15. For children such as these, Hanwell was their only home and family.

A Creed Register was also kept which recorded whether the children were protestant or catholic. In the 1860s and early 1870s there was quite a high proportion of catholic children, clearly the families of immigrants from Ireland. From the late 1870s onwards the numbers of catholic children dwindled as catholic orphans were cared for in catholic institutions, such as St. Vincent's, Mill Hill and St. Joseph's, Norwood Green, at the expense of the local guardians.

The children's diet was meagre and dull by today's standards. In September 1858 it was reported to the Managers that the expense of maintaining and educating a child at Hanwell was almost double compared with other establishments. The Managers thereupon recommended that the dormitory work be done by the children and that the dietary be examined 'with a view to its being made much more comformable to that which exists among poor persons out of doors.' Each day for breakfast children of 5 to 9 had 5oz of bread with butter or dripping and half a pint of milk and water in equal proportions; children from 9 to 16 had 6oz of bread. Supper was the same as breakfast except that the drink was 1A milk and 3/4 water. The main meal of the day was midday dinner. On Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday the children had meat, vegetables and bread, 3oz of meat and 3oz of bread, for the 5 to 9s and 4oz of each for those between 9 and 16. Monday and Friday were soup days, with 5oz of bread. Wednesday and Saturday were suet pudding days. After Aubin's death, better supervision and medical advice resulted in improved diet. When in 1861 it was reported that the children were too revolted by the suet pudding to eat it, substitutes such as bread and cheese and barley broth were tried and larger portions were allowed. In the early days, the children must often have felt very hungry. However, as the Managers no doubt argued, had they been 'out of doors' they would have been hungrier still.

Conditions improved as the century wore on and there were special days to look forward to when visitors brought sweets and cakes. It is said that travellers on the branch line to Greenford used to throw buns out to the children as they passed. In 1896 when the Guardians of the District came to inspect the School, the infants had sweets and all the children had cake, fruit, home-made lemonade, tea and coffee. In 1901 the Managers claimed in their report that 'the food supplied is of the best quality, thoroughly well cooked and without stint. The milk is of excellent quality and is supplied from the school farm, while a large proportion of the vegetables are also grown upon the estate.' In the last decades of the school's life, it seems likely that the food was adequate and no better or worse than that supplied in comparable institutions.

Much of the clothing worn by the children was made in the school. In the early days the clothing supplied cannot have been adequate to withstand the near freezing temperatures in the dormitories in winter. Delicate children, who in the 1860s might amount to half the total number, wore flannel next to the skin day and night, and a visiting committee in December 1861 reported that the children were clean, healthy and happy and there were no colds in the school. Between October 1857 and November 1861, 34 children under 6 and 40 over 6 died at the school, but considering the high rate

of child mortality at the time and considering the children, to quote the contemporary report, 'are the offspring of parents of the lowest and most degraded ranks of society, born in the midst of filth, disease and death, so that nothing can be worse than their moral and physical condition on entering this Establishment,' out of a fluctuating children population averaging 1100, 74 deaths in 4 years is not at all bad. In 1901 the Managers reported 13 deaths over the previous three years and felt 'justified in congratulating themselves upon the healthy condition of their charges.'

The activities of the children were organised in two divisions, the working division and the school division. Children over 9 years of age spent alternate days in the two divisions. In the working division they were divided into groups to learn and work at various trades: boys, 6 tailoring, 6 shoemaking, 5 cleaning, 3 farming and gardening, 2 painting and glazing and 1 each carpenting, blacksmith's work, engine room and bakehouse. 6 girls worked at needlework, 6 in the laundry, 5 cleaning and attending dormitories, 4 as nurserymaids, 2 cooking and scullery work and 1 each as housemaid and dairymaid. Meanwhile the school division received instruction in basic literacy and numeracy. There were periods for recreation during the days which in the early years were spent in the yards but later day rooms with games and amusements were provided. There was a half day holiday on Saturday for each child on alternate weeks.

As time went on, more importance was attached to education and manual training was integrated into the school curriculum. The standards achieved rose and inspectors praised the results. By the 1890s older boys were taught history, geography and science and both boys and girls were taken on educational visits.

Both boys and girls were drilled, partly for discipline and partly for exercise. Boys were also taught musical instruments and organised into bands. As early as 1865, the brass band accompanied mealtimes. The school built up a reputation for its bands and many boys were recruited into Army Bands and made excellent careers for themselves. In 1901 the Managers reported that in the previous three years 51 boys who had passed through the Band had joined the Army and 14 old Bandboys were Army Bandmasters. The Band remained a notable part of the school's life right up to the end.

As an alternative to the army, some boys were transferred to the training ship Exmouth, an old three decker dating from the Napoleonic Wars. In 1903 the ship was in such a dilapidated condition that it had to be scrapped, but an exact replica Exmouth was built by Messrs Vickers. (This replica later passed out of LCC hands and became HMS Worcester, moored at Greenhithe, but it is now back in GLC care.) In the First World War Old Hanwell Boys on leave from the forces were always welcomed back at the School, and could stay free for as long as they wished.

Other boys became apprentices in trade or on farms. There were schemes for sending lads as farm apprentices to the settlement of the Fairbridge Society in Western Australia and probably many Hanwell boys found themselves in other parts of the Empire in those days when the sun never set on the Union Jack. Girls were usually settled in domestic service. Whatever happened and wherever they went, the school endeavoured to keep contact with its old pupils especially in their early years in the world of work.

In the early years, only occasional holidays were permitted. Special happenings such as a great thunderstorm early in August 1879 must have been a welcome break in the monotony of school routine. The superintendent reported 'from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. we were visited by the most terrific thunderstorm I ever remember. The hailstones were at least one inch in diameter and literally wrecked the roof of the Dining Hall and top corridors amounting to 7497 square feet of glass. I need not say that I took all means in my power to make the children safe and comfortable. They were still disposing of the broken glass in late October.

As time went on, holiday periods became part of the routine of the school. In the 1870s, the superintendant was granted permission each year to buy evergreens, holly and coloured paper to

decorate the dining hall at Christmas and to provide the 'usual Christmas fare' to children and officers. In 1882 £10 was spent on such aids to recreation as draughts, dominoes and balls and sticks for hockey. By the 1890s there were three weeks holiday in summer, 10 days at Christmas and 9 at Easter. Organised games and swimming occupied the days with the older children being allowed to ramble round the neighbourhood at their pleasure. Entertainments, says Mornington, took place almost weekly from Christmas to Easter. In the summer two children each fortnight were sent to stay in a country cottage.

By the 1920s and 1930s, large parties of children were taken each summer to seaside camp. Dymchurch seems to have been the favourite place and in 1931, 382 children and 19 officers, travelling there and back by train from Castlebar Halt, spent a fortnight enjoying the freedom of the beaches, while 48 Guides from the school company camped under canvas on Lady Delia Peel's estate at Sandy in Bedfordshire. The youngest children, who stayed at the school for the holidays, were given day outings to the Zoo and to Hampton Court. In December 1931 a donkey was transferred to Hanwell from Mitcham Children's Home, and no doubt it became a popular pet.

Everyone knows that Charlie Chaplin spent some time at Hanwell when he was a small boy. The circumstances are detailed in his autobiography. He was admitted to the school in June 1896 and left in January 1898. His memories of the School are not happy ones, but that whole period of his life was one of family upset and emotional disturbance. He recollects the harsh discipline and corporal punishment at the school as do a number of other pupils whose reminiscences are available. While in no way discounting such memories, it must be remembered that discipline and punishments which today would seem barbarous and inadmissible were the order of the day in most schools and many homes in the years before 1933. Punishments at Hanwell were nothing compared with the floggings meted out at many great public schools during the same period.

A letter written in 1931 by a lady then living in Canada who had been a pupil at the school about the year 1890 gives the other side of the picture:

'...I am one of the girls who was brought up in Hanwell School, and I can safely say it was the happiest time of my life. Of course, this is a long time ago then I was there. The Matron was Mrs Hilliard and then Mrs Hall.... I feel kind of lonesome for dear old Hanwell School... It seems only yesterday since I was there. I have eight children — five boys and three girls.... Will you be kind enough to send me a picture of the School so that I can show my children the Home I was raised in and was so happy in?'

The school magazine for 1931 gives a picture of fantastic activity and prowess in school and outside. Prize-giving, summer fete and sports day, summer camp, guides, scouts, band, swimming competitions, athletics, football and cricket were all reported on enthusiastically. The school especially excelled in cricket: in 1931 it entered the Hanwell Schools' Cricket League for the first time and won all its matches to gain the Salmon Shield beating St. Ann's, Costons, Drayton, Northfields and Horsenden schools twice each and the Rest of the League once. It also beat among others, Baling County School twice in friendly matches and won the LCC Residential Schools Cricket League. Clearly Edward Sawyer, Ernest Dodson and George Fox (110 not out) were batsmen to be reckoned with. In swimming too the standard was high, and the girls especially carried off the trophies in many inter-school championships.

The Cuckoo Schools, which is still the name used by many local people, were said to be so called because the children who were boarders there had no proper nest or home. In fact the name Cuckoo appears on maps of the area drawn before 1850. But even if it were true, it would seem an inappropriate name, for many children, certainly in the latter years of the School's life, found in Hanwell a very real home and family. This is witnessed by the popularity of scholars' reunions even 45 years after the closure of the Schools.

OPHTHALMIA

Ophthalmia is a disease of the eye which is highly contagious and which, can, if untreated, lead to blindness- It is a disease caused by malnutrition and poverty, aggravated by crowded living conditions. The disease was common among children in the poor parts of London in the nineteenth century. When families fell on hard times, they carried it with them to the workhouses. From there the children brought it to Hanwell, and once in Hanwell, it proved extraordinarily difficult to eradicate.

The attention of the Board of Managers was first drawn to the problem of ophthalmia in March 1862 when more than half— 686 out of 1162 — of the children had the disease in varying degrees of seriousness. Mr. Bowen, the Medical Officer, recommended various steps to try to isolate the worst cases and to ensure that each child, for example, had its own towel. He also recommended that more and better quality nurses be engaged. The Board were slow to act on the requests because they all cost money. Indeed by April 1863 the expenses connected with ophthalmia had pushed up the maintenance from 3s 8¼d per head per week to 4s per head per week.

A separate infirmary building was planned and in use by June 1865, 'at enormous cost', to give better treatment to all sick children but at that •time there was little improvement in washing arrangements. Temporarily, however, ophthalmia receded and in July 1865 only 29 out of 815 children had the disease. The symptoms never died out completely and returned in virulent form in the mid-1870s. After an inspection of all the metropolitan pauper schools, Mr. Nettleship reported that the state of affairs at Hanwell was exceptionally bad. He found that 44.1% of the children had 'bad granular lids'; 11% were suffering discharge and 12% had damaged eyes. In his opinion, 'The present system may be shortly described as an arrangement for favouring the production and spread of the disease, and then keeping it in check, by increasing, laborious and expensive medical treatment.' As a result of his report, iron huts, to be regarded as temporary, were erected as isolation wards for cases of ophthalmia. The trouble now was that healthy children were catching the disease on the journey from central London and children were being discharged from the ophthalmic wards before their cure was complete.

In 1888 Dr. Littlejohn, resident Medical Officer, calculated that 2649 children had been placed in the iron huts over 13 years, an average of over 200 per year. During the same period, 1190 cases of ophthalmia were admitted from the workhouses and infirmaries of the Unions so that an average of 112 cases per year were generated at Hanwell. 'Hundreds of eyes admitted healthy have been attacked here; it is useless and would be cowardly to attempt to deny or conceal it.'

The matter was now becoming a public scandal and Mr. Mundella, the outspoken liberal reformer, asked a question about it in the House of Commons. Mr. Nettleship was again asked to examine the children and in September 1888 he found 375 children with the disease. Public opinion forced the Managers to deal more effectively with the problem and Dr. Littlejohn was given full backing for his recommendations. The answer was the construction of an ophthalmic school with accommodation for 400 cases at the cost of £30,000. Here the affected children would live and continue their education until all fear of their spreading the disease was passed. It was also urged that children known to be suffering from the disease should travel separately to Hanwell and that all new admissions should be quarantined in separate accommodation.

The Ophthalmic School-Hospital, called the Park School received children with the disease from all the 27 London Unions, not only those in the Central London District. The greater number of cases came from Southwark, followed by Bethnal Green, St. Pancras, Hackney, Poplar and Greenwich. At last the disease was kept in check and the number of cases in the Main School fell to nil. Soon only a small proportion of the cases in the Ophthalmic School were from the Central London District. Of 272 cases in September 1898, only 39 were from the District and of 287 in 1901, 50 were from the District. But, as the Managers pointed out in 1901, of the 213 cases of City and Southwark children discharged cured to the Main School, in only two instances had a relapse occurred.

The Ophthalmic School ran into unexpected troubles in the summer of 1899. Rats infested the kitchens and played such havoc with the fabric of the walls that the repairs cost £75. "The cooks had gone about in terror of their lives and did not dare enter the buildings after dark. They might even have some of the children swallowed eventually' — at which turn of wit, it is recorded that the Board of Managers laughed.

AFTERWARDS

1933 was not after all to be the end of the story. In February 1934, due to an "outbreak of ringworm on the training ship Exmouth, the boys were transferred to Hanwell for about six months until the ship re-opened. For some of the boys, it must have been a home-coming. Later in 1934 there was a proposal that the school be converted into an institution for able-bodied men.

In 1935 the LCC decided to use the Hanwell site of 140 acres for a new housing estate. The site was attractive because of the 'adequate travelling facilities to London by train, omnibus and tramway services via Baling Broadway and Shepherd's Bush. Cheap workman's fares are in operation on the trains from Baling to many parts of London and on the tramway service to Shepherd's Bush'. The Cuckoo estate was attractively laid out with greens at road intersections and with the avenue of chestnut trees forming a feature of Cuckoo Avenue in the centre of the development. Over 1600 houses and flats were built on the estate by C.J. Wills, working from north to south. The first families moved in in 1936. The old School buildings remained standing for the time being, and some of the accommodation was let occasionally to the Cuckoo Tenants Association at nominal rents.

In December 1938 the Middlesex County Council asked for a lease of the building for the purposes of a community centre. They planned with the aid of a grant from the Board of Education to repair and adapt the building to provide handicraft rooms, games rooms, gymnasium, concert hall and meetings rooms. The lease was again under discussion in 1942, when the maintenance of tower and clock was particularly emphasised. Meanwhile the outlying blocks and wings of the Schools were being demolished until only the central administrative block and dining hall remained. During the Second World War the building was used both for storage and for various community activities such as a baby clinic, and under the provisions of the 1945 Education Act, it became the Hanwell Community Centre administered by the Borough of Ealing and leased to the Hanwell Community Association.

The building has been threatened with demolition on a number of occasions but has always been reprieved. Now more than 120 years old, it not only continues to serve the community well, but is a historic monument in its own right, bearing witness to the best of Victorian humanitarian ideals which anticipated by many decades the modern welfare state.